Hybrid

Revue des arts et médiations humaines

4 | 2017

Malaise dans la représentation

Producing the real: testing the political effectiveness of images

Viviana Lipuma

Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/hybrid/883>

DOI: 10.4000/hybrid.883

ISSN: 2276-3538

This article is a translation of:

Produire le réel : les images à l'épreuve de leur efficacité politique - URL : <https://journals.openedition.org/hybrid/877> [fr]

Publisher

Presses universitaires de Vincennes

Electronic reference

Viviana Lipuma, "Producing the real: testing the political effectiveness of images", *Hybrid* [Online], 4 | 2017, Online since 04 September 2017, connection on 13 April 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/hybrid/883> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/hybrid.883>

This text was automatically generated on 13 April 2022.

Revue Hybrid

Producing the real: testing the political effectiveness of images

Viviana Lipuma

“My body, an object destined to move other objects is, then, a centre of action; it cannot give birth to a representation.”

Bergson, *Matter and Memory*

- 1 In a society where images are omnipresent, the disproportionate attention given to their iconological dimension, their content and their meaning is particularly surprising. It is as if we wished to interrupt the constant flow that is submerging us by using the determination of a meaning that needs to be outlined, analysed and interpreted. As if we refused to admit that we ourselves are also part of this flow of images, by pretending to be, at best, recipients, at worst, targets. Even if it means, in one theoretical gesture, maintaining the paradigm of representation, that postulates a distance between the representation and the thing that is represented, and the paradigm of the subject, that postulates the existence of a receptacle, brain or conscience, where the representations form. In other words, a double gap where meaning could fit in.
- 2 We are, nevertheless, well aware that this is a high price to pay. In fact, the real issue is the historic debt that we in the West owe to the peoples we conquered, without ever bothering to try to seduce them: the mirror we held out was a trap, because by introducing this double gap between representation and subject, we carried out a full frontal attack on indigenous thought, cutting it off from its material connections, emptying it of its power over things. From 1520 onwards, the destruction of idols by the conquering Spanish was an attempt to force this dissociation between the divinity and the representation of the divinity, which for Mexican Indians until then had been one and the same thing, as they saw the universe without ontological cuts, and subjectivity as an expressive multiplicity through gestures, dances and music, where the issue of meaning was simply not on the table.¹ Representation and the subject are thus nothing more than the two sources from which the westernisation of the world began: it

appears to us that this is a good enough reason to make the effort to think on them together.

- 3 But how can images be understood outside of any reference to a representation system and a subject system? As there is no such thing as neutral theorising, independent of the social and historical situation from which it emerges, we prefer to ask why images are always understood in reference to these two systems. What are the real issues involved in reducing signs to their signifiers and to their meaning for a subject? What sort of operation slips into the interstice that connects signs and their real effects?
- 4 At the point where a materialist philosophy of the image converges with the post-colonial perspectives opened up by Cultural Studies, the question we would like to ask could almost be expressed in terms of “re-indigenisation,” if by that we mean a return to the effectiveness of signs, a shift in the interest we have in images from their semiological existence (what they mean) to their performative existence (how they act) and, thus, the need for an analysis of the material, technological and social conditions in which they are inserted, instead of a systemic slide toward the issue of their representation. This change in approach to images is justified by a political preoccupation: if we agree that the representation detour is suspect, it seems necessary to us to question the capacity of the image to produce an effect, and thus produce changes in the social fabric, as much through the reconfiguration of the sensible as through the start of a journey toward real changes in living conditions. The power of images, that has been extensively used by the powers-that-be and the marketing experts, must, in other terms, become a politic of images, which brings us back to the problem of the subsumption of the system of representation and of the subject to a pragmatic aim.

