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THE SPECTACLE AND THE WITNESS: AN HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL
STUDY OF SURVEILLANCE IN VISUAL CULTURE FROM 1920 TO 2008

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ABSTRACT

This thesis engages with surveillance as a pervasive theme presented in several modes of modern visual culture and is approached with particular reference to Guy Debord’s theory of the spectacle. Through an historically contextualized analysis, I locate the centrality of surveillance in Western culture as a visual regime that institutionalizes spectacle. This is revealed in a number of prominent events between 1920 and 2008 that illustrate ethical shifts in the historical subject in which the presence or the absence of the witness becomes a meaningful consideration. Surveillance is thus linked inextricably to two main discourses regarding the spectacle and the witness, a theme that is expanded upon through the analysis of specific films and other representations of modern visual culture, including painting and television. The spectacle within our ocularcentric society has, as I see it, not enhanced the world so much as it has separated us from it, and has thus consistently obscured instances of moral reflection by the individual in the form of witness. I link this concept to the thinking of Hannah Arendt, Walter Benjamin, Martin Heidegger and others.

Starting with the 1920’s, the progressive destruction of the witness has been exemplified in Western visual culture. The problems of detachment are derived in part from Anton Kaes’ reading of Ernst Jünger’s theoretical concepts of the development of a “second consciousness” produced by the camera, the new technical “evil eye”, and Michel Foucault’s reading of the “panopticon”. The thesis draws on Thomas Mathiesen's expansion on Foucault by revisiting “the viewer society”, further addressing the distancing effects of surveillance. The second section is devoted specifically to a discussion of the Holocaust through the analysis of selected “Holocaust films”. My analysis of these films centres on their relation to memory, representation and the distinction of the embodiment of pain beginning with the witness/survivor. The over-arching concern of the final section of this thesis is with the digital transition in visual culture and the shift away from its tradition of conceptual and contextual materiality to what is now a predominantly Internet-based digital mode, conceptualized by Katherine Hayles' work on the “post-human”. As a result, I argue that this produces further distancing between the witness and the subject. From this I conclude that the further distancing between the witness and the subject has enabled the facilitation of what appears to be a society of surveillance, a society which, for ethical reasons, needs to reinstate the witness.
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Throughout my thesis writing, and especially in these final days of completing it, there have been numerous hand-written and shall we say, “mysterious” corrections scribbled throughout my thesis by my diligent supervisors. It is here that I must thank profusely my “crack-team” of supervisor translating experts—the ones in the “pods” of our offices, Anita Perkins and Peter Barton, and away from the office, when I had to photograph the corrections and post them on Facebook as photographs for deciphering, it was only through the help of Alison May, Lhizz Browne, James Dignan, Susan Herridge, Susan Craig, Fiona Bowker, Kyle Kontour and other word de-scrambling experts that I was able to finish. Other angels include pod-mates Robert Styles, Charlotte Dunn, Teri Higgins, and Kenton Storey, all of whom have played a part in rescuing me from my demons of self-doubt at one time or another, simply by being kind.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to assess the role mechanical surveillance plays in recent visual culture. In particular the thesis asks if perhaps mechanical surveillance has displaced the functionality of our “inner eye”–or conscience–within the personal, social, and political sphere. I have taken a wide-ranging view through the lens of history and have chosen films and other visual culture media that I believe are pertinent to this topic and which, as Anton Kaes¹ suggests, “shape and legitimize our perception of the past”:

Cinematic images have created a technological bank that is shared by everyone and offers little escape. It increasingly shapes and legitimizes our perception of the past. Memory in the age of electronic reproducibility and dissemination has become public; memory has become socialized by technology. History itself, so it seems, has been democratized by these easily accessible images, but the power over what is shared as popular memory has passed into the hands of those who produce these images. No wonder that struggle has erupted over the production, administration, and control of public memory. (HFPM, 112-113)

To accurately trace what Martin Jay refers to as “ocularcentric”² power and control within the realm of visual culture throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, I will begin somewhere near the middle with a key concept from Guy Debord’s pivotal work, La Société du spectacle (The Society of the Spectacle³). Published in 1967, The Society of the Spectacle sets out a critical theory of “the spectacle”. Debord describes the presence and effects of what


²“One ocularcentric” here is used in the neological sense as Martin Jay suggests in the Introduction to his work, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought as meaning “dominated” by vision. Important to this thesis is in line with what Jay eludes to as the pondering of historians of technology regarding the implications of the expansion of our “exosomatic organs” by the ability to see though “devices” including telescopes, microscopes cameras and cinema. These devices are used to compensate for our “imperfections, or find substitutes for its limited powers. Jay is specific in mentioning that these “expansions themselves have been linked in complicated ways to the practices of surveillance and spectacle, which they often abet” (DEVD, 3). Martin Jay. Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought. University of California Press: Berkley, CA: 1994. From here on in will be cited as DEDV.

he determined were an ever-increasing proliferation of visual representations that permeated twentieth-century society.

Debord was the leader of a small but highly influential group called “Situationist International” (SI), made up of no more than a dozen ever-changing members of Dada-inspired Parisian artists and French Marxist-leaning intellectuals. Reworking Marx’s early writing on alienation⁴, Debord argued that images were (and remain) the currency of contemporary society. Marx’s alienation occurred in the material world, involved individuals and meant the loss of control over their labour. Debord acknowledges the transformation from the mid-1920s of the worker-producer into the consumer:

The analysis that life has been reduced to a spectacle, is the result of all relationships becoming transactional in capitalist society. The Situationist addition to this theory is the recognition of “pseudo-needs”, created by capitalism to continually ensure increased consumption. They switched consciousness from its determination at the point of production to the point of consumption, seeing modern capitalism as a consumer society. The individual, or worker, is no longer recognized as a producer, but courted as a consumer.⁵

The original SI group was formed from two avant-garde artist groups joining together in 1957, the “Lettrist Internationals”⁶ and the “Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus”⁷, so it is not difficult to comprehend the creation of a cultural, political and social theory derived not only from the thinking of Marx but also from the standpoint of those whose activities were located principally in the visual arts. Central to Debord’s theory in relation to alienation is that “images detached from every aspect of life”, meaning photographs, film, television, all

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⁶ “Lettrism” was founded by Isodore Isou as a reaction against Andre Breton’s dictatorial control of Surrealism (and Surrealism's movement away from its conceptual origins in Dada towards that of mysticism). The Lettrist worked on the level of the letter at the heart of what they believed to be an experiential language that was to be the basis of their new culture. Their Lexique Des Lettres Nouvelles, for example, was a sonic alphabet of 130 or so sounds from which a new natural language was to spring and their poetry composed. Isou along with his chief lieutenant, Maurice Lemaître, worked out a notational style that resembled that of traditional, 'common-practice' music, sometimes even with staffs, bar lines, and dynamic markings. Lettrist poetry was also often performed by choral groups. From: <http://www.wendtroot.com/spoetry/folder4/ng441.html#pa1>. Web. Oct., 2011.
⁷ “Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus” was an anti-Max Bill group who were upset that the Bauhaus had been restructured by Bill to be an academy where only technical instruction was to be given. Max Bill formulated the Principles of Concrete Art, as a refinement of the ideas published by Theo van Doesburg. Bill is one of the most important exponents of this art genre. From: <http://www.wendtroot.com/spoetry/folder4/ng441.html#pa1 and http://www.max-bill.com/>. Web. Oct., 2011.
representations of life, are streamed together creating a “pseudo-world”, because they are not real and therefore only partial aspects of life (SOS, 12 and 13).

In other words, as Heidegger succinctly posited, “it is the world conceived and grasped as picture”8. Because the pictures of the world have become the world, the real world has either disappeared or has been so thoroughly subsumed under the spectacle that it has transformed and become society; the spectacle has become the real world (QCT, 129). Debord concludes that that society is either unaware of this transformation or has simply accepted the spectacle as the replacement of an original self. In the historical sense, what Debord theorises as the society of the spectacle emerged as a result of the development of technology that enabled what Walter Benjamin famously named “the mechanical reproduction of art”9 within the realm of visual culture. The reproduction of art and images created the possibility of a surplus of representative images creating the necessity of archiving multiple images, separate and observable by society. This capacity to reproduce images positioned the emergence of a regime of visual representation that in turn created the institutionalisation of the spectacle itself. This is what could be called the visual regime. “The spectacle is not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (SOS, 12).

Encroaching systems of surveillance or the perception of surveillance are examined in this thesis. These systems are inextricably linked to “the spectacle” as Debord describes it in his chapter entitled “Separation Perfected”:

The spectacle is the self-portrait of power in the age of power’s totalitarian rule over conditions of existence. The fetishistic appearance of pure objectivity in spectacular relationships conceals their true character as relationships between human beings and between classes; a second Nature thus seems to impose inescapable laws upon our environment. But the spectacle is by no means the inevitable outcome of a technical development perceived as natural; on the contrary, the society of the spectacle is a form that chooses its own technical content. If the spectacle – understood in the in the limited sense of those “mass media” that are at its most stultifying superficial manifestation – seems to be invading society in the shape of a mere apparatus, it should be remembered that this apparatus has nothing


neutral about it, and that it answers directly to the spectacle’s internal dynamics. (SOS, 19)

Surveillance also seems to be “invading society” in the shape of a “mere apparatus”, the mechanical apparatus, for example, of the vast proliferation of CCTV cameras installed throughout the world, often, but not exclusively in urban areas. Debord suggests that the rise of “the spectacle” is an “inevitable outcome”. Likewise, I apply the same understanding of “inevitable outcome” to the technical development or “rise of” systems of surveillance in our society. Since these systems are relatively ubiquitous\(^{10}\), one might consider them a “natural” development. Surveillance of every kind beyond just watching or being watched is also a “self-portrait of power in the age of power’s totalitarian rule over conditions of existence” (SOS, 19). Not merely the visual aspect, but surveillance in the many ways in which people are kept track of: forms of control and categorisation such as social sorting through citizenship documentation, economic sorting through “official” credit rating and so on. These modern forms of surveillance condition our existence.

Evidence of shifting cultural perceptions and our relationship with visual culture in what N. Katherine Hayles refers to as a “posthuman”\(^{11}\) (here, meaning digital and thus virtual) world can be found by questioning the relationships we develop with technology. Is it possible to feel simultaneously connected to and disconnected from the apparatuses that we use to watch and record others? How connected do we feel with our computer keyboards, web-cameras and “smart phones” equipped with video cameras, internet and GPS systems monitored by satellites? In other words, are we spectators, witnesses or participants, when we engage with these systems? Perhaps our development is contingent upon combining these various roles, and if this is the case, is this a positive or negative development?

The rationale for the selection of the visual and written texts in my discussion draws predominantly on visual aspects of the spectacle and surveillance and their dual role in a double-helix system of influence and discipline in society. The dual role in Debord’s concept of the spectacle, according to Andrea Brighenti\(^{12}\), who takes a social scientific view, is “not a

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\(^{10}\) For a vast number of scholarly works on the topic of surveillance and its relative ubiquity in societies around the world, begin by visiting: http://library.queensu.ca/ojs/index.php/surveillance-and-society/ which is the home of the online peer-reviewed scholarly journal, Surveillance and Society.

\(^{11}\) N. Katherine Hayles. How we Became Posthuman, Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics The University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1999. From here on in will be cited as HWBP.

set of images, but a social relation mediated by images – is a détour
nement of Marx’s definition of capital, which, in turn, is grounded in the Hegelian
d master–servant dialectic of subjectification and alienation”. Brighenti points out that “the mixing of visible and invisible human relations is thus an important dimension for assessing what happens when well-ordered ontologies are in crisis or collapse” (VCSS, 331).

One of these well-ordered ontologies involving the all seeing, watchful, and ubiquitous “eye of God” is not a new construct but rather an ancient trope found in the story of Genesis in the first Book of Moses. In Chapter One of this Biblical account, after creating the heaven and the earth, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good”. However, in terms of visual culture, Astrid Schmidt-Burkhardt points out in her essay, “The All-Seer: God’s Eye as Proto Surveillance” even though “the eye or eyes of God are mentioned often in the Bible [...] anthropomorphic illustrations of the organ signifying divine omnipresence and omniscience cannot be traced prior to the sixteenth century” (ASGE, 18). I will explore how crises throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries may have weakened not only the ontology of this trope, but some of what Brighenti refers to as the “well-ordered visible and invisible human relations” attached to it as well (VCSS, 331).

Have we replaced this prototype of the Biblical all-seer with a mechanical system created through evolving technology? I am in agreement with Schmidt-Burkhardt’s assertion that “as a privileged sense the eye organ acts as mediator between interior and exterior, subject and world”. She also notes that in the French language, voir (vision) savoir (knowledge) and pouvoir (power) “have the same [etymological] stem”. What this reveals is that there is a “dual structure of vision”, one that connects “reason as well as the control of power, to the illumination of reality and therewith its surveillance” (ASGE, 18).

Through the analysis of painting, film, photography and television, relations such as these will be explored conceptually and theoretically. More importantly, however, the reason this thesis takes an historical look at various emanations of visual culture is that it may assist us to move through the spectacle and locate a place outside its sphere. It is in this place that we may locate the true “aura” of the witness.

13 In the simplest terms for pedagogical clarity on, Eric Steinhart explains Hegel’s master-servant dialectic this way: It is what happens when two self-consciousnesses confront one another: each thinks about the other in terms of the self. The two self-consciousnesses are like mirrors of one another. Each mirror reflects the other; but it also reflects the other reflecting itself; it reflects the other reflecting itself reflecting the other. This goes on and on and it produces both frenzy and paralysis. The only way to break the mirroring is to fight: the winner is the master, the loser is the slave. But this is an incomplete solution. In the end, the two self-consciousnesses need to learn how to cooperate. 1998. <http://ericsteinhart.com/progress/HEGEL/MA SLAVE.HTM>. Web, Nov., 2012.

14 Astrid Schmidt-Burkhardt. “The All-Seer: God’s Eye as Proto Surveillance”. CTRL [SPACE] Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother. ZKM / Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe on the occasion of the exhibition, October 12, 2001- February 2002. From here on in will be cited as ASGE.
THESIS METHODOLOGY AND ORGANISATION

The methodology employed in this thesis is to adopt an historical, analytical and critical approach to surveillance as a visual regime that institutionalises the spectacle. Since visual culture regards images as central to the representation of meaning in the world, the historical approach is undertaken in discussion of certain events that occurred between 1920 and 2008 through the analysis of particularly notable works which, for the purposes of this thesis, reflect and mark important technological and ethical shifts in the historical subject within visual culture. Although the main emphasis is on the contextualised analysis of feature films, I also include the analysis of other significant elements in visual culture and Western history: Picasso’s painting Guernica, and the uniquely televised trial of Nazi War criminal, Adolf Eichmann. Underpinning these analyses are references to key theoretical works by Arendt, Benjamin and Heidegger.

This dissertation is organised in three sections, each of which address three main themes: surveillance, the spectacle and the witness conceptualised through the original works of various critical theorists and further, relevant readings of them as examined by others. Some examples include Jonathon Crary’s reading of Guy Debord, Thomas Mathiesen’s ideas developed from the theories of Michel Foucault, and Anton Kaes’ analysis of Ernst Jünger.

Section One: War, Technology and Modernity in 1920s and 1930s Visual Culture

My aim is to examine some of Debord’s key concepts by looking at films and other media that reflect the culture of those the 1920s and 1930s and made use of the technology that promoted the notion of the spectacle on several levels. One such level is the introduction of films that begin to employ a technique in which a more omniscient or surveillant view is adopted perhaps in response to technological developments that occurred during the First World War. In other media, specifically painting, a reaction to Fascism was created in political protest as an anti-Fascist response in the form of a spectacle for the world stage. Finally, I present a film that was made to promote a positive view of Fascism by creating a false sense of a new world order combining the use of spectacle bolstered by the omniscient view. As Benjamin’s essay attested about art, in 1936, there was a sense of apprehension in that era about the burgeoning technology for the mechanical reproduction of images; an unease about the ability to inform the masses first through images and then combining these images with sound. This enabled a centralisation of power and communication heretofore unknown which was then applied to methods of achieving political power. The films
discussed in this section contain visual metaphors that reflect important events in politics and the economic turmoil of the era.

Chapter One: The 1920s and 1930s Film; Modernity, Surveillance, and the Spectacular, concentrates on four Fritz Lang films from the early 1920s and 1930s, and one American film directed by Victor Fleming released in 1939 that, on several levels, made use of the early technology that promoted the notion of the spectacle. Jonathon Crary\(^\text{15}\) discusses German filmmaker Fritz Lang’s trilogy of Dr. Mabuse films that spanned much of his career to exemplify how these films “compellingly chart the mobile characteristics of various perceptual technologies and apparatuses of power, culminating in a precocious meditation in the final film on the status of the video screen” (DMME, 271).

The first of these films was *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler* (*Dr. Mabuse the Gambler*\(^\text{16}\)), made in two parts, released in 1921-22. Next in the series was *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (*The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*\(^\text{17}\)) released in 1932-33, and finally, in 1960, toward the end of his career, Lang made *The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse*\(^\text{18}\). Crary asserts that the name “Mabuse” is not simply the name of a fictional character, but rather that Lang’s repeated use of the Mabuse name signifies what Crary describes as a “system of spectacular power whose strategies are continually changing but whose aim of producing ‘docile’ subjects remains relatively constant” (DMME, 271). Another important Lang film which highlighted an intensely regimented visual network was *M*\(^\text{19}\), released in 1931. Although this was the first film in which Lang used sound and spoken dialogue, *M* was specifically attuned to the concept of the development of what was becoming an urban surveillance society, less in the technical sense and more in the efforts of individuals within a specific network having the ability to track the movements of another person without their knowledge.

Chapter Two: the Proposition about Guernica: the Mechanical Eye within the Cold Sun will embark upon an analysis of Pablo Picasso’s mural *Guernica* (1937). This thesis, while focusing mostly on films is still a discussion about visual culture, which is why beyond films,


\(^{16}\) *Dr. Mabuse der Spieler* (*Dr. Mabuse the Gambler*). Germany, Uco-Film der Decla-Bioscop AG. Dir. Fritz Lang, (1922).

\(^{17}\) *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, (*The Last Testament of Dr. Mabuse*). Germany, Nero-Film AG. Dir. Fritz Lang, (1933).

\(^{18}\) *Die 1000 Augen des Dr. Mabuse*, (*The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse*). Germany, CEI Incom, Dir. Fritz Lang, (1960).

\(^{19}\) *M*. Germany, Nero-Film AG. Dir. Fritz Lang, (1931).
it also includes the analysis of a painting. I begin with the fixed viewpoint by looking at Guernica. I chose to focus on *Guernica* because the mural itself represents a snapshot view of a violent time of transition, and Picasso, although not physically present at the bombing of the town of Guernica was indeed a citizen of Basque, present at the time and a witness to the political and cultural maelstrom of that time. *Guernica* emerged from a cultural and political climate in which tyranny, Fascism and violence were fermenting. The painting also specifically and conspicuously stood for and continues to be a bold statement of anti-Fascism. Presenting this statement in the form of a painting is a different way for people to share an interpretation of the consequences of Fascism. The painting can do this only because Picasso has managed to conjure the “essence” of Fascism by using the classic technology of painting and employing a specific set of images. One could say that Picasso was able to “manipulate the media” of paint and canvas in such a way that the meaning of *Guernica* remains as implicitly understood in the collective conscious of today’s audience as it did for the audiences of 1937.

In contrast, Benjamin’s 1936 essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” has more to do with his concern about the impending encroachment into the public arena of audio-visual technology, i.e. film. Benjamin states: “The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced” (WAM, 223). Picasso’s *Guernica* seems to underscore a moment in history that crystallizes the chaos, tyranny and moments of evil that war engenders, and why for the purposes of my thesis it represents a work of art with the “authenticity” or “aura” that Benjamin refers to. Benjamin’s statement helps to highlight why *Guernica* encompasses more than just the general horrors of war. Picasso’s painting, for the purposes of this thesis, also represents the antithesis of *Triumph of the Will*, a product of the same point in time. This painting was created in reaction to that time; *Triumph of the Will* was created to produce action in that time.

**Chapter Three: Triumph of the Will /Triumph des Willens, A Triumph of Ideologies,** examines certain key features of Leni Riefenstahl’s film *Triumph des Willens / Triumph of the Will*[^20] (1935). By comparing and contrasting portions of *Guernica* and *Triumph of the Will*, both chapters will further the discussion begun in the introduction about a developing regime of visual culture that emerged in the early twentieth century. When I use the term “regime” what I have in mind is the OED’s definition, “a system or institution having widespread

influence or prevalence”\textsuperscript{21} (2513). I will further analyse other key moments within the history of visual culture linking these to what Martin Heidegger refers to as “the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where \textit{aletheia}, truth, happens” (QTC, 13).

Film was a medium that created a steady stream of images readily available to the public en masse, but for Benjamin they would be images with diminished authenticity. Benjamin describes this phenomenon of the loss of authenticity by stating “that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art” (WAM, 223). It will thus be useful to consider the other side of the coin, the use of media in propaganda, with the aim of manipulating the audience for political reasons. Benjamin advanced the premise that it was not only the methodology of producing and reproducing art that held significance, but that it was also the different way in which art is received by the spectator:

Mechanical reproduction changes the reaction of the masses toward art. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin movie. The progressive reaction is characterized by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert. Such fusion is of great social significance. . . . With regard to the screen, the critical and the receptive attitudes of the public coincide. (WAM, 236)

And, although Benjamin’s essay is focussed mostly on art he also seeks to characterise the authentic or the unique as discourses of truth. He posits that “the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition”, and that “by making many reproductions it [technology] substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence” (WAM, 233).\textsuperscript{22}

This may be the reasoning behind why reaching mass populations through the use of radio and newspapers is different from the use of film. In \textit{Triumph of the Will}, there is the additional capability of creating the visual illusion of mass agreement within the work, simply by the director’s employment of aesthetically and ideologically calculated images and angles within the film. Through the use of a recurrent relay of looks in her film direction and editing, Riefenstahl’s repeated portrayals of enormous crowds of people, both military and civilian, young and old, all responding in fervent unanimity to the mere presence of Adolf Hitler as the


\textsuperscript{22} This is not to suggest that Benjamin’s essay makes the claim that reproducing art was suddenly unique to this time, but rather that the increasing popularity of films and the ease in which they could be reproduced and shown in many places within a short time-frame was a developing technology in visual culture that was a matter of some concern.
central character and leader in the film, establishes Hitler cinematically as the most powerful individual, accepted as the overseer of the new and great times ahead.

According to the German film theorist, Siegfried Kracauer:\footnote{Kracauer quotes Riefenstahl from Eher’s book: \textit{Hinter den Kulissen des Reichsparteitag Film}. Franz Eher, München, 1935.}

[i]t was Hitler himself who commissioned Leni Riefenstahl to produce an artistically shaped film of the [1934 Nuremburg] Party Convention. In her book on this film\footnote{Jean Baudrillard. “The Procession of Simulacra” In this essay, Baudrillard claims that consumerism in contemporary society had reached a point where signs refer to nothing other than themselves rather than anything real, and are generated from “the matrix”. He asserted that the only reality in the world that was left is that there is no reality, and that the simulacrum was its own truth, or “the simulacrum is true”. From: “Jean Baudrillard. Simulacra and Simulations”. \textit{Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings}, (Second Edition). Standford University Press: CA, 2001.}, she incidentally remarks: “The preparations for the Party Convention were made in concert with the preparations for the camera work”. This illuminating statement reveals that the Convention was planned not only as a spectacular mass meeting, but also as spectacular film propaganda. . . \textit{Triumph of the Will} is undoubtedly the film of the Reich’s Party Convention; however, the Convention itself had also been staged to produce \textit{Triumph of the Will}, for the purpose of resurrecting the ecstasy of the people through it. (FCH, 301)

The advantage of being able to depict a spectacle of the masses as one consenting mind plays an important role in the regimentation of visual culture. In the case of \textit{Triumph of the Will}, it was by creating a simulacrum of mass appeal in Jean Baudrillard’s\footnote{Gay, Peter. \textit{Voltaire's Politics: The Poet as Realist}. Yale University: New Haven, 1988. p. 265: “If the heavens, despoiled of his august stamp could ever cease to manifest him, if God didn't exist, it would be necessary to invent him. Let the wise proclaim him, and kings fear him”} sense, i.e. a reality to hide the fact that the real one does not exist, that promoted the apotheosis of ideals, systems and the portrayal of the leader.

\textbf{Section Two: The Role of the Witness and Testimony in Films Regarding the Holocaust after Bilderverbot}

Voltaire wrote in a verse epistle 1768: “Si Dieu n’existait pas, il faudrait l’inventer” meaning: “If God did not exist, we would need to invent him”\footnote{Kracauer, Siegfried. \textit{From Caligari to Hitler, A Psychological History of the German Film}. Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey: 1947, revised edition, 2004. From here on in will be cited as FCH.}. My discussion highlights the significance of the human witness. Witnessing embodies the lived experience, and at times, acts as the “eye of God”. I approach this topic by analysing films that treat the Holocaust as an historical event. My analysis of Holocaust films indicates they are deeply concerned with
topics relating to memory, representation and technology in visual culture. These films inaugurate the domain of the witness and move the discussion of witnessing to the front and centre of the modern debate about visual culture. The status of the witness is significant because the witness’s experience of an event is bodily and real and, at the scene of an event the witness reports from the physical experience of being present. Once the event itself has passed the witness’s experience of the event clearly changes. While still able to attest to what has been directly seen and apprehended, the witness reports the experience from memory. This shift from direct experience to memory is the moment when visual culture as mediated experience intervenes. I establish the implications of this shift in Section Two.

Chapter Four: Memory of the Camps Representation as Witness considers a documentary film about the Allied liberation of the Nazi Concentration Camp, Bergen-Belsen in 1945. Memory of the Camps is important to my thesis as it lays out the ground-work for establishing the importance of the witness, and it serves to expose the counter-spectacle of reality directly opposed to the manufactured fantasies contained in Triumph of the Will. This film also highlights the historical and technological context of early photojournalism and addresses the question of authenticity of images raised by Benjamin. I discuss how the photographers as witnesses of the event used their written testimony in the form of captions on the photographs they took, thus assisting the establishment of a sense of veracity that was desperately needed at that time.

Chapter Five: Televising the Trial of Adolf Eichmann: From the Panopticon to the “Synopticon”; The Legitimisation of a New Visual Regime. The next film I discuss is Un spécialiste, portrait d’un criminel moderne /The Specialist (1999). This film is part of a broader discussion about a major event related to the Holocaust: the 1961 televised trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. The Specialist is based on particular aspects of Hannah Arendt’s 1963 book, Eichmann in Jerusalem a Report on the Banality of Evil. I therefore include a brief analysis of her view and her work. I argue that the unprecedented mediatisation

27 Memory of the Camps (shot in 1945, released in 1985). This documentary on the liberation of the German concentration camps in 1945 was assembled in London that year, but never shown until Public Broadcasting System (PBS) Frontline first broadcast it - 40 years later - in May of 1985. F3080 was the name given to a project to compile a documentary film on German atrocities. Dirs. Sidney Bernstein and Alfred Hitchcock. Five of the film's six reels had survived in a 55-minute fine-cut print without titles or credits. From: PBS Frontline Website. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/camp/>. Web. Dec. 2012.

28 Un spécialiste, portrait d’un criminel moderne / The Specialist. (1999) Dir. Eyal Sivan. Screenplay, Sivan, Rony Brauman. An Intermedia Arc presentation of a Momento production, in association with BIFF (Germany), Lotus Films (Austria), Image Creation (Belgium), Amythos (Israel). Hebrew, German, English and French dialogue, subtitled in English. From here on in will be cited as The Specialist.

of this trial facilitated a mass audience viewing that in turn promoted familiarisation with a new type of global media spectatorship. Arendt provides the theoretical foundation of this chapter and her views on the trial as spectacle and the potential impact of spectacle on judgement are woven into the discussion.

**Chapter Six: The Pawnbroker: Memory as Witness** is an analysis of Director Sidney Lumet’s *The Pawnbroker* (1965). This film is presented through the eyes of a Holocaust survivor, whose memory acts as an inner witness that persistently surfaces as he struggles to subvert and deny his painful past experiences. *The Pawnbroker* is crucial to my argument as it preserves the distinction of embodiment in its human, suffering form, in contrast with the lack of embodiment in the surveillant form of technology, a matter that is discussed in greater detail throughout this thesis. A decade earlier, at the beginning of the 1950s, in the Federal Republic of Germany, the term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or “coming to terms with the past”, came into use in reference to all “judicial, scholarly, public and private, and legislative and administrative measures adopted to treat the National Socialist dictatorship and its crimes”. The past crimes were specifically to do with the Holocaust. Although what might have been unintentional choices made by Lumet while making the film *The Pawnbroker*, some of the struggles found in Germany’s attempt to work through its history and create a positive national identity after the Second World War are mirrored by the character of Sol Nazerman. Nazerman represents the survivor witness standing at the edge of the time just prior to this turning point in the reception of Holocaust memorialisation.

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31 Eventually, as a result of on-going discussions regarding Germany’s past and future, a debate known as “der deutsche Historikerstreit” (“The German Historians Quarrel”) developed concerning a confrontational debate of ideals and political opinions regarding the possibility of moving forward from a culture of regret and contrition, and the political role that West Germany’s had endured since 1945. One of the most prominent ideas put forward was that the Holocaust was not a particularly “unique” event. Although brewing under the surface for decades in polemic essays and speeches by a number of academic contributors the “quarrel” was finally played out in 1986 mainly between two German academics; philosophical historian Ernst Nolte and Jürgen Habermas, social-scientist and political philosopher. Nolte tried to argue that the Holocaust was not a particularly “unique” event, Habermas argued against this. The debate was inspired by a revival of new German nationalism, a growing trend of neo-conservatism and revisionism in the German political and intellectual life, especially in historical literature books proliferating throughout the German market in the early 1980’s. The arguments were posited chiefly in German newspapers through letters to the editor and articles that appeared in the conservative daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and the more liberal leaning *Die Zeit*. On the side of Nolte’s argument were Andreas Hillgruber, author of *Zweierlei Untergang*, or *Two kinds of downfall, the Smashing of the German Reich and the End of European Jewry*, 1986, Klaus Hildebrand, Rainer Zitelmann, Hagen Schultz, while Michael Stürmer, Karl Dietrich Bracher and Richard Löwenthal. On the side of Habermas’ argument were Hans Ulrich Wehler, Jürgen Kocka, Hans Mommsen, Martin Broszat, Heinrich August Winkler, Eberhard Jäckel, and Wolfgang Mommsen. From: Dieter K. Buse and Juergen C Doerr, eds., *Modern Germany, an Encyclopedia of History, People and Culture, 1871-1990*, Vol. I, A-K, Garland Publishing, New York, London: 1998.

Chapter Seven: Ethical Representation and the Witness: Shoah versus Schindler’s List, A Question of Eras, not Errors briefly surveys some of the critical literature analysing and reappraising two films in the Holocaust film genre, Claude Lanzmann’s Shoah (1985) and Stephen Spielberg’s Schindler’s List, (1993-1994). This chapter highlights two ways of conceptualising the task of witnessing. Shoah is presented factually and intellectually in lengthy documentary style. Interviews with surviving witnesses of the Holocaust are recorded at the scene of the event they are recounting, thus allowing us to engage with the “actors”. According to Spielberg, Schindler’s List was inspired by Shoah and is constructed in the Hollywood tradition through the motif of emotional story-telling and melodrama. I consider the arguments presented in the critical literature in the context of these films to be at the very centre of a larger debate about the Bilderverbot and important contributions to themes I discuss throughout this thesis.

Section Three: Truth and Consequences in the Digital Turn: The Dawning of the “Third Consciousness” in a Surveillance Society

The over-arching theme of this final section of my thesis regards the digital transition in visual culture. The transformation from a tradition of conceptual and contextual materiality to what is now a predominantly digital mode is what W. J. T. Mitchell refers to as one of a number of “pictorial or visual turns”, a term he coined in 1994. Mitchell describes this as a “specific form” that “is not unique to our time” (SSVC, 173). Here Mitchell explains the pictorial or visual turn:

> It is a repeated narrative figure that takes on a very specific form in our time, but which seems to be available in its schematic form in an innumerable variety of circumstances. A critical and historical use of this figure would be as a diagnostic tool to analyse specific moments when a new medium, a technical invention, or a cultural practice erupts in symptoms of panic or euphoria (usually both) about the visual. (SSVC, 173)

Clearly, the digital camera has inaugurated such a visual turn, and has thus enabled surveillance in its extensive, multiple forms to proliferate into our every-day social, private and work environments. Surveillance is no longer “suggested” by visual culture, nor does it

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merely follow along with the collection of evolving technologies and consumer entertainment frivolities passing through history. This is demonstrated in two vastly different European films analysed at the end of this section, in which the characters seem comfortable with living under the constant gaze of visible and invisible surveillance or omniscient “eyes”.

Surveillance, as I see it, is now integrated within every-day visual culture media. As I will demonstrate throughout my thesis, various modes of “surveillance” have, in a variety of ways, been portrayed in films, often demonstrated as cultural and political aspects of society. Living in a society that has been steadily conditioned to view every kind of image from the hideous to the sublime, provided by technology that enables easy access to a multitude of viewing media, suggests that placing ourselves under the lens and in the picture seems comparatively harmless. The photographs from Abu Ghraib, for instance, are an iconic instance of surveillance throughout visual culture being manifested within the general media spectacle, as an integral part of a new, conscious expectation of seeing and being seen.

This increased and often unfettered visual access does not, however, guarantee that what is seen is necessarily a true picture or any situation under view. A brief analysis of Errol Morris’ documentary film *Standard Operating Procedure* underpins a part of the discussion about how digitality facilitates seeing and being seen, but does not always make clear exactly what is being seen, or whether what is being seen is actually a representation of reality. My point is that the photographs from Abu Ghraib are an example of the transitory time or the pictorial turn, when being seen in the picture and becoming part of the spectacle became more important than anything else in the picture. At first glance it appears obvious that being seen was also more important than an ethical judgment regarding the “Other” subjects in the picture. However, Mitchell conjectures that:

> While there is no doubt that visual culture (like material, oral, or literary culture) can be an instrument of domination, I do not think it is productive to single out visuality or images or spectacle or surveillance as the exclusive vehicle of political tyranny. (SSVC, 175)

In other words, the loss of empathy is another “vehicle” for political tyranny. Instead of responding to events in person, Sean Cubitt and Violeta Politoff propose that we are usually called to respond to “images of natural disaster, war and disease”, and that now, with “the increasing ease of production, manipulation and circulation of images”, the conditions “for contemporary ethical obligations” have been formed (VCTD, 254).

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In the context of Emmanuel Levinas’ thoughts of “the obligation to the other” however, Cubitt and Politoff stress that “few of the many commentators speak of their obligation to the prisoners”. Rather, their concern was “only of the obligation to political action”. In this case, Cubitt and Politoff suggest a return to the Biblical Bilderverbot of the Old Testament’s Second Commandment, and that “the prohibition against images might be evoked against their obscene omnipresence, their capacity to wound, and their ability to blunt our sense of mutual debt” (VCTD, 254). In this case, Cubitt and Politoff’s rather speculative question asks if the mass proliferation of these images on such a large scale somehow reduced our sense of ethics as our first duty to the faceless individuals suffering in each image.

Chapter Eight: “Standard Operating Procedure, Surveillance and the Emergence of a Third Consciousness”. The first of three films that I discuss which exemplify this concern is Standard Operating Procedure37 (2008), a documentary directed by Errol Morris. Through interviews, photographs and video, this film examines the scandal and cover-up of the digital photographic documentation of organised humiliation and torture of suspected terrorists at Abu Ghraib prison by US Army Military Police. The spectacle of the World Trade Towers on September 11 wrongly led to the events which are the basis for the acts committed in this film. For the purposes of this thesis, the discussion will focus more on digital ontology and its effect on the participants. As the characters are interviewed, there is a curious ambivalence in their ability to define their roles in the disturbing events that took place at Abu Ghraib prison.

Chapter Nine: Red Road and Caché (Hidden): Surveillance and the Emergence of a Third Consciousness. In the final chapter I compare two contemporary European films from the surveillance film genre, Red Road 38 (2006) directed by the British born Andrea Arnold and Austrian director Michael Haneke’s Caché39 (2005). These films present two very different views of living in an urban surveillance society. In Red Road, the surveillance is explicitly portrayed in its ubiquity by way of showing surveillance cameras, their operators, and the human dramas that play out under the cameras which are captured and displayed on multiple screens. Set in Glasgow, the film concentrates on a traumatised character who is engaged in watching others, and the intense changes she undergoes as a result. Also notable is a complete acceptance of our lack of resistance to constant surveillance; it appears to be a necessary and unquestioned part of life.

On the other hand, in *Caché* not a single, physical surveillance camera is ever shown in urban Paris where the film is set. Only certain, mostly mundane video-taped images that have been pre-recorded are viewed after the fact. Surveillance is not only ubiquitous here; rather, it is embedded invisibly throughout, hidden and, to use Hayles’ terminology, “seamlessly articulated” within the human conscience and consciousness. The characters whose lives are surveilled view the mostly mundane images and are driven to reveal what they have hidden from themselves. Their growing anxiety is paralleled by contemporary response to a violent, political epoch from France’s past. What the characters in *Caché* refuse to recognise or “see” for themselves is witnessed for them and presented to them by what appears to be an invisible presence. This presence brings forth memories that stir feelings of responsibility to events that had been long forgotten and are once again denied.

I have chosen these two films for their similarities and disparities to accentuate some of the various ways in which they explore particular themes that are heavily informed by the power of the two opposite states of visibility and invisibility. Each film also presents startling and unexpected outcomes brought about by the visible and invisible presence of surveillance. These two films help to succinctly illustrate the social and cultural cusp upon which our conceptions of surveillance and our everyday lives are poised. Both films position disturbing events throughout, but the redemptive ending that we have come to expect at the end of a story is scarcely achieved. Instead, at the end of each film an important question remains: if we stop referencing our inner “conscience” and rely increasingly on the development of our “third consciousness” as a way to justify our actions, what kind of world will we bring into being?
Theoretical Considerations and Conceptual Approaches

A Discussion on Apparatuses of Control

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*¹, Michel Foucault discusses surveillance in the sense of regimentation. Here, in the chapter entitled “Panopticism”, Foucault explains:

‘Discipline’ may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a ‘physics’ or an ‘anatomy’ of power, a technology. (DP, 215)

According to Foucault, the necessity for discipline in society as a way to manage the masses is achieved through the infiltration of existing systems and the inter-connecting of these systems². As a result, these systems expand and in turn, “assure an infinitesimal distribution of the power relations” (DP, 216). In this case, the “power relations” have to do with “control” based not on moral outcomes, but on the modulation of “flows” of one kind or another.

If we are to discuss the emergence of surveillance as an equal part of the development of a regimentation of visual culture, however, a return to Foucault’s metaphoric “archaeological” analysis of vision in varying historical contexts is necessary. When Foucault discusses Jeremy Bentham’s³ architectural design of the Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish*, he surmises that the structure, a large central tower centrally located within a prison, would have windows from which prison guards could view prisoners, but prisoners would be unable to view guards. An assumption by the prisoners would develop that they were being

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² I am describing here Foucault’s disciplinary surveillance when speaking in terms of “surveillance” and “control”. I am not referring to the “post-Panoptic surveillance” in the sense of Gilles Deleuze’s “Postscript on the Societies of Control”. *October*, Vol. 59, pp.3-7. MIT Press: Winter, 1992, from here on cited as PSOC. Deleuze asserts that “new forces that were gradually instituted and which had accelerated after World War II: a disciplinary society was what we already no longer were, what we had ceased to be”, and that *societies of control* developed after that period (PSOC, 3-4), including the “transformation of surveillance and the subjects of surveillance” brought about and furthered by technologies of digitisation and automation, as suggested by David M. Wood in “Editorial. Foucault and Panopticism Revisited”. *Surveillance & Society* 1(3): 234-239. Web, <http://www.surveillance-and-society.org> . 2003.

³ According to Bentham: “The more constantly the persons to be inspected are under the eyes of the persons who should inspect them, the more perfectly will the purpose of the establishment have been attained. Ideal perfection, if that were the object, would require that each person should actually be in the predicament, during every instant of time. This being impossible, the next thing to be wished for is, that, at every instant, seeing reason to believe as much, and not being able to satisfy himself to the contrary, he should ‘conceive’ himself to be so”. Jeremy Bentham. *Panopticum or The Inspection House*. Privately published: Dublin, 1791, p 3.
watched at all times, whether guards were actually present or not. From this assumption, self-surveillance would occur en masse by the prison population, thus eliminating the need for so many or in fact any prison guards. Bentham’s design for the prison panopticon was geared towards reform, rather than control. An overseer was put in place that was theoretically “invisible” yet conceptually ubiquitous to the inmates in the conviction that a constant presence of someone watching over would help to genuinely “train the souls” of the inmates, or at least facilitate a reaction within the inmates of automatic self-control, meaning, “discipline”.

It is important that the infiltration of the panoptic or “all-seeing” disciplines remained historically linked to a centralised figure, the monarchy, an emperor, or a leader, in other words, “the individual who looms over everything with a single gaze which no detail, however minute can escape”. Foucault paraphrases Treilhard: “the eye of the genius who can enlighten all embraces the whole of this vast machine, without, however, the slightest detail escaping his attention” (DP, 217).

According to Gary Shapiro in his work, *Archaeologies of Vision, Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying* ⁴, from this analysis spring volumes of further ideas on vision and power. Foucault considered that “neither the visible nor the articulable would be an eternal given” and in his analysis he described “all human activities as having a double aspect” (AOV, 9). Regarding power, however, in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* ⁵, Foucault theorises that “[p]ower relations are both intentional and non-subjective”, and that they are “imbued with calculation: there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives”. Interestingly, Foucault also suggests that “this does not mean that it results from the choice or decision of an individual subject”. Therefore, although the rationale of power can be understood, the originator cannot always be clearly discerned. Foucault also points out the elusive quality of power when its origins are difficult to discern yet still elicit a reaction, “where there is power, there is resistance and yet this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power (HS, 94-95).

For instance, to refer to being “under surveillance” is repetitious, according to the Shorter Oxford’s English Dictionary⁶, as the definition of the word which is French in origin,

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⁴ Gary Shapiro. *Archaeologies of Vision, Foucault and Nietzsche on Seeing and Saying*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, USA: 2003. From here on in will be cited as AOV.


comes from *surveiller*; “sur,” meaning over and above, and “veille” meaning: “watch or wakefulness,” which originated previously from the Latin, *vigilare*; “keep watch” (3126). This is a definition that presents surveillance as benign and protective, in opposition to Foucault’s “carceral”, or rather, the fundamentally “reformative” reading taken from Bentham’s work on institutions of discipline and a “generalised ocular regime” (AOV, 8).

If, as Foucault says, “the eighteenth century invented the techniques of discipline rather as the Middle Ages invented the judicial investigation (DP, 225), what can we say about the invention of the technology of the mass reproduction of art in the twentieth century and how it might be connected to the subjectivity of an increasingly urbanised population. Foucault is clearly referring to various methods of regulation, organisation and documentation that, in the end help to facilitate the control or at least the flow of information and Debord answers this question in part with his argument about the emergence of the notion of the spectacle. The mass-mediated spectacle, while separate from real life, is in fact an illusion of a co-existence with life that we are separate from but visually informed by. “Private spaces (e.g. media and shopping malls)”, according to Brighenti, “become largely more visible than public ones, while traditionally visible public spaces recede into invisibility (e.g. boring parliamentary debates)”. In the end, it is about control, because “in a sense, this is what the whole anti-capitalist movement’s struggle for a new model of society is all about: to bring back the visibility (as political control) of the public sphere” (VCSS, 332). In other words, we are drawn to the more spectacular, seemingly open and more visible spaces in a quest for some kind of control, which I suggest is also a quest for security in the public sphere.

In his essay, “The Viewer Society, Michel Foucault’s ‘Panopticon Revisited’”7, Thomas Mathiesen departs from one particular aspect of Foucault’s use of Bentham’s concept of the “Panopticon” on the aspect of surveillance. Mathiesen argues that there has been “a striking parallel to the panoptical process, and concurring in detail with its historical development of a unique and enormously extensive system enabling *the many to see and contemplate the few*” (VSPR, 219)8. Mathiesen points out that corresponding to panopticism is another phenomenon that has “merged with panopticism through a common technology”


8 All emphases in italics from cited quotes attributed to Mathiesen are Mathiesen’s.
and is “imbued with certain parallels in structure” and is “vested with certain reciprocal supplementary functions”.

Mathiesen says that “synopticism characterises our society, and characterised the transition to modernity”, explaining that the word “synopticism” is composed from the Greek word syn meaning “together” and opticon referring to the visual⁹. Although Mathiesen does not claim that synopticism is exactly the opposite of panopticism, what he does say is that “it may stand for the opposite of the situation where the few see the many”, and that “it may be used to represent the situation where a large number focuses on something in common which is condensed”. He continues: “In a two-way and significant double sense of the word we thus live in a viewer society” (VSPR, 219). Mathiesen explains his argument:

It is maintained that the control and discipline of the “soul”, that is, the creation of human beings who control themselves through self-control and who thus fit neatly into a so-called democratic capitalistic society, is a task which is actually fulfilled by modern Synopticon, whereas Foucault saw it as a function of the Panopticon. (VSPR, 215)

Mathiesen’s conceptualisation of the viewer society describes a particular facet of Debord’s spectacle, which underscores the idea of a perpetually evolving duality or parallel existence, linking technology and visuality with synopticism and surveillance, a combination that I argue constitutes a large part of “the spectacle”. Combining technology and visuality has among other things, produced two of the main mass media engines, television and film, which helped to ease the creation of an every-day viewer society and “synopticism”. I argue that these media also contributed to the notion that watching others or “surveilling” is socially acceptable and has perhaps evolved into a somewhat “natural” state of being.

A fitting metaphor for this combination of technology and visuality is the figure of the ouroboros creature, an animal that is usually portrayed as a snake or serpent, sometimes a dragon, devouring its own tail in a never ending quest to renew and sustain its life. However, in the case of the spectacle, the ouroboros emerges slightly differently after each “turn”. I envision this creature as a representation of some of the changes that occur in society through various evolutions in technologies, especially based on image reproduction and visual representation, and our changing attitudes regarding seeing and being seen. Debord also describes the spectacle as having two sides or as two concepts being on opposite sides, yet

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⁹ Oxford’s dictionary does not recognise this word, but defines “synoptic” as “giving an overall view”, (OED, Vol. 2, 3155). Mathiesen has clearly coined this term to describe a system of viewing that involves many at once viewing the same thing, such as millions of people watching the same programme on television.
continually transforming and trading places. Again this is not unlike like the ouroboros which can appear as two separate creatures, as if one creature is constantly evolving into an alternate version of the other while in reality, both continue to exist as one:

(8) The spectacle cannot be set in abstract opposition to concrete social activity, for the dichotomy between reality and image will survive on either side of any such distinction. Thus the spectacle, though it turns reality on its head, is a product of real activity. . . Each side has its own objective reality. And every concept, as it takes its place on one side or the other, has no foundation apart from its transformation into its opposite: reality erupts within the spectacle, and the spectacle is real. This reciprocal alienation is the essence and understanding of society as it exists. (SOS, 14)

For Mathiesen as well, “panopticism and synopticism have developed in intimate interaction, even fusion with each other”. He uses the Confessional of the Roman Catholic Church as an historical example of panopticism, where the priest sees and hears the many but is only one who is unseen, and, as Mathiesen puts it, through this method he has “surveyed the town”. At the same time, “the Catholic Church has definitely functioned synoptically, with its enormous cathedrals intentionally placed in very visible locations for synoptical admiration, drawing large masses of people to listen to the sermon” (VSPR, 223). This lays the foundation, perhaps for Debord’s spectacle which evidently doesn’t begin until the twentieth century.

Interestingly, it is Jonathan Crary who, in accord with the concept of the ouroboros, states in his essay “Spectacle, Attention, Counter- Memory” that in Debord’s original work, there was “an absence of any kind of historical genealogy of the spectacle, and that absence may have contributed to the sense of the spectacle as having appeared full-blown out of the blue”. The serpent eating its own tail symbolises the cyclic nature of the universe; creation out of destruction, and life out of death. As the ouroboros consumes its own tail to sustain its life in an eternal cycle of renewal, it also represents infinity. Crary points out that placing the spectacle within certain periods defines its meaning more clearly, and that it will assume different meanings “depending on how it is situated historically” (SACM, 98).

Crary turns to the later work of Debord, *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle* (Comments on the Society of the Spectacle\(^{11}\)), published originally in 1988, to determine where Debord historically locates the emergence of the society of the spectacle. Debord declares in this work: “Nonetheless, the society of the spectacle has continued to advance. It moves quickly for in 1967 it had barely forty years behind it; though it had used them to the full” (CSS, 3). By deduction, Crary designates the late 1920s as Debord’s origin for the society of the spectacle, a designation that my research endorses.

Even if it appears somewhat obvious, it is important to note that Debord’s first major published work was written in 1967 and should therefore be considered a theory that is based in “pre-computer” and “pre-digital” thinking at a time when computer use on a day to day basis by everyday citizens still did not exist. This is important because Debord’s work in 1967 already carries in its thesis a sense of the overwhelming, in that every aspect of society seems to be dominated by “the spectacle”.

(219) . . . The individual, though condemned to the passive acceptance of an alien everyday reality, is thus driven into a form of madness in which, by resorting to magical devices, he entertains the illusion that he is reacting to his fate. The recognition and consumption of commodities are at the core of this pseudo-response to a communication to which no response is possible. The need to imitate that the consumer experiences is indeed a truly infantile need, one determined by every aspect of his fundamental dispossession. In terms used by Gabel\(^{12}\) to describe quite another level of pathology, “the abnormal need for representation here compensates for a torturing feeling of being at the margin of existence”. (SOS, 153)

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\(^{11}\) Guy Debord. *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*. Originally published by Editions Gérard Lebovici, the version I cite from here was published by Verso, London, New York: 1990. From here on in will be cited as CSS.

\(^{12}\) Joseph Gabel was a French Hungarian born philosopher, psychiatrist and sociologist who wrote (among many other publications) *The False Consciousness (La Fausse Conscience: essai sur la reification)*. Paris, Éditions de Minuit: 1962, which took a social psychological view of alienation, consciousness and mental illness. Gabel’s work was published around the same time was Michel Foucault’s *Histoire de la Folie* (France: Librairie Plon, 1961), and in English, *Madness and Civilization*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), which concerned the history of mental illness. The tendency of these works converged with the views of writers like Herbert Marcuse, Norman O. Brown and Bruno Bettelheim in America. Generally they all pointed to the implicit madness of a great deal of what is accepted as sane in everyday life. Although the works were devoted to the relationships between individual disorders and structures of social power and communication, they also suggested that the exclusion in one or another way of different kinds of persons from social participation serves to maintain an appearance of reasonableness of those in power, who in fact fear and distrust the new possibilities for human life and community. Taken from Erling Eng’s article, “Beyond Psychiatry?” Reviewed work(s). *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3, (Autumn, 1967), pp. 469-472. The Hudson Review, Inc. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3849765>. Web. July, 2012.
In contemporary times, a sense of being overwhelmed is often referred to in regard to our semi-immersion in and seemingly willing dependence on the Internet and other endless computer, media, and “screen” activities but it is an overwhelmment we freely participate in. Perhaps society’s increasing participation in social media, including the watching, uploading and making of videos for YouTube, posting photos on Facebook and writing online Blogs are a way of either satisfying or masking feelings of “being at the margin of existence”.

YouTube, a website developed in the mid 2000’s, where anyone with access to the right equipment and the Internet can create original videos or upload copies for millions of people to view for free, is mass media in an internet driven, screen-based form that has become part of the twenty-first century’s version of the spectacle. According to Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau, editors of The YouTube Reader:

From a computer-science viewpoint, YouTube is nothing but a database, but in any given cultural context, moving onto the platform and watching a video obviously entails more than that, (YTR, 13). As consumption patterns change, digital screens will arguably become the default interfaces for media access. Providers of Web services, video-recording devices and mobile technology have in any case put great effort into marketing new patterns of media consumption to the younger generation. “YouthTubers” are targeted in both online and offline advertising, and any use of YouTube videos is regularly translated into metadata. Metaphorically speaking, the site thus appears to work not only like an archive or a medium, but like a laboratory registering user behavior also. From this perspective, YouTube appears to be not so much a platform for any individual presenting her - or himself to a community (as in a social-networking system like MySpace or Facebook), but rather as a way of strategically combining video content with numerical data. (YTR, 16)

Debord’s thesis describes the evolution of the spectacle as being constant, meaning always changing while remaining essentially the same: “The image of the blissful unification of society through consumption suspends disbelief with regard to the reality of division only until the next disillusionment occurs in the sphere of actual consumption” (SOS, 45).

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13 Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau. Eds. The You Tube Reader. National Library of Sweden, P.O. Box 5039, 10241 Stockholm, Sweden: 2009. From here on in will be cited as YTR. You Tube as an entity and as a topic far too complex to be delved into by me in this thesis. This book may be useful in tackling these complexities, and can be downloaded on the Web in its entirety at: http://pellesnickars.se/index.php?s=english.
In the case of YouTube and other forms of online user-led media, the concept of “co-creative labour” has emerged. In their essay, “Co-creative Labour\(^{14}\), the term “co-creation”, according to John Banks and Mark Deuze, “is used to describe the phenomenon of consumers increasingly participating in the process of making and circulating media content and experiences. Practices of user-created content and user-led innovation are now significant sources of both economic and cultural value” (CCL, 419).

However, user participation and co-creation can, from Debord’s perspective, still be seen as another “new product” that is “offering a dramatic shortcut to the promised land of total consummation” (SOS, 69). Debord dismisses the idea that there is really anything new or unique in the realm of the spectacle, and that anything that appears to be even briefly unique soon loses its “singularity” because it will be offered to the eager hordes only if it has been mass produced, thus rendering it “mundane”:

>The prestigiousness of mediocre objects of this kind is solely due to the fact that they have been placed, however briefly, at the center of social life and hailed as a revelation of the unfathomable purposes of production. But the object that was prestigious in the spectacle becomes mundane as soon as it is taken home by its consumer — and by all its other consumers. Too late, it reveals its essential poverty, a poverty that stems from the poverty of its production. Meanwhile, some other object is already replacing it as representative of the system and demanding its own moment of acclaim. (SOS, 69)

Antecedent and yet similar to Mathiesen and Debord’s concepts of mass viewing and its attendant distractions, was Benjamin’s idea that mass production ruins the uniqueness of an object as it conforms to the desires of mass consumption. This may still be applied to the function of mass participation by co-creators, which is how the contemporary version of the spectacle continues to operate. Co-creators lessen the uniqueness of the few as they discover ways to replicate through technology what only a few people with specialised technical skills were once able to do.

The decade of the 1980s, in which Debord’s addendum to Society of the Spectacle, Comments on the Society of the Spectacle was published, saw an acceleration of electronically based computer accessories that facilitated personal use of computers as well as advances being made in digital imaging. In 1981, the University of Calgary Canada ASI

Science Team constructed the first operational digital camera for the purpose of photographing auroras, and in August the same year, IBM introduced the first personal computer. Representations and images began to increase their visibility exponentially. That same decade the cellular phone and the personal digital camera were also invented, but the earliest versions of them were so clumsy and expensive that very few people could afford to own or comfortably operate them.

As Debord suggested, however, they were eventually placed at the centre of social life (in part by combining the two into the cell phone with digital camera) and became the goal of the production process. With these and other inventions, a set of other commodities are created to support and facilitate seemingly necessary accessories to them. Some of these accessories are online platforms for uploading photos and sharing them with others, not only mass-reproducing images, but enabling them to become almost infinite in their viewing capacity. Again, like the ouroboros feeding on itself to stay alive, a key method of keeping the spectacle self-perpetuating is the economic and production phenomena of gadgetry that accompanies and thus accelerates further invention of additional apparatus for technologies.

A Discussion on “The Second Consciousness” and the Rise of Film and the Mechanical Reproduction of Art in Media

According to Ernst Jünger15 in “Photography and the ‘Second Consciousness: An Excerpt from ‘On Pain’”:

If one were to characterize with a single word the human type that is evolving in our time, one might say that among his most obvious characteristics is his possession of a “second” consciousness. This second, colder consciousness shows itself in the ever more sharply developed ability to see oneself as an object. It should not be confused with the self-reflective stance of traditional psychology. Psychology differs from the second consciousness in that the subject of its investigations is a feeling human being, while the second consciousness is focused on a person who stands outside the sphere of pain. (PSCP, 207-08)16


Jünger’s earlier observation on the detachment of the world as the world becoming increasingly “available only through the mediation of the camera lens” refers to Guy Debord’s later definition of a society of the spectacle. Anton Kaes points put Jünger’s “prophetic foresight . . . in 1934, the year of the Nuremburg Rallies and half a century before CNN”:

Today any event worthy of notice is surrounded by a circle of lenses and microphones and lit up by the flaming explosions of flashbulbs. In many cases, the event itself is completely subordinated to its transmission; to a great degree, it has been turned into an object. Thus we have already experienced political trials, parliamentary meetings, and contests whose whole purpose is to be the object of a planetary broadcast. The event is bound neither to its particular space nor its particular time, since it can be mirrored anywhere and repeated any number of times. These are signs that point to a great detachment. (CGMM, 109, PSCP, 209)

Here, Jünger seems to be foreshadowing Riefenstahl’s film that was meant to showcase the 1934 Nuremburg Rally, *Triumph des Willens / Triumph of the Will* and its uncanny ability to create a world picture within a picture of the world, which, among other works discussed further in the next chapter, speaks directly to Debord’s idea of the spectacle being “separation perfected”.

For a spectator, watching *Triumph of the Will* unfold is like watching the creation of a spectacular place, where the talking and the thinking has been done for you, so that merely by watching the film the audience may feel as though they are participating in the events taking place before their eyes. This is an example of what Jünger means by the “second consciousness”, because here is where detachment from the physical world and the emergence of the second consciousness occurs. As Debord puts it, “The spectacle is by definition immune from human activity, inaccessible to any projected review or correction. It is the opposite of dialogue. Wherever representation takes on independent existence, the spectacle re-establishes its rule” (SOS, 17)

Debord does not specify exactly what triggered the spectacle, and only gives a general idea of the time he feels it began. It is Crary who offers an explanation in the form of a timeline of evolving technological “dispositifs” relating to what he calls “some fragmentary

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17 Dispositif, used here as a neologism, is the French noun (usually masculine) that encompasses many meanings attached to its basic meaning: “device”, or apparatus, but also refers to mechanics, plan, the handle that turns the crank, or a system that has a plan of action. However, in regard to Foucault’s use of the term, according to Matti Peltonin, in several of his more popular empirical studies Foucault was interested in a much wider phenomenon than discourse. He also studied practices and an abstraction that he called dispositifs, by
speculations on some very dissimilar events that could possibly have been implicit in Debord’s remark”. Crary begins his time-line in 1927, when the technology of the television was perfected by Vladimir Zворикин, a “Russian-born, American trained engineer and physicist” whose patented iconoscope, as Crary puts it, arrived “right at the moment when awareness arose of the age of mechanical reproduction”\(^{18}\). The amazing property of television was that it broadcast images with seemingly no physical support, and no “silver salts”, meaning silver halides, a light sensitive substance used in photographic film to record images (SACM, 100). Crary observes that beyond the circulation and transmission of images which television was able to offer, something “equally important” was under way:

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\ldots \text{by the late 1920s, when the first experimental broadcasts occurred, the vast interlocking of corporate, military, and state control [in Germany] of television was being settled. Never before had the institutional regulation of a new technique been planned and divided up so far in advance. So, in a sense, much of the territory of spectacle, the intangible domain of the spectrum, had already been diagrammed and standardized before 1930. (SACM, 101)}
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Crary then asserts that in the same year the movie *The Jazz Singer*\(^{19}\) premiered with the first words of synchronous speech spoken by a performer in a feature film. Clearly, one of the most significant moments in film was the shift from silent cinema to film with sound. The phrase spoken in the film, and in fact, in any film, “Wait a minute, wait a minute, you ain’t heard nothing yet!” came almost as an announcement to a stunned audience by the American vaudevillian, Al Jolson.

In the film, Jolson’s character Jakie Rabinowitz was a descendant from five proud generations of synagogue Cantors. Within the narrative of this film the character becomes something of a spectacle himself, as he embodies the strange combination of being a Jewish

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\(^{18}\) The iconoscope, according to Crary, was “the first electronic system of a tube containing an electron gun and a screen made out of a mosaic of photo-emissive cells, each of which produced a charge proportional to the varying light intensity of the image focused on the screen” (SACM, 100).

man who changes his name to “Jack Robin”, and rather than follow his family’s religious singing tradition, he chooses to sing ragtime jazz instead. Furthermore, as Jack Robin he appears in black-face make-up to create the persona of an African-American performing in a minstrel show. According to Crary the significance of *The Jazz Singer* was “not only a transformation in the nature of the subjective experience; it was also an event that brought on the complete vertical integration of production, distribution, and exhibition within the film industry”. In keeping with Debord’s idea of the commodity as spectacle, Crary states that the “amalgamation” the film industry had with “the corporate conglomerates that owned the sound patents and provided the capital for the costly move to the new sound technology. . . Again, as with television, the nascent institutional and economic infrastructure of the spectacle was set in place” (SACM, 101-102).

Crary points out in another essay, “Dr. Mabuse and Mr. Edison”, that “whether in *Spies* (1928), *M* (1931), *Metropolis* (1927) or *Fury* (1936)”, the German director Fritz Lang, “was a close observer of the ways in which different technological networks permeated a densely layered social space” (DMME, 274). Although not included in the main corpus of this thesis, it should be mentioned that along with *The Jazz Singer*, Lang’s film *Metropolis* is considered one of the most spectacular films of the twentieth century. Tom Gunning describes the film as being an “allegory of the future as the triumph of the machine” (GMET, 55). The making of *Metropolis* is also notable in terms of economic influence for the German film industry because it so “over spent its budget that it drove Ufa into the red and ultimately into financial dependence on Hollywood corporations” (GMET, 53).

Unlike *The Jazz Singer*, *Metropolis* was silent and yet, Crary notes that Lang managed to highlight through imagery the growing pervasiveness of technology: “Well


21 “Ufa” stands for the German film company, Universum-Film A.G. According to the website *Screening the Past*: As perhaps no other film company in relation to its national film culture, the Ufa's changing fortunes are a barometer of the economic, political, aesthetic, and ideological struggles that make up Germany in the first half of the 20th century. Although the Ufa never monopolized the German market, the way Paramount-MGM-Fox controlled the American industry, its power was both real, in terms of its combined production, distribution, and exhibition potential, and imagined, as the symbolic core of the German film industry's aesthetic aspirations. Founded by the German High Command in 1917, the object of an American take-over in a Germany torn by post-war inflation, revolutions and counter-revolutions, co-opted in 1933 and inflated to a state-owned and operated monopoly by the Nazis for the own propagandistic purposes, ultimately deconstructed after the war by the Allies to protect American film interests, the Ufa mirrored Germany's historical experience. Yet, ironically, the company also tried to create for both its own employees and its audience a fragile, hermetic world, a *lebenswelt*, outside the strictures and commands of history, existing only in the darkened caverns of the studio and in the minds of a people burdened with too much history.

before the advent of television Lang was finely attuned to the enigmatic character of a seemingly mundane object such as a typewriter or telephone and how its habitual use incorporated its user within the operations of institutional power” (DMME, 234). Interestingly, one of the central allegories in Metropolis is the Tower of Babel, which is Lang’s allegory for the “universal language of the silent cinema” as well as “a political parable about class and power divisions” using what Gunning says is “one of the oldest in the history of allegory, the city-state as the human body, with the workers conceived of as ‘hands’ and planners as ‘brains’” (GMET, 56-57).

Film historian Robert Sklar states: “In nearly every language, however the words are phrased, the most basic division in cinema history lies between films that are mute and films that speak” (FIHM, 172)22. Clearly, film was no longer entirely, nor had it ever been only, a visual experience. According to Sklar, there were often “elaborate aural presentations alongside movies’ visual images, from the Japanese benshi23 crafting multi-voiced dialogued narratives to original musical compositions performed by symphony-sized orchestras in Europe and the United States” (FIMH, 172). Once the technology emerged as a possibility, the urge to push forward seemed irresistible. In his book Theory of Film The Redemption of Physical Reality24 Siegfried Kracauer mentions that introducing the sound of human voices did not detract from what had already been determined as a “stupefying” effect of film on its spectators: “silent or not, film — cinematic film, that is — can be expected to influence the spectator in a manner denied to other media” (TF, 157).

With the advent of sound in film and most notably “Talkies”, the notion of what was considered to be a universal visual language was considerably displaced. Prior to the European technological advances of matching sound systems to films between 1923 and 1928, live musical accompaniment to film was a key component of the cinematic experience, and there were many at the time who felt that the technical problems that had historically plagued process meant that recorded sound combined with film would be a passing novelty. Technicians in the industry ignored this belief, however, and continued to persevere. One

22 Robert Sklar. Film, an International History of the Medium. Thames and Hudson Ltd., London: 1993. From here on in will be cited as FIHM.


method of adding sound to film was recording sound optically, known as the “variable density sound track”, the method responsible for the somewhat familiar sight of wavy, white streaks that appear on some films from that era. Sklar describes the process as being reversed when the movie is shown through the projector: “Light projected onto the sound track activates a variable electrical current that is converted back into sounds” (FIHM, 173).

