Philosophy of Photography
Volume 9 Number 2
 doi: 10.1386/pop.9.2.217_5

REVIEWS

AGAINST THE ANTHROPOCENE: VISUAL CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT TODAY, T. J. DEMOS (2017)

Berlin: Sternberg Press, 132 pp.,
ISBN 978-3-95679-210-6, p/bk, £18.00

Reviewed by Iain Campbell, Reid School of Music, University of Edinburgh

A cursory Internet image search for the term 'Anthropocene' reveals a distinctive set of visual tropes. Frequently the planet Earth as a whole, often smeared with artificial light or criss-crossed with representations of flight paths. Perhaps, superimposed over this, sets of daunting graphs, charting exponential trajectories. These images serve to inform us about the Anthropocene, a term and a thesis coined in the year 2000 by atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and biologist Eugene Stoermer (9), which has since moved beyond the natural sciences into popular science educational media and increasingly into the arts, humanities and social sciences (11). It tells us that we have entered a new epoch in the history of planet Earth, an epoch in which humanity is leaving its mark on the planet and contributing to a climate crisis to which it must respond.

In *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today*, T. J. Demos takes as his task diagnosing what this imagery hides and excludes, and what a visual culture that resists the terms of the Anthropocene can tell us about alternative means of doing environmental activism. Key to Demos's contention with Anthropocene discourse is its claim that we are witnessing a shift in Earth's systems that can be attributed to 'human activities'. For Demos, such a definition obscures the deeply differentiated

character of any *anthropos* whose actions we understand to be responsible for this shift: the implication of 'human activities' is a 'universally distributed responsibility' (12) for climate change, a collective 'we' that many of 'us' would rightfully resist identifying with. Demos's argument, then, is that Anthropocene rhetoric, as deployed through its visual culture, acts as a 'mechanism of universalization' (19). This allows the occlusion of the precise source of the 'human activities' that ground the Anthropocene, and in so doing defers and disavows responsibility and accountability from the real agents of climate change, namely, corporate industry and what he terms the 'military-state-corporate apparatus'.

A problem grappled with throughout *Against the Anthropocene* concerns what underlies the illusory immediacy of Anthropocene imagery, what is obscured and erased in the production of its 'techno-scientific, militarized, "objective" image[s]' (18). This problem invites a central question: what kind of mobilization will it take to render these 'invisibilities' visible (36–37)? Throughout, Demos engages with a wide, intersectional set of activists, artists and scholars who have taken on this question by producing practices and visual forms that resist and challenge those of the Anthropocene.

Naming the 2015 sHell No! kayak blockade of Shell's Polar Pioneer oil drilling rig as an example, Demos presents a form of activism that is, contrary to the elegant holism of Anthropocene imagery, wilfully, messily, irreducibly pluralistic. This blockade saw the kayaks themselves creatively deployed, these 'leisure crafts retooled for rebellious intervention and nonviolent direct action' (42) forming a mass of clashing colour surrounding the Polar Pioneer, and the cultural forms surrounding the event comprised a diverse mix of 'political theater, mediagenic banners and signage, civil disobedience, and Indigenous ritual'. This activism challenges in content as well as form the undifferentiated humanity and centralized solutions of the Anthropocene thesis, and so is able to pose questions that the Anthropocene thesis cannot: questions not of humanity but of the systems – capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy and white supremacy among them – responsible for the crisis we face (53–54). Such an orientation allows us to recognize the character of the uneven distribution of harms posed by environmental disaster, where 'the lives of the vulnerable, the lives of the impoverished, women, Indigenous peoples, migrants, and people of colo[u]r' (59–60) are at vastly disproportionate risk.

It is for this reason that when considering alternatives to the Anthropocene thesis, Demos first endorses that of the 'Capitalocene' (54).[1] This has the simple power of 'call[ing] violence by its name' (60), that of capitalism, rendering it visible and offering a point around which to mobilize politically. In turn, it brings with it a wide set of existing theoretical tools to analyse and challenge modern capitalism, and to recognize climate change as the end point of a history of enclosure, colonialism, industrialization and globalization.