The critique of representation from an anti-capitalist point of view

Materialism of the image

- 5 We must go back in time to a certain conception of the universe in order to rid ourselves of the reflex that makes us liken an image to a representation. Bergson sets out this conception in the first chapter of *Matter and Memory*. He follows a traditional path from Kantian phenomenology where the thesis is that all we can know is the image. The originality comes from the fact that Bergson ignores the conscience within which, and for which, these images constitute themselves as such: the transcendental subject, that escapes all empirical determination to become the condition needed for the knowledge of things. The image, according to Bergson, exists in itself, is free from all subjects, for the simple reason that the subject itself is an image among others and, as such, does not occupy a dominant position. “It is the brain that is part of the material world, and not the material world that is part of the brain.”² Of course, my body can appear different to me, but what is important is that it is first and foremost a question of a body, and not of this difference. As image is, in the end, the equivalent of matter, it is the type of variation my body can introduce to this material universe that is the question here.
- 6 In other words, it is because the images affect me to the point of cerebral damage that they produce, and the gestures they lead to, that movement, reaction, action take the

place of representation following on from a perception of things. As such, “the image is more than a representation and less than a thing”: it is that which, in direct connection with matter, allows perception to plug into immediately pragmatic dimensions, instead of being considered as a sterile impression of representations in the brain. Through the “absolute identity” of the image and the movement that comes from such an elimination of the problem of conscience, Deleuze comes to characterise the Bergsonian universe as “metacinema” or, according to his disturbing phrase “the eye is in the things.”³

- 7 The consequences of that which we commonly understand by “image” seem to us, today, to be absolutely underestimated. Indeed, from Bergson onward, it became impossible to distinguish what constitutes the “mental image” and the “realreal image,” according to the famous division between “*image*” and “*picture*” that William John Thomas Mitchell outlined in the English language,⁴ nor is it possible to create a typology of images, like that proposed by Jacques Rancière in *Le Destin des images*, as this would unavoidably reintroduce a transcendence of meaning to the immanence of matter.⁵ To affirm that the real is a metacinema is the same as saying that everything is an image, or “picture,” and that all images are equal for the effects that they are able to produce.

Power and the “impotentisation” of signs

- 8 This pragmatic dimension is what was to interest, in an initially clinical and then outright militant framework, Félix Guattari in the analysis of signs, whose elaboration of concepts is closely linked to that of Gilles Deleuze. In the same way that birds make sounds that connect them functionally to the other members of their species, when I raise my hand, when I look at someone, when I shout or cry, these gestures are grasped immediately by my entourage, acting positively or negatively on the person on the receiving end, they require an answer, in short, they are signs that are directly plugged into the flows of matter, with no need, in this case, to go through a system of meaning. Nevertheless, far from being the simple support material of a univocal communication, as a hasty consideration of animal ethnology may imply, the sign, in this case, takes on a meaning on the level of things. From a political perspective elaborated in light of the critical analysis of capitalist societies, what makes this dissociation between sign and meaning interesting for Guattari is in the re-connection with the productive dimension of desire, before it was taken over by a production that transformed it into monetary flow. Only if we are able to intervene in the material flows that define the framework of our realreal existence will we be in a position to bend them in the direction of our own desires, and undo the systematic blocking of an almost revolutionary praxis, by simply managing to connect with the real. And, when we speak of the “impotentisation” of signs, by which we mean an operation that involves removing the power of signs to intervene in the real, it is indeed because this operation is not unlike the economic and social dynamics of capitalist societies.

Capitalistic subjectivation and dominant semiology

- 9 We cannot be unaware of the political origins that underpin the signifying formalisation of content. According to Guattari, “a system of power uses this formalisation to unify all modes of expression and centre them on fundamental

values.”⁶ The very precise wording, reveals, in one felled swoop, the three essential traits of the power system that is capitalism. First trait: capitalism, as a collection of operations of capturing and managing material and semiotic flows, does not contain signification in itself, which explains how it can rely on a perfectly a-significant semiotic – such as algebra, statistics, or even the quantity of space one can occupy in the metro, to have this effectiveness on desires and on the real that it rejects all alternative praxes.

