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Source: *Salmagundi*, No. 106/107 (SPRING - SUMMER 1995), pp. 127-145
Published by: Skidmore College
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40548825
Accessed: 27/10/2014 17:25

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The Cinema Animal: On Spielberg's *Schindler's List*

BY GEOFFREY HARTMAN

1

As a film that conveys to the public at large the horror of the extermination, *Schindler's List* is entirely successful. The mass scenes are heart-rending: the liquidation of the ghetto, the enticement and deportation of the children from the camp, the mothers rushing that convoy; later, the exhumation and burning of the bodies (a scene from hell). The scale is deliberately varied: from the brilliant opening, matching the smoke of the extinguished candle and the smoke of the locomotive, to Schindler's hilltop observation of the exterminating action, to the close-ups in the apartment buildings (the chaos of terror made physically painful to the viewer's eyes by handheld, unsteady cameras, as if the eyes had to be punished for what they could not feel). Then back to the hilltop and the extraordinary glimpse of the little girl in the red coat wandering alongside and apart from the murders and roundups, as if on an ordinary kind of walk. Then the heartbreaking effort of the boy to find a hiding place, and ending in the sewer. The sheer assault on the lifeworld of the Krakow Jews as well as on their persons could not be rendered more effectively than when the contents of the suitcases are emptied, first at the deportation center, where the spoliation is clear, then during the ghetto's liquidation, when even spoliation ceases to matter, and the contents and then the suitcases are contemptuously thrown over the banisters.

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We have learnt that technique is never just technique: it retains a responsibility towards the represented subject. This link of responsibility distinguishes Spielberg here. The difference between close-ups and long shots is utilized again and again: uncomfortably but tellingly we sometimes see the action as if through the telescopic sights of Goeth's murderous rifle. The imperative to make everything *visible* is not modified by such distancing; rather, the viewers' eyes are more fully implicated. We are made aware of our silent and detached glance as spectators removed in time and place. Neither the creator of this film nor its viewers can assert like the Chorus in the *Oresteia*: "What happened next I saw not, neither speak it."

Yet, as I realized later, the premium placed on visuality by such a film made me deeply uneasy. To see things that sharply, and from a privileged position, is to see them with the eyes of those who had the power of life and death. There is no convincing attempt to capture a glimpse of the daily suffering in camp or ghetto: the kind of personal and characterizing detail which videotestimony projects record through the "lens" of the survivors' recollections.

Nor is there an attempt to explore the behavior of the main protagonists. Spielberg has been commended for not making Schindler transparent or seeking to illuminate the mystery of his compassion. While we do not need or want an "explanation," both Schindler and Goeth remain stylized figures that fail to transcend the handsome silhouettes of the average Hollywood film. The madness of Goeth is made believable simply by the madness of the war and particularly this war against the Jews; and there is no conversion or turn in Schindler that is expressly highlighted. Seeing the brutal liquidation from the hilltop may have played its part; but it is only when "his" Jews are fated to be sent to Auschwitz that he goes decisively from making money to spending his money to buy them back. The scene in the cellar between Goeth and Helen Hirsch, and in Goeth's house between Schindler and the drunk camp commander on the subject of power, are psychologically credible, but their frame remains the deadly game of power.

Goeth's offhanded, as if casual murderousness, moreover, especially when he toys with sparing the young boy who has sinned against cleanliness (the neurosis is barely hinted at), can be perversely humaniz-

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ing. Against our will, we are made to identify with the hope that something in this man is redeemable, and that the boy will be saved.[1] The pathology against the Jews, moreover, is always expressed in actions rather than words, as if no argument or introspection were needed. Only in defense of Schindler imprisoned for kissing a Jewess does Goeth trot out some garbage about the spell cast by those women, which betrays his own acted-out fascination with Helen Hirsch. The film's pace remains that of an action movie which tolerates no diversion except to increase suspense: it "clicks" from shot to shot, from scene to scene, with the occasional mechanical failure symbolizing a chance for human feelings to reenter the sequence.

Spielberg is always precise, with a special ability to translate history into scene and synecdoche. Yet his tendency toward stylization is both distancing and disconcerting. The wish to encompass, through the episode of "Schindler's List", the enormity of what happened in Krakow and Plaschow, leads to moments approaching Holocaust kitsch. The SS officer playing the piano during the liquidation of the ghetto—with the "Is it Bach? No, Mozart" comment of the soldiers who hear him—is an unnecessary touch; I feel the same about the scene with the "Schindler women" in the showers at Auschwitz, which is melodramatic and leaves the audience confused (like the terrified prisoners, in that crucial moment of uncertainty, when the lights go out) about the issue of disinfecting showers and gas showers. The episode, however, in which Goeth vaunts that he and his troops are making history, because the Jews who settled in Krakow six centuries ago will have ceased to exist by day's end, is important, and recalls Himmler's Poznan speech.