On this theme, Chapter 4, 'Capitalocene violence', features Demos' most striking and powerful visual analysis, where he contrasts the photographic industrial landscapes of Edward Burtynsky's *Oil* series (1999–2010) and Louis Helbig's *Beautiful Destruction* catalogue (2014) with Richard Misrach and Kate Orff's 2012 *Petrochemical America* project. In Demos' reading, Burtynsky's and Helbig's

1. This term Demos credits to Andreas Malm and Jason W. Moore. On the Capitalocene see, among many of Moore's other writings, Moore (2016).

images both aestheticize their subject in a troubling manner, rendering industrial technologies and their destructive effects awe-inspiring and even beautiful (61–65). On the contrary, Misrach's images of scarred terrain and depopulated communities along the Mississippi River, coupled with Orff's detailed and varied analyses, name and make visible both the cause – fossil fuel extractivism – and the uneven distribution of its effects on economic and racial lines (78). This work, then, emphasizes much of what Demos takes to be occluded in the imagery of the Anthropocene: impact at a human scale, the differential distribution of this impact, the use of a plurality of materials presented without intention of a unifying narrative, a political perspective rather than complicit claims of objectivity or neutrality, and a direct challenge posed towards structural causes being among these features.

However, corresponding to a recognition of 'the sheer complexity and multiple dimensionality of this geo-politico-economic formation' (87), Demos acknowledges the necessity of not only the Capitalocene thesis but of 'many names' with which come a diverse set of sources of resistance and means for bringing about transformative justice: 'if ecology means relationality, and as such proposes an analogue for a comprehensive politics of intersectionality, then the struggle must be waged on multiple interconnected levels' (99). Donna Haraway's 'Chthulucene' (2016) names a 'post-anthropocentric, non-human-exceptionalist, and post-individualist' response to not only the Anthropocene thesis but also what she perceives as the defeatism of Capitalocene discourse, and seeks to articulate a speculative world of multispecies mutuality (88); the Gynecene, Plantationocene and Homogenocene are among terms that point variously to feminist, Indigenous, postcolonial and many more lines of attack on the Anthropocene thesis.

Demos does not seek to unify these approaches, and is justified in doing so by his resistance towards the universalizing logic of the Anthropocene. But this poses a problem concerning the effective scope of such approaches. Demos recognizes that the term 'Anthropocene' registers the scale of the catastrophe we face, and has effectively united scholars and practitioners across the sciences, arts and humanities (85), but it is difficult not to affirm with Demos that the term and the discourse around it is a direct barrier to any thinking of a differentiated humanity. Yet the question of scale still haunts us. The speculative reach of Haraway's 'Chthulucene', imagining societies hundreds of years from now, may be one approach that can compete with the scale of the Anthropocene, but this comes at a price that goes unmentioned by Demos. Haraway's speculative society is predicated on a vast reduction in human population (2016: 6), which would be achieved in a peaceful and non-coercive manner. Sophie Lewis has compellingly argued that here Haraway tends towards an unsettling misanthropy (Lewis 2017), and does not convince in her attempts to separate her notions of population management from the many other such attempts that have been implicated in what Michelle Murphy has termed the 'economization of life' (2017: n.pag.).

