

## Introduction

Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier and Susanne C. Knittel

### 'Content Deemed Inappropriate'

In 2017, YouTube decided to purge from its platform content that was considered graphic, inappropriate or supporting terrorism (specifically the Islamic State's propaganda). Rather than relying on its usual system of community flagging, the website resorted to a new machine-learning algorithm that identified and removed the problematic material automatically. It worked faster, but the outcome was disastrous, as the algorithm proved unable to distinguish between the provenance, intent, and import of content. As a result, hundreds of thousands of videos on the war in Syria disappeared, including those posted by journalists and human rights groups.<sup>1</sup> YouTube's culling did not only erase potential evidence for the prosecution of war criminals. It also disrupted the work of human rights organizations, which suddenly lost their channels of communication and, on top of that, were forced to take emergency measures to back up the videos before they were removed. YouTube's action raises key issues with regard to 'perpetrator photography', and in the broadest sense 'perpetrator imagery' (videos, photos, social media production). It touches upon a structural ambiguity: How do we distinguish between images by perpetrators, images of perpetrators and images of acts of perpetration? How much context is needed? When are these images 'informative news'? When are they 'glorification of violence'?<sup>2</sup> Lastly, to what extent does such a distinction influence our ways of looking at and speaking about these images?

These and others were the questions addressed during the international conference 'Double Exposures: Perpetrators and the Uses of

1 Fortunately, the Berlin-based Syrian Archive group persuaded Google/YouTube to reinstate 400,000 videos, proven to be legitimate. Kate O'Flaherty, 'YouTube Keeps Deleting Evidence of Syrian Chemical Weapon Attacks', *Wired*, 26 June 2018, <<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/chemical-weapons-in-syria-youtube-algorithm-delete-video>> [accessed 17 October 2019]. See also Malachy Browne, 'YouTube Removes Videos Showing Atrocities in Syria', *The New York Times*, 22 August 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/22/world/middleeast/syria-youtube-videos-isis.html>> [accessed 17 October 2019].

2 Avi Asher-Shapiro, 'YouTube and Facebook Are Removing Evidence of Atrocities, Jeopardizing Cases against War Criminals', *The Intercept*, 2 November 2017, <<https://theintercept.com/2017/11/02/war-crimes-youtube-facebook-syria-rohingya/>> [accessed 17 October 2019].

Photography' held at Kazerne Dossin Memorial, Museum and Documentation Centre on Holocaust and Human Rights in Mechelen (Belgium) in January 2018. The conference was organized by Susanne Knittel and Uğur Ümit Ungör on behalf of the Perpetrator Studies Network in collaboration with Christophe Busch (Kazerne Dossin Memorial), Hans-Christian Jasch (Haus der Wannseekonferenz), and Stefan Hördler (Mittelbau-Dora Concentration Camp Memorial). It brought together scholars working in the fields of history, art history, sociology, anthropology, political science, literary and cultural studies, media studies, philosophy, and criminology, as well as curators, educators, and other practitioners whose work intersects with the question of perpetration and the uses of photography. It was conceptualized as a response to the critical need in the emerging interdisciplinary field of Perpetrator Studies to examine the ways in which visual sources shape our perception and understanding of perpetrators' acts and motivations. Furthermore, while photographs undeniably play a crucial role in raising awareness about atrocities and other forms of mass violence, their omnipresence can on the one hand feed fascination and voyeurism, and on the other hand lead to decontextualization, inoculation, and trivialization. This means that we must think carefully and critically about how photography is used, not only in the media but also in academic scholarship, at sites of memory, and in educational and commemorative practice.

Holocaust Studies has played a foundational role in fostering the academic analysis of perpetrator imagery.<sup>3</sup> In the past years, and in conversation with other disciplines, among which film and media studies, postcolonial theory, visual culture and memory studies, a substantial body of literature on perpetrator images has emerged, engaging with questions of power relations, voyeurism, re-traumatization, aesthetics, secrecy and public circulation, and the production of critical knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Lately, scholars have paid growing attention to

3 See, e.g., Frances Guerin, *Through Amateur Eyes: Film and Photography in Nazi Germany* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011); Bernd Hüppauf, 'Emptying the Gaze: Framing Violence through the Viewfinder', *New German Critique*, 72 (1997), 3–44; Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of Evidence* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005); Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. by Barbie Zelizer (London: The Athlone Press, 2001).

4 See, e.g., Dora Apel and Shawn Michelle Smith, *Lynching Photographs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zonebook, 2008); Sylvia Shin Huey Chong, *The Oriental Obscene: Violence and Racial Fantasies in the Vietnam Era* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012); Gil Hochberg, *Visual Occupation*

the political, ethical and epistemological challenges raised by digital culture and the Internet, and the effect the constant digital flow of (unfiltered) images by/of perpetrators has on our ways of looking at acts of killing.<sup>5</sup> The papers presented at the conference traced some of these developments and challenges against the background of a wide range of historical contexts and geographic areas.