Poster effects that make this very much a Hollywood film will show through even more with the passage of time. While a certain flatness in the characters may be inevitable in a panorama of this kind, and strengthens the mass scenes and "actions" that convey so ferociously Nazi callousness and terror, the focus on Goeth on the one hand and Schindler on the other is too clean, like the killings themselves which are quick and neat and remain without resonance except for the sound-effect. Two of the three endings of the film are also Hollywood: the farewell scene in the factory is stagey, and Schindler's break-down (concerning his not having saved enough Jews: had he only sold his car, his gold Nazi pin, etc.)

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detracts rather than adds; the survivors walking en masse toward the sunset with "Jersualem the Golden" sung by an angelic offstage chorus (in Israeli showings of the film, I understand the song was changed to "Eli, Eli"), while giving a certain comfort after all those scenes of mass victimization, is again Hollywood or fake Eisenstein. This sentimentality is redeemed only by the final sequence: it takes us out of docudrama, and presents the survivors, the Schindler remnant, together with the actors who played them, as they place a ritual pebble on Schindler's tombstone in the Jerusalem graveyard.

II

Claude Lanzmann takes a radical position in a comment on *Schindler's List*, writing that the Holocaust "is above all unique in that it erects a ring of fire around itself....Fiction is a transgression. I deeply believe that there are some things that cannot and should not be represented."[2] I too believe in the possibility of reticence: that there are things that should not be represented. Yet because our modern technical expertise is such that simulacra can be provided for almost any experience, however extreme, it is more today a question of *should not* rather than *cannot*. What should not be represented remains a moral decision; a choice that does not have to be aggravated by a quasi-theological dogma with the force of the Second Commandment.

It is true that the more violence I see on the screen, through real-time reporting or fictional recreation (all history sooner or later returns as film, to use Anton Kaes' phrase), the more I rediscover the wisdom of a classical poetics that limited direct representations of violence or suffering, especially on the stage, and developed instead a powerful language of witness or indirect disclosure. The idiom of violence should not be routinized and become, as so often in the movies, an expectation, even a default setting. Though genius may breach any decorum and overcome our abhorrence, as Shakespeare does when he shows Gloucester's blinding on stage, it is clear that repeated depictions of *to pathos*, as Aristotle names those bloody scenes, will desensitize rather than shock, especially when art enters the era of mechanical reproduction. The Rodney King tape, shown over and again, turns into an icon, a barely expressive metonymy.

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In short, Spielberg's version of *Schindler's List* can be faulted on two counts. One is that it is not realistic enough. It still compromises with Hollywood's stylishness in the way it structures everything by large salvational or murderous acts. But the second is that the very cruelty and sensationalism of the event, reconstructed through a spectacular medium, exerts a magnetic spell that alone seems able to convey the magnitude of the evil. Viewers of this powerful film are surely troubled by the question that Adorno has renewed concerning the pleasure we take in tragedy; or they may wonder how its spell, so close to voyeurism, could have been modified. The "ineluctable modality of the visual", with its evacuation of inwardness, fixates imagination more than the formulas of oral tradition. Artists have always, in one way or another, rebelled against the tyranny of the eye.[3]

A self-conscious commentary intruded into such a movie is no solution: it would merely have weakened its grip as docudrama, or postmodernized the film. Spielberg has created a fact on the screen, and the moral challenge passes to the viewers. Can we, either during the movie, or as those images recall themselves in the mind, become like the Perceval of legend, who must decide what to ask or not to ask of an extraordinary sight? There is no guarantee, of course, that the questions we ask—not only about how the Holocaust could have happened, but what is to be done now that it has happened—will be redemptive.

III

In the debate about this film the major issue becomes: what are the characteristics of an authentic depiction of the Shoah? "Authentic" is a heartfelt and yet slippery word. I will have to rephrase the question: how should we value a graphic, cinematic realism of Spielberg's kind, seemingly unconscious of itself (that it remains a fiction of the real) and which elides (except for the last scene) the passage of time and the relation of memory to reality?

To answer this question I seek the help of two other well-known films about the Holocaust. Claude Lanzmann in *Shoah* rejects all archival images or simulacra: he keeps the film in the present, the time of composition, reuniting survivors and the original (now deceptively peaceful) scene of their suffering. He animates that scene by an action of the

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survivors' own memory, and even—as in the case of Bomba, the Auschwitz barber—by using props to assist a painful return of the past. In this radical and principled work, the presence of the past is evoked primarily through human speech, through testimony; and so the film is anything but archival, or a historical simulacrum.