These criticisms raise a more general concern about *Against the Anthropocene*. This slim volume compresses much into its short length, but we may come to ask if this brevity sees Demos set aside

some crucial theoretical questions. Demos's depiction of cultural practices that pit themselves against the Anthropocene thesis is a largely harmonious one, pluralistic yet congenial, with an implicit image of diverse theoretical and political movements working together in peaceful coexistence. This perhaps obscures the more conflictual features of the field, and despite bemoaning the depoliticization implicit in Anthropocene rhetoric, Demos may well risk depoliticizing the internal dynamics of anti-Anthropocene activism itself. The source of this conflict is only hinted at in *Against the Anthropocene*, but is more visible in Demos's 2016 book *Decolonizing Nature*. Here Demos notes that his work draws on 'speculative realism and new materialism as much as Indigenous cosmologies and climate justice activism' (2016: 8), and while he makes some distinctions between his work and that of the theorists he refers to, by only referring in passing to the substantial criticisms of speculative realism and new materialism from a long list of scholars coming from Indigenous, feminist, queer, Marxist and other perspectives,[2] Demos leaves the question of to what extent we can really integrate or communicate between these theoretical discourses open.

There is no doubt that Demos captures much of the vibrancy and power of environmental activism in *Against the Anthropocene*, and points in many directions for strategies to resist the continuing destruction of our planet by a very select portion of humanity. Yet there is much cause to be bleak. Demos emphasizes the importance of a rendering visible of invisibilities, yet even since the publication of this book, one of the most effectively visible environmental movements of recent times, that around the Standing Rock Sioux protest against the completion of the Dakota Access Pipeline, was ultimately, and brutally, shut down.[3] But we cannot risk a slip into cynicism. While Demos's downplaying of antagonism may fail to capture some of the dynamics of environmental activism, there is nevertheless merit to the positivity and excitement he evokes from its successes. As Demos says, '[t]he goal must be one of hope: to make the impossible gradually possible, for we have no other acceptable choice' (98).

2. Among them, Todd (2015), Rosenberg (2014) and Cole (2013). Andreas Malm's recent work on climate change offers a striking alternative to many of the precepts behind *Against the Anthropocene*, staking a strong claim against new materialist positions (see Malm 2017).

3. And major administrative steps have since been taken to diminish the possibilities of such protest being possible or successful: see Carpenter and Williams (2018).

References

Carpenter, Z. and Williams, T. (2018), 'Since Standing Rock, 56 bills have been introduced in 30 states to restrict protests', *The Nation*, https://www.thenation.com/article/photos-since-standing-rock-56-bills-have-been-introduced-in-30-states-to-restrict-protests/. Accessed 2 March 2019.

Cole, A. (2013), 'The call of things: A critique of object-oriented ontologies', *Minnesota Review*, 80, pp. 106–18.

Demos, T. J. (2016), *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*, Berlin: Sternberg Press.

—— (2017), *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today*, Berlin: Sternberg Press.

Haraway, D. J. (2016), *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Helbig, L. (2014), *Beautiful Destruction*, Victoria, BC: Rocky Mountain Books.

Lewis, S. (2017), 'Chthulu plays no role for me', *Viewpoint Magazine*, https://www.viewpointmag.com/2017/05/08/cthulhu-plays-no-role-for-me. Accessed 2 March 2019.

Malm, A. (2017), *The Progress of this Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World*, New York: Verso.

Moore, J. W. (ed.) (2016), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*, Oakland: PM Press.

Murphy, M. (2017), *The Economization of Life*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Rosenberg, J. (2014), 'The molecularization of sexuality: On some primitivisms of the present', *Theory and Event*, 17:2, pp. 15–30.

Todd, Z. (2015), 'Indigenizing the Anthropocene', in H. Davis and E. Turpin (eds), *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, London: Open Humanities Press, pp. 241–54.

E-mail: iain.campbell.om@gmail.com

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4501-9891

BECOMING A CAMERA

NONHUMAN PHOTOGRAPHY, JOANNA ZYLINSKA (2017)

Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 272 pp.,
ISBN 978-0-26203-702-0, h/bk, £35.00

