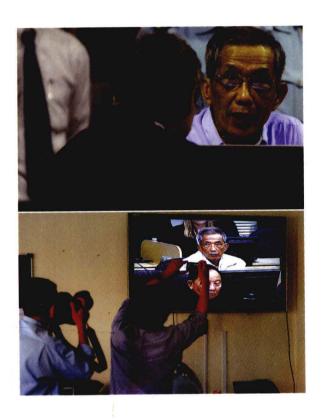
The Scene of the Mass Crime

HISTORY, FILM, AND INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS



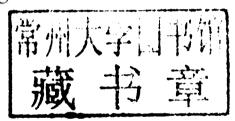
Edited by Christian Delage and Peter Goodrich



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Introduction

Christian Delage and Peter Goodrich

A change in the material relays of knowledge, new modes of transmission, inevitably impact the social order and the legal form. The classical trinity, ordo, lex, medium, refers precisely to the co-implication of technology and the institutions of power. The previous seismic change in the material form of knowledge was inaugurated by the printing presses and, borrowing from Debray's Course on Mediology, introduced the reign of the graphosphere. Print not only exponentially expanded the social presence of law but also led to the systematization of the discipline. Law became a linear enterprise, in part mirroring the rectilinear form of the typeset book and its various authorized and collated compilations.

Photography, film and now the plethora of digital forms of virtual relay are having a comparably drastic if not yet fully explored impact upon the preconceptions and forms of relay of legality. The videosphere has crept up on lawyers and despite a tradition-based conservatism and a tendency toward hostility to novelty – *novum omne cave*, is the relevant legal maxim – the new media have promulgated images into all dimensions of the practice of law. Graphic presentations of statistics, magnetic resonance body images, animatrix reconstructions of events, private videos that captured crimes in the course of commission, photographs and films have come to play an increasing role both inside and outside of court. Visual literacy is fast becoming the watchword of progressive lawyers and *au fait* legal scholars. This book aims to contribute to the trend and to provide the

elements of a history of the growing amity of what is frequently if incorrectly termed "law and film". The encounter between law and the moving image, between the juridical and the virtual, has a highly specific and distinctively peculiar history in the varied quasi-legal forums that have at different times and in diverse ways been instituted by international bodies to record, to judge, to reconcile and to move beyond mass crimes. The story starts in Nuremberg in the aftermath of the Holocaust and World War II.

When the young American architect Dan Kiley was commissioned, in Spring 1945, to design the court room that would house the trial of a number of major Nazi war criminals, he was asked to consider two completely new factors. First, and at the time uniquely, the proceedings were to be filmed. Second, the courtroom was to be organized in such a way as to accommodate the screening of newsreels on a big screen, during the course of the trial.² This remit led Kiley to make some major innovations in the plans for the courtroom so as to allow for this double staging of the trial. He first moved the judges from the center to the side of the court so as allow for the installation of the screen. The focal point, the visual center of the forum, became a blank screen which at certain points in the trial would play the novel role of screening documentary footage of atrocities committed by the German authorities though without any necessary or direct connection to the accused. The film screen held center stage and in front of it, with a direct view of this vivid and disturbing evidence, Kiley placed the benches for the Nazi accused. For the first time in courtroom architecture, the accused would not face the judges but rather they would stand in full view of the public sitting on the mezzanine.³ Previously, it had been thought that both victim and accused were to be protected from people's eyes, so as to preclude any excess of emotion, either of compassion or of hate, disturbing the purported tranquility of reason in the forum.

The new configuration of the courtroom reoriented forensic space so as to allow for the emergence and contestation of the novel charges of crimes against humanity and later genocide.⁴ The "atrocities" committed by the Nazis were of such magnitude that they required a new legal architecture, novel spacing and untested displays of evidence. The immensity and the uniqueness of the crimes charged required a drastic adaptation of both the architecture and the procedure of the trial. The space had to be adequate to the horror of the atrocities and the novel forms of proving them. First, the fact of the crimes had to be established, and this required collecting testimony from political leaders, perpetrators, survivors and witnesses. The defendants had to be brought face to face with their crimes, they had to be shown – challenged with and confronted by – the evidence of their atrocities; with the testimony of survivors, for sure, but also with the documentary

and filmic record, visual and audible, of their deeds. More than this, the filming of the trial was intending to create both a record and a relay of the fact of the atrocities to prevent subsequent ignorance or denial of such crimes. Film would also allow history to be inscribed in a form that future generations could view, learn from and in turn transmit. In sum, this novel use of filming and of screening footage played a dual role. It brought film to law as a means of making and recording history while at the same time evidencing crime through film. Images here enter the heart of law both as a forensic process and as a mode of historical record, of judging history and so determining the truth of what had happened.