Lanzmann too is very much in presence, a part of this present. His questioning can become, not just with the perpetrators but also with the victims, a pressured interrogation. Occasionally this creates a problem. For he does not appear to be all that interested in the survivors' life or afterlife: the way their daily reality is still affected by a traumatic past. Instead, with relentless directorial insistence, he recovers and communicates every detail of *how* the "Final Solution" was implemented, every aspect of the death-machinery's working, of the technological Mammon that demands its sacrifice. That is the "reality" he brings home in all its technical and bureaucratic efficiency. Stunning, disconcerting, obsessive, and either hypnotic or tedious, *Shoah* is a film that does not entirely spare Lanzmann himself, who is shown to be—in the service of his cause—ironic, manipulative, and anything but likeable. To his credit, however, he does not seek to explain the obscene facts by a Marxist or any other thesis. "There is no Why here," he quotes (in a later comment on the film) from a concentration camp guard's welcome, recorded by Primo Levi.

In Haim Gouri's trilogy that opens with *The Eighty-First Blow*, precisely what Lanzmann rejects is the very base of the representation. Reality is depicted exclusively through archival images. But individual memory does enter, through the voice-over of survivors who comment on the events—a tangle of voices with its own richness and variation, and in no simple way subordinated to the photo-montage. These images and voices have to speak for themselves: though sequenced, there is no other effort to bring them into compositional time, which Lanzmann never departs from. Yet the director's didactic if invisible hand remains palpable. In *Flames in the Ashes*, for example, the part of Gouri's trilogy that deals with resistance, the issue of why Jews did not put up more fight is "answered" by footage of defeated Russian soldiers, columns of them stretching to the horizon in an endless line, utterly dejected, guarded by very few Germans, and scrambling abjectly, like animals, for cigarette butts or food.

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Neither Gouri's nor Lanzmann's films are *primarily* about memory in its relation to reality. Although Lanzmann composes his film as an oral history, his interviews are used to reconstruct exhaustively and exclusively one aspect only—the most terrible one—of the Shoah: its end-phase, the "Final Solution" together with the technology and temperament that made it possible. Gouri's focus is more varied, less obsessive, but he must compose the visual track mainly in the "idiom" of the perpetrators, since most of the photos at his disposal (especially in *Flames in the Ashes*) were made by the Nazis themselves for propaganda or documentation.[4]

The very format of voice-over adopted in Gouri's trilogy is reminiscent of newsreels shown in the old movie theaters. Goebbels' propaganda machine exploited the format blatantly in such films as *Der Ewige Jude*. But in Gouri the excited and triumphant monologue of the announcer has given way to a spirited montage of voices. His documentary gains its integrity from the fact that it invents or reconstructs nothing. It struggles, rather, with a mass of received materials: utterances, images, musical score.[5] They are all "clichés". Gouri is symphonic, a conductor rather than a director; and though his emphasis remains on reportage, the structural gap between visual footage and voice-over makes the film both less unified in its realism and more interesting from a formal point of view. A picture, here, is not worth a thousand words but *requires* these words (the voices of the survivors, in their timbre as well as their message) to humanize it, to rescue it from voyeuristic hypnosis.

Yet Gouri never develops his technique in order to portray memory as either its own place, evolving its own stories or symbols, or in a competitive situation. The relation of cinematic image to voice-over (*voix-off*, the French say) is not problematized as in Alain Resnais' and Marguerite Duras' *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. Different life-worlds—that of the Japanese man and the French woman, that of the aftermath of the Atomic Bomb and the aftermath of the Nazi occupation—are juxtaposed in that film; while soundtrack and image are sometimes at odds. Today, as we recede from the original event, and identity—personal or collective—is increasingly based on publicized memories, there is bound to be an ever greater tension between different "cultures." These are now defined by what is rescued from oblivion or singled out for remembrance, by modes of representation, reception and transmission.

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IV

However different their films, both Lanzmann and Gouri avoid an invasive technological gaze. We have become painfully aware of that gaze since Vietnam, Biafra, Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda.[6] For it is no longer unimaginable that some of the terrible scenes reconstructed by Spielberg might have been filmed in real-time—as if that present were our present—and piped almost simultaneously into our homes.[7] Those who watch *Schindler's List*, therefore, face the dilemma I have already mentioned. How do we respond to such sights? In our very impotence, do we protest and turn away, or find some other defense? Have we no choice but to demand that these representations be labeled unpresentable? How can we morally accommodate the fact that "what others suffer, we behold"?[8] *Schindler's List* has not only achieved popular acclaim but is being prepared for widespread use in the schools. This suggests that all my reservations and questions have missed a very basic point: as the Greeks (though not the Hebrews) maintained, a clear picture of what is feared can moderate that fear. It may be fundamentally affirming to "sing in the face of the object" (Wallace Stevens) as Spielberg incredibly seeks to do.

