

The Representation of Women in European Holocaust Films: Perpetrators, Victims and Resisters

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Abstract

The Representation of Women in European Holocaust Films: Perpetrators, Victims and Resisters

Ingrid Lewis

The persistence of filmmakers in tackling the subject of the Holocaust over the last seven decades has resulted in an overwhelming body of films, which is continuously expanding. While this body of work is vast and diverse in terms of aesthetic, narrative, generic and ideological approaches, it is possible to trace cycles and patterns which both reflect and respond to particular sets of political, historical, social, commercial and gender-related factors. Crucially, what moulds our collective memory of the Holocaust is not a transparent projection of events, but a complex constellation of ideologies, public memories of the Holocaust, market-driven processes, cultural interpretations and a multitude of other factors. Since the early 1980s, the study of women and the Holocaust has evolved into a distinct academic field. In spite of this, however, the representation of women in Holocaust cinema remains a relatively underresearched domain. The present study addressed this gap, providing substantial knowledge on how women's experiences have been treated in films dealing with the Nazi persecution. Focusing on fiction films made in Europe between 1945 and the present, this research explores dominant discourses on and cinematic representation of women as victims, resisters and perpetrators. In all three categories, this thesis reveals what aspects of women's lives during the Holocaust have been exposed, distorted or concealed by cinema.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

It is important to approach films about the past (...) in ways that are critical of how these memories may be mediated.
(Reading 2002)

Female characters and the plight of women have been a significant presence in European Holocaust cinema since its inception and throughout its seventy years of existence. From the aftermath of the war to the present day, women have been portrayed in a multitude of roles in cinematic narratives about the Holocaust: as victims in hiding, in ghettos and death camps, as wives, mothers, daughters or sisters of the persecuted, as women who perished engulfed by the tragedy or women who survived, as women who gave shelter to the persecuted or denounced them, as indifferent bystanders, as heroic women involved in the resistance, and also as persecutors. While none of the female characters featured in European films has succeeded in reaching the popularity of their American counterpart, Anne Frank, their enduring presence has played an important role in shaping public images and understandings of gender in the Holocaust.

From *The Last Stage* (1948), one of the earliest films about the Holocaust, to contemporary productions such as *The Birch-Tree Meadow* (2003), *Nina's Journey* (2005) and *Remembrance* (2011), there is a rich and complex trajectory of change and development with regard to the representation of women, which both reflects and responds to key socio-cultural developments in the intervening decades as well as to new directions in cinema, historical research, politics of remembrance and memoir literature. Thus, for example, *The Last Stage* (1948) directed by Wanda Jakubowska, a Polish

filmmaker and Auschwitz survivor, portrays a vast array of female prisoners from different backgrounds held in the concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, as well as female perpetrators. The film focuses on brave women who gave their lives for the cause of the resistance, but also features women who complied with the system or even worked for the Nazis. Despite its authenticity in depicting the horrors of the Holocaust and its pioneering role in “creating an iconography for the camps” (Loewy, 2004: 180), *The Last Stage* has significant flaws derived mainly from the onus on narrative to suit the ideology of the post-war period (Haltorf, 2012: 37). As a result, the characters are flat and stereotyped, and their key purpose is to provide commentary on the bravery of the inmates or the inhumanity of the perpetrators, at the expense of more complex portrayals of women that would facilitate deeper insights into female experiences of the Holocaust.

Six decades later, multiple developments – among them second-wave feminism, the incursion of female directors into the film industry, the rise of memoir literature and first-person accounts of history and the voice that these have given to women’s experiences – have resulted in more insightful and more theoretically and technically complex films. *The Birch-Tree Meadow* (2003) by Marceline Loridan-Ivens, *Nina’s Journey* (2005) by Lena Einhorn and *Remembrance* (2011) by Anna Justice are excellent examples of how contemporary filmmakers have addressed women’s stories and perspectives related to the Holocaust. They not only cast women in the protagonist roles, but offer a radically different portrayal in terms of visual point of view, narrative voiceover and the prioritisation of a female perspective of events. There has been a significant change, therefore, in the way that women’s experiences of the Holocaust are narrated in old versus new Holocaust films.

This doctoral thesis explores how European cinema has constructed particular sets of images of and discourses on women in the Holocaust over time. It focuses on three distinct categories: victims, perpetrators and resisters. The study examines how and why the portrayal of women in European Holocaust films has changed since the end of the war, and traces the various patterns that characterise their representation throughout the

intervening decades. Working with a corpus of three hundred and ten films, this research presents a close and detailed analysis of the dynamic relationship between gender, film, and the history and memory of the Holocaust.

The journey that led me to this research is complex and sinuous. Although I cannot claim any personal connection with the Holocaust other than my passion for the topic, this study indirectly reflects my own experience of how the Holocaust is remembered and/or silenced in various societies. I grew up in Romania, geographically close to the traces of the Jewish persecution and yet, like most young Romanians, I was completely oblivious to it. It was only while living abroad, when my Film Studies research intersected with the subject of the Holocaust, that I started to be aware of the tragedy that had unfolded in my own country and also of the silence that pervades Romanian society regarding the Holocaust (see also Butnaru 1992; Glajar 2011). Meeting Prof. Ronit Lentin, daughter of Romanian-Jewish survivors and lecturer at Trinity College Dublin, was a crucial turning point not only in terms of determining the direction the research would take but also with regard to developing a full understanding my own personal motivation. Lentin's inspirational writings about the Holocaust (Lentin 1989, 2000a, 2000b, 2004) informed and enriched my research in refreshing and unexpected ways. Importantly, most of her studies are permeated by the topic of silence. Lentin (2000a: 693) claims that there is a "deafening silence" that "envelops the link between gender and genocide in relation to the Shoah¹". Since this thesis is primarily concerned with discourses about women in relation to the Holocaust, the theme of silence is inevitably embedded in its structure and theoretical underpinnings. Indeed, the various ways in which women's experiences are silenced in mainstream Holocaust history and representation became a key preoccupation of the research.

Significantly, the concept of silence points to the constructed nature of Holocaust memory and, more generally, to the constructedness of the Holocaust as a concept. This study addresses the Holocaust not merely as an historical event consigned to the past, but rather as a complex concept whose connotations are constantly revisited and challenged

over time. While the preference for the term Holocaust over analogous ones such as “Shoah” and “Judeocide” is explained in detail in Chapter 4 (see “Notes on Terminology”), it demands elaboration at this juncture as it is inextricably linked to the study’s epistemological approach. Thus, Joan Ringelheim (1990: 141) claims that “the Holocaust has been focused in our minds by the selectivity of many interested parties: scholars, survivors, politicians, novelists, journalists, filmmakers, perpetrators and revisionists”. What Ringelheim means here is that our knowledge about the Holocaust is not based on direct access to the past, but is rather filtered and shaped by a multitude of (f)actors and within a variety of contexts. In a similar vein, Susan Sontag (2003: 76-77) argues that “What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that *this* is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds”. By acknowledging the Holocaust as a construct, this study takes into account a twofold process: on the one hand, how various factors re-shape and influence the Holocaust memory and on the other hand, the way in which collective memory interacts with other discourses within and beyond the subject of the Holocaust. Importantly, historian Zoë Waxman (2006: 152) states that “the concept of the Holocaust acts as an organiser of memory, not only for events contained within its own description – how it shapes, what it excludes, and the manner of its functioning – but also for memories of other events”.

The Holocaust is therefore a term and a concept that is both problematic and needs constantly to be problematized. According to Lentin (2004), there is a tendency to define all other contemporary catastrophes by comparison with the Holocaust. Lentin (ibid.: 5) claims that the recurring use of the Holocaust trope to describe other conflicts such as the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has led to the transformation of the Holocaust into an “euphemism” and a “‘unique, epoch-making’ metaphor”. Thus, the growing identification of the Holocaust with a symbol for modern-day atrocity has “discursively overshadowed all other modern cataclysms”, while “populating our collective and individual imaginations with indelible images, which have

impoverished our vocabulary so that every catastrophe becomes a holocaust” (2004: 6). According to Lentin (ibid.: 12):

Telling and re-telling the Shoah has been employed not only in order to construct a particular kind of memory, but also to justify certain acts, perhaps because no other lexicon is available to Western imagination to narrate catastrophe.

The universal metaphoric connotations embedded in the term Holocaust, therefore, lead not only to an “impoverishment” of the terminology available to narrate atrocity but also to an homogenisation and politicisation of the knowledge about the Holocaust itself. As Lentin (2004: 11) states, “the Shoah is transformed into a political ideology, a code: the Shoah myth replaces the Shoah itself.” In the same vein, Waxman (2006: 186) argues, “although we now know much more about the events of the Holocaust, the outcome has been a diluted comprehension that accords with ‘official’ forms of Holocaust representation”.

Significantly, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1989) explains that there are two ways to downplay and minimise the relevance of the Holocaust for modern history and civilisation. The first is to present the Holocaust as uniquely Jewish, as a “one-off episode” of persecution rooted in antisemitism. Bauman (ibid.: 1) argues that this vision limits understanding of the Holocaust because it makes it “uncharacteristic and sociologically inconsequential” and leaves no room for comparisons with other cases of racially or ethnically motivated violence. Another way of downplaying the impact of the Holocaust is to consider it as generated by a “‘natural’ predisposition of the human species”, in other words as a horrifying, yet normal event in modern societies. Bauman (ibid.:2) claims that, by classifying the Holocaust as something unavoidable, this second vision normalises it as “another item (...) in a wide class that embraces many ‘similar’ cases of conflict, or prejudice, or aggression”. For Bauman, both such perspectives on the event are misguided and limiting as they foster theoretical complacency and do not invite scholars to revisit the relationship between the Holocaust and modernity. As Bauman (ibid.: x) argues:

The Holocaust was born and executed in our modern rational society, at the high stage of our civilization and at the peak of human and cultural achievement, and for this reason it is a problem of that society, civilization and culture.

Contrary to accounts, therefore, that construct the Holocaust as a unique historical aberration, Bauman (1989: 89) contends that it is in fact deeply connected with modernity and is both a “product” and a “failure” of modern civilisation. He further argues that “the role of modern civilization in the incidence and the perpetration of the Holocaust was active, not passive” (ibid.: 89). In other words, the Holocaust would not have been possible outside the context of a modern civilisation based on highly planned, scientific, bureaucratic and efficient management. Importantly, Bauman (ibid.: 94) explains that “modern Holocaust” is unique in two ways. Firstly, the Holocaust is unique precisely “because it is modern”. Unlike pre-modern forms of genocide whose main goal was to get rid of an enemy, modern genocide is motivated by the vision of a “better, and radically different, society”. As Bauman (ibid.: 91) argues, “Modern genocide is an element of social engineering, meant to bring about a social order conforming to the design of the perfect society”. Secondly, the Holocaust is unique “because it brings together some ordinary factors of modernity which normally are kept apart” such as radical, exterminatory antisemitism, state reliance on a widespread bureaucratic apparatus, an “emergency” state caused by war and the passivity of the local population. Bauman’s seminal theory of the Holocaust as a “test of modernity”, facilitated and fostered by a unique combination of ordinary factors that characterise our modern civilisation, underpins the approach adopted in this thesis and is especially relevant to the analysis of cinematic representations of perpetrators in Chapter 6.

This thesis is situated within the theoretical frameworks of both Holocaust Studies and Film Studies. It is therefore crucial to explore the interaction between the two, as well as the unique parameters that characterise Holocaust cinema. According to historian Lawrence Baron (2005: 6), as the Holocaust recedes into the past, films acquire a significantly increasing role in forming the popular perceptions about the event.

Nowadays, along with history books, magazines and the education received in school, an important source of information about the Holocaust is represented by television and cinema. Highly acclaimed films such as the American *Schindler's List* (1993) and many European ones such as *Life is Beautiful* (1997), *Train of Life* (1998), *The Pianist* (2002), *Rosenstrasse* (2003), *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2008) – to name but a few - provide unforgettable images that shape public knowledge about the Holocaust of people who did not experience it. In a similar vein, the scholar Anna Reading (2002: 100) acknowledges that films are a “key medium in our social inheritance of the history and memory of the Holocaust.” As she claims, the increasing role of films in informing and fostering awareness about the Holocaust is a natural consequence of the evolution of the film industry and the multiplication of its forms of distribution. According to Reading (2002: 78):

The role of film in raising post-Holocaust awareness of the events is not surprising given that the number of moving images related to and about the Holocaust, and our access to these has increased enormously with the diversification of broadcasting and the advent of satellite and cable television resulting in the development of specialized channels, including those for history.

While there is little doubt regarding the major role played nowadays by cinema in awareness of and education about the Holocaust, there is also a tendency in recent films such as *Good* (2008), *The Reader* (2008), *Sarah's Key* (2010) and *The Door* (2012) to engage in discourses that bridge between the past and the present. Such films inform about the tragedy in an oblique manner, while the focus is shifted away from the Holocaust as an historical event witnessed by its victims towards its potential to enlighten contemporary audiences on topics relevant to modern societies, such as discrimination, racism, understanding why people become perpetrators, forgetting versus remembering the past and the importance of repairing the mistakes of the past. Lawrence Baron (2005: ix) acknowledges this change in the preferences of the contemporary public, pointing out that the generations born after the 1960s prefer “to learn why the Holocaust is relevant today instead of why it was unique.” Thus, as Baron claims, filmmakers are increasingly

challenged to adjust their narratives from more “literal” or historically accurate depictions of the Holocaust towards more “creative” or metaphorical accounts and to incorporate broader perspectives that include the non-Jewish victims of the Nazi persecution.

Reflecting upon the present in the light of the events from the past seems to be a common paradigm that characterises contemporary Holocaust cinema, as films strive to respond to the concerns of modern audiences. As a result, the Holocaust is transformed into a paradigm for evil, a metaphor for racism, prejudice and hatred (Bauer, 2001: xi). It is precisely the symbolic connotations incorporated over time in the word “Holocaust” that are appealing to filmmakers because they allow a simultaneous engagement with past and present. Importantly, sociologist Ronit Lentin acknowledges that the memory of the Holocaust is not a fixed entity and has been constantly shaped and re-shaped over time and within various contexts. As Lentin (2004: 8) claims:

No society can ‘remember’ the extermination outside the discourses used to narrate, or ‘memorise’ it. The Shoah has been ‘remembered’, ‘forgotten’, ‘re-interpreted’, and ‘historicised’ in different historical periods and different social and political climates.

The plurality of discourses mobilised in the process of remembering the Holocaust is closely related to the dominant concerns of societies at any given moment in time as well as with their social and political agendas. In the same vein, Andrew Hoskins (2009: 27) argues that, “How, what and why individuals and societies remember and forget is being shaped by technological, political, social and cultural shifts that interpenetrate memory and memories, their makers, deniers and their (...) ‘repositories’.”

Despite the passing of time since the end of the World War II, the impact of the Holocaust is not diminishing but rather growing, as historian Yehuda Bauer (2001: xi) points out. The Holocaust is still a sensitive topic for many nations, who endeavour to wrest meaning from a past whose memory lingers into the present. Germany, the main perpetrator nation, struggles between an ongoing process of “coming to terms with the Nazi past” (Fuchs, 2008: 1) and the more recent tendency, since reunification, towards

portraying Germans as victims of historical circumstances (ibid.: 12). Also, over the last three decades, France is constantly revisiting its past, by demolishing the post-war myth of widespread resistance and acknowledging extensive collaboration with the Nazis (Hewitt, 2008: 2). Indeed, all of the countries involved in the war, due to their varied positions as perpetrators, collaborators, victims or allied nations, encourage different discourses of remembrance that are often promoted or reinforced by the nation's cinematic output. In this process, films act not only as vehicles of collective memory but also as producers and re-interpreters of it. As Leah Hewitt (2008: 4) argues "in the contemporary period, the media have frequently taken on the task of transmitting and/or creating collective memories that confirm (but sometimes challenge) national identities." In the same vein, media scholar Ferzina Banaji (2012) claims that films play an active role not only in "creating" memory, but also in changing the Holocaust memory according to the concerns operating at particular points in time. As Banaji (2012: 1-2) further points out, even before we begin to address the substantive content of films, "the very fact of cinematic revelation can often act as a catalyst in shifting and engaging with perceptions and memories". A case point is the documentary *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1972), which challenged the myth of generalised French resistance and marked a watershed moment in the memory of the Holocaust in France (Hewitt, 2008: 3).

Given the importance of films in transmitting, creating and changing collective memories of the Holocaust, it is crucial to emphasise the constructed nature of the latter. According to Anna Reading (2002: 5), the concept of collective memory is intended to highlight how memories are configured to create "social cohesion through a broader consensus about the past". As she argues, despite the multitude of scholarly works that focus on the role of media as a vehicle of collective memory, there is a "gender memory gap", meaning that very few studies take into consideration the importance of gender in the "collective construction, mediation and articulation of memories of historical events." Reading (2002: 100-101) further claims that:

The more well-known socially inherited memories of the Holocaust handed down through film tend to be those that in particular ways help

re-establish or confirm gendered roles and identities, and thus help maintain social cohesion. In this respect it is important to approach films about the past, even 'documentaries' of the events, in ways that are critical of how these memories may be being mediated.

Understanding how Holocaust memory is mediated over time from a gendered perspective, it is argued here, yields important new insights into the complex mechanisms at play between gender, film, collective memory and historical representation.

It is important to flag here that gender is understood in this study not as biological difference between men and women, but rather as a complex and socially constructed set of norms, behaviours and relationships that have evolved over time in the context of a patriarchal society. According to sociologist Diane Richardson (*ibid.*: 4-5), prior to the 1960s, gender was referred to strictly in terms of masculine versus feminine, with masculinity attributed solely to men and femininity to women. Within this heteronormative binary model, the sexes were conceived of as essentially different but complementary. Between the 1960s and 1970s, the emergence of second-wave feminism initiated a radical interrogation of this concept of gender, shifting attention away from essentialist frameworks towards an emphasis on the importance of historical, cultural and social parameters in shaping and defining gender. During this period, gender was reconceived as the "learning of a culturally and historically specific social role associated with women and men, and used to describe a person's identity as masculine or feminine" (Richardson, 2008: 9). As Richardson (*ibid.*: 10-11) points out, later developments made by scholars such as Christine Delphy (1984) and Monique Witting (1981/1992) challenged the universality of gender as a conceptual category, claiming that the way we refer to gender is not the same in all times and places, being tightly connected with social and economic positions of men and women in various societies around the world. Richardson (*ibid.*: 11) further explains that more recent, postmodern, understandings of gender, "shifted the emphasis away from definitions of gender as fixed, coherent and stable, towards seeing gender categories as plural, provisional and situated". The key exponent of this thinking, American theorist Judith Butler (1990), claims that gender is a reiterated social performance (Richardson, 1989: 11-13). Rethinking gender theorisation,

Butler (1990: 4) has questioned the universal category “woman” used in traditional feminism and argued that gender is constituted differently in various contexts because of its intersection “with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities”. Butler (ibid.: 4-5) further claims that it is “impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained”.

In a similar vein, Lentin (1997: 5-6) states that, in studying genocide, one needs to go beyond the universal binary equation of powerful male versus powerless women. As she argues, gender analysis of catastrophes need to approach women not as a monolithic category, but instead to move beyond women’s victimhood to include “the routes of resistance available to women” and the participation of women as perpetrators of genocide. Lentin claims that the idea of women as a “universally oppressed group” is a “Western feminist colonialist” concept. Quoting Mohanty (1991: 71), Lentin (1997: 5) argues that:

Indeed ‘women’ cannot be considered a category of analysis across contexts, regardless of class, race-ethnicity, nationality and sexual orientation, not only because the world is not neatly divided into the binary opposition of the powerful (men) versus powerless (women), but also because such a construction, of women struggling across class and culture, against the general notion of (male) oppression, would assume ‘a unilateral and undifferentiated source of power and a cumulative reaction to power’.

Importantly, Lentin highlights the complex relationship between gender and race. Taking stock of the writings of Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (1989; 1992), Lentin (ibid.: 9) acknowledges the numerous ways in which women are “targeted by and participate in ethnic and national processes” as producers of the next generations, as transmitters of culture, as symbols of ideological discourses and as signifiers of ethical differences. In other words, as Yuval-Davis (1996: 17) argues, “women reproduce biologically, culturally and symbolically their ethnic and national collectivities”. In the context of Nazism and the Holocaust especially, Lentin (1997: 3, 9) explains that the Holocaust

“was based not merely on anti-Semitism, but on racist state ideology”. She argues that there was a direct connection between the Final Solution for the Jews, the mass murder of disabled people and the Lebensborn breeding programme of Aryan children. In all three cases, “women’s biological destiny” was targeted differently within the Nazi ideology: young Jewish women were sentenced to death because they could bear (Jewish) children, disabled people were sterilised within the race-hygiene programmes, while ‘Aryan’ women were encouraged to bear many ‘racially superior’ children. Lentin uses this example to emphasise the importance of addressing ‘women’ not as a single homogeneous category, but in terms of the diversity of their experiences and taking into account the intersection between race, ethnicity and gender, which broadens the horizons of knowledge about the Holocaust. According to Lentin (1997: 11):

Privileging women’s lived experiences as primary resources not only militates against universalising ‘womanhood’ across contexts. It also enlarges our understanding of any catastrophic event by reclaiming experiences of women ‘hidden’ in mainstream historiography and scholarship, shaped, among other things, by the gendered construction of knowledge itself.

In the light of Lentin’s statements above, it is important to note that gender issues were largely absent from Holocaust Studies until the beginning of 1980s (see Baer and Goldenberg, 2003: xvii- xviii). In its initial stages, this new field of research was met with a degree of suspicion and resistance by both survivors and scholars. As Weitzman and Ofer (1998: 12) point out, it was feared that a gender-differentiated agenda might trivialise the historical event and potentially allow a feminist agenda or set of concerns to overshadow the Holocaust. Over the last three decades, however, cutting-edge research has successfully challenged the hitherto gender-neutral perspective on the Holocaust. Among the most significant writings in this regard are *Women in the Resistance and in the Holocaust* (1983) by Vera Laska, *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust* (1993) by Carol Ann Rittner and John Roth, *Women in the Holocaust* (1998) by Dalia Ofer and Lenore Weitzman, *Double Jeopardy: Women and the Holocaust* (1998) by Judith Tydor Baumel and *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust* (2003) by Elizabeth Baer and Myrna Goldenberg. These studies have rendered women visible

within the area of Holocaust Studies and, as a result, have produced important narratives of women's lives during the Holocaust.

However, two recent scholars (Waxman 2006; Young 2009) claim that the need to fit women's stories into certain canons of "rightful" behaviour results in a homogenisation and idealisation of women's experiences that limits their diversity and historical accuracy. Waxman (2006: 125) argues that studies of women and the Holocaust "often project their own concerns", which "tend to emerge from preconceived ideas regarding women's abilities to act in moral, heroic, or noble ways". She further claims that survivors also tend to simplify their stories to "fit" them into existing gender patterns, especially when they live in cultures with more traditional gender norms. In the same vein, Young (2009) contends that curatorial discourses exhibit similar tendencies towards idealising women. He argues that women's representations often focus on resistance, heroism, virtue and sacrifice, as attributes that leave no room for their vulnerabilities, fears, wrong choices, weaknesses or attitudes that could be considered inappropriate. As Young (2009: 1778) claims, "too often, our stories about these women have left no space for the stories women have to tell, stories that seem to have no place in the field of the Holocaust canon". A useful example here is the concept of "split memory" used by Joan Ringelheim (1997; 1998). As Ringelheim (1997: 20) explains, there is a twofold split between the "official" memory of the Holocaust and the personal stories of women. Firstly, this occurs when survivors misunderstand the importance of their experiences in the context of the Holocaust and thus omit them. Secondly, the split takes place because "there is a dividing line between what is considered personal and private to women, and what has been designated as the proper collective memory of the Holocaust". This second split of memory is enhanced not only by the reluctance of scholars to include certain extreme experiences such as cannibalism, killing of newborn babies or sexual violence, but also by their inability to listen to or to deal with topics that "may bring us closer [to atrocity] than we can bear" (Ringelheim, 1997: 27, 31). According to Ringelheim (1998: 342):

I believe that we avoid listening to stories we do not want to hear. Sometimes we avoid listening because we are afraid; sometimes we avoid listening because we don't understand the importance of what is being said. Without a place for a particular memory, without a conceptual framework, a possibly significant piece of information will not be pursued.