Reviewed by Sara Oscar, University of Technology Sydney

Photography, as a medium that fuses time, light and space, is often associated with the human experience of temporality and death. Roland Barthes speaks of photography's distinct ability to capture a future anterior, because all photographs collapse the dual temporalities of 'this will be' and 'this has been' into the same frame. For Barthes, 'every photograph is this catastrophe' (1981: 96). Similarly, Derrida is triggered to repeat the sentence 'we owe ourselves *to* death' throughout his meditation on the photographs of Jean François Bonhomme (2010). Susan Sontag also observes, 'to take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality' (1973), while Geoffrey Batchen has spoken at length of photography's historical associations with death (1999: 208). Necromancy appears to have a long-standing affiliation with photography. In her recent book, *Nonhuman Photography*, Joanna Zylinska proposes an alternative way of considering photography outside of the death discourse, by looking at the medium in the light of the Anthropocene. Defined by scientist Paul Crutzen as the geological era that marks human impact on the earth dating from industrialization, the Anthropocene has since been popularized in the arts and humanities by extensive consideration of topics such as human accountability in climate change, the end of civilization and the mass environmental extinction of animal species. In this context, Zylinska argues that human responsibility to the ecological world first involves seeing ourselves as humans entangled amongst other nonhuman factors and agents, particularly light. One of the principle factors that Zylinska sees as limiting the acknowledgement of such entanglement is photography's relationship to death. According to Zylinska, death discourse limits the medium to a human struggle against mortality, and she suggests we look outside of the anthropocentric view to consider photography in the ecological framework of the Earth and its own cycles. For Zylinska, this means seeing the medium of photography as a vital nonhuman entity, one aligned with processes of fossilization and deep time.

To make her claim, Zylinska mobilizes what she terms 'nonhuman photography', a mechanical form of capture where humans are neither the subject, agent or addressee of the photographs (2017: 5). The increasing employment of nonhuman photography with satellite and drone technology can be seen as severing the human from the mechanical apparatus, and Zylinska sees this as an exciting proposition for a theory of photography outside of death discourse because it decentres the human as

the pivot of the world. This facilitates a realignment of the human as a connected entity, with an 'embodied, immersive, and entangled form of image and world formation' (17). Zylinska offers readers an alternative history of the photographic medium as a nonhuman force with its own trajectory and she looks back to the inception of photography to revise the history of its invention as one that suppresses the medium's nonhuman nature.

In the first two chapters of the book, Zylinska reconsiders traditional models of human vision. The first chapter, 'Nonhuman vision' offers a model of perception which has its origins in the thought of Donna Haraway and Vilém Flusser. Here Zylinska advocates for an embodied, nonlinear, connected model of perception that challenges the traditional, dominant white masculinist 'view from nowhere' and creates a sense of human mastery over the world. By using a model of 'nonhuman vision', Zylinska sees the potential to revolutionize traditional forms of seeing and this is illustrated with artistic examples such as Richard Whitlock's *The Street* (2012), Bonamy Devas's *Photographic Tai Chi* (2015) as well as her own artistic practice-based research such as *Active Perceptual Systems* (2014–16). In these works, Zylinska sees the employment of technological means of distorting traditional forms of single point perspectival representation as a way of revolutionizing seeing. For example, Whitlock's video tableaux of a street in Greece is a composite of still and moving imagery using architectural parallel projection techniques to create an image without any single point of perspective, the cars in the video do not recede into the distance but appear to be the same size while moving. Devas's method employs the technique of shaking her smartphone while photographing with the panoramic tool so as to confuse the algorithm that stitches scenes together as a form of abstraction. In Zylinska's own work, photographs taken by a wearable camera programmed by an algorithm to capture images at regular intervals and according to the movement of her body, are edited according to a sequence and intended to rupture the linearity of vision. Zylinska argues these works function to circuit break traditional Albertian models of single point perspective that privilege the 'view from nowhere' and offer other models of perspective outside of human vision.