- 10 Second trait: it nevertheless needs, for instrumental reasons, signifying machines that can cause this split with our desires; a task it delegates to any form of institution that works within society (schools, but also literature, the media, cinema), that are relied upon to convey the dominant representations on to which we end up projecting our production of desires (buying a car, becoming a mother, going to a match with a flag, following the presidential elections with hearts a flutter).
- 11 Third trait, and a direct consequence of the second: capitalism acts by “social subjection” as much as “mechanical enslavement.” These two concepts, analysed in detail in the 13th plateau,⁷ work in tandem: while we are busy being “pieces in the machine” of social functioning, we must also comply with positions as subjects (woman, man, employee, unemployed person) and to the position of the subject. The importance of the contribution of the Guattarian analysis of the signs, is to show that in the open space between the signs and their effects, the meaning attached to representations clears itself a path that takes us away from our intensive multiplicity, to a “pluralism of articulations” beneath the subject, beneath the subject as a support for the dominant representations, and beneath the subject as isolated cell, with no agency.⁸
- 12 The supervision of real alternatives, both from the point of view of their libidinal consistence as from the point of view of their translation into new lifestyles, that authors with a Marxist bent refer to as “ideology” (as is the case with Althusser), is here given a semiotic perspective, which is interesting to us in two ways. On the one hand, it emphasises the sign aspect, rather than the representation, denotation and meaning of images, even though there are practically only mixed regimes. On the other hand, it raises the issue of the pragmatic reach of these signs that could end up dispatching the dominant representations and even the system of representation itself, through the production of unprecedented, experimental and effective conjunctions.

Images, a semiotic apparatus

Operational images

- 13 To affirm of an image that it is “effective,” is, first of all, to grasp it at the point where it works in a tangible way – which implies that we consider it as part of an instrumental logic of “means, with an end in sight.” This remark, while problematical on many levels (we can indeed wonder if we can analyse a society, and more to the point, a capitalist society, from the perspective of well-determined objectives and finalities), at least forces us to study images in the real conditions of their production and their circulation. A social and economic base appears to be necessary, that orients the analysis toward the political system that makes them work, and that allows us to limit our remit to technical images only, as a “semiotic apparatus,” if, by apparatus we mean “dispositive” as in Foucault and Agamben,⁹ and as such all of the signs that aim to

orient behaviour. The appearance of a new technique always corresponds to a complete redefinition of the ways it can be used. As such, the technicity of a picture is not to be measured in terms of pixels but in terms of the type of operations it makes possible. In “War always finds a way,”¹⁰ Harun Farocki insists on this idea, affirming that the war in Iraq signalled the emergence of a “new type of image”: “operational images,” that are not informative, that in no way pretend to represent reality, but that, as the technical accomplishment of an objective, are an integral part of a power operation. These images, taken by drones, missile cameras or surveillance cameras, remain incomprehensible as long as they remain detached from their real effects: from the visual target to the explosive target, from perception to action, the transition is obligatory (fig. 1).

fig. 1

Harun Farocki, *Erkennen und Verfolgen (War at a distance)*, 2003.

© Harun Farocki GbR

- 14 If we observe the way the field of application of this type of image has broadened, we see that we also see them in the alternative media, in zones of exception where the lexicon of war is not just metaphorical. For example, in Rio de Janeiro, groups of media activists have sprung up inside each favela, forced into being by the need to cover issues that are largely ignored by the mainstream media. We are struck by these images, not so much for their counter-balanced view against the manipulated mainstream and their alternative representation of reality, but for the fact that the effect they produce is immediate, as they are shot on mobile phones and broadcast on social media. The point is to avoid a shoot-out between the army and the dealers, to be informed in real time on the military operation: the image is indeed “operational,” if

we see it as part of the technical operations of a movement of political resistance against the powers-that-be (fig. 2).

fig. 2

Photograph published on the facebook page of the *Maré Vive* collective from the Maré favela (Rio de Janeiro) on July 7th 2016 with the comment : « Warning to all inhabitants, the favela is still under pressure ! The Caveirão (Military police tank) is doing rounds and shots have ben fired in the Pinheiro. Does anyone have any other information ? #MaréVive ».