Importantly, Ringelheim (1997: 32) urges scholars and survivors alike to “journey beyond this split”. Waxman's, Young's and Ringelheim's critiques re-emerge throughout this research as I explore the extent to which the propensity for idealising, universalising and silencing women's experiences is mirrored and/or challenged by cinematic discourses and representations.

It is worth noting that, while much historical material has been written in the past three decades about women and the Holocaust, their representation in cinema remains under-analysed in both Film Studies and Holocaust Studies literature. Pioneering research by Judith Doneson (1978; 1992; 1997) and Esther Fuchs (1999a; 1999b; 2008) has contributed significantly to the topic, although their research is more intuitive than based on rigorous content analysis, and is not comprehensive in scope and scale. There is a significant gap in the literature, therefore, on how cinema has articulated images of women in the Holocaust, what elements have been exposed, concealed or modified through various representational practices, and to what extent gendered stereotypes have been replaced by more empowered and authoritative accounts of women's experiences. This thesis aims, therefore, to fill in this gap in a hitherto poorly researched area by taking into consideration a large-scale corpus of European Holocaust films to be analysed in terms of discourses and gendered representation.

In line with Lentin's (1997) and Butler's (1990) theorisation of gender, this thesis focuses on women not as a unique and monolithic category, but instead it acknowledges the “multiplicity of cultural, social, and political intersections in which the concrete array of “women” are constructed” (Butler, *ibid.*: 19). As the following chapters illustrate, this study acknowledges an intricate web of Holocaust experiences in which women are

found at its every possible intersection: as women in ghettos, in concentration camps and in hiding, women who perished in the Holocaust and women who survived, women who succumbed to despair and women who by their courage defied the crushing Nazi system, women who were persecuted and also women who sided with the persecutors. Due to the variety of their gendered experiences, the category “women” is a highly heterogeneous and all-inclusive one. Moreover, this thesis rejects the traditional binary opposition between male oppressor/female victim by demonstrating that some women were also perpetrators. In doing so it challenges essentialist discourses that consider violence as male domain against women seen as a “powerless, unified group” (Lentin, 2000c: 93) and proposes a “set of dialogic encounters by which variously positioned women articulate separate identities” (Butler, 1990: 20).

Most importantly, this thesis does not focus exclusively on women who conformed to gender roles and identities, but excavates representations that challenge mainstream historical knowledge by depicting taboo topics such as sexual violence, rape and suicide. Significantly, Butler (ibid.: 34) claims that identities are formed upon a set of “regulatory practices” of gender coherence. This implies that gender identity is moulded upon “socially instituted and maintained forms of intelligibility” (Butler, ibid.: 23). Butler’s assertion is particularly important in the context of this thesis because it resonates with Waxman’s (2006: 125) claim that the study of women and the Holocaust is organised upon preconceived gender roles and rigid canons of “rightful behaviour”. Thus, this thesis goes beyond the commonly accepted norms and regulatory practices traditionally embedded within gender, in order to examine whether or not the memory of the Holocaust structures its images upon a rigid gender stereotyping.

Also, despite the tendency of scholars to refer to the Jewish dimension of the Holocaust (Baumel 1998, Kaplan 1998, Weitzman and Ofer 1998), this study acknowledges other, understudied, categories of women such as Gypsies, lesbians and the disabled. In line with Lentin (1997), therefore, this research is aware of the complex intersectionality between gender, race and ethnicity, which was particularly relevant in the context of

Nazism and its eugenic policies. Although at times it might seem that the study adopts an essentialist binary discourse by comparing the experiences of women with those of their male counterparts, this is driven by the various ways in which men and women were treated differently rather than by an understanding of gender characteristics as innate, and the study is underpinned by the need to acknowledge the multitude of perspectives on women's experiences during the Holocaust. Last but certainly not least, it is significant to acknowledge that Lentin's own work – which was inspirational for this research – has changed significantly to reflect an epistemological trajectory from understanding the feminine as biologically innate and exclusive to women to a much more fluid and performative understanding of gender, as espoused by Judith Butler and other feminists influenced by queer theory. Thus, her first novel, *Night Train to Mother* (1989) which follows the life story of four generations of Romanian-Jewish women is informed by a gender essentialist perspective on women, while later (academic) works such as *Gender and Genocide* (1997) and *Israel and the Daughters of the Shoah* (2000b) are based on understandings of gender as fluid, dynamic and performative.

Chapter 2, "Women and the Holocaust: The Silenced Gender?" begins with an attempt to locate this doctoral thesis within the wider context of Holocaust Studies as an academic discipline. It offers a brief overview of the historiography, canons, methodologies and theoretical concerns that set out the research parameters in the study of the Holocaust. At the same time, the chapter is concerned with establishing the dominant discourses and theoretical positions that characterise scholarship on gender and the Holocaust generally. The chapter clarifies why it is so important to focus on women and how this can enhance our understanding of the Holocaust, seen in a broader perspective as the mass murder of six million Jews and six million other victims. As the chapter explains, the inclusion of women in the study of the Holocaust is strongly connected with the need to examine this historical event beyond its Jewish specificity. The chapter then tackles the marginalisation of women's voices, a concern that has been present in women's studies about the Holocaust since its beginnings and still resurfaces in scholarly writings today. It then explores, one by one, the three categories of women at the heart of this study

(victims, perpetrators, and resisters) and corresponding forms of silencing their experiences encountered in Holocaust research. With respect to victims, the analysis takes into consideration both Jewish and non-Jewish victims.

Chapter 3, “Between Gendered Stereotypes and Sexual Extremes: The Representation of Women in Holocaust Films” explores the main concerns present in the film studies literature on female victims and perpetrators. This review points to significant gaps in the research, whereby the topic has been – with few exceptions – largely overlooked by scholars. However, the paucity of scholarship on this subject and the tendency of scholars to focus on the same small repertoire of films is compensated by the useful insights it provides for the purposes of my own study. Referring to the depiction of women as victims, the chapter focuses mostly on the writings of Judith Doneson and Esther Fuchs, two landmark scholars who first approached the topic. Doneson’s concept of the “feminization of the Jew” is introduced here as a key paradigm, whereby many films tend to identify the Jew with a woman or with a feminised male. Within this representational trope, the Jew is configured as weak, prone to passivity, and waiting to be saved by a strong male Gentile. Doneson claims that many films are permeated by this stereotype, from the early post-war films such as *Distant Journey* (1949) to the internationally acclaimed *Schindler’s List* (1993). The chapter then outlines the findings of Esther Fuchs, which demonstrate that women tend to be portrayed as vicarious victims through cinematic structures that emphasise the tragedy suffered by men. Moreover, as she further claims, when women feature in leading roles they are depicted between sexual extremes, within the virgin/whore dichotomy. Another significant part of this chapter deals with the representation of sexual violence in film by focusing on the work of two key scholars, Yvonne Kozlovsky-Golan and Rebecca Scherr. Despite its growing body of films, Holocaust cinema tends to elude explicit depictions of rape and sexual abuse. While on one hand, respect is imposed when depicting the violence endured by female victims, the representation of perpetrators, on the other hand, is often accompanied by sexual references. The chapter concludes by reviewing the literature on the representation of

female perpetrators whose depiction blends the element of evil with the sexualisation of their bodies.

Chapter 4, “Methodology” outlines the theoretical concerns and the methodological approach used in this doctoral thesis. Since this research emerges at a crossroads between Film Studies, Gender Studies, Holocaust and Perpetrator Studies, the various theoretical backgrounds are set in each one of these four areas of study. The research design is based on textual analysis, but constantly looks beyond the text towards the historical, cultural and social context, and also to the ideological persuasions and background of the filmmaker. The chapter also places much emphasis on defining Holocaust cinema, a concept that is characterised by a distinct lack of consensus among scholars. In the same vein as historian Lawrence Baron, this research adopts flexible boundaries to Holocaust cinema that also include films about non-Jewish victims and films about the post-war trials and punishment of perpetrators. The chapter then explains and justifies the selection criteria for the film corpus and delineates the productions that will be included in it. Of significant importance in this chapter is the overview of landmark feminist theories which provide the framework for gender analysis within this thesis.

Chapter 5, “The Cinematic Representation of Women as Perpetrators and Accomplices of Crime during Nazism” maps out and analyses the different cinematic categories of women working within the Nazi apparatus: the guards and head overseers, the secretaries, and the medical personnel. Acknowledging the paucity of studies on the topic, this chapter examines the depiction of these women, highlighting the differences and similarities with their male counterparts. The chapter suggests that the absence of female figures seen working within the Nazi system goes hand in hand with their confinement to stereotyped roles. It is significant, therefore, to point out that, in the nearly seventy years since the end of the war, Holocaust cinema has dramatically changed in terms of style and narrative strategies, but not in relation to the portrayal of female perpetrators. The findings indicate that films tend to depict these women mainly using stereotypes of violent, ridiculous or sexually perverted behaviours. By comparison, the portrayal of

male perpetrators is much more complex and exhibits a high variety of roles from zealots, desk murderers, to unwilling executioners and even benevolent Nazis. The chapter traces the roots of such gender-differentiated depiction of perpetrators in the patriarchal mechanisms of Holocaust cinema rather than in the general disinterest in women perpetrators. Finally, the chapter acknowledges a shift in the representation of female perpetrator, marked by two recent films: *Downfall* (2004) and *The Reader* (2008). These films offer more nuanced portrayals and challenge viewers to reflect upon and interrogate the ordinariness of female perpetrators during the Nazi regime.

Chapter 6, “Female Victims in Holocaust Films: From Universalised Portrayals to Recovered Memory” examines the trajectory undertaken by films in depicting female victims. The path towards recovering women’s memories in the Third Millennium is a non-linear one, characterised by different stages spanning from early universal images of Jewish women (late 1940s), homogeneous portrayals (especially in the 1960s) and exploring new fertile grounds (early 1970s to the end of 1990s). In the post-war films, the few leading Jewish female characters are portrayed as universalised victims with the intention of providing a broad spectrum of identification. By contrast, in the 1960s, the Jewess is recognised as a symbolic victim of the Holocaust and most Jewish characters tend to be portrayed as women. But, as this chapter will claim, despite the increasing numbers of significant female figures, these films are not particularly interested in exploring women’s experiences during the Holocaust. This chapter then focuses on the new filmic characters introduced by the Holocaust cinema in the 1970s: along with the novelty of depicting non-Jewish victims, sexual abuse and second generation survivors, the female characters portrayed in this period are often in crisis and suicidal. Finally, the findings acknowledge a new trend in the Third Millennium towards more nuanced depictions of Jewish women whose stories are told from a woman’s perspective. These latter films engage to a greater extent in depicting the experiences of women during the Holocaust, and in doing so they create valid premises for analysing the relationship between gender, memory and representation.

Chapter 7, “Gendering Heroism: The Role of Women in Filmic Discourses about Resistance” examines how Holocaust films construct their discourses about resistance from a gendered perspective. While acknowledging that the majority of films analysed reinforce the mainstream historical invisibility of female resistance, the chapter explores some of the main films that portray women who opposed the Nazis, such as *The Last Stage* (1948), *The Nasty Girl* (1990), *Aimee and Jaguar* (1999), *Rosenstrasse* (2003), *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* (2005), *Black Book* (2006) and *Sarah’s Key* (2009). The chapter highlights the limited presence of leading female characters in narratives about resistance, arguing that the popularity of romantic plots and the prevalence of fictional scripts and characters are telling for cinema’s tendency to downplay women’s resistance. The analysis of rescue films occupies a central place in the chapter’s structure. By analysing the depiction of female rescuers compared with their male counterparts, the chapter contends that most films construct a collective imagery in which the rescuers are men while women represent a hindrance in their noble rescuing efforts. Finally, the chapter contends that the female figure is used as an instrument for facilitating discourses about resistance in perpetrator and collaborator countries such as Germany and France.

Chapter 8, “Conclusion” locates the findings of this study in the wider scholarship on European Cinema Studies, on the one hand, and Women in Holocaust Studies, on the other hand, highlighting the significant contribution it brings to both areas of research. The chapter argues for the uniqueness of this study, which is the first to address the representation of women across a comprehensive and representative corpus of European Holocaust films. It also discusses the findings in more detail, highlighting the discursive relationship between film, history, cultural memory and gendered representation. The chapter also makes recommendations for future research by pointing to possible areas of future enquiry.

Chapter 2

WOMEN AND THE HOLOCAUST: THE SILENCED GENDER?

Too often, our stories about these women have left no space for the stories women have to tell, stories that seem to have no place in the fixed field of the Holocaust canon.
(Young 2009)

2.1. Introduction

Despite the uniqueness of the Holocaust as an historical event, the story of persecution that it narrates is not one but many stories. Each victim, either man, woman or child, each Jewish or non-Jewish survivor, as well as each person who belonged to the Nazi machinery of destruction, has his/her own story, his/her own personal version of the Holocaust. According to historian Zoë Waxman (2006: 2), “Holocaust testimony attests to the heterogeneity of Holocaust experiences. The Holocaust was not just one event, but many different events, witnessed by many different people, over a time span of several years and covering an expansive geographical area”. Waxman’s statement is fundamental in understanding the need to explore the Holocaust in the complexity of its stories and in the diversity of the people who have experienced it.

The focus on women that characterised the feminist research on the Holocaust over the last three decades is an attempt to restore this heterogeneity, obscured by the previous male canon of Holocaust research. The role of gender in the study of the Holocaust is essential since it helps us explore better the nuances of the Nazis persecution and the different ways men and women responded to it. As sociologist Lenore Weitzman and historian Dalia Ofer (1998: 1) claim:

The discussion of women's unique experiences provides a missing element of what we must now see as an incomplete picture of Jewish life during the Holocaust.

Significantly enough, historian Joan Ringelheim (1990) connects the imperative to consider women's experiences with the need to explore as well the lives of victims other than Jews. She claims that seeing the Holocaust as a unique and exclusive Jewish tragedy is "symbiotically tied" with the view that considers there are no significant gendered differences within the Jewish experience. While the first perspective denies and marginalises any experience other than the Jewish one (such as Gypsies, the disabled, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses), the second one ignores the complexity of the Jewish experience and incorporates women's lives in a unique - male dominant - point of view. According to Ringelheim (1990: 142-143):

Jews, however, were not victims in a vacuum. Their lives intersected those of perpetrators, bystanders, and other victims. All these intertwined create the picture of the Holocaust. (...) The second problematic view concerns the sameness of the Jewish experience (...). Such a view seems to ignore the complexities of that Jewish experience just as the exclusivity/uniqueness view ignores the complexities of the experiences of victims who were not Jewish. At a most basic level, this narrow view misses the fact that no two Jews experienced what is called the Holocaust in quite the same way, even if they were in the same place at the same time. There is no time, there is no place that is the same for everyone, not even Auschwitz.

This chapter and thesis as a whole address both of Ringelheim's concerns: while the main focus will be on women's experiences, it will include as well a broader perspective on the Holocaust to embrace the other categories of victims, as well as female perpetrators and women in the resistance. The thesis challenges perspectives that argue for the sameness and the uniqueness of the Holocaust. It aims towards a gendered analysis that rejects the idea of women as a monolithic category and will encompass different sub-categories: Jewish and non-Jewish victims, resisters, and perpetrators.

Before considering how women have been represented in Holocaust cinema, which is the object of the following chapters, it is essential to establish and explore dominant discourses and theoretical positions that characterise scholarship on the Holocaust generally and especially its intersection with feminist research. For this purpose, it is important to first provide a brief overview of Holocaust Studies as an academic discipline and, subsequently, to tackle the key concern of this chapter, namely the core theoretical issues that characterise the study of women and the Holocaust.

According to historian Michael Bernard-Donals (2006: 33), Holocaust Studies emerged as an area of historical research between the 1960s and the 1970s. As Bernard-Donals (ibid.: 43) explains, the study of the Holocaust has changed significantly over the decades and thus “what we know about the event, the *shape* of the event in historical terms, has shifted and those shifts have had a profound impact on the event’s implications for us and for how we study, and write, history”. His study provides an overview of the most significant contemporary debates and theoretical concerns that have shaped the historiography of the Holocaust, such as the issue of Holocaust’s uniqueness, research on the implementation of the Final Solution, the growing awareness of non-Jewish victims and the debate over the contribution of ordinary people to the persecution. Notably absent from Bernard-Donals’ account, however, is the research on women and the Holocaust that has developed over the past three decades, which is mentioned only in passing. This example is illustrative of the absence of gender-related discourses within dominant approaches to Holocaust Studies. In the same vein, Doris Bergen (2013: 17) claims that, despite the considerable volume of academic writing, college courses and conferences devoted to gendered perspectives on the Holocaust since the 1980s onwards, “to a remarkable extent this work remains outside the mainstream Holocaust studies (...) removed from what count as the big questions in the field”. Similarly, Pascale Rachel Bos (2003) acknowledges that Holocaust Studies remains a “male-dominated” field of research. Bos (ibid.: 24) contends that because “male researchers are inclined to read ‘autobiographically’”, giving precedence to those readings “which resonate with [their] own experiences and sensibilities”, the Holocaust canon “has in turn remained

predominantly male”. This explains to a large extent why dominant discourses and theoretical debates regarding the Holocaust remain predominantly male-centred.

However, since the early 1980s, an increasing number of (female) scholars from various disciplines have focused their research on the topic of Women and the Holocaust. These include Sybil Milton, Joan Ringelheim, Elizabeth Baer, Myrna Goldenberg, Lenore Weitzman, Dalia Ofer and Judith Tydor Baumel. According to Baer and Goldenberg (2003: xxiv-xxv), academic writings on women and the Holocaust generally fall into two categories. The first comprises early thematic anthologies of memoirs and oral histories intended to preserve women’s Holocaust stories, such as Laska (1983), Lixl-Purcell (1988), Gurewitsch (1998) and Ritvo and Plotkin (1998). While this first category does not evaluate the memoirs, the second wave of scholarly works which emerged in the mid to late-Nineties consists of feminist interpretations of the topic of women and the Holocaust such as those by Rittner and Roth (1993), Ofer and Weitzman (1998), Baumel (1998) and Fuchs (1999). Baer and Goldenberg (*ibid.*: xxiii) also point out that, while “historical approaches have dominated Holocaust Studies, including those limited to women”, Marlene Heinemann (1986) shifted the focus towards literary texts. Heinemann’s research identified recurrent gender-specific topics in women’s memoirs and novels, such as physical abuse, rape and childbirth. Baer and Goldenberg (*ibid.*: xxvi) further acknowledge the work of Lillian Kremer (1999) as a “pioneering study of fiction written in English about women’s experiences”.

Acknowledging these two different strands of academic writing is fundamental for this thesis, which will draw much of its theoretical framework from the second category, based on feminist interpretations. However, throughout the study there is also direct reference to various other collections of memoirs and oral testimonies. It is important to highlight, therefore, that this study considers oral testimony, autobiographical memoirs and also their academic interpretations as “gendered discourses which serve to construct, reshape and contest the memory of the past for various present purposes (personal and social) as much as they serve to preserve that past itself” (Bos, 2003: 39). This

perspective allows us to consider both Holocaust Studies and its intersection with gender as a discursive arena in which our knowledge about the past is constantly shaped, reformulated and contested by the interests of various parties. Significantly, Joan Ringelheim (1990) emphasises how both written history about and collective memory of the Holocaust are shaped by the selectivity of historians, survivors, scholars, politicians and filmmakers. According to Ringelheim (ibid.: 141):

The past is alive in our present, but connections with it are opaque rather than transparent. The past as lived is chaotic and confusing; the past as written is a refinement of this disorderliness. What is identified as the historical past has been shaped, reconstructed, and muted to serve various scholarly and political interests. While written history is continually reconstructed, portions of the past wait to be revealed. Thus, *the* past doesn't exist in the present; *many* pasts do.

Thus, the extensive literature review in this chapter is organised around the theme of silence, emphasising the constructed nature of historical, memorial and academic writings and, along with it, the gaps left behind by the process of reconstructing the past. More specifically, this chapter explores how women's experiences have been repeatedly silenced throughout the history of the Holocaust. Often feminist scholars make reference in their research to the "neglect of women" (Baer and Goldenberg, 2003: xxv), the "blind spots in the memories and reconstruction of the Holocaust" (Ringelheim, 1990: 145), "the conspiracy of silence" (Lentin, 2000a: 691), "deafening silence" (ibid.: 691), "silences in Holocaust historiography" (Reading, 2002: 34) or "the absence of women's voices" (Young, 2009: 1779). These expressions describe the peripheral position of women in relation to the "phallogentric view" (Bos, 2003: 24) dominating Holocaust Studies. Using the metaphor of the "silent gender", this chapter explores the way in which the experiences of women have been variously neglected, overlooked, marginalised, disregarded and misrepresented, both before and after the emergence of gendered studies of the Holocaust. It also challenges the silenced gender paradigm by highlighting how various categories of women (Jewish victims, non-Jewish victims, perpetrators and resisters) have been neglected in mainstream Holocaust history and by examining the validity of such a paradigm after more than three decades of feminist Holocaust

scholarship. This literature review is thus divided into five sections: the first one explains the “silenced gender paradigm”, while the other four explore the literature on female victims – Jewish and non-Jewish, women in the resistance and female perpetrators, and the specific ways in which these categories have been partially or totally silenced.

2.2. The Silenced Gender Paradigm

This section sets out to explain the silenced gender paradigm by acknowledging the various ways in which women’s gendered experiences have been overlooked, marginalised, dismissed and homogenised both prior to and after the emergence of research on women and the Holocaust. The literature review in this section highlights various reasons outlined by scholars for the marginalisation or dismissal of women’s Holocaust experiences: the self-imposed silence of survivors (Lentin 2000a), the fears that a feminist agenda would trivialise the Holocaust (Weitzman and Ofer 1998), the dismissal of topics related to gender and sexuality in relation to the Holocaust (Tec 2003) and the lack of interest on behalf of publishers on women’s testimonies (Baer 2011). This section also considers Waxman’s (2006) and Young’s (2009) claims that the need to fit women’s stories into certain canons of “rightful” behaviour results in a homogenisation and idealisation of women’s experiences that further limits their diversity and historical accuracy.

One of the survivor memoirs published in the last decade is *Final Witness: My Journey from the Holocaust to Ireland* (Zinn-Collis, 2006). The author narrates his personal experience when, aged four, he was incarcerated with his mother and siblings first - for a short period - in a women’s concentration camp, Ravensbrück, and then in Belsen extermination camp. The memoir offers an unusual perspective, since it is written by a man but offers a glimpse of the experience of women since Zoltan Zinn-Collis, being a child at the time, stayed with his mother. Normally, due to the fact that most of the camps were segregated by sex, such perspective is extremely rare. One of the most disturbing

episodes of his Holocaust experience, Zinn-Collis acknowledges, happened during the journey towards the concentration camp when, in a train station, a guard forced from his mother's arms the corpse of his baby sister and threw it like an object over the station's wall. As Zinn-Collis (2006: 52) narrates:

Being the smallest, I don't know how I managed to get to the front, but there I am, still demanding my mother's attention and her hand to help me jump down onto the platform. Mother is already down there, holding on to a tiny bundle, which I know is my baby sister, dead. There is a guard – whether he is Polish, Czech, or German I cannot say, since I do not know what country we are in, never mind what town or station – and he is pulling at the bundle, trying to tear it from my mother's hands. My mother is holding on fiercely, holding on with all her strength. The guard gives it a sudden jerk, and wins the struggle. He takes the bundle in one hand, gives it a cursory inspection, and throws it swiftly over the wall at the back of the station. My mother gazes at him, shocked and powerless, and this bundle with no name, my baby sister, is gone.