Here is where mass production and the potential for cinema’s role to become an agent of communication came into play. Technology, produced by combining scientific knowledge and technique within this dispositif, was used to create an art that promised a way of shaping and expressing ideology in part by simulating the real, but also by removing any original, human witness. Verbal discourse, read in subtitles or spoken in films removes the opportunity for an open-ended interpretation of ideas by individuals. The audience, en masse, is the receptive body captured by and created for this type of art media. Therefore, a visual regime cannot help but be inherently propagandistic. Kracauer, in part paraphrasing film documentary historian Paul Rotha, puts it this way:

For the sake of completeness it might finally be mentioned that the effectiveness of screen propaganda must also be laid to the reproducibility of film. The cinema says Rotha, possesses the “virtues of mechanized performances to a million persons, not once but countless times a day, tomorrow, and, if the quality is good enough, ten years hence”.25 (TF, 163)

The late 1920s and the decade of the 1930s brought forth heuristic innovations in the visual arts, science and technology, that when combined, produced particularly significant outcomes in film. What was emerging as the spectacle spawned a new visual regime, more technological devices were created to support or enhance those that came before in the mass production and reproduction of images. According to Crary, even before this, in 1870, the inventor Thomas Edison had already intuited the advantages of creating the commodities for a never-ending chain of attachments and mechanical devices to accompany his inventions:

What needs to be identified is . . . the emergence, beginning in the 1870s, of a new system of quantification and distribution. For Edison, cinema had no significance in itself– it was simply one of a potentially endless stream of ways in which a space of consumption and circulation could be dynamized, activated. Edison saw the marketplace in terms of how images, sounds, energy, or information could be reshaped into measurable and distributable commodities, and how a social field of individual subjects could be

25 Kracauer was paraphrasing and quoting Paul Rotha from his work, Documentary Film, p58.
arranged into increasingly separate and specialized units of consumption. (DMME, 266)

Later, as the technological proficiency of sound in film increased, economic considerations became more prominent with regard to the way film and its many related industries developed around the world.

David Bordwell explains that the Great Depression in America influenced the way movies were presented; fewer theatre experience frills such as ushers personally showing a patron to their seat were still affordable, but popcorn, candy and beverages were available to purchase in the lobby. Lower quality “B” movies were shown as double features after the main feature, with an intermission provided so that theatre goers would be able to purchase food at that time26 (FHI, 201). Of course, selling snacks among many other efforts were made to increase audience attendance which translated into ticket sales and thus profits for the various industries within film and those surrounding the support of movie theatres. Keeping the audience fed and happy during viewing serves the purpose of attracting and maintaining an audience as well as maintaining the existence of the theatre where films are shown.

Returning to Debord’s thesis and his later comments on the chronology of the spectacle, it should be noted that in 1927 European politics, fascism was also on the rise followed soon after by Stalinism in Russia’s Soviet Union. In early 1930s Germany, the economic uncertainty of the Great Depression was causing political instability, the population suffered from poverty and misery. Adolf Hitler and the Nazis seized the opportunity to wage a new type of election campaign incorporating the use of “spectacle”, never before experienced by the people of Germany. Displaying an extraordinary talent for creating what would now be termed as a “media blitz”, Joseph Goebbels as Hitler’s newly appointed “Minister of Propaganda”, organised torchlight parades, plastered posters wherever possible, and printed millions of special edition Nazi newspapers. Travelling the country by airplane, (another first) Hitler delivered dozens of major speeches, attended meetings, and greeted the crowds personally as he posed for pictures, kissed babies like a celebrity and signed

autographs.\textsuperscript{27} Andrea Brighenti says that this form of “celebrity” is “spectacular recognition”\textsuperscript{28}.

\textit{Spectacular} recognition has to do with the distinction between the two regimes of the ordinary and the extraordinary, or between the profane and the sacred. While celebrities are personally unknown to their audience, they are clearly different from anonymous strangers subject to categorical recognition. Indeed, people develop a peculiar sense of intimacy with celebrities that generates a tension between the ordinary setting of everyday life and the “sacred” appearance of “very important people”. (ACAS, 177)

And, according to Crary, Goebbels also made good use of sound and image propaganda in Hitler’s campaign by mailing out “50,000 phonograph records of one of his own speeches to targeted voters”, thus “devaluing the written word”, because as Crary puts it, “reading implied time for reflection and thought” (SACM, 104). It could also be argued that having the capability to play a record of Hitler giving a speech in the intimacy of one’s home, could more easily draw the listener in to what may have felt like a shared experience.

Film affects an audience by giving the appearance of creating both time and space, therefore its power is great regardless of the strength or weakness of whatever “aura” of authenticity it may appear to emanate or possess. Watching a film affects us because the activity onscreen generally mimics certain physical and mental situations we exist in or live through every day by portraying movement through space and the conceptual passing of time. Richard Allen explains in his book \textit{Projecting Illusion, Film Spectatorship and the Impression of Reality}\textsuperscript{29} how “projective illusion and cinematic narration” bring forth such an effect:

Narrative brings a dimension of temporal illusion to our experience of projective illusion because it encourages us to experience projective illusion over time. Since, in projective illusion, what we perceive appears spatially present to us, it also appears temporally present. If the experience of


\textsuperscript{29} Richard Allen. \textit{Projecting Illusion, Film Spectatorship and the Impression of Reality}. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1995. From here on in will be cited as PI.
projective illusion is sustained, the film appears to unfold before our eyes as we watch, as if it were live, created in the moment of projection. . . . When the experience of projective illusion is sustained we lose our awareness of time. The everyday experience of shock or surprise at emerging from a matinee performance into darkness outside attests to this experience. (PI, 114)

The situation in which an audience views a painting or films is also decidedly different. As Benjamin notes, “Thus the same public which responds in a progressive manner toward a grotesque film is bound to respond in a reactionary manner to surrealism” (WAM, 237).

In his 1970 article, “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus”\textsuperscript{30}, French film theorist Jean-Louise Baudry proposes that the process of viewing film should be considered from the angle of socio-political analysis. He discusses film-making in the context of the mechanical apparatus of camera lenses and the instrumentation involved in creating the illusions on screen, pointing out that “. . . in the history of cinema: it is the perspective construction of the Renaissance which originally served as the model”. Furthermore, he claims that the “resulting ideological effect is still defined in relation to the ideology inherent in perspective”. Baudry posits that we are accustomed to viewing through this perspective and that this “optical construct appears to be truly the projection – reflection of a “virtual image” whose hallucinatory reality it creates” (IECA, 44). He suggests that because of our familiarity with this perspective, in the optical sense we are primed physiologically to believe that what we see on the screen is “true”.

The technique of the rapid succession of projected images creates the illusion of continuity and movement on screen and according to Baudry also adds a “temporal dimension”. He demonstrates the veracity of this by mentioning how disturbing it is to an audience when the film breaks and continuity is broken, “when the spectator is brought back to discontinuity” within the movie house setting (IEAC, 42). Baudry refers to the psychoanalytic views proposed by Lacan: “The origin of the self, as discovered by Lacan, in pertaining to the imaginary order effectively subverts the ‘optical machinery’ of idealism which the projection room scrupulously reproduces”. Baudry continues, “The ‘reality’ mimed by the cinema is thus first of all that of a ‘self’” (IEAC, 45). Baudry is claiming through the use of Lacan’s concepts that the spectator seems to psychologically imagine or “project” their own being (their “self”) into that which is being projected on to the cinema screen.

\textsuperscript{30} Jean-Louise Baudry. “Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus”. Cinéthique. No. 7-8, 1970. From here on in will be cited as IECA.
The regimentation of visual culture at this point in time simply meant that film could be used to control the arrangement and distribution of “this imaginary order” visually through mass reproduction, making it easily available to the public as a particular type of entertainment in the cinemas. As Shapiro posits regarding the visual regime:

One characteristic of what I will call the visual regime lies in what it allows to be seen, by whom, and under what circumstances. But it is also a question of a more general structuring of the visible: not just display or prohibition, but what goes without saying, not what is seen but the arrangement that renders certain ways of seeing obvious while it excludes others. (AOV, 2-3)

In *The Age of Extremes*, historian Eric Hobsbawm states that “the 1930s were a decade of considerable technological innovation in industry” (AOE, 102). Through a combination of science and technology mass communication in the 1930s was flourishing, followed by some of the most astonishing outputs of metaphysical achievements in the audio and visual arts; the radio and the smoother synchronisation of voices to images in the relatively recent invention of “talking films”. Hobsbawm goes on to observe, “Indeed in one field – entertainment and what later came to be called ‘the media’ – the inter-war years saw the major breakthrough, at least in the Anglo-Saxon world with the triumph of mass radio and the Hollywood movie industry” (AOE, 102).

These innovations which came about as a result of combining art, science and technology had a profound effect on 1930s society because of the sudden ability to communicate, inform and entertain a mass population through radio and film. The profundity of the metaphysical implications of the 1930s continues unabated throughout that century and into our present day. In his essay, “The Age of the World Picture” 32, German philosopher Martin Heidegger has this to say about metaphysics:

Metaphysics grounds an age, in that through specific interpretation of what is and through a specific comprehension of truth it gives to that age the basis upon which it is essentially formed. This basis holds complete dominion over all the phenomena that distinguish the age. Conversely, in order that there may be an adequate reflection upon these phenomena themselves, the metaphysical basis for them must let itself be apprehended. Reflection is the

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courage to make the truth of our own presuppositions and the realm of our own goals into the things that most deserve to be called into question. (AWP, 115-116)

Technology, according to Heidegger, is the means to a way of revealing the realm of truth. “The truth of our own goals”, as argued by Heidegger, stimulates a discussion on particular aspects of visual culture grounded in the 1930s, because technology is not neutral, it is something we must respond to, or we will become blind to its essence.

As Hobsbawm pointed out, the combination of technology with modes of communication and entertainment meant that facets of humanity that had always existed but previously were able to be witnessed only by relatively small groups of people could now be revealed to millions. For example, as a political event, the Nuremberg Rally of the Nazi party before 1934 had the greatest impact upon only the participants of the rally and the local population in the town of Nuremberg, Germany. However, thanks to film technology, the event could be shown in a particular way to millions around the world, now suddenly able to make an impression on people who would have had no knowledge of the existence of the movement before. Benjamin states it simply: “The characteristics of the film lie not only in the manner in which man presents himself to mechanical equipment but also in the manner in which, by means of this apparatus, man can represent his environment” (WAM, 237).

This new technology became the basis holding “complete dominion over all the phenomena that distinguish” (AWP, 115), especially in the inter-war years, throughout the 1930s. I envision what Anson Rabinbach refers to as “Benjamin’s conception of Messianic time as comprised of the fleeting ‘instantaneous flash’ as opposed to duration” (WBDS, 62), as the flash at the creation of an irreparable fissure which makes its way through our metaphysical comprehension of the universe and enables the revealing of another realm of truth.

33 According to Anson Rabinbach, in his essay “Introduction to Walter Benjamin's ‘‘Doctrine of the Similar’’”: “The aural and visual elements of language are seen as a residue of the powerful natural and supernatural correspondences that predominated in the mental world of the primitives. This idea is also emphatically linked to Benjamin's conception of Messianic time as comprised of the fleeting “instantaneous flash” as opposed to duration. The non-sensuous similarity that is at the root of language is in essence the reminder of a lost world of experience. . . What Benjamin emphasizes in the earlier version is this lost world, “the effort or gift of letting the mind participate in the measure of time in which similarities flash up fleetingly out of the stream of things only in order to become engulfed again immediately”. New German Critique, No. 17, Special Walter Benjamin Issue, (Spring, 1979), pp. 60-64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/488009>. Web. Aug. 2010. From here on in will be cited as WBDS.
By the same token, an imaginary or false revealing may just as easily be made possible by this same technology. This enabling is the basis upon which the truth, even a false truth, can be formed and the effects of which can last for decades. Here again is what Benjamin had to say about certain aspects of technology at that time: “The most powerful agent is the film. Its social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage” (WAM, 223).

**Witness, Memory and Representation through the lens of Film**

Memory is made up of re-created images and, in the case of witness testimony remembering the Holocaust, what actually occurred was often at or beyond the margins of communicable experience. Since the witness may be obliged to call on memory aids and representations in order to maintain awareness of the past event, the witness’s role shares some of the features associated with indirect witnessing. In extreme cases, the witness’s memory of a past event will disappear altogether. Kaes seems to summarise best what the inevitable is in future instances:

> Cinematic images have created a technological bank that is shared by everyone and offers little escape. It increasingly shapes and legitimizes our perception of the past. Memory in the age of electronic reproducibility and dissemination has become public; memory has become socialized by technology. History itself, so it seems, has been democratized by these easily accessible images, but the power over what is shared as popular memory has passed into the hands of those who produce these images. No wonder that struggle has erupted over the production, administration, and control of public memory. (HFPM, 112-113)

Images without discourse are ambiguous and anonymous. It is the discourse attached to images that provides meaning beyond our initial sensations of shock, delight or even boredom. In the context of visual culture, a point occurs where direct witness-experience and indirect representation begin to some extent to overlap; these visual representations may stand in as the second tier of evidence or as the witness once removed. Photographs and films are references to what the witness physically saw, but without their attendant discourse, they may remain ambiguous or be essentially meaningless.

Susan Sontag describes the effect of photographs this way: “Photographs shock insofar as they show something novel”. But then, she finds the inevitable happens:
“Unfortunately, the ante keeps getting raised—partly through the very proliferation of such images of horror. One’s first encounter with the photographic inventory of ultimate horror is a kind of revelation, the prototypically modern revelation: a negative epiphany” (OP, 19). It is even more peculiar, then, that the only “answer” given in response to representational “proof” is the creation of more and more representations, the proliferation of which may have already led us to their normalisation, and thus the trivialisation of all such “evidentiary” imagery. As Ernst Jünger aptly stated much earlier in 1930 in “War and Photography”:

One simply cannot expect more from photography than it can deliver. Its detailed impressions of the surface of events are like the impressions left behind in stone of the existence of certain strange creatures. Certainly these offer visual data – but to surmise how the life of a large animal in all its mysterious movements unfolded: that requires imagination. To sense the spirit of great deeds and great suffering behind the images of a lost world, behind its ruins, that is the task which every document demands of the attentive viewer; so it is with the photographs of zones of battles past. (WP 25-26)

The impact of the event of the Holocaust itself recalls the description of Gilles Deleuze’s concept of a “sheet of time” that Slavoj Žižek employs in Less than Nothing. Žižek describes the “sheet of time” as a “traumatic point in time, a kind of magnetic attractor which tears moments of past, present, and future out of their proper context, combining them into a complex field of multiple, discrete, and interacting temporalities” (LNHS, 28). This concept may also be applied to the rapid development and subsequent combining of audio and visual (photographic /cinematic) technology that produced “a complex field of multiple, interacting” methods of recording and reporting what had happened. Paradoxically, reports of the event was not in any way equal to what had actually happened. Žižek concluded that the “aesthetic

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35 Slavoj Žižek. Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism. Verso: NY, 2012. From here on in will be cited as LNHS. Here Žižek is describing Gilles Deleuze’s concept of a “sheet of time”, from Deleuze’s discussion about time and memory in Alain Resnais’ film Je t'aime, je t'aime (1968).
lesson of this paradox is clear. The horror of the Holocaust cannot be represented; but this excess of represented content over its aesthetic representation has to infect the aesthetic form itself. What cannot be described should be inscribed into the artistic form as its uncanny distortion” (LNHS, 25).

For Benjamin, the witness plays a central role in the authentication of the cultural artefacts of the visual. Through the witness, the aura of a work of art is established. In her analysis of more recent periods of witnessing and journalism, or “reporting”, Barbie Zelizer\(^{36}\) discusses how eyewitnessing is needed to “underscore, establish, and maintain authority”. Zelizer asserts that “understandings about eyewitnessing [have] changed over time” and that within “the evolution of the practice […] three very different dimensions of eyewitnessing have been at the heart of its centrality – the eyewitness as report, the eyewitness as role, and the eyewitness as technology” (HBTE, 408-409). The eyewitness in these terms still refers to the human as being present at the scene as interpreter; the technology refers to the means of recording the event.

A prime example of the “traditional” witness is the author of *The Diaries of Victor Klemperer 1933-1945*\(^{37}\). Victor Klemperer had been a journalist and writer, a soldier in the German Army in the First World War, and finally, a professor of Romance Languages at Dresden Technical University until 1935, when he was dismissed from his position for being a Jew under the “Law for the Restoration of Professional Civil Service”\(^{38}\). Klemperer kept a careful and immensely detailed private record of the rising tide of totalitarianism that surrounded him, his friends, and his family. From this emerged his vast diaries published in two volumes, *I Shall Bear Witness* and *To the Bitter End*. Klemperer, who was married to a non-Jewish woman, miraculously survived not only the bombing of Dresden, but also the Holocaust entirely. His diaries provide a detailed, prolifically written account of the plethora of quotidian activities punctuated by frightening incidents that foreshadowed the encroaching doom and eventual deadly reality that befell so many of his contemporaries. As a diarist

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\(^{38}\) The “Law for the Restoration of Professional Civil Service”, decreed on April 7\(^{th}\), 1933 by a newly elected Adolf Hitler stated that only “Aryans” could work as civil servants (which included teachers) and even those who had tenured positions, if Jewish or “non-Aryan” could be dismissed without notice.
present at the time, he could be considered the quintessential, mid-twentieth century witness of the Holocaust.

In Dresden, on Saturday, the 17th of January 1942, Klemperer writes: “Evacuation of all the Jews here on the coming Wednesday, excepting anyone who is over 65 [he was 60], who holds an Iron Cross, First Class, who is in a mixed marriage, including one without children. Point 3 protects me – but for how long?” (DVK, Sec. II, 452) The next day he reports that plans had changed and the evacuation will not take place so quickly. As it turns out, the evacuation happened in November of that year. As the translator of the diaries, Martin Chalmers, reports in his preface to Section II:

Very unusually there exists a film of this initial stage of deportation: Assembling the last Jews in Dresden in the Camp at Hellerberg on 23rd/24th November 1942. This short, 27-minute silent film, not only shows the building of the camp, the removal of the Jews from Jews’ houses in Dresden and the initial humiliations, like ‘de-lousing’, inflicted on them (as a kind of prelude to subsequent degradation) but also a number of identifiable persons, among them several mentioned in Victor Klemperer’s diary. (Preface Sec. II, 441)

Corresponding to those dates, Klemperer’s writes in his diary: “24th November, Tuesday forenoon: ‘Jews’ Camp Hellerberg. Eva [his wife] said this new kind of evacuation was so shameless because everything happens so openly”. Klemperer then goes on to mention the reactions to the evacuation by his contemporaries, perhaps even the ones Chalmers mentions: “Young Eisenmann, who helped stuff the bedding [in the camp]” said that camp conditions were “Catastrophic!” Klemperer then describes his neighbours the Seliksohns [also Jewish] and their home as “chaos and despairing depression”, and finally he mentions Frau Reichenbach who was “suffering greatly because of her feet” (DVK, Sec. II, 607). The point is that by sheer coincidence, we have a witness whose account corresponds with a silent film of the event. The witness, and in this case, his written testimony, delivers the context of a silent visual record of the evacuation of Dresden Jews to a Nazi concentration camp. The combination of the silent footage and Klemperer’s written account gives the visual record authenticity.
In Barbie Zelizer’s *Remembering to Forget, Holocaust Memories through the Camera’s Eyes*[^39], she offers a critique of Holocaust atrocity photographs and how they are read and misread, referring to “the landscape of atrocity memory”:

> Three waves of memory work made the Nazi atrocities rise and fall in the public imagination over time: an initial period of high attention persisted until the end of the forties; it was followed by a bracketed period of amnesia that lingered from the end of the forties to the end of the seventies; and that was followed in turn by a renewed period of intensive memory work that has persisted from the end of the seventies until the present day. (RFHM, 141-142)

The films I discuss follow roughly similar “waves of memories” as expressed in visual and other media beginning with the intense shock provided by the camp liberation documentaries and newsreels immediately following the end of the war. The radio and television plays, the televised Eichmann Trial, *The Pawnbroker* and a few other films about the repercussions of the Holocaust began to surface in the 1960’s, and as Zelizer states, they persist today in the form of recorded survivor testimony for various Holocaust archive projects around the world.

Annette Wieviorka[^40] reports that there was an “imperative to honour what is now called, at least in France, ‘the duty to remember’”. According to Wieviorka, “between 1944 and 1948, the members of the Historical Commissions of the Central Committee of Polish Jews gathered 7,300 testimonies, which have since been stored in the archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw” (EW, ix). She states that “no other historical event not even World War I —when the practice of recording testimonies first became common—has given rise to such a movement, which is so vast and long-lasting that no researcher can master its entirety” (EW, xi).

The large outpouring of testimonial narrative still continues to be recorded and archived in various, multiple media texts, manuscripts, books, audio and video tapes, photographs, television mini-series, films and documentaries. Subsequent links provided by the Internet mean that these testimonials are becoming exponentially more accessible to the public. Reproducible in digital format, copied from original photography or created from a

[^39]: Barbie Zelizer. *Remembering to Forget, Holocaust Memories through the Camera’s Eyes*. University of Chicago Press: USA, 1998. From here on in will be cited as RFHM.

software program, the proliferation of all images also means that any original impact or even meaning may be negated. As Zelizer argues, “photography may function most directly to achieve what it ought to have stifled—atrocity’s normalisation” (RFHM, 212).

In 1954, Heidegger begins to address the increasing tendency of modernity to privilege images – the world as picture, becoming a representation of itself, rather than its “Being”:

Wherever we have the world picture, an essential decision takes place regarding what is, in its entirety. The “Being” of whatever is, is sought and found in the representedness of the latter. . . The world picture does not change from an earlier medieval one into a modern one, but rather the fact that the world becomes picture at all is what distinguishes the essence of the modern age [der Neuzeit] (QTC, 130).

In 1968, Debord observed: “Though separated from his product, man is more and more, and ever more powerfully, the producer of every detail of his world. The closer he comes to being his own creation, the more drastically he is cut off from that life” (SOS, 114). Consonant with what Benjamin predicted about the loss of the original in his essay about the mechanical reproduction of art in 1936, but writing from different eras, Debord and Heidegger document what they suggest is the continual progression of how we see the world: from experiencing that which is (the world), to a picture or representation of the world, by its mechanical or somewhat “other than mechanical”, eventually “virtual” re-creation.

Two positions emerge from this particular wide-ranging discussion. First, the view that the Holocaust as a “sheet of time” cannot properly be represented, and therefore should not be represented, is linked to Benjamin’s concern in the 1930s about the disappearance of the witness from the original. This view may be linked to the “Bilderverbot” – the idea that images on their own are “graven” and cannot represent what is truly unique. Jeffrey Shandler suggests that Benjamin’s essay “offered telling insights into the mimetic power of film” and that “the political, emotional, and moral investment in the power of liberation footage exemplifies the motion picture’s profound impact on the aesthetics of representation, or mimesis, in the twentieth century” (WAW, 7).

The second view suggests that there is no alternative to representing the Holocaust, and we must find the best available means to do so, in part for pedagogical reasons and

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41 Jeffrey Shandler. *While America Watches, Televising the Holocaust*. Oxford University Press: 1999. From here on in will be cited as WAW.
importantly, for legal and political reasons. There may be views from adherents of both sides in the debate about representation of the Holocaust, but in the end, since we are well aware of the great number of visual representations of the camps, ghettos, victims and perpetrators already existing that are carefully archived, the real work lies in analysing how we view the images, what we think about them, and what is accomplished by addressing them.

Gertrude Koch points out in her essay, “Mimesis and Bilderverbot”\(^\text{42}\), that film can be seen as “an attempt to mediate between extremes: for a theory of images, and thus of film, these extremes would be the twin poles of mimesis and Bilderverbot (the ban on graven images)”, (MAB), 211). Jean-Michel Frodon also makes a case for the “connection” between the Holocaust and the “legitimisation” of the cinema in his book, *Cinema and the Shoah, An Art Confronts the Tragedy of the Twentieth Century*\(^\text{43}\):

An incredibly strong link connects the twentieth century on the one hand to the extermination of the European Jews by the Nazis and on the other to the legitimate art and industry of the cinema, which focuses particular attention on the interactions between two phenomena so obviously different in nature: the Shoah and the cinema. (CS, 1)

Nicolas Losson\(^\text{44}\) defends the use of films taken of the horrific sights at the liberation of the camps in 1945. He admits that “it seems difficult to imagine the nature and range of emotions of the Soviet soldiers when, on the morning of January 27, 1945, they arrived at the gates of the extermination camp of Auschwitz”, and that the films taken were therefore in response rather than in the fashion of a “conscious or planned operation”. Losson asserts that they were “a simple attempt to capture the phenomenon in its opacity”, and that “the study of documentary films made on the Nazi concentration camps at the Liberation immediately entails the following reflection: these films allow us to measure the size of the disaster even as they inform us of the extent of which they are, ultimately, the last trace” (NIC, 25-26).

According to Joel Rosenberg and Steven Whitfield in “The Cinema of Jewish Experience: Introduction”\(^\text{45}\), films about the experiences of “the other” offer us a view of the

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\(^{42}\) Gertrude Koch. “Mimesis and Bilderverbot”. *Screen* 34, 3 Autumn, 1993. From here on in will be cited as MAB.

\(^{43}\) Jean-Michel Frodon. (Ed.) Translated by Anna Harrison and Tom Mes. *Cinema and the Shoah, An Art Confronts the Tragedy of the Twentieth Century*. State University of New York (SUNY): Albany, NY, 2010. From here on in will be cited as CS.


ethnic screen image and “what it says about civil society from which the film emanates” (CJEI, 1). While the topic of each film discussed is thematically centred on the Holocaust, the approach taken in each film is unique. Particular aspects within these films represent relationships to places and times that are applicable as conceptual gauges to measure how other aspects of public consciousness are being shaped.

Film spectatorship in practice offers the potential for spectators and their interpretation of characters within a film to come together, again at a distance, to engage in questioning and understanding others and perhaps ourselves within a specific domain of human experience. Here, the authors employ Benjamin’s thesis to explain:

How was cinema, in some sense, a defining force of twentieth-century history? Such a role was already foreseen in Walter Benjamin's exploratory essay of 1935, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, which raised, among other issues, the question of cinema’s relation to the totalitarian experiments of his time—those undertaken in the name of communism, fascism, and National Socialism. Benjamin's underlying concern, however, was not limited to totalitarian societies, for he was inquiring, more generally, into the unprecedented changes in human consciousness brought about by forces of modernity—which had fostered the rise of a mass culture, employing sophisticated technologies of production and dissemination, that not only challenged our traditional conceptions of art and aesthetics but also affected the most fundamental processes of language, education, cultural transmission, and historical memory. (CJEI, 2)

In Annette Insdorf’s comprehensive work, Indelible Shadows, Film and the Holocaust, she asserts that “Like Nazi art, motion pictures have the capacity for escapist entertainment and manipulation: they can distort, evade and trivialise. But most Holocaust films have instead engaged in creative confrontation, indeed imagining that which is unimaginable in terms of facts and figures” (ISFH, 248).

Admittedly, there is a dichotomy between representing what some find impossible to comprehend and the need to prove that the impossible existed and that certain inconceivable events actually occurred. Importantly, this makes the case that representations of these should be shown and viewed as evidence. The key point is that while the potential for missed meaning in representations is valid, the reality is that Holocaust images and films do exist,
will continue to be seen, and in vital concert with them are vast tomes of scholarly work
dedicated to the critical and contextual analysis of these images. These should be understood
as tools for discussion and for learning. It should be argued, however, that representation
should never take the place of human discourse.

Finally, I argue that it is Arendt’s conception of judgment relating to “impartiality”,
which is distinctly different from being “disconnected”, that delivers a philosophical
framework relevant both to discussions on the forbidden image and on the status of the
wit ness. In her critique of how judgment functions in the real, human world, Arendt moves
beyond analytic philosophy because it falls short of offering a complete view. Rather, she
turns to Kant’s idea\(^\text{47}\) regarding judgment and the “spectator” or “onlooker” and how it differs
from the “actor”, or the participant within a situation. The actor or participant relies upon the
opinion of the spectator or how they are viewed, but the spectator does not. It is Arendt’s
conception of judgment relating to “impartiality” in that the spectator, distinctly different
from the actor is not concerned with the opinions of others. This is different still from being
“disconnected”. I therefore apply in part Arendt’s philosophical framework relevant to
discussions on the “forbidden image” and on the status of the witness. According to Arendt:

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\text{Only the spectator occupies a position that enables him to see the whole: the actor, because he is part of the play, must enact his part – he is partial by definition. The spectator is impartial by definition – no part is assigned to him. Hence, withdrawal from direct involvement to a standpoint outside the game is a condition \textit{sine qua non of all judgment}^\text{48}. (LKPP, 55)
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Judgment, which Arendt refers to here as “the silent sense” has always, “even in Kant, been
thought of as taste, and therefore as belonging to the realm of aesthetics”, thus keeping it
separate from \textit{conscience}, which belonged among “practical and moral matters”. Rather,
“conscience did not judge; it told you as the divine voice of either God or reason what to do,
what not to do, and what to repent of”.

More importantly, however, is Arendt’s contention that “[w]hatever the voice of
conscience may be, it cannot be said to be ‘silent’, and its validity depends entirely upon an
authority that is above and beyond all merely human laws and rules”, (LLKP, 4). This is

\(^{47}\)Hannah Arendt delivered a series of Lectures on Kant and Politics at the New York School in 1970, her ideas
on the impartiality of the “spectator” are derived from her analysis of Kant’s \textit{Critique of Pure Reason},
specifically, Kant’s ideas on sociality.

\(^{48}\) Ronald Beiner. \textit{Hannah Arendt, Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy}. University of Chicago Press: USA,
1982. From here on in will be cited as LKPP.
significant because it suggests that one must recognise the authority of a power higher than
that of human institutions in order for conscience, in essence, to have any meaning or effect
on public or private behaviour. The Holocaust shows us the effects on public and private
behaviour when the conscience, as an attitude of judgment, is displaced or absent.

**Seamlessness: The Digital Age of Creation, Reproduction, Dissemination and the
Possibility of a “Third Consciousness”**

What I propose in the final part of the thesis is that the melding of artistic media in visual
culture and digital technology has enabled the capability to merge seamlessly spectacle and
panoptic-like systems of visual and data monitoring. This, coupled with increasing, habitual
tendencies of mass synoptic behaviour (the many watching the few) helps create the ground
for our current “surveillance society”. Although this condition has become common, it is by
no means singular in nature; rather it is evolving and complex. I focus on our increasing
inclination to privilege the visual as we enter the twenty-first century, and how, due in large
part to digital technology, our attraction to and immersion in a society of visual spectacle has
increased exponentially.

David Lyon has written extensively about this phenomenon within a socio-cultural
context, describing what he refers to as “co-construction and surveillance practices”\(^49\). Lyon
states: “[T]he case of surveillance illustrates well the mutual shaping and influence of
 technological developments and social processes. It also shows how that mutual shaping and
influence may be imbricated within larger sociocultural shifts such as that described between
modernity and postmodernity” (STSS, 178). Although the spectator remains intact, these
shifts or developments have not left the role of the witness unscathed and, in some cases it
appears almost as if the witness has completely disappeared. If the witness disappears, so too
then does the meaning and thus the aura of veracity which the witness provides.

A striking example of this phenomenon occurred during the now widely known event
of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center of September 11\(^{th}\), 2001. The airplane
crashing into the first building was unintentionally filmed by one of two brothers who
happened to be filming a documentary about New York City firemen. The collective gaze of
Manhattan was turned skyward at first attracted by the sound of the plane flying so low to the
ground, and then again when it exploded into the building. This enabled the spectacular vision

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here on in will be cited as STSS.
of the second crash and both of the buildings collapsing to be filmed by thousands of people on their mobile phone cameras as it was happening. Many TV news cameras caught the scene of the immediate and ensuing reaction of panic by people who were unable to process what was happening.

In the end, there were countless versions of this visually spectacular event from almost every possible angle, shown repeatedly around the world on every available television channel. The sheer number of people filming the event created millions of spectators, there were however, only a limited number of witnesses of the event. The authentic testimony comes from the victims, who witnessed and survived it, and from the dead who experienced it, and before dying, left anguished voice recordings to their loved ones on their cell phones and answering machines.

Later, intensive investigation showed that terrorists who overtook the pilots of the airplanes that day and had been silently and mechanically filmed by CCTV surveillance cameras in the airport, recorded as passengers boarding the airplanes they hijacked to destroy the buildings. “Surveillance”, the predominant feature of the works discussed throughout this thesis, is now a multi-faceted phenomenon that is no longer merely encroaching on our society. Rather, it is a system that has in many ways permeated society for the most part unheeded. Due in part to the interallied nature of the panoptic gaze with synoptic capability, greater access to a continuous spectacle has been the current outcome.

Previously, I have used the “ouroboros” as a metaphor to illustrate the evolution of certain technological and socio-cultural developments in visual culture. For this current digital information age, this metaphor can be replaced by the more recent image of the “feedback loop”. N. Katherine Hayles describes this as the processes by which shaping and influences occur within this technical, virtual realm. In order to describe virtuality as a “cultural perception” and the notion of information embodied in materialism, Hayles began with a method of creating the type of seriation chart used by archaeological anthropologists that help make sense of the developmental changes in artifacts.50

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50 Hayles explains: Within archaeological anthropology, changes in artifacts are customarily mapped through seriation charts. One constructs a seriation chart by parsing an artifact as a set of attributes that change over time. Suppose a researcher wants to construct a seriation chart for lamps. A key attribute is the element that gives off light. The first lamps, dating from thousands of years ago, used wicks for this element. Later, with the discovery of electricity, wicks gave way to filaments. The figures that customarily emerge from this kind of analysis are shaped like a tiger's iris-narrow at the top when an attribute first begins to be introduced, with a bulge in the middle during the heyday of the attribute, and tapered off at the bottom as the shift to a new model is completed. (HWBP, 14-15)
Hayles applied the same methodology of the chart that corresponds with the idea of the “feedback loop”: “[T]he feedback loops that run between technologies and perceptions, artifacts and ideas, have important implications for how historical change occurs”. Hayles also asserts: “[C]onceptual fields evolve similarly to material culture, in part because concept and artifact engage each other in continuous feedback loops” (HWBP, 14-15). My assertion here is that previous film-based photography and video-tape based surveillance camera technology helped to shape cultural perceptions and influence technological changes, and resulted in certain contemporary cultural perceptions. Now these cultural perceptions are again evolving and changing due in part to further technological advances in digital camera photography and expanding (often invisible) surveillance capabilities.

Grounded in the digital information age, Hayles discusses virtuality and the “posthuman”. Her assumptions define the posthuman as a “view that privileges informational pattern over material instantiation”. She states that “the posthuman view considers consciousness… as an epiphenomenon, as an evolutionary upstart trying to claim that it is the whole show when in actuality it is only a minor sideshow”, and that “the body [is] the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born”. Finally, in the posthuman view, human being is configured “so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines” and thus “there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals” (HWBP, 3).

Hayles’ theory of the posthuman can be brought to bear on the use of digital image making; the digital camera just like the earlier film camera, is an apparatus that operates as an extension of the operator. In terms of image capturing and production (photography), communication and filmmaking, the use of digital technology has now easily reached the point of being the rule for common usage rather than the exception.

Crary describes rather well why we accept this dual journey of human visual perception and technology so readily in our lives:

For the last hundred years, perceptual modalities have been, and continue to be, in a state of perpetual transformation or, some might claim, of crisis. If vision can be said to have any enduring characteristic within twentieth-century modernity it is that it has no enduring features. Rather, it is embedded in a rhythm of adaptability to new technological relations, social configurations and economic imperatives. What we familiarly refer to as film, photography and television are transient elements within an
accelerating sequence of displacements and obsolescences within the delirious logic of modernization. And by modernization I mean a process that is fully distinct from a notion of progress but which is instead a self-perpetuating, directionless creation of new needs and desires, new production new consumption. (DMME, 264)

I suggest that with the increasing use of digital cameras, evolving transformations in technology and conceptual fields have contributed to the evolution of a different kind of operator, splitting off of and away from the original status of the witness. This technology often has no need for an operator to be present, and therein lies the crisis.

As I have previously established, a witness is that person who was present at the time of an event. The witness can recall and discuss the event because the memories of that event are pictured like snap-shots, seared into the brain, like the imprint on a negative. Consider then, a metaphor of the evolution of optical media interweaving film and photo-chemical processing with the virtual existence of the digital image. Unlike using the film camera, one who is documenting and recording an event through the lens of a digital camera has little or no physical participation in the technique of producing the images, and thus tends to lack engagement with the physical process.

The instantaneity and nearly closed system of digital image production means the producer foregoes the experience of anticipatory expectation, or even the “wait” for a technician to process and produce physical photographs. Perhaps taking less time is more convenient, but less processing means less engagement, resulting in a possible lack of conscious attachment to the image and thus the event itself. There is little limit to the number of images that can be produced on a digital “film card”, unlike analogue film, with its physical space limitations on the number of photos that can fit on a roll. This “lack of attachment” is one of the elements that I believe creates a new and difficult situation for the witness and the spectator. The vast number of images and the ability to disseminate them instantly and reproduce them infinitely creates an environment which enables a deficiency of awareness and critical reflection, thus allowing and in fact inviting an excess of banality.

Digital Democracy

In their essay “Digital Cameras and Domestic Photography: Communication, Agency and Structure”51, Paul Cobby and Nick Haeffner suggest that a sort of “digital democracy” has

been established “in which digital technologies, particularly those to do with imaging, grow at a very rapid rate and become available to consumers outside a purely industrial setting to the extent that information imbalance is, in some measure, ameliorated” (DCDP, 124). Cobley and Haeffner also point out that “digital cameras enable domestic photographers to take ‘good’ or professional-looking photographs and make certain capacities of professional cameras available for consumer use”, (DCDP, 123). Contemporary software that supports digital photography provides the technology to create, manipulate and disseminate images on a level that is nearly professional, compared to what the average consumer, or, in the case regarding my discussion of the photographs from Abu Ghraib Prison, that even the average American soldier could achieve using previous methods of film-based photography.

Furthermore, digital technology provides the capability for tiny yet powerful cameras to be seamlessly aggregated within mobile phones so that they are automatically available for use. Interestingly, their availability in the market took place before any desire to have them was established. Unlike earlier, relatively cumbersome film camera technology, the sheer availability of an unobtrusive digital camera in a mobile phone encourages the amateur to take more pictures. Some of the soldiers at Abu Ghraib used their cell phones to make short videos of their experiences as well. However, according to Cobley and Haeffner: “the question of critical understanding of the politics of representation in domestic camera use remains, since technical proficiency is not necessarily always accompanied by analysis” (DCDP, 123).

In her book about Holocaust photography, Janina Struk52 notes that within every rank of the German Army during the Second World War, creating photo albums from pictures taken of their everyday life as an occupying soldier was quite common and popular. Struk describes how “photographs shift seamlessly from picture-postcard views, drinks parties and social occasions, to poverty-stricken indigenous peoples in destroyed towns and cities, deportations, hangings, murders and executions” (PHIE, 66-69). So the act of soldiers taking “trophy” photographs of atrocities along with iconic monuments or foreign landscapes is not a new invention or activity suddenly revealed in the Abu Ghraib photographs. The drastic differences are found in the level of their availability to others. The private photograph album then, versus our digitally disseminated images now, is what marks our time.

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The availability of digital photographic technology without an accompanying desire for it may create problems in terms of judgment; there may be a lack of forethought regarding what happens to the photographed images after they have been taken. Taking these particular photographs at Abu Ghraib in the first place, and then indiscriminately disseminating copies of them by email exemplifies almost perfectly an enormous lack of critical understanding and the absence of discourse and analysis. In spite of all the possibilities afforded by digital camera technology, Cobley and Haeffner conclude that the amateur digital photographer still cannot avoid the “politics of representation”:

As with all technologies, digital cameras are embedded in discourse. There is simply no escaping the fact that amateur digital photography is caught up in a defined politics of representation. Yet, equally, it would be folly to assume that technology is automatically complicit with existing discursive structures. We need to take seriously the capacity of self-reflexivity inherent in digital domestic photography, defined as the non-professional use of consumer digital cameras including, but not confined to, family snapshots. (DCDP 141)

What this means is that moments which were once considered insignificant are now often documented in digital photos, simply because the technology to do so is at hand. This documentation could suggest meaning where none exists or has become part of a collection of images so prolific that the potential for meaning is lost or goes unnoticed. Conversely, the images from Abu Ghraib portray incidents which are horribly significant, yet look as if they were documented in the same fashion as other insignificant photos.

The Abu Ghr aib photos still suggest that the way in which we currently define the “value” of images is somehow obscured, not only by what we choose to look at, but also how we choose to share images, and our sense of the value of being watched or seen through the camera lens. This is a deceptive state of affairs, however, since photographs alone appear to contain inherent meaning. According to W. J. T. Mitchell, for example:

> [p]hotography’s true nature is found in its automatic realism and naturalism, or in its tendency to aestheticize and idealize by rendering things pictorial. It is praised for its incapacity for abstraction or condemned for its fatal tendency to produce abstractions from human reality.⁵³ (WPW, 474)

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It is as if simply because they are photographs with the tendencies described by Mitchell, we feel compelled to take photographs and collect them, almost to fetishize them. Sontag reminds us that “photographs of black victims of lynching taken between the 1880s and 1930s” are “comparable” to what the photos from Abu Ghraib show, including images of “Americans grinning beneath the naked mutilated body of a black man or woman hanging behind them from a tree”. The grinning stems from the participants feeling “perfectly justified in what they had done”, and that these “lynching photographs were souvenirs of a collective action” (RTO, 27). So too, according to Sontag, are the pictures from Abu Ghraib:

The lynching pictures were in the nature of photographs as trophies – taken by a photographer in order to be collected, stored in albums, displayed. The pictures taken by American soldiers in Abu Ghraib, however, reflect a shift in the use made of pictures – less objects to be saved than messages to be disseminated, circulated. A digital camera is a common possession among soldiers. Where once photographing war was the province of photojournalists, now the soldiers themselves are all photographers – recording their war, their fun, their observations of what they find picturesque, their atrocities – and swapping images among themselves and e-mailing them around the globe. (RTO, 27)

It is the excessive proliferation of images that enables the shift in their use and it is my argument that this proliferation has also degraded their meaning. When Heidegger states: “we get the world picture” and “all that belongs to it and all that stands together in it – as a system” (QTC, 129), the representation of ourselves is arguably now also included in this picture. If the picture has been degraded, our representational presence in the picture is devalued accordingly. Heidegger also postulated that the “world picture” encompasses the “history, nature and ground” of the world, and that “getting the picture” is also the representation of “all that belongs to it and all that stands together in a system”. It stands to reason, then, as they are included in the collective Western image archive; the photographs that emerged from the Abu Ghraib prison necessarily become part of our world picture–our weltbild (QTC, 129).

Surveillance is linked to some sense of distancing from “our picture (representation) of the world”, yet insofar as it is technically disconnected from events in the real world, still acts as an observer. Kracauer54 discusses “phenomena overwhelming consciousness” in the

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case of witnesses and catastrophe, and the reasoning behind the use of cameras for creating a distance or disconnection from its physical reality.

Elemental catastrophes, the atrocities of war, acts of violence and terror, sexual debauchery, and death are events which tend to overwhelm consciousness. In any case, they call forth excitements and agonies bound to thwart detached observation. No one witnessing such an event, let alone playing an active part in it, should therefore be expected accurately to account for what he has seen. Since these manifestations of crude nature, human or otherwise, fall into the area of physical reality, they range all the more among the cinematic subjects. Only the camera is able to represent them without distortion. (TF, 57)

Key to Kracauer’s statement is found in the final line regarding the camera. The camera is only “able to represent them without distortion” from a visual standpoint and even then, it is only one view that, after being recorded as a representation has no meaning without observation, thought, and discourse to interpret the representation. We can, however, employ the tools of visual culture with film, photography and television, and, although we act as the spectator when we are disconnected from the event, we remain the observers of their representations.

Along with “excitements” and “agonies”, we should add to this Arendt’s view on the role of spectator as standing “outside the game”, in order to make judgements as it relates directly to the perspective of the witness, representation and, ultimately, the validity of the role of conscience in visual culture (LLKP, 55). Her ideas about the role and importance of political discourse in the public sphere also suggest that standards of inter-subjective judgment and truth are ultimately to be seen as discursive and should therefore, be included in the discourse of visual culture. However, when the spectator is bombarded by images of the sphere that they have taken part in creating, the spectator may lose their ability to find their way outside the sphere. What I mean here in particular is the sphere of media that is nearly all-encompassing, and that we need to be aware of what “the game” is before we can take the step to stand outside the game.
Section One:

War, Technology and Modernity in 1920s and 1930s Visual Culture
CHAPTER ONE

“The 1920s and 1930s Film: Modernity, Surveillance, and the Spectacular”

Introduction
Fritz Lang’s film *M* may be taken as a convenient starting point for my analysis. The element of surveillance in this film is portrayed less as a means of “discursive organisation”, than it has to do with knowledge and thus power, and to some extent, control. The film focuses on the joint effort of citizens from every strata of class as they desperately attempt to track and catch Hans Beckert, a man accused of murdering a child. Although feared and reviled by everyone, Lang cleverly casts Beckert (Peter Lorre) as physically nondescript. The blandness of his countenance gives him the ability to be somewhat invisible in the crowd, so in this case, rather than being marginalised, invisibility is power. According to Anton Kaes:

The film is based on authentic events, namely the search and capture of Peter Kürten, a serial murderer in Düsseldorf who randomly assaulted and killed 30 children and adults between February and May 1930. Lang’s film premiered on 11 May 1931, only three weeks after Kürten's conviction, and a full two months prior to his sentencing and execution. This prompted contemporary critics, not surprisingly, to call the film sensationalistic and even sadistic. (CGMM, 108)

In *M*, life seems both claustrophobic and atomised within the confines of the urban space of Berlin. Groups of people organise logistically in sections that spread throughout the urban space as the density of the population increases. The rapidly growing population spawns a seemingly invisible underclass of beggars and thieves, the outcasts who are the people of the street. There are two ways of being invisible here. The beggars may be invisible in the sense that it is easier for the middle and upper class population to choose not to see them, rather than recognise the disparity between the different classes, the others may choose to be invisible to make it easier to go about their business of picking pockets and burgling.

This sense of invisibility becomes an advantage when the city is embroiled in the pursuit of Beckert, as the outcasts are better able to join together as a surveillance network that see, but are not seen as seeing, thus creating the opportunity for mass surveillance techniques of one kind or another. As the increasing population encroach upon the space they inhabit and therefore upon each other, the encroachment of surveillance increases in kind.

According to Gunning, “Lang also anticipates Foucault, not only in founding this modern space of actions of surveillance and the discursive organisation of the archive, but as thoroughly absorbed into the practices of everyday life” (TGM, 180-181). Crary notes that “Lang was a close observer of the ways in which different technological networks permeated a densely layered social space” (DMME, 274).

M has been singled out as an important film for many reasons. Technically, as I mentioned before, it was Fritz Lang’s first sound film, but he also employs what Gunning describes as a “merging of two Langian techniques: the topographical view and parallel editing” in order to portray the “atomisation of the city” (TGM, 168). However, Lang’s portrayal of increasing urban congestion suggests how loneliness and isolation may breed psychological stress with chilling consequences but also offers a different kind of aesthetic. Noël Burch points out another unusual feature in his textual analysis of M and that is that “the underworld and the police pull together”, which he asserts that although “simplistic in appearance the structure

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here is perhaps the most complex in the film”. He also describes a unique oral rhyming in the film’s dialogue that occurs in a parallel set-up, where Inspector Lohmann of the police and the notorious crook Schränker address their “colleagues” (police for Lohmann, thieves and beggars for Schränker) in such a way that a scene will begin where one starts a sentence about catching the child murderer, then blend into the next scene where the other finishes the sentence about catching the child murderer, with neither having any knowledge of the other’s speech (FLGP, 596).

In Patrick Verrone’s 1989 article in the *American Bar Association Journal* entitled “The 12 Best Trial Movies”\(^4\), he lists *M* as number two out of his pick for the best twelve. He describes it as portraying “one of the most effective trials ever filmed questioning our notions of justice and revenge, mob rule and social order, power and responsibility” (BTM, 97).


The discussion that follows focusses on how this film illuminates the organisation of power through structures of surveillance within the urban setting, the suggestion of mechanised surveillance and the detachment of standing outside the scene, but still remaining within the

sphere of visual culture. One such example is Lang’s composition of certain scenes that are shot in such a way that they show the characters being watched, not from the point of view of another character, but anonymously from above. In a 1997 issue of Wide Angle, Edward Dimendberg discusses the use of high angle shots in M in his article “From Berlin to Bunker Hill: Urban Space, Late Modernity, and Film Noir in Fritz Lang’s and Joseph Losey's M”. According to Dimendberg, the use of these “high angle shots suggest a common mode of controlled vision that eludes the control of both the law and the criminals”:

These elevated views propose photographic and cinematic surveillance as key elements of a late modernity that appropriates earlier avant-garde techniques developed in the aftermath of the First World War. The high overhead angles of these shots recall the visual aesthetic of the “new seeing” ("das Neue Sehen") associated with Weimar period photographers such as Moholy-Nagy and Rodchenko. Yet unlike their photographs, the elevated views in M never transform the depicted individuals and street scenes into visual abstractions and the resulting images in the film are more analogous to maps or aerial reconnaissance photographs than artworks. No longer a purely aesthetic enterprise, the facility with which the movie camera can adopt multiple standpoints and explore space in all directions appears in M to support a more ominous agenda of social control than that suggested in the buoyant rhetoric of the photographers associated with the New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit). (BBUS, 71)

I agree entirely with Dimendberg’s opinion on the “ominous agenda of social control” that takes place in M, however, because a criminal investigation is under way, we can also assume that surveillance in its capacity to “watch over” is often necessary and for good for protection


6 Here Dimendberg inserts a footnote with which I concur: “By means of its tirelessly surveying eye and ‘cold gaze’, the camera becomes a participant in the desire for disciplinary power and mobilization in M. It is ubiquitous, a third all-encompassing force (in addition to the police and the underworld), covering every inch of the terrain… Fritz Lang's M exemplifies the single gaze that wants to see everything constantly; it narrativizes (sic) the nexus between warlike mobilization, surveillance, and social control”. Kaes, “The Cold Gaze”, 115-16.

purposes. Social scientist and surveillance theory expert David Lyon claims correctly that “surveillance has two faces”. In his book, *Surveillance Society, Monitoring Every Day Life*° Lyon states that “Surveillance always carries with it some plausible justification that makes most of us content to comply” (SSML, 3).

Lyon takes up a brief “prehistory of surveillance” in another work, *The Electronic Eye, the Rise of the Surveillance Society*°:

Surveillance is not new. Since time immemorial, people have ‘watched over’ others to check what they are up to, to monitor their progress, to organise or to care for them. The rulers of ancient civilizations, such as Egypt, kept population records for purposes such as taxation, military service and immigration. And the Book of Numbers records how even the nomadic people of Israel undertook more than one census to record population details as far back as fifteenth century BC. (EESS, 22)

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Within the realm of cinema in visual culture, Lang seems to be preeminent in establishing surveillance in the urban social setting, using the cinematic point of view as means of illustrating its pervasiveness in terms of personal privacy as well as its necessity for order and protectiveness. He does this to further illustrate an outcome as he sees it of the growth of spectacular technology within modernity. Kaes’ view supports this when he says that “the alliance of technological warfare and media technology set in motion processes of mobilization and militarization that continued and even intensified after the war”. In discussing what he felt was a concerted effort Kaes states that “most of, if not the entire, cultural production of the Weimar Republic” suffered from First World War psychosis and traumas underlying these productions. He also notes that “strategies of surveillance that originated in the war were eagerly introduced into civilian life after the war; *M* demonstrates the use of vision to control, discipline and punish” (CGMM, 117).

**The Second Consciousness**

As Kaes puts it, when contrasting Ernst Jünger’s view against Lang’s: “If Ernst Jünger welcomes, even extols total mobilization as a necessary result of modern technology and the war, Fritz Lang appears to question and critique the need for mobilization, fear, and heightened paranoia”. What is most noteworthy in Kaes’ discussion of Jünger, Lang and *M* however, is the fact that he quotes Jünger on his notion of detachment, photography and a “second consciousness” that Jünger sees as emerging from the “new technical eye” of the camera which “captures the object with a shocking indifference to the object’s condition” (PSCP, 207-208, CGMM, 109). The camera is a “mechanical instrument” and therefore what we are able to see because of it, is “incapable of feeling and thus able to apprehend even the most horrific images of the modern world with aesthetic detachment”. Jünger claims that the camera is “ultimately a new version of the evil eye, a form of magical possession” (PSCP, 209, CGMM, 117). These descriptions of the camera as mechanical instrument and a form of the “evil eye” are echoed in Picasso’s 1936 painting, *Guernica*, which I will discuss in far greater detail in the following chapter.

Dimendberg and Kaes point out that *M* is in part, Lang’s response to society’s inclusion and deployment of technology and systems of control that emerged during the First

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10 According to Kaes, Ernst Jünger “was the first to explore the nexus between the technology of warfare and new technologies of perception” (CGMM, 106).

World War; mechanised surveillance and the possibility of total mobilisation of the masses within the architecture of urban space. Crary states that in *M*, the character of the serial murderer and his “transgressive nature” is the motivation for mobilising “all sectors of society in order to rid itself of the offending presence” thus giving way “to a world in which a murderer is transformed into a commodity for spectacular consumption”, because he and his crimes are “fully subsumed within a media-saturated regime of information” (DMME, 274). By referencing Jünger, Kaes also illustrates the detachment that occurs via the separateness of the individual from the world when the camera lens and what it produces afterward — a picture of the world — is created. Debord argued that society itself has become this picture or this representation; society has become the spectacle that we take to be the world, and Jünger posits that a “second consciousness” has developed in response to this separateness which emerges to make this belief possible. The central point is that the “second consciousness” Jünger put forward suggests a consciousness that is disembodied from pain. As we move through the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, our consciousness seems to increasingly detach not only from pain, but little by little we become disembodied from a great many more experiences of “real” life. Without these experiences, crucial acts of thinking and judging may become problematic.

**Dr. Mabuse the Gambler, Creating a Network of Power and Control**

In Lang’s silent film *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler*, the recurrent theme is coercion. Using a wide variety of costumes and elaborate theatrical make-up, Mabuse demonstrates the power of malleability in his changing chameleon-like character. Mabuse could be anyone, anywhere, depending on what the profession a particular disguise creates and how he chooses to use them. By changing his identity or avatar so thoroughly and so often, Mabuse is able to get away with his technique of bedazzlement, which is staring intently either into the eyes of his victims, or even merely staring at them from behind, thus hypnotising them. In this way he is able to coerce otherwise honest people into committing such acts as cheating at gambling. Mabuse is also a counterfeiter who gambles with Germany’s stocks and bonds markets, enabling him to create and manipulate a false economic boom and an ensuing bust.

As Crary describes it, “control is exerted within the perceptual fields of cultural and economic space—including the rhythmic attractions of the roulette wheel and the shifting quotes on the wall of the stock exchange”. Mabuse does not act alone however; he has a number of accomplices to help him carry out his intentions. There are accomplices who are all in some way dependent upon Mabuse, including his make-up and costume assistant.
(portrayed as a cocaine addict), and a group of workers who are blind men that produce counterfeit money for Mabuse, toiling away in a dungeon-like basement. According to Crary the power is not in an attraction to one charismatic figure, nor is it the “figuration of totalitarianism”, but rather, “a diverse technology of influence” (DMME, 272).

Tom Gunning\(^{12}\) describes Lang’s use of hypnotism as being symbolic of wider social concerns at the time that reached beyond the story in the film. “Lang’s alignment of the power of cinema with hypnosis pulls in a broader discourse on the nature of film, one intimately linked with the film reform movement in Germany and the concerns about the effects of this new medium”. This is important in relation to Debord’s theory of the spectacle because according to Gunning, by the early twentieth century topics that in the early 1800’s fell under what were then considered “sciences of the occult”, including hypnotism and mesmerism, had “become the basis for a broad social theory based on the underlying idea of ‘suggestion’, the term introduced by Hippolyte Bernheim to explain the effect attributed to hypnosis”. Gunning goes on to describe a “European concern about the gains of democracy and the growth of mass culture” taking on the form of “a new psychology of crowds”. Film was seen as having the potential to use the “power of suggestion” over the masses that, “sitting spellbound in the darkness”, were somehow “especially susceptible” (MGE, 110). If the spectacle denotes a model of the unreality of mass images overtaking the real, film represents

\(^{12}\) Tom Gunning, “Mabuse, Grand Enunciator”. The Films of Fritz Lang, Allegories of Vision and Modernity. British Film Institute, London: 2000. From here on in will be cited as MGE.
the potential of controlling the masses via the imagery in films. Mabuse’s coercion techniques are not entirely rooted in the occult sciences however; Lang demonstrates how the manipulation and control of information is just as powerful in influencing and controlling the masses.

He uses Mabuse to mirror events in the fluctuating Weimar economy and the German stock market in 1921. Inflation had been a real problem since World War I, and there had been tremendous controversy over Germany’s reparation payment to the allies. Gunning explains:

Money works in Mabuse’s schemes precisely because it has no value other than that with which it is momentarily endowed by panicked (and misled) buyers or sellers, ignorant dupes passing forged notes, or concupiscent gamblers hoping to find in their wager a way to compel fortune to smile on them. . . Mabuse’s role as a printer of counterfeit currency also offered a commentary on the Weimar Republic’s tendency to respond to the economic problems by simply printing more money. Thus when hyper-inflation arrived in August, Adolf Hitler could revile “this weak republic [which] throws its pieces of worthless paper about wildly” as if he were describing the final scenes of Mabuse in his clandestine printing press wallowing in his now worthless currency. (MGE, 104-105)

Early in the film we are privy to a multifaceted and carefully constructed plan that Mabuse has devised to steal a commercial contract that will ultimately enable him to manipulate the German stock market. Lang displays the plan in action through a series of scenes that Gunning describes as tackling “the way one form of technology interacts with another to create the abstract and fully coordinated grid of space and time that forms the terrain of modernity” (MGE, 96).

Through a cinematic technique of parallel editing, the crime is played out visually like a series of chain links that hold together, but only if the timing is perfect on the part of his gang of accomplices. The machinery of modern transportation includes a train, and a waiting automobile; modernity’s obsession with living by the clock or being controlled by time is suggested as watches and clocks are repeatedly shown and referred to during the theft. A briefcase containing the commercial contract is stolen from a man on the train, and then tossed into the moving automobile. When the mission has been accomplished, one of Mabuse’s henchmen climbs up a telephone pole, connects some wires and rings Mabuse directly to tell him (using code words) that the job is complete. The scene is a visual piecing together of a crime puzzle. Lang is demonstrating how the rush and noise of modernity’s mechanisation and technology, or what Debord viewed as “distractions”, can be organised
and timed perfectly as a system within a larger distraction. By breaking the activities into separate parts, we can see through Lang’s editing technique that Mabuse can control the various parts and thus enable his crime to take place.

By infiltrating the spectacle, or becoming part of the spectacle of modernity, which is to say the “high tech” transportation and communication apparatuses, Mabuse can exploit the spoils of the spectacle for his own gain. This is not the destiny of Dr. Mabuse though, and destiny is a key theme in Lang’s films, not in a conceptually abstract way, but in what Gunning refers to as the “Destiny-machine”. The Destiny machine is comprised of the day to day incidences that occur when each individual vies for control of circumstances around them and, when connected, add up to a particular event, history, or “destiny” in the social sphere.

At the end of the film, rather than growing in power, Mabuse’s ability to control others through the use of modern technology is severed when he is interrupted by an outside telephone call coming into his hideout, which is now surrounded by police. State attorney von Wenk who has been attempting to catch Mabuse throughout the film, telephones him demanding that that he surrender, but Mabuse only laughs and refuses, hanging up on von Wenk who tries in vain to re-establish the connection. According to Gunning, although “Mabuse asserts his independence over the phone by severing the connection, this action nevertheless announces his downfall. The technological web no longer responds to his desires, but carries messages he tries to refuse” (MGE, 113).

In the final scene, after escaping from his hideout through the dank sewer system under the city, he emerges in the counterfeiting room where the trap door closes and locks behind him, trapping him with the blind counterfeit workers. As the blind workers seem to confront him, Mabuse is over-taken by madness, as he realises that he no longer has any power or control and the money he has had printed is worthless paper. He begins to hallucinate, seeing his dead victims surround him, and the wheel on the printing press machinery becomes a frightening vision as it “takes on the face of a fiend with glowing eyes and then (through overlap-dissolve again) a gnashing maw with claw-like, snapping arms” (MGE, 115). Lang’s message seems to be a cautionary one, that the failure of Dr. Mabuse the criminal to control the mechanics of technology leads to his madness, and therefore every day man could succumb to madness in his attempt to wrest control of modernity’s increasing technology. As Gunning puts it: “The vision of the demonic machine poses another literal image of the Destiny-machine, threatening and devouring and subject to no master other than its own repetitive actions, titanic energy and insatiable demand” (MGE, 116). Although less
violent, one of Debord’s descriptions of the spectacle runs along a similar theme of society’s functioning to exist and existing merely to function:

(13) The spectacular character of modern industrial society has nothing fortuitous or superficial about it; on the contrary, this society is based on the spectacle in the most fundamental way. For the spectacle, as the perfect image of the ruling economic order, ends are nothing and development is all – although the only thing into which the spectacle plans to develop is itself. (SOS, 15-16)

*The Testament of Dr. Mabuse; Power Dispersed from the One to the Many*

After sound and spoken dialogue had been used for the first time by Lang in *M*, his next film, *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*, (1933) utilised sound in a way which identified a different range of “power effects”. Crary suggests that a “modern perceptual regime of reciprocal attentiveness and distraction takes on some of its own paradigmatic features”, and that, according to “Guy Debord’s own historicization of spectacular culture, it is possible to suggest that it is around 1930 when it becomes structurally transplanted in the West”. Here, Crary describes the emergence of various systems for “just some of the components of the social environment in which Lang was operating”:

The institutional and technological origins of television, the consolidation of corporate control over both television and radio, the emergence of urbanism as a regime of social control, and [some three years later] the introduction of synchronized sound into films and the first concerted use of sound/image technology by state power in Nazi propaganda. (DMME, 272)

It appears that the use of mass-produced sound and image propaganda was politically effective. By the spring of 1932, there were over 400,000 storm troopers under the leadership of SA Chief Ernst Röhm, so that many in the German Democratic government began to assume that the SA would soon overtake them by force. After many back-room political deals were made, Hitler came into power as Germany’s Chancellor in January 1933.

In *Testament*, Lang makes emphatic use of sound technology in the first five minutes of the film. The opening scene appears to be set in the bowels of a noisy factory as the pounding, deafening noise of machinery carries on for five minutes. Somewhat ironically, two of the characters in this scene have to mime instructions to each other rather than having a conversation, not only because they are trying to conceal from a third character their knowledge that he is there spying on them, but mostly because it is impossible for them to
hear each other in the noise. Perhaps this could be seen as a sort of segue from the previously silent Dr. Mabuse film. From that moment on, however, Lang moves away from the purely visual or ocular sensory mode of power, giving way to “tactics of simulation, recording, and tele-communication in which auditory experience is primary”. Although sound had been introduced into films before, Crary points out that “the introduction of synchronized sound decisively transformed the nature of attention within a spectacular setup” (DMME, 273).

In Gunning’s analysis of Lang’s second Dr. Mabuse film, he describes how: “Disembodied, homeless messages seem to prowl through the film in search of someone to receive them, decode them (in Lohmann’s case) enact them (in Baum’s case)”13 (TDM, 143). Police homicide Inspector Lohmann is a common character thread throughout Lang’s crime solving films, (he also appears in M), and in this film, Dr. Baum plays a psychiatrist who becomes enthralled with Dr. Mabuse as an evil genius master-mind of control and criminality. Baum eventually falls under the spell of Mabuse by reading his hypergraphic “testament”, writings which explain in precise detail the most efficient way to commit crimes of epic proportions. Having gone mad at the end of the previous film, Mabuse is now locked up in an insane asylum and under Dr. Baum’s care. Interestingly, since Mabuse does not speak and is

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confined to a bed in the asylum, he is no longer the centre of power, but the criminals hired to carry out his deeds are unaware of this. The audience is left in the dark as well for a good portion of the movie; we know he is in the hospital but we see evidence of his control in other ways. The point of this is to exemplify the de-centralisation of power, and to diffuse it by what Crary calls “delocalising the operation of power from some centre of control and intentionality” (DMME, 273).

Type-written notes which are thought to be from Mabuse are received by the henchmen giving them a time and date to arrive for instruction, always in the same claustrophobic room with a self-locking door. The verbal orders issued to the criminals are conveyed by a disembodied voice emanating from a recording and loud speakers accompanied by a cardboard silhouette, all hidden behind a curtain. The voice they heard was in fact that of Dr. Baum, but it had sounded so different to the criminals that it was unrecognisable as his. Lohmann explains that the reason for the discrepancy was that the sound of the voice they had heard was “only a mechanical reproduction”, thus indicating the unreliability of a recording over the original. The spectacle in Testament is found in the evolvement of sound technology in modernity, as it surpasses the “arrangements of power around forms of ocular domination”. After the synchronisation of recorded sound to pictures, Crary notes that “the Mabuse system cannot be reduced to a visual model, for it deploys a broader range of perceptual management”. In this second Mabuse film of Lang’s, the spectacle now employs “tactics of simulation, recording and telecommunication in which auditory experience is primary” (DMME, 273).

Testament focuses more on the dissemination of power through a centralised location, Lang’s example is that of a single voice mobilising the masses through the use of radio. By having a cardboard figure behind a curtain and a phonograph record emitting vocal instructions, Lang appears to suggest that the mechanised voice on the radio may not be the voice of truth. Both of these particular Mabuse films keep step with the political activities of their day as well as highlighting the power of mediated techniques of communication by way of technology from the telephone, phonograph and radio. Gunning puts it this way:

This exposure of a loudspeaker as the source of the voices of the characters on the screen remains a disorienting experience. While this technological mediation may preserve Baum’s identity from discovery, Baum’s use of a private radio broadcast to communicate with his gang recalls the opening of the first Mabuse film and the technological web of communication and surveillance which surrounds the master criminal. But if the original Dr. Mabuse appeared like a prosthetic God due to his technological accoutrements, Baum seems abstracted, rendered somehow bodiless, by
them, the awesome ‘man behind the curtain’ reduced to a cardboard silhouette, a stand-in, a relay between points. This action exposes the apparatus of the Destiny-machine in this film, the technology of voice and sounds that undergirds Baum’s machinations. (TDM, 153)

Gunning’s use of Freud’s term, “prosthetic God” from his work, *Civilisation and its Discontents*  

14 (1930) seems, in this case, to be referring again to the nature of a disembodied consciousness in the form of the disembodied and “omniscient” voice. The added accoutrements of communication technology and machinery seem not to relieve Baum of the neurosis he appears to suffer from, but rather to overtake and replace him.