See things according to the apparatus/see the apparatus

- 15 It may be surprising to draw similarities between the American army and the inhabitants of a Brazilian favela. While, in both cases we are dealing with the instrumentalisation of signs with a view to effects that go way beyond them, with the solicitation of perception with a view to provoking a reaction that is immediately linked, and finally with the mechanical function of the sensory-motor schema, we can still legitimately wonder if, in certain resistance practices, we leave behind a certain conception of politics as the imperatives of effectiveness outweigh the possibility of being able to live in the world in a different way. In another war text,¹¹ the authors invite us to “Operate / a slight shift / with the common logic / of the Empire and its contestation / that of mobilisation/ with their common temporality / that of the emergency,” a sign that we can be at war without necessarily sacrificing existence on the altar of the objectives of a revolution that is yet to come. The introduction of the issue of time, with all its dilatations and variations, to a political perspective that is constantly aiming for action, seems to us to be highly important, as it allows perception to enter data that must be taken into account in the construction of real alternatives. In fact, when we are not taken up by the urgency to shoot back, when the sensory-motor schema that runs it is broken, we are dealing with what Bergson referred to as clairvoyance, meaning a pure form of perception that no longer selects among that which is perceptible, what interests us and on which we can act.¹² We form intervals, breaks in which our capacity to feel is augmented. Dreams and the subconscious thus fully take part in politics, in as much as they reconfigure the lines between the real and

the possible: instead of settling for a choice between possibilities that are predetermined in and by the social field, thanks to these dimensions, we can strike out in the direction of possibilities that, while they indeed may involve a certain lack of realism, can nevertheless pretend to the actualisation of something that didn't exist before.¹³

- 16 But, how can images manage to create the conditions for such a breakage of the sensory-motor schema, for such a level of "politicisation" of perception? Farocki goes on to say: "If we are interested in images that are part of an operation, this more likely comes from the flood of non-operative images, from the tedium of meta-language. Tedium of the everyday practice of re-mythologizing everyday life, and the multiple and many-channelled program of images that confirm the most banal thing: that the world is as it is."¹⁴ In other words, operational images capture our interest not through their inherent role (aim, kill, surveillance), but due to the fact of the explicitation of this operation that calls for another operation to be carried out, that itself, is precisely located at the level of perception: to see non-operational images, that answer to dominant semiologies, to "the world as it is," from the operation they are aiming for while also hiding it.
- 17 This is the job Farocki gives to the images he makes, by establishing a counter-apparatus that breaks the effects of identification with representations, by cleaning up the perception of déjà-vu of images and the consensus they produce. We could even speak of a "Brechtian distance," relative to technical images: whether it is through a *mise en abyme*, as in *Vidéogrammes d'une révolution* (fig. 3) or through a direct, simultaneous confrontation on two screens, as in *Serious Game* (fig. 4), the object of the images is to produce and circulate the images themselves. The result is a critical virtualisation of the ordinary workings of the sensory-motor schema that a power system wants to ensure for pragmatic reasons.¹⁵ A gap appears between the images and the reactions they provoke, a gap that not only signals another way of inhabiting time, but that produces this difference from the mechanical logic of capitalism.

fig. 3

Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujica, *Vidéogrammes of a Revolution*, 1992.

© Harun Farocki GbR

fig. 4

Harun Farocki, *Serious Games I-IV*, video installation, 2009-2010.