Without underestimating the emotional charge and power of this paragraph, as well as the impact it had on a four year old boy, one has to admit that it says very little of what the mother might have experienced in that moment. The account does not tell us what she thought, how she felt or how she was able to carry on. Without her testimony one will never know the answers to these questions. One can presume what she might have felt, have done or have thought, but without her side of the story, her subjective experience of the Holocaust remains unknown. The author himself admits these limits and the fact that even by being so close to his mother during the terrible ordeal, his mind as a child at the time and as an adult nowadays, could not understand what his mother lived. As Zinn-Collis (2006: 60) acknowledges:

I often think about the adults, the mothers. What could have been going through their minds? As children, we were concerned with having food in our bellies and our protectors by our sides. In time, this is what the adults would be reduced to also, but for now they carried bravely the lead of responsibility for their children's safety. (...) I wonder whether, trundling across Europe on a squalid bus, surrounded by bodily emissions and decaying flesh, the corpse of her baby daughter having just been wrenched from her arms and flung over a wall, my mother was

glad or sorry that she refused to sign that piece of paper [the divorce papers from her Jewish husband].

In order to understand what women experienced and felt during the Holocaust, as mothers, daughters, sisters, or simply as women, one needs to listen to the women's version of this unique tragedy. Their stories are important and, according to Weitzman and Ofer (1998: 1), "they help us envision the specificity of everyday life and the different ways in which men and women responded to the Nazi onslaught".

For more than three decades after the Holocaust happened, silence was laid over women's experiences for several reasons. According to sociologist Ronit Lentin (2000a), women chose a self-imposed silence, due to their fragility as survivors, to the desire to forget, but as well due to the reluctance to speak about delicate issues like bartering sex for survival. As Lentin (*ibid.*: 691) points out:

After the Shoah, most survivors balanced precariously on the edge of an enforced silence. Having suffered the unthinkable, their senses numbed and their emotions silenced, many did not want, or know how, to speak of their experiences. (...) Women Shoah survivors, many of whom found it difficult to rebuild their lives after the Shoah, were particularly prone to silence. Questions such as "what did you do in order to survive?" resulted in women being more reluctant to tell their stories, as some were branded as having allegedly traded their sexuality for a chance of survival.

Bringing sexuality issues into the discourse about the Holocaust, especially in the case of rape and bartering sex, is painful, gives a sense of shame, and is often considered to desecrate the memory of both the living and the dead, as Ringelheim (1998: 345) argues. As suggested by scholar Nomi Levenkron (2010), there is much reluctance among the victims of the Holocaust to approach subjects related to sexuality or sometimes the memories of those sexual related dramas can be so painful that Holocaust survivors prefer to remain silent. As Levenkron (2010: 16) points out: "It is far easiest to count the number of skeletons than the number of those raped: skeletons are far more tangible and

visible, but the living women who were raped hide, for they fear the stigma that is likely to cling to them if they reveal what was done to them”.

The silence was due sometimes, as Weitzman and Ofer explain (1998), to the fact that women often considered their stories unimportant and their femininity as not being meaningful in the account of their experience of the Holocaust. Even later, when scholars started to inquire in the newly created field of Women and the Holocaust, survivors often manifested their reluctance or disagreement towards a gendered approach. Many fears have been expressed regarding the fact that a gendered approach to the Holocaust might “allow a feminist agenda (...) to take over the Holocaust” (Weitzman and Ofer, 1998: 12). As Weitzman and Ofer claim, concerns in this direction have been expressed both by scholars and survivors. For example, survivor Ruth Bondy (1998: 310) starts her testimony about the life of women in the concentration camps of Theresienstadt and Birkenau, by disagreeing with the focus on women, stating that “Zyklon B did not differentiate between men and women; the same death swept them all away”.

In the same vein, survivor and scholar Nechama Tec (2003: 14-15) speaks openly about her difficulties when interviewing Holocaust survivors and of their reluctance towards comparisons between men and women’s experiences of the Holocaust. Tec claims that survivors would avoid direct gendered questions and manifest discomfort towards a comparative approach. Interestingly, she further notes that although consistent gendered behaviour and coping strategies emerged during the research, when confronted with the results, most of the survivors would either consider the gender differences as irrelevant or would state that they didn’t notice any differences at all in the way men and women experienced the Holocaust. Silence in this case was fostered by the lack of importance that women attributed to their experiences, considering that they were no different than those of men, and by the fear that the focus on women’s experiences would take over and trivialize the tragedy of the Jewish people.

There is however a third type of silence: the one imposed from outside by the memorial publishing market and its ruthless mechanisms. In the introduction to Lucille Eichengreen's (2011) third memoir published over the last fifteen years, Elisabeth Baer attributes her late editorial debut to the lack of interest on the part of publishers in Holocaust testimonies written by women. According to Baer (2011: 2):

Firstly, biographies of women of the Holocaust were not popular fifty years ago. Only men were considered credible witnesses. Secondly, publishers did not see Holocaust biographies as "money makers".

Similarly, in the research on women's Holocaust writing, Lillian Kremer (1999: 4) argues that literary critics gave priority to men's writing over that of women, and with the exception of a few extraordinary women such as Charlotte Delbo, Nelly Sachs, Ida Fink, Cynthia Ozick, "women's Holocaust writing remains at the edges of Holocaust literary criticism". This third type of silencing women's voices goes hand in hand with the predominance of the male-centred agenda of the Holocaust. According to Marlene Heinemann (1986: 2):

The study of Holocaust literature has focused primarily on the writings of men, whose perspectives have been taken as representative of the experiences of all Holocaust victims.

This tendency to refer to the experiences of men as valid for women too, is rooted in the general conviction that since the Nazis targeted the Jews as people, the distinction whether they were women, men or children is just a detail among others like nationality, social status, age, class etc. Women and men were equally victims of the Holocaust; therefore a gender-neutral perspective is for many the most logical approach. But, as many scholars stressed in the last three decades, the Holocaust was definitely not gender-neutral (Heinemann 1986, Ofer and Weitzman 1998, Kremer 1999, Lentin 2000a, Baer and Goldenberg 2003, Goldenberg and Shapiro 2013).

Interestingly, Kremer (1999) contends that the marginalisation of women's work and the lack of attention to what women have to say suppresses their voices and reduces them to

silence. As Kremer (*ibid.*: 4-5) points out: “There might be no conspiracy to silence women’s voices. Nevertheless, since their works have received inadequate critical attention, their voices have been effectively suppressed”.

By identifying the reasons that contributed to lay a veil of silence, for so many decades, over the experiences of women during the Holocaust, one is able to understand the imperative of speaking about women and of taking into account the particularity of their experiences. By redeeming women’s voices, one is able to understand why gender matters so much in the overall picture of the Holocaust.

Firstly, the focus on women is an act of justice towards the silenced gender and, as Esther Fuchs (1999a: x) points out, is important in its intent to “give voice to the silenced, and to enable the oppressed to regain a sense of self dignity”. Secondly, it offers a more nuanced image of the Holocaust, since the experiences of women during the Holocaust and those of men were not the same. The women and Holocaust scholar Myrna Goldenberg (1990) has famously described it as “Different horrors, same hell” which suggests that, even if men and women were equally brutalised and received the same death sentence, namely the Final Solution, their experiences and horrors were differentiated by gender. Similarly, historian Yehuda Bauer (2001: 185) argues that “the Holocaust engendered a special fate for Jewish women, to be sure, just as it did for men”. The act of taking into consideration what women have lived during the Holocaust from a comparative standpoint with men’s experiences is fundamental, since it broadens our perspective on the Holocaust. The focus on women could provide as well a valuable insight into topics uniquely related to the female universe: motherhood, pregnancy, giving birth in ghettos and camps, abortion, menstruation, sexuality and rape.

To contrast the “deafening silence”, as Lentin (2000a) calls it, between gender and the Holocaust, in the 1980s scholars started to manifest their interest in the study of women’s experiences during the Nazi genocide. According to the scholars Baer and Goldenberg (2003), the relation between Gender Studies and the Holocaust had its beginnings with an increasing interest of feminist scholars in exploring the daily lives of women during the

Holocaust. What started out as a relatively vague set of interests and questions became a distinctive area of research within Holocaust Studies with the first conference about women and the Holocaust organised in 1983 by Joan Ringelheim and Esther Katz². The conference was a huge success and it laid the foundations for further research on how gender influenced the way women survivors lived, interpreted and transmitted their experiences (Baer and Goldenberg, 2003: xvii). During the three decades that have passed since, scholars have tried to fill in the gap about women's experiences, reclaiming their stories and giving them back their voice. Many studies have been carried out on different aspects concerning the life of women in ghettos, concentration camps, in hiding or in the resistance, but as well regarding their lives in the pre-war period. Sybil Milton, Joan Ringelheim, Judith Tydor Baumel, Dalia Ofer, Lenore Weitzman, Myrna Goldenberg and Elisabeth Baer are but a few of the scholars who have contributed to this new born area of research. These scholars claimed that the experiences of women are equally important to the ones of men in the knowledge we have about the Holocaust. In parallel, the interest that their lives generated encouraged many female survivors to share their experiences in interviews or to put them in writing. As Baumel (1998: 56) acknowledges, due to an increasing Holocaust awareness and interest in the issues connected with gender, women's memoirs started to be published on a large scale beginning with mid 1970s. They differed from the few previous ones because of their explicit focus on gender-related experiences and because they took into consideration the pre-war lives of women as a source of gendered differences between the sexes.

Now that it is clear that women experienced the Holocaust differently than men, and there are a myriad of women's memoirs and scholarly writings presenting a gendered perspective on the Nazi genocide, the study of Women and the Holocaust is less contested than in its early days. These new circumstances question whether the silenced gender paradigm continues to be relevant.

The research of historian Zoë Waxman (2006) on Holocaust writings sheds important light on this question. Waxman challenges conventional research by arguing that the

studies that so far have been conducted about women's Holocaust experiences tend to portray women according to set gender patterns that favour certain behaviours or experiences at the expense of others. As Waxman (2006: 5) claims:

[the] studies of women's lives during the Holocaust, in attempting to portray women in a specific manner, seek a homogeneity of experience that did not exist, overlooking testimonies that do not fit with preconceived gender roles. These studies often project their own concerns, selecting testimonies that reinforce pre-existing ideals and ignoring 'difficult' testimonies that reveal experiences outside the dictates of collective memory.

Waxman claims that the existent research on gender and the Holocaust marginalises the experiences of those women who deviated from traditional female behaviour, which implies a loving and caring nature, strong natural feelings etc. She challenges the theme of the dutiful mother as it is presented by Ofer and Weitzman (1998) by confronting it with two different accounts written by men. The first, called *In the Sewers of Lvov* (1991) by Robert Marshall narrates how Mrs Weinberg, in hiding with a group in the sewers of Lvov, smothered her newborn baby for fear that its cries would attract the attention of people in the street and endanger their lives. The second account, taken from Tadeusz Borowski's semi-autobiographical book *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen* (1967), describes how a woman, on her arrival in the concentration camp, tried to walk away from her toddler, ignoring his cries, knowing that having a small child meant for her a death sentence. By confronting the three books, Waxman points out that women's responses to the brutality of the Nazi persecution were varied, and sometimes mothers chose their own lives over that of their children. As Waxman (2006: 143) argues, the image of the dutiful mother presented by Ofer and Weitzman "may indeed be true of most women, but there are exceptions".

Waxman further develops the argument by claiming that not only do scholars tend to select those testimonies that are "appropriate", but survivors also tend to simplify their stories, to "fit" them in the existing gender patterns in order to ease comprehension and to meet the expectations of the readers. As she points out, the act of making their own

testimony “compatible” with the pre-existing narrative patterns is reinforced when the survivor lives in a culture with strong gender norms. The survivor’s need to be able to continue living with no sense of guilt or shame among her community and the desire to give testimony of the atrocity are reconciled in a narrative that is dictated by the prescribed norms and gendered patterns of the survivor community. Waxman (2006: 151) argues that:

The post-war adoption of the role of the witness can provide survivors with a sense of purpose, or identity, but their testimony is mediated by the myriad of factors which play a part in survivor’s narrative, especially the accepted Holocaust narratives, studies, and testimonies. (...) The function of collective memory is not to focus on the past in order to find out more about the Holocaust, but to use the past to inform and meet present concerns. In the case of women, the purpose is to say something universal about women, not about their particular experiences.

While Waxman claims that the assumptions about appropriate gender behaviour filter women’s experiences about the Holocaust and limit their diversity, Judaic studies scholar James Young (2009: 1778) makes a stronger case that “too often, our stories about these women have left no space for the stories women have to tell, stories that seem to have no place in the field of the Holocaust canon”. Young argues that when speaking about women in the context of the Holocaust or when representing them through memorial arts, there is a tendency towards idealisation. Women’s representations focus on heroism, virtue and sacrifice, as attributes that leave no room for their vulnerabilities, fears, wrong choices or attitudes that could be considered inappropriate. According to Young (ibid.: 1778), by turning women into emblematic figures, their experiences as women “remain unexpressed, unregarded, and even negated”. Women continue to be silenced because no one wants to hear their real stories, but prefer instead images of virtue, beacons of strength and heroines. The result, according to Young is that “we often split those women off from their lives and deaths, their stories and their experiences” (ibid.).

The first to talk about the “split between gender and the Holocaust” was Joan Ringelheim in 1998. During an interview with a Jewish survivor, Pauline, Ringelheim discovered that

the woman had been molested in hiding by male relatives when she was just twelve, but had never disclosed this experience. Ringelheim highlights Pauline's reluctance to tell the story and her belief that the sexual abuse she suffered for almost a year is not related to the history of the Holocaust. Ringelheim explains her reaction, arguing that by minimising the importance of her story in the bigger picture of the Holocaust, Pauline splits her own experience of the tragedy from traditional versions of how the Holocaust was experienced. In her opinion what she lived is too unimportant and too particular to be a part of the Holocaust history. As Ringelheim (1998: 344) further points out:

The split between genocide and gender-specific trauma exists not only in the memories of witnesses but also in the historical reconstruction by scholars. A line divides what is considered peculiar or specific to women from what has been designated as proper collective memory, or narrative about, the Holocaust.

Young agrees with Ringelheim's theory about the split between gender and Holocaust, arguing that Anne Frank is also an illustrative case of how gender-related experiences have been separated from Holocaust memory. Anne Frank's diary was in fact edited by her father and excluded any allusion to her sexual awakenings, her disagreements with the mother or the doubts she had about her faith. Everything deemed inappropriate was removed with the intent of creating an idealised portrait of a "young girl" never losing hope against the brutality of Nazi persecution. Otto Frank's need to preserve the memory of his daughter as an innocent presexual child, created a universal symbol for all innocent victims of the Holocaust but lost in the process Anne's story as she would have told it. As Young (2009: 1780) points out:

It is also true that Otto merely did for Anne what many female survivors did for themselves: in Ringelheim's terms, he split off her necessarily gendered experiences from the universalized notion of her martyrdom.

Ringelheim, Waxman and Young agree on the role of collective memory as a silencer of women's stories of the Holocaust in their specificity, diversity and uniqueness. Young (2009) argues that even with the increasing interest in and attention to women after the field of Women and the Holocaust took off, women are silenced. As Young (ibid.: 1779)

acknowledges: “the absence of women’s voices and of their experiences as women is still too emblematic of ways gender and sexuality have been split off from Holocaust history and memory”. Working out of these general theoretical concerns surrounding the “silenced gender paradigm”, the remainder of this chapter explores the more specific ways in which the experiences of women, organised into four main categories (Jewish victims, non-Jewish victims, resisters and perpetrators) have been addressed. The next section thus focuses on exploring the literature on Holocaust experiences of Jewish women, highlighting the two extremes that characterise much of the scholarly writings: on the one hand the tendency to idealise women and on the other hand the propensity to dismiss experiences that do not fit pre-determined canons.

2.3. Jewish Women: Between Ideal Patterns and Silenced Testimonies

Much academic literature on the gendered experience of the Holocaust emphasises an idealistic image of Jewish women, who coped admirably and responded heroically to the Nazi persecution. In these discourses, women in the pre-war period are depicted as having bravely adapted to the increasingly difficult situation, sustaining their families both morally and financially, making use of their creativity to find solutions in extreme situations like the ban on kosher butchering, taking on new roles and jobs and being more perceptive than men to the worsening of the situation in Germany (Koonz 1987, Kaplan 1993, Kaplan 1998b, Weitzman and Ofer 1998, Hyman 1998, Tec 2003). In the writings about ghettos, Jewish women are depicted as loving and self-sacrificing mothers and wives, who found creative solutions to respond to the increasing lack of food and materials and took great risks to provide for their families. They were resourceful, strong and resilient and often they coped with hunger better than men (Ofer 1998, Unger 1998, Tec 2003). In most scholarly discourses about concentration camps, women are described as prone to cooperation and mutual bonding, helping others, caring and nurturing. They are praised for sharing and pooling resources better than men, for covering for one another during roll calls, for sometimes risking their own lives to save others, for sharing recipes as a way of coping with hunger and for choosing death rather than abandoning

their children (Laska 1983, Milton 1984, Baumel 1998, Bondy 1998, Kremer 1999, Tec 2003, Goldenberg 2003). The academic writings about hiding imply that it was easier for Jewish women, unlike men who were circumcised, to pass themselves off as non-Jews. They could blend more easily among Germans, they could find jobs working as servants or nannies, and they would sometimes join underground movements (Laska 1983, Kaplan 1998a, Weitzman 1998, Tec 2003).

This idealistic portrait of Jewish women as positive and heroic prompts the question as to whether this image accurately reflects the historical facts or is the result of a selective process put in play by scholars and survivors. As the silenced gender paradigm discussed in the previous section suggests, this image of Jewish women appears to be an ideal, which although based on reality, implies the silencing of many other testimonies that do not fit into its rigid schemes. This section will explore three cases, where there is evidence that dominant discourses on Jewish women's experiences do not totally correspond to historical reality.

Firstly, many scholars have emphasised the way in which women showed an incredible moral strength and how they often succeeded in making things work despite the increasing ostracism, persecutions and lack of money and food in the pre-war period. In the introduction of their study on women and the Holocaust, Weitzman and Ofer (1998) highlight the most important aspects of Hyman's and Kaplan's chapters on women's experiences in the pre-war stage. In both cases, Jewish women's moral and spiritual strengths represent the focal point: they argue how, in face of the persecution, the Jews "placed the psychological and spiritual well-being in the hands of women" and that "women also took responsibility for the psychological work of raising their family's spirits" (Weitzman and Ofer, 1998: 3). It is interesting to note that, in her historical account of Jewish life in Nazi Germany published the same year, Kaplan (1998a) dedicated five pages to the topic of "despair and suicide". As she argues, in Nazi Germany the Jewish suicide rate increased dramatically and was 50 percent higher than for the rest of the population, and that "there were more and more women who, driven to

despair, saw no alternative but death” (Kaplan, 1998a: 182). Interestingly, these two versions of women’s constructive attitude and strength in the pre-war period do not match, which leads one to believe that the testimonies of despair and failure to cope among Jewish women were somehow omitted to leave room for the positive cases.

Secondly, most scholars accentuate women’s caring spirit and tendency to socialise in groups of mutual support in concentration camps. In much literature, both by scholars and survivors, there are references to women’s need to replace their own lost families with surrogate ones, in which they mutually helped each other. According to historian Sybil Milton (1984: 313), “these small families, usually not biologically related, increased protection for individual internees and created networks to ‘organize’ food, clothing, and beds, and to help cope with the privations and primitive camp conditions”. Similarly, communications scholar Ami Neiberger (1998) argues that the family groups played a fundamental role in the survival of women. Family members protected the weaker and the sick, sustained each other during roll calls, pooled their resources equally and offered mutual encouragements and a space where individuals could express openly their feelings. The historian Judith Tydor Baumel (1998) argues that often, assertions about women’s greater tendency – compared to men - to socialise and to form bonds, are unconditionally accepted as truth without any further research. Nevertheless, her research based on a group of ten ultra-orthodox Jewish girls who manifested an exceptional generosity and caring spirit not only within the group but as well for outsiders, concludes that “women in camps had a greater tendency to form bonds with their surrounding than men did, a phenomenon which may be explained by female preconditioning to nurturing or building ties of sisterhood” (Baumel, 1998: 94). Whether the conclusions of research on such a limited group can be generalised to all women remains questionable. In fact Nechama Tec (2003: 176) challenges Baumel’s findings by arguing that “the conduct of these Orthodox women, while praiseworthy, does not warrant the conclusion that women rather than men created cooperative groupings”. Tec argues that there is evidence that both men and women took part in various family groups, but it is difficult to establish the quality of their bonding.

Although most gender and the Holocaust scholars agree upon the importance of socialisation and the predisposition of women to nurture and care for each other, one of the pioneer studies on women and the Holocaust seems to suggest a theory that has been largely ignored. Heinemann's (1986) study on women writers suggests that egocentric people are never shown as the main protagonists in Holocaust memoirs, but they often exist in secondary roles to highlight even more the humanity of the main character. Heinemann (*ibid.*: 82) advances the hypothesis that, "since so many survivors still assert the primacy of egocentrism in the camps, one might justly ask whether the "communal" memoirist is hiding the reality about relationships and whether this reality could be uncovered in other texts". She further argues that "the moral imperative which powers many acts of bearing witness seems to preclude showing much egocentrism" (*ibid.*: 108). If Heinemann's hypothesis is true, then it calls into question previous writings that stress the altruism and caring spirit of women in the camps. At the same time it questions whether the image of the generous, nurturing woman is not a generalisation of certain behaviours, inspired by the perceived need to fit women's lives into a pattern of desirable Holocaust experiences.

Thirdly, regarding the experience of Jewish women in hiding, Waxman (2010) points out that much historical literature focuses on partisan resistance or on the heroic activities of women, neglecting individual experiences, especially the more dramatic ones such as the risk of being raped. Waxman (2010: 131) acknowledges that, "rather than calling attention to sexual violence to retrieve women's Holocaust experiences from oblivion, researchers have instead been eager to emphasise the myriad ways in which women attempted to resist their fate and hold onto their dignities by exhibiting moral, heroic, or noble behavior". By choosing as counter-examples the studies of Weitzman (1998) and Baumel (1998), centred on heroic women who resisted by passing on the Aryan side or by enrolling in underground movements, Waxman claims that the focus on heroism has had the effect of silencing the alternative voices of Jewish women in hiding. She further argues that, by identifying the lives of Jewish women on the Aryan side as an act of

resistance, Weitzman puts pressure on survivors to fit their stories in the same pattern of heroism, while silencing those experiences that did not conform.

The three cases provided so far provide evidence that the experiences of Jewish women during the Holocaust were not always related to heroic choices or selfless behaviour. Significant in this respect is an observation made by memoir author Gisella Perl, a Hungarian Jew and doctor in Auschwitz. As Perl (1993: 111) acknowledges:

One of the basic Nazi aims was to demoralize, humiliate, ruin us, not only physically but also spiritually. They did everything in their power to push us into the bottomless depths of degradation.(...) There was only one law in Auschwitz – the laws of the jungle – the law of self-preservation. Women who in their former lives were decent self-respecting human beings now stole, lied, spied, beat the others and – if necessary – killed them, in order to save their miserable lives. Stealing became an art, a virtue, something to be proud off. (...) By stealing bread, shoes, water, you stole a life for yourself, even if it was at the expense of other lives.

