
 FILM-PHILOSOPHY

Fragile Faces:
Levinas and Lanzmann
Libby Saxton
 Queen Mary, University of London

In recent years, the concept of a 'prohibition against representation' and its ethical and political implications for artistic practices past, present and future have been subjected to renewed critical scrutiny. While this interdiction derives from the Second Commandment given by God to Moses, forbidding the creation of graven images or idols, it has frequently been invoked in secular contexts, and has acquired special resonance in ongoing debates about the difficulty of adequately representing the event which has been called the Holocaust or Shoah. The persistent claim that the Nazis' persecution of the Jews and other communities remains beyond or unsusceptible to representation, and more specifically the assertion that it cannot or should not be recuperated within images, are often informed by a particular understanding of the *Bilderverbot* (as the prohibition described above is often known). However, certain survivors and scholars have queried whether it is legitimate or helpful to reactivate this injunction in the aftermath of such atrocities. Jorge Semprun, Jacques Rancière, Jean-Luc Nancy and others have variously criticised this move, along with associated rhetorics of 'ineffability', as confused and obscurantist, politically misleading and morally suspect.¹ Nancy, the author of one of the most forceful critiques in this vein, warns that the allegation that representation of the Holocaust is illegitimate rests on a misunderstanding or misapplication of the original religious prohibition which he seeks to correct; "representation of the Shoah", he concludes, 'is not only possible and licit, but in fact

¹Discussing Holocaust literature and cinema, Semprun, for example, refutes '*a priori*' interdictions on representation: 'No-one, no court, can pronounce in advance on whether this or that can or cannot be written or filmed. There can be no prohibition on this' (Semprun 2000, 11). Rancière attempts to demonstrate that such interdictions lack a coherent philosophical foundation: 'There is no property of the event which prohibits representation, which prohibits art, even in the sense of artifice. Unrepresentability does not exist as a property of the event. There are only choices' (Rancière 2001, 96).

also necessary and imperative' (Nancy 2003, 61).

In the light of these assertive recent interventions, it seems timely to revisit two earlier and seminal accounts of representation which caution that the *Bilderverbot* cannot be dismissed quite so straightforwardly. The writings of Emmanuel Levinas and the films of Claude Lanzmann offer distinctive and challenging takes on the ethical potentialities and risks of the image as witness to history and alterity, as interface between self and other. While Lanzmann's work remains an important point of reference in the debate outlined above (it is discussed by Semprun, Rancière and Nancy as well as others), Levinas's name is rarely mentioned in this context. The essay by Levinas on which I shall focus here is concerned with the enduring resonance of the Second Commandment, but does not consider its applicability or otherwise in the specific case of the Holocaust, an event to which it does not explicitly refer. Yet this text, like Levinas's wider philosophical project, is haunted by the memory of the Nazis' crimes (as intimated, for instance, by the epigraphs to *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (*Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*)). As Robert Eaglestone argues, despite Levinas's apparent reluctance to address the event directly, '[his] thought is saturated with the thought of the Holocaust' to an extent that is often overlooked by his readers (Eaglestone 2004, 249–250). Jill Robbins proposes more specifically that Levinas's rejection of art may be 'to some extent a response to the Holocaust', though she notes, too, that on those occasions 'when Levinas *does* speak positively about art, (...) that art always has a relation to the Holocaust' (Robbins 1999, 133). By reading Levinas in parallel with Lanzmann, I hope to show here, furthermore, that his reflections on the ethical significance of the prohibition against images are highly pertinent to issues at stake in the ongoing conversation about representation of, and after, the Holocaust.

In staging an encounter between Levinas and Lanzmann, the broader aim of this essay, in common with others collected here, is to forge connections between Levinas's thought and filmic practice. If Levinas had little to say about cinema, the appearance of explicit references to his work in recent films, such as Jean-Luc Godard's *Notre musique* (2004), suggests that cinema, at least, has something to say about Levinas.² Following the lead of a handful of critics who have begun to investigate these affinities (see, most

