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# The Documentary Real and the Shoah

Marc De Kesel<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** Without the support of imagination, one would not have the slightest idea of the cruel ‘real’ that has occurred in the Nazi extermination camps. Yet, in documentaries imaging the events of the Shoah, one runs the risk of missing their most basic property, namely their unimaginability. The mere idea that one is able to imagine the unimaginable comes down to a denial of the Shoah’s status as an event that defies our understanding. The unimaginable ‘real’ of the Shoah, however, is not simply located in its object, in the cruelty of what happened in the camp. The Shoah makes us at the same time facing the unimaginable ‘real’ of the modern subject—the blind spot in our own identity. If we need imagination to deal with the Shoah, it is also because of an ungraspable ‘real’ in ourselves. This is why adequate Shoah representations, acknowledging their object as being beyond representation, include the same ‘beyond’ concerning the *subject* of the Holocaust memory. The essay makes this clear in an elaborated comparison of Claude Lanzmann’s 1985 film, *Shoah*, with some conceptual works of art from the late nineties—all of this ‘fine-tuned’ in a reflection upon Ingmar Bergman’s *Persona*.

**Keywords** Holocaust · Shoah · Representation · Subject theory · Imagination · The unimaginable

*The Holocaust shall be approached as a solemn or even sacred event with a seriousness admitting no response that might obscure its enormity or dishonor its dead. (Des Pres 1988, p. 217)*

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## 1 The Lanzmannian 'Documentary Real' and Its Opposite

A documentary film replays reality and in doing so, intertwines fact and fiction. Because an event, especially a historical event, hardly ever can be recorded directly, it needs to be retold, restaged or re-enacted. This inevitably requires imagination: to reconstruct an event means to structure it according to a plot and to use filmic means to evoke the circumstances and atmosphere of the now past event. This inevitably entails the risk that the imagination takes on too great a role. Today, we see a trend in documentary films to continually increase the role of the imagination and of fiction. In *Conspiracy* (2001) we are given an inside look into the Wannsee Conference and witness 'live' how the top-ranking Nazi official Reinhard Heydrich pushed the programme of the *Endlösung* down the German leadership's throat.<sup>1</sup> In the television production *God on Trial* we see tourists visiting the camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, while at the same time we witness a discussion between camp prisoners, a half a century earlier, about the question if God is guilty or not for the Shoah. In the end, the documentary shows us how both present-day tourists and camp prisoners share the same gas chamber.<sup>2</sup> Here, the documentary film becomes a 'docudrama'—a different name for a documentary but with a larger share of fiction and imagination. But what remains of the naked, real facts in all that fiction and imagination? The more the latter dominates the documentary, the greater the risk that the real event they document is manipulated, distorted or even concealed. Where do we situate, in all these fictionalizing documentaries, the 'real', or, to put it with a term borrowed from this title of this special issue, the *documentary real*.

'Documentary real': is this not the most adequate term to summarize the shape of almost any Holocaust memorial? The memory of the Shoah deals with events and facts so 'real' that no document can give a satisfactory account of the unbearable atrocities they try to report. They are literally beyond imagination: no image can do justice to the 'real' dimensions of the horror of the Shoah. However, this 'being beyond imagination' is precisely the reason why the 'documentary', in the sense of a fictitious 'report', is needed here. If 'documentary real' stands for the attempt to catch reality by means of a fictitious dramatized account, then, the Shoah is the first in line to need such dramatized fiction.

Here we run into the central conundrum of the representation of the horror of the Shoah. On the one hand, we need fictitious dramatization of reality to be able to imagine the reality of the camps. Without the support of imagination, one would not have the slightest idea of the cruel 'real' that has occurred in the Nazi extermination camps. Yet, on the other hand, when the events of the Shoah are imaged, one runs the risk of missing their most basic property, namely their unimaginability. The mere idea that one is able to imagine the unimaginable comes down to a denial of the Shoah's status as an event that defies our understanding. Imagination too easily suggests that we 'understand' the inhuman suffering of the victims of Holocaust and 'feel' their pain. A real understanding of their suffering cannot but coincide with admitting one's incapacity of ever fully understanding or feeling it.

<sup>1</sup> *Conspiracy*, 2001, by Frank Pierson, with Kenneth Branah, Clare Bullus and Stanley Tucci. This movie retakes the 1984 television series by Heinz Schirk, with Dieterich Mattausch as Heydrich.