As one can discern from the latter statements, the lives of Jewish women did not always fit into ideal patterns of behavior: sometimes they succumbed to desperation and, when confronted with the progressive worsening of the situation, chose death. Women were not always selfless caring and altruistic but sometimes acted in less decent manners, and in hiding women were not always heroes but were often helpless victims of male abuse. The reason much of the memoirs and scholarly literature have disregarded these experiences is because, as Waxman (2006: 124) points out, “women’s testimonies are often used to show us what we already want to see”. This explains how, the need to see women through the patterns of idealism either silenced or marginalised all other - less- heroic and laudable - experiences of Jewish women. According to Waxman (ibid.: 125):

Studies of women in the Holocaust often project their own concerns, which set the agenda for future testimony. They tend to emerge from preconceived ideas regarding women’s abilities to act in moral, heroic or noble ways. However, the Holocaust was not discriminatory towards its victims. No moral test was required for the gas chamber, only a test of race. Of course, there were people who performed ‘heroic’ acts, but

there were also many who merely did what they had to do in order to survive. To show that people are fallible and act just like human beings is not to demonize them, but to attempt to present a more rounded picture of responses to extreme suffering.

Between ideal patterns and silenced testimonies, the case of Jewish women has taught us that unless scholars give up the lens of idealism it is not possible to recover women's stories in their fullness and complexity. The next section demonstrates that the Holocaust experiences of non-Jewish women have received very little attention from researchers, resulting in a paucity of academic work on the topic. It also shows how the focus of scholarship on Women and the Holocaust on Jewish women has led to a double invisibility of other female victims within Holocaust Studies, for being both women and non-Jewish.

2.4. “Other” Women: the Doubly Silenced

In the last two decades, an increasing number of publications have started to deal with the other victims of the Nazi persecution, namely the Gypsies, homosexuals, disabled people, and Jehovah's Witnesses. The titles of these chapters and books make reference to the invisibility and “otherness” of these disregarded victims: for example the *Hidden Holocaust* (Grau and Schoppmann 1995), *Neglected Holocaust Victims* (Grenville 1998), *Hidden Lives* (Milton 2003), *Hitler's Forgotten Victims* (Evans 2006), *Jehovah's Witnesses as Forgotten Victims* (Milton 2001a) and *The Neglected Memory of the Romanies in the Holocaust* (Hancock 2011). Even though their presence in the pantheon of Holocaust studies is far outnumbered by publications that deal exclusively with the persecution of Jews³, these scholarly writings point to the inclusion of people who were hitherto invisible or, at the most, included in categories as “others”. The historian Jonathan Friedman (2011: 1) claims that from the twelve million victims of the Nazi persecution, six million were non-Jews⁴. The fact that half of the victims of the Nazi onslaught have been omitted from most of the Holocaust scholarship invites for further research. The studies that have been done in the last couple of decades on the Nazi

persecution of Gypsies, homosexuals, disabled people and Jehovah's Witnesses have tried to fill in this gap and extend our knowledge about victimhood during one of the darkest chapters of recent history.

However, although there is a general increase in interest towards non-Jewish categories of victims of the Nazi onslaught, the same thing cannot be said about the study of women and the Holocaust. In the overall picture of gendered studies of the Holocaust, Jewish women are the best represented and, with the exception of very few studies, the other categories of female victims are still all but unheard. This section considers how the emphasis on the "double jeopardy" of Jewish women and on their double persecution as women and as Jews shadowed the other categories of women that, consequentially, became doubly silenced: for being women and for being "other" than Jews.

The expression "double jeopardy" with reference to Jewish women during the Holocaust was coined by Joan Ringelheim (1990: 147; 1993: 400) when she stated that "Jewish women were the victims of the Nazis as women and as Jews". Subsequently, it became commonplace in the gendered vocabulary of the Holocaust, appearing in book and chapter titles (Baumel 1998, Goldenberg 2011). It became one of the most commonly employed expressions to describe the fate of Jewish women - doubly oppressed not only because of their race but also because of their gender. Ringelheim (1990) argues that more women than men were deported and perished during the Holocaust: arriving in a concentration camp with small children was the equivalent of a death sentence, pregnancy was also a crime punished by death, women were less valuable as part of the work force than men and therefore more victimised. As Ringelheim (1990: 147) claims, women's chances of survival "were simply not equivalent to those of men". Gender played an important role in their survival and, as Heinemann (1986) argues, "gender is destiny" in the case of many women persecuted by the Nazis. The mere fact of being a woman could mean a death sentence. According to Heinemann, not only were maternity and childbirth often punishable by death but simple things like a blood spot on their clothes due to menstruation was a reason for being beaten to death.

In her chapter “Double jeopardy: being Jewish and female in the Holocaust”, Goldenberg (2011) highlights why gender represented such a threat in the case of Jewish women. As Goldenberg (ibid.: 398) claims:

Though not apparent before the onset of the war, the Final Solution depended on the annihilation of Jewish women not only because they were Jews, but for two other reasons: first, they were women and, as women, they were perpetrators of future generations of Jews who could be expected to avenge their families’ deaths; second, they had to be “eliminated” because, according to Nazi propaganda, they could and would seduce Aryan men and thereby contaminate the Aryan race for the generations to come.

The focus on Jewish women within the frame of gendered studies on the Holocaust effectively replicates what happened in the more general field of Holocaust research, whereas the focus on the genocide of Jews rendered the experiences of other categories of victims marginal. While the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a Jewish tragedy⁵ is still a controversial topic between scholars, the historian Sybil Milton (1991) argues that by highlighting the singularity of the Jewish affliction we are transforming the Nazi genocide into a “Judeocide” and, implicitly, victims such as the Gypsies became invisible in the big picture of the Holocaust. In the same vein, Ringelheim (1990) points to the “otherness” of non-Jewish victims and the consequential silence of their experiences during the Third Reich. Ringelheim (ibid.: 142-143) claims that:

The Holocaust is not only a picture of unrestrained power over and terror against the Jews. Yet, somehow political prisoners, homosexual men, Gypsies, Communists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the “mentally defective”, Poles, Ukrainians, and “anti-socials” have been identified as “others” – victims with no names in much of the literature and the public perception. This has created an implausible silence about them.

Similarly, by focusing on Jewish women, the study of Women and the Holocaust has ignored or assigned a peripheral position to all the other female-victims of the Nazi persecution. Since Jewish women are the “doubly jeopardized” ones, all “other” women remain anonymous. As a result, while there is an increasing volume of scholarly writings dedicated to the lives of Jewish women during the Holocaust, studies in English

dedicated to the “other” women are very few. Of note here are Elman’s account of lesbians and the Holocaust (1999), Milton’s study on the lives of Gypsy women (2003), two contributions about female Jehovah’s witnesses (Krause-Schmitt 2001; Harder and Hesse 2001) and two studies that deal with homosexuals and lesbians (Schoppmann 1996; Giles 2011). It is significant to note that, with the exception of Schoppmann’s book, these publications take the form of book chapters and are therefore limited in covering the subject. The stories of these “other” women and their experiences during the Holocaust have been left out both from the books that deal with the other categories of victims during the Third Reich and from the books on women and the Holocaust.

Although limited, the literature on non-Jewish female victims of the Nazi persecution shows similarities but also significant differences between the lives of those women and the accounts of mainstream female experiences during the Holocaust. According to Milton (2003), the Gypsies were stigmatised both by the Nazi government and by society, which marginalised them as social pariahs. As in the case of Jews, they were often singled out as an ethnic group through negative stereotyped behaviors: considered unproductive, with criminal tendencies and sexually promiscuous. In Gypsy families, it was considered normal that women contributed financially through their work; selling handmade pots, baskets or textiles and telling fortune were female occupations. With the Nazi take over, several decrees for the restrictions of freedom of movement and the denial of licenses for itinerant trade affected many Gypsy women, who had to give up their traditional occupations. As Milton (ibid.) points out, along with the financial hardships other measures hit Gypsy men and women together: prohibition of intermarriages, expulsion of children from schools, denial of medical services and expulsion from their houses into the special *Zigeunerlager*s.

The *Zigeunerlager*s were a hybrid between ghettos and concentration camps where inmates lived together in families. The Berlin-Marzahn camp was one of the harshest, with two toilets and three water pumps serving between 600 and 800 inmates. Milton argues that the key difference between the *Zigeunerlager*s and the ghettos and

concentration camps for Jews was the fact that women were allowed to leave the camp and provide for household supplies. Another dramatic feature of the persecution of Gypsy women was the sterilisation process that started with the law issued in 1933 for disabled people; as Milton claims, even though the law targeted only the disabled, in practice it was extended to many Gypsies. According to Milton (2003), the sterilisation of Gypsy women was practiced on a higher scale in the *Zigeunerlager*s. She highlights that, despite the fact that speaking about sexual issues is a taboo for the Gypsies, some of the women survivors later published stories of their forced sterilisation. From 1939 onwards, in parallel with the *Zigeunerlager*s, the Nazis used concentration camps as detention places for the Gypsies: many women were interned in Ravensbrück, Dachau, Lichtenburg, and later in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen.

An interesting aspect that Milton points out is the tendency of Gypsy women in Ravensbrück, similar to the Jewish women, to function in social groups, similar to families (not necessarily blood related) which would provide a base for mutual help and physical support. As Milton (2003: 63) acknowledges:

Although the presence of male youngsters in women's barracks transgressed Sinti and Roma⁶ cultural taboos and mores, some women created imitation "families", usually not biologically related, to increase mutual assistance for themselves and the younger children.

In the last stages of the Nazi persecution, the policies of sterilisation and internment in concentration camps or *Zigeunerlager* of the Gypsies were replaced by mass murder. As Milton highlights, Sinti and Roma were the first ones to be killed, with 1,400 women murdered in the gas chambers of Bernburg. The inmates of the "Gypsy family camp" from Auschwitz-Birkenau had the same fate when the camp was liquidated in August 1944. Milton claims that in Auschwitz-Birkenau there were 10,849 women and 10,097 men registered, but probably several thousand others lived there but were never registered.

Regarding female Jehovah's Witnesses, it is interesting to note that the only available studies on the topic emphasise both their integrity and the resistance to the Nazi

persecution. Harder and Hesse (2001) claim that while they were very “disciplined and industrious” and in concentration camps they refused any kind of job that would enter into conflict with their religious beliefs. According to Krause-Schmitt (2001), in Ravensbrück these women rejected, despite the harsh punishments, any kind of work related to the war: from sewing uniforms and bags, to wrapping packages of bandages or building air-raid shelters. Krause-Schmitt points out how, similarly to the Jewish and Gypsy women, the Jehovah’s Witnesses manifested mutual support and solidarity. Krause-Schmitt (ibid.: 200-201) claims that:

Female Jehovah’s Witnesses supported each other through religious certainty, explicit group solidarity, and mutual assistance. They shared food rations, nursed their coreligionists back to health even under the most difficult circumstances.

Unlike the other categories (Jews and Gypsies), Jehovah’s Witnesses were targeted as individuals, and not as a whole community. This aspect impacted differently on the way women experienced the persecution. Unlike Jewish and Gypsy women, the Jehovah’s Witnesses were not interned in camps with their children. Unlike Jewish women, the female Jehovah’s Witnesses were never put in the position of choosing between their own life and that of their children. Still, they had experienced separation differently, mainly under two forms. Firstly, according to Harder and Hesse (2001), the incarceration of women had drastic consequences: the children were either taken by relatives or taken by the state, and even in some cases parents lost the custody of their children. Secondly, Krause-Schmitt (ibid.) acknowledges that the removal of children from their families was one of the most drastic measures against Jehovah’s Witnesses, with consequences on the whole family but especially on mothers. The children were taken to Nazi homes or families so that by having no contact with their own families, they would have given up their religious beliefs.

A special case is represented by lesbians, whose experiences are explored by Schoppmann (1996), Elman (1999) and Giles (2011). Compared to the categories discussed so far, one could argue that lesbians were less persecuted since no law or

decree targeted them specifically. While the Nazis prohibited male homosexuality with a paragraph in penal law, no similar act affected women. According to Giles (2011), the lack of a specific measure was due, firstly to the fact that manifestations of affection were considered normal among women, and secondly because lesbianism was seen as less reprehensible than male homosexuality since it was not considered a threat to their reproductive capacities. Lesbians were not criminalised in the same measure as gay men. As Elman (1999: 9) points out, they were “socially ostracized into silence though seldom specifically criminalized”. Many of these women chose to lead a double life, hiding in public any gesture that might betray them, others instead chose to defy the Nazis and were often sent to concentration camps. Unfortunately, as Elman acknowledges, while in the camp structure gay men were a clearly separated category marked by the pink triangle, lesbians were considered to be *asocials*. As Elman points out, since the category of *asocials* was so heterogeneous (it included varied categories of women considered “socially maladjusted” such as criminals, prostitutes, thieves and vagrants) a study of lesbians is almost impossible. In addition to this, the invisibility of lesbians within the area of Holocaust studies has been accentuated by existing stereotypes and taboos regarding lesbians.

A particular category that is totally absent from gendered studies on the Holocaust is that of disabled women. To my knowledge, no study so far has attempted to address the Nazi persecution of disabled people from a gendered point of view. Significantly, in a study dedicated to the nurses involved in the euthanasia program, historian Sharon Harrison (2008: 14) acknowledges that “the tragic irony of the euthanasia program is that the record is silent in the question of victims’ experiences (...). Nonetheless, the few available witness statements provided by patients and their families offer valuable insights into institutional life and the experiences of patients”. What Harrison (2008) suggests is that few of the people targeted as disabled survived the Nazi persecution. Many of them died during the euthanasia program put in action by the Nazis. In the case of disabled women, sterilisation was probably one of the main aspects that marked their experience; but probably, the pain of such experience ensured that few survivor accounts

were written on the subject. One of the few exceptions is provided by the collection of interview-based stories by Ina Friedman (1990). One of the stories included in her volume is that of Franziska, a deaf girl who was unsuccessfully sterilised when she was sixteen years old. Her story is a powerful one because her desire to bear a child was later fulfilled, but since her pregnancy was not among the “desired ones” according to the Nazi policies, she was forced to abort and was sterilised for a second time. Franziska’s story offers only a glimpse of the tragic and untold story of disabled women and highlights the necessity of further research on the topic.

The few studies that have been briefly presented regarding the hidden lives of non-Jewish women provide us with new elements for the puzzle on female experiences during the Holocaust. Their similarities and their differences indicate that, without including their lives in the study of the Holocaust, one cannot reach a comprehensive picture of the female victimhood of Nazi persecution. Moving away from the “double silence” on other victims of the persecution, the next section focuses on the invisibility of women in accounts of resistance against the Nazis.

2.5. Invisible Resistance: Women’s Contribution

This section explains how the very concept of resistance, defined in terms of armed, military combat, has rendered women invisible in narratives of opposition against the Nazis. After reviewing the few studies that explore profiles of women who took part in military missions (Baumel 1998; Rittner and Roth 1993) or held leadership roles in the underground resistance (Bauer 2001), the chapter demonstrates that these cases are exceptions rather than the rule. Instead, as various scholars contend (Weitzman 1998; Poznanski 1998; Von Kellenbach 1999; Greenberg 2003; Tec 2003) the concept of resistance needs to be redefined and broadened in order to include the contribution of women.

Traditionally, the concept of resistance is understood in terms of direct combat and armed resistance, with the intention of defying the oppressor by force. The historian Claudia Koonz (1987) claims that generally dictionaries associate the definition of resistance with three attributes: organised, clandestine and military. As she points out, such definitions confine the concept of resistance to armed, male-based activities, while disregarding the contribution of women. Koonz (*ibid.*: 332) highlights that “very few studies of the German resistance mention women at all expect in passing”, which leads to an incomplete picture since “men and women shared the daily tasks of resistance”.

In examining the reasons for women’s invisibility in the big picture of the resistance, Weitzman (1998: 217-218) argues that there are four factors that jointly contribute to it. In the first place, armed resistance is more striking compared to other activities by virtue of their invisibility, such as the rescue of children or courier work. Often these actions accomplished by women needed to be performed in secret; indeed invisibility was women’s main attribute when involved in the resistance. Men, instead, by blowing up a bridge, a railroad or a car had more visible and greater chances to be remembered. Secondly, while in most cases men belonged to an underground organisation, the actions performed by women often happened in a private or individual context such as the acts of rescue. As Weitzman (1998: 218) further claims, often women’s resistance activities were “extensions of their prewar roles in the home and in charitable organizations”. In the third place, even when women belonged to underground organisations, their roles were complementary to those of men. With few exceptions women never took leadership and their tasks were meant to facilitate men’s actions. Fourthly, as Weitzman (*ibid.*) argues, throughout all of Europe the actions of women were “typically devaluated” and “did not count as much” within the patriarchal framework. Weitzman’s contribution is remarkable for the clarity with which it highlights the mechanisms that overshadowed the contribution of women within the resistance.

The heroic actions of women and their contribution to opposing the Nazi persecution are part of a story that has been silenced because it does not fit common resistance patterns. This does not mean, however, that female heroines are totally absent from the pantheon

of the Holocaust resistance. Historian Judith Tydor Baumel (1998: 146-148) examines the lives of some of these heroic figures: Zivia Lubetkin and Chaika Grossman, both leaders of the Zionist underground movements in the ghettos of Warsaw and Bialystok; Hannah Senesz and Haviva Reik parachuted in Hungary and, respectively, Slovakia, both were tortured and killed; Rosa Robota a member of the Zionist movement in Poland and later of the resistance in Auschwitz; Katherina Horovitzova who killed an SS man before being sent to the gas chamber; and finally, Mala Zimetbaum, actively involved in the resistance within the Auschwitz concentration camp, sent to death for being caught after escaping from the camp. The Holocaust scholars Rittner and Roth (1993: 131) took note of a similar story: that of Rose Meth and Anna Heilman, members of a Jewish resistance group in Auschwitz, who smuggled gunpowder and were involved in making parts for bombs, later used in the sabotage mission of one of the Crematoriums in Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. Similarly, historian Yehuda Bauer (2001) highlights the case of Gisi Fleishman, leader of the underground movement within the Slovak Judenrat, as another example of a woman who resisted the “Final solution”. Fleishman was involved in illegal immigration transports that helped many Jews flee from the country, part of an ambitious plan to save all the European Jewry. She was arrested in 1944 and sent to Auschwitz, where she was killed. Bauer (ibid.: 184) points to the singularity of Fleishmann’s case, arguing that paradoxically her case “is so exceptional that it seems to prove that women had almost no chance to show their leadership qualities”.

In light of this fact many historians have concluded that women played a minor part in the overall resistance against the Nazis, while other scholars have argued that the women’s contribution to the resistance needs to be searched elsewhere. Baer and Goldenberg (2003: xxiv) for example claim that “as a subject, women and the Holocaust poses a challenge to the traditional definitions of heroism and resistance”. They contend that the category of resistance must include the actions of women “passing on the Aryan side” in order to smuggle food and documents, the acts of rescue performed by women and the “Rosenstrasse silent protest” organised by the wives of Jewish prisoners. Von Kellenbach (1999) also argues that the act of giving birth in the context of concentration

camps was in itself an act of resistance. Poznanski (1998), Weitzman (1998) and Greenberg (2003) identify the contribution of women to the French resistance in “invisible” actions such as hiding fugitives, rescuing children, and supplying false papers. Tec (2003) describes the difficulties faced by the couriers – a task performed mostly by women in which passing unnoticed was essential. All these alternative ways of defying and opposing the Nazis brought invaluable contributions to the resistance in general, but due to their nature, often women’s acts of resistance remained invisible in the bigger panorama of the resistance.

Weitzman (1998) claims that, after the process of ghettoisation and deportation to the concentration camps had begun, the act of “passing on the Aryan side” (escaping from the ghetto to the area for Aryans only) can be considered as a form of resisting the Nazis. Deprived of the most basic goods like food and medicines, people’s means to thwart the Nazi oppression were more limited. Still many people risked their lives, exposed themselves to being arrested and killed, by passing on the Aryan side in the hope of returning to the ghetto with food, weapons, documents or even information useful to the underground resistance or for the survival of many. Weitzman acknowledges that sixty-nine percent of those who passed regularly were women, some belonging to underground organizations and others acting individually. As she points out, the invisibility of those resistance activities in the broader picture of the resistance is not surprising due to their nature and the context in which they occurred (often individually). According to Weitzman (1998: 218-219):

If we place the activities of those who were living on the Aryan side in this larger context, it is not surprising that they had received relatively little attention. They were, for most part, ordinary people, acting independently, trying to remain invisible, and they were primarily women. Even when they helped or rescued others, their activities had to remain unobtrusive and invisible.

While Weitzman contends that living on the Aryan side was a form of resistance, Von Kellenbach (1999) further extends the concept by arguing for the inclusion of reproduction among the acts of defiance towards the Nazi system. Von Kellenbach (1999:

26) contends that, by choosing to give birth in ghettos or concentration camps, fully aware of the life threatening consequences, the Jewish women “denied the Nazis’ power over their lives and asserted a small area of autonomy guided by a different set of values and beliefs”. Furthermore, Von Kellenbach challenges the idea that bearing a child is equal to a “selfish” survival instinct. She claims that, in the extreme conditions of concentration camps and ghettos, pregnancy and giving birth were never “private” and were impossible without the support and collaboration of the entire group of women who risked their lives by helping to deliver the baby, pooled their few resources to feed the pregnant woman, and then shared responsibility of hiding, teaching, rearing the children. In these conditions, Von Kellenbach (1999: 26-27) states that each one of these births represented “small victories in an uneven fight between a powerless, imprisoned people and their oppressors”, and assumed political and religious connotations.

A particular case in point was the protest of the women in Rosenstrasse, Berlin, in front of the Jewish Community Centre where their Jewish husbands were held prisoners. Historian Nathan Stoltzfus (1998) describes how hundreds of German women gathered for days to protest and ask for their husbands to be freed. After more than a week, when the people gathered there were as many as six thousand, the Nazis decided to release all intermarried Jews and their children. Stoltzfus points out that, despite the importance of this victory against the Nazis, the non-violent protest in Rosenstrasse has remained ignored and unexamined by historians and scholars because it doesn’t fit into already established resistance paradigms. According to Stoltzfus (ibid.: 155):

It is possible that the Rosenstrasse protest has been ignored because it challenges accepted wisdom about an ordinary German’s responsibility in several ways, and poses women as heroes. (...) The story of intermarried Germans and Rosenstrasse challenges the main paradigm of resistance in postwar Germany by showing, in defiance of the model in West Germany, that Germans did not have to choose between passivity and resistance leading to martyrdom. Women have had difficulty with having their stories told at all, in standard histories, and the notion that women would be heroes in the face of Nazi terror is even harder to fit in conventional histories.

Stoltzfus (1998) further argues that, if the protest had been a military one or had made use of violence or if the women had been martyred, it probably would have received more attention, but the story of non-violent protest by women even if successful is not likely to catch attention. Similarly ignored have been the stories of women in the French resistance; as historian Renée Poznanski (1998) points out, the few women that are remembered for their contribution are exceptions and mostly represent those who died for the cause. Weitzman (1998), Poznanski (1998) and Greenberg (2003) claim that the reason the women have been largely ignored in the history of the French resistance lies in the nature of their activities. Unlike men, women were not involved in direct combat, but instead their contribution to the resistance was an extension of their everyday activities: offering shelter to fugitives, supplying members of underground movements with food, providing false papers, gathering information, typing underground papers and rescuing children. The invisibility of these actions that needed to be performed in secret and the fact that these kinds of activities were often considered insignificant resulted in a trivialisation and marginalisation of women's contribution to the French resistance. As Poznanski (1998: 235) stresses:

Because women's activities were based on everyday life, they were more difficult to pinpoint than such male activities as political developments and military action.