² In the scene in question in *Notre musique*, an Israeli journalist flicks through a copy of *Entre nous: essais sur le penser-à-l'autre* while contemplating in Levinasian terms the significance of the reconstruction of the Mostar bridge in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which will reconnect the Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosnians who live on opposite sides on the River Neretva. Saxton, Libby (2007) 'Fragile Faces: Levinas and Lanzmann', *Film-Philosophy*, vol. 11, no. 2: pp. 1–14. <<http://www.film-philosophy.com/2007v11n2/saxton.pdf>> ISSN: 1466-4615 online

notably, Renov 2004, 148–167 and Cooper 2006), this essay argues that Levinas, too, has something compelling to teach us about cinema – that his writings can help us to articulate and explore some of the ethical dimensions of the medium which have often been neglected in film criticism and theory. I am interested here, more specifically, in how Levinas’s critique of representation as liable to ‘thematise’ and thereby reduce the *visage*, or face, of the Other to a projection of the Same, might be brought to bear on filmic sounds and images and the ways in which they address, compel and command us as spectators. Yet any attempt to conceptualise cinema along Levinasian lines must take account of his abiding suspicion of the aesthetic and the visual. In the preface to *Totalité et infini: essai sur l’extériorité* (*Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*) Levinas describes ethics as an ‘optics’, a formulation which might appear conducive to reflection on a medium which habitually privileges the sense of sight, were it not for the qualification which immediately follows: ‘But it is a “vision” without image, bereft of the synoptic and totalizing objectifying virtues of vision, a relation or intentionality of a wholly different type – which this work seeks to describe’ (Levinas 1961, xii).

It is my contention here that Lanzmann’s images are particularly hospitable to Levinasian thought at once in spite and precisely because of the latter’s hostility towards vision and representation. In the context of prohibitions on representation certain unexpected and illuminating parallels emerge between Levinas’s and Lanzmann’s otherwise divergent projects. Lanzmann trained as a philosopher and his films can be viewed as an ongoing ethical enquiry informed, like Levinas’s writings, by the traumatic legacy of the Holocaust. Moreover, Lanzmann, like Levinas, is preoccupied with the ethical adequacy and legitimacy of representation and, in particular, of the image. Indeed, his mistrust of representation and ambivalence towards direct images of the past intersect on several levels with Levinas’s concerns. Both adopt positions which have been described as iconoclastic. I would venture, however, that reviewing Lanzmann’s images through a Levinasian lens may serve to call this designation into question, offering fresh insights into the capacity of the image to bear witness to alterity.

Levinas: *Bilderverbot* and *visage*

In ‘La Réalité et son ombre’ (‘Reality and its Shadow’) Levinas makes a passing but significant reference to the Second Commandment: ‘The proscription of images is truly the supreme commandment of monotheism, a doctrine that overcomes fate, that

creation and revelation in reverse' (Levinas 1948, 786). Levinas returns to this proscription over three decades later in 'Interdit de la représentation et "Droits de l'homme"' ('The Prohibition against Representation and "The Rights of Man"'), an essay which has so far received less attention from his commentators. Here he engages with the commandment in a more sustained way and in terms which confirm the suspicion that it implicitly informs many of his other writings, in tandem with the Sixth Commandment ('you shall not murder') which does so explicitly. This essay is dedicated to the memory of Adélie Rassial, co-editor of the volume in which the text originally appeared: *L'Interdit de la représentation (The Prohibition against Representation)*, selected proceedings of a conference held in Montpellier in 1981, organised by Rassial and her husband Jean-Jacques, during which philosophers, psychoanalysts, writers, painters and filmmakers debated the implications of the interdiction for current developments in their disciplines or media. Levinas's contribution takes the prohibition as a point of departure for discussion of our relation and responsibility to the other (in this respect it appears to take its cue from the final sentence of 'La Réalité et son ombre'). Anticipating Nancy's remarks, Levinas begins by warning that the commandment only applies to certain images and should not be taken out of its Biblical and Talmudic contexts, but nevertheless questions whether it may only be understood 'in the limited sense of a religious rule, and a purely repressive one at that' (Levinas 1984a, 107). For Levinas, it has infinitely richer ethical resonances. The suspicion of images of beings at the heart of Judaism may also be interpreted, he contends, as a denunciation of a certain reductive or acquisitive mode of thought, of 'an *intelligibility* that one would like to reduce to knowledge' (ibid. 109). Representation is reconfigured in the course of his argument variously as 'thought thinking the thing', 'the adequation of thought with its other', 'an intentionality', 'a thematization (...) of what lets itself be designated – ultimately or immediately – by a demonstrative, and in a word concretely, with the index finger' (ibid. 108–110). As a corrective to such a form of thinking and the 'deep-seated immanence or atheism', even 'temptation to idolatry', he discerns in this context in sight and knowledge, Levinas endeavours to imagine a 'thought freed of all representation' which infers 'a *meaningfulness* prior to representation' (ibid. 108, 113). What is particularly compelling in this context about the prohibition against representation is that it acknowledges the transcendence which is proper to the relation to the Other but which is overlooked in perception:

This transcendence is alive in the relation to the other man, i.e. in the proximity of one's fellow man, whose *uniqueness* and consequently whose irreducible *alterity* would be – still or already – unrecognized in the perception that stares at [*dé-visage*] the other (ibid. 110).

The word-play in the final phrase of this sentence is revealing (the hyphenated 'dé-visage' might be translated as 'stares' or 'defaces'), for in Levinas's account, that which cannot 'give itself' in representation is 'the uniqueness of the unique that is expressed in the face' (ibid. 108). Levinas explains elsewhere that his term 'visage' does not refer exactly or exclusively to a human face (Levinas 1984b, 344). Nor does it allude simply or primarily to something that we can see. Despite his use of vocabulary associated with vision, Levinas strips the face of its habitual meanings as a phenomenon that appears in the visible world, an object of perception: 'one can say that the face is not "seen". It is what cannot become a content, which your thought would embrace; it is uncontainable, it leads you beyond' (Levinas 1982, 91). Levinas clarifies in *Totalité et infini* that rather than *appearing* to me, the face *expresses*, *signifies* and *speaks*, addressing and commanding me from a position beyond the perceptual field (see, for example, Levinas 1961, 21–2, 37–8). As such, it reveals itself 'without the intermediary of any image'; indeed, it incessantly 'destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me, the idea existing to my own measure' (ibid. 174, 21). Levinas pursues these insights further in 'Interdit de la représentation et "Droits de l'homme"', where he asserts that the epiphany of the face is 'refractory to the image': 'Beneath the plasticity of the face [*figure*] that *appears*, the face [*visage*] is already missed. It is frozen in art itself' (Levinas 1984a, 112, 110). The face cannot be captured in representation, which would reduce it to immobility, reappropriate its alterity and silence its address. Françoise Armengaud, glossing Levinas, explains that the face is not only unique but also 'essentially non-duplicable; it has no double, no shadow, no copy, no portrait' (Armengaud 2005). In other words, it is the face of the Other that forms the proper foundation and object of the prohibition against representation; it is in its epiphany that 'an "unheard of command" or "the word of God" is heard' (Levinas 1984a, 112).

Put simply, then, Levinas finds in the *Bilderverbot* a validation of his conception of ethical relations: 'the ancient, biblical call and command (...) awakens the subject to a responsibility for the other' (Levinas 1984a, 113). However, his commentary on the

prohibition would seem to further problematise the task in hand: the attempt to draw parallels between his thought and filmic representation, to identify a Levinasian dimension of cinema. Levinas's account of a face which is 'refractory to the image' poses a series of questions to film viewers.³ If the face of the Other eludes representation and cannot be encountered in images, if it expresses the Second Commandment as well as the Sixth (Levinas 1961, 173), how could cinema reveal alterity or call us to responsibility in the manner described by Levinas? Is it possible to conceive of ways in which cinema might expose us to this face without 'defacing' or 'effacing' it – without reducing it to an object of perception? Is the prohibition against representation signified by the face not always already violated as images of the other are successively captured and fixed on celluloid, or do certain films work instead or simultaneously to respect, probe or at least stimulate reflection on the limits of representation? In a related vein, how does the cinematic apparatus disrupt and reconfigure a Levinasian model of relatedness? Film is unable to emulate the immediacy and spontaneity of the *face-à-face* insofar as the camera mediates otherness and manipulates our look. Furthermore, theoretical accounts of the apparatus have recurrently placed the viewer in a position of dominance and transcendence over the object viewed (see, for example, Baudry 1970; Metz 1984). This paradigm inverts the asymmetrical structure of the Levinasian encounter, where it is the Other who calls the self into question. As Sarah Cooper observes, 'a Levinasian-inspired theory of viewing would necessarily posit a space beyond subject/object relations, which is crucial for an opening to otherness' (Cooper 2006, 19). What kinds of viewing relations might preserve the proximity and separation proper to what Levinas calls 'a relation irreducible to the subject-object relation: the *revelation* of the other' (1961, 45)?

