

CINEMA AND MODERNITY
EDITED BY MURRAY POMERANCE

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Manufactured in the United States of America

For Abraham Kaplan
1918-1993
who taught me to think of beauty
and showed me anyone

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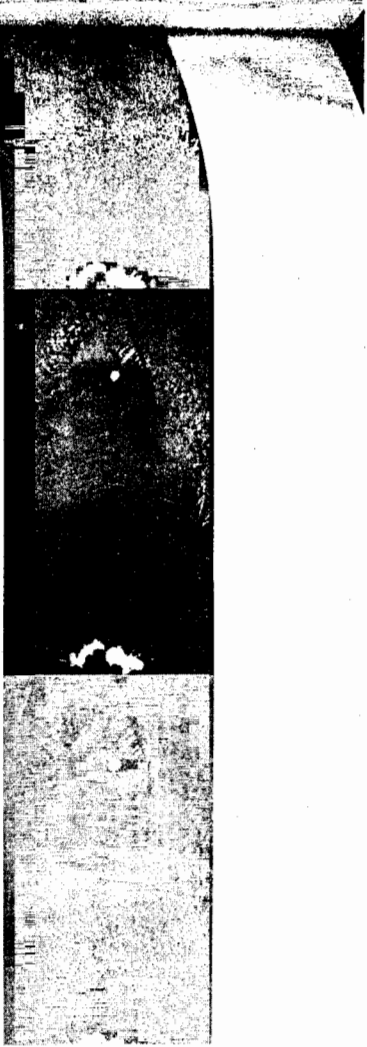
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Miller, a psychopath who kills women at random with a high-powered rifle. *The Sniper's* vision of American life is vicious, cold, and clinically powerless to stop the killer until the film's final moments. The film remains absolutely up-to-date today. Significantly, Franz's Eddie Miller repeatedly seeks help from the authorities, because he knows he's about to go over the edge, but none is forthcoming. Eddie falls through the cracks, until he reemerges as a figure of violent death. Yet as the 1940s gave way to the 1950s, our fear of the Other in our backyard was replaced by the fear of foreign invasion, and even atomic attack from an entirely new—and unanticipated—antagonist. After all, hadn't the Russians been our allies in World War II? The basic precepts of noir—to trust no one, to believe nothing as truth, to expect the worst in all possible situations, to realize that deception is an integral feature of social discourse—were all coming true as fundamental characteristics of modern life.

Whom, indeed, could we trust? No one. We could not even trust ourselves; a little pressure, and each of us could easily be made to implicate our friends and associates in whatever crime the authorities wished. What has been termed Neo-noir, in such films as Bryan Singer's *The Usual Suspects* (1995), John Dahl's *Red Rock West* (1993), and Larry and Andy Wachowski's *Bound* (1996), is little more than a stylistic homage to a genre whose authentic sense of menace and deception will never be equaled. Today, we have new fears to deal with, and a new set of escapist tools to transcend or confront them: video games, hyperviolent action films, Internet chat rooms, and interactive Web sites. We are all "connected," yet we have never been more isolated from one another. This was already the true message of noir sixty years ago: that today is horrible, and tomorrow will be worse, and hope is an illusion.

Once upon a time, we were adult enough to pay heed to this message. Now, we avoid the questions raised by film noir with the trivial pursuits of Neo-noir, searching cozily for something to pass the time.



MASS MURDER, MODERNITY, AND THE ALIENATED GAZE

Steven Alan Carr

The Battle over Holocaust Imagery

Modernity promises both utopia and dystopia. As utopian ideology, modernity celebrates linear progress, technological efficiency, scientific authority, and industrial achievement. As the Rosetta Stone for dystopian anxiety, modernity signifies massive social change, population shifts from rural to urban centers, the rise of consumerism and capitalism, increased industrialization, increased regimentation of daily lived experience, more sophisticated methods of concentrating social power and gaining popular consent, and, of course, more barbaric methods of deploying technology in the service of military aggression and fascist regimes.