Creative image-making practices are, for Zylinska, a way of philosophizing and simultaneously, a way of practicing philosophy through image-making and it is with Bergson's thoughts on duration that Zylinska argues for the act of photographing to be considered as a creative, 'zoetic' force. Against Sontag's reading of photographing as a passive act of 'non-intervention' (43), Zylinska argues for photography as life-giving or world making. Through the employment of the term 'the cut', which she also considers in an earlier co-authored book with Sarah Kember, *Life After New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process* (Kember and Zylinska 2012: 79), she says, it 'is what we do to stabilize matter from the flow of duration, and to this end the cut is vital and still 'bears a trace of life' (53). Zylinska speaks of cuts rather than photographs as 'frozen and ultimately deadly mementoes of the past' associated with photographic discourses of death, because they are part of a process of managing the duration of the world (73). While Zylinska distinguishes between the temporary stabilization of matter and

the deadly memento, this tenuous distinction needs to be developed further in the chapter. There is considerable difficulty here in establishing the semantic differences between the vital cut as life giving, and the morbid click of the camera as a frozen memento mori. The difference between the vital cut and the morbid click hinges on subjective interpretation, and represses the medium's entanglement with the dual forces of life *and* death.

In the second half of the book, Zylinska draws parallels between photography and fossilization in order to position photography in the framework of deep time outside of the relatively short time of the human. Influenced by the media theory of Siegfried Zylinski and the fossil, Zylinska sees nonhuman photography within a geological framework because photographs, like fossils have been made with the imprint of light. This leads Zylinska to reconsider the history of photography in light of the geological process of imprinting from Nièpce, to Daguerre to William Jerome Harrison. By Zylinska's account, drawing parallels between photography, fossils and deep time makes photographs ideal agents for reimagining the 'eco-eco disaster' as the medium has the capacity to 'scale down the deep-time of nonhuman history to the human measure of duration and perception' (95). Zylinksa's effort to think of the photograph as a fossil, is induced by a posthuman reframing of photography outside of the sphere of the human. Zylinska states 'photography is not a new process but, instead a 'modern mediated extension' of the ancient-long impressioning activity enabled by light, soil and various minerals' (111). As a symbol of deep time, the fossil can be mobilized to imagine a species after extinction and open up the gap between experience and witnessing. Zylinska argues fossils are ethical injunctions that ask us to reach out to life as active grieving for the world rather than a form of memento mori (127). With light as an enabler and enforcer of the passage of time, photography may offer a different perspective on ecological problems, she argues. By seeing fossils as a material record of life rather than a kind of melancholy death mask or trace of the referent, Zylinska wants to establish a greater connection between the fossil and the sun that fosters life on the planet.

In the final chapter, Zylinska makes the provocative, but well supported claim that we have always been digital. With Geoffrey Batchen's insight, Zylinska regards the shift to digital technologies to be an embodiment of the idea of photography within 'a persistent economy of photographic desires and concepts' rather than a material difference (169), which is to say that photography's social and relational function still remains intact, even though it has changed material form. Photography's transition from analogue film to digital code is a symptom of the inherent liquidity of all culture and its technological artefacts in modernity (169). The need to argue for the unfixable photographic object is prompted by Zylinska's desire to move beyond the ontological concerns of what a photograph is to its 'acts, affects and temporal effects' in the context of memory and archiving (170). What consequences, Zylinska asks, are there for the liquidation and digitization of photography in general? This question is posed in consideration of photography's relationship to the archive in the age of the digital.

Generally understood as a repository of knowledge and memory, the archive as Derrida reminds us is subjected to the dual forces of remembrance and forgetting, and Zylinska acknowledges photography is but one of the many places where such a compulsion is enacted.