Lanzmann: the speaking face and the missing body

In order to address some of these questions in more concrete terms and to distil the particular implications of Levinas's argument for Holocaust representation, I would like to turn now to *Shoah* (1985), Lanzmann's nine-and-a-half-hour filmic meditation on memory, testimony and annihilation. *Shoah* consists principally of images of faces and places: interviews with survivors, perpetrators and bystanders intercut with present-day footage of the killing sites. However, what is arguably most striking about the film is what

³ For discussion of the implications of Levinas's writings for art and visual and sensible experience, see Crignon 2004.
Saxton, Libby (2007) 'Fragile Faces: Levinas and Lanzmann', *Film-Philosophy*, vol. 11, no. 2: pp. 1–14. <<http://www.film-philosophy.com/2007v11n2/saxton.pdf>>
ISSN: 1466-4615 online

Lanzmann chooses not to show. *Shoah* breaks with the conventions established by previous films on the atrocities by evoking the past without reconstructing it using actors and sets or archive footage. In this way, it consistently avoids direct images of the catastrophic event named in its title; despite its unwavering focus on violence and death it does not contain a single image of a dead or violated body. These missing bodies are symptomatic of the film's broader withdrawal from the space of representation, which Lanzmann views, not uncontentiously, as inherently fictionalising and consolatory in the wake of the event.

Lanzmann summarises his key reservations about representation in his provocative critique of *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993):

The Holocaust is unique first of all in that it erects around itself, in a circle of flames, a limit which cannot be breached because a certain absolute of horror is intransmissible: to claim to do so is to make oneself guilty of the most serious sort of transgression. Fiction is a transgression; I profoundly think that there is a prohibition on representation (Lanzmann 1994, vii).

While Lanzmann asserts elsewhere that it is not his intention to impose taboos, perpetuate interdictions or 'sacralise' the event (see, for instance, Lanzmann 2000, 14), many of his commentators hear echoes of the Second Commandment in remarks of the kind cited above. Miriam Bratu Hansen, Dominick LaCapra, Michael Rothberg and Joshua Hirsch, amongst others, all posit a relationship between this proscription and the doubts about representability which inform Lanzmann's directorial choices (Hansen 1996, 301; Hirsch 2004, 72). Accusing the filmmaker of returning to 'what he explicitly denies, represses or suppresses: a tendency to sacralise the Holocaust and to surround it with taboos', LaCapra, for example, argues that *Shoah* manifests a 'displaced secular religiosity' and that Lanzmann 'especially affirms a *Bilderverbot*, or prohibition on images, with respect to representation' (LaCapra 1998, 100). Rothberg reiterates this charge: 'Lanzmann's argument derives explicitly from a certain understanding of the ban on graven images' (Rothberg 2000, 233). Whether or not we accept this reading of *Shoah*, which remains at odds with the director's own and is informed by his extra-filmic commentaries as much as by his images, Lanzmann's qualms about representation and its capacity to reduce and violate its object provide a pertinent Levinasian point of entry into his film. However, in one obvious but important respect at least, Lanzmann's response to the *Bilderverbot* diverges sharply from Levinas's: while the director rejects

images of the past, he invents and multiplies images of the present, embracing visual representation in order to reflect on its perceived limitations from within.

Before examining some of the ways in which *Shoah* alludes to these limitations and the ethical meaning with which they become charged, it is important to distinguish between two kinds of relations established by the film: those between Lanzmann and his filmic subjects, which remain difficult to reconcile with Levinasian principles, and those between the film and its viewers, which seem to me to be more compatible with the philosopher's preoccupations. Structured around Lanzmann's personal obsessions, *Shoah* is arguably a film about its director as much as about anything else, for the testimonies he elicits tend to be channelled through and shaped by his own vision and agenda, which are often conspicuously prioritised over those of his interviewees. Critical debate about the film has dwelt with suspicion on the ethical implications of Lanzmann's tendency to stage-direct and manipulate or coerce his witnesses, his insistence on continuing to film even when this appears to be against their wishes and his willingness in certain cases to resort to subterfuge (see, for example, Todorov 1991, 252–254; LaCapra 1998). Whether or not his ends justify his means, a Levinasian critique of these strategies might charge Lanzmann with reappropriating the alterity of his witnesses and their depositions to the extent that he refuses to allow them to put his own place at risk.