© Harun Farocki GbR

- 18 This, we feel, is what Jacques Rancière is getting at when he raises the issue of a necessary disjunction between politics and aesthetics, when he contests the assimilation of art operations with “life forms,” instead of the valorisation of a policy unique to aesthetics, that would precisely consist of producing that “gap.”¹⁶ The thing is, on the one hand the gap does not necessarily seem to us to be that of a “dissemblance” in the order of representation, as the accent remains on the “distancing” of effects when the image is received. On the other hand, by building on a sharing of fields in constant interaction, as they are part of the same cultural horizon of meanings, the maintenance of a specificity for art images seems to us to be problematical with regard to the ambition of a renewal of politics: while it is true that it stops being understood in terms of a “power struggle” to cover that of a *partage du sensible* (distribution of the sensible), we could take on the challenge of creating new paradigms that are indistinctly aesthetic-political, where it is not so much a question of the disappearance of art and more a question of the transformation of the quality and typology of effects that signs can produce.
- 19 However, if we replace visual signs in the cultural horizon of meanings, even if we orient them toward the creation of a dissensus relative to the images it circulates (as images arranged as such re-signify the social field), what becomes of the opposition between a-signifying semiotics and semiology, between signs that act directly on the real and others that take a detour by signification preventing them from having any kind of effective grasp? We are aware of the difficulty: the system of representation commands the general conditions of perception, thanks to the constant occupation of spaces where images materialise (advertising hoardings, television screens, cinemas, websites). Can we then pretend to gain any kind of effectiveness in these new aesthetic-political paradigms without giving in to a conflict on a representational level?

The need for representation for minority politics

Identity and identification

- 20 After having shown that a regime of representation opens a breach that goes against the immediate effect of signs, we must come back to representation, in the name of political effectiveness itself. It is important to underline that this contradiction is not ours, but that with which we are confronted the minute the capitalist, sexist or colonial power-centres signal themselves through control over meaning, a control that any type of counter-power can try to contest, but in order to do so must enter a battleground in which it decides neither the conditions or the weapons. So the battle for power necessarily takes place on the level of representations.
- 21 We understand that representation is doubly central for dominated groups that undergo exclusion, marginalisation and inferiorisation, and who were, for so long, forced into invisibility as bodies and as cultures. Firstly, because what is at stake through this representation is actual inclusion in civil society, and following on from this inclusion that moves them into a regime of active enunciation, it is then time to contest the stereotyped representations that circulate about them. Thus, the presence of black people on cinema screens, in films made by black artists¹⁷ with themes that involve rioting after police brutality to black people, seems to us to be an example of the political conflicts that form around representations that confront the protocol of the production of the dominant image. This dual characterisation of a “war for position” inside hegemonic discursive formations is what Stuart Hall details in “Nouvelles ethnicités”¹⁸ (New Ethnicities): the “burden of representation,” imposed by a system of colonial power, must lead to a “politic of representations,” if what we understand in the term “representation” is not the counterfeit figuration of a reality that exists outside of the means that let it express itself, but indeed in a discursive practice that is constituted by dominant groups.
- 22 If the system of representation cannot be conceived of outside the system of the subject, it is not in the way that representations would appear in the supposed interiority of the subject, but in the way that the subject is the derivation of a certain number of representations. This is why the control of signs and their meaning turns out to be decisive. Hall, whose main preoccupation is to highlight social and economic domination that run through cultural forms such as the production of signs, nevertheless insists on the risks of the obsolete identitarianism such a politic can lead to, that runs the risk of imprisoning subordinate individuals inside new definitions, no less binding than those imposed by the dominant power. To this end, in another text, Hall notes the politically decisive distinction between identity and identification.¹⁹ While the first concept, designated as “naturalist,” aims to mask the constructive dimension of identity – pretending to subsume the unmissable differences between people who are necessarily unique by recognising common characteristics, identification makes this construction explicit and turns it into a process that has to undergo constant modification, as a type of performance level of the subject. So the concept here is not essentialist, it is strategic and positional. “Not, who are we? Where are we from? But more what will we become, how are we represented and how can this influence the way in which we represent ourselves?”²⁰ While acknowledging the importance of Foucault’s work in favour of a total reconfiguration of the philosophy of “subject,” Hall

nevertheless regrets that he failed to make a clear distinction between (1) individuals (2), the positions they find themselves occupying and (3) the way in which they “perform” in these positions without necessarily being fully on board.