The book offers new perspectives of photography from the position of posthumanism. Such an account is immensely important to photographic ethics, photography and memory studies and documentary photography because reframing involves consideration of authorship as a human dominated activity, particularly as human impulses to record raise questions about what it means for the human to photograph in an ethical way. Zylinska's reading of nonhuman photography makes a valuable contribution to a neglected area of the medium's human focused discourse. At times, the breadth of scholarship in the book makes it difficult to rearticulate Zylinska's reading of photography as a form of life outside of the time of the human, and the arguments sometimes are limited by the material supports that struggle to capture the significance of photography's connection to deep time. To see photography within the ecological framework of the Earth and life, and outside of the discourse of human death was never going to be an easy exercise in the light of climate change, particularly when photography is also deployed by humans to document its effects. This prompts a return to the question of whether or not Zylinska's book is able to critique Barthes' conception of photography's relationship to death, and its perverse capacity to signify death as both a past and future event. While Zylinska delineates a new theory of photography outside of the human, her vitalist perspective of photography as a 'temporary stabilisation of duration' and form of 'active grieving for the world' only bypasses Barthes' discourse of death rather than ever directly engaging with it. Zylinka's turn from death to light and life is perhaps the most problematic aspect of the book because it is never completely resolved, and underscores the difficulty of speaking outside of the human impulse to see life and death as deeply entangled concepts.

References

Barthes, R. (1981), *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, New York: Hill and Wang.

Batchen, G. (1999), *Burning With Desire: The Inception of Photography*, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.

Bennett, J. (2010), *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uts/detail.action?docID=1170671. Accessed 24 May 2018.

Derrida, J. (2010), *Athens, Still Remains: The Photographs of Jean Francois Bonhomme*, New York: Fordham University Press.

Kember, S. and Zylinska, J. (2012), *Life After New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process*, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.

Sontag, S. (1973), 'Photography', *New York Review of Books*, 18 October, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1973/10/18/photography/. Accessed 24 May 2018.

Wolfe, C. (2018), 'Posthumanism', in R. Braidotti and M. Hlavajova (eds), *Posthuman Glossary*, London and New York: Bloomsbury, pp. 356–59.

Zylinska, J. (2017), *Nonhuman Photography*, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.

E-mail: sara.oscar@uts.edu.au

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0543-0811

1. 'Thinking images' is an expression used by Laura Rascaroli to highlight the reflexivity and critical inquiry typical of the essay film in her book *How the Essay Film Thinks* (2017).

BEYOND THE WITNESS: HOLOCAUST REPRESENTATION AND THE TESTIMONY OF IMAGES, THREE FILMS BY YAEL HERSONSKI, HARUN FAROCKI AND EYAL SIVAN

REBECKA KATZ THOR (2018)

Stockholm: Art and Theory Publishing, 183 pp.,
ISBN 978-9-18803-161-7, h/bk, £25

Reviewed by Malin Wahlberg, Stockholm University

Conceptual explorations of visual archives, memory and forgetting in moving images may provide to an audio-visual historiography an alternative knowledge production that adds to the work of historians. Cinema and gallery films may illuminate history as lived time, while scrutinizing the complexities of recollection and the struggle of memory work. Ideally, these are screen events and 'thinking images' that also manage to reflect upon the formative role of images in the production and reproduction of cultural memory.[1] The recent monograph *Beyond the Witness: Holocaust Representation and*

the Testimony of Images departs from, and centres on, three specific examples of such artistic projects: *A Film Unfinished* (Hersonski, 2010), *Respite* (Farocki, 2007) and *The Specialist: Portrait of a Modern Criminal* (Sivan, 1999). These films result from different strategies of compilation aesthetics and exemplify different modes of address, but they all relate conceptually to Holocaust commemoration. Each example also pays special attention to the materiality of archival images and the politics of their preservation and re-use as proof or 'visible evidence'. Rebecka Katz Thor accounts for the aesthetics of these films to argue for the critical potential of 'the moving image as witness', beyond documentary conventions and the excessive visibility and implied voyeurism of the filmic testimony in visual culture. Katz Thor proposes to 'resituate' the power of the image in relation to visual culture, documentary truth claims, and the predominant tropes of Holocaust commemoration. Her argument unfolds in close dialogue with the three films, whose individual production histories and original projects of archival research also represent objects of study for her detailed film analyses. In *Beyond the Witness*, the 'method of resituating' crystallizes into: a line of thought grounded in theory and conceptual art; an object of study; and a method tried out in Katz Thor's own analysis of the films. This is an unusually playful structure for an academic study, but the fallacy of its narrow scope is counterbalanced by the multifaceted theoretical discussion and the author's own work in the archives, propelled by the archival research of Hersonski, Farocki and Sivan. The originality of *Beyond the Witness* consists of the double exposure of each film as both a committed engagement with the history of a particular archive and the film, that is, the particular result of the artist's method of resituating that history.