This special issue grew out of the conference. It comprises a variety of different formats, including a roundtable, five full-length articles, and two shorter think pieces. The roundtable is a recurring feature of JPR, which invites shorter reflections on a particular text or object. For this issue, that object is the notorious 'Hooded Man' photograph from Abu Ghraib, or rather, the three-dimensional re-creation thereof by the artists Jojakim Cortis and Adrian Sonderegger, which was part of their 2019 exhibition *Double Take* in Berlin. This image and its trans-medial proliferation also provides the inspiration for our cover image, which was designed specifically for this issue by the Amsterdam-based artist and activist Tjebbe van Tijen. The roundtable features an introduction by Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier, an interview with Cortis and Sonderegger, and individual contributions by Rabiaâ Benlahbib, Wulandani Dirgantoro, Kobi Kabalek and Zuzanna Dziuban, as well as Lovro Kralj. The contributors to the roundtable were each asked to reflect on this image and to bring it into conversation with their own research and practice. The result is an extraordinarily rich collection of ideas and approaches that open up a wealth of questions and connections, which resonate in surprising ways with the rest of the issue.

The roundtable is followed by a section of full-length articles, all of which push the boundaries of what constitutes perpetrator images and imaginaries. Michelle Gordon analyses photographs taken during the Anglo-Egyptian reconquest of the Sudan in 1898, which document atrocities committed by the Anglo-Egyptian army. Gordon argues on the one hand that these photographs trouble the dominant narrative of British heroism and decency, but on the other hand, that, this critical potential notwithstanding, the photographs are not separate from the atrocities but in fact are themselves part of them. Ulrike Koppermann

*and Visibility in a Conflict Zone* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015); Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Watching Babylon: The Iraq War and Global Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

5 See, e.g., *Image Operations: Visual Media and Political Conflict*, ed. by Jens Eder and Charlotte Klöckl (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Laughlin, *War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010); Mette Mortensen, *Journalism and Eyewitness Images: Digital Media, Participation and Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

discusses the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the ‘perpetrator perspective.’ She conducts a close reading of the album ‘Resettlement of the Jews from Hungary’, a collection of photographs taken by the SS at Birkenau concentration camp, focusing on how the album was designed to present a visual narrative of mass murder as a coherent and rational process. In her contribution, Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier explores the use of portraits of Khmer Rouge perpetrators in Cambodia’s public sphere, more specifically in exhibitions, education, and human rights activism. She is particularly interested in the affective dimensions and uses of these images and to what extent they can offer a means for the expression of powerful emotions such as grief and rage. In Katarina Ristić’s contribution, we turn to moving images, specifically the medium of television and the representation of perpetrators in the news. Through a media-discursive analysis of the representation of Serbian defendants at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on Serbian television news, Ristić shows how footage from the courtroom and from the war is used strategically in order to imply the guilt or innocence of these individuals. Finally, Rick Reiman’s article examines the Zapruder film and its crucial role in the investigation into and the cultural memory of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. The Zapruder film presents a limit case for this issue: it is not a perpetrator document in the strict sense, as the perpetrator is neither the author, nor the object of representation. Rather, it is the very absence of the perpetrator that haunts these images and the American cultural imaginary ever since.

The issue concludes with two shorter and more essayistic think pieces by Uğur Ümit Üngör on the uses of videos of and by Syrian perpetrators, and Paul Lowe, who reflects on a photograph of a dead SS guard taken by Lee Miller at Dachau. Through his careful reading of this image, Lowe unpacks the vertiginous aesthetic and ethical implications of looking at perpetrators. This is by no means the final word on perpetrators and photography. And in fact, when preparing this issue we constantly came upon new questions, perspectives, and avenues of inquiry, more than could be addressed in this single issue. Perpetrator photography is a rich, complex, and potentially inexhaustible field that is rapidly evolving, not least owing to the development of new technologies and the discovery of unexplored archives. As such, we hope that this will be merely the first in a series of special issues dedicated to photography and other visual media in relation to the question of the

perpetrator. With this in mind, we would like to take this opportunity to sketch possible topics and questions to be addressed in the future.

