

***“Au revoir, les enfants”*: The Jewish Child as a Microcosm of the Holocaust as Seen in World Cinema**

Yvonne Kozlovsky Golan
Sapir College of the Negev
Kibbutzim College, Tel Aviv

NEED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Very few documentary films, if any, have focused on children during the Holocaust. There were no cinematic depictions of children being deported and killed or survival in hiding or concealed by non-Jews. It was a feature film,

Sophie's Choice,¹ which was the first to hint at the fate of Jewish children,² barely addressed since William Wyler's *Die Todesmühlen/Death Mills* (1945)³ which filmed children marching in a row between barbed wire and displaying their arms with tattooed numbers. A very concise scene in a feature film preceded documentary cinema on the topic, and yet, no matter how strong a performance, the image was incomplete. The cinematic answer to these open questions was provided only six decades later by a BBC documentary, based on the testimony of an SS man present at the Auschwitz killing machine:⁴

When it was over [clearing the platform after the transport arrived] it looked like the aftermath of a fair. There was a great deal of rubbish. And between the heaps of rubbish were people—those who were unable to walk. The way they treated these people really shocked me. For example, a boy who was lying there, naked, was simply dragged by his feet and thrown into a truck to be taken from there. . . . When he screamed . . . they struck his body against the side of the truck to shut him up.

Since the 1980s, images of child victims and survivors of World War II in Europe have captured the imagination of filmmakers worldwide, since they are perceived as a reliable reflection of the war and its horrors. Without delving too deeply into each country's conscience regarding its treatment of adult Jews, a survey of the major films made after the war to the present time shows broad common denominators of the portrayal of children and teenagers during World War II.

The major trend in films was to focus on children who did not fit stereotypes of the Jewish child and then explore a small story, usually a conflict between childhood and the adult world. The following survey of world cinema proceeds according to the region where the films were made: Eastern and Western Europe, the United States, and Israel. The hypothesis of a "common denominator" for a continent or country will be discussed, as well as how the cinematic and historical representation in individual films correspond to so-

¹Dir. Alan J. Pakula (USA, 1982).

²Despite the case that in this specific film, *Sophie*, the boy's mother was Catholic, the viewer's first association is with Jewish children.

³Dir. Hanuš Berger (USA, 1945). Billy Wilder was the Chief Editor for the Information Control Division (ICD), the Wochenschau-Abteilung for the Office of Military Government for United Germany.

⁴Oskar Gröning, former member of the SS stationed in Auschwitz, gave his testimony to a BBC documentary film crew. From *Auschwitz: The Nazi "Final Solution," Part 2*, Dir. Laurence Rees (UK, 2006).

cial, cultural, and political trends and to the country's behavior during World War II towards their Jewish citizens, Nazi collaborators and local resistance movements.

The American Front

The American was the first film industry to understand and warn about the danger of Fascism and Nazism. As far back as the early 1930s, Warner Brothers attempted to expose the dangers of Nazism, but met with little success.⁵ Immediately after the United States entered the war in December 1941, the rules of the game changed, and Hollywood was given the "green light" to use its best weapons in the propaganda war. The early films on the liberation of the camps in Europe also emerged from well-timed film crews accompanying the armies, manned by Hollywood professionals and directors documenting the course of the fighting. Most of the propaganda films were directed at the war effort, with themes of soldiers and battle.⁶

Fred Zinnemann's 1948 film, *The Search* (1948), depicted soldiers in Franconia (western Germany), in a covert propaganda message. He emphasized the common humanity of liberators and liberated to justify America's entering the war. The plot involves UNRRA soldiers' encounter with a young survivor whom they help in his search for his mother.⁷ Although there is no solid evidence as to the boy's religion or national origin (he could be Czech), the erroneous impression is created that the boy is Jewish. The boy arouses pity and seems to bear the story of the destruction of the Jews, since his parents have disappeared, he has a tattoo, and he is a stateless refugee orphan, haunted by ghosts of the past. The American soldiers, as "enlightened conquerors," put him in touch with activists for illegal immigration to Israel. It is among the immigrants that the boy, together with his friends Myriam and

⁵Warner Brothers made many unsuccessful attempts between 1938 and 1941 to warn the USA about Fascism and Nazism in Europe, but their efforts were blocked by the censors. One historical film succeeded in arousing the US: *Sergeant York* (1941) by Howard Hawks, which described the war against evil and covert anxiety of the Germans' persistence in seeking to go to war again. See Michael E. Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers: Warner Bros.' Campaign Against Nazism* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), Chapters 1–3.

⁶Jeanine Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film, Anatomy of Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), "Prior history," pp. 81–119.

⁷Lawrence Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary Holocaust Cinema* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), Chapter Two, "Picturing The Holocaust In The Past."

Joel, rediscovers himself and his heritage. However, it is important to note the child's physical appearance: he is fair, with "Aryan" looks, as if testifying that children's suffering is universal, with no relation to religion or ethnicity. The suffering of the Jewish children is thus assimilated into the general suffering, although they are the largest of the child refugee groups.⁸

Over following years, beginning in the late 1960s and continuing to the present, American films, made for the most part in Hollywood, began to tell the story of the Holocaust as a separate theme. Hollywood succeeded in producing features and television mini-series that reflected the spirit of the times as it attempted to point public opinion towards the darkest hour of human history. One of the most important books on this issue, which has aroused much controversy among scholars is Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life*,⁹ in which he states that the memory of the Holocaust in American society and culture constitutes a relatively large portion of the public discourse in America. He feels that research rather than memory should be the prevalent emphasis in Holocaust discourse. His critics respond that this is not so, that remembering the past teaches us lessons so that we are not "doomed to repeat it." Thus, universal memory will be formed from all of the evils of past world history.¹⁰ And indeed, the first films to deal with the Holocaust, albeit naively, attempted to include narrative, memory, and history simultaneously.

The most outstanding example of this attempt is the television miniseries *Holocaust* (1978)¹¹ seen as a turning point in the awareness of the Shoah in the Western world. The irony is that no matter how sensitive the industry might be, it is still a profit-driven industry skilled at manipulation. Hollywood had become expert at concealment under the watchful eyes of the censor; since the early 30s¹² through 1964, film plots were largely tried-and-true formulas

⁸Shlomo Sand, *Cinema as History: Imagining and Directing the 20th Century* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2002), p. 227.

