CRIME IN FILMIC FORM: THE HOLOCAUST IN HOLLYWOOD CINEMA UNDER THE HAYS CODE

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"Brutal killings are not to be presented in detail."[1]

INTRODUCTION

This article examines the relationship between *historical violence* and its modes of representation. This is a question that has been explored previously in general terms (Mongin, 1999), but here it will be given a much more limited focus, specifically in relation to the formal methods adopted for the activation of signifying processes (Zumalde, 2011).

In general, very few studies have analysed the relationship between the Holocaust and the Hays Code. Although other related issues *prior* to the liberation of the concentration and extermination camps have been the subject of some notable research, such as the contextual and economic circumstances behind the processes of production and distribution between Hollywood and Nazi Germany (Urwand, 2013; Doherty, 2013), the dimension of the *mise-en-scène* of the of the processes of direct extermination of civilians in American fiction film is an intriguing field of study that is still largely unexplored. The question I wish to raise here relates to the real meaning (in terms of the *mise-en-scène*) of this slippery idea of *detail* referred to in the Hays Code with respect to the presentation of brutal killings in the quote that serves as the epigraph to this article.

Perhaps a good place to start would be by pointing out a strictly historical paradox: in the first American films dealing with the Holocaust, the Hays Code operated more as a kind of muffling framework that *regulated* the extraordinary brutality of dramatic material that was by definition incomprehensible. As had already been noted by the first editors of the *real* footage taken by British and American cameramen in the camps (see the documentary *Night Will Fall* [André Singer, 2014]), this material was literally *unintelligible* to film professionals themselves. The screening in the Allied countries of the first newsreels to include the infamous images from Dachau and Bergen-Belsen not only undermined every chapter of the Hays Code related to the representation of violence and the body, but also proved strangely alien to what audiences expected of a cinematic experience: "Many found it distasteful to see a Donald Duck

film immediately after the horror film" (Struk, 2004: 127). And yet, films under the Hays Code *had to* talk about the Holocaust: either to warn of it explicitly in the years prior to 1945, or to explore its traumatic nature in the decades that followed. In a way, the footage of the Holocaust would have been able to function as the ultimate justification for the US military intervention. A very different matter was the problem of its *fictionalisation* and, more specifically, its insertion into the narrative frameworks of classical Hollywood films.

Paradoxically, the Soviet studios had no qualms whatsoever about filming their own perspectives on the catastrophe, often directed by and even starring survivors of the camps or the massacres (Gerenshon, 2013). While the Stalinist regime implemented its own anti-Semitic policies (Snyder, 2017), and always took a clearly propagandistic approach that tended to present what had happened in terms compatible with the narrative of the "Great Patriotic War", Soviet studios dispatched entire film crews to the ruins of Auschwitz and Terezín to shoot films like *Ostatnietap* [The Last Stage] (Wanda Jakubowska, 1948) and *Daleká cesta* [Distant Journey] (Alfred Radok, 1949). In Hollywood, however, there was still a kind of astonishment at the survivors' testimonies that would take nearly twenty years to subside.

This first point should be borne in mind before we begin analysing strictly visual features. Although today we are undoubtedly saturated with Holocaust images and reconstructions that for the most part appropriate the stylistic language of post-modernism (Lozano Aguilar, 2001), in the 1940s and 1950s there were barely a dozen titles produced by the major studios in which the Holocaust can be considered a *major* textual reference. Actually, in my research for this paper I have had to condense several of the filmographies giving more specific weight to the concentration camps (Frodon, 2010: 255-362; Insdorf, 1983: 217-223; Kerner, 2011: 320-325), as their respective selection criteria were not the same.

AND YET, FILMS UNDER THE HAYS CODE *HAD TO* TALK ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST: EITHER TO WARN OF IT EXPLICITLY IN THE YEARS PRIOR TO 1945, OR TO EXPLORE ITS TRAUMATIC NATURE IN THE DECADES THAT FOLLOWED

As is well known, in Western nations—and especially in the United States and Israel—the Holocaust suffered from a stigma of silence practically until the Eichmann trial triggered the processes of historical memory (Lipstadt, 2011) and served as a specific catalyst for the trauma. It is hardly surprising that the 1960s should have served as the context both for the end of the Hays Code and the beginning of critical reflection on what really had happened in Hitler's Europe. As will be shown here, *mature* reflection in strictly visual terms on the complexity of the Holocaust experience in Hollywood can be dated with perfect precision, at the time of release of *The Pawnbroker* (Sidney Lumet, 1964), a film shot right between one event and another. It is also a film that takes the formal conventions of European modernist montage as a major point of reference, with its disjointed timeframes, aberrant shots and breaks in continuity (on this context, see Rodríguez Serrano, 2014). Lumet argues that in the death throes of the Hays Code a kind of narratological maturity came to the fore, which would justify a new way of thinking visually about the Holocaust.

My research here will therefore attempt an overview of the period between these two points, from the first Holocaust films shot under the restrictions of the Production Code to 1964, briefly mapping this paradox that emerges between the censors' restrictions and the historical possibility of saying something about the bodies and the violence of the Holocaust. It is important to clarify that I will not be taking a chronological approach, but instead will divide the study into two concep-

tual fields directly associated with the problems inherent in the filmic form in order to explore how the image was subjected to different signifying strategies. First of all, I will examine the form of presenting the so-called *Holocaust by bullets* or mass shootings of civilians by the *Einsatzgruppen*, and then go onto to consider stories set explicitly inside the death camps.