Despite the presentation of a relatively coherent voice, the stylistic emphasis of modernism functions as a schizophrenic Greek chorus that both laments the more dystopic conditions of modernization and promotes the utopian teleology of individualism, humanism, and advancing scientific rationalism that itself helps generate and justify the conditions to which modernist styles often react. In *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Maria Sturken and Lisa Cartwright define modernism as a set of aesthetic practices that sought to break away from conventional representations, emphasizing "form over content" and self-reflexivity (2001, 360). Reacting to perspectival

realism and the assumptions of three-dimensional depth, modernist works sought to contradict assumptions of an "ideal spectator," instead offering a fractured but not necessarily fragmented view of the world. Rather than discount the possibility of a coherent observer, as much of the fragmentation that came to define postmodernism sought to do, modernism began with the assumption of a coherent individual who could access real phenomena through scientific methods, and ended with the individual subject alienated from a phenomenological reality that, while it did exist, remained too complex and contradictory for mere human consciousness to access. If the subject and even narrator of modernist fiction could prove unreliable, the notion of a coherent authorship deploying form over content as a way to comment upon the conditions of modernity and challenging traditional representations nonetheless remains intact, arguably even into the postmodern era.

Between modernism and postmodernism there is no clear break. This blur is the starting point for thinking about the construction of what we may call an *alienated gaze*; how it becomes encoded into popular culture, and how it functions as a stylistic response to the growing public emergence of the Holocaust and its visual record of atrocity. By this term, I mean to indicate a view that is at once conscious of itself and, to some degree therefore, in contradiction with itself; a look that, as it were, sees itself looking; a disengaged, and therefore potentially critical, view. I believe it is important to consider such a gaze in the context of the Holocaust and its attendant image of atrocity, a defining metaphor for the twentieth century against which all other images of atrocity stand in relation. Nothing of the photographed images of liberation—skeletal survivors crowded three or four to a bunk, ovens and showerheads, and piles of nude corpses being bulldozed into pits—inherently fixes the powerful and complex implications of these images as arbiters of atrocity. The images have been bestowed with two kinds of meaning, meaning that can be asserted but also meaning that gets pushed and pulled according to ideological struggle, and thus constitute together a battleground of myriad attempts of various social forces all seeking to maintain, negotiate, or ascend to legitimacy.

Given the primacy of Holocaust imagery in the struggle to negotiate subsequent standards for what constitutes atrocity, moral outrage, and ultimately military intervention, there has been surprisingly little public discussion—and even outright resistance to having a

discussion—that moves beyond issues of propriety or the bogey of Holocaust denial to question the primacy of the visual in representing the Holocaust, or the consequences for an overreliance upon images to serve as arbiters for what constitutes an atrocity and what does not. To be sure, both art and analysis have decried the encroaching commercialism of Holocaust imagery. The reasons for the absence of this discussion are understandable. The most vociferous challenges to photographic images of atrocity often come from the ludicrously marginal Holocaust deniers, who deploy this challenge as part of a larger project to restore anti-Semitism to mainstream legitimacy. The images must be fake; none of this could possibly have really happened. Another position, however, is more problematic, adopting Holocaust images as absolute givens, total definitions of a truth. The criticism that faces any attempt to engage the consequences of using these images as the arbiter for what constitutes atrocity—instead of accepting them unconditionally as if they were, themselves, the Holocaust—points to the perils of having a discussion like this one. Sadly, the work of Zbigniew Libera or Alan Schechner—the latter raised a storm by interpolating himself into a photograph of a concentration camp bunker, posing casually with a Diet Coke can—generates controversy because of a public unable or unwilling to distinguish between the increasingly commodified representation of the Holocaust on one hand and, on the other, artists who use their work to comment upon the consequences of this commodified representation, not to reinforce or hasten the commodification of Holocaust imagery.

Alienation and the Record

To begin an honest discussion of what I call the alienated gaze and its useful link to Holocaust and atrocity images, it helps to address the inherent alienation that is inspired by the direct encounter with the photographic record of atrocity. "Alienation," particularly in its Marxist connotation, need not be interpreted in the negative; to see the process of one's own seeing can ultimately promote a sense of critical engagement and awareness that is necessary to the functioning of a civil, pluralist, democratic society and can be, at the very least, appropriate when we encounter new levels of barbarism achieved in the name of modern progress. To find a deep-seated ambivalence, we need look no

further than the inscription on the west wall of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Taken from a letter written by General Dwight D. Eisenhower to General George C. Marshall dated 15 April 1945, the passage testifies to both the horror of atrocity and an awareness of the skepticism that evidence of atrocity will surely meet: "The things I saw beggar description. . . . The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were . . . overpowering. . . . I made the visit deliberately in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to 'propaganda.'" Despite its moral certainty, the inscription betrays a deep-seated ambivalence toward the gaze in modernity, namely, a lack of certainty concerning the act of looking and what its consequences might hold for future generations.