⁹Peter Novick, *The Holocaust and collective memory: The American experience*. London: Bloomsbury, 2000 CHECK THIS ONE—NOT BOOK MENTIONED IN TEXT

¹⁰Stephen J. Whitfield, "Reflections on Peter Novick's *Holocaust in American Life: Two Perspectives*," *Judaism* (Fall 2000): 484–492. See also: Jeremy D. Popkin, "Holocaust Memory: Bad for the Jews?" *Judaism* (Winter 2001): 112–117.

¹¹*Holocaust*, Dir. Marvin J. Chomsky (USA, 1978).

¹²In 1922, following the Arbuckle and other scandals in Hollywood, Presbyterian Will H. Hays was appointed as head of the Motion Pictures Producers and Distributors Association (MPPDA), which later became the Motion Picture Association of America

avoiding controversy. In short, Hollywood depicted "men who were men," heroes who were "real men," models for "all-American" masculinity such as John Wayne, Marlon Brando, and others. The women fulfilled traditional gender roles as wives, mothers and daughters, sexy and provocative when possible only to serve fictional escapism from hardship. Characters represented the Protestant ethic and nationalist pride, while glorifying the myth and ethos of American society, family values and social mobility, democracy, and the (unfulfilled) promise of equal opportunity for all.

Until the 1960s, child protagonists were not considered especially attractive screen heroes, unless unusually talented youngsters suited for escapist "family entertainment," such as Shirley Temple, Mickey Rooney, or Judy Garland, all of whom mostly appeared in musicals. There were only a few films made specifically for young audiences. In contrast, the genre of "coming of age" movies did flourish from the 1950s onward, films that dealt with teenagers but also engaged with issues addressed to a mature audience, such as parent-child relationships and adolescence. The best example is *Splendor in the Grass* (1961),¹³ in which the actors were, for the most part, not teenagers but adults playing teens.

The genre of "Holocaust film" joined the Hollywood mix of reinvented themes, reworking the reasons for the country's having entered World War II in the general tone of American public opinion. The films explored the endeavor to rebuild a "new Europe" over the old one, which had been silent about what happened during the terrible wartime years. One of the first films on the subject was *The Diary of Anne Frank*,¹⁴ made in 1959. The young girl seems to be part of an "All-American family," albeit Jewish and living in wartime Amsterdam.¹⁵ George Stevens, Sr., who directed the film, had been among the first Allied teams to film the liberation of the concentration and death camps in Western Europe. It was Stevens who had witnessed the horrors, and

(MPAA). Hired by the Hollywood moguls, his annual salary was \$100,000 as chief internal censor for the industry. His "Hays Code" was the beginning of Hollywood censorship, which peaked in 1933 and died away in the 1960s after McCarthyism ebbed. See E. W. Knappman, ed., *Great American Trials: From Salem Witchcraft to Rodney King* (Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 1994), pp. 294–298.

¹³*Splendor in the Grass*, dir. Elia Kazan (USA, 1961).

¹⁴*The Diary of Anne Frank*, Dir. George Stevens (USA, 1959)

¹⁵Ronald J. Berger, "The Americanization of the Holocaust: Representing Anne Frank," in *Fathoming the Holocaust* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2002), pp. 143–146.

whose sequences were decisive evidence at the Nuremberg war crimes trials, who opted to tell the story of Anne Frank, the young girl who kept a diary while hiding in an attic.¹⁶ Stevens decided not to make a movie about the horrors themselves,¹⁷ because the public was too unsettled by the re-creation of events.¹⁸ The film was well received: the character of Anne, the optimistic adolescent in a world full of hatred and fear had a definite appeal to generations of viewers, and her story inspired numerous versions in several media.¹⁹

However, it is also important to remember that this film appeared during the postwar period when there was still no consensus on the genre or look of children during the Holocaust in film. Filmmakers made a conscious choice not to have children as the main characters and not to portray the Holocaust for children. The series about Anne Frank was one of its kind, since it dealt with the Holocaust and was screened among other Sunday programs for limited groups (Jewish children), such as *Me and the Colonel* 1958, and science fiction series for fans.²⁰

The theme of learning universal lessons from history and about the horror of killing children in particular was presented to the public from a place unworthy of the subject²¹ yet perfectly expected in terms of the period and the place: it was through *The Sound of Music*, a film for the entire family. The

¹⁶Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present*, Chapter 2, "The Decade of the Diary: *The Diary of Anne Frank*," pp. 34–40.

¹⁷Yvonne Kozlovsky Golan, "The Shaping of the Holocaust Visual Conscience by the Nuremberg Trials. Birth of the Holocaust in Hollywood-Style Motion Pictures: The Impact of the Movie *Nazi Concentration Camps*," in *Search and Research: Lectures and Papers* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem International Institute for Holocaust Research, 2006), pp. 6–50. See also Lawrence Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment: Making Law and History at the Trials of the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 22–27.

¹⁸The director's interview with George Stevens, Jr., in the film, *Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust*, Dir. Daniel Anker (USA, 2004).

¹⁹The film and the play of *The Diary of Anne Frank* were staged in innumerable versions, beginning with the film by George Stevens, Sr. in the USA and other films in Europe Scandinavia, the far east: *Anne no nikki*, Dir. Akinori Nagaoka, an animé adaptation of the *Diary* (Japan, 1995). As Doneson states, Anne Frank, as Doneson states, became the first image in the west to represent events that took place during Nazi domination of Europe and the first to be reflected in American culture as such. See Judith E. Doneson, "The American History of Anne Frank's Diary," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (1987): 2.

²⁰Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present*, Chapter 6, "The Children Are Watching: Holocaust Films For Youngsters," p. 172.

²¹*The Sound of Music*, dir. Robert Wise (USA, 1965).

children were put at center stage, but their designated role could not contain the behind-the-scenes story of the Holocaust since it was a broader narrative than could be presented in the plot.

The children’s function is to describe the dangers of Nazism and to hint at what would happen if it were not stopped in time. The two types of children depicted map out two opposite poles: the young Nazi Ralf in contrast to the Von Trapp children, led by their father the Captain who opposes Nazism. The film characters, based on the real family, are intended to show that suffering was also meted out to those who opposed Nazism, and that Austrians and Germans suffered, too. The teenagers enchanted by Nazism represent the loss of childhood. After all, the children are the next generation. During the postwar years, the Americans wanted to bury memory so that the people of Europe could re-establish themselves free of the past. Integral to the story is the sweetness and innocence of the Von Trapp children as messengers of hope in a new era. As in many family films, *The Sound of Music* also shows the limits of its era and circumstances under which it was made.²² There are not many American films that made use of children as the object through which to transmit the narrative of the Shoah itself, but only as allegory. The lack of children as major protagonists during this decade may be contrasted to their role in the later expanded cinematic discourse on the Holocaust.