Ultimately, my objective here is quite simply a kind of updating of the conclusions already formulated by Jean Mitry in his celebrated refutation of film semiotics, i.e. that each film imposes its own laws and implements its own signifying program:

> As I have always maintained, every film imposes and creates the rules appropriate to it alone, the codifications suggested by it existing only by virtue of an all-powerful context. Whereas signifying structures preexist the verbal expression, this is not the case in film: they depend on it and, by that fact, they are not exportable (Mitry, 2000: 145).

How do the *internal* rules of films about the Holocaust relate to this "all-powerful context" identified by Mitry? My central hypothesis for this study is that this relationship is based on strictly *formal* decisions. To reveal it, it will therefore be necessary to use a method of textual analysis that focuses on the semantic processes of the image, but that at the same time maintains the necessary ethical rigour in relation to the victims of the catastrophe.

THE SITES OF DEATH I: THE MASS SHOOTINGS

As has been pointed out many times in the literature on the Holocaust, a very large number of civilian victims of the Third Reich perished outside the extermination camps, as a result of the ethnic cleansing operations orchestrated by the *Einsatzgruppen* during the occupation of the countries of Eastern Europe (Browning, 2010). Although the Allies were fully aware of the opening of the death factories (Wyman, 2018), the American movie industry initially opted for an interpretation of what was happening in Europe that focused strictly on the concentration camps—the most celebrated example, of course, being *The Great Dictator* (Charles Chaplin, 1940)—and only began offering fictional depictions of the mass shootings after the war.

Scenes dedicated to the so-called *Holocaust by bullets* were always complex structural fragments inserted into stories with a defined dramatic purpose that tended to vary between condemning certain villainous characters—generally, collaborators with the regime—and the exemplifying catharsis that triggers the heroic action of the resistance. Nevertheless, the visual precision with which the directors of the time represented what was happening in Europe is no less disturbing.

A prime example is the massacre scene in *None Shall Escape* (André De Toth, 1944). Throughout the film the director *tests out* a visual style for depicting the masses of intimidated civilians that would subsequently reappear in post-war reconstructions: the idea of the *victim* is established visually through slow, low-angle tracking shots that follow the direction lines of the future victims in the exclusion zones. The faces and hands blur together, occasionally concealing the secondary characters in the story, and serving as inspiration for the camera movements.

The specific scene of the mass shootings is introduced in a montage through a slow lap dissolve. Positioning it as the second major plot twist, De Toth constructs the scene using a profound, low-key cinematography that makes a lot out of the materials of the environment. Already in the scene's first image, the human body is reduced to the background through the use of textures: the rain mixing with the mud, the drenched tarp on the trucks transporting the Jews, the darkened wood of the train that will deport them and the blinding glimmer of the German cars and SS helmets. It is quite literally a nightmare scene that the camera pans sparingly with a tracking shot from left to right.

It soon becomes clear that the rows of Jews are there for the purposes of composition as well. In some moments they mark the depth of the frame; in others, they divide it into separate sections by tracing ascending diagonal lines along which the killers' cars move. The scaling up of the dramatic attention is effectuated, above all, by a closing-in approach in the filming: from wide shots, the sequence splits up the protagonists in different establishing shots, and at last the rabbi's final speech is located in a contrasting close-up, cutting in response to a circular tracking shot of the faces, in shadow, of the future victims, the killers, and even the civilian witnesses to the tragedy.

It is, however, at a specific moment in the massacre that the enunciation reveals the director's most interesting decisions. In time with the clatter of the machine guns, De Toth creates a high-speed montage of eleven completely dislocated shots with barely any continuity, which seem directly reminiscent of the rhythmic techniques of Soviet cinema. Obviously, this inherently ideological gesture—questioning the classical foundations on which the Code was based—is in itself a bold move in terms of signification. It breaks the enunciative cohesion and, through a twisting of the text, upsets the spectator's hypothetical placidity. All the shots are perfectly designed, from the violent diagonal composition that connects the door of the train to the barrel of the machine gun [Figure 1], to the lateral tracking shot that follows the trajectory of the bullets that riddle the train carriage with holes [Figure 2].

Pushing beyond the limits set by the Hays Code, De Toth explicitly depicts the brutality of the killings. The spectator can witness the bodies fall and pile up, can see the executioner's expression, and can hear the screams of horror and the cries for help. This leaves no possibility of an off-screen space: everything is shown, everything is depicted and—although it functions as a kind of *textual operator* to encourage the audience to judge the nation's war-time enemies more harshly—it is undeniable that the image captures the reality of the historical massacre with unexpected precision. Yet this sequence could still be classified as falling within ethical limits because of the specifically concise nature of the enunciative act: the corpses shown from a prudential distance, the extermination shown very fleetingly (nothing like the sensationalising use of slow motion in contemporary productions), and narrative interweaving that supports the tragic nature of the story.

Above. Figure 1. *None Shall Escape* (André De Toth, 1944).
Below. Figure 2. *None Shall Escape* (André De Toth, 1944).