Why does Eisenhower insist upon positioning himself as a first-hand witness? Surely those critics predisposed to dismiss photographic evidence of atrocity as propaganda could easily explain away the testimony of a military general as part of a larger, ongoing effort to sustain anti-Nazi propaganda. Eisenhower understood that if his testimony were to have credibility, he would have to position himself in relation to the evidence of atrocity. Yet, as many from Walter Benjamin to John Berger and James Elkins have observed, the act of looking is neither passive nor one-sided. Rather, gazing is a relationship constructed between both material and imaginary conditions of existence. In reformulating Marxist conceptions of ideology, Louis Althusser suggests that the imagined relations indeed are far more complex, durable, and flexible than earlier notions of "false consciousness" had once assumed. For Althusser, ideology "hailed" the individual subject, but Elkins articulates the concept even more succinctly: in a visual society, our objects stare back. What, then, was Eisenhower's encounter with "starvation, cruelty and bestiality," and how were the images of these realities staring back at him?

The alienated gaze is not simply a passive activity; nor is it an activity initiated solely by human beings. Rather, it is a mutual relationship between animate subjects and inanimate, indexical traces of the real. That relationship has already been constructed and, through our ongoing participation, continues to be constructed, maintained, and

repaired. We enter into this relationship, not necessarily knowingly and perhaps the less knowingly the more effectively the relationship binds us to it. Of course, none of this theory is particularly radical or new: feminist film scholarship had already addressed the ideological nature of the gaze by the 1970s, when it used Freudian tenets to dissect how sexism becomes encoded in visual meaning. Rather than explore the gaze as a gendered construction, however, this essay will explore the gaze as an ideological modern construction that is infused with an especially ambivalent and complex alienation when confronted with the image of atrocity.

Of course, overt visual and narrative motifs of alienation and alienated characters have received extensive attention in analyses of individual artistic creations, especially in the work of European art film directors such as Ingmar Bergman, Michelangelo Antonioni, and Federico Fellini. Here I shall argue that with some interpretive work, one can also find a complex appropriation of modernist strategies encoded in relatively middle-brow and mainstream Hollywood films. Despite the tremendous advance that critical theory offered by revisiting and rethinking Marxist notions of ideology and false consciousness, most discussions about the failure of popular culture to respond adequately to the Holocaust persist in presuming the same, now somewhat tired, Marxist notions of ideology that applied before the advent of critical theory. Therefore, rather than merely assume that Hollywood films avoided or trivialized the Holocaust, we might ask how Hollywood films appropriated a sophisticated, complex, and nuanced subject position consistent with a modernist response to atrocity, and how from this position these films implicitly but consistently questioned and interrogated the very practice of looking. One can locate the material practice of this position in the alienated gaze, articulated through visual elements such as camera angle, shot composition, and shot selection; but it can be seen as well through editing and even narrative. The practice emerged both in mainstream Hollywood and in newsreel footage of the camps, but documentary practice explicitly articulated the alienated gaze before it was appropriated by studio filmmaking. Admittedly a subtle response to the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust, the alienated gaze reveals the implications and consequences of looking at the unbearable.

Alienation and the Alienated Gaze

The archetypal criticism of popular culture comes from Theodor Adorno, whose famous maxim, "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," warned that any art—not just poetry—would be unthinkable after the horrors of the concentration camp. However, critic Lawrence Langer has offered a much-needed corrective to this oft-cited passage. As Langer observes, "Perhaps what Adorno really meant to say was that to write poems after Auschwitz the way we wrote poems before Auschwitz was barbaric" (2002, 78). What I am calling the alienated gaze is, following Langer, a new way of writing and responding to the visual poem. As a signifying practice of filmmaking, it does not solely seek to unmask the prewar suspension of disbelief as so much denial and pretense. Rather, it is a self-reflexive practice that makes the viewer aware of the artifice of looking and ethically implicates the viewer in troubling ways. The alienated gaze can be manifest narratively, in stories of mistaken identity and "plays within a play," but it is also a visual construction. Indeed, the two genres in which one finds it most prevalent are comedy and the psychological horror film. Through point of view, constructed via camera angle, shot composition, and shot/reverse shot, the alienated gaze makes the viewer aware of the process of looking—indeed, the viewer's own looking—even as it can uncomfortably align those who identify with morally ambiguous protagonists and antagonists.

