

CINEMATIC PORTRAYAL OF THE HOLOCAUST

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Abstract: Holocaust is considered as one of the most atrocious events to ever occur in the history of mankind. From 1941 to 1945, the whole world witnessed the systematic mass murder of nearly six million European Jews by the Nazi German Regime and its allies. Holocaust, however, is a word originated from ancient Greek which literally means "burnt offering". The word "holocaust" has been used to refer to the extermination of the Jewish since 1945.. The Jew population of the Nazi Germany occupied Europe was wiped out which was approximately two third of the Jewish population in Europe.

This paper aims to portray the visual representation of this drastic event through films and web series over the course of time. It talks about the interpretation of actual events that occurred during the Holocaust and how the film industry witnesses the historical event that left millions dead and the survivors going through the survivor's guilt of being the only one alive while their families and friends were no longer.

Keywords: Holocaust, Cinema, Jewish, Second World War, History

1. Introduction

When it comes to Holocaust, cinemas have demonstrated the event through multiple perspectives. The cinematic representation of historical events tends to portray the real atrocities on screens. The study of Holocaust representation in cinema is located at the crossroad of film studies and Holocaust studies. The issues dealt within the field are defined by two sets of tensions: first, the stress between history and narrative, and second between eastern and western understanding of the holocaust. The filmmakers and The scholars studying their movies must enwrap with the thorny questions about the representability of the holocaust on the display.

2. Filmic representation of the Holocaust

A body of scholarship, grounded in the theories of visual culture and psychoanalytical theory focuses on the challenges of portraying tragic history authentically and in ways that honours the victims. The question is to what extent can historical facts be fictionalized, and which genres of fiction and documentary are appropriate. Specifically is the representation of the holocaust in comedy, fantasy, and other popular genres.

Scholarship also deals with questions of recollection – in what ways the cinematic representations reflect and adapt the understanding of history and transmission of memory. The second set of tensions surfaced as a result of complexities in history both during the Second World War and the Cold War, which divided the world into the "West" which included the United States, Western Europe, and Israel, whereas the "East", that is, the Soviet bloc. Under Soviet rule the story of the Holocaust was largely encompassed into that of the "Great Nationalistic War", as a result, it silenced the fact that its victims were Jews.

Therefore, representation of the holocaust in Soviet and different European National films was cut out. On the other hand, the Western narrative of the holocaust was predominantly concerned with stories of Nazi confinement and death camps, blurring the history of Holocaust in the Soviet regions. Only lately has the Western historical record of the holocaust started pivoting to the East and film fellowship spread its focus to incorporate Soviet and Soviet-bloc national cinemas.

The erudition also asks questions about the problems of representation, but for the most part in the situation of restriction and suppression of comparative study of the visual portrayal of Holocaust in national films. Set scholarship uncovers previously concealed movies and also analyzes the Eastern and Western narrations of the holocaust in the Post-Cold War era. Ultimately, some scholarship on Holocaust films is also concerned with periodization, that is, discussing holocaust movies in the conditions of the historical era in which they were produced and spread around, whether in a particular National context or in a comparative manner..

3. The Pianist

A war film combined with drama and music is based upon the actual life story of Wladyslaw Szpilman was created in 2002. Wladyslaw was a Jewish pianist who had to hide in order to survive the occupation of Nazi Germany regime of Poland. The film is said to be one of the most historically accurate depictions of the occupation of Poland and the Warsaw Ghetto. It successfully portrayed the reality of daily life during the Second World War. The film portrays how the Jewish people of Poland were affected by the Nazi regime. There were certain laws passed by the Nazis that would help Hitler to accomplish his desire of exterminating the whole Jewish community. Some of these laws included the compulsory wearing of badges with the star of David on the arms of Jews in order to identify them. There was a law that reduced the income of the Jews, etc. In an attempt to destroy Polish Culture, the Nazi regime murdered almost three million Jewish people in Germany occupied Poland.

3.1 Analysis of The Pianist

The filmmakers decided to start the film with Szpilman working at a radio station as a Pianist, adorning a nice well - knitted suit when suddenly a bomb goes off signifying the entrance of Germany in Poland and establishing their control. The film starts with how Wladyslaw Szpilman is not allowed to enter a coffee shop where he reads a sign which clearly translates to "No Jews". Szpilman's friend Dorota suggests going to a park to which Szpilman explains that Jewish people are not allowed to enter the park as well. The scene about bombing is said to be the accurate depiction of how Germany in reality bombed Warsaw during the invasion.

The movie depicts the Warsaw Ghetto exactly as it is which was a particular zone surrounded by a brick wall guarded by fully braced armed personnel and inside that ghetto were nearly four hundred thousand Jewish People. Residents of the ghetto were ill-treated and were often murdered over petty reasons and sometimes without any reason just for the sake of it. According to the author of the book "The Holocaust", the biggest problem for the residents of the ghettos was hunger. The movie does a tremendous job at showing the limited amount of food supply in the ghetto. There was a scene where a man is trying to steal soup from a woman but it falls on the ground spilling everywhere and the man decides to eat it off of the ground.

At the end of the film, the German occupation of Poland ends with the defeat of Germany by the Allies and several Nazi soldiers were put in the Soviet Prisoner-of-War Camps. At the very end, Szpilman is shown playing the piano which signifies the end of German control over Poland as well as the discrimination against the Jewish people was over.