An example that explores a different type of visual technique can be found in *Hitler's Madman* (Douglas Sirk, 1943). This time, the massacre shown has a very real and specific source of inspiration: the destruction of the village of Lidice

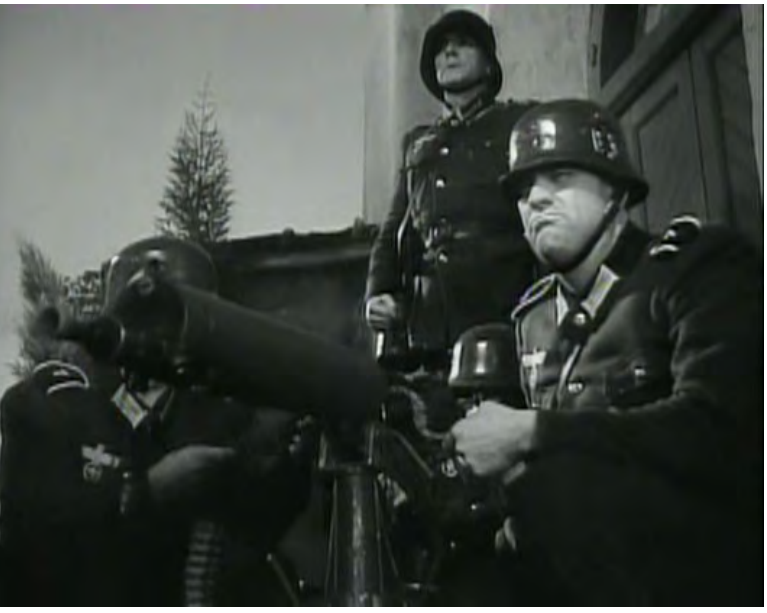


Figure 3. *Hitler's Madman* (Douglas Sirk, 1943)

Figure 4. *Hitler's Madman* (Douglas Sirk, 1943)

in June 1942 in retaliation for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich (who at the time, of course, was one of the most important ideologues of the "Final Solution"). The case of Sirk's film is striking not only for the way it deals with the facts, in a manner diametrically opposed to the much more famous *Hangmen Also Die!* (Fritz Lang, 1943),[2] but also, and above all, because of its director's background. Only a few years earlier, Sirk had shot the highly successful *La Habanera* (1937) for UFA with two of the biggest stars of Nazi cinema: Zarah Leander and Ferdinand Marian. Out of that simplistic and explicitly propagandistic picture—see Marco da Costa (2014: 218-219) for an insightful analysis—and out of his own experience as an exiled director came this reflection on collaborationism and barbarism that is brilliantly consummated in the daring visual approach to the sequence of the mass shooting.

Like Toth, Sirk depicts the moment of the killing explicitly. However, instead of breaking the narrative continuity of the editing, he seems to propose a kind of wild compositional axis of movement between the trajectory of the machine gun [Figure 3] and that of the camera itself, which shows the bodies as they fall in a crane shot sweeping from left to right [Figure 4].

Meanwhile, the way in which he displaces the rape, pillaging and mass destruction of the village of Lidice is even more noteworthy. Having reached a kind of high point in the representation of the horror through the identification of the camera with the machine gun, Sirk makes use of a final *displacement* through a vigorous editing technique—overlapping two shots together by means of an extremely long lap dissolve—that effectively contextualises the corpses he has just shown us. Indeed, his strictly visual approach proves even more violent in the sense that it directly violates the hypothetical system of classical enunciation, with its insistence on transparency, by forcing the actors to address the audience directly through a gaze to camera (Casetti, 1989).

It is worth taking a closer look at the composition of this shot [Figure 5]. On the one hand, Sirk uses the image of the village square in flames, as a wide shot lingers on the great tongues of fire rising out of the windows of the buildings while the top of the frame fills with thick grey smoke. On the other hand, the director overlaps a kind

of funeral march acted out by the villagers, who are shown in a low-angle shot. The angle of the camera not only reflects the heroism of their sacrifice in the battle against Nazism, but also suggests something of a religious message in the way that the line of movement marks an *ascension* within the frame. The film's protagonists then address the audience to call for their direct collaboration in the struggle by using some lines conveniently extracted from "The Murder of Lidice", the war poem by Edna St. Vincent published only a year earlier (Raspon, 2015: 156-158).