<sup>2</sup> *God on Trial*, docudrama, BBC & Boston Television, van Frank Cottrell Boyce, 85 min, 2008. See <http://www.psb.org/wgbh/masterpiece/godontrial/index.html>.

## 2 *Kamp*

In the case of the Shoah, the 'documentary real' as it is presented by a documentary or docudrama can imply both a ban on *and* a promotion of the image and the imagination. For Claude Lanzmann, capturing the 'documentary real' of the Shoah can only result from avoiding images. The 'real' of that horrible past can only be evoked using *verbal* testimonies. (Liebman 2007)<sup>3</sup> Contrary to Alain Renais' *Nuits et brouillard* (1955), which offers a kind of 'anthology' of the images collected from the Holocaust archives, Lanzmann's 9 hour movie *Shoah* (1985) does not show any of these images. As none other, his movie celebrates the Holocaust's status as an unimaginable event. On the opposite of the spectrum are movies such as *Schindler's list* (Steven Spielberg 1993) or *La vita è bella* (Roberto Benigni 1997), in which images and imagination are given free rein. In these films, the topic—the Shoah—doesn't restrict the imagination in any way, and the 'documentary real' is fashioned as in most Hollywood-style productions: through identification with the main characters, the spectator gradually evolves toward an emphatic understanding of the movie's message.

One can think of the *Kamp* (*Camp*), a remarkable theatre performance by the Dutch group *Hotel Modern* (première in Rotterdam, 2006).<sup>4</sup> Eight thousand puppets made from *papier mâché*, each eight centimetre tall, fill the stage, turning it into a miniature version of the concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz. The puppets are moved by the 'actors' who, like evil giants, dominate and orchestrate the entire life of the inferno. One of the actors handles cameras whose images are simultaneously projected on the back wall of the stage. The 'plot' they let the figurines act out is well known: the arrival of the trains, the selection by the 'Mengele' of the day, the labour of building barracks or dragging stones, the hanging or torturing of sentenced inmates, the undressing before entering the gas chamber, the inserting of the Zyklon B, the emptying and cleaning of the gas chamber, the burning of the dead, et cetera.

*Kamp* is a documentary, reporting both the 'real' that was done *by* ordinary people (German citizens) and the 'real' done that was done *to* ordinary people (European Jews and gypsies, and other 'racial' minority's). *Kamp* shows the 'real', documented in the shape of a docudrama, in so far as it blends, reality and fiction to report the 'documentary real' of one of mankind's cruelest genocides.

Claude Lanzmann was virulently opposed to reducing the Shoah to such a 'documentary real'. Following his reasoning, reducing the Shoah to a theatre play would nourish the spectator's pretention to be able to eventually comprehend the incomprehensible. This is why Lanzmann's Shoah representation does not focus on images but on words—words that endlessly solicit new words in order to finally leave the 'thing' unsaid. Even after the nine and a half hour film, the spectator is not able to really identify with the victim he nonetheless feels solidarity for. The 'real' of the Shoah here resist identification.

Identification, however, is the *sine qua non* for theatre, and *Kamp* is theatre. From the very first moment of the performance, the spectator is 'in' the camp, not in order to find there something he did not yet know or to garner new insights, but to be emotionally immersed in and perplexed by this sadistic universe. *Kamp* theatrical address is of the order of the affect, as the play aims at the audience's emotional reactions. The spectators are

<sup>3</sup> See specifically the essays Claude Lanzmann, "Hier ist kein Warum": pp. 51–52; Fred Camper, "Shoah's Absence": pp. 103–112; Dominick LaCarpia, "Lanzmann's 'Shoah': 'Here There Is No Why'": pp. 191–232.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.hotelmodern.nl/flash\\_en/p\\_kamp/kamp.html](http://www.hotelmodern.nl/flash_en/p_kamp/kamp.html).

invited to empathize with the victims and to imaginarily experience the cruel predicament they are in. From a Lanzmannian perspective, this is intolerably disrespectful, since it denies the unimaginable character of the 'real' atrocities the deportees had to suffer. The 'real' at stake in that documentary is beyond empathy, beyond imagination or any other form of appropriation.

However, is the 'real' only on the side of the object? Is it not also situated on the side of the subject? Does the subject, too, not have an unimaginable component? Modern identity theories—certainly the ones influenced by Freudian and Lacanian theory—consider the subject not primordially as the agent but as the *effect* of identification. (see De Kesel 2009) Only by identification with others, the (originally selfless) baby can build up a 'self'. But, so these theories add, identification in its very heart always encounter a kind of obstacle that resists any form of appropriation. This is why our identity, however stable it is, remains marked by unconsciousness and there, keeps on needing the act of identification. Is it not *precisely therefore* that some particular way of identification remains indispensable, too, to the remembrance of the Shoah?