- 23 In the end, it is only through the study of each situation that we can measure the effect of such a policy of representations, that is to say its possible translation into images and the type of reception they may have. A certain branch of visual sociology proposes to carry out this study using the concept of “visualisation,”²¹ which is intended to show that there is no such thing as equal perception for each individual, but that this depends on the historical and social issues of each one. While in Bergson, anticipating the conceptual operations that come with the Deleuze and Foucault, the subject is derived from a perception that only takes on board what interests it and only reacts to that which it can move, the interest and the reaction are here, if not totally, then partially determined by the social field where the subject is located. What type of reaction will I have faced with a stigma or an advertisement where a blonde-haired family are all eating breakfast? Does it matter whether I am white or black, male or female, employee or refugee? Of course I comply with my own singular subjectivity, but I also define as female, black, Palestinian, and these attributes colour my construction as an individual. Whether identification is a process that can be termed “fictional,” ensuring a collection of representations that are, as we know, built on a non-existent ideal, this “does not diminish its discursive, material or political effectiveness.”²² In other words, the detour by the system of representation, to which we are constrained by the subordinating workings of capitalism, does not necessarily include a loss of agency. We could thus consider that the very famous photo taken at the 1968 Olympic Games, loaded with meaning by a gesture that is, in turn, signifying support for the Black Panthers, and led to the process of building a black identity that was to materialise as much in terms of the new image as in the meetings, gestures, collectives, struggles that we cannot see in the images, that go beyond the frame and became real in the period of time between the two pictures (fig. 5). To a certain extent, this makes them both significant *and* operational as images.

fig. 5

Erida Ferreira (Brazil) at the capoeira angola international meeting in Chicago during a Black Lives Matter campaign in 2015.

- 24 This possibility, for a politic of minority representation, of a signification acting as a sign, is obviously not exclusive to this situation. The processes of identification that do not split from dominant semiology, in the case of National Front nationalists or the Brazilian middle classes in the recent coup d'État, alas, do not lack effectiveness. The flags, be they red, white and blue or yellow and green, build an identity as they rest on an already existing identity that circulates in the perceptible spaces, in the cultural forms, and doesn't have to fight to exist, as it is the system of representation itself.
- 25 To grasp the specificity of minority politics means to understand that the subject position that minorities occupy is strategic and not organic, in as much as they never end up coinciding with these positions. This means that their processes of identification are open to transversal and connective subjectivations as is the case of the current intersectional practices that postulate the existence of a "multiplicatory identity," that is inter-categorical or anti-categorical. We must then take on board the changes that occur on the representation level due to this transversality. Indeed, the problem caused by "an effectiveness of representations" is whether or not the effects expected from a non-hegemonic representation, both in the shared sensible space as in the subjectivity construction process, must always be paid for by the abandonment of the multiplicity of feelings/affects that an image provokes.²³ Thus, as part of the *nouvelle vague* of black women filmmakers in France, the latest short film by Maïmouna Doucouré, *Maman(s)*²⁴ produces effects as much through the representation of black women that acts on the political awakening of other black women, as through the creation of a gap between perception and political reaction. If we insist on the possibility of a lack of distinction between the political function and the aesthetic