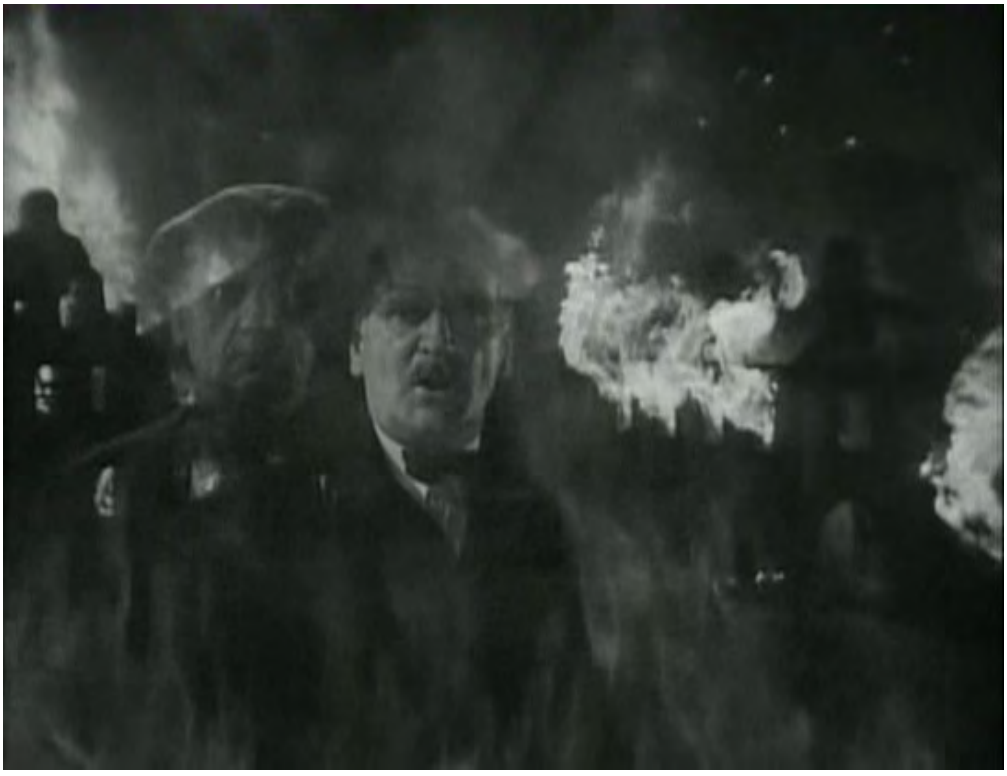


Figure 5. *Hitler's Madman* (Douglas Sirk, 1943)

This sequence should be read as literally as possible. With the overlapping on the same filmic space, as paradoxical as it seems, the characters, through their absence, *embody* the living presence of this destroyed village. They *are* Lidice, and their words act as a testimony that rises visually out of the ruins of the town but that has a clearly defined audience in mind: the Americans who in 1943 are troubled about the role their country will play in the war. The victims of the massacre are Lidice but, at the same time, Lidice is the whole world: the lines of the poem point directly to the threat that calls out to people, "so happy and free", using the words "happy" and "free" as a macabre *ritornello*.

However, Sirk's sequence has some unique features that are worthy of critical analysis. First of all, it is clear that it forces a particular interpretation of the massacre by linking its victims explicitly to a Christian notion of martyrdom. The shot is punctuated at the beginning and the end by the presence of a statue of Saint Sebastian, surrounded by clouds of smoke, apparently given the role of guardian angel of the fallen. In the same way, the words of the victims are accompanied by extradiegetic celestial choirs that serve to underscore the religious compassion awoken by their deaths.

To recapitulate, we can see here how two very different films were able defy the prohibitions of the Hays Code in order to depict violence with two diametrically opposed strategies: a montage based on dislocation in one case (De Toth), and compression and movement of the camera, followed by the use of a lap dissolve, in the other (Sirk). In both cases, what is of interest here is that the strategies to show or sensationalise the tragedy are exclusively formal in nature and are anchored within the narrative universe of the film itself: the "poeticisation" of the redemptive act can only occur *because* the spectator has been able to witness the

brutality of the crime. There is a visual, discursive relationship between the murdered body—constructed by the story—and its call for redemption and political action. In other words, the editing and filming of the sequence aims at shocking the spectator, but never at the cost of immediate satisfaction of the scopic drive: the film never revels in the death, but evokes and points to "something unseen", "something yet to be revealed". In the next section, I will turn to the specific case of the concentration camps.

THE SITES OF DEATH II: THE EXPERIENCE IN THE CAMPS

As noted at the beginning of this article, the arrival in American film theatres of the footage shot by the Allies during the liberation of the camps caused a kind of audiovisual breakdown. The very fact that this historical reality could be *captured on celluloid* directly violated the hypothetical intention of the Hays Code to use the audiovisual for the protection and indoctrination of the general public. The Nazi film industry had certainly not been known for brutal imagery or scenes that revelled excessively in violence: indeed, when the Allies analysed the films produced under the Third Reich they found that a surprisingly small percentage of them needed to be banned during the post-war period.[3]

However, the *consequences* of these generally innocuous filmic narratives, with touches of historical melodrama, were horrendous enough to turn the Code itself on its head: the tortured corpses, the bodies on the very brink of death, the train carriages piled up with the dead *had to be shown*. Having said this, it must be noted that it was precisely in the leap into fictionalising these events that the most effective strategies of *mise-en-scène* needed to be employed.[4]

As I have analysed elsewhere (Rodríguez Serrano, 2015: 65-71), in the years prior to the discovery of the camps, Hollywood had already developed its own stylistic codes for *representing* what was happening on the other side of the Atlantic. Like the example of the Chaplin film cited above, *Once Upon a Honeymoon* (Leo McCarey, 1942) made use of a series of iconic motifs that constituted an extraordinary foreshadowing of the images of the liberation: crowds of bodies, rabbinic prayers, barbed wire, heaped garbage. None of McCarey's *foreshadowing* images constituted a break with the Hays Code: they showed injustice and overcrowding, but not extermination.