**Moving Forward from 1960 to 2005; the Return of Architecture and the Prison**

The third and final film to be discussed in the Fritz Lang Mabuse triptych is *The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse*, released in 1960. It was the last film Lang ever made. This film is valuable to my discussion because I consider it to be an epochal book-end to M in relation to the spectacle, the visual regime and what I have argued are pointed representations of encroaching systems of control using surveillance. As the title suggests, the “thousand eyes” and panoptic nature of the film refer to the mythic creature Argos Panoptes, the giant with the one hundred eyes who could see everything. It is safe to say that as a film-maker, Lang was prescient in his predictions of “the power latent in surveillance”  

15 (CCL). He does not deviate from his method of referencing and employing the current technology of the time and, in this film the technology is literally embedded in the architecture rather than portrayed as devices used by the characters.

The film takes place for the most part in a hotel called “The Hotel Luxor”, which becomes the centre of “a web of references, crimes, memories and conspiracies”, and is outfitted with hundreds of optical surveillance units originally designed for purposes of espionage, but later updated for more voyeuristic activities. The architectural aspect is significant because, according to Gunning, “Lang’s buildings act as devices – machines – regulating the behaviour of those within, designed to channel their movement, and facilitate their observation as much as to provide shelter”. In the film it is pointed out by insurance agent Mistelzweig that the cornerstone of the building was laid in May 1944, and was

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15 Czech Centres 2010 - Czech Centre London, 13 Harley Street, London W1G 9QG.  
originally constructed by the Third Reich to “gather foreign diplomats under one roof and make them easier to spy on”. Mistelzweig is a very nosy fellow who we later discover is actually an Interpol agent. He also claims that “there was a curse on this place from the start” (CCLM, 471). Likening the building to a machine, Gunning suggests that like “Lang’s ultimate Destiny-machines, these buildings always contain secrets” (CCLM, 473).

In this film, the character of Dr. Mabuse has long been dead, but his name, echoing earlier Mabuse films, is somewhat confusingly resurrected through the disguises of a person first as “Cornelius”, the blind psychic. This Cornelius is actually Dr. Jordan who, like Dr. Baum in Testament, poses as “Dr. Mabuse”, and orders the killer via broadcast methods to commit a murder. By using a “futuristic gun” that shoots a needle through Mr. Barter’s skull—“an exact duplicate” of the method used in a murder committed by Mabuse’s old gang in Testament, Lang once again evokes the past 16 (CCLM, 463-64). Gunning admits that as far as the film’s overall quality, “next to a film like M, The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse shows many inadequacies: poor performances, stretches on uninspired story-telling and a central love affair”. Gunning excuses these inadequacies by pointing out Lang’s use of allegory. In the other Mabuse films, Lang somewhat heavy-handedly hints both at the coming of the Nazi’s fascist regime and at the technology that plays a part in smoothing the path for it. Gunning says, “as Adorno stated, the Nazi experience defines the limits of representation”, and he finds “Lang’s allusive and indirect invocation of the Nazi’s in The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse more powerful than most of his anti-Nazi films of the Hollywood era” (CCLM, 473).

Once again the film is another of Lang’s crime solving detective stories, but, according to Crary, “part of the film’s formal structure is built around a network of surveillance cameras feeding video images back to a massive bank of monitors”. The technology featured most in this film is television, but Lang differentiates between broadcast TV and closed circuit television monitors used for surveillance purposes only. Interestingly, surveillance in this film is less about ubiquitous social control and more about what Crary describes as Lang situating the television screens “within a larger and chaotic spectacular regime of pseudo-events, disinformation, voyeurism and scopic desire”. Crary also suggests that featuring the “cathode ray tube” had become “a means for Lang to explore the relation between new abstract perceptual spaces that exceed his own accumulated experience of the cultural conditions of the cinema” (DMME, 273).

Although the busy machinations within the film involve criminal activity and refer back to the political intrigue of his earlier Mabuse films, what interests me here is how Lang has replaced the conceit of Mabuse’s techniques of hypnotism with what Gunning aptly describes as the “erotics of voyeurism and the lust for knowledge gained through visual surveillance [which] are more effective than literal hypnosis in creating enthralled spectators” (CCLM, 470). In one scene, the creepy hotel manager approaches one of the hotel customers (Travers) and offers him the opportunity to “increase his knowledge” of the woman (Marion) that Travers is developing romantic feelings for, by inviting him to surreptitiously watch Marion through a two-way mirror hidden in the hotel room closet adjoining her room. The mirror, which the manager refers to as a “device”, even has a microphone built in so they can hear as well as watch what happens in the room. Together they watch first the mundane scene of the hotel maid going about the business of tidying the room, and then “Lang immediately introduces the voyeuristic aspects of this set-up, both erotic and investigative, as Marion enters the room and has the maid help her hook her bra and then pulls on her slip”. After this, Travers continues to watch as Marion applies her lipstick, “inches away from him”, unsuspectingly using the two-way mirror.

![Image](http://www.dvdtalk.com/dvdsavant/s127mabuse.html)

When a messenger arrives to deliver the roses sent to her by Travers, we see Marion “smiling and embracing the roses lovingly” as she reads the note. Lang then intercuts Travers continuing to observe her, and it is only when she suddenly collapses into tears that this scopophilic spell is broken. Instead of being appreciative of the manager, Travers snaps at him and denounces “this appalling spectacle”, and then asks that the closet be boarded up and
that the room adjoining it, the viewing room, be rented to him as an additional apartment. Gunning finds this request “somewhat contradictory”, but I see it as Travers merely being protective of the woman’s privacy by paying for it (CCLM, 468). Still, the dual nature of the situation is typical in surveillance and voyeurism. Travers has a certain power because he knows there is a two-way mirror in Marion’s room that she is unaware of. This allows him the opportunity to watch her, and, even if he chooses not to, it is still a power he has and she does not.

Another technique Lang employs in this film is his portrayal of a scene as if it is a scene in the film, but instead it turns out to be a video of a scene within the film. This is demonstrated in a ballroom dancing scene, where the characters in the film are already “spying” on each other, and we watch the panoply of activities and hear their dialogue together:

Lang cuts from the blonde delivering her report on Mistelzweig to Kras in the hotel bar back to the ballroom with a shot of Travers and Marion in the foreground as they discuss the possibility of her getting a divorce from her tyrannical husband. The low visual resolution of the shot registers immediately, as if we were suddenly watching a poorly duped print. The camera pulls back, but instead of moving away from the couple and revealing more of the ballroom, the frame of a television monitor comes into view and a control panel below it. We are actually watching our protagonists on television. The revelation of this added frame is bizarre, nearly comic, certainly mysterious. Although their dialogue continues, the image on the monitor dissolves for a moment into horizontal bands, due to some electronic interference. (CCLM, 470)

This technique of conflating diegesis with non-diegesis was used with great success in 2005 by Austrian Michael Haneke in the film Caché / Hidden, a film I discuss in detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

Crary describes Lang’s use of the video scene within a film scene in this way:

One of the work’s most piercing moments is a slow, seamless dissolve from a filmed image of a scene to a video screen of the same image. Lang’s particular overlapping of these two kinds of screens is an announcement of a specific historical passage to a new arena of techniques of subjectification, when cinema is supplanted or infiltrated in various ways by television. (DMME, 274)

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17 Caché. AU, FR, GR, IT, Dendy Films. (2004-2005). Dir. Michael Haneke. DVD, Madman: (2005). In Caché, Haneke’s methods are used to get us to discern what is “real” within the film versus what part of the film is the “outer” film we are there to watch. It is not the infiltration of television, but rather the infiltration of invisible surveillance devices. In The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse, the effect is one of surprise and novelty, but in Caché, the effect is somehow chilling and ominous. The film Caché will be discussed further in Chapter 10.
Lang may be trying to portray the potential of technology and popularity of television as threatening the existence of cinema. Or, as Debord says, “[t]he whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation” (SOS, 12).

Conclusion:

According to Kaes, Jünger declared the camera “as a new technical eye which captures the object with a shocking indifference to the object’s condition” (CGMM, 109). Jünger also described photography as “an expression of our characteristically cruel way of seeing. Ultimately it is a new version of the evil eye, a form of magical possession” (PSCP, 209). The photograph is the still picture that we look at after the event has occurred, and often acts as the stand in for a memory as a representation of the event. The films I have just discussed are significant because through their representations, they begin to open up the possibility that surveillance is a condition that is endemic to visual culture but proliferates in the visual regime. More than the stand in for a memory, the films are reminders.

Lang’s incorporation of overhead or surveillant views in M in 1931 and his earlier contextualisation of systems of control coming together with the aid of the emergent technologies of the day in the 1920’s, and again later in the 1960’s, appear to signal that in these filmic interpretations, surveillance cannot help but be part of the society of the spectacle and that it continues to carry on not unlike or within the spectacle:

The spectacle erases the dividing line between self and world, in that the self, under siege by the presence/absence of the world, is eventually overwhelmed; it likewise erases the dividing line between true and false, repressing all directly lived truth beneath the real presence of the falsehood maintained by the organization of appearances. (SOS, 153)

Recent concerns about present day surveillance by governments and corporates is evidence that the spectacle may “erase the dividing line”, but the self and the world do still exist. Further examination of surveillance and the spectacle should be, and in this thesis is a key part of a wider discussion of visibility as we proceed along the lines of determining not whether, but how much, we now fashion our lives according to our representation within the spectacle and under surveillance.
Ourselves and the world: we look at it and it looks back at us, and somewhere is the truth of the things, but will we know it when we see it? In other words, do we know what we are looking for, and if we find it, will we know if it is a representation of the world or the world itself? And equally important, if it is a representation, who or what has generated the representation and thus “controls” it? Debord proposes that we are “imprisoned in a flat universe bounded on all sides by the spectacle’s screen, the consciousness of the spectator has only figmentary interlocutors which subject it to a one-way discourse on their commodities and the politics of those commodities” (SOS, 153). The following chapters aim to discuss the nature of the boundaries of the “flat universe”, in pursuit of a more complex seeing, because unless the discourse we engage in flows from many directions, we may find freeing ourselves from the potential imprisonment of the spectacle’s multiple and ubiquitous screens more difficult than imagined.
There are many ways to handle a myth. One consists in building a new one. Others consist in concentrating only on the psychosociological fact—that is, on the acceptance of the myth as the sign of belonging to a group, a class, that secretes an ideology. Perhaps this is the most important aspect for the historian. Yet the latter cannot ignore, at the birth of this acceptance, the original propositions\(^1\). (Pierre Vilar, GG, “Foreword”, WAM, xi)

CHAPTER TWO:

The Proposition about Guernica: The Mechanical Eye within the Cold Sun

Introduction:
The inception for the idea of Picasso’s mural Guernica began on a Monday, the customary Market day in the small town of Guernica, Spain. Located in the Basque Country, Guernica was noted for its local, nostalgic landmarks and as the Basque’s centre of culture and tradition it was considered somewhat as a national shrine. Quaint and rural, in no way was the town designated as a prime military target. At 4:30 PM on this particular Monday, April 26, 1937, the streets were filled with the usual townsfolk. There were women tending to their weekly shopping, children making their way home from school, and local farmers coming to trade. Abruptly, and with no warning, the ill-prepared inland village was suddenly under attack, heavily bombed in an air-raid attack for almost four consecutive hours. Over 1000 incendiary bombs were dropped, levelling the town. The perpetrators of this assault were German planes of the Condor legion, acting in alliance with General Franco’s Nationalistic military offences. When the bombings finally ceased at 7:45 PM a tally was taken. Within that small space of time, the astonishing amount of 1654 people had been killed and 889 lay wounded (SPC, 419). The town had been lain to waste and the assault on Guernica was, on a world scale, a symbol of the “revelation of danger” to come, much as Hiroshima was some years later (Vilar, GG, “Foreword”, xii).

Two days later, on April 28, the London Times reported an “eye-witness account” that described the event almost impassively. Written like stage directions for a film or theatrical production, the account depicts the scenes of human carnage in a calculated and constructed manner, demonstrating how a huge military power can conquer hundreds of fleeing innocents:

The tactics of the bombers, which may be of interest to students of the new military science, were as follows: — First, small parties of aeroplanes threw heavy bombs and hand grenades all over the town, choosing area after area in orderly fashion. Next came fighting machines which swooped low to machine-gun those who ran in panic from dugouts, some of which had already been penetrated by 1000 lb. bombs, which make a hole 25ft. deep. Many of these people were killed as they ran. A large herd of sheep being brought in to the market was also wiped out. The object of this move was apparently to drive the population underground again, for next as many as 12 bombers at a time dropping heavy and incendiary bombs upon the ruins. The rhythm of this bombing of an open town was, therefore, a logical one: first, hand grenades, and heavy bombs to stampede the population, then

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machine-gunning to drive them below, next heavy and incendiary bombs to wreck houses and burn them on top of the victims.³ (GG, 15-16)

With the support of Mussolini and Hitler, Franco’s Nationalist Army was able to control over half the country, and events leading up to the European spring and summer of 1937 were also heating up, but not only in the usual seasonal way. Culturally, socially, and politically the temperature was also rising in Spain and throughout the rest of Europe.

In January 1937, Pablo Picasso had been commissioned by the Spanish Republic and its Popular Front government to create a work of art for the Spanish Pavilion at the Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne (International Exposition dedicated to Art and Technology in Modern Life⁴) to be held from May to November in Paris that year. Despite the upheaval and destruction wrought by the Spanish Civil War that had been on-going since July 1936, the Spanish Pavilion representing the Spanish Republic wanted to create the appearance of “business as usual”. The specific goal of the pavilion was to highlight and praise the Republic’s social programs, particularly those in agriculture and education, and to bring worldwide attention to the suffering of the Spanish people in the civil war through artistic means. This was demonstrable in its display of government supported cultural undertakings, “and thus that the Republic was confident of both eventual victory and of the support of the world community”⁵ (SSCW, 152).

Although the Spanish Pavilion was due to be opened in June, Picasso had not even begun the preliminary sketches for what was to be the final work until May ¹, the day after the first photographs of the bombings by fascist Germany finally appeared in Paris newspapers four days after the event on April 30th. According to Herschel B. Chipp in his essay, “Guernica: Love, War and the Bullfight”⁶, the news of the bombing was the “immediate motivation for starting the work” (GLWB, 100). Interestingly, also within the context of the International Exhibit, Jutta Held reports a unique approach taken by the Spanish cultural


⁴ Also known as “The 1937 Paris World’s Fair”.

⁵ Robin Adèle Greeley. Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006. From here on in will be cited as SSCW.

committee in his essay, “How do Political Effects of Pictures Come About? The Case of Picasso’s *Guernica*”

Unlike most other nations, the Spanish Republic did not represent itself in the exhibition in terms of its economic power, but in terms of its cultural values, among which works of art of the avant-garde took pride of place (Picasso, Calder, Miró, Gonzalez and others had all offered works of art). In this way the Spanish Republic — embattled as it was by the fascists — enlisted international solidarity with the help of artists. (PEOP, 33)

When Picasso received the commission from the Spanish Pavilion’s cultural committee in January, his response to the two delegates was to read a poem written by his intimate friend, the respected surrealist poet and lifetime communist, Paul Eluard. Picasso then presented the committee with a suite of his etchings that corresponded directly to Eluard’s poem, which were to be reproduced and sold at the Exhibition with the proceeds going to refugee relief. The poem and etchings eventually came under the title, *Dream and Lie of Franco*. Picasso’s first offering of the etching suite would have been rejected by the cultural committee due undoubtedly to its obvious politically partisan sentiments, which at that time were unwelcome. In fact, the original idea of the mural for the Pavilion that Picasso had begun sketching on the 18th of April depicted “the artist’s studio” which was conceptually apolitical. What we can deduce from this is that due to the event of the unexpected bombing of Guernica, politics did indeed play a large part in changing the Republic’s direction regarding what would finally appear upon what was about to become a global stage — the 1937 Paris World’s Fair. The Pavilion had in part been designed to reaffirm the legitimacy of the Spanish Republic and condemn the attacks of Franco’s Army. Therefore, Picasso’s efforts in his final offering of the painting *Guernica* was simultaneously a work of art and a political product inspired by a political event, rather than a painting offered as a political product with the aim of inspiring a political event.

In Herschel B. Chipp’s in depth work *Picasso’s Guernica, History, Transformations, Meanings*, he describes the jarring juxtapositions between the two nations who were, through their “cultural offerings” at the Fair also seemed to be expressing their dominance in their political positions over Europe:


Albert Speer’s monstrous Nazi neoclassic tower; its entrance was ornamented by belligerent male nude sculptures, and, with its crowning eagle, it soared higher than any other structure in the exposition, including even the enormous and overbearing Soviet tower facing it across the promenade. The administration had shrewdly assigned these two representatives of gigantism facing sites along the Seine. Their pavilions, both aggressively jutting forward and upward, grossly out of scale with the other structures, served to negate each other. (PGHT, 141-2)

Picasso’s final composition for display at the Spanish Pavilion, however, was that of a painted mural, in the style of the avant-garde, using a monochromatic colour scale. Although Spain’s display at the 1937 Paris World’s Fair carried an important political message decrying the ravages of fascism, it did so by displaying paintings, etchings, and poetry which were physically and aesthetically in obvious opposition to the behemoth, nationalistic manifestations of Germany and Soviet Russia’s architectural and sculptural displays.

**Art, Aura and the Aftermath of a Spectacular Event: How the Political Appears in Guernica**

C2 Figure 2: Guernica, Pablo Picasso, June 6, 1937. Paris, France.

The 1930s saw the original avant-garde art movement coincide with the anti-fascist struggle throughout Europe; Avant-garde art at this time included cubism and surrealism, or methods of representation that deliberately eschewed purely figurative realism. By the end of 1936, the Popular Front, a combination of communist and socialist movements, was, according to Chipp, viewed by liberals as “the symbol of resistance to totalitarianism that was descending over Europe” (PGHT, 9). In the case of Popular Front cultural politics of France and Spain,
how to exhibit works of art, in other words, the “artistic reception” of the work had to be done in such a way as to strengthen their political effectiveness. Obviously, the powerful imagery and complex composition in *Guernica* go far beyond illustrative propaganda and slogan wielding poster graphics, but still *Guernica*, as a single work could not reach thousands of people en masse.

Held asserts that Picasso’s *Guernica* was pivotal to the avant-garde art community because of the culmination of several important factors:

One might even say that the picture served as a means whereby the politicisation of a bourgeois cultural elite was strengthened, or even set in motion. This could only happen because Picasso’s work satisfied the formal aesthetic avant-gardist expectations of such circles. The picture fitted the criteria of artistic avant-gardism that, particularly in France, had a long tradition of elaboration and refinement behind it. Picasso’s work succeeded in bringing together two usually quite separate areas of concern regarding visual imagery — the formal preoccupations of the artistic avant-garde and the interest in putting over a political message. (PEOP, 33-34)

When Picasso was asked whether the bull in *Guernica* stood for fascism, he denied this, and insisted that “the bull signified rather a generalised darkness and brutality”. He elaborated: “In this picture I was concerned with the definitive expression and the definitive solution of a problem and that’s why I used symbols” (PEOP, 37). It could be argued, wrongly, I think, that Picasso used interpretive techniques to obscure his meanings somewhat rather than portraying the horror of the bombing by applying graphic and realistic renderings of blood, flesh and flames. Rather, Picasso interprets the scene using shapes and symbols as a way to create a universal language for all—or as many as possible to understand. As Rudolph Arnheim states succinctly in *The Genesis of A Painting: Picasso’s Guernica*: “The image is reduced to expressive shapes, which are interpretive rather than narrative” (GPPG, 25). A narrative would suggest that there be a particular language telling a particular story, I argue that this avant garde work uses this particular style in order to convey a picture that can be universally understood.

Dora Maar was an accomplished artist as a French photographer and painter but became best known for being Picasso’s lover and muse. She began documenting the creation

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of *Guernica* on May 1st by photographing Picasso’s progress on the work in eight key successive stages, just as one would document any event within its historical context. I find this new form of documenting a painting significant, because it was first time anyone had ever documented the stages of a painting with photography. For this reason it was a turning point in artistic methodology, thus signalling a dispositif in visual culture. Whether deliberate or fortuitous, intentional or unintentional I argue that the act of photographing the progressing stages of this art work was an original idea.

Photography captures discrete events in time, one by one. Although Picasso left sketches behind showing some of the decisions he made for and against inclusion into the final piece, Marr’s photography shows the processes that occurred on canvas behind the final layers of paint, in order of their occurrence. The painting itself remains one of a kind and yet its progressive stages of creation however, may be mechanically reproduced. The complaint about photography has been that one cannot see what happens before and after the photo is taken, but here the photo is used as a tool to see what has occurred before and after different stages of creating a painting.

This seems to be another example of the dual and in this case practical role of technology in modernism. A mechanical distancing through archival photography is paired with an artistic sharing of “how it was done” relationship to Picasso’s painting. The painting evokes passion, but the context of Marr’s photographic documentation was completely unlike Jünger’s collaboration in a large coffee-table styled book consisting of photographs of disastrous events, entitled *Der gefährliche Augenblick*, (*The Dangerous Moment* 1931). Kaes describes Jünger’s intentions here:

> Photography was used here as a defense mechanism against the anxiety caused by the shocks of modernity and the risks of social and technological change. The eye of the camera that mechanically recorded the occurrence allows the observer to adopt a cool and detached attitude vis-A-vis the horror pictures of warlike casualties. Jünger wanted his readers to develop an aesthetic relationship to danger; he believed that the big city (no less than the war) stimulated a specifically modern form of perception, one that is based on the experience of danger and shock. (CGMM, 108)

Of course Marr was not documenting a disaster, but what is intriguing is that she was documenting the stages of a painting that itself was documenting a disaster. Therefore, while speculation about the meaning behind each sketch and symbol leading up to the completion of *Guernica* is well documented, speculation on Marr’s role in influencing the painting should be considered as well.
The process of photographing the artist creating a painting in a step by step process is actually evidence of the process from start to finish. In an era when witnessing was to become a crucial necessity for revealing the results of fascism, Marr’s photographic documentation of the effect the Nazi air-raid had on Picasso and his art is a coincidence akin to a theatrical foreshadowing.

Dora’s documentation of the eight key successive stages clearly explains both the development of the work and the multiple transformations that occurred during the course of its journey....The constant conversation between the painting in progress and its photographic recording manifests in a number of ways. The dramatic intensity of the dark tones slowly making their appearance felt as the painting evolves can be likened to the gradual appearance of an image in a developing tray. In a more concrete way, the tonal variations Picasso observed in Dora's photographs appear to have influenced the development of those in the middle stages of the painting. *Guernica* was to be published as postcards for sale at the exhibition (to fund the Spanish Republican war effort), which also meant that Picasso must constantly consider how the painting would work as a photographic image on a small scale. (PLW)

The large mural was produced on a canvas surface 3.5 by 7.5 metres (11'6" high by 25'8" long) so the production of the mural was astonishingly quick for a work of that size. When completed, Picasso was able to make known the event of the bombing of Guernica to an international audience within weeks of it happening. The main sketches were helpfully numbered and dated as Picasso progressed, showing that he began on May 1st and that on the evening of May 11th he had finished sketching and finally began to apply paint to the canvas. Although the actual date of its final completion has not survived, Dora Maar’s penultimate photograph was dated June 5th, and according to Russell Martin, it is believed that *Guernica* was completed by June 6th, just forty-two days after the bombing, with only minor changes made to it in the days afterward11 (PWDG, 100). Arnheim posits that for Picasso and for the painting *Guernica*, there is a reason for documenting the processes of art.

If it is true that Picasso creates states rather than objects, his concern with preserving the exact sequence of his works become understandable. It follows also that the sketches for a particular work must be considered as having a status similar to that of a sequence of works and that, in addition to representing the stages of a problem gradually solved, they must be seen as variations on a theme of that particular work. . . Thus there may be significance in the fact that for the first time in recorded history an artist has

created and carefully catalogued and preserved such extensive series of preparations. (GPPG, 14)

While I agree with Arnheim’s statement that Picasso’s sketches represent a sequence of works involved in the problem solving process of the final work, and that in this process they could be considered as “variations on a theme of that particular work”, it could be argued that the very fact that when the images featured in the sketches do not appear in the final piece, their significance in relation to it is greatly diminished. Marr’s photographic documentation, for example, “reveal that the bull's head, for example, changes direction over time, and that Picasso experimented with applying strips of coloured paper collage to the painting that were later removed” (PLW). While it is admittedly instructive and interesting to review the discarded evidence of the artist at work, the images that exist in the final piece are what matters the most because it represents the final decision made by the artist. A finished work of art is like the signature written on the final contract the artist makes with him or herself that says “this work has been done to my satisfaction and it is final”. It is not a common practice for instance, to review the discarded pages of a contract as being part of the final contract.

Documenting this work is a way of mapping Picasso’s creative journey and eventual arrival at the solution of a problem. There is little mystery in how he does what he does with materials on canvas; the physical act of going from point A to B is all transparently recorded, and in fact, we can attribute some of the painting’s metamorphoses to something as elemental as changes in lighting:

Picasso moved the lighting as he worked, sometimes causing halos and spots to appear in the photographs. In order to correct these defects, Dora manipulated the photographs taken at stages one and two through the process of photomontage. She cut out and rearranged sections from several shots and attached them to a background with drawing pins before photographing them again. (PLW)

Beyond the technical necessities however, where Picasso’s “inspiration” originated would be found not only in the relevant reports of the bombing of the town of Guernica, but also in the social, political and cultural events leading up it. I propose that the finished work of Guernica is the result of what Heidegger referred to as a “cultural paradigm”, and what Benjamin conceptualised as a “constellation”. This painting represents a snapshot of a turning point in
technological, cultural and artistic practices that combine to create this cultural paradigm. Hubert L. Dreyfus elaborates on Heidegger’s idea here, in “‘Being and Power’ Revisited”: 12

Generalizing the idea of a work of art, Heidegger holds that “there must always be some being in the open [the clearing], something that is, in which the openness takes its stand and attains its constancy” (OWA, 61). Let us call such things cultural paradigms. A cultural paradigm is any being in the clearing that discloses a new world or, by refocusing the current cultural practices, discloses the world anew. (BPR, 33)

We see that in “the clearing”, which is the aftermath of the Nazi bombing of Guernica, stands Picasso’s Guernica, “disclosing the world anew” as violent, chaotic and horrific.

Hubert L. Dreyfuss defines the “cultural paradigm” this way: “A cultural paradigm collects the scattered practices of a group, unifies them into coherent possibilities for action, and holds them up to the people who can act and relate to each other in terms of this exemplar”. Within the conceptual definition of a cultural paradigm, it is interesting to note the close proximity of propaganda and a work of art within that definition and how both may transcend the aesthetic and become political. According to Greely, transcending aesthetics in the case of Guernica is in large part enabled by Picasso’s ability to link “the act of seeing to the scene of catastrophe through the act of representing” (SSCW, 163). How is this different to propaganda? It depends. “Propaganda” stems from the word “propagation” coined in this context by Pope Gregory XV in 1622, when he founded a committee of cardinals responsible for the systematic dissemination of Roman Catholic Church doctrine in foreign missions (OED, 2368).

If Picasso was attempting to convince others that his painting represented information from the point of view of a specific organisation or group, it might fit this particular context of propaganda. But at the time, there was only one Guernica, a single painting, representing Picasso’s reactions to war and impending fascism. His reactions happened to mirror the feelings of thousands of others who feared with good reason, a similar fate to the people of Guernica. However, even though it was displayed in a public space representing Spain, the


painting, unlike an “idea” was still the portrayal of a recent event, thus enabling it to maintain its aura of authenticity. In this sense Picasso is not only an artist but also a critic, speaking his “truth to power” though his painting presenting it on the political stage of the Spanish Pavilion. In the twentieth century, propaganda may present itself as “art” and can be employed for the manufacturing of a myth using an idea connected to an “ideology”. In order to disseminate an “idea”, however, the art must be able to reach the masses which is why mechanically reproduced images, such as film and television work quickly and efficiently.

The topic of ideology is enormous and complex, but here I refer briefly to Hannah Arendt’s description in one of her most important works, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*:

> An ideology is quite literally what its name indicates: it is the logic of an idea. Its subject matter is history, to which the “idea” is applied…The ideology treats the course of events as though it followed the same “law” as the logical exposition of its “idea”. . . The “idea” of an ideology is neither Plato’s eternal essence grasped by the eyes of the mind nor Kant’s regulative principle of reason but has become an instrument of explanation. To an ideology history does not appear in the light of an idea . . . but as something that can be calculated by it. (OT, 469)

Arendt’s explanation of ideology is demonstrated when visual suggestions are employed through representational images with the specific goal of stimulating a response that will ultimately lead to an event or situation that has not yet occurred. Put simply, visual propaganda may be seen as a version of advertising or vice versa, but rather than advertising a product as object or thing, the product is an idea, concept or belief portrayed in such a way as to (hopefully) attract viewers and convince them to come to a shared understanding. This in turn would spur some sort of action which will then lead to a particular, and in this case, political outcome.

Imagine a picture of a world that exists only in an idea, and that idea is based on only one facet of truth. This produces a single, focussed view of the world, or *Weltanschauung*. The picture is convincingly portrayed on the surface as a world which is bound inevitably either to become real, or is already real yet is more akin to the philosophy of what is real rather than reality itself. Arendt says, “Ideologies are never interested in the miracle of being. They are historical, concerned with becoming and perishing, with the rise and fall of cultures, even if they try to explain by some ‘law of nature’” (OT, 469).

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The reason *Guernica* does not, in my view, fall under the category of being part of an ideological scheme is because it is not an “instrument of explanation” (as Arendt further defines ideology), but rather, it seems to ask the question, “why?” Why did this occur, why must this town and its people be destroyed? It also makes a statement again, rather than presenting an explanation. The statement of course is about war: “this is what war is, this is what war does, and these are the victims of war”. To repeat Arendt’s statement above, that “the ‘idea’ of ideology is neither Plato’s eternal essence grasped by the eyes of the mind nor Kant’s regulative principle of reason”, we can see that against this definition what is portrayed in *Guernica* represents the opposite of reason and yet the eternal essence of its existence is contained within the aura of this work of art.

Interpreting Metaphors and Meaning in *Guernica*

![C2 Figure 3: The middle area of the mural *Guernica*; note the oil lamp, the light bulb within the eye/sun/ lamp, and the stipple marks on the body of the horse.](image)

It is difficult to have a meaningful discussion of any art work without addressing the imagery within it at least as a subtext to the main concept. This also aids in understanding the “being-ness” that Picasso’s *Guernica* revealed as the result of an event that had occurred. When I
refer to the revealing of a subtext in the mural, I make a connection to Dreyfus’s paraphrasing Heidegger’s thoughts on the history of “being”, and that is that it gave him “a perspective from which to understand how in our modern world things have been turned into objects” (BPR, 30).

My focus is directed toward the middle of Picasso’s mural (Figure 3) where, in my view, some of the most powerful images portraying “the condition of the world” are located. The things that have become objects are the result of the emergence of a cultural paradigm over the course of the 1930s. The imagery in Guernica goes beyond simply responding to the near annihilation of the town of Guernica by fascist forces. What is important here is how the painting demands a response from the viewer. No matter how difficult, complex and repugnant they are to consider, the magnitude of visual potency in the images conveyed in Guernica are such that the audience is confronted, more or less to consider the horror of all wars. In 1937, Picasso held fascism and totalitarianism up for examination, by displaying a rendition of their aftermath. Put simply, it can be said that Guernica presents us with the consequences of war in the form of a painting.

Attempting to solve the riddle behind what the meaning of Cubism represents in Picasso’s work is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I present Arnheim’s explanation of Cubism from “Snippets and Seeds Ninth Instalment: Notes at the great Picasso Show”, about Picasso and his generation here for some helpful context:

What we see as transparency is originally only the superposition of pictorial objects which respect each other’s integrity by ignoring the presence of their neighbors. The animals on the walls of Lascaux cross one another’s contours quite unconcernedly. But when some twenty thousand years later the generation of Picasso returns to this early recklessness, transparency in painting has been acknowledged and practiced for centuries. Therefore it is no longer possible for two objects to occupy the same place without a loss of material solidity. They turn each other into wraiths - a welcome side effect¹⁶. (SSPS, 122)

So, what we have in the jumble of Cubist objects are “wraiths”, or the apparitions of a collection of the dead and their ghosts. Where is the pain of war in this painting? In the faces of the women and the animals and “to Picasso”, Arnheim also reveals: “the horse is a woman, guided, mounted, victimized, and often beautiful. Its partner is the bull” (SSPS, 21).

Although Picasso had begun to move away from the strictly angular aspects of traditional cubism, he had not abandoned it altogether in Guernica. Rather, the painting is an example of transitional representation in both style and subject matter. For the purposes of this thesis, it is recognised that interpreting the meanings and metaphors within the imagery of a Picasso painting is not at all a new or original exercise, in fact, judging from the extensive bibliographies attached to each article about this painting, the amount of scholarly research and literature containing varying interpretations of Guernica is vast. Picasso was an artist who did not give away his secrets but as painters often do, he did create images through the use of symbols as visual metaphors in place of words. Heidegger says that when it comes to the methodology of research, the basis of clarification is explanation. “Explanation is twofold. It accounts for an unknown by means of a known, and at the same time it verifies that known by means of that unknown” (QCT, 121). However, any explanation about specific meanings behind the multitude of images within the painting is not provable; rather, it was a closed circuit of creative processes which began with Picasso’s knowledge of the bombing, travelled through the artist’s eyes and hands, and finally ended with Guernica.

Representation is a form of communication, but the creative act that energises a representation had, as Arnheim says, “entered the domain of academic psychology” where it was “called upon to supply a more scientific foundation for the understanding of the most distinguished human capacity” (GPPG, 4). Interestingly, Arnheim summarises the secrecy of artists regarding the creative process:

Artists, in particular, have learned to tread cautiously when it comes to reporting the internal events that produce their works. They watch with suspicion all attempts to invade the inner workshop and to systematize its secrets. Surely, creative processes are not the only ones to rely upon impulses from outside the realm of awareness, but they are unique in that their results give the impression of being beyond and above what can be accounted for by the familiar mental mechanisms. To the artist himself, his accomplishment is often a cause of surprise and admiration, a gift from somewhere rather than the traceable outcome of his efforts. It is viewed as a privilege that might be forfeited like the golden treasures of the fairy tales, which vanish when curiosity ignores the warnings and peeps at the miracle-working spirit. (GPPG, 1-2)

So without the artist present to confer, and with no detailed artist’s statement left behind to explain the creative process or more importantly a description of the final meaning of the end result, every interpretation, no matter how deeply researched, is still the personal interpretation of the viewer.
Scholarly interpretations of *Guernica* often refer to the sketches left behind by Picasso, as if they are puzzle parts of a treasure map that lead to the meaning of each figure in the painting. Speaking as an artist myself, I find it odd that the sketches, which show more of what never went in to the final version *Guernica*, are often relied upon as clues. In my experience, artists often make sketches to see what works and what doesn’t work compositionally in a final piece. If the contents of a sketch do not match the final piece, then I argue that the idea was rejected, and therefore it is not irrefutable further evidence of the final meaning. The sketches do reveal part of the processes of creativity, they are in fact, “poietic”, involved in the “revealing” and the technique of creating in the sense of how Heidegger describes *techne*:

We must observe two things with respect to the meaning of this word. One is that *techne* is the name not only for the activities and skills of the craftsman, but also for the arts of the mind and the fine arts. *Technē* belongs to bringing-forth, to *poësis*; it is something poietic. Thus the clue to what the word *techne* means and to how the Greeks defined it leads us into the same context that opened itself to us when we pursued the question of what instrumentality as such in truth might be. Technology is a mode of revealing. Technology comes to presence [West] in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where *aletheia*, truth, happens. (QCT, 12-13)

The “revealing” here, is a reading of the content. The interpretations of others do continue to be worthy of exploration today, as these discussions highlight the importance of *Guernica* as work of art in the aesthetic sense and as a significant political marker.

In “Images of War, Picasso’s Guernica” 17, John Corbin refers to *Guernica* as “perhaps the world's most famous modern painting”. Even though “as a military event in a modern war, the bombing of Guernica deserves little more than a footnote”, because of the painting, “the bombing became notorious” (IWPG, 1). Corbin continues:

Its symbolism puzzles because of the discrepancy between its central images and the bombing. This paper resolves the puzzle first by distinguishing “Picasso's *Guernica*”, as a symbolic object in itself, from “*Guernica*”, as a composition of symbolic images, and arguing that it is the first, not the second, that represents the bombing; and secondly by drawing on an anthropology of Spanish culture to interpret the images. (IWPG, 1) Thus the puzzle of the images vanishes and their symbolism becomes

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transparent. Coherence and consistency emerge. *Everything* about the painting, its shape and composition, its physical perspective, its modernist execution and its pre-modern symbolism, works to the same end. That end is to represent the collapse of Spanish civilization. (IWPG, 18)

William Darr describes the context of linked symbols throughout *Guernica* in his 1966 essay “Images of Eros and Thanatos in Picasso's *Guernica*”\(^{18}\). He describes “the blazing sun-eye” as “another ancient universal symbol for Godhead, as light, law, rationality and objective male power” For Darr, the image of sun and eye combined represents “Divine Reason and the beneficent product of that Reason, the life-giving sun; as lamp-bulb and eye, it represents Man's Reason and the product of that Reason, electricity. As negative light, exploding bomb, it is Arnheim's “Consciousness without Conscience”, consciousness of course includes pain. Darr continues by describing the oppositional duality of the symbols as well: “The blazing sun is on one level God Almighty of the Old Testament or its Marxist equivalent as Dialectical Materialism. The gentle kerosene flame has aspects of the Agape of Christian faith: grace, forgiveness, redemption, pity and love” (IETG, 343).

The first of the three main images I would like to discuss is the figure of the stricken horse, specifically the stippled markings painted on the hide of the horse. The next image is that of a woman whose face is distraught, as if she is in shock. She is holding a light-bearing oil lamp, which she thrusts forward into the centre of the painting with an outstretched arm. For my brief interpretation I propose that these objects tell a story of how the reality of the bombing of Guernica in particular was reported by the combined media\(^{19}\), and how war in general was perceived within the context of Picasso’s reaction to those events as they related to other events, all occurring during the time he lived in. It is also notable that Dora Marr’s influence as model, photographer and muse was also said to be felt in this centre-piece:

Dora’s influence was again embedded in the masterpiece of *Guernica*, created in perhaps the most impassioned and innovative period of Picasso’s career. Her presence is recorded in the painting as the face of the woman

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\(^{19}\) For a robust discussion on the press and propaganda, I suggest Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky’s work, “The Propaganda Model (PM)”, a theory developed by Herman and Chomsky and published in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* in 1988. The opening paragraph states: “The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, inform and inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfil this role requires systematic propaganda”. See: Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Pantheon Books, New York: 1988.
bearing the lamp. We also know that she painted a few vertical strokes on the image of the horse… The composition has at its heart a white triangle of light projected by a naked light globe, resembling the dazzling eye of a flash bulb used to take photographs in the dark. At the heart of Guernica, however, is the unique fusion of Picasso's painting and Dora’s photography, sparked by the empathy between two fiercely inventive minds attuned to the world in such a similar way. (PLW)

From an artistic standpoint in the first image, the stippled brush marks on the horse-hide solves a potential compositional problem resultant in Picasso’s use of almost entirely monochromatic grey, black and white hues that, combined with the surrounding non-narrative, expressive and interpretive shapes, tend to visually “flatten” the mural. The stipple create not only a three-dimensional effect of texture, but more importantly, they are also symbolically and visually reminiscent of newspaper text. European and American press were vital to the “life” and the essence of Guernica, as reports of the bombings and the subsequent and vehement denials by those who carried them out raged on in the days that followed the event.

The gruesome imagery encircled by burning buildings and painted in black, white and subtle gradations of grey, suggests that Picasso may have drawn on newspaper photographs and newsreels documenting the tragedy in Guernica. The fine patterning in the centre of the painting resembles words on torn pieces of newspaper, suggesting that art is as powerful as the mass media in communicating a message. (PLW)

In this chapter I have cited the critics Chipp, Greeley and Martin, all who have written extensively on the painting Guernica and the historical events surrounding its inception, creation, and completion. Each author regularly paraphrases and refers to Herbert R. Southworth’s exhaustive research on the subject of the contradictory press reports about the bombing of Guernica. According to Southworth, whose book, Guernica! Guernica! A Study of Journalism, Diplomacy Propaganda and History, covers the reporting of the event in great detail:

It can be said that without the presence of foreign correspondents and Spanish representatives of the foreign press in Bilbao on the night of April 26, there would not have been the event of Guernica as we know it today. The successive phases of the story were also in large part determined by the press. (GG, 11)

Here, Chipp speaks of the suppression of facts, “The government-supported Havas news agency dominant in France, chose (or was forced by the government to suppress the field
dispatches from its own correspondence for about two days)” (PGHT, 38). Greeley refers to the confusing newspaper accounts, “Picasso, in Paris, was forced to rely on wildly speculative reports of the bombing and the war, which ultimately told more about the politicking of media reporting and governments than they revealed about the frontline conditions” (SSCW, 154). Martin describes the first visual references of the bombing, “It was Friday before L’Humanité, joined by Ce Soir and the widely read and politically conservative Le Figaro, published the first photographs of the few standing walls in the stricken town — their window holes appearing like vacant eyes or perhaps open wounds” (PWDG, 52). Furthermore, Chipp states that “Even more important than the prejudices of the press and the fabrications of the propaganda agencies, Guernica inflamed so many crucial political disputes of the age that it rapidly became a cause célèbre” (PGHT, 143).

As the bombing of Guernica was entirely unexpected, it was not until after the bombing that the devastation was captured by newsreel cameramen, and although the technology for television existed it was not yet in public use so the general public relied heavily on photographs and reports almost exclusively from the newspapers on a local and international level. There were outright denials of responsibility by the perpetrators of the bombing, adding fuel to the media fire. Reports heard on the radio were reactions based predominantly on what was reported in newspapers, such as what Southworth describes as a “virulent diatribe” entitled “Lies, Lies, Lies”, that aired on Radio Nacional at Salamanca at nine o’clock on the night of April 27. As Southworth describes it:

This worldwide eruption of indignation caused by the original news stories of the destruction of Guernica provoked the second group of newspaper dispatches forming the Guernica series. These were based on the reaction of the spokesmen of the military junta in Salamanca and began with a hastily improvised, blustering, all-inclusive denial, founded chiefly on the claim that bad weather had prevented the nationalist air force from flying on the day of the alleged bombing. Commentaries on the news of the destruction of Guernica inside Nationalist Spain—reactions to the news from Bilbao by President Aguirre—began about twenty-four hours after the end of the bombing attack, if we accept the time schedule set up by the news from Bilbao. (GG, 32)

I suggest that in Guernica the image of the horse, in its wounded, twisted and screaming state, also acts as the message-bearer of the bombing of Guernica. The meticulously applied stippled markings are characteristic of the thousands of words printed in newspapers—both true and false—about the event. The markings are also reminiscent of the type of marks made for tallying, in this case, counting the number of dead from the bombing (PWDG, 99). It is significant that some of the marks or “words” portrayed by the stipple marks are in shadow
while others are illuminated, and more brightly so by the oil lamp held by the distraught woman than the incandescent light bulb, the light of which is so cold that it appears to cast a shadow rather than light. I would also argue that a key point about how a message is conveyed becomes part of the message itself.

This leads to the second image from the centre of the mural. What makes the light held by the woman appear to radiate so brightly? In this case, Picasso has portrayed the lamp bearer as a woman in anguish, and the lamp is an oil lamp lit with fire which gives the luminosity a more natural quality. Arnheim’s description also mentions that the shape of the woman’s head is “transformed into the shape of a dazzling white comet” (GPPG, 20). I would like to link this particular version of light to the true “light of an idea”, mentioned earlier when quoting Arendt’s description of ideology, versus its representative antithesis, the incandescent bulb within the flattened eye. This is a man-made object that casts its light mechanically, under-illuminating and thus revealing what becomes only a dimly lit version of the truth, fitting the description of what Arendt will be cited as, “an instrument of explanation,” a sort of poor tool, a light only just strong enough so that “something which can be calculated by it” can appear, and not necessarily something real or true (OT, 469). The light from the lamp she is holding is held high so that it reveals another woman’s weeping face, appearing as though she is trying to raise herself after falling, as she looks skyward in sorrow. Is she looking for mercy from God or in helplessness at the bombers flying overhead? Both are invisible. I propose that the main role of the woman with the oil lamp seems to be an illumination of the physical reality of the pain, death and other horrors associated with destruction brought on by tyranny and war.

But there is a particular significance to the third image in my discussion, and that is the technical apparatus of the incandescent light bulb. Note Arnheim’s description:

Compared with the strength of the oil lamp, the large luminary at the ceiling is almost inert. It is not propelled by anybody, and its effect as a giver of light is not apparent since it is outside the cone of illumination. It is lamp, sun, and eye, but these meanings interfere with rather than support each other. This sun is nothing but a lamp, the pupil of the eye is nothing but a bulb; there is a coldness of an inefficient power, whose somewhat dishevelled rays, isolated in the dark and casting shadows as though they were paper cut-outs, do not seem to warm or brighten anything. Here then, is a symbol of detached “awareness”, of a world informed but not engaged. The apparent duplication of the light source actually expresses a significant contrast between the true, small light, whose participation brightens the scene, and the powerful, but blind instrument of a consciousness without conscience. (GPPG, 20)
The original painting of *Guernica* has significant but diffuse elements. According to Dora Marr’s photographic documentation of the work in process, the application of inserting the light bulb within the eye shape, or the “seeing device” from above came at the very end of the creative process. Placing the aesthetics of the political, or portraying consciousness with conscience by reminding us of their opposite, is the finishing touch that I suggest is an excellent example of how introducing technology has a potentially distancing effect on representing authenticity or the “truth”, as Jünger conceptualised regarding the development of a “second consciousness” thanks to photography.

The light bulb within the painting could suggest an insertion of technology’s emerging and growing presence into the scene, lighting the situation or the tableau not in the first but rather in the “second, mediated degree”. Although the light shining from the bulb appears to be of weaker value than the light from the oil lamp, its compositional placement at the top of the painting adds to its presence; it is meant to loom over the situation. *Guernica* is an original painting, and not a reproduction. Benjamin’s phrase, “the loss of aura” (loss of the “first” consciousness) could also be applied to the image of the light bulb featured within the eye-shape as a significant metaphor about the technological reproducibility of art in the form of film, and the “problem” of mass production and mass viewing. According to Benjamin, access to a proliferation of non-original images to more people signifies a reduced authenticity that is potentially dangerous because of its effect on “historical testimony” (WAM, 223). Many people seeing the same reproduced version of an event may eventually come to the conclusion that the truth arrives in mutual consensus, rather than individual testimony.

As mentioned earlier, Arnheim describes the image of the light bulb in *Guernica* as being “cold and inefficient” in its ability to shed light. Another way to put it would be to say that like the moon, it is an orb that seems to shed its own light but is in truth merely reflecting a light that emanates from its true source, the sun. The light from the moon is a weaker version of the sun; its light is cool, not warm, and its light is not original. At its core, Benjamin’s essay is about the effect that distance from the original has, not only upon the subject of the original, but also one would suppose, the affect it has on one viewing the subject as a representation. By saying “distance” what is meant is the distance of the reproduction from the original object or scene. Picasso’s *Guernica* was a painter’s reaction to the moment of an event that he captured and froze in time by applying paint to canvas, an accepted and for many centuries, traditional medium, deemed to be widely understood. Although *Guernica* is physically removed from the actual event it portrays, the presence of its existence where ever it is displayed manages to convey through its aura, the essence of horror that defined that event.
That aura of authenticity manages to give the painting the means to transcend history, because it contains within it the “light of the idea” of the destructive consequences of war.

But the painting also contains the image of the man-made incandescent light bulb, like the light bulb on the film projector that shines through the film and onto the screen—representation rendered through machine technology, or an instrument used as such. The mechanical distancing of the airplane, aiming at “targets” rather than people or homes below, framing the target through a viewfinder and pressing a button to release bombs, this is war at a mechanical distance. Benjamin explains the difference between the painter and the cameraman by using an analogous comparison of the magician and the surgeon:

The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law. Thus for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeation of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment. And that is what one is entitled to ask from a work of art. (WAM, 235-6)

Everything that takes place in the painting is not necessarily specific to the town of Guernica, that is to say there are no sign posts in the painting telling us that these are the things destroyed in that particular town on that particular day. The weeping woman looks skyward, but there are no images of airplanes in the painting. Although the town was bombed from above, the characters in the mural also look as though they might be crowded into one strangely lit room, or arranged on a theatrical stage, frozen in place. Coincidentally, when the mural was placed in the Spanish Pavilion at the International Exhibit in Paris, it appeared upon the world stage where an international audience of thousands were confronted by both the raw reality and the garish illusion of what was happening throughout Europe at the time, alluding to or acting as a warning of what was to come. Rather than representing a single political party and the goals and rhetoric that supports it, Guernica surpasses this by representing “... a broader range of social experience and cultural competence [that] could be drawn into the political struggle” (PEOP, 38).

Guernica is a vivid and emotional combination of images both mythic and civic. It is less important that the political appears in Guernica and it is more significant that Guernica originally appeared in a particular political environment of its time, unmediated by the second consciousness of spectacle.
Guernica as Spectacle

According to Held, “both in its content and its formal language Picasso’s picture represented, in Picasso’s own words, a self-sufficient answer to the destruction of Guernica, one that could not simply be subsumed within some pre-established political programme”. Whether political or non-political, Picasso would have been prepared to allow it to serve any purpose that “happened to be appropriate”, because for him Guernica would always remain “connected with the anti-fascist struggle for the Spanish Republic. Its original political charge was something he always wanted it to keep” (PEOP, 37). Guernica portrayed not only an immediate terror, it also hinted at the further horrors to follow in World War Two. With its striking visual metaphors, the images of Guernica are timeless; it is both heraldic insignia and sombre reminder of the general destruction from all wars. A stunning example of the “political charge” Picasso spoke of was exemplified during an event that took place sixty-six years after the completion of Guernica.

On February 5, 2003, US General Colin Powell went before the United Nations to deliver a mass-media press conference in an attempt to present strategic arguments condoning pre-

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emptive air strikes to begin a war against Iraq. The plan was to “win the hearts and minds” of the public by way of the televised mass-media conduit in the hopes that the public would get behind a US Congress, and steer the way toward funding the effort. However, the stage at the entrance of the UN Security Council where the mass media spectacle was to take place had already been back-dropped by an enormous, privately commissioned golden-hued tapestry of *Guernica*. This woven version was a meticulous copy of the original, set to scale and off-set by a deep, cerulean blue curtain behind it. Apparently the power and the meaning of the imagery in *Guernica* is so instantly recognisable by so many, that it was decided that even a simulacrum should be purposefully obscured from view by placing the blue curtain in front of the tapestry, and arranging a group of national flags (also universally recognised as having “meaning”), in front of the curtain to hide the tapestry. The spectacle in this case was the deliberate absence of the reproduced image of *Guernica*, and the purposeful placement of the flags resulting in the replacing of one visual spectacle with another.

I can merely speculate that what Picasso may have thought would have been “an appropriate purpose” for the representation of this image; however, the US government media advisors clearly did not. Why? One can either assume that there was enough of Picasso’s “political charge” existing within the copy of *Guernica* that steps were taken to remove it from the visual equation of this particular spectacle, that was about to be broadcast world-wide, or perhaps there was a “human charge” that politicians in the era of the spectacle do not wish to acknowledge.

In her essay, “Why Media Aesthetics”21, Miriam Hansen describes the sentiments of relevant print media at the time by quoting reporter Maureen Dowd:

> According to U.N. diplomats, the picture would have sent too much of a “mixed message”; quipped Maureen Dowd in the *New York Times*, “Mr. Powell can’t very well seduce the world into bombing Iraq surrounded on camera by shrieking and mutilated women, men, children, bulls and horses”. (WMA, 2004, 391)

Hansen constructs her discussion of what she refers to as a “cover-up” of the tapestry by questioning why such a cover-up was even needed. “We are so far into the decline of the aura of the work of art in the age of technological reproduction flagged by Walter Benjamin that the opposition between the original and its mass production no longer seems to grasp the conundrum here”. Hansen maintains, however, that the tapestry version of *Guernica* which

she admittedly states is “not a mass-produced object”, still has some “cultural cachet” because the original painting is “an icon of historic modernism, specifically a type of modernism assumed to be allied with progressive politics” (WMA, 391-392). In this case it seems that political (or human) charge and cultural cachet have the same effect.

In an attempt to circumvent the visual representation of history repeating itself, a quality that the imagery of Guernica holds, Colin Powell’s mission was to avoid reminding people of the results of carrying out what would amount to a declaration of war on Iraq—and the level of pain it would cause—so it would seem prudent during the press conference to obscure the images illustrated in even a second-hand version of Guernica. Hansen posits:

> What are the locations of this event and its modalities of existence? How does it appear (and disappear), circulate, and function within the public sphere? Whether or not the image would have been covered up without concern over media coverage is a moot question. The United Nations and its precursor, the League of Nations, are part of a history of globalizing modernity that is unthinkable without the rise of technological mass media and their industrialized public spheres. We’re dealing therefore with yet another transposition of materials, from the artisanal medium of tapestry—via the double veils of cloth and flags—to television, photo-journalism, and the internet. (WMA, 392)

Picasso’s impetus for creating the original painting is important for bringing forth the end result that is Guernica. What I mean here is Picasso’s representation, created in a moment of time, of a moment of time, is part of the painting’s essence. Because of the stationary physical quality of a painting, it cannot present the illusion of the continuous forward movement that the mechanical technology of film by its nature does automatically. However, the original clusters of images created by Picasso that are juxtaposed within Guernica are what enable the power of the composition we see to exist in other forms. With its mixed iconic, indexical and symbolic elements assembled as they are, we can see that even in the case of Macuga’s woven tapestry, created by another person in a different time using completely different materials and technology, the imagery still contains the metaphysical qualities (the embodiment of ordinary human pain) that maintain the validity of this work. Although abstruse and difficult to define, there is something about Guernica that might well “bring forth” the authentic, humanistic and political passion or the aura (Benjamin) that continues to resonate to this day, perhaps immeasurably surpassing even Picasso’s original conception.

What is striking about this incident is how the impact of the original Guernica manages to travel relatively intact through a copy fashioned from radically different materials using totally different technology. Furthermore, the possible appearance of the tapestry on
television devolves the work into a copy thrice removed from the original painting. I argue that what Picasso had achieved in choosing to create and combine the specific images within the composition of *Guernica* in 1937 still acts within the Western visual conceptual context as a recurring artistic “Zeitgeist” that continues to strongly resonate with any political movement against war. Obscured by flags, the tapestry version of *Guernica* was deliberately removed from its mediated view to prevent the public from seeing it. In any form, this image still remains symbolic of the consequences of war in general, not simply the bombing of a town by the same name.

In the essay “The Question Concerning Technology”, Heidegger expresses the view that “the essence of a thing is considered to be *what* the thing is”, but he is not speaking of art, rather, he is describing technology and advancing the view that “the essence of technology is by no means technological” (QCT, 4). For Heidegger, technology provides a way for controlling reality rather than accessing the ability to experience reality as it is. The essence of technology is not merely technological; it is an extension of metaphysics, which is considered to be a mode of revealing, openness, or clearing. The essence of *Guernica* as a work of art is not exhausted by the technological means of realising it, but also includes the effects it produces, in turn by those who witness it, which is to say it also conveys (by revealing) a political message and represents the artist’s testimony of an historical event.

General Powell’s proposal of declaring war on Iraq by way of a pre-emptive bombing strike, was presented via electronic television media in a 21st century setting, with a second-hand version of an avant-garde masterpiece shielded to avoid obvious negative symbolism. Powell wanted to describe a world picture without a particular picture of the world in the background; because that picture of the world represents in fact, the result of what happens to people when they are bombed from above. Benjamin gives us something to think about when we consider the noticeable efforts taken by the US government in orchestrating the cover up of the *Guernica* tapestry—which again was a representation of a painting—behind the podium to prevent the image being broadcast to a mass television audience:

Painting is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience, as it was possible for architecture at all times, for the epic poem in the past, and for the movie today. Although this circumstance in itself should not lead one to conclusions about the social role of painting, it does constitute a serious threat as soon as painting, under special conditions and, as it were, against its nature, is confronted directly by the masses. (WAM, 236-7)
Even if “painting is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience”, as Benjamin states above, the use of what Picasso called an “artistic language” was such that it would translate across geopolitical borders and thus transcend specific events. *Guernica* expressed a particular view of the world that was both honest and powerful. It was an appropriate expression of what was and what would be, and under these “special conditions”, was not an image that the US Government wanted “confronted directly by the masses”.

Debord notes: “In form as in content the spectacle serves as total justification for the conditions and aims of the existing system” (SOS, 13), which is why within the spectacle of Colin Powell’s news conference, the images of Guernica, even in tapestry form, was an entirely inappropriate world-view for presentation to the audience watching *en-masse*. Here, however, is where consideration of what Mathiesen called “synopticism” had to be taken into account, because the millions that make up the viewer society were to view this single television event. In other words, the audience unknowingly managed to exert control over how the spectacle was to be presented. Debord continues, “It [the spectacle] further ensures the *permanent presence* of that justification, for it governs almost all time spent outside the production process itself” (SOS, 13). In this case, the mere representation of Picasso’s *Guernica*, the woven, symbolic simulacrum version of the painting, needed to be hidden under a further layer of spectacle. For if it were visible, their case for “justification” may have been impossible to make.

**Conclusion**

When the US government purposely obscured Goshka Macuga’s woven tapestry version of *Guernica* (Figure 4) within the halls of the UN Security Council, we can interpret this as an example of art being received as propagandistic in a cultural and political sense. The particular reception of this work in that place and at that moment demonstrates that even with the passage of time, Picasso’s *Guernica* has, in our shared cultural view of art, steadily transformed from belonging to Picasso less, and moving more toward a shared consciousness in the world.

Originally exhibited in the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World Fair, there was time and the space for thousands of people in small groups to stroll through the Pavilion who could take the time to stop and through close examination, critique or at least discuss the work. The art is brought to the masses in an open way; also, this is not the “projection” of a painting, the painting is there before the eyes of the people witnessing it, it has boundaries, four sides, the objects portrayed within the boundaries are perfectly still. The painting in total remains still
for examination in the light of day, unlike the group audience experience in a movie theatre who, seated side by side facing one direction sit wordlessly (we hope) in darkness, as the objects in the film in front of them appear to do the parading while the watching audience remains still.

In the next chapter, I discuss the film *Triumph of the Will*. Riefenstahl’s film involves the assemblage of images, and also like Picasso’s mural, the end result of such an assemblage of imagery was, and remains quite powerful. While both *Triumph of the Will* and *Guernica* came about as the result of a political commission, there is a major difference in regard to the location of its auratic power. In the case of *Guernica*, this power comes from representing the truth of a devastating and real situation, and an artist’s reaction to an authentic event, the silent cry of innocent victims.

I will argue that as a film, *Triumph of the Will* is an attempt to stage a “second consciousness” (Jünger) beyond the terms of a first subjective consciousness predicated on human standards of perception and pain. *Triumph of the Will* derives its spectacular effect through the artist’s arrangement of actions en masse, portrayed as mythic images existing in time and space, with shots calculated for maximum effect using specific viewing angles. These effects were brought about by the intention of the political commissioners, but mediated by the artist through the technology of a cold, mechanical eye that is the camera lens.
C3 Figure 1: The shadow of Hitler’s airplane flying above the spectacle of thousands of Nazi troops marching through the streets of Nuremberg on their way to the 1934 Nazi Party Rally. (Still photo taken from the early scenes of *Triumph of the Will*).¹


C3 Figure 3: Still shot from Triumph of the Will ³


C3 Figure 4: The Russian and German exhibition halls attempting to out-do each other in size, strength and architectural posturing. A. Dubout, “At the Exposition: once again, these two are the ones fighting” (WOE, 37). Candide, 15 July 1937. James D. Herbert, Paris 1937. (CNFP, 294)
CHAPTER THREE:

Triumph of the Will /Triumph des Willens: Triumph of Ideology

Introduction

In 1937, the official name of the world’s fair where the first official unveiling of Guernica occurred was “Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne” or “International Exposition dedicated to Art and Technology in Modern Life”. This somewhat grandiose title signalled an intention and thus created an expectation of the event, in fact its draw card was that it would be a spectacle. The organisers of the Fair had in mind a venue where common ground could be shared among European nations that for the previous seven years had endured the strain of increasingly strident political rhetoric, violent outbursts, and outright military attacks on one another. This common ground would ostensibly be found in exhibitions that presented national achievements in architecture, art, culture, science and technology. The significance of the fair for this thesis is that Guernica and Triumph of the Will were both on display at the fair representing the political and creative scene of their respective nations: Spain and Germany.

The inspiration for the general architectural plan of the fair was based on the notion of “a peaceful alliance of all nations”. This hope was expressed by Fernand Chapsal, the French minister of Trade in his opening speech:

France’s decision to hold this major event in insecure and difficult times demonstrates faith in its fate and the future of peace. And by taking up the invitation, the peoples of the world have demonstrated their solidarity with this faith and that they also intend to direct their efforts in the same objective. The World Exposition will have fallen short of its goal if it were merely a spectacle—whatever its brilliance. (CNFP, 293)

Echoing Chapsal’s sentiments in his Inaugural speech, Dr Hjalmar Schacht at the German House also proclaimed:

The world exhibition in Paris is an appeal to the nations to build bridges from country to country: bridges of flourishing trade, bridges for tourism, but also bridges for a more intimate contact in civilization, and thus bridges for a solid political understanding to the benefit of all participants. Germany’s exhibition at Paris wishes to contribute its share in attaining this end. (CNFP, 293)

Rather than building a bridge for more “intimate contact” with Spain, however, the Germans went on to dismiss Picasso’s mural at the Spanish Pavilion as “the work either of a lunatic or of a four-year old”\(^5\) (PWY, 72).

Before elaborating on *Triumph of the Will*, I would like to mention one of the most interesting aspects in this time of invention, technology and spectacle and that was how the television arrived on the scene but was promptly ignored by a regime that was fully invested in disseminating propaganda. In his essay, “Presenting the ‘window on the world’ to the world, Competing Narratives of the Presentation of Television at the World's Fairs in Paris (1937) and New York (1939)”, Andreas Fickers asserts that “the World’s Fairs—in their quality as politically and symbolically charged showcases of modernity—created a qualitatively new frame of exposition for television” (CNFP, 292). And yet, as media historians note, the use of television as a medium for propaganda was one of the largest opportunities completely missed by Nazi Germany in terms of public impact. Germany was eager to showcase television because of the impact it had made with live transmissions of the 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin.

Peter Hoff states in his essay “German Television (1935–1944) as subject and medium of National Socialist Propaganda”\(^6\):

> On the one hand, live transmissions of an original event like the Olympic Games were, without a doubt, technical pioneering acts. On the other hand, they also represented instances of Nazi German broadcasting, they demonstrated nationalistic superiority, they feigned open mindedness towards scientific-technical progress, while, at the same time, leading scientists had been driven out of the country. (GTNP, 232)

Walter Bruch, who was considered “a German television pioneer of the first hour” and who was responsible for the Fair’s television technology staged by Telefunken\(^7\), reported that “the

\(^5\) Steven A. Nash, Ed. *Picasso and the War Years 1937-1945*. Thames and Hudson: New York, NY, 1998. From here on in will be cited as PWY.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01439689000260181>. Web, April, 2011. From here on in will be cited as GTNP.

Post Office decided to forge the iron as long as it was hot and to produce and transmit the most modern German television with film transmissions and live-programmes from the top of the German pavilion in Paris 1937" (CNFP, 293). Television as an invention, however, was somewhat overshadowed by a film that was featured on another German stage.

**Defining Triumph on the Will: Spectacle as Propaganda**

Although Riefenstahl’s film had premiered much earlier in Berlin on the 28th of March in 1935, two years later it still had such an impact on audiences and judges that it managed to receive the “Diplome de Grand Prix”, a highly esteemed award presented at the Paris World’s Fair exhibition in July, 1937. According to Steve Neale’s essay, “*Triumph of the Will, Notes on Documentary and Spectacle*”9, receiving this particular award “is of significance for the film’s later inscription into cinema history” (NDS, 63). The question is what did this award stand for? Should this film have been considered as a work of art, and if so what were the criteria for this award? Riefenstahl was and still is considered an artist in film direction and photography. However, David Weinberg states in his essay “Approaches to the Study of Film in the Third Reich: A Critical Appraisal”10:

The purpose of the film was to introduce German and foreign audiences to the personalities of the newly installed Nazi regime and to impress upon...

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8 According to Fickers: In contrast to popular but rather modest French activities on the promotion of the “window to the world” at the Paris World’s Fair, German television had already passed its official inauguration at the other “media event” of modernity: the Olympic Games. The Berlin Olympic Games of 1936 were the first ones ever broadcasted live by television: about 150,000 people in Berlin could attend a daily television programme up to eight hours in 28 so-called “television halls”, public viewing rooms for about 50–100 spectators. Already one year before, the Reich Director of Broadcasting, Eugen Hadamovsky, had declared open the “first broadcasting in the world with regular television programming”. In his speech from 22 March 1935, Hadamovsky left no doubt about the cultural mission and first of all the political goals linked with the new technology: “Now, in this hour, broadcasting is called upon to fulfil its greatest and most sacred mission: to plant the image of the Führer indelibly in all German hearts”. As Monika Elsner and Thomas Müller have shown, the inauguration of a regular television service in Germany was part of the National Socialist eagerness to claim the superiority of German technology. Nazi officials and technicians were driven by their ambitions to “beat” the British and to be the first nation on earth to start with a regular television service. It is worth noting that the real television service in the mid- and end of the 1930s remained an experimental playground for a handful ambitious television engineers and writers, and—most important—a medium without a public. (CNFP, 298, all in-text footnotes have been removed).


viewers its immense power and popularity. Over a million individuals were choreographed to march, salute, and sing in demonstration of their unwavering loyalty to the Reich. Special structures were built expressly for the rally and were designed in such a way as to have maximum effect upon the film viewer. More than any other film produced under Nazism, *Triumph of the Will* reflects the ability of Nazi propaganda to manipulate the emotions and desires of the German masses through the film medium. (AFTR, 117)

In Germany the medium and the message culminated in a new genre of films called the *Wahlfilme*, or “election films” (NPEF, 32).