In 1960, director Otto Preminger confronted the events of the Holocaust directly, in his monumental film, *Exodus*.²³ At first glance, it is the story of the “illegal” immigration to the Promised Land and the Jewish struggle for independence under the British Mandate. But the narrative connecting all of these points is the figure of the young Holocaust survivor who joins the struggle of the native-born Jews, the core being the narrative of rising from the ashes. The young man (played by Sal Mineo, best known for his supporting role in *Rebel without a Cause*) finds his way to the immigrant ship *Exodus* and joins the underground to break into Acre prison. As the representative of the millions killed in Europe, he is the film’s *raison d’être*, a “New Jew,” the hero whose spirit cannot be broken and who joins together with the “sabras” to work for Israeli statehood.

²²Vicky Lebeau, *Childhood and Cinema* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), Chapter 4, “The Child, from Death,” p. 148.

²³*Exodus*, dir. Otto Preminger (USA, 1960).

In the television series *Holocaust*,²⁴ considered to be a significant milestone in bringing Holocaust memory to the world's consciousness, we can identify children as the seismograph of the period's horror. The children represent the inter-generational opposition between those who understood the danger of remaining in Germany and those who wanted to stay, thereby portraying how each generation sought to fight the Nazis in its own way. Children play a very important role in Steven Spielberg's film, *Schindler's List*²⁵ and become an inseparable part of the adults' narrative, although they are so enfolded in the story that their depiction does not stand alone. The outstanding, unforgettable image of children in the film is the girl in the red coat, alone and lost in the crowd that is as lost as she is.²⁶ It is one of the most impressive and memorable sequences in the entire film because of the double gaze on the situation: one is the personal viewpoint of the lost girl, turning outward to a world collapsing around her. The second is the cinematic point of view describing the little girl as a victim whom no country tried to save, without words or additional photographs.²⁷

Tim Blake Nelson's film, *The Gray Zone*²⁸ set in Auschwitz, presents a Hungarian teenage girl as a major figure in the plot. The *Sonderkommando* ["special work crews" who processed and cremated the bodies of the murdered] find her and revive her after she manages to survive the gas chamber. They are then faced with the moral dilemma of whether to hand her over to the camp authorities or save her, whereas they will only remain alive as long as they dispose of and keep secret the murders in the gas chambers. This is an absurd state for the victims who have the "freedom" to take part in carrying out

²⁴*Holocaust*, dir. Marvin J. Chomsky (USA, 1978).

²⁵*Schindler's List*, dir. Steven Spielberg (USA, 1993).

²⁶The figure of the girl in red is drawn from the testimony of Martin Paldi at the Eichmann trial. His testimony was integrated into Nathan Mansfeld's film, *Gideon Hausner: And I Shall Speak on Their Behalf* (Israel Broadcasting Authority, 2005), in which Gavriel Bach, the junior prosecutor in the Eichmann trial, soon to become Justice Bach, used the intensity of the storm aroused by Paldi's story of how he succeeded in tracking his wife and daughter in the noisy crowd on the ramp "only thanks to" the little girl's red coat. In Daniel Anker's interview with Spielberg, in his film *Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust* (2004), Spielberg explains how he was influenced by the trial. One of the reasons for making his film in black and white was to symbolize the partial blindness of the nations of the world to the genocide of the Jews. Having the girl in red was intended to make this stand out even more.

²⁷Lebeau, *Childhood and Cinema*, p. 141.

²⁸*The Gray Zone*, dir. Blake Nelson (USA, 2001).

the "Final Solution" but who actually become part of it.²⁹ Her monologue after being executed reflects the perfect and horrific essence of evil, as Semprun has written. "It's not just evil, it's radical evil. . . . Because death is not something that we brushed up against . . . we lived it. . . . We are not survivors, but ghosts, revenants."³⁰

Additional scenes were filmed in the women's camp, of younger women who had wished to escape of the hell of the concentration camp through active revolt against the Germans. Their activities receive much screen time, portraying their work as couriers, their information-gathering, capture and torture by the guards. The film is unusual for its scenes in which women prisoners are interrogated and endure courageously.

Despite unfavorable reviews, *The Gray Zone*, based on a book by Auschwitz survivor physician Miklos Nyiszli, has several unique qualities. First, there is its egalitarian treatment of the men and the women in the camps, in which the men's heroism is echoed in the women's heroism, as well as through the eyes of the young woman survivor of the gas, as told in the autobiographical book.³¹ Second, there are extremely few, if any, films that concentrate on an issue as explosive as the *Sonderkommando* and the smallest details about life in the crematorium in the floors above where mass murder is taking place.

The European Arena

Most, if not all earlier European films excluded the drama from distinctly hellish settings such as ghettos, camps and the like, and chose, instead, to depict neutral areas such as streets and houses. As the plots unfold, they become like a game between Jew-hunters and fleeing Jews. However, unlike "cops and robbers," viewers are aware of the real-life deadly consequences. Children as film heroes are usually the only survivors of big families or two children whom circumstances have joined together as a substitute family.³² A Gentile with a

²⁹Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, Hebrew ed., translated from the Italian by Miriam Shusterman-Padovano (Tel Aviv: Ofakim/Am Oved, DATE?), pp. 42–43.

³⁰Jorge Semprun, *Literature or Life*, Hebrew ed., translated from the French by Ido Basok (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim/Kibbutz Hameuhad/New Library, DATE?), pp. 84–85.

³¹Miklos Nyiszli. *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*, translated by Tibere Kremer and Richard Seaver, with a foreword by Bruno Bettelheim (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1993).

³²For example, Anne Frank and Peter in the annexe, or the lone boy in *The Island on Bird Street*.

conscience usually comes to their aid, a non-Jew who bears the risk of saving a Jewish child. The major theme of such films is almost always the child's rescue, which becomes the rescuer's salvation. The children in these films serve as models through which the filmmaker shows how absurd racist Nazi thinking about Jewish children is. Furthermore, heaps of corpses are not normally portrayed, nor are children torn from their mothers' arms only to be sent to a certain death—the actual reality of the Holocaust.³³ And, if the children are not saved by the end of the film, the conclusions tend to be open-ended, along the unwritten lines of “And their fate was unknown” instead of specific closure.³⁴

The broad common denominator in the following six films is their didactic tone and similar structure: at the beginning of each, the non-Jewish rescuers are portrayed as racist boors, while others are simply indifferent to Jews, especially if they are “out of sight, out of mind,” believing that the Jews would be much better off after being deported to “their new home.”

