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Sylvie Lindeperg. *"Nuit et Brouillard": Un film dans l'histoire.* Paris: Edition Odile Jacob, 2007. 288 S. EUR 29.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-2-7381-1868-4.

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Revisiting *Night and Fog*

Silvie Lindeperg's book offers a microstudy of Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* (1954), one of the first documentaries about the National Socialist concentration camps. Although only a thirty-minute French production, *Night and Fog* quickly gained a broad, international reputation, in part because of the scandals surrounding it, but largely because of its aesthetic, emotional, and historiographical quality. Before *Schindler's List* and the History Channel, *Night and Fog* was–and is still for many teachers and professors–a first choice for visual material to be shown and analyzed in class.[1] As shown in the book, the film can be used for two purposes: as the documentary about the camps it was supposed to be and as a visual document from the years 1954-55, mirroring how parts of the world (France, the two Germanies, Japan, and the United States) were dealing with the knowledge of the Holocaust and issues of memory and accountability. Lindeperg's book, which exploits new archival materials, is thus an important and welcome addition to the scarce materials available.[2]

Moving well beyond a mere listing of the mistakes made by filmmakers and historians involved in the film, Lindeperg's focus is twofold. She first repositions the film in its historical, historiographical, and cinematic contexts and details its genesis as a documentary about the deportation of French *resistants*. In the second part, the author traces the international reception of the film as it became both a "lieu de mÃ©moire" through its worldwide distribution and status as arguably one of the best documentaries about the camps. Widely different receptions of the film are understood in light of their respect historical contexts, for example, during the Cold War and as an aspect of German *VergangenheitsbewÃ¤ltigung*.

In the book's first part, Lindeperg reconstructs the creation of the documentary at the nexus of "art, history, and archive" (p. 10) and uncovers the dialogue between these contexts. Her narrative witnesses to a rare and unusual process of cinematic and at the same time historiographical production, in which new historical narratives were constructed while the documentary was being made. Lindeperg opens and closes the book with two chapters about the person she calls "the missing link," historian Olga Wormser-Migot. One of the first to enter concentration camps in the search of French deportees

in May 1945 and an active member of the RÃ©seau du souvenir, a group of former Resistance members devoted to maintaining memory of wartime activities, Wormser was, together with Henri Michel and the group, in charge of the official exhibition of 1954-55 entitled "Resistance, Liberation, Deportation," a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the liberation of France. On the night of the opening, the historians announced the decision to make a documentary about the deportation, arguing that cinema "was more appropriate to interest younger generations" (p. 43). The project came to fruition thanks to the collaboration and the support of the ComitÃ© d'histoire de la DeuxiÃ¨me Guerre mondiale–a government commission in charge of assembling documentary material and of launching historical inquiries into the period of the French occupation (1940-45).

Guiding the reader through all the majors steps of preparation and production, Lindeperg explains the selection of director Alain Resnais, who had already gained a reputation as a scrupulous filmmaker, and shows how financing was secured through a collaboration between the producers of Argos Films, "institutional financiers" composed of the state, the minister of veteran affairs, and the city of Paris, as well as Films Polski, the Polish state production company. Lindeperg also describes the team's search for visual materials. After both the French Service CinÃ©matographique de l'ArmÃ©e and the Imperial War Museum in London refused to share their documents, Resnais eventually integrated remarkable materials from Dutch sources into the film: British documents on the camp liberations, footage from Westerbork (where Dutch Jews were assembled before deportation), pictures taken secretly by Sonderkommandos in Birkenau, as well as pictures from the so-called Auschwitz album, which had been taken by the SS at the beginning of June 1944. Many of the pictures used in the film, such as that of a little boy in the Warsaw ghetto, became icons of Holocaust visual imagery. Trips to Polish archives and the Jewish Historical Institute provided the filmmakers with extraordinary documents, even as the historians in the project, who were simultaneously assembling their own narratives about the camp system and experiences in it, discovered new materials as well.

Lindeperg meticulously follows the "four hands writing" process used to craft the film. Wormser-Migot, Michel, and Resnais began the effort, later asking French poet and camp survivor Jean Cayrol to bring his lyricism to the project. Lindeperg dedicates a whole chapter to Cayrol's writing process. His words, spoken without pathos by actor Michel Bouquet, undeniably contributed to the effect of the film. After a painful viewing of the rushes, Cayrol produced a text which was a "cry of worry" about the fascist-like actions of some contemporary European nations (p. 127), and a thinly veiled condemnation of French colonial politics. In the process of development, the narrative underwent a shift from a focus on French deportees to a "clear explanation of how the camp system worked economically, and how it resulted from fascism" (p. 74). We see here a move from a commemorative project, rooted in the 1954 exhibition, to an all-embracing reflection on the possibilities of fascism. The historian writers struggled with the information gathered, especially about Heinrich Himmler's visit to Auschwitz in 1942 and his decision to implement what we now call the Holocaust, the deliberate extermination of European Jewry. It is fascinating to realize that a film often used in a classroom as a documentary about the Holocaust was not conceived as such. The project was and remains a documentary about the concentration camp system and did not differentiate the experiences of the Jews from those of other deportees.