I find the alienated gaze operating as the kind of "socially symbolic act" described by Fredric Jameson (1981, 81). It betrays broad, deep-seated, and unresolved ideological tensions within the general narrative superstructure of our culture, tensions that can be taken as responses to the witnessing of modern-day atrocity. Consider that narratives distill the cultural forces, tensions, and contradictions of the day into easily recognizable symbols. Thus, whether any individual author of a text meant to respond or react to the Holocaust is irrelevant. In fact, the possibility that the alienated gaze might be an intentional device remains highly suspect. I see it as a symptom of a culture traumatized by its own looking. Just as, for Sigmund Freud, the narrative of the individual subject could be analyzed as a symptom, the gaze is symptomatic of a modernist schism, an utterance of the cultural meta-subject that reveals an unwriting attempt to reconcile the barbarism of the Holocaust with the teleological notions of progress and civilization.

That the alienated gaze "lets slip"—more than it intentionally articulates—a symptomatic schism is crucial in terms of how it encodes alienation in modern life. To see that schism in strictly Marxist terms, one can certainly think of alienation, from the proletarian perspective, as "indignation" against the "depravity" of witnessing a contradiction between humanity and the "blatant, outright, and all-embracing denial" of that humanity (1978, 133–34). But although this definition might describe an immediate encounter with the photographic image of atrocity, Walter Benjamin's account of alienation in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" builds upon a prescient understanding of fascist aesthetics and is closer to the kind of alienation reproduced in the alienated gaze. Benjamin understood that alienation from the aura and cult value of art was a necessary and inevitable process. While alienation would destroy the aura surrounding a work, it inevitably would bring about greater critical awareness.

In the service of "politicizing art," alienation would be a powerful democratizing force. In the service of fascism, however, alienation could become a dangerous tool for mobilizing mass movements "on the largest scale" (1985, 693). Without the constraint of an overriding critical context, the relationship between art and authority could be used to centralize power and promote war rather than to politicize and democratize art. As Benjamin notes, "All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war" (1985, 693). Seeking to give the masses "an expression while preserving property" relations, fascism's aesthetic glorification of war is the epitome of art for art's sake, a penultimate form of alienation that finds aesthetic pleasure in the destruction of human lives (1985, 694). Fascist pageantry capitalizes upon alienation from the aura and cult value of art, but asserts an authoritarian framework to structure how one experiences that alienation. Not necessarily a reaction to fascism, the alienated gaze nonetheless articulates a greater degree of ambivalence toward looking than fascist pageantry, more along the lines of how Benjamin describes the estrangement that one feels when encountering his or her own image on a screen. As he observes, the alienation one experiences is not just the estrangement one feels when looking into a mirror, but an estrangement from a reflected image that now "has become separable, transportable" to the public. Independent of the person who is its source, the image has a currency of its own, and the

alienated gaze shows us the image independently circulating with that currency.

As part of the political unconscious, the alienated gaze represents a similar estrangement, not from a particular image but from the very act of looking itself. The alienated gaze does not so much mirror a reflected image as it mirrors the very act of looking, as a relationship and as a process. Because the alienated gaze mirrors the act of looking, not the image, looking itself becomes separable and transportable, gains a currency. As Benjamin notes, discourses on photography long debated whether photography represented a triumph of science over human subjectivity, or a major quandary for traditional aesthetics. But what underscored these debates, without being explicitly acknowledged, was that the "science" of photography could newly encode (and popularize) the position of the dispassionate, objective observer. Just as photography could erode any sense of authorial ownership over the image, it could also reinforce a position of neutrality and present the image as a form of evidence. When Eisenhower spoke of "visual evidence" that "beggars description," he was maintaining that the antidote to charges of propaganda is to preserve a first-person account, both buttressed by material signifiers and endorsed within an institutional discourse that asserts its military authority. Even as the pictures become "real," the act of looking at them must be reasserted as engagement and authentication.