To understand what is at stake in these suggestive questions, it is helpful to consider the provocative way in which, in the nineties, an interesting tendency in visual art has dealt with the Shoah. The success of *Kamp* in 2006 is partly due to the impact of that tendency of which we will discuss a few illuminating examples here.<sup>5</sup>

### 3 Playing Holocaust

The work of the New York-based artist David Levinthal (°1949), for example evokes historical events, some of them referring to the Shoahs, using scale models and figurines. His early series *Hitler Moves East* (1975–1977) shows miniature installations evoking typical Nazi events, such as parades with the swastika flags, concentration camps or torture scenes. A later series entitled *Mein Kampf* (1994–1995) shows similar scenes in miniature setting. The danger of an immediate (read: all too easy) identification with the victim is minimal here, due to the alienating effect of Levinthal's set-up: the uncanny combination of toy puppets and the Nazi terror is so drastic it thwarts any affective sympathy or identification. This is clearly done on purpose. Here, too, the artist's intention is to illustrate the unimaginable character of the Holocaust, precisely by suggesting that none of its representations transcend the infantile level of a puppet scene. Put differently, the all too easy representation points to the all too easy supposition that the Shoah is graspable through images or theatrical representations.

A work by the visual artist Ram Katzir, *Your Coloring Book* (1996), illustrates this even more accurately. *Your Coloring Book* is an installation consisting of school desks and table on which colouring books and colouring pencils lie. The books contain simple line drawings based on existing photographs, often taken from propaganda publications, from the Nazi period. The spectators are invited to take place on one of the school desks and to colour in the drawings. Here, the viewer is more actively involved. Moreover, he is invited to identification, albeit with a person he would not identify with spontaneously at all: instead of with the victims, the spectator/participant is forced identify with the perpetrator in the guise of the ordinary German father or mother assisting his or her little son or daughter with colouring the drawings books of the time. The artist's intention here is to

<sup>5</sup> For an extensive discussion of some of these examples, from a different perspective from the one we are elaborating here, see the third chapter of Van Alphen 2004.

deconstruct identification, to bring it to an uncanny, impossible point. Here too, the Nazi atrocity is exposed as being easily representable, and *precisely this* is the uncanny dynamic that subverts the usual representations of the Shoah. In Katzir's installation, the Lanzmannian criticism with regard to images is performed by 'easy', even 'infantile' images. They are 'easy' in the sense that they all too easily—and, therefore, uncannily—invite the spectator to step into and give colour to the depicted world, casting him to emphasize with the Nazi-supporter. The artwork signals that our position as spectator is closer to that of the executioner—in his way, also a spectator—than to that of the victim. Our spontaneous empathy for the victim of the camps, the work suggests, often serves to block the insight that we take in the position of his executioner.

A third example is Zbigniew Libera (°1959), *Correcting Device: Lego Concentration Camp* (1996). Sponsored by the well-known LEGO Corporation of Denmark (who, by the way, was unaware of the precise intention of the art work when they award the sponsorship), the Polish artist realized a seven-box limited edition of three LEGO sets of a concentration camp. Stephen Feinstein describes the three sets as follows:

Inside were the bricks and other pieces to construct the concentration camp shown on the cover. The outer box looks like a normal LEGO box except in the upper left corner—instead of the “system number” is the inscription: “This work of Zbigniew Libera has been sponsored by LEGO.” Each unit of the seven-box set contained a different aspect of a concentration camp. The larger boxes showed the entire concentration camp, with buildings, gallows (one showing an inmate being hanged), and inmates behind barbed wire or marching in line in and out of the camp. An entry gate similar to the stylized “Arbeit Macht Frei” entry point at Oswiecim is included, although without the German inscription. The guards, in black shiny uniforms, came from the regular LEGO police sets. The inmates came from LEGO medical or hospital sets. A second box showed a crematoria belching smoke from three chimneys, with *Sonderkammendo* or other inmates carrying a corpse from the gassing room. The smaller boxes depict a guard bludgeoning an inmate, medical experiments, another hanging, and a commandant [...]. The last box is one full of possessions, the type of debris painted by other artists and inspired by the vast array of loots collected by the S.S. in the Kanada warehouses at Birkenau. (Feinstein 2000)

What is at stake in these three examples of conceptual art about the Shoah? Does their reduction of this event to child's play ridicule the Holocaust? Do they minimize its gravity? To understand what is going on in these conceptual artworks, one should situate them, precisely, in the tradition of conceptual art and of modern art in general. Two general characteristics of modern art are to be taken into account, here: first its inherent self-reflective character and, secondly, its subject-oriented (instead of object-oriented) nature.