Yet even Spielberg cannot pass beyond the limits of realism. Though there is a *bona fide* attempt to follow the facts and to be accurate about the Jewish milieu depicted (his errors or compromises do not detract, I think, from the overall picture), so much in the movie is structured like a fiction, so much is like other action films, though based on documented history, that the blurring between history and fiction never leaves us free from an interior voice that murmurs: "It is (only) a film." This happens not simply when the film is most vulnerable—when it is not about the Holocaust at all but stages a homoerotic psychodrama, scenes of tense mutual jockeying between Goeth and Schindler—but also when episodes like the liquidation of the Ghetto force us into a defensive mode by the sheer representational power displayed. Visual realism, as I have written elsewhere, can induce an "unreality effect." Hans Jonas is reported to have said that "At Auschwitz more was real than is possible."

Though Spielberg's gaze seems to me problematic, we should explore the questions it raises. And while I prefer Gouri's and Lanzmann's alternate modes of representation, almost the obverse of each other and more respectful than Spielberg of the action of memory and the issue of

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presentability, there is no need to insist dogmatically on a single type of "realistic" depiction. I want to describe briefly other exemplary modes, especially those that respect the action of memory.

V

In the case of Aharon Appelfeld (whose novels have not yet been filmed) memory is an absent presence. We are made to feel the scorching flame that animates his characters but we never see it consciously displayed as a haunting or unbearable force. We know something has displaced their life or basic trust or vital faith, yet memory's "fire," as Appelfeld calls it, is subject to a perpetual curfew.

His novels stand out, in fact, for not singing in the face of the object; he does not describe the Shoah directly, only the before and after. The survivor is often his theme, but not the specificity of Holocaust memory. He refuses the slightest hint of melodrama, focussing instead on the daily life of human beings who have difficulty living in this world after what they have gone through, yet cannot escape into political or religious mysticism. They want to do something with a life, their life, that was spared, but continue to feel guilty and out of focus.

Like Helga in *The Healer*, there is always a sick person who seems to take on herself the symptoms of an obscure illness; but that illness is intermittent, cut across by an extraordinary earthiness and a horizon where that earthiness is not opposed to faith. Yet there has been a fatal separation between faith and feeling, orthodoxy and assimilation. Jewish emancipation has not fulfilled Jewish needs. If we ask, given his characters' lack of orientation, where are they going, it is tempting to answer with Novalis: "Immer nach Hause", "Always home." That underlying nostalgia is too close to a death-drive.

A sense of spiritual waste emanates from Appelfeld's stories, exacerbated by the shiftless biological energy his characters display, and by strong, though discontinuous moments of physical pleasure in nature, in just being alive. There is no purposeful dying but also no rebirth. Yet it is rebirth that is at the horizon of all this aimless wandering. The irony in many Appelfeld novels, from *Age of Wonders* and *Badenheim* on, is that a post-traumatic condition, which requires no extreme effects of art to represent it, begins to resemble the human condition as a whole. So the

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insouciance or innocence of his assimilated Jewish characters (a trait that makes them sleep-walkers in an increasingly hostile environment) is not unlike that of camp inmates who have passed through the worst. Both groups display a hypnotic alertness, where everything is registered by the senses yet meaning and affect seem rarely to get through. A movie in their mind (which we cannot see) makes the survivors wander about restlessly, up and down, back and forth, ever wakeful though wishing to sleep it off. In the case of the assimilated, pre-Holocaust Jews, the restlessness seems to come from a haunting lack of memory: they are described as "ego floating on the surface of consciousness." For both groups, then, getting away from the past, its fullness or emptiness, is not enough: they crave a distraction—even an ecstasy—as deep as nature itself, or an anti-self-consciousness principle as subsuming as art.

Often, therefore, Appelfeld evokes a magical but recuperative sleep, midway between amnesia and gestation. Of the youngsters who finally reached Israel, he writes: "After years of wandering and suffering, the Land of Israel seemed like a broad, soothing domain, drawing us into deep sleep. Indeed, this was our desire: to sleep, to sleep for years, to forget ourselves and be reborn."[9] An extended psychic absence is the necessary prelude for healing, for a rebirth that has a distinctly aesthetic dimension, in that empathy returns to what was previously merely observed.