The project of Hersonski was to research, invoke and imagine the circumstances surrounding the making of the never completed Nazi propaganda film *Das Ghetto* in 1942. *A Film Unfinished* reuses sequences from the original production combined with Hersonski's interviews with people who acted in *Das Ghetto*. Music is added to dramatize the bridging between the present and the past, and there is also the enacted testimony of one of the camera operators. Katz Thor contextualizes the production history of both the original film and Hersonski's to show how sequences from *Das Ghetto* previously have been cut out of context, recycled and presented as historical source material for educational purposes, a 'documentary record' oblivious of the original filmmakers' intentions and intervention.

Harun Farocki's *Respite* also acknowledges a film project that was never completed, sequences shot at the Dutch transit camp Westerbork in 1944 for a film commissioned by the camp commander, possibly with the intent to argue for the maintenance of the camp. In contrast to Hersonski's conventional use of music and filmed testimony, Farocki combines moving images with still images, re-uses original text frames and adds his own commentary. The frames have been put in critical dialogue without the affective support of music or sound effects. Katz Thor underscores how *Respite* invokes and comments on the materiality of the archive image, the implied power relations between the seer

and the seen, the organization of the camp and the implied organization and framing device of the original Westerbork material.

The Specialist: Portrait of a Modern Criminal (Sivan, 1999) makes use of film images shot during the 1961 Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. For this film, an impressive set of sequences from the famous video record was carefully selected and transformed into a narrative based on Hannah Arendt's account in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* of 1963. In her analysis of *The Specialist*, Katz Thor also accounts for the about 358 hours of video material that was discarded for the chosen material to be enacted into an audio-visual courtroom drama where the already theatrical features of the trial and its political implications are brought to the fore.

In documentary cinema, material traces tend to be presented as proof of things having happened, but the indexical quality of photographs, film images and recorded sound already enhance the uncanny impact of the trace as a 'disarrangement expressing itself' (Lévinas 1971: 63). Even in the most reflexive film narrative, where the claim to truth and objectivity associated with documentary are questioned and mocked, aspects of camera inscription and framing devices tend to invoke the vestige both as passage and mark, a compelling presence of absence. Katz Thor's detailed contextualization and analysis of each film also hint at the interrelation between the actual event and the imagined past, the unfolding sound-images of the film and the embodied time of film viewing. This aspect of the image as witness resonates with a long-standing debate on cinema and trauma, film and Holocaust commemoration in the predominant field of documentary studies (Sakar and Walker 2010; Haggith and Newman 2005; Renov 2004).

The editing table provides a common denominator in Katz Thor's account of the three films: the editing table as the actual and metaphoric control desk of the editor/filmmaker/storyteller/historian. *Frame* and *re-framing* mark the agency of the resituated image, and the practice to analyse it, because, Katz Thor contends, 'it is the frame that structures the image both conceptually and materially, in the moment when the image is created and in the moment when it is interpreted by the viewer' (41). With reference to Georges Didi-Huberman, Susan Sontag and Judith Butler, *Beyond the Witness* accounts for the politics of the image and the expressive potential of the immanent play with inclusion and exclusion at work in the playful framing exemplified by the three films. The overall argument of 'the image as witness' relies primarily on scholarly work biased towards the static frame of the photograph, something that initially puzzled my reading of the book. 'Still Images' is the title of an entire section that provides generous illustrations of the films' compiled archival sources. The abstract quality of these still images (and text frames devoid of sound, voice and the overall rhythm of montage) is eventually balanced in later sections where Katz Thor provides close readings that truly stress the creativity and agency of compilation aesthetics in the three films. At this point it is worth noting how the concept of *resituating* seems to resonate with related reflections in current scholarship on documentary theory. For example, Ilona Hongisto