Even though less visible than male actions, women's contribution to the resistance was crucial since, as Poznanski (*ibid.*: 136) points out, "without their support, the dazzling exploits of the fighters would not have been possible". In a similar vein, Weitzman (1998), Poznanski (1998) and Greenberg (2003) stress the need for scholars and historians to rethink the concept of resistance in order to recognize the vital contribution of women. According to Greenberg (2003: 131):

An understanding of resistance that takes into account these insights allows scholarship to incorporate oral history and stories of women who worked not in the military but from the "inside" – domains of hiding spaces, clandestine routes, and alternative "homes" created to sustain lives.

Similarly, Koonz's (1987) historical study on the underground resistance in Germany highlights the indispensable role of women and how, without their contribution, many activities would have been impossible. One of these activities was the publication of anti-Nazi materials and leaflets, which relied heavily on women. As Koonz points out, being a typist was specifically a woman's job. Moreover, disseminating information was more suitable for women who could meet and, under the pretext of a coffee and some gossip, easily exchange secret documents hidden in boots, bags or baby prams. Baby strollers were excellent for hiding large quantities of paper needed for printing, since it was forbidden to sell it. Sometimes women would disguise themselves as pregnant in order to cross the border with illegal printed materials under their large maternity dresses. Koonz (1987) acknowledges that, these tasks and many others were easily accomplished by women, for the fact that women, and especially mothers, would raise fewer suspicions than men. As Koonz (1987: 326) points out, "the paper lifeline among resisters depended upon several specifically feminine capacities".

However, despite the important role women assumed in underground movements, their contribution was underestimated and disregarded. Their roles, which were auxiliary to the role of men, were considered unimportant and therefore not recognised, even among the underground's members. This invisibility and marginalisation of women within their own organisations was highlighted by Tec (2003) when speaking about the couriers – a profession par excellence for women. Making reference to the memoir of Jan Karski, one of the few male couriers involved in the resistance, Tec (*ibid.*: 264) points out the injustice and sacrifices that women were facing:

The average life of a woman courier did not exceed a few months... It can be said that their loss was the most severe, their sacrifice the greatest, and their contribution the least recognized. They were overlooked and doomed. They never held high rank nor received any great honours for their heroism.

As was pointed out so far, the women who broke the gender boundaries and distinguished themselves, equally to men in sacrifice and bravery, such as Hannah Senesz, Izia

Mackiewicz, Gisi Fleishman and other heroic names, are the exception rather than the rule. By contrast, the vast majority of women involved in the resistance worked within their gender boundaries, and most of what they did went hand in hand with their traditional roles. The female couriers played on women's apparent vulnerability, using intuition, manipulation and the ability to fake identity; all these abilities enabled women to survive in the "Aryan side" and to play invaluable roles in the resistance. They knew that, as Laska (1983: 7) claims "a smile could often accomplish more than a bribe or a gun" and used it as a strategy. The female rescuers extended their traditional roles to resistance activities and they did what they knew best: to love, to take care, to nurture and to offer support. Without them, many of the Jews, especially children survivors would not have been alive after the war. Women in the underground movements also created invisible networks without which the overall resistance would not have been possible. Some women in concentration camps gave birth to children in defiance to the Nazi system, jeopardising their lives in order to give a future to the Jewish people. Overall, it would be hard to argue that all these actions, activities, missions which involved the presence of women needed less bravery or less sacrifice than what men had accomplished in the resistance. Nevertheless, the stories of these women remained unheard and their contribution to the resistance invisible. In order to include women's invaluable participation in defying the Nazi oppression, the study of resistance in the context of the Holocaust needs to redefine its core terms and broaden the spectrum of its recognised activities. The next section will focus instead on the paucity of academic studies on women as perpetrators, by highlighting on the one hand how the topic has been dismissed for decades by scholars and on the other hand, by exploring the few, valuable studies that have emerged in recent years.

2.6. Women Perpetrators: Breaking the Silence on Nurses, Guards and Female Denouncers

The silenced gender paradigm can be applied not only to the silenced female victims of the Holocaust, but can be extended to women perpetrators. The dearth of studies on women perpetrators during the Nazi regime occludes stories that are equally important in obtaining a comprehensive gendered picture of what the Holocaust was. As Wendy Adele-Marie Sarti (2012: 199) points out in one of the few studies on women perpetrators, “with emerging scholarship, decades of silence towards analysis of female perpetrators can be re-dressed”. This section explores three possible explanations for why scholars have dismissed the topic of female perpetrators and further reviews the few recent academic studies on female guards (Brown 2002; Sarti 2012), nurses (Benedict 2003; Lagerwey 2003; Harrison 2008; Benedict and Shields 2014) and female denouncers (Joshi 2003).

According to Kaplan (1998a: 59) “long before women’s history took root in the mid to late 1970s, German scholars were exploring gender and family related issues within the political, social, economic and military contexts in the Third Reich”. Since the gendered research mentioned by Kaplan could easily include a study on female perpetrators, one might justifiably ask why the study of women as perpetrators did not take off in the early 1980s together with the newly established area of research on Women and the Holocaust or why studies on women as perpetrators have remained peripheral despite the numerous studies on women in Nazi Germany. Even more recent books like Stephenson’s *Women in Nazi Germany* (2001) give very little space to the topic of women perpetrators. The first extensive studies on women perpetrators have been published in the last ten years and were dedicated to female guards (Brown 2002; Sarti 2012) and to female denouncers (Joshi 2003). The list also includes two chapters and two books, dealing with female nurses as perpetrators (Benedict 2003; Lagerwey 2003; Harrison 2008; Benedict and Shields 2014).

A first possible explanation for the silence on women perpetrators is the fact that traditionally, the idea of perpetrators has been associated with male figures. According to the investigative journalist Peter Vronsky (2007: 6), the general perception is that “men commit violence; women and children suffer from it”. Women therefore tend to be portrayed more as a target of violence than perpetrators of it. It is commonly assumed that, the concept of “perpetrator” has little to do with the female universe, whose traditionally ascribed attributes are goodness, caring spirit and tenderness. To highlight this discrepancy, Sarti acknowledges that, during the trial of Irma Grese, one of the cruelest and most infamous head overseers in Ravensbrück and Auschwitz, the media focused on the apparent contradiction between her youthful beauty (she was only 21 at the time) and the atrocities she committed. As Sarti (2012: 121) points out: “people had a hard time accepting that women who were so young and pretty could commit such heinous crimes”. In the same vein, Roger W. Smith (1994: 323) argues that the sadistic SS women who excelled in their cruelty are “a bizarre realization of Aristotle’s idea of woman as *imperfect male*”. According to Vronsky, the actions of women perpetrators were considered a break with the gender boundaries and an invasion into a male-dominated sphere. Vronsky (2007: 29) points out that, women perpetrators “not only challenge our ordinary standards of good and evil but also defy our basic accepted perception of gender role and identity”.

A second possible explanation lies in the passionate debate between the American historian Claudia Koonz and the German historian Gisela Bock regarding whether female perpetrators in Nazi Germany were also victims. Koonz (1987) identifies the contribution of German women as perpetrators within their role as wives of officials. She argues that, by focusing on motherhood and family, women supported and encouraged their men in their racist activities. By offering to their husbands involved in the genocide “a safe place where they could be respected for who they were, not what they did” (Koonz, 1987: 419), by ignoring their husbands’ activities outside the home, the wives of the Nazi officials encouraged the lack of morality and the fulfillment of Hitler’s ‘final solution’ for the

Jews. As Koonz (1987: 420) explains it, their role goes beyond tacit complicity with their husbands' crimes:

When the SS man returned home, he entered a doll's house of ersatz goodness in which he could escape from his own evil actions. He, in contemporary psychological terminology, "split" his identity as public man from his warm and loving feelings for his family. Nazi wives did not offer a beacon of strength for a moral cause, but rather created a buffer zone from their husbands' jobs. Far from wanting to share their husbands' concerns, they actively cultivated their own ignorance and facilitated his escape.

While performing their functions prescribed by society and without questioning the morality of their husband's work or simply ignoring what they were doing, Nazi women helped their husbands to restore their humanity before returning to the killing operations. Koonz (1987: 418) further explains their role: "These wives did not directly participate in evil, but, on the contrary, fulfilled 'nature's role' by normalizing a masculine world gone amok".

At the other end of the spectrum, Bock (1984: 287) argues in favor of the idea that women in Nazi Germany could be considered as victims since "both Nazi racism and sexism concerned all women, the inferior as well as the superior". She claims that women suffered excessively during the Nazi regime, and that not only Jewish women but women in general were victimised due to the policies related to motherhood, race hygiene and sterilisation.

In an article dedicated to the controversy between Koonz and Bock, Adelheid von Saldern (1994) argues that very few people could be identified only as victims or as perpetrators. She claims that the search for "pure types" should be replaced with one for "mixed types", whereby people found themselves at different times in both of the two categories. According to Von Saldern (ibid.: 157):

In the everyday realities produced by German fascism, ordinary men and women became complex and contradictory combinations of both victims

and perpetrators, although the mixture of roles probably displayed gender-specific features because women were confined to minor political offices and to the less overtly Nazified everyday life of the private sphere. This meant that women were commonly co-observers, co-listeners and co-possessors of “guilty” knowledge, rather than co-perpetrators.

Von Saldern’s statement explains the silence around women perpetrators as a topic of research until recently. The controversial debate between Bock and Koonz that developed over the years and involved many other scholars, paradoxically engendered the idea of German women both as victims and perpetrators, and encouraged the research towards what Von Saldern calls “mixed types”. In this context, women were considered co-observers or tacit accomplices, and therefore accounts with an exclusive focus on perpetratorship of women were slow to evolve.

A third explanation that goes hand in hand with the previous two is the fact that, during the Nazi regime, the women working within the Nazi apparatus were statistically in a much lower number than men and rarely in positions of leadership. Subordinated to men, women had little freedom of initiative and were often considered to be merely fulfilling the orders they had received. However, as historian Daniel Patrick Brown (2002: 9) argues, even if their number is minuscule compared to male perpetrators and even if their contribution often did not involve direct participation in the mass murder but consisted in auxiliary roles, still “their presence and assistance at the sites made them valued accomplices in the wholesale slaughter”.

The stereotype of male perpetrators and female victims, the underestimation of the role women played in the Nazi mass murder and their relative lower numerical participation in perpetratorship compared to men were factors that contributed to the long silence on women perpetrators and the dearth of relative studies in the field. As mentioned earlier, since 2002 a few studies have tried to fill in this gap and to focus specifically on women perpetrators by exploring their profiles, their motivations and their actions as perpetrators.

Female guards, nurses and women denouncers are the three main categories explored in recent scholarly studies.

In relation to female guards and overseers, Sarti (2012) argues that four thousand camp guards trained in Ravenbrück concentration camp, but their number was probably even higher considering that, in total, there were three hundred camps for women. Some volunteered for the job in search of status, an authority position or for the high salaries, whereas others were forced by the state. They came from all walks of life and they were of all ages. As Sarti acknowledges, before working in the camp structure these women came from a wide variety of professional backgrounds: beauticians, shopkeepers, housewives, and entertainers. Even though Sarti argues that there are not many common features that these women shared, in her study, the camp women (overseers, block commanders or doctors) are linked by their extreme cruelty and sadism. The eleven women on which Sarti's thesis is centred include the most vicious, perverted and cruel women that the history of the Third Reich recorded: Dorothea Binz, Juana Bormann, Herda Bothe, Hermine Braunsteiner, Elisabeth Volkenrath, Irma Grese, Hildegard Lächert, Maria Mandl, Ilse Koch, Ilse Lothe and Herta Oberheuser. *The Nightmare Creature, the Angel of Death, Bloody Bridgette, the Sadistic Beast, the Bitch of Buchenwald* were only a few of the nicknames used to describe them. By extracting these figures from the whole body of the female camp personnel, Sarti extends her conclusions arguing that most of the women working in the camps transgressed gender boundaries and manifested the same cruelty as men. As Sarti (2012: 191) points out:

There may never be an acceptable answer for why so many women took part in sadistic, horrific acts of violence against prisoners. Regardless of any predetermined concepts that existed about women and the ideal feminine sphere, these women defied all preconceived notions of the gentler sex. Women were responsible for many of the most heinous atrocities committed within the camps.

While there is no doubt that most of the women working in camps were extremely violent, the automatic equation of female guards with cruelty is a perilous undertaking because it establishes a behavioural pattern that leaves very little room for socially

contextualised exceptions. By focusing on those cases that stood out for their cruelty, Sarti mobilises an essentialist discourse of gender which cannot reconcile assumptions of female passivity and kindness with their actions as murderers and must therefore simply conclude that all women working in the concentration camps were evil. In doing so she reiterates within the study of women perpetrators the tendency noted by Waxman (2006) in gendered research on Holocaust victims: to establish set gendered patterns that favour certain behaviours at the expense of the others, therefore limiting their diversity. Lucille Eichengreen (2011), a Holocaust survivor, dedicates one chapter of her memoir to the women in the SS where she presents three different women. One of them, Kristie, was only twenty-one and, after finishing high school, was forced to accept the job as a guard. As Eichengreen (2011: 108) points out, “she seemed intimidated and was afraid to be a member of the SS”. She was often seen whispering on the phone, begging her influential friends to help her quit the job, which indeed happened later on. Eichengreen presents two other women guards, Elisabeth Muller and Elisabeth Roberts, both in their mid-thirties, married to husbands fighting in the Russian front and childless. Muller enjoyed torturing, shouting and cursing at the inmates. She would easily find reasons to beat them, for example when the floor was not clean enough or the windowsills not properly dusted. Roberts was quite the opposite: she did not beat them, and once gave Eichengreen a toothbrush and a substitute for toothpaste which was considered a luxury in a camp. Another time Roberts took Eichengreen and another inmate in town with her and let them rest for two hours while she was talking with her mother. As Eichengreen points out, Roberts’ kindness in offering them a blanket and treating them with respect touched them deeply. Significantly the survivor concludes that Muller and Roberts were “two SS women, working within the same system, yet totally different human beings” (Eichengreen, 2011: 113). The women portrayed by Eichengreen represent three different typologies of female guards and are significant because they are not limited to the stereotype of the sadistic female perpetrator. Following this path one could achieve a more complex and comprehensive image of the women perpetrators working in concentration camps.

While Sarti's (2012) study highlights extreme cruelty and sadism as a major trait of the female guards, the study of historian Daniel Patrick Brown's (2002) offers a more general picture of the camp women: from the particularities of their recruitment, training, ranks and assignments to their personal files that are an integral part of the book. Brown explains how the Nazis tried to attract women to work as camp guards: while highlighting the fact that the job was effortless and entailed only supervision of the inmates, it included accommodation and clothing along with the highest wages women could ever earn in the German economy. But, despite the promising offer, only a few women volunteered, so the Nazis had to use compulsory orders to fill in the vacancies. Brown (ibid.) makes a very meaningful observation when arguing that, by 1943, the majority of women working in the various concentration camps were conscripts, which means that they did not willingly chose a job that would put them in the position of becoming a perpetrator. Whether they enjoyed their role or whether they were merely fulfilling duties needs further research. As Brown acknowledges, the Nazis' training and supervision of female guards encouraged them to be cruel and violent towards the inmates, and those who did not conform risked severe punishments as for example, in the case of a guard who was whipped for being too compassionate towards the inmates. Brown (2002) also points out that there were a few overseers who, at their own risk, did not exercise violence against the inmates, such as Johanna Langerfeld who was praised in the post-war period for her humanitarian attitude, and a Bavarian guard named Brigitte. Brown's (2002) and Sarti's (2012) studies on women working in the camp structure provide us with a useful glimpse of women guards and overseers but there are still many gaps to fill and many questions that need further investigation.

Another important category within women perpetrators is female nurses. They played an important role in the persecution and murder process put in play by the Nazis by being involved in involuntary sterilisations, racial hygiene politics and the euthanasia program. It is interesting to note that two of the three contributions that have been published so far on the subject (Benedict 2003; Lagerwey 2003) focus on the nurses in the euthanasia centre of Hadamar. Under the title "Caring while killing", Benedict (2003) highlights the

contradiction between women who murdered their patients but were convinced that they were fulfilling their duty to care for the patients by not letting them suffer more than necessary. Benedict (2003: 107) points to “the paradoxical behaviour of nurses gently holding patients while feeding them lethal doses of injection, killing while caring” arguing that often, these women could not see the contradiction between the act of taking life and their duty as nurses to preserve life. To get a better picture better of the horror, Benedict states that, in 1941, all the personnel working in the psychiatric hospital of Hadamar (secretaries, nurses, psychiatrists) received a bottle of beer to celebrate the cremation of its ten-thousandth patient. As she claims, by that date more than 70,000 patients from different mental hospitals had been killed in the gas chambers of the six killing centres: Grafeneck, Brandenburg, Harthheim, Sonnenstein, Bernburg, and Hadamar.

Lagerwey (2003) argues that the nurses who murdered their patients and performed various duties within the killing centres were “ordinary women” who did not lack ethical or moral values and were not sadistic. On the contrary, as far as they were concerned they accomplished their duties, trying to remain “good nurses” despite their participation in mass murder. As Lagerwey (*ibid.*) acknowledges, two characteristics of nursing practice emerged in the documents of the Hadamar trial that women used as a justification for their actions: duty and selfless service. First, duty implied obeying their superiors, doing whatever was asked of them without questioning. At the Hadamar trial, many considered themselves to be innocent because they were merely fulfilling orders. Secondly, the nurses claimed to have accomplished their duties selflessly and with compassion. In the court, one of the nurses emphasised how she brought toys for children and cakes for the adults, implying that she cared for her patients but could not do anything to stop the euthanasia process. Lagerwey argues that many nurses felt “powerless” and that there was no possible alternative for them to act differently. Harrison’s (2008) contests this perspective by demonstrating that the participation of nurses in mass murder was to some degree voluntary and that alternatives existed for those willing to find them. Harrison presents the case of Isabella W. who was working in the clothing room where she was

helping the patients undress before entering the gas chambers. The work provoked a mental breakdown for which she was able to take six-week leave. She returned to work only to present her resignation, which at first was not accepted, but she refused to continue working and was eventually dismissed from the job. As Harrison (2008: 75) points out, “nurses did nevertheless have some discretionary latitude and could exercise some control over their involvement in the euthanasia program”.

While the studies of Benedict (2003), Lagerwey (2003) and Harrison (2008) have contributed to our understanding of the subject of nurses as perpetrators during the Nazi regime, it is important to note that the three studies are limited to the involvement of nurses in the euthanasia program and that two of them (Lagerwey and Harrison) took into consideration only the Hadamar centre. Moreover, as Harrison (2008: 14) points out, what we know about the euthanasia program comes mainly from the post-war trials and from testimonies of perpetrators, but “the record is silent on the question of victims’ experiences” due to the fact that most of them were killed. More studies on nurses who participated in involuntary sterilisations and abortions could therefore offer new insights on the topic.

The third and final category of women perpetrators that has been subjected to study is denouncers. By examining the Gestapo files, Joshi (2003) provides a useful insight into female denouncers and into the way in which women used denunciation as a form of exercising power. He stresses that the act of denunciation was an important part of the persecution during the Third Reich and that by using it ordinary people helped to make the Holocaust possible. Joshi argues that, in contrast to perpetrators who acted at high levels by issuing laws and were directly involved in the killing system, denunciators acted at a lower level, that of everyday life. Denunciation empowered common people who used it as an instrument to achieve their goals spanning from revenge, desire for emancipation, family problems, financial issues or even pure sadistic pleasure. In the case of women, Joshi shows how the allegedly “weaker sex” got involved in the power game and made free use of power to fight its own battles. According to Joshi, women

outnumbered men in denouncing strangers and the power they exercised through denunciation focused on the area that was most familiar to them: the community and the neighbourhood. As Joshi (2003: 99) points out:

Women, especially housewives, expressed their desire to make the community free of Jews more vehemently and openly, especially in the families and neighborhoods. They virtually acted as self-appointed neighborhood watchdogs and social mothers of the racial community and denounced Jewish neighbors, fellow Jewish passers-by or inconspicuous fellow shoppers in the supermarkets, groceries and provision stores to the control organizations. These areas were, so to say, the niche areas of female Volksgenossen.

An important category present in Joshi's analyses are women "accomplices", namely those women who "acted behind the scenes", meaning that they encouraged their husbands or male neighbors to denounce or they filed a denunciation together (Joshi, 2003: 95). Joshi's study on female denouncers is an interesting and groundbreaking analysis because it shows women perpetrators acting within their gendered boundaries and with instruments that are gender-specific.

The few studies that have been done to date on female guards, nurses and denouncers have broken a long silence on women perpetrators and opened new areas of interest for future research. Nevertheless, they do not provide us with a comprehensive overview of female perpetrators. Firstly there are just a few; they mark a beginning but could hardly be considered to offer a definitive overview on the subject. Secondly, they have inner limitations such as the focus on extreme cruelty in the case of guards or the focus on euthanasia for the nurses. Thirdly, the study of women perpetrators should include other categories such as the Nazi secretaries and different other administrative functionaries who indirectly contributed to the persecution system.

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter illustrates how, despite the large body of literature on women and the Holocaust, women's stories tend to be obscured and silenced unless they conform to already existing patterns and canons of Holocaust experience. The silenced gender paradigm emphasises the role of collective memory as a silencer of women's stories in their diversity and uniqueness. Young (2009) points out that, when representing women there is a tendency towards idealisation, which enforces ideal behaviours of heroism, sacrifice and resistance, while leaving no room for showing women's vulnerabilities or wrong choices. Similarly, Waxman (2006) argues that existing studies on women and the Holocaust "seek a homogeneity of experience that did not exist" and, by favouring certain experiences at the expense of others, limits their diversity. Ringelheim (1998: 344) also points out how women's peculiar experiences are often dissociated from what is considered the "proper collective memory, or narrative, about the Holocaust". The studies by Waxman, Ringelheim and Young claim that women's experiences have continued to be silenced despite the growing interest in their stories after gendered research on the Holocaust started in the early 1980s.

To illustrate the silenced gender paradigm, this chapter explored four different cases: Jewish women, non-Jewish women, female resisters and female perpetrators. Regarding Jewish women, much literature emphasises how, as the persecution increased, they showed moral strength, spirit of sacrifice, caring attitude and heroic choices. In the writings of Kaplan (1998a), Heinemann (1986) and Waxman (2010) there is evidence to challenge this ideal behavioural pattern. While most of the literature argues that women coped admirably and raised their families' spirits, Kaplan's (1998a) study shows that in Germany an increasing number of Jewish women committed suicide for not being able to cope with the worsening of the situation. Heinemann's (1986) study challenges the idea of selfless and caring women by arguing that, while survivors attest to the primacy of egocentrism in the concentration camp experience, the moral imperative of bearing witness inhibits testimonies centred on selfish people. In the same vein, Waxman (2010)

points out that the experiences of rape and the high risks women were facing while in hiding are neglected because the focus is on partisan resistance and heroic activities. Kaplan, Heinemann and Waxman all emphasise how the experiences of Jewish women are shadowed between ideal patterns and silenced testimonies.

The case of the “other” (non-Jewish) women highlights the almost exclusive focus within gendered research on the Holocaust has been dedicated to Jewish women. As a result, non-Jewish women (Gypsies, Jehovah’s Witnesses, lesbians and disabled women) have been doubly silenced: for being “others” and for being women. Forgotten among the other six million non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust, the “other women” have received very little attention and their stories have been largely ignored. Milton (2003), Elmar (1999), Krause-Schmitt (2001), Harder and Hesse (2001), Schoppmann (1996) and Gilles (2011) are among the very few scholars who have tried to rescue the stories of non-Jewish women from oblivion.