The notion of *Wahlfilme* had begun eleven years before the filming of *Triumph of the Will* took place. It was in 1923, during his eight month imprisonment as punishment for his failed “beer-hall putsch”\(^{11}\), that Adolf Hitler worked out his political ideologies in what was to become his notorious thesis *Mein Kampf*\(^{12}\). One of his most significant statements, “the finest theoretical insight remains without purpose and value if the leader does not set the masses in motion toward it”, was manifested in a movement that was put into practice during his rise to power (MK, 580). In 1934, Goebbels stated in a speech, “We are convinced that in general film is one of the most modern and far-reaching methods of influencing the masses. A regime thus must not allow film to go its own way”\(^{13}\). In William G. Chrystal’s essay “Nazi Party Election Films, 1927-1938”\(^{14}\), he explains that achieving the influence of the masses “was

\(^{11}\) On the evening of November 8, 1923 leaders of the Bavarian government were holding a rally at a Munich beer hall before 3000 spectators. Suddenly, Hitler burst into the hall, fired a pistol in the air and announced that the building was surrounded by 600 of his storm-troopers. The Nazi leader whisked the stunned Bavarian officials off the stage and into a back room where he vowed to hold them hostage until they expressed support for his revolution. The hostages soon acquiesced. Unfortunately, the spontaneous enthusiasm Hitler expected from the local population was not immediately forthcoming. By dawn the following day, the coup attempt was running out of steam, riddled with confusion and lack of direction. However, Hitler had promised a march on Berlin and despite the dwindling chance of success, he led a column of approximately 2,000 armed followers through the streets of Munich. Entering a city square, the marching rebels were confronted by a police unit. Shots rang out and fourteen Nazis were killed in the ensuing bedlam. Hitler escaped only to be arrested two days later. Tried and convicted of treason, the Nazi leader was sentenced to five years of confinement under reasonably comfortable conditions, but actually served only eight months. The experience taught Hitler that power was to be achieved not through armed conflict but through manipulation of the existing political system. From: http://www.eyewitnesshistory.com/pfputsch.htm.


indeed the Hitlerian task, and its accomplishment was possible only with systematized propaganda”. Written rather explicitly in *Mein Kampf*, Hitler’s general idea was that:

The picture in all its forms up to the film has greater possibilities. Here a man needs to use his brains even less; it suffices to look, or at most to read extremely brief texts, and thus many will more readily accept a pictorial presentation than read an article of any length. The picture brings them in a much briefer time, I might almost say at one stroke, the enlightenment which they obtain from written matter only after arduous reading. (MK, 470)

Together, Hitler and Goebbels also felt that “there must be two key elements in a successful propaganda campaign-simplicity and repetition”. The two obviously felt superior to the ordinary public, because in their minds, according to Chrystal, the masses had only a “limited ability to comprehend political thought”. The use of film was ideal as it was agreed that “for these tasks, the conventional media would be of little use” (NPEF, 29). Hoff points out that television had been ruled out for wide propaganda use because “on the screen of the television receiver, the *Führer* became a coincidental visitor, whom one could “switch off”, lock out. This was inconceivable for Nazi propaganda” (GTNP, 238).

The methodology of Nazi propaganda simply did not include room for individuals in private to enter into decision making about what they cared to watch, and besides, why attempt to influence one person at a time when crowds seemed easier to control? This is why much more energy and money was poured into films:

The Nazis looked for and provoked the crowd situation, which they intended to form in their mass events. The media conceptions of the National Socialists were also determined by these ideas. For them, the cinema became primarily a means of entertainment. The popular entertainment film dominated the programmes of the picture palaces. The movie viewer was removed from his world of everyday life for the time of reception of the film. In the mass events of Nazi Germany, the individual was also removed from his everyday life, and, at the same time, also from his personal insignificance. It had been resolved in a mass, which already meant ‘strength’ and ‘power’ itself, with the outstanding personality of the leader at the head. (GTNP, 238)

Goebbels knew that film was the ultimate distraction and that by choosing Riefenstahl who, above all, claims to have had “artistic ambitions to make great films of emotional power but free of propagandistic intent”, the film could be a work of art as well as being politically influential. However, combined with “Nazi Party pressure for a film that would generate a
positive image at a moment when its power was not fully consolidated and its leadership not fully concentrated in Hitler”\textsuperscript{15}, the aestheticization of politics as propaganda was the natural outcome, regardless of any original artistic intentions (ITD, 94).

According to Susan Tegel in her essay, “Leni Riefenstahl: Art and Politics”\textsuperscript{16}, even though she had “only one film to her credit, Riefenstahl landed the important commission of filming the first Nuremberg rally after the Nazi take-over. Hitler himself had commissioned it as well as all her subsequent documentaries”. However, this was not a completely popular decision to some insiders because “she was not a party member”, which apparently “did not go down well in some quarters” (LRAP, 187). Tegel continues:

Arnold Raether, Head of the Film Department at the Propaganda Ministry wrote dismissively in 1933: ‘One thing is certain that up to one year ago Fräulein Riefenstahl knew nothing about National Socialism’ (Raether to Hans Hinkel, 8 September 1933). But Riefenstahl had Hitler’s backing and, despite what she has said and written, also that of Joseph Goebbels, if we give credence to his diary entries which sing her praises: ‘the only one amongst the stars who understands us’, he recorded on 14 June 1933. (LRAP, 187)

Furthermore, it should be noted that \textit{Triumph of the Will} was not the first Nuremberg Rally film Riefenstahl had ever made. Although she spoke dismissively of it in her memoirs as being an amateurish flop, she had also filmed \textit{Sieg des Glaubens (Victory of Faith)}, the official film of the Nuremberg Party Rally, 30, August to 3, September, 1933. Riefenstahl claims she was only given a few days preparation before the rally began, but research shows otherwise. In 1988, Martin Loiperdinger and David Culbert’s essay “Leni Riefenstahl, the SA, and the Nazi Party Rally Films, Nuremberg 1933–1934: \textit{Sieg des Glaubens and Triumph des Willens}”\textsuperscript{17}, reveals that Riefenstahl had been specifically chosen by Hitler and Goebbels several months earlier to film the 1933 Party Rally\textsuperscript{18}.


\textsuperscript{18} There is much to be said about Riefenstahl’s previous work and her murky involvement with the Nazi party. I say “murky” because she often claims that because she was not an official party member, she was not knowingly
On 16 May 1933, Goebbels offered Riefenstahl the opportunity to make a film about Hitler; she was enthusiastic. A couple of days after another talk with Goebbels on 11 June, Riefenstahl had a conference with Hitler himself, and after that she began to prepare the Party Rally film. On 19 June she discussed the film again with Goebbels. Then, in the afternoon of 13 August, Goebbels met Riefenstahl at his house in Berlin to discuss film matters. At 6 pm that evening, he flew back to Heiligendamm, an Ostsee resort where he was on vacation. Just two days later, on 15 August, Riefenstahl came all the way to Heiligendamm, expressly to discuss something with him. On the next day, 16 August, she saw him a third time. The brief references of the Goebbels diary entries reveal all that we need to know. (LRSA, 4)

The significance of this from an artistic standpoint is that from her experience with Sieg des Glaubens, Riefenstahl learned a great deal technically about what to do when it came to shooting Triumph of the Will. What it means from a political standpoint is that she could not possibly have been as naïve as she often claims to be about her responsibility as an influential artist within the political sphere or the public eye.

In Ray Müller’s 1993 documentary film, The Wonderful Horrible life of Leni Riefenstahl19 she says in response to the director’s question about her “influence”:

What was my responsibility? By that time 90% of the people were enthusiastic about Hitler. …To me the film wasn’t about politics, it was an event. I shot the subject-matter as well as I could and shaped it into a film. Now, whether or not it was about politics or about vegetable or fruits, I couldn’t have cared less. (Leni Riefenstahl, 1993)

Perhaps this is one of the widest points of difference between Picasso and Riefenstahl, that Picasso’s art and politics in regard to Guernica were admittedly entangled, and that he of course, cared tremendously. Finally, in Picasso’s case, he truly did have a very limited time to prepare for and complete his work, and no mental or emotional preparation whatsoever for painting what amounted to an immediate response to the event behind Guernica.

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Surveillance as Spectacle in *Triumph of the Will*: The Thin Line between Mass Appeal and Mass Control

In this section I will refer again primarily to Neale’s article because it contains such a thorough and enlightening close analysis of the film. Neale speculates on “a juxtaposition of a series of related conceptions of film, documentary and propaganda, a juxtaposition which is not in fact explicitly made or explicitly recognized by the critics of *Triumph of the Will*.” Neale argues that once those juxtapositions are realised, so too will the contradictions come to light as he focuses “in particular on notions about (and definitions of) the relationship between documentary, cinema and vision” (NDS, 65). I will discuss only certain aspects of this film, just as I pinpointed my argument within a limited and specific area of Picasso’s painting *Guernica*. In this case, I am using scenes in *Triumph of the Will* to highlight certain moments within the film when surveillance appears in metaphors of omniscious power illustrated in the cinematic realm of visual culture.

I have chosen this film as being one of the most influential films in which some of the earliest examples of key surveillance or eye-of-God tropes are revealed. Several “cinematic and ideological” power plays occur in *Triumph of the Will*, and Neale’s frame by frame analysis helpfully constructs a case for this film constituting a crucial moment in the emergence of the surveillance film genre. The form of the film and its subject are concerned with the manipulation of reality through aspects of (the construction of) visuality. By addressing the audience’s desire to see, the intention of the film is to manipulate and control. Neale’s article is primarily focussed on an examination of “two areas of systematicity – spectacle and looking”, as he works towards exploring what he refers to as “the compartmentalising of art on the one hand and history on the other” (NDS, 63-65).

The opening scenes of the film feature a point of view originating from inside the cockpit of an airplane in flight. Neale describes how the shots in the crucial opening scenes “function to install spectacle as the principle of the film’s operations”, through “the imbrications of framing, composition, movement and clouds” (NDS, 66). At first we see no ground below; we see only sky above and voluminous white clouds at eye level, very brightly lit. Neale points out that “cloud formations in particular here are both important and indicative”. Citing Hubert Damisch’s argument in his book *Theorie du nuage* (Paris, 1972), Neale adds that according to Damisch, “clouds have been an essential ingredient in the whole apparatus of spectacle in European art” and that within that context, the bright white
luminosity of the clouds and the contrast of shadow or “chiaroscuro”\(^20\) suggests or perhaps signals an approaching spectacle (NDS, 67).

Somewhat mysteriously, there are no visible passengers or pilot at the controls of the airplane, so the spectator feels naturally placed in the diegesis of the film. According to Neale’s description, it is important that we are made aware of the existence of the machinery as driving our view from the cockpit of the airplane. This gives the viewer, at once both spectator and pilot, a visual authority in several ways. By being part of the machinery we feel in some control through our connection by sight to what is happening in the film, while still being disconnected by our separation from the machinery, thus releasing us from having any responsibility over the scene. Additionally, Neale suggests that the infinite view of the sky gives us a simultaneous sense of “limitless” power. The successfulness of this theatrical effect is dependent upon the audience being aware of the artifice, thereby entering in and out of the sense of the real and the unreal, which enables a visually interpretive action within the technological context of the film.

In offering to the spectator’s gaze a set of forms which mask and fill an otherwise empty and potentially infinite space (the sky) while simultaneously signifying the very emptiness and infinity that they mask, clouds have come to function, in a sense, to signify spectacle itself. This

\(^{20}\) Chiaroscuro: From the Italian, “chiaro meaning clear or bright, +scuro, meaning dark or to obscure. The treatment of or disposition of the light and shade, or brighter and darker masses, in a picture; an effect or contrast of light and shade in a picture or in nature”. (OED, A-M, Vol. I, (392). A word used to describe the use of light and dark in artworks.
double functioning illustrates particularly well the contradiction that spectacle involves. The traces of the cockpit in the image have an interesting significance and role in relation to this. If the spectating subject is inscribed, via the spectacle of the cloud formations, in interrelationship with an easily flowing and effortless series of movements (both of the aircraft and of the panning camera within it) – the gaze able almost to encompass the infinite, such is its position of visual privilege — the traces I am referring to function so as to circumscribe its apparently limitless power. (NDS, 67)

This distanced point of view can also create the visual impossibility of being able to see individuals who, from high above, become effectively erased when viewing large crowd scenes. At times the masses of people look like indeterminate shapes, reminiscent of how different the world looks from above as opposed to at eyesight level from the ground. I see this as a reminder not only of disappearing boundaries of 1930s Europe, and symbolic of Hitler’s plan to overtake and subsume the boundaries of various countries under his wider rule, but also of Hitler as the great single will over the new urban and even the world’s masses. Neale’s quote below describes and underpins one of the defining factors for why Triumph of the Will signals its kinship with the surveillance film genre:

[T]he aircraft’s forward movement through the clouds and down towards Nuremburg marks the first point of re-orientation of the film’s visual system. As the plane descends, the clouds appear to dissolve, to draw apart like a stage-curtain, to reveal the aerial spectacle of the city itself, spread out below for our gaze . . . it also fully establishes that the register and position of the gaze of the spectator is one of privileged mastery, now detached from and transcending any specific, identifiable and circumscribed place. (NDS, 68)

Having situated our spectatorship position in the sky, we are now, like Hitler, in a position to survey everything below. The shots taken from above now famously show the airplane’s shadow moving over the sleeping town of Nuremburg. Later, its dark swath cuts across large masses of marching soldiers, demonstrating another obvious watching, although simultaneously suggesting a somewhat “looming” over-all aspect of God’s eye. Our subsequent knowledge of what happened as a result of Hitler’s rise to power has left us with another meaning that we attach to shadow: one of predator flying over prey.
Another interesting and important component in this view is the optical illusion created by shooting the film from an airplane, which positions a wide distance between the lens of the camera and the objects below. Neale notes that “the plane’s diegetic presence is “remarked” by the shadow of the plane passing over the town, and that the “spectator’s gaze, above the city, comprehending both the plane and its shadow is re-inscribed in its position of all-encompassing mastery” (See Fig. 1). Like a trompe-l’oeil painting he finds the scene, “strikingly contrived” and “composed” and therefore it “functions precisely to catch the eye”:

The point is that the trompe-l’oeil of painting pretends to be something other than what it is. What is it that attracts and satisfies us in trompe-l’oeil? When is it that it captures our attention and delights us? At the moment when, by a mere shift of our gaze, we are able to realize that the representation does not move with the gaze and that it is merely a trompe-l’oeil. For it appears at that moment as something other than it seemed, or rather it now seems to be that something else. The picture does not compete with appearance; it competes with what Plato designates for us beyond appearance as being the Idea. (NDR, 68-69)

For the most part, Triumph of the Will is a filmic “trompe-l’œil” matching almost perfectly what the phrase in the original French conveys: “Dummy window; deceptive appearance; illusion; eye-wash; piece of bluff, of camouflage”\(^{21}\) (HFED, 653). It cannot, therefore, be considered “authentic” in the way that Benjamin discussed. Triumph of the Will attempts to create the illusion of “history in the making” or the event itself as history unfolding. Yet sixty

years later, the film reveals it has a different effect. Neale points out various sequences or moments within the film that produce a reaction of “delight” because something appears to be other than what we originally thought it was. After the war however, it becomes horrifyingly obvious that almost everything portrayed in *Triumph of the Will* was other than it seemed, or was at least only one side of the coin. In other words, they seem to be watching a political rally rather than the preparations for war which means pain, death and destruction. This is what *Triumph of the Will* actually foretells.

The original images in this film do not “break” time, nor is this film a work of art that transcends time, rather the images inform us about a spectacle held in that time. The images, although appearing to be in constant forward movement on the screen, actually feel more fixed and immobile when seen from today’s perspective. For the audience, the organisation and aestheticization of the content placed in formal order help to convey the positive, enthusiastic happiness of the crowds that easily brings the distancing required to enable a “second consciousness” (Jünger) to emerge. This may cause an audience in 1937 as yet unaffected by war to become enthralled at the display of overwhelming power and might, rather than fearful and aghast at the notion of being completely overtaken by a dictator and a totalitarian regime.

Neale describes a sequence involving twenty-one shots that move rhythmically between medium to close-up shots of Hitler and long camera shots of the masses taken from high above the rally. In the background of the sequence we can hear a speech Hitler is presenting from a podium to a mass of what appears to be thousands of regimented soldiers. Back and forth the scenes cut from Hitler at the podium speaking to thousands, to Hitler speaking alone from the podium, to massed flags being carried forward by troops, to a mass of marching troops, and then back again to a shot of Hitler speaking to the troops. Although quite sparse in its technique, the effect is powerful. Clearly the message being given is that this is power in the making, the beginning of a historical moment in Germany and the sense of promise through an artistic technique of creating the illusion of history through film. Here is how Neale sums up this method of sequencing:

If this is the economy profoundly at work in the sequence, indeed in the film as a whole, it is marked by a particularity in its emphasis on spectacle and looking as a means, in the absence of a plot, of holding film together and especially, by their functioning in relation to the figure of Hitler — the figure who literally dominates the film. (NDS, 83)
Tegel gives us more insight on the motives of Riefenstahl as an artist – motives that appear to contrast starkly with those of Picasso. Riefenstahl was well aware of what the Nuremberg Rally was all about: “Despite Riefenstahl’s claim to have been in Nuremberg for only two days, her biographer has uncovered contemporary newspaper accounts proving that she was indeed there for the entire period” (LRAP, 190). There was a good reason for this, as Tegel reports:

The 1935 Nuremberg rally was significant for another event. During the rally, though not at the rally itself, the Nuremberg Laws were announced. At the rally, the leader of the Reich Doctors had raised the issue of banning marriages between Jews and non-Jews. But it was however, at a ‘symbolic meeting’ of the Reichstag, summoned to Nuremberg by Hitler at the same time — it had not met there since 1543 — that the new race laws were announced. The Reichstag was called on to approve three laws: a new Flag Law, whereby the swastika replaced the imperial flag beloved by the conservative military; the Citizenship Law and the Blood Law, the last two subsequently becoming known as the Nuremberg Laws. (LRAP, 189-190)

Realistically, it is almost impossible to imagine Riefenstahl or any director being able to film *Triumph of the Will* in just two days, and yet, as Tegel says, if she could claim she had been at the rally for such a short time, then later “she could plead a political innocence, as well as ignorance of decisions concerning the Jews, though the latter were hardly secret” (LRAP, 190).

**Comparing and Contrasting *Triumph of the Will* and *Guernica***

In this section I will begin my discussion by comparing and contrasting some of the elements shared by Picasso and Riefenstahl. As artists, they employed the use of powerful, fragmented images assembled aesthetically to create compositions that conveyed stories based in the political. Picasso’s use of Cubist techniques in *Guernica* conjures such fragmentation. The painting is about destruction, frozen in the moment when it occurs. By contrast, *Triumph of the Will*, regardless or perhaps because of its use of editing to rearrange moments in time, was assembled to create an impression of mass assembly with the people (or *Volk*) seen as one powerful force. R.L. Rutsky\(^{22}\) paraphrases Kracauer’s reading of the film:

The basis of this appeal is not a “desire for tyranny” — an idea that would extend even the most pessimistic conceptions of false consciousness — but precisely a desire for a sense of wholeness, of Heimat. The “aesthetic” mediation of brain and heart, rationality and human emotions, masculine and feminine, modern technology and an ancient or eternal spirituality, is not simply “an ideological veil,” hiding the “truth” of Nazi desire; this mediation is itself the “truth” of National Socialism’s appeal. This truth is, of course, ideological, as is the desire for wholeness that is its basis. (MTGN, 28-29)

Although the people are seen especially from above as abstract geometric formations, when we are returned to the close-up shots of small groups, these people are often seen laughing, happy, and jubilant. These well regimented macro-masses and joyful micro-groups are meant to represent a unification of the German spirit.

On assignment from Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels and the Ministry of Propaganda, Riefenstahl’s Triumph of the Will creates the impression of a political rally as well-ordered machine, but through an artistic and somewhat flamboyant lens. The rally appears on an enormous scale, carried out in completely ordered unity as a thrilling visual spectacle of organisation and powerful leadership. Nazi party leaders, one after another, were seen giving rousing speeches, all leading up to the grand finale of Hitler’s speech. Taken together, these speeches promise a brilliant future filled with power and glory. But this promise seems only possible if inspired by a single ruler, Adolf Hitler. The city of Nuremberg also provided Riefenstahl with the optimal location and backdrop for several reasons that Rutsky lists here:

The abstract, modernist architectonic of the mass ornament is mediated with a familiar, older spirit, a sense of organic or natural connection, of Heimat, which is represented by the “organic”, gothic architecture of the ancient city of Nuremberg, with its connotations of past German glories. (MTGM, 29)

Riefenstahl’s task was to mythologize Hitler as a leader and render events as being spectacular and inspiring through the use of creative film editing, lighting, and shot angle techniques. At that time, Hitler was still not fully accepted as a leader. Riefenstahl’s assignment was to create a visually lavish film that would establish unanimous support for Hitler’s rule. The task was to create a diegesis of natural spontaneity that would reveal the delight of those following one man and one vision. These images, along with those of gigantic swastika branded flags fluttering in the background, were to become instantly iconic for the illustration of nationalistic mythologies and ideologies.
Unlike the thousands of images strung together in a film, Picasso’s Guernica begins and ends with one, single frame. It is this frame that is missing at the end of Triumph of the Will. The characters within the painting are innocent victims; the perpetrator of their agonised suffering is never revealed, rather it is only the devastation brought upon them that is featured. No images of suffering or agony are depicted in Triumph of the Will; instead only exuberant joy, harmony and mass consensus are shown. There is only one sombre ritual of Hitler laying wreaths upon the monuments of dead war heroes. It is ironic that the young soldiers portrayed so heroically by the cameras in the film, are later to become in reality the German bomber pilots of the Condor Legion airplanes. They represent the very same soldiers who indiscriminately carried out the general destruction and devastation to the town of Guernica.

In his critique and analysis of Guernica, Arnheim asks, “How does the subject matter of the mural compare with the facts? Obviously, Picasso condensed the event in time and space. No painting can present a sequence of happenings as a film or story can”. This serves to point out that with the use of film, there is somewhat of an advantage when arranging the portrayal of events in a particular chronological order. Even though Picasso took careful pains to document the sequential activities that created the mural, Arnheim asserts that the mural itself “is no historical chronicle, but a tragedy of human beings envisaged within the close range of the eyes of the peasants terrorized by the disaster”, meaning it could really be about the suffering of war’s cruelty anytime and anywhere (GPPG, 19). In contrast, Triumph of the Will was created for just the very purpose of assuming the mantel of “historical chronicle”, thus becoming the “official document” of the Nuremburg Party Rally of 1934. However, in his essay, “Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde”23, Bill Nichols asserts that there is a key difference between documents and documentaries:

Documents have long been regarded as factual elements of the historical record, free of the editorializing stratagems of the orator or the interpretative leanings of the historian. Documentaries, on the other hand, are the product of a persuasive, or at least poetic, intent to have an audience see and act differently. (DFAG, 587, Note 13)

Arnheim also observed that “Picasso is not a painter of crowds”, and although in 1937 the town of Guernica held more than 10,000 inhabitants, Picasso places only nine figures in the painting, thus “the mural presents no crowd at all” (GPPG, 19).

The exact opposite occurs in *Triumph of the Will*. This film swells with throngs of people assembled and amassed in every possible way. Riefenstahl arranged these masses of “extras” to be brought into the film so that the audience would see both players and spectators. Goebbels used *Triumph of the Will* to solve the problem of speaking to the masses through cinema in another instance of Mathiesen’s “Synopticon”. The audience watching the film observes that the same players who served as spectators can also be seen as witnesses and willing participants in Hitler’s Third Reich. Nichols describes the necessary elements when a film works to create the impression of a documentary:

The appearance of documentary involves the combination of three pre-existing elements—photographic realism, narrative structure, and modernist fragmentation—along with a new emphasis on the rhetoric of social persuasion. This combination of elements itself became a source of contention. The most dangerous element, the one with the greatest disruptive potential—modernist fragmentation—required the most careful treatment. (DFAG, 582)

Although the film was also a government commission, film scholars argue whether *Triumph of the Will* is a documentary, a work of art, pure propaganda, or a combination of all these things. Nichols points out that during the 1920s and 1930s, “a wave of documentary activity takes shape at the point when cinema comes into the direct service of various [and] already active efforts to build national identity”. He defines documentary film as media “that affirms, or contests, the power of the state. It addresses issues of public importance and affirms or contests the role of the state in confronting these issues” (DFAG, 582).

Under this definition, *Triumph of the Will* easily fits into the documentary film category. But does this make *Triumph of the Will* completely factual? Not necessarily, and in some ways not at all. Nichols also cites Allan Sekula’s cautionary take on the amount of honest information or truth that is actually derived from documentary work, regardless of the “mountain of evidence” that can be amassed. According to Sekula, “in this pictorial presentation of scientific and legalistic ‘fact’ the genre has simultaneously contributed much to spectacle, to retinal excitation, to voyeurism, to terror, envy and nostalgia, and only a little to the critical understanding of the social world” 24 (DFAG, 588). In terms of having an effect on the audience, how a documentary is edited and presented is in large part a key in defining

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the amount of educational or persuasive power it may hold. Nichols describes the methods used within documentary films to achieve audience participation:

...[D]ocumentary took identifiable shape when photographic realism, narrative structure, and modernist fragmentation served the goal of social persuasion. Oration added another element of social consciousness to cinematic representation. It called on the audience to put itself at one with the social perspective of the film and to prepare itself to act accordingly. (DFAG, 596, 599)

I have already established Guernica as a “political” artwork. Likewise, the political in Triumph of the Will with its militaristic themes, featured political figures, and unabashed nationalistic tone is most certainly a political film, but in a completely different manner. Triumph of the Will portrays the goals and the power of Nazi Germany, and thus the inevitability of war if war is required to carry out those aims. The arrangements in Riefenstahl’s picture of this world are rich in lavish display and spectacle, yet utterly devoid of the corresponding elements of suffering and pain that accompany war. The film shows us the embodiment of power, but power embodied in a faceless mass when viewed from above.

In many ways, Triumph of the Will could have been called “Aftermath of the Night of the Long Knives”25 because it was, in fact, a public relations effort to convince the citizens of German to accept Hitler as their leader and to forget that Ernst Roehm, who had been so prominently featured as being allied with Hitler in Riefenstahl’s previous Nazi Rally film, had been killed in order to clear the path for Hitler’s rise to power. Loiperdinger and Culbert

25 The “night of the long knives”: On June 30, 1934 in Germany, Nazi leader Adolf Hitler orders a bloody purge of his own political party, assassinating hundreds of Nazis whom he believed had the potential to become political enemies in the future. The leadership of the Nazi Storm Troopers (SA), whose four million members had helped bring Hitler to power in the early 1930s, was especially targeted. Hitler feared that some of his followers had taken his early “National Socialism” propaganda too seriously and thus might compromise his plan to suppress workers’ rights in exchange for German industry making the country war-ready. As for Ernst Röhm - on Hitler’s order he had been given a pistol containing a single bullet to commit suicide, but refused to do it, saying “If I am to be killed let Adolf do it himself”. Two SS officers, one of whom was Theodore Eiche, commander of the Totenkopf (Death's Head) guards at Dachau, entered Röhm’s [Roehm’s] cell after waiting fifteen minutes and shot him point blank. Reportedly, Röhm’s last words were “Mein Führer, mein Führer!” By 4 a.m., Monday, July 2, the bloody purge had ended. The exact number of murders is unknown since all Gestapo documents relating to the purge were destroyed. Estimates vary widely from 200 or 250, to as high as 1,000 or more. Less than half of those murdered were actually SA officers. On July 13, Hitler gave a long speech to the Nazi controlled Reichstag (Parliament) in which he announced seventy four had been shot and justified the murders. He then reportedly said: “If anyone reproaches me and asks why I did not resort to the regular courts of justice, then all I can say is this: “In this hour I was responsible for the fate of the German people, and thereby I became the supreme judge of the German people”. From: <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/night-of-the-long-knives> and <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/timeline/roehm.htm .Web, Dec. 2012.
describe the “primary political task” in both *Sieg des Glaubens* (*SdG*) and *Triumph of the Will*:

Roehm, plus many other high-ranking SA leaders, was killed in the “night of the long knives”, 30 June 1934. *SdG* had to be suddenly withdrawn from circulation; Hitler ordered every print destroyed. [...] *TdW*’s [*Triumph of the Will*’s] primary political task is its need to present a filmic image of SA unity. Lutze, Roehm's powerless successor, tells the SA that they must love and support their Führer, the person who had their beloved leader murdered just two months before, and then had the audacity to concoct the cover story of the so-called ‘Roehm Putsch’, by which the destruction of the SA is known to history. Hitler's speech, in *TdW*, absolves the SA of complicity in the imaginary Roehm Putsch. In this sense, *TdW* is a snow job, a public relations campaign to win the hearts and minds of millions of SA true believers who backed Hitler in hopes of a social revolution. Instead they received a mass media palliative--star billing in two of the most successful propaganda films ever made. Placating the bitter disappointment of so many true believers is an important contribution of both *SdG* and *TdW*, a political contribution overlooked by those who have trouble recognising the role mass media sometimes plays in twentieth century political decision-making. (LRSA, 17- 18)

Certainly, neither Picasso nor the Spanish government were devoid of their own motives to influence, both personal and political. As I have previously argued, Picasso’s intention was in part to produce a political work of art that would be exhibited at the Spanish Pavilion during the Paris World Fair. One might argue therefore, that Picasso’s *Guernica* was a propaganda event, and that this painting was part of an anti-fascist movement and propagandistic in nature. It was only natural that the Spanish government also wanted their moment in the sun. In fact, according to documentation found on the history of world expositions:

Only when the Spanish ambassador in Paris recognised the major propaganda value of the World Exposition as a vehicle to influence public opinion did the Spanish enthusiastically push ahead with the construction of their pavilion. Their exhibition was intended to raise international public awareness of the critical situation in Spain, which had developed into a European conflict with the intervention of the German and Italian governments. Spain wanted to warn the world of the dangers of fascism and to improve the image of the republican government by presenting its successes.27

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26 SA stands for *Sturm Abteilung* or *Sturmabteilung*. In the German Nazi Party, a paramilitary organization whose methods of violent intimidation played a key role in Adolf Hitler’s rise to power.
The difference however, between Riefenstahl under direction from the Nazi regime and Picasso on commission from the Spanish government was that Picasso’s work originated from a reflective response to something real, whereas Riefenstahl’s creation was that of an illusion, manufactured to promote a false reality. Finally, unlike the painting of Guernica, the creative effects displayed in Triumph of the Will presuppose the kind of mechanical manipulation enabled by the still relatively new technology of film.

So, if not exactly a documentary how is this film best defined? According to David Bathrick in his essay, “The Afterlife of The Triumph of The Will: The First Twenty-five Years”, Riefenstahl was hired to counter what Film Minister Joseph Goebbels felt was the “perceived cinematic failure” of Hitler’s speech on February 10, 1933. This speech had appeared as a newsreel under the title of Hitlers Aufruf an das deutsche Volk, (Hitler’s Appeal to the German People). I find it worth mentioning that Chrystal places it in the category of one of the “election films” rather than a newsreel, because in Chrystal’s detailed account of the film we learn that Goebbels tried and felt he had failed at not only filmmaking but also at portraying Hitler in the best possible light:

The other film, Hitlers Aufruf an das deutsche Volk (Hitler’s Appeal to the German People), is clearly a masterful example of the election film. It is entirely devoted to Hitler’s February 10 Berlin speech. As it was broadcast nationwide on the radio with Dr. Goebbels providing a commentary, cameras and wire recorders assimilated raw material for the election film. Ten days after the speech it was completed and was approved for release by the censor the next day. Thus, the radio audience which heard the speech and read accounts of it in the papers could see it complete with audience reaction shots. (NPEF, 36)

Both Hitler and Goebbels decided that, in view of this failure, it was time to “turn to professionals and artists working outside existing political and bureaucratic agencies for the purpose of shaping the Hitler image” (AFTY, 76). Interestingly, because of the great “snow job” that Riefenstahl had managed to achieve in Sieg des Glaubens, she was an easy choice of

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directors for Goebbels and Hitler. The manner in which Riefenstahl specially lit the figure of Hitler as the idolised and often haloed leader was portrayed symbolically throughout *Triumph of the Will* as the one who would stir Germany’s awakening to the Nazi’s version of the truth.

It was obvious that a new, even grander Party Rally film would have to be made, so of course Hitler turned once again to Riefenstahl. [...] For Riefenstahl, making a Party Rally film was, if not old-hat, nothing more than perfecting ideas worked out through trial and error a year before. It is not therefore surprising that *TdW* is also an obvious political document. (LSRA, 17)

In an article written for *Film Culture* called “Propaganda as Vision: *Triumph of the Will*,” film critic Ken Kelman refers to Riefenstahl’s film as “a true documentary, completely made up of “actual” footage- the ultimate in incontrovertible credibility.” Furthermore, Kelman repeatedly refers to “the absolute reportorial truth” as fusing with the “myth of resurrection of Germany to its ancient heroism through the medium of one man, Adolf Hitler, the saviour.” Kelman describes this mixture of truth and fiction as a sort of alchemy:

To fuse such truth with such propaganda, compromising neither, Riefenstahl creates a unique cinema: a cinema which transfigures “real life” while apparently recording it; which is essentially avant-garde while ostensibly conventional; which, in short, is dedicated to the creation of grand and ultimate illusion. Magic of various sorts has always been a staple of fiction film, archetypally reputed to be escapist entertainment. But documentary has invariably been considered the spinach or castor oil of cinema fare, the occasional dose of fact that can be sugar-coated or spiced, but never can have magic or even much imagination without becoming something other than documentary. This tradition is the formal point of Riefenstahl’s departure, and subtle play with documentary convention is her basic alchemical technique. (PAV, 57-58)

He ends by describing the film as “particularly notorious, and transcendent, and uniquely great . . . The result was not pure documentary, but pure genius. [A]nd terrific propaganda” (PAV, 64).

In his essay, “*Triumph of the Will, Document or Artifice*”30, David B. Hinton argues strongly against Kelman’s claim of “absolute reportorial truth” in the film, by presenting the

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original schedule of events at the Nuremberg Party Rally, thus demonstrating how “the actual order of events was of little significance to Riefenstahl; they were pieced together in the film in a plan much more elaborately conceived than a mere progression of events” (DOA, 56). He strongly refutes Kelman’s claim that the film was produced “in the most literal documentary tradition” (PAV, 59). Hinton also provides a much needed historical context to the film, which further indicates that the film was not made purely for the documentation of an event but rather as a device for presenting the event in such a way as to create a radically different context for why the event occurred. *Triumph of the Will* has no plot or dialogue, yet we are witness to political speeches given by various military and government figures.

According to film analysts, these speeches are clustered together through editing to appear as though they were presented one directly after another, and in their original chronological order. Hinton notes that the fifth section of *Triumph of the Will* portraying the opening speeches of the party congress at the Nuremburg Rally were purposely arranged this way, yet in reality they were edited and placed quite deliberately out of sequence:

Following the opening remarks by Rudolph Hess and the reading of Hitler’s proclamation by Adolf Wagner, Gauleiter of Bavaria, there is a series of brief excerpts from speeches given by other party leaders, with their names written on the screen before their images are introduced. The appearance is that all were speaking from the same podium at the same event, following the remarks by Hess and Wagner, but in actuality this is not the case. It is instead a collection of brief excerpts taken from speeches made on five different days at three different locations. (DOA, 53)

The ideas presented in the film in the form of political speeches are never challenged or questioned, nor are views opposing or otherwise ever presented or taken into account. There is no impartial narrator, or even a narrator with a clear agenda. What is notably absent from the film that also prevents it from being strictly labelled a documentary are any third party commentaries; the film is almost entirely visual. In propaganda, there are no contradictions, and according to Neale, unlike documentaries, propaganda films “tend to remain fundamentally complicit in its perpetuation” of ideologies (NDS, 84).

**Conclusion**

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Bathrick states that “Triumph of the Will is probably the most quoted work of film history. Today there is not a documentary about National Socialism that can get by without using images from this film and no other film has defined as deeply our visual notion as to what National Socialism actually was” (AFTY, 73). I would like to conclude by mentioning the early post-war use of Triumph of the Will. In Bathrick’s essay in Riefenstahl Screened, he mentions the unusual use of the images in this film as legal “proof” of war crimes and later, even “proof” that the Holocaust happened. Bathrick reports that the Nuremberg Trials held for the prosecution of Nazi war criminals showed two documentary films that he says “came to play a pivotal role in the proceedings and even the outcome of the trial”. One of the documentaries showed raw footage taken at the liberation of the concentration camps, but the other, called The Nazi Plan was “a compilation film commissioned by the United States Counsel for the Prosecution, produced by Twentieth Century Fox, researched and written by Budd Schulberg”. The first Nuremberg trial was held not to “assume” that the twenty four prisoners and military elite had committed war crimes and atrocities, but to “prove” that they had “engaged in conspiratorial criminal acts as defined by law”. The Nazi Plan contained not only allied captured newsreel propaganda footage from 1918-1945, but most surprisingly, out of one hundred ninety-four minutes of film footage, forty-four minutes of the compilation were film clips from Triumph of the Will. Oddly, the voice-over narration of the film introduces this section called the “Sixth Party Rally” as “the official German film”, never mentioning that its source was Riefenstahl’s film (AFTY, 87-88).

Bathrick lists several other uses of Triumph of the Will being a film-within-film as cinematic evidence for Hollywood propaganda situation. Death Mills, produced by Hanus Burger and re-edited by Billy Wilder, combines heinous images of dead and dying victims of the camps juxtaposed with images of the exultant crowds in clips of Triumph of the Will. They included shots of the throngs of adulating, cheering people shown earlier in the film, as an echo to the “weary, now-ravaged citizens of Weimar being forced to march to nearby Buchenwald to view the piles of emaciated corpses and shrunken heads left by the fleeing SS”. Stanley Kramer’s 1961 Judgement at Nuremberg, set in 1948 regarding the trial of four Nazi judges before a panel of three American judges, in which Kramer uses a similar “before

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31 Bathrick begins his essay with this quote by German author Jürgen Trimborn, who has written extensively on Leni Riefenstahl and her work. See: Leni Riefenstahl: A Life by Jürgen Trimborn. Translated by Edna McCown. Faber and Faber: New York, 2007.

32 Bathrick points out that Wilder was “a Silesian Jew by origin whose family perished in the Holocaust” (AFTY, 89). Director Billy Wilder went on to make Sunset Boulevard, (1950), Some Like it Hot, (1959) and The Apartment, (1960), see http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000697/ for many further listings of his work.
and after” method of linking together *Triumph of the Will* footage with camp films, creating “the inevitable iconic before and after, to help map out his meditation on the dialectic of cause and effect leading to the Holocaust” (AFTY, 90). And finally, what Bathrick refers to as French director Alain Resnais’ 1955 “opus classicus of the genre, *Night and Fog*, a thirty-five-minute part compilation documentary combining colour footage of the camps filmed by Resnais and historical black and white footage selected by him”. Resnais’ style in this film was based on other “aesthetic juxtapositions, (sound and silence, dark and light, movement and stasis, poetry and prose, montage visuals and montage music, etc.)” all leading up to questions about past and present. Resnais uses Riefenstahl’s images in *Triumph of the Will* to “symbolise the growing of the Nazi party into symbols of crushed Europe by Nazi troops and the beginning of the Holocaust”, made especially true since Hitler ordered the filming (AFTY, 93).

What Bathrick is proposing here suggests two sides of representation and seeing: the spectacle and spectatorship, of witnessing and ways of testifying, of participating in an event versus standing outside the sphere of reality, passively observing through the lens of a cold, mechanical eye. In these examples of later uses of *Triumph of the Will*, there is an emerging phenomenon of distanced watching that steadily creeps into our sense of things by attaching itself to the distracting spectacle represented within the film. When the scenes from this film are used in what Bathrick calls a “purely iconographical rather than indexical” form, it means we accept Riefenstahl’s mythology of history as a measured representation of a political movement against which the awful truth is equally weighted (AFTY, 94). There is no concrete point of fact for such a comparison in *Triumph of the Will*, and yet these comparisons were used as a platform for legal arguments in the creation and showing of *The Nazi Plan* during the Nuremberg trials. Here are edited films within films being used as the tools for justice, deciding between life and death for the people on trial. This is the beginning of accepting decontextualized representations as evidence. What has happened is that the images in *Triumph of the Will* have become accepted forms of the spectacle as Debord has posited:

(4) The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people mediated by images, [and] (5), the spectacle cannot be understood as an abuse of the world of vision, as a product of techniques of mass dissemination of images. It is, rather, a *Weltanschauung* that has become actual, [by being] materially translated. It is a world vision which has become objectified” (SOS, 7).
Triumph of the Will is without question iconographical in terms of its representation of Adolf Hitler and his vision for beginning the Second World War. The documentary film I discuss in the next section, Memory of the Camps, is an indexical counter-spectacle pertaining to the outcome of the war. It is only Picasso’s Guernica with its tactile, painted symbolic imagery that carries the unusual gravitas of being iconographical in its indexicality.

Combining aesthetics, politics and war into the creation of art may be described as “the consummation of l’art pour l’art”. But Benjamin puts it this way in the final paragraph of his essay on art in the age of mechanical reproduction: “Fiat ars—pereat mundus”, says Fascism”, which roughly translated means, “let the world be destroyed so that it may be made” (WAM, 244). Triumph of the Will turns its picture of the world into the world picture, but Memory of the Camps is a film that attempts to bear witness as it provides visual testimony of the destruction that Riefenstahl’s “world picture” as the new Weltanschauung of a political movement, was to bring.
Section Two:

The Role of the Witness and Testimony in Films Regarding the Holocaust after

*Bilderverbot*
CHAPTER FOUR:

“Representation as Witness: The Inception of Memory of the Camps /F3080”

Introduction

War photography began in the form of daguerreotypes made in 1847 during the Mexican-American War; although the photographer is unknown, the images remain today.¹ Since then, every war has been documented using some form of photography. At present, reconnaissance satellites are being launched by the US administration and other governments to photograph and relay information. Official sources claim that they have “provided intelligence that aided in the killing or capture of ‘high-value targets’ in more than a dozen operations and supported counterterrorism and anti-piracy efforts, among other scenarios”².

Photography really began to proliferate as a form of documentation during the First World War. This was a war, however, which Jünger described as “distinguished by the high level of technical precision required to wage it”. In 1930 he noted:

The historian of the future who wishes to report on this war will certainly be more perplexed by the excess than the lack of sources. Included among the documents of particular precision, which have only recently been at the disposal of human intelligence, are photographs, of which a large supply accumulated during the war. Day in and day out, optical lenses were pointed at the combat zones alongside the mouths of rifles and cannons. As instruments of a technological consciousness, they preserved the image of these ravaged landscapes which the world of peace has long since reappropriated. (WP, 24)

Among the reasons for the significance of the film Memory of the Camps from a visual culture point of view is the fact that it arose from a military undertaking in 1945 and that it

¹See examples here: <http://www.militaryphotos.net/forums/showthread.php?182523-The-Very-First-Military-Photos-Mexican-American-War-1846-1848>. Web, Dec. 2012. Daguerreotype was an early form of photography that generated a single image using a silver-coated copper plate, took a very long time to produce. This prevented action photography, as images took minutes to develop and could not be processed immediately.

² This is according to Congressional testimony in March, 2011, made by the principal deputy director of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) agency, Betty Sapp. “The NRO provides satellite imagery to the Department of defence (DOD) and U.S. intelligence agencies, as well as to the departments of State and Justice and other civilian agencies. Its images are also used by scientists to study the environment, oil spills, and natural disasters”. See: <http://www.informationweek.com/government/security/secret-spy-satellite-takes-off-stunning/240002424?pgno=1>. Web, Dec. 10, 2012.
can be located within the history of military documentary film-making. It was also
significant for early photojournalism in reference to print media, such as *Life* magazine. Just
as important, however, is that from the standpoint of establishing a Benjaminian authenticity
of the image, by combining a witness in the form of a photographer and their testimony in
the form of their captioning these photographs, this combination helped to suggest the aura
of veracity needed at that time.

Before it was found in the archives of the Imperial War Museum (IWM) under the
name *F3080*, compiled and edited in its present form in 1985, *Memory of the Camps* was
mostly screened as newsreels soon after it was shot. The film documents quite graphically a
microcosm of the atrocities committed by the Nazis against millions of prisoners of war held
in various German concentration camps across Eastern Europe during the Second World
War. The film begins with intentional irony by inserting a two minute clip from
Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* in order to highlight Hitler’s abortive promises of glory
versus the hideous end result. Despite such initial commentary, the film consists largely of
documentary footage shot by small teams of British, American and Russian Army
photographers immediately upon the liberation of the camps from the Nazi German forces in
April and May of 1945. The completed film was not shown in a cinema until February 1984
when it was at the Berlin Film Festival, under the name *Memory of the Camps* ³ (SIAS, 50).
It was then shown to the wider public a little over a year later on May 7th, 1985, when the
Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) presented it on the television show *Frontline* with the
addition of Trevor Howard’s narration taken from the original script to mark the 40th
anniversary of the liberation.

Five out of the original six reels of film were found in the archives of London’s
Imperial War Museum (IWM) unedited, incomplete and often without sound. The *F3080*
project originated in February 1945 in the aptly named “Psychological Warfare Division”
(PWD) of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) with the chief of the
PWD’s film section, Sidney Bernstein, credited as the executive producer of the film. His
pivotal role in the making of the film will be discussed in greater detail later in this section⁴.

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³Kay Gladstone. “Separate Intentions: the Allied Screening of Concentration Camp Documentaries in Defeated
Germany in 1945-46: *Death Mills* and *Memory of the Camps*”. From here on in will be cited as SIAS.

⁴Dates, facts and figures in this paragraph were summarised from information located on the PBS *Frontline*
Sussex’s paper, “The Fate of F3080”. *Sight and Sound*. British Film Institute, April 1983, 92-97. From here on in
will be cited as TFF.
In this section I focus mainly on the cameramen who were the first to be confronted by the sights and smells of the camps, and who managed at great risk to document images of the unimaginable. Here were the images that told the contradictory elements that constituted the goals of the Third Reich. The presence of the cameramen who recorded this event equated to the presence of witnesses. They were witnesses with the equipment and the means to document, store, and reveal the full extent of the Nazi atrocities.

Many still photographs taken either at the same time or created from the actual footage had misleading captions that were widely disseminated in the news press and print magazines. Zelizer notes that in the early 1930s, and even through the 1940s, there were rapid improvements in photographic methods, equipment, and technology, including the advent of the wire-photo in 1935. News journalists, however, were not particularly impressed with the addition of photography to news text in general, nor did they welcome photography as an enhancement of their own written copy.

Zelizer also notes in an essay entitled “From the Image of Record, to the Image of Memory: Holocaust Photography, Then and Now”5, that some reporters contended that “photographs should be denounced altogether” because they represented regression to the picture-language of the “Stone Age”. She elaborates:

What was emphasized was photography’s role in providing a medium of record that catered to its referentiality, indexicality, and ability to reference a real-life object. What was undermined was the image’s cogency as a symbolic tool and its universality, generalizability, and ability to position a real-life referent within a larger interpretive scheme. . . It was assumed that photography could help bolster the journalists’ authority for relaying the events of real life, supporting its aspirations toward objectivity and helping reporters become better journalists – or at least so went the refrain before the war. (IRIM, 101)

The technology of reporting and photojournalism came together in what Zelizer refers to as “the birth of modern news photography” which also happened to coincide with the timing of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. It was the coupling of this event and the technology of recording and reporting atrocity images that “produced an inversion of the logic”. Rather than using photographs to indicate specific camps or times, the atrocity

images presented in photographs and films played “more to their effectivity as symbols of the atrocities at their most generalised and universal level” (IRIM, 102).

Jean-Louis Comolli describes *Memory of the Camps* in his work, “Fatal Rendezvous”:

Never before, in the cinema project, in the invention of cinema, in the utopia that was created in the form of cinema, had such situations been filmed or even imagined. Perhaps the Nazis were aware of the absolute novelty of the spectacle that death represented to the living, and perhaps this is one of the reasons for their ultimate attempt to erase all trace of their crimes – to make them literally invisible. (FR, 65)

The images became proof that the rumours of Nazi atrocities that had been circulating were not only true, but far worse than the distant and often sceptical public were capable of comprehending. In his book *While America Watches*, Jeffrey Shandler cites the historian Robert Abzug’s words about the images of the camps, recorded just days earlier, showing up in newsreels throughout movie theatres. Abzug asserted that seeing the representations of camp images created “a turning point in Western consciousness” (WAW, 5).

It should be pointed out that the liberation of the camps was not of strategic military importance, but *showing* the act of liberating the camps and the subsequent “rescue” of the inmates was vital. Comolli describes the impact of the film:

All the work of the film (if only all that remained was a promise in the unfinished work of the project) was to attempt to take the responsibility for filming something that had never been filmed, had never been imagined, for which what was missing was the image: the never before experienced event in cinematography. (FR, 64)

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7 Jeffrey Shandler. *While America Watches, Televising the Holocaust*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, New York, 1999. From here on in will be cited as WAW.
Although the film portrays footage taken at a number of camps\textsuperscript{8}, one camp in particular, Bergen-Belsen\textsuperscript{9}, is prominent in the film, and was the scene of some of the most confronting images of Holocaust victims and the conditions they were forced to endure. On April 15\textsuperscript{th}, 1945, upon entering the camp, the British Army’s Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU) and accompanying members of the 11\textsuperscript{th} Armoured Division were reportedly “horrified and incredulous”. They reported that the scenes they encountered while filming “are some of the most disturbing of all those recorded at concentration camps in the closing months of the war”. The British photographers and cameramen found the scenes at Belsen even more disturbing than those recorded at other sites of atrocity by American and Soviet cameraman in the final months of the war, which included exhumations of mass graves of prisoners.

Through several primary sources, Toby Haggith, head of the Public Services Section in the Imperial War Museum’s Film and Video Archive, summarises the visual assault that confronted the soldiers and cameramen in his essay called “Filming the Liberation of Bergen-Belsen”\textsuperscript{10}:

[S]cores of ‘paper-thin’ naked corpses strewn across the camp floor or piled in grotesque heaps of twisted limbs; close-ups of decaying and bruised faces; survivors dressed in rags tottering dazed and bewildered around the camp or reaching out to grasp the hand of a British soldier; corpses slung over the backs of the camp guards, nodding and bouncing like life-sized rag dolls, which are carried from trucks then tossed, without ceremony, into huge pits; a bulldozer pushing a heap of naked corpses across the camp floor. Even to those who one might expect to be used to the horrors of war, the images of Belsen were unprecedented. Ronald Tritton, who was the Director of Public Relations at the War office, recorded in his war diary, “The Belsen pictures came in this evening – 103 of them. They are so awful

\textsuperscript{8} Memory of the Camps includes film footage taken from a handful of the hundreds of prison, labour and concentration camps, including: Bergen-Belsen — approx. 50,000 dead, including 14,000 who were too sick to survive after liberation. Dachau — 188,000 total prisoners, 28,000 dead between 1940-45. Unknown how many deaths between 1933-1939. Buchenwald — between 33,000-43,000 dead. Ebensee — approx. 20,000 dead. Mauthausen — 119,000 dead. Ludwigslust (Wöbbelin) — at least 1,000 dead. Ohrdruf — a sub camp of Buchenwald. Auschwitz — 1.1-1.6 million dead. (Sources for these figures are The Jewish Virtual Encyclopaedia and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). Web, Aug., 2011.

\textsuperscript{9} Bergen-Belsen is also often shortened to “Belsen” in the research literature referenced in this thesis.

\textsuperscript{10} Toby Haggith. “Filming the Liberation of Bergen-Belsen”. From here on in will be cited as FLBB. Holocaust and the Moving Image, Representations in Film and Television since 1933. Editors Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman. Wallflower Press, London, UK: 2005. From here on in will be cited as HMIR.
that words cannot describe them. I was almost physically sickened, and felt shaky and very upset”¹¹. (FLBB, 33)

According to Haggith, “no other camp was filmed so comprehensively and over such a long period”, and furthermore, “the footage shot at Belsen was the first to be admitted as evidence to a war crimes trial, when it was screened at the courtroom in Lüneberg, during the trial of the Belsen guards, between September 17 and November 17, 1945”. The film images shot at Belsen were meant to be used sparingly at the time immediately after the war, but, as Haggith points out, have “since become so widely used in film and television programmes, that they are now familiar icons, coming to symbolise not just the Holocaust but the evil of the Nazi regime as a whole” (FLBB, 33).

This “symbolising” is something that Haggith disputes moreover, because as appalling as the images are, they do not, in reality, represent the policy of the ‘Final Solution’. The difference is that Belsen as a camp itself was not a designated “extermination camp” in the same way as Auschwitz, Birkenau, Chelmno, Sobibor and Treblinka. At those camps, people were deliberately murdered en masse within hours of their arrival. The scenes at Belsen were indicative of sheer neglect; it was disease, starvation and a complete absence of empathy that killed the inmates.

The Cameramen of AFPU: Witnesses unprepared, yet willing to testify

As Paula Rabinowitz¹² has noted, Benjamin is the “chronicler of modernity” whose figure, the “Angel of History”¹³, displays a face turned “towards the past as she is blown into the wreckage of the future [which] might also represent the documentary filmmaker who can only

¹¹ From Toby Haggith’s footnotes: ”Ronald Tritton, ‘War Diary’, 19, April 1945, held in the IWM Docs, 76. Tritton joined the War Office in January 1940 where he was appointed head of PR2. He set up the Army Film Unit, later the AFPU, and as Director of Public Relations was responsible for the output of the Unit and for ‘placing it’ for good army relations” (FLBB, 45).


¹³ Rabinowitz is referring to Benjamin’s essay, “Thesis on the Philosophy of History” found in Illuminations, (Harcourt, 1955, 255-266). In this essay Benjamin describes a Paul Klee painting named “Angelus Novus”. He says, the painting “shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet” (p 259).
make a film within the historical present, even as it evokes the historical past”. In discussing *Memory of the Camps*, she defines what she sees as the “mission of the cameramen”:

> At the heart of this documentary project is a cinema of memory. The mission of the cameramen was to record a historical aberration. Filming an essentially ephemeral event, a vanishing custom, a disappearing species, a transitory occurrence is the motivation behind most documentary images. Documentary films provide a stability to an ever-changing reality, freezing the images within their frames for later instructional use. (WUW, 120)

It is important to note why the cameramen were even present at the camps during their liberation regardless of any philosophical questions regarding the veracity of the filmed image. Put simply, the AFPU’s primary mission was to “compile a historical record of Britain’s armed forces” (FLBB, 37). This was much more than a “record of Britain’s armed forces”, however, as the task the cameraman were suddenly confronted by was to document as quickly and as accurately what people are capable of doing to each other in the name of ideologies and scientific myths and their lust for power. Clearly, the situation in front of them was nothing the British public or the cameramen of the AFPU could have possibly expected. The environment of the camp with its ghoulish inhabitants seemed beyond anything that could be real or even conceivable.

According to Haggith, the British soldiers were “totally ignorant as to what was happening in Belsen”, and were completely unprepared for what they were about to discover. The cameramen were “fairly blasé about the prospect of going into the camp and accepted the German description of it as containing political and criminal prisoners”. Furthermore, they were also professionally and psychologically unprepared for the scenes they found at Celle14 and Belsen”. They, along with the soldiers felt that because of the newly created “neutral zone”, they would be able to observe and film the “Wehrmacht and SS close-up and fully armed, in their natural habitat”. The AFPU training for the photographers was designed only to “equip men with a sound, basic knowledge for battle photography” (FLBB, 36). Hannah Caven15 cites documents from the Imperial War Museum that describe the original plans for the way the photographers would be situated in battle:

14 Celle is a village containing a POW camp, 13 miles from the Bergen-Belson Camp.

One of the units of the AFPU is a group of four men with a driver, with a roving commission to go wherever there is action, wherever they think they can get pictures of the recent campaign… Two of the men take still pictures, the other two use cine cameras… they live the life of the ordinary soldier in the front line, with the same rations… Their weapons are cameras instead of guns…\(^{16}\) (HOTI, 207)

Zelizer says that the camp liberation “images were instrumental to the broader aim of enlightening the Western world about what the Nazi’s had done” (IRIM. 105). Bearing in mind that while the film footage was being shot, “still” cameramen taking individual photographs were alongside to provide another witnessing angle or version of the images that eventually made their way into what became Memory of the Camps. The photographers were well aware that no matter what they shot or how many images they made, the photographs had an inherent limitation because of their status as mere representations. Some of them are so horrific that even now, sixty-six years later it is difficult to fathom how such photographs or cinematic films could be considered fakes, and yet it is just as difficult to imagine that such things as we see here were ever real. However, this is not to say that the photographs and filming took place in a strictly uncreative way, on the contrary; “When asked about shot composition, Harry Oakes talked of selecting angles that would deepen the horror”. Oakes also admitted: “There are also allegorical references in the framing, notable naked male bodies’ slain, martyr-like, on the ground”\(^{17}\) (FLBB, 42).

Life Magazine photographer George Rodger also found that the experience of Belsen changed his outlook on life forever, when he discovered “the ultimate degree of human degradation”, and that the camera enabled him to “forget the horror and shoot automatically without thinking”. But what he then realised was that “[he] had arranged hundreds of Jewish bodies [within the scope of his camera lens] to create a nice photographic composition” (FR, 60-61). In the transcripts for the 1985 narration of Memory of the Camps, British actor Trevor Howard, his voice sombre, weary and bordering on disgust, further contextualises scenes we might otherwise merely recoil from: “Here is a pit where the inmates—in order to earn food—

\(^{16}\) War Office Assignment No. 907, 10 December 1942, Department of Documents, Imperial War Museum, London From here on in will be cited as IWM, DOD.

\(^{17}\) An example of this can be seen in the collection of photographs provided at the end of this chapter, specifically Figure 3.
had to drag the bodies of their comrades, but they were too weak to keep up with the rate at which they were dying so the pit remains only half filled.”\(^{18}\)

**Cameramen Produce Witness Testimony using “Dope Sheets”**

It was the standard practice for the men of the British AFPU, who were the majority of the cameramen and photographers on-site at Belsen, to record what they saw both in film and in their personal descriptions or captions on what were disarmingly called in soldier’s slang “dope sheets”. Dope sheets were officially known as “Secret caption lists”, although it is never explained why the word “secret” is employed, but they were used not only as archival logs of times, dates and places, the sheets also went beyond describing only the visual. In order to capture as honestly as possible what was before them, the men used dope sheets to describe their intensely personal emotions because what they were witnessing was a confrontation to their prior knowledge and their reality. Dope sheets could be thought of as testimony upon impact, so even if the word secret was perhaps meant originally in terms of military confidentiality, it might also be applied to the men sharing their personal or private thoughts about the almost unendurable situations they found themselves in.

Caven explains further, “each cameraman and soldier took a personal decision to record what they saw, and to do it with the clear intention that it should be recorded for posterity, and so that the British public who were largely ignorant of the true nature of these camps should know of the horror and never forget” (HOTI, 206). Shoshana Felman eloquently defines what it means to “testify” here:

> To testify is always, metaphorically, to take the witness’s stand, or to take the position of the witness insofar as the narrative account of the witness is at once engaged in an appeal and bound by an oath. To testify is thus not merely to narrate but to commit oneself, and to commit the narrative, to others: to take responsibility – in speech – for history or for the truth of an occurrence, for something which, by definition, goes beyond the personal, in having general (non-personal) validity and consequences\(^{19}\). (IET, 39- 40)


Stepping aside for a moment from the AFPU specifically, Zelizer reports that there were a large number of photographs and reels of film coming in from a variety of sources, other servicemen, journalists and photojournalists. “Thus images flourished as a mode of documenting the camps, and these stark, naturalistic representations of horror became readily available in large numbers after liberation”. This was because reporters were literally at a loss for mere words to describe what they were seeing: “That meant that words were most effective in telling a grounded story of liberation, but images were able to present a broader story of Nazi atrocity”. Zelizer cites one reporter claiming that photographers “sent pictures so horrible that no newspaper normally would use them, but they were less horrible than the reality”. Therefore, not every photograph and reel of cine film was as carefully documented with dope sheets or any captions as they were by the AFPU, but nevertheless, “within days of the arrival of photographers in the camps wire services were flooded with explicit and gruesome snapshots of horror the likes of which had never been seen before on the pages of the U.S. and British daily and weekly press” (IMIR, 106).

In the case of the photojournalists, it was not clear whether they were responsible for captioning or titling the images, but Zelizer sees the lack of captioning, or in some cases, even blatantly wrong captioning, as being less important than what the images represented: “On the level of the image’s universality, that wrong information mattered little. At a more general level the image provided proof of the atrocities, even if they were labelled as being in the wrong place” (IMIR, 107). Beyond filming and taking still shots of the horrifying aspects of camp liberation, the cameramen were also crucial in recording how the British were stabilising the situation in the camps attempting to create a healthy environment, or at least an environment that was survivable, took as much effort as did burying the tens of thousands of the dead that lay strewn about the camp.

According to Haggith, there is a concern from some documentary makers that some of the footage of the Belsen camp liberation has been used almost “promiscuously”, as it is non-specific to the particular camp and often mixed with footage taken from other sites, unbeknown to the viewer. Haggith asserts again that, “although the film has come to symbolise the most extreme behaviour of the Germans towards the Jews, the scenes at Belsen, however appalling, do not represent the Holocaust” (FLBB, 33). He also points out that to the viewer, it is also not clear whether the majority of the dead and the survivors were Jewish or of other origin, as there was a “tendency to universalise the suffering and down-
play the high number of Jews in the camp”. Curiously, “the very anonymous nature of the
corpses has even led Holocaust deniers to claim that they were in fact the victims of Allied
bombing” (FLBB, 34). In fact, Americans reported to the Supreme Headquarters Allied
Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) at the end of the war that “both Nazi and anti-Nazi POW’s
were disassociating themselves almost unanimously for the atrocities depicted”. They also
claimed that the images they saw were strangely familiar, because they reminded them of
“photographs of the German victims of Allied air raids, which they have seen constantly in
the German press and Wochenschau’ [Third Reich Newsreel]” (FLBB, 46).

The dope sheets, however, clarify the situation in many cases. Sergeant Oakes
recorded in his dope sheet of April 24, “An inmate tells the world. Helen Goldstein, a Pole—
her crime: being born from Jewish extraction. Four years in concentration camps, but was only
here two weeks before the British arrived”. Caven states that “in most camps at the time of
liberation, Jews comprised only about 10% of the inmate population. In Belsen about 40,000
(of the approximately 60,000 liberated) were Jews. This represented between one third and
one half of all the Jews who survived the Holocaust” (HOTI, 210). Other dope sheets by the
army cameramen contained captions that refer specifically to Jews at time of Belsen’s
liberation. Again, Sergeant Oakes reported, “The children in Camp No. 2 which is now the
hospital and evacuating camp for camp No. 1 are getting very well cared for. The vast
majority of them are either Jewish or of Jewish extraction”. Caven reports that “Sergeant Mike
Lewis, another AFPU cameraman, recalled the incredulity of the prisoners when they realised
he was Jewish”. Apparently they had difficulty comprehending that he was still free. In an
interview conducted many years later he recalled: “I’ll always remember one woman staring at
me in astonishment. She exclaimed, in Yiddish, ‘You are Jewish—and you are free?’”
(HOTI, 209-210).

Without captioning or dope sheets, there could be a potentially dangerous lack of
clarity in what the photographs and films represented. The dope sheets provided by the
cameramen are in fact a vital accompaniment to the images. Whether or not they were
annotated, the images were important for practical and legal reasons, so the allies needed them
to be well-documented. During the Nuremberg trial and several other war crimes trials,
various sections of camp liberation film footage were shown from the documentary film called

20 Davidson Taylor, Chief of Film, Theatre and Music Control Section of SHAEF to Sidney Bernstein, 25 May,
1945.

Nazi Concentration Camps as general proof or evidence that the stories of atrocities would not be taken as exaggerations or faked at a later time. Like Memory of the Camps, it is also a compilation of atrocity footage. The film was even shown at the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961. Helen Lennon reports on the amount of atrocity footage that was originally shot and what was edited for viewing as evidence in her essay, “A Witness to Atrocity: Film as Evidence in International War Crimes Tribunals”:

Nazi Concentration Camps, six reels distributed from more than 100,000ft of 35mm film shot by American and British forces when liberating the Western concentration camps in April, 1945, runs to 59 minutes and documents bodies stacked in piles and burned at concentration camps at Ohrdruf and Mauthausen, the bulldozing of thousands of corpses into massive pits at Bergen-Belsen and piles of human hair at Buchenwald. (WIWC, 67-68)

On a personal level, the dope sheets also provided the men with an outlet for their emotions. Since the camera was an instrument that allowed for some minor detachment from what they were forced to encounter, the men may have felt they had some room to express their sorrow, horror and outrage over what they were filming.

[Sergeant] Mike Lewis was glad that he was busy filming every day and Sergeant Oakes busied himself with the camera equipment as a distraction. The lens both limited the scenes and operated as a protective barrier for the cameramen, for even though the men of the AFPU were trained to film with both eyes open, Oakes mused perhaps metaphorically that the camera enabled them to close “one eye from the horror”. (FLBB, 38-39)

The dope sheets also provided a system of keeping track of what each roll or reel of undeveloped film contained before being sent off to the censor and the news agencies, as they provided a detailed introduction to what was on each reel. This was an efficient and important way of contextualising the images before the public saw them. Here, Caven discusses what I believe was felt by these men to be a duty to provide an accurate account:

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22 Nazi Concentration Camps. Record Group 238: National Archives Collection of World War II War Crimes Records, 1933-1950, Motion Picture, Sound and Video Collection. Lennon further notes that Nazi Concentration Camps was also admitted in several of the twelve war crimes trials, known as “the Subsequent trials”, administered by the Allied Control Council for Germany in the four zones of occupation.

These dope sheets vary enormously, depending on the individual author. At times they are surprisingly personal documents, revealing something of what the cameramen were thinking at the time and as they were preparing to send the footage home. They sometimes contain the odd aside, or personal comment that elucidates their work, and which are missing from the edited ‘official’ captions, under which the images were filed, or sold to the press. . . The AFPU cameramen had already seen at first hand the horrors of modern warfare, but all of them expressed total shock at what they witnessed in Belsen. Viewing the situation from the present, which has seen the establishment and acceptance of the Holocaust as a concept; it is much more difficult to appreciate the extent of the horror which they had to absorb… Ultimately it fell to this particular group of AFPU cameramen to try and make a coherent, comprehensible account of this incomprehensible manifestation of human suffering, a role they had not really had to play before. (HOTI, 207-208)

Their assignment had been to “record history”, but the filming of the camps’ liberation meant the AFPU cameramen were suddenly elevated to key witnesses of the aftermath of the crimes that had obviously been committed; their dope sheets became their testimony.