It was important for us to begin this introduction with a reference to the war in Syria, which is frequently described as the ‘most documented’ conflict in history.<sup>6</sup> This is not even an exaggeration. The massive number of visual sources that document war crimes in Syria and reach the outside via YouTube, Instagram, Telegram, Facebook and other digital platforms certainly point to a new ecology of ‘seeing’ perpetration. Hence it is legitimate to ask whether we might be facing a paradigm shift in relation to this visual material. We become global witnesses, watching crimes being committed, in real time and from multiple angles. And yet, there is no cross-border mobilization against the war. On the contrary, the conflict continues unabated, and international intervention to stop it seems to be at a dead end. Moreover, we have never had so much incriminating material available for prosecution. According to the organization VFRAME<sup>7</sup>, there are over three million videos. This large and ever-growing number of images presents us with radically new challenges in terms of identification and authentication. Could it be, then, that the aforementioned shift is taking place first and foremost in the arena of justice? In August of 2017, the International Criminal Court in The Hague issued, for the first time ever, a warrant for the arrest of a war criminal based on online evidence. The man in question, Al-Saiqa Brigade commander Mahmoud Mustafa Busayf Al-Werfalli (Libya), was accused of having committed or ordered murders in Benghazi. The killings were filmed, and the videos posted on Facebook. That same year, a Swedish court convicted Syrian refugee Mohammad Abdullah on the strength of a photo posted on Facebook, showing the defendant standing with one boot-clad foot on a corpse. This was enough to charge him with violating the victim’s humanity,

6 See, e.g., Christopher Boland, ‘“We Didn’t Think It Would Hit Us”: New Report on Attacks on Schools in Syria Calls Attention to Atrocities’, *ICTJ*, 7 September 2018, <<https://www.ictj.org/news/%E2%80%9Cwe-didn%E2%80%99t-think-it-would-hit-us%E2%80%9D-new-report-attacks-schools-syria-calls-attention-atrocities>> [accessed 17 October 2019]; Isaac Chotiner, ‘A Times Reporter Documents the Horror of Syria’s Torture Sites’, *The New Yorker*, 13 May 2019, <<https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/a-times-reporter-documents-the-horror-of-syrias-torture-sites>> [accessed 17 October 2019]; Ivan Sigal, ‘Syria’s War May Be the Most Documented Ever. And Yet, We Know so Little’, *Global Voices Online*, 19 December 2016, <<https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-12-19/syrias-war-may-be-most-documented-ever-and-yet-we-know-so-little>> [accessed 17 October 2019].

7 For more information on the work conducted by VFRAME, see VFRAME (*Visual Forensics and Metadata Extraction*) <<https://vframe.io/>> [accessed 17 October 2019].

but not to charge him for the killing.<sup>8</sup> Today, perpetrator imagery circulates in a different economy of visibility, one which is dominated by platforms that are ‘essentially privately owned evidence lockers’, but that ‘are not in the business of being a human rights evidence locker’.<sup>9</sup> As we enter the era of ‘open-source evidence’, the question that looms large is how scholars in the field of Perpetrator Studies, alongside activists, journalists, and practitioners, will adjust their conceptual and methodological tools to this new condition of perpetrator imagery.

### ‘Management of Savagery’<sup>10</sup>

There are so many questions to be asked: How do perpetrators deal with the visual now that means of recording and sharing are ubiquitous? The views of perpetrator imagery held in the field of Perpetrator Studies are still very much shaped by the Holocaust, and the analysis of photo-albums of Nazi soldiers, which stayed mostly out of sight or were displayed in specific circles. With its Hollywood blockbuster-style and viral videos, the recent example of the Islamic State (IS) shows that this model does not necessarily apply anymore. The IS built an efficient propaganda machine run by tech-savvy media professionals and organized around a Ministry of Media with local bureaus, media centers (al-Furqan and Al-Hayat), and a plethora of websites, Instagram and Facebook accounts and online illustrated magazines.<sup>11</sup> The IS was so masterful in its understanding of networked communication that journalist Abdel Bari Atwan dubbed it the ‘digital Caliphate’.<sup>12</sup> The group initiated a sort of ‘jihadi cool’ with pop culture

8 Anne Barnard, ‘Syrian Soldier Is Guilty of War Crimes, a First in the 6-Year Conflict’, *The New York Times*, 3 October 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/03/world/middleeast/syria-war-crime.html>> [accessed 17 October 2019].

9 Christoph Koettl, senior analyst at Amnesty International, quoted in Asher-Shapiro.

10 This is the title of an influential book in the ISs circles, *Edarat al-Tawahush* or *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage through Which the Umma Will Pass*. It was penned by AQI (al-Qaeda in Iraq) ideologue Abu Bakr Naji. The Arabic version appeared online in 2004, and the book was translated into English in 2006 (Will McCants for John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies).

11 The magazines included *Dabiq* (English), *Dar al-Salam* (French), *Istok* (Russian), and *Konstantiniyye* (Turkish). Fahmy, Shaira S., ‘The Age of Terrorism Media: The Visual Narratives of the Islamic State Group’s *Dabiq* Magazine’, *The International Communication Gazette* (2019), 1–29 (p. 6). See on the subject: Daniel Milton, *Communication Breakdown: Unraveling the Islamic State’s Media Efforts* (New York: Combating Terrorism Centre, 2016); Aaron Y. Zelin, ‘Picture or It Didn’t Happen: A Snapshot of the Islamic State’s Official Media Output’, *Terrorism Research Initiative*, 9 (2015), 85–97.

