

What Remains to Be Seen: Animal, Atrocity, Witness

Author(s): DAVID L. CLARK

Source: *Yale French Studies*, No. 127, *Animots: Postanimality in French Thought* (2015), pp. 143-171

Published by: Yale University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44512266>

Accessed: 14-04-2018 13:31 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Yale University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Yale French Studies*

DAVID L. CLARK

What Remains to Be Seen: Animal, Atrocity, Witness¹

In memory of Ross Greig Woodman, mentor and friend.

What does it mean to fall under the gaze of a non-human animal and to be dispossessed in its singular presence? What does it feel like to be glimpsed by a creature whose eyes are not so much unmet as met without the consolation of recognition or comprehension? In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Jacques Derrida explores the significances of yielding to an animal's address. "The animal looks at us, and we are nude before it," he writes: "And thinking begins perhaps there."² The animal's gaze, which is not simply a matter of observation but of enduring the passion of that which "exhibits me as being-for-the-other,"³ summons thinking and is the calve of thought. A scandalous proposition. Derrida's hesitancy about making it is telling: Perhaps there? Perhaps thinking? Perhaps beginning? An uncertainty that borders on derangement overtakes the philosopher who thinks in the company of animal others and who wagers that thought

1. I thank Jenny Fisher, Roshaya Rodness, and Tracy Wynne, with whom I first discussed the Liepaja footage. Danielle Martak, Rebecca Gagan and Jessica Carey helped prepare this essay for publication. Special thanks go to Jennifer Fay, Jacques Khalip, Anat Pick, and Sharon Sliwinski, whose thinking about photographic images has made my own work possible.

2. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 13.

3. In his prefatory note to Emmanuel Levinas's essay, "Truth of Disclosure, Truth of Testimony" (1972), Adriaan T. Peperzak argues that for Levinas the human subject is both constituted and undone by the necessity of exposure, i.e., that which "exhibits me as being-for-the-other." See Levinas, "Truth of Disclosure, Truth of Testimony," *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 97. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida similarly speaks of "the involuntary exhibition of the self," as if "the self" were always already the scene of a bearing witness of itself, always an unthought testamentary remnant of itself (p. 11). Such will be my working thesis here.

YFS 127, "Animots": *Postanimality in French Thought*, ed. Senior, Clark, and Freccero, © 2015 by Yale University.

is always already under their unfathomable watch. In the no man's land between thinking and not-thinking, animals are on the prowl, looking at us looking at them. But from where? Their reconnaissance emerges from a place that is elsewhere, forever in transit. Their indeterminate glances steal us from ourselves.

My focus in this essay is to pursue some of the implications of Derrida's inexhaustibly rich provocations regarding animals who regard us and whose attention unsettles the very idea of inhabiting single worlds of "us" and "not-us," human and non-human. But my aim is to shift the emphasis from the animal gaze to a somewhat different question: can a non-human animal be said to bear witness to atrocities committed against human beings? More specifically: in the wake of atrocities, can we think of animals acting as testamentary remnants, attesting to unregarded deaths and useless suffering? How does animal witnessing – if there is such a thing – make irrefutable demands on the present and on the future?

An animal looks at us. Mercilessly those who call themselves human harm others before it and in fact take pleasure in such violence. Does witnessing begin or end there? By way of responding to that query, I turn to rare archival film of Nazi executions of several groups of Jewish men in Latvia in the summer of 1941.⁴ In this gruesome "trophy" footage, an animal, a small terrier, makes an unexpected and fleeting appearance, easy to miss, given the horrific murders that we are given to see. Why concern ourselves with a dog who leaps out of the margins of the frame when all that matters is that the Nazis are killing Jews in front of dozens of spectators, including a sailor with a home movie camera? But once glimpsed, the dog, *this* dog, proves as impossible to ignore as its testamentary role in the footage is difficult to understand. Cognizant of Anat Pick's trenchant observation that "in post-Holocaust rhetoric, . . . human and animal, humanity and inhumanity continue to circle one another in contagious proximity,"⁵ let me wager an opening hypothesis: a distinction must be made be-

4. The footage is available in at least two places: the website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (See "Massacre on the Beach," *Some Were Neighbors*, n.d., <http://sowereneighbors.ushmm.org/#/exhibitions/neighbors/un1629>); and Yad Vashem ("Mass Murder of Jews in Liepāja, Latvia, 1941, Archival footage of JUDENEXEKUTION IN LIBAU 1941," *The Untold Stories*, n.d., http://www.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/database/murderSite.asp?site_id=571).

5. Anat Pick, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 25.

tween a cat arriving at one's bathroom door, the wondrous image that Derrida bequeaths to us, and the advent of a dog on the scene of a filmed murder.

* * *

After a week of heavy fighting, the 291st Infantry Division of the *Wehrmacht* captured the seaport of Liepāja from Russian troops on 29 June 1941.⁶ Elements of *SS-Brigadeführer* Walter Stahlecker's *Einsatzgruppe A* accompanied regular army forces into Latvia's second largest city and immediately began murdering Jews. As Edward Anders notes, "assisted by Navy personnel, the SD, and the Latvian police, the SS conducted daily executions within the city limits, near the lighthouse and the beach."⁷ During the summer and autumn mostly Jewish men were killed. "Women and children were largely spared until the big *Aktion* of 14–17 December, 1941, when 2749 Jews were shot."⁸ These murders "were watched by hundreds of German soldiers and their sweethearts."⁹ Eventually the SS and its agents killed all but a handful of Liepāja's 5700 Jewish residents, mostly at the point of a gun: "Bullet by bullet by bullet," as David G. Marwell

6. See Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia: 1941–1944. The Missing Center* (Riga: The Historical Institute of Latvia, 1996), 271–95.

7. Edward Anders, "Liepāja," in *Encyclopaedia of Camps and Ghettos*, general ed. Geoffrey P. Megargee, vol. 2, *Ghettos in German-Occupied Eastern Europe*, volume ed., Martin Dean (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 1012. The detachments of the *Einsatzgruppen* responsible for the executions in and around Liepāja were, as Ezergailis notes, "assisted by numerous groups, including the German SD detachment of Liepāja, the Ordnungspolizei of Liepāja, the Latvian SD Guard Platoon (Latvian SD Wachmannschaft), parts of the Latvian Liepāja Schutzmannschaften, and the Arajs commando, from Riga." "There is also more than a strong possibility that some German *Wehrmacht* and naval forces participated in the killings, especially in the beginning phase." See Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia*, 279. For what it is worth, in an interview conducted in 1981, Reinhard Wiener testified that he wasn't "sure if the execution squad" in his footage "was made up of SS men, but the supervising detail was made up of SS." "You can see that on the film," he notes, adding, the SS "had their summer uniforms on." The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum holds a copy of the transcript (and translation) of that interview, conducted by Ester Hagar. See "Mr. Wiener's Interview Re Libau," *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, n.d., http://data.ushmm.org/intermedia/film_video/spielberg_archive/transcript/RG60_0346/ED8FF8C2-70E7-4990-BB1D-629F8C1F9846.pdf.