Susan Sontag calls the caption “the missing voice” and argues that “What moralists are demanding from a photograph is that it does what no photograph can ever do—speak”. Sontag makes the claim that the photograph “is expected to speak the truth. But even an entirely accurate caption is only one interpretation, necessarily a limiting one, of the photograph to which it is attached” (OP, 108-109). Perhaps this is inherent knowledge for cameramen; perhaps it is for this reason that the cameramen either took advice from subsequent directors or intuitively knew to film in a certain style or aspect. Although the dope sheets were important and informative, they had to accompany images that fitted the description. Later in this chapter, I will discuss certain techniques that were used in shooting the documentary film to fulfil a particular need to ensure that what was seen could be believed. The examples provided at the end of this chapter show some of the AFPU still shots with the corresponding dope sheet information that were also used as captions.

To quote briefly from the dope sheets: “The British soldiers set up makeshift showers for the inmates, which they used with some alacrity, to the embarrassment of some of the soldiers standing nearby. ‘Sergeant J. Thompson of Glasgow of the mobile bath unit … finds himself in undreamed of circumstances” (HOTI, 218). The photo in Figure 8 was accompanied by this very descriptive dope sheet:
The importance to the inmates of simply being rid of their former rags is described in the commentary for a photograph depicting women waiting to be evacuated in an ambulance. Before we could evacuate the maimed and diseased internees of Belsen ... they had first to be stripped of their foul and vermin-ridden rags ... It is interesting to note that although these people have been systematically degraded over considerable periods, once primitive necessities of food and warmth had been met—the patients—particularly the women—were almost immediately crying for clothes. Thus clothes became a medical necessity, a powerful tonic, a strong antidote against the mental apathy of the very weak. (HOTI, 219)

One can ascertain from the dope sheets, the photo in Figure 8 and the other photos, that the men of the AFPU also took pains to describe and identify the inmates in a humane and accurate manner as possible, withholding all judgement.

Finally, it is important to note that the descriptions given by cameramen of the AFPU were found to be of such veracity that they were used as affidavits in the Nuremberg trials. Therefore the cameramen were considered legally reliable witnesses in the most important war crimes trial of the twentieth century. The men provided a steady stream of films and photographs to the British national press and thus the public, but their own personal descriptions were what allowed journalists to make sense of it and interpret the story for that wider audience. However, Comolli states that “People didn’t know, didn’t really want to know what had happened to the Jews in the camps. Those who made Memory of the Camps filmed, and edited it without realising the full breadth of the elements they were putting together” (FR, 65).

The Making of Memory of the Camps; Film as “Psychological Warfare”

In his well-considered essay, “Notes on the Images of the Camps”24, Nicolas Losson declares that a study of documentary films about the liberation of Nazi concentration camps “immediately entails the following reflection: these films allow us to measure the size of the disaster even as they inform us of the extent of that loss of which they are, ultimately, the last trace” (NIC, 25). Other than the previously described horror, sadness and anger experienced by the AFPU while filming the scenes at Belsen, Losson reminds us that there was another emotion driving the filming of camp liberation; fear:

One therefore thinks that these images correspond not so much to a conscious and planned operation, but rather to a simple attempt to capture the phenomenon in its opacity. One can’t take in these films without losing awareness of the way in which they were made, without forgetting that these images were born in the collective fear that informed the discovery of the camps: it was horror that drove the singular act of filming the charnel houses25. (NIC, 26)

Losson says that the filming of the liberation of Belsen was the only “constructed and considered project” by the Allies, and that it “perfectly represents the state of mind” that was shared by the men who shot and compiled the other liberation films of the period. Thus far I have singled out the cameramen of the AFPU as the people most responsible for shooting the film that went into Memory of the Camps, but Losson gives due credit to Sydney Bernstein for “the existence of these images” (NIC, 26).

Bernstein, a British army officer, was the head of the Film Division of the British Ministry of Information in the army’s division on combat psychology, better known as the “Psychological Warfare Division” or PWD. It was Bernstein’s goal with the support of the Allies to create a film as proof that the Nazi atrocities took place.

It is important to mention again that the completed project does indeed begin with a two and a half minute clip of Leni Riefenstahl’s film, Triumph of the Will, just as Bernstein had prescribed. It presents the premise of the Nazi plan, portraying it as a dark fantasy built up by the use of visual propaganda and the rhetoric of dramatic speeches that ultimately result in genocide. I suggest that by conflating these polar film texts, they appear as mirrored twins in their spectacularly opposite representations of war, done purposely to contrast Nazi ideology with Nazi reality.

In the opening scene, Howard’s voice is weary, sombre, and bordering on disgust as he reads what amounts to a brief historical synopsis of the Nazi’s ascent into power, clearly audible over the background cheers of the throngs gathered at the Nuremburg rally in Riefenstahl’s film:

The German people had embarked on that long, incredible journey that led seemingly out of chaos to unprecedented triumph. Promise after promise had been fulfilled. Austria, 1938. Czechoslovakia, 1938. Poland, 1939.

25 Charnel-house: a house or vault in which dead bodies or bones are piled.
Norway, Denmark, and France in quick succession. A place in the sun at last. True, they had lost their trade unions and a lot of books had been burned, but it seemed a good sort of bargain, and one got to like being told what to do, having one's views prescribed, especially if it meant a vista bright with the promise of grandeur and conquest.26 (MCTC, 1)

Immediately following this sequence is the liberation footage of the Belsen camp taken by Sergeants Harry Oakes and Mike Lewis. Beginning from the viewpoint of a bucolic farm yard nearby, the camera follows the road that led shortly to the Belsen camp, thus depicting a sort of fall from grace and descent into hell. The specific use of the “long shot” technique in editing was undertaken at the suggestion of British film director Alfred Hitchcock, who famously took part in the unfinished project. Howard’s voice-over narrates the short journey: “Neat and tidy orchards, well stocked farms line the wayside and the British soldier did not fail to admire the place and its inhabitants-- at least until he began to feel a smell. It came from a concentration camp, a waste ringed with barbed wire and overlooked by watchtowers” (MCTC, 1).

In terms of conveying the desired information to the audience watching the film, Comolli explains how the panning shots create a continuous visual connection from the naked and decaying corpses to the variety of spectators. Some, it can be seen, were forced to be there, such as German officers and SS camp guards, and the others, British officers, chaplains and soldiers were brought in as witnesses. All the spectators are shown watching the corpses, and more importantly, the audience sees the looks on the faces of the spectators as they comprehend what they are seeing. “The film audience will see the spectators in the film seeing what they see themselves”. Comolli says that “to see another person seeing and to see what he is seeing doubles the effect and attests to the reality of seeing”. This doubling thus establishes “at the very least the possibility of believing what one sees, that there is seeing in the look, in the same shot which makes it indisputable proof, which it would be absurd not to believe”. By setting up the spectators’ looks, Memory of the Camps uses these shots as a device for framing the situation. It is “offering to the viewer” a view of the spectator seeing the spectacle that will connect the audience with their own seeing (FR, 63).

The AFPU had already “directed” the film in this way, but it was Hitchcock who made sure that long shots such as these stayed long and uncut. Bernstein’s involvement in the

contextualising of this documentary should be underscored. How certain key images in the Belsen footage became emblematic signs of the Holocaust, as explained by Tobias Ebbrecht in his essay, “Migrating Images: Iconic Images of the Holocaust and the Representation of War in Popular Film”27:

One scene in particular validates Bernstein's approach. In a long shot German representatives from the surrounding villages tour the camp. Then the camera pans to a German SS-guard who is forced to carry a dead body to the mass graves. This single shot encompasses the SS-guard, the dead body, the villagers, and the mass graves. This technique of assuring the reality of the scene became as much part of the iconography of the Holocaust as the images themselves. The film's footage depicting bulldozers pushing dead bodies into the mass graves became one of the most influential iconic images of the Holocaust. (MIII, 96)

Rabinowitz, along with others, deduced that that Memory of the Camps was never shown as a finished product for purely political reasons:

Never released because of its graphic images of the camps, the film was originally intended for viewing by the German people as part of the denazification program. Because of its disturbing pictures of mass graves being excavated and filled with emaciated corpses by captured S.S. guards, the film was considered so inflammatory to the newly forged postwar alliances that the British government suppressed it. It languished in the archives of the Imperial War Museum until the mid-1980s when it was recovered by another generation of filmmakers and was finally seen as part of another documentary on the making of the film and on its history for Frontline, narrated by Trevor Howard. (WUW, 120)

However, it appears that the film was never released before for reasons far more mundane. Bernstein was determined to create a definitive documentary on the concentration camps, yet he seemed unaware of the Americans growing impatience with the length of time it was taking because even after repeated requests for a completion date, he was unable to satisfy them with a final time-frame. Gladstone reports that Bernstein “could not have foreseen the logistical and political problems he would face in acquiring and assembling all the material within the timescale necessary for its intended message to be heard in Germany”(SAIS, 62).

He was finally able to assemble the required production team to complete the film, but not until July, 1945, and by that time the original sponsor of the film, SHAEF, had been dissolved into its component parts and official decisions about the film was left to the Foreign Office. According to Gladstone, officials within that office were responsible for defining policy in Germany, and it was their decision that “press and radio [were] the most important media for eradicating militarism and Nazism and leading Germans out of their apathy towards rebuilding Germany” (SAIS, 62).

*Memory of the Camps* is unique for many reasons; the subject matter, the people who operated the cameras, who did their best to describe in words the feelings they had about the things they were seeing, as well as the great sense of urgency that seemed to propel the project. There was a sense that not only must this situation be documented for history, but that it had to be documented in such a way that the reality had to be seen as being real, rather than attempting to create a reality out of fiction. Comolli says that the filming at Bergen-Belsen was “done without knowing or comprehending the very proportions of the filmed event itself—the Shoah”, and that they were “filming without knowing, filming without comprehending”, or, in other words, filming history in “anticipation of the work of historians” (FR, 65).

**Public Reactions to Images from within Memory of the Camps in 1945; Viewing and Reviewing the Underside the Reality of War**

Atrocity images from the Holocaust along with many other heinous and well documented images of more recent and terrible crimes against humanity are easily obtainable, in large part due to their accessibility in the Internet. Entering the term “Holocaust images” into the “Google Images” search engine produced 14,300,000 images in .28 seconds. Before the Internet, television played a large part in re-introducing the Holocaust to the public in America and Europe by showing a variety of made-for-television dramas, old newsreels and documentaries. This allowed the public time to become accustomed to incredibly hideous imagery. Directly after the liberation of Europe in 1945, however, the images released from the camp liberations resembled nothing real or even imagined by the general public.

Many of the camp liberation newsreels which eventually made up *Memory of the Camps* were shown as soon as possible in cinemas across London, while newspapers and magazines devoted entire sections to still photographs with captions, many of which were erroneously identified and reprinted. Nevertheless they were extremely powerful in their
visual effect and eventually, their moral impact. By many accounts, people were generally not ready to absorb the reality of what had been happening across Europe. A good example detailing some of the reactions to these newsreels is found on the final page of the literary critic Alfred Kazin’s memoirs, in which he describes his initial encounter with films from the concentration camps:

One day in the spring of 1945, when the war against Hitler was almost won, I sat in a newsreel theater in Piccadilly looking at the first films of newly liberated Belsen. On the screen, sticks in black-and-white prison garb leaned on a wire, staring dreamily at the camera; other sticks shuffled about, or sat vaguely on the ground, next to an enormous pile of bodies, piled up like cordwood, from which protruded legs, arms, heads. A few guards were collected sullenly in a corner, and for a moment a British Army bulldozer was shown digging an enormous hole in the ground. Then the sticks would come back on the screen, hanging on the wire, looking at us. It was unbearable. People coughed in embarrassment, and in embarrassment many laughed. (SOT, 160)

Hannah Caven’s analysis of the British public’s general response to the images from the camps confirms that they were “shocked, horrified and troubled by the images that confronted them”. Interestingly, in 1944, a survey carried out in December of that year showed that “only 37% of the people interviewed felt that the atrocity stories were unequivocally true”. After seeing the films in 1945 however, a Mass Observation report said that the audience response was vastly different from the opinions of 1944. “The news of the German concentration camps has made a very profound impression”. Apparently, people had inklings about the existence of the camps, but never of their vast extent: “Not only had everyone who was questioned heard about them—generally on questions of topical news there is a large ‘Don’t know’ section—but many people came out with spontaneous comment, which showed how deeply horrified they had been by the news that they had heard”. It was also noted by MOA that the most

28 Alfred Kazin, *Starting Out in the Thirties*. Little, Brown, and Company: Boston, 1962. From here on in will be cited as SOT.

29 Cavell obtained this information from the Mass Observation Archive, which she describes in her footnotes as “a rather idiosyncratic collection of public opinion polls. The archive contains some reports which were the result of questionnaires; however, some of the material collected comes from the personal reports of ‘observers’ who overheard conversations, or recorded diaries on their own and others’ activities” (HOTI 252). From here on in will be cited as MOA.

30 MOA, I FR 2228.
important point was that although they knew the atrocity stories were true, “seeing the pictures of them makes a great difference” (HOTI, 244).

Many thought the stories were propaganda until they saw the films, and even afterwards, tried to make sense of what they literally could not comprehend, by using logic as a way to almost deny the reality:

Well I ask you, would the Germans deliberately establish focal points of dysentery and typhus all over Germany if they could avoid it? They know as well as we do that it can’t be confined to the camps once it has broken out… I don’t say they were run like the Ritz before all this, but I do think it’s a gross misrepresentation to suggest that the prisoners have been treated like that all along, deliberately; it just isn’t sense. As for the pictures of thin, starving people, dead and alive—Well, dysentery and typhus are wasting diseases, and anyone suffering from advanced stages of them will look like that 31 . . . (HOTI, 245)

Clearly, Bernstein and Hitchcock knew their own people well enough to have predicted their doubts. The fact that the Newsreels that make up the footage for Memory of the Camps were shown in cinema theatres, normally a place for family entertainment, was a new problem. There were debates in newspapers about whether or not children should be permitted to see the film; in those days the newsreels were rated with a “U” in Britain, which meant everyone was free to watch them. Reports by people, who as teen-agers saw the films are remarkable. Bernard Crick who was fifteen years of age at the time, recalled fifty years later that when “we saw the film, just spliced in without warning to a routine newsreel, of the opening up of Belsen. We wept in the alley outside” 32.

Conclusion:
At the end of the completed version of Memory of the Camps appear the harrowing scenes of imprisoned SS soldiers under threat from bayonets, being forced to pick up the corpses of

31 MOA, FR 2248, pp. 1–2.
32 The Independent, 15 April 1995, p. 15.
their victims, and then carry them to trucks where they are tossed and piled up for transport to mass graves. At the gravesite the SS are once again forced to remove the corpses and hurl them into the deep pits. The lifeless bodies dangle as they are carried in the arms of the SS, creating what Comolli refers to as a “danse macabre” between the living SS men and the corpses. Comolli goes so far as to make this analogy:

Through the extraordinary reversal through which war becomes the director, the executioners and the victims find themselves in an embrace. The Nazi wanted to destroy the bodies, the spirits, the identities, the filiation of the Jews of Europe; and now here he is, holding in his arms these dead who have come back to embrace (embarrass) him. (FR, 66)

Memory of the Camps created a picture of the Holocaust in the mind’s eye of a war-weary public by bringing us not only unspeakable realities, but also by filming and offering up the real dead for the audience, breaking cinematic taboos instead of displaying death as staged or fictional. The dead are highlighted and contrasted by their closeness with the living; here there is no privacy. The dead become almost artistic subject matter. Here then, is another moment of rupture, as this exposure and revealing of reality out-does any fictional representation of horror. Comolli says, “This horror that defies representation paradoxically reminds us of the intimate economy of the cinema, its secret, in the very word of magic”. The horrible magic in this case is the jostling about of the bodies of what the Nazis referred to as Figuren, meaning “characters”, “figures”, “silhouettes”, in any case, not human, even meaning in this case “marionettes” or “puppets”, making their jerky movements a parody of contrast to the smooth, fluid movements of the living human beings carrying them along to their graves (FR, 67).

The reels of film in this documentation of the various concentration camp liberations were finally found and pieced together forty years after the fact to become Memory of the Camps. It has been shown repeatedly, often re-edited in classrooms and various media countless times. Trevor Howard’s narration sets the stage as he describes with certainty the details behind the events coinciding with the images, in other words, he provides the captions. Over the years this film, whether as one continuous film or taken apart and shown in fragments as elements of the film, helps construct how we imagine the Holocaust and the devastating outcome of war. In this way I see it as functioning somewhat like Picasso’s Guernica, which also shows us in a single frame the outcome of war, again in pieces put together. Guernica showed us the beginning and the end; Memory of the Camps shows us the ending as the outcome; Triumph of the Will shows us the vision behind the promise of
beginning the war, and in hindsight, the threat of this outcome. Each in its own way presents 
war as different versions of a spectacle, but truly, *Memory of the Camps* represents the 
spectacle at its most real; the horrifying images, one would think, should have provided the 
evidence that would have stopped all future war in its tracks.

The Holocaust as an event is implicated in the historical and conceptual development 
of the spectacle. The importance of *Memory of the Camps* is that it represents a turning point 
in history by recognising and validating the witness as a crucial element in overcoming the 
cold, mechanical recording of events. The witness should be present to create a discourse, 
because discourse is vital to our understanding of an event and if need be, acting upon that 
understanding. Without the human witness, there is no basis for genuine discourse.

By documenting the final days of the Holocaust, *Memory of the Camps* suggests that at 
this point in time the spectator was becoming painstakingly aware of what becomes of the 
world when the protective conscience of its people, and thus its capability of making moral 
judgments are allowed to be displaced. Filling the lacuna left behind is the work of visual 
culture and the technology needed to convey the necessary messages. But the messages must 
have proper context. This film locates an ethical need to fill the gap where the lack of conscience and moral agency had carved a space. Ever increasing forms of the mechanical 
lens and thus surveillance technology may be creating the illusion of “watching over” and thus 
filling this gap, but *Memory of the Camps* makes the strong argument that without the 
presence of a witness and the discourse that follows, there still exists the lack of humanity and conscience required to fulfil this ethical task.

The next chapter describes what I see as a technically obvious but consciously 
delitescent turning point in visual culture exemplified by the international broadcasting of the 
television trial of Adolf Eichmann held in Jerusalem. It is again during this important period in 
the early 1960’s when much of the world was deeply immersed in one of the most intractable 
points of the Cold-War era, that technology, visuality, memories of war, history, myth- 
making and a vast body of witness testimony come together in one event. The intentions 
lying behind the trial were not necessarily tied to the wider outcomes of the trial. However, I 
suggest that the machinations behind the trial and the systems used to mediate it produced an 
outcome that subsequently opened another socio-technological dispositif in mediated visual 
culture to process. This highly mediated process has served to conflate what had previously 
been two separate modes of visuality–surveillance and voyeurism– and two different ways of viewing –witnessing and spectating. I consider these conflations a crucial stage in the
establishment of our current visual regime and the beginning of a fundamentally different way of mediating individual and collective identities under the terms of this regime.
FIGURES FOR

Memory of the Camps

THE LIBERATION OF BERGEN-BELENCON CONCENTRATION CAMP, APRIL 1945

All photographs for this chapter were accessed from the online archives of the Imperial War Museums (IWM), and, unless otherwise noted, are part of a sub-group of photos from the collection entitled “The Liberation of Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp, April, 1945”, which is part of the main group of photos: War Office Second World War Official Collection. All images are available to share and reuse under the terms of the IWM Non Commercial Licence. All Photographs were accessed from the Web in September, 2011.
C4 Figure 1: No 5 Army Film & Photographic Unit. Maker: Oakes, Sergeant H. “Piles of dead bodies await burial in mass graves”. 
C4 Figure 2: This now iconic image of camp liberation and the Holocaust is described as: “A woman inmate of Belsen concentration camp kisses the hand of Army Film & Photographic Unit cameraman Lieutenant Martyn Wilson on liberation”. IWM FLM 1226. IWM Film Frames Collection, 16 April 1945. Maker: Lewis, Mike (Sgt) No 5 Army, Film & Photographic Unit. Object Type: Reproduction from Film frame, from Memory of the Camps. Further information: The woman giving the kiss has been identified by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum as Rosalie Weisner. Source: Film Number CVN 319/09, “The True Glory”.
C4 Figure 3: The bodies of victims in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. This also illustrates that the cameramen were not unaware of ways to frame certain shots for maximum effect; here the crucifixion-like manner in which these bodies appear is unmistakable and were surely framed as such, in this case by Lt. Wilson. BU 3760. Date: 17 - 18 April 1945. Maker: Wilson, M H (Lt) No 5 Army Film & Photographic Unit. Object type: Official photograph.

C4 Figure 4: One of the mass graves partially filled with corpses. 
C4 Figure 5: BU 4058. A British Army bulldozer pushes bodies into a mass grave at Belsen. The driver of the bulldozer wears a protective handkerchief over his mouth and nose. Production date: 19, April 1945. Maker: Oakes, H (Sgt) No 5 Army Film & Photographic Unit Object type: Official photograph.
Hannah Caven:

There is one particular Belsen inmate who appears in all the newsreel footage. He is pictured amid a pile of rags and corpses, half naked while he searches the shirt that he holds for lice. He looks up at the camera but hardly seems to register that it is there, let alone what it is. *Movietone* describes him as a ‘Prisoner—just a skeleton sits down handling garment’ *Paramount* points him out as a ‘... living skeleton among dead bodies’ *Gaumont* commented that he was indistinguishable from the corpses which surrounded him. This one powerful image of a man closer to death than life, who probably did not survive for long after these pictures were taken, encapsulates the tragedy of liberation for many of these inmates for whom it came too late. (HOTI, 240-241)
C4 Figure 8: BU 4237. Description: Women inmates use a Mobile Bath Unit which is equipped with hot water. Production Date: 21, April 1945. Maker: Oakes, H (Sgt) No 5 Army Film & Photographic Unit. Object type: Official photograph. <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/search?query=BU+4842&submit=&items_per_page=10>. Web.
CHAPTER FIVE:

From the Panopticon to the Synopticon: Televising the Trial of Adolf Eichmann; The Legitimisation of the New Visual Regime

Introduction

In Memory of the Camps, the historical order in which things occur is also a conceptual order. Following Benjamin’s thinking, the development of authentic witness reports and “dope sheets” accompanying atrocity photographs that were written by the soldiers reporting the conditions at the concentration camps, formed the threshold on which a moral-political case for the authenticity of the image could be constructed. Clearly, in the post-war period, the discourse of the witness became increasingly important. I now examine three ways of viewing the criminal trial of Nazi officer Obersturmbannführer (Lieutenant Colonel) Adolf Eichmann, in order to portray how various levels of mediatising an event help determine how we view them as they occur. By noting the various ways of viewing a “mediated” event of this scope, different types of aesthetic framing and the position of the witness within those frames can be examined.

Firstly, as Wieviorka concluded, “the trial itself […] was also powerfully innovative” because “everything happened there for the first time” (EW, 56). The trial was unique in several ways. It was a turning point in the development of ways to disseminate more widely a mediated and therefore more regimented way of viewing cultural and political events. For my purposes, the most important point about the trial is that it was the first internationally televised trial, thus broadening the societal sphere of spectators, and as such, it provides an example of Mathiesen’s notion of the “viewer society”. I present the first way of viewing the trial by explaining further the global role that television and other media played in broadcasting this event. The trial also substantiates Debord’s theory of the spectacle, and, beyond this basic meaning, it may also be described as “spectacular” for the size of its viewer audience and the effect it had on large sections of society.

I then consider Hannah Arendt’s book, Eichmann in Jerusalem, a Report on the Banality of Evil (1963) and some of the key scholarly arguments that have arisen in response to it, as this work continues to be a controversial analysis of the trial. The important factor in this “controversy” is that much of it is based on inverted or wrong-headed interpretations of Arendt’s work that have been repeated without proper verification. Finally, I discuss the semi-documentary film Un spécialiste, portrait d’un criminel moderne / The Specialist (1999),
directed by Eyal Sivan. Compiling selected sequences of the original, archived video tapes of the trial, digitising and re-editing the tapes, the director and producer of this film created a unique version of the trial based almost exclusively on the views and chronology of Arendt’s book. By taking into account the intense mediatisation of the trial and Arendt’s view of it, the film succeeds in becoming a third and contemporary version of Eichmann’s trial.

The trial of Adolf Eichmann opened officially on April 12, 1961 in Jerusalem, Israel. Much about this trial that had been planned and carried out beforehand was based specifically on serving the needs of a mass audience through television and radio media. Israel’s Attorney General and Chief Prosecutor in the trial, Gideon Hausner, wrote in his account of the event: “A month before the trial began the court had authorised the entire proceedings to be filmed for television purposes, so that the whole world could watch” (JIJ, 307). Unprecedented and extensive coverage of the trial by the press, radio, and for the first time, internationally televised broadcasting created a perfect vehicle for presenting not only the Israeli court tribunal’s final judicial outcome, but also revealed dramatically as high political intrigue in the Israeli government’s covert activities. It is safe to say that without the questionable methods employed to undertake these activities, the trial may never have taken place.

Setting the Stage for Eichmann’s Trial

Debord offers an updated view on what he refers to as the “continued advance” of the society of the spectacle in Comments on the Society of the Spectacle. Referring to the Parisian students’ revolt of May 1968, he makes this claim: “Spectacular domination’s first priority was to eradicate historical knowledge in general; beginning with just about all the rational information and commentary on the most recent past” (CSS, 13-14). The concept of eradicating history is not a new one, however, as previously noted in the case of Triumph of

1 Eyal Sivan is an Israeli dissident and documentary filmmaker, born in Haifa, Israel in September, 1964, and raised in Jerusalem. Having never completed his formal education, he chose instead to become a fashion photographer in Tel Aviv. He moved from Israel to France in 1982 during the Lebanese war after he was declared unfit for military service. Sivan’s interests are in memory, the fate of displaced Palestinians and genocide. Between 1987 and 1999 Sivan made, amongst other films, Aqabat Jaber: Passing Through, Israland and Jerusalem, Jerusalem, as well as four short films on Populations en danger.


3 The student protests of May 1968 in France were linked to international protests against the American war in Vietnam and other political and social consequences of the Cold War. In many respects, the terrible condition of many schools in France that led students to revolt remains a problem Revolt flared in many places; across Europe, in France and Italy particularly - and in the East, the Prague Spring. In Mexico there was a massacre of demonstrators to ensure social peace prior to the Olympics of that year. Yet May 1968 in Paris remains the iconic image associated with the year. From The Online Lecture, Yale University given by John Merriman, (Charles Seymour Professor of History). <http://www.academicearth.org/>. <http://libcom.org/history/articles/france-1968/>. Web. April, 2012.
the Will; the Nazi regime was adept at this procedure. Through representational media, history can be eradicated and replaced by a different version of events that have occurred or are yet to come about. By examining multiple layers of the Nazi “spectacle” that lay between the horrifying reality of “the spectacular” throughout Eichmann’s trial, history seems to have been not so much eradicated as obfuscated.

Eichmann avoided judgment in the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial\(^4\) by hiding out in various parts of Europe and finally escaping to Argentina. Consequently many components of the Eichmann trial involved a meticulous revealing of crimes that, despite their enormity and the depth of depravity involved in their undertaking resulting in the vast number of victims they affected in their completion, for much of the world had also remained completely hidden. Bringing Eichmann to trial before an international audience in the court of a country that was finally established in part as a result of his crimes suddenly designated him as a key signifier of the Holocaust. He was tried not only as an individual, but also as a symbol of the human capacity for destroying humanity in numbers that amounted to genocide. The trial was meant to expose this and shine some light upon a dark truth that had remained largely hidden, either in part by choice from the witnesses and victims’ standpoint, or the circumstances of geography or, more importantly, because those who were not there could simply not conceive of or imagine it.

Survivors as witnesses were carefully chosen by Hausner to give testimony based on their memory of events that had taken place twenty years earlier. Verbally reconstructed events experienced by them were not always related to or specifically attributed to Eichmann. Their experiences could however, be seen as the result of his overarching role as the wholesale expeditor of Jews to concentration or “death” camps. Through these live, televised testimonies of witnesses who became designated as “Holocaust survivors” two major things were achieved: the establishment of the Holocaust as a real event (now named), and the creation of a mythology within it. I say “mythology” in this case, for two reasons. First, although the stories of the survivors unquestionably deserved to be told, heard and documented, in relation to a legal trial many were second-tier stories tied to outcomes stemming from the activities of Eichmann. The majority of the “witnesses” had never actually seen Adolf Eichmann, nor were

\(^4\) According to Mark Gado, “The name Adolf Eichmann was mentioned over and over again at the trials. Defendants Herman Goering and Auschwitz Commandant Rudolf Hoess spoke highly of Eichmann’s dedication to the Fuehrer. They praised his talents for organization and his ability to get things done for the Reich. But above all, the other Nazi killers admired Eichmann’s enthusiasm for getting rid of the Jews. ‘I first met Eichmann about four weeks after receiving the order (to kill Jews)’, said Commandant Hoess at Nuremberg, ‘he came to Auschwitz to discuss details with me on the carrying out of the order... I was to receive all further instructions from him’”. Mark Gado. “Crime Library, Criminal Minds and Methods”.  
they present to hear him give orders pertaining to any killing or witness him signing the
documents to carry out the act of killing. Second, from Hausner’s point of view, he wanted to
go beyond archival documents and allow people to tell their stories to the world. On a local
level he felt that the teenagers of Israel, most of who had been born either into Israeli
statehood or the struggle for it, “had no real knowledge and therefore no appreciation, of the
way their own flesh and blood had perished”. He also said that there was a “breach between
the generations, a possible source of an abhorrence of the nation’s yesterday”. Hausner
reasoned that the witnesses’ testimony was “factual enlightenment” and that hearing it was the
only way to eliminate this breach (JIJ, 291-92).

Myths are created to help explain the inexplicable in the world and its creation, and, in
most stories, events not physically witnessed by human beings. In the Eichmann trial,
testimony is given in an attempt if not to explain an unexplainable horror and the destruction
of the world, then to at least describe it. Primo Levi\textsuperscript{5} stated that there is no “why” in the
concentration camp; orders for committing cruelty are arbitrarily given, absurd situations and
torture can only be described, and none of these may ever be explained. Because this
particular juncture in history is inexplicable, it is therefore ripe for myth-making. Its
representation in a legal trial broadcast around the world, especially being the first of its kind,
makes this trial spectacular. Witness testimony is given by people who were present at the
scene, so the inexplicable history becomes “eradicated”, and is replaced by stories recalled
from horrible and often traumatic memories. If there is no reasonable explanation as to why a
particular moment in history occurs, then it seems plausible to merely discard that which is
unknowable, which in this case is the “why”, and instead, relate that which is known based on
the memory of that past experience and its effect upon the present. The Eichmann trial, in the
Heideggerian sense discussed earlier in this thesis, presented a new world picture: “The fact
that whatever is comes into being in and through representedness transforms the age in which
this occurs into a new age contrasting with the preceding one” (QCT, 129).

This is not to say that the Eichmann trial was based on a myth; rather, it was based on
making recognisable an event (the Holocaust) that, in its original yet constantly evolving form
had been an almost untellable story. The Eichmann trial therefore, became another event on its
own, a spectacular event, meaning it was an event that was carefully orchestrated to be
performed within the framework of a modern day political creationist story that the Israeli
government established and then orchestrated through mass media to the world. An event
such as a legal trial that showcases innocence posed against evil attracts spectators who are

\textsuperscript{5} Primo Levi. \textit{If This is a Man; The Truce}. Everyman Publishers plc, London: 2000.
both present yet invisible (watching the event on television, thousands of miles away) and numbered in the millions. Shoshana Felman, in her discussion in “Theatres of Justice”\(^6\) explains what she means by “event”. “I define event by the capacity of happenings to shock and to surprise—in excess of their own deliberateness. An event is always what surpasses its own planning, what exceeds its own deliberateness, what happens in a form of surprise to—and in excess of—the ideological intentions that have given rise to it” (TJ, 210). This combination serves as fertile ground for the creation of a new world picture (Heidegger), which in this case, presents Israel as a sovereign state capable of bringing to justice crimes that occurred elsewhere and before the state of Israel came into being.

Further discussion of this takes place in the essay “Eichmann on the Air: Radio and the Making of an Historic Trial”\(^7\). It describes how as an “event”, steps were taken in the trial’s publicity to establish the right of Israel to hold the Eichmann trial with respect to Israeli law. In an internal briefing to Israeli consulates in April 1961, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Haim Yachil, articulated the political significance of the trial:

First is the redemptive function of the State of Israel as the country where every Jew has a place; . . . Second is this State as claiming the wrong done to its people and as sentencing those who injured the life and rights of the nation . . . And I truly put the Eichmann trial, without any exaggeration, as a great tragic symbol of that harsh reckoning between us and our assailants who sought to annihilate us on a par with the act of redemption, the Aliya, and the integration of the people of Israel in its land. (EOA, 3)

The article also states that Israeli public relations officers “managed media coverage of the proceedings” and that Israeli “representatives” had instructions to “portray the trial as a turning point in Jewish history”, which would in turn, connect it to “Israel’s current national agendas, particularly to the on-going efforts to reaffirm the State of Israel as the Jewish homeland” (EOA, 3).

If, as the article states, the Eichmann trial was portrayed as a “turning point in Jewish history”, and public relations officers were hired to “manage the media coverage” in order to create this portrayal, then I suggest that the trial was historicized through media manipulation in order to become historical, meaning that like so many other events that take place it became

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historical by being represented as such. Therefore reducing the complexity of a situation to a more easily recognisable form in order to inform a mass audience is much like creating a myth. The word “myth” as a noun has many definitions, but here I am referring to a situation or event that is at once extraordinary, indescribable and perhaps even unspeakable. If one is to describe it or speak of it, then one is required to do so by way of allegorical references or interpretation or by representation. Representation, however, may be more of a problem here than interpretation. In the Eichmann trial past atrocities are recreated and given a form (through representation), and this inevitably opens them up to readings of all kinds, as well as to forms of historicization. This is what is encompassed by “the spectacle”.

As for the deeply traumatic experience of the witness testimony being televised around the world, Debord’s comments are again instructive: “With the destruction of history, contemporary events themselves retreat into a remote and fabulous realm of unverifiable stories, uncheckable statistics, unlikely explanations and untenable reasoning” (CSS, 16).

Although Debord’s description might be viewed as cynical, we can assume that the witnesses’ testimonies given at Eichmann’s trial were as genuine as the survivor’s memory, but, they were to become part of the regime of the spectacle when they were mediatised.

Prosecutor Gideon Hausner, who might be considered the dramaturge of this event, admitted that he was satisfied that the documentary evidence collected and held by the Israeli police would have been enough to secure Eichmann’s conviction. However, he purposely decided “to call as many as 110 witnesses to appear before the court”. For Hausner “the trial was not only about convicting a Nazi criminal but also about reconciliation with the tragic past” (EOA, 3). He also felt that the “the combined effect of various narratives, as related by different witnesses (many of whom had been personally interviewed and coached by him), would render the tragedy more tangible” (EOA, 4). It was, according to Hausner, his hope to “superimpose on a phantom a dimension of reality” (JIJ, 292).

Finally, the full intention of the Israeli court was made clear, on April 17, 1961, by Prosecutor Hausner’s declaration in his opening statement at Eichmann’s trial:

In rising to present the case against the accused, I am not alone. I am accompanied and surrounded by six million prosecutors, who, alas, cannot stand and point their finger of accusation against the man in the dock, declaring ‘I accuse!’ Their ashes are either at Auschwitz and Treblinka, or

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in graves scattered all over Europe. Their blood cries out but their voices are silent and unheard. It is in their name I present this awful indictment.\(^9\)

In her essay on the Eichmann trial, historian Anita Shapira\(^10\) defines the concept of myth-making in the trial: “From the vantage of 1961, it is doubtful that anyone could perceive the extent to which the Eichmann trial was a historic watershed marking the first phase in the waning of one myth and the ascent of the other” (ETCP, 19).

Not only were the voices of six million Jews silent, it was much more than that, the waning myth was that Jews would continue to remain silent and be unheard. While they suffered in Auschwitz, many Jews felt that God was absent because His Divine Presence had been obliterated by the Nazis. Afterward however, the Jews reaction to the Holocaust was more like a command to establish Israel and return to Jerusalem. According to the Jewish philosopher, Emil Fackenheim\(^11\):

\begin{quote}
Without a Jewish return from Auschwitz to Jerusalem, humanity would lose this testimony embodied in the Jewish people. For like the people of Israel, the Land of Israel is of a piece with the Torah of Israel. When it seemed that God fell silent during the Shoah, it was if every avenue of return, all teshuvah, had been closed. And yet the Torah itself—the very vessel of the Divine Presence that the Nazis sought to obliterate—opens the path of return. (EFRH, 125) Indeed it is written, “Return unto Me and I shall return unto You” (Malachi 3:7). (EFRH, 122)
\end{quote}

In Jewish legend, “Israel is believed to have been created before the other part of the world and remains located in the centre of the earth. Shekinah, (the Presence of God) resides in the Holy Land, though it follows the Jews in their exile”\(^12\). So the other myth, the one that was “ascending”, was that the State of Israel would indeed become a reality. Israel, also known as the Holy Land, was where “the resurrection of the dead will take place” (LOJ, 129). What began as a Biblical promise described in mythical terms finally reached its fruition in the form of a political event almost exclusively as a result of the Holocaust.


In the following section I show how the trial of Adolf Eichmann was presented and contextualised through well planned mass mediatisation. The cause and effect of televising this trial, I argue, was unprecedented, and its consequences continue today. The Eichmann trial influenced many aspects of modern life beyond the media: political thought, ways of writing history, approaches to questions of international law, philosophies of judgment, to name a few. Representation was deployed in new ways to create what Eyal Sivan called “a monopoly” view of the state of Israel. It shaped “history politics, memory politics and a collective past”. The Eichmann trial is an excellent example of the spectacle in that it is very much about “what meets the eye”.

Three Views of the Eichmann Trial

Part I: Expanding the Synopticon through “an event that overshadowed everything else”¹³

It was both deliberate and ironic that the Israeli government insisted on televising the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 from Jerusalem to an international audience, because until 1968, Israel itself did not have television. Photographs in newspapers and on overseas television broadcasts often showed the Israeli people huddled in small groups around open car windows as they listened to the broadcast on car radios, or on the street, listening to the trial on the newly popular transistor radio. As Jewish political studies scholar Françoise S. Ouzan reports: “For the first time in Israel, which counted some half a million Holocaust survivors, the voice of the ‘remnants of European Jewry’ was literally heard in the public sphere. There was a rush on sales of transistor radios. Until then, survivors had spoken of what they had endured but without public impact”¹⁴ (ETAJ, 1). A deeper irony is that the people of Israel, whose God it seemed, had been blind to their plight in the ghettos and death camps of World War II, deliberately established a way for the rest of the world to watch their retribution unfold on the visual medium of television, and yet it was an event that Israelis themselves could not watch.

“Though newspaper and radio coverage were often just as prompt, television also offered the trial as spectacle, providing, as one telecast¹⁵ claimed, “the whole world” with “a front-row seat” in Beit Ha’am” (MGB, 96). Accomplishing this was a profound undertaking, for it was the first major attempt to establish television as the means for a global audience to participate in what may be considered “mass surveillance” because of the sheer number of people who would have access to watching the trial, whether live as it was happening or seen later on television via video tapes shot from cameras recessed within the walls of the courtroom.

Unlike any other medium, television fostered a sense of “live” contact between event and audience; its intimate scale and speed of transmission gave viewers a sense of proximity to the proceedings. Moreover, television could present the trial in segments of “actuality” that, while selectively edited, still ran much longer than film clips usually shown in newsreels. For those watching the trial coverage in New York, the daily reports appeared in serial installments that paralleled the trial’s progress. Together, these

¹³ Hausner, (JIJ, 309).


¹⁵ Quoted from the television documentary, Verdict for Tomorrow. (Capital Cities Broadcasting Company, 1961).
elements of television broadcasting fostered an unrivalled sense of direct contact with the proceedings in Israel. (MGB, 96)

C5 Figure 2: No television in Israel until 1968: Israeli citizens listening to the broadcast of the trial via transistor radio outside Beit Ha'am in Jerusalem. Photo by Avraham Vered, courtesy of IDF and Defense Establishment Archive, from Bamahane collection (from the book *Six Million Accusers* published by Yedioth Books and the Massuah Institute 16. Web, May, 2012.

Televising the Eichmann trial to an international audience was part of a wider movement in which new understandings, aided and abetted by technical innovations, were emerging. My aim here is to consider these understandings from the viewpoint of the spectacle, which itself “names” only one part of the broader movement of a new mentality that can be observed. This began stimulating a new, wider acceptance of watching others and being watched by others, all at a distance, and close to real time.

“Thanks to the ingenuity of modern communications—particularly the urgent intimacy of television—the distance between us and the Beit Ha’am in Jerusalem is almost non-existent”, wrote one American observer of the trial. “We, too, are present in the courtroom. We listen to the recitals of the prosecution. We hear the testimony of the witnesses. We see Adolf Eichmann”17. (MGB, 96)

The very *gravitas* of the trial in which “crimes against the Jewish people” were being tried, created an atmosphere of solemnity infused with lengthy presentations, laden with dry facts and real human drama, all in a theatrical setting. It is because of the serious content and the

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17 “Timely Topics: Reliving the Past”, *Congress Bi-Weekly* 28, no. 9.1 May 1961: p. 3. Emphasis from the original.
spectacular setting of the trial that the idea of the audience being labelled little more than “voyeurs” was entirely absent.

Without assuming that the undertaking of televising this trial held any intentional designs toward the pre-figuration of creating more accessibility of being watched and watching others through the use of video cameras, one could argue that this massive project contributed to its future facilitation. Looking forty years ahead in a discussion regarding the twenty-first century phenomena of reality TV shows, David Lyon notes that “reality TV also reverses the conventional notion that there are sacrosanct ‘private’ spaces in bathrooms and bedrooms; these are not ‘public’ in all their banal, mundane and earthy glory”\textsuperscript{18}. Here Lyon is discussing surveillance, visibility and popular culture, by referring to Norman Denzin’s\textsuperscript{19} argument regarding the postmodern ‘cinematic society’, one “which unmask[s] the voyeuristic desire to watch” and the ‘cinematic gaze’, a gaze that is shared among the members of the audience (SSAO, 152).

Creating a format that enabled the Eichmann trial to be visually available to the largest audience in history before the advent of satellite broadcasting, suddenly granted a new and special permission to forego previous, conventional notions about looking and privacy. Although it was a trial, it had the air of an international invitation to return to the old days, when crowds had gathered to watch a hanging in the public square. This time however, the lenses of the cameras, hidden within specially built recesses in the walls of the courtroom created a much cleaner, mechanical distance.

In theory, the cameras placed in the courtroom are very close cousins to the surveillance cameras that we have grown used to in contemporary every day urban life. The cameras were put in position with a purpose: to watch and record the Eichmann trial. However, the cameras could not show everything. To this extent they could be construed as providing what Bruno Latour\textsuperscript{20} coined the “oligopticon” view. Latour’s discussion was specifically about “centres of calculations” that operate independently of each other and are disconnected, but are still located within a particular (usually urban) environment. Their function is to provide discrete information that when combined, create a picture of a system. However, what remains is only a partial interpretation of that environment, providing only a


specific section or targeted area of information. The significance of the Eichmann trial is that it is a striking example of an emerging type of surveillance. It was the dawning of surveillance as a transnational cultural practice.

The Eichmann trial introduced a new type of voyeurism that simultaneously crossed cultural and geographical boundaries. The distance of the mechanical lens from the human participants in the trial provided for a “disembodied”, surveillant experience, while still maintaining an open window—the television screen—for public spectatorship outside the public sphere. This phenomenon is what Mathieson refers to as “synopticism”, which is to say the many watching the few. Mathieson’s notion reiterates Foucault’s theory on the effects of societal control, employing Jeremy Bentham’s architectural design of the prison with its centralised, panoptic guard tower, where the few have the ability to watch the many. The many who are watched in this way, the prisoners of the “panopticon”, who cannot see the guards but must assume they are there being supervised: “It is the normalising gaze of panopticism which presumably produces that subjectivity, that self-control, which disciplines people to fit into a democratic capitalistic society”. Furthermore, Mathiesen suggests that the ubiquity of contemporary surveillance devices supports Foucault’s contention that we “certainly live in a society where the few see the many”. Of this there is very little doubt, as he further cites his own studies of the “modern control systems in Norway and other western countries” where the “panoptical principle” is a “pronounced aspect of various systems and parts of society” (VSPR, 218). These systems have emerged in contemporary times at an exponentially accelerated rate. A study published in 2004 reports that “On the basis of a

21 As I have explained briefly in the Introduction to Chapter One.

22 According to Clive Norris, Mike McCahill and David Wood in their Editorial: “The Growth of CCTV: A Global Perspective on the International Diffusion of Video Surveillance in Publicly Accessible Space”, in 1960 the Metropolitan police erected two pan-tilt and zoom cameras in Trafalgar Square to monitor the crowds during a State Visit to Parliament and, although this was a temporary installation, it was re-erected later that year to monitor the revellers on Guy Fawkes night. By 1969, “14 different forces were using CCTV, a total of just 67 cameras nationally”. However, with the video recorder becoming commercially available during the 1960s, the early growth of CCTV was largely confined to the retail sector and by 1967, one company, Photoscan, was actively marketing CCTV to deter and apprehend shoplifters. For the next two decades CCTV gradually became a routine feature of security for the retail sector, and there was limited diffusion in other areas, such as the London Underground, which in 1975 installed cameras on the Northern Line in an effort to prevent assaults on staff and combat robbery. In the same year, 145 cameras were introduced to monitor traffic flow in central London streets. During the 1970s and early 1980s police use of CCTV remained limited and focussed on marginal groups such as football hooligans and political demonstrators in 1993, the fuzzy CCTV images of toddler Jamie Bulger being led away from a Merseyside shopping mall by his two ten-year old killers placed CCTV in the spotlight. These images were replayed night after night on the national news, and achieved an iconic status in the subsequent moral panic about youth crime. While CCTV had not managed to prevent the killing, the ghostly images at least held out the prospect that the culprits would be caught. How many cameras this translates to is impossible to accurately measure, although in 1999 Norris and Armstrong estimated that, in an urban environment, on a busy day, a person could have their image captured by over 300 cameras on thirty separate CCTV systems. All foot notes have been removed from this quote. See the full article for details here:
Mathiesen points out that what Foucault seems to have overlooked, however, is the process opposite to the panoptic view which has emerged at an even more prolific rate. This is “the mass media, and especially television, which today bring the many — literally hundreds of millions of people at the same time — with great force to see and admire the few” (VSPR, 215). Televising the Eichmann trial triggered a turning point for expanding what is now our current and prevalent synoptic phenomenon. There is little doubt that people watch not only to “admire”, but also to be included in spectatorship, and yet also to remain distanced as spectators. Here was television as the political and cultural informer, and yet the information can only be framed within a particular context. This is how the trial is “spectacular”, specular and as such is also governed by the visual regime of the spectacle.

Mathiesen emphasises that there are “developmental parallels and relationships between panopticon and synopticon”, (VSPR, 215) that correspond with “certain reciprocal supplementary functions” as a result of “the development of the total system of modern mass media”. His bold claim is that panopticism and synopticism together characterise our society, just as they have “characterised the transition to modernity” (VSPR, 219). Mathiesen correlates the historical rise of societal panopticism with that of synopticism by listing corresponding events in the evolution of media technology, some of which have been discussed previously in this thesis, but here are mentioned in relation to the development of panoptic surveillance: “Foucault takes the modern prison, which came between 1750 and 1830 as his point of departure for panopticism. Precisely at the same time, between 1750 and 1830, the mass press was born — the first wave of mass media after the printed book”. Mathiesen then cites cinema, which he says was “also founded on a complex set of technological innovations and social conditions”. The popularity of films “implied the gathering of large crowds of people in large film theatres” again, where the many see the few, and which “presupposed a social structure where mobility, especially out of the family, was possible” (VSPR, 220).

The establishment of regular broadcasting from a number of radio stations grew in the decade of the 1920s, and then finally television, which was based on technology developed before and after the Second World War, “from 1945 in the United States and 1960 in Norway”, fundamentally enhanced “the basic synoptical character of the media”. Mathiesen

states that “the panoptic structure and the media structure are parallel in that they are archaic or ‘ancient’ as means or potential means of power in society” (VSPR, 220-221). Another key factor in the relationship between panopticism and synopticism is that they “have developed in intimate interaction, even fusion with each other”. Mathiesen points out that there are “joint technological features”, meaning both panoptic and synoptic features in technology that include “television, video, satellites, cables and modern computer development” (VSPR, 223).

The technological manifestation of synopticism through mass media is by now fairly obvious, but what is less obvious and more important is again, how this manifestation influences our world view. Mass media clearly enables us to view more of the world. The Eichmann trial enabled millions to “see” Jerusalem and Israel for the first time, a fact which, as I have discussed, was a major reason for televising the trial. At the same time our view of the world, how we as individuals process the view presented to us, is what in large part dictates our personal world view. Behind the technological processes are of course, people, and in this case, the trial was made public by the leaders of the Israeli government and then funnelled through news correspondents acting as both witness and narrator to the spectacle of the event.

During the spring of 1961, [the American Network] NBC presented a series of news specials on the Eichmann trial. The first to be aired after the proceedings had begun was broadcast on 23 April. The half-hour program consists of excerpts from Capital Cities’ trial footage and a series of interviews, with correspondent Frank McGee serving throughout as narrator and interviewer…McGee sets the scene of the trial and discusses its “larger purposes”, including the goal of understanding the Holocaust “so that the symptoms of madness can be isolated and recognized for all time to come”. After the introduction, images appear of Israelis listening to broadcasts of the trial over loudspeakers on the streets of Jerusalem, followed by footage of the trial’s opening sessions. McGee explains Israel’s mission to provide its Jewish citizens of non-European origin and its youth with an understanding of the Holocaust…As he identifies footage of Eichmann's defense counsel, McGee notes that while “legal procedures are scrupulously followed”, it is common knowledge that the issue of Eichmann's culpability is “incidental to the larger purpose that has fallen to the Israeli prosecutor, Gideon Hausner”. (MGB, 97-98)

Just as Foucault claimed that his work in Discipline and Punish was a “correlative history of the modern soul”, Mathiesen’s corresponding point is that “synopticism, through the modern mass media in general and television in particular, first of all directs and controls or disciplines our consciousness” (VSPR, 230). The three views of the Eichmann trial is a
discussion on how the *contextualisation* of an event serves the exact same purpose; but not always with the same message being sent to or received by our consciousness.

**Part II: Framing the Spectacular all over the World**

*“Where there is no publicity, there is no justice”*23

In order to prepare for the Eichmann trial, the Israeli government decided to hold the proceedings in a large community centre and public theatre known as “Beit Ha’am”, which in English means “the house of the people”. Located in the centre of Jerusalem and still under construction at the time of Eichmann’s capture easily enabled other renovations to be made to the centre to accommodate the trial. For security reasons it was surrounded by a ten-foot-high fence, and it held special quarters for Eichmann’s confinement during the proceedings. The most famous addition was the special bulletproof glass enclosure built to surround the dock where he sat, flanked by armed guards throughout the trial. Extra remodelling was undertaken to provide work space for the hundreds of print and broadcast journalists and telecommunication services. A feature in *Time* magazine refers to the “$1 million press facilities” and “$350,000 worth of new transmission press facilities, including banks of teletypes staffed by Jerusalem housewives hastily recruited and trained”. There can be no doubt Israel’s investment in the project of broadcasting the trial was a decision that “epitomised . . . the power of the mass media” (MGB, 90).

The American company, Capitol City Broadcasting, was the first television company to apply for the job of video-taping the trial, and it was also awarded the task. Part of the agreement was that Capitol Cities would provide footage for a fee to “all interested television networks and newsreel producers”, but that any profits from those fees would be turned over to charities designated by the Israeli government. An example of panopticism and synopticism occurring simultaneously was the actual video-taping of the trial, as the presence of cameras in the courtroom was well masked in order not to distract from the proceedings. The cameras were mounted within special wall recesses, and the trial was shot through a mesh screen concealing the cameras. According to a feature in *TV Guide*, “only because you have been informed of the presence of the cameras do you know they are at work in the courtroom” (MGB, 92).

The numbers of people who watched or had access to watching the trial on television, however, were massive and unprecedented.

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23 “Israeli judges who ruled in favour of the prosecution cited British law on the subject of witnesses and publicity” (MGB, 90).
According to Milton Fruchtman, an executive producer with Capital Cities, footage of the trial was used by thirty-eight countries, and an estimated “80 per cent of the world's viewers have seen shots of the trial”. *New York Times* media critic Jack Gould noted that television coverage of the Eichmann trial promised “to be the most sustained and extensive attention that TV ever has accorded a single news story, partly because what will be one of history's most celebrated trials will be the first to be televised on home screens around the world. Indeed, some described the televising of the Eichmann trial as an important precedent for international television coverage of future major events. Fruchtman predicted that the videotape record of the trial would be “one of the great reckoning points of television” and might eventually lead “to a worldwide network”. He also envisioned videotape facilitating the creation of “visual case histories”, which would become a valuable resource for jurists and law schools: “Video tapes will tell them not only what the witnesses said, but how they said it and how they looked when they said it”. (MGB, 91-92)

Simultaneous translations of the court proceedings were offered in Hebrew, English, French and German by way of portable transistor radios, offered to the press and “important visitors”. Still, everything said in court for the official record was taken by complete tape recording and shorthand; anything said in a language other than Hebrew, the official language of the trial, was translated into Hebrew. This was the pre-satellite era of telecommunications\(^\text{24}\), so videotapes of the trial were flown daily from Jerusalem to America, Great Britain, West Germany and other countries. Throughout America and especially in New York, “substantial interest was sustained throughout the trial”. Leading correspondents from American Broadcasting Company (ABC) prepared one hour summaries of the trial and presented them once a week across sixty stations, and in New York City, a half-hour summary was given five nights per week with commercial sponsorship. “An offer by ABC to supply printed copies of the indictment evoked 24,000 replies” (JIJ, 307).

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\(^{24}\) “Telstar I inaugurated satellite relays of television programs in July 1962, shortly followed by the enactment of the Communications Satellite Act. COMSAT (the Communications Satellite Corporation) was established in 1962. The Early Bird (Intelsat I), which enabled synchronous transmission, was the first commercial communications satellite; it was launched in 1965” (MGB, Note 36, 278).
Part II: Hannah Arendt’s report on the Eichmann Trial: Backlash and Watershed.

In America, where thanks to the ubiquity of the new medium of television, the trial seemed to have a significant impact, *The New Yorker*\(^{25}\) sent Hannah Arendt to observe and report her findings in the magazine. Of the four month trial, Arendt spent ten weeks observing. The result was a five-part article called “Eichmann in Jerusalem”, a series that became her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. The added sub-title became a coined phrase almost instantly. “The banality of evil” was now a term that was often repeated and unfortunately often misunderstood. The articles and the book were published in 1963, both setting off one of the most heated and continuous debates about the trial, the Holocaust, and even Arendt’s dedication or denial of her Judaism that continues to be discussed even today.

In her defence, *The New Yorker* set out to contextualise Arendt’s connection to the Holocaust and Eichmann’s trial by citing her autobiographical background.

Arendt, who was born in Wilhelmine, Germany, in 1906, studied theology at the University of Marburg, where she met the philosopher Martin Heidegger, who would become her mentor and, later, her lover. In 1933, she was arrested by the Gestapo for collecting evidence of anti-Semitic

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\(^{25}\) *The New Yorker* is an American magazine which began being published in February, 1925. It is noted for its rigorous fact-checking and copy-editing throughout its contents made up of reportage, commentary, criticism, essays, fiction, satire, cartoons, and poetry. It is not surprising that Arendt’s report on the Eichmann trial and subsequent book began in serial form in the magazine. *The New Yorker* is also known for frequently publishing influential social critiques, such as the serialised version of Rachel Carson’s important book in June, 1962 before it was released as the book that set off a wide-spread environmental movement, *Silent Spring*, published by Houghton Mifflin on September 27, 1962.
propaganda. After fleeing to Paris, she worked for a Jewish relief group before being sent to an internment camp, in Gurs, from which she escaped. She and her husband, Heinrich Blücher, emigrated to America, and she began writing for the Partisan Review and Jewish Frontier. Her 1951 masterwork, “The Origins of Totalitarianism,” about the parallels between Hitler’s Third Reich and Stalinist Russia, made her an intellectual celebrity.26 (EFHA)

There is no shortage of scholarly articles, book chapters, and debates discussing Arendt’s book on Eichmann. The secondary literature that responds to Arendt’s book is so vast that an attempt to list their entries would be overwhelming. Some of the critiques have been vehemently negative, others dismissive, and still others that found her work utterly illuminating and perfectly valid.

While I refer to some of the arguments for and against Arendt’s views about the trial, there is no need here for me to render them in great detail. Arendt’s report is relevant to this thesis because the position she took was opposed to many other accounts in the way that she saw the trial for what it could have been, by describing instead the way it really was. By noting how common and dull Eichmann appeared, she was immediately able to recast the turn of the spectacle. At the time, many people expected monstrous deeds to be carried out by monstrous looking people, and they were almost disappointed at Eichmann’s appearance. In her report, Arendt was already attempting to work against the spectacle of the trial, which seemed to some as analogous to being sympathetic toward Eichmann, which was not the case at all. Arendt noted in the epilogue of her book, “surely one can hardly call upon the whole world and gather correspondents from the four corners of the earth in order to display Bluebeard in the dock”. Rather, she noted that “so many were like him” that were “neither perverted nor sadistic […] they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal” (EIJ, 253).

Televising the trial also facilitated broader public discussion of Eichmann’s crimes, the Holocaust, and the establishment of Israel as a legitimate political space for meting out justice on behalf of the Jewish people. Because the media as the fourth estate had presented these situations on a global level, wider discussions were now taking place in the public sphere. In an essay written on Arendt’s response to criticism of her report on the Eichmann

The Eichmann trial was the first attempt to apply the doctrine of crimes against humanity outside the context of occupation authority and to make this idea the authority for action. The claim was being made by Israel, a nation-state, on behalf of the Jewish people, and in this sense it was as particular and non-universalistic as one can be. The trial brought these two seemingly incompatible opposites close together. On the one hand, it sought to establish the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the unique right of the Jewish people to judge those who committed it; at the same time it convicted Eichmann of a charge – crimes against humanity – that by necessity had to be empty of all particular national content if it was to be legitimate at all. For this reason, perhaps, the court deemed it necessary to supplement it with the charge of “crimes against the Jewish people”, a charge that fits neither the old framework nor the new.27 (HAJC, 114-115)

For Arendt, the trial was being driven by Ben-Gurion acting as the State of Israel, and it was he who determined that the crimes committed by Eichmann were specifically against the Jewish people. When she introduces the Prime Minister of Israel into the trial scene as “Ben-Gurion, rightly called the ‘architect of the state’ [who] remains the invisible stage manager of the proceedings”, there is no hiding her contempt (EJBE, 2-3). Arendt contended that Eichmann’s motives were based on something far less dramatic or pointed, they were based on the same motives that any average, mediocre business man would have, and that was to get ahead by impressing his superiors by whatever means were at hand. In his case, it was to obediently kill as many people as possible as quickly and efficiently as possible. Arendt’s overall disappointment with the trial was that the chance was missed to charge Eichmann with crimes against humanity, crimes that were carried out neither with purpose nor zeal, but with a dullness that only underscored their horrifying nature.

Arendt was also repeatedly attacked for the “tone” of her work. Her tone of voice, as I read it, is often filled with disdain for Eichmann, frustration with the Israeli handling of the judicial process, and a deep disappointment with the prosecution hinted at a misuse of power by elder Jews of the “Jewish Councils” (Judenräte) in the forced ghetto situation. She felt the trial could and should have been handled in a far less melodramatic and hyperbolic manner, and sometimes she appears to be disapproving and embarrassed by what she refers to as a

“show trial” in the opening pages of her book. She describes the contradictions of the trial’s set-up, where, on the one hand, “at no time is there anything theatrical in the conduct of the judges. Their walk is unstudied, their sober and intense attention, visibly stiffening under the impact of grief as they listen to the tales of suffering is natural. . .” On the other hand, she employs an entirely different way of describing Prosecutor Hausner. “It is Judge Landau who sets the tone, and that he is doing his best, his very best to prevent this trial from becoming the show trial under the influence of the prosecutor’s love of showmanship”.

As for the trial being televised, Arendt discusses what she finds as Ben-Gurion’s “permissive” rules of the trial for Mr. Hausner. He “permits the prosecutor to give press-conferences and interviews for television during the trial, (the American program, sponsored by the Glickman Corporation, is constantly interrupted—business as usual—by real-estate advertising)”. She describes the courtroom, as it has been done before: “the proceedings happen on a stage before an audience, with the usher’s marvellous shout at the beginning of each session producing the effect of a rising curtain” (ElI, 3). Often dubbed “the trial of the (twentieth) century”28, it was held in what was then the newly constructed Beth Ha’am or “House of the People”. Originally this had been built as a community centre, but fortuitously for this event, it also came with a stage and seating for theatrical productions.

What Arendt described repeatedly was that the very banality of Eichmann, his drab clothing, his common mannerisms, the very quotidian blandness of his physical appearance, demeanour and worse for her as a writer, his frequent use of clichés, was far more frightening than whatever monster anyone could conjure up in their imagination. That such a dreary man was capable of orchestrating millions of deaths from his desk seemingly without conscience and still not have horns growing out of his head was difficult to comprehend. This of course, was Arendt’s point; that evil can be done by anyone at any time, in any place, and that acts of evil can be treated with such triviality by the perpetrator as to remain under the radar of comprehension by others was the awful truth she felt should be told.

From Arendt’s point of view, Eichmann was the opposite of a monstrous master-mind; rather, he simply had “an inability to think”. “The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else” (ElI, 44). It was also pointed out by Arendt that in German society, throughout the war years “eighty million people had been shielded against reality and factuality by exactly the same means, the same self-deception, lies

28 Stuart Liebman. “‘If this be a Man…’ Eichmann on Trial in The Specialist”. Cineaste, Spring, 2002, Vol. 27 Issue 2. Pp. 40-42. From here on in will be cited as ETS.
and stupidity that had now become ingrained in Eichmann’s mentality”. In other words for Eichmann, when the state pronounces something legal that was once illegal—in this case, killing other human beings—then lying and telling the truth were the same thing. He did not know the difference between lies and truth any more than he knew right from wrong. She said that “the practice of self-deception had become so common, almost a moral prerequisite for survival, that even now, eighteen years after the collapse of the Nazi regime . . . it is sometimes difficult not to believe that mendacity has become an integral part of the German national character” (EIJ, 47). These statements were not made out of sympathy, but as a way to point out the effects of totalitarianism and its aftermath.

Part III: *Un spécialiste, portrait d’un criminel moderne / The Specialist* Eyal Sivan: “We made a film”

The documentary filmmaker Leo T. Hurwitz directed the original “live”, televised production of the Eichmann trial. Hurwitz was responsible for placing the four cameras in the courtroom and under his direction he determined the various points of view from which each camera would shoot, as only one single camera view would be recorded at a time. Milton Fruchtman was the producer, and Rolf M. Kneller led the team of camera-men who filmed the trial for the Israeli Government. One hour of tape from each day of the trial was chosen by Israeli producers for reproduction. The tapes and films were then quickly flown off and distributed to various television broadcast stations around the world.

By the time the trial was over there were almost 400 hours of what is called the “two-inch tape” version of the trial. It is clear that from its inception that like every other television production, the Eichmann trial was carefully mediated in part, for practical reasons such as the constraints of time, and then for necessary compositional and aesthetic reasons as determined by the director. The end product was determined by the Israeli Government’s political motivations in terms of contextualising the trial and deciding what would be the highlights shown to the rest of the world.

29 Quotes from Sivan and Bauman are taken either from presentations given at the UCLA conference tapes or from their taped interviews found in the “special section” of *The Specialist* DVD. All other quotes by them taken from further written text will be duly cited.

30 Director/cameraman Hurwitz was Harvard educated and started out in film in the early 1930s. He was closely associated with the innovative Film and Photo League until 1937 when he helped found Pioneer Films, the first U.S. non-profit production company to focus on making independent documentaries. In collaboration with Ralph Steiner, Willard Van Dyke, Hurwitz turned out several historically important chronicles of the times like *Heart of Spain a look at the Spanish Civil War*, and *Native Land*, an examination of U.S. labour struggles. One of Hurwitz’s most important films was *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, a chilling chronicle of life in the Dust Bowl that he co-wrote and photographed. Hurwitz worked closely with the Office of War Information and the British Information Service during WWII. Politically, Hurwitz was a liberal. In 1948, his chronicle of racism in postwar America, *Strange Victory* won him international awards and acclaim, but it was detrimental for his career in the U.S. because he was watched by the FBI and blacklisted from the 1950s through the early 1960s. This did not stop Hurwitz, who continued directing, co-producing and editing on the CBS show Omnibus. He was simply never credited for the work he did during his blacklisted days. He is prominently credited in the opening of *The Specialist*. Hurwitz earned both an Emmy and a Peabody for his 1961 documentary of the Adolf Eichmann trial *Verdict for Tomorrow*. In the late 1960s, Hurwitz became a professor of film and served as NYU’s Chairman of the Graduate Institute of Film and Television until 1974. <http://www.fandango.com/leothurwitz/biography/p198878>. Web. August, 2012

31 Two-inch wide videotape was the first practical video recording medium. This system was referred to as the 2-inch quad system because it used four video heads to scan a complete video picture on two-inch wide tape. Videotape resembles audiotape in its makeup. It consists of a strip of plastic backing coated with a permanent layer of microscopic metal particles embedded in a resin base. These particles are capable of holding a magnetic charge. The videotape recording process was first demonstrated in 1953, and the first machines went into service in 1956. Video recording revolutionized TV production. <http://www.cybercollege.com/tvp046.htm>. Web. Sept., 2012.
Sivan says that during the thirty-seven years between the taping of the live trial and when he and Brauman began working on the archived footage in 1996, no one, including historians, was interested in seeing or finding the original tapes or what he refers to as “the material”. Sivan states that the reason for this was that the previously repeated versions of the trial had become so memorised that they had become iconic to the point that “memory had replaced the trial; there was no need to see the trial”. The politicisation of the Eichmann trial continued long after he was hanged for his crimes, in even the most mundane situations such as the process that Sivan and Brauman had to endure to access the archives of the trial from The Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive, located at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Sivan says that he happened upon the Eichmann trial material quite by accident while working on a different film using other material from the Spielberg archives. He said that he was surprised to see a pile of cassette tapes marked “Eichmann trial” sitting on a shelf in the small room where he was working.