12 Abdel Bari Atwan, *Islamic State: The Digital Caliphate* (London: Saqi Books, 2015).

memes, fake celebrity endorsements and selfies of 'fighters' with kittens, jars of Nutella, and emojis.<sup>13</sup> For the IS, social media functioned simultaneously as a means of communication with different audiences, a system of recruitment, an archive in the making, and a form of terror. Still, most journalistic and academic analyses of IS propaganda chose to focus only on the last aspect: the beheadings, crucifixions and mass shootings,<sup>14</sup> and the destruction of archaeological sites and cultural artifacts.<sup>15</sup> This prompts the question of the role played by mainstream media, and the extent to which they helped amplify the group's propaganda by extensively discussing these public displays of violence. In fact, the majority of the visual material produced by al-Furqan and Al-Hayat was not about death, destruction, and chaos. Rather, it was about images of brotherhood, happiness, order and prosperity that supported the IS's claim to nationhood. By dismissing these narratives, mainstream media not only oversimplified the nature of the IS. They also rendered incomprehensible the group's attraction in some segments of the Western population. If the abundant visual material available today is to allow observers greater access to the psyche, intentions and motivations of perpetrators, its analysis has to cover all its parts, not only those that fit a pre-existing view of the group, community, or state to which these perpetrators belong.

The 'combination of transgressive violence and a vision of a comprehensive (actually emerging) society' in the IS's propaganda and the group's quest for public visibility and global spectacle were a novelty.<sup>16</sup> Yet, this novelty was anchored in the multilayered archive of perpetrator images that shapes our collective imaginaries of killing. Public displays of violence are an old strategy in warfare and terror, which might

13 See, e.g., Laura Huey and Eric Wilmer, '#IS\_Fangirl: Exploring a New Role for Women in Terrorism', *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 7 (2016), 1-10; Joseph Russo, 'The Power of Pop Culture in the Hands of the Islamic State', in *Foundations of Homeland Security: Law and Policy*, ed. by Martin Alperen, 2nd edn. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 459-467. After CNN television commentator Carol Costello claimed that kittens and Nutella were the group's strategy to lure women jihadists online, she became a laughing stock in mainstream and social media alike.

14 See, e.g., Jessica Auchter, 'Imag(in)ing the Severed Heads: ISIS Beheadings and the Absent Spectacle', *Critical Studies on Security*, 6 (2018), 68-84; Jean-Louis Comolli, *Daesh, le Cinéma et la Mort* (Paris: Verdier, 2016).

15 See, e.g., José Antonio González-Zarandona, Cesar Albárran-Torres and Benjamin Isakhan, 'Digitally Mediated Iconoclasm: The Islamic State and the War on Cultural Heritage', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 24 (2018), 649-671; Claire Smith and others, 'The Islamic State's Symbolic War: Daesh's Socially Mediated Terrorism as a Threat to Cultural Heritage', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 16 (2015), 164-188.

16 Simone Molin Friis, "'Behead, Burn, Crucify, Crush": Theorizing the Islamic State's Public Displays of Violence', *European Journal of International Relations*, 24 (2018), 243-267 (p. 260, p. 245).

explain why mainstream media so easily latched onto these videos rather than the larger corpus of IS images. Military, paramilitary and militias have long recorded their crimes. Interestingly, media scholar Marwan Kraidy underlines the intertextuality (or rather inter-iconicity) in IS videos. For example, he finds ‘traces’ of Abu Ghraib in the video of the Jordanian pilot’s execution. The images can be read ‘as a tit-for-tat inversion of the U.S. “shock and awe” military strategy during the 2003 invasion of Iraq.’<sup>17</sup> If the context were less horrific, one might even be tempted to speak of *détournement* (using and altering an image or a work in a way that is antagonistic or antithetical to the original), given the prominence of Guy Debord’s ‘société du spectacle’ in today’s cultural theory discourse.<sup>18</sup> This points to the changing articulation of visibility and invisibility in perpetrator imagery, and how this articulation is culturally and historically situated. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the term ‘perpetrator’ is a label applied from the outside. It is not how, for some, the men who commit these crimes define themselves. It is thus critical not only to connect this visual production with multiple repertoires, for instance the ‘tradition’ of martyr video started in Lebanon in the 1980s.<sup>19</sup> When analyzing these images, one must also keep in mind the grey zone in which perpetrators are not perpetrators yet, or do not see themselves as perpetrators. In this context, the following declaration of Sergeant Javal Davis from the 372<sup>nd</sup> Military Police (M.P.) at Abu Ghraib to journalists Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris is enlightening:

Everyone in theater had a digital camera. Everyone was taking pictures of everything, from detainees to death. That was nothing, like in Vietnam when guys were taking pictures of the dead guy with a cigarette in his mouth. Like, ‘Hey, Mom, look.’ It sounds sick, but over there that was commonplace, it was nothing. I mean, when you’re surrounded by death and carnage 24 hours a day, seven days a week, it absorbs you. You walk down the street and you see a dead body on the road, whereas a couple of months ago, you would have been like ‘Oh, my God, a dead body’, today you’re like, ‘Damn it, he got messed up, let’s go get something to eat’.<sup>20</sup>

17 Marwan M. Kraidy, ‘The Projelictic Image: Islamic State’s Digital Visual Warfare and Global Networked Affect’, *Media, Culture & Society*, 39 (2017), 1194–1209 (p. 1205).

