

## INTRODUCTION

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# Concentrationary Cinema

GRISELDA POLLOCK AND MAX SILVERMAN

*Night and Fog* made a decisive contribution to the way we regard the concentration camp system, while apprehensively inventing a gesture of cinema in order to face it. By assembling archival footage – some of it known, some of it revealed to French audiences for the first time – Resnais shaped our images of the camps.  
*Sylvie Lindeperg*<sup>1</sup>

Remember that the concentration camp system even from its origins (which coincide with the rise to power of Nazism in Germany) had as its primary purpose the shattering of the adversaries' capacity to resist.  
*Primo Levi*<sup>2</sup>

The extermination camps appear within the framework of totalitarian terror as the most extreme form of concentration camps ... Concentration camps existed long before totalitarianism made them the central institution of government.  
*Hannah Arendt*<sup>3</sup>

The anxiety can hardly abate in view of the fact that none of the societal conditions that made Auschwitz possible has truly disappeared, and no effective measures have been undertaken to prevent such possibilities and principles from generating Auschwitz-like catastrophes.  
*Zygmunt Bauman*<sup>4</sup>

A *concentrationary* cinema disturbs the slumber induced by post-war reconstruction by showing us the novel message of the *concentrationary* system in which we have to *see* what it means that 'everything is [now] possible'. It is a cinema utilizing radical techniques of montage and disorientation, camera

movements and counterpointed commentary to expose invisible knowledge hidden by a normalized, documentary presentation of a real that could become bland and opaque unless agitated by disturbing juxtapositions and prolonged visual attentiveness. It connects the living to the dead, past to present, here to there in order to shock us out of comforting dichotomies that keep the past 'over there'. It uses the travelling shot and shocking montage to expose us to contamination. It is a cinema of hauntings, 'in-betweens' and warnings heavy with a menace revealed under sunny skies and harsh colour. Concentrationary cinema embraces other films of the era that work in a similar way (for example Resnais's *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) and *Muriel* (1963), and Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962)). *Night and Fog* is, in our eyes however, the classic commentary on the *concentrationary* universe.

### *Night and Fog* (1955)

When the producer of Argos Films, Anatole Dauman, first watched the final cut of the film he had commissioned from Alain Resnais in 1955, *Nuit et Brouillard* (henceforth *Night and Fog*), he declared it a work of art ('un beau film'). He added, however, that it would never be widely seen.<sup>5</sup> Dauman was convinced that the film was a major aesthetic achievement, and not a straightforward documentary history. At the same time, the film was both so deeply shocking and so profoundly made that Dauman could only imagine a brief exposure followed by a forgotten life of remembered renown on the shelf.

In fact, the politicizing scandal that erupted around the film in 1956 because of the attempt to censor two scenes (Plates 11 and 40) and to prevent its exhibition at the Cannes Film Festival ensured a much wider engagement with both the film itself (regarded by fellow filmmakers as worthy of the highest acknowledgement for its cinematic originality – it was awarded the Prix Jean Vigo in January 1956) and with its politics of the representation of history and the production of cultural memory.<sup>6</sup> *Night and Fog* has since come to be acknowledged by film historians and scholars in general as not only the first French film offering a commemorative analysis of the events 1933–45 but perhaps the most influential, significant and certainly the most widely shown film on these events ever made. But what was the film about? What was its purpose? What are the effects of its self-consciously formal strategies – what Resnais called his *recherches formelles*, that is his formal experiments – in representing the recent past in the film's present? How do its politics and its aesthetics interface? In what ways did Resnais's 'gesture of cinema' to confront the concentration camps create an aesthetic of resistance to political terror, a terror epitomized by the concentration camp but presented as seeping beyond its spatio-temporal origins? Thus where and how should this film be

positioned in the history of cinema, in the history of a politics of representation, and in the creation of cultural memory of the horrors of the twentieth century? How, indeed, should its self-conscious aesthetic strategies of the use of the shot and the gaze, the relations between words and images, the intercutting of present and past and its imaging of the dead, be read?

Resnais's short but potent film has undoubtedly shaped the cultural imaginary of generations, not because of its (relatively limited) commercial distribution, but because of its pedagogical exhibition in schools and synagogues, university courses and festivals, and in museums and at conferences.<sup>7</sup> For many people worldwide, however, the film's selection of photographs, its combination of documentary and fiction-film footage, its montage of still and moving images, its compellingly haunting commentary combined with charged discordant music, its cutting between pans across abandoned ruins filmed in colour and swiftly-edited montages of fearful images in black and white, have established in their memories an iconic imagery of what they understand now as 'the Holocaust'. We can trace this connection in anecdotal evidence, and in the regular referencing of *Night and Fog's* images in later films, and even in what has become an unconscious visual memory of the event of the attempted destruction of European Jewry.<sup>8</sup>

But what does it mean to name the film a 'Holocaust' film? Does it concern the specificity of its content? Could it indicate the emergence of a new rhetoric for memory? Are we sure that we know to what we are referring by using this name for several historical events?

The name Holocaust, deriving from the Greek *holokauston*, meaning burnt whole, originates in the Hebrew word *olah*. *Olah* was the most sacred sacrifice in which, exceptionally everything, was wholly consumed by fire so that the scented aroma could rise to serve the deity. Freighted, therefore, with problematic religious and specifically sacrificial overtones that are utterly inappropriate to a modern crime of mass genocide, the term became a widely used name for the attempted destruction of European Jewry between 1941 and 1945 only after the mid-1950s. Capitalized, the Holocaust was effectively consolidated in Euro-American popular cultural memory by its use as the title of an American TV series about the destruction of Jewish Germans, *Holocaust*, created by Gerald Green in 1978, and watched by millions of people in the United States and across Europe.<sup>9</sup> Yet, as Jon Petrie has shown, uncapitalized 'holocaust' had as varied a semantic life, and as completely a secular range, before 1933 as it continued to have after 1945. Promiscuously it can signify both the Nazi persecutions in general and the threat of nuclear disaster. This breadth of reference is also exemplified, for instance, in the fact that when the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was founded, President Carter and his Commission were pressed to ensure that the memorial was dedicated not only to the six million Jewish victims of the genocide, a strong meaning

of Holocaust, but also to the five million other victims of Nazism in Germany and its occupation of many countries.

We do not propose to enter into a calculus of suffering or comparative victimization. We wish to clarify how it arises through the confusions now created by this common term, the Holocaust, that, in common parlance, often conflates several different aspects of the violence and terror of the Third Reich under Nazism. Here we wish to explore *Night and Fog* through the prism of a different term – the *concentrationary* – in order to bring into view a politico-aesthetic dimension of cinematic representation that is at once historical, relating to the period 1945–55 in Europe, and theoretical and conceptual, reflecting retrospectively on the political novelty represented by the *concentrationary* system whose implications and dangers go well beyond commemoration of a specific atrocity, its time and its places.

This book aims, therefore, to offer a series of textual readings of Resnais's film through the prism of *Concentrationary Cinema*. *Concentrationary Cinema* is not a synonym for Holocaust film. We are not concerned directly with the debates about the representation or representability of the Holocaust (understood either narrowly as the Judeocide or, more broadly, as Nazi persecutions and atrocities inflicted on many peoples and communities). In order to avoid often sterile, and potentially anti-Semitic, arguments about whether or not there has been an excessive focus on the Holocaust as Jewish suffering compared with that of other persecuted minorities, we are proposing the term *concentrationary cinema* to refer both to a historically-created and realized system of terror that took place in real locations and to a theoretical concept that emerges from this state of affairs as a new political possibility.<sup>10</sup> *Concentrationary cinema*, understood as a cinema of critical reflection on both these aspects of modern life, therefore, constitutes what we will call a new politics of representation.

*Night and Fog* has been typically placed by film scholars at the very inception of the history of *Holocaust* film, namely films that represent the specificity of the attempted destruction of European Jewry (even though it has often been claimed that the event is beyond the limits of representation).<sup>11</sup> Thus, for instance, in 2006, Ewout van der Knapp edited *Uncovering the Holocaust: The International Reception of Night and Fog*.<sup>12</sup> Van der Knapp's collection studied the reception of this film in France, Germany, Israel, the United States and Britain. This book provides subtle and textured analyses of the cultural politics of memory and forgetting in the countries both most deeply affected by the attempted genocides of Jewish and Romany peoples and engaged in the Second World War. It emerges that, in the aftermath of the war, each country had anxieties about its own role, actions – or lack of action and complicity – in the persecution and attempted destruction of European Jewry. Thus a study of uneven and locally-determined receptions of

a single film such as *Night and Fog* mirrors back to each nation both the emergence and formalization of the concept of the Holocaust to designate a specific historical occurrence, and the deeply anxious and contested series of variegated rather than single histories of nationally created cultural memories for this event.

In this book, however, we ask how we would read *Night and Fog* if we do *not* approach it as a Holocaust film. No one can doubt the use that is made of *Night and Fog* for educational, cultural and political purposes in reconsidering the terrible events of attempted genocide of European Jewry (and, of course, the Romany peoples, although no mention is directly made of the Romany persecution in the film and to our knowledge no protest has been made for that failure). Yet, paradoxically, one of the key criticisms of the film has often been that it did *not* identify, specify, or directly address the central horror of racially targeted genocide and the systematic process of the attempted industrial extermination of these two peoples. For instance, in the first substantial documentary study of the making and reception of *Night and Fog*, published in 1987 (which included a dossier of reviews and responses to the film), film historian Richard Raskin reprinted a well-known essay by Robert Michael, published in 1984, dissenting from the general acclaim of *Night and Fog* and its celebrated place in the study of the Holocaust by means of film.<sup>13</sup> Stating that '(w)e are now approaching the thirtieth anniversary of the most powerful documentary film on the Holocaust, *Night and Fog*', Michael reviews the way in which the film has been praised for its historical accuracy and unremitting confrontation with radical evil and then observes:

An otherwise historically and morally valid work, *Night and Fog* omits the particularity of the Jewish Holocaust and, in doing so, it emphasizes the universal at the expense of the particular ... it silently buries six million Jews in universal genocide. It sinks the specific case of the central victims in a sea of generalities, and the Jews vanish with hardly a trace.<sup>14</sup>

How do we make sense of this paradox? Although the film has become the foundation stone of studies of cinema and the Holocaust, and of pedagogical programmes about the Holocaust, in a very important dimension it only obliquely considers what is now understood by that term as denoting a racist and targeted genocide.<sup>15</sup> If the film did indeed universalize the genocide by not particularizing its racialized victims, why do we talk of *Night and Fog* as a Holocaust film? Perhaps the film was not centrally about the genocide at all? If so, are we looking at it in the wrong way? Without avoiding the question of Nazism's exterminatory racism, might there be other ways to understand the film's 'peculiarities'? Was it attempting to disclose a systemic logic within

which such ‘destruction’ could have occurred alongside other variants of the same economic and political logic?

In its original and final edited form, *Night and Fog* is at best oblique in its acknowledgement of Jewish suffering and the attempted extermination. The designation ‘Jewish’ occurs once in the commentary when it speaks of Stern, the Jewish student of Amsterdam (shot 23), although there are visible identifiers of Jewish victims in the image track. In this volume the film historian Sylvie Lindeperg, who has written a major historical study of the making of the film, carefully analyses this problematic through close reading of the archives of the film’s production process. She tracks the multiple influences on its final form so that we can better understand the conditions under which its particular set of representations was constructed. She shows how its starting point in a French commemoration of political deportation was eventually brought to the encounter that disclosed to the research team the fuller impact of the mass murder by the filming on its sites in Poland and the visits to Polish archives; this was, however, deflected in the editing of the final commentary (and not simply omitted in the way suggested by Michael) towards a different interpretation of its place within the *concentrationary* system that the film plotted out through its combination of visual montage and laconic commentary.

Lindeperg’s reading of the archives for what she calls a micro-history is contextualized by two further chapters that also stress the film’s place in the history of an understanding of the varied horrors perpetrated under the Third Reich. Film archivist for the Imperial War Museum, Kay Gladstone researches and analyses the making of a documentary film in spring to summer 1945 by the British and Americans, based on the materials filmed and photographed by the two armies in the large and small concentration camps that the Allies encountered and liberated in the spring of 1945. This footage was to be used immediately to make a propaganda film in the early summer of 1945 about what was then termed the ‘Nazi atrocities’ as witnessed in German concentration camps by the American and British forces. The joint Allied film was not, however, completed in 1945; the Americans rushed through their own, directed by Billy Wilder, titled *Death Mills* (‘mills’ being the American term for factory). The original rushes of the joint venture waited thirty years for an American broadcasting company to commission a recording of the commentary from Trevor Howard to be read over the newly-assembled footage that appeared in 1985 under the title *Memory of the Camps*. Like *Death Mills*, however, these initial film projects were never to be seen by their domestic publics. They were neither commemorative nor critically investigative in intent; their purpose was to overwhelm German viewers with the accumulation of the evidence of atrocity. They wanted to shock the German public with what had been perpetrated in their name. These films are,

therefore, relentless; their imagery repetitive; their effects desolating and numbing. When Kay Gladstone screened *Memory of the Camps* for our seminar on this project, the audience was 'crushed' into silence by the unbearable structure that simply moved from one camp to another to another. Beyond the psychological assault, there was one relevant effect for this project that became clear on viewing *Memory of the Camps* as it had been compiled as a journey through Germany: namely that there were so many camps. They were everywhere across Germany, in town after town, holiday resort after holiday resort. This in itself was a crucial disclosure of the sheer extent of the *concentrationary* system.

Also returning to film footage created in 1945 and reviewed in the 1980s, French art historian Georges Didi-Huberman casts a theoretical light on the history of understanding the encounter with what was disclosed to Allied soldiers when they entered concentration camps across Europe and were asked to film what they saw. Didi-Huberman 'reads' a fragment of black and white film created by a young American GI in the First Infantry Division of the United States Army, known as the Big Red 1, when his company liberated a small concentration camp at Falkenau, in what was formerly Czechoslovakia. The soldier was Samuel Fuller who later became a major Hollywood film director. Fuller recreated his historical experience in his film about his war experience called *The Big Red One* (1980). At a time when it has become possible to commemorate with great pomp the liberation of Auschwitz, historical knowledge about concentration camps still stumbles upon a methodological problem: the problematic of articulating the legibility of history through what the recorded documents make visible but not self-evidently intelligible, whether photographs or films about this period, from July 1944 (the liberation of Majdanek by the Soviet army, filmed by Roman Karmen) to May 1945 (the liberation of Falkenau, filmed by Samuel Fuller). The theoretical framework set up by Walter Benjamin regarding historical knowledge, however, enables us to better articulate statement with narrative, 'spirit of the place' with 'spirit of the time', image with 'legend'. The film made by Samuel Fuller in Falkenau was re-contextualized by Emil Weiss in 1988 when a now elderly Fuller was both interviewed about his fragmentary film at Falkenau and taken back to the site on which he had filmed an extraordinary event when the Sergeant of his unit ordered the dressing and formal burial by civilians from the adjoining village of inmates' abandoned bodies. This double moment of original documentation and retrospective reading exemplifies how images of horror can be transmitted under certain – aesthetic and ethical – conditions of legibility so that the indignity of men can be rendered with dignity. Highlighting an age-old coalescence between *imago* and civil *dignitas*, Didi-Huberman provides a critical reading of 'a twenty-one-minute brief lesson in humanity' of quivering images that touches on the

moment of encounter between the place – the concentration camp – and cinematic representation. Radically retheorizing notions of document, archive material, representation and interpretation of the image, Didi-Huberman asks the question: what did Fuller film? What does a study of this fragment reveal about the complex relations between visibility and legibility?