In the second stage of the plot, circumstances bring rescuers together with their wards, even if unwillingly. Some of them are aware of the children's condition and extend assistance as if they have no choice. Others become the protectors of the children in their role as religious or educational leaders, or due to a status which enables them to protect the children without conscious knowledge of their ethnic and religious origin.

In the third stage of such plots, the rescuers get to know the children emotionally and cognitively, becoming close to them; through bonds of love and responsibility, they grow so close as to endanger their own lives. Finally, the rescuers are frequently transformed, divesting themselves of their prejudices through the children. They could not have learned their lesson had the plot centered on the rescue of adults.

In the French film, *The Two of Us*, two major scenes depict how the anti-semitic old man entrusted with the welfare of a little Jewish boy tells him how to identify a Jew. The boy asks Pepe, the old man, to tell him about Jews. It is obvious that the little boy, despite his Jewish origins, comes from a secular family that did not keep the traditions, as he makes an innocent attempt to

³³*Auschwitz: The Nazi “Final Solution”: Part 3*, BBC (2006, UK).

³⁴Space considerations allow us only a brief mention of the central theme shared by the following films: *Le vieil homme et l'enfant* (The Two of Us), dir. Claude Beeri (1967, France); *Island on Bird Street*, dir. Soren Kragh-Jacobsen (1997, Denmark); *Monsieur Batignole*, dir. Gérard Jugnot (2002, France); *Lacombe Lucien*, dir. Louis Malle (1974, France); *Au revoir, les enfants*, dir. Louis Malle (1987, France); *Démanty noci* (Diamonds of the Night), dir. Jan Nemeč (Czechoslovakia, 1964)

understand why the secret he has to keep is so serious. What is it about the Jews, about him, that makes him so different?

The second scene, like the first, is set facing the mirror, as the old man tries to explain to the boy how a Jew looks, by using all of the stereotypes. The two scenes show the discrepancy between the stereotype of the Jew and the reality. This discrepancy can be bridged by exaggeration and ridicule, while on the other hand, the love between the characters blur the boundaries. The boy serves these two means well in the film.

In the film *Monsieur Batignole* as well, we can find a similar portrayal of relationships. After his son-in-law informs against his neighbors, M. Batignole takes over his Jewish neighbor's house together with his family. He now he finds himself in charge of the welfare of Jewish children, some of whom knock on his door after they succeed in escaping the transport and returning home. He wanders with them to the border to smuggle them out of France. This “adventure” leads him to form a moving familial solidarity with the Jewish children, an experience that had been lacking in his biological family. The emotional range of the relationship built up among them originates from the merging of responsibility and guilt towards his unfortunate, good neighbors who disappeared one day. He gradually develops a commitment to continue to lead a specific young boy to safety. The principles of human morality, awakened in him by the child during their flight, force him to confront his life, his position in the family, and his blindness to the Vichy reign of terror and his (previously) silent partnership in it. In the finale, M. Batignole attains a personal salvation as he is extracted from the environment of his greedy family, a parabolic representation of an evil spirit possessing all of France and which he succeeds in exorcising from himself.

In European, especially French, cinema, pangs of conscience and guilt are reproduced mostly through the prism of childhood and adolescence. *M. Batignole* was preceded by *Lacombe, Lucien*, the story of a teen joining the Vichy police to “cleanse Paris of Jews.” And yet Lucien suddenly becomes transformed and joins the Resistance because his Jewish sweetheart is among those sentenced to deportation. *Au revoir, les enfants*, is also based on guilt and regret. Here a moment of reckless childhood haste costs the lives of some Jewish children living as Christians in a Catholic boarding school in France. A single scene distills many of the experiences of the period: a scene involving a specific glance. When at the film's denouement, the German Gestapo enters the classroom and asks who is Jewish, the entire class remains silent. However, one of the boys sitting in front turns his head around to catch the look on his Jewish friend's face. This movement gives away the boy and he is removed from the classroom. The heavy guilt on the young protagonist—a character

based on director Louis Malle himself—who accidentally betrays his friend is said to have accompanied him throughout his life. The classmate’s absence and subsequent murder by the Nazis led Malle to make a film to commemorate his Jewish classmates. For the director, this film was intended to memorialize the French Jewish children murdered in the Holocaust as a warning against totalitarianism and a painful reminder of how France’s Vichy government had so faithfully served the Nazi regime.

In this film and others under discussion, the camera pauses to reflect on the moral heritage of the children. They are not depicted as individuals in and of themselves, but as representatives of an entire nation. The children and adolescents act as advocates for their people and co-religionists, and are shown mostly as well brought up. In addition, their inner intensity testifies to the injustice done to the Jews of Europe. The moral criteria embodied in their young lives are intended to contain Judaism and Jewry as symbols of a living human morality.

The Christian children, too, are depicted as representing their generation: confused, lacking a clear path, and tinged with Nazi ideology. However, as in the “Emperor’s New Clothes” model, the children reveal the truth and point to the hypocrisy and pretense of the adults. Nevertheless, they are too young to save their Jewish counterparts, and the “happy ending” expected in children’s fairy tales does not apply to their Jewish friends during the Shoah.

Despite this, French cinema does not dare to engage the core of the trauma itself. What was the fate of the Jewish children? Where were they taken, with whom did they go, and how did they die? Who helped them? These are open questions for which the French viewer finds no answer in the cinematic corpus and has to search in other media, many times in vain. Alain Resnais’ shocking documentary film *Night and Fog* premiered in 1955, ten years after World War II ended. The film was in color (which startled people who were used to black-and-white newsreels), based on contemporary documentary materials. It described in dry detail the journey of thousands of French deportees “to the East,” and attempted to trace every stage of deportation from France: the freight trains, concentration, and liquidation. But the narrative unfolding for viewers does not mention France’s 4,100 young victims—its young citizens taken in August 1942 in freight trains eastward to their death. Children from age one to their early teens, alone on the train with a handful of deportee adults, all from Drancy, were headed to the fiery furnace awaiting them at Auschwitz-Birkenau. France apparently did not want to know, or could not digest, this traumatic information. If Alain Resnais, who succeeded with professional insight in arousing public opinion and European conscience (France’s in particular), did not discuss this issue in full, he thereby suppressed the dis-

appearance of these children in future documentary films, and certainly in future features. His influence is obvious in the works by the majority of French directors who chose to adopt this stance. Another example may be seen in the film *The Two of Us*. Here there was a happy ending for a good boy, who finally received proper, loving treatment even from obviously racist enemies—a fate quite different from that which befell the dead Jewish children of France.