If a Levinasian reading of *Shoah* must contend with Lanzmann's self-positioning as filmmaker, interviewer and, in certain cases, as camera-operator, the pertinent question in the current context is whether this reduces his subjects to objects of perception and knowledge, or whether and how they resist this. Lanzmann accords us visual access to his witnesses primarily through medium and close-up shots of their faces. For better or worse, the face has long been cinema's privileged subject, where it has been transformed through the close-up into a spectacle, an incarnation of unspoken or unspeakable truths, an originary signifier whose meanings can never be stabilised or exhausted.⁴ Under Lanzmann's lens, the faces of the German and Polish perpetrators and bystanders become the site of a multitude of micro-movements which offer a silent but involuntarily illuminating commentary on the witnesses' testimony. During these interviews, the facial close-up sometimes functions as a lie-detector, exposing the inconsistencies, half-truths or barefaced untruths which punctuate the witness's account.

⁴ For analysis of the privileged position and evolving meanings of the face on screen, see Aumont 1992.

The images of the faces of the survivor-witnesses, however, signify differently, breaking with the cinematic tradition mentioned above by progressively dismantling the myth of the face as the veracious expression of an interiority, the locus of a privileged relationship to the real. While any generalisation about the witnesses' faces in *Shoah* risks denying the irreducible singularity of each, what is particularly disconcerting about a number of the survivors' expressions, notably those of Simon Srebnik, Rudolf Vrba, Filip Müller and Abraham Bomba, is their habitually impregnable impassivity. The camera repeatedly lingers on these faces, inviting us to scan them for insights into the past and the present, yet even when the witnesses are remembering the most excruciating suffering, their faces often remain inexpressive, deadpan, at once unreadable and available to a multiplicity of readings. A number of deportees have reflected upon the violence that was inflicted – at once literally and metaphorically – upon the human face in the Nazi camps (see, for instance, Antelme 1957, 57–58; Levi 1966, 103). Drawing on such testimonies, Nancy ventures that 'the question of the representation of the camps is none other than that of the representation of a face which has itself been deprived of a representation and a gaze' (Nancy 2003, 92). While he does not explicitly refer to Levinas here, Nancy's argument at this juncture recalls the Levinasian notion of a *visage* which calls representation into question. If, on one level, the survivors' faces in *Shoah* bear witness to the enduring effects of violation and privation, on another level, they attest to the limits of representation both in their resistance to a definitive reading and in their refusal, at pivotal moments, to reveal anything at all. These images ultimately offer us no purchase either on the witnesses or on the traumatic experiences they recount.

In the course of such sequences, *Shoah* strips the face of spectacular qualities and re-maps it instead as a trauma site. In the absence of direct images of the past, the survivor's face becomes the place not only where trauma is visually registered but also where the interdiction on representation is affirmed. In this way, the visible face incessantly points to or signifies something beyond the visible, something that perpetually eludes our vision and escapes our knowledge and understanding. To clarify: this is not to suggest that the real, human faces of the survivor-witnesses in *Shoah* can be read as representations of the Levinasian *visage*, which exceeds and undoes any image we attempt to form of it; what concerns me here instead are the ways in which

these faces resist reduction to visible phenomena and the possibility that this preserves an opening onto alterity.

Crucial to this opening is language. One of the key means by which Lanzmann reactivates the prohibition against representation and avoids reducing his filmic subjects to objects of our gaze is by consistently privileging the word over the image. While Lanzmann, like Levinas,⁵ is interested in the ethical significance of non-verbal forms of expression (as demonstrated, for example, by the numerous occasions on which the camera continues to linger on the witness's face after he or she has fallen silent), language and its relationship with alterity simultaneously emerge as pivotal preoccupations for both. In *Totalité et infini* speech is identified as a central component and expression of the ethical relation with the Other: 'The face speaks. The manifestation of the face is already discourse' (Levinas 1961, 37). In the relation of language, moreover, 'the essential is the interpellation, the vocative', which maintains the other 'in his heterogeneity' (Levinas 1961, 41). In line with Levinas's concerns, *Shoah* addresses its audience and evokes the alterity of the traumatic past primarily through discourse. The film interpellates us not only as spectators but also, and perhaps most significantly, as listeners. The witnesses appear first and foremost as sources of language, and it is as speaking faces, talking heads, that they resist reduction to objects of our perception. It is through the singularity and unpredictability of their spoken depositions that they confront us with new and unexpected meanings and realities, calling our preconceived ideas into question and probing the limits of knowledge in the face of their experiences. The priority which Lanzmann grants to audition over vision – to oral over visual modes of access to the past – is thus in keeping with Levinas's reflections on the ways in which the *visage* reveals itself and on the prohibition against representation which it expresses. The *Bilderverbot* is reiterated in *Shoah* in the disjunctive relationship between voice and image, between the atrocities described by the witnesses and the empty, derelict and deceptively tranquil murder sites to which they return in the present.