## **The Concentrationary I: History and Political Philosophy**

Our aim is to reframe the reading of the showing and the writing that is the film *Night and Fog* and to explore its complex relationships through the concept of the *concentrationary*. The *concentrationary* is both a historical and a conceptual tool. Historically, it relates to a specific space and to the problems relating to both the representability of that space and the legibility of the images created as its witnessing and archiving. The scholars in this collection were commissioned to develop extended, critical and theoretically diverse readings of the political and aesthetic complexity of the film in order to enquire into its specific ‘gesture of cinema’ in the face of the ‘image’ and the construction of memory for, and from, the *concentrationary* space. Conceptually, however, the *concentrationary* also refers to a system, enacted in a historically specific time and space, but not identical with that moment alone. We will now explain the sources for the term the *concentrationary* and indicate its potential value as a heuristic device for revisiting the politics of representation.

*Night and Fog*, declares Sylvie Lindeperg, is a ‘gesture of cinema’ addressing the *concentration* camps. This terminological precision matters. For many, and perhaps for cultural memory in general, the concentration camps – *Konzentrationslager* in German – have become simply the epitome of the Holocaust. They were not only where it took place; ‘concentration camps’ are synonymous with it. In general conversation and talking with students on courses about the Holocaust, it is not uncommon to hear the phrase: ‘the Jews were sent to concentration camps.’ But this is not accurate.

Systematic industrial genocide of Jewish and Romany peoples did not take place in *Konzentrationslager*. It took place in a specialized locus named *Vernichtungslager*: the extermination camp or *Todeslager*: death camp. Under the Third Reich there were also *Arbeitslager* – sites of slave labour as well as re-education camps. All part of the same totalitarian system, these different sites need to be distinguished practically and theoretically.

Existence in any of the camps created by the Third Reich was desperate and likely to end in death as a result of starvation, overwork, torture or brutality. But some prisoners in concentration camps survived from 1933 to 1945. American CBS reporter Edward R. Murrow’s famous and horrified report on Buchenwald in April 1945 included interviews with inmates who

had been there for over ten years.<sup>16</sup> Extermination camps, on the other hand, were small, few in number (only four, in fact, with two additional mixed sites at Auschwitz-Birkenau and Majdanek) and only about 340 people survived their relentless daily production of death. They operated between December 1941 and late 1943 (with the exception of Auschwitz-Birkenau whose death factory operated until October 1944). Most people, almost all Jewish or Roma and Sinti, transported to an extermination camp did not survive the day or sometimes the hour of their arrival.

Concentrationees [*Inmates of the concentration camps*] did indeed die. Immediate death was not, however, the purpose of the concentration camp, unlike the extermination camp, where it was the sole function. The concentration camps created a physiological and psychological mode of existence where men and women were intended to suffer until they gave in to its agonizing deprivations and/or its psychological destruction or were 'polished off', having thus been drowned by it, in the terms of Primo Levi. In his late reflections written in 1986, *The Drowned and the Saved*, Primo Levi concluded that whether it was planned or merely emerged through experience, in the concentration camps there was a systematic assault whose purpose required the living to experience their own psychological disintegration and human degradation before a death that was neither any longer a natural destiny (death as the normal punctuation to a life-time) nor a welcomed relief from suffering. Something worse than death had been created.<sup>17</sup> This does not mean that the *concentrationary* was worse than being horrifically murdered on arrival. It does indicate that in the *concentrationary* existence, men and women were forced to experience another kind of destruction that made death a preferable outcome even while death was, however, denied to them. Dying was planned as a prolonged deferral of release from torture, while being killed permanently overshadowed and menaced every moment. Living in the permanent anxiety of its unpredictable imminence infected all obligatory living – that is *concentrationary* life – with anguishing terror that changed the very meaning of living and dying.

The populations of concentration camps were diverse, in terms of nationalities and reasons for their incarceration. It is vital, therefore to disentangle the confusion between two sites of terror: concentration camps and their expanding and multi-formed populations on German soil and the extermination camps on Polish soil, which were few, short-lived, single-purpose and genocidal. Let us, therefore, put some necessary historical information in place.

The system of concentration camps began in 1933 with the conquest of the German political system by the National Socialists that led to the suspension of the Weimar Republic's constitution and the creation of a one party state and a dictatorship. Camps were opened following the initial political victory to destroy all political opposition. Their populations had

contracted by about 1935, only to grow again between 1937 and 1939 with the beginning of the persecution of German Jews following the Nuremberg Laws (1935). Between 1939 and 1941 there was a significant expansion of concentration camps. Their populations increased with the military occupations of surrounding countries and expanded progressively over the war years. After December 1941, the SS, already having taken over the concentration camp system from the SA in the later 1930s, was charged with the secret creation of hidden and dedicated sites of extermination for two peoples designated for total annihilation by the enactment of the Final Solution, minuted at the infamous conference at Wannsee, outside Berlin, on 20 January 1942.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, we need to grasp the fact that a vast network of concentration camps, ultimately numbering over 10,000, was built across Greater Germany, housing German political prisoners, common criminals, social undesirables, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses and the deported political prisoners from countries occupied by the Germans as a result of the Second World War. The fluctuating population of these camps rose from about 4,000 in 1933, when the incoming National Socialists aimed to eradicate all domestic political opposition, to over 700,000 by January 1945. The names of major camps include Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück (for women), Oranienburg, Struthof, Neuengamme, Dachau, Flossenbürg, Gross-Rosen, Mittelbau (Dora), Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen and Mauthausen.<sup>19</sup> Historian Wolfgang Sofsky calculates that 1.6 million people were admitted into the *concentrationary* system between 1933 and 1945, and that 1.2 million died in the frightful conditions of starvation, overwork and brutality that characterized its regime.<sup>20</sup> Some of the concentration camps were small. Others were vast, rising to the size of a small city. Many had satellite camps radiating from them. Some were linked with industrial installations, munitions factories and were essentially places of slave labour. Some, like Auschwitz I, had been built for Soviet prisoners of war and housed the persecuted intelligentsia of what had formerly been Poland.

The concentration camps that have been etched into European cultural memory, and which have, therefore, wrongly come to be confused with the actual sites of the extermination – the genocidal face of the Holocaust – are those that were photographed and filmed when the Allies invaded Germany in 1945 and found the vast network of the camp system in its final horrific condition. It was from the selective elements of this chaotic archive that Resnais would, ten years later, attempt to construct his film as a representation of *the concentrationary system*. As the Allies advanced, camps were abandoned by the SS or were no longer being resourced or even minimally maintained. Thus, their thousands of inmates were discovered by the invading British and Americans in advanced states of starvation and suffering rampant disease,

having had no food or medical services provided for several weeks following often years of systematic malnutrition. These camps had huge international populations. For instance, liberators found 33,000 inmates alive in Dachau in a suburb of Munich from 34 different nations, including 1,000 Germans. Some of the German camps, such as Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald and Dachau, included Jewish prisoners who had not generally formed part of the normal concentration camp populations in Germany, with some minor exceptions such as notables kept for potential prisoner exchanges. Jewish prisoners were present in concentration camps in 1945 as a result of the forced death marches in early 1945 from camps such as Auschwitz in Poland, evacuated as a result of the advancing Soviet forces or late transfers of slave labour to the ailing German economy.<sup>21</sup>

The other site of Nazi terror and deadly violence is a very small number of four dedicated camps, *Vernichtungslager* or *Todeslager*, created after 1941 for one purpose only: industrialized murder of targeted populations of Jewish and Romany peoples. These were at Chelmno (1941–43, 225,000 killed), Treblinka (1942–43, 974,000 killed), Sobibor (1942–43, 250,000 killed) and Belzec (1942–43, 600,000 killed). Most of these small camps required merely a railway spur off a main line in rural Poland, gas chambers and crematoria, and barracks for some prisoners selected to run the death machine or do other work for the SS who controlled the camp and lived outside its barbed wire enclosures. A tiny inmate population serviced a daily system of death inflicted on thousands per day. These special details (*Sonderkommando*) were regularly killed and replaced with fresh incomers. At Chelmno, the camp was merely the site for the disposal of bodies of those murdered by being gassed by carbon monoxide in mobile gas vans that travelled from the site of collection to the site of disposal. Treblinka killed its victims by the same exhaust fumes, using a tank engine attached to the gas chambers. These small sites were closed as early as 1943 and were destroyed by the Nazis, planted over with small forests, or abandoned in the hope of erasing all traces of the mass murder. All members of the final *Sonderkommando* were executed. The few witnesses were survivors of these final executions. The extermination sites were never 'liberated', and thus they were neither filmed nor photographed, nor known to the Allies from direct experience. It was to these empty, almost obliterated and hidden sites in the Polish countryside that French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann returned between 1973 and 1985, with the two or three escapees or chance survivors of the final massacres or revolts and escapes when he made his epic film, titled *Shoah* (1973–85) exclusively about the destruction of Europe's Jewish communities in these places.<sup>22</sup>

Some Jewish people were also the temporary inmates of the initially KZ (*Konzentrationslager*) camps of Auschwitz (near Krakow and on the Polish/German border) and Majdanek (outside Lublin south of Warsaw). These were

both hybrid camps in Poland, although Auschwitz was officially part of Greater Germany at the time. Auschwitz, nowadays the name that is almost synonymous with the Holocaust, was in fact a network of 48 camps around a Polish garrison town Oswiecim. Auschwitz I (*Stammlager*, original camp) was established as a camp for Soviet prisoners of war in February 1940. Political prisoners from Germany began arriving in May 1940 and the camp was subsequently filled with Polish prisoners as the persecution of the Polish intelligentsia and political resistance intensified. Auschwitz II was begun in October 1941 at the nearby site of a Polish village whose name translates into German as *Birkenau* to ease the pressure on the original camp, but following the Wannsee Conference on 20 January 1942 that determined a 'Final Solution to the Jewish Question', namely mass extermination, parts of Auschwitz-Birkenau were progressively transformed during the spring of 1942 into a dedicated *Vernichtungslager*: a killing centre, using Zyklon B pesticide in vast specialized gas chambers and needing multiple, multi-ovened crematoria to deal with over a million bodies of those murdered between 1942 and 1944.<sup>23</sup> The height of its operation was between April and July 1944, when 475,000 Hungarian Jews, half of the pre-war population, were deported to Auschwitz and murdered at a rate of 12,000 a day for a considerable part of that period. It is now believed that out of 1.1 million who died in Auschwitz, 900,000 Jewish people were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau. This represents almost one sixth of the total number of Jewish victims of Nazism, and it indicates the vast scale of the industrialized process of mass murder at Auschwitz-Birkenau. It also reminds us of the equally massive scale of the extermination process in other Polish death camps, and of the direct mass killings undertaken by shooting by the *Einsatzgruppen* (taskforces) attached to the invading German army during *Operation Barbarossa* begun on 22 June 1941, as it moved into the Soviet Union and special squads systematically annihilated the rural Jewish populations in the Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia and beyond, village by village. These paramilitary death squads were responsible for over one million deaths, the largest of their killing operations taking place at Babi Yar outside Kiev, Ukraine, on 29–30 September 1941, when 33,771 people were shot in two days.

Industrial installations around Auschwitz, such as I G Farben at nearby Monowitz (to which Primo Levi was sent) required slave labour. As a result of the pressure from industrialists given the war-time labour shortage, the SS relented from their programme of total and immediate destruction of all Jewish deportees to Auschwitz-Birkenau; by July 1942 the SS had introduced selection of fit-for-work prisoners from the ramp at Auschwitz II. The last selection took place on 30 October 1944. About 60,000 prisoners were in the Auschwitz system as the Soviet Army pressed into Poland in late 1944 and most were death-marched westwards to Germany to the concentration camps.

The Red Army liberated about 7,500 prisoners in Auschwitz I, II and III on 27 January 1945.

In his periodization of the history of the KZ, the *concentration* camp, historian Nikolaus Wachsmann notes that, far from declining as defeat loomed, the population of the camps rose to their highest number by January 1945, 714,211, and that this number had been swelled by the forced death marches of surviving prisoners in the hybrid and slave-labour camps in Poland back into the German territories.<sup>24</sup> It is for this reason alone that some Jewish survivors were found in the concentration camps inside Germany when the Allies liberated and made infamous sites such as Dachau, Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen. These names that resonate in cultural memory as Nazi camps were in fact the largest of the concentration camps inside Germany, not the real sites in the East of the massacre of European Jewry and Romanies.

Thus, the *concentrationary* system in Germany was vast. Camps were everywhere outside cities and towns, in the countryside, beside famous resorts and picturesque villages. Wachsmann also makes clear that while the camps as a whole formed a system of terror created and run by the SS under Himmler, they exhibit a dynamic history of changing functions and improvised processes which run counter to the confused and abstracted 'idea' of the concentration camp that circulates in post-war, media-formed public memory. So we can ask what is the relation between the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question', code named *Operation Reinhard* (*Aktion Reinhard* or *Einsatz Reinhard*) undertaken in Poland (then named the General Government) after 1942 by the SS, and the vast network of concentration camps that had been set up slowly across Germany after 1933 whose populations continued to expand? Historians do not agree about the inevitable trajectory of Nazism towards exterminatory genocide.<sup>25</sup> There is considerable debate amongst them about its long-term planning or its emergence as another contingent adjustment to unforeseen events, such as the conquest of vast territories in the Soviet Union, and the problem of feeding the growing ghettoized populations 'concentrated' in the East. Although the SS had taken over the concentration camps from the SA in the late 1930s, and although the SS were also in charge of the extermination operations in the six key sites of mass murder, we must not conflate the two systems nor assume a direct relation between the two.

If historians have increasingly turned their attention recently to detailing the system and particular histories of the concentration camps between 1933 and 1945, political philosophers have analysed the meaning of the concentration camp as a '*nomos*', that is to say as a socially constructed ordering of experience which achieved an explicit realization in the actual camps of the Nazi epoch, but which exceed that historical actuality, having both precedents before 1933 (the infamous British concentration camps for the Boers during the Second Boer War of 1899–1902) and subsequent

incarnations that infiltrate contemporary social experience globally. Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben is best known for the following controversial proposition: ‘The camp, which is now securely lodged within the city’s interior, is the new biopolitical *nomos* of the planet.’<sup>26</sup> Taken seriously by political theorists and human geographers, Agamben’s arguments have troubled some Holocaust scholars.<sup>27</sup> Many appear to be uncomfortable with Agamben’s proposition because they read it as effacing the historical specificity of ‘Auschwitz’ (standing in for the genocidal Holocaust despite its ambiguity as a signifier) by suggesting that aspects of what occurred there might, or even do, recur in more normal conditions of contemporary society, for example, in our sporting stadia and television spectacles.