The tapes that he and Brauman had found and worked on contained Eichmann’s full testimony, which had never been seen before in the annual re-showing of the trial in Israel, nor in the world-wide broadcasts when the trial was happening. Their further research in other countries showed that archives in New York City held 250 hours of Eichmann trial tapes, and that when the trial was shown on German, Dutch and Swedish television, it was often shown on film, not video tape. These were films taken of the television monitors at the trial showing the trial. Sivan makes an important point about the metamorphosis of images and technology as valid documentation. He asserts that although people believed what they saw and heard on television during the time of the trial, for many years afterward, the videotaped material was never thought of as true, historical documentation. Sivan suggests that the tapes provide an important opportunity that has been missed:

I already said that the Eichmann trial was fully recorded on video. In the year following the trial there was some footage, which travelled around the world. During the trial itself, there were broadcasts. The German TV (and I’m not sure about Austria), broadcast some sort of a regular journal, a kind of a regular resume of the trial. It was the same in United States and in France. But when Eichmann came to speak, journalists left, people left, and there was no further interest in the recorded footage. Nor, at the end of the trial, in the full length (i.e. 500 hours, as we can suppose today) of some unique archive material. Unique, because it was the only trial of a Nazi criminal which was filmed in its entirety.32 (NAMV, 193)

In an interview shown by Hurwitz’ son Tom at the UCLA conference, Leo Hurwitz also said that when he went to film the trial, he had assumed that the people of Israel would be interested in how Fascism comes about, but surprisingly, they were not. He said that what they were interested in was “dramatizing what happened to the Jews”.

Sivan and Brauman made the decision to work through the trial mostly as if from Hannah Arendt’s point of view, taken from *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. They are expressing their political ideas and another view of history through the use of historic, archival material, while at the same time, using Arendt’s book as the foundation for underpinning their anti-Zionist views at the time of the trial and on Israel’s politics in the present. According to Sivan, it was only after the release of *The Specialist* in 1999 that people suddenly became interested in the trial and the film because of the way it had been edited. The film presents a somewhat contra-view not normally presented about the trial; a commonality shared with Arendt’s report. Sivan also hints that that *The Specialist* may have contributed to the fact that Arendt’s book was finally published in Hebrew and made available in Israel the year after the film was released. Sivan describes their version here:

Rony Brauman and myself decided to try to make what can be called a cinematographically adaptation of Hannah Arendt’s *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. This film is mainly centred on the figure of the perpetrator, we show really very few survivors in the film. We followed the trial. We do not follow the idea of the trial in Jerusalem, as the Attorney General Gideon Hausner presented it. We didn’t build a geographical trial; it is not a history of Jewish suffering from Pharaoh to Nazism, as he put it. We just tried to build the imaginary trial of a specialist, a title which is of course taken from Hannah Arendt’s title in French “un spécialiste de la question juive” (an expert of the Jewish question). (NAMV, 194)

The film purposely confuses the chronological order of the actual trial, presenting a somewhat disjointed court-room drama; the visual and audio editing includes discordant and sometimes cacophonous music and sounds including disturbing layers of several multi-lingual voices speaking at once. Because of Arendt’s book, the perspective of the film becomes specific to the perpetrator rather than the victims. In this version of the trial Eichmann is the main witness giving testimony, he was the main witness to the system of extermination. Brauman and Sivan wanted to portray Eichmann as his own witness and in doing so, cause him to incriminate himself. In agreement with what Arendt stressed in her book, they determined that
Eichmann could incriminate himself better than anyone else, so therefore the more time he is exposed on the screen the better.

After all the preparatory work was complete, *The Specialist* was finally assembled in what Sivan says their detractors seemed to think was a “digital attack against the veracity of the image”. As a filmmaker, Sivan states that he does not find the term “manipulating the image” to be a pejorative one, after all, this is what a filmmaker does. One of the over-arching themes of this film is the idea of the spectacle, only like Arendt this is Brauman and Sivan’s look at the other side of the spectacle as Arendt did, and not the one that the Government of Israel had in mind for the spectators. They deliberately rearranged the chronology of the trial, which in and of itself indicates a differing point of view on history. They added shadows and enhanced the reflections of the audience on the glass booth that contained Eichmann to remind the viewer that this was a “show” with an audience; another goal was to “bring Eichmann into the present”.

Why wouldn’t the Eichmann trial video tapes be re-contextualised, edited and in general, be manipulated or fooled with? Lev Manovich refers to this process as “what new media mixing does to old media” and calls it “mapping” or “remapping” as he explains further in his essay, “Understanding Meta-media”.

This is why I refer to this type of new media as “meta-media”. A meta-media object contains both language and meta-language—both the original media structure (a film, an architectural space, a sound track) and the software tools that allow the user to generate descriptions of, and to change, this structure….More complex and unusual mappings are also possible—and the search for new mappings allows us to access old media objects in new ways congruent with information interfaces we use in our everyday life represents one of the most fruitful research directions in new media art. (UMM, n. pag.)

Sivan states that what guided them “ethically” was the desire “to give the spectator the possibility to doubt the images, anyway, to see that there is a construction both in the editing and in the treatment of the image”, and thereby, turn the spectator into a witness. The point is, says Sivan, that the image is “just a series of lights on a screen which is not a real person in front of us, [and] is just a construction, both technical and optical”. He continues, “[c]inema is about the possibility of reducing into artificial time to what would be so-called ‘real time’”. In one specific scene, Sivan openly confesses to using digital technology to give the impression

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of “history in the making”. It is the scene in which Prosecutor Hausner asks the court for the death penalty for Eichmann. Sivan created a vintage effect by creating black, horizontal lines running through the scene as if the image had been damaged by age. In fact the image was free of such lines, but Sivan added the lines to make the scene stand out differently from the other cleaner image. In the end, Sivan reminds us, “We made a film”.

In his essay, “Actuality of Banality: Eyal Sivan's The Specialist in Context” 34 Gal Raz describes Sivan’s methods this way:

The editing sometimes violates the chronological ordering by juxtaposing fragments from different stages of the trial. Sivan was recently blamed by Hillel Tryster, the director of Steven Spielberg’s Jewish Film Archive, for “fraud, forgery and falsification” due to a series of editorial “distortions.” According to Tryster, the original footage of the trial was manipulatively edited by Sivan in a way that insults the witnesses and is unfaithful to the testimonies. He notes some examples: the artificial juxtaposition of Hausner’s question about the absence of resistance in the extermination camps with the silence of the witness Avraham Lindwasser that was taken from another testimony; the artificial insertion of audience laughter into several shots; and the elliptical editing that led to the distortion of the testimony of Pinhas Freudiger, a leader of the Orthodox community in Hungary. Regardless of the moral aspects of these editorial choices, it is clear that Sivan intentionally denies the original order of the trial. (ABSC, 10-11)

Constructed as a critique of the Eichmann trial, the film is an assemblage of scenes from the trial that are digitally manipulated for specific effects, such as showing Eichmann in the glass booth shuffling papers, wiping his glasses, and flapping his handkerchief around as if to clean his desk of dust. While he is attending to these fussy tasks, we see that the two guards beside him appear, fade, disappear, and then new guards fade in and reappear next to Eichmann as he continues to fuss. This indicates not only Eichmann’s “German” fussiness but also the passing of time by the changing of the guards. It also serves to remind us that Eichmann is the focus of the film, not the survivors. Brauman and Sivan say that the purpose of their film was to ask how one could use Eichmann to talk about today, and “an attempt to represent something that we have a hard time seeing in our everyday lives”.

Another significant part of the film occurs at those moments when the courtroom is darkened and the hideous films of the camp liberations are shown, as they were for the

34 Raz, Gal. “Actuality of Banality: Eyal Sivan's The Specialist in Context”. *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, Volume 24, Number 1, Fall 2005, pp. 4-21 Purdue University Press. From here on in will be cited as ABSC.
Nuremburg trials. In _The Specialist_ however, we do not see the films head on; they are shown from an oblique angle so we can see only a sliver of the screen which the images are playing on, and can just barely detect what is shown on the screen. Sivan makes two main points here: first, that the Eichmann trial is not the same as the Nuremburg trials, and second, that perhaps these films do not even belong at this trial, in part because Eichmann was not present at those trials. However, as Arendt tells us, at the Nuremburg trials, “the defendants had been ‘indicted for crimes against members of various nations’, [and so] had left the Jewish tragedy out of account for the simple reason that Eichmann had not been there” (EIJ, 4).

The music and sounds we hear during the films in the courtroom are disturbing, shrill and have a “warning of impending horror” tone to them. The rising, shrill sounds of violins blend with what sounds like the screaming of human voices, the voices of the terrorised. Then, suddenly a short phrase of what I will describe as sounding like Yiddish folk-music with violins and violas, lower in tone and saturated with tragedy, entering the aural space. Added to this is a pounding noise with the same rocking, metallic rhythm as trains rolling down the track.

We are shown an unblinking Eichmann who is impassive, emotionless, unmoved by the now iconic images of what we know in our memories to be the images of the near dead victims in the hundreds, barely able to move, and of the thousands of corpses being bulldozed into open pits. Again, the focus is on Eichmann and not the victims, flashing brightly and only momentarily on the misshapen slice of screen. The screening of the films is done in montage-like glimpses, rushed through, and when it is over, we hear Hausner’s voice saying, “I am sorry it was necessary to show the court such a distressing experience”, and we see one of the judges looking down, holding his head in his hands.

There are direct references to Arendt’s work in another sequence of the film in which one of the judges (Justice Halevy) decides to speak to Eichmann directly in German rather than Hebrew. When he does this there is obviously no waiting for Eichmann to hear the translation in German through his headphones, and he is able to answer the judge immediately and directly. In this line of questioning the judge is asking Eichmann about the Jewish Councils, or the “Judenräte”. He asks specifically whether the councils were given the job of registering Jews and their property, and of setting up “a machinery of strict controls which greatly facilitated emigration, and rapidly this switched to deportation?” Eichmann answers, “Yes”.

Then, listing Hungary, Poland and Holland, the judge proceeds to ask Eichmann directly whether the Jewish Councils in all these places were used “as instruments of the
German policy towards the Jews [that] largely facilitated the application of the measures taken against the Jews and saved a great deal of manpower, police as well as officials?”, “Yes”, answers Eichmann throughout. Finally, the judge gets to the point: “The councils, by misleading the victims made this work easier, and put the Jews to work for their own extermination”. Eichmann replies somewhat quietly, “Yes. That is correct”.

Sivan’s inclusion of the clear and direct exchange of questions and answers between Halevy and Eichmann in their native tongue returns the genie of Arendt’s more colourful description back to the bottle. In doing so, Sivan makes a valid point about memory, representation and contextualisation of history. Raz proposes that *The Specialist* was put together in non-chronological order to suggest that the linear, historical context put forth by the Zionist state is a crooked one, and does not necessarily travel in a straightforward or overwhelmingly truthful manner.

This historical decontextualization is a cinematic device used by Sivan to offend against the Zionist interpretation, which considers the Eichmann trial as a paragon of justice in terms of the right finally gained by the Jews to sentence to death one of their anti-Semitic deadly foes. By concealing the historical context of the trial, Sivan reduces the ability to present it as part of the successive time-line outlined by Zionism. He disrupts its patriotic moral meaning as a Zionist lesson of history, as decisive evidence that only a Jewish justice that is supported by the power of a Jewish State can finally effectively fight against the ancient phenomenon of anti-Semitism. Just as Arendt rejects the context attributed by the Zionist state to Eichmann’s crimes within the history of anti-Semitism, so too does Sivan deny the context of the whole trial in the Zionist super-narrative. (ABSC, 11-12)

In no way does *The Specialist* or Arendt’s book ever portray Eichmann as a sympathetic character. However, Sivan with his film and Arendt with her book appear to have broken a cardinal rule; they are Jews who have stood outside the sphere of public opinion and read aloud from the “darkest chapter of the whole dark story” (EJ, 126).

**Conclusion**

Surveillance may be defined in one sense as “the systematic monitoring of people or groups in order to regulate or govern their behaviour”35, and, in another sense, a system for mobilising people to bring about “collective empowerment” (SCP, 498). In its intended role, the

Eichmann trial served as an intersecting point connecting history to a new political story, but more important was its place in the cultural practice of surveillance through television and global or transnational media. With regard to another facet of surveillance in visual culture, it was a televisual event which helped to entrench mass watching and being watched and the acceptance of both. The public nature of the trial with its multi-layered socio-political and cultural aspects caused and continues to stimulate the dissemination of varied reactions throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Advances in digital, visual technology helped to illustrate an entirely different political point of view that in this case issued from the pages of Arendt’s book. This demonstrates the most important point to be made about surveillance: it is less about monitoring and more about influencing. The entire mechanical, and constantly evolving, ocular-centric offshoots of surveillance, how the visual message is contextualised between the images captured and the images sent, are precisely what defines who the regulator is and who the regulated are.

In mass society, communication occurs increasingly on the basis of the mechanical reproduction of images, and, as Benjamin insisted, the innovation of mechanical reproduction of images can be manipulated for political ends. A counter move to these mechanisms of control has emerged in the postwar period in the form of the witness. However, the authenticity of the witness, as Benjamin also argues, is depleted by the new conditions of mass society. The televising of the Eichmann trial demonstrates that not only is there a “surveillant” aspect in the new visual culture—the new panopticon—but there is also the “synopticon”, a new mass reception aspect of visual culture. The Eichmann trial illustrates how the worldwide operation of the synopticon is in fact part of the spectacle. Vision in visual culture now includes the elements of both the panopticon and the synopticon; together they allow political control of images and the purposes behind these images to proliferate.

It is Arendt who seems most aware that the “synoptic” communication through the medium of television will not address the inherent problem of witnessing. This is because the TV images of the trial have already been “mediated” and are thus controlled in some way. Sivan further highlights this mediation and control by framing The Specialist around Arendt’s description and chronology of the trial and, more importantly, by using digital technology to recreate the trial. Sivan thus creates a bridge between past and contemporary technology in visual culture, demonstrating a corresponding historical and conceptual order of affairs relating to the witness. The role of the witness, as Benjamin argues, then, is central to visual culture. Eichmann is a perpetrator and, because he is not aligned with the conceptual order of the witness, he cannot be considered as such. The witness generates the conditions of
authenticity necessary for the aura of the artwork (or the event) to have a special status that commands our attention. In this case, Sivan and Arendt argue that in the event that is the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the concept of the witness is submerged within the proliferating forms of the spectacle.

Benjamin Robinson states in “The Specialist on the Eichmann Precedent: Morality, Law, and Military Sovereignty”36:

The film [The Specialist] is a representation of a representation. Its images of the Israeli courtroom’s particular contingencies, as well as its own cinematic contingencies, help a viewer question whether the Holocaust can serve as a last word – whether it, as an event apparently beyond our horizon of daily ambiguity and debate, can supply the final vocabulary for instituting and assessing morality and justice.

In the following chapter I return to art in the form of a film from 1965. I analyse The Pawnbroker, a film in which the main character portrays a survivor who represents an authentic witness of the Holocaust. After the post-war silence of Holocaust survivors, this film helped to foster empathy with the main character, thus furthering our ability as a society to create the impetus needed for authentic witnesses to come forward and share their stories.

CHAPTER SIX:

The Pawnbroker, Memory as Witness

Introduction:
Adapted from the 1961 novel by Edward Lewis Wallant\(^1\), *The Pawnbroker*, Sidney Lumet’s 1965 film of the same title, portrays an individual who has been traumatised by the direct experience of unimaginable horrors. The plot revolves around the main character, Sol Nazerman\(^2\), (Rod Steiger) a former professor from Germany, who is identified as a Jewish concentration camp survivor. Terrible images of past experiences are trapped within his subconscious, and he is tormented by painful memories that he attempts – unsuccessfully – to repress. Nazerman’s role in the film, therefore, is that of a witness. According to Dori Laub in “An Event without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival”\(^3\), the Holocaust was unique

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\(^2\) Sol Nazerman will be referred to either as “Sol” or “Nazerman”, as both names are used by various scholars in reference to the main character of this film.

because “the event produced no witnesses” and by this he means, those who suffered and did not live to tell (EWW, 80). Contrarily, however, it did yield some survivors who, through testimony, were able to return to their original status of the witness. As Laub asserts, “[W]hat ultimately matters in all processes of witnessing, spasmodic and continuous, conscious and unconscious, is not simply the information, the establishment of the facts, but the experience itself of living through testimony, of giving testimony” (EWW, 85).

The movie was filmed and takes place in the early 1960s, around the time of the Adolf Eichmann trial, and an era that Wieviorka refers to as “the advent of the witness”. According to her, the Eichmann trial “marks a pivotal moment in the history of the memory of the genocide, in France, and the United States as well as Israel”. Wieviorka states that it opened “a new era, in which the memory of the genocide becomes central to the way many define Jewish identity, even as the Holocaust demands to be admitted to the public sphere” (EW, 56). The film, for these reasons, makes an important contribution to the understanding of the witness during a time of cultural transformation in postwar American society.

The film’s protagonist is a witness to two eras, the era of the Holocaust and the post-war era portrayed in the film. He is also a survivor of the Holocaust who appears to struggle in his present life to survive the memories that haunt him. He is portrayed for much of the film as a person who has given up all hope of finding a person who could possibly comprehend what he has been through. As a survivor, Nazerman’s traumatic memories of his past experiences steadily overtake his experiences in his present day. Not until he is able to give testimony about his experiences, will he and his struggle be resolved and his status as a witness reclaimed. The Pawnbroker portrays Nazerman as the embodiment of a survivor who undergoes what Laub terms as “essentially, a ceaseless struggle” in “the process of the testimony” (EWW, 75).

In The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider also consider the post-war 1960s as “a turning point in the reception and institutionalisation of Holocaust memories”, and that from the 1960s until the 1980s, “the iconographic meaning of the Holocaust was established within the framework of various political and cultural events”, citing not only the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem but also the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt that began in 1963 and ended in 1965. According to them, both trials were “important catalysts in transforming the culture of remembrance” (HMGA, 96, 98). Nazerman represents the survivor witness standing at the edge of the time just previous to this turning point in the reception of Holocaust memorialisation.

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4 Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider. The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age. Temple University Press, Philadelphia, USA: 2006. From here on in will be cited as HMGA.
A decade earlier, at the beginning of the 1950s, in the Federal Republic of Germany, the term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or “coming to terms with the past”, came into use in reference to all “judicial, scholarly, public and private, and legislative and administrative measures adopted to treat the National Socialist dictatorship and its crimes”. The past crimes were specifically to do with the Holocaust. Although what might have been unintentional choices made by Lumet while making the film *The Pawnbroker*, some of the struggles found in Germany’s attempt to work through its history and create a positive national identity after the Second World War are mirrored by the character of Nazerman. For Nazerman, however, coming to terms with the past is an individual, intensely personal ordeal that he attempts with much difficulty to deny.

Nazerman’s fate was to watch helplessly as his young children, wife, and parents died at the hands of Nazis. In Auschwitz he was literally forced into the position of voyeur, watching his wife undergo sexual degradation and rape by Nazi concentration camp officers. The film moves between past and present, juxtaposing images of past “lived” time and a present “real” time in Sol’s consciousness. “The story arc of *The Pawnbroker*”, according to Leonard Leff, “rises, regressively, retrospectively, toward the death anniversary of Sol’s wife and children”, and like the novel it is based on, the film uses memory more than action to reach this goal (HHRP, 1).

Shot in black and white, the film takes place in the depressingly squalid New York City borough of Harlem. The film is populated by a unique collection of individuals who, at that time, would have been considered “misfits” or “outsiders”, whether on the grounds of sexual orientation, nationality, or because they were miscreants existing outside the confines of the law. Nazerman runs a pawn shop as a front for a money laundering business run by Rodriguez, (Brock Peters), an impossibly large, homosexual black man who oversees several criminal operations, including a brothel. Among the many things Nazerman is unable to confront is direct knowledge of the business that is the real concern of Rodriguez and his white lover, Robinson (Ed Morehouse). The pawn shop in Harlem represents one side of Nazerman’s life; the other side is his home in the middle-class suburb of New Haven, where the money he earns from the pawn shop is used to support his sister in-law Bertha, her husband, and their children. Between the dreary world of Harlem and the harshly bright suburban world, is the middle world of a cramped apartment, where Sol also supports Tessie,

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his mistress and the widow of his friend who died trying to escape from the concentration
camp. Tessie’s disagreeable father, another survivor who is close to dying also lives with her,
and he berates Sol with contempt, calling him a “ghost” because Sol appears completely
disengaged from his feelings and life.

In the film’s narrative, Sol’s present or “real life” becomes intermingled and confused
when incidents in his daily life begin to trigger memories of his experiences in the
concentration camp. These episodes increase in frequency no matter how fiercely he works to
deny them. Meanwhile, the characters in the background represent an American society
coming to grips with its social problems of economic class disparity, racism and poverty.

One reason for the importance of The Pawnbroker is its use of filmic techniques to
highlight the extent of Sol’s mental anguish. Lumet portrays memory suppression through
what was then the ground-breaking technique of “flash-cuts”, now known as “the flashback”
or “subliminal cutting”. In this way the film inaugurates an original visual and perceptual
“dispositif” that merges remembrance with present experience, past imagined time with
situations “actually” occurring in present time.

Lumet and the flashback: “The Matrix for an Apparatus”

In his book, Making Movies, Lumet explains how he attempted to solve the problem of
portraying these two levels of reality. Lumet worked through the first problem of “telling the
story of [Sol’s] predicament” by asking himself how the memory works, which he felt was
“the central question”. He also had to grapple with trying to portray the memory at work
while simultaneously attempting to deny it. Lumet says that he “found the answer by
analysing my own mental process when something I didn’t want to deal with came bursting
through to overwhelm the present” (MM 158-159). Lumet determined that the work of
denying memories or what he refers to as “the suppressed feeling” would continuously recur
“in longer and longer bursts of time, until it finally emerged fully, dominating, taking over all
other conscious thought”. Lumet set about how to solve the second problem of “how to show
this in film terms” (MM, 159).

What is of interest here is how Lumet, as the artist, finds the answers to his artistic
problems of representing an event and feelings he himself has not experienced on film in
much the same way as Picasso did with Guernica on canvas. Both men use their inner

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personal experiences through the work they produce as a way to outwardly portray the emotional experiences of others. Again Lumet looks within himself to determine the processes he must use to achieve a certain effect that will be visually readable and understood by the spectator:

I knew that when these feelings were first stimulated, they arrived in tiny bursts of time. But how tiny? A second? Less? The reigning wisdom was that the brain could not retain or comprehend an image that lasted less than three frames, one eighth of a second. I had no idea how this figure had been arrived at, but Ralph Rosenbloom, [sic] the editor and I decided to play around with it. I don’t know this for certain, but I don’t think three frame cuts had ever been used before… In one sequence, as he leaves his store one night, Nazerman passes a chain-link fence, behind which some boys are beating up another kid. Images of a relative [or friend, it is uncertain] caught by dogs against a concentration camp chain-link fence start to crowd in on him. I adopted the three-frame recognition rule and made the first cut into the concentration camp four frames (for safety), one-sixth of a second… I reasoned that if I used the same image during the breakthrough time, I could reduce the cut to two frames (one twelfth of a second). Even if people didn’t quite understand the image the first time, they would after it had been repeated two or three times. (MM, 159)

The scene with the first use of the three frame cuts method that Lumet mentioned develops after Nazerman witnesses a boy being beaten up by a gang of youths. He rushes to his car where, in what seems to be near panic, he throws himself into the driver’s seat and speeds away as he suddenly experiences a flashback. Insdorf states in her discussion of The Pawnbroker: “The first flashback thus establishes Nazerman’s essential relationship to his surroundings: a spectator who cannot relieve suffering, only observe, register and perhaps absorb it”. We are able to determine this because we are privy to more than just images of the concentration camp; at first we see through the inner eyes of Nazerman’s memory, when suddenly the film switches our gaze to the privileged position of the diegetic objective camera shot, where we see Nazerman from the past, with, as Insdorf notes, “a shaved head and a Star of David on his uniform”. She points out that “Nazerman watches his friend die on the fence; his inability to take action extends to the present” (ISFH, 28).
As the film’s editor, Rosenblum describes the “flashbacks” as going “beyond a mere plot device and even beyond a backward voyage into an anguished man’s past. It had become, for the first time, an X-ray vision of the anguish itself”\(^9\) (WSS, 46). Lumet’s use of flashbacks became, as he puts it, “the technical solution for the subconscious memories forcing themselves into Nazerman’s conscious mind” (MM, 160). Lumet says that within a year of the film’s release, “every commercial on television seemed to be using the technique. They called it ‘subliminal’ cutting’. He then adds, “My apologies to everyone” (MM, 161).

This method was a new tool used as the solution to the problem of showing how a character with a difficult past might be dealing with their extraordinarily painful memories from that time. Simultaneously, the film can be seen as emerging on the scene just at the time that post Second World War society was also beginning to confront and come to terms with the extraordinary event of the Holocaust. This may be seen as corresponding with Foucault’s definition of the “apparatus” or “dispositifs”. Foucault explains:

> What I’m trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble of discourses institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions — in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. (CFPK, 194-195)

Not that *The Pawnbroker* invests in or portrays each of these institutions, but rather, the film stands almost as an unintended yet necessary example of a turning point in the postwar mindset. The film offers a new look into other “heterogeneous ensembles”. What Foucault refers to as a “strategic imperative” at that time may have come about because of crowded urban settings that created new cultural combinations resulting in unexpected situations, confrontations, and suddenly for Sol, a trigger for intense memories.

From the purely technical standpoint however, the result of creating a visual time-line using the flash-cut method quickly became an accepted and widely used technique for making commercials in American television and a common visual “cue” in filmmaking from that time on. Lumet’s creative problem solving may be seen as an example of an artist’s original creation of an effect specific to a unique situation, (portraying the invisible memory, re-creating it as a visible representation of memory) quickly evolving (through mass reproduction via mass media) into a technique used as a promotional tool. Thus as Foucault says, “a sort of interplay of shifts of positions and modifications of functions” occurs (CFPK, 195), and it is within the regime of Debord’s spectacle: “The world the spectacle holds up to view is at once here and elsewhere; it is the world of the commodity ruling over all lived experience” (SOS, 26). Or, as Mikiro Kato observes in his essay, “Seeing Holocaust Films”¹⁰: “The traumatic hell of the past from which the protagonist cannot escape is thus accurately conveyed through the use of [what became] a popular commercial spectacle of that period” (SHF, 2).

**The Survivor Syndrome: the witness and the embodiment of pain**

The plot in *The Pawnbroker* is structured along two lines. Nazerman’s repressed memories are triggered by everyday occurrences that also exemplify the changes in race-relations and the cultural and socio-economic conditions of 1965. Those conditions reflected what various strata of American society were to come to terms with in the aftermath of the Second World War, particularly the Holocaust. Other films as well as and radio and television plays were also beginning to explore the Holocaust as a predominantly Jewish event. Although the existence of Eastern European concentration camps was not well known until 1945, it was still twenty years before memorialising it as a Jewish catastrophe was to begin.

For many, the articulation of painful memories and coming to terms with the consequences of post-war life in the present was extremely difficult at first, which, through

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Nazerman, is precisely how the film portrays it. Rosenberg and Whitfield offer a salient description of this process:

_The Pawnbroker_, a film American in origin but hybrid in its idioms and impulses, is keenly preoccupied with negotiation – literally, “brokering”– the divide between Europe and America, in the aftermath of a time when Europe, having taught the world the abysmal depths of human nature, had little left to teach… That is, the individual and collective rituals of mourning and memorialization, though two decades beyond the end of the war, are still insufficiently evolved, and thus the raw power of memory and trauma remains explosive and dangerous, to the survivor and to all whom he encounters. (CJEI, 6)

Other deep consequences of post-war experiences were also presented in _The Pawnbroker_. Sol’s angst was explored through the lens of what was then a fairly recent diagnosis in psychiatry, a condition that Dr. William G. Niederland, M.D. called “the survivor syndrome”. In his paper, “The Survivor Syndrome: Further Observations and Dimensions”¹¹, Niederland discusses in detail the causes and effects of this psychological condition:

In a number of other publications I have dealt with the after-effects of brutal persecution, methodical starvations and coercion, cruelty, torture, constant fear and helplessness, and other types of traumatization endured by surviving victims of the Nazi concentration camps. As early as 1961, and in a series of follow-up writings (1964, 1968, 1977), I described the multidimensional consequences of these shattering experiences and noted that the traumatization sustained by the victims appears to be of such magnitude, severity, and duration as to produce, in many cases, a recognizable clinical entity which—for the sake of brevity— I have called the “survivor syndrome.” (SSOD, 413)

Levinson states that “_The Pawnbroker_ invents a character that could function as an ideal case study for Niederland’s diagnosis” (MBTS, 148). For the survivors of these atrocities, academic and medical scholars concurred that one of the most prevalent reactions was to suppress any acknowledgment or memories of their experiences at all costs, burying it deep within their consciousness. To be seen as a “survivor” was to be seen as a “victim”. Further humiliation was endured when people whose homes and countries had been destroyed were forced to move elsewhere, and only by the grace of another country’s government, were they allowed entry. They were then referred to as “DP’s” which stood for “Displaced Persons” and

were considered refugees, a status that Levinson suggests “underlines the notion of passive suffering rather than active endurance” (MBTS, 142).

Under these conditions, it is not difficult to surmise that a sense of shame overwhelmed some survivors, and that living in the shadows of society might have been preferable. *The Pawnbroker* shines its light on the inner workings of Holocaust memory suppression, according to Levinson, thus “placing the focus away from legal and political battles”, which had been previously presented in other films like *Judgement at Nuremberg* (1961). The Holocaust could now be seen through “the traumatized psyche of a former concentration camp inmate”. Although Wallant portrays Nazerman’s pain through a subtle but outward physical deformity, Lumet’s narrowing in on the unseen inner torture of Nazerman’s psyche rather than visible, outward appearances suggests a “new focus” that “opens the possibility for the experience of empathy denied by the repellent physicality of earlier depictions” (MBTS, 148).

**Memory: The Past Permeating the Present**

Laub states: “[A] witness is a witness to the truth of an event” (EWW, 80). *The Pawnbroker* is a first look at the witness before he or she is willing or able to give testimony. What we see is human anguish and despair trapped under an icy layer, a frozen surface that prevents overwhelming emotions from flooding upward and out. Before the audience is introduced to the present-day Nazerman, the film opens with a bucolic scene of a pleasant, sunny day in a lush meadow complete with shade trees and a stream. A beautiful young woman with long, dark, hair flowing in the breeze, silently calls out to a virile young man walking through the meadow towards her. There is no sound or dialogue in the scene and it is played out in slow motion with slightly unsettling harpsichord music in the background. Near the woman sits an older couple dressed in the traditional Jewish garb of Eastern Europe, relaxing with a picnic under a shade tree. Next we see two small children, a boy and a girl, running, laughing and playing in the meadow. They run with excitement to the young man who picks them up in a hug and playfully twirls them around. From this action we determine that the man is the children’s father. The meaning of this scene will not be grasped until the middle of the movie, where we discover that this was Sol’s earlier, and happier life.
Next there is an abrupt cutaway from the man in the meadow to a much older man lying on lawn furniture in the back yard of a suburban house. The shot is viewed from a long birds-eye angle, so one can observe that the house and yard are separated by fences from the other neighbour’s homes, and a noisy highway is set directly in front of all the houses. This is Sol Nazerman’s home, where his sister-in-law and her family also live. Much of the film is marked by this type of visual delineation by using chain-link fences, and wire security cages in the pawn shop to cut lined shadows across Sol’s face. This symbolises Nazerman’s psychic imprisonment.

The opening scene serves to represent the half-memory daydream that Sol was experiencing as he dozed, just before Bertha, his sister-in-law pesters him awake. She reminds him that the painful 25th anniversary of the death of his wife, (her sister), is fast approaching. Bertha and her husband Selig then begin to wheedle him to pay for a family trip to Europe, a place they envision as being romantic and “cultural”. The family has fully embraced suburban American middle-class life, in all its dull glory. Sol’s dream-memory of a past experience in pastoral splendour is juxtaposed with the reality of the suburban back yard, just as the idea of Europe being the land of class and culture to his sister-in-law and her post-war family is juxtaposed against Sol’s true European experiences. Within the film’s dialogue, it is clear that for Sol, Europe is the land of decay and death:

Sol: Why do you want to go to Europe, Bertha?

Bertha: Mostly, it’s him. He says it’d be very good for his standing with the School Board if he went there. And he's always wanted to visit there anyhow. The shrines and the old cities.
There's an atmosphere we don't have here. . . .

Selig: Something mellow. . . . Age lends its own charm. . . . Why, you can almost smell the difference.

Sol: Rather like a stink, if I remember\textsuperscript{12} (PMTP, 81).

Sol, as a true witness, has an altogether different memory of Europe. This scene also distinguishes between how a place is imagined versus how it is actually remembered by a witness. Alan Rosen refers to Nazerman's way of seeing, and how it differs from others:

Whereas Nazerman's family assumes that Europe is superior to America in its richness of cultural treasures, Nazerman himself reverses the terms, reminding them of the “stink”—presumably, the odor from the crematoria—and implying that it is more representative of Europe's legacy than the age of its cultural treasures. The scene is important in that Nazerman's caustic assessment of Europe constitutes the last words spoken before the film moves from the suburbs into the city itself. (PMTP, 82)

Sol drives to Harlem, and we are given a brief tour through an area of New York that is the antithesis of Sol's suburban home. It is a teeming ghetto, filled with noise, rubbish and energy. Inhabited by mostly African Americans and Hispanics, the population of Harlem are unlike the Chinese of “Chinatown”, or the Italian residents of “Little Italy” who operate and trade with each other from their own shops. In Harlem, they do not gain financially from store ownership or trade. According to Rosen's notes, there is a clear, if not real than at least a perceptual discrepancy: “Indeed, black merchants were at times convinced that there was a Jewish conspiracy to keep out locally owned black businesses”. The shops were run by whites and the profits went to the suburbs, not the community from which they operated, so in a sense, they can be interpreted as being “colonies” (PMTP, 105: note 17).

Nowhere is the embodiment of pain in Sol, the witness, better signified than in the way Sol’s pawn shop is designed, as if it was a fortress or more deliberately, like a prison. Perhaps in relation to unlocking the layers of Sol’s memories that clearly imprison him, there is a ritual of unlocking each layer of security. First, the iron scissors gate that covers the front

window and doorway, next, the front door, and then once inside, the floor-to-ceiling chain link cage that Nazerman stands behind when he is haggling. Levinson notes that when Nazerman is standing behind the metal grating of the cage, “the lights create an uncanny effect whereby the bars cast shadows directly on his body” (MBTS, 150). In the book version, Nazerman has been somewhat physically deformed from beatings he endured in the camps, but in the film all physical traces of torture have been removed. Levinson surmises that the removal of the physical effects means that his Holocaust experience has been cast to “the private domain of his psyche” and that “In the absence of external signs of his camp experience, we await access to an internal domain where the nature of the trauma will be revealed” (MBTS, 150-151).

The pawn shop is also where we are introduced to Nazerman’s personality foil, the upbeat, optimistic Puerto Rican assistant, Jesús Ortiz (Jaime Sánchez) and the chequered collection of desperate customers and small-time hoodlums that frequent the pawn shop. The characters that inhabit the scenes in the pawn shop and other ghetto milieu present us with a slice of society that exists within the liminal parameters of their few opportunities for survival, usually operating between poverty and crime. Ortiz’s girlfriend, Mabel, for example is a black prostitute, which in the context of a relationship, is by definition unnatural, or at least exemplifies the lack of choice in the cramped ghetto for creating a “normal family” life, as is the living situation of Ortiz. As a full grown man he is forced to bathe in a bathtub located in
his mother’s open kitchen while she is present. Nothing is this world of Harlem seems completely clean, open or free, and yet Ortiz happily views his job as Nazerman’s assistant as a fantastic opportunity to better himself and become an independent businessman.

Several scholars have made comparisons between the Harlem ghetto life in the 1960s and life in the 1940s concentration camps, but the general agreement is that even though some of Lumet’s props and locations may hint at this comparison, it is not offered as a parallel in the film. Insdorf approaches it from the character’s personal perspective, describing the manner in which Nazerman treats his black customers:

Nazerman treats his predominantly black customers with the same disdain that characterized the Nazi’s attitude toward Jews. He calls them “creatures”, “scum”, “rejects” – and his job is ultimately one of dispossession. Indeed, the pawnbroker can be seen as a contemporary Kapo, controlling the poor clients who barter with him, but also controlled – and imprisoned – by his superiors. He must remain unmoved by the suffering of these “creatures” in order to survive, even as they relinquish their most personal possessions to him. (ISFH, 28)

Ilan Avisar suggests that The Pawnbroker does indeed attempt to make a point by point comparison between Harlem and the camps with its use of recognisable Holocaust imagery. “The contemporary locale is shown through pictures of heaps of shoes and ragged clothes whose iconography is part of the Holocaust footage and they function here to present an urban
ghetto”. He also takes issue with what he sees as an environmental comparison: “[F]or the bogus analogy between the horrors of the Holocaust and living conditions in Spanish Harlem is the main premise of this film as well as its main fallacy” (SH, 124).

Levinson discusses some of the induced memory scenes in which an occurrence in Harlem triggers Nazerman’s camp memories. “On the one hand, this scene suggests a parallel between the brutality on the contemporary Harlem street and that of a Nazi concentration camp”. However, he concludes that it functions rather “as a disclosure of Nazerman’s psyche, his inability to distinguish between the present and his traumatic memories” (MBTS, 151).

Finally, it is the director, Lumet, who disdains the associations between Harlem and the Holocaust and reveals his true creative intentions: “This was a picture about creating our own prisons. Starting with the pawn shop itself . . . a series of cages: wire mesh, bars, locks, alarms, anything that would reinforce a sense of entrapment. The locations were picked with this in mind” (MM, 102). In Lumet’s mind, Harlem in fact has a healing effect on Nazerman: “At the beginning of the movie, Nazerman is encased in his own coldness. He has tried desperately to feel no emotion and he has succeeded. The story of the movie is how his life in Harlem breaks down the wall of ice with which he has surrounded himself” (MM, 175).

If there is any comparison of concentration camps to Harlem, it would be more to suggest the importance of learning lessons from the brutal experiences of Europe during the Second World War. This film might be in part, simply a reminder of how the treatment of others can eventually lead to savagery, especially when people are classed and so easily labelled without compassion. Nazerman’s suffering at the hands of the Nazis has obviously warped his outlook on life. Although not intended as a comparison to the Nazi concentration camps, Harlem does illustrate what happens to human nature in poor, cramped, segregated environments.

Breaking Codes: Another Key Dispositif in the Hollywood Visual Regime

The Pawnbroker is also known for breaking the Hollywood “Production Code”, known more familiarly as the “Hays Code”13, which was in actuality a “morals” code. This was essentially

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13For the entire “production code”, please see: http://www.artsreformation.com/a001/hays-code.html. I was unpleasantly surprised to discover through my research in other journals that the Hays code had deeply anti-Semitic roots. For examples of this, please see: Stephen Vaughn. “Morality and Entertainment: The Origins of the Motion Picture Production Code”. (MEPC). Source: The Journal of American History, Vol. 77, No. 1 (Jun.,
a code that was devised for restricting any expression of what was termed as “immoral” or
defined as “sin”, and had deeply anti-Semitic roots. In March 1930, the code’s preamble
stated: “A Code to Govern the Making of Talking, Synchronized and Silent Motion Pictures.
Formulated and formally adopted by The Association of Motion Picture Producers, Inc. and
The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc. (MPPDA)”
Lumet’s opposition to the code led to its eventual demise, and to a distinct change in what could and
was shown in Hollywood movies from that moment on. The act of transgression in the film
occurs in a pivotal scene when Ortiz’s prostitute girlfriend Mabel, (Thelma Oliver) confronts
Nazerman in a desperate attempt to trade a gold locket for more than the usual one or two
dollars he pays his customers for their goods. In addition to presenting him with the locket as
her bartering tool, she bares her breasts and also offers to have sex with him.

An interesting aspect to this scene is that as an audience spectator, it is far more
genrassing to watch Nazerman avoid looking at Mabel’s breasts than it is for us to look at
them. We are not in the same position Nazerman is, we are several times removed from his
position as a witness to what, beyond her body, is about to be revealed. Mabel informs
Nazerman that her boss (meaning her pimp) is Rodriguez, and he will punish her brutally if
she does not bring in enough money.

The fact that Rodriguez is behind a prostitution ring seems to startle him. Sol knew his
shop was a front for a money laundering operation, but it appears that either it had not
occurred to him, or he had denied and suppressed the knowledge that some of the money was
coming from prostitution. Since it becomes clear to Mabel that Sol is not interested, she

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14In the above (footnote 7) article, Vaughn reports: Even among those who had helped draft the code, many were
dissatisfied with its enforcement and remained both suspicious of [Will] Hays and hostile to Jewish producers.
[Joseph] Breen, who soon would head the powerful Production Code Administration (PCA), was convinced by
October 1932 that the code had failed and had be- come an object of ridicule in Hollywood. He was also
contemptuous of Hays and deeply anti-Semitic. He confided to Wilfrid Parsons that while his boss was well
meaning, he was weak and lacked “guts”. “Hays,” Breen wrote from Hollywood, “sold us a first-class bill of
goods when he put over the Code on us. . . . It may be that Hays thought these lousy Jews out here would abide
by the Code’s provisions but if he did then he should be censured for his lack of proper knowledge of the breed”.Singling out for attack those Jews who had recently arrived from Eastern Europe and who seemed to dominate
the film industry, he continued: “They are simply a rotten bunch of vile people with no respect for anything
beyond the making of money. . . . Here we have Paganism rampant and in its most virulent form. . . . These Jews
seem to think of nothing but money making and sexual indulgence. . . . They are, probably, the scum of the scum
of the earth.” (MEPC, 62-63)

15 The part of the code that this film had to override was: VI. Costume: 1. Complete nudity is never permitted.
This includes nudity in fact or in silhouette, or any lecherous or licentious notice thereof by other characters in
the picture. 2. Undressing scenes should be avoided, and never used save where essential to the plot. 3. Indecent
or undue exposure is forbidden.
switches to her next offer, which is to appeal to what she knows is the natural penchant in most males, and that is to gaze at the female body. She attempts to stimulate the voyeur in Nazerman, by repeating, “Look….Look…That’s it…. Look…. It doesn’t hurt to look”. What she does not know is that it does indeed hurt Nazerman to look, for now the memory he wanted to avoid the most is the one her nakedness has triggered; the unspeakable memory of being forced to witness as his wife (who had been conscripted into brothel service at the camps) being raped by Nazi officers.

The act of witnessing is not merely for something to pass within the gaze of the witness. To witness is to have some sort of psychological insight or knowledge. When Nazerman endures Mabel’s debasement of herself, an action she must commit in order to survive, it triggers his memory involving a Nazi SS officer forcing Nazerman’s head through window glass so that not only he must see his wife being raped, he is also forced to see her from the Nazi’s gaze. This memory is the embodiment of the experience he has tried to deny. Because Nazerman, his wife and Mabel are all victimised in this scene, instead of being aroused by Mabel, he is visibly horrified. Then, overcome with a desire to protect her, he abruptly stands up from where he is sitting and quickly covers her with her coat, handing her the money she wanted as he sends her away. This scene is important as an example of the potential of the witness, because Nazerman has finally been morally energised to physically act upon righting what he feels is wrong, rather than acquiescing to hopelessness and doing nothing.

Mabel’s attempt at seducing him and his subsequent epiphany about the unsavoury reality of why his pawn broking business exists in the first place compels Nazerman to confront Rodriguez in the environment of his gaudy home. At one point during Nazerman’s visit, Rodriguez’ homosexual relationship is emphasised when his lover Robinson arrives at home, immediately running upstairs to what is most likely the bedroom, with a familiarity that indicates intimacy. Another point to this scene is to examine the cultural clashes of differing moral norms. The portrayal of Nazerman as an older European, experiencing one revealing and degrading episode after another in terms of the dissolving racial prejudices and sexual mores of 1965 America. He attempts to take a moral stand against “whorehouses”, but Rodriguez reminds him that the money from the whorehouses is the same money that Nazerman uses to support his family. Rodriguez then forcefully dismisses Nazerman’s feeble, moral protestations by pushing his face in close confrontation to Nazerman’s, contemptuously referring to him as “professor”.

He then issues a direct order to Nazerman to sign a piece of paper the next day at the pawnshop, facilitating further money laundering. Rodriguez has reminded Nazerman exactly how the business works in that he, Rodriguez, is in charge of it, and not only is Nazerman complicit with it, he is rewarded by it and therefore must continue to perpetuate it if he wishes to survive. It is as if for the Jew, humiliation is part and parcel of survival, always demanded by those in power. Nazerman quivers with fear and is forced to answer in the affirmative to Rodriguez’ demand, proving once again that he is helpless or utterly incapable of protecting anyone, much less preventing evil things from further encroaching on his life. These scenes of degradation with Mabel and Rodriguez indicate that Nazerman’s emotional dam is beginning to show signs of strain and that at some point in the ensuing narrative the dam will undoubtedly break.

This unravelling is most notably portrayed in a following scene, when in a complete and sudden turn-about, Nazerman is shown paying them ten times the amount of money to for their goods, rather than measure out the unfair and miserly pittance to his regular pawnshop clients that they had been accustomed to. Although bewildered, the customers take the money. He then refuses to comply with his previous criminal partners in the money laundering scheme, going directly against the orders of Rodriguez. It is as if he is finally willing to shed his role as perpetual victim and appeaser, the role that had been his earlier, constant mainstay in order to survive.
The Awakening of Americans

The film was released in 1965, but the production of the film was on-going between 1961 and 1965 tying it, as mentioned earlier, to the epoch of the Eichmann trial. It was also within this time-frame that Arendt was reporting on the trial, eventually resulting in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Alan Rosen suggests that Lumet was echoing Arendt’s controversial sentiments suggesting the victim was “an important cog, if not in his own destruction, then in his own persecution” (PMTP, 92). Rosen continues:

> But if I am correct in situating the shift of villain from exotic to local (from Sicily to Harlem, from Europe to America), I would also argue that, by universalizing Arendt’s thesis—that is, by making the victim/victimizer dynamic apply not only to Jews but to blacks—Lumet also qualifies Arendt’s claim. For the film implies that groups of victims generally have members who are willing to collaborate with the persecutor and even go them a step better. Whereas Arendt (and, perhaps even more explicitly, the noted historian Raul Hilberg) seemed to account for the apparent complicity of European Jewry’s leaders by positing a particular Jewish “mentality” or propensity for such behaviour, the film suggests that whatever the Jews did, they did as any victim would have done—and does. (PMTP, 92)

The majority of Americans at this time were for the most part either ignorant or just awakening to the depth of horror contained in the Nazi concentration camps, an ignorance that is portrayed in the characters of Jesús Ortiz and Marilyn Birchfield and their incomplete information about Sol Nazerman’s experiences in the concentration camp. This is why they are unable to see who he is or truly connect with him to the point of understanding his grief; to them he just seems unreasonable or irascible. Levy and Sznajder explain how America as “witness” discovered the Holocaust:

> Americans for the most part were ignorant of what Europe had gone through to rebuild itself after the war. American political culture was

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16I paraphrase here from Rosen’s notes on Hilberg’s comprehensive work, *The Destruction of the European Jews* which first appeared in 1961 and, arguing that a “ghetto mentality” dictated the inadequate response of Europe’s Jews, was also greeted with some pointed attacks that focused on Hilberg's assertions regarding “the victims”… I am concerned here with making a historical link between the intense debate around the issue of Jews-as-victims that emerged in the period 1962-64 in response to Hilberg's analysis, on the one hand, and Lumet's strategies of representing victim and persecutor in the same period, on the other hand. This is not the place to try to say more than that regarding Hilberg’s overall approach to this issue. Arendt is clear about her debt to Hilberg: “As can be seen from the text… I have relied even more on Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews*, which appeared after the trial and constitutes the most exhaustive and the most soundly documented account of the Third Reich’s Jewish policies” (EIJ, 282). Thus, both Hilberg's and Arendt's studies were crucial in arbitrating the discussion about the Holocaust's victims and persecutors during the period in which *The Pawnbroker* was in production. (PMTP, 111-112, notes)

overwhelmingly optimistic at the time. While Europe lay in ruins, the United States was new, young, and powerful, which was an important factor in determining the different types of memories that defined the two cultures. America was “free of pain” and thus able to uphold a universal type of memory. Americans did not see themselves as victims of air raids, occupation and division as the Germans did; nor were they part of the Jewish collective of victims. America was a witness to these events and, as such, was able to hold a privileged position. (HMGA, 112-113)

It is important to note that America was “free of pain”, because Sol, like so many other immigrant witnesses, was not free of pain. His memories and the pain caused by what he had seen and could not forget were like broken bones that had been poorly reset, inseparable reminders of a terrible event, forever embodied and therefore undeniable. Levy and Sznaider also mention that America’s “prevailing optimism” began to wane in the 1960s with the assassination of President Kennedy and the youthful hope he symbolised, the onset of the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement and subsequent assassinations of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. These events, all heavily reported and televised, seemed to contribute to an “emerging tale of American suffering”, and, while not affecting all Americans, it was certainly the case for minorities and ethnic groups. Society could no longer exist in an unexamined state. “The new catchwords were racism and discrimination, under which the Holocaust fell, as well” (HMGA, 113).

As we near the end of the film, Sol’s flashback incidents become longer and more frequent. There are two scenes that illustrate Nazerman’s disconnection from feelings for anything, including his fellow man, and then a final turn-about that forces a connection if only through the presence of intense, physical pain. When he boards a subway train, we observe
the passengers from Nazerman’s point of view. Their eyes carry a blank, lifeless stare until an insistent memory surfaces. As Insdorf puts it, “the crowded train becomes transformed into a freight car crammed with Jewish bodies on their way to misery and death. Once again, the memory sneaks up on Nazerman and is then unleashed”. The scene was shot in a creative way that combines our view as spectators with Nazerman’s specular view from a distance where he appears to be “seeing through a glass darkly”. As the film progresses, Sol is increasingly confronted by more debilitating images of his past experiences. The horrendous images in his memory become so intense that they overtake and surpass the forefront of reality in his present consciousness.

In what Lumet refers to as “the climactic scene”, the entire transition from a present reality in a subway car subsuming to Sol’s memory of twenty five years before, technically lasts only one minute in the film. Shooting the scene within genuine railway and subway cars, Lumet cut in two frames of the railway car to replace two frames of the subway car, increasing the amount of railway car to subway car frames until the subway car visually (thus “mentally”) becomes the railway car. By shooting both the subway car and the railway car in a 360-degree pan and keeping the picture in constant motion, Lumet says he “made the sequence even more visually exciting”. Nazerman’s feeling of entrapment plays out when he tries to escape his memory by rushing to open the connecting subway car door, but when he goes through, he finds he has entered the railway car of his memory, and the flashback is finally played out in its entirety (MM, 160). The memory includes a crowd of near-dead Jews claustrophobically pressed together in a forced standing position in the railway car, looking dazed and empty like cattle as they resign themselves to their fate. Sol’s son is draped over his shoulder, possibly dead already, but as Sol finds himself weakening and unable to maintain a grip on his son, he calls out to his wife in panic as the boy slips lifelessly to the floor. We see that his son truly is dead, and that Sol was entirely powerless to prevent the death.
In the final scene we are returned to the pawn shop where, unbeknownst to Sol, Ortiz has planned a robbery of the shop. In scenes previous to this, we watch as Ortiz who, usually loyal to Sol, has his feelings badly hurt by one too many of Nazerman’s unkind comments. We watch Ortiz enlist the help of three thugs who frequently trade their stolen goods at the pawnshop. As one of the conditions of their assistance in carrying out his plan, Ortiz has made them promise not to shoot Nazerman during the robbery. We can see by the look on Ortiz’s face and in his general physical demeanour which is nervous and shaky, that he experiences intense inner-conflict between needing money and betraying Sol. Just before the robbery takes place a customer comes to the pawn shop to sell his butterfly collection which triggers Sol’s memory into the same daydream of the slow motion idyllic opening scene in the film. This time however, the remembered picnic scene is abruptly interrupted by the arrival of three German soldiers, and the memory ends when it clashes with the reality of the three thieves entering the shop, foreshadowing again the brutal death of someone close to him.

When it appears as though the thieves are going back on their promise not to shoot Nazerman, Ortiz leaps out in front of Sol and is accidentally shot and killed. For years Nazerman has numbed his feelings, but this injustice makes him want to feel, so he runs back inside the shop and purposely jams the metal spike of his receipt holder through his hand, in an attempt to reclaim his humanity by experiencing physical pain. He then rejoins the crowd (and the human race), surrounding Ortiz lying in the street. Nazerman must again endure his

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18 There have been critical debates about Christian symbolism in Nazerman taking the action of ramming a spike through his hand. Although it strays somewhat from my main point about the embodied consciousness of memory in the witness, Avisar’s valid analysis is that it is “religious symbolism” used as an attempt to bring resolution about through “exemplary Christian martyrdom”, which he finds “offensive” (SH, 125).
feelings of powerlessness to protect someone close to him, and he lets out a soundless scream, his face twisted in agony.

![C6 Figure 9: Sol, moments before impaling his hand on the receipt spike in the centre of the image. Image asked from: <http://sensesofcinema.com/2011/feature-articles/auschwitz%C2%AD%E2%80%93harlem-post-traumatic-economy-in-the-pawnbroker/>. Web, April 2012.]

**Conclusion:**

As an event, the Holocaust was a spectacle of real horror, not a representation of horror. However, its reality, as Wieviorka puts it, does represent something else: it has become a definition of something against which we can measure ourselves and our actions:

> Just as Auschwitz has come to stand for absolute evil, the memory of the Holocaust has become, for better or for worse, the definitive model for memory construction, the paradigm in efforts to analyse recent events unfolding before our eyes that have not yet become history, for instance, those that took place not long ago in Bosnia. References to this paradigm may be implicit or explicit. For instance, historians may use the categories and concepts produced in the wake of World War II (crimes against humanity, genocide, and so on) to describe a more remote past... (EOW, xiv)

America is a land of immigrants. This film helps to portray the beginning of the Americanisation of the Holocaust as a Jewish event, further defining it in legal terms as a great crime. This began what Levy and Sznaider say is also its “universalization”, which brought forth a general public interest in “the way in which a state treats its citizens” (HMGA, 12-13).
A child survivor of the Holocaust, Laub, who is the cofounder of and one of the interviewers at the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust testimonies at Yale University, states that he recognises “three separate, distinct levels of witnessing in relationship to the Holocaust experience; the level of being a witness to oneself within the experience; the level of being a witness to the testimony of others; and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself” (EWW, 75). In the case of Sol Nazerman, the unconscious monitoring by what Laub refers to as the “internal witness” are exemplified in his insistent memories of the trauma he experienced by witnessing the death of his family during the Holocaust. Together, they constitute an embodied consciousness, which Lumet is able to represent in his technique of employing the flash-back. However, without the action of creating a discourse through testimony to others, Sol’s survival has little feeling of redemption. Unlike the detached, mechanical eye of surveillance, the witness who was present at the scene of the event is and remains connected to the event, often through pain, whether psychic or physical.

While The Pawnbroker presents the individual’s suffering and memories, as the spectators or audience watching the film are also allowed glimpses of several other outcomes: the effects of trauma on an individual, how the memory of the trauma affects the individual, and how the perception of everything around that individual is affected. If, as the postmodern perspective suggests in the context of the argument from the “Historikerstreit” namely, that the Holocaust was not a particularly exceptional event, the agony embodied by the character of Sol Nazerman appears to undermine the postmodern perspective. Nazerman, as a surviving witness of the Holocaust, is a portrait of the unique suffering each individual endures in their struggle to come to terms with their past. We also see the wider view as we stand outside the sphere of the individual. We are shown a slice of mass society inhabited by millions of individuals, including those who have survived a world war. We are also shown the ripple effect on later generations who inhabit this recovering world with the survivors.

The timing of the film’s release in 1965 was crucial. The audience was beyond the role of spectator and was closer to that third level Laub defined: the witnesses to the acts of witnessing. Lumet has thus illustrates what the Holocaust survivor not only lived through by presenting a proper understanding of the way the mind’s eye works in Sol’s memories, but also what the survivor must endure just by being a survivor, many years later. Lumet, therefore, acts as a witness himself. Through his own moral outrage, he was able to discover the important role played by the witness again under the terms of visual culture. Laub states

19 (EWW, 87)

20 (See footnote 5 in this chapter for a short discussion on the “Historikerstreit”).
that it took “a new generation of ‘innocent children’ removed enough from the experience” who, just as in the story of “The Emperor’s New Clothes” were finally “in a position to ask questions” (EEW, 83). Lumet presented them with the starting point to do so.

*C6 Figure 10: Sol’s silent scream in reaction to the murder of Jesus Ortiz. Image accessed from: <http://sixties60s.com/1965movies.html>. Web, March, 2012.*

*The Pawnbroker* is important to this thesis because it addresses several major themes at once: the individuality of each character in their ethnicity and what position of power they take, and the historical setting of the film and what this setting implies about the development of our visual regime. Tied to these themes are some of the technical and “moral” solutions that were used to offset particular problems the director as artist had to deal with. All of these seemingly heterogeneous aspects of the film make it a good example of how disparate themes and discourses coalesce to form a “dispositif”. *The Pawnbroker* is an example of people, seemingly disconnected from each other, incidents and places, that all signify another step in the evolution of our current culture of disembodied visuality. This film also shows the struggle of characters as they push back memories in order to avoid pain.

That this pain must be confronted and not denied is central to the role of the witness and a source of its moral significance in recent visual culture. In the next chapter, I examine through secondary literature how the role of the witness is treated in two films that centre on the Holocaust in which morality, the role of the witness, memories and the necessity for testimony are highlighted.
CHAPTER SEVEN:

“Ethical Representation and the Witness: Shoah versus Schindler’s List,
A Question of Eras, not Errors”

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss a small body of literature that appraises modes of representation and visibility in two films: Shoah (1985), directed by Claude Lanzmann1, and Schindler’s List (1993 and 1994), directed by Steven Spielberg. Simply put, each film attempts to historicise the Holocaust in very different ways. Schindler’s List is based on characters and events in a novel written by Thomas Keneally2, whereas Shoah is a film comprising a vast collection of recorded interviews of people who had either survived the Holocaust or had in some way participated in its facilitation.

As case studies, Shoah and Schindler’s List help clarify the definition and function of the witness in the surveillance context of the totalitarian regime represented in both films, albeit in their own unique way. These two films also exemplify what I suggest are later phases of our continually evolving ocular-centrism within Western visual culture. The arguments presented in the critical literature that I consider in the context of these films are at the very centre of a larger debate about the Bilderverbot3, and are important to themes I have discussed throughout this thesis. Discussions within the critical literature revolve around how the director of each film attempts to present aesthetically a way of looking at a difficult past. Rather than present another analysis of these two films and thereby adding to the voluminous literature on them, I consider the chief positions established in the secondary literature and present my own conclusions.

Each film is heavily informed by its separate grounding in a specific era: Shoah functions within the frame of the end of World War II and the Cold War, and Schindler’s List is representative of a generation that was entering the post-Cold War leading to a new and emerging digital age. Admittedly, beyond the influences of the era concerned, the fact that the

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1 Lanzmann, a Jew, joined the French Resistance as a teenager and was later an editor of Les Temps Modernes, the cultural and philosophical journal founded by Jean-Paul Sartre.

2 In 1983, Australian author Thomas Keneally published his fact-based novel Schindler’s Ark, which chronicled, through first-person accounts, the story of Oskar Schindler, a war profiteer and womanizer, saved the lives of about 1,100 Jews who worked for him. These people would come to call themselves Schindlerjuden (Schindler Jews). Given that the Nazis killed millions of people during the Holocaust, 1,100 might seem an insignificant number. However, this number represents 1,100 unique human lives, all of which would have ceased to exist if not for Schindler, and those 1,100 produced some six thousand descendants. <http://www.sparknotes.com/film/schindlerslist/context.html>. Web, May, 2011.

3 “Bilderverbot”, translated from German means “forbidden picture”. It is also a reference to the Second Commandment from the Old Testament: “Make yourself no graven image”.
sensibility of one film is “European” and the other has its contextual basis in “Hollywood” carries added cultural factors into the mix of the discussion. Miriam (Bratu) Hansen⁴ outlines four “key points” in the “intellectual critiques” of these films. These are: “arguments pertaining to (a) the culture industry (in Horkheimer and Adorno’s sense); (b) the problem of narrative; (c) the question of cinematic subjectivity; and (d) the question of representation” (SLNS, 296). These arguments relate to what Hansen calls “mass mediated memory culture” (SLNS, 312). Hansen describes the effect that Spielberg’s film had on audiences and intellectuals: “the way the film polarized, or was assumed to have polarized, critical and popular responses, the reception of Schindler's List threw into relief a particular pattern in intellectuals’ positioning that rehearsed familiar tropes of the old debate on modernism versus mass culture” (SLNS, 296).

Lanzmann’s goal appears to have been to disseminate information about the Holocaust, an event that was intensely personal and emotional, but to do it in such a way that concrete pictorial references of it that originated from that time were eliminated. He appears to have avoided making visible what was already invisible. Andrea Brighenti⁵ offers this explanation of the forces at work which constitute the terms of “visibility”:

Visibility lies at the intersection of the two domains of aesthetics (relations of perception) and politics (relations of power). When these two terms are understood in a sufficiently broad meaning, it makes sense to say that the medium between the two domains of aesthetics and politics is the symbolic. A symbol is aesthetically impressive and semiotically relevant in social relations. Just think of the powerful and ambivalent position of the light in western culture, its indelibly metaphysical residuum: light is the obsession of physics as well as of religion, it marks the field of the sacred and that of the secular. It is not simply visible. It constitutes a form of visibility.

Lanzmann keeps areas of past life sacred by not illuminating the faces of the dead or the artifacts they have left behind. But this is where his intentions and the outcome of the film seem to be at odds, as he still wants the story told or made visible through words and testimony by using the memories of his Holocaust “witnesses” as “verbal visualizers” in his film, even placing them geographically as close as possible to where things happened as they speak.


Much of the critical literature notes that Shoah travels a loftier path in regard to ethical and artistic principles than Schindler’s List, precisely by eschewing archival material. Michael D’Arcy⁶ notes: “While Lanzmann’s commentaries on the Bilderverbot that attaches to the Shoah have generated a certain amount of criticism; there has been on the whole a marked tendency in the literature on Shoah to associate the film's particular refusal of representation with an ethical address to alterity” (CLSI, 138). Hansen, for her part, finds some of the criticism of Schindler’s List to be somewhat over-simplified in its fixation on the visual:

The critique of Schindler’s List in high-modernist terms, however, especially in Lanzmann's version, reduces the dialectics of the problem of representing the unrepresentable to a binary opposition of showing or not showing – rather than casting it, as one might, as an issue of competing representations and competing modes of representation. This binary argument also reinscribes, paradoxically, a modernist fixation on vision and the visual, whether simply assumed as the epistemological master sense or critically negated as illusory and affirmative. (SLNS, 302)

Dominick LaCapra⁷ makes a similar point about Lanzmann’s sacralising approach in the making of Shoah:

To what extent do references to art, fiction, personal obsession or vision, and even ethics serve in good part as a screen for the role of displaced, disguised, and often denied religious elements in Lanzmann's approach? I would suggest that Lanzmann returns to what he explicitly denies, represses, or suppresses: a tendency to sacralize the Holocaust and to surround it with taboos. He especially affirms a Bilderverbot, or prohibition on images, with respect to representation, notably representation relying on archival documentation or footage, and he also insists on what might be called a Warumverbot or a prohibition on the question why. (LSHW, 236)

LaCapra also says that Lanzmann’s “primary concern is his personal vision of his film as a work of art”. He asserts that “Shoah is probably best viewed as neither representational nor autonomous art but as a disturbingly mixed generic performance that traces and tracks the traumatic effects of limit-experiences, particularly in the lives (or afterlives) of victims” (LSHW, 233-234). He also describes it as “a film of endless lamentation or grieving that is

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tensely suspended between the acting out of a traumatic past and the difficult effort to work through it” (LSHW, 237).

Shoah versus Schindler’s List: Managing Visibility in the Sphere of Political Representation

Lanzmann’s film, a work which began twelve years before its release originated from what communication theorist Pippa Norris calls the “Cold War frame”, an era that Norris says “prevailed between 1945 and 1989”. Norris also states: “Like the development of all-pervasive social stereotypes it is often difficult to study the origins and gradual evolution of frames. It is like trying to see the air around us. Yet periods of sharp change—such as the end of the Cold War—highlight awareness of frames that come to be seen as out of touch with social reality”. Norris notes that there were significant changes to the post-Cold War frame: “Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, old stereotypes of ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ have had to be rapidly recast” (RSNN, 358). Norris aptly describes this pivotal time:

In November 1989 the Berlin Wall fell to the tune of Beethoven’s ‘Ode to Joy’. In 1990 even the most die-hard communist regimes were disintegrating, and the old Soviet Union dissolved in 1991. Following these dramatic events in Central and Eastern Europe, the period 1992-1995 is seen as representing the early years of the post-Cold War era. (RSNN, 361)

These early years of the post-Cold War era was precisely when Schindler’s List was being filmed and released. The new hopefulness of that time should be recognised as significant for framing the film within a new context of redemption, emerging from a previous time when “the familiar Cold War frame depicted international events in terms of rivalry between two major superpowers and ranged other countries into ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ of these superpowers” (RSNN, 358).