Furthermore, it is through oral testimony that *Shoah* makes manifest the absence of those faces Lanzmann cannot or chooses not to show yet whose experiences remain the central subject of the film: the missing faces of the dead. Commenting on the

⁵ See Critchley for an account of the privileged place which Levinas reserves for non-verbal communication (Critchley 1992, 177–180).
Saxton, Libby (2007) 'Fragile Faces: Levinas and Lanzmann', *Film-Philosophy*, vol. 11, no. 2: pp. 1–14. <<http://www.film-philosophy.com/2007v11n2/saxton.pdf>>
ISSN: 1466-4615 online

relationship between this absence and Srebnik's song at the beginning of the film, Shoshana Felman suggests:

the unique expression of the voice and of the singing both expresses and covers the silence, in much the same way as the unique expression of the face (...) both covers and expresses the deliberate and striking absence of dead bodies from Shoah's screen. It is indeed the living body and the living face of the returning witness that, in Shoah, becomes a speaking figure for the stillness and the muteness of the bodies (Felman 1992, 281–282).

For Felman, then, the living faces and voices of the survivors figure or attest to the missing faces and testimonies of those who perished, without supplanting this absence. If *Shoah* invites us to read the survivor's face as a screen in the double sense of the term (as a blank surface onto which the action is projected and as a protective partition or veil which conceals the action from view), as the survivor speaks or sings, the film screen opens onto a face in the Levinasian sense, insofar as it directs attention beyond itself towards an otherness which cannot be recuperated in images.

In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* Judith Butler articulates the fragile relationship between humanity, representation and the *visage* in the following terms:

For Levinas, (...) the human is not *represented by* the face. Rather, the human is indirectly affirmed in that very disjunction that makes representation impossible, and this disjunction is conveyed in the impossible representation. For representation to convey the human, then, representation must not only fail, but it must *show* its failure. (...) In this sense, the human is not identified with what is represented but neither is it identified with the unrepresentable; it is, rather, that which limits the success of any representational practice. The face is not 'effaced' in this failure of representation, but is constituted in that very possibility (Butler 2004, 144).

Butler's argument rehabilitates representation as revelatory of the face precisely to the extent that it fails to represent it and – crucially – acknowledges this failure. As it probes the limits of the image, *Shoah*, I would argue, moves towards such an acknowledgement. Renov warns that 'given the conditions of capture and reproducibility that govern nonfiction media, we can assume that no documentative practice can meet

the ethical standards of the [Levinasian] encounter, simulating a mode of thought better than knowledge' (Renov 2004, 157). Yet he is surely right to suggest that Levinas's prioritisation of the ethical might nevertheless help to free documentary theory up from its persistent preoccupation with ontology and epistemology (Renov 2004, 159, 161). In *Shoah* ethical relations are accorded precedence over questions of being and knowledge. The film consistently frustrates our desire to see, know and understand by refusing to allow the other and his or her history to take shape as objects under our gaze. By holding us at a distance the images and voices afford a more intimate encounter with traumatic experience, opening up the possibility of proximity while preserving separation. In so doing, they call Levinas's critique of images and vision as inherently totalising into question. If Lanzmann's reluctance to visualise the past directly and privileging of oral over visual witnessing appear to affirm the *Bilderverbot* revalidated by Levinas, reinvigorating it in the aftermath of the violence of the Holocaust, his film shows that – paradoxically – the cinematic image has a vital ethical role to play in this process.