We would like to clarify this debate by distinguishing between the *historical* reality and specificity of the camps such as Auschwitz I, II or III, and Agamben’s identification of a *logic of the camp* which can, and did, occur historically in one form, but which also informs and translates into other instances. The distinction between the *concentrationary* and exterminatory, furthermore, may facilitate a better understanding of Agamben’s political-philosophical reading of the import of Primo Levi’s writing about his experiences in the *concentrationary* dimension that he, a Jewish prisoner, selected for slave labour in Auschwitz III, witnessed in both Auschwitz II and III. Instead of a misinformed and certainly dangerous conflation of two distinct sites (an actual soccer match played between SS and Sonderkommando representatives at Auschwitz II and contemporary sporting events), Agamben is using Levi’s analysis of the system to disclose a more recurrent logic of power that reveals itself as a logic of annihilation hidden within certain ‘normal’ social rituals and modern spaces. Of course, industrial mass murder is not taking place at the Olympics. Nor is Agamben reducing the reality of Auschwitz to a mere metaphor, a promiscuous figure for unrelated events. Neither is he generalizing nor universalizing a specific historical phenomenon, the Holocaust, which should be recognized for its unique horror.<sup>28</sup>

Agamben places that horror – but also the larger system of the *concentrationary* to which Levi, as an observer and participant of the camps for selected slave labour, gave his analytical witness – within a historical development of a political-legal event, namely the normalization of *the state of exception*. He traces a historically developed relationship between State (sovereign) power and the human body (its living and dying). Agamben notes that, historically, all States claim the right to a state of exception in which the normal legal protocols protecting the rights of citizens and limiting the power of the sovereign State over the body, and hence the life and death of the subject or citizen, may be suspended in confrontation with a national emergency. Under the *concentrationary* system created for real during the Third Reich, however, the typical legal boundaries that define the power of

the former over the latter become blurred, or even undone, creating a novel scenario in which law ceases to exist as the law that attempts to adjudicate on facts and actions and determine the legality of political acts of State according to a jurisprudential theory of the state. Under the totalitarian regime created by Nazism, *the state of exception* became a norm, eradicating the distinction between legality (often separated in democratic systems from executive political power and functioning as a court of appeal to monitor political action) and what the regime did. Once law is suspended, what is done itself becomes the law of the place, hence the camp becomes the emblematic site of the political system that creates it as its instrument. The camp becomes a model for a society in which law and fact are blurred. What happened historically within the Nazi and indeed the Soviet camps gives rise not only to a historical event we hope remains utterly unique, but to a paradigm that we must recognize can and does recur in other configurations because of a common logic. The nature of these other sites and moments of totalitarian or absolute power can then be read through their being traced, logically, rather than historically, to these Nazi camps: the concentration camp and the extermination camp, that in Levi's case lay side by side but were not identical. Survivor and witness to the system he so brilliantly anatomized as a system, Levi also rightly declared that he was not a true witness to the core horror – the gas chamber.<sup>29</sup> But Agamben argues that in writing of the physical and psychological destruction of human life *qua* humanness that was the *concentration camp's* systematic function, and whose epitome is the living corpse, the so-called *Muselmann*, Levi's writing bears witness to a political-legal event that has repercussions in other modern spaces in which an everyday normalcy co-exists with deadly violence and violation of the human which is not confined behind barbed wire. Hence, Agamben writes that 'the essence of the camp consists in the materialization of the state of exception and in the subsequent creation of a space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction.' Where this becomes the case, 'we find ourselves virtually in the presence of a camp every time such a structure is created, independent of the kinds of crime that are committed there and whatever its denomination and specific topography.'<sup>30</sup>

Agamben's reflections on the profound significance of the camp for understanding both a specific historical event and a more general logic in contemporary society can best be grasped as politically and historically necessitated extensions of Michel Foucault's earlier theses about the novel logic of modern power as disciplinary, and modern States as those which extend, via disciplinary measures, power over the bio-political sphere of people's lives. In his analysis of distinctive modern forms of power, Foucault had identified key spaces through which to track the intricate relations between modern disciplinary power and its prime object, the body, which

typify Modernity: the hospital, the asylum, the school, the family and the prison. The camp is not merely a new form of prison, a carceral space that sets apart the criminal from the citizen after due process of law. Agamben's reading of Primo Levi's writings on his experience in and, more importantly, his analytical observations of Auschwitz II and III enabled him to identify a novel space of bio-political power relations through which historical events associated with the Third Reich become emblematic of a widespread political condition, never as heinous, but still necessitating our knowing vigilance and political resistance. This space and its *nomos* Agamben calls 'the camp'. Radical dehumanization extending to industrialized extermination of human life were features of the historically realized camps of the Third Reich. Rather than focus on the specificity of the extreme crime that is industrial extermination of selected human groups in specialist sites, Agamben alerts us to the *logic* that, having made that crime possible within a system of the camp (even if the specification of the racialized targets for extermination derived from a different logic within Modernity and specifically Nazism), exceeds that specificity and indicates that we may now live in a world in which what was once an exceptional 'state of exception' could, by the erosion of law that protects democratic polity, be enacted on many scales as a 'normal' procedure of contemporary societies, and to which we have become inured or inattentive.<sup>31</sup> The exception becomes a normal fact of management of certain kinds of populations, from economic migrants to untried political opponents. Looking away, failing to notice, tolerating what should be resisted, create conditions of complicity with logics that have within them both a dreadful historical past and a contemporary capacity to poison the world with 'campness', which is at once an actual zone or space within the polity and a mental structure disabling the kinds of political anxiety and resistance that should revolt against any instance of the camp logic utilized by contemporary social or political authorities.

This intersection of historical precision and politically structural argument about the spaces of modern power and its object, the human body, defines the first dimension of the *concentrationary* with which we are working. It opens up analyses of Resnais's film to new readings. Taking up the question of not looking away but attending to what it might be that Resnais's film presented to be seen, encountered, and even felt, as an ethical or a political response to the *concentrationary*, two chapters differently address Resnais's *aesthetic* strategies for effecting an encounter via film with this *concentrationary* that has ethical or political effects.

Film and literary scholar Emma Wilson has long studied Resnais's cinema in general and has identified some of its recurrent concerns with materiality rather than vision. Wilson argues that *Night and Fog* first gives form to a concern, felt through the decades of Resnais's feature filmmaking, with the

possibility of (physical) contact with the dead. This concern can be read as an ethical gesture of refusal to forget or to deny. Wilson suggests that for Resnais, the attempt to find a mode of response to the camps encompasses a move to conjure the dead as animate, physical and tangible. This is effected through the use, on the one hand, of still photographs and moving images, and, on the other, through attention to material objects, clothing, personal effects and even physical remains. The film depends on attention to effigies of the dead, their imprint on film, to the material items with which they have come into contact, and, most excessively, to the items into which their remains have been transformed. Touch, tactility, the desire to hold the dead still animate, give way, in the underworld of the film, to abject, obscene contact with inanimate and disintegrating matter. As Resnais pushes his film towards tactility, investigating film as medium of sensation and contamination, Wilson suggests that he draws his viewer to question any possibility of sure purchase or contact. Yet the aesthetics of such cinematic 'contact' bring the viewer to an ethical as well as political attentiveness to the threshold between human life and human death and an inhuman domain that produced death as it produced things from personal remains.

Libby Saxton, author of a major study of French film and ethics in relation to the Holocaust, raises the issue of attention through considering the act of witnessing. She suggests that one of the recurrent motifs in the archive photographs and footage used in *Night and Fog* is that of the observer, bystander or witness. Like the censored French *gendarme* at Pithiviers, these figures often lurk at the edges of the frame, yet their presence marks them as actors in, rather than simply spectators at, the events depicted. Simultaneously inscribed in the images are the looks of another set of actors, those of the Nazis, Allies and, in certain cases, deportees operating the cameras, alongside Resnais's own. In representing onlooking as an inherently political act, whether of collaboration or resistance, Saxton argues that the film implicitly questions the possibility of neutral bystanding in the face of the *concentrationary* and positions its viewers as both responsible and complicit. Saxton argues that *Night and Fog* was one of the first films to ask what it means to 'regard the pain of others' (in Sontag's phrase) and to view such spectatorship in political and ethical terms, issues which gain urgency as our culture becomes increasingly mired in unprocessed images of abjection. While the film has been canonized as a monumental injunction, its dialectical, rather than didactic, form implicates viewers differently at different historical moments (Algeria, Carpentras, the Balkans, Rwanda, Iraq). While it has been instrumentalized as an ethical touchstone, a model of virtuous filmmaking instructing in virtuous viewing, its elisions and blind spots hint at a strategic prioritization of political agency over ethical reflection. Resnais's film poses, according to Saxton, prescient questions about the relationship between a

politics and an ethics of spectatorship: to what extent does politically engaged viewing lead to an evasion of ethical responsibility? Conversely, to what extent does a properly ethical response entail a retreat from politics in the face of atrocity perpetrated as a political tactic?

## The Concentratory II: Aesthetics and Politics

Having outlined the political and philosophical basis of the *concentratory* system and its emergence as a new possibility of shaping the human, we need to define the politico-aesthetic roots of the term *concentratory* that informs our notion of *concentratory cinema*. In terms of a conjunction of aesthetics and politics the phrase *concentratory* derives from articles first composed and printed in Paris in 1945 but published as a book in 1946 by David Rousset (1912–97) under the title *L'Univers concentrationnaire*, 'the *concentratory* universe' variously translated as 'The Other Kingdom' referencing Albert Jarry's Dadaist play or 'A World Apart' – thus losing the visibility and acoustic force of *concentrationnaire*.<sup>32</sup> David Rousset was a French political prisoner held in the German concentration camp of Buchenwald, outside Weimar. A Trotskyist at the time of his imprisonment, in his post-war writing Rousset aimed to produce a political anatomy – literally a disclosure of the hidden structure – of the novel political space of systematic terror that Agamben, following Foucauldian analysis of the novel spaces of Modernity, would later elaborate as the camp. Rousset named this space and its system *the concentratory universe*, arguing that the place was itself symptomatic of an extended political logic not confined within it. Rousset's notion of a *concentratory universe* invokes a political system of terror whose aim was to demolish the social humanity of all its actual and potential victims within and beyond the actual sites. Enclosed within the camp, the concentrationees experience its brute violence and pain directly in their bodies. They directly witness the terrifying novelty where 'everything is possible'. As the laboratory of limitless possibility the camp functions, paradoxically, as the heart of the totalitarian society that creates it at once as a 'world apart', utterly other to the everyday world beyond its barbed wire enclosures and as an emblem of total domination infecting and destroying all political life in the apparently 'normal' world around it. From experience inside the camp, Rousset argues that the camp is symptom of the *concentratory* as an infection of the entire social fabric.

For Rousset, the *concentratory* is not, therefore, a moment of extreme atrocity that occurred only in one place and at one time to be revealed by the liberators and thus cleaned up and cleared away. The concentration camp system marks the inception and initiating actualization of a new political

possibility in modern political life of a form of terror that, as a result of this realized experiment under the Third Reich, will always be with us now that it has been unleashed on the world. While the fully realized actualization of such terror had been unprecedented in this form until the 1930s, now that it has happened, become real, made into fact, it is a precedent and hence a constant menace. Not reducible to a term that signifies an event, such as the Holocaust, the *concentrationary* is the inception of a modern 'anti-political', anti-democratic political possibility that must be opposed by understanding its realized configurations, not only in Nazi Germany but also in Stalin's Soviet Union. Rousset used his own experience in Buchenwald to alert the French public to the gulag system in the Stalinist Soviet Union:

The existence of the camps is a warning. German society, both because of the strength of its structure and the violence of the crisis that demolished it, underwent a decomposition that is exceptional even in the present state of affairs. But it would be easy to show that the most characteristic traits of both the SS mentality and the social conditions which gave rise to the Third Reich are to be found in many sectors of world society – less pronounced, it is true, and not developed in any such scale as in the Reich. But it is only a question of circumstances. It would be blindness – and criminal blindness, at that – to believe that, by reason of any difference of national temperament, it would be impossible for any other country to try a similar experiment. Germany interpreted with an originality in keeping with her history, the crisis that led her to the *concentrationary* universe. But the existence and the mechanism of that crisis were inherent in the economic and social foundations of capitalism and imperialism. Under a new guise, similar effects may reappear tomorrow. There remains therefore a very specific war to be waged.<sup>33</sup>

In Rousset's *writing*, however, we can note that his analysis of the political innovation – totalitarianism – is created by constructing an *aesthetic* counter-representation of the camps. The text is not a dry political treatise. His book is not, however, anaestheticizing representation. Rather, it becomes clear that aesthetic effects of figurative language and stylistic devices are needed to convey as horrifyingly real what was hitherto only imagined. As literature rather than simple political documentation, Rousset sought to create a warning to contemporary cultures, by means of an affective and poetic representation, of the ever-present danger of what is no longer unprecedented because what was brought about in the camps themselves is the very sign of the novel forms of totalitarian societies that now exist. Although Nazism shattered the existing limits to, and hence terms of, representation of violence and dehumanization, as a result, we have to acknowledge that such violence

is now no longer unprecedented. The reality of what the Nazis enacted has created a model. It has left a memory. It could become a resource. It has become part of history and its representations are part of culture; equally as important, its real sites continue even if in different forms.

The *concentrationary* is, therefore, also part of the politics of representation – of thought, memory and imagination. Given the importance of Rousset's post-war writing to an elaboration of this politico-aesthetic idea of the *concentrationary*, in contradistinction to the more familiar contemporary Holocaust paradigm, let us look more closely at Rousset's text as both the initial analysis of the *concentrationary universe* and itself an aesthetic operation of (anti)*concentrationary* art.

In France a particular way of perceiving the concentration camps had emerged in the immediate aftermath of liberation, as many of the returnees were not 'Holocaust survivors' – that is, racialized survivors of the exterminatory programme of the Final Solution with which some parts of French society had sympathized, if not collaborated – but political deportees (including Rousset himself). Of the 115,000 political deportees from Occupied France, about 35 per cent returned. Hence there was a considerable constituency to bear witness to the *concentrationary*. Of the 390,000 French Jewish citizens, about 80,000 were deported and killed in the extermination camps; only four per cent returned. Of the 7,500 Jewish men and women rounded up during the notorious Vel' D'Hiv' *raffle* on 16 July 1942, 811 alone survived.<sup>34</sup> Under the Occupation, the resistance movement led to many thousands of political prisoners being transported to the concentration camps of Germany rather than the extermination camps in Poland specializing in killing Jewish Europeans to the East. Many deportees died in camps from the harshness of the regime; but also some (one third) came back and several wrote influential texts about the world they had endured, but also what they had observed as the system or logic of these other worlds.

The political deportees of occupied nations were sent to the *concentrationary* universe under a particular decree, conceived by Hitler and formalized by Field Marshal Keitel, dating from 7 December 1941 (which was, coincidentally, also the date of the first mass gassing of Polish-Jewish people in Chelmno, Poland). The purpose of the decree was not to kill but to 'disappear' the deported. They were to be cut off completely from any contact with the outside world, ensuring that their relatives and friends could find no trace of them. Handed over to the SS, they would effectively 'cease to exist' as civil or juridical subjects while living on in that knowledge of effaced existence through the regime of *Vernichtung durch Arbeit* (annihilation through work: slave labour). The decree that brought about this regime was the *Nacht und Nebel Erlass*, translating as *nuit et brouillard* (night and fog), and marked on its prisoners by the letters N N painted on their jackets.<sup>35</sup> Some of those who

survived this regime returned and produced (almost immediately) a compelling literature that was, it must be emphasized, written by intellectuals accustomed to writing political analysis, literary prose or poetry. These authors gave highly crafted and morally reflective testimony to their experience of *l'univers concentrationnaire*. Survivor of Mauthausen-Gusen *Nacht und Nebel Häftling*, Jean Cayrol (1911–2005) published a book of poems under the title *Poèmes de la Nuit et du Brouillard* also in 1946, while the resistance fighter Robert Antelme (1917–90), sent first to Buchenwald and then to a slave labour camp at Gandersheim before being discovered at the liberation on the verge of death from typhus and starvation in Dachau outside Munich, wrote *L'Espèce humaine*, which was published in 1947 by Gallimard.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, although the Jewish population of France suffered imprisonment and then deportation through French camps such as Gurs, Pithiviers, or Drancy, and then destruction in Auschwitz-Birkenau, or lived in hiding or escaped through Marseilles and crossing the Pyrenees, the public memory of the war in France was largely written as a memory of Resistance to the occupying German forces.<sup>37</sup> The experiences of the deported political prisoners substantiated this comforting narrative. The literature ranged from a study of the resilience of human solidarity even *in extremis*, offered by the defiantly optimistic Antelme, to Rousset's Trotskyist analysis of the *concentrationary* universe as a perverted (anti)political system, whose effects were not confined to those who suffered incarceration, but remained as a permanent threat to humanity.