18 Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle* (Paris: Editions Buchet/Chastel, 1967).

19 On the subject see Verena Straub, ‘The Making and Gendering of a Martyr: Images of Female Suicide Bombers in the Middle East’, in *Image Operations*, ed. by Eder and Klöckl, pp. 137–150.

20 Sergeant Javal Davis to journalists Philip Gourevitch and Errol Morris, ‘The Woman behind the Camera at Abu Ghraib’, *The New Yorker*, 24 March 2008, <<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/03/24/exposure-5>> [accessed 17 October 2019]. Davis and his colleagues

Everything is there: the progressive desensitization, the banalization of violence in the context of war, when all moral limits seem to vanish. The reference to Vietnam proves especially interesting since it links perpetration and trauma, and thereby helps recast perpetrators as victimized by their acts (a process that Erica Bouris's notion of 'complex political victim' aptly captures).<sup>21</sup>

### **Beyond the Perpetrator's Body?**

This leads us to a set of more complex connections between subject, object and recording device, for example the images of perpetrators created and disseminated by human rights NGOs and international justice institutions. Some pictures show older men and women, long after they participated in policies of extermination. How do we feel about them? There is a clear political message in these images. The 'body natural' of the perpetrator becomes the symbol of the end of a regime rendered harmless through prosecution and political reforms. With good reasons, the body of the perpetrator has become, over the past years, an object of academic scrutiny.<sup>22</sup> Media representations of Saddam Hussein, Muammar Gaddafi, and Radovan Karadžić (to name but a few) as disheveled, frightened, and abused, at least in the first two cases, speak volumes about the ways in which the old iconography of debasement of the once-powerful is being reinterpreted today. These representations also place viewers in a state of 'cognitive dissonance', as they try to reconcile conflicting feelings of (unwanted) empathy and judgment. The camera's eye does not focus only on the masterminds or chief perpetrators. The body of subordinates, executioners, and ordinary killers began to take front stage years ago. In the film *Massaker* (2005), for example, Lebanese writer Lokman Slim and his wife, German journalist Monika Borgmann, interviewed several men from Bashir Gemayel's Forces Libanaises (Lebanese Forces) who had participated in the massacre of up to 3,000 civilians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila (September 1982). The men's faces are hidden, for safety reasons, and

Megan Ambuhl, Lynndie England, Ivan Frederick, Charles Graner, Sabrina Harman, and Michael Smith were sentenced to dishonorable discharge from service and military prison for their mistreatment of Iraqi detainees at Abu Ghraib.

21 Erica Bouris, *Complex Political Victims* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2007).

22 See, e.g., *La Mort du Bourreau: Réflexions Interdisciplinaires sur le Cadavre des Criminels de Masse*, ed. by Sévane Garibian (Paris, Édition Pétra, 2016).

the film directors focus on the voices, bodies, and gestures of the interviewees as they recount what they did, why, and how they did it.<sup>23</sup>

These headless bodies evoke another body, this time fully visible and in the open: the body of Bosniak war criminal Esad Landžo, the central figure in Lars Feldballe-Petersen's film *The Unforgiven: A War Criminal's Remorse* (2017). Once a skinny nineteen-year old guard at the prison-camp Čelebići near Konjic (central Bosnia), Landžo is now an overweight man in his late forties looking for redemption. Čelebići was run by Bosniak and Bosnian Croat forces, then allied in the fight against the Serbs. Roughly two hundred men were detained there. Landžo was arrested in 1996. In 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) sentenced him to fifteen years for torture, cruel treatment, and murder.<sup>24</sup> Transferred to Finland in 2003 and granted an early release in 2006, he decided to stay in Helsinki. The only time he returned to Bosnia was for Feldballe-Petersen's film. The director approached several war criminals prosecuted at the ICTY. Landžo was the only one who agreed to meet with the victims and ask for their forgiveness: 'I came to this [film] as a person who wants to apologize to another person for the evil things I did.' *The Unforgiven* represents Landžo's encounter with the former prisoners as a confrontation of bodies, the solid and opaque body of Landžo himself and the fragile, nerve-driven bodies of his victims. Interestingly, Feldballe-Petersen never shows the heavy police forces that were mobilized to secure the perimeter for these meetings. Instead, he films solitary bodies standing in the deserted landscape of the now abandoned camp, unable to connect or perform any meaningful contact.