According to Levy and Sznaider, there is a specific type of “witness”, one who holds what they refer to as a third “privileged position”. Their claim is that this position develops through what they call the “Americanization of the Holocaust”, occurring predominantly in Hollywood movies about the Holocaust. As the Holocaust was so thoroughly a phenomenon that took place in Europe, its subsequent Americanisation in cinematic terms is, according to them, best exemplified by Schindler’s List. The film is seen by some as sanitising the

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Holocaust by making it conceptually and visually palatable for a mass audience. This very palatability is why Spielberg is accused of crossing what is to some an established principle of the Bilderverbot. Although for Schindler’s List, the audience is also referred to as “witnessing” the film, Levy and Sznaider concur that because we are allowed to see film characters who are perpetrators (the “criminals”) as well as characters who are victims (the “innocent”), we hold the “privilege” of being able to make the choice of either identifying with the victim or, as they put it, to “adopt the morally bankrupt role of the passive observer” (HMGA, 155).

In Fantasy of Witnessing, Gary Weissman argues that when watching Schindler’s List, the audience is actually experiencing what he calls “a fascination with the vacillating verisimilitude of the Holocaust” and that this allows “viewers to fantasize that they are witnessing the Holocaust for themselves, more than fifty years after the fact” (FW, 210, 187). In her essay arguing both for and against the Bilderverbot, Karyn Ball, seemingly unconvinced by this view says that, if this is the case, then “how does this fantasy remain subject to the disciplinary scaffolding of image prohibition aesthetics that would supposedly counteract a voyeuristic longing to connect vicariously with a visceral reality?” (FBRU, 169). Ball then quotes Frank Schirrmacher’s view in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung that “the breaking of this taboo is by invoking art’s consciousness-raising potential”. According to Schirrmacher, “Spielberg shows that art functions to enlighten and, even in a time dulled by images, is able to exercise an amazing power. Maybe such a film could emerge only in America because European artists have given up their belief in this power” (FBRU, 169).

Does Weissman’s “fantasy of witnessing” and Levy and Sznaider’s identification of the “passive observer” indicate a disconnection from making a judgment which, in turn, might have better served the archive of the conscience? On this matter I do not think so, because when we view the film, at least we are “identifying” ourselves somewhere within the context of situations experienced and known to others that has the potential to provide us with moral instruction.

Spielberg’s images in his film – to speak with Foucault – can be broadly located within “the regime of the non-discursive”. Lanzmann’s film, by contrast, locates meaning “in a given cultural universe” and therefore can be associated with what Foucault refers to as the discursive (VCSS, 328). Brighenti asserts that the two may be separate but that they invariably operate together:

Against the radical separation of the visible and the articulable, one can advance the argument that, as we try to imagine a pure visible or a pure
articulable as severed from one another, we quickly fall into a paradox. The aesthetic (and, specifically, the visually aesthetic) arrives earlier to us, almost instantly, but in fact it is because the political (Foucault’s articulable) is always already there. True, the two domains speak different languages, but the one carries the other onwards. It is not that they are occasionally mixed together: they are always together. There is no visible without ways of seeing, which are socially and interactionally crafted and even the pure abstract articulation that makes these ways possible can be conceived as an invisible (in Merleau-Ponty’s sense), rather than a distinct, unrelated regime. (VCSS, 329)

The invisible, the things that Lanzmann does not want us to see are not away from the eye or out of sight, they are always there, but we are unable to see them. “The visible may occasionally look obscure, but words can be obscure, too – as in Borges’s library of Babel. The articulable may occasionally look abstract, but images can be abstract, too – as in Kandinsky’s theory of painting” (VCSS, 329).

“Film”, according to William D. Romanowski⁹, “has long been recognized as a powerful transmitter of culture because it transmits beliefs, values, and knowledge; serves as cultural memory; and offers social criticism”. As such, “the cinema remains a continual battleground in the cultural conflicts” not only, as Romanowski suggests, “in America”, but clearly, between Europe and America as well (CFCH, 63). In fact, a survey of the literature revealed that Shoah enjoyed a higher level of critical respect, in part because of its seeming lack of Hollywood trickery and techniques. Schindler’s List was criticised somewhat more for using the technique of relying on fictional narrative and, it was often argued that the film was often visually and emotionally “manipulative”. It is as if Shoah has been elevated by being less like a Hollywood movie, and that Schindler’s List received less respect for being more like a movie while trying hard not to be like a Hollywood movie. Some of the most pointed criticism comes from Lanzmann himself, who, as some suggest, appears overly invested in making these comparisons.

An article in the Arts Section of Le Monde¹⁰ on March 3rd of 1994 contains one of Lanzmann’s most favoured view on representation of the Holocaust in general and specifically in regard to Schindler’s List. The article was also re-printed in The Guardian in April, 1994:

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¹⁰ Claude Lanzmann. “Holocauste, la representation impossible”, from Le Monde, 3 Mar. 1994, pp. 1. 7. trans. under the title: “Why Spielberg has distorted the truth”, published in The Guardian Weekly. April 13, 1994. All of Lanzmann’s quotes are from this reprinted article unless otherwise specified, and will be cited as WSDT.
The Holocaust is above all unique in that it erects a ring of fire around itself, a borderline that cannot be crossed because there is a certain ultimate degree of horror that cannot be transmitted. To claim it is possible to do so is to be guilty of the most serious transgression. I deeply believe there are some things that cannot and should not be represented. (WSDT)

Lanzmann was also critical that the view of the story in *Schindler’s List* was told “through the eyes of a German” (Oskar Schindler), rather than through the eyes of a Jew. He refers to Spielberg’s film as “a kitsch melodrama”. I agree with Lanzmann on this point. However, there are components of melodrama in both films, especially with respect to the use of music. Strains of composer John Williams’ emotively evocative violins can be heard throughout *Schindler’s List*, especially during moments of particular poignancy. But in *Shoah*, plaintive singing is featured in the opening sequences by Simon Srebnik, one of two Jewish survivors of Chelmno concentration camp. We hear him singing Polish folk songs on a small flat-bottomed boat. The lengthy subtitling made it clear that this scene was meant to be reminiscent of Srebnik’s days spent in chains on the river. It was in this place that, at the age of 13, his life was spared but he was made to dump the remains of the crushed bones of all the other Jews exterminated in the concentration camp.

Lanzmann compares his feelings about *Schindler’s List* to what he felt while watching the 1978 American television mini-series *Holocaust*11 (shown in Germany in four parts in 1979): “There is no difference between transgressing and trivialising: both the serial and the Hollywood movie transgress because they trivialise”. His claim is that the transgressions “erase the unique nature of the Holocaust”. Most of Lanzmann’s article, however, is in fact celebratory of his film, *Shoah*, and involves his personal descriptions of the many ways he feels his film bests *Schindler’s List*. The most salient difference concerns his not using “archive material in *Shoah*, because that’s not the way I think or work, but also because none exists” (WSDT). What he means is that none of the people Lanzmann interviews in *Shoah* have a film or photograph of what happened to them during the Holocaust. Nor does Lanzmann cut away to iconic imagery that has become common in other Holocaust-themed works on the reception of *Holocaust* in West Germany, see Friedrich Knilli and Siegfried Zielinski, eds., *Betrifft “Holocaust”*: Zuschauer schreiben an den WDR (Berlin: Volker Spiess, 1983). See also the special issue of *New German Critique* 19 (Winter 1980) on “Germans and Jews”, particularly the essays by Jeffrey Herf, Andrei S. Markovits and Rebecca S. Hayden, Siegfried Zielinsky, and Andreas Huyssen, 30-52; 53-80; 81-96; and 117-36 respectively. (FBRU, N. 41, 183).

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11 Karyn Ball. “For and against the Bilderverbot: The Rhetoric of ‘Unrepresentability’ and Remediated ‘Authenticity’ in the German Reception of Steven Spielberg’s *Schindler’s List*”. This essay gives a thorough criticism from both points of view. From here on in will be cited as FBRU. Ball supplies an excellent list of works on the reception of *Holocaust* in West Germany, see Friedrich Knilli and Siegfried Zielinski, eds., *Betrifft “Holocaust”: Zuschauer schreiben an den WDR* (Berlin: Volker Spiess, 1983). See also the special issue of *New German Critique* 19 (Winter 1980) on “Germans and Jews”, particularly the essays by Jeffrey Herf, Andrei S. Markovits and Rebecca S. Hayden, Siegfried Zielinsky, and Andreas Huyssen, 30-52; 53-80; 81-96; and 117-36 respectively. (FBRU, N. 41, 183).
films. Each person interviewed in his film must recall and then repeat from memory what happened to them, usually in their native language which is then translated to Lanzmann on the spot by a translator while English sub-titles are provided for the audience.

Spielberg did not use archival material in his film either, but what he did do was make a movie that represented certain moments in the Holocaust. According to Lanzmann, in the making of Shoah, he believes that he (Lanzmann) had “created a new form”, but that “Spielberg chose to reconstruct. The trouble is that in a way, reconstruction is tantamount to fabricating archives”. But is this not a charge that could be levelled at almost every movie ever made? And is it not the case that Lanzmann himself “reconstructs” many scenes in his film by similar means?

Lanzmann began shooting Shoah in 1973. Even after being whittled down from 350 hours of original footage, the film is still nine and a half hours long and divided into four videotapes. In a discussion held at Yale12, Lanzmann described how he did not wish to make a documentary even though his film often has the feeling or appearance of being one. This may be due to what are obviously “real interviews”, or interviews which, according to Lanzmann, are never intentionally “representational”13 (YS, 96-97).

This is not exactly true, however. As he explains in his discussion at Yale, Lanzmann rented a train and hired a conductor who during the war had delivered thousands of Jews by train to the camps on the very tracks that Lanzmann was filming. He even had the driver re-enact the signals, the waving and so on he had done during the war. If this is not exactly representation, what would one call it? Is this not a type of reconstruction?

Schindler’s List did not set out to work against a reconstruction, but rather, as Hansen states, serves another important function:

[S]een from a perspective of displacement, and considered from an interstitial space between distinct critical discourses and between disjunctive political legacies, the film did seem to have an important function, not only for empirically diverse audiences, but also for thinking through key issues involved in the representation of the Shoah and the problem of ‘public memory’. (SLNS, 296)

12 Claude Lanzmann visited Yale University on 4-13 April 1990 at the invitation of the Department of Comparative Literature, where he conducted two seminars on Shoah organized by David Rodowick. It was here that Lanzmann insisted that his film was not a documentary, as he explained various set-ups and shooting techniques of Shoah to the attendees of the seminar.

Spielberg’s way of conveying witness testimony through the use of film is to use a decidedly “Hollywood” method, which is to re-tell a story. What is the best way to do this? If, as Michel de Certeau observed in The Writing of History, “[H]istoriography (that is, ‘history’ and ‘writing’) bears within its own name the paradox – almost an oxymoron – of a relation established between two antinomic terms, between the real and discourse”, then one of the methods of reconstruction that Lanzmann refers to in Schindler’s List, which is that Spielberg chose to shoot it in black and white, makes perfect sense. De Certeau continues, “Its [historiography’s] task is one of connecting them and, at the point where this link cannot be imagined, of working as if the two were being joined” (WH, xxvii).

Americans are pre-conditioned to view World War II in black and white terms, thanks to the endlessly repeated clips of newsreels and old movies on television from that era. According to Geoff Eley and Atina Grossmann in their essay, “Watching Schindler's List: Not the Last Word”, the effects of this black-and-white filming are complex. For one thing, it aestheticizes. Eley and Grossmann continue:

For Spielberg himself, filming in monochrome was clearly a matter of authenticity and the striving for verisimilitude, part of the realist style of his desire for history, for a film that would be “true” to the record. For an audience it works ambiguously. In one way, it distances: it marks this particular past as different, as elsewhere, as “another country”. But in another way, it reduces distance: our images of the Holocaust are constructed in black and white, whether from newsreel or photographs, and the film resonates with this existing archive of representation; it places us immediately into that place of memory. (WSLN, 47)

In my earlier discussion of the film Memory of the Camps, the effects of the visual confrontation experienced by the American and British soldiers of the aftermath of the Holocaust is explained. Yet however terrible this experience of witnessing as well and documenting the experience was, they would never be able to comprehend the years of mass suffering leading up to that moment; not on a cultural or even an intellectual level. It was, in fact so “indescribable” to the men that they kept mostly silent for many years, perhaps as an act of self-imposed “forbiddance”.

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From the European point of view, Gertrude Koch\textsuperscript{16} describes \textit{Shoah} as “a documentary about the annihilation of European Jewry in the National Socialist era. In contrast to his cinematic predecessors, Lanzmann adopts a strategy that dispenses entirely with historical material” (AFTM, 122). She then describes what usually happens within the documentary genre:

The documentary film seeks to present prefilmic events, whose facticity lies beyond cinematic constructs, in aesthetic form; what is represented (the facticity of reality) and what is imagined (a construct of reality) are brought into a deictic relationship. The historical film and pictorial material thus have two functions. The first is cognitive, i.e. to establish optical evidence: what I can see is real; the camera bears testimony to what has occurred. This method functions only provided that the material itself contains no manipulation of the facts. We could even say that the camera is charged with the function of an eye-witness, following the basic rules of communication such as reporting with the expected candor. The second function is aesthetic, i.e. to create the impression of authenticity: I experience the pictures I see as emerging from the past; their historicity is signalled, by the very unfamiliarity of their social and cultural signs -fashions, architecture, camera style. (AFTM, 122

Lanzmann does not adhere to these principles, however, but rather negates both cognitive and aesthetic “functions” identified by Koch, by “rejecting well proven historical material”. This is what “points to his unique perception of Trauma and Memory the historical and aesthetic problematic”. Koch’s argument, which gels with Lanzmann’s, is that “[t]he true nature of the mass extermination cannot be described through the camera’s eye”. By this she means “the inward connection between the gigantic, external organizational effort and the literal annihilation, the actual slaughter inside the gas chambers” (AFTM, 122-123).

The inability of the camera to describe the true nature of mass extermination was one of Spielberg’s main aesthetic blunders; the fact that he dared to re-create a shower scene in the concentration camp is a central point. By 1993, it was no longer possible to represent a scene where so many Jews were killed under the guise of being sent to the showers for de-lousing. Barry Langford, in his essay entitled “You cannot look at this’: Thresholds of unrepresentability in Holocaust film”\textsuperscript{17} describes the problem here:


\textsuperscript{17} Barry Langford. “‘You cannot look at this’: Thresholds of Unrepresentability in Holocaust film”. \textit{The Journal of Holocaust Education}, Vol.8, No.3, Winter 1999, pp.23-40. Vallentine Mitchell: London. From here on in will be cited as YCL.
Schindler's List, the object of a great deal of Lanzmann's spleen, is a particularly interesting example: for surely no single passage in Spielberg's film has aroused more controversy than its Auschwitz shower sequence, a scene which threatens the spectator with the alarming possibility of an imminent direct representation of the gassing process, only to release him with a relief intended apparently to analogise that of the Schindlerfrauen themselves when the shower-heads in this particular installation turn out to deliver only hot water. The staging of this sequence (an incident drawn direct from Thomas Keneally's novel), suffused with intimations of monstrosity right up to the moment that the lights in the shower room dim around the terrorised, screaming women, seems not only to exploit the horror of the gas chamber in the pursuit of suspense, but moreover to work to deny that horror in consolatory fashion by the last-minute escape from catastrophe, thus effectively patterning in miniature the arguably illegitimate redemptive trajectory of the film as a whole. (YCL, 32)

In 1994, when Spielberg released Schindler’s List in Europe, there was a furore in Germany. It was considered to be “manipulative” for being portrayed in the Hollywood sense. The scene showed a group of terrified Jews being led below the grounds of Auschwitz and into the shower room. We, the audience were thus led into a feeling of suspenseful terror for the people we felt sure were to become victims. The tension breaks when water, instead of the poison gas, (“Zyclon B”) emerges from the shower-heads. Karyn Ball quotes Rainer Rother’s description in her essay on the German reception of Schindler’s List:

In [Lanzmann’s] Shoah the camera approaches the door of Auschwitz again and again. The murder within is only present in the survivors’ telling. Spielberg directs the place of death. He lets it be reproduced because: film images can show all. But even a rescue – the certified exception – out of the extermination camps becomes spurious when staged for the camera. It continues to be impossible to manufacture consumable images about Auschwitz. (FBRU, 166)

It is difficult to comprehend that, by 1993, an audience in a movie theatre would not accept that what they were seeing was a fictional representation of a situation.

Manchel concludes that the recreations of historical incidents in Schindler’s List are at great risk of misunderstanding or misuse. These scenes are “dramatizations, even though a large portion of the public assumes that what they see are the actual events. It is not, as some critics have suggested, just a question of fidelity to detail, or even of the filmmaker's humility in the face of such adversity”. Manchel continues, “even as far back as Plato's Republic,

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responsible critics realized that art was imitation and several steps removed from reality”. When Manchel mentions that “a large portion of the public assumes that what they see are the actual events”, I understand him to mean that they may think something like this actually happened, rather than believing they are witnessing a documentary filmed at the scene of a real event. I agree with Manchel when he states that “If we understand the power of the medium to shape cultural and historical values, then we must curb our enthusiasm for an extraordinary piece of filmmaking and discipline our imaginations to the difference between fact and fiction” (RWSS, 95-96).

However, finding ways to facilitate a connection between the historical event and the audience does not apply only to the Holocaust. The 1977 American television mini-series Roots based on Alex Haley’s book Roots, the Saga of an American Family (1976), was a semi-factual historical drama about one African-American family’s experience of coming to America by slave ship from Gambia. The show “reshaped the way Americans discussed the legacy of slavery” according to Randy Laist in his essay “Alex Haley’s Roots and Hyperreal Historiography”. Well known African American actors were used as a way to familiarise white audiences rather than alienate them from watching it. Throughout the series, strong family ties were emphasised, regardless of slavery and separation and terrible hardships. These trials and tribulations resonated with American audiences, creating a feeling of if not reality, then at least something “relatable”. Laist states that “in the midst of the USA’s [1976] bicentennial ceremonies, Haley’s representation of American history from his black character’s perspectives presented a counter-narrative for which audiences demonstrated a clear hunger” (AHRH, 1).

Eley and Grossman defend Spielberg’s re-creation of Auschwitz; they argue that making a film about the Holocaust without including Auschwitz would be disconcertingly ahistorical. “The scene captures something of our own incredibly complicated, horrified, voyeuristic relationship to the gas chambers. Moreover, our relief at the rescue can't be enjoyed, for the line moving in the other direction is too long, descending unrelentingly to the gas” (WSLN, 60).

In her discussion of the presentation of history and perception, Anne-Marie Baron notes that where visual archival material is available, such as in the case of the Shoah, an element of “déjà vu” enters the collective historical imaginary:

These pieces of visual evidence, haunted by the fear of rebuttal, have become a sort of raw material for other films (documentary and fiction) and have ended up an integral part of the imagery of the destruction of the European Jews. Verisimilitude is now created by an impression of déjà vu, which appeals more to the imagination than to the eye. Every film about the Shoah takes into account this initial material. (SSRC, 12-13)

Yet *Shoah* is often referred to in mythic terms, described in ways that border on the reverent. At first, Margaret Olin categorises it as an “interview film about the Nazi Holocaust”, but then goes on to refer to “the mysterious power of *Shoah*”, describing the film as being “the outcome of a visual act of self-denial: its almost religious respect for the unrepresentability of horror and death leads to an abstention from the use of images of the past” (LSTH, 1).

Beginning with an evocation of pastoral beauty, *Shoah* proceeds into the heart of evil...The scene is not merely pastoral. It is mythological. A mysterious standing Charon figure with his back toward us steers a flat-bottomed boat down the river, conveying the “enfant chanteur” as though on a return voyage to Hades, a place from which he has miraculously emerged once before. His Orpheus, one of only two prisoners to return alive from that Hell, is now to cross the forbidden river once more. If topography is the subject of *Shoah*, the territory to be mapped is Hell. (LSTH, 2)

Olin’s use of metaphor paints a picture in our minds about this film, which, rather than making the film closer to the truth, moves it closer to that of mythic. The scene she is describing is again Lanzmann’s re-creation of something that happened in the past. When the subtitles tell us the horrific story of Srebnik’s (the “mysterious standing Charon figure” on the river as Olin describes him) tortured childhood in the Chelmno concentration camp, we learn by reading rather than through re-enactment that he was one of two Jewish survivors out of 400,000 that survived Chelmno concentration camp. This camp has the infamy of being the place in Poland where Jews were first exterminated by gas, beginning in December, 1941.

Srebnik was sent to Chelmno at age 13 after his parents were killed; his father shot in front of him in a ghetto in Lodz, his mother was killed in one of the infamous Chelmno “gas

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20 Anne-Marie Baron. *The Shoah on Screen – Representing Crimes Against Humanity*. Volume 1, Council of Europe: Strasbourg Cedex, June 2006. From here on in will be cited as SSRC.

vans” – vans that held Jews in the back with the exhaust pipe fixed so that the exhaust went into the back of the van to asphyxiate the passengers as the driver drove around. On January 18, 1945, Srebnik survived after being shot in the head along with the rest of the camp inmates, just two days before the Soviets arrived to liberate the camp. Somehow he escaped and was nursed to health by a farmer from the village. After the war he moved to Israel but was persuaded at age 47 by Lanzmann to return to Chelmno for the making of Shoah, and, as stated earlier, Srebnik is featured in the opening sequences of the film singing his childhood songs.

Is Lanzmann’s re-creation of a scene from the past using the real person playing himself, only older, at another time, doing the same thing and singing the same songs from that terrible time more aesthetically acceptable than Spielberg’s shower scene? Or is it merely indicative of another way of representing the past? In both cases we are seeing a picture of people, who have survived, represented either by the actual survivor or by someone acting in place of a survivor. We are still involved only from outside the sphere of the real thing, because we are watching a film about a real thing. The fact that Lanzmann does not use the available references to the concentration camps means that he has found another way around the Bilderverbot, rather than avoiding it altogether.

Ilan Avisar points out Lanzmann’s techniques in Screening the Holocaust, Cinema’s Images of the Unimaginable, asserting that Lanzmann uses authentic objects in place of archival images: “such items as original documents, the railroads and the actual trains used to transport millions of victims, the kind of trucks which served for the initial gas killing, and the camp sites—the real settings of the crimes. In Shoah, these are shown again and again, as dumb witnesses hiding unbearable secrets” (STH, 26). These objects of evidence, photographed and explained through narration by either Lanzmann or a survivor, are at once made real for what they signify, and yet distanced for us by the years separating our viewing of them as historical artifacts.

Spielberg also took tremendous pains to bring in a level of authenticity for his project by his use of set and location according to Baron:

He has endeavoured – as far as possible – to work like a reporter, capturing reality in almost documentary fashion in order to have an authentic approach to the historical context. His sets? The city of Krakow itself, preserved from the ravages of war, Schindler’s actual factory and his apartment, which have remained unchanged, as well as a faithful reconstruction of the Plaszow forced labour camp based on the plans of the

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22 Ilan Avisar. Screening the Holocaust, Cinema’s Images of the Unimaginable. Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988. From here on in will be cited as STH.
original camp. The director chose to film in black-and-white to parallel the archival material of the time and worked painstakingly on the photography with his cinematographer Janusz Kaminski. (SSRC, 66)

We know these are sets, despite the location and backdrop. We also know that work was done to portray authenticity, and there is no secret here, the director’s intentions do seem to be worthy and honest.

Interestingly, Lanzmann, as the interviewer, did not attempt to present himself in the same manner with each subject. Rather, he took different approaches depending on the person and location. When discussing “the different categories of characters”, Lanzmann says that he “can’t see addressing Jewish, German, or Polish characters in the same way”, and that his “approach when facing the Jewish protagonists was to find out as much as I could about them, through them, before filming, because I knew how hard it would be—and it was, with all of them. It was difficult to ask them questions, and so difficult for them to respond, for words cannot possibly describe such experiences” 23 (CS, 96). Baron also compares Lanzmann’s approach to that of film documentarian Marcel Ophüls:

Lanzmann’s method is based on that of Marcel Ophüls 24 but radicalises and sublimes it: asking key questions with a quiet sympathy designed to allay distrust, listening attentively until the witness becomes tangled up in his own answers, and exposing the weakness of his method of denial. The filmmaker thus hounds the eyewitnesses into a corner, extracting unwittingly self-accusatory words from Poles and former Nazis and agonising memories from some of the survivors. . . Furthermore, by compelling survivors to re-enact their past, despite their distress, Lanzmann makes them realise the importance of their testimony and the role they are playing in the great process of reconstruction and recollection and involves them in the making of his film. (SSRC, 35)

In some cases while making Shoah, Lanzmann admitted using deceptive interviewing methods. He employed a surveillance methodology by making use of a special spy camera, recording technology and covert techniques. He had his crew parked outside of a house using a hidden camera and telescopic microphone during an interview with an ex-Nazi who had worked in the camps. Lanzmann had assured the subject that their conversation was “off-
camera”. He also surprised a former Nazi guard at his place of work, by simply walking into a restaurant with a camera crew and attempting to confront the man as he tried to continue working. He finally escaped through a back door without answering any of Lanzmann’s questions. Lanzmann explains later that lying to a former Nazi does not make him feel guilty in any way.

Conclusion
According to Wieviorka, “[t]he nature of testimony is determined both by how an interview is conducted and how the witness understands the questions”. She also asserts that Shoah “must be recognised” because “it revolutionised testimony. It transformed it into something beyond the history of historians, into a work of art” (EW, 82-83). As the audience of such testimony, we “witness the witnesses” and thereby become spectators “outside the sphere”. When we who have not lived through the Holocaust listen to the multi-lingual tones of Lanzmann’s interviewees, we may experience feelings of empathy, and we may create images in our personal mind’s eye that stand in for that which we cannot know. Those images are most likely based on our memories of those iconic Holocaust photographs and newsreel films, for what else have we got to go on?

Both Shoah and Schindler’s List are cinematic representations of a major historical event, which and within the formal constraints of their respective approaches, use filming techniques and acceptable levels of manipulation to get their message across to the audience. One is based on a fictional account of an actual person and follows an author’s narrative, and the other is based on story-telling taken from memories recalled by the witnesses who were at the scene. Both films are, in their most basic form, representations of stories about the Holocaust. While dissimilar in tenor, tone and style, these films are nevertheless more alike than much of the secondary literature appears to suggest. Schindler’s List emerged from a different informative context. However, as Norris notes: “Perhaps, without the familiar Cold War frame, viewers have information available about a wider range of countries. Whether they thereby understand the world better remains an open question” (RSNN, 368). For Lanzmann, on the other hand, calling forth the voices of the actual witnesses giving their personal testimony appears to present a higher degree of authenticity about the Holocaust than Spielberg’s representation of a true story. In the end, however, which version of the event has a greater claim on veracity is an open question. My point is that Lanzmann and those critics who endorse his approach appear to be arguing for recognition of the size, scope and
authenticity of Lanzmann’s version of the Holocaust. These virtues contrast not only the popularity of Spielberg’s work, but the fact that his theme is redemptive in outlook.

What is undeniable is the importance of the role and the function of the witness. To the extent that Lanzmann’s film is European, it is clear that he foregrounds the role of the witness and, by having actual witnesses telling their stories, he has given the role of the witness the authenticity he seeks and they deserve. On the other hand, Spielberg, to the extent that his film is American, has not sought authentication via the testimony of living witnesses. Foregrounding narrative and story-structure, he has re-constructed some sets as realistically as possible and filmed in original locations. Then, at the end of the film, he does present us with the real survivors who silently walk arm-in-arm with the actors who played them in the movie, as they place stones of remembrance on Schindler’s headstone which is located in Israel. In other words, with the shower scene for instance, Spielberg plays up to his audience, whereas Lanzmann’s reconstruction was used only as an aesthetic framework out of necessity for the audience, and as a place from which the witnesses could speak.

This chapter concludes the second section of my thesis; in the third and final section the over-arching theme regards the digital transition in visual culture. The transformation from its tradition of conceptual and contextual materiality to what is now a predominantly digital mode means that modes of representation, reconstruction have also transformed, but the role and the function of the witness have not and still remain important. What is at stake is how digital media supports this function.
Figure 1: Director Claude Lanzmann interviewing Franz Suchomel, SS Unterscharführer using a hidden camera; here we are viewing a picture of a video screen inside a van that is outside Suchomel’s apartment, recording the interview, unbeknownst to him. Excerpt from Claude Lanzmann’s Shoah, from: <http://culturevisuelle.org/cinemadoc/2009/11/16/de-limage-a-la-legende/>. Web, 06 Jan., 2011.

Section Three:

Truth and Consequences in the Digital Turn:
The Dawning of a “Third Consciousness” in a Surveillance Society
CHAPTER EIGHT

Standard Operating Procedure: Digital Reproduction and the Abu Ghraib Prison Photographs

Introduction:
In Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, Abu Ghraib prison was already infamous for the brutal treatment and mass-hangings of its inmates. These executions often occurred before the prisoners were ever tried before a court. In the West, however, Abu Ghraib was relatively unheard of by the civilian public until April 28, 2004. On that evening, all across America, the CBS television news show 60 Minutes II broadcast a small group of digital photographs that depicted what looked unmistakably like grinning, American soldiers giving the “thumbs up” gesture as they posed next to naked and handcuffed Iraqi “detainees”¹ at Abu Ghraib prison. Individually, the Iraqi prisoners were unidentifiable because they were wearing cloth sacks over their heads. The pictures were grotesque because they depicted these prisoners in such an undignified way that it was clearly meant to humiliate them and thus constituted a form of torture.

One week later, a sub-set of those photographs were published in the May 4th print and online edition issue of The New Yorker² magazine. The photographs were subsequently picked up by the global news media and were then quickly republished and widely disseminated on a variety of other websites throughout the world.

Even at face value, the images alone are disturbing, but perhaps more alarming was the depiction of people photographing others taking the pictures. After all, their existence made it apparent that the activity of photographing the humiliation and torture of other human beings had taken precedence over the activity of stopping it. Then, as in a classic hall of mirrors, we looked at screens presenting pictures of people taking pictures of naked people being tortured in gruesome poses. These images were then replayed and repeated on different screens.

¹“Detainees” are non-US citizens who have not been charged with any crime, but are held in prison. See: Jill Lepore’s description in “A History of Torture and the Law”. The New Yorker. March 18, 2013. Lepore: On November 13, 2001, George W. Bush, acting as President and Commander-in-Chief, signed a military order concerning the “Detention, Treatment, and Trial of Certain Non-Citizens in the War Against Terrorism”. Under its provisions, suspected terrorists who are not citizens of the United States were to be “detained at an appropriate location designated by the Secretary of Defense.” If brought to trial, they were to be tried and sentenced by a military commission. No member of the commission need be a lawyer. The ordinary rules of military law would not apply. Nor would the laws of war. Nor, in any conventional sense, would the laws of the United States. <http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2013/03/18/130318fa_fact_lepore#ixzz2OsU28Kbt>. Web, March 29, 2013.

The soldiers who took the photographs at Abu Ghraib were US Military Police assigned to the camp as prison guards. Two striking aspects of the photos that came out of Abu Ghraib were their overtly amateur quality and the fact that the subjects looked deliberately posed. This meant time and thought had been put into the choice of subjects and the compositional design of what was photographed. In his article “Images of Torture, Culture: Politics and Power” Eamonn Carrabine graphically describes the photographs:

US soldiers inflicting atrocities upon helpless captives and inanely grinning as they pose behind piles of twisted, naked bodies. Other notorious images include the hooded man on the box, a female soldier leading a naked prisoner on a leash, dogs poised to attack yet more naked detainees, while others are forced to wear women’s underwear and masturbate for the camera or are coerced into simulated sexual positions. (ITCP, 6)

The reverberations from publishing these photographs were tremendous, according to Seymour M. Hersh who wrote in the issue following their original publication in The New Yorker on May 10th, 2004:

As the photographs from Abu Ghraib make clear, these detentions have had enormous consequences: for the imprisoned civilian Iraqis, many of whom had nothing to do with the growing insurgency; for the integrity of the Army; and for the United States’ reputation in the world.

Soon afterwards, an essay entitled “Regarding the Torture of Others” by Susan Sontag appeared in the New York Times Magazine. Sontag began with a proclamation: “For a long time – at least six decades – photographs have laid down the tracks of how important conflicts are judged and remembered. The Western memory museum is now mostly a visual one” (RTO, 25).

Sontag’s opening statement is accurate and succinct as it underscores our continuing dependence on the photographic image as meaningful documentation. Four years later, in a close analysis of what are often referred to as the “Abu Ghraib torture photographs”, Kari Andén-Papadopoulos states that they achieved an almost instant rise to “iconic status” after

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4 Seymour M. Hersh. The New Yorker. May 10, 2004. See the archived version of this article online here: <http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/05/10/040510fa_fact#ixzz2OVdyHzNd>. Web, March 2013.

5 Susan Sontag. “Regarding the Torture of Others”. New York Times Magazine; May 23, 2004; National Newspapers (27) pg.24. From here on in will be cited as RTO.
their broadcast on television. This status, according to her, was responsible for bringing forth a “political debate both inside and outside the United States”\textsuperscript{6} (ABNF, 5).

The main aim of this chapter is to argue that the nature of digital visual technology has promoted a mass normalisation of watching and being watched, and what appears to be an almost total acquiescence to surveillance in our lives has become an established part of our visual culture. The photographs from Abu Ghraib provide dramatic examples of a new way of seeing, being seen, and finally, being seen seeing. Therefore, I briefly discuss the Abu Ghraib prison photographs as a prelude to my analysis of Errol Morris’ documentary \textit{Standard Operating Procedure}, a film that helps to further contextualise and elucidate these photographs.

The photographs taken at Abu Ghraib prison are a significant addition to that part of the global visual archive which may be designated as the “Western visual memory museum” for several reasons. First, from the perspective of Benjamin’s theory of aesthetics, described by Miriam Bratu Hansen in her essay “Why Media Aesthetics”, as an “anthropological – materialist philosophy of technology film and other media”, the digital photographs represent — for these aesthetics — another step forward into the twenty-first century (WMA, 393). Second, they represent organised torture as spectacle, indicating the necessity to address a plethora of social and political issues, including the role technology plays in facilitating these issues. I agree with Hansen’s further assessment suggesting that our human consciousness is unable to keep pace with the outcomes rendered by technology:

\begin{quote}
The unprecedented acceleration of technological innovation and circulation have created conditions in which consciousness is more than ever inadequate to the state of technological development, its power to destroy and enslave human bodies, hearts, and minds (WMA, 394).
\end{quote}

One of the tasks of this chapter is to consider if the “meaning” we apply to our visual documentation is changing in tandem with the digital technology that now supports photography.

A further task is to examine whether or not our “picture of the world” as Heidegger saw it, has changed along with our new methods of representing the world. I suggest that the art, technique and function of digital photography and filmmaking have shifted and thus brought forth a new cultural paradigm. This new paradigm is expansive and inclusive; its

digital composition involves less of the cumbersome materiality found in previous film and chemical processing. The images in the photographs that surfaced from Abu Ghraib prison indicate that many of the old theoretical principles of photography still apply. Roland Barthes’ statement that “a photograph is always invisible; it is not what we see”\(^7\), is one such example that Morris works to flesh out in *Standard Operating Procedure* (CLRP, 6).

For the spectator, the photograph and the image we see on the page or on the screen is undistinguishable from its referent; but that which transpires the moment before and the moment after the making of the image is unable to be seen, thus the image is only an image; the actual subject is not present and may therefore be called “invisible”. The time, the place, the world outside that picture is invisible. The classic definition of the photograph is that it is only a representation. What is needed now, however, is further exploration of the outstanding new capabilities of digitality that have changed the applications of some of these principles in part because of the ease of the mass reproduction and dissemination of both digital and analogue photographic images.

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\(^7\) Roland Barthes. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Hill and Wang. 1982. From here on in will be cited as CLRP.
Standard Operating Procedure: the evolving conditions under which we allow ourselves to be seen

Errol Morris sets out to investigate some unnerving and problematic situations in Standard Operating Procedure, exemplified by the digital photograph and the gruesome, somewhat pornographic group of pictures that emerged from Abu Ghraib prison in 2004. Quite opposite to the often sickening images that were responsible for the film’s inception, the film is striking in its aesthetic quality. Morris accomplishes this by employing a variety of artistic lighting and filmmaking techniques enhanced with CGI and methods that include extreme close-ups and slow motion shots. The background music is an evocative mixture of child-like enchantment and emotional drama.

The historical research material for this documentary is presented in a book published in conjunction with the release of the film is also entitled Standard Operating Procedure. Like the film, the book is chronologically organised in terms of before, during and after the photographs were shot and released to the wider public, but it also provides a much deeper biographical history not offered in the film.

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This film has been analysed and debated from several points of view, often placed in film genres about the Iraq war\(^9\), or documentaries about torture\(^{10}\). In the context of this thesis however, I discuss *Standard Operating Procedure* because it is a digital film about digital media. Another important, underlying theme of the film is the role of photography and the unreliability of photographs as evidence. Even when images look unmistakeably and exactly like what they appear to be, the isolated image in the photograph as evidence without the testimony of a witness is incomplete.

During the director’s commentary of the film, Morris explains his personal motives for making this movie, and what he hoped to achieve. He states that the film is about “photographs and the role that they play in this story about the Iraq war”\(^{11}\). Somewhat along the line of Barthes notion of the unseen in photographs, Morris describes photographs as being “like island universes; we see the things in the photographs, but we don’t see those things that have not been photographed”. The opening sequence that features the credits plays on this idea by having discrete images emerging from the foreground and then steadily disappearing into a black background. Morris explains that making this film attempts to look at what is outside the frame of the photos, and to determine if they reveal or hide “the truth”. He also wanted to answer some simple questions about what he calls “the most famous photos in history” (*SOP*, DVD).

In an essay that addresses Morris’ cross-over from previously working with traditional film to a complete immersion in digital media, Kris Fallon suggests that as a filmmaker, “Morris has embraced digital technology head on, utilizing it both in his cinematic work and as a medium in its own right”\(^{12}\). Although the story in the film travels along a linear narrative, Fallon describes the appearance of the opening credit sequence as a definition of how digital media operates in a non-linear way:

> Presenting them as a random cluster, with no immediate logic to their arrangement or spatial distribution, aesthetically foregrounds the material


\(^{11}\) All quotes originate from Errol Morris’ commentary throughout the film, *Standard Operating Procedure*, some of which have been paraphrased. From here on in they will be cited as SOP DVD.

\(^{12}\) Kris Fallon “Archives Analog and Digital: Errol Morris and Documentary Film in the Digital Age”. *Screen* 54:1 Spring, 2013. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of *Screen*. From here on in will be cites as AADD.
status of these records at various points in their existence, from the nonlinear editing software that rendered the shots, to the hard drives of the computers to which they were downloaded, to the memory cards of the cameras with which they were originally recorded. As digital files they can be ordered according to any number of different principles, selected or skipped depending upon any number of preferences. (AADD, 38 – 39)

*Figure 2: Opening credit sequence, Standard Operating Procedure. Discrete images appearing in the foreground and receding to the background.*


*Standard Operating Procedure* also addresses the effects of the widespread use of digital technology on the characters in the movie, and as Fallon further suggests, the film and the photographs at the centre of the film “enter the labyrinth of images that shape our collective view of past and present, thereby offering an entry point into the evolution of technology, politics and aesthetics over the last decade” (AADD, 22).

**Three dimensional witnesses with a “third consciousness” point of view**

One of the first thing Morris states in his commentary is that “digital cameras were sold at Abu Ghraib”. In other words, a reliable tool for documenting what was happening at the prison was readily available for soldiers. Morris wanted to portray the nightmarish, often surreal life at the prison as a way of contextualising and humanising those who were involved, who speak of the activities outside the frame of the pictures as well as describing what they see inside the picture, as they recall and describe their personal involvement with the photographed images. Apparently the activity of photography helped distract the soldiers from
being under the constant barrage of artillery attacks from the outside and witnessing or partaking in the daily brutalising of detainees on the inside.

The film revolves around Morris interviewing twelve people, all of whom were involved with the photographs from Abu Ghraib in one way or another and were responsible to the US Military. Three questions not sufficiently discussed during the media firestorm that erupted after the release of the photographs, were asked in this film: “Who witnessed these events, and why did they not come forward?” And finally: “Why were these photographs taken?” In the case of the Abu Ghraib photographs and their mediatisation resulting in a global internet scandal, the role of witness was but one of three parts of a triskelion; the other parts consisted of participant and scapegoat, with the act of producing the photographs located at the common centre. Morris mentions more than once that he does not suggest that any of his subjects are entirely innocent. He does point out that it became very easy for the US administration to judge, sentence and dismiss the incidents at Abu Ghraib as a result of “a few bad apples” acting in isolation outside the disciplined sphere of the over-all US military presence in Iraq, rather than address the higher chain of command where approval of these methods undoubtedly originated.

The method Morris employs to interview most of his subjects is to invite them to describe one of the photographs they either took or appeared in. He achieves an interesting effect by having the subject stare directly at the photograph as it appears on a teleprompter in front of them. From our view, they appear to be staring directly into the camera lens as they curiously examine the photograph and speak to Morris. Their individual description of events suggests how others may manipulate our concept of the truth in what we see.

In her essay, “Standard Operating Procedure: Mediating Torture”13 Caetlin Benson-Allott questions the methods used by Morris:

Crucial here is Morris’s patent-pending Interrotron camera, which displays his video image on a tele-prompter in front of the camera’s lens. This arrangement encourages Morris’s interviewees to look straight at him (and the camera) while they talk, which means that they also make “direct” eye contact with their future viewers. This effect arguably encourages the viewer to mistake direct eye contact for direct access to the truth, especially because Morris never analyzes his Interrotron technique in his films. (SMT, 41)

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Reviewers have critically noted that Morris paid the people he interviewed in the movie, and the lush re-enactments of what the interviewees describe were possibly created to present a defence of their behaviour. Morris sometimes refers to the re-enactments as “illustrations”, and seems more interested in their narrative application rather than a political agenda. The re-enactments are filmed in extreme close-up and slow motion, thus forcing us to visualise unpleasant situations in our imagination that while our minds may be resistant to conjuring them, digital technology makes disturbingly clear.

Morris assures us during his commentary that the re-enactments, ordinarily not a part of “pure” documentary film making, have been provided as a way to give the viewer a “deeper sense” of the story they are hearing. His aim is to portray the world around the photographs. According to Benson-Allot, they do more than just help the story:

By mixing its talking heads with the photographs from the prison, expressionist re-enactments, Standard Operating Procedure explores how digital media newly problematize the well-established epistemological crisis regarding history and photography. (SMT, 39)

While the interviewees are speaking, the camera is either focussed on them as they talk, or we hear them in voice-over as we see either the photographs they are discussing or Morris’ compelling re-enactments of what they are describing. Four years after the fact, the subjects often seem resigned to, yet distanced from the facts. They admitted their participation and took their punishment for doing so, but they all gave the impression that they were somehow either trapped or compelled to participate, and that it was beyond their control.

The absence of a code was the code of Abu Ghraib

The interviewees Morris spoke with consist of a range of people who had been assigned to the prison, and then in some way were drawn into what was already a deteriorating situation regarding methods of detainee treatment at Abu Ghraib prison. All of the young MP’s, who at the time of their assignments were barely into their twenties, independently concur that acts of humiliation, torture and abuse were being carried out as if they were normal, everyday occurrences. Morris says “these were children, we send our children to war” (SOP, DVD).

What struck all of the interviewees as the most notable thing about Abu Ghraib was the amount of gratuitous and unnecessary “nakedness” involved with handling the detainees. Because of their rank, they either did not question what was going on or, when they did, they were given only terse or vague explanations. Each of them admits, however, that in their hearts and minds, they were aware of the activities and knew that what they were asked to do
was wrong. Although never trained or prepared for this role, the young MP’s were routinely asked to “soften” prisoners for interrogation and, according to Lynndie English (one of the most infamous of the group in the photographs), this meant “doing anything you wanted short of killing them” (SOP, DVD) to get them ready for the Military Interrogators. What then, would be so wrong about documenting the activities that you were being ordered to carry out?

Throughout his commentary, Morris explains that his goal was to “discover something unknown in the photos”, and says that the central, rather broad question of the movie is “what do photos mean?” My question is more specific, “what do the photographs from Abu Ghraib mean?” The speed that the images of Abu Ghraib travelled around the globe through media outlets meant that assumptions and judgments were made before crucial questions were asked. The photos seemed to be judged at face value alone.

One can see the deep impression left upon Sontag who wrote within a month of the first release of the photographs:

Soldiers now pose, thumbs up, before the atrocities they commit, and send off the pictures to their buddies. Secrets of private life that, formerly, you would have given nearly anything to conceal, you now clamour to be invited on a television show to reveal. What is illustrated by these photographs is as much the culture of shamelessness as the reigning admiration for unapologetic brutality. (RTO, 29)

Sontag’s critical view seems to grasp immediately the over-all “pictorial turn” in a society that these photos seemed to represent. Morris wanted to know what and who were behind these photos that so quickly became iconic signifiers. In fact, Morris reminds us that “we would know nothing about this world without these photos”, and that the photos “rendered a public service” for revealing a world that would otherwise be hidden” (SOP, DVD).

Morris unearths a publicly unknown fact that while this was taking place one soldier, Sabrina Harman, was writing letters home documenting what was happening at Abu Ghraib, that included her discomfort and disapproval of it. The letters are presented in the film inscribed and postmarked with evidential dates. They are hand-written on lined notebook paper, but like much of the film, they are lit in sepia tone, an effect that among other things, lends them and the entire film an aura of historical authenticity. They may be seen as something like the “dope sheets” the Allied soldiers sent along with their film canisters when they liberated the concentration camps in 1945, but Sabrina’s photographs do not accompany the letters. In Morris’ opinion, the letters read by Sabrina in the background “provide one of the most powerful documents of what it’s like to be a soldier in a world gone mad” (SOP, DVD).
In a voice-over, Harman reads her letter that contains an explanation of why she photographed a prisoner forced to wear underpants on his head, tied with hands behind his back to his bed. She says that at first, it was “because he looked like Jesus Christ, and it was funny” (SOP, DVD). However, when another soldier took her “asp” (a type of baton used as a weapon), and began to poke the prisoner’s penis, she suddenly judged the activity as a “form of molestation”. It was this act that prompted her to begin taking photographs as “evidence” because “no one would believe me if I told them without pictures” (SOP, DVD).

Harman crossed the boundary of being a witness however, as she was also appeared to be a willing participant. She was not only also active in taking the photographs, she was featured in them as another notorious grinning female, using the thumbs up gesture, looming and leering over the corpse of a dead detainee. It is never explained when she was planning to use the photographs as evidence, or why she didn’t turn them in at once after witnessing only a few incidents. And yet, when we go beyond the images, and begin to get more information through her letters and Morris’ interviews, we see that the situation may not be as cut and dried as it first appears, and how the truth can be manipulated.

Harman’s verbal descriptions and her letters are often in direct opposition to what we see in the Abu Ghraib photos, and yet, later in the film she is described by others who knew her and served with her as being altruistic to a fault and incapable of cruelty or “even hurting a fly” (SOP, 73). Harman said she was fascinated with photographing wounded and dead bodies, and that she wanted to become a forensic photographer in the police force. Her reason for joining the army was that it would help her pay for college and that it would be good experience for being a police officer, a goal that is understandable because both her father and her sister were already police officers.
Harman admitted that “even if somebody is hurt, the first thing I think about is taking photos of that injury. Of course, I’m going to help them first, but the first reaction is to take a photo” (SOP, 74). Although this provides some context for Harman’s penchant for taking pictures, her reasons for grinning and showing the thumbs up sign at first seem weak. She claims to have “picked up the thumbs-up from the kids in Al Hillah”. She also said that she “never knew what to do with her hands so it’s something that automatically happens” (SOP, 75).

Morris points out what he calls “one of the most important letters Harman ever wrote home”, because in it, she writes: “Yes they do beat the prisoners here, and I don’t think that it’s right, I never have, and that’s why I take the pictures in order to prove it and take more photos, I have to fake a smile every time” (SOP, DVD). Apparently, she had to look as if she was not affected by the gruesome situation, in order to document it.

Later, Morris explains in his commentary that one of the biggest crimes committed at Abu Ghraib was the murder of a “ghost detainee” (an undocumented detainee brought in by an unidentified interrogator) that was never reported. The detainee was beaten and tortured to death, but with a cloth sack over his head, the interrogator must not have detected his demise because he asked some of the young MP’s to “help hold him up” (SOP, DVD). The interrogator thought the detainee was pretending to be unconscious. Eventually they discovered that he was in fact dead, and the interrogator enlisted the MP’s to make it look as if he had died from a heart attack, and not the beatings. They put him in a body bag, left him in a shower room and covered him with ice overnight.

After finding out about the dead man, Harman took over twenty “forensic” photographs of him, removing his bandages to document the severe beatings that caused his death. The photo in Figure 4 is a time-line that, because of the information embedded in the

“EXIF”\textsuperscript{14} data, we can determine that it is her camera, all were taken within minutes of each other, and that someone else using her camera took the photograph of her smiling over the corpse. One of the other MP’s who had been asked to help with the dead detainee stated that it was decided that they would cover up what amounted to a murder through torture by pretending the man had died of a heart attack. He explains with an incredulous tone, that they “actually stuck an IV into an already dead guys arm and wheeled him out on a gurney” (SOP, DVD).

Morris explains that people of much higher rank were aware of the incident, but that the man who actually killed the detainee was never named, never brought to trial, and that Sabrina Harman went to jail for six months for taking photographs of the corpse. Harman said that they tried to charge her with “interfering with a body”, but that in order to prove that, they would have had to bring all twenty of her photographs of the man in as evidence. If they had done that, it would actually prove there was a murder, and they did not want that to happen. Harman asks, “What actually do you do, when it is your job? You cannot simply walk away and say you’re done, and if you stay, either way you’re screwed”. Morris then explains that he believes they were all in the same predicament.

C8 Figure 5: The Army’s investigative photo forensics\textsuperscript{15} show that the same camera took photos of the corpse within 5 minutes; that some of the shots are either missing or were deleted, and that since the third photo on the right is a photo of Sabrina Harman, someone other than she took that photo.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figures/morris_timeline_gran.jpg}
\caption{The Army’s investigative photo forensics\textsuperscript{15} show that the same camera took photos of the corpse within 5 minutes; that some of the shots are either missing or were deleted, and that since the third photo on the right is a photo of Sabrina Harman, someone other than she took that photo.}
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\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{14} EXIF: Exchangeable Image File. Data that contains camera settings and scene information are recorded by the camera into the image file. Examples of stored information are the camera brand, shutter speed, date and time a photo was taken, focal length, exposure compensation, metering pattern and if a flash was used.

\textsuperscript{15} <https://vimeo.com/36859552>. The clip details the use of forensic photography to cross-reference metadata. Errol Morris examines the incidents of abuse and torture of suspected terrorists at the hands of US forces at the Abu Ghraib prison.
Morris also states that while he does not think the soldiers involved with the Abu Ghraib scandal were “lily white”, there were other much higher ranking personnel who were responsible for, or at least well aware of what was happening. To paraphrase one of the professional interrogators interviewed in the film, “There is no way a bunch of kids from rural Kentucky would ever think of doing what these people were doing to these detainees” (SOP, DVD). The orders to carry out the type of interrogation at Abu Ghraib came from the highest ranking military personnel, the people who took the Abu Ghraib photos or were in the photos suffered the penalties for carrying them out. He considers Harman’s photographs of the dead detainee as “her act of civil disobedience, her act of saying something is happening here…and is wrong”. Morris believes that had the circumstances been slightly different, “Harman would have won the Pulitzer Prize” for the same photographs that put her in jail.

**Prosumer**¹⁶ Digital “War Porn” Invades the Contemporary Public Sphere

The arrival of the photographs from Abu Ghraib in 2004 began in the media as spectacle, almost as an announcement of new state of affairs. Certain things we did not want to see suddenly became accessible and visible to us and, what is even more even more disturbing is that we appeared to be somehow present in them and are thus seen in the same picture. As a recently added part of the spectacle, the Abu Ghraib photographs represent a “Weltanschauung” and, as Debord references it in relation to the spectacle: “has become actual, materially translated. It is a world which has become objectified” (SOS, 12). Our worst nightmares about the perversities of war, in other words, were made real and thus became undeniable in the photographs from Abu Ghraib.

“Considered in this light”, as Sontag contended, “these photographs are us” (RTO, 26). Could it be, as Hansen stated, that our consciousness was indeed “more than inadequate to this state of technological development”? What else could explain the images in these photographs? If it is true, as Sontag suggests, that within these pictures, “[T]he grin is a grin for the camera. There would be something missing if, after stacking the naked men, you couldn't take a picture of them” (RTO, 28). If this is the mind-set behind the photographs, then it is clear that whatever reticence there once was about being seen in any state, committing any act, has altogether disappeared. I concur with Hansen’s urging to “resume Benjamin’s concern for the conditions of apperception, sensorial affect, and cognition, experience and memory – in short, for a political ecology of the senses” (WMA, 394).

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¹⁶ “Prosumer” is a word that combines “professional” and “consumer” to describe the contemporary amateur consumer photographer that wants and has access to equipment that is on a professional level of capability.
Art historian Stephen F. Eisenman wonders if the American reaction to the photographs is an acceptance of “torture as a matter of dull routine”, referring to what he describes as a “shared blindness” between the “US public and the amateur photographers at Abu Ghraib”. Calling it the “Abu Ghraib effect”\(^{17}\) (TAGE, 8-9), the questions asked by Eisenman are not unlike those set out in this thesis:

What if there is something about the pictures themselves, and past images of torture in different media that has blunted the natural human response of outrage? What if the sexualised scenarios, so frequently visible in the Abu Ghraib photographs, rather than rendering the images of abuse more horrific, made them less so? (TAGE, 9)

Eisenman’s work as an art historian brings another comparative dimension to the Abu Ghraib photographs. He notes their similarity to centuries of artworks depicting torture, reminding us, however, that although “not all images are works of art, all artworks are images”. The photographs of Abu Ghraib have the “special character”, he continues, because of “their representation of torture and suffering in time of war”. Francisco Goya’s drawings of victims of the Inquisition come to mind as does Picasso’s *Guernica*, but these works are deliberately “anti-war”. The photographs from Abu Ghraib are somewhat ambiguous in their original motivation, even after we hear various rationalisations in *Standard Operating Procedure* from the photographers who took them.

Eisenman has placed the Abu Ghraib photographs as belonging to a “very large and culturally prestigious set” because they contain what he describes as “peculiar motifs and subjects” with their “approximate origin in the sculpture of Greco-Roman antiquity”. From there these motifs reappear regularly throughout Western art. Eisenman clearly states that the photographs from Abu Ghraib are not however, to be categorised as works of art. His argument is that “the tools and materials of art history are essential to understand them and counter their effect” (TAGE, 10-11). Whether or not these tools have actually countered the effect of blunting “the natural human responses” to images of torture remains to be seen.

Conclusion

The dramatizations or “illustrations” as Morris calls them throughout Standard Operating Procedure serve an important purpose. Just as only a few photographs out of the thousands that were taken at Abu Ghraib were selected by the media for exploiting, the film (digitally) exploits certain details from the situation behind the photographs, taken from stories told to Morris by the soldiers. Every step taken along the way in this movie leaves more questions than answers; the soldiers give us explanations about why they did what they did, but looking at the photographs, the grins, the posing, we are still left feeling that something is not quite right. As Benson-Allot surmises:

Morris’s dramatizations affirm that the Abu Ghraib photos, despite all their metadata, may still be missing crucial details, that their relationship to history is still tenuous and representational. Furthermore, the Abu Ghraib photographs are also based in showmanship, or representing a world for an audience. Instead of official history or journalism, Standard Operating Procedure privileges the equivocations and explanations of the various “bad apples” as it thinks about everything we ask digital photographs to do for us, and the ways we fear they may deceive us. (SMT, 44)

The Abu Ghraib torture photographs exemplify an important moment in the evolution of the spectacle in the digital age that might be referred to as a “third consciousness” that concerns the condition of representation. The pictures suddenly made us aware of one part of the truth of what was really happening in Iraq, but they also created the fiction of who was responsible. The danger is that the more we are allowed to see, the harder it is to determine or judge what
is real. No amount of verbal explanation or re-creation of events can erase what the photographs from Abu Ghraib prison appear show us. These photographs show us not only that we distance ourselves from an ethical responsibility to the other. They also suggest that we distance ourselves a step further by eliminating all moral conscience. Perhaps the third consciousness is a way to reprogram the terms of the dispositif and to reincorporate the moral office of the witness.

C8 Figure 8: A photo of a photographer looking on his camera at one of the most infamous photos within the collection of Abu Ghraib photos, that he had taken just moments earlier of the prisoner known as “Gilligan” (2003). In this photo as part of the ‘softening up” procedure, “Gilligan” has been told that if he moves at all, he will receive an electrical shock, which is untrue because the wires hanging from his fingers are not connected to anything. He is, however, completely unaware of this. <ftp://graphics8.nytimes.com/images/blogs/morris/posts/15hooded.533.jpg>. Web, April, 2013.
CHAPTER NINE:

**Red Road and Caché (Hidden): Surveillance and the Emergence of a “Third Consciousness”**

**Introduction**

One of the themes I explore in this final chapter of my thesis regards what occurs when the invisible yet real—and by this I mean memories, dreams, and most importantly, the conscience—threaten to become disembodied from their central location by the introduction of surveillance. *Red Road* and *Caché* employ some of the typical methods of technological surveillance, a conceit that while obvious in *Red Road* is as the title implies, “hidden” in *Caché*. In *Red Road*, the redemption sought by each of the two main characters is eventually provided, but one of the characters keeps concealed the unethical means by which she obtained it. In *Caché*, the reality of what was hidden is also revealed, but upon recognition is rejected and returns to its original hiding place where it will remain hidden and thus unresolved and unredeemed.

This suggests that surveillance as a technical procedure, forces the way we look at things to become dislodged. What I mean by this is that the conscience, the metaphoric lens through which we “see” (or feel) things in order to make judgments about ourselves and others, has grown weak or distant in part because of our reliance on a technical way of “seeing”. The conscience is or has been our personal, inner witness to the events in our lives, driving how we react to them. Both of these films suggest that contemporary systems of surveillance operate within a regime linked specifically to the dominance of the digital code, creating the possibility that the inner eye of our conscience already somewhat overtaken by a “second consciousness”, as suggested by Ernst Jünger, was facilitated for over a century by our persistent companion, the cold, mechanical eye of the camera’s lens. I suggest that our entrance to the digital age is perhaps pushing us even further from the lived experience and increasingly towards a “third consciousness” of mediated representation.

Each film at some point suggests that the characters are “missing” something, and are searching to regain it. They are taunted by memories that seem to fuel a desire to replace the missing thing with a stronger sense of their conscience that will somehow allow them to move forward. Although the need may be sensed, accepting the responsibility of recognising the capacity for acts of conscience is not always available. Therefore, my main interest in discussing these films is to regard the interior effects that surveillance, now embedded in the
urban landscape, has on the characters. “Film”, after all, as Benjamin said, “is the art that is in keeping with the increased threat to life which modern man has to face” (WAM, 252, n. 19).

Although manifesting itself in entirely different ways, *Red Road* and *Caché* represent the conceptual end-point of analysis in my thesis. These films ask: How can we reconcile ourselves to the presence of surveillance in almost every major facet of our lives? Surveillant forms pervade our engagement with social media, government and corporate methods of security systems, as well as global tracking systems built into our communication and transportation devices. These surveillance systems have become unquestionably accepted as part of our everyday lives, and have been increasingly represented as such in film and television media. The two films discussed here thus exemplify the “ubiquity” of surveillance. It is fitting, then, that the theme of surveillance is immediately established as a given in the beginning of each film. The focus of each film is then directed to how the individual characters react to surveillance amid the “increased threat to life” that Benjamin already spoke of in the 1930s.

Just as Bentham’s panopticon suggested in the late eighteenth century, it is completely unnecessary for another human being to be present to watch someone. Examples of this are innumerable when one considers the proliferation of CCTV cameras operating continuously in public and urban spaces worldwide, as *Red Road* so aptly portrays. In modern, urban Glasgow, surveillance cameras are seen as protective, watchful eyes on the citizenry. Amongst its many variations, the form of surveillance that I am looking at in *Caché*, however, insists that the subject be unaware at the time that they are being watched, and by whom.

It is also helpful to note in this context what is not surveillance. Even if the subject of another person’s gaze is unaware of being watched — such as the male character in *Red Road* the act of one person knowing (the person who is looking), and the other person not knowing they are being watched, can be constituted as a form of voyeurism¹ because there is still a pair of human eyes watching the subject, and the watching in this case causes a sexual reaction to what they see.

¹ Jonathan M. Metzl, MD, PhD. “Voyeur Nation? Changing Definitions of Voyeurism, 1950–2004”. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*. Volume 12, Number 2. March- April, 2004. Brunner / Routledge. From here on in will be cited as VNCD. In present-day America, popular definitions of voyeurism are as broad as psychiatric definitions are narrow. For instance, popular culture presents an endless flow of “reality”- based “voyeurism TV” (VTV) television programs such as *Survivor* and *Big Brother*, voyeuristically themed movies such as *The Truman Show*, and a host of adult, 24-hour streaming-video Internet sites such as voyeurlounge.com. At the same time, contemporary American psychiatry seems to struggle to identify a population of voyeurs who are, in fact, sick enough to require treatment with psychotherapy and psychotropic medication. To be sure, DSM-IV (1994) defines voyeurism as the practice of looking specifically at “unsuspecting individuals, usually strangers, who are naked, in the process of disrobing, or engaging in sexual activity”. (VNCD, 127)
In his article “Voyeur Nation? Changing Definitions of Voyeurism, 1950–2004”, Psychiatrist Jonathan M. Metzl states that an “expansion of the acceptable at the expense of the pathological defines a well-known dynamic of normalization in which psychiatric terms and concepts (neurosis, hysteria) take on lives of their own when appropriated by popular culture”. What is lost in this expansion, says Metzl, is that psychiatry as a profession is no longer allowing “psychiatry to speak with authority about cultural ways of seeing”, including “a recognition that even the most innocent act of voyeurism is never value free”. Metzl concludes: “Rather, voyeurism is a practice that is imbued with power, gender, and other types of nonchemical imbalances that let us see the voyeur as an exaggerated extension of society, as well as an aberration from it” (VNCD, 131-132).

An unmanned camera recording another person for reasons unknown, where one would reasonably assume that there is no realistic justification for any state, corporate, or even private security cameras to be present, and without that person’s knowledge or consent, is the unsettling type of mechanistic surveillance regime that is invisible and yet eerily prescient in Caché. Although Haneke’s version of surveillance in Caché is submerged and, if not imaginary than at least unresolved, its presence—proven to exist by videotapes received by the main characters—creates a new reality. In this reality, the surveillance tapes seem to either foretell the future by referencing the past, or compel the characters into reacting to what they believe will happen next. Haneke may be asking the audience if they believe something is real in this case because a videotape they are watching suggests that it is, and if this is the proof they use to determine truth, what does this mean regarding the truth in every other mediated event?

Red Road and Caché address the effect of surveillance in dealing with the key issues of authenticity, power (or the illusion and elusiveness of power) and the choices one makes about how much of any conflict is truly revealed. As Foucault noted in Discipline and Punish, there is a clear imbalance of power between the observer and the observed (DP, 223). The observed are not privy to the degree of observation they are under, nor are they aware of the type and amount of information being gleaned about them during observation. Therefore, they have no way of knowing what is being done with this information once it is gathered. In essence, anything they say or do may be used against them.
The Voyeur in *Red Road*, Permeating the Ethical Veil

The opening scene of *Red Road* shows the main character, Jackie (Kate Dickie), seated at a desk where she oversees 35 different CCTV screens simultaneously displaying surveillance images in colour. She works for Glasgow’s “City Eye” security centre. Although she is located miles away, Jackie can manipulate the surveillance cameras to move from side to side, up and down, and to zoom in on people and places at will with a large joy-stick controller. A key moment in this opening scene is our ability to watch as Jackie becomes aroused from watching an unknown male having sex with a female stranger outdoors in a back alleyway. We then observe as Jackie begins monitoring him more closely. Very quickly she realises that she recognises him as the man who we eventually discover was responsible for killing her husband and young daughter in a terrible car accident.

The audience is not let in on this exact fact for some time, but as the film progresses informational clues are provided in part through Jackie’s telephone conversations with her lawyers and other police officials. Clyde (Tony Curran) is supposed to be in prison serving out a ten-year sentence for this crime, but we find out through Jackie, armed with her privileged “official” information, that he was released four years early for good behaviour. Jackie feels that Clyde is at the root of her despair, and she develops an insatiable desire to investigate his life, which, without a moment’s hesitation, she sets about doing by using the
tools of her trade. She does not, however, show the slightest interest in investigating her own life, as she is the voyeur forever looking outward at others or backwards, to the past.

In her essay “Red Road (2006) and Emerging Narratives of ‘Sub-veillance’” Jessica Lake\(^2\) draws a link “between the Freudian psychoanalytic sexual perversion of voyeurism and the political and technical practice of surveillance”. Foucault describes the voyeur as “one who derives gratification from surreptitiously watching sex acts or objects; a Peeping Tom; one who takes a morbid interest in sordid sights; may also be called a spy, reporter, detective, psychoanalyst, sociologist or anthropologist”\(^3\) (PK, 155). Jackie’s behaviour in Red Road exemplifies this imbalance of power quite viscerally and, as Lake points out, since “Foucault’s definition slides easily and somewhat perversely from the titillated Peeping Tom to the professions of human investigation”, Jackie’s work as a CCTV operator is a perfect fit for this classification (RREN, 233).

Arnold’s direction intentionally drives the audience to sympathise with Jackie, because in between the scenes of Jackie’s unethical activities of voyeurism via surveillance, we must observe scenes in which other versions of Jackie are presented. We can already empathise somewhat with her feelings of justification for spying on Clyde based on the barest of knowledge provided to us: he killed her husband and daughter while high on drugs by running them down in his car as they stood waiting in a bus stop. We can imagine that Jackie is thinking, “how good is this man’s life after taking the life of my family?” She wants revenge, and whether justified or not, her behaviour does not, in my case anyway, overly engender sympathy.

By offering us narrative rationalisations for Jackie’s outrageous behaviour, Arnold makes a key point by suggesting further naturalisation and thus internalisation of the idea that surreptitious spying on others can, under the right circumstances be allowed. This introduces the idea that there is a tacit permission within society for betraying the moral and ethical code of invading someone’s privacy, and worse, without their knowledge. Arnold continues to produce layer upon layer of scenes in which Jackie’s life is portrayed as being pathetic and tragic, with the intention that we feel somewhat obligated to pity her. Jackie is engaged in a loveless affair with a married man who drops by her work every other week for one reason only, to drive her out to the country and have utterly joyless sex with her in his small,


\(^3\) Michel Foucault. Power/Knowledge. Harvester Wheatsheaf.: London, 1980. From here on in will be cited as PK.
cramped car. Jackie’s face appears dead during these sessions of intercourse. What is revealed through these scenes is that every activity Jackie undertakes is a desperate attempt to either distract her from her pain, or replace it with different feeling.