It is important to remember that after 1945, directors who wanted to *recreate* the camps already knew the site of destruction of the bodies, as well as the systematic and depersonalised processes in which they operated. The lines of new arrivals were almost always heading for the gas chambers. The Jews were forced to participate in the processes of self-destruction in the *Sonderkommandos* only to be murdered afterwards. The survivors, suddenly thrown into an indecipherable world and with their families completely annihilated, found themselves surrounded by an uncomfortable wall of silence and shame that forced them into a second, internal exile and a new traumatic experience on their arrival in the State of Israel.

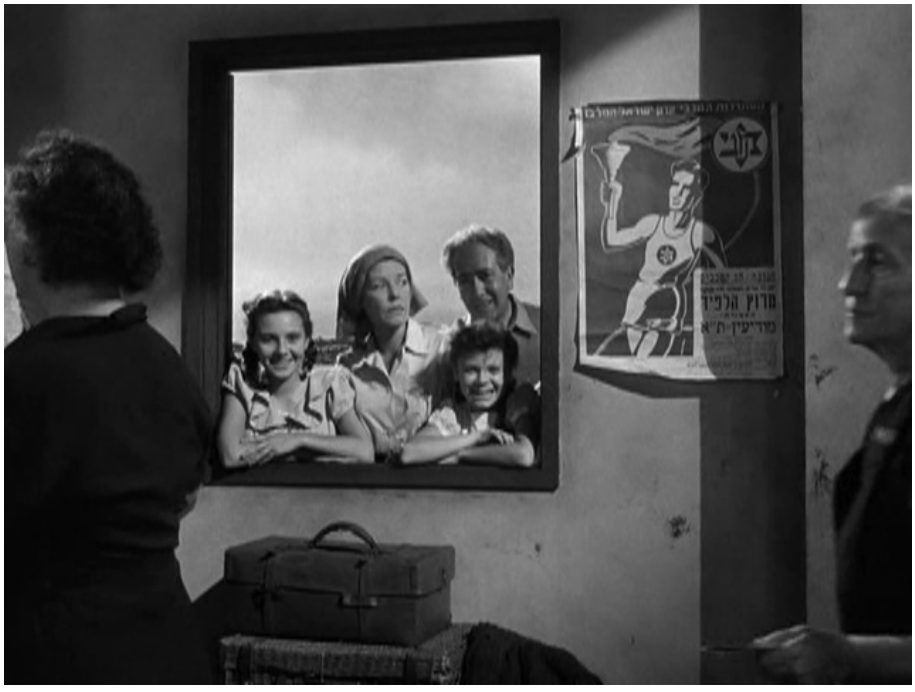
Thus it was that after 1945, cinema turned it attention to these surviving bodies and, more specifically, to their ability to remember. In both *The Juggler* (Edward Dmytryk, 1953) and *Exodus* (Otto Preminger, 1960), the enunciation explicitly rejects the use of any flashbacks to the camps. The images are absent, and in their place is the recourse to faces: close-ups that capture the dramatic moment of anguish when the verbal reference to the trauma pushes the story forward. In the first case, Dmytryk makes use of a window frame in which we see a woman with her two children to trigger a kind of internal breakdown in the protagonist, a dizzying and confusing remembrance of the lost bodies that sets off a violent reaction in him [Figure 6]. The window sections off the cinematic

space, but it also frames time and the problem of remembering. In *Exodus*, on the other hand, it is the shame of a young man who had been forced to collaborate with the *Sonderkommandos* that gives rise to a greater sense of horror and of closeness to the historical truth of the camps.

In many ways, from the outset these films acknowledge a certain inability, a strictly formal uncertainty in relation to the reconstruction of the spaces remembered by the protagonists. They get away with an elegant feint that relies on the actor's face, voice or body, even if that actor's unavoidable association with the star system of the day—in the case of Kirk Douglas in *The Juggler*—may render any kind of historical credibility impossible.

There is, however, one highly notable exception, which was filmed shortly after the end of the war: *The Search* (Fred Zinnemann, 1948). Shot partly among the ruins of a devastated Europe, the film functions exclusively through the *displacement of signifiers* specific to the Holocaust. To put it more clearly, under what is still a reasonably saccharine and melodramatic plot related to children who survived the camps, the imagery brings to life a highly complex network of strictly visual choices that offer the spectator a kind of deformed (or perhaps adapted) echo of what really happened in the different stages of deportation and extermination. For example, the film begins with an extraordinary prologue in which a trainload of child survivors arrives at the gates of an Allied headquarters. However, the visual construction of the sequence seems to point in another direction: the darkness of the night enveloping the station, the broken signs with Gothic German letters, and above all, the revelation of little bodies crowded inside a goods carriage. This scene unfolds in a series of shots edited in a 180-degree logic with startling precision. After an establishment shot of the station, we cut to the darkness inside the train and the main door sliding open. The camera is positioned inside this space that we have yet to see, although the dour expressions of the American soldiers that greet us prompt us to expect the worst [Figure 7]. The next shot is a POV that pans slowly over the bodies of the children [Figure 8]. They are completely still, their bodies lying in a tangle of heads, hands and closed eyes.