*The Unforgiven* is part of a broader trend in films that bring perpetrators and victims face-to-face, such as Laura Waters Hinson's *As We Forgive* (2009) in Rwanda and Sara Terry's *Fambul Tok* (2011) in Si-

23 *Massaker*, dir. by Monika Borgmann and others (Lichtblick Film and TV Produktion, 2005). On the subject see Eric Vidal, 'Massaker de Monika Borgmann, Lokman Slim et Hermann Theissen, 1h39, Allemagne/France/Liban/Suisse, 2004', *La Pensée de Midi*, 21 (2007), 163–166.

24 *The Unforgiven: A War Criminal's Remorse*, dir. by Lars Feldballe-Petersen (Kinocompany, 2017). Landžo and former Čelebići Deputy Commander Hazim Delić were the first Muslim war criminals to be prosecuted at the ICTY. It was also the first time that a government in former Yugoslavia (in this case, Bosnia's Muslim-led authorities) voluntarily handed over suspected war criminals to the Tribunal. See: Tony Barber, 'First Muslims on Trial for Bosnia War Crimes', *The Independent*, 11 March 1997, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/first-muslims-on-trial-for-bosnia-war-crimes-1272242.html>> [accessed 17 October 2019]; Chris Hedges, 'Balkan War Crimes: Bosnia Is First to Turn in its Own', *The New York Times*, 3 May 1996, <<https://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/03/world/balkan-war-crimes-bosnia-is-first-to-turn-in-its-own.html>> [accessed 17 October 2019].

erra Leone.<sup>25</sup> How does this kind of work complicate our perception of perpetrators, and perhaps of their crimes? What ‘operations’ – to draw on the work of art historians Jens Eder and Charlotte Klonk – do such images enable, affectively and cognitively?<sup>26</sup> Can they become instruments of political and social change in transitional societies? What discourse or ideology do they convey then? The emphasis on individual perpetrators, their emotions, their narratives, their experiences, is certainly essential to shedding light on these men’s psychology. At the same time, it also obfuscates to some degree the collective and structural dimension of the violence perpetrated. The question is what such emphasis contributes to the discussion if we start looking at perpetrator imagery against the backdrop of the nonhuman. The way we address the technical/mechanical/robotic recordings of acts of killing associated with the technologies of visualization and surveillance dominating contemporary asymmetrical warfare (drone-produced images being paradigmatic in this case) becomes an increasingly pressing issue. Owing much to scholarship on aerial warfare, there is a growing body of literature on the subject, especially since French philosopher Grégoire Chamayou published his seminal *Drone Theory* in 2013.<sup>27</sup> Still, to date, the machine as perpetrator and the machine’s effect on the human perpetrator – two subjects at the core of military history and studies about technology and weapon industry – remain underexplored topics in the field of Perpetrator Studies. The relation between political violence, genocide and ecocide as international crimes punishable by law (see the work of the late barrister Polly Higgins and activist Gillian Caldwell on that matter for example) is the other major theme that Perpetrator Studies should investigate. And the recent example of the burning of the Brazilian Amazon shows how crucial it is to tackle it. Will images of extractivism,<sup>28</sup> such as the forests destroyed

25 *As We Forgive*, dir. by Laura Waters Hinson (House Lights Media, 2009); *Fambul Tok*, dir. by Sara Terry (Catalyst for Peace, 2011).

26 Jens Eder and Charlotte Klonk, eds., ‘Introduction’, in *Image Operations*, pp. 1–22.

27 See, e.g., Grégoire Chamayou, *Théorie du Drone* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2013); Tom Holert, ‘The Seen Unseen of Drone Warfare’, in *Image Operations*, ed. by Eder and Klonk, pp. 101–117; Kathrin Maurer, ‘The Scopic Regime of Military Drone Operations’, *Media, War & Conflict*, 10 (2017), 141–151; *Life in the Age of Drone Warfare*, ed. by Lisa Parks and Caren Kaplan (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017); Joanna Tidy, ‘Visual Regimes and the Politics of War Experience: Rewriting War “from Above” in Wikileaks’ “Collateral Murder”’, *Review of International Studies*, 43 (2017), 95–111.

28 Extractivism can be defined as ‘an ideological construct and a paradigm of severe exploitation which is characteristic of contemporary capitalism and neoliberalism at large’ and deploys accordingly to ‘increasingly complex political geographies’ beyond the core/periph-

by illegal logging or mono-cultivation, help to reconceptualize the notion of perpetration itself, in terms of the identity of both perpetrators (the 'corporate') and victims (animals and plants) as well as the extent and forms of perpetration? Certainly, in order for the field of Perpetrator Studies to position itself at the crossroads of global concerns and local struggles, it must pay critical attention to the non- and more-than-human parameters of perpetration.<sup>29</sup>

As an emerging field, Perpetrator Studies is in constant formation. Moreover, its interaction with practitioners, educators, and activists proves increasingly important, since it contributes to generating new perspectives on the display and interpretation of difficult or sensitive images in various kinds of public space, from mainstream media to movies to memorial sites. As such, Perpetrator Studies has multiple terrains of critical inquiry now open for investigation. Photography and visual culture more generally represents one important area of inquiry. This special issue, then, can be seen as a first foray into what we hope will become an intensive and interdisciplinary exploration.

ery divide. Laura Junka-Aikio and Catalina Cortes-Severino, 'Editorial of Cultural Studies of Extraction', *Cultural Studies*, 31 (2017), 175-184 (p. 177).