Since 1945, historians and media professionals have played a crucial role in the elaboration, consolidation and relay of the legacy of the Nuremberg trials. These exemplary forensic proceedings became the model for the future development of international justice, and today the literature on this field is impressive and growing.⁵ In the first part of this book, Pieter Lagrou, William Schabas and Hélène Dumas discuss the appropriateness and the effects of the impeachment of war criminals and their trial in forums that derive in large measure from Nuremberg. They also address the role that these trials play in the constitution of a shared collective memory and so in the writing of history. Henry Rousso, using the example of the Papon trial in France, addresses the issue of the role of images of the victims in the trial of those responsible for their deaths. Such images were shown, controversially, in the courtroom during the trial of Maurice Papon and Rousso elaborates upon the effects of this decision and its impact both upon the history recorded in the trial and upon the public sphere to which the trial was relayed.

In Part 2, Nicolas Werth, Johann Chapoutot, Anne Kerlan and Stuart Liebman evoke the "show trials" that took place in the Soviet Union under Stalin, in Nazi Germany, in post-Maoist China and in post-World War II Poland. The concept of a show trial is complicated and disputed. All trials are in a sense show trials, theatrical events that are intended to show justice being done, but that is not the meaning generally attached to the specific notion of the show trial. Organized by dictatorships, show trials are political trials whose primary purpose is to advertise and publicize what the dictatorship views as political crimes. They thus display – show – the culprits and have the function of both humiliating and sentencing the accused while at the same time educating the public by way of making an example of "subversive" or "traitorous" elements in society. The political control of the trial process and the regime's goals of publicizing and inculcating its ideology are defining features of show trials and distinguish them as extreme and distinct variations from the norm.

The show trial is a double-edged sword and, as the studies in this volume show, they were more often unsuccessful in their political goals even if they did result in the death or imprisonment of a few political enemies. The Soviet raion trials, for example, were widely reported in the local press but the people, knowing their political and staged character, reacted strongly against them. Far from establishing and augmenting centralized power, the raion trials paradoxically ended up reviving local power centers. Even though these were show trials, Moscow did not have them filmed, as their purpose was local rather than national, let alone international. The Nazis, on the other hand, chose to film the trial of opponents of the regime who had attempted to assassinate Hitler towards the end of the war, in June 1944. The prosecutor, Roland Freisler, however, so overplayed his role that the film of the proceedings would have outraged even a sympathetic audience and so the film was never shown. Freisler was so arrogant and contemptuous of the defendants that viewers of these images would inevitably have ended up sympathizing with the unfortunate defendants and not with the histrionics of the prosecutor. These images were not shown in 1944, but they were among the first pieces of film found by the Allied forces in 1945 and were subsequently presented as evidence at Nuremberg.

When the Chinese organized the public trial of the so-called "Gang of Four", they could not prevent one of the principal defendants, Mao Zedong's widow, from taking the stand and defending herself and the politics of the Cultural Revolution which she shared with her husband, the semi-sacred figure of Mao himself. Filmed in close-up, her scorn of the proceedings and her screams were particularly spectacular and led to the film of the trial all but disappearing from history. Finally, Stuart Liebman evokes a quite unknown event, the earliest history of Holocaust trials and Holocaust cinema in Poland and USSR. Not only were these the first trials of German concentration camp personnel, but they created an imagery that instituted a virtually complete iconography for the representation of extermination camps that has been employed ever since.

The new research field of "law and film" has extended the range of analysis and reflection upon the manner in which mass crimes, as well as terrorist attacks, may include consideration of their spectacular and specifically "filmic" appeal and intelligibility. Despite the earlier misadventures of filmed trails, film has increasingly become central to the very purpose of war crimes tribunals. In Part 3, the contributors focus on Cambodia, and the Khmer Rouge trials taking place there. The first thing done by the Vietnamese when they invaded Cambodia and removed the Khmer Rouge from power was to film the traces of the crimes committed, especially in a jail located in the heart of the capital city, Phnom Penh, the infamous S-21.