One heart-rending scene involves Jackie stuffing newspapers into toddler-sized clothing once worn by her deceased daughter, so that she can experience a facsimile of hugging her three-dimensional child. Every parent understands this pathos and its indication of the depth of her pain is powerful, used here perhaps, as a counter-weight for the audience to balance empathy with Jackie’s invasive stalking actions. Jackie, as a result of a violent and great loss she has suffered, is the very definition of sadness, loneliness and isolation, but she also embodies the definition of a voyeur, an act from which she can derive at least some pleasure. The negative trait of voyeurism that I find far more pertinent, however, is that it places Jackie in a unique and unfair position of power. Are we to wonder if she might not have abused her power had this tragedy not befallen her? Does the “why” matter? Although pertinent to the narrative, these questions seem somewhat superfluous in the over-all consideration of today’s widespread use of surveillance.

We observe Jackie attend her sister-in-law’s wedding reception where she is treated like the familiar in-law, but this scene is presented as evidence of her previous persona, as others recall her as being friendly and fun in her life before the deaths of her own family. However now, in stark comparison she is considered tragic. When she encounters her father-in-law at the wedding, we note there is rancour there, but we do not know why. Eventually, we discover that she has never disposed of the ashes of her husband and daughter; in fact she actually takes their urns of ashes to bed with her, thus making it impossible for his own parents to grieve properly because there is no gravesite. This act could be viewed as either poignant or self-centred; we are conflicted because her grief, we tell ourselves, must play a part in her behaviour, even though it has been six years since their deaths.

On the one hand these scenes are capable of invoking sympathy but they also suffice as small, perhaps unintentional power plays by Jackie because they are ways of controlling the situation she has been made to endure through grief. Losing her family was the ultimate loss of control for her, and these small steps, perhaps give her a sense of control, even if she is unaware that she is doing it. The point is that this is a somewhat creative method of portraying power in a different, slightly veiled way.
Use and Abuse of Power

Power is not one single thing that someone can possess, but rather, it constitutes a system of assemblages, relationships and networks, and, in Jackie’s case, it is her position within these networks that affords her an advantage over Clyde. Using a mechanical surveillance apparatus to service the personal desire of the voyeur and prove the capacity of surveillance as a control technique is demonstrated when it comes to Jackie stalking Clyde. Jackie becomes increasingly obsessed with control, and she quite easily abuses her privileged position as a CCTV operator to her advantage and thus his disadvantage. This is interesting in terms of Foucault’s idea of panoptic principles in action, “containing, shaping and including subjects within a system of automatic power”. Foucault's argument that through this process, one develops “an inner compulsion to do the right thing” seems at times, because of Jackie’s lonely state of mind, to have an inverse effect on Jackie, who in effect becomes the guard within the panoptic tower (SSAO, 59). Jackie steals several company video tapes that feature Clyde, first to definitively determine that he is the same man who killed her family, and second, to discern where he lives. After gaining this information, she concentrates on following not only his hourly activities but his friends as well.

Counterbalancing Jackie’s obsessive bouts of monitoring Clyde during work hours are spurts of her “normal” humanity. In these scenes Jackie displays a friendly, protective familiarity albeit from her control desk via monitors, as she coos over an old dog and his master, and amuses herself by watching an office cleaning lady dance to music from her headphones while she works. For Jackie, the world is a cold, dark place, and she feels hopelessly out of place when she is not behind the screens. In her “tower”, she is looking for warmth or some kind of connection. The dog-walker and the cleaning lady are people she considers to be her “regulars” that she seeks out during her shifts, but they of course, cannot see her, nor do they know she is watching them. She has access to the state-owned technology, they of course do not.

We also see just how powerfully invasive the CCTV cameras can be when one of the cameras Jackie is able to zoom in enables us to read a notice on a small note-card posted on a shop window. But what is “outside the picture” is demonstrated here as well. On her watch, Jackie becomes so absorbed in following Clyde around town via these variously placed surveillance cameras, that she nearly misses observing a stabbing incident involving a teen-aged girl. Her obsession with one part of the picture that revolves around a past incident removes her attention from an actual crime happening in the present. Missing this key event causes Jackie some remorse, but not to the point of changing her obsessive and distracting
behaviour. Instead she takes up smoking cigarettes again as a way to distract herself and thus temporarily alleviate her guilt. Although Jackie is portrayed as caring about her subjects when she takes an interest in their situations, ostensibly these weak connections to the subjects of her gaze is there to portray her role as being that of a human witness behind the camera. What the film is really telling us, however, is how easily and invisibly Jackie infringes against the ethical order by shifting her duty as the witness into obsessive voyeurism. Her unawareness of this shift of duty exemplifies the creeping in of a third consciousness that is actually more indicative of a lack of consciousness.

Finally, Jackie transgresses not only the ethical boundaries, but also the physical boundaries of her workplace in order to follow Clyde in person. Arnold uses the trope of windows to invoke the distance of a continuing “screen” between Jackie and most of the “real” or unmediated world. Jackie takes the bus to Clyde’s run-down, desolate neighbourhood where the Red Road flats are located. The windows of the bus become the screens that make her aware of her descent into a place that until now had always and only been viewed mechanically from a distance.

She arrives at the locally infamous “council flats” of Red Road that house the general under-class of society including criminals recently released from prison. In an article called “Windows, Re-viewing Red Road” 4, certain aspects of the “cultural geography” of the Red Road buildings and their inhabitants were described like this:

Red Road has as much in common with the crafted object as it does the mass-produced housing system. The estate is an emblematic example of the dramatic slide from utopian vision to dystopian reality that marked so many postwar high-rise modernist social housing programmes in Britain. It has suffered a history of dis-investment. Its residents include many long-term households, but also the emergency-housed homeless, asylum seekers, the aged, the drug and alcohol dependent. Its ‘undesirable’ housing type has been made residual by the new market logics of social housing privatisation and stock transfer. In 2005 the Glasgow Housing Association made a determination that Red Road is no longer a ‘sustainable’ or ‘viable’ social housing development and announced a £60-million redevelopment strategy, the first stage of which is to be the demolition 5 of the block with the address 213/183/153 Petershill Drive. (WRRR, 168)

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5 Video footage of the actual demolition of these flats can be seen on YouTube here, from 2012: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=HsmZcYHDAso&feature=endscreen > Published on Jun 20, 2012 by SAFEDEM Red Road Flats Demolition 10-6-12 and here, from 2013: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KO98VWDEOk>. Published by:
As Jackie descends from the bus and looks around, we spectators recognise the area from her screens. We also get a look at the main camera through which she has been watching Clyde, the background lit with the dull, grey cast of Glaswegian winter skies.

Before too long, Jackie sees Clyde and his friend and former cell-mate Stevie (Martin Compston). Because Jackie has become so accustomed to watching them, she seems briefly surprised to discover that they take no notice of her. This presents her with an unexpected advantage. She is aware of who they are, their neighbourhood, and what they do. To them, however, Jackie is as good as invisible, as are we, the audience in our shared position as spectators, and hers as the surveillant operator and voyeur.

When Stevie and Clyde split off from each other, Jackie continues to follow Clyde who is lugging a large, black plastic rubbish bag filled with something unidentifiable. As he begins to climb a small, muddy hill of dirt and rubbish, Jackie bends over and picks up a piece of broken glass, but we are unsure of her motives. Everything we view is from Jackie’s point of view, so we see Clyde from behind, unaware as he always has been that he is being monitored and followed.

There is a high pitched sound in the background, like the squeaking of metal on metal from train brakes screeching on train tracks as Jackie follows Clyde to a Laundromat, and finally to a café. These noises charge the scene with Jackie’s determined energy fuelled by her knowing who he is and being so physically close to someone who has no concept of her existence. The power Jackie holds from her knowing and his ignorance of her allows her to eavesdrop on the conversation with the waitress in the café. Clyde mentions to the waitress that he is having a party on Saturday night at his new place. He then licks his plate in a crude, suggestive manner, and we recognise the waitress as the woman from the opening scene who had sex with Clyde. Not only armed with information about the party, but also in reaction to Clyde’s overtly sexual innuendoes, Jackie suddenly jumps up from her table as if recoiling, and abruptly leaves the café.

In her interpretation of Jackie’s relationship to Clyde, Lake’s essay describes in a rather interesting if not somewhat lurid way some of the intricate meanings she determines are behind the tropes of windows and glass:

The ultra-subjective street view is contrasted to the previous and subsequent scenes of the more ‘objective’ CCTV camera view. Although Jackie’s street vision is still mediated through panes of glass (the bus window, the laundromat window and the café window), she is shown as repeatedly moving to transgress these barriers, whereas Clyde is represented as constantly escaping behind them. It is significant that Jackie chooses a piece of glass as her weapon, possibly with the intention to plunge it into his flesh, anticipating castration perhaps. Rather than denoting distance, Jackie regards glass as a potential for bodily invasion. Glass, cameras, screens become vehicles invested with her own particular desires. This scene manages to situate perverse desire within the omnipresent and objective CCTV camera and invites us to question whose eyes exist behind each unblinking lens. (RREN, 236-237)

I disagree with Lake on two counts here. First, she refers to the CCTV view as “objective”, whereas I would use the term “distanced”. One can gain objectivity from a distance, but in this case, I believe the distance is to do with estrangement. Second, the piece of broken glass that Jackie picks up yields no further physical action from her, and, in terms of cinematic suspense, it also yields no action.

The jagged glass represents not a bodily invasion, but rather Jackie’s desire to invade Clyde’s privacy and his world. By going to the place he lives, she has actually “broken the glass” that separated them and she is now perhaps, beginning to “pick up the pieces”. Whether she is aware of it or not, the path that Jackie is taking is leading her towards personal and emotional closure by being physically closer to another person. Although Jackie is by nature a compulsive voyeur in this film, she breaks the voyeur’s rule to find a path that leads her to physically engage with the subject of her gaze. Later, we discover her motives for this behaviour and the action she takes as a result of her engagement. At this point, Arnold is setting us up for a definite turn in the story.

Jackie decides to find Clyde’s party and, because of her position at the Glasgow City Eye, she is able to easily identify which building Clyde lives in. Red Road contrasts the chilly, grey winter skies of Glasgow with garish colours, unusual sound effects and emotive music. When lit at night the city streets become distorted in hue and intensity through the cameras; they appear bright red, fluorescently enhanced and contrasted with lime greens and sulphuric yellows. The look is sickly, other-worldly and somewhat hellish.

After working out what floor Clyde lives on, she manages to get into the secured building by following a couple through the door and onto the elevator. The couple are Stevie and April (Natalie Press), both of whom Jackie is familiar with as being friends of Clyde, but again they have no idea who she is. She has brought alcohol with her and she begins a small-
talk conversation with April, perhaps hoping to bluff her way in to the party with a show of female camaraderie. This is unnecessary, however, as it seems no one notices or cares who comes to the party. Watching Jackie, this otherwise timid, quiet, introverted person push her way into a party at a dirty council flat demonstrates how determined she is to penetrate Clyde’s life.

The film moves from portraying Jackie as depressed to Jackie as obsessed during another session of snooping around, this time in Clyde’s home. Somewhat mesmerised, Jackie walks down a hallway, pretending to be looking for the bathroom. Jackie then notices Clyde who is howling it up loudly in the next room with his mates, as they all sing along to a rowdy song. The song abruptly ends and a very romantic sounding tune fills the room, changing the mood instantly as couples begin to slow-dance. Jackie simply stares at Clyde until he comes over, takes her hand and pulls her to him to dance. Clyde is a large, well-built masculine-looking man with reddish hair and a good-looking face. As he dances with Jackie he begins to seduce her, and she responds immediately in kind.

Realising that she is responding sexually to Clyde’s touch, she is suddenly overwhelmed and repelled so she flees to the elevator where she promptly vomits. In the following scene we find Jackie in her usual bi-weekly dalliance with the married man, but this time she refuses to allow him have sex with her. When she returns to work, her behaviour is even more obsessive as she follows Clyde’s work van (he has his own locksmith business) via the CCTV cameras from screen to screen as he travels on the highway. When he leaves the area she is responsible for monitoring, she simply moves to a workmate’s area and continues following him into a surveillance sector not assigned to her. When the van stops, Clyde has parked outside a school where he sits, watching teen-aged girls walk by. Red Road is scattered with feigned clues like this where we are expected to make a pat judgment about a character based on what we see from a distance.

**Surveillance as a Technique for Suspense: Seduction and Suspense**

As John Turner points out in “Collapsing the Interior/Exterior Distinction: Surveillance, Spectacle, and Suspense in Popular Cinema”6: “when films use different surveillance technologies as part of the narrative substance of the film’s diegesis, this usually serves as a prelude to violence. In this manner, a surveilling episode is more often than not framed as a

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‘suspense mechanism’ which provides tension” (CIED, 96). Turner has stated that we have now become so comfortably accustomed to surveillance technology in films, that we begin to piece together our own version of what will happen next in the narrative of a surveillance genre film.

The appearance of surveillance imagery in narrative cinema has become a naturalized code that is neither arbitrary nor incoherent but comprehensible. When surveillance codes are employed, these codes bring within the viewer’s ken a reduction of strangeness and offer a framework of appropriate expectations. (CIED, 98-99)

According to Turner, in many if not most cases, this expectation is akin to suspense, and what we anticipate is violence, because there is “a strong correlation between the use of surveillance technologies in contemporary films as both a calculated device for the technique of suspense and as a harbinger of violent activity”. This correlation thus “ties together a certain relationship between surveillance and violence in contemporary representation systems” (CIED, 99).

At first glance we, and probably Jackie too, believe that Clyde is some kind of paedophile, especially when we watch Clyde approaching one girl in particular, who seems puzzled, but not frightened at his approach. Through the lens of the surveillance camera we watch Clyde talking to the girl for a short while, but then he awkwardly places something in her hands and walks away. The girl seems surprised but she accepts what he has given her. Displaying the power of technology, Jackie focuses in so close to the girl’s hands that we see that her fingernails are painted black and that Clyde has presented her with several more bottles of nail polish. We are left to wonder what the relationship is until later when Arnold leaves us a clue. That night Jackie climbs into bed with funerary urns filled with the ashes of her husband and daughter. We soon find out that the girl Clyde had approached was in fact, his own daughter.

On another evening, Jackie sets out to the pub she has seen (through surveillance) Clyde and his friends frequent. Before going in she picks up a rock from the street and places it in her pocket. Once inside the pub, it is not difficult for Jackie to be noticed by Clyde and the two leave together. Inside his own home and bedroom, Clyde is notably less brutish and crude and far more charming and likeable. It is as if we are suddenly being introduced to a crash course about who the “real Clyde” is. A strange noise is made outside and Clyde explains to Jackie somewhat poetically that it is a fox living right here in the city. There is
also a large chunk of tree branch in his room with all the tell-tale signs of being in the midst of a carving, and he explains to Jackie that he enjoys carving, exposing his artistic side.

When he leaves the room briefly to get whiskey, Jackie takes the opportunity to hurriedly snoop about his room, rifling through papers and mail left on the floor. She stops when she finds a school portrait photograph of a young girl, and it is at this moment that Clyde returns and explains that the girl in the photograph is his daughter. Jackie rather harshly opines that she doesn’t look a bit like him. Clyde remains cordial and begins to explain that she is older now, and that he has been in jail, and is trying to mend his ways and become a good person so he can be with his daughter again. This is Clyde, the inspired, caring parent.

He then sets out to undress Jackie but does so in a most caring, gentle way, beginning with removing her shoes and massaging her feet, an unusually intimate act that surprises Jackie. What takes place after this is an incredibly realistic scene of the couple engaging in intercourse. We can tie the earlier narrative point of Jackie’s joyless coupling with the married man as a means to demonstrate the sharp contrast to her obvious arousal and intensely pleasurable reaction to having sex with Clyde, which does not seem the slightest bit feigned.

Jackie’s apparent enjoyment of having sex with Clyde, especially now that we’ve seen his more “human” side, leads to some confusion in the plot as we wonder what her motive is for this carefully orchestrated trysting. Jackie abruptly rises from the bed, and surreptitiously grabs the discarded condom from the floor. She then races to the bathroom where she hurriedly dresses. Next, she takes the condom used by Clyde and smears his ejaculation fluid into her crotch. Then, pulling the stone out of her pocket, she smashes herself in the face with it, winces, and watches herself in the mirror as she begins to bleed. Clyde calls out to her, wondering what she is doing, and Jackie says she has to leave because she is married.

She runs out of Clyde’s building, clutching some of her clothes and, with her face bloodied and bruised, she stops and looks up at the CCTV camera that she’s been watching Clyde from at work. She then rings for the police and reports that she has been raped by Clyde at his address. In the next scene we see Jackie being carefully tended to during a rape exam by a police woman. Jackie’s mission has been accomplished because surely this staged “violation” of Clyde’s parole will land him back in jail, which we now see was the carefully planned outcome of the revenge sought by Jackie.

Within a day of the feigned rape Jackie is back at work and several interesting things occur. First, she replays the surveillance tape of herself running out of Clyde’s apartment and phoning the police. Then, after she watches the replay of her leaving the scene, she watches the police come and drag Clyde away. She then fast-forwards the tape to the next morning,
when she sees the same girl that Clyde had given the nail polish to. She is now at his door, trying to see him. Jackie suddenly realises that it is Clyde’s daughter, and this causes her to drop the rape charges against Clyde. This subsequent action affords Clyde the chance to rebuild his life with his daughter.

In the final scene Jackie, who knows where Clyde is at all times, approaches him on the street, seemingly out of the blue. He tries to evade her by hopping on a passing bus, but then he relents and stops a few blocks away. Jackie wants him to tell her what happened to her family because Clyde is, after all, the last person to have contact with them while they were alive. He explains how her husband and daughter were killed because he was on drugs and driving his car out of control. He is completely remorseful. He also reassures her that their death was instant and they could not have suffered. Jackie then admits that the final words she had said to her daughter that morning had been cruel, thus further explaining her guilt-driven, obsessive behaviour.

At the end of Red Road

We have now reached the culminating point in the film where redemption is possible on the basis of forgiveness. Jackie’s version of “forgiving” Clyde is to specifically decide not to destroy his life, thus again wielding the power of her invisibility to him. Jackie’s version of forgiveness is somewhat different than Hannah Arendt’s definition. In The Human Condition, Arendt refers to forgiveness as the opposite of revenge and as being unpredictable, because vengeance, according to her, is what is expected:

In this respect, forgiveness is the exact opposite of vengeance, which acts as form of re-acting against an original trespassing, whereby far from putting an end to the consequences of the first misdeed, everybody remains bound to the process, permitting the chain reaction contained in every action to take its unhindered course. In contrast to revenge, which is the natural, automatic reaction to transgression and which because of the irreversibility of the action can be expected and even calculated, the acts of forgiving can never be predicted; it is only the reaction that acts in an unexpected way and thus retains, through being a reaction, something of the original character of action. (HC, 241)

If forgiveness is unpredictable, as Arendt says, it seems it is because those who forgive relinquish the control that can be forgiven. This is not exactly the case with Jackie. Arendt speaks of revenge as the most “natural, automatic reaction”, but in Jackie’s case, we see that

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she achieves revenge only after a great deal of manipulation; in fact it takes far less to motivate her act of forgiveness than it does to carry out her deed against Clyde.

The point I am making here is that in this film, the forgiveness seems hurried and contrived, and that Jackie “forgives” Clyde only so that we, the audience, can forgive Jackie for trespassing every civil boundary of another citizen in pursuit of personal satisfaction. This is the greater evil that is somewhat glossed over: the socio-political implications of an individual’s misuse of public surveillance apparatus to achieve control over another human being. Arnold, therefore may be doing the audience somewhat of a disservice by normalising the intrusion of mass surveillance in Red Road. Jackie never reveals to Clyde how she managed to find him, and that she is capable of keeping track of him visually as long as he is in Glasgow and that she probably has access to surveillance of him via data in the police system should he ever leave Glasgow. This constitutes a lop-sided set of power relations. As Arendt maintains: “Forgiving in other words, is the only reaction which does not merely re-act but acts anew and unexpectedly, unconditioned by the act which provoked it and therefore freeing from its consequences both the one who forgives and the one who is forgiven” (HC, 241).

The protective use of surveillance in this urban setting is highlighted only a few times in the film. A prerequisite in this benevolent use of surveillance is the good or “pure” intentions of the surveiller. In other words, the surveiller must act as a witness, who takes seriously his duty toward others. We see the surveillance mechanism here used mainly as an instrument of power and control. Surveillance is a tool for satisfying Jackie’s personal, voyeuristic obsession and manipulating the life of another. The haunting, romantic and redemptive song played at the end over the credits called “Love will tear us apart” seems to suggest that, ironically, even if love tears us apart, perhaps surveillance will bring us closer together.

If we are meant to walk away from this film feeling redeemed, it is because Jackie can now move on with her life and allow Clyde to move on with his. We can empathise with Jackie and her horrible predicament, but one is left to wonder how many surveillance officers like Jackie engage in their own power plays for private, illicit purposes. On the whole, surveillance is generally accepted as a protector of citizens in mass populations and yet it is also feared as a tool for corrupt manipulation. Red Road in one of the first attempts to debate the use of surveillance cameras in civic life and to ask searching questions about those who witness the images they produce. As a witness, Jackie is anything but a reliable surveiller. Her

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8 ™“Love will tear us apart”. Written by Ian Curtis from Joy Division, (1980) and performed by The Honeyroot for Red Road.
labile nature and unreliable ethical sense leaves deep questions for the viewer about the use of a now generally accepted medium of civil cont

![Figure 2: Majid (Maurice Bénichou) weeps alone while being filmed unknowingly by an invisible camera. Caché photos, courtesy of Les Films du Losange and Sony Pictures Classics.](image)

**Further Distancing: Caché and the Power of the Omniscient Unknown**

As in *Red Road*, in *Caché* we are immediately introduced to a situation of surveillance, but in this case it is almost a full five minutes before we realise it. In theory, the surveillance apparatus is already introduced into the film before we are aware of it, but we are offered no clues until after the credits fade from the screen, when we finally learn only by listening to a non-diegetic conversation introduced through voiceover. Through this disconcerting (and sense dislodging) method, we discover that the family’s home has been surreptitiously videotaped by an impossibly and invisibly positioned camera in an alley across the street. What we, the heretofore uninitiated audience have been watching for the first five minutes along with Georges and Anne is actually a videotape of their home that was mysteriously delivered to their doorstep.

Like many other Michael Haneke films, there are often more questions at the end than there are answers. Haneke prefers his films to be as unpredictable as circumstances can be in real life situations, where we are not always provided with resolutions nor rewarded with a redemptive outlook at the end. As a director, Haneke insists that we must learn by thinking for ourselves and by use our personal experiences as the filter through which we ascertain meaning in his films⁹.

Against the background, the opening scene of Caché is striking for several reasons. The film begins with the credits being visually but silently typed out across the screen in neat, white letters. The opening shot is held unnaturally still for such a long time that at first it appears to be a still frame, and an anticipation of what happens next begins to build. A long shot of a quiet, leafy neighbourhood located on a well-maintained residential street shows us that it is morning-time. The appearance of this well-maintained neighbourhood dotted with tidy flower boxes, indicates that the residents of this street are financially well off. Finally the sounds of birds chirping and leaves rustling in the distance become noticeable. Experiencing these normal sights and sounds somehow brings to the spectator a feeling of relief.

When the credits are finally completed, they vanish, but the camera remains static and a minimal amount of visual activity onscreen continues. We watch as a bicyclist rides past and off in the distance we see a woman leave her home and get into one of the cars parked on the street. Anticipation continues to build, but there is no resolution as we wonder what we are meant to be waiting or looking for. I for one kept waiting for an explosion or sudden noise to occur, which never happened. This absence encourages our brains to manufacture possible scenarios to fill in what feels like a narrative void.

Conceptually, we are unaware of any actual surveillance devices of technologies in play, but the long, almost still shot seems to trigger a feeling that if not behind a surveillance camera, then perhaps we are situated in such a way that we exist in place of its point of view. We continue to wait out this long shot, mesmerised and focused on the same scene, then very suddenly the hermeneutic layer is revealed rather abruptly by the unexpected interjection of an off-screen male voice asking: “Well?” An unseen a woman replies, “Nothing.” The voices seem to indicate that they too are experiencing the same predicament as the audience, wondering why they are staring at an uneventful scene.

What happens next is indicative of how most of the narrative is carried forward throughout the entire film. A closer jump shot immediately brings our gaze to a door where we watch as a man and woman leave and, from the spectator’s perception the shot “feels” unbroken from the almost static opening scene. In this particular shot, however, it is no longer morning, but nearly night-time, and the camera begins tracking Georges, (Daniel Auteuil) as he crosses the street. He appears to be curiously looking around for something, but when the woman’s voice we had heard previously calls out for him to come back inside, he returns to the door where Anne (Juliette Binoche) is waiting and both of them retreat inside. What he is looking for of course, is where a camera filming the front of his house might be located. Not
only is there no camera, but it appears that there is nowhere one could place a camera in order to capture the scene we have been watching.

The film then repeats the same opening shot but no perceptible break is discerned until there are no longer the white credits and we see the familiar trope of the rewinding or fast-forwarding video tape in the form of jiggled, white lines scratching across the scene and TV screen. This, and the abrupt insertion of non-diegetic dialogue, is Haneke’s way of informing the audience that we have transcended the role of film spectatorship and have been placed in the scene somehow alongside Georges and Anne, watching as they are the first of several surveillance video tapes in which their lives appear to be the object of surveillance. Haneke’s opening sequence in Caché highlights several important themes for the audience to consider, not the least of which is how short our attention span has become after years of watching television and films. The point is that a scene as benign and banal as the one we’ve just sat through has created an inordinate amount of discomfort for seemingly no reason.

Georges is the host of a public television talk show that features guests from the European literati, and is cast as a minor celebrity. Anne is the wife of Georges who works in the book publishing business and is cast as being slightly spoiled and emotional. Together, Georges and Anne have a twelve-year-old son named Pierrot (Lester Makedonsky) who is on the precipice of entering puberty. Haneke means to cast them as an entitled, upper middle-class bourgeois family, busy in their separate lives. This film far more haunting and powerful than Red Road, because Caché is presented in such a way that as the audience, we are never given the identity of the surveillant and are at most times placed in the surveillant’s point of view. Unlike Red Road, the characters in Caché choose to move further and further away from each other and when redemption is offered, it is pushed away and refused.

There are a number of subtexts in this that pass through the narrative of the film so delicately and with such deftness as to be almost invisibly subtle. The subtlety does not in any way diminish the mounting tension that gradually infuses the atmosphere of the film with paranoiac fear. Even in the opening scene, the method of involuntarily steering our senses from the position of semi-passive viewer to abruptly becoming an active participant in some intra-diegetic moment is an unsettling experience, one that is quite different from sitting safely and physically distanced from the movie screen, being entertained as a story unfolds on film.

Although the audience eventually comprehends the situation, Haneke pressures the viewer to contemplate the origin of control in the production of the image being both shown to us and viewed by them. In this sense, by continuing to share a mood of seeming
“directorial alienation” with his audience, he briefly relinquishes a certain degree of his own
directorial control over the film and exposes the artifice. This technique allows us to place
ourselves as the person behind the camera in our imaginations, allowing us to feel what it is
like to be the one with the power behind the camera. The point is to become accustomed to
the uneasy feeling of never being sure who is watching and who is controlling any given
situation within the film.

In his article, “Haneke, the Long Take, Realism,”10 John David Rhodes quotes André
Bazin’s views on what the use of cinematic long takes achieves:

The long take, in André Bazin’s famous terms, performs a variety of
labours, among them this one: a forcing of spectators to assume a more
active role in in interpreting the representation of reality before them. No
longer are spectators guided by the close up, the edit, the montage sequence;
instead they are “forced to discern . . .”11 Oddly, this same foisting of an
ethical-hermeneutic project squarely onto the shoulders of the viewers
which is affected by the long take (and deep focus), also delays the same
activity. (AAR, 37)

Many of the techniques of film distanciation such as non-diegetic inserts, characters speaking
off screen and unmatched shots inserted into the mise-en scène, are employed by Haneke to
distance the audience. Throughout Caché, however, this distancing is achieved predominantly
by his paradoxical urging us to scrutinise his images far more closely than we were expecting
to, especially when he brackets the entire film within two long-take shots, one at the
beginning and again at the end.

Through ensuing dialogue between the characters of Georges and Anne (now filmed
in a classic conversational diegetic style), we learn that this and subsequent video tapes have
been mysteriously filmed from seemingly impossible angles, delivered to their home
anonymously, and with no accompanying note of explanation or demands. Through their
initial verbal exchange, we are also given a glimpse of an undercurrent of dissatisfaction
between the two, perhaps the result of the everyday tension and stresses felt by the career
driven couple. These are typical of the moments of bracketed “normalcy” that Haneke allows
throughout the film. Our attention is drawn by the distraction of a variety of mismatched yet
seamlessly embedded images within the film, and from this we develop a sense that from any

Detroit, MI., 2006.

1971. From here on in will be cited as AAR.
perspective the possibility exists that someone or something is constantly watching. If we as spectators sense this, how do the characters themselves react? We can sense that part of Georges’ unsettling discomfort stems from being out of control. Although he is regularly on TV, that is the medium of his domain, under his control, as the show is planned, taped and edited completely by his choice and he is, of course, paid to be in control.

The central subtext in Caché is how the characters react after they watch the collection of tapes that are delivered intermittently and always anonymously to their home. In fact, once we accustom ourselves to Haneke’s unusual shooting style, the fuel that drives the engine of the film is derived almost entirely from character reactions. When Georges and Anne first become aware that they are under some kind of surveillance through the videotape left anonymously at their door, we watch as their perceptions slowly begin to shift. Once the audience is made aware shortly thereafter, we notice our own perceptions shifting as well, because, as the concept of Bentham’s panopticon presupposes, the characters and the audience will react in kind to the assumption of the existence of an invisible surveillance system.

The assumption that they are possibly under surveillance at all times causes our reaction as viewers to become hyper-aware of the mise-en-scene in the film, as we try to determine the origin and thus solve the mystery of the surveillance tapes. When the real and the unreal cross our perceptual boundaries, the effect can be likened to mixing paint; two colours combine to make a third. The physical introduction of the video tapes arriving, and the perceptual knowledge that a disembodied or at least unidentifiable “Other” is observing them and bearing witness to their lives, combine to create the third reaction of Georges, Anne, and even Pierrot. Now the observed are compelled to look within their lives and at certain uncomfortable aspects of their existence which, up until that point, have been hidden.

We observe the ironic effect that being under anonymous surveillance has on the family. Coinciding with each mysterious arrival of another videotape, Georges, Anne and Pierrot become increasingly agitated and unnerved. This could be seen as an odd reaction because Georges is, after all, an erudite television talk-show host on a show that features writers, theorists and other literati, and he is quite comfortable being videotaped. However, because of the unknown origin of the surveillance tapes, the family has lost its sense of orientation, and so their fear and anxiety turns inward, where they take aim at each other.

The video tapes that arrive at the Laurent household do not contain any lurid, incriminating acts that any of the family has committed. In fact, what appears on the tapes could not be more mundane. Perhaps this is what is chilling, the very banality of their lives, recorded and delivered to their home. For the most part the tapes do nothing more than
provide commonplace images such as driving sequences from the camera’s fixed point of view inside a moving car, or the camera holding still filming outside of their family home, and somewhat oddly, Georges’ rural childhood home. Yet even though there is nothing shown on the tapes that could possibly be construed as threatening, the private and specific but entirely non-incriminating information about the life of Georges Laurent, and by proxy his family, is still considered to be highly privileged information. The more banal the information is on the tapes, however, the more the family feel compelled to reveal secret and unsavoury portions of their lives. More importantly, it is the very detail of the mundane that indicates more than information, rather, it alleges knowledge of the family, and this is what causes such concern.

Not only is there an absence of any untoward activity by the family, the absence of a camera operator also means there is no easy, straight-forward solution to their dilemma, such as paying off a blackmailer. Instead, the less the tapes reveal, the more the characters reveal themselves, but the parts that they reveal are unexpected, even for them. The lack of control stems from the inability to determine the source of the videotapes or the surveillant behind the camera, leaving Georges and the entire Laurent family rudderless, not only in terms of how to react to such a mysterious situation, but also who to blame.

One of the most significant responses by the family to the situation is that rather than drawing closer together in a protective family mode, they begin to experience an increasing distance from each other, and then take steps to exacerbate it. This peculiar reaction of the family distancing themselves from one another is both brilliant and disturbing in its articulation of disconnection brought on by the knowledge of being under surveillance. I find in this distancing a strong comment on how Haneke views a societal reaction to living under constant surveillance as well. It does not bring us closer together to know that we are being watched, at least not by the mechanical eye, in fact, it seems to drive us apart.

Within the bourgeois Laurent family, everyone has something to hide, not necessarily illegal, but painful and at least somewhat morally or ethically questionable. Georges has his past childhood misdeeds, Anne has a clear sexual frustration and the son is at an age where he is beginning to hide things from his parents, who, to him, no longer seem the model citizens they portray themselves as to others. The end of the film even suggests that the son had a hand in the entire video tape mystery, although we will never know. Therefore, Caché may constitute an acerbic critique of the standard bourgeois liberal rejection of the state’s justification for surveillance, in the mode of “nothing to hide so nothing to fear” thinking,
especially, as Haneke portrays them, for members of the hypocritical white middle class. In the end, it seems, surveillance reveals our hypocrisy.

**Embedded Mediations in *Caché*: Dislodging Memories, Lies, and Nightmares**

Haneke’s method of filming uses *Caché* as his vehicle to invoke the idea of the second consciousness or psychic distancing that Ernst Jünger\(^\text{12}\) spoke of regarding photography in the 1930s. But by filming *Caché* in its entirety using only high definition digital cameras, we are taken into the third consciousness by the digitally seamless sensibility. Moving in and out of the diegesis is more than disconcerting for the audience, and yet we take it on. Knowing that the videotapes made of the family are done so with no evidence of a person or camera filming them is frightening for the Laurents, but is still accepted by never being expressly discussed. The witness, it seems, has disappeared entirely from the scene.

Haneke’s ultimate goal is to show us that the perpetrator can never separate themselves from their victims or their past, regardless of the distance of time, camera lenses or repressed memories. It can however, as Haneke shows us in several key scenes, enable us to withstand the onslaught of violent images of war and atrocities, perhaps enabling “us” in the wider sense to continue to commit them.

In one scene midway through the film, Anne arrives home late after a long, tearful and unusually intimate lunch with her boss. Georges and Anne suddenly realise that neither of them knows where Pierrot is, and they begin to worry aloud. This is a red herring, however, because *Caché* is not a film about a kidnapping. Haneke employs a technique that draws the audience into a self-reflexive voyeurism. In the background we are confronted by non-stop on-screen footage of violence in the Middle East, or of riots in the streets of France by Algerian, Muslim or Middle-Eastern people appearing on television news, which is noticeably turned up to an intrusively high volume.

Haneke quickly illustrates here how we are often presented with images that disallow the time to discern who are Algerian, Israeli, Palestinian, and so on, almost as if it does not matter. In other words, more information does not always mean better information as it

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becomes a phalanx of images, a spectacle. By switching our focus back and forth between “real,” news footage and Georges’ and Anne’s growing panic over their missing son, Haneke breaks some of the illusory flow of the narrative and demonstrates another side of the distanciation\textsuperscript{13} in the film, and of course the audience should realise, this also represents the distancing and alienation in our own lives.

The news images are played on Georges’ and Anne’s contemporary, expensive flat-screen television, a further signifier of their bourgeois life style. The television screen also appears to be nested in a sort of geometric seamlessness, built on the same plane within the fortress like wall of books in their living room. Above and behind the bookshelves are barred windows, far too high to be able to see out of. Their home is a prison-like collage of mediated communication from television, books, the real world, with each being increasingly obscured by the next. Here we are also shown the Laurents’ truly insulated existence away from the outside world of real suffering and victims, which is another one of Haneke’s recurrent

\textsuperscript{13} “Distanciation/Distanciation”: The effect of distancing or estranging a spectator through means within the form or content of a text that challenge basic codes and conventions, and therefore mainstream ideological expectations. The term, drawn from the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, and connected with the “alienation effect” theorized and practiced by German Marxist poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht, has been used by film theorists in discussions of the possibilities and limitations of using cinema to challenge mainstream ideological and institutional structures. Formally, distanciation may be achieved by such things as obvious jump cuts, glaring lighting, violating the 180 degree rule, etc. Narratively, the film may employ absurd, arbitrary, and/or non-linear story lines. Distanciation may be achieved through characterization by creating characters that audiences can neither identify with nor mindlessly loathe. A key question within film theory concerning distanciation is whether a film can achieve its intended political effect simply by being formally alienating without being directly political, particularly in today’s post-modernist cinema, when shocking innovation has become part of the standard palette employed by Hollywood directors. Adapted from Susan Hayward. \textit{Key Concepts in Cinema Studies}. Routledge, 1996.
themes. The audience cannot help noticing the annoying background din of the television news violence, but it is being completely ignored by the fore-grounded characters of Anne and Georges, typifying what Western society’s world perception through the audiovisual digital culture circa 2005 had become, and is a situation that continues now to proliferate.

Haneke also places Georges’ character as the representative of the typical suburban Parisian bourgeoisie class opinion and reaction to the increasing numbers of Algerians and thus the “immigrant class”. Caché was released in 2005, the same year as the race riots in Paris. According to Cathy Lisa Schneider in her essay “Police Power and Race Riots in Paris”¹⁴, for three consecutive weeks in November of that year, Paris and all of France were “consumed” by them. The riots reflected “decades of violent enforcement”

When Minister of Interior Nicholas Sarkozy responded to the violent death of three teenage boys on October 25, 2005, by condemning the boys rather than the police officers who had killed them, he merely reaffirmed what many young blacks and Arabs already believed: that their lives have no value in France. (PPRR, 133)

I would also connect the way Max Silverman¹⁵ describes Jean Cayrol’s¹⁶ vision about a “post-Holocaust aesthetic vision” in post-Holocaust filmmaking as “Lazaréen art”, (raising issues from the dead in filmmaking) to Haneke’s use of the object that “reconnects the present with a disavowed past”. Here, “the image of humanity can no longer ignore the experience of the concentration camp”, seems to be in concert with what Haneke is working through, or perhaps, urging France to work through the treatment of the French-Algerian population in the past and today.

Hence, Cayrol’s vision of an “art concentrationnaire”, in which the image of humanity can no longer ignore the experience of the concentration camp, reflects critically on the role of the image in creating what we might call a “concentrationary imaginary”. The dehumanising nature of its mode of representation (“the Nazi gaze”) is interrupted through the creation of an anxious tension between the concentrationary universe and everyday life. Neither totally different from nor exactly the same as each other, they are

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¹⁶ Jean Cayrol was Alain Resnais’s collaborator on his seminal film about Nazi Concentration camps, *Nuit et brouillard / Night and Fog* (1955).
forced out of their familiar ‘freeze-framed’ categories (in which they have become objectified and fetishised) to occupy a realm between the already recognised and the strange, sameness and difference, repetition and change, hence restoring opacity and otherness to the Real. (HEPH, 13)

By this he means France’s disavowal of responsibility to Algerians living in contemporary France. Beugnet posits that in Caché the “video becomes the obstinate witness to the everyday denial of intolerable realities and memories”. If the video has become the “witness” with no evidence of human connections, as the film insists on suggesting, then here again is an example of a distanced, third consciousness, wherein a representation stands in for the human witness. We know that we are being pushed to witness something, when one of the video tapes that arrive at the Laurent’s shows the view of the camera lens originating from behind a car’s rainy windscreen as it travels to Georges’ rural family estate and childhood home. We are again unclear if we are watching the movie or a videotape being played within the movie.

In this full quote from an essay entitled, “Blind Spot”17, Martine Beugnet assesses Haneke’s treatment in this way:

In Caché, the object that reconnects the present with a disavowed past may be the image itself – or, rather, the video image. Once held as the benevolent companion of middle-class familial history, in Haneke’s work, video becomes the obstinate witness to the everyday denial of intolerable realities and memories. Here, its gaze is not associated with its benign expressions – the endearing unsteadiness of home movies or the roaming, intimate cinematic style and fluid camera work characteristic of many of the 1990s feature films shot in DV [Digital Video] – but with the objectifying, mechanical yet voyeuristic stare of the surveillance camera. (BS, 228)

This is juxtaposed against the cultural notion of the video being “the benevolent companion of middle-class familial history”. Beugnet points out that in the case, the camera’s gaze “is not associated with its benign expressions – the endearing unsteadiness of home movies or the roaming, intimate cinematic style and fluid camera work characteristic of many of the 1990s feature films shot in DV – but with the objectifying, mechanical yet voyeuristic stare of the surveillance camera” (BS, 228).

Lack of control, or the fear of it, is another underlying theme in Caché from the point of view of the main character and in the much subtler political subtext, from the point of view of France and the growing unrest of their French Algerian population. Haneke uses what is

benign, every-day, and mundane to actually push forward an intensely disturbing reality in France. Georges’ childhood incident with the character of Majid (Maurice Bénichou) represents the past unfair treatment of the Algerians, and the tapes represent the uncomfortable reminders of a past that will not disappear, and that in fact, lays in wait to explode as a result of years of simmering, underlying tensions. And yet, the Algerian motif is only one narrative strand to this disturbing surveillance genre film.

Originally, Majid was the child of the farm workers employed on the vast estate of Georges’ parents when Georges was a little boy and an only child. On a visit to his mother, Georges speaks of dreaming about him to her, but she either doesn’t care to remember, or she finds the memory of Majid far less significant than Georges has believed it to be, deep in his heart all these years. We note that Georges, apparently through increasingly bad memories that he strives with difficulty to suppress, has come to the conclusion that Majid is the person behind the video tapes. Through the somewhat awkward and tentative discussion between Georges and his mother, Georges through simple small-talk, reveals himself to be an accomplished liar. We also discover that Georges’ parents briefly considered adopting Majid. This act of mercy had been considered after Majid’s parents were killed in the infamous Franco-Algerian riots of October 17 1961, cited as the 1961 “Massacre of Paris”.

Majid became an orphan and with only one child of their own, the estate had plenty of room for both boys. It was a humane and sensible thing to do at the time. It is clear from the conversation with his mother, however, that this adoption never took place, and although his mother makes little of it, we see Georges grow uncomfortable, as if his memory of why the adoption never took place troubles him.

According to an interview with Karin Badt in 2005 at Cannes Film Festival, Haneke does not shy away from or gloss over social issues in his films; he regards filmmaking as being both art and a representation of social concerns. The common element throughout all of Haneke’s films is his penchant for making the audience uncomfortable by using a variety of cinematic techniques, and one is by causing them to doubt or question the visual veracity of what they are seeing. Social morality on a broad political scale is another theme in Haneke’s

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18 The title of Beugnet’s essay, “Blind Spot”, is also the expression that aptly describes the treatment of the massacre of 1961 – the event that brought the Algerian war to metropolitan France – and how, until recently, the circumstances of the death of over two hundred people, who had come to march peacefully in Paris in support of the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale), have remained unspoken. Some of the bodies, thrown into the Seine, were never found. The expression also applies to the apparatus devised by Haneke to probe the covert effect of the silence and guilt generated, beyond the official censorship, by a nation’s collective and individual amnesia. (BS, 229)
films, which he plays out within the microcosm to represent or demonstrate a large, macrocosmic issue\textsuperscript{19}.

The incident of the Paris Massacre of 1961, during the Algerian war, in which hundreds of peacefully demonstrating Algerians were drowned in the River Seine, was orchestrated by the head of Parisian Police, Maurice Papon\textsuperscript{20}. Following this was an infamous cover-up, general disavowal and a refusal to acknowledge much less take responsibility for this event until recent years, most likely due to the children of the victims and their relatives becoming old enough to seek retribution for the situation. Haneke reminds the audience that consequences will result from issues that have been left unresolved, such as the flooding of France with cheap labour from the foreign nationals of colonial Algeria in the 1950’s, and their eventual population of offspring who must be housed, fed and educated. When Georges’ parents attempted to make things right in their own small way within the microcosm of their family by attempting to adopt Majid after his parents were killed, Georges’ lies prevented them from doing so. We glimpse the very different consequences of these lies for the adult lives of Georges and Majid.

During the night of his visit to his mother, Georges has a nightmare that explains much of what may have happened, albeit still rather obscurely and opaquely. The nightmare is at least “the truth” as seen from Georges Laurent’s sublimated point of view. The HDV camera combined with the filming technique again takes us to the curious world of being visually destabilised, because even if we know it is a dream, we cannot be sure whose dream this is, or who is behind the surveilling eyes, watching the dream unfold. We see that Majid has been kept at a great distance from Georges’ consciousness, but as the film progresses we see that the boy is, however, quite embedded in what we take to be the area of Georges’ conscience.

Here, through these events, Georges has an unconscious physical reaction, because there is no separation between his physical body and the neurological patterning in his brain that recaptures the memories and causes the dreams (and his nightmares) that in turn create his physical reaction of panic. This is very much like the experience Sol has in \textit{The Pawnbroker}, where he is unable to separate his memories from the present. This is also a point in the film when the intensity of Georges’ onscreen physical reactions becomes noticeably paranoid. He appears to have developed a feeling similar to being haunted, but

\textsuperscript{19} Examples of Haneke’s unique filmmaking styles can be found in \textit{A Companion to Michael Haneke}, edited by Roy Grundman and published by Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010.

\textsuperscript{20} Maurice Papon, previously a high ranking official in Vichy France, is also infamous for sending 1000 Jews to Nazi concentration camps during the Nazi occupation of France in the Second World War. Papon died in 2007.
only in the most private and supposedly impenetrable places within his mind, in his memories
and dreams.

The physicality of his character is foregrounded however, when the technology is in
danger of becoming too seamless, or visually slick. Haneke switches our gaze to the
character’s physical reaction, from pictorial digital “flits” (representing memories or dreams)
to the physical (Georges perspiring, his laboured breathing) which symbolise “analogue” fits.
Haneke is using Georges’ body as the physical referent to the real.

Because Haneke’s economical style of shooting often makes the real and the unreal
look the same, it causes a relief to both the spectator and Georges to be shocked into the
present by his intensely vivid nightmares. Indicated by his flushed face, his panting and
profuse sweating upon awakening, his subconscious memories cause the same physical
reactions present in the “fight-or-flight” mode. Bringing the audience back to a physically
oriented reality allows them the hope of reconnecting with a more familiar mode of
understanding the narrative. By digitally flattening the images in many of the films sequences,
and by inserting nearly subliminally brief flashes of images into the mise-en scène, (the
technique of visualising memories that Sidney Lumet originated in The Pawnbroker as
discussed in Chapter Six) and by using a large number of unusually long, static takes and long
shots in his technique, we must learn to see via the flatly continuous visuality within the
movie.

A further invasion of the Laurent’s lives arrive in the form of child-like drawings of several
disturbing images which begin to appear separately, either as the wrapping of videotapes sent
to their home, or as postcards appearing in the mail at Pierrot’s school and even at Georges’
office. One drawing is of a rooster with a severed head, with bright red blood drawn as if
gushing across the page. Does it symbolise the political decapitation of France or is it of personal significance to Georges? We discover later that it illustrates part of a lie Georges told about Majid to discourage his parents from adopting him.

Another drawing is of a small boy with blood flowing from his mouth, which I assumed at first was to lead the audience onto the narrative path into assuming a future kidnapping or threat of some kind to Pierrot. Then, the most grisly image is one of a boy with his throat slashed, again with blood gushing across the page. All of the pictures are techniques of foreshadowing, but the events they foreshadow are unimaginable at this point in the film. The drawings, also sent anonymously, remind us again that someone is watching the family, and even though we still do not know why, the feeling of being threatened looms but more importantly, these drawings trigger a strong memory in Georges.

Haneke briefly inserts the digitally seamless visual (and silent) vignette of a small, frightened boy, bleeding from his mouth, hiding and cowering on a window seat in the dark. The boy is dark complexioned. Somehow, we can deduce this as a scene which is in fact emanates from a space within Georges’ memory, spliced right into the diegesis of the film. However, it is as though this foreknowledge is phenomenological, signifying a knowledge that is felt, and not placed so much as a visual clue on the map of the narrative. By placing it within the videotape, or in what we think we are watching, which is the night-time surveillance videotape of someone’s home, Haneke reminds us of the intensified reality produced in a nightmare. He dislodges a familiar analogue referent, a memory, and replaces it with similitude, the digitally filmed portrayal of a memory within the visual space and temporality of watching a videotape in the present.
When it dawns on Georges that Majid might be involved in the tapes and the drawings, what I found to be the most revealing and inexplicably unnerving, is being able to hear the palpable change in Georges’ *voice*. When he speaks to Anne, his voice takes on a tone that is instantly recognisable as the reaction to or experience of guilt, or shock, or at the very least, extreme psychological discomfort. Georges’ face is not onscreen, but you can *hear* the throat constrict and the mouth go dry, and thus easily imagine the adrenaline rush that is causing restrained panic in his voice.

The driver behind the visual enigma in *Caché* is the digital HDV camera, not only because of the certain conflated, indistinguishable look of the images it creates, but also because of the unbreakable connection that digital audio-visual technology now has with contemporary society, a fact that I maintain cannot be overstated. The way *Caché* is brought to the screen, and therefore to our attention, may be one of the key elements in establishing a current visual taxonomy for the surveillance film genre. The fact that a film genre has developed around the existence of mechanical surveillance in our lives speaks volumes.

In this case the invisibility, seamlessness and ubiquity of being observed (and being the observer) throughout this film help not only to establish our relationship to the images, but also to classify the film within this genre. If, as some genre theorists believe, genres, like myths, are the means by which a society can work through some of the changes and dilemmas inherent in being a society, then the way that *Caché* portrays the intrusion of anonymous surveillance as a fact of life, albeit a disturbing one, dropped in the lap of the Laurent family, may be signalling a shift in our point of view. How so? By shifting our point of view from one that originated in audiovisual culture, from being part of the “viewer society” that watches television or enjoys the cinema, to the steadily changing point of view within an audiovisual regime, such as being watched on CCTV by state employed observers within what has now become a surveillance society, as in *Red Road*.

**Is seeing believing?**

Locating the source of the video tapes becomes Georges’ obsession. Because of his own guilty conscience stemming from a cruel act of dishonesty in childhood that resulted in Majid being sent away to an orphanage instead of being adopted by Georges’ parents, he assumes

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21 Among others, see for instance, Will Wright, *Six Guns and Society, a Structural Study of the Western*. University of California Press: Berkley, 1975. According to Wright (page 2), the “Western”, like any myth, stands between individual human consciousness and society. If a myth is popular, it must somehow appeal to or reinforce the individuals who view it by communicating a symbolic meaning to them. This meaning must, in turn, reflect the particular social institutions and attitudes that have created and continue to nourish the myth. Thus, a myth must tell its viewers about themselves and their society.
Majid is finding a way to torment him in revenge. When we meet the grown up Majid and see that he is a quiet, simple, somewhat beaten man, we cannot imagine him having the technical knowledge or even the personality to undertake such devious and time consuming acts. Nevertheless, in an important scene towards the end of the film, Georges angrily accuses Majid of being the perpetrator. Majid is so distraught at the accusation that he invites Georges to his somewhat squalid apartment and slits his own throat in front of Georges within moments of his arrival. Instead of rushing to help Majid or even calling the police, we view Georges, again, as if from the viewpoint of a hidden camera perhaps as a metaphor for the conscience, shuffle around for a bit, clear his throat and then go off to see a movie at a multiplex movie theatre. At the end of the film Georges goes to bed and literally “pulls the wool over his eyes” by shutting his curtains, going to bed and pulling the covers over his head.

Mirroring the disturbing style of the opening sequence, the final scene in Caché also consists of a long, static shot with credits rolling across it. Entering on the left hand side of the screen is Majid’s son, who was introduced to us midway through the film but never named. Suddenly, although they have never met within the context of this film, he speaks (although we cannot hear what they are saying) with Georges’ son Pierrot, at his school. On the Director’s disc accompanying the Caché DVD, Haneke states that about half the audience notices this interaction, and the other half never sees it. The body language between the boys tells us that even though they have no connection within the plot or storyline of the movie, it now appears that in this dimension, they had been friends or at least known each other for many years. What does this mean? Haneke refuses to tell. Each person must take away with them their own interpretation of this last scene, and thus the entire film.

No real or redemptive moment is given to us by Haneke. Georges’ dream of getting rid of Majid has melted into a dream about an alternative conclusion. What if Georges had accepted Majid as his brother and the two had grown up together, enjoying the same social privileges that come with such an upbringing? The outcome might then have been that Majid’s son and Pierrot would attend the same school and have the same friends. In fact, they may have been like cousins and as close as brothers. Perhaps the last scene of the movie would have been indicative of this other, seemingly far happier outcome. But the reality is that Majid’s son is unnamed, he is unrecognised and since no mention is ever made of his mother, he appears almost as a cipher manufactured from thin air, yet even with his father gone, he, like generations of his French Algerian brethren continue to carry out their lives in French society.
In an interview on the DVD, Haneke claims that the film is ultimately about the presentation of truth. His films “are an appeal for a cinema of insistent questions instead of false (because too quick) answers, for clarifying distance in place of violating closeness, for provocation and dialogue instead of consumption”. What interests him is how many different ways the truth in any situation can be construed, and that it is dependent on each witness’ or participant’s perception that informs their version of it. The story in Caché serves only as a framework on which to hang the various points of view of the characters. In this way, Caché presents the microcosm of a bourgeois family as the macrocosm of a society which is kept in line by both an interior and exterior system of surveillance. The interior system of surveillance is that of conscience and memories, the exterior is how the camera sees society. Clearly all mediated versions of seeing, many of which have become spectacle, are examined by Haneke and should be examined by us.

Exposing the conditions of our “audiovisual regime” by means of highlighting verisimilitude as resemblance and using digital versus analogue technology, Haneke creates Georges as a reactive character rather than an active subject. Again, he denies the role of witness, as he denies the “other” by denying Majid. Our audiovisual culture seems to have digitally perpetuated itself, but with disturbing consequences. Under the terms of this digital dispositif the “loss of aura” is experienced because the subject is now missing entirely for the circulation of images. Georges has no conscience because he has no continuity of moral events in his visual field, and therefore no moral or ethical activity awaken in his field of vision. Even though the people around him and his memories and dreams prompt him to react, he ignores all and retreats. Georges is the subject, a pure product of surveillance who is relatively bereft of moral agency.

**Conclusion**

Because digital filmmaking allows the desubstantiation and reassembly of images as well as their infinite reproduction, Haneke has chosen to use digital techniques to explore the consequences for open seeing when vision is impaired. By presenting us with characters who perceive that something is wrong, but who are unable to determine exactly what that something is that has been lost from the field of vision, Haneke propels his audience ultimately along a moral trajectory. In the end it is up to us to determine what action, if any, we will take in order to reinstate the original conditions of vision and to see more truly.
Conversely, Arnold’s use of digital technology and the “Dogme 95” technique of shooting to capture the raw, dirty realism of urban life create a false transparency of sorts, in which nothing is hidden and everything is exposed, but only to the watcher who has the power to use her information at will. Both films tell us of characters struggling with their conscience, but in Red Road the bulk of the “moral” work seems to be done by Clyde, the watched, rather than Jackie the watcher. Although Jackie’s character is set up to be the victim, it is Clyde who is equally victimised by her because she plots and plans her attack on Clyde, whereas Clyde’s crime was a moment of stupidity for which he is profoundly sorry. Jackie’s loss is greater, of course, but by portraying Jackie’s vengeful activities as acceptable because of her loss is troubling. Arnold, it seems, suggests that the audience may want to eat its cake and have it too, and that Clyde should go through more punishment meted out personally by Jackie and only then be forgiven. In the end, however we are left understanding that while Jackie’s actions are not portrayed as acceptable, they are explicable. Clyde and Jackie each have a chance for something better but the mournfulness of the final song suggests that there is no guarantee of something better on the immediate horizon.

Haneke doesn’t even offer us a piece of the cake. Unfortunately, Georges’ way of dealing with his conscience is to continue to deny the reality of what he saw and what he was told. As in the penultimate scene, he simply swallows a couple of sleeping pills, closes the curtains to his bedroom, shuts his eyelids and dreams about Majid as a boy being hauled away screaming to the orphanage, as Georges’ parents retreat into their home. Georges chooses sleep rather than face the consequences of his actions. Of course in Georges’ mind, since the actions were those of a six year old child, he feels no remorse for what he has done, and considers that he has no duty to repair any damage that had occurred as a result. This was the conclusion the boy Georges dreamt of, and the adult Georges carries on dreaming the same dream, except that Majid, who commits a brutal and visceral suicide by cutting his own throat in front of Georges, has been sent much further away than the orphanage this time. His conscience, then, is sufficiently buried under the weight of years that have passed between then and his present. Because he will not accept blame, or apologise or allow his conscience to be “bad,” he therefore opts out of any chance to seek forgiveness for his deeds.

22 In 1995 a collective of Danish directors, including Lars von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg, established the manifesto below to govern the manner in which their films were to be shot. They named this style “Dogme 95”: The Vow of Chastity (abridged): I swear to the following set of rules drawn up and confirmed by Dogme 95: 1) Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in. 2) The sound must never be produced apart from the image or vice-versa. 3) The camera must be handheld. Any movement or mobility attainable in the hand is permitted. 4) The film must in colour. Special lighting is not acceptable. 5) Optical work and filters are forbidden. 6) The film must not contain superficial action. 7) Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. 8) Genre movies are not acceptable. 9) The film format must be Academy 35mm. 10) The director must not be credited. From: <http://cinetext.philo.at/reports/dogme_ct.html>. Web. Dec. 2012.
The responses of the characters in *Red Road* and *Caché* highlight various aspects of the surveillance film genre, complete with embedded problems: how do subjects reinsert themselves into the scheme of visibility and become active, moral agents with an embodied conscience? How do subjects become “ethical subjects” in Hannah Arendt’s sense of the term within “the web of relationships and the enacted stories”? (HC, 181)

The dilemma is contained first in whether or not we are even aware that we have removed ourselves from the scheme of visibility. In our audiovisual regime, are we watching or being watched? In becoming accustomed to systems of surveillance and desensitised to spectacles of violence on the multitude of screens in our lives, we risk the loss of our conscience, and, if this is so, what will take its place? These are the questions that we need to be asking ourselves if we are to keep hold of and restore the conscience we so obviously require to operate ethically within our society.
CONCLUSION

Surveillance: The Spectacle and the Witness Revisited

The task I undertook when I began this thesis was a wide-ranging and at times, seemingly an unwieldy one. The thesis has demonstrated that the current ambivalent and yet symbiotic status of our relationship with mechanical surveillance suggests that we may have become more reliant on mechanical surveillance than our own inner eye. Since surveillance is a concept with its own multiple definitions and diverging properties, I chose to approach the topic through the lens of visual culture with a critical focus on two predominant discourses: the spectacle and the witness. The underlying argument and direction of this dissertation, therefore, has been to present the idea that certain “elements of the apparatus”, an abstraction that Foucault defines as “dispositifs”, described as “historically specific totalities of discourses and practices” (DDMF, 206, Note 3), plays an active part in providing the impetus for some of the major developments in our increasingly surveillance-oriented society. Similarly, Debord states that “the spectacle is not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (SOS, 12).

Guided by the Debord’s critical theory of the spectacle (1967) and in particular his description of the spectacle being “both the result and the project of the existing mode of production”, yet “not a supplement to the real world” but rather “an additional decoration” (SOS, 6), I was able to exemplify and reflect the trajectory of certain outstanding events that became significant moments in Western history. I then analysed particular works of art and media chosen to reflect the changing social, political and technological landscape in conjunction with these events. Within these realms, I have consistently highlighted the significance of the witness as the one who provides meaning to that which is seen in the lived experience.

I found it helpful to correlate the notion of the spectacle and the position or absence of the witness directly with Benjamin’s earlier concern in 1936 (especially regarding the increasing use of film) about the consequences that stem from “the mechanical reproduction of art” namely, the loss of authenticity or “aura” in representations. Readily available reproductions are, however, a double edged sword. I take up the claim underscored by Benjamin regarding the loss of authenticity, and Debord’s point about moving away from everything that was directly lived, by addressing the disappearance of an important component of society, namely the role of the witness. It is for this reason that the vital role of the witness is widely discussed and referred to frequently throughout this work.

Debord theorises that the society of the spectacle emerged as a result of the development of technology within an emerging realm of visual culture. As I lay out in the
opening argument in the Introduction, the reproduction of art and images created the possibility of a surplus of representative images and the necessity of collecting and archiving multiple images that could be both separate and observable by society. The emergence of a regime of visual representation in turn promoted the institutionalisation of the spectacle that underpins what has since been identified as the visual regime.

The argument laid out in the first section is that there is a prima facie case for the view that a further surveillant regime had arisen by the mid-1930s, and that it has become a constituent part of modern life. The introduction of a surveillance point of view in films was taken up in Chapter One, by focusing on four German films by Fritz Lang, a group of films that made use of emerging camera technology and filming techniques in the 1920s. These films also promoted the notion of the spectacle as it was viewed in light of what was considered an increasingly mechanised era of modernity. Here, I considered M and Lang’s entire Dr. Mabuse series, released mostly in the early 1920s and 1930s. Lang’s final film, The Thousand Eyes of Dr. Mabuse, (1960), was chosen as a way to foreshadow the future, in which the intensification of surveillance as various surveillance cameras and television screens are portrayed as embedded within the architecture of the building where the action takes place. I then diverged from film to painting in Chapter Two to include Picasso’s masterpiece about war, Guernica (1937), a mural which this dissertation argues is one exemplification of the Benjminian “aura”. The analysis of this painting is juxtaposed with the discussion in Chapter Three about the spectacle as demonstrated in Leni Riefenstahl’s film, Triumph of the Will (1935). This is included to describe a pivotal moment when the film’s artistic director is hired by the Nazi government to purposely mix a flamboyant documentary style with a propagandistic motivation to promote war and fascism.

In Section Two, “The Role of the Witness and Testimony in Films Regarding the Holocaust after Bilderverbot”, the argument for the witness is explored that suggests that a counter-weight to the spectacle and its mass appeal can be, but is not always fulfilled by the role of the witness. I employed a discussion of the Holocaust because in an event so grand in scope and devastation as Annette Wieviorka states in The Era of the Witness, there was an “imperative to honour what is now called, at least in France, ‘the duty to remember’”, which brought the importance of memory into play. Four chapters examined films pertaining to the Holocaust and the televised trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann laying the groundwork for adducing the witness. The witnesses here exemplify the authenticity of an event that had been (and is still at times) seriously questioned as having actually happened. I take the position that the witness must step forward in order to fulfil the need for an ethically informed vision.
The third and final section of this dissertation, “Truth and Consequences in the Digital Turn: The Dawning of the ‘Third Consciousness’ in a Surveillance Society” addresses what W. J. T. Mitchell refers to as “one of a number of “pictorial or visual turns”, meaning the transformation of photography from what was traditionally a conceptual and contextual materiality to the current predominantly digital mode. Mitchell describes this “turn” as a “specific form” that “is not unique to our time” (SSVC, 173). The two chapters contained in this section consider how the dispositif associated with the rise of digital image-making changes the discourse regarding visual culture under the new terms of the visual regime. In my argument, I noted the increasing use of digital cameras and suggest that evolving transformations in technology and conceptual fields have contributed to the evolution of a different kind of operator, splitting off and away from the original status of the witness. Because this technology often has no need for a human operator to be present, my position regards the witness as the missing link where moral conscience and viewing have come apart.

The example I use to demonstrate this dispositif or turn begins in Chapter Eight, where I present a discussion about the widely disseminated digital photographs that emerged from Abu Ghraib Prison in the form of a mass media spectacle in 2004. Even though further explanations of how such photographs came to be posed and documented are presented by Errol Morris in his film Standard Operating Procedure (2008), through extensive interviews, his evidence indicates that the perpetrators and therefore we ourselves are capable of being even further distanced from the lived experience. There can be a distinct absence of moral conscience here, even when they or we are placed within the frame. My argument states that the terms of witnessing have been so disrupted by the ubiquity of digital technology that the witness in Benjamin’s sense may seem entirely absent, because the witness has ceased to stand outside the sphere, or has disappeared altogether.

The final chapter of my thesis examines this concept in two films, Andrea Arnold’s Red Road (2006) and Michael Haneke’s Caché (2005). These surveillance genre films portray two versions of contemporary urban existence in different European cities. Red Road features the physical ubiquity of CCTV cameras, what they view, and the lonely life of a woman who is employed to operate them. Caché, on the other hand, is entirely free of all physical cameras, and is shot at times as if the audience is surveilling the actors, and at other times as if we are sitting alongside the actors, watching video tapes of their lives under surveillance, indicating a troublesome blur between the lines of living and living under increased systems of surveillance.

Where we go from here in how we approach surveillance, the witness and what we do with the information provided is key to making further, significant contributions to the
scholarship of surveillance in visual culture. One of the over-arching themes throughout my investigation is the assumption that our ocularcentric tendencies have been a steadily developing and predominant feature of twentieth-century Western culture, and, that this tendency continues unabated in the twenty-first century. Certain consequences have developed and continue to ensue, particularly for the role of the witness. Another far reaching consequence is that we have allowed our lives to be increasingly “watched” in a multitude of ways. We cannot deny that much of our lives, whether for personal convenience or through the exercise of the power of the state, are documented, surveilled, tracked and monitored. Although this often takes place invisibly, this thesis suggests that this condition has been facilitated in part by certain components within what we define as visual culture. Certain films, television shows and other media, including fine art, have helped to inure us to the nature of watching and being watched by others, whether these others are human or mechanical, seen or unseen. In many ways, we have allowed the spectacle to replace the activity of critical thinking. Critical thinking is needed, not constant and passive recourse to the spectacle. The witness is the one who should in the end, deliberate with conscience, engage in discourse, and finally render judgment in ways which include the vital information provided by our senses, rather than depend solely on the technologies that we have created to supplement and replace them. Therefore, it is my conclusion that for ethical reasons we stand at a crucial point in the history of visual culture where the witness must be reincorporated within the personal, social and political sphere.
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