8. Anders, "Liepāja," 1012.

9. *Ibid.* Anders' work on the Holocaust in Latvia remains seminal. See, for example, Edward Anders, *Amidst Latvians During the Holocaust* (Riga: Occupation Museum Association of Latvia, 2010).

says.¹⁰ On a single day in late July or early August, an off-duty German Navy sergeant named Reinhard Wiener recorded the shootings of several groups of Jewish men using an 8 mm Ciné-Kodak camera. About a minute and a half in length, his footage is the only motion picture recording of SS shootings known to have survived the Holocaust.¹¹

The intensifying atrocities in formerly Soviet controlled territories proved irresistible to photographers, both official and amateur, in part because, initially, the murders were meant to be seen. Timothy Snyder points to the gruesome example of the shootings of thousands of Jews from Minsk in the autumn of 1941. "Even at the height of Stalin's Great Terror," he remarks, "the NKVD was always discreet, taking people by ones and twos in the dark of the night." By contrast, the "Germans were carrying out a mass action in the middle of the day, made for public consumption, ripe with meaning, suitable for propaganda film."¹² Several months after Wiener filmed the executions in Liepāja, *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler officially prohibited the photography of killings, but as Georges Didi-Huberman notes, his interdiction hardly stopped pictures from continuing to be taken. Indeed, the scope of the surviving photographic archive betrays the operation of "an epidemic power" that is "as sovereign as that of an unconscious desire."¹³ Joshua Hirsch suggests that Wiener's footage marks the inaugural moment of a uniquely complex relationship between the Holocaust and its cinematic representations, a relationship

10. David G. Marwell, in *Hitler's Hidden Holocaust*, a TV documentary by Peter Hankoff (Creative Differences and National Geographic, 2009). Ezergailis notes that before that war about 7,600 Jews lived in Liepāja and the surrounding towns, 25% of whom escaped, leaving about 5,700 "trapped by the Germans." "It is not likely that 300 of them survived the Holocaust." See Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia*, 273.

11. The singular rarity of the Liepāja footage is often noted. See, for example, Joshua Hirsch, *Afterimage: Film, Trauma and the Holocaust* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2004), 1; and Stuart Liebman, "Introduction," *Claude Lanzmann's Shoah*, ed. Stuart Liebman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 14. Other SS atrocity footage appears to have existed, now lost, including film that Himmler's cameraman took of executions in Minsk. See Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 552; and Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 230. Ezergailis notes that "soon after the first killings, pictures began to surface from the massacre sites." See Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia*, 223. Moreover, "[SS-Brigadeführer Walter] Stahlecker . . . ordered photographs of the killings to be made" (*ibid.*, 237 n. 78).

12. Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 226.

13. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz*, trans. Shane B. Lillis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 23.

that is still unfolding and the subject of considerable controversy.¹⁴ The stakes could not be higher, which helps explain why thinking about Holocaust images so often leads to questions about the nature and limits of photography itself.

Claude Lanzmann's brief treatment of the footage is perhaps the most provocative. That Wiener's film is absent from his masterpiece, *Shoah*, goes without saying, given the director's refusal of all archival photographs in favor of immersing audiences in the voices of survivors and perpetrators as well as in images of the present-day settings in Poland where the exterminations took place. As Lanzmann says, Wiener's images "are not intended to say anything; in a certain sense, one sees such things every day. I call these 'images without imagination.' They are just images that have no power."¹⁵ *Des images sans imagination* is in fact the phrase that Lanzmann will use to dismiss all photographs of the Holocaust.¹⁶ Moving well beyond the *Bilder-verboden* that governs the *mis en scène* of *Shoah*, he disavows the significance of documentary images in general because they constitute a grotesquely impoverished vision, reflecting only the SS's sight of the Jews: as disposable, unheard, unable to resist, and marked for death. Moreover, photographs of Nazi atrocities are empty because, in their now iconographic familiarity, they shun what matters most, namely, responding to the incalculable losses and the inconceivable suffering of the individual victims. They colonize the unimaginable with images, offering thoughtless and sometimes prurient onlookers "a refuge in visibility."¹⁷ To stare at these pictures is to hazard collaborating with SS violence, not only because we see the Jews through the Nazi viewfinder, but also because passively consuming archival images takes the place of wrestling with the residuum of Nazi murderousness that haunts the complacencies of the present. Atrocity photographs engender a historicist impulse to locate the calamity of the Holocaust safely in the past, thereby indemnifying viewers against

14. See especially the first chapter of Hirsch, *Afterimage*, 1–28.

15. Claude Lanzmann, interview by Marc Chevré and Hervé Le Roix, "Site and Speech: An Interview with Claude Lanzmann about *Shoah*," in *Claude Lanzmann's Shoah*, ed. Stuart Liebman, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 40.

16. See, for example, Lanzmann, "La lieu et la parole," in *Au sujet de Shoah*, ed. Michel Duguy (Paris: Belin, 1985), 297; and Lanzmann "Parler pour les morts," *Le monde des débats*, May 2000, 15.

17. I borrow Akira Mizuta Lippit's phrase. See Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 14.

its still unfurling legacies. For Lanzmann, the inert powerlessness of photographic representations of the Holocaust lies in their capacity to refuse the victim's gaze.

There is very little, almost nothing, to protect the Liepāja footage from these dangers, since they are not accidents that befall photographs of Nazi atrocities but elemental both to the history of their reception and to their violating nature. How then to do justice to these images, which both record and impose a perverse law: routinized murder must not only be done, it must also be *seen* to be done. Yet Didi-Huberman invites us, contra Lanzmann, "not to eliminate but to *rethink the image*" of Nazi atrocities; he resists treating these photographs as so hermetically self-possessed and under-determined that they are left well enough alone.¹⁸ As he argues, "[a]n image without imagination is quite simply an image we have not had the time to work on."¹⁹

We will hardly find sufficient time here. Yet Didi-Huberman's careful discussion of rare photographs of SS gassings at Auschwitz (images taken by an anonymous victim) helps us understand that the Liepāja footage (images taken by a known spectator-perpetrator) makes horror palpable—*not*, as Lanzmann fears, palatable—precisely because it forces the commonplace to bear the weight of the extraordinary, and commands the familiar to share the same visual space as the homicidal. The presence of the terrier, someone's pet dog, running about the execution site condenses that gruesome phenomenon into a single memorable image, and that is one of several contradictory reasons why the animal catches the eye and forms the punctum through which I will consider the footage. The dog is hardly the only detail to bring out the promiscuous mixing of worlds into which the Jewish men are thrown, but it is arguably the most unexpectedly affecting. In fact, the dog and the footage are intimately connected at this cinematic juncture: the film puts a household pet and another family accouterment, the portable movie camera, together at the scene of the executions, thereby demonstrating by example that these ordinarily disparate worlds are now somehow equivalent. The dog, who occupies the margins of the frame, and the camera, which is the blind spot occupying the center of the frame as the unseen apparatus of seeing, find each other and form a nexus of atrocity. Seeing the

18. Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, 62.

19. *Ibid.*, 58.

incredible and the credible mimic each other makes it hard to believe your eyes, there where nothing is forbidden and where everything is compelled to be visible. One searing question – “In the face of ultimate degradation, who could lift a camera?”²⁰ – blends into another: “Who could bring a dog to an execution?” Who but those possessing uncontested authority? Who but those for whom the outcry of the photographed victims – “I am going to be killed” – fails to “sound an emergency alarm”?²¹ A German occupier carries his own camera to the murders because watching them isn’t enough. A Latvian local brings a dog to the shootings because they resemble an outdoor social gathering. It is not the dog and the camera alone that are disturbing but the apparently *undisturbed* nature of those who use these props to make the absolutely inhumane and unrecognizable take on features of the humane and the recognizable. Far from contributing to the self-cancellation of the significance of the footage, the presence of the dog and the camera suture the repugnant into the homely, thereby putting an awful truth to us: the extermination of the Jews of Liepāja was “thought; it was therefore thinkable.”²²

Wiener’s film both documents a moment in the history of Nazi violence and forms part of that history. But it is hardly containable *as* history, the first sign of which are the affects – including repugnance, sorrow, and disbelief – that it prompts in the viewer. The little dog acts as a kind of well in which those testamentary feelings gather and take shape. Its sudden appearance at the scene of the murders is tied to the horror that comes not from watching soldiers and SS men, Germans and Latvians, executioners and onlookers together doing what is impermissible but in the ordinariness of doing what is. Perpetrators kill Jews, but in a universe in which the “non-criminal putting to death”²³ of others is admittable and insolently unhidden.