#### 4 Modern Art and the Shoah

The first characteristic typifying art's modernity is its self-reflexive character. Art has transformed into art *about* art, into representation *of* representations. Art has become modern when it faced its obsolescence, or, as Hegel formulated it in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, its 'death'.<sup>6</sup> This occurred, when art realized that the visual culture of its time

<sup>6</sup> “In allen diesen Beziehungen ist und bleibt die Kunst nach der Seite ihrer höchsten Bestimmung für uns ein Vergangenes.” (Hegel 1955, p. 57).

accompanying society's reality was shaped, not by art, but by other instances.<sup>7</sup> The representations by which a society identifies itself, for both the members and the outsiders of that society, no longer spring from art but from image industries that have attained a proper independence. The marginalisation of art by modern visual culture, pushes art to attain a different, more limited role: instead of society's self-image art increasingly provided a critical reflection about and critique on that emancipated visual culture.

So, the role of modern art is limited to a critical *representation of the representations* that constitute the identity of modern societies. In a countless variety of ways, it shows that the representation constituting our visual culture are but representations not to be taken for what they claim to do, namely providing a direct access to reality. The 'reality modern art shows us is a reality *become representation*.

So, when a modern work of art deals with things related to the Shoah, it is not simply a matter of representing them, but of representing its representations. In the images of the Shoah it presents, art shows the Shoah in so far it has become itself one of the elements that constitute our universe of representations. In order to show the representational dimension *as such*, one has to intervene at the level of the representational logic. And that logic is a logic of denial: to function optimally, a representation denies the mere fact *that* it represents. To be taken for real, a representation has to hide its representational nature. If one wants to foreground this representation nature, one has to thwart that logic of denial and deprive an image of the sense it is supposed to have.

At this point the inherent 'iconoclastic' nature of modern art's intervention into visual culture comes into play. To show the representation *as such*, one has to break and subvert its logic. To show the Shoah as being itself a representation, one has to intervene in the way it is anchored in the set of representations constituting our visual culture. This explains the uncanny and alienating character of many modern artistic representations, including those referring to the Holocaust. The existing way in which it is represented, is to be deconstructed by the artistic images. Instead of providing the spectator direct access to 'the thing itself', art is to confront the spectator with his incapacity to capture the reality that is presented to him.

Even Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* illustrates this paradigm of modern art's way to deal with Holocaust representation. Because the Shoah was appropriated by visual culture (for instance by the popular television series, entitled 'Holocaust', 1978),<sup>8</sup> Lanzmann tried to deconstruct the commonly held and settled idea of the Nazi genocide on the European Jews: instead of presenting the cruel images the audience of the time had gotten used to, he showed verbal testimonies and the incapability of those testimonies to tell exhaustively what they have to tell. This was Lanzmann's iconoclastic way to make clear that the core of what Auschwitz means, remained beyond what one was able to show or tell, beyond the realm of graspable ideas that reduce the Holocaust to an ordinary movie scenario.

The visual culture of the nineties, in which the art of David Levinthal, Ram Katzir and Zbigniew Libera operate, is a different one than the one Claude Lanzmann worked in. In

<sup>7</sup> For visual art, this moment is crystallized in the figure of Gustave Courbet and his 'realism'. He realized that the art of his days was locking itself up in its realm of beauty (i.e. of 'les beaux arts'), and had lost connection with the 'real' reality of current time. Hence his claim, expresses in both his art and his pamphlets, that art must either become realistic or disappear. That requirement to be realistic (i.e. to guide visually the *real* tendencies of the progressing times), although fulfilled by no artistic '-ism', hallmarks art's modernity until now.