4. The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

Holocaust is an event that could be seen from multiple perspectives and in this film it is seen through the eyes of a child. The main theme of the movie is the portrayal of the innocence of children. It shows that no matter what the situation is, a child will always view another child as the same without any differences. The author of the book John Boyne says that he could write the story only through the eyes of a child. The film demonstrated how Bruno and Shmuel maintain their innocence even after going through everything around them. The film focuses on the individual relationships and shows how two young innocent boys are looking for the same kind of friendship. Bruno's confusion as to why people in striped pajamas are considered non-humans and how they are different from others and on the other hand, there is awareness of reality and unnatural acceptance of the world as it is.

4.1 Analysis of The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

In the film, when Bruno is forced to leave Berlin with his parents and shift to Auschwitz, his major complaint is that he has to leave his three best friends. What makes it worse is that in their new house, there are no families and children in the neighbourhood. When he went to explore without informing his parents, he somehow reached the fences of the concentration camp of Auschwitz where he met Shmuel. The two form a bond that transcends races and fences. The two boys became friends in the midst of hatred governing the world proving that friendship can thrive even in the darkness.

The barbed wire fences represent the separation of the characters as well as the other separations. Both the children are confined in their own spaces from where both of them cannot leave and when they meet each other, they feel a certain kind of freedom, they get to feel and live the life they wanted for a little while. The "boundaries" in the film represent certain aspects of the society as there is a huge difference between the living conditions within and outside the fence.

On one side of the fence is Shmuel who is inside a concentration camp whereas on the other hand, Bruno is in a house living with his family. Shmuel is shown to be living in confinement all his life from his home, to a shared room, a train and eventually in the biggest concentration camp of Holocaust, Auschwitz. Bruno, however, has a certain amount of freedom where he can walk out of his house freely whenever he wants and does not fear for his life but at the end both the boys were struggling with loneliness which helped them in forming the unlikely bond to find a little bit of freedom with the company of each other.

At the end in the film, life is shown through the eyes of a little boy. An innocent boy who has not realised the reality and the cruelty of events unfolding before his eyes. A boy who wanted to have friends and he did find one.

5. Schindler's List

The film is based upon a novel. The novel was titled "Schindler's List" only in the United States and in Europe, it was titled as "Schindler's Ark". The film starts in the town of Krakow in Poland during the Second World War which was occupied by German troops. The Jews of Poland are supposed to register themselves as well as their family members. More than ten thousand Jews arrived at Krakow everyday from the province.

Oscar Schindler is a businessman who is an opportunist, pursuing his own success. Schindler buys a vessel factory which is run by a Polish Jew. Schindler became a member of the Nazi Party so that he could take over the factory. Schindler is portrayed as a cold-blooded opportunist. He gets to know about a Jewish accountant named Stern and becomes friends with him by using the other Jews. Schindler realises about the unreasonable murders committed by the Nazi party and decides to save thousands of Jewish People from being exterminated by the Nazi.

5.1 Analysis of Schindler's List

After the Nazis invaded Poland, they snatched the properties of Jewish citizens and forced them into ghettos. The SS used the Jews as free labor and forced them to work in the factories like Oscar Schindler's in Krakow.

The Black and white background plays a significant role in the film as it portrays the time the events occurred in. There is a scene in between the movie where a girl is seen in red as it shows the colour of blood on her body symbolizing the preciousness and hope of life. The style of the film connects the film to that era and deepens the viewer's immersion in the historical background.

The background music in the film is a powerful tool which makes the audience feel the same feeling as the Jews felt in the film. A world renowned violinist named Itzhak Perlman plays the original sound track for the film who is also one of the Jews who was saved by Oscar Schindler. He plays the song by remembering being amidst the massacre at that time, the extreme fear and sadness can be felt through his performance.

This film can be considered as one of the greatest films to portray the brutality of the Holocaust. One of the key features of this film is that it builds up very slowly and very subtly due to which one does not realise what is happening until they reach the climax. The film does an extremely wonderful job in portraying the horrors of Holocaust. The starving Jews to the barracks and to the children, it is horrific because the event actually was horrifying.

Conclusion

Holocaust cinema has gone through several stages and phases through the course of time. The various allied forces produced images of the newly released camps. This substance, itself frequently depending upon amalgamated forms of legitimacy and restagings with actual convicts, stands at the beginning of a long and by now rather eminent tradition of using the medium of film and increasingly also the role played by photography in order to educate the viewers about the atrocities committed during the Nazi reign. The film industry while creating fiction films that talk about the holocaust takes a different approach by creating narrative that contemporary viewers can relate to, this frequently try to build empathy and contribute importantly in making of the Holocaust and ethical legacy that remains significant and relevant.

The Holocaust movies demonstrate how broad the range within which film makers set out to fantasize not only the events during the second World war but also the evolving legal ethical and stationary challenges that emerged from the specific limitations and opportunities that moving images provide. The contemporary Holocaust films come out to take a more minute if less self-reflexive approach. The films about holocaust include moments that gesture towards the unreliability of various aspects of representation while simultaneously stressing the importance of keeping the events represented and their by commemorated in their viewers active memory.

The Holocaust films increasingly branch out into new thematic directions and work with aesthetic strategies not previously employed; the critical discussion of course begins to address these aspects as well. Recent Holocaust cinemas have advanced our understanding of the history of this filmy genre along numerous different pathways.

The films made on Holocaust portray different kinds of atrocities committed by the Nazis on the Jewish people not just by lowering their income and degrading their existence and making them do free labour works in factories, streets irrespective of the qualifications they

have but also being forced into the numerous concentration and extermination camps all over the Nazi occupied Europe where they were tortured extremely and gassed in the gas chambers in groups killing millions.

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