It was the British who had the courage to confront these disturbing questions and provide clear cinematic answers. The BBC’s documentary drama series, *Auschwitz: The Nazi ‘Final Solution’*³⁵ devoted the second chapter out of six to the story of the children of Drancy. The close-up shots of the children on the screen, one after another, state that these are the faces and the names. The horrifying story begins with the chilling testimony of an SS man from the moment of his arrival on the Auschwitz-Birkenau “ramp” through the cruel selection and destruction of life in the improvised ranch buildings that were made into gas chambers, then continues with stories of survivors who witnessed and testified after the fact. Like Alain Resnais, the director favors narrative restraint, but, in contrast, the restraint was on the surface: he presents the television viewer with the subjects of the genocide, the location reduced geographically to concentrate on one dark room – the murder room—and deepens the discussion with the testimony by a former camp guard, a first-person witness. However, we must remember that the film as documentary can contain more than the overall sum of elements of a feature film; its relative advantage is also its disadvantage: a surplus of facts and details very difficult to watch, which the spectator finds too difficult to contain.

“In the fall of 1942,” intones the narrator, “Oskar Gröning [an SS soldier] believed that this horrific crime was justified. ‘We were convinced by our worldview that the entire world had betrayed us and that the Jews had woven a huge conspiracy against us. But surely, when it was a matter of children, of course, you understood that it was impossible that they had done any evil to us. Children are not the enemy at that moment. The enemy is the blood flowing in their veins. The enemy is their future maturing into Jews who could be a danger to us. And that is why the children were also included.’”

The viewer’s feeling of nausea is strongest when observing materials describing the murder of the children. In January 2006, at a lecture by Laurence Rees to Holocaust and Genocide researchers at a conference at the Imperial War Museum in London, Rees confirmed that of all of his studies, the work

³⁵*Auschwitz: The Nazi ‘Final Solution,’ Part 3*, Dir. Laurence Rees (2006, UK).

of editing and organizing this section was the most difficult for him. “My staff and I worked at a very slow pace with long breaks for crying. We couldn’t bear the photographs of the dead children of Drancy.”³⁶

Italian Jewry is another ancient, significant Jewish community depicted in films. Director Vittoria De Sica chose to depict the decline of this community by focusing on the next generation, the descendants of the wealthy, assimilated and well-educated Finzi-Contini family.³⁷ The Finzi-Continis, distanced from traditional, affiliated Judaism, symbolize an Italy which knew how to appreciate its Jews (after so many years of persecution) for their contribution to society. Their spacious home, well-tended lawns, tennis courts and the surrounding forestland serve to illustrate their class status from the outset. This estate becomes their (private) ghetto, to which the family must confine itself.³⁸ The children, a sickly son and daughter—complementary and connecting links between past and present—find themselves persecuted for their race and religion. The director cast actors whose appearance is the antithesis of the “classic Jew”³⁹: he chose actors who were fair and “Nordic-looking” to create a contrast between imagination and reality. The challenge to racial theory provides the film and others like *Europa Europa* (1991)⁴⁰ with an additional layer of unease for viewers; it casts the parents as darker and shorter, with a “Mediterranean” look. The film does not depict Fascism’s physical acts of torture but exempli-

³⁶Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: Current International Research on Survivors of Nazi Persecution 60 Years On. The Second International Multidisciplinary Conference at the Imperial War Museum, London, 11–13 (January 2006).

³⁷*Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, dir. Vittorio De Sica (Italy, 1970).

³⁸Dan Michman has maintained in his article, *Search and Research No. 11: Jewish Ghettos during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1998) that the “central government of Nazi Germany itself never precisely defined a ghetto from their point of view. We have no major documents establishing the roots of the idea of the ghetto and the essential nature of the manner and mechanisms for applying and implementing it.” The author is attempting by this statement to show that the concept of “ghetto,” as perceived during the Third Reich, was flexible and applied to the gathering and concentration of Jews, but was not a uniform concept; rather it was adapted to time and place. Thus, for example, the concept of “ghetto” in Eastern Europe differed from the camp for concentrating Jews in Holland or Italy. Nevertheless, the basic idea was similar, although not entirely identical. The Finzi-Continis’ “ghetto”—the family estate on which the director locates the actors—is therefore not a chance choice, but serves the internal cinematic narrative as a mental state of the adolescent heroes and as a precise historical existential state.

³⁹Shlomo Sand, *Film as History: Imagining and Screening the 20th Century* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved/Afikim Library in association with the Open University, 2001), p. 241.

⁴⁰*Europa Europa*, dir. Agnieszka Holland (Germany, 1990).

fied it in the overall humiliation and mockery of people who have hardly had a moment's peace since the rise of Nazism.

Perhaps it is precisely the restrained reactions of the children to what is happening that is the most horrifying, considering our knowledge that three generations are going to their death together while the local population's reactions range from equanimity to obvious indifference. In one of the last scenes, all of the Jews of the city are concentrated into the classrooms in the Jewish school, for the first time after many years of separation from the Jewish community and after feeling themselves Italians first and Jews second. All of them sit as equals around the children's elementary school desks, as if they are returning to the era of childhood and the early state of the Jewish community living in a crowded, poor ghetto, but forming a cohesive group. In the open shots filming the process of seating the Jews, the camera cannot capture all of them, but merely samples the entire scene. It is the Fascists who create rooted, Jewish unity in this passage, as they cynically herd all of them together in one schoolroom and force a common fate on them. They will soon go up in smoke.

The Secret (2008, France), by French director Claude Miller, creates an indirect dialogue with De Sica. The French film focuses on a French-Jewish family during the Nazi occupation of France and their confined living space, as did the Italian film. The enclosed, protected area of their apartment house is a kind of voluntary ghetto where they close themselves off from the outer world and its troubles. It is clearly oriented on a particular time (occupied France) and place (Paris). The child is the protagonist of the film, set during the 1950s. The secret that the boy reveals in time is at the very heart of the family, as he discovers that he had a brother who had been murdered several years earlier during the war. Despite the fact that numerous, successful attempts were made in the field of Holocaust commemoration in France by Nazi hunters Serge and Beate Klarsfeld together with Jewish organizations after the war, and despite the fact that many years have passed since Resnais' and De Sica's films and the heyday of French cinema with its narrative and professional impact abroad, this film does not directly confront the murder of the children of France. Instead, the director focuses the entire story more on the boy's discovery and exposure, and less on what went on and what had vanished.