The book moves on to detail location filming in Poland and elucidates Resnais's artistic choices: decisions about locations, motives, and the use of color and black and white images. This physically and emotionally exhausting trip was followed by an even more difficult phase of editing, in which the technique of filmmaking seemed at odds with the images used. Lindeperg explains in detail Resnais's choice of cuts and his effort to offer a glimpse into the "savage and absurd universe of the camps" (p. 102). The author does a very good job of retracing the choice of images used, as well as the history of these images, while a short digression about subsequent discussions, involving those of filmmakers Claude Lanzmann and Jean Luc Godard, among others, enables readers to grasp the work and the artistic decisions in play.

The last major component of the film, the music, found its perfect creator in Hanns Eisler, an exile from Nazi Germany who experienced McCarthysm before settling in East Germany. Eisler's career, political engagement, and writings about music and cinema in collaboration with Theodor Adorno were well known to Resnais, who chose consciously to involve a German in the production. As in Resnais's previous documentaries, the music in *Night and Fog* is continuous, avoiding clichÃ©s and redundancies, and favoring asymmetry, harmonic alternation, and dissonance. Eisler's participation also illustrated the filmmaker's desire to differentiate between the Nazi regime and the German people, an effort noticeable in the word choice of the commentary. While Eisler's

score enhances the effect the film has on viewers, it is also provocative. The composer worked elements of the "Deutschlandlied"–the national anthem of the Weimar Republic and the current Federal Republic of Germany–into the music for the footage of Germans loading Jews into railway cars at Westerbork. The West German government cut this part of the soundtrack from copies of the film distributed to German schools.

In the second part of her book, Lindeperg explores reactions to the film, starting with the well-known struggle over censorship in France, due to the picture of a French policeman taken at Vel d'Hiver, where Jews were rounded up before deportation. In a cultural landscape where myths about universal French resistance prevailed, Resnais agreed to "hide" the incriminating image in order to secure distribution of the film. First nominated for showing at the Cannes Film Festival, the film was subsequently excluded by the organizers in order to avoid tension with Germany. This decision triggered a media scandal with international ramifications, involving high-ranking French as well as German officials, intellectuals, and artists in a wave of debates, which, in France, were often tainted with anti-German overtones. The West German government decided to organize test screenings, with questionnaires, of the film, which Lindeperg insightfully analyses in the context of a country struggling with its own politics of memory. Paul Celan's translation of Cayrol's text reflected the ambivalent embrace of the film by Germans. Lindeperg meticulously points to the numerous changes made in the translated text–semantic, musical, and even thematic (for example, Celan's translation emphasizes the fate of the Jews). The subsequent chapter on the version of the film shown in the GDR demonstrates the diverse political agendas of the two Germanies, with the GDR using the film to propagate its communist ideology. During her research, Lindeperg encountered a further version of the film shown in the GDR that downplayed the accusatory tone of the first version, which was probably seen as a critique of the camps for political prisoners still operating in the Eastern Bloc at the time.

Lindeperg then follows the "journey" of the film through Japan, England, Switzerland, and eastern Europe, where it was censored, recut, and given new texts and music in each setting. In the United States, pieces were used in the television show "Remember Us"(1960), which sought to inform Americans about the genocide of the Jews. This first "recycling of the film as a film about the Holocaust" (p. 216) was followed by a career in Israel, where it was used in the Adolf Eichmann trial in 1961–not unproblematically, since some images were correctly identified only years later. This "rereading" of the film continued in subsequent decades, as the film was screened in educational institutions. In France it was first shown in schools in the framework of what Lindeperg called "the obsession with the transmission of cultural memory" (p. 224)–characterized by institutional efforts to ensure that future generations will be knowledgeable about the deportation–, but used in the 1990s in the fight against racism and anti-Semitism. In Germany, the film was used as early as the 1960s to denounce antisemitism and the fascist past, but as a tool in the 68ers rejection of their parents' generation.

Informative as well is Lindeperg's discussion of critical reactions of the cinematic features of the documentary, which shifted over the years: from an inability, almost a refusal, to express a critical opinion in view of the topic, to the first critiques of Resnais's neo-formalism and debates about the "amorality of the dolly shot," a critique of Resnais beautiful, masterly use of cinematic technique to portray such an abhorrent topic (p. 237).

In sum, this book is excellent and highly informative on the genesis and context of the film, and effectively demonstrates the variety of its potential uses, both as a work of history and as a work of art or as an illustration of the use of archival material in visual media. The film offers indeed an excellent opportunity for students and history teachers and professors to engage with a visual document, something the latter are still often reluctant to do. The focus on the individuals involved makes the books engaging. A considerable downside, however, is the lack of any footnotes or endnotes; the reader is only provided with ten pages of references, making it very hard to pin down the nature of Lindenperg's own contribution.[3] The book provides a rich amount of information not only for scholars of French studies but it is also relevant for anyone interested in European and more specifically German history of memory, as well as film studies.

Notes

[1]. See the informative and useful essay of Donald Reid, "Teaching *Night and Fog*: Putting a Documentary Film in History," originally published at the website of the Project for Historical Education, now forthcoming in *Teaching History*. Prior to publication a copy can be obtained by writing to Reid directly.

[2]. See the excellent work by Richard Raskin, *Nuit et Brouillard by Alain Resnais* (Aarhus: Aarhus University

Press, 1987).

[3]. This decision is very surprising considering that the footnotes are available on line at the press website, at `http://www.odilejacob.fr`.

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