20. Bernd Hüppauf, “Emptying the Gaze: Framing Violence through the Viewer,” *New German Critique* 72 (Autumn, 1997): 33.

21. Ariella Azoulay, “The Execution Portrait,” in *Picturing Atrocity: Photograph in Crisis*, ed. Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Ridley, Nancy K. Miller, and Jay Prosser (London: Reaction Books, 2012), 258.

22. Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, 25. In this passage Didi-Huberman, citing the French historian Pierre Vidal-Naquet, notes that “[The genocide] was thought, it was therefore thinkable.”

23. Derrida, “Eating Well, or the Calculation of the Subject,” in *Points: Interviews 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 278. “Non-criminal putting to death” is Derrida’s description of the sacrificial fate of non-human animals and animalized humans.

For Derrida, that is the bleakly mundane condition of exposure to both violence and visibility that animals of all species are differently compelled to endure at the hands of irrefutable power. Victims are tortured to death, but the violations they suffer occur in a setting in which the means to speak *as* the tortured has been eliminated and where the idea that torture constitutes a wrong goes unregarded because it has been dissolved into a quotidian of countenanced brutality. For Lyotard, the "animal" names the creature who most vividly embodies this violation in plain sight. As he argues, the "animal is deprived of the possibility of bearing witness according to the human rules for establishing damages, and as a consequence, every damage . . . turns it into a victim *ipso facto* . . . That is why the animal is the paradigm of the victim."²⁴

That Lyotard makes this case for the animal in a book that is haunted by the unwitnessed deaths of Auschwitz is telling. Even to bring animal suffering and the victims of the Final Solution into proximity risks analogies between death-worlds of the sort that Heidegger notoriously made²⁵ and that Levinas condemned as "beyond commentary."²⁶ And yet against that over-determined background, Lyotard implies that injustice is irreducible to inhumanity. He proceeds under the assumption that ethical and political judgment after the Holocaust need not be governed by the hope of recovering or protecting humanity, a speciesism that is replete with terrible dangers, as Nazism precisely demonstrated, but instead by attending thoughtfully and compassionately to all creatures whose suffering has been denied address and appeal. Derrida too calls for "the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing the possibility of this non-power, the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability and the vulnerability of this anguish."²⁷ Like Levinas be-

24. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 28.

25. In a series of lectures on technology that he gave in Bremen in 1949, Heidegger claimed that the "motorized food industry" was "in essence the same as the production of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps." See Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures: Insight Into That Which Is and Basic Principles of Thinking*, trans. Andrew J. Mitchell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 27.

26. Levinas, "As if Consenting to Horror," trans. Paula Wissing, *Critical Inquiry* 15 (Winter 1989): 487.

27. Derrida, *The Animal*, 28.

fore him, Derrida brings the question of violence against human and non-human animals into contiguity without saying that they are the same thing, which is what Heidegger loftily suggests.²⁸ The French philosopher tarries passionately with the fact of mortal exposure and the affects of torment. What is indubitable for him is that suffering is a summons and leaves its traces in the world, even if that call and those marks have not yet been thought and remain to be seen.

Looking at this cinematic animal, it helps provisionally to separate out the dog's surprise from its role as part of the image's Nazi *dispositif*. On the one hand, we must wrestle with the obscenity of watching neighbors of the murdered men bring their mutt to the execution site. On the other hand, the terrier's reaction to the sound of the executioners' guns demonstrates a corporeal faithfulness to the event, as if to bear living witness to the atrocities when no one else can or will. We are reminded of Derrida's insistence that the *act* of testifying must be distinguished from its content, and that any testimony is composed of "these two heterogeneous strata, even if they come together in a single occurrence that has become in some sense its own homonym."²⁹ Within months of the Liepāja footage, the SS will have murdered almost every Jewish person in the city.³⁰ The Nazi fantasy of eliminating all the witnesses is almost perfectly realized and Wiener is there to document a step towards that accomplishment – before Himmler grasps that photographic images of executions might have the uncanny effect of corroborating the crimes and of testifying to their inhumanity *as* crimes rather than pleasurably commemorating their non-existence. While Wiener watches the killings, his film produces and reproduces a terrible muteness and invisibility at the heart of the murder scene. His confidence that the Jewish men cannot meet his gaze ensures that his photographic images thrum with barbarous power. The fact that the footage is itself silent non-diegetically mimes the enforced inaudibility of the Jews. The images affirm their incapacity to refuse this violence, a disabling

28. For a discussion of Levinas, see David L. Clark, "On Being 'The Last Kantian in Nazi Germany: Dwelling with Animals after Levinas,'" *Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History*, ed. Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior (New York: Routledge, 1997), 165–98. Derrida speaks of the Nazi genocide in the context of "animal genocides" in *The Animal*, 25–26.

29. Derrida and Maurice Blanchot, *The Instant of My Death / Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 38.

30. See, for example, Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 193.

cruelty that Pick identifies as an elemental characteristic of the deprivations endured by animals³¹ and that helps us grasp why Lyotard says that animals epitomize the victimhood that is unique to the state of exception. So it is uncanny when, in the midst of that muteness and indifference, a little dog leaps into view, breaking the silence by instantly translating the crack of the executioners' guns into a picture of movement. We must have our wits about us to pick up that indexical signal, broadcasted immemorially from the margins of the footage's field of view. The animal who, like the Jews, is presumed not to have a voice, finds a voice, after a fashion. In Lyotard's terms, the dog's startle, its involuntary exhibition of itself before the other, takes on the aura of *le différend*, the remainder and reminder of injustice that slips through the spaces between the authorized phrase regimes that not only harm others but render those harms imperceptible. Lyotard compares the differend's unanticipated emergence to a *blow*, i.e., an experience that is felt before it is cognized, a delayed action that he compares, of all things, to the sound of a whistle whose tone is audible only to dogs.³² Is the image of the terrier in the Liepāja footage a traduction of that sound? Are we those dogs?

* * *

In groups of four or five men, the Jews are forced out of the back of a small truck, hurried past a crowd of onlookers, and ordered to jump into a deep execution trench. Many spectators have turned out on this brightly lit summer day: the SS officers and German security police overseeing the killings, including a bored looking man who smokes a cigarette; the Latvian auxiliaries who keenly assist; German sailors, a few sitting in their bathing suits; assembled townsfolk, including children; and of course, Wiener, who claimed accidentally to have come across this scene, but whose film tells us that he consents to the horror.³³ We see what appear to be four separate groups of Jewish men brought to the site to be killed. With remorseless efficiency, the gunmen kill the men in exactly the same way. In one

31. Pick, *Creaturely Poetics*, 43.

32. Lyotard, *Heidegger and "the jews,"* trans. Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 15.

33. See "Mr. Wiener's Interview Re Libau," *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, n.d., http://data.ushmm.org/intermedia/film_video/spielberg_archive/transcript/RG60_0346/ED8FF8C2-70E7-4990-BB1D-629F8C1F9846.pdf.

continuous motion, a line of marksmen steps up to the lip of the pit. They point their rifles downward toward the Jewish men and shoot. The murdered collapse into the floor of the trench. The spectators watch, mesmerized. Some crane their necks forward, hoping for a better look. Wiener films from several different spots, starting and stopping his hand-held camera, repositioning himself at least half a dozen times, seeking vantage points from which to record the victims, the killers, and the crowd whose eyes feast upon the deaths.