The silence on the contribution of women in the resistance against Nazis has been the result of an exaggerated emphasis on traditional definitions of resistance seen as direct fighting or, in general, as male-based activities. Emphasis on the few exceptions of female heroines that participated in the armed combat or in leadership positions equal to men, has effectively consolidated this limited view and perpetuated the discrimination of women as resisters. In order to redeem the visibility of women, many scholars have argued for a broader concept of resistance to include passing of women on the Aryan side (Weitzman 1998), the act of giving birth in concentration camps (Von Kellenbach 1999), the activities of rescuing children, offering shelter or helping with illegal printing performed by women as members of underground movements (Koonz 1987; Poznanski 1998; Weitzman 1998 and Greenberg 2003) and the silent protest of women in Rosenstrasse (Stoltzfus 1998).

The stereotype of men as perpetrators and women as victims together with the fact that, in the Nazi persecution, there were much more men involved than women, have led to the underestimation of the role played by women in the Nazi machinery of death. Recent

studies on female guards (Brown 2002 and Sarti 2012), on nurses (Benedict 2003, Lagerwey 2003, Harrison 2008) and on female denouncers (Joshi 2003) have attempted to break this long silence, but the image of female perpetrators during Nazism is still limited and needs further research. The case of female guards is especially significant since it enforces a peculiar dynamic: the women are more represented when the discrepancy between the attributes traditionally ascribed to them (goodness, caring spirit) and their behaviour as perpetrators is higher. Rather than challenging the silenced gender paradigm the case of the female guards actually reinforces it, by highlighting the polarity between heroic victims and evil perpetrators. The stories of female perpetrators who conformed to their gender boundaries and tried to show some humanity are of little interest to scholars since they do not fit into the pattern of inhuman, cruel perpetrators.

The emerging literature acknowledges that the experiences of women have been ignored or relegated to peripheral positions in many ways even within the study of gender and the Holocaust. Instead of recognising the diversity and exploring the complexity of women's experiences, many scholars have tended to structure their studies around certain established patterns, ignoring the experiences that challenge or seem inappropriate to the canons. While "women's stories are silenced because no one wants to hear their real stories" (Young 2009), the silenced gender paradigm continues to describe what women – both Jewish and non-Jewish, both victims and perpetrators - lived during the Holocaust. In parallel, the silent screams of women caught in the intricate web of the Holocaust beseech us to allow their stories to survive, in a mosaic of experiences with all their contradictions and inner paradoxes.

Given this broader context of the literature on women and the Holocaust, the following chapters will examine whether these ways of overlooking and dismissing women's experiences are also encountered in cinematic discourses and representations. Bearing in mind that cinema is entertainment and has its own grammar and dramatic conventions, which are often in conflict with historical accuracy, Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present the findings of a rigorous analysis of the corpus of films under investigation to explain how women's experiences (as perpetrators,

victims and resisters) have been represented, idealised, stereotyped, concealed or distorted through the process of cinematic interpretation. Before proceeding to the discursive and textual analysis of the films, however, Chapter 3 explores the key theoretical concerns encountered in the scholarly literature on the representation of women in Holocaust films.

Chapter 3

GENDERED STEREOTYPES AND SEXUAL EXTREMES: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON WOMEN IN HOLOCAUST FILMS

Both women and Jews were thought to be innately nervous; they suffered fits of hysteria. Manliness, however, meant normalcy, self-control, and harmony of the body and the mind.
(Otto Weininger quoted by Judith Doneson 1997)

3.1. Introduction

The representation of women and women's experiences in Holocaust films is a topic that has been largely ignored both by film scholars and within women's studies regarding the Holocaust. Despite the fact that there is a rich bibliography on Holocaust films - at least a book every year since 2000, the depiction of women in these films is largely neglected in the literature. Thus, the increasing attention that the lives and experiences of women during the Holocaust has received since the 1980s in historical and memoir accounts has not been paralleled by an equivalent interest in cinematic accounts of women's involvement in the Holocaust. The reluctance of both Film Studies and Holocaust scholars to engage with cinematic images and discourses of women and Holocaust is surprising, given the significant body of films that feature female protagonists and that highlight relevant aspects of their experiences as victims, resisters or perpetrators. These include: *Ida* (2013), *Remembrance* (2011), *Lea and Darija* (2011), *The Black Book* (2006), *Nina's Journey* (2005), *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* (2005), *Downfall* (2004), *Rosenstrasse* (2003), *Spring of Life* (2000), *Aimee & Jaguar* (1999), *My Mother's courage* (1995), *The Seventh Chamber* (1995), *Just Beyond this Forest* (1991), *Angry*

Harvest (1985), *November Moon* (1985), *The Last Metro* (1980), *The Night Porter* (1974), *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (1960), *Kapò* (1960) and *The Last Stage* (1948).

This chapter reviews the literature on women and Holocaust in cinema, and identifies the key topics, debates and theoretical frameworks that have dominated the study of the female figures in Holocaust cinema. As outlined in the previous chapter, before the emergence of gendered studies about the Holocaust, dominant accounts by both scholars and survivors have tended to be gender-blind. Interestingly, Waxman (2006), Ringelheim (1998) and Young (2009) show that women's experiences have continued to be silenced, despite the growing interest in their stories since gendered research on the Holocaust started in the early 1980s. As all three scholars have demonstrated, the requirements of homogeneity between testimonies and the propensity to idealise feminine behaviour limit the diversity and complexity of women's experiences during the Holocaust. If this "filtering" mechanism is possible when dealing with real testimonies and concrete historical data, feature films – which by their nature blend historical events with fiction – are arguably even more exposed to such processes.

The primary aim of this chapter, therefore, is to identify and evaluate the main theories and debates related to the representation of women in Holocaust films as defined by relevant scholars and academics. Before examining the key thematic concerns of the literature, the chapter will start by exploring the general issues posed by the representation of history and memory in film. The writings of Robert Rosenstone (1995; 2001; 2012) and Mike Chopra-Gant (2008) on cinema and history are especially insightful on this topic and provide much of the bedrock for this research. Of particular significance in this section and throughout this thesis is Rosenstone's (2012: 186) claim that historical films do not merely represent the past in a literal way, but rather they create "a counter discourse on the past". Secondly, this chapter will examine Anna Reading's (2002) theory of the "gender memory gap". Reading (ibid.: 5) claims that there is a research gap within media and cultural studies, which relates to the way gender influences the "collective construction, mediation and articulation of memories of

historical events”. Reading’s study is significant as it confirms the paucity of gender-related studies on how visual media, particularly film, narrate the Holocaust. Thirdly, this chapter focuses on the writings of Esther Fuchs and Judith Doneson, both of whom have consistently addressed the topic of women as victims in Holocaust films in their work. A key concept within the literature is Doneson’s (1978; 1992; 1997) notion of “the feminization of the Jew”, which points to the tendency, based on gendered (negative) stereotypes, to identify the Jew with a female figure or a feminised male. This concept is particularly useful in the context of this thesis because it highlights the propensity of cinema to use the female figure merely as a device, rather than to give voice to women in narrating their own Holocaust-related experiences. While this literature review explains and analyses Doneson’s theory, Chapter 6 on the filmic analysis of the depiction of victims will question and challenge the validity and continuity of such representational paradigm. Fuchs’s (1999a; 1999b; 2008) works instead foreground three major tendencies in Holocaust films, which are discussed separately: the tendency of films to portray women as vicarious victims, as “beautiful souls” and to confine their portrayal within the virgin/whore dichotomy. Fuchs (2008: 287) argues that, when the woman is the protagonist of the story, she is inevitably “defined in sexual terms”: either she is idealised for her virtuous behaviour as the “beautiful soul” or she is doomed by her sexual proclivity.

Outside this virgin/whore dichotomy, Fuchs (1999b) claims, women tend to be placed in the background of stories that represent men as the main victims of the Holocaust, implicitly suggesting that their experiences are not as valid or important. The chapter further reviews the literature on the representation of sexuality and abuse in Holocaust film. Although this topic is considered a taboo by survivors and scholars in Holocaust Studies, the studies of Scherr (2003) and Kozlovsky-Golan’s (2010) claim that there are films, albeit a few, which do not shy away from representations of sexual abuse. Finally, another key element of the literature review indicates that female perpetrators have been sexualised and eroticised in Holocaust films. The academic writings of Kriss Ravetto (2001), Antony Rowland (2013) and Adam Brown (2013) are also significant as they

shed an important light on this understudied topic. The constant reference to sexual extremes and gendered stereotypes in studies of the cinematic representation of women is important since it identifies sex and sexuality as highly significant tropes through which women's experiences of the Holocaust have been mediated. However, it is worth noting that most of the academic studies reviewed in this chapter are based on a very small and highly selective number of films. Their qualitative analysis is often character based, resulting in a somewhat superficial and fragmented overview of women's representation in Holocaust films. Despite their limitations, however, it is important to acknowledge these studies as they delineate the context for my research and highlight the extent to which the representation of women in Holocaust films remains an understudied domain. Being the first of its kind, my research aims to fill this gap by taking into consideration a large-scale corpus of films to be analysed in terms of gender discourses and representation.

3.2. Screening the Past in Historical Films

The potential of films to engage in narrating historical events is a much contested subject. As historian Robert Rosenstone (1995: 45) claims, "historical films trouble and disturb professional historians – have troubled and disturbed historians for a long time". Rosenstone (ibid.: 25-26) presents two diametrically opposed views regarding the appropriateness of filmmakers to approach historical events. On the one hand, historian Richard J. Raack (1983) claims that films are a more suitable medium for history than the traditional written word which, due to its linearity, is unable to render the full complexity of the past. On the other hand, philosopher Jan Jarvie (1978) argues that films have a "discursive weakness" and are unable to offer a meaningful representation of history. According to Rosenstone, such divergent viewpoints originate in two totally different concepts of history as a discipline: one that acknowledges the constructiveness of history and another that considers written history as an objective and transparent presentation of the past. He claims that historians often ignore the fact that written history uses the conventions of storytelling and thus is shaped by the language used to narrate it.

Rosenstone (1995: 34-35) further points out four significant aspects that highlight the constructive nature of history and its similarities with cinematic narrative: (a) historians use narratives in their attempts “to make sense of the past”; (b) written history “is a representation of the past, not the past itself”; (c) historical narratives are governed by the genre adopted (ironic, tragic, heroic or romantic); (d) the language used to narrate history, creates and structures the latter, filling history with meaning. As Rosenstone (1995: 35-36) summarises:

To the extent that written narratives are in fact “verbal fictions,” then visual narratives will be “visual fictions” – that is, not mirrors of the past but representations of it. This is not to argue that history and fiction are the same thing. (...) History on film must be held accountable to certain standards, but these standards must be consonant with the possibilities of the medium. It is impossible to judge history on film solely by the standards of written history, for each medium has its own kind of necessarily fictive elements.

The constructive nature of history is also acknowledged by Media Studies scholar Mike Chopra-Gant (2008: 63), who claims that written history is not an “inviolable, scientific truth” but rather “an unstable and provisional construct”. He further recognises the potential of historical films to enhance the knowledge about the past and its potential to impact much wider audiences than traditional history. According to Chopra-Gant (ibid.: 68):

In challenging the written word’s dominion over history, historical films both reflect the increasing importance of the visual media as a mode for communicating knowledge through the twentieth century up to the present, and offer an opportunity for extending the horizons of our historical understanding.

However, despite acknowledging the popularity and potential of cinema, Chopra (2008: 87, 93) claims that historical feature films tend to “present a simplified and hyperbolic version of the past” and that there is the “danger that public knowledge of historical events will be formed by accounts that are created under the pressure of forces that are not governed by historiographical intent and the rigorous standards expected of academic histories”.

The problem with this rigid viewpoint lies in the desire to judge historical films upon the same canons as historical writings. According to Rosenstone, film is a “new kind of history” and needs to be examined as such. As Rosenstone (2001: 65) claims:

Accepting the changes in history that mainstream film proposes is not to collapse all standards of historical truth, but to accept another way of understanding our relationship to the past. (...) Film neither replaces written history nor supplements it. Film stands adjacent to written history, as it does to other forms of dealing with the past such as memory and the oral tradition.

Rosenstone (2012: 132-133) also explains how films operate in order to bring the past onto the screen. Similarly to traditional history, films “engage the discourse of history and add something to that discourse”. Unlike written history, feature films bring the past to life through three main processes: vision, contest and revision. Firstly, while written history is distant and analytical, films “vision” history, they reconstruct events from the past, dramatise them, and allow emotions and experience of past events. Secondly, films “contest” history and often they challenge commonly accepted viewpoints on people and events. Thirdly, films “revision” history, thus by offering unexpected depictions of the past they challenge the audience to rethink and judge history from new perspectives.

Although its parameters are not yet fully defined and accepted, historical film “plays part of the role we assign to traditional History” and in the same time it alters “the way we read, see, perceive, and think about the past” (Rosenstone, 2012: 185-186). As Rosenstone (ibid.: 186) claims:

This kind of history is a challenge, a provocation, and a paradox. If its world can never be taken literally, the history film creates rich images, sequences, and visual metaphors that help us to see and think about what has been. Its truths are metaphorical and symbolic, not literal. The history film not only challenges traditional History, but helps return to ground zero, a sense that we can never really know the past, but can only continually play with, reconfigure, and try to make meaning out of the traces it has left behind.

In line with Rosenstone's claim, this thesis recognises historical film as a symbolic, metaphoric representation, rather than a literal depiction of the past. In doing so it does not analyse the direct and factual correspondence between what women lived and the representation of their experiences, but rather how Holocaust cinema constructs discourses about the past and how these discourses relate to broader contexts of national ideologies, gender politics, cultural memory and Holocaust historiography.

3.3. The "Gender Memory Gap"

This section examines Anna Reading's (2002) theory of the "gender memory gap" in media and cultural studies. According to Reading (*ibid.*: 5), there is a paucity of research from a gendered perspective on the role played by media in transmitting and creating socially inherited memories of historical events. Her study thus represents an important contribution to scholarship by examining how various media (written and spoken word, visual media, memorial sites and museums) contribute to the construction of gendered collective memories about the Holocaust. However, as it is broad in scope and covers a variety of media through which the past is articulated, Reading's study dedicates only one chapter to films, which is in turn made up of three sections on Holocaust real footage films, documentaries and fictional films.

Reading's (2002: 79) viewpoint aligns closely with that of scholars who previously claimed that Holocaust films universalise and vulgarise the events (Doneson 1987), simplify them (Langer 1995) and romanticise the plots (Insdorf 1989), although she recognises the role of cinema and television in promoting awareness and in educating about the Holocaust. However, as she (*ibid.*: 80) further claims, "it is difficult to generalize, since the scope and variety of films and television programmes related to the Holocaust are huge".

Some of the findings presented in Reading's chapter on film are extremely useful in the context of this research because they explain how the gender dimension is (or is not)

articulated in various films. In reference to Claude Lanzmann's internationally renowned documentary *Shoah*, Reading (2002: 91-92) stresses that "the predominant emphasis is on men as survivors, as perpetrators, as witnesses and as bystanders". She points out not only that the interviews with men outnumber those with women in a proportion of 26 to 7, but also women's interventions are "short and rarely given voice more than once". Unlike their female counterparts, men have much screen time dedicated to their interviews and they appear more frequently during the nine and a half hours of documentary. Interestingly, Reading argues that, since the film's focus is on the process of killing and disposing of the bodies of Jewish people within the death camps in Poland, the people working there were "all men and mostly Jewish", while women belonged exclusively to the category of victims. Thus, the "gender bias embedded at the very heart of the film" is justified by the "core feature of the system of Nazi murder" in which the women, children and elderly were murdered, while men were involved in preparing them before being killed and disposing of the corpses. Reading (2002: 92-93) further argues that women are only "visually absent" in the film to symbolise all those women and children who "cannot be present in the film because they were the murder victims in this process were murdered by the Nazis". Nevertheless, the absence of women "is in fact present in the words and faces of men" (Reading, *ibid.*: 92).

Importantly, Reading (*ibid.*: 94) acknowledges that "there is not yet the nine-hour equivalent of specifically women's experiences". While there are a few documentaries that highlight female perspectives and women's Holocaust experiences as perpetrators, victims and resisters, such as *Nazi Women* (2001), *Kitty: Return to Auschwitz* (1989) and *As If It Were Yesterday* (1980), they have never reached the same popularity as Lanzmann's *Shoah* or the same prominence in the canon of Holocaust films. Reading further argues that the foregrounding of women's experiences in the documentary *As If It Were Yesterday* (1980) is due to the fact that the film was made by a female director. As Reading (2002: 94) claims: "the director of the film suggests that women's memories are given a greater role in the film because of women's involvement in its production". This statement is significant as it suggests that the presence of female directors, writers and producers increases the

probability of having women's voices and experiences heard and seen. In a similar vein, Ruth Holliday (2008: 194) claims that because media organisations are generally owned and run by men, this impacts on how men and women are represented, often resulting in restrictive and stereotyped depictions of women. This hypothesis is taken into account throughout the thesis, especially in the findings and analysis chapters (5, 6 and 7) which demonstrate whether there is any relation between the foregrounding of women's Holocaust experiences and the involvement of women within the film industry.

Another significant finding of Reading's (2002: 100) study is that in mainstream feature films' "commercial imperatives tend to result in the use of patriarchal narratives and conventional gendered stereotypes of masculinity and femininity". Using the renowned American production *Schindler's List* (1993) as an example, Reading (ibid.: 97) explains how the film's structure corresponds to the "traditional patriarchal fairytale" in which the hero (Schindler) is assisted by a helper (Stern) and obstructed in his noble mission by the villain (Goethe). As Reading (ibid.) claims:

At no moment does a woman assist in the development of the story. Rather, women in this film are either there to be rescued (Jewish women); there to provide a moral anchor (Oskar's wife) or there to provide sexual interest (cabaret women, Goethe's mistress, Schindler's mistress).

Reading further argues that in *Schindler's List*, women's survival is conditioned by their ability to "conform to acceptable forms of femininity". Moreover, their portrayal is conducive with traditionally ascribed gender roles and conventions: they are portrayed as protecting and caring for their offspring, while there is no evidence in the film of the dilemmas faced by women who murdered or abandoned their children (Reading, 2002: 98). As Reading (2002: 100) concludes:

Overall, as with autobiography, the more well-known socially inherited memories of the Holocaust handed down through film tend to be those that in particular ways help re-establish and confirm gendered roles and identities, and thus help maintain social cohesion. In this respect it is important to approach films about the past, even 'documentaries' of the events, in ways that are critical of how these memories may be mediated.

While there is no doubt that Holocaust films must be approached with a critical eye regarding their handling of gender, Reading's study invites critique on at least two points. Firstly, her research is concerned with Hollywood conventions and representations and as such it offers only a partial view. Indeed, Reading (2002: 99) herself acknowledges that "the hegemony of Hollywood overdramatised versions of the Holocaust should not be thought as total", since there are other "subaltern memories that are present in smaller-budget non-American films". Thus, what remains to be studied is whether European cinema obeys the same set of principles in its gendered representation. There is evidence, however, as suggested by Claudio Gaetani (2006), of a significant difference in depicting the Holocaust between European and Hollywood cinema. Secondly, while Reading's findings are useful and insightful for my research, it is worth pointing out that her study is not based on a large-scale content analysis. There is no mention of a corpus or dataset and the qualitative analysis relates only to a very limited (and thus far from representative) number of films. One of the key concerns of the current study, therefore, is to determine the extent to which her comments on Hollywood's gendered conventions can be applied to a large corpus of European films. The following section introduces Doneson's (1978) much quoted study on the "feminisation of the Jew" which, similar to Reading's study, is based on qualitative readings of a selective corpus of films.

3.4. The "Feminization of the Jew"

According to Aaron Kerner (2011: 4), "the Jew-as-feminized-victim is one of the most common tropes in Holocaust films". The tendency to identify the Jew with a female figure or with a "feminised" male is explored by Judith Doneson in several articles published since early 1978. As Doneson (1978: 11) points out:

Of particular interest in Holocaust film is a theme relating to popular theology which defines itself in the motif of the Jew as a weak character, somewhat feminine, being protected by a strong Christian-gentile, the male, in what comes to symbolize the male-female relationship.

It is worth noting that the tendency towards feminising different groups of people or entire nations is a much broader phenomenon, generally encountered in the context of colonisation (Nandy 1983, Meaney 1993, Yuval-Davis 1997). The dynamics of colonialism are based on enforcing the image of the ruler-nations as strong and masculine powers in contrast with the weak, feminised occupied nations. As Yuval-Davis (ibid.: 53) claims, “in this imagery, feminization and disempowerment are being equated”. In the same vein, Geraldine Meaney (1993; cited in Ging, 2013: 23), claims that:

A history of colonisation is a history of feminisation. Colonial powers identify their subject people as passive, in need of guidance, incapable of self-government, romantic, passionate, unruly, barbaric.

Similar patterns have been acknowledged by sociologist Ronit Lentin (2000b) who states that the process of building a strong, masculine image of the Israeli State went hand in hand with the denigration of the diaspora Jews, stigmatised as being weak and feminine. Lentin (ibid.: 177-188) applies post-colonial theory to argue that, within the state of Israel, the diasporic Jews as “descendants of dispersed, exiled world Jewry, identified as passive, incapable of self-government and weak” represented “the ‘natives’ of the colonised territory”. They were opposed to the dominant majority, the so-called “coloniser” who stood for “the allegedly strong, brave, fighting masculine Israel”.

Interestingly, Doneson (1978; 1992; 1997) does not connect the “feminisation of the Jew” with broader theories on the feminisation of the oppressed. Instead she traces the roots of this overly used trope of cinematic representation in the theological myth of the “Wandering Jew”, condemned to a restless life for not having accepted Christ as Messiah. According to this myth, the mere fact of belonging to the Jewry places him in a state of limbo that lasts forever, since “he is neither devil nor angel; he is neither Nazi nor Communist; he is neither heathen nor Christian; he is a Jew” (Doneson, 1978: 12). Passive, weak, and unable to save himself, the Jew is doomed unless a strong and kind-hearted Gentile intervenes to save him. Doneson (1997) further claims that the “feminisation” of the Jew can also be explained at a historical level through the theory of “gender duality” whose main exponent was Otto Weininger, a converted Jew from

Vienna. In his book *Sex and Character*, published in 1906, he claimed that “every human being is a combination of male and female elements” where the “man” stands for logic, spiritual, productive, while the woman is the negative element which marks the lack of all these qualities. As Doneson (ibid.: 141-142) points out, in his denigrating theory about women, Weininger included the Jews:

Both women and Jews were thought to be innately nervous; they suffered fits of hysteria. Manliness, however, meant normalcy, self-control, and harmony of the body and the mind.

Doneson’s work is very useful, for she highlights the male-female dynamics and gendered stereotypes that are frequently employed in Holocaust films. Her work, which spans a time period from 1978 to 1997, includes a sample of mostly European but also some American films, including *Professor Mamlock* (1938), *The Great Dictator* (1940), *Distant Journey* (1949), *Stars* (1959), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), *Romeo, Juliet, and Darkness*⁷ (1960), *Kapo* (1960), *The Gold of Rome* (1961), *The Shop on Main Street* (1965), *Black Thursday* (1974), *Lacombe, Lucien* (1974), and *Schindler’s List* (1993). According to Doneson (1978: 11-12), the early Russian film *Professor Mamlock* and the Hollywood production *The Great Dictator*, highlight the weakness of the Jew, his perennial state of limbo and the need for a solution to the “Jewish problem”. These films, both made during the war, propose as a solution the conversion of the Jew to “communism as a Messianic ideology” in the Russian film or his salvation on the “Judgement Day” in *The Great Dictator*. The films that follow, while maintaining the theme of the Jew in limbo, offer a more reasonable solution in the “symbiotic relationship” between the Jew and the Gentile. As Doneson (ibid.: 12) claims:

For the Jew this means reliance upon the Christian for his survival, while the Christian depends upon the Jew as both a witness to his own theology and as a humanizing factor which helps bring out the ‘goodness’ incumbent upon noble Christian souls. This mutual need is represented as a couple, the Jew being the female, the Christian (gentile), the male. This partnership is not necessarily sexual but is based on the stereotyped divisions and complementary character of the sexual roles;

the weak, passive female in relation to the strong male and the need both have for each other within the structure of the daily living.