Figure 6. *The Juggler* (Edward Dmytryk, 1953)



The two shots described above seem to have an exclusively dramatic logic—the introduction of the orphan child protagonist, conveniently highlighted by a beam of light—although their composition and editing are clearly very different. The cinematic techniques used to present these *living* children serve to reference the massive piles of *dead* children who were sent directly to the camps after the forced displacements. The visual elements (the interior of the train, the darkness, the chaotic arrangement of faces

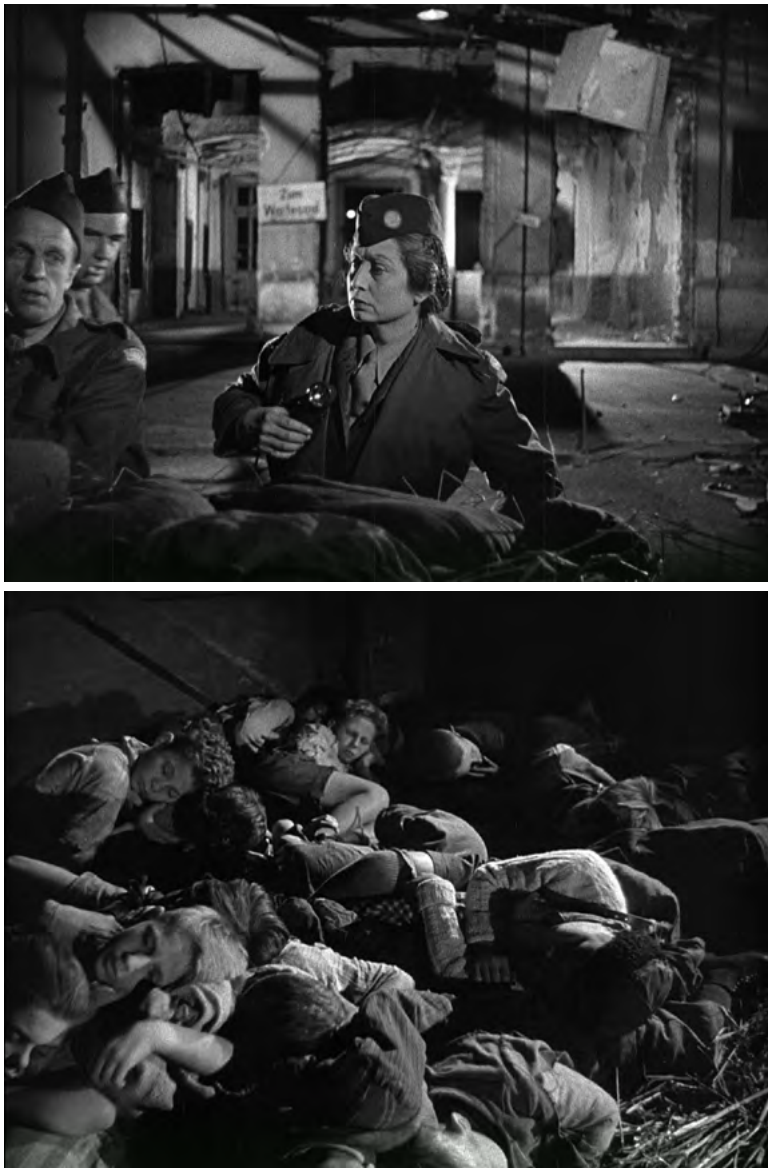
with closed eyes, etc.) strike the audience directly by suggesting what prudence forbids to be shown, but what has already been slipped into the message offered to the spectator: these children, when they wake up, are only an *exception* to the multitudes of dead bodies lurking behind the scene.

As the film progresses, we find that Zinnemann's initial strategy is maintained throughout. The children walk down dreary hallways, articulated visually in a concentration camp style, or are transported in ambulances that directly evoke the gas vans used for the first gassings at Chelmno. Finally, the whole inner journey of the protagonist is articulated around a major signifier: the barbed wire fence that separates him from his mother during his time in Auschwitz.

In what was probably a first in the history of the major Hollywood studios, this film reconstructs two specific spaces in the studio: a female barracks [Figure 9] and a kind of foggy outdoor space where the separation takes place [Figure 10]. In both cases, the violence comes close to being explicitly shown through a selective use of lighting. Like the light used on the train, intentionally directed spotlights—in this case, mimicking the presence of German searchlights—direct our attention fully at the protagonists' faces while leaving the truly unpleasant details outside the shot: the dying bodies, the piled-up corpses, and even the brutality of the guards.

As we have been able to see in these different examples, the visual and linguistic approach to the Holocaust alternated between two possibilities. The first of these involved *pointing out* to the attentive spectator the significant gaps that the film itself evokes, either through *testimony* or through *visual displacement*. The second is to stage a kind of *narrative present* that gives consistency to the particular story depicted in the film, i.e. the harsh conditions faced by the former camp inmates who have survived.

However, as the 1950s ended and the 1960s began to exert its particular effect on the global



Above. Figure 7. *The Search* (Fred Zinnemann, 1948)
Below. Figure 8. *The Search* (Fred Zinnemann, 1948)

historical memory, the enunciation became more and more explicit, to the point that audience expectations about what could visually imply a "concentration/extermination camp" moved beyond the historical archive images and found their way into popular culture. Perhaps the most significant example of this paradox was the reconstruction of an unnamed concentration camp included at the end of *The Young Lions* (Edward Dmytryk, 1958). As previously documented by Eric A. Goldman (2013: 119), when the film crew were building the

set at the original location of the Struthof-Natzweiler camp—the first camp, incidentally, to be liberated by the Allies—they felt that the facilities were not "funereal" enough to inspire sufficient terror in the audience. To enhance the sinister effect, they added more barbed wire and used a composition based directly on photographs taken during the liberation of the Buchenwald camp. There is, however, one important difference that no doubt has to do with the ideological conventions of the day: while the camp inmates appeared naked in the original photographs, the extras in the film were always modestly depicted in the regulation uniform.