<sup>29</sup> Several of the contributions to the forthcoming Routledge International Handbook of Perpetrator Studies, edited by Susanne C. Knittel and Zachary Goldberg (Routledge 2020) take up this issue. See in particular the chapters by Austin, Driscoll, and Crownshaw.

## Works Cited

- Asher-Shapiro, Avi, 'YouTube and Facebook Are Removing Evidence of Atrocities, Jeopardizing Cases against War Criminals', *The Intercept*, 2 November 2017, <<https://theintercept.com/2017/11/02/war-crimes-youtube-facebook-syria-rohingya/>> [accessed 17 October 2019]
- As *We Forgive*, dir. by Laura Waters Hinson (House Lights Media, 2009)
- Atwan, Abdel Bari, *Islamic State: The Digital Caliphate* (London: Saqi Books, 2015)
- Apel, Dora, and Shawn Michelle Smith, *Lynching Photographs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008)
- Auchter, Jessica, 'Imagin(ing) the Severed Heads: ISIS Beheadings and the Absent Spectacle', *Critical Studies on Security*, 6 (2018), 68–84
- Azoulay, Ariella, *The Civil Contract of Photography* (New York: Zonebook, 2008)
- Barber, Tony, 'First Muslims on Trial for Bosnia War Crimes', *The Independent*, 11 March 1997, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/first-muslims-on-trial-for-bosnia-war-crimes-1272242.html>> [accessed 17 October 2019]
- Barnard, Anne, 'Syrian Soldier Is Guilty of War Crimes, a First in the 6-Year Conflict', *The New York Times*, 3 October 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/03/world/middleeast/syria-war-crime.html>> [accessed 17 October 2019]
- Boland, Christopher, "'We Didn't Think It Would Hit Us': New Report on Attacks on Schools in Syria Calls Attention to Atrocities', *ICTJ*, 7 September 2018, <<https://www.ictj.org/news/%E2%80%9Cwe-didn%E2%80%99t-think-it-would-hit-us%E2%80%9D-new-report-attacks-schools-syria-calls-attention-atrocities>> [accessed 17 October 2019]
- Bouris, Erica, *Complex Political Victims* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2007)
- Browne, Malachy, 'YouTube removes Videos Showing Atrocities in Syria', *The New York Times*, 22 August 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/22/world/middleeast/syria-youtube-videos-isis.html>> [accessed 17 October 2019]
- Chamayou, Grégoire, *Théorie du Drone* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2013)
- Chong, Sylvia Shin Huey, *The Oriental Obscene: Violence and Racial Fantasies in the Vietnam Era* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012)
- Chotiner, Isaac, 'A Times Reporter Documents the Horror of Syria's Torture Sites', *The New Yorker*, 13 May 2019, <<https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/a-times-reporter-documents-the-horror-of-syrias-torture-sites>> [accessed 17 October 2019]
- Comolli, Jean-Louis, *Daesh, le Cinéma et la Mort* (Paris: Verdier, 2016)
- Debord, Guy, *La Société du Spectacle* (Paris: Editions Buchet/Chastel, 1967)
- Eder, Jens, and Charlotte Klonk, eds., *Image Operations: Visual Media and Political Conflict* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017)
- Fahmy, Shaira S., 'The Age of Terrorism Media: The Visual Narratives of the Islamic State Group's Dabiq Magazine', *The International Communication Gazette* (2019), 1–29
- Friis, Simone Molin, "'Behead, Burn, Crucify, Crush": Theorizing the Islamic State's Public Displays of Violence', *European Journal of International Relations*, 24 (2018), 243–267