Doneson identifies two dynamics within the film narrative that express the symbiotic relationship between the Gentile and the Jew: firstly the strong Gentile is engaged in saving the weak Jew because of his generous heart, and secondly the love of the male Gentile for the Jewess motivates the attempts of saving her. In the first category are films like *The Shop on Main Street* (1965) and *Black Thursday* (1974), which highlight the need of the Jew to be saved and his incapacity to save himself without the help of the Gentile. Moreover, the Jews depicted in these films either do not understand the lurking danger menacing their lives (Rozalia in *The Shop on Main Street*), or they refuse to accept help, choosing to die rather than to be separated from their Jewish families (Jeanne in *Black Thursday*) (Doneson, 1978: 12). According to Doneson, in the films belonging to this category the main feature that characterises the Jews is their passivity and lack of resistance to the persecution. The passivity of the Jews becomes a key element in the films, favouring a narrative that emphasises the efforts made by the local populations and by the Christian-gentiles to save the Jews. As Doneson (1978: 12) points out:

These films do not center on the Holocaust as such but rather they use the Holocaust in an attempt to confront Christian guilt in the face of Jewish destruction. The Jew becomes the catalyst whereby the Christian can work out his own frustrations vis-à-vis the Holocaust.

In the second category, Doneson (ibid.: 13) places the films that revolve around a love story between a Gentile and a Jewess, in which “it is always a Christian male who falls in love with a Jewish female” and tries to save her. Films such as *Stars* (1959), *Romeo, Juliet, and Darkness* (1960), *Kapo* (1960), *The Gold of Rome* (1961) and *Lacombe, Lucien* (1974) use the love story as a pretext to accentuate the positive and altruistic side of the Gentile male. The Jewess serves as a “humanising factor”, offering the male the occasion to prove his Christian values manifested in the efforts to save her life (Doneson, 1978: 13, 18). Taken together, these films do not evade the pattern of the male Gentile hero who saves the weak, female Jew. Similar to the films in the first category, these love-themed films show, in most cases, the Jewess’ refusal to be saved, absolving the

Gentile men of any guilt in the tragic fate of the Jews. Ruth in the film *Stars* (1959), Giulia in *The Gold of Rome* (1961) and Hanka in *Romeo, Juliet, and Darkness* (1960) are all examples of Jewesses who refuse to abandon their family and roots, choosing to share the fate of their people. When the man's efforts to save the loved one fail, it is because the Jewess chooses to embrace a tragic death rather than betray her own people.

According to Doneson, all these films (from both categories) emphasise that the Gentile men did all in their power to save the weak and passive Jewesses. For generosity or love, the male strove to rescue the Jews and if he failed in his rescuing mission it is somehow the fault of the latter. As Doneson (1978: 18) claims:

In spite of the diverse portrayals of these relationships, the image of the Jew is similar in all cases. He symbolizes a feminine figure incapable of acting alone without the help of a Christian, the male partner, as his protector.

In a later publication, Doneson (1992) claims that the Hollywood film *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959) is permeated by the same framework of the feminised Jew passively accepting his fate, with the only difference that all roles are attributed to Jews. Thus Anna and her father Otto Frank take on the role of the strong "male", while the other Jews hiding in the attic (Mr. and Mrs. Van Daan and Dr. Dussel) play the role of the "female" character. The visual stereotypes confirm this cinematic choice of the "feminised Jew"; in fact Dr. Dussel as well as Mr. and Mrs. Van Daan "look Jewish": they are nervous and easily lose their calm breaking down in tears, they often complain about the lack of food and space, they are constantly arguing (Doneson, 1992: 146-150). According to Doneson (ibid.: 151):

The weakness during the World War II that found the Franks and European Jewry in the situation of dependency for their survival is perhaps still preferred in the post-Holocaust climate by the Christian/gentile world. The stereotype embodied in the model of the weak, feminine Jew in need of the protection of the stronger, masculine Christian is not unique to *The Diary of Anne Frank* but rather a continuing pattern throughout films concerned with the Holocaust.

A similar pattern is mobilised in the acclaimed film *Schindler's List* (1993). As Doneson (1997) points out, the film highlights the portrayal of Oskar Schindler as the symbol of the "Righteous Gentile", to whom many Jews owe their life. The Jews are represented by Itzhak Stern, Schindler's right-hand man, whose purpose in the film dynamic is only "the creation of the larger-than-life hero" that is Oskar Schindler. Stern is never shown to have any family bonding, instead trying to advocate the cause of the Jewish people, becomes the shadow of Schindler, "evolving into the woman behind the successful man" (Doneson, 1997: 146). He is shown cleaning, cooking for Schindler, washing his clothes, all that a wife or a woman would do.

The image of the weak, passive Jews whose entire salvation depends on the benevolence of the Gentile man is enforced by the film's one-sided narrative. In fact, by presenting the story from Schindler's perspective, the other side of the coin, namely the Jewish response to the Nazi persecution, is omitted. As Doneson acknowledges, the book of the same name that inspired the film included passages referring to the Jewish resistance movement that are totally absent in the filmic representation. This cinematic choice stresses the idea of the passivity of the Jews, who compliantly accepted their destruction. Doneson (1997: 140) claims that:

If one were to examine the myriad of fiction films exploring the Holocaust that have appeared since the end of the World War II, irrespective of country of origin, it might appear that goodness infiltrated Europe during this evil era, for a majority of these films portray, in some manner, Christians/gentiles attempting to save the life of the weak, passive Jews.

Of all the films presented by Doneson as paradigms of the "feminisation of the Jew", *Schindler's List* is probably the least significant in the context of this thesis as it focuses not on women but on feminised male characters (Itzhak Stern). However, it is important to acknowledge it here, given Doneson's assertion that through *Schindler's List* (1993) the image of the feminised Jew "lingers into the present". Interestingly, historian Lawrence Baron (2005: 104-105) claims that, while Doneson correctly identifies the gendered patterns present in Holocaust films before the 1990s, she fails to acknowledge

more recent contrasting depictions of Jewish characters that no longer fall into these rigid schemata. Thus the analysis of female victims presented in Chapter 6 pays particular attention to Doneson's theory of "feminisation of the Jew" with a view to determining whether this paradigm is representative in European Holocaust cinema and whether or not it has survived into the present.

3.5. Women in Holocaust Films: "Vicarious Victims", "Beautiful Souls" or "Virgins and Whores"

This section addresses the work of another pioneering scholar on the topic of women and the Holocaust, Esther Fuchs. Fuchs' research points to three main complementary tendencies regarding the depiction of women in Holocaust films: the portrayal of women as "vicarious victims" (Fuchs 1999b), as doomed "beautiful souls" (Fuchs 1999a) or within the sexual-clichéd dichotomy of "virgin/whore" (Fuchs 2008). As Fuchs suggests, all three representational patterns are connected with patriarchal ideologies.

Firstly, according to Fuchs (1999b), numerous major cinematographic productions on the topic of Holocaust tend to overlook women by relegating them to secondary roles in male-centred narratives. As she (ibid.: 50) states, "most literary and cinematic recollections of the Holocaust in recent decades marginalize women". Thus, women become "vicarious victims", affected by the horrors of the Holocaust only indirectly, as wives and mothers of male victims. As Fuchs (1999b: 50) further claims:

Rarely are women presented as the direct victims of the Nazi aggression. More often than not their punishment is vicarious. As the indirect victims of fascist persecution Jewish women suffer because their male protectors are arrested or marched.

With a view to exposing their "resistance to or compliance with the patriarchal mythology", Fuchs analyses four Holocaust films: the American television mini-series *The Holocaust* (1978), the documentary *Shoah* (1985) and two feature films *Europa*,

Europa (1991) and *Schindler's List* (1993). Despite their differences in genre and origin, Fuchs identifies these films as examples of Holocaust films' tendency to assign women peripheral roles and to present the Holocaust as a collateral event in their lives. According to Fuchs (1999b: 55-56), "each of these works all share a male-centred ideology" and, moreover, the portrayal of women as secondary characters "creates the impression that they were not as resourceful in their attempt to survive or that they were not treated as harshly". A few observations need to be made at this point. Firstly, the choice of the films, although apparently it backs-up Fuchs' theory, is debatable. For example, Agnieszka Holland's film *Europa Europa* is based on Salomon Perel's autobiographical memoir and intended to depict his incredible story of survival. Salomon's voiceover indicates the intention of the filmmaker to present the story from his perspective, which justifies to some extent the marginal roles of women in the filmic narrative. The absence of women in Claude Lanzmann's documentary *Shoah* the issue is explained by Anna Reading earlier in this Chapter. As Reading (2002: 92-93) claims, the visual absence of women in the film *Shoah* is justified by the film's focus on the process of killing and disposing the bodies of Jewish people in the death camps, activities undertaken exclusively by men. Secondly, Fuchs's making such general claims based on four films is problematic.

To complement her research on women as "vicarious victims", Fuchs published two additional studies (1999a; 2008) dedicated to Holocaust films that depict women in protagonist roles. According to Fuchs, female leading characters in Holocaust films are characterised by two sexual extremes: the tendency of "idealization of Jewish women" as "optimistic, humane, kind, beautiful, and asexual" (Fuchs, 1999a: 97) and the propensity "to frame the Jewess as either femme fatale or the ultimate victim of erotic obsession" (Fuchs, 2008: 287). The first depicts women as "beautiful souls" and innocent victims of a terrible tragedy, while the second portrays women either as victims of their erotic appearance or as strong individuals who transcend their victimhood status by making use of their sexuality. In all cases, the common element that connects these women is their confinement to purely sexual parameters.

In the study “The Jewess as Beautiful Soul”, Fuchs (1999a) examines the female figures of five American and European films: *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), *The Shop on Main Street* (1965), *Julia* (1977), the television drama *Playing for time* (1980), and the short documentary *One Survivor Remembers* (1996). According to Fuchs, the leading female figures in these five films - Anne Frank, Rozalia Lautmann, Lilly and Julia, Fania Fenelon, and Gerda Weissman - are all examples of exceptional women whose goodness and optimism remain unaltered despite the atrocities of the Nazi persecution that surround them. Whether they are able to disconnect with the dreadful reality and to live in their ideal world (Anne Frank, Mrs. Lautmann and Lilly) or whether they are aware of their condition but chose to believe in the goodness of the human soul (Julia, Fania and Gerda), they are all prototypes of the “beautiful soul”. Moreover, as Fuchs points out, the actresses chosen to interpret their roles are physically attractive, even when they are old like in the case of Mrs. Lautmann in *The Shop on the Main Street*. Fuchs draws attention to the implicit risks of identifying the Jewish female victims of the Holocaust as “beautiful souls”. As Fuchs (1999a: 98) claims:

If the heroine of the average Holocaust film is spiritually strong, joyful, vivacious, kind, altruistic, considerate, and beautiful – should we mourn less the loss of the “inferior” women? Does a woman have to be artistic, talented, and idealistic; does she have to constitute a palpable potential promise of a contribution to a civilized society in order for us to grieve her suffering and loss?

According to Fuchs, the tendency to idealise the Jewish women portrayed in Holocaust films results in the marginalisation of other women who do not distinguish themselves for special features (physical or spiritual). Interestingly, as Fuchs acknowledges, the paradigm of the “beautiful soul” is associated with the “asexuality” of its female characters. These idealised female figures from fiction films, like Anne, Mrs. Lautmann, Lilly and Fania, have in common the fact that they remain asexual despite all the adversities they have to endure. Fuchs (1999a: 109-110) argues that:

The Jewish heroine of the Holocaust film is made to embody Western bourgeois values, be they gendered based or not. These heroines are non-maternal Madonna-like prototypes. In this sense, they continue the

Christian tradition of depicting Jewish women as dichotomies of good and evil, virginal women versus sexually active women.

Fuchs (1999a: 110-111) warns against the pitfall of representing the Jewish women as “beautiful souls”, a tendency that is manifested not only in films, but as well in literary works: “The proliferation of media, literary, artistic, and academic constructions of the Holocaust and the idealistic representation of its victims and its survivors threatens to cheapen this event and to create a kind of cultural fatigue stemming from a perceived surfeit of reception”. Interestingly, Fuchs’s statement re-echoes Young’s (2009: 1778) claim from Chapter 2 that by turning women into emblematic figures, their experiences as women “remain unexpressed, unregarded, and even negated”.

A similar message is conveyed in Fuchs’ (2008) later work, in which she exposes the virgin/whore dichotomy that surfaces in the image of Jewish female figures in Holocaust films. As virgin the Jewish woman is an “object of sexual desire”, as seductress she is an “irrepressible lover”. In both cases, as Fuchs points out, the Jewish woman is defined in sexual terms and her portrayal is sketched through sexual stereotypes. According to Fuchs (2008: 287):

Romantic narratives in European Holocaust films tend to frame the Jewess as either femme fatale or the ultimate victim of erotic obsession. She lives for love, dies for love, and if she survives she survives thanks to love, which is sexual rather than platonic, marital, or familial.

While her life revolves around romantic narratives, the Jewess is dissociated from the fate of her family, community and from the more general context of the Jewish persecution. For Fuchs, despite the fact that reference to family life is constantly present in women’s memoirs, most films eschew any connection between the Jewess and her family or community of origin. In romantic Holocaust films, the Jewish woman is secluded from political, social or historical context, and thus appears disassociated from the destiny of her people. Fuchs claims that: “As violence and destruction engulfs her family or community, the cinematic Jewess is fixated on sexual exploration, adventure and escape” (ibid.). But the love that motivates her actions and decisions cannot save her from death

as she will ultimately have to embrace the tragic fate of most Jewry. As Fuchs argues, the death of the Jewess is connected to her past behaviour lead by love/sexual passion, rather than to the Holocaust. Thus, Fuchs (2008: 287) claims, her death will remain personal and a-historical, a punishment for her “reckless behaviour”:

If the gentile woman’s love (for the persecuted Jewish man) at times leads to feats of rescue and survival, offering her the status of the heroine of the redemptive Holocaust narrative, the Jewess is almost inevitably the heroine of a story of atrocity, her love constituting a temporary distraction on the path to death. Yet, the Jewess’s death is portrayed as the result of her own reckless behaviour, her youthful passion. This construction shifts the blame from perpetrator to victim. To the extent that we are justified in associating the Nazi genocide with fantasies of Aryan virility, we may say, such films also shift the blame from the male perpetrator, to the female victim of violence.

To support her argument, Fuchs examines six European feature films: *Kapo* (1960), *The Garden of Finzi-Continis* (1970), *Lacombe, Lucien* (1974), *Angry Harvest* (1985), *November Moon* (1984) and *Aimée and Jaguar* (1998). Fuchs stresses that all the Jewish female protagonists in the six films under analysis (Nicole, Micòl, France, Rosa, November and Felice) are constructed within romantic narratives based on sexual stereotypes and the dichotomy virgin/whore. As she points out, the inner risk of such representation based on sexual connotations lies in diminishing the historical relevance of the Holocaust in the film dynamics. According to Fuchs (2008: 302):

By returning the Jewess to the virgin/whore dichotomy the Holocaust romance succeeds in normalizing the Holocaust as a story about sexual innocence and experience, and shifts the subject to a more familiar representational history. More importantly, by presenting the Jewess as a reckless lover, the Holocaust romance shifts the blame from the (male) perpetrator to the (female) victim.

Fuchs claims that, both the paradigm of the “beautiful soul” and the virgin/whore dichotomy shifts the attention from the terrific dimensions of the Holocaust towards approaches that are more familiar or more “palatable” for a mainstream audience. Thus,

the historical accuracy in the representation of the Holocaust as a unique historical event fades in front of the artistic and entertainment requirements.

The tendencies highlighted by Fuchs (1999a; 1999b; 2008), represent an important point of departure for my research. However, one needs to be aware of the many limitations of Fuchs' studies: the small scale of her analysis, the predominantly non-cinematic readings of the films, the character-based nature of her analysis and the non-representative nature of her sample. Despite the fact that her studies can be criticised for being too partial and selective, however, two of her major theories seem to be confirmed also by other theorists. Firstly, Fuchs's (1999a) claims regarding the idealisation of Jewish women in Holocaust films are re-echoed in both testimonies and academic research (Waxman 2006) and in memorial arts and museums (Young 2009). Secondly, Fuchs' (2008) "virgin/whore" dichotomy identified in Holocaust films, points to a broader propensity of cinema to restrict women to a limited range of roles. Gender Studies scholar Ruth Holliday (2008: 196) acknowledges that in the past the cinematic representation of women "seemed to be divided in two kinds – good women and bad women, known as the 'Madonna/whore' dichotomy". Thus, the current analysis, while remaining cognisant of Fuchs' claims, also attempts to overcome the limits of her study. To this end, it makes reference to a much more representative corpus of films (over 300) and employs a more sophisticated and interdisciplinary methodology, underpinned by both film and gender theory, as well as by concepts such as trauma and postmemory.

3.6. Approaching the Taboo of Sexual Abuse and Rape in Film

This section explores the literature on Holocaust cinema's depiction of abuse and rape. As explained in the Chapter 2 of this thesis, there is a strong reluctance on the part of both survivors and academics to deal with sensitive themes such as rape, violence against women or the exchange of sex for commodities. The topic is either considered to be offensive to the memory of the dead or is deemed irrelevant in the study of the Holocaust,

and therefore tends to be avoided or marginalised. This gap in academic studies on the Holocaust is also mirrored in scholarly works that concern the analysis of Holocaust films. This does not mean, however, that the films themselves shy away from representing these issues but rather that they are ignored in the cinema and Holocaust literature. In recent years, however, two book chapters have broken the silence on the representation of sexuality and abuse in Holocaust films: Scherr's (2003) *The Uses of Memory and Abuses of Fiction: Sexuality in Holocaust Film, Fiction, and Memoir* and Kozlovsky-Golan's (2010) *Public Property": Sexual Abuse of Women and Girls in Cinematic Memory*.

Both publications are important to the current study because they explore how this sensitive topic has been approached in Holocaust films. While Scherr's study is limited to examining how eroticism and sexuality are (mis)used in the feature film *The Night Porter* (1974) and in the novel *The White Hotel* (1981), Kozlovsky-Golan's research is more comprehensive, and explores a variety of films, from post-war documentaries to contemporary fiction films from different backgrounds (Europe, United States and Israel).

English language scholar Rebecca Scherr claims that, by focusing on eroticism and sexuality, both the film *The Night Porter* and the novel *The White Hotel* "misread the Holocaust" and depart from its historical reality. According to Scherr (2003: 279):

These fictional works of art replace the absence of sexuality characteristic of memoirs of camp experience with an overabundant of erotic imagery, a sign of general discomfort with the historical facts or with the methods one can employ to represent the Holocaust. Moreover, it is the female body that becomes a site for displaying this erotic impulse.

The two fictional works are an opportunity for Scherr to question how the (over)use of eroticism influences the representation of the Holocaust as a historical event and how the sensualised female body is used to contextualise the memory of the Holocaust. Scherr's study is relevant to the current research primarily in terms of her discussion of the

representation of sexuality in *The Night Porter*, which narrates the story of Jewess Lucia, a concentration camp survivor, who meets an ex-Nazi officer (Max) in post-war Vienna, who had sexually abused her while she was prisoner. The film reveals a relationship characterised by perversion, abuse and sadomasochism that is both past (flashbacks through Max's point of view) and present (re-initiated by Lucia, their relationship will continue with the same perverted dynamics until the two are killed).

Scherr (2003: 282) claims that "Cavani transforms the memory of the camp into a 'sexy memory' which, through the depiction of eroticism and the sexualized female body, elicits a reaction of pleasure in the spectator, completely warping the historical facts of the Holocaust". She argues that, by focusing on Max's viewpoint and presenting Lucia as erotic spectacle, the film manipulates the spectator's gaze towards the pleasure of a "peeping tom" show. This de-contextualises the concentration camp experience and defocuses the attention from the Nazi atrocity to a representation of eroticism and perversion within a "discomforting" narrative that offers "no moments of redemption or acts of resistance by the victim." As Scherr (ibid.: 285) points out:

Since the memories presented in Cavani's film are particularly Max's memories, as seen through his lens, Lucia stands as the silent bearer of (his) meaning. In fact she rarely utters a word throughout the entire film. The victim here does not make meaning; the woman's body stands for the atrocity and memory of Cavani's fictional Holocaust but remains prisoner to it, contained within the boundaries of Max's perverse, erotic rhetoric. The meaning assigned to Lucia is that of the center focus of the gaze, the captive body that is looked at and desired, a position that succeeds in illuminating the interconnections between pleasure and perversity, yet a position that fails to communicate the horror that was the Holocaust.

Cinema and history scholar Yvonne Kozlovsky-Golan (2010), however, disagrees that Lucia's perspective is absent and argues that the film needs to be read as the perspective of "the child-woman who learns the 'secrets of love' from a much older man". Kozlovsky-Golan (ibid.: 242) further claims that the patterns of love and survival based on humiliation and violence that were imprinted in Lucia at a young age determined her

ulterior behaviour similar to the one of “a battered woman who returns to the ‘scene of the crime’ again and again out of love and blind faith in her beloved.” Kozlovsky-Golan argues against the interpretations that consider the sex scenes between Lucia and Max as pornography and invites us to explore the “psychological layers” of this relationship rooted in the Holocaust.

More generally, Kozlovsky-Golan’s (2010) study provides an overview of the films that make reference to the topic of sexual abuse and rape. Kozlovsky-Golan’s study is groundbreaking, not only because she stresses the importance of considering the woman’s experience and viewpoint in a film ostensibly dominated by the male gaze, but also because it attempts to map for the first time the representation of women’s sexuality, abuse and rape in Holocaust films. As she highlights, despite the fact that numerous documentaries and feature films have been made since World War II, there is an “absence of any serious attempt to grapple with the physical and sexual abuse of women, whose role in advancing the plot was significant.” She (ibid.: 235) claims that:

An overall survey of the films that refer to sexual abuse shows that very few Holocaust films address such themes, and that the national, religious, and ethnic origin of a film does not seem to play a part in the cinematic treatment of the young women.

According to Kozlovsky-Golan, the first documentary materials about the sexual abuse of women were made both by German soldiers and by Allied troops involved in the liberation of the camps. Some of this newsreel footage was later included in documentary films such as *My Private War* and *Hitler’s Hit Parade*. The German film *My Private War*, directed by Harriet Eder and Thomas Kufus and released in 1989, is based on the interviews with five soldiers of the Third Reich who used cameras (photographic and video) to document their journey into Eastern Europe in 1942. The film combines the war memories of the five soldiers with photos and short filmic materials in a sequence of what would normally happen during the occupation of a village: the killing of men, the rape and physical violence on women and young girls, the looting their properties and finally the hiding the evidence of their criminal acts. As Kozlovsky-Golan points out, this

documentary that describes the sexual violence of local women in the hands of the German troops had a limited distribution and fell into oblivion not long after its release.