These "naked bodies" were problematic for reasons that went much further than what the Code had been intended to restrict in its rigorous control over what could be shown (Zelizer, 2001: 247-274). Consider, for example, the use of the archive footage taken by the Allies in *Judgment at Nuremberg* (Stanley Kramer, 1961). A mere fifteen years after the liberation, these problematic images were taken up once again to add their potency to the signifying chain of the film. In a way, just as it had done in the trials of the Nazi war criminals themselves, the presentation of the brutality committed against the bodies had the effect of legitimising the whole message of the film—a kind of *argument of moral authority* for the American ideological discourse. In the case of Kramer's film, the scene is constructed as a dialogue between the images of the camps and the shots of the different protagonists' reactions, ranging from explicit sensationalising—the prosecutor who "comments dramatically" on the events—to (once again) narrative logic—the judge who abandons his neutrality when he is overwhelmed by the power of the image.

However, what is interesting about this sequence for this study is not the power of the image but its frailty. Although it is one of the best orchestrated moments of the film in terms of editing and scaling, it is important to note that a supporting character had already referred to the *real* footage of the camps in a mocking tone as "a horror movie". Kramer was certainly not so naive as to believe in the validity of the images *per se*; instead, their insertion in the context of this "second-level" trial (bearing in mind that this was not the famous proceeding against Göring in 1946 but a much later process that formed part of a now systematised series of trials) hints at a problem

Figure 9. *The Search* (Fred Zinnemann, 1948)

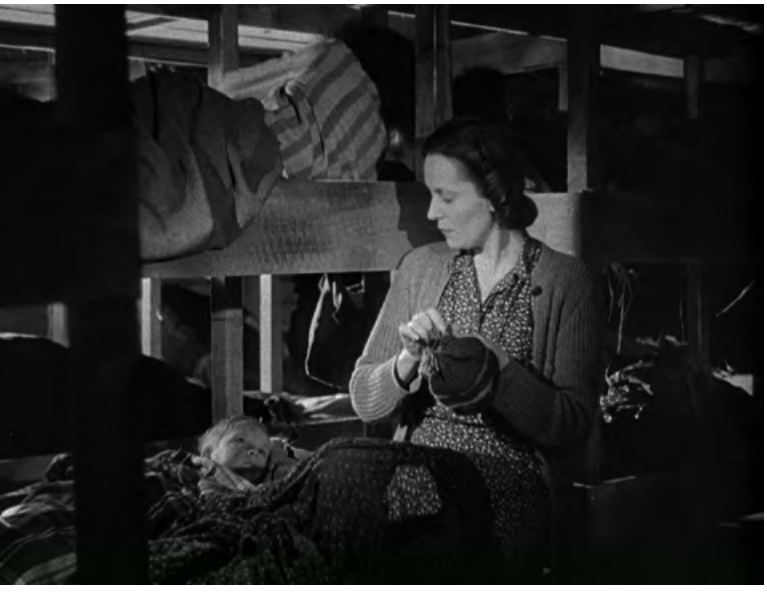


Figure 10. *The Search* (Fred Zinnemann, 1948)

that would not take long to emerge: the trivialisation of their content, their dissolution and decontextualisation; in short, their *frailty*. As we now know would happen in the years after the end of the Hays Code, the images of the camps began losing their symbolic power and ultimately became engulfed in the mechanisms of pop culture consumption. Indeed, at a time when fictionalised violence can easily match or even outdo the real footage from the liberation of the camps—consider the infamous *Auschwitz* (Uwe Boll, 2011), for example—we may well ask whether it is possible anymore to believe in the capacity of images to restore, even partially, the dignity of the lost body of the victim.

BY WAY OF EPILOGUE

As I have shown above, there is a paradox between the nature of institutional censorship and the need—an ethical but also a strategic need in relation to war—to document historical atrocities. Unlike other genocides, which are silenced or referred to in hushed tones so as not to harm the national (i.e. economic) sensibilities of the day, the Holocaust was, from the very time of its occurrence, the subject of a kind of visual exploration that clashed violently with the regulatory restrictions of the Allied nations.

In this sense, the censorship served to trigger various formal techniques for representing violence: displacement, poeticisation, quotation, revision, etc. There was something in the very act of *trusting* in the ability of the images—and, at the same time, being fully aware of their limitations—that guided the significant decisions that I have analysed here. Although in many cases the Hays Code served to *erase* what was deemed normatively unacceptable by the conservative minds of the day (the complexity of the flesh and social relations, the plurality of desires), here we can speak instead of its function as a *framework* to bring what could/must be shown into tension with what it seemed more advisable, albeit at a purely instinctive level, to leave out of the picture.