The managed orderliness of the footage is disrupted only once. What unexpectedly occurs takes up a few scant seconds during the first of the executions Wiener records, but the event is preserved indelibly in the footage, where it proves to be complexly affecting to consider. The irruption of the animal feels ambiguously in excess of the otherwise irrefutable authority that Wiener films and for which it is an agent. At the instant the marksmen fire their rifles, a small spotted terrier suddenly jumps excitedly in front of the camera. Startled by the retort of the rifles that we cannot hear and whose percussive blast we cannot feel, the dog translates those phenomena into the observable shape of its bounding body. For a moment, we are given to "see" the force of the salvos in impossibly different but viscerally connected ways: in the background, the collapsing bodies of the Jews, and in the foreground, the animal's unexpected leaps. Like a cameraless photograph or photogram, the terrier's movements register something of the violence of the executions, translating their force into a corporeal image of force. The terrier's moving body in effect "films" what otherwise goes unexpressed by the onlookers and perpetrators, who are remarkable not only for their indifference to the cruelty of attending the murders, but also for their strange physical impassivity at the sight of the killings when they take place. The spectators appear frozen, fixated on the murders, while the Jewish men crumple in death and the dog jumps to life. The animal's singular and autonomous faithfulness to the killers' fatal blow seems uncannily to fill a void at the execution site. But with what? So far as one can see, no one looks away, or covers their face, or otherwise reacts in horror in ways that, for example, Sharon Sliwinski discusses in her work on those who witnessed the attacks on the World Trade Center.³⁴ The bystanders stare while also remaining outwardly unmoved by the murders, a duplicity that seems uncannily mirrored in the dog, who attends the

34. See Sharon Sliwinski, "New York Transfixed: Notes on the Expression of Fear," *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 30 (2008): 332-52.

executions but who is presumed as an animal to be blithely unaware of their significance.

No one flinches, except for the terrier . . . and, surprisingly, Wiener, whose camera jolts momentarily, the only time it does so while he is taking his pictures. Throughout the filming his hand remains steady, even when, at a later point in the footage, he stands at the very edge of the execution pit. Nothing else shakes him: not the tasks associated with making his camera work, not the excitement of the gathered spectators, not the cries of the mortally wounded, not even the ear-splitting crack of the executioners' guns. Farther away from the murders, it is the *dog's* shock that seems to catch him off guard, as if fugitively to break his unblinking view of the torture and slaying of the Jewish men. He feels the sudden intrusion of the animal into his field of vision before he sees it, assuming he sees it at all. Wiener quickly recovers, but not before a strange and unstable circuit of autonomous reactions and indexicalities flash before our eyes. The dog's startle reflex triggers another startle reflex, the first leaving its bodily trace on the film, the second leaving its trace on the body of the filmmaker, whose trembling hand in turn blurs the image in whose margins the dog appears. In each case, non-human and human, the animal body forms a kind of sensitive recording surface that captures details that might otherwise go unnoticed or that happen so quickly as to escape conscious perception.

Although it occupies the same visual space, the blur *in* the image is not the same thing as the blurred image. The latter shakily reproduces the killings, from which Wiener's gaze never wavers, even amid his startle, while the former translates his corporeal reaction to the sudden appearance of the dog into a smudge. The blur viscerally embeds the camera into the scene of the shootings, but here the point of contact to the executions is mediated through the animal, and specifically through the dog's embodied fidelity to the force of the executioners' guns. A momentary loss in the image's clarity non-representationally "photographs" Wiener's reaction to the dog whose sudden unruliness leaves him briefly beside himself. The tremor has the unexpected effect of opening up the footage, and of prying apart what the camera photographs *from* the irrefutable power that otherwise saturates the scene. Pointing to the event of the animal's stirring, and reminding us that Wiener cannot refuse its interference in the filming of the executions, the blur invites us to distinguish two aspects of the footage: on the one hand, the candor of the dog's self-

showing, the involuntary spasm of its exhibition of itself as mortal and singular; on the other hand, the horrid significance of the terrier's appearance at the killing site, which demonstrates how, in the SS's state of exception, the routine and the bloodthirsty are mixed together. Another way of saying this is that the dog's reaction points not only to its proximate cause, the sound and force of the executioners' guns; like all deictic gestures, that animal utterance also refers to itself, demonstrating its capacity to *demonstrate*. The blur inadvertently points to the dog's indexicality, which notionally separates it from the horror to which its own startled body points and of which it also forms an unwitting part. Whether through the aperture of his Ciné-Kodak or through the becoming-aperture of his own trembling body, Wiener picks up signs of animal life, easily missed on this day so focused on death and on collaborating in the manufacture of the everydayness of death. We too might well miss the dog's appearance, even if Wiener's camera implacably records it, not once but twice, and in two qualitatively different ways: as blur and image. From their inception, as Baer notes, photographs have always been attractive because of their uncanny "ability to confront the viewer with a moment that had the potential to be experienced but perhaps was not."³⁵ Wiener's footage precisely demonstrates that strange revelatory quality, beginning with the little dog's surprise, through which is threaded foreground and background, death and life, the homely and the murderous, the irruptive and the administered, the seen and the unseen.

How to situate the dog in the midst of this ghastly photographic setting? Rather than averting our eyes from photographs of SS atrocities, as Lanzmann counsels, Didi-Huberman makes a case for working interrogatively with their minute particulars, including what appear to be the most nonessential elements. The dog is one of those details, moving not because it is mawkish (although this kind of response is always possible while looking at the antics of what Deleuze dismisses as "family pets, sentimentalized, Oedipal animals each with its own 'petty' history"³⁶), but because it is an image that leaps out at us, demanding attention without our necessarily knowing what we are seeing, and because it affirms the piercing role that affective

35. Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 8.

36. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 240.

life can have in responding to photographs of historical violence. Contextualizing photographs is important, Didi-Huberman argues, as long as doing so isn't at the expense of ensuring that we are answerable to their minutest details. "We must *tighten our point of view* of the images and omit nothing of all the 'imaging substance,' attending even to those features in which it appears that 'there's nothing to see.'"³⁷ For Lanzmann, the Liepāja footage in its entirety is an exemplary instance of the Nazi "nothing to see." But as Didi-Huberman notes, even those who attend critically to photographs of SS atrocities can too quickly screen out elements deemed to be "empty of informative value."³⁸ And the fact is that the Liepāja footage remains curiously under-discussed, notwithstanding its completely unique status in the archive of the Holocaust. It is often mentioned in scholarship on Holocaust photographs, to be sure, and it plays a role in Holocaust museums, exhibits, and documentaries, yet it still awaits a scrupulous frame-by-frame analysis.³⁹ The film is, as it were, mostly left to speak for itself, or functions as an icon of undifferentiated Nazi war crimes. About the terrier's appearance in the viewfinder, next to nothing is said. Perhaps the dog's familiarity renders it imperceptible and untroubling, a fate to which animals in the field of vision are generally relegated, as John Berger has well described.⁴⁰ The fine-grained summary of the footage's contents by the Fritz Bauer Institute ignores the creature, but not without noting other details: the dark color of the sedans parked nearby, for example.⁴¹ Under what conditions does the color of a car have "informative value" in an atrocity photograph yet a dog does not? You start to wonder about the possibility of a kind of hysterical blindness among the archivists. The terrier is not simply deemed to be insignificant; nor is it "withdrawn" in Berger's sense of the term, i.e., replaced with something more anthropomorphically pleasurable. The image of the animal is instead blanked out altogether, plainly part of the footage's image substance but experienced symptomatically as invisible. The shade of the inanimate car

37. Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, 41.

38. *Ibid.*

39. An account of the various ways in which the footage is misdescribed and underdescribed in the literature would take up a separate essay.