function of images, it is precisely because a representation that goes up against a dominant representation cannot be understood only from the perspective of this conflict and cannot be reduced to its signifying dimension, but must also be taken as the departure point for the creation of new semiotics, a new authority the potential agency of which cannot be known and is difficult to measure in traditional political terms.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BERGSON Henri, *Matière et mémoire*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), 2008.
- DELEUZE Gilles, *L'Image-mouvement*, Paris, Minuit, 1983.
- DELEUZE Gilles, *L'Image-temps*, Paris, Minuit, 1985.
- FAROCKI Harun, "La guerre trouve toujours un moyen" (War Always Finds a Way), in *HF/RG Harun Farocki et Rodney Graham* (musée du Jeu de Paume), Paris, Blackjack, 2009.
- GRUZINSKI Serge, *La Guerre des images de Christophe Colomb à Blade Runner (1492-2019)*, Paris, Fayard, 1990.
- GUATTARI Félix, "Échafaudages sémiotiques," in *La Révolution moléculaire*, Paris, Les Prairies ordinaires, 2012.
- HALL Stuart, "Qui a besoin de l'identité?" (Who needs identity ?), in Maxime CERVILLE (ed.), *Identités et cultures. Politiques des cultural studies*, Paris, Amsterdam, 2008.
- HALL Stuart, "Nouvelles ethnicités" (New Ethnicities), in Maxime CERVILLE (ed.), *Identités et cultures. Politiques des cultural studies*, Paris, Amsterdam, 2008.
- KRTOLICA Igor, "Art et politique mineurs chez Gilles Deleuze. L'impossibilité d'agir et le peuple manquant dans le cinéma," *Silène*, 2010.
- LAZZARATO Maurizio, *Signs and Machines, Capitalism and the production of subjectivity*, New York, MIT Press, 2014.
- MIRZOEFF Nicholas, *An introduction to Visual Culture*, London/New York, Routledge, 1999.
- MITCHELL William John Thomas, "What is an image?," *New Literary History*, vol. 15, "Image/Imago/Imagination," 1984.
- MORILLON Toni et BOURDIEU Pierre, "Voir comme on ne voit jamais," *Vacarme*, no. 6, 1998. [En ligne] <http://www.vacarme.org/article807.html> [accessed 11 June 2017].
- RANCIÈRE Jacques, "Le destin des images," *Le Destin des images*, Paris, La fabrique, 2003.
- VOLTZENLOGEL Thomas, "Harun Farocki (1944-2014) ou la dialectique dans les images," *Période*, 2014. [Online] <http://revueperiode.net/harun-farocki-1944-2014-ou-la-dialectique-dans-les-images/> [accessed 11 June 2017].
- TIQQUN, "Comment faire ?," *Contributions à la guerre en cours*, Paris, La fabrique, 2009.

NOTES

1. ¹ Serge Gruzinski, *La Guerre des images de Christophe Colomb à Blade Runner (1492-2019)*, Paris, Fayard, 1990.
2. ² Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), 8th edition, 2008, p. 13.
3. ³ Gilles Deleuze, *L'Image-mouvement*, chapitres 1 et 4, Paris, Minuit, 1983.
4. ⁴ William John Thomas Mitchell, "What is an image?," *New Literary History*, vol. 15, "Image/Imago/Imagination," 1984, p. 503-537.
5. ⁵ Taking the opposition between Visual and the image as a basis as formulated by Serge Daney ("Montage obligé," *Cahiers du cinéma*, no. 442), Jacques Rancière questions the "difference between the specific work on art images as opposed to social images," referring to the "meaning gap," a certain game between "the power of showing and the power of signifying." The problem of reference to a system of representation remains not only intact, but is doubled by an understanding of images from the matrix of language. (Jacques Rancière, "Le destin des images," *Le Destin des images*, Paris, La fabrique, 2003).
6. ⁶ Félix Guattari, *La Révolution moléculaire*, Paris, Les Prairies ordinaires, 2012, p. 410. We only refer to the "Échafaudages sémiotiques" part of this article, even though all of Guattari's work is imbued with the issue of the non-signifying effectiveness of signs.
7. ⁷ It is interesting to read the analysis of the television audience by Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, *Mille Plateaux*, Paris, Minuit, 1981, p. 570-573.
8. ⁸ On the reduction of signs to signifiers as a capitalist operation, see Maurizio Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines, Capitalism and the production of subjectivity*, New York, MIT Press, 2014.
9. ⁹ Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*, Paris, Gallimard, "Tel," 1975; Giorgio Agamben, *Qu'est-ce qu'un dispositif?*, Paris, Rivages Poche, "Petite Bibliothèque," 2007.
10. Harun Farocki, "La guerre trouve toujours un moyen" (War always finds a way), in *HF/RG Harun Farocki/Rodney Graham* (musée du Jeu de Paume), Paris, Blackjack, 2009.
11. Tiqqun, "Comment faire?," *Contributions à la guerre en cours*, Paris, La fabrique, 2009, p. 176.
12. It is interesting to highlight that the way Deleuze used the Bergsonian concept of clairvoyance was to serve as a break between the volumes of *Cinéma*, and that he was to precisely designate this situation where the virtualisation of perception is born out of the impossibility to act, thus opening the door to the possibility of another politics (Gilles Deleuze, *L'Image-temps*, Paris, Minuit, 1985).
13. For more on the political reach of clairvoyance and its conflict with action/ agency, we suggest you read Igor Krtolica, "Art et politique mineurs chez Gilles Deleuze. L'impossibilité d'agir et le peuple manquant dans le cinéma," *Silène*, 2010.
14. Harun Farocki, "La guerre trouve toujours un moyen" (War always finds a way), in *HF/RG Harun Farocki/Rodney Graham* (musée du Jeu de Paume), Paris, Blackjack, 2009, p. 89.
15. Thomas Voltzenlogel, "Harun Farocki (1944-2014) ou la dialectique dans les images," *Période*, 2014. [Online] <http://revueperiode.net/harun-farocki-1944-2014-ou-la-dialectique-dans-les-images/> [accessed 11 June 2017].
16. Jacques Rancière, *Malaise dans l'esthétique*, Paris, Galilée, 2004.
17. The expression "black artists" refers back to the membership of certain black artists to the BAM (*Black Arts Movement*), founded in Harlem by the poet Amiri Baraka in 1966 within the larger political movement of "Black Power."
18. Stuart Hall, "Nouvelles ethnicités" (New Ethnicities), in Maxime Cervulle (ed.), *Identités et cultures. Politiques des cultural studies*, Paris, Amsterdam, 2008.
19. Stuart Hall, "Qui a besoin de l'identité?" (Who needs identity?), in Maxime Cervulle (ed.), *Identités et cultures. Politiques des cultural studies*, Paris, Amsterdam, 2008.