On the whole, I find that Western and European cinema hardly dare to deal with the lives of adults in the death camps, and certainly do not address the fate of the children in the camps. The main reason for this avoidance is that very few children survived the concentration camps, since they were murdered almost directly upon arrival. And, if they did survive, the lack of a proper budget for a large European production to commemorate their story and recreate

life in the camps with all of the necessary elements was so difficult as to be impossible. However, the exception that proves the rule is the unusual film made from Martin Gray's autobiography *Au nom de tous les miens*, published in English as *For Those I Loved*, and filmed as *Martin Gray*. The film portrays life in the Warsaw ghetto for a fair-haired boy⁴¹ played by Michael York (looking unlike the stereotype of the dark-haired, "swarthy Jew") who survives by means of actions grown men would have been proud of owing to his qualities and initiative. The young Martin supports his family by trading on the Aryan side, and even when he is later brought to a concentration camp, he overcomes the shock of working in a *Sonderkommando* and manages to survive. Following liberation he is rehabilitated, but fate does not leave him alone. His wife and children are burned to death as he watches, in a fire maliciously set to his isolated forest estate. Yet, despite everything, with indescribable courage, he chooses life. The main quality that characterizes this film is the boy's unusual resourcefulness that allows him to adapt to impossible situations and survive as an adult as well.

A second reason for the avoidance of showing the fate of the Jews is the way in which Europe as a whole, and European cinema in particular, has chosen to deal with the past. The aesthetic and narrative choices adopted by European cinema are especially influenced by film fashions which originated in the French Nouvelle Vague of the 1960s, and which inculcated a tradition of cinematic minimalism in which contemplation of the hero's soul was more important than careful attention to his (sociological) surroundings. The films of the 1960s were also linked to political and social trends that have spread since the mid-50s onward, concerned more with rejection of the past and repressing it in favor of the present. This emphasis prevented people from seeing and dealing with the Eastern European arena of events, the location to which the Jewish transports were sent, where most if not all met their death.⁴² Focus on

⁴¹Nordic-looking English actor Michael York was chosen to play the part of the mature Martin (as well as his father). The director's goal was to state that it is the person's internal, not external, qualities that mark his essential character. The young man survived despite his Christian appearance, but suffered during the postwar years from antisemitism that cost him the life of his family. Racial "theory" had nothing to do with his fate or his Judaism.

⁴²Thus, for example, it is impossible to find feature films about Drancy, the place where the Jewish children of France were concentrated and deported "to the East," to their death. The only representation of the children of Drancy, extremely strong and powerful, of the concentration, deportation and murder of the Jewish children, has been in the BBC documentary film mentioned above.

the hero-individual produced an additional “achievement” for the “representation of disaster”: there was an absence of a critical mass of entire communities with complete families. Missing from the screen were therefore the young ones in their hiding places and on the run.

Lajos Koltai’s 2005 film *Fateless*, based on Nobel prizewinner Imre Kertész’s autobiography,⁴³ changed the direction of European cinema, and mixed the American with the European cinematic traditions. The plot, which captures the story of the camps through the eyes of a boy, combines the narrative aesthetic of classical European cinema with the literary narrative of American movies. The film was made with a big budget and partial American financing. The Hungarian-born Koltai, a talented cinematographer, worked with several directors, including Istvan Szabo, the creator of three thought-provoking films on the world wars: *Mephisto* (1981), *Colonel Redl* (1984), *Hanussen* (1988) and *Sunshine* (1999). Szabo’s success derives from his ability to isolate the cinematic gaze and contemplate the innermost (and tortured) souls of his protagonists. This method is enhanced greatly by Koltai’s cinematography, which succeeds in capturing the essential atmosphere and emotions. Even in films such as *Max* (2002) and *Taking Sides* (2001), we can see Koltai’s attraction to subjects from the world wars through the searching gaze of the camera. It is no surprise that he brought his artistic touches to the first film he directed.

Fateless is a film made with great sensitivity to its subject. Against the background of the camps, it explains the essence of the boy’s existence and survival, without going into great detail about the enigmatic operations of the camp. Based on a profound understanding of the nature of suffering and its adaptation into cinema, the showpiece of the concentration and death camp is replaced by seemingly minor, but strong elements drawn from the experience of childhood. The director has viewers see situations through the innocent, childish gaze of young prisoners who are starving. In an extremely chilling scene, the director intelligently used a long, extended look by a young prisoner gazing directly at a German guard who was chewing his flaky sausage roll with a hearty appetite. The starving boy imitates the motions of the German’s jaw and mimics his frenzied chewing while imagining that he is the one consuming the meal. But then he finds that his saliva has dried up. The boy’s miserable look is captured in a close-up shot which the director closes on his face to preserve the definition of “hunger” in the collective memory of all who view this scene. The very moment of the lad’s hungry gaze is many times more powerful than any scene that could be filmed of a starving adult.

⁴³*Fateless*, dir. Lajos Koltai (Hungary/Germany/UK, 2005).

Koltai's film sense is involved in literary content and not limited to his camera. In the finale to the film on liberation day, we can see how the cinematic medium provides a precise adaptation of the book in which the adolescent narrator describes himself: "I already think of myself as healthy and whole, more or less, except for several strange things and disturbances, for example, when I pressed a finger on any part of my body, I could still see its imprint for a long time afterward, as if on some lifeless, inflexible material, such as yellow cheese or wax. Even my face surprised me somewhat. . . . The face at which I now looked at had a low forehead sticking out under hair that had already grown several centimeters past the ears which had strangely expanded into two new clumsy swellings. Elsewhere were sagging pouches and sockets . . . my eyes that had become very tiny, although I had remembered a friendlier, even trusting look. Well, I limped a little and still dragged my right foot."⁴⁴

Distancing the testimony from the adults to young people is significant in providing twice the horror. Using children also reflects the universalist trend, while the crude description of the fatal meaning of the "Final Solution" becomes clear on a practical level. Roberto Benigni's film *Life is Beautiful* (1997)⁴⁵ is entirely focused on the point of view of the young boy who joins his father on the journey into the unknown. They arrive at a camp which is a world within a world. It represents an internal world, standing alone, with its own codes, its management and thinking understandable only to its managers. The adult world becomes even more distorted as the father breaks down reality into concepts that the boy can accept and understand. It becomes a contest for earning points, a "quiet game" of hide-and-seek with a grand prize, the largest of them all. The boy's world is formed parallel to the adults' world while he coexists within it. In contrast to other Holocaust films, the uniqueness of *Life is Beautiful* lies not in telling about the boy but in portraying the boy's world.