VI

"We must transmit memory," Appelfeld has written, "from the category of history to that of art." A question arises concerning that program: do his novels veil historical memory too much or do they save the specificity of art in an age of brutal realism? The problematic reaches beyond Holocaust-centered representations. A film like Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad* is distinguished by its deliberate, stylized entanglement with the absence rather than presence of memory—with memory-envy. In its chill and elegant way, it parallels Appelfeld's distancing: a decisive event is presupposed, a virtual *lieu de mémoire* that cannot be brought to life, that refuses to become a living encounter.[10] Yet that there was, once, a place and a time of real encounter continues to exert its seduction. The French classicism of the film is, by way of both the sterile setting and the actors' deportment, a protest against another kind of

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seduction, that of contemporary realism. At the same time, it succeeds in starkly shifting the focus to a man and a woman who must perform their minuet with little to help them except a memory that is more unreal than real: memory here remains the mistress of illusions.

In a similar yet also startlingly different way, the German filmmaker Alexander Kluge refuses to allow the "forces of the present"—our programmatic realism—"to do away with the past and to put limits on the future." His movies come to terms with the past and its continuing pressure by incorporating images of ruined or deserted Nazi architecture. These negative *lieux de mémoire*, once glorified by Nazi films, serve as a reminder of the "eternity of yesterday." Symptoms of a fatal collective dream that has not really passed away, they play on in the *Kinotier*, the "cinema animal" (Kluge's phrase) we have become.[11]

VII

What is to be done with that cinema animal: how can it be nurtured, but also trained? Memory and technology have become correlative themes. If, by a new fatality, everything returns as film, then not only is the present endangered as a site of experience, but also the past. The Soviet joke that "The past is even less predictable than the future" takes on a broader significance, one that encompasses us too. The authenticity of past and present are imperiled not only by Enlightenment philosophies of progress, which elide everything for the sake of the future, nor just by the selfishness of each Now generation, but also by a subversive knowledge that information technology can infiltrate and mediate everything, so that our search for authentic or unmediated experience becomes both more crucial and desperate.[12]

That context strengthens the importance of a new genre of representation, the videotestimony, which is cinematic and countercinematic at the same time. Formally videotestimonies make a double claim: they convey "I was there", but also "I am here"—here to tell you about it, to take that responsibility despite trauma and pain, despite the divide between present and past. The "I am here" is the present aware of the past but not seeking its grounding there—for it finds not a ground but a destabilizing abyss, a murderous ditch like the one victims were forced to dig for their own corpses. Thus the position of the Holocaust survivor

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expresses a much more difficult juxtaposition of temporalities than past and present. In the survivor, aware of new generations, aware of his own decimated community, truth and transmissability enter into conflict. Some such tension has always existed: Gershom Scholem senses it in the veiled procedures of the mystic, and Walter Benjamin in the peculiar world of Kafka's imagination. But this time we know from photos, from film, from documents, very precisely what happened, and what makes the story so difficult to tell. The chilling facts, however, are not the only thing the witnesses seek to give, or what we want from them. Rather, their "I am here" balances the "I was there" and recalls the humanity of the victim who has to survive survival. There was life in death then, there is death in life now: how is that chiasmus to be honestly recorded?

It is here that technology both helps and hinders, and we see a new genre emerging. The videovisual medium has its hypnotism, but it becomes clear, when one views the testimonies, that its effect is, in this instance, more semiotic than hypnotic, that the medium both *identifies* and *differentiates* persons who have been through a wasting and disidentifying experience. Every time we retrieve an oral history in this form, even when, tragically, it tells of Treblinka or Auschwitz, technology helps to undo a technology-induced sameness. For the more fluent we become in transmitting what we call our experience, the more similar and forgettable the experience becomes. What had previously to pass through the resistant channels of tradition is now mediated by a super- conductive technical process that seems to promise absence of friction and equal time (equal light) for everyone. Hence a subversive feeling about the interchangeability and replication of experiences—a replication implicit in the technological means of their transmission.[13]

Testimonies are, as a genre, not limited to recording witnesses of the Holocaust: "testimonial video" is a more general contemporary phenomenon that links memory and technology in order to rouse our conscience and prevent oblivion. But the relation between memory and technology is especially problematic when the experience to be transmitted is traumatic. As I have indicated, the more technically adept we are in communicating what we call our experience, the more forgettable the latter becomes: more interchangeable and easily simulated. Yet Holocaust testimony, in particular, uses video to counter a video-inspired amnesia. A homeopathic form of representation is being developed.