recently underscored the formal mechanisms and possible agency of re-framing as fundamental to her understanding of *fabulation in* experimental documentary: 'deframing and reframing endows the documentary with the capacity to imagine' (Hongisto 2015: 63). This would also align with Katz Thor's reference to the philosophy of Judith Butler, who contends that the moment when the image becomes political is exactly when it points beyond the frame to invoke the unseen (2009: 51). Katz Thor's sensitivity to audio-visual form highlights the potential of the image as witness when re-animated in a film. This is also where the complex interrelation between reused archival images, narrative and imagination in film most poignantly deviates from the frozen, fixed frame of the photograph. *Beyond the Witness* stands out as a welcome contribution to the philosophy of film and photography, to media theory and cinema studies. It speaks to current debates on film, historiography and the possibilities and pitfalls of media commemoration in relation to historical events and the challenges of the political present.

Night and Fog ('Nuit et brouillard') (Resnais, 1955) is an essay film, 'a film that thinks' (Rascaroli 2017) about Holocaust commemoration while performing a gesture of audio-visual historiography. The film scrutinizes the authoritative voice of documentary form, the distancing effect of historical representation and the notion of the archival image as an object of the past. Instead colour sequences of Auschwitz shot in 1955 blend with archival images, showing horrific mountains of eyeglasses and cut hair at the death camp and accompanied in counterpoint by the poet and survivor Jean Cayrol's text, which is grimly performed on voice-over by the detached voice of actor Michel Bouquet and orchestrated by Hanns Eisler's score. Resnais was commissioned to make a film in commemoration of the ending of the war. In response, he forged a reflection on image and memory, with the hope to make the viewers 'shaken by what is not seen'.[2] In the history of Holocaust cinema, this 30-minute audio-visual poem refuses the enclosed structure of a historical narrative. As famously stated by Resnais' younger college, collaborator and filmmaker Chris Marker, 'You never know what you actually are filming',[3] the meaning of images changes over time and the interrelation between photography, film and the production and re-production of cultural memory is a complex process, imbued with the politics and power relations of media culture in large (Wahlberg 2008: 102).

2. Alain Resnais quoted in Flitterman-Lewis (1998: 204–15).

3. Marker quoted from his film *Le fond de l'air est rouge* (1977).

References

Arendt, H. (1994), *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, London: Penguin Books.

Barthes, R. (1980), *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (trans. R. Howard), New York: Hill and Wang.

Butler, J. (2009), *Frames of War: When Life is Grievable*, New York: Verso Books.

Farocki, Harun (2007), *Respite*, Germany: Harun Farocki Filmproduktion.

Flitterman-Lewis, S. (1998), *To Desire Differently: Feminism and the French Cinema*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Haggith, T. and Newman, J. (2005), *Holocaust and the Moving Image: Representations in Film and Television Since 1933*, London and New York: Wallflower Press.

Hersonski, Yael (2010), *A Film Unfinished*, Germany and Israel: Belfilms.

Hongisto, I. (2015), *The Soul of Documentary: Framing, Expression, Ethics*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Rascaroli, L. (2017), *How the Essay Film Thinks*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Renov, M. (2004), *The Subject of Documentary*, vol. 16, Visible Evidence Series, London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Sakar, B. and Walker, J. (eds) (2010), *Documentary Testimonies: Global Archives of Suffering*, London: Routledge.

Sivan, Eyal (1999), *The Specialist: Portrait of a Modern Criminal*, France: Momento, France 2 Cinéma.

Wahlberg, M. (2008), *Documentary Time: Film and Phenomenology*, London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.