<sup>8</sup> Directed by Marvin J. Chomski and starring (among others) Meryl Streep and Fritz Weaver. The series won several prizes, but was also immediately criticized—by Elie Wiesel for instance—for 'trivializing' the Holocaust and economically exploiting it.

the nineties, the Lanzmannian representation of the Shoah, developed a decade earlier, had become a generally accepted way to represent the Holocaust. Hence, following the iconoclastic imperative of modern art, this accepted image is to be broken as well. By turning Hitler's *Mein Kampf* or his war against the Soviets into a puppet play for children, Levinthal indicates the true place the Nazi terror, including the Holocaust, now occupies: a neutralized, everyday life place within the contemporary visual culture. Katzir's gesture of turning Nazi propaganda images into colouring plates, offered to the spectator's pictorial inventiveness, aims for a similar goal. Likewise, in an uncanny way, Libera's *Lego* boxes show how deeply the image of the Shoah is integrated into our everyday sphere of life.

If the work of these three artists has given rise to criticism and protest (as was often the case), it is precisely because they have been understood 'correctly': people suddenly realized they could no longer bear the 'ordinary' place the Shoah occupied in their mind. By condemning these conceptual artworks as 'blasphemous', people actually blamed their *own* everyday perception of the Shoah. These works of art were successful to the extent that they shed light on the way Auschwitz had become a neutral and indifferent element in people's common cultural imagination. Although formally radically different, these artworks rehearse what Lanzmann's Shoah had done a decade before, namely criticize and deconstruct the dominant idea about the Holocaust.

This brings us to the second helpful characteristic of modern art to understand what is going on in these 'blasphemous' representations. These works make clear that the truth of art not only lies in *what* it shows, in its object, but also and at the same time in the effect they produce in the subject or spectator. Art's truth depends on its effect on the side of the subject; not in the sense that one can recognize oneself in that truth, but precisely in the way one cannot. The truth the subject experiences is one of extreme exteriority and radical alterity. And it's in this very quality that the subject's experience of truth coincides with an ultimate experience of the self. Then the subject, instead of touching its real, substantial self, faces the lack of such a 'self' as well as the incapacity to exist without—and outside—representations. What the subject has to acknowledge is, in other words, its late-modern condition of being dominated by the primacy of visual culture. In the absence of a real, substantial self, we constantly need images in which our 'self' supposedly is mirrored. This is the reason why mass media today have become so indispensable and why, night and day, we need screens deluding us with images we can identify with—images offering us an 'identity'. And where do we find the truth of the identity we identify with? Neither in the image nor in its beyond, but in the mere fact that we do not coincide with these imaginary identities, i.e. in our incapacity to appropriate even our own identity, our own mirror image.

The representation of the Holocaust touches us, not only as the beyond of representation, but also as what makes us realise *ourselves* to be absent in the representations that constitute our identity. The important thing to grasp however is that, even if the subject lies beyond representation, it cannot exist without representations. As the beyond of visual culture, the subject is nothing more than its object or 'supposition': it is that image which imagines itself to be located outside the realm of images. Our most intimate 'self'—our subject—is that imagined and imaginary point beyond the images that constitute our identity. That 'self' has nothing substantial—it exists only as benchmark for our representational identity and cannot be appropriated by the autonomously functioning realm of images/representations.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The background of this definition of the subject is the Lacanian structuralist theory of the subject, according to which the human world is constituted out of a semiotic system, of an autonomously functioning

Libera's LEGO boxes represent the Holocaust in a similar way to the one in which the Holocaust is appropriated by today's visual culture. It is the artist's way to suggest the Holocaust is being beyond representation. But the experience of that truth is premised on a kind of decentering or deconstruction of the subject: this truth makes the subject stop considering himself as the owner of his representations. While experiencing representation as alienating, the subject becomes aware of his *own* alienation. He realizes that his own being is at the mercy of images without ever coinciding with them. The experience of not being able to appropriate the Holocaust goes hand in hand with the experience of not being able to appropriate oneself, or, put differently, with the experience of the impossibility to coincide with the image one identifies with.

This is what any 'documentary real' is after. This is the structure of the 'real' a documentary—whatever fictitious it is—is aiming at. It thus has nothing to do with the representation *of* something real, e.g. of the *real* atrocities of the Holocaust. These are always situated *beyond* representation and can hence only be 'suggested'. Moreover, the recognition of the real *beyond* representation, supposes a decentering or deconstruction of the subject: the subject must acknowledge itself as being *beyond* its represented identity.

For this reason, the television series Holocaust (1978) certainly possesses something as a documentary real. However, keeping its 'real' dimension requires an iconoclastic repetition of it. This occurred in Lanzmann's *Shoah*. And it is no surprise that, to transfer this 'real' to next generations, one needs, again and again, new iconoclastic gestures such as Libera's, Levinthal's or Katzir's.