Like Hannah Arendt after him, Rousset linked the *concentrationary*, therefore, with the larger political logics of capitalism and imperialism. But he also wanted to stress the novelty of its actual forms. In introducing his readers to this *concentrationary* universe, however, Rousset had to create a montage from the existing cultural repertoire of metaphors for 'other' worlds, both ancient and modern. For instance, if we look at his chapter headings which function as cryptic, poetic markers for the *concentrationary* universe, we find a strange mixture of imagery falling between surreal parody and Dadaist sarcasm:

*Les portes s'ouvrent et se ferment: The Portals Open and Close*

Although *porte* in French means both door and gateway, in English a portal is both an architectural term for an entryway and one used in science fiction as a magical or technological doorway to other worlds. The literary connotation of portal is with the entrance to Hell.

*First-Born of Death*

This evokes the tenth Biblical plague from the Book of Exodus.

*And God Said Let There be Night and Day*

The reference here is to the creation story in the Book of Genesis.

*In My Father's House are Many Mansions*

This is a citation from the Christian Gospels: John 14:2.

*What Shall it Profit a Man if he Gain the Whole World*

This is also from the Christian Gospels: Mark 8:36.

*Man does not live by Politics Alone*

A variation on the more famous phrase about that man cannot live by bread alone: Deuteronomy 8:3.

*The Dead Stars Pursue their Courses*

A corruption of an ancient text, Aesculapius III 24–25 *Hermetica* translated by Walter Scott and quoted in John Anthony West, *The Traveller's Key to Ancient Egypt*, p. 439.

*The Realm of King Ubu*

A reference to Alfred Jarry's play *Ubu Roi* (1896), a precursor of the Surrealist movement and the theatre of the absurd. Jarry's play *Ubu Enchainé* also provides Rousset with his opening epigraph that concludes 'You will see very far into hunger, cold and emptiness. It is time for our nap. The jailer will show you out.'

Faced with the task of rendering the extreme experience more accessible, therefore, Rousset depicts the *concentrationary* universe through mixing Biblical metaphors with avant-garde French absurdist literature. Rousset thus frames the 'otherworldliness' of the *concentrationary* universe in culturally-coded visions of heaven and hell and uses the legacies of the trauma of the imperialist Great War of 1914–18, as well as the proto-Surrealist Dada theatre, that was itself a cultural response to the civilization that produced that industrial slaughter. How do we make sense of this dependency on literary images? It might well be critiqued were we to be considering what Rousset described in terms of a Holocaust narrative, as the horrifying novelty of the experience would preclude both metaphorization and comparison. Many writers on the Holocaust, however, do not place it beyond all representation, but rather, in Saul Friedlander's words, at its very limits, because the limits of historical precedent had been breached by industrialized, racialized mass murder.<sup>38</sup> Yet, we are suggesting, the *concentrationary* falls under a different rubric from the debate on the Final Solution and thus it is possible to search for precedents without in any way compromising the uniqueness of the Holocaust. On the other hand, in a move that was focussed on the chronotope of Auschwitz that often blurs the distinctions between mass killing and systematic brutality, Theodor Adorno, in his essay on 'Commitment' (1962),

returned to his 1949 statement about the barbarism of poetry or art ‘after Auschwitz’. Adorno not only pointed to the exemplary work of Samuel Beckett as a decent and just response to that which comes ‘after’, but paradoxically to Franz Kafka, whose vision precedes the bureaucratic administration of a new kind of species killing.<sup>39</sup> Adorno demonstrates, in effect, how Kafka’s texts are imaginatively coincident with what became real in the *concentrationary* system. Thus the Surrealist poet Jean Cayrol, who wrote the spoken text to accompany *Night and Fog* (and to whom we shall turn shortly), also called upon Kafka to convey his first impression of the *concentrationary* universe: ‘As I arrived, I exclaimed immediately “It is Kafka! It is *The Penal Colony!*” I entered Mauthausen with Kafka under my arm, so to speak.’<sup>40</sup>

A possible explanation for the potency of the anachronism lies in the prescience with which a pre-war Kafka fashioned a literature disclosing in imaginative and fictional form some of the decisive features of Modernity itself. In his major sociological intervention *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman later came to identify the same features as the conditions within Modernity that could make possible racist, bureaucratically administered and systematic genocide.<sup>41</sup> In arguing this, there is, however, a risk of confusion. We have again invoked the Holocaust even while we are aiming to shed light on the *concentrationary*, not as a totally independent or separate dimension, but as a specific site within the network of terror and violence unleashed by Nazism after 1933. For our purposes here, however, the coincidence between the horrific reality of the actualized *concentrationary* universe – the Mauthausens and Buchenwalds rather than Auschwitz-Birkenau – and the specifically modernist literary projections of Jarry or Kafka created decades before 1933, suggest that the *concentrationary* universe’s extremity, and its extension into death factories, should not mask the fact that both depended on possibilities present not only in sociological Modernity (identified by Bauman following Weber as instrumental reason, bureaucracy and fear of ambivalence), but, as Rousset and later Arendt will stress, in capitalism and notably racist imperialism, where there were undoubtedly precedents inflicted on non-Europeans for what was later done in Greater Germany to Europeans.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the invocations by Rousset and Cayrol of absurdist or Kafkaesque modernism recognize in the *concentrationary* universe a political reality that was at first only allusively identified in imaginative disclosures, but for which these anticipatory metaphors and scenarios, like *The Penal Colony*, acquired the power of prescience that finally matched the experience concentrationees now carried ‘in their muscles’.

Normal men do not know that everything is possible. Even if the evidence forces their intelligence to admit it, their muscles do not believe it. The concentrationees [*concentrationnaires*] do know.<sup>43</sup>

If Rousset drew on metaphors from the past to convey the horrific otherness of the world from which he only partly returned, he equally wanted to insist that it had not disappeared: ‘The *concentrationary* universe shrivels away within itself. It still lives on in the world like a dead planet laden with corpses.’<sup>44</sup> What remains incomprehensible to those who never entered the actual camps but which is known by the survivors: *in the muscles* is not the immediacy of being murdered, but living with the absolute knowledge of a new kind of dying being ‘carved’ into the muscles on a daily basis. This radical possibility is the alteration of the course of human life and death:

Death lived among the concentrationees at every hour of their existence. She showed them all her faces. They came to know all her exigencies. They lived dread (*inquiétude*) as an ever-present obsession.<sup>45</sup>

Not confining the *concentrationary* universe to the encampment itself, Rousset then also names it a *disease* that infiltrates the entire social fabric in which it occurs: ‘The decomposition of a society ... in a fetid stench of destroyed social values ... a gangrene of a whole economic and social system. Its contamination spreads far beyond the ruins of cities.’<sup>46</sup>

Rousset’s final chapters, however, belie the dark vision of a pestilent and death-bearing hell that now infests the planet: ‘On the positive side, it is still too soon to reckon on the value of our experiences as concentrationees, but already it promises to be a rich one.’<sup>47</sup> What is the value? ‘Dynamic awareness of the strength and beauty of the sheer fact of living, in itself, brutal, entirely stripped of all superstructures.’<sup>48</sup> Faced with relentless hunger, dread and pain, Rousset places the concentrationee beyond all existing social and economic structures. Yet Rousset’s Trotskyist idealism, punctured by the *concentrationary* reality, discovers an unexpected humour which reminds him of the absurdist visions of Alfred Jarry and Franz Kafka whose surreal images, created before the *concentrationary* universe came into being, now ‘cease to be literary fantasies and become component elements of a living world’.<sup>49</sup> Through the discovery of humour as an objective pattern of the universe, Rousset reclaims his politics: the German experiment is not exceptional; other countries share the components of the crisis that led to the *concentrationary* universe; it may re-appear under a new guise; thus all anti-fascists must unite internationally against an enemy within.<sup>50</sup>

In the epigraph to her first essay ‘The Concentration Camps’, published in the American leftist cultural periodical *Partisan Review* in 1948, Hannah Arendt cites David Rousset to assert the political significance of the camps: ‘The SS made the concentration camp the most totalitarian society in existence up to now.’<sup>51</sup> Both central instrument and exemplary encapsulation of a terrifyingly total exercise of power – not merely over a political system but over the life and death of all it touched – the camps needed not only to be revealed for the

dreadful legacy of suffering and atrocity exposed to view when they were found abandoned by the retreating Germans, but also to be studied for the meaning of this novel system, however perverse or insane it appeared. Hence, Arendt follows Rousset in suggesting that it was necessary both to expose what had happened in the camps and to evaluate that knowledge in terms of analysis of now 'current' political possibilities. The camps introduced into the modern world a face of Modernity that politically demands the constant work of resistance to the totalitarianism the camps both enacted and emblemized but did not confine to their singular historical moment. Recognition of the existence of the camp therefore also demands the concomitant work of active reconstruction of the democratic and post-camp humanist project 'after Auschwitz', that is, after the radical deconstruction of democracy's deepest principles and European humanity's Enlightenment aspirations.

In the same essay Arendt recognized the difficulty the *concentrationary* writers faced in communicating their visceral experiences to the world to which they returned which necessitated a certain management of the reality they had endured. Hence she declares:

There are numerous such reports by survivors; only a few have been published, partly because, quite understandably, the world wants to hear no more of such things, but also because they all leave the reader cold, that is, as apathetic and baffled as the writer himself, and fail to inspire those passions of outrage and sympathy through which men have always been mobilized for justice, for 'misery that goes too deep arouses not compassion but repugnance and hatred' (Rousset).<sup>52</sup>

Thus to move the world for social justice, it is not sufficient to bear tales of atrocity alone. Arendt observes that Rousset and a German Communist prisoner from Buchenwald, Eugen Kogon (who wrote *Der SS Staat*, in 1950 which was translated as *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them*), write 'assimilated recollections' for 'the world of the living'. They try to communicate not only an understanding of the camps but also an examination of 'the totalitarian regime as a whole'.<sup>53</sup> Yet Arendt impatiently dismissed Rousset's desire to find 'consolation of an "extreme experience" in a kind of suffering which, strictly speaking, no longer permits of experience, and thus arrives at a meaningless affirmation of life that is extremely dangerous because it romanticizes and transfigures what must never under any circumstances be repeated on this earth'.<sup>54</sup> In a difficult move, therefore, Arendt appears to be arguing that an exclusive commemorative focus on the suffering inflicted in the camps – ultimately too difficult adequately to convey justly – would distract the political theorist from understanding the full import, for the future, of the

political novelty, and hence the continuing menace, represented by the camps *qua* products of a now realized totalitarian system beyond law. Arendt came to recognize the extreme danger in clothing Nazism's horrors in past metaphors that might adorn it as demonic or infernal. Too grandiose would be as dangerous as too atrocious. So how could any form of cultural response, written, theorized, filmed or imaged, mobilize resistance to this assault on the human condition?

For Arendt, then, the importance of the analyses offered by political prisoners such as Rousset or Kogon, combined with the evidence assembled for the Nuremberg trials of the Nazi regime and its perpetrators she studied so astutely, was to enable us to understand what had been tried out in the political laboratory for a new imperial world order in the camps of the Third Reich.<sup>55</sup> Not a Marxist like Rousset and Kogon who explicitly linked the *concentrationary* with capitalism, Arendt, none the less, also argued that what this laboratory tested out was nothing less than the destruction of the human being *qua* human individual:

The supreme goal of all totalitarian governments is not only the freely admitted long-range ambition to global rule but also the never-admitted and immediately realized attempt at the total domination of man. The concentration camps are the laboratories in the experiment of total domination, for human nature being what it is, this goal can be achieved only under the extreme circumstances of a human-made hell. Total domination is achieved when the human person, who somehow is always a specific mixture of spontaneity and being conditioned, has been transformed into a completely conditioned being whose reactions can be calculated even when he is being led to certain death.<sup>56</sup>

Having been experimentally destroyed in this *concentrationary* system, what is *human* in a human being emerges into theoretical clarity for Arendt. The horror of the *concentrationary* system was to find a means to detach organic life from human life in the person by means of three levels of destruction: of the individuality, the plurality and the spontaneity that, she concluded, fundamentally defines the human being. The camp system firstly erased all traces of the juridical person – identity, civil rights and access to the world. Secondly, it assaulted and aimed to destroy the moral person, creating a situation that removed all meaning from resistance, including martyrdom (that is, making dying have any social or individual meaning). Thirdly, the regime aimed at destroying spontaneity and individuality by 'the permanence and institutionalizing of torture' so that the human being was so reduced that s/he was forced to respond, in a conditioned manner, to basic organic functioning, thus further reducing both choice and personality.<sup>57</sup> Driven by

agonizing thirst and hunger, life was only the struggle for any kind of existence, which rendered normal forms of sociality, connection, affection and solidarity positively dangerous and irrelevant. Of course, we have testimonies of concentrationees to the necessity for such connections and human solidarity as the condition of any survival at all. Primo Levi reports precisely on his shock on arrival at Auschwitz of the complete absence of solidarity between inmates and incomers.

From her study of what happened in the *concentrationary* universe, Arendt redefines what constitutes 'the human condition' but not in the form of some generalizing universality. She defines what each person must uniquely enjoy as spontaneous action and what each person must actively practise as the thoughtfulness of our fundamental plurality as human beings. Plurality arises from natality. Natality is Arendt's term for the creative significance of the event of every human birth, which initiates the utterly novel beginning of an unpredictable singularity: 'the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting.'<sup>58</sup> The *concentrationary* systematically assaulted and in practice erased plurality, singularity, spontaneity and the capacity for action. From her study of the totalitarian eclipse of human history, therefore, Arendt created her larger political theory about 'The Human Condition', which is, therefore, a text we could propose as an example of (anti-) *concentrationary* art and thought.<sup>59</sup>

As a result of the Nazi experiment, it was now clear to Arendt that, for the very first time in history, the very concept of the human could not be taken for granted; it has to be specified and defended in this new confrontation with a political experiment in which the human condition could be, and was experimentally and for real, systemically eradicated, not only through swift and horrific extermination of specific racially othered populations, but precisely through the prolonged torment of the *concentrationary* existence that functioned to experimentally erode the civil identity, the emotional and intersubjective meaning and finally the possibility of anything beyond instinctual, organic bare life which the human individual had to endure and witness in those others around him or her already succumbing to this living death that was the sustained torture of the *concentrationary* universe.

The emaciated, starved and brutalized concentrationee so often imaged by Allied liberator footage and photography, and burned into public consciousness and cultural memory by repetition, becomes a terrifying figure of a living being who is, and yet is no longer fully, human. S/he is reduced to the body's dehumanized struggle for existence. Starvation has eroded brain functions, eyesight and hearing and worse; the starving organism consumes its own organs to maintain life to the bitter end. This is the systematic erosion of human life by reducing people to just-still-living corpses that would be

epitomized by the infamous *Muselmänner*, as they were named in Auschwitz slang, encountered by the liberators and taken up in Primo Levi's writings (and later in Agamben's study, *The Remnants of Auschwitz*).<sup>60</sup>

Although Arendt would depart from what she saw as Rousset's sentimentality, between her desire to analyse what happened so that it can never happen again and Rousset's contradictory blend of romanticism and clear-sighted recognition of a new *concentrationary* plague, there was, nevertheless, a conclusion that both shared. The specific novelty that will be the core of Arendt's thesis about concentrationary totalitarianism is Rousset's insight (previously quoted) that hereinafter 'everything is possible'. This is the menacing potentiality, the unimaginable and the exceptional made normal having crossed the threshold into actualization.<sup>61</sup> The purpose of trying to know the *concentrationary* is thus monitory rather than memorial. Agamben himself comments on this when he writes:

Hannah Arendt once observed that in the camps, the principle that supports totalitarian rule and that common sense obstinately refuses to admit comes fully to light: this is the principle according to which 'everything is possible.' Only because the camps constitute a state of exception – in which not only is law completely suspended but fact and law are completely confused – is everything in the camps truly possible.<sup>62</sup>

The analyses of Rousset and Arendt are fundamental in shaping the post-war idea of the *concentrationary* as this new potential for the destruction of the human, and the monitory warning to guard against its reappearance. This – the *concentrationary* – is, therefore, the context within which we would like to situate *Night and Fog*.