Recent Holocaust scholarship has focused upon the signifying practices of photography and documentary filmmaking during the liberation of the concentration camps, and how these practices evolved. As Barbie Zelizer notes, documenting "liberation" ultimately "depended on larger impulses to call the atrocities by name," and the photographic records of the camps were intended to be a form of "governmental persuasion." Although one might dismiss the intent and origination of Holocaust photographs as government-induced propaganda, Zelizer correctly observes that, unlike earlier forms of government propaganda that were selective in what they presented, the sheer weight of the photojournalistic record with regard to concentration camps eventually rendered untenable any charges that the atrocities of the concentration camps had not occurred. More important, though, was the way in which these photographs were able to shock "nations out of their skepticism" by "processing the unbelievable atrocity story into a plausible interpretive schema" (1998, 11–12). Whereas Zelizer sees the

documenting of atrocity as the event that launches the signifying practice of news photography, Dagmar Barnouw interprets the photographing of the camps at the time of liberation—in both still and motion pictures—as an encoding of military authority and perspective. As Barnouw perceptively notes, the photographs showing German civilians confronting German atrocities are,

by their very nature, visually self-conscious since their goal was to show what needed to be seen. Not surprisingly, the photographic spaces of these images are constructed around the topology of looking. Through the lens of his camera, the photographer looks at Germans looking at large numbers of piled-up or lined-up corpses, using the perspective of one or more American or British soldiers who are shown observing these prescribed acts of "viewing the atrocities." Positioned at different points of observation, the witnesses to these acts are themselves witnessed by the photographer, reaffirming the photographic evidence of the German population's obedience. (1997, 7)

Barnouw's stunning analysis of camp liberation images suggests that in addition to an emergent practice of news photography after the war, there was an emergent practice of framing atrocity through a military perspective. Such analysis demands more than looking at the image itself or treating the image as mirrored reflection. It demands that one consider a whole structure of looking as following a consistent pattern of meaning. Witnessing atrocity becomes a form of evidence in and of itself. In looking, the viewer says, "My reality as a viewer is confirmed by this reality I see," and also, "What I see is in fact a reality as it occurred." As Barnouw notes, it was military personnel who shot these photographs, the object of which was "to make clear that showing evidence of German atrocities will ensure German obedience in accepting, along with the new authorities, their new identity" (1997, 7).

Alienated Gaze as Modernist Visual Strategy

In and of itself the alienated gaze is neither fascist nor militaristic, but one would be foolish to deny links between the fascist appropriation of alienation observed by Benjamin and the Allies' encoding of

military authority within the visual record of atrocity. Although the alienated gaze is not an intentional or even explicit signifying practice, perhaps the most easily accessible example of structure comes from the highly self-conscious and stylized European art cinema. Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* (1955!), for example, is rightly regarded as a classic modernist approach to the Holocaust. Critics often note the striking juxtaposition of color footage of an abandoned concentration camp with black-and-white documentary and newsreel footage depicting Nazi atrocities, and especially the way in which the film graphically matches these juxtapositions through editing: a tracking shot of fence posts in the abandoned camp cuts to black-and-white newsreel footage of Nazis marching in formation past the camera (Bordwell and Thompson 2004, 299). Then there is the laconic voiceover narration by Jean Cayrol, himself a survivor, which deploys ironic distance at key moments in the film, such as when Cayrol self-consciously uses a spectrum of architectural styles to describe the camps ("No specific style—that's left to the imagination: *style Alpin, style garage, style Japonais, no style*"). Perhaps the most tangible and most self-conscious invocation of an alienated gaze, however, is in the visual motifs revealed during the color footage. The film opens with a devastating series of tracking shots, each one starting with a vista of "a peaceful landscape" before being reframed to reveal barbed wire or the electrified fence of the camp. Later in the film, the tracking camera becomes a surrogate point of view for the arrival of the deportation train at the camp. Beginning with a tracking shot of the railroad ties, the camera tilts up to reveal the camp entry. The motif of dramatic change through camera movement underscores a sense of alienation. Placed before the camp gates, we witness this movement from the abandoned tracks via the distancing color footage and plainly cannot approximate the historical suffering of those who were actually on the boxcars and sent to the camps. How easy it is to overlook the subtle and complex visual meanings of these shots—perhaps because so many of the once-radical cinematic techniques employed in *Night and Fog* have been subsumed within a popular visual lexicon.