20. Stuart Hall, "Qui a besoin de l'identité?" (Who needs identity ?), in Maxime Cervulle (ed.), *Identités et cultures. Politiques des cultural studies*, Paris, Amsterdam, 2008, p. 27.
 21. Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An introduction to Visual Culture*, London/New York, Routledge, 1999.
 22. Stuart Hall, "Qui a besoin de l'identité?" (Who needs identity ?), in Maxime Cervulle (ed.), *Identités et cultures. Politiques des cultural studies*, Paris, Amsterdam, 2008, p. 86.
 23. "To be considered merely as a witness to a certain situation, or as someone who has nothing to say but: 'Ow! That hurts!' or 'I protest!,' is profoundly humiliating [...]. Regardless of the level of sophistication of the pieces, regardless of the new answers, the subtleties and innovations they bring, all of this is totally ignored" (Toni Morillon and Pierre Bourdieu, "Voir comme on ne voit jamais," *Vacarme*, no. 6, 1998. [Online] <http://www.vacarme.org/article807.html> [accessed 11 June 2017]).
 24. Maïmouna Doucouré, *Maman(s)*, 2015, 20'.
-

ABSTRACTS

The physical and virtual spaces in which we move are marked with the stamp of visual saturation. This allows the cultural codes that rule our society to circulate with unprecedented freedom, keeping any possibility of change through a system of representation at bay. Given these circumstances, what can the expression "the politics of images" possibly mean? At the point where a materialist philosophy of the image converges with the post-colonial perspectives opened up by Cultural Studies, this article proposes a shift in the way images are envisaged, from their semiological mode (what they mean) to their performative mode (how they act), in order to analyse the material, technological and social conditions in which they are inserted and to establish the conditions for re-appropriating the system of representation by minorities.

INDEX

Keywords: capitalism, identification, political iconography, semiotics, subjectivity

AUTHOR

VIVIANA LIPUMA

Viviana Lipuma is an *agrégée* in philosophy, a doctoral student of the Labex Arts-H2H and member of Lavits – the Latin American network of surveillance, technology and society studies at UFRJ (Rio de Janeiro). Her work examines the place where political philosophy and aesthetics meet, through the prism of the work of Deleuze and Guattari and Visual Studies. Her thesis examines the mechanisms of producing subjectivity through images in neo-liberal capitalist societies, and the possibilities for the reappropriation of this production process available to dominated groups through new technology.