Bibliography

- Antelme, Robert (1957) *L'Espèce humaine*. Paris: R. Marin. (First published in 1947 by R. Marin.)
- Armengaud, Françoise (2005) 'Faire ou ne pas faire d'images. Emmanuel Levinas et l'art d'oblitération'. *Noesis*, n. 3.
<<http://revel.unice.fr/noesis/document.html?id=11#ftn13>>. Accessed 3 August 2006.
- Aumont, Jacques (1992) *Du visage au cinéma*. Paris: Cahiers du cinéma.
- Baudry, Jean-Louis (1970) 'Cinéma: effets idéologiques produits par l'appareil de base'. *Cinéthique*, n. 7 – 8: 1 – 8.
- Butler, Judith (2004) *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso.
- Cooper, Sarah (2006) *Selfless Cinema? Ethics and French Documentary*. Oxford: Legenda.

- Crignon, Philippe (2004) 'Figuration: Emmanuel Levinas and the Image'. *Yale French Studies*, n. 104: 100 – 125.
- Critchley, Simon (1992) *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Eaglestone, Robert (2004) 'Inexhaustible Meaning, Inextinguishable Voices: Levinas and the Holocaust' in *The Holocaust and the Postmodern*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 249 – 278.
- Felman, Shoshana (1992) 'The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*' in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. By Felman and Dori Laub. New York and London: Routledge, 204 – 283.
- Hansen, Miriam Bratu (1996) '*Schindler's List* is Not *Shoah*: Second Commandment, Popular Modernism and Public Memory'. *Critical Inquiry*, v. 22, n. 2: 292 – 312.
- Hirsch, Joshua (2004) *Afterimage: Film, Trauma, and the Holocaust*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- LaCapra, Dominick (1998) 'Lanzmann's *Shoah*: "Here There is No Why"' in *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 95 – 138.
- Lanzmann, Claude (1994) 'Holocauste, la représentation impossible'. *Le Monde (Supplément Arts–Spectacles)*, 3 March: i, vii.
- Lanzmann, Claude (2000) 'Parler pour les morts'. *Le Monde des débats*, n. 14: 14 – 16.
- Levi, Primo (1966) *If This Is A Man*. Trans. Stuart Woolf. London: Bodley Head.
- Levinas, Emmanuel (1948) 'La Réalité et son ombre'. *Les Temps modernes*, v. 4, n. 38: 771 – 789.
- Levinas, Emmanuel (1961) *Totalité et infini: essai sur l'extériorité*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Levinas, Emmanuel (1974) *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Levinas, Emmanuel (1982) *Éthique et infini: dialogues avec Philippe Nemo*. Paris: Arthème Fayard et Radio-France.

- Levinas, Emmanuel (1984a) 'Interdit de la représentation et "Droits de l'homme"' in *L'Interdit de la représentation. Colloque de Montpellier, 1981*. Eds. Adélie and Jean-Jacques Rassial. Paris: Seuil, 107 – 113.
- Levinas, Emmanuel (1984b) 'Paix et proximité'. *Les Cahiers de la nuit surveillée*, 'Emmanuel Levinas'. Ed. Jacques Rolland, n. 3: 339 – 346.
- Levinas, Emmanuel (1991) *Entre nous: essais sur le penser-à-l'autre*. Paris: Grasset et Fasquelle.
- Metz, Christian (1984) *Le Signifiant imaginaire: psychanalyse et cinéma*. Paris: Christian Bourgois. (First published in 1977 by Union Générale d'Éditions.)
- Nancy, Jean-Luc (2003) 'La Représentation interdite' in *Au fond des images*. Paris: Galilée, 57 – 99.
- Rancière, Jacques (2001) 'S'il y a de l'irreprésentable' in *L'Art et la mémoire des camps: représenter exterminer*. Ed. Jean-Luc Nancy. Paris: Seuil, 81 – 102.
- Renov, Michael (2004) *The Subject of Documentary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Robbins, Jill (1999) *Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Rothberg, Michael (2000) *Traumatic Realism: The Demands of Holocaust Representation*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
- Semprun, Jorge (2000) 'L'Écriture ravive la mémoire'. *Le Monde des débats*, n. 14: 11 – 13.
- Todorov, Tzvetan (1991) *Face à l'extrême*. Paris: Seuil.

Filmography

- Godard, Jean-Luc (2004) *Notre musique*. France/Switzerland.
- Lanzmann, Claude (1985) *Shoah*. France.
- Spielberg, Steven (1993) *Schindler's List*. USA.