Yet, not all of these iconoclastic gestures are equally successful with respect to their deconstructive effect on the subject. One can say that the gesture of the artists from the nineties mentioned above did not achieve the impact Lanzmann's film had in the eighties. Compared to Lanzmann's film, their work is too momentaneous in its effect, too fragile, and too much dependant on the issues of the day. Yet, from the perspective we just developed, their work is certainly of greater impact than *Kamp*, the theatre play performed by Hotel Modern discussed in the beginning of this essay. Although in line with the conceptual work of Libera, Levinthal and Katzir, this art work misses the deconstructing effect on the subject, i.e. the audience. At first, the performance does produce an alienating effect. However, because there is no real evolution in the spectator's position facing the well-known aspects of the life in an extermination camp, that position increasingly loses its alienating character. In the end, the play risks to enable a re-appropriation of the Holocaust. It is far from being improbable that people go home thinking they now have really understood the atrocity of the Nazi determination camps. In reality, they only have neutralized it, classifying it within the realm of representations that constitute their world and that supports the idea they are this realm's self-assured owner, its substantial subject.

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Footnote 9 continued

network of signifiers. The subject is a supposition, produced by the interaction between the libidinal being and those signifiers. 'Supposition' is literally the definition of the subject: it is what is put under (sub) the signifiers, i.e. what is supposed to be the bearer of the signifier. To put it 'technically', as Lacan does in the beginning of his seminar on identification (in the lesson of 6 December 1962, unpublished), in a passage defining the signifier (while, in reality he is defining the subject): 'the signifier is what represents for another signifier'.

## 5 Coda: *Persona*

In Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966), an actress of great fame, Elisabet Vogler (Liv Ullman) is checked into a psychiatric hospital since. For months, she was refusing to utter the slightest word. One might interpret this character as an illustration of the modern subject's inability to no longer endure atrocities such as those committed during the Vietnam War or the Holocaust.<sup>10</sup> In the movie, Elisabeth explicitly deals with these. On television she sees a Vietnamese monk burning himself alive as a sign of protest against the war in his country, and in another shot, she stares at the image of a Jewish child threatened by Nazi guns. The movie seems to suggest that, as an actress, Elisabeth realises we live in a fake universe in which we are unable to have access to the real side of life. In the world we live in, we all are but a 'persona' in the original sense of the (Ancient Greek) word: a mask we use to play our role on the stage. This realisation, the film suggests, is the root cause of her suffering.

A young nurse, Alma (played by Bibi Andersson), has been given the task to care for and assist in curing Elisabeth. Contrary to her patient, who remains paralysed by the 'real' during the entire movie, Alma undergoes a strong evolution. At first she identifies with her famous patient, but feeling betrayed after she uncovers that her patient has been analysing her in her letters, her love for Elisabeth turns into hatred. It is at that moment Alma discovers the particular 'real' her patient is suffering from: the actress has a young son whom she never had wished to have and whose unrelenting affectionate love she is not able to reciprocate. Yet, precisely in that hate, Alma discovers to what large extent she is nonetheless identical to Elisabeth. She recognizes that the fake world she hates in Elisabeth does not differ that much from the 'authentic' or 'loving' world she herself lives in.

Not unlike the representations of the Shoah, the real in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* is shown to be beyond representation—Elisabeth's syndrome makes this clear. But the effect of that truth is not located in Elisabeth who expresses this insight only by remaining wilfully mute before the 'real'. The effect is more far-reaching in Alma whose very subject-position is 'moved'—read: decentred or deconstructed—by that truth. This kind of decentring movement within the identification process of the spectator is essential in modern visual art. If there is such a thing as a 'documentary real'—a 'real' speaking even through the most fictitious documentary—it is to be calibrated in reference to the decentring of the subject it brings about.

It is here that a theatre play like *Kamp* misses the mark. Its alienating representation of the Shoah ('alienating' because it illustrated the 'infantile' imaginary of our common sense consciousness of Auschwitz) turns too easily into an appropriating gesture. The identification process, inevitable in theatre and in visual art in general, is not fashioned in such a way that it deprives the spectator of his position mastering the scene. In this performance, the Shoah turned into a kind of 'Hotel Holocaust', and, as anyone knows, the Holocaust is anything but a hotel.

<sup>10</sup> Lloyd Michaels points suggestively in that direction in his essay "Bergman and the Necessary Illusion" (Michaels 2000, p.18).

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