To this political-theoretical vision of the *concentrationary*, however, we must add another perspective derived from the poetic and aesthetic writings of a French camp survivor who was not a political theorist but the Surrealist poet and resistance fighter, Jean Cayrol, whom we quoted above. In a number of essays written after the war, Cayrol elaborated the idea of a *concentrationary art*: this refers to an aesthetic and poetic form of resistance to that which had come into existence as the *concentrationary* universe and from which he had 'returned from the dead', like a modern Lazarus, having died in some dimension without being actually killed. Cayrol's concept of a *concentrationary art* is not an art about the camps; it involves recognition of this new state of affairs (which contains both historical specification and general theoretical import) that then demands a response to what has been created by the '*concentrationary* universe'. This aesthetic response is a political resistance to that universe through aesthetic affectivity and poetic formulation. Why aesthetic? Why not purely intellectual, rational, factual, political or

philosophical? *Concentrationary* art both embodies affecting commemoration of the suffering and the dead and incites active resistance in the viewing or reading subject to the novel persistence of the *concentrationary* universe. This is now slumbering in the aftermath of the war but has the potential to be re-activated at any moment and anywhere, including within nations such as France. The legacy of the *concentrationary* universe is a political disease that can infect a whole society, allowing violation of human life and rights that are not seen as such, but are accepted under conditions of ‘emergency’, politically permitted states of exception. *Concentrationary* art is the art made by the returnees from this universe of death, who have in some ways already died as human beings, having lived with death daily, but must arise from this ‘death’ of their humanity to be constantly alert, creating what Cayrol named a *dispositif d’alerte*: a warning system, addressed to the present.<sup>63</sup> Cayrol thus uses Lazarus (in the Christian Gospels, Lazarus is the brother of Mary and Martha whom Jesus raised from the dead) as the emblematic figure of *concentrationary* art. The Lazarean hero is the returnee who has experienced in his or her body and mind that other planet in which political terror became a system, and must now warn us of the reality that ‘everything is possible’.

We suggest that this specific French politico-aesthetic context around the formulation of the *concentrationary* for the making of *Night and Fog* has been obscured by a different history of the emergence of the cultural memory of the event, one which was itself initially obscured by the focus on deportation, namely the exterminatory dimension of Nazism, now named the Holocaust. This version of cultural memory has, over time, screened out the specific conjugation of politics and aesthetics in the period between 1945 and 1955. The year 1955 – the year of the making of the film to mark the tenth anniversary of the end of the war – should be seen in its contemporary context: it was the occasion for both public commemoration and an ‘unconscious return of the repressed’.

It has been suggested that the belated emergence of a memory of a catastrophic event might be understood through the metaphor borrowed from medicine and psychology: trauma. On the level of the individual, trauma is an extreme event that overwhelms the psyche, which cannot assimilate what has happened according to the imagination’s available fantasies or the intellect’s known concepts. Thus, the event, that has really impacted the person affectively, becomes a latent, unformulated ‘thing’, a presence haunting the psyche it occupies without being known or remembered. Secondary incidents that share something with the original trauma can, however, trigger the unbound affective freight associated with it, endowing the new occasion with the latter’s frightful charge while also enabling the secondary event to discharge some of the originary terror that returns to supercharge this secondary staging. Can the psychological concept of trauma be translated into

cultural terms? There is no such thing as collective trauma because there is no collective psychic mechanism. But we can point to the magnification of individually experienced trauma that can lead to collectively shared experience. But we can also use the model of trauma to understand a cultural phenomenon of initially willed amnesia or resistance to the integration of a difficult or excessive historical event into cultural memory not for psycho-mechanical reasons, but for the cultural lack of representational resources adequate to the novelty that then functions as if traumatic: a ghostly disturbance without full registration according to available terms or tropes. Without positing a trans-individual psyche or collective unconscious, we can observe that the overwhelming and extreme historical event – traumatic because it happens but culture has no adequate representational precedents through which to know it – emerges, like psychic trauma, into cultural elaboration *belatedly*. Events such as anniversaries, or other politically traumatic events that themselves cannot yet be confronted but which share something with the originary traumatic event are often the trigger for delayed re-engagement with unprocessed pasts.<sup>64</sup> This is not to say that a detention camp or political torture is identical with Auschwitz, but similarities inject into the lesser or later evil the freight of anxiety because of possible, even tenuous, connection and because of a sense generated by political discourse of potential affinities.

Thus some of the authors in this collection move beyond close analysis of the specific dynamics of the film as text and situate Resnais and Cayrol's project as one that evokes the pressing questions of other politics in its own moment of production. The possibility for considering the film's work in relation to other instances of atrocity, troubled memory, or failed remembrance is explored through comparative studies.

In her chapter entitled 'Auschwitz as Allegory in *Night and Fog*', Debarati Sanyal reminds us that *Night and Fog* closes with a disquieting admonition: the narrative voice declares that we who have watched these images of atrocity fail to see the ongoing reality of *concentrationary* terror as it unfolds in different times and places, just as we fail to hear the endless cry of human suffering. The film's final gesture breaches the limits of historical documentary and opens up an allegorical reading of its testimony. In so doing, it also positions the spectator as a deaf and blind witness – if not accomplice – to contemporary iterations of the post-Nazi terror. The intersection of allegory and complicity upon which the film closes, indeed through which it *refuses* closure, might well explain the enduring force of its critique across historical horizons and geopolitical sites. Sanyal's essay hence probes *Night and Fog's* role in constructing an allegorical topography of the *concentrationary* experience. More specifically, it proposes that the dialectical force of allegory, along with the film's visual and verbal positioning of the audience as a potentially complicitous witness, open *Night and Fog* out to alternative historical projects,

specifically in a colonial and postcolonial context. As examples of such projects, Sanyal puts *Night and Fog* into dialogue with subsequent allegorizations of the *concentrationary* experience. At the same time, she takes up the troubling ethical questions that such allegories raise even as they mobilize political action at various historical junctures.

Joshua Hirsch also tracks the *concentrationary* potential across different moments of racialized violence. Hirsch's concept of 'posttraumatic cinema' (of which *Night and Fog* is an initiation), elaborated in his major study *After-Image: Film, Trauma and the Holocaust*, allows for just such an extrapolation from the *concentrationary* aesthetic of *Night and Fog*. Hirsch revisits some of the major arguments for this concept while setting its work in a relation with the film *Sankofa* (Haile Gerima, 1993) in which an African-American model, shooting a fashion spread in a former slave fortress in Ghana, 'falls' through time back to the historical moment of enslavement in an allegorical study of repressed memory and historical witnessing.

Max Silverman proposes that the concept of memory that we can derive from the film necessitates a reading that links one time and place with another. He argues that *Night and Fog* exemplifies Arendt's notion of 'fearful imagination' proposed in her essay 'The Concentration Camps' – that is, a way of seeing the absolute novelty of totalitarian rule unleashed on the world – through its invention of what Silverman names '*concentrationary* memory'. This is a concept of memory as the haunting (and hence a disturbance) of the present, a site of the in-between, of doublings and overlappings, of an uncanny superimposition of the visible and the invisible, the here and the elsewhere, and the living and the dead. Silverman draws out some of the implications of *concentrationary* memory to suggest that, for Resnais and Cayrol, 'fearful imagination' in the wake of the camps is one that must permanently unsettle all normalizing assumptions that, in the words of the film, 'all this happened only once, at a certain time and in a certain place'.

We believe that allegorical readings of *Night and Fog* are both a crucial part of the idea of the *concentrationary* (as elaborated by Rousset, Arendt and Cayrol) and are built in to the political aesthetic of the film itself. Our larger research project entitled *Concentrationary Memories: The Politics of Representation*, of which this collection of essays on *Night and Fog* is the first part, attempts to re-establish the context and importance of this focus alongside 'Holocaust studies'. It does not aim to displace the central horror of exterminatory racism and its instrument: the extermination camps. It does, however, seek to create analytical space between the exterminatory system and the larger and older *concentrationary* system beside which the genocide came to be enacted, in order to draw attention to the specific political meaning of the *concentrationary* universe and the idea of *concentrationary* art to challenge it, both of which have received less cultural analysis. Our aim is to reinstate

the historical and cultural understanding of that which seemed, to those who returned from the German concentration camps, the larger significance of the camps as the instrument of a novel totalitarian system that could morph under other political necessities in so-called democratic states and be enacted by other regimes of anti-democratic repression. Thus, without diminishing the necessity to research and analyse the horror of racism that led to the attempted genocides of the Final Solution, our project aims to explore the intersection of the politics and aesthetics of resistance in relation to the new possibility created in modern society by the totalitarian systems whose instrument and privileged site was the camp.

### **The Making and Reception of a Film**

By 1948 deportee literature had dried up. Thus, when Henri Michel and Olga Wormser, of the *Comité d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale*, completed their book *Tragédie de la déportation 1940–1945: Témoignages de survivants des camps de concentration allemands* (published by Hachette in 1954) and prepared a historical exhibition of the same name in November 1954 at the Pedagogical Museum at 29 Rue D'Ulm in Paris, they were already re-engaging with a past that had become dormant, but a past already shaped by images. Their pedagogical exhibition was greeted as a monument to the history of resistance, deportation and liberation. From this exhibition, the proposal to make a film about that history of the deportees and the system they endured was conceived and taken up by Argos Films produced by Anatole Dauman.<sup>65</sup> Although Sylvie Lindeperg will re-examine the film's genesis in her chapter, a short résumé is necessary here.

The film was commissioned in May 1955 and research began with a trip to Poland and attempts to gather further documentation, including from military archives. This is significant in so far as visiting Auschwitz and Majdanek took Resnais and his film crew to hybrid sites of both *concentrationary* and exterminatory terror, and also gave them access to archive materials of perpetrator imagery found by Polish and Soviet liberators of these complexes. Relatively less 'notorious' than Bergen-Belsen for the British or Buchenwald and Dachau for the Americans, Auschwitz, liberated by the Red Army, enters into representation. Because of his known left political position as a filmmaker, Resnais it appears experienced difficulties in accessing official French materials on the concentration camps, and he had been denied access to materials collected by the British (Gladstone explores the reasons in his chapter). He had visited the Netherlands and found the footage of the departure of a train from Westerbork deportation camp. As a whole, Resnais's film draws extensively on Polish/Soviet documents and even fiction films made after 1945.

At the end of November, Jean Cayrol watched in excruciating silence Resnais's mute montage. Fearfully transported back to the *concentrationary* universe by this all too vivid encounter with its visual traces, he withdrew to write a script from memory. The difficult challenge of matching his beautiful, mournful but autonomous poetic composition to the reworked montage of the film was only effected with the intervention of Resnais's former collaborator Chris Marker, who reconfigured Cayrol's initial text and brought him back to work with Resnais's carefully calibrated rhythms of editing and sequencing of past and present images.<sup>66</sup> Cayrol had the final say over the words spoken in the commentary and excluded certain phrasings planned by Resnais.

In *Night and Fog*, the gas chambers and crematoria and the selections at Auschwitz, recognized by Resnais and his team when they consulted the archives in Poland and notably at Auschwitz as 'the final solution', are 'contained' by the briefest of Cayrolian phrasings: Himmler says 'We must destroy, but productively.'<sup>67</sup> It would be easy to read this as Cayrol's overlaying of the exterminatory system he did not know personally with the *concentrationary* experience he knew all too well 'in his own muscles'. It is also possible to read this phrasing as an acute if compressed registration of what Resnais's film specifically brings into vision. If there is so little direct visual evidence of the mass genocidal destruction for which there is so little cinematic documentation, there was plenty more, if one could see it, of a cynical, capitalist mentality in which remnants of the destroyed and the murdered were systematically harvested for varied uses: not only recycling of clothes and possessions, but women's hair woven into blankets, bones for fertilizer and so forth. Some of the grisliest scenes in Resnais's film intimate other unspeakable experiments with skin and body parts that remain almost too painful even to watch. Cayrol himself in the commentary allows words to fail before the sights.

The German-Jewish composer Hanns Eisler was brought to Paris to watch the film and, in the space of two weeks, he reworked existing compositions and created new material to complete a musical score for the film. The film was then sent to the French censors who demanded, however, the removal of the images of bulldozers pushing bodies into mass graves at Bergen-Belsen and a scene in which a '*képi*' (the distinctive cap) clearly identifies a *French* policeman surveying a *French* concentration camp for foreign-born Jewish men and women at Pithiviers. The scene remained in the film, but the offending *képi* was blocked out by the addition of a black bar across the frame. Resnais received the Prix Jean Vigo in January 1956. This award brought the film into public debate through newspaper reviews and commentaries. The film was then nominated as a French entry for the Cannes Film Festival of that year. After a private screening of the film, representatives from the German Embassy wrote to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs

requesting that the film be withdrawn from official French submission to Cannes, under the rule that ‘if a film is deemed offensive to the national sensibilities of a participating country, that country’s representatives may request that a film be withdrawn from the competition, though compliance with such requests is not obligatory’.<sup>68</sup> Following this complaint, the film was indeed withdrawn from competition but the scandal resonated across the media. Cayrol wrote an excoriating article objecting to the notion that the film renewed German-French hostilities and calling for a Franco-German democratic alliance against the repression of the film’s non-judgemental, non-nationalist, anti-fascist ‘*dispositif d’alerte*’.<sup>69</sup> The film was finally shown outside the competition at the Palais du Festival in Cannes, under French government sponsorship. The organizers of the Berlin Film Festival immediately expressed their desire to show the film in Berlin in June. *Night and Fog* was finally released for public exhibition in France on 22 May 1956. When the film appeared one month later at the Berlin Film Festival, the Chairman of the Bundestag Committee on Press, Radio and Film suggested that the government of West Germany should commission a German language soundtrack to ensure the widest distribution of the film in cinemas and youth organizations.<sup>70</sup>

This brief study of the film’s genesis and initial exhibition reveals three important issues. First, the film’s making and chequered reception was part and parcel of the intense but variable sensitivity within Europe about the *national* identities of perpetrator and victim in relation to post-war narratives about wartime national experience. Thus the debate circled around questions of the film itself appearing anti-German, while events of June 1956 revealed that it could equally be used by the new West Germany as part of its campaign of democratization and de-Nazification to distinguish the Bundesrepublik Deutschland from the National Socialist Third Reich. There the film was being read as less about the war between nations, and more about the specificity of National Socialism or the Fascist Third Reich between 1933 and 1945 now being disowned by a reconstructed Germany rapidly welcomed back into European nationhood as a democratic bulwark against the new totalitarian threat posed by the Soviet Union and its now satellite states in the East.

Second, the complex manoeuvrings between government agencies, cultural agencies, the press, and the producers of the film index the intensely ‘political’ climate in which a committed film about the recent past was being received and disputed in France. Ostensibly concerned with managing both French sensitivities about disavowed collaboration (the *képi* incident that implicated French police in round-ups of Jewish men and women) and German sensibility about its horrendous recent past, the attempted censorship of this film also registered, if indirectly, heated political issues within the actual moment of distribution in 1956, to which the film’s specific cinematic argument openly gestured in its final question about responsibility and the

merely slumbering *concentrationary* monster. Thus, the immediate reception crisis surrounding the film during the emergence of the Algerian anti-colonial struggles and the French use of camps for its colonial rebels exposes the politics engendered by its critical aesthetic practice as a film that was clearly intervening in the still uncharted minefield of unprocessed memory of an event that was itself sufficiently relevant to the current moment to crank up heated debate. Yet by virtue of not being much debated before, there was as yet no consensus as to how the troubled histories of Europe and Nazism and still questioned responsibilities might be finally contained.