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While not exempt from error and unconscious fabulation (especially forty and more years after the events), these audiovisual documents allow occasional spontaneous access to the resurgence of memory as well as to significant *details* of daily life and death, which history as *histoire événementielle* displaces or passes by. Memory is allowed its own space, its own flow, when the interview is conducted in a social and nonconfrontational way, when the attempt to bring memories of the past into the present does not seek to elide a newer present—the milieu in which the recordings took place. Since the period in which they will be viewed is not the period in which they were recorded, just as the period of recording is not the time of the original experience—a pattern challenged by "real-time" video, or "The Assault of the Present on the Rest of Time"—a temporal complexity is created very close to the dimensionality of thought itself, and which undermines the attempt to simulate closure, or any kind of eternity-structure.[14]

Let me give an example of that temporal complexity, inseparable from the rhythm of memory when expressed in words. In one of the Yale videotestimonies a woman tries to describe her state of confusion during a Nazi "action." She wraps her baby in a coat, so that it appears to be a bundle, and tries to smuggle it by a German guard who is directing the Jews to left or right. She says she holds the bundle on her left side, thinking she will rescue it that way; but that memory is already a confusion, showing the strain she was under in making choices. As she passes the guard, the baby, who is choking, makes a sound; the guard summons her back, and asks for "the bundle."

At that point in her story she utters a "Now," and creates a distinct pause. It is as if by that "Now" she were not only steeling herself to speak about what happened next, but seeking to recapture, within the narrative, the time for thought denied her in the rushed and crucial moments of what she had lived through. She goes on to describe her traumatic separation from the baby: she wasn't all there, she claims, or she was numb, or perhaps, she implies, she is imagining she had a baby—perhaps she has always been alone. Even Jack, her husband, she says later on—slipping to another now-time as the camera pans to him (and for a moment we think she is saying that even with Jack she has remained alone)—even Jack didn't know her story, which she revealed to him only recently, though he

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too is a survivor. When, just before this moment, she admits she gave the officer the baby, she does not say "the baby" but "the bundle" (a natural metaphor, sad and distancing, yet still affectionate, perhaps a Yiddishism, the "Paeckel"): "He stretched out his arms I should hand him over the bundle and I hand him over the bundle and this was the last time I had the bundle."[15]

VIII

I remember in a shadowy yet haunting way a moment in one of Resnais' films (I believe it was *Muriel*, set in the period of the Algerian war with its revelations of torture by certain elements of the French army), when a home movie is inserted, and the muteness of the medium seems to heighten our sense of the mutilation (physical, psychological or both) inflicted on the woman who is its subject. Emptied of sound those scenes screamed all the more. I also remember them in black and white, and contrasting with the color film; but I may be wrong about that. The crude tape was like a play within a play, and I thought of the mime in *Hamlet*, that serves to catch the conscience of the King. Here as there the irruption of an archaic medium takes us out of the temptation to smooth over or aestheticize what happened. Breaking the frame suggests that a crude form of realism may be closer to the truth than its sophisticated version. Silenced memories live on silently.

That Spielberg shoots in black and white has an archaizing effect and could have been a temporal distancing, but it seems post-color, so rich a tonality is achieved. Spielberg made the right choice; yet the film needed also an *internal* contrast to relieve what I have called its invasive techno-logical gaze and to respect unglossy aspects, the graininess and haltings of memory. So Gouri, at the end of *Flames in the Ashes*, presents an epic array of photos, creased rather than glossy, and in a static flow of images quite unlike the film's erratic though fluent montage up to that point. But Spielberg seems always in a hurry, or in love with mimesis, with the motion and hugeness of a medium that has retained its magic, and which he stages, whatever the subject, for the sake of the child in us—for the children whose murder, though not directly shown, is his most terrible and poignant theme.

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It is the child in the adult which remains Spielberg's theme even here: the abused and disabused child. Cinema addresses that sin against the child—not only, as in *Schindler's List*, by terrifying us with pictures of a mass infanticide, but also, in general, by reviving a structural link between the adult memory and the childlike imagination.[16] For our increased ability to recover the past through historical research or psychotherapy is abetted by technology's proficiency with simulacra. Yet Spielberg's art is not primarily retrospective, because the child and the adult differ as "cinema animals."

The child (in us) still learns through wonder; for young people, the past can never catch up with the future, with freedom, with possibility. Who can forget, in Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the boy's face, when his toys spontaneously light up, start up, come alive? That mixture of innocence and wonder, of an expectant gaze that says "I always knew you were real, you were alive" is unforgettable. Whatever our age, when we enter the cave and become "cinema animals," we also reenter a realm of possibility. Our feelings are freed—even for the sinister subject, for a film like *Schindler's List*, which reconnects them with a knowledge we had desensitized or relegated to footnotes. But the adult, as distinct from the child, is a "cinema animal" also in a more disturbing way.

