Alex Rivera’s Sleep Dealer (2008) introduces a near future where a young Mexican farmer faces the militarized privatization of water resources on a daily basis before seeing helplessly the destruction of his house by a drone controlled by the United States government. He then moves to Tijuana where he earns a wage by working in a ‘sleep dealer’ factory where the minds and energies of Mexican labor workers are being used through body-plug connections linked to various working machines in the United States. The views of the factory are the most striking images of the film as they fully reconstruct the imagery of the assembly line factory as we currently know it, while at the same time the object of production is removed from this same imagery. The workers’ bodies still endure the physical labor and its repetition, yet the product of their work is situated on the other side of the border. The connection cables are the only link from the laborers to the product of their labor. The violence with which the cables penetrate the laborer’s body expresses the power of his/her exploitation. It is probably not unintended that these cables make the workers appear as puppets in a literal illustration of their bodies’ dispossession.

On the other side of the border, the drone pilot is subjected to a similar dispossession. He is also connected to the objects of his labor through cables in his body, yet his energy and mind
are not dedicated to labor, but rather to the military assassination of “water terrorists,” — i.e. Mexican proletariats trying to survive by stealing water. The nature of his relationship with them through a digital interface allows him to disconnect what he sees and does from his perception of reality. Of course in this latter case, this is barely science fiction as the United States currently operates targeted assassinations through drones in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and Somalia. For many reasons, the dissociation of the body and its instrument — in the case of the U.S. drone program, a weapon, but in the film’s factory the instrument is a working tool — is profitable on a political and economic level for the dominant powers. *Sleep Dealer* only materializes a current situation, the one where labor is only understood as a flow of energy that needs to be extracted from the body, controlled and maximized through a strategized interface. The more this interface is separating the body from its objects of production, the more the exploitation is effective. In this regard, the invention of the assembly line was a key moment of such a separation as each worker became in charge of one piece of an object that (s)he could not comprehend as a whole.

On the other hand, the worker’s repossession of his/her body and its reconciliation with the process of production allows a political empowerment and emancipation from the transcendental logic of the capitalist system. In this regard, Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis’s documentary *The Take* (2004) shows the physical occupation of a factory in Argentina by its workers and the redistribution of power and wealth to the ensemble of the laborers. The bodies and the factory were so involved together that the former had to physically defend the latter against the police which was trying to take back the factory in favor of its former owner in order for him to be able to sell it.

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