- Garibian, Sévane, ed., *La Mort du Bourreau: Réflexions Interdisciplinaires sur le Cadavre des Criminels de Masse* (Paris, Édition Pétra, 2016)
- González-Zarandona, José Antonio, Cesar Albárran-Torres and Benjamin Isakhan, 'Digitally Mediated Iconoclasm: The Islamic State and the War on Cultural Heritage', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 24 (2018), 649–671
- Gourevitch, Philip, and Errol Morris, 'The Woman Behind the Camera at Abu Ghraib', *The New Yorker*, 24 March 2008, <<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/03/24/exposure-5>> [accessed 17 October 2019]
- Guerin, Frances, *Through Amateur Eyes: Film and Photography in Nazi Germany* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2011)
- Hedges, Chris, 'Balkan War Crimes: Bosnia Is First to Turn its Own', *The New York Times*, 3 May 1996, <<https://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/03/world/balkan-war-crimes-bosnia-is-first-to-turn-in-its-own.html>> [accessed 17 October 2019]
- Hochberg, Gil, *Visual Occupation and Visibility in a Conflict Zone* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015)
- Holert, Tom, 'The Seen Unseen of Drone Warfare', in *Image Operations: Visual Media and Political Conflict*, ed. by Jens Eder and Charlotte Klöckner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp. 101–117
- Hoskins, Andrew and Ben O'Loughlin, *War and Media: The Emergence of Diffused War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010)
- Huey, Laura, and Eric Wilmer, '#IS\_Fangirl: Exploring a New Role for Women in Terrorism', *Journal of Terrorism Research*, 7 (2016), 1–10
- Hüppauf, Bernd, 'Emptying the Gaze: Framing Violence through the Viewfinder', *New German Critique*, 72 (1997), 3–44
- Junka-Aikio, Laura, and Catalina Cortes-Severino, 'Editorial of Cultural Studies of Extraction', *Cultural Studies*, 31 (2017), 175–184
- Knittel, Susanne C., and Zachary Goldberg, eds., *The Routledge International Handbook of Perpetrator Studies* (London: Routledge, 2020)
- Kraidy, Marwan M., 'The Projelictic Image: Islamic State's Digital Visual Warfare and Global Networked Affect', *Media, Culture & Society*, 39 (2017), 1194–1209
- Massaker*, dir. by Monika Borgmann and others (Lichtblick Film and TV Produktion, 2005)
- Maurer, Kathrin, 'The Scopic Regime of Military Drone Operations', *Media, War & Conflict*, 10 (2017), 141–151
- Milton, Daniel, *Communication Breakdown: Unraveling the Islamic State's Media Efforts* (New York: Combating Terrorism Centre, 2016)
- Mirzoeff, Nicholas, *Watching Babylon: The Iraq War and Global Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005)
- Mortensen, Mette, *Journalism and Eyewitness Images: Digital Media, Participation and Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 2015)

- Naji, Abu Bakr, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage through Which the Umma Will Pass*, trans. by Will McCants (Cambridge, Mass.: John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006)
- O'Flaherty, Kate, 'YouTube Keeps Deleting Evidence of Syrian chemical Weapon Attacks', *Wired*, 26 June 2018, <<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/chemical-weapons-in-syria-youtube-algorithm-delete-video>> [accessed 17 October 2019]
- Parks, Lisa, and Caren Kaplan, eds., *Life in the Age of Drone Warfare* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017)
- Russo, Joseph, 'The Power of Pop Culture in the Hands of the Islamic State', in *Foundations of Homeland Security: Law and Policy*, ed. by Martin Alperen, 2nd edn. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), pp. 459–467
- Sigal, Ivan, 'Syria's War May Be the Most Documented Ever. And Yet, We Know so Little', *Global Voices Online*, 19 December 2016, <<https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-12-19/syrias-war-may-be-most-documented-ever-and-yet-we-know-so-little>> [accessed 17 October 2019]
- Smith, Claire and others, 'The Islamic State's Symbolic War: Daesh's Socially Mediated Terrorism as a Threat to Cultural Heritage', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 16 (2015), 164–188
- Straub, Verena, 'The Making and Gendering of a Martyr: Images of Female Suicide Bombers in the Middle East', in *Image Operations: Visual Media and Political Conflict*, ed. by Jens Eder and Charlotte Klöckner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp. 137–150
- Struk, Janina, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of Evidence* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005)
- The Unforgiven: A War Criminals Remorse*, dir. by Lars Feldballe-Petersen (Kinocompany, 2017)
- Tidy, Joanna, 'Visual Regimes and the Politics of War Experience: Rewriting War "from Above" in Wikileaks' "Collateral Murder"', *Review of International Studies*, 43 (2017), 95–111
- VFRAME <<https://vframe.io/>> [accessed 17 October 2019]
- Vidal, Eric, 'Massaker de Monika Borgmann, Lokman Slim et Hermann Theissen, 1h39, Allemagne/France/Liban/Suisse, 2004', *La Pensée de Midi*, 21 (2007), 163–166
- Zelin, Aaron Y., 'Picture or It Didn't Happen: A Snapshot of the Islamic State's Official Media Output', *Terrorism Research Initiative*, 9 (2015), 85–97
- Zelizer, Barbie, ed., *Visual Culture and the Holocaust* (London: The Athlone Press, 2001)
- , *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)

**Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier** is an art historian. She is currently ERC-Research Fellow at the 'Cultures of Occupation in Twentieth Century Asia' (COTCA) project, University of Nottingham (UK).

**Susanne C. Knittel** is Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Utrecht University, Netherlands. Email: [s.c.knittel@uu.nl](mailto:s.c.knittel@uu.nl).