The relationship between the end of the Hays Code and the increasing number of explicit images related to the fictionalisation of the Holocaust in Hollywood cinema follows an inevitably causal logic. At the beginning of this article, I mentioned *The Pawnbroker* as a key example of a hypothetical *maturity* in Holocaust fiction that went beyond the norms of melodrama or of the mere use of the Holocaust as a *textual operator*. Indeed, what Lumet proposes is a strictly visual treatment of the problems arising from the "act of remembering", using cinematographic editing as an instrument for signifying the trauma. Thus, when the insertion of the protagonist's visions of the past *breaks up* the relationships of continuity between shots, this not only takes the flashback into a realm beyond conventional narrative but also renders explicit the survivors' problem of *integrating* the trauma into their everyday lives decades after the catastrophe.

The rules of the Code would certainly not have allowed the inclusion of images like those shown in the miniseries *Holocaust* (NBC, 1978), generally considered the starting point for the debate on the trivialisation of the historical memory. On the other hand, the use of visual strategies that are apparently *respectful* to the victims—I am thinking specifically of the rather debatable use of off-screen space in the ending to *The Zookeeper's Wife* (Niki Caro, 2017)—has not in any way ensured responsible participation in their process of remembering. Although there seems increasingly to be an argument for referring to a kind of melodramatic subgenre explicitly associated with the Holocaust, which new films continue to add to almost constantly, there is no correct way of systematising the visual depiction of the violence without succumbing to the easily disputed dogmas of the most radically iconoclastic schools (Wajcman, 2001). This exciting theoretical battleground is still quite active, as reflected by the

central place that films like *Son of Saul* (Saul Fia, László Nemes, 2015) continue to be given in academic studies (Mendieta Rodríguez, 2018; Ferrando García and Gómez Tarín, 2018).

The Hays Code sought to impose an external regulatory framework based on a puritanical approach to textual materials, taking it as a given that in this way it could ensure a positive ethical effect on the public. However, as the film production developed *in parallel* by UFA in Nazi Germany shows us, the accumulation of prudish content with emotionally innocuous storylines does not necessarily guarantee a relationship of respect towards the Other. Only by understanding each film as a unique voice that speaks to us through the signifying processes of its form can we map out its rules, its shortcomings and, finally, its intimate ethical approach. ■

NOTES

1 Article 1(b) of the Motion Picture Production Code, popularly known as the Hays Code.

2 While Lang and Bertolt Brecht co-wrote an incisive tale of adventures and betrayal related to Heydrich's assassination, Sirk opted for a hypothetical poetic reconstruction of its most dramatic consequence: the brutal extermination of Lidice in retaliation. Lang's is an eminently urban film with a marked background of communist sympathy in which the executions always occur off-screen, while Sirk would read the whole film as a kind of hopeful vindication of divine goodness.

3 Obviously, the greatest exception to this conclusion was the so-called "anti-Semitic trilogy" (Gitlis, 1997) made by Harlan, Hippler and Waschneck in the early 1940s. We could also include the infamous films designed to justify the Nazi programs to exterminate the intellectually disabled (Gotz, 2014) or the "documentaries" shot by the Office of Racial Policy between 1935 and 1937.

4 It is interesting to note that several decades later, Nicolas Klotz would also use visual displacement at the end of *Heartbeat Detector* (La question humaine, 2007) to underscore the impossibility of showing the connection to the dead bodies in the camps. In this case, the narrative choice was even more radical: to leave the screen black and make use of the evocation of a chanting voice-over by Mathieu Amalric.

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CRIME IN FILMIC FORM: THE HOLOCAUST IN HOLLYWOOD CINEMA UNDER THE HAYS CODE

Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the points of friction between the representation of violence and the fictionalisation of the Holocaust under the restrictions of the Hays Code. With reference to the Code's explicit prohibition against the detailed representation of "brutal killings", I will explore the formal strategies applied by different directors (Douglas Sirk, André de Toth, Stanley Kramer, Edward Dmytryk, and Fred Zinnemann) in an effort to present the systematic shootings carried out by the *Einsatzgruppen* or, going further still, what happened in the extermination camps. To this end, I will use a textual analysis method focusing mainly on the processes of *mise-en-scène*, especially in relation to the revelation/concealment of the violence perpetrated on the victims.

Key Words

Holocaust; *Mise-en-scène*; Motion Picture Production Code; Hays Code; Brutal acts; Nazism; Hollywood.

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LA FORMA FÍLMICA DEL CRIMEN: EL HOLOCAUSTO EN EL CINE DE HOLLYWOOD BAJO EL CÓDIGO HAYS

Resumen

Nuestra investigación pretende explorar las fricciones entre la representación de la violencia y la ficcionalización del Holocausto bajo las normas del código Hays. Tomando como referencia la prohibición explícita de «no representar detalladamente crímenes brutales», exploraremos las estrategias formales que diferentes directores (Douglas Sirk, André de Toth, Stanley Kramer, Edward Dmytryk o Fred Zinnemann) aplicaron para intentar mostrar lo ocurrido en los fusilamientos sistemáticos de la población civil a manos de los *Einsatzgruppen*, o en el límite, en los propios campos de exterminio. Para ello, se seguirá una metodología de análisis textual principalmente centrada en los procesos de la puesta en escena que tome en su centro la reflexión sobre la mostración/ocultación del gesto violento hacia la víctima.

Palabras clave

Holocausto; puesta en escena; Código de Producción Cinematográfica; código Hays; actos criminales; nazismo; Hollywood.

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