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| Night and Fog (1955) |
| Nuit et brouillard |
| Widely considered one of the greatest documentaries ever made, *Night and Fog* is a 1955 French short film about the Holocaust, which combines footage from Nazi concentration camps with contemporary material shot at Auschwitz and Majdanek ten years after their liberation. The film was directed by Alain Resnais, written by Jean Cayrol (himself a Holocaust survivor), and features narration by Michel Bouquet and scoring by Hanns Eisler. The film alternates between the tranquil, present-day camp grounds and detailed, often graphic accounts of the starvation, torture, medical experimentation, and mass executions that took place in the camps.  Similar to Resnais’ *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* (1959), *Night and Fog*’s modernist approach rejects the pretence of realism typical of documentary filmmaking, instead emphasising subjectivity as a means for evaluating historical consciousness. This is evinced by a subtle and self-reflexive critique of the documentary format, heard in Bouquet’s narration, which expresses scepticism, even frustration, at the camera’s limited capacity to capture and comprehend the full horrors of the Holocaust. Throughout, Resnais favours a fragmented, essayistic structure that scrutinises the nature of atrocity and the politics of collective memory. Interpretations note how the film chronicles the camps’ routines and administrative processes, pointing to the everyday banalities through which unspeakable cruelty becomes normalised. |
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| Further reading:  (Pollock and Silverman) |