The camera's point of view is the boy's, of a child who sees his father live and die. In the opening, the adult narrator describes his sublime happiness as a boy in the company of his mother and his father's death as part of the game which he will explain later in the film. Critics stated, perhaps correctly, that the film was insufficiently descriptive and lacked many of the elements to be

⁴⁴Imre Kertész, *Fateless*, Hebrew, ed., translated from the Hungarian by Miriam Al-gazi (Tel Aviv: Am Oved), p. 117.

⁴⁵Lawrence Baron, "Holocaust Film," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., Vol. 9 (Detroit: Thomson-Gale, 2006), pp. 437–446.

expected in a film attempting to portray a forced labor camp, such as scenes portraying relations between kapos and prisoners, or scenes of hunger.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, although the film strives to achieve an adult level of description of the camp, it is the banal, partial memory of the child that Benigni portrays, which thus intensifies the boundless sadness. Even the father’s jests seem to be an allegory for the Jewish prisoners who, to the last moment, were unable to believe that anything bad would befall them as long as they fulfilled the strange and impossible demands of their guards and jailers. In this case, the viewers’ “sorrow and pity” is increased, and the images from the film persist long after it is over.

European and Italian films, particularly films from the 1960s and 70s, have mostly used the icon of the child and adolescent prisoner or survivor, heavily influenced by a bold, crude approach bordering on pornography for describing the camp inmates (mainly girls and women) in the camps and the appalling abuse of their bodies and souls.⁴⁷

Such is the story of the young Jewish girl in Pontecorvo’s film *Kapò*.⁴⁸ She assumes the identity of a non-Jewish political prisoner, and, in order to survive, becomes the Germans’ sex slave and a *kapo*. During the process of fortifying her position as a harsh leader determined to survive, the audience observes her moral and human deterioration from hunger, her flirtation with the doctor at the selection, the theft of her friend’s stockings, and the consent to sell her body for food. One of the scandalous scenes in *Kapò* shows her watching a fragile young girl being taken to a pedophilic guard as the other guards joke.

Even more extreme is the figure of the young woman played by Charlotte Rampling in Liliana Cavani’s controversial feature, *The Night Porter*.⁴⁹ Rampling’s character had been in the power of a sadistic camp doctor when she was

⁴⁶See also Kobi Niv, *Life is Beautiful—But Not for Jews: Another Look at Benigni’s Film* (Tel Aviv: N.B. Books, 2000). Niv attacks Benigni’s film harshly but convincingly. Yet he totally ignores the child’s gaze while delving into technical questions of cinematic gaze: the art aspect of the scenery and props, the model of the father’s car, and more. His critique would be entirely acceptable but for the simple fact that the inaccuracies and seeming “bloopers” in the film are actually the result of childhood memory.

⁴⁷“Public Property”: The Cinematic Description of Sexual Abuse of Women and Girls during the Holocaust,” in Rochelle Saidel, ed., *What No One Wants to Talk About: Sexual Abuse of Women During the Holocaust* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England/Brandeis University Press, 2008).

⁴⁸*Kapò*, dir. Gillo Pontecorvo (France/Italy/Yugoslavia, 1959).

⁴⁹*The Night Porter*, dir. Liliana Cavani (Italy, 1974).

a camp inmate, and he became her sado-masochistic lover. By chance, years after the war, she meets him in a Vienna hotel where she and her husband are staying and where the former doctor is working as the night porter. The woman abandons her husband and rebuilt life in order to stay with the former Nazi, ending her life in humiliation.⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that in both cases, the villains are finally motivated by good will and inner idealism in their treatment of the young women. However, both films also leave the viewer with the painful impression that the girls had some freedom to choose their own fate. In the final analysis, this is represented similarly in Russian cinema, as well, as seen in the film *Red Cherry*.⁵¹

The 1995 Russian-Chinese co-production portrays the complicated lives of children in an international boarding school run by the Bolsheviks in the early twentieth century USSR. The protagonist is a young Chinese girl named Chuchu, sent by her revolutionary parents to Soviet Russia to receive a proper Communist education. Against a background of worsening conditions, the children form an informal “family” headed by their beloved teacher. After the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Chuchu and her friends are captured one summer day while on a lakeside holiday, and they see their beloved teacher murdered. Chuchu and her best friend manage to escape and return to the nearby destroyed city, but later she is captured and forced to become a servant for the Nazi commanders who set up headquarters in a medieval castle. At first Chuchu thinks she is going to fulfill a routine job in the kitchen, but it soon becomes clear that the commandant has something entirely different in mind.

The commandant, a physician, practices his hobby of tattooing Nazi symbols on his servants’ bodies, feeling that the pinnacle of his craft was the Nazi eagle which covered Chuchu’s entire torso. First he starved her, imprisoned her, and terrorized her by murdering all of her cellmates. Chuchu, survives, wounded physically and emotionally, living out her life as a walking dead person, imprisoned in her body. In contrast, her friend in the ruined city dies physically but leaves an important human legacy behind in the little girl he adopts as a sister, and with whom he works as military postman. However, instead of delivering death notices to parents, the two of them rewrite letters with news of great deeds so as to give the parents hope.

⁵⁰Dana Regna, “Staging Memory and Trauma in French and Italian Holocaust Films,” *Romanic Review*, Vol. 97, Nos. 3–4 (May–November 2006): 461–483.

⁵¹*Hong ying tao/Red Cherry*, dir. Daying Ye (China/Russia, 1995).

Adventures and deadly games of hide-and-seek between Jewish children and Nazis in Germany and occupied Russia are also depicted in the semi-autobiographical story of Solomon Perel, the adolescent protagonist of *Europa, Europa* by Agnieszka Holland, who had previously specialized in two types of films. One is Holocaust films about children and women, such as *Korczak*, on which she was assistant director to Andrzej Wajda, and *Bitter Harvest*. The second type was children’s fantasy films such as *The Secret Garden*. In Holland’s film on Perel, she succeeds in transmitting the young stateless refugee’s feelings of anxiety as he flees, as well as the sensation of adventure with which he experiences the war. The protagonist has a lust for life and overcomes his difficulties in a wonderful story of escape and survival.