Third, the arguments indicate that there was no dominant narrative about the past by which to judge the film. The defence of the film against censorship (French or German), and the attempts to censor its content or displace it from being a French entry at Cannes seem to circle around contested issues of national sovereignty versus international, anti-fascist solidarity. Concerned with how French policemen and Germans in general might be viewed, the debate in 1956 shows no indication, however, that anybody was then too much concerned with the representation, or rather the lack of specific representation, of the Jewish, Roma and Sinti victims of genocide.

We feel that it is important to remind ourselves of some of the contemporary debates framing the making and reception of the film because we wish to approach the film in relation, precisely, to the politico-aesthetic particularities of its moment of production. As we have mentioned, these pre-date the dominance of the interpretation of this past through the prism of the term 'the Holocaust', which rightly centres on the dark exterminatory core of Nazi racism. Without in any way seeking to minimize or displace the absolute centrality of the destruction of European Jewry and Romany peoples, we want to think about what we would learn if we could reconfigure the moment before such knowledge was publicly shaped by the eventual emergence of the literature of testimony. The image produced across the Eichmann trial (1961) and the many events since that have fostered theoretical, historical and cultural analysis of the genocidal project, have superseded the focus on the *concentrationary* that dominated in France during the 1950s and have made us view this earlier focus as a failure rather than a historico-political contingency that has relevance for the understanding of the work and the effects of Resnais's film.

Primo Levi's seminal testimony *If This is a Man*, originally composed and published in a limited edition in 1946, was reissued in 1958 by Einaudi and translated into English in 1959. Elie Wiesel's *Night* was written in Yiddish in 1954, published in 1955 in Buenos Aires and was only rewritten in French later that year as the slim volume that has now become celebrated throughout the world. Returning to the historical moment of *Night and Fog's* production and reception before these major literary forms of testimony had shaped the

event in their different visions specifically of Auschwitz II and III allows us to see Resnais's film not as the first major film about the Holocaust as such. Rather, we can read it as an effort to disclose and, at the same time, to incite resistance through a knowledge of, the *concentrationary* universe by means of self-consciously aesthetic cinematic techniques and strategies (image, word, music) that resonated with a range of political and aesthetic cinematic experiments for which Resnais was already notorious. In 1953, working with Chris Marker, Alain Resnais had made a 30-minute anti-colonial film entitled *Les Statues meurent aussi* (*Statues Also Die*) which was censored for eight years after its making. Ostensibly a film about the sculptural art of the African continent, its deeper question as to why the arts of Africa were found in European anthropological museums and not in art museums served to expose the effects of colonialism as culturally murderous not only of the historical art of Africa but also of its living creators of today. The film shows how the vitality and cultural foundations of African sculptural imagination were being crushed by colonization, forcing African artists to become mere replicators of colonial trophies. Music, a dramatic means of filming the sculptures so as to animate their aesthetic force, and a voice-over that underscored the tension between the liveliness of the works and their colonial fate, identified Resnais and Chris Marker as not only anti-colonialist in politics, but filmmakers capable of finding a cinematic form that itself could visually, aurally and critically indict colonial violence. Montage, poetic voice-over and dramatic juxtaposition had also defined Resnais's film *Guernica* (1950), which violently denounced the fascist, military assault on a defenceless Basque town and offered a poetic lament for the dead through Picasso's images, from his paintings of the urban poor through to the violent torsions of his painted homage to suffering and denunciation of fascism. Thus, when speaking of the new commission for *Night and Fog*, Resnais's already formulated politicized '*recherches formelles*' (formal researches) will generate a specifically cinematic mode of encounter – a 'gesture of cinema' – between past and present, the moment and history that presents not a monument to the dead but a political questioning of the present and an exploration of *concentrationary* memory.<sup>71</sup>

Included in this newly commissioned collection are, however, two previously published articles which demand to be placed within this study of *concentrationary cinema* because they are benchmarks for the critical analysis of both the production and reception of the film and the politics and logics of its 'formal researches'.

First published in *New German Critique* in 1997, Andrew Hebard's 'Disruptive Histories: Toward a Radical Politics of Remembrance in Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*' challenges a predominantly psychoanalytic reading not only of this film in relation to Freud's concept of mourning, but its use as a means of 'working through' the trauma of the Holocaust. Looking carefully at

the film's distribution and reception in Germany after 1956, Hebard resists the later memorial interpretation of *Night and Fog*, and proposes instead a political reading by invoking another Freudian aesthetic concept: the uncanny. Hebard argues that the film set out not to commemorate but to generate anxiety in the spectator. After a critique of the new vocabulary of 'trauma studies' (trauma, mourning, acting out and working through), Hebard states that 'a politics of the uncanny ... asks what aspects of the history can and do possess us?' Hebard's use of a politics of the uncanny thus demonstrates how the temporal ambivalence created in *Night and Fog* is a sign of a return of history and, hence, the politico-aesthetic creation of a permanently anxious present.

On the other hand, we might also have to ask: What place might cinema as a visual technology and a mass medium itself have had in creating and sustaining the *concentrationary* imaginary and massified aesthetics of Nazi totalitarianism? What treacherous and compromised aspects of the cinematic might *Night and Fog* have had to, or failed to, negotiate as a political and historical work that would have to use materials created by the perpetrators – both perpetrator imagery as well as the spectacular use of cinema as a means to document this universe? We invited John Mowitt to participate in this volume precisely because he had been the first scholar to raise this troubling question in his critical study of Resnais and cinema. At the same time we wanted to acknowledge the historicity of the discourse on *Night and Fog*. Thus we asked Mowitt to revisit a text he had originally composed in 1988, critically examining its own genesis and politics in the changing context of debate and reception. Mowitt here reframes his own work in a new conversation with our work. In 'showing' (a term used in US English to designate the act of walking through a commercial space, typically a home) his text within the context of our initiative to think about the cinema and the *concentrationary*, Mowitt investigates the role of the cinematic itself in making possible not only fascist aesthetics of spectacle but the imagining of mass movements and mass violence. Where and how does an attempt at a counter-*concentrationary* art practice become complicit with the aesthetic technologies of that which is being resisted?

### **Concentrationary cinema: a politics of representation**

We are not proposing that *Night and Fog* was in any way a cinematic treatise in political theory. Nor are we suggesting that Resnais read Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, first published in 1951, with a full third of the volume being dedicated to the concentration camp. It was not available in French.<sup>72</sup> Arendt's contemporary political focus on totalitarianism, however, is a significant element of the context within which the film was produced, since

it also drew on the largely political analyses offered by French and German deportee literature and itself represented a context of political reflections.<sup>73</sup> We want to stress the presence of a *political* reading of the camp as a systematic weapon for the destruction of human life – a fine distinction from the mass production of non-human death that was the horror of the extermination camp. We wish to offer a range of new readings of *Night and Fog* by placing the film in the context of this complex terrain of emerging and contested political and cultural narratives, memorializations and political anxieties. By focusing on the nature of the political terror of the system rather than the suffering and identity of the victims, we do not minimize that suffering, nor ignore the racialization of genocide. No longer placing *Night and Fog* at the beginning of a history of cinema and the genocide we know now as the Holocaust, we are viewing it as a politics of representation, situated in, but not confined to, the 1950s, and as a representation of politics in relation to an event we might consider the most politicized instance of attempted eradication of the political, the *polis*, the sphere of social action. This means inviting the scholars assembled here to assess the film's aesthetic strategies and their political consequences beyond the limits of existing debates that have either eulogized the film or critiqued it as a brilliant or flawed documentary about the Holocaust. We would, therefore, like to ask what the film does and how it has become a benchmark for a political poetics in cinema that transcends classification as documentary, compilation or fiction. We will call this political poetics arising from a cinematic reflection on the *concentrationary* system *concentrationary cinema*, hence distinguishing it from 'Holocaust film' and the different politics, aesthetics and ethics that has raised.

If one reason for returning to *Night and Fog* is to detach it from the debates about 'representing the Holocaust' and the focus on trauma that were to develop later (especially with the appearance of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* in 1985 and his 'resistance to representation', that is, the refusal, and in fact debarring, of the use of archive photographs and footage) and to reinsert it into the immediate post-war context of an aesthetic resistance to *concentrationary* terror, it is, none the less, necessary to address what has become a major tendency to pit *Shoah* against *Night and Fog*.

*Night and Fog's* distinctive operations have, perhaps, not only been disfigured by the critique of its failure to focus on the destruction of European Jewry, but also by the implicit critique by Lanzmann of Resnais's aesthetic strategies. Lanzmann's film is important for the precise fact that *Shoah* revisited and disclosed the hidden or forgotten history of two of the specialist extermination camps at Chelmno and Treblinka. An offshoot of Lanzmann's huge project led to a free-standing film about the revolt at Sobibor. To recreate traces and memories of these short-lived death camps, Lanzmann filmed only in the present, and hence reaffirmed Resnais's opening gesture, the often

empty landscapes of erased extermination camps now punctured only by belated memorial monuments desolately keeping watch over places few tourists visit. But he also filmed bystanders such as signalmen, railway workers, local farmers, German colonists and a handful of survivors of these places. Lanzmann went to the sites, spoke to the bystanders and filmed the survivors some of whom he took back. Faces, places and words became a means of signifying the central meaning of the project: absence – the almost obliterated traces of the camps and the millions of people disappeared from the Polish and European world.

Resnais's film, however, is not about absence and absencing. It is about terror and the systematic operations of its specific experimental sites: the concentration camps. Thus the debate about the impossibility of representing the nature of extermination by means of the image, which has led to a critique of *Night and Fog* precisely as a compilation film utilizing compromised archive footage (and, let it be said, pioneering the return to the forlorn and dismal actuality of the site of Auschwitz II in a self-conscious gesture that marks the gap in memory between past and present) can, in our opinion, be displaced by a more precise focus on the politics of representation in the moment of making of the film.

It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish the two projects (*Night and Fog* and *Shoah*) in terms of their different premises and rationales. In confronting the unimaginable project of State-sponsored, industrial mass murder, Lanzmann has consistently argued for a 'resistance to representation': an acceptance of the limits of representation of an event that goes beyond any previous event or crime or experience, such that there is no convention through which it can be comprehended and represented. He goes further in his refusal to rescreen perpetrator images of violence. Indeed, he has even claimed that were he to discover actual footage of a gas chamber in action he would destroy it.<sup>74</sup> Lanzmann, therefore, created a different cinematic process involving duration, repetition, rhythm and the intensive, affecting, phenomenological encounter with the places, the faces and the voices of survivors, bystanders and perpetrators who are all encouraged to put into words experiences that still have the traumatic capacity to undo the speaker in the vividness with which the unprocessed event still 'happens' in the present moment before the relentless camera. Thus Lanzmann's film contains no archive photography, no archive footage, nothing except that which could be filmed in the present as he and his crew pursued the handful of survivor-witnesses of the extermination camps of Poland or Lithuania and of Auschwitz in its various forms, taking them sometimes to 'the place', as in the case of Simon Srebnik and Chelmno, sometimes interviewing them in their new relocated lives.

Between the photograph-rich exhibition of 1954 about German deportations and torture of French resistance fighters organized by Henri Michel and Olga Wormser, which returned to visibility an archive of documents which led to Resnais's film, and Lanzmann's anti-archival position lie more than two decades in which the relatively little-known images used in Resnais's film had acquired a different status and even charge, precisely as a result of the film and the further memorializations that subsequent events and anniversaries set in motion. The progressive production of an iconography that often confused the Holocaust and the *concentrationary* universe – that is, a consolidation of the historical memory of the event through the selective but repeated use of certain photographs and certain extracts of the Allied liberation footage, often without specification and detailed identification of place, date, photographer, function and so forth – would indeed alter the power of any image over time. No better analysis of this fading of affect exists than that provided by Susan Sontag, one of the first cultural critics to theorize photography:

One's first encounter with the photographic inventory of ultimate horror is a kind of revelation, the prototypically modern revelation; a negative epiphany. For me, it was the photographs of Bergen-Belsen and Dachau which I came across by chance in a bookstore in Santa Monica in July 1945. Nothing I have ever seen – in photographs or in real life – ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously. Indeed it seems plausible to me to divide my life into two parts, before I saw those photographs (I was twelve) and after, though it was many years before I understood fully what they were about.<sup>75</sup>

What was once the overpowering impact of a reality transmitted by the photograph may, however, be de-realized by the repeated exposure of the image. Sontag continues:

To suffer is one thing; another thing is living with the photographed images of suffering, which does not necessarily strengthen conscience and the ability to be compassionate. It can also corrupt them. Once one has seen such images, one has started down the road of seeing more – and more. Images transfix and images anaesthetize. An event becomes more real than it would have been if one had never seen a photograph. But after repeated exposure to images it also becomes less real.<sup>76</sup>

Thus Sontag also suggests that even the most shocking images of atrocity cannot retain their initial power, while, none the less, she affirms that her first impressions leave her eternally grieving for a loss of innocence before the sight of such pain. In her more recent study of *Holocaust Memory through the*

*Camera's Eye*, Barbie Zelizer documents an important discovery in her research. When the first journalists reported the *concentrationary* horror, they struggled with the inadequacies of language to describe what they were seeing as they followed the Allied troops into concentration camps on German soil. 'Words fail me', was their repeated refrain. Readers in the United States or Britain could not fully appreciate the nature of the horror these men and women were witnessing. Zelizer then argues that this changed as soon as a stream of photographic images began to accompany the written word and appeared in daily newspapers and illustrated weeklies (the like of which Sontag encountered, possibly in *Life* or even *Vogue*, for which Margaret Bourke White and Lee Miller respectively worked as war photographers). It appears that the photographs and newsreels were necessary for any sense at all of the extremity to be conveyed to the outside world. This shock of the first time may happen for individuals as they too come across this archive. But as a culture, the archive cannot hold this terrible rupture for us any more. It has become part of the possible; it has made the unimaginable knowable as the photographic images of it. It has a look. Repeated exposure of these images also risks other dangers of being misused, allowing for sadistic voyeurism or even pornography.

Thus, by the mid-1980s, Lanzmann's critique of the use of the archive of photographic and film imagery can be granted some validity; to document again is to repeat and thus destroy what should remain challenging rather than becoming banal and over-familiar. In this sense, Lanzmann's decision to create another cinematic strategy that disavows repetition is both an ethical and political move of great importance. But it would be wrong to use this necessary reconfiguration of cinematic encounters with the unremembered past by the 1980s to make *Night and Fog* the fall-guy in a critique of an unthinking, unethical, pernicious use of archive footage.

Inevitably, our revisiting the moment of *Night and Fog* takes place in the aftermath of Lanzmann's work. It is mindful of the debates to which his position on the resistance to representation has given rise, rightly. Our project is an informed and self-aware return to *Night and Fog* in order to reconsider not so much the brute differences between the two classic films, as to re-contextualize and identify what Resnais named his *formal researches*. What can we make of the calculated and self-conscious, modernist cinematographic aesthetic as the very ground for a means to re-encounter the *concentrationary* universe in all its radical otherness? How did the formal choices represent the complexity of that universe and make the gap between the past and the present vivid for an outsider, a non-participant viewer, irrespective of the time or moment at which that viewing takes place.

Thus the debate about the validity of the archive and representation which has emerged following Lanzmann's film often fails to take into account both

the alteration of the ability of the image (often the same images) to shock and disturb over time and the power of Resnais's film to sustain the ability to shock and disturb, not because of the images he used, but because of the cinematic construction he created with his collaborators Cayrol, Eisler and Marker.<sup>77</sup> We believe, however, that by recontextualizing these images as *concentrationary* images rather than as Holocaust images, and therefore defamiliarizing our normalized view of the iconography of the Holocaust, these images can be released from their entrapment within an anaestheticizing aesthetic and rediscover their power to shock or to provoke analysis.