In terms of representing the Holocaust, such practices were hardly new or unique to film, given the cinematographic records made by the Allies at the end of World War II. One has to wonder, then, what all the fuss was, in the very late twentieth century, over an exhibition

mounted at the Jewish Museum in New York City nearly forty years earlier (yet considerably after *Night and Fog*), when the NO!art collective group was employing similar distancing and alienating techniques in Sam Goodman's *Eichmann Remember* (1961) or Boris Lurie's *Lolita* (1962). Politicizing Pop Art, and in some ways reacting to it, the NO!art collective used radical collage to shock the viewer out of complacency in the wake of Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Both Goodman's and Lurie's works sought to engage what Hannah Arendt would later dub the "banality of evil" in her 1963 *New Yorker* articles and later book manuscript, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, an account of the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a high-level Nazi official complicit in the Final Solution and apprehended and put on trial by the Israelis in televised proceedings in 1961. As Estera Milman notes, both Goodman's and Lurie's works are obsessed with Eichmann's inability, or perhaps stubborn refusal, to grasp the ramifications of his having to answer for war crimes (Milman 2001, 24). At his trial, Eichmann could or would not recall the seminal role he played in the Wannsee Conference, the 1942 meeting of high-level Nazi officials to discuss various methods of mass execution that could be used to exterminate Jews. Constructed as a triptych, Goodman's *Eichmann Remember* helps prod memory through a ghastly collage of photographic evidence of atrocities committed by the Nazis, with the central panel featuring various photographs of Eichmann himself, his glasses shattered and the phrase "6,000,000 DEAD" scrawled across his face.

Even though Goodman does little to mask his indignation, the piece politicizes alienation through the central metaphor of Eichmann's *not* seeing, or refusing to see. Lurie's work, however, is even more confrontational in that it juxtaposes a fragment from a movie poster for the MGM adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1962) with a photograph from the Gardelegen massacre, where the Nazis locked an estimated one thousand or more concentration camp slave laborers in a barn and then burned them alive. Less than a month after American troops came upon the massacre, *Life* published the series of photos (7 May 1945). Given that both images had achieved popular currency in their time—actress Sue Lyon in heart-shaped sunglasses, sucking on a lollipop; and a charred corpse partly visible underneath a barn wall after apparently trying to escape the building by digging with bare hands—the juxtaposition is shocking. Perhaps this shock is

achieved because the synthesis of these images offers no stable subject position from which to view them. The only gaze that approaches stability when confronted by this work is one that is informed by the knowledge that Eichmann had refused a copy of Nabokov's novel after finding it "unwholesome" (Milman 2001, 24–25).

The instability of the subject position in viewing both *Night and Fog* and the works of the NO!art collective suggests that the notion of an alienated gaze was addressed most confrontationally and explicitly at the levels of art and art cinema. However, one need not look far to find less explicit engagement with the alienated gaze within popular culture. Indeed, much of NO!art draws from and comments upon commercialization and popular culture. And even though *Night and Fog* uses its techniques to destabilize how one views the concentration camp today, similar distancing techniques arguably were present in earlier documentaries immediately after the war, and even in Hollywood feature films before 1945.

Alienated Gaze as Narrative Strategy

The most pronounced form of the alienated gaze in mainstream cinema before the United States entered World War II is to be found in a number of different genres, in films that address, however elliptically, the early ramifications of the Holocaust. The two films that most notably engage this subject, both from United Artists, are Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940) and Ernst Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be* (1942). Although these films lack the visual flair of the European art cinema or NO!art photo collages, their narratives of mistaken identity, performance, and the tenuous balance between fiction and reality foretell the visual motifs of alienation that appear in subsequent mainstream films. In *The Great Dictator*, Chaplin plays a dual role: both a thinly disguised caricature of Adolf Hitler, Adenoid Hynkel, and a Jewish barber. The dual narrative serves both to satirize fascism through the depiction of Hynkel and to elicit sympathy for the plight of Jews through the appearance of the Little Tramp-like barber. Only in the final fifteen minutes of the film do both narratives coincide, as the barber's resemblance to Hynkel precipitates the capture and arrest of the actual Hynkel while the barber gets to speak to an audience of millions. Chaplin then steps out of character to deliver a monologue

in a direct address to the camera, creating a third "character" who seems to exist at the margins of both diegetic and non-diegetic narrative space.