Now the ability to reproduce simulacra, or to think we *see* memories, to call them up and project them onto the wall of the cave, can make us their prisoner. They are no longer toys, companions, comforters, masks endearing rather than frightening, whose silent smiles or strange grins disclose, ever so intimately, a mysterious realm. In a society of the spectacle, strong images are what property or the soil is often said to be: a need of the soul. If the incidence of recovered memory seems to have increased dramatically in recent years, it may be that images of violence relayed hourly by the media, as well as widespread publicity on the Holocaust that leads to metaphorical appropriations (Sylvia Plath is a famous case), have popularized the idea of a determining trauma. It is understandable that many might feel a pressure to find within themselves, and for public show, an experience equally decisive and bonding, a sublime or terrible identity mark. The wound of absent memory may be

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greater than the wound of the memory allegedly recovered, and which. however painful, recalls a lost intensity, a childlike aura.

IX

In a powerful and precise essay, "La mémoire trouée" or "The Memory that is full of Holes," the French writer Henri Raczymow speaks of a double vacancy that affects his identity as a Jew.[17] There is the loss of traditional Judaism, which Bialik captures in his poem "On the Threshold of the House of Prayer."[18] The Haskalah or Jewish Enlightenment had already created, before the war, a diaspora within the diaspora: many Jews could participate only intellectually and nostalgically in a communal life which, viewed from a threshold that was never crossed, seemed warm and appealing. This loss is made more rather than less acute by the realization that the mourned reality was a sentimental construct, and could not now be expressed except in fiction, or "by sewing scraps together." But the second loss for Raczymow's generation (for the children and grandchildren of the survivors) is what Nadine Fresco has called "the diaspora of ashes": the physical and cultural destruction of Jewish communities, especially in Eastern Europe.

Razcymow, whose family came from Poland, does not seek to impose his sense of an absent or ashen memory on anyone else. But the way he situates himself as a writer helps us to think through the fact that Spielberg too must be situated. There is no universal or omniscient point of view, however objectifying the camera-eye may seem to be. So the brilliance of *Schindler's List* reflects a specifically American kind of optimism. This optimism does not make a statement about human nature (presenting Schindler as a hero need not cancel out Goeth or atrocities never before depicted so vividly) but rather a statement about *film* as a technology of transmission which differs from *writing* as Raczymow conceives it.[19] For Spielberg the screen must be filled up; he brings to life what we know of the documented history; in that sense he does not "recover" memory at all but enables its fullest transmission as imagery. Raczymow, in contrast, both as a Jew and a writer, lives the paradox of having to express a double void, and becomes, in the words of Maurice Blanchot, "the guardian of an absent meaning":

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> My books do not attempt to fill in empty memory. They are not simply part of the struggle against forgetfulness. Rather, I try to present memory *as* empty. I try to restore a non-memory, which by definition cannot be filled in or recovered. In everyone there is an unfillable symbolic void, but for the Ashkenazic Jew born in the diaspora after the war, the symbolic void is coupled with a real one. There is a void in our memory formed by a Poland unknown to us and entirely vanished, and a void in our remembrance of the Holocaust through which we did not live. We cannot even say that we were *almost* deported.[20]

Notes

1 This insidious optimism is reinforced by the structuring theme of the film. J. Hoberman points out in a symposium on *Schindler's List* in the *Village Voice* (March 29, 1994) that Spielberg chose a story in which the meaning of the camps' deadly selection ritual is reversed: "The selection is 'life', the Nazi turns out to be a good guy..."

2 *Manchester Guardian*, March 3, p. 15, translated from *Le Monde*.

3 In this and the next paragraph I borrow from my "Reading the Wound: Holocaust Testimony, Art, and Trauma", the 1994 Freud Lecture at Yale.

4 An exception is footage of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, which deeply influenced him (see his *The Man in the Glass Booth*) as well as many of his compatriots.

5 In Alain Resnais' *Night and Fog*, one of the early (1955) if not the earliest attempt to work with archival footage (much of it familiar now, through that film), what one feels most is the dilemma: what can be done, morally, visually, with such atrocious images? In Resnais' "essay", then, scenes appear sometimes too composed, and the recited monologue that serves for voice-over too poetic, even if deliberately so.

6 "...this is what the white ones cannot understand when they come with their TV cameras and their aid. They expect to see us weeping. Instead they see us staring at them, without begging, and with a bulging placidity in our eyes." "I opened my eyes for the last time. I saw the cameras on us all. To them, we were the dead. As I passed through the agony of the light, I saw them as the dead, marooned in a world without pity and love." From the *New York Times* op-ed column of January 29, 1993 by Nigerian novelist Ben Okri.

7 According to journalist Richard Schickel, Spielberg said that he "wanted to do more CNN reporting with a camera I could hold in my hand"; he also reportedly told his cast "we're not making a film, we're making a document" (*Time*, 13 December 1993, 75).