The early twenty-first century saw two additional films produced in Germany that dealt with children’s lives during the Third Reich. The first is Caroline Link’s film of 2002, *Nowhere in Africa*⁵² and two years later, *NaPolA* (*National Police Academy*), directed by Dennis Gansel.⁵³ *Nowhere in Africa* tells the story of a German Jewish girl refugee in Africa, attempting to survive with her family under hostile British colonial rule. The latter film deals with a working-class lad in Germany who is considered “lucky” to be sent to a boarding school where the Nazi elite are being educated. Both films describe the lives of young people, their suffering and struggle among adults, as well as their efforts to understand the world of grown-ups—or at least to adapt to its strange rules in order to survive. However, because Link’s film takes place in Africa and not in Europe, the present essay is not the place for a deeper analysis of the film. As for *NaPolA*, its harbinger may be seen in *Europa, Europa*, mainly in the portrayal of the life of students in a Hitler Youth boarding school for “Aryan” children in the Third Reich. In Gansel’s film, the hero is not a Jew, and his survival is mainly class-oriented, including his decision to finally leave the school. It suffices to mention that non-Jewish children as well had to withstand terrible tests which they would not have had to face in an era of peace and calm.

Israeli Cinema

For many years, Israeli cinema, like its European counterpart avoided descriptions and representations of Holocaust victims. Instead, Israeli filmmakers explored the aftermath of the Holocaust, its impact on the new immigrants who

⁵²*Nowhere in Africa*, dir. Caroline Link (Germany, 2002).

⁵³*NaPolA*, dir. Dennis Gansel (Germany, 2004).

arrived in the Jewish national home and the attitude of local residents to the newcomers. Here, too, the prism of childhood and adolescence was deployed in order to give viewers an idea of what had taken place. The major protagonists of the films are children, despite the films being directed towards adults. I will not discuss most of these films here because they do not directly engage the Holocaust, except for Israeli director Eli Cohen's *Under the Domim Tree*, portraying rescued children in a kibbutz training farm/boarding school. These figures and other heroes of many Israeli films of the period about postwar years in Palestine are described in stereotypical terms as suffering from nightmares which hint at their latent insanity.⁵⁴ Their entire lives become a quest to be a "New Jew" to repress the horrors of their past.

The second noteworthy film is *Aryeh* [lit., lion, or Leo], an Israeli-Russian-Polish co-production.⁵⁵ This film elicited a torrent of bad reviews and was never commercially screened in Israel, other than a few times on the Israeli satellite TV channel. Nevertheless, filmed in part in Ukraine and with dialogue chiefly in Russian, its uniqueness as an Israeli film lies in its attempt to tell the story of Soviet Jewry under Nazi occupation by means of the survival of two Jewish children, thanks to their non-Jewish neighbor.

Not many films have addressed how this group of Jews suffered, mainly because they were not confined in ghettos and concentration camps, but instead assembled from their villages in the dead of night, taken to the forests, and immediately shot. That entire communities were wiped out meant that there was no one to tell their story except for those very few who managed to survive, as expressed clearly in Claude Lanzmann's film, *Shoah*,⁵⁶ a documentary unique for its time. *Aryeh* is equally unique in the creative landscape of the Israeli feature.⁵⁷

Aryeh opens with a description of good neighborly relations between Jews and Christians in a small Ukrainian village. When the Nazis move into the area, two Jewish children, a girl and a boy from neighboring families, are sent

⁵⁴Yvonne Kozlovsky Golan, *The 81st Blow*, "Beyond Camps and Forced Labour," pp. 771–785.

⁵⁵*Aryeh* (Israel/Russia/Poland, 2004)

⁵⁶*Shoah*, dir. Claude Lanzmann (France, 1985).

⁵⁷By contrast, in Israeli Hebrew literature, the theme of escape, concealment, and survival of children has an honored place. For example, see Hava Nissimov's unforgettable book, *Yaldah MiSham* [The Girl from 'Over There'] (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2007) [Hebrew], especially the chapters, "In the Attic," "Water," "Cellar" and "Empty Streets" (unpaged).

to hide with a good-hearted Ukrainian peasant. Their life is transformed into a series of adventures. When the war ends, they split up: he continues deep into Russia and she immigrates to Mandatory Palestine. They meet many years later when their lives change once again. In the film, as in the reality of children in the Holocaust whose lost childhood can never be regained,⁵⁸ the protagonists' viewpoint will forever be built on their memories of being in hiding together, their fear and despair, and even the love they experienced. Their dialogue as adults is conducted on the plane of adolescence, despite their biological age and life experience. The film contains no moral or value-based judgments of the “good” and “evil” figures in the story. Instead, the level of judgment is emotional, for it is on the emotional level that the children's fate is sealed.

Conclusion

In the fourth chapter of Vicky Lebeau's book *Childhood and Cinema*⁵⁹ the author describes a scene from Ingmar Bergman's film *Persona*. The actress, distant from her son and family, compulsively contemplates the famous photograph of a boy with raised hands taken in the Warsaw Ghetto, fear of Germans visible on his face. Lebeau states that this photograph expresses the essential parental and human fear of injury to our children. Even years later, the photograph of a child can elicit extreme emotions in the viewer, identification with the image, and empathy. This insight accompanied filmmakers from all over the globe, overtly and often covertly, in many national cinemas.

European cinema used depictions of the life of the Jewish children under the Nazi régime to justify different national behaviors, presenting the host countries as members of the resistance and protectors of Jewish children. Israeli filmmakers ignored the origins of the children from “over there” and focused only on how these young refugees were treated upon arrival in the rebuilt Land. By contrast, Hollywood and American directors who strove for a balanced view of victims and perpetrators were considered judgmental when engaging issues of fate and insights on war. They in turn leaned towards favoring the victims, rendering the children a prism through which fateful questions about the nature of humanity were posed. Children were used to represent cinematically the past and the future of European Jewry as a whole, rising from its ashes.

⁵⁸Israeli poet and author Hava Nissimov, rescued as a very young child, describes her life in hiding and her subsequent life as a kind of eternal permanence of an unfulfilled childhood.