40. John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" in *About Looking* (London: Bloomsbury, 1980), 3–28.

41. For the Fritz Bauer Institute's archive entry on the Liepāja footage, see "Executions of Jews in Libau in 1941," <http://www.cine-holocaust.de/cgi-bin/gdq?dfw00fbw000799.gd>

bears looking at and archiving but the moving image of the animated dog is more problematical, perhaps because in exhibiting itself before the other, the animal, *this* animal, looks upon us, returning a complicated gaze across the gulf of time at the moment when the human gazes of the victims are obliterated.

The notable exception to this disregard of the animal regard comes in the form of remarks that David G. Marwell, Director of New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage: A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, makes in a film by Peter Hankoff about SS killings in Eastern Europe.⁴² In a brief but richly suggestive commentary on the Liepāja footage, Marwell raises questions about the errant creature that serve here as a lure to thought. "Who brought the dog there?" Marwell quietly asks, while the footage is slowed and the terrier's image is highlighted: "Did the dog go back home? What was the dog doing on this scene when people were being murdered?" Hankoff puts the terrier vividly before us at this moment in the documentary, but Marwell reminds us that, metaphorically speaking, it remains curiously hard to place. Where it arrives from or is en route to, what it is "doing" amid the murders, remains not only open to question but also *worthy* of questions and of remaining open *as* a question. "I don't know why that moves me," he concludes, "but it does."⁴³

What is the *that* that works on or over Marwell, as it certainly does me, about which neither of us seems to know anything definitive? Something automatic and anonymous connects us to the footage. How to account for this response that feels more like a reaction, something unconsidered, unbidden, and perhaps "animalistic" welling up in the historian and important enough to be captured on film by the documentarist? The dog's vibrant body speaks, making an obscure but irrefutable claim on us. And it does so in the same place and

42. See David Marwell, in *Hitler's Hidden Holocaust* by Peter Hankoff. In an interview, Hankoff, who directs the documentary featuring Marwell's remarks, also acknowledges the presence of the dog. "What struck me in the film footage were little details like a dog running around in the middle of the shooting," he says: "The banality of it is even more chilling." See Gerald D. Swick, "Producer Peter Hankoff – Why Historical Documentaries Matter," *Armchair General*, August 11, 2009, <http://www.armchairgeneral.com/producer-peter-hankoff-why-historical-documentaries-matter.htm>. To my knowledge, the only other reference to the dog is indirect: "Dog" is one of the searchable key words for the film and photograph archive at the Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the archive that includes a copy of the Liepāja footage. Searching "dog" brings up the Liepāja footage.

43. Marwell, in *Hitler's Hidden Holocaust* by Peter Hankoff.

moment that we bear witness to the murders. Focused on the torture and execution of the Jewish men, Wiener may well have missed seeing the other creature. But his footage records its appearance, making legible what might have gone unseen. From their inception, photographic images have held that uncanny power over viewers, the capacity to show us things that we did not or could not see with our own eyes.⁴⁴ But *how* and *why* the dog is present, the meaning of its *being-there*, remains more difficult to determine, as Marwell intuits. The historian asks questions of the footage for which he concedes there are no simple answers, reminding us of the importance of occupying interrogative relationships with photographs of Nazi atrocities rather than confidently knowing ones, for example, assuming that the image is fully accounted for by the SS, and thus empty, or that it is iconically illustrative of the Holocaust, and thus a photograph of what is already understood or imagined to be understood. Instead, we appear to be in the indeterminate region of the affective and the symptom, and what is admirable is the historian's willingness to let himself tarry with the advent of the dog, registering what it pulls into the frame at the same time as it gestures toward the unapprehended that lies beyond it.

Liotard notes that "the authority of the SS comes out of a *we* from which the deportee is excepted once and for all."⁴⁵ Does that "we" unequivocally include the little dog? To whom does it belong? Did the dog accompany one of the Latvian men, women, or children who attend? The neighbors enjoy the prospect of the companionship of a pet dog and the hearth that that fellowship symbolizes, but these are pleasures that have been wrenched from the Jews. Or is the dog a stray, and so belonging to no one in particular, yet clearly not wild either, not entirely dispossessed of a relationship with human beings? Does the terrier belong only to the Nazi gaze? Or does the image of the dog belong finally to *us*, to viewers who are undone by the act of witnessing otherwise unregarded suffering, viewers—modeled by

44. Speaking of Eadweard Muybridge's experiments with the *zoopraxiscope* in the 1870s, Jennifer Ham notes: "For the first time in history, movements could be recorded, replayed, and slowed down, allowing the human eye to see what actually transpired. The camera rendered visible and conscious, movement that had previously been invisible and unconscious." See Jennifer Ham, *Elastizität: The Poetics of Space, Movement and Character in Frank Wedekind's Theater* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 106–7.

45. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 101.

Marwell—who are moved by the advent of the terrier and who follow its quivering life, as I do, here? The very concept of “belonging” starts to waver because, insofar as the dog makes an enigmatic claim on us, it is more accurate to say that we belong to it.

* * *

When we look at Wiener’s footage we bear witness to what Didi-Huberman calls “*naked horror*, a horror that leaves us all the more devastated as it ceases to bear the hyperbolic mark of the ‘unimaginable,’ whether the sublime or the inhuman, bearing instead the marks of human banality at the service of the most radical evil.”⁴⁶ The presence of the domestic animal, the human familiar, amid the monstrosity of the Nazi unfamiliar, blocks us from too quickly assimilating the footage to the unwatchable or inexpressible. The SS torture and humiliate the Jewish men by delivering them to the execution site in nothing more than the clothes they were wearing when they were chased down in the streets of the city they called home. The rumpled clothes in which they perish testify to the suddenness and irrevocability of their having been kidnapped and transported to this place. Seeing (and filming) *both* the commonplace of the victims and its gruesome violation is central to the spectacle of the malevolent infection of the prosaic. For the onlookers of Liepāja, the SS have conjured up a malignant paradox: although clearly treated as less than human, the Jewish men are also not so unfamiliar as to be unrecognizable to local townspeople. Far from it. We can assume that some of the spectators and some of the men who are murdered know each other or know of each other. As Marwell says of the bystanders: “they’re not witnessing anonymous people being shot. They are witnessing their neighbors, their teachers, their pharmacists, their physicians, people with whom they grew up, whom they looked up to, perhaps.” What the SS require to be watched is not the extermination of the wholly unfamiliar but extermination *amid* familiarity. What makes this film *maudit* is not the incomprehensibility of the executions but their unabashed and given-to-be-seen comprehensibility, the grotesque manner in which the visually recognizable must bear the weight of evil *and remain recognizable*. The excited dog, one

46. Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, 81.

of the *d'hommes*, as Lacan might call him,⁴⁷ moves literally and symbolically between these worlds of murder and everyday life, his animated body connecting them in ways that are difficult to put into so many words, but as horrific to watch as they are impossible to ignore. The terrier, whose body starts in syncopation with the force of the executioners' guns, resolves that grotesquery, which otherwise saturates every detail of the atrocity footage, by, as it were, focusing it in one place. It forms the punctum of a deeply sobering knowledge: "You realize, almost as you never realized it before, that the Jews were murdered in a place on earth."⁴⁸

* * *

There where there is a surfeit of onlookers and where spectators delight both in seeing murderous harm done to others and in being seen *seen* to take pleasure in that harm; there where the Jewish men are killed and where the very idea of the human is shown to be mortal and vulnerable, not a positive substance requiring protection squads but a precarious claim, a hominizng attestation that must be made and remade, especially in the face of its having been utterly unmade; there in this place that is bereft of responsible witnesses and where, in the days and months to follow, all the witnesses will be killed . . . there amid the sand dunes and the cruelty the terrier appears and leaves its indelible trace on Wiener's film. Almost despite itself, the footage admits the self-showing of the dog's flinching body, and, so to speak, lets the animal speak. Can we be certain about what it says? Or from where? Or to whom? To be sure, the terrier inhabits the death-world that the Nazis have created, and like the domesticating prop that it is compelled to be, the animal plays an unwitting role in making the homicidal a feature of the everyday. What is torture and humiliation to the Jewish men means something like a field day to Latvian neighbors who let their pet dog tag along. Yet the same Ciné-Kodak camera that collaborates in the creation of this scene of horror also exposes Wiener's film to a kind of parallel universe, fortuitously absorbing images of myriad phenomena, including animal

47. Jacques Lacan, "Television," trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson, *October* 40 (Spring 1987): 9.