In 2001, Jacques Rancière contributed a long reflection on representability and extremity to a special edition of the journal, *Genre Humain*, relating to an exhibition on *Art and the Memory of the Camps: Representation and Extermination*.<sup>78</sup> Refuting those who have claimed that the *concentrationary* and exterminatory universes are 'beyond' representation (he has in mind both Lanzmann and philosopher Jean François Lyotard), Rancière makes a telling comparison between a moment in Gustave Flaubert's seminal modernist novel, *Madame Bovary* (in which Charles Bovary's burgeoning love for Emma is linked with a play of dust animated by a draught under the farm kitchen's ill-fitting door) and the literary language used by deportee Robert Antelme in *L'Espèce Humaine*. Attempting to describe, paratactically, a momentary human experience, Antelme links the steam rising from the flow of urine as the prisoners pee together in the night with a momentary and exhilarating experience of human solidarity. The texts by both Flaubert and Antelme exhibit a distinctively modernist mode of literary writing, associated with what Rancière defines as the 'aesthetic regime' that characterizes modern culture, in which there is a momentary, paratactic conjunction of a human pathos and a tiny detail of material existence:

Thus Robert Antelme's experience is not unrepresentable in the sense that a language for conveying it does not exist. The language exists and the syntax exists. Not as exceptional language and syntax, but on the contrary, as a mode of expression peculiar to the aesthetic regime in the arts in general ... The language that conveys the experience is in no way specific to it. The experience of programmed dehumanization finds itself expressed in the same way as the Flaubertian identity between the human and inhuman, between the emotion uniting two beings and a little dust stirred up by the draught in a farm kitchen.<sup>79</sup>

Rancière contrasts Antelme's Flaubertian prose with Lanzmann's *Shoah* which, he argues, attempts to deal with both the fact of extermination having happened and the elimination of the traces of extermination: a material event and an absent one. Rancière thinks both 'perfectly representable' but not by

means of creating equivalents in fictional embodiments of executioners and victims. 'It is through a confrontation between the words uttered here and now about what the place was and the reality that is materially present and absent in this place.' But this confrontation exposes an abyss haunted by a hallucinatory dissonance so that:

the impossibility of adequate correspondence between the place and the speech and the very body of the witness goes to the heart of the elimination that is to be represented. It touches the incredible character of the event, programmed by the very logic of extermination ... This is what the speech of the witness framed by the camera responds to. It avows the incredible, the hallucinatory, and the impossibility that words could fill this empty place.<sup>80</sup>

Thus Rancière concludes that there is nothing in the event that proscribes art/representation. Even when dealing with the extreme or the inhuman or even the absent, it is a matter of choices: the present against historicization, or a focus on the means as opposed to the causes and so forth.

More recently Lanzmann's position has been deployed in a polemic against art historian Georges Didi-Huberman who published an article in the catalogue to an exhibition in Paris in 2001, *Mémoire des Camps: Photographies des camps de concentration et d'extermination Nazis 1933–1945*. The focus of Didi-Huberman's article is the only *four* photographs, out of an archive of half a million images from the Nazi era, of the extermination process at Crematorium V at Auschwitz II, taken surreptitiously by members of the Sonderkommando – the Jewish prisoners selected to work in the gas chambers and crematoria before themselves being gassed. Didi-Huberman argued that images of the unimaginable exist 'in spite of everything' (*malgré tout*). He also insists that we need to *see* these photographs not merely as images purveying information but as material traces of an act of witnessing bearing the marks of their own moment of production. These photographs have a physical materiality as photographs taken in spite of terrible danger of extreme punishment by those desperate to ensure a witness record of the killing process. Their distinctive features – the lack of focus, or oblique framing, or even capturing only the trees above the site of killing or burning – are read by Didi-Huberman not as elements which diminish the value of the photographs as documents but rather as the very indices of the conditions under which the photographs were taken which are their meaning. They are thus marked with their historical moment even as these characteristics make the images *difficult* to read as images. What, therefore, should we be looking at them for? Didi-Huberman wants to make us see the photographs *per se* and in so doing come to see history. That means that the photographs are not to be *used* as images, as an image of *x* or *y*, or for a documentary value for any information these

four photographs might yield. History, and their function as its inscription, lie in the fact that they exist at all, *despite* everything militating against their having been made and surviving. Their materiality and the specific forms of the images are the traces of the dangerous constraints under which ‘Alex’, the Greek prisoner who took the shots and his colleagues who stood guard or smuggled the negatives out, fought to find a means of bearing witness to the killing process that would be otherwise ‘unbelievable’ without such indexical, evidential, visual testimony which incorporates in what is shown the will to make this seen. Didi-Huberman is arguing a case for the value of the very existence of the photograph itself.

In this light, the notion that *Night and Fog* opted for historicization by means of a simplistic belief that the incredible and unimaginable might be ‘represented’ by indexical documents can be dismissed as a radical oversimplification. The opening sequence of the film *Night and Fog* produces a shocking collision between two worlds whose physical proximity belies their incommensurability.<sup>81</sup> This is effected by tracking shots: the camera tilts down, and then, in a second sequence, pans from left to right, both shots traversing the once electrified barbed wire fence from a camera positioned inside the camp perimeter. The accompanying text by Jean Cayrol enacts the poet’s Surrealist reworking of a Proustian concept of memory. As we argue above, this formal technique produces an aesthetic vision that Cayrol formulated as *art concentrationnaire* or *art lazarien*. *Concentrationary* art is premised on the confusion of *l’invraisemblable et le naturel* (the extraordinary and the ordinary): ‘Objects will be central to this vision for they will be shown to have a secret life alongside their familiar appearance which will capture that tension between familiarity and strangeness.’<sup>82</sup>

Our collection of ‘readings’ of the film as a ‘writing’ – *écriture cinématique* – focuses precisely on the choices Resnais and his team of collaborators made in order to produce the disturbing quality of Rousset’s *univers concentrationnaire*. Uncanniness effected by estranging juxtapositions infects what cannot be reproduced or re-presented. The *concentrationary* universe, however, left material traces in the form of places, buildings, objects, documents and (as importantly) images – filmed and photographed – which function both as evidence but also phenomenologically beyond evidence because they were made within the very system itself. Though not ‘images despite everything’, as is the case of the *Sonderkommando* photographs, what remains is perpetrator image-making, inscribing their ‘will’ to show, their will to record. In their ordinariness touched by the horror of extremity, these images enact the uncanniness of the proximity between the everyday and the horrific that is indeed the deepest horror of the systematicity of *the concentrationary* (Plate 41). Disclosing this required a profoundly aesthetic gesture that is at once deeply thought cinematically.

As many readers of the film have already stressed, the central logic of the film *Night and Fog* is the logic of alternation between the ‘present’ filming in the sites of Auschwitz and Majdanek – the abandoned, not yet musealized and fully touristic sites of commemoration – and the montage of found imagery, the ready-mades of history, to plot out what Rancière has helpfully named the necessary ‘logic of fictions’. Here again we return to the politics of the aesthetic. Rancière claims that ‘[t]he real must be fictionalized in order to be thought’. In a difficult and theoretically paradoxical move, Rancière favours art as a means to access understanding over a simplistic notion of history as the mere telling of fact or event. He argues that what he calls the historical is ‘condemned to presenting events according to their empirical disorder’ in which actual history often chaotically happens, while the poetic, a structured and structuring representation, creates for the historical an order of intelligibility.<sup>83</sup> Actual occurrences are often a seemingly chaotic jumble of coincident events whose patterns of meaning and significance are not self-evident as they occur. To discern meaning is to find an order that seeks it, investigates it and discloses it. Thus Rancière displaces the notion of fiction as a falsification, while the notion of documentary as truth is also undermined. In this surprising inversion, self-consciously aesthetic or formal film creates a *machine for understanding*:

The poetic ‘story’ or ‘history’ henceforth links the realism that shows us the poetic traces inscribed directly in reality with the artificialism that assembles complex machines of understanding. This connection was transferred from literature to the new art of narrative, film, which brought to its highest potential the double resource of the silent imprint that speaks and the montage that calculates the values of truth and the potential for producing meaning. Documentary film, film devoted to the ‘real’, is in this sense capable of greater fictional invention than ‘fiction’ film, readily devoted to a certain stereotype of actions and characters.<sup>84</sup>

Thinking about this paradox, in her chapter Griselda Pollock places *Night and Fog* in conversation with a problematic fiction film about the *concentrationary* universe, *Kapò*, directed by Italian filmmaker Gilles Pontecorvo in 1958. Using *Night and Fog* as his benchmark of thoughtful cinema, French film critic and director Jacques Rivette attacked *Kapò* not so much for being a fictionalizing recreation with actors and built sets of the *concentrationary* universe as for the misuse of a cinematic device: one tracking shot. Rivette considered abject Pontecorvo’s decision to create a tracking shot moving in to restage, in medium shot, a woman who has killed herself on the electrical wires, an act already filmed once. What were the politics of Rivette’s revulsion at Pontecorvo’s tracking shot when the larger issue of any fictional

reconstruction and romanticization of the *concentrationary* experience already begs a profound question after the work done by *Night and Fog*?

Rivette's article became the resource for French critic Serge Daney who was formed as a critical *cinéphile* through exposure to *Night and Fog* as exemplary of what thinking, engaged and ethical cinema could be. Revisiting this now famous intertextual moment in French film studies, Pollock critically interrogates Resnais's own ethics of the shot and the encounter with the dead, noting his repeated cropping of close-ups and reframing and decontextualization of archive images. Confronting the few frames in which Resnais did attempt to use his gesture of cinema to face the extermination process, Pollock examines the unexpected incursion of potentially eroticized images of naked women that serve Resnais when he has to confront mass death. Does the film falter here? Is it reclaimed, like *Kapò* by existing tropes? What do we do when the killing process is confusingly displaced and rendered treacherously pornographic by troubling images of naked *women*, using archive images that are not to do with murder by gassing in the extermination camps but from the Einsatzgruppen murders? Drawing on psychoanalytical readings of the deep mythic linkage of the feminine, the aesthetic and death, Pollock exposes the way the film stutters politically at this point by using such embedded and gendered tropes that typically serve to deflect the confrontation with mortality irrespective of the cultural or racialized identity of the victims.<sup>85</sup>

Rivette disowned Pontecorvo and praised Resnais because the former abused camera movements. Pollock questions Resnais's selection, editing, cropping and montage of images of the dead in order to re-open this classic debate in French film studies. Circling back to Emma Wilson's reflections on Resnais's confrontation with the dead, Pollock asks if Resnais's film is compromised by its thoughtless insertion of the erotic image. Reworking the problem with the help of Arendt, on the meaning of the *concentrationary* system, and Adorno, on how the self-conscious modernist artwork might for a moment still the inevitable cultural reification of suffering, Pollock makes a connection with Mowitz's chapter. She poses the question of Resnais's aesthetic effects at the level of the politics of technology. If aesthetics can be both political and ethical, does this operate at the level of the shot – the technologies of cinematic representation – or at the level of the authorial decision about what shots to create, or at the level of a spectatorial reading of the effect generated between the two? Who is to blame for the failure of ethics in representing death: cinema, the desire of the spectator to see everything, the auteur who sets up the scene/seeing?

Daney used Rivette to develop an ethics of viewing the other and dying across classic cinema after 1960; but, approaching the 1990s, he sensed that new digital technologies enabled forms of image manipulation that could become as dangerously thoughtless as Pontecorvo's tracking shot appeared to

Rivette. Daney, formed critically by exposure to *Night and Fog* in the 1960s, thus brings the question of a *dispositif d'alerte* directly into the politics of the contemporary image and our responsiveness of the mediatized 'camp' *nomos* of our image culture in the present.

This collection emerged out of our decision to devote 18 months to a standing seminar on 32 minutes of film. It is not in any way conclusive. Through a historical, theoretical, cinematic, literary and political engagement with the *concentrationary*, we seek to re-invigorate the debates about aesthetics and the politics of representation in the light of the ethical obligations to see and know a historical violence and the political necessity to recognize that which was then initiated. The final phrases of Cayrol's text declare over the contemporary filming in colour of the monumental ruins of the crematoria at Auschwitz-Birkenau a message to a 'we' that comes 'after' who must know not the comfort of ruined empires but the menace of a merely sleeping pestilence. This knowledge shatters the silence of our complacency by means of an endless cry that, in Cayrol's wording (*qu'on crie*) specifically leaves entirely open to any time and any place and any suffering:

Who amongst us is still watching in this strange observatory to warn us of the coming of new executioners? Are their faces really so different from our own?

Somewhere, amongst us, live on the lucky Kapos, the reinstated leaders, the unknown informers.

And there are some of us who sincerely gaze upon these ruins as if the *concentrationary* monster lay dead beneath its rubble, who pretend to take up hope again as the image recedes into the past, as if we could be cured once and for all from the *concentrationary* plague, we who want to believe that all this belongs to one time and one country, and are failing to look around ourselves and hear the unending cry. (*qu'on crie*).<sup>86</sup>

*Concentrationary Cinema* is a response to Resnais's and Cayrol's political vision for aesthetics in 1955, a making visible that seeks continually to reveal the monster beneath its ruins, the past in the present, echoing with continuing sound of the haunting cry. The metaphor of the contaminating disease that spreads beyond one time and one place functions beyond figuration, for it is monitory: we must see and we must hear the unending cry of violated humanity. Thus, we hope that this critical exploration of cinematic *concentrationary* memory will maintain some fidelity with the concept elaborated by Rousset and Cayrol of the *concentrationary* universe that knows no limits.