Mistaken identities and doppelgängers were nothing new at the time. But *The Great Dictator* represented a departure from Chaplin's other films and was seen as less entertaining, in part because of its infusion of politics into his art. The film does represent a substantial distancing from the persona of the Little Tramp in such earlier films as *City Lights* (1931) and *Modern Times* (1936). Where the earlier narrative films presented a coherent character, Chaplin fractured his on-screen persona in *The Great Dictator* not once but twice—first between Hynkel and the barber, and again when the barber turns into a version of Chaplin himself. Although the barber seemed to be a holdover from Chaplin's earlier films—so much so that many viewers mistakenly believed Chaplin himself to be Jewish—Hynkel is the antithesis of the Little Tramp. Chaplin used to recall how so many people had commented upon his physical resemblance to Hitler, yet in his performance he seems to call attention to the artifice of Hynkel in his own right: the grandiose sets, the exaggerated use of nonsense language mixed with English, the anthropomorphized props (such as the bendable microphone). Such comic exaggeration would seem to underscore the difference between Chaplin and Hitler, rather than the similarity between the two. The ultimate alienation effect, however, occurs when the barber addresses the crowds who expect to hear Hynkel. At this point, Chaplin completely breaks the artifice of the scene, playing neither Hynkel nor the barber but a third character who directly addresses the camera and calls for an end to violence, war, and fascism. Although neither as polished nor as efficient as *To Be or Not to Be*, the climactic soliloquy does work as a kind of ultimate alienation that ends up rupturing the narrative and provides only minimal narrative resolution.

If *The Great Dictator* ends with narrative rupture, *To Be or Not to Be* begins with it, imagining what would happen if Hitler visited the Warsaw Ghetto in 1939 Poland. The film immediately sets up its own conceit, revealing that the "visitor" is actually an actor impersonating Hitler on the stage of a theater, at one point improvising and issuing an anticlimactic "Heil myself!" Distancing the audience through this bit of trickery—revealing the artifice of the actor's performance by

showing that within this film "the play's the thing"—*To Be or Not to Be* sets up a chain of subsequent scenes that call into question the nature of seeing and performance: Maria Tura's (Carole Lombard) divalike insistence that her stage character wear an evening gown for a scene to be played in a concentration camp; the assassination of the pro-Nazi agent Professor Alexander Siletsky (Stanley Ridges) on the stage of a theater, of all places, after members of the theatrical troupe fail to maintain their disguise as military officers (in order to help a colleague prevent the Nazis from gaining sensitive information concerning the Polish underground); the confrontation of Joseph Tura (Jack Benny), head of the acting company, who is impersonating Siletsky, with Siletsky's actual corpse; and Greenberg's (Felix Bressart) performance of Shylock's "Hath not a Jew eyes" soliloquy before German soldiers to stall them from an ensuing chase.

Such instances of dual, appropriated, and mistaken identity establish the formation of the alienated gaze, because these plot devices ultimately reference the non-diegetic aspects of performance. By featuring staged "diegetic performances" within the (diegetically performed) narrative, the film heightens the viewer's awareness of performance itself. In this manner, one can understand a film like *To Be or Not to Be* as countering the fascist embrace of spectacle in such a film as *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens* [1934]), which although Benjamin does not mention it would certainly conform to the kind of estrangement from humanity that he attacks. The estrangement from performance is similar to the estrangement Benjamin describes when an actor in role encounters his or her own image. Estrangement in these films, whether intentional or not, appears to function as a form of politicizing art by encouraging viewers to take a skeptical view of Nazi pageantry.

The Alienated Gaze in Popular Culture

The encounter with fascism may acquire a certain degree of politicization through an alienation from fascism, but the encounter with atrocity requires an alienation from the gaze itself. A number of films and newsreels documented the atrocities and liberation of the camps, many of them made under the auspices of the Allied military command. In May 1985, the PBS documentary series "Frontline" aired an

unreleased documentary entitled *Memory of the Camps*, which was long thought to have been lost. A joint production of the United States and Britain, the film was reconstructed from a fine cut, a shot list, and a narrator's script. Trevor Howard was employed to read the narration.