8 See Terrence des Pres, *Praises and Dispraises*, and G. H. Hartman, "Public Memory and its Discontents," *Raritan*, Spring 1994. An unsparing use of archival footage can also, of course, raise that question, as in Resnais' *Night and Fog*. But this seminal movie of 1955 intended to shock viewers out of their ignorance or indifference. Its assault on the viewer is

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only modified by an "essayistic" effect: Resnais, both through his formal virtuosity of composition and through the occasionally lyrical voice-over (Cayrol's), seems to say: what shall I do with these images, what can they mean, how can they be accommodated to anything we have known?

9 "The Awakening", in *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), p.149. Also Appelfeld's *Beyond Despair*, "Introduction" and "Lecture One". In the case of survivor immigrants to Israel, the "sleep" came from a suppression from without as well as a repression from within: Zionist ideology had, on the whole, contempt for Old World Jews and insisted on refashioning them.

10 Appelfeld's American contemporary, Philip Roth, refuses to fast in the French way—which remains quite sumptuous—and does not give up anything of his own art and comic gift because the Holocaust is not his subject. He manages to endow Anne Frank with an alternate life as Amy Bellette, the focus of Nathan Zuckermann's fantasies in *The Ghost Writer*, just as he transposes Kafka into a Czech refugee who outlived his work and becomes an unknown Hebrew school teacher in New Jersey. See the fine article of Hana Wirth-Nesher, "From Newark to Prague: Roth's Place in the American Jewish Literary Tradition", in *What is Jewish Literature?*, ed. H. Wirth-Nesher (Philadelphia/ Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1994).

11 See the presentation of his thought in "The Assault of the Present on the Rest of Time", *New German Critique*, 49 (1990), 11-23.

12 Gertude Koch observes in the *Village Voice* symposium how even the "realism" of *Schindler's List* is mediated by film history: "he recycled every little slip of film that was made before to produce this film." She thinks Spielberg tricks us, through this "rhetoric" which presents so powerfully what we seem to know or have actually seen before in other Holocaust movies, into believing that it happened exactly like this. But this is a problem with every realistic film, although it can be argued that the stakes here are higher. I prefer to treat this problem as one concerning Spielberg's elision of the perspective of personal memory.

13 Critical thought, therefore, looks for residues of technology in every product, in case the truth has been modified to achieve transmissability. The era of simulacra is necessarily an era of suspicion. Walter Benjamin is the literary source for these reflections, extended by Guy Desbord and Jean Baudrillard.

14 On Holocaust survivor testimony, see my "Apprendre des survivants: Remarques sur l'histoire orale et les archives vidéos de témoignage sur l'holocauste à l'université de Yale", *Le Monde Juif*, 150 (Janvier-Avril 1994), 67-84. This essay was originally given as a talk for the Auschwitz Foundation at a conference in Brussels, November 1992. On testimonial video generally, see Avital Ronell, "Video/Television/Rodney King: Twelve Steps beyond *The Pleasure Principal*", in *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 4 (1992), 1-15.

15 Bessie K. Holocaust Testimony, HVT-205, Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Yale University Library. See also Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 49.

16 Historians like John Boswell in *The Kindness of Strangers* have begun to document the prevalence of infanticide. They make us aware how deeply the love of children is accompanied by a fear and resentment of them. Deborah Dwork, in *Children with a Star*, records the pain of children caught up in the Holocaust, but also the love that saved them, and establishes the importance of the oral history of child survivors. Judith S. Kestenberg's "International

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Study of Organized Persecution of Children" is creating an important archive. Finally I might mention Jean-François Lyotard's *Lectures d'enfance*, which are basically meditations on the *infans*: on the relation in the human being of the mute to the representable, a relation that can never satisfy a haunting "debt" contracted at birth.

17 Originally presented as "Exil, mémoire, transmission", and translated from "La mémoire trouée", *Pardès* 3 (1986), 177-82 as "Memory Shot Through with Holes", in *Yale French Studies* 85 (1994): 98-105.

18 The word "Beit Hamidrash" in Bialik's title means "House of Study" as well as "House of Prayer" and points to an integration which is among the things now lost.

19 The concept of writing, in Raczymow, is certainly influenced not only by the post-War "New Novel" (which he mentions) but by a longer genealogy that includes Mallarmé and Proust. The *cultural* revolt in French literature against realism—and often within it—was more programmatic and consequent than in England and America. Moreover, several important authors, some Jewish, some not—they include Blanchot, Jabès and Derrida—link the integrity of writing to its "Hebraic" questioning of (realistic) image-making.

20 See *Yale French Studies*, 85: 104.

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