Brice Poirier relates how this film footage was eventually found and considered, or not, as legal evidence of war crimes. The Khmer Rouge trials indeed started with the trial of one individual, the former director of S-21. His lawyer and the expert appointed to perform a psychological examination of the defendant here explain how they worked, before and during a trial that was filmed and aired live on the website of the Tribunal.

In the war in the former Yugoslavia, as in the United States under the threat of al-Qaeda, criminal actions took place before the cameras. Far from hiding their acts, the perpetrators were proud of what they were doing, and sometimes wanted to take advantage of the immediate international resonance of their crimes to assert their political views.

In the West, in more recent years, film has come to play another role in the commission and response to mass crimes. In the former Yugoslavia, proud of their deeds, those perpetrating the genocide filmed their executions of their enemies, in cold blood, with handheld cameras. They wanted a record of their acts and they wanted to publicize and spread the visibility and terror of what was being done. By the same token, al-Qaeda planned the attacks of September 11th in main part as media events. Their symbolic targets, the decision to attack in camera-friendly morning light and the choice of a media capital as the object of the principal attacks all suggest a finely attuned sense of the immediate and international impact that this very visible event would have.

In Part 4, Constance Ortuzar, Vincent Dozol and Christian Delage return in diverse and surprising ways to these attacks on the United States. Images of the attacks against the World Trade Center towers flashed around the world within the hour and came rapidly to form a searingly vivid, pretty much real-time collective memory of the events. At the time, there were some discussions as to the propriety of confronting the public with pictures of horror so as to inform it in real time of the material and human toll of a terrorist act. The first professional witnesses, directors Jules and Gedeon Naudet, refused to film corpses strewn on the ground around the twin towers. Not only that. The images resonated with earlier representations of the destruction of New York in a number of Hollywood movies, and soon generated a post-September 11th filmic aesthetic. The impact of these images on the day of the event was very powerful and the symbolism of destruction created certain visual tropes of terror that ironically came also to be used to commemorate other atrocities and, as Ortuzar shows, had a marked influence upon how Chile now remembers and memorializes its own September 11th, in 1973, when the Chilean President Salvador Allende was killed in a coup. Once unleashed, the images of terror take on a life of their own, as impresa - symbolic marks - of the event, as visual tropes of terror, as figures not only of destruction but of structures falling apart.

The essays gathered together in *The Scene of the Mass Crime* allow historians, media experts and lawyers to address for the first time the actual history of the various international tribunals and other more explicit and politically driven "show trials" which first threw law and film together. This intersection of media and law, film and trial has a longer history in theater and in the innumerable film and television courtroom dramas, well-established staples of the entertainment industry, but here, for the first time, an international group of experts look to the history of the real in the form of filmed trials and film's use in trial.

Notes

- 1 Régis Debray, Cours de médiologie, Paris: Gallimard, 1996.
- On the US jurisprudence of film as evidence, see Pierre R. Paradis, "The Celluloid Witness", University of Colorado Law Review, 37, 1965, pp. 235–69. See also Neal Feigenson and Christina Spiesel, Law On Display: The Digital Transformation of Legal Persuasion and Judgment, New York: NYU Press, 2009.
- 3 Christian Delage, "Image as Evidence and Mediation: The Experience of the Nuremberg Trials", *Law and Popular Culture*, edited by Michael Freeman, Current Legal Issues 2004, vol. 7, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 504–19.
- 4 Michael M. Marrus, The Nuremberg War Crimes Trial, 1945–1946. A Documentary History, Boston and New York: Bedford Books, 1997; Peter Maguire, Law and War. An American Story, New York: Columbia University Press, 2000; Donald Bloxham, Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- 5 Mark Osiel, Mass Atrocity, Collective Memory, and the Law, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997; Gary Jonathan Bass, Stay the Hand of Vengeance. The Politics of War Crimes Tribunals, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000; Lawrence Douglas, The Memory of Judgement: Making Law and History in the Trials of the Holocaust, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001; Antoine Garapon, Des crimes qu'on ne peut ni punir ni pardoner: Pour une justice internationale, Paris: Odile Jacob, 2002.
- 6 Among recent publications, see Neal Feigenson and Christina Spiesel, *Law on Display:* the Digital Transformation of Legal Persuasion and Judgment, New York: NYU Press, 2009; "In Flagrante Depicto: Film in/on Trial", Cardozo Law Review, March 2010, 31–4; Richard Sherwin, Visualizing Law in the Age of the Digital Baroque: Arabesques and Entanglements, London: Routledge, 2011.

PART 1

History, trauma, war crimes