48. I cite Leon Wieseltier, who is speaking of the deeply sobering effect of viewing the color images in Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*. See "Shoah," in *Claude Lanzmann's Shoah: Key Essays*, ed. Stuart Liebman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 90.

animacy, that might well go unnoticed or undetected while Wiener focuses on the spectacle of men killing other men. As Jennifer Fay suggests in an illuminating discussion of André Bazin's lifelong fascination with cinematic realism, although "the photographer must select the when, where, and what of the image, it is in the moment of aleatoric abandon after he presses the shutter that man recedes from the process and nature imprints itself both photochemically and phenomenologically."⁴⁹ These layered forms of mediation are not the antithesis of realism in Bazin's sense of the term, but constitutive of it; realism is the occasion of dynamic translations and displacements—apperceptive, chemical—vis-à-vis "nature" rather than a bare encounter with anything like an in-itself or "real." The intrusion of the agitated dog into the margins of the frame makes the camera's passive susceptibility to this accidental imprinting strangely legible because the film's inhuman exposure to the inhuman other apparitionally reproduces itself in the recoil of the terrier, whose sensitive body makes it into a kind of bio-camera or zoo-phonogram. Neither simply organic nor mechanical, the dog is a living index that sneaks the inaudible retort of the executioners' guns into the film's imaging substance. It is also a *mise-en-abyme* of the indiscriminate wildness of exposure that is elemental to the photographic image and a chief source of its uncanny power. In the sliver of time between the blast of the rifles and the play of reflected light on the surface of Wiener's film stock, the terrier is itself imprinted and imprints itself, photochemically and photochemically, respectively. The image of the dog's reflex is a "photograph," as it were, of the cinematically realistic. The Liepāja footage is thus an example of realism not only in the sense that it is documentary in kind, but also because, at the moment of the terrier's response, we glimpse how it hews impersonally to the contingent, exposed to the carnal exposure that all living creatures share as the immanent condition of what Jean-Luc Nancy calls "singularly plural existence."⁵⁰ The footage corroborates this animal animacy by preserving its signs in the film, but it does more than that. It also *testifies*, insentiently, to what Pick names "creatureliness," hospitably framing a space for the animal other to exhibit its flinching

49. Jennifer Fay, "Seeing / Loving Animals: André Bazin's Posthumanism," *Journal of Visual Culture* 7/1 (2008): 51.

50. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 3.

vulnerability and thus, against the grain of the malicious design of Wiener's film, refusing to refuse the other's address.⁵¹

The perpetrators and collaborators are blind to the suffering of the victims at the precise moment they believe their Jewish difference to be perfectly discernable; yet amid that cruel willfulness the alterity and non-power of the animal's mortalizing fragility makes itself felt. The German sailor documents a radically administered world, yet he does so using an instrument whose "program," as Baer says of the camera that Genewein carried into the Łódź ghetto, "knows no politics, no morality, no intention."⁵² If the photographic image *qua* photographic image is what the world looks like without human beings in it, as Stanley Cavell suggests,⁵³ then it offers fleeting and uncanny glimpses of an environment undominated by and indifferent to the needs, fears, designs, and histories of the *anthropos*. The photographic image's formal inhumanness, its availability to what Fay calls the "surplus of detail or a 'chance event' that the photographer could neither have anticipated nor orchestrated,"⁵⁴ unsettles the anthropomorphizing desire to recognize and affirm ourselves in "our" images. Here chance or randomness does not mean chaos but inhumanness, although it is telling that the latter often finds itself normatively erased and reconfigured by the former. That is why we are obscurely *taken* by the photographs that we take, falling under the indeterminate gaze of what isn't self-evidently human about them. As Lippit, argues, "looking at the photograph, one is looking into a place without subjectivity and, moreover . . . something like a nonsubject returns that look."⁵⁵ We begin to understand why human beings sharing the photographed field with unpredictable animals can be so disarming: the inhuman quality of the photographic image reso-

51. Pick, *Creaturely Poetics*.

52. Baer, *Spectral Evidence*, 169.

53. For example, Cavell argues that photographic images maintain "the presentness of the world by accepting our absence from it." See Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1979), 23.

54. Fay, "Seeing / Loving Animals," 51. But lest we inadvertently attribute a kind of plenitude to the camera "eye," it is important also to emphasize that the human eye also always sees "more" or differently than the camera eye, and that human and—presumably—non-human perceptions of the executions in Liepāja registered myriad details that do not feature in the Liepāja footage.

55. Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 176.

nates with the inhuman quickness of the animal other, both human and non-human. As Fay says, "the photograph is like an animal," not negatively because both are haunted by absence but positively because each has the capacity to absent itself from the anthropocentric.⁵⁶ That eschewal unfurls a macrocosm, albeit one that is often difficult to discern under the atomic light cast by "man," which all but washes out visual traces of the advent and persistence of the non-human and of a universe that is unconcerned with the task of shoring up the primacy of the human. Discussing Bazin, Tom Gunning nonetheless notes that the "nearly inexhaustible visual richness" of the photograph, "combined with a sense of the photograph's lack of selection,"⁵⁷ means that the image "opens up a passageway to its subject, not as a signification but as a world, multiple and complex."⁵⁸

Among the many reasons why the terrier in the Liepāja footage proves to be so affecting is that it also helps to unseal the film from its ferociously hominizing execution, disconnecting the viewer from a concentrationary realm where we are told we know in advance all that is shown. Instead of a world *sans imagination* we encounter something strangely indeterminate, irreducibly mediated and on the move, *there* where everything is also brutally pacified. Strictly speaking, even the most under-determined documentary footage conceivable—filmed images in which the viewfinder is indistinguishable from the gun sight—is always also the site of incalculable over-determinations to the degree that the camera's mechanical "program" remains both inhuman and erratically exposed to the inhuman, including the inhuman animal, the "animality" that is as indifferent to the hierarchical determination of species boundaries as it is to the mastering fantasy of the dissolution of species boundaries. But the contingent intercession of animal animacy makes the camera's hospitality especially palpable. Contemplating the terrier's image caught on camera, we find ourselves momentarily both at the center *and* to the side of the anthropocentric frenzy to separate the human from the non-human, of which Nazism is perhaps the limit-case but whose "immunologic of war" reverberates everywhere—wherever the avowal of the human demands the disavowal of life that is deemed to be less than human

56. Fay, "Seeing / Loving Animals," 62 n. 4.

57. Tom Gunning, "What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs," *Nordicom Review* 25/1-2 (2004): 47.

58. *Ibid.*, 46.