Although there is some dispute as to how much of a role director Alfred Hitchcock played in editing the footage, interviews reveal that he was involved as a creative adviser at some point in the production of the original film. Peter Tanner, one of the editors at the time, recalled in an interview with Elizabeth Sussex that Hitchcock was very concerned with preventing people from "thinking that any of this was faked; which of course none of it was." Hitchcock's strategy, according to Tanner, was to use footage that was "never cut. It was all in one shot. And this I know was one of Hitchcock's ideas, and it was very effective. There was *no way* for somebody seeing it that it could have been faked" (Sussex 1984, 96). Indeed, in the sequence depicting the liberation of Dachau, there are haunting uncut tracking shots of crowds of inmates staring back at the camera as it surveys them.

More intriguing, however, is the way in which the editing functions in this documentary to question not the veracity of evidence but the nature of looking. In the longest sequence of the film, a record of what the Allies found at Bergen-Belsen, the first scene presents pastoral views of the town before cutting to a wide shot of the camp. The editing suggests a disturbing veneer of normalcy camouflaging the horrible, not unlike the narrative conceit of Hitchcock's earlier *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943) or subsequent *Strangers on a Train* (1950). The motif also occurs in the narration, which often ironically wonders how a German could have failed to know what was taking place. Toward the end of the sequence devoted to this camp, a scene shows two chaplains delivering last rites to a pit full of corpses. The scene is intercut with reaction shots of prisoners witnessing the event and shots of a bulldozer pushing dirt over the bodies. The first shots of the chaplains are framed to exclude the pit, but the following ones show them above it. The next shot is a close-up of dirt being bulldozed into the pit. The camera slowly pans left to reveal the corpses.

The sequence betrays a concern for the believability of such images of atrocity that echoes throughout Hitchcock's subsequent work, particularly through the 1950s. I am not suggesting that Hitchcock's films

are about the Holocaust, but their narratives frequently convey at least as much concern for whether events will be believed as does the editing of *Memory of the Camps* in its concern with skepticism. Both *Rear Window* (1954) and *Vertigo* (1958) address issues of the gaze. Of course, these films are not about looking at the Holocaust, but they are about the ethics of looking at horrible crimes. The unseen and seen murders in these films arguably serve as narrative surrogates for atrocities, and the way in which both films implicitly call into question the spectator's gaze seems most relevant in terms of what we know from the film *Memory of the Camps* and Hitchcock's participation in it. *Rear Window* is a film about looking, and the central metaphor for fear in *Vertigo* is the famous special visual effect of the camera pulling back as the lens zooms in. Both are films that one can appreciate on a purely narrative level. Yet both films also accommodate a more metavisual reading that encompasses the role and function of the camera as the central position for the spectator.

This concern for looking becomes most apparent immediately before the shower scene in *Psycho* (1960). As Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) disrobes to take a shower, Norman Bates (Anthony Perkins) removes a framed picture from a wall to view her through a peephole. An extreme close-up of Bates's eye anticipates the later shot of Marion's eye as she stares blankly into the camera after having been murdered. By showing both Norman's eye and the spectacle of her disrobing that he sees, Hitchcock highlights and calls into question the act of watching: Norman watching Marion, the camera (and us) watching Norman watching, and the act of watching the film itself. The audience occupies the same gaze as a Peeping Tom. Later, a similar alienation occurs after Marion's murder. She stares lifelessly into the camera, but there is no reaction shot to reveal what can be seen from the point of view of her eye. The camera tracks over to a newspaper that is hiding the money she had embezzled, but there is no subjectivity to ground this visual flourish. Through the use of this technique, Hitchcock implicates the viewer in the narrative of the film: now, only the viewer—and none of the characters—knows the significance of this camera movement and what it shows.

Arguably, the filmic moments I have been describing here could do more to politicize meaning along the lines that Benjamin proposes. In terms of viewing the Holocaust not as a discrete historical moment

but as one with repercussions at both the overt and implicit levels, such moments can reveal a political unconscious at work. It is hard to imagine that the impact of the visual witness to atrocity would not have made some kind of impression, especially for those Hollywood personnel actively engaged in documenting atrocity for both military and civilian audiences. I have tried to suggest that the concern raised by images of atrocity can lead to a heightened awareness of the ethics and politics of looking, and that not just European art films but even Hollywood feature films can encode within their meaning the ambivalence present in the alienated gaze. Such ambivalence may or may not lead to a heightened politicization, but the presence of the alienated gaze would seem to reinforce Benjamin's initial observations about the inherently liberatory function of images. Although it is certainly not insulated from co-optation by authoritarian forces, even popular culture can encode complex and charged visual subjectivities with which the most dominating systems of control must reckon.

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