## Notes

1. Sylvie Lindeperg, 'Night and Fog: Inventing a Perspective', in *Cinema and the Shoah: An Art Confronts the Tragedy of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jean-Michel Frodon, trans. Anna Harrison and Tom Maes (New York: SUNY Press, 2010), p. 63.
2. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Random House Vintage Books, 1989), p. 38.
3. Hannah Arendt, 'Social Science Techniques and the Study of Concentration Camps', *Jewish Social Studies* 12:1 (1950), reprinted in *Essays in Understanding 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, Totalitarianism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1994), p. 226.
4. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. 11.
5. Richard Raskin, *Nuit et Brouillard by Alain Resnais: On the Making, Reception and Functions of a Major Documentary Film, Including a New Interview with Alain Resnais and the Original Shooting Script*, Foreword by Sascha Vierny (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1987), p. 54. Like all scholars working on this film, we are deeply indebted to the pioneering research undertaken by Richard Raskin.
6. The French censors objected to the horrifying images of the corpses being bull-dozed at Bergen-Belsen and to the visibility of a French policeman watching over prisoners in a French concentration camp at Pithiviers. For the discussion of the furor around the Cannes Film Festival, see later in this chapter (plate 11).
7. For detailed studies of the film's distribution and reception, see Ewout van der Knapp, ed., *Uncovering the Holocaust: The International Reception of Night and Fog* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006); Sylvie Lindeperg, *Nuit et Brouillard: Un Film dans l'Histoire* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2007); primary source documents are printed in Richard Raskin, *Nuit et Brouillard by Alain Resnais*.
8. For instance, film analyst Joshua Hirsch attests to this in his Preface to *Afterimage: Film, Trauma and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), pp. ix–x.
9. Capitalized, the Holocaust is an interesting linguistic phenomenon in naming a real historical event figuratively with a term already loaded with both secular and religious meanings. Alternative namings of the destruction within the Jewish world include Hebrew terms such as *Churban* or *Shoah*, which mean catastrophe or destruction. In German, the event was generally named *Vernichtung der Juden* (Annihilation or Extermination of the Jews). The most extensive study of the currency of the term in secular pre- and post-war American, French and Israeli contexts is Jon Petrie, 'The Secular Word "HOLOCAUST": Scholarly Myths, History, and Twentieth Century Meanings', *Journal of Genocide Research* 2:1 (2000), 31–63. Petrie challenges many historians by documenting the varied secular uses of the term 'holocaust' before 1939 and after 1945 when it was often associated with the threat of nuclear war and other catastrophes. Petrie notes the significance of the gradual emergence of the term in American writing, firmly established in the 1978 TV series *Holocaust*. See also Gerd Korman, 'The Holocaust in American Writing', *Societas*, 2 (1971), 250–70, which traces the uses of the capitalized term in American literature to the mid-1950s. Elie Wiesel, wrongly associated with its widespread dissemination, notably in Germany, first used the term in August 1963: *The New Leader*, 5 August 1963, p. 21. See also James Young, 'Names of the Holocaust: Meaning and Consequences', *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*

- (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 83–98. Young examines the effects of the metaphor for an event whose dreadful reality cannot be metaphoric.
10. For historical precision to which we hope also to contribute, we can spell out some of the sources of confusion. Only two peoples were designated by documented means for a ‘final solution’ – mass destruction by increasingly industrialized means: the Jewish and the Roma–Sinti peoples. Nazism’s designation of a range of persons as socially undesirable led to persecution, but not extermination, of sexual and religious minorities. Political resistance also led to extreme punishments. In addition the euthanasia programme initiated in Germany itself was directed at physically disabled persons, while some within that community were subjected to forced sterilization.
  11. For major studies of film and the Holocaust, see Judith Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film* (New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1987), Annette Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (New York: Random House, 1983), Ilan Avisar, *Screening the Holocaust: Cinema’s Images of the Unimaginable* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), Joshua Hirsch, *Afterimage: Film, Trauma and the Holocaust*.
  12. Ewout van der Knapp, ed., *Uncovering the Holocaust*.
  13. Richard Raskin, *Nuit et Brouillard by Alain Resnais*.
  14. Robert Michael, ‘A Second Look: *Night and Fog*’, *Cinéaste*, 13:4 (1984), 36–37, reprinted in Raskin, *Alain Resnais’s Nuit et Brouillard*, p. 159.
  15. According to Annette Wieviorka, ‘the film has nothing to say regarding the genocide of the Jews’ (*Déportation et génocide*, Paris: Plon, 1992, 223).
  16. Edward R. Murrow, ‘They Died 900 a Day in “the Best” Nazi Death Camp’, *PM*, 16 April 1945. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/murrow.html>, accessed 8 September 2009.
  17. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 39. See also Sarah Kofman, *Smothered Words*, [1987], trans. Madeleine Doby (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998): ‘Since Auschwitz, all men, Jews (and) non-Jews die differently; because what took place – back there – without taking place, death in Auschwitz, was worse than death.’ Kofman in turn quotes Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 362.
  18. Mark Roseman, *The Villa, The Lake, The Meeting: Wannsee and the Final Solution* (London: Penguin, 2002).
  19. Wolfgang Sofsky cites the calculations by G. Schwartz in his *Die nationalsozialistischen Lager* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1990, 221–2), that taking into account all forms of camps (including ghettos, labour-education, labour, forced labour and special detention camps) across the German Reich and its territories there were about 10,006 (Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp* [1993], trans. William Templer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 292). See also Jo Reilly, David Cesarani, Tony Kushner and Colin Richmond, eds, *Belsen in History and Memory* (London: Frank Cass, 1997) for a documentation of the impact of the liberation of Belsen on British cultural memory. They write ‘Although Nazi camps of a far more murderous nature were liberated before Belsen, the scenes recorded at Belsen by soldiers, journalists, photographers, broadcasters and film crews were perhaps the most gruesome images of all relating to the Nazi atrocities,’ p. 3.
  20. Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, p. 43.
  21. Anna and Margot Frank were sent from Auschwitz to Bergen-Belsen in October 1944 where Anna encountered a former schoolmate, the Berlin-born Hannah Goslar,

- whose family had been deported from Westerbork transit camp in the Netherlands to the Albalallager at Bergen-Belsen, a special sub-camp that held prominent Jewish people who could be used in exchanges for prisoners of war.
22. Two men survived Chelmno. Following the revolt at Sobibor on 14 October 1943, 300 prisoners escaped, of whom between 50 and 70 survived beyond 1945. Possibly 40 people survived Treblinka following an uprising on 2 August 1943.
  23. Scholars accept the figures compiled from train transport lists of 960,000 Jewish deaths and 140,000–150,000 ethnic Polish victims, along with 23,000 Roma and Sinti. Franciszek Piper, 'Ilu ludzi zginęło w KL Auschwitz. Liczba ofiar w świetle źródeł i badań 1945–1990 [‘How many people died in Auschwitz Concentration Camp? The number of victims in the light of sources and research,’ 1945–1990] (Oświęcim, 1992); German version: *Die Zahl der Opfer von Auschwitz Aufgrund der Quellen und der Erträge der Forschung 1945–1990* (Oświęcim, 1993).
  24. Nikolaus Wachsmann, 'The dynamics of destruction: the development of concentration camps, 1933–1945' in *Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany*, ed. Jane Caplan and Nikolaus Wachsmann (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 17–43.
  25. For the functionalist account in contrast to the intentionalist model of the decision to exterminate the Jewish population, see Christopher Browning, *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 1992) and *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939–March 1942* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004).
  26. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, [1995] trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 176.
  27. Richard Ek, 'Giorgio Agamben and the Spatialities of the Camp: An Introduction', *Geografiska Annaler B Human Geography* 88:4 (December 2006), 363–86.
  28. Many scholars have critiqued Agamben's propositions. Debarati Sanyal offers a sustained criticism in her 'A Soccer Match in Auschwitz: Passing Culpability in Holocaust Criticism', *Representations* 79 (2002), 1–27. She also references Claudine Kahan and Philippe Mesnard, *Giorgio Agamben à l'épreuve d'Auschwitz* (Paris, 2001). All criticisms aim at the problematic relation between the historical reality and specificity of the camps such as Auschwitz and the identification of a logic which can occur historically in one form but also inform and translate into other instances.
  29. 'I must repeat: we, the survivors are not the true witnesses ... We the survivors are not only an exiguous minority but also an anomalous minority: we are those who by their prevarication or abilities or good luck did not touch bottom. Those who did, those who saw the Gorgon, have not returned to tell about it or have returned mute, but they are the "Muselmänner", the submerged, the complete witnesses, the ones whose depositions would have general significance. They are the rule and we are the exception.' (Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, pp. 83–4).
  30. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, p. 174.
  31. In his study *States of Exception*, [2003] trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 3, written after the invasion of Iraq, Agamben extends his thesis to the study of the order for 'indefinite detention' declared by President Bush on 13 November 2001.
  32. David Rousset wrote a series of articles in 1945 for Maurice Nadeau in *La Revue Internationale* which appeared as a volume, *L'Univers concentrationnaire* (Paris: Editions de Pavois, 1946); translated as *The Other Kingdom*, trans. Ramon Guthrie

- (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947), and reissued in 1951 as *A World Apart*. He was the first to use the term 'Gulag' in French to introduce the Stalinist labour camps to French public awareness. In 1949 he instituted with other survivors of the Nazi concentration camps the *International Commission Against Concentrationary Regimes*.
33. David Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, p. 173.
  34. Hirsch, *Afterimage*, p. 28, citing Charles K. Krantz 'Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog: a Historical and Cultural Analysis*, *Holocaust Studies Annual* 3 (1985), p. 109 and David Weinberg, 'France' in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David S. Wyman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 15.
  35. Raskin, *Nuit et Brouillard*, pp. 15–17.
  36. Charlotte Delbo's trilogy of writings, which were collectively published as *Auschwitz et après* were written immediately after her return from Ravensbrück but were not published until 1970. They were translated by Rose C. Lamont for an English edition: *Auschwitz and After* (New Haven: Yale University Press) in 1995. See also Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz, *La traversée de la nuit* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1998), a memoir about de Gaulle's niece, who was deported to Ravensbrück, written only 50 years later.
  37. Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).
  38. Saul Friedlander, *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the 'Final Solution'* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
  39. Theodor Adorno, 'Commitment', in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), pp. 313–15. 'Even the most extreme consciousness of doom threatens to degenerate into idle chatter. Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation,' 'Cultural Criticism' [1949] is reprinted in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), p. 34.
  40. Jean Cayrol, 'Les rêves concentrationnaires', *Les Temps Modernes*, 36 (September, 1948). In Kafka's short story *The Penal Colony* published in 1914, a visiting researcher is told about a machine, no longer in use in the colony, which brought about the death of the condemned by carving the script of his sentence onto his skin over a period of 12 hours.
  41. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).
  42. The most careful exploration of the links between colonial-imperial racism and Nazism is offered in Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps; Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (London: Allen Lane, 2000). See especially Chapter 4: 'Hitler wore Khakis.'
  43. Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, p. 168.
  44. Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, p. 168.
  45. Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, p. 169.
  46. Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, p. 169.
  47. Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, p. 171. This is one of the challenges also posed by Imre Kertesz in his *Fatelessness*, written between 1960 and 1973, finally published in 1975 and translated in 1992. In this semi-autobiographical novel of the author's

experiences as a fifteen-year-old Hungarian Jewish boy sent first to Auschwitz and then to Buchenwald, Kertesz remembers moments of ‘happiness’ experienced by inmates just before sunset, between exhausting work and minimal rations and dreadful sleep. He mourns the intensity of that experience when he returns and cannot communicate why this is the abiding memory. Such experiences as those that Rousset and Kertesz report indicate the impossibility of the non-concentrationee fully grasping this other world.

48. Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, p. 171.
49. Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, p. 172.
50. Rousset, *The Other Kingdom*, p. 173.
51. Arendt, ‘The Concentration Camps’ *Partisan Review*, XV (1948), p. 743.
52. Arendt, ‘The Concentration Camps’, p. 744.
53. Arendt, ‘The Concentration Camps’, p. 744.
54. Arendt, ‘The Concentration Camps’, p. 744.
55. Eugen Kogon, *Der SS Staat* [1950] translated by Heinz Norden as *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them* (New York: Farrer, Strauss and Giroux, 1950). Arendt also drew on United States Office of Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*/Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality. Washington, DC: US GPO, 1946.
56. Arendt, ‘Social Science Techniques and the Study of Concentration Camps’, p. 240.
57. Arendt, ‘Social Science Techniques and the Study of Concentration Camps’, p. 240.
58. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 9.
59. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*.
60. Giorgio Agamben, *The Remnants of Auschwitz*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999).
61. The phrase ‘everything is possible’ is widely known from Arendt’s *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), although it was first used by Rousset. On the significance of the phrase in Arendt’s elaborated political theses about totalitarianism as opposed to its precedent, imperialism, see Patricia Owens, ‘Humanity, Sovereignty and the Camps’, *International Politics* 45 (2008) 522–30 in which Owens emphasizes the difference between camps created with the imperialist justification ‘everything is permitted’ and Nazi concentration/extermination camps that put into practice ‘everything is possible’.
62. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, p. 170.
63. Michel Pateau, ‘Avant-propos’ to Jean Cayrol, *Nuit et Brouillard* (Paris: Librairie Fayard, 1997), p. 9. *Dispositif* means a contrivance or device: a warning device.
64. The linking of trauma to culture has generated heated debate amongst historians. For a critical rebuke, see Wulf Kansteiner, ‘Genealogy of a Category Mistake: A Critical Intellectual History of the Cultural Trauma Metaphor’, *Rethinking History* 8:2 (2004), 193–222.
65. For the fullest and most recent historical analysis of the making of this film, see Sylvie Lindeperg, *Nuit et Brouillard: Un Film dans l’Histoire* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2007).
66. Sylvie Lindeperg, *Nuit et Brouillard: Un film dans l’histoire*, pp. 119–21.
67. Christian Delage, ‘*Nuit et Brouillard*: a Turning Point in the History and Memory of the Holocaust’ in *Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in Film and Television since 1933*, ed. Toby Haggith and Joanna Newman (London: Wallflower

- Press, 2005), p. 134: 'The last cut was made without any modifications to the images and on the sole initiative of Cayrol, who was the final arbiter in the chain of collective decisions in the making of the film.' Delage tracks the text of the screenplay to the final spoken commentary, noting the removal, on Cayrol's poetic initiative, of Resnais's initial synoptic reference to 'the definitive solution to the Jewish problem' decided upon in 1942'.
68. Raskin, *Nuit et Brouillard* by Alan Resnais, p. 35.
  69. Jean Cayrol, *Le Monde*, 11 April 1956, reprinted in Raskin, *Nuit et Brouillard*, p. 38. See also Jean Cayrol, 'Nous avons conçu *Nuit et Brouillard* comme un dispositif d'alerte', *Les Lettres françaises* 606 (9 February 1956), Richard Raskin, *Nuit et Brouillard*, p. 137.
  70. The film was commercially exhibited in France and then distributed in Germany with a translation of Cayrol's text by the poet Paul Celan. The film was screened in Britain at the National Film Theatre in December 1956 but was not distributed commercially until 1960. In the United States it was first screened on 7 December 1960 (the anniversary of both the *Nacht und Nebel* decree and the first murders by gassing of Jewish Europeans at Chelmno) by the film society Cinema 16, which was slated to show *Les statues meurent aussi* by Resnais and Marker. This was withdrawn because of its political interpretation of colonialism and *Night and Fog* was screened instead. The film was not finally commercially screened in the USA until 1962. See essays by Judith Peterson, 'A Little-known Classic: *Night and Fog* in Britain' and Warren Lubline, 'The Trajectory of *Night and Fog* in the USA', both in Van der Knapp, *Uncovering the Holocaust*: 106–28 and 149–64, respectively.
  71. Richard Raskin, 'Interview with Alain Resnais', 18 February 1986, in Raskin, *Nuit et Brouillard*, p. 53.
  72. Arendt's three volumes which compose *The Origins of Totalitarianism* were not translated into French until 1972 (Vol. 3: *Le Totalitarisme*), 1973 (Vol. 1: *L'Anti-Sémitisme*) and 1982 (Vol. 2: *L'Impérialisme*).
  73. Alfons Söllner, 'Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in its Original Context', *European Journal of Political Theory* 3:2 (2004), 219–38.
  74. Claude Lanzmann, 'Seminar with Claude Lanzmann', *Yale French Studies* 79:96 (1991), 82–99; see also 'The Obscurity of Understanding: An Evening with Claude Lanzmann', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 200–20.
  75. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), pp. 19–20.
  76. Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 20.
  77. For an excellent overview of this debate in France, see Libby Saxton, *Haunted Images: Film, Ethics, Testimony and the Holocaust* (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2008).
  78. Jacques Rancière, 'S'il y a de l'irreprésentable?', *Genre Humain* 36 (2001), 81–102; reprinted as 'Are Some Things Unrepresentable?' in Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007), 109–38.
  79. Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, p. 126.
  80. Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, p. 128.
  81. For a fuller discussion of this point, see Max Silverman, 'Horror and the Everyday in Post-Holocaust France: *Nuit et Brouillard* and Concentrationary Art', *French Cultural Studies* 17:1 (2006) 5–18.
  82. Max Silverman, 'Horror and the Everyday in Post-Holocaust France', p. 9.

83. Jacques Rancière, 'Is History a Form of Fiction?' in *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* [2000] trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 36.
84. Jacques Rancière, 'Is History a Form of Fiction?', p. 38.
85. For a comparative study of gender and representation in Lanzmann's *Shoah*, see Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, 'Gendered Translations: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*' in *Gendering War Talk* ed. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 3–19. See also Griselda Pollock, 'Photographing Atrocity: Becoming Iconic?', in *Photographing Atrocity*, ed. Jay Prosser, Nancy Miller and Mick Gidley, (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).
86. Authors' translation. For another version, see Robert Hughes, ed., *Film: Book 2: Films of Peace and War* (New York: Grove Press, 1962), p. 255.