and unworthy of life.⁵⁹ Wiener's Ciné-Kodak incarnates the compulsion to render Jewish "difference" legible so that the Nazis can make a mirroring spectacle of their violent dis-identification with it. Not for nothing did Leica cameras become the prized objects of exchange for Jewish lives in Liepāja, so closely wedded is the "anthropological machine" to the photographically representational in the Nazi universe.⁶⁰ Yet as Pick suggests, images in which the accidents of non-human life occupy the same cinematic space as the *anthropos* mark "the absorption of the human within the leveled plain of the photographed world."⁶¹ In the "cine-zoo" or "cinema as a zoo," as she puts it, motion picture images become a "stage that transforms all living beings—including humans—into creatures,"⁶² each of which is not a discrete living quanta but, as Nancy says, a moving part of a continuum of "being-with-others," circulating "in the *with* and as the *with* of this singularly plural coexistence."⁶³

* * *

"No Jew ever returned alive from the executions in Liepāja," Anders remarks.⁶⁴ Looking at the shootings, we are accosted by an absence that historical memory cannot redeem or repair. Not a single man, woman, or child survived the shootings, and very few escaped the scourging of the city. Moreover, none of the men murdered in the footage has been identified, notwithstanding its unique archival significance as the only surviving film of SS executions. We see the images of their faces, imagine the lives from which they have been seized, observe their last moments, and watch their murders, yet we do not know the names that their respective families gave them, leav-

59. I borrow the phrase "immunologic of war" from Bishnupriya Ghosh, who uses it in her forthcoming book, *The Virus Touch: Living With Epidemics*.

60. See Kalman Linkimer, *19 Months in a Cellar . . . The Holocaust Diary of Kalman Linkimer 1941–1945*, 3rd ed., ed. Edward Anders, trans. Rebecca Margolis (Riga: Museum of Jews in Latvia, 2008), 33. Agamben's phrase, borrowed from Furio Jesi, is from *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 27.

61. Pick, *Creaturely Poetics*, 106.

62. *Ibid.*

63. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 3.

64. Anders, "Comments by the Editor," in Linkimer, *19 Months in a Cellar . . . The Holocaust Diary of Kalman Linkimer 1941–1945*, 43.

ing a ruinous void that cuts through everything that can be said and known about the killings and the images of them. The lives and the deaths of the men are extinguished in a disaster of useless suffering, there in the very place where one has to go on appealing in faith to the necessity of bearing witness. What is the nature of that attestation? Cary Wolfe is hardly alone in arguing that "what must be witnessed is not just what we can see but also what we cannot see—indeed, the fact that we cannot see. That too must be witnessed."⁶⁵ But as Sara Guyer cautions, such unqualified confidence in the capacity of witnessing to attest to its own finitude, and, indeed, in essence to be that traumatized appeal, makes "failure" into a "sublime knowledge" that grounds both witnessing and the witness.⁶⁶ Wolfe's choice of words here is telling; the "fact" to which he refers registers his wish for a moment of certainty and clarity amid the uncertainties of attestation, a desire to arrest the recessive chain of appeals and appeals to appeals that routes witnessing through the inhumanly figurative and groundless rather than through the humanly apperceptive and phenomenological. The "we" who bears witness to witnessing's finitude functions as an anthropomorphizing figure for attestation's outside and for a subject of testimony who is imagined to be free from this chain of claims, a doer who stands behind the witnessing deeds and heroically bears the burden of the unwitnessable and knows it as such. Witnessing, or a certain concept of witnessing, also forms part of the hominizing labor of the anthropological machine.

In the still unfolding wake of the exterminations of those who were "refused not only life but also the expression of the wrong done to them," however, Lyotard is more circumspect.⁶⁷ Amid the "silence" of the victims and among the "shades" who "continue to wander in their indeterminacy,"⁶⁸ Lyotard suggests, "something remains to be phrased which is not, something which is not determined."⁶⁹ "An enigma perhaps, a mystery, or a paradox," as he says, at a loss for words to describe a "feeling [that] does not arise from an experience

65. Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 167.

66. Sara Guyer, *Romanticism after Auschwitz* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 24.

67. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 56.

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*, 57.

felt by a subject."⁷⁰ What seems clear is that we are no longer in the company of a witness in possession of the "fact" of its own finitude. The "something" that remains may not be human. As if to bear witness to that possibility, Lyotard's language slows thinking down; the hesitancy, the lateral movement of his adjacent figures and his redoubled "nots" function like an abeyance, preventing "something" from being too quickly assimilated to the minimal surety of the "not determined." An uncertain "not" [*ne l'est pas*] takes precedence over the "not determined" [*n'est pas déterminé*].⁷¹ Yet *quelque chose* remains, a *milieu* of survival more than an object of thought or memory, residua left over from the hominizing work of coming to know the unknown and see the unseen. In other words, if there is a ruination to witnessing it is not simply the witness's to declare, possess or experience. In Guyer, too, "remains" is a figure for a non-subjective and inhuman desistance at the heart of witnessing, a leaving and a leaving off from determination and from the temptation to fall back on the reassurance that comes from claiming to bear witness to the limits of witnessing. Whatever survives the Nazi atrocities is in an altogether different register and calls for thinking attestation otherwise. Sensitive to the inhuman movements of hominizing figures, Guyer looks for traces of what she calls "a non-restorative, non-redemptive testimony."⁷² She cites a fragment from Celan, drawn from his translation of Jean Caryol's text for Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard*: "And we, we alone strive to see what remains remain . . ."⁷³ "Rather than merely stating its own failure,"⁷⁴ Guyer points out, the poet's text "founders:" "What remains remain . . ." may "mean that it remains to be known, remains to be understood, remains to be seen, and so forth, but in the absence of knowledge, understanding, and vision, it remains *as* its remains, unrecovered, unredeemed—and thus it cannot recover us in the knowledge of our failure and finitude."⁷⁵ We begin to understand why the last lines of Celan's mysterious poem, *Aschenglorie*, remain so powerfully generative for Derrida: "*Niemand / zeugt für den / Zeugen* [No one / bears witness for the /

70. Ibid.

71. English lines quoted from Lyotard, *The Differend*, 57. French lines quoted from Lyotard, *Le différend* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1983), 91.

72. Guyer, *Romanticism after Auschwitz*, 22.

73. Ibid., 204.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid., 205.

witness].”⁷⁶ What attracts Derrida to Celan’s poem is how it attends and attests to the *quelque chose* without redeeming itself in the figure of the knowing witness. No one bears witness for the witness to the extent that there is “something” cinderous in witnessing that is *not* readily described as human and that in any case is *not* expressly *for* the human. Bearing witness takes place without reassurance or redemption, not only because it is always possible violently to be refused an auditor and a language with which to speak of suffering, but also because a lacuna or “refusal” already occupies the testamentary as the condition of its possibility. Bearing witness bears this burden without apprehending it, without making it either an object of knowledge or the subject of testimony. If the paradigmatic victim of being silenced and unheard is the animal, this is because something inhuman lurks at the heart of witnessing. “[W]hat remains remain”: something that isn’t determinately human or in whose name the human determines itself, something that survives as nothing more or less than remains.

If it is possible to speak of a “legacy” of the Holocaust, it lies in the incapacity either to come after it or to do anything but come after it. We follow it, inhabiting an unquiet condition of survival with which Derrida also associates falling under the gaze of the animal. Insofar as the shades of its victims make a claim on us, we are relegated to a future that is not yet present and perhaps will never be. Witnessing can always suffer its utter disappearance, meaning that there is no place in the world from which to observe the catastrophe from a position of complete safety, not while we remain the creatures we are, exhibiting our exposure and thus both appealing *in faith* to the other and being appealed-to by the other. Among the things to which we attest is being human. Nothing guarantees that that appeal can or will be heard or understood, and yet no appeal could be made without also assuming the risk of its erasure as its very form. What makes bearing witness possible is also what makes it impossible. As Derrida suggests, bearing witness carries the weight of this cataclysm within itself; to shift metaphors, it is the mortal horizon before which the testamentary entrusts itself and makes its claim. To witness is not only to attest but also recursively to attest to an attestation; where witnessing

76. See Derrida’s reflection on Celan’s words in Derrida, “Poetics and Politics of Witnessing,” in *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 65–96.

takes place, if it does take place, if it can be said to have taken place, there is already a withdrawn remainder, an immemorial "past" or "not" to which witnessing also insentiently attends, unknowingly figuring something it cannot recall or make the object of thought. Without these remains *remaining* irrecuperably remains, witnessing would be merely corroborative, the programmatic transmission of information rather than wildly promissory, excessive, and inhuman. In other words, an unrecollectable recessiveness or unrevealed remains is the "secret" of the witness, as Derrida says so cryptically, "to which witnessing bears witness without knowing or meaning to do so." "We are witnesses of something we cannot testify to, we *attend* the catastrophe of memory."⁷⁷ In a certain way, all witnesses are what Derrida calls "strange witnesses," strange "because they are witnesses who do not know what they are witnessing. They keep a secret without knowing anything about it . . . They are witnesses to something they are not witness to."⁷⁸

Is this another reason why the dog is so affecting and troublesome, because it is an example of a *strange witness* and of the strangeness of witnessing, there where there are no witnesses and where all the witnesses are killed? Among the many generative possibilities flowing from Derrida's exploration of the question of witnessing is that it appeals to forms of attestation that are irreducible to the psychic, intentional, conscious, or experiential. In his work we are invited to follow a "passage," as he says, "from traumatism to promise,"⁷⁹ *from* a psychic focus on what it means to be subjected to a violent event that "may occur as an absolute inability to know it,"⁸⁰ a disruption of aperception that is tacitly if not explicitly anthropocentric, *to* formal, and, as it were, material understandings of attestation and exhibition that may or may not be human. Where the dominant discourse about witnessing returns the testamentary to the agonistically psychological, another understanding casts light on the degree to which bearing witness is impersonal and routed through the inhuman. Derrida models what it would mean to think of witnessing otherwise in his reading of Celan's *Aschenglorie*, to whose testamentary powers he

77. Derrida, "Passages—from Traumatism to Promise," in *Points: Interviews 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 392.

78. *Ibid.*

79. Derrida, "Traumatism to Promise."

80. Caruth, "Traumatic Awakenings," 208.

responds by divorcing the poem from authorial intention, autobiography, and indeed history. In the rustle of the *Aschenglorie's* turns, ellipses, and polyphony, addressed to no one and emerging from an unidentifiable place, Derrida overhears an appeal to the other and the other's appeal: the text reproduces what it cannot cognize, not unlike the photographic image that Roland Barthes says "repeats mechanically what could never be repeated existentially," operating in ways that aren't easily integrated into perception and consciousness.⁸¹ What was once exclusively the provenance of the human subject, the victim who was refused speech, shares something ambiguous, powerful, and uncanny with marks and markings that are speechless and yet address the other and leave traces of speech. Are we in a position to treat animals in an analogous fashion? Is there something non-human about witnessing? The dog's tremors move us, cause a stirring within the viewer who looks through Wiener's viewfinder but realizes that there is more to see than is shown.⁸² What prompts a shudder in us is the disconcerting chance that witnessing is irreducible to the human. To bear witness is not to proffer evidence but an attestation that may not itself be sentient or discursive.

That which exhibits me as being-for-the-other is what Levinas calls the "truth of testimony."⁸³ In what language is that testament spoken? "We should not thus say, or believe," Derrida says, "that bearing witness is entirely discursive, through and through a matter of language."⁸⁴ A look, a gesture, a poem: these too can testify. And what of the dog's agitation, its flight response, which, let us insist, lest we summarily reduce the creature to a condition of dumb instinct, doesn't take place in a thoughtless vacuum but in the midst of a scene that thrums with human languages, ranging from excited murmurs to cruel commands to mortal cries? Who could do more than *claim* that the terrier is oblivious to the terror, sorrow, aggression, boredom, and even pleasure coursing through this macabre gathering or that its barking makes no claim on this *milieu* and leaves no mark?

81. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 4.

82. I recall Sharon Sliwinski's phrase: "'What is seen in a . . . photograph is not all that is shown.'" See "Icarus Returned: The Falling Man and the Survival of Antiquity," in *Contemporary Art and Classical Myth*, ed. Isabelle Loring Wallace and Jennie Hirsh (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 211.

83. Levinas, "Truth of Disclosure, Truth of Testimony," 97.

84. Derrida, "Poetics and Politics," 77.

Let us assume that much more than the sound of the executioners' guns makes an impression on this dog and inflects the involuntary exhibition of its body. After Derrida, Leonard Lawlor asks whether it is "possible to separate the pointing with the finger of man from the sign making of animals when they trace paths with their paws"?⁸⁵ To acknowledge an underlying collocation between these two gestures asks us to bring a kind of non-anthropomorphic camera eye to the question of language, which is to say a perspective that is indifferent to the hominizing insistence that human beings are graced with the capacity thoughtfully to respond, while animals are mostly relegated to the realm of instinctive reactions. The animal, it is sometimes said, *leaves* rather than *makes* marks. And yet both phenomena presuppose a generalized *marking* that is, as it were, older than the distinction between human and non-human communication, prior perhaps even to the distinction between sentience and insentience, life and non-life. Without collapsing the boundaries between animal reacting and human responding, Derrida points to the traces of living creatures that aren't easily described as belonging to either category because they form the remains of a matrix out of which marks of all kinds unceasingly and thoughtlessly emerge. Following possibilities submerged in Heidegger's notion of the *Zusage* (an elementary "acquiescence, affirmation, agreement, etc."), Derrida evokes an unascertainable and inhuman form of "engagement" or "showing" to which language belatedly testifies.⁸⁶ Everywhere Derrida looks there are attestations and pointings, and these include the myriad ways in which life exhibits and differentiates itself, leaving tracks to pick up and donating spoors that might include the traces written into an animal's body and into the animal body of film.⁸⁷ Is it possible, Derrida asks, that "the 'moment,' the instance and possibility of the *Zusage* belong to an 'experience' of language about which one could say, even if it is not in itself 'animal,' that it is not something that the 'animal' could be deprived of?" Insofar as the *Zusage* is the inhuman prom-

85. Leonard Lawlor, *This Is Not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 50.

86. See, for example, Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 134–35. See also Derrida, *The Animal*, 166.

87. Nicole Shukin points to the basis of film stock in animal byproducts. "Cinema," she points out, "simultaneously encrypts a sympathetic and pathological relationship to animal life." See *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 108.

ise of language, we could nevertheless call it, after Levinas, "animal faith."⁸⁸ Derrida questions what the archaic origins of language are, and what "language" is "before" it is taken up by the impulse to attest to the humanity of human beings. His work is quickened by the possibility that language, like animal others, "might call upon and obligate me in ways that I cannot fully anticipate."⁸⁹ An analogous spirit activates Lyotard, who bears witness to the nonpower of the uncertain attestation. In this world, he asks, what of the "phrasings," markings and monstrations that are human and animal and finally neither human nor animal? There are always marks to be followed, or not, traces that recede into indistinguishability yet call upon me in ways and from places that I cannot predict and that remain to be seen: "A wink, a shrugging of the shoulder, a tapping of the foot, a fleeting blush . . . And the wagging of a dog's tail, the perked ears of a cat? – And a tiny speck to the West rising upon the horizon of the sea? A silence?"⁹⁰

88. Levinas, "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights," in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seàn Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 153.

89. Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 66.

90. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 70.