The second film *Hitler's Hit Parade*, directed by Oliver Axer and Susanne Benze and released in 2003, portrays life in Germany during the Third Reich from two opposed points of view: one illustrating national pride through newsreel footage and diaries, and another connecting the German soldier's "patriotism" with photos revealing the sexual abuse of women in Eastern Europe. Kozlovsky-Golan (2010: 238) highlights the different cinematic treatment in the presentation of the tortures suffered by men and women: while the filmmakers seem to want to preserve the dignity of male survivors in showing the signs of torture on their bodies, the only scene showing signs of torture on a woman "seems staged" and "expresses the lack of consideration and basic understanding of what victims suffered in general, and what women endured in the camps in particular". As Kozlovsky-Golan acknowledges, in another scene where a woman testifies about her camp experience as a doctor in Bergen-Belsen camp, the woman's voice is often "muffled" by the narrator and totally silenced in the part where she speaks about the "gynaecological experiments" on women. According to Kozlovsky-Golan (2010: 239): "The woman doctor's testimony is swallowed up in the bigger story of the war and the horrors perpetrated by human beings to other human beings, some of which can be described in words and others by silence".

What Kozlovsky-Golan is pointing out with these two examples is the difficulty and reluctance of documentary films to deal with such a sensitive topic and the tendency to conceal rather than to expose the violence and abuse on women during World War II. According to Kozlovsky-Golan (2010: 239):

The tendencies to conceal and repress the abuse of women in general and sexual abuse in particular also took root in postwar cinema. The most outstanding examples of concealment were perpetuated precisely by survivors themselves.

Interestingly, Kozlovsky-Golan (ibid.: 239) claims that women survivors, even when interviewed decades later after the War, as in the case of an ongoing project carried out in the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, tend to narrate their Holocaust experiences “according to a particular order of topics”. As Kozlovsky-Golan (ibid.: 239) contends, “they describe their parents and family and the conditions under which they lived, which included hunger, fear, hard labor, abuse by those in control, and death”, while their painful experiences of sexual abuse are only hinted at.

In relation to feature films, Kozlovsky-Golan argues that their production in the post-war period was influenced by the “cultural” tendency to conceal sexual violence against women and to blend it into a more general picture of persecution. She claims that the 120 films dealing with the Holocaust made between 1945 and the 1960s belong to two categories: films that associate Nazism/Fascism with the sexual domination, which are mostly European (*Kapò*, *The Night Porter*, *Seven Beauties*, *The Damned*, *Salò*) and American productions featuring heroism, implying that both men and women were physically and mentally raped in concentration camps (*Exodus* and *The Pawnbroker*). According to Kozlovsky-Golan (2010: 241):

A deeper look at the film industry in the West during these years shows that both types of films share a common narrative: woman as a vehicle for conveying the Nazi/Fascist message, for carrying out their sex crimes, sexual exploitation, and pimping, and as a means through which pure evil works itself out in all its ugliness. Despite all this, women are missing from the films’ central discourse, as the real “heroes” are men.

Mapping a comprehensive overview of the representation of torture of women in feature films about the Holocaust, Kozlovsky-Golan argues that most films only hint at gender-specific acts of torture but elude showing them explicitly. In *Schindler’s List* (1993), the filmmaker “hints unambiguously” that Amon Goeth’s servant, Helene, is beaten and abused by him. The sexploitation film *Ilsa, She-Wolf of the SS* (1975) shows nude female bodies and torture with electrical vibrators, but as Kozlovsky-Golan (2010: 244) points out “there are no close-ups of the experiments historically made on the vaginas of torture

victims”. Only the film *The Grey Zone* (2001) explicitly depicts two scenes of torture against women which, according to Kozlovsky-Golan, “were never screened in full”. While recognising the merits of this later film in screening the heroism of the women involved in the *Sonderkommando*’s revolt, Kozlovsky-Golan (ibid.) contends that “however, gender-specific experiences do recede into the background of the cinematic portrayal of the insurrection by the *Sonderkommando* in which crematoria I and III were destroyed with the smuggled explosives”.

Kozlovsky-Golan (2010) also dedicates a section of her study to Israeli feature films, arguing that very few of them approach the topic of the Holocaust and when they do, survivors are generally represented as “insane”, while women survivors are pictured as having saved their lives by becoming “the Germans’ whores”. As she claims, in Israeli films the notions of “rape, coercion, and abuse” do not fit within this “frame of insanity”. The films about the Holocaust briefly explored by Kozlovsky-Golan are: *Newland* (1994) directed by Orna Ben-Dor Niv, *Henrik’s Sister* (1997) directed by Ruti Peres and *Tel Aviv-Berlin* (1987) directed by Tsipi Trope. According to Kozlovsky-Golan (2010: 245):

None of these films depict or explain the actual act of rape. Nor is there any narrative depth enabling viewers to understand these women, identify with them, and have compassion for them. On the contrary: the explanation is concealed according to the taste of the filmmaker, who decided in advance to point a finger of blame at the survivors. The viewer is imprisoned in this view as if by historical truth. It is interesting to note that all three of the above films were directed by women.

As Kozlovsky-Golan claims, the tendency to suppress the representation of rape and violence against women in Holocaust films may be motivated by a desire to preserve the dignity of survivors and the memory of the dead, or by the desire to protect the sensitivity of the audience by not screening such horrific experiences. Also, this omission can be explained by the inability of scholars (and filmmakers alike) to confront the sexual abuse of women. According to Ringelheim (1997: 25):

The impulse to neutralize the issue of sex by treating it as non-existent or insignificant is entirely understandable. The possible rape of mothers,

grandmothers, sisters, friends, or lovers during the Holocaust is difficult to face. The further possibility that mothers or sisters or lovers ‘voluntarily’ used sex for food or protection is equally difficult to absorb. All the experiences connected with sex, whether negative or positive, are understandably troublesome.

However, as Kozlovsky-Golan points out, regardless of the good intentions that motivate this “silencing” process, the absence on the screen of sexual violence against women may cause people to believe that this phenomenon has been historically exaggerated. According to Kozlovsky-Golan (2010: 248):

Despite all we know about sexual violence, coercion, and rape, and despite photographic records of the horrors that simultaneously reinforce and confirm facts, we still perceive rape in terms of shame and respond to it by silencing it. Thus the difficulty in cinematically depicting the explicit violent sexual act and its implications still exists, and many filmmakers prefer, out of shame or respect for survivors, not to directly show the act. Yet if we, as viewers, witness no example of this act in a film in which rape figures, we may consider the abuse exaggerated.

This section acknowledges two extremes in the filmic representation of sexual violence and abuse: on the one hand, films such as *The Night Porter* exceed on depictions of sexual imagery, while on the other hand most films regard this topic as a representational taboo. Taking stock of Scherr and Kozlovsky-Golan’s findings, the present study explores the extent to which female characters in European Holocaust cinema are sexualised and establishes whether this tendency is connected with the historical reality of abuse or rather reflects patriarchal mechanisms of representation that rely on displaying women as objects of the gaze.

3.7. Female Perpetrators in Film: Evil as an Eroticised Woman

This section examines another category of women whose representation has been heavily sexualised in Holocaust cinema: female perpetrators. According to Claudia Koonz (2007: 161), “Anyone who studies female perpetrators does so in the context of a culture that has

sensationalized Nazism by locating evil in eroticized women”. Koonz’s claim is instructive as it acknowledges an important phenomenon, namely the continuing tendency to fictionalise Nazi women using strong sexual connotations. The finding is surprising given that the subject of female perpetrators during the Holocaust has been addressed by scholars only in recent years (since the beginning of the 2000s). The lack of academic interest in women as perpetrators during the Nazi regime was apparently paralleled by the enormous success of hyper-sexualised, often pornographic images of Nazi women present in fictional literature, men’s magazine’s and in popular films. Following Vronsky (2007), Wendy Adele-Marie Sarti (2012: 201) acknowledges that:

Hypersexualized images of Nazis emerged after World War Two with men’s magazines of the 1950s and 1960s, but notably in film in the 1970s. The hypersexualization of German woman was nothing new in erotic literature or images. Though in film, combining German women with Nazi women in violent, pornographic ways became, and, apparently, still continues, as a popular underground theme for some.

Films that became popular in the 1970s and paved the way for an eroticised representation of Nazi women include *She-Devils of the SS* (1973), *Ilsa, She-Wolf of the SS* (1975), *Deported Women of the SS Special Section* (1976) and *The Beast in Heat* (1977). Even though these films belong to *Nazisploitation*⁸ cinema, which is positioned firmly outside of mainstream cinema and will therefore not be considered in the current analysis, it is useful to consider them at this stage as they establish a pattern in the representation of Nazism and its female perpetrators, which clearly influenced later productions. The sexualisation of female characters in Holocaust films is evident not only in *Nazisploitation* films, but also in Italian *auteur* cinema of the 1970s, whereby films such as *The Night Porter* (1974) by Liliana Cavani, *Seven Beauties* (1975) by Lina Wertmüller and *Salò, or the 120 days of Sodom* (1975) by Pier Paolo Pasolini are a good example of this tendency.

The popularity of films that equate Nazi women with extreme evil and simultaneously portray them in an eroticised manner raises questions regarding the origins of this phenomenon. Antony Rowland (2013) argues that “there is a wider cultural fascination

with the figure of female perpetrators in western countries” originating from the way in which the Allied media framed the women perpetrators brought to the trials. He explains how, unlike the trials that took place in the German Federal Republic, which “played down the guilt” of these women, the Allied trials emphasised “the spectacle of the female perpetrators” during which they were “prosecuted and demonized as atavistic beasts”. Examining the case of two of the most famous female camp guards, Irma Grese and Ilse Koch, Rowland (2013: 129) argues that:

Koch and Griese have been conceived as masculine due to their apparent brazenness at their post-war trials, and the supposed masculinity of their power and violent crimes in the camps, conjoined with accusations of sexual promiscuity. These masculinities would be less spectacular, however, were it not for the perceived attractiveness of these women during the Allied trials.

The Allied newspapers and magazines that published information about the trials played an important role in the image created around these famous women perpetrators. Ilse Koch’s infamy, for example, was largely attributable to a story that was never historically proven, namely that she ordered lampshades made out of tattooed human skin. In 1948, the war section of the *Times* newspaper published an article about her collection of tattooed skin for lampshades, but, as Rowland claims, the article did not mention that in Buchenwald, where she was appointed as guard, there was a laboratory performing experiments on human skin. Rowland (2013: 131) points out: “in the scandalized narrative of female perpetrators, the fact that (again, invisible) men in the pathology lab might have created the lampshade is of no interest”.

The framing employed by the Allied media in the immediate post-war period, reiterated later by writers and filmmakers like Bernard Schlink (*The Reader*), Howard Jacobson (*Kalooki Nights*) and Oliver Storz (*Gegen Ende der Nacht*), thus created a disproportionate image of women’s participation as perpetrators, “a cultural obsession” as Rowland notes, while casting a shadow on the male contribution to the genocide. According to Rowland (2013: 132):

It is worth noting that as with Irma Grese, the transgression of female masculinity includes Koch's reputed sexual rapacity (...). However, the transformation of Ilse Koch into an icon of Nazism has had the effect of occluding the role of the male SS in Buchenwald, and the collusion of Germans living nearby the camp.

In a similar vein, media studies scholar Adam Brown (2013) claims that, the recurrent use of the name "Ilsa" or "The Bitch of Buchenwald" as a character in different films is an example of "the voyeuristic value that has been placed on the figure of the female perpetrator and her brutal behaviour" and has had a significant impact on the way in which filmmakers deal with the subject of women perpetrators. Moreover, the phenomenon of eroticising female perpetrators has generated a certain reluctance on the part of historians to study women who committed criminal acts during the Nazi regime. Brown (2013: 77) makes useful reference to Przyrembel's (2001) claim in this regard:

Alexandra Przyrembel posits that the ideological hold on the popular imagination of the demonized image of Koch may be 'responsible for the tendency, even within women's history, to view female perpetrators in the concentration camps as at most a "remarkably brutal and power-obsessed" minority among women, and for the reluctance, until recently, to address the specifics of these women's "exercise" of power, let alone to address the history of its reception after 1945'.

Kriss Ravetto (2001) provides another interesting contribution to the debate about why the cinematic image of Nazi women became defined in predominantly sexual terms. In a chapter entitled *Feminizing Fascism*, Ravetto (2001: 71) attempts to unpack the ideologies that lay behind the highly feminised and erotic representation of Nazism by re-addressing a question inspired, as he claims, by Michel Foucault:

How could Nazism, which fashioned itself on its own model of blood purity and masculine mastery, become the ultimate sign of decadent erotic sexuality? More specifically, how could the nazi and the fascist come to be identified with the same "impure" icons (feminized sadists, femme fatales, etc.) they once used to demarcate externals (Bolshevik, Slav, African) and internal (Jew, homosexual, mentally disadvantaged, Gypsy) others?

Ravetto explains that, during Nazism, the image of the woman was a very conservative one, of mother, sister and wife, and the unmarried woman was considered a social threat, especially in Germany where single women had no rights to citizenship. To contrast the male figure as a symbol of virtue and moral coherence, films often employed the character of the “femme fatale” or seductress. Both in Italian and German cinema, the image of the fatal woman was a “metaphor for the seduction of the evil”, threatening to kill the male hero “by consumption or castration”. According to Ravetto (2001), the threat of female sexuality combined with the “fear of male impotence” resulted in discourses, images and narratives that focused on the “moral punishment and humiliation of the femme fatale”.

Ravetto claims that the antifascist climate in the post-war period resulted in a change regarding the way films represented sexuality: from the fascist construction that emphasised the male power and virility, towards one of “excessive feminine” (the fatal woman) or “feminizing degeneration” (effeminate males). The femme fatale continued to represent supreme evil, symbol of decadence, violence, and cruelty, but in the new context, “female degeneration” was equated with the common enemy of the post-war period: Nazism/Fascism. As Ravetto explains, in the equation between Nazism and absolute evil, the focus was shifted from man to woman. According to Ravetto (2001: 72):

Rather than characterize evil as aggressively masculine, they feminize it through sexualization. The threat of the radical evil is, then, reconfigured as a feminine sexual threat. Yet, the menace of the evil is not directed towards women (...), but towards men, who in the post-war period have been stripped of their “masculine models” of identification.

It is not a coincidence that one of the countries in which the model of “feminising the evil” worked best is Italy. Due to its fascist past, Italy could not afford post-war films that would emphasise resistance acts or partisan stories centered on a heroic male character, as in the case of France or the Soviet Union for example (Ravetto 2001). Therefore, the films referred to anti-fascist resistance more generally claiming the heroism of common people or “the plebeian” resistance, while the representation of evil re-purposed the

female figure as an icon of decadence and promiscuity. The tendency toward representing female sexuality as a metaphor for fascist evil was a feature of Italian cinema not only in the post-war period but also in the 1960s and 1970s. Its most acclaimed - and simultaneously criticised- “products” were films such Cavani’s *The Night Porter* (1974), Wertmüller’s *Seven Beauties* (1975) and Pasolini’s *Salò, or the 120 days of Sodom* (1975), all of which deal with sexual deviance, bodily exposure and ambiguous gendered identities in the context of the Holocaust.

Understanding the roots of this tendency to transform eroticised women into symbols of Nazism and, more generally, of evil is important, but does not alone explain the pervasiveness and persistence of such stereotyped and sexist depictions. As media scientist Adam Brown (2013: 85) claims, “more research needs to be undertaken on the issue of how female perpetrators are judged and represented, in film and elsewhere”. Brown’s study attempts to fill in this gap by addressing the representation of female guards. Despite the inherent limitations of a book-chapter and the small number of films analysed (both for cinema and television, American and European), Brown’s study is useful because it acknowledges the eroticised depictions of women guards generally adopted in films, as well as the existence of more complex portrayals that eschew voyeurism, as it is the case of two American films for television *Playing for Time* (1980) and *Out of Ashes* (2002). Interestingly, Brown claims that, in the last ten years, there has been a significant change in the cinematic approach to male perpetrators that implied “moving away from the previously commonplace Nazi stereotypes of indoctrinated, malignant racists and bumbling, inefficient fools” (Brown 2013: 77). Films such as *Before the Fall* (2004), *Downfall* (2004), *Eichmann* (2007) and *Good* (2008) engaged in exploring the human nature of (male) perpetrators. However, while the representation of men as criminals during the Third Reich became more complex and articulated, the same thing cannot be said about the representation of women, who remain frozen in superficial and sadistic caricatures. Brown points out how, in one of the scenes from *Schindler’s List*, in which male and female guards beat Jewish prisoners, men shout their commands in English while the women scream only in German and Polish. The women cannot be

understood, which Brown reads as an example of the tendency towards superficial portrayals of women perpetrators, who in most films are “deprived” of a meaningful voice. According to Brown, most films depict women guards only as “secondary characters who briefly inhabit the background of the frame”, performing acts of brutality and remaining disengaged from the figure of the female perpetrator. As Brown (2013: 79) claims:

Such a trend threatens to demonise and de-humanise female perpetrators, both diminishing their importance and characterizing their experiences as marked only by viciousness.

Brown acknowledges that, despite the superficiality that generally characterises the cinematic portrayal of women as perpetrators, there are two American films which employ more complex depictions and which “eschew voyeurism and refuse to sexualise women complicit in the Holocaust”: *Playing for Time* (1980) and *Out of Ashes* (2002). In the TV film *Playing for Time*, the female guards that feature as minor characters are “clearly differentiated from one another in terms of physical appearance and general disposition” (Brown, 2013: 80). Similarly the TV-movie *Out of Ashes*, based on a true story, offers a more realistic portrayal of the notorious Irma Grese through the eyes of the main protagonist, Gisella Perl, a Jewish-Hungarian doctor prisoner in Auschwitz. While Grese is indeed described as cruel and sexually perverted, her character was “in no way sexualized” (Brown, 2013: 82).

While stressing the paucity of research on the representation of female perpetrators, Brown highlights the need to overcome patriarchal and stereotyped images of women involved in the Nazi persecution. Quoting Weckel (2005), Brown (2013: 85-86) claims that:

More research needs to be undertaken on the issue of how female perpetrators are judged and represented, in film and elsewhere. The voyeuristic eroticization of female body (or its abjection) within the camera’s gaze has intersected strongly with what Weckel describes as ‘fantasies about particularly evil women – women so wicked that they turned the gender order up side down’. Patriarchal perspectives on women’s participation in Nazi genocide, often reliant on the simplistic

concept(ion) of ‘evil’, only detract from attempts to comprehend their behaviour.

Rowland (2013), Ravetto (2001) and Brown (2013) acknowledge and attempt to explain the origins of such limited and superficial depictions of female perpetrators. However, beyond the stereotypical identification of Nazi evil with eroticised women, the subject of female complicity in the Holocaust needs to be studied in more depth and correlated with the representation of victims in Holocaust films. This thesis, and especially Chapter 4, which is dedicated to the representation of female perpetrators in European Holocaust films, attempts to fill in these deficits in current scholarship. Firstly, it moves beyond Brown’s study of female guards by acknowledging and analysing other categories of perpetrators such as administrative and the medical personnel. Secondly, in doing so, it refers to the significantly more comprehensive corpus of films that is European Holocaust cinema.

3.8. Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter reveals a recurrent preoccupation in Holocaust cinema with sexual extremes and gendered stereotypes. Given that sexually related topics are generally eschewed in the broader framework of historical studies on women’s lives during the Holocaust, cinematic interventions provide a significantly different type of discourse about women and Holocaust. Although cinema’s adherence to sexually-defined attributes is clearly problematic from a feminist perspective, some films have at least succeeded in addressing uncomfortable topics such as rape, sexual abuse and prostitution, which have been largely neglected in the historical literature on women and Holocaust. However, most cinematic images, discourses and narratives remain constrained both by the phallogentric grammar of conventional, realist cinema and by the survival of racist gender-stereotyping in the broader culture. Doneson’s (1978; 1992) work, in particular, draws attention to this “feminization of the Jew” in Holocaust films, while Fuchs claims that Jewish women are either idealised through the figure of the asexual “beautiful soul”

(1999a), or framed between the “fatal woman” and the innocent virgin, victim of sexual obsession (2008). Meanwhile, Ravetto (2001), Brown (2013) and Rowland (2013) agree that Nazi women are represented as both eroticised and evil in roles that narratively and symbolically connect perverted sexuality with genocide and, in doing so, serve to sexualise, de-historicise and de-politicise historical events.

The contributions to scholarship by Fuchs, Doneson, Scherr, Kozlovsky-Golan, Rowland and Brown are described in detail, not only because they are among the few studies that address the representation of women in Holocaust films, but also because taken together they exemplify the tendency to read films in terms related almost exclusively to sexuality. The limited number of these studies corroborate also Reading’s (2002) claim of a “gender memory gap”, whereby there is a striking paucity of gender research on the role played by media in transmitting and creating collective memories of the Holocaust. The present study thus aims to address this hitherto under-researched area by exploring the representation of and discourses on women as victims, perpetrators and resisters. This thesis thus overcomes several of the limitations that characterised previous academic research on the topic. Firstly, it presents a more accurate and representative analysis by taking into consideration an exhaustive corpus of films from a variety of national backgrounds within European cinema. It is worth noting here that most of the academic studies discussed in this chapter are confined to a small number of films and often the same film is encountered in more than one article/book chapter. Thus it can be argued that previous research is partial and does not contextualise or confirm its findings in larger bodies of films. Secondly, this thesis adopts a more complex methodological approach that takes the codes and conventions of cinema into consideration. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, it seeks to determine where and how cinematic narratives fit into broader discourses on Holocaust historiography, collective memory and national politics of remembrance. The selection of films for the study’s corpus, the criteria used for their categorisation, the identification of salient themes and character types and the method of data analysis employed are all discussed in more detail in the following chapter on Methodology.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

The fundamental project of feminist film analysis can be said to centre on making visible the invisible.
(Annette Kuhn 1990)

4.1. Introduction

The first two literature review chapters of this thesis on women's lives during the Holocaust as victims, resisters and perpetrators and their cinematic representation emphasise fertile areas of gendered research within Holocaust Studies. The paucity of academic research on the representation of women in Holocaust cinema outlined in Chapter 2 was the initial stimulus for the choice of the topic for my research. I am fascinated by filmmakers' persistence in finding and re-inventing their approaches to the subject of the Holocaust, resulting in an overwhelming body of films which is continuously expanding. What at a superficial level could seem just a chaotic explosion of Holocaust representations, especially when referring to feature films, is rather a highly complex process in which each film and cycle of films is reflecting its own political, historical, social and commercial realities. In other words what ultimately moulds our collective memory of the Holocaust is not a transparent projection of events, but an interwoven product of ideologies, public memories of the Holocaust, market-driven processes, cultural interpretations, and a multitude of other factors. As the historian Lawrence Baron (2005: viii) simply notes, films are "expressions of a particular mind-set, place, and era in history".

Media studies scholar Debbie Ging (2013: 5) explains that cinema should be regarded "not as a barometer of social experience but rather as a constituent *part* of the social

world, and an arena in which discourses are constructed and contested as well as merely represented.” Rejecting the simplistic view of cinema as a mirror of the society in which it has been produced Ging’s claim encourages us to consider the filmic medium as an arena with its own gender regimes. As she explains, there is never a transparent relationship between cinematic narrative and the reality to which it refers, but rather cinema comments upon reality or envisions its possible future state. In order to do so, cinema sometimes offers a range of gendered images that perpetuate dominant discourses, while other times films endeavour to provide counter-discourses by challenging dominant representations. Ging (2013: 5) praises cinema for its “extraordinary capacity for picking up on issues that are unspoken or avoided in other discursive arenas”. This perspective is particularly useful for this research since Holocaust cinema is no exception to this rule. If we consider the discursive nature of both historical writings and memorial narratives (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 3), then we must also think of films as equally valid discursive interventions into the subject of women and the Holocaust. As historian Robert Rosenstone (2012: 185-186) claims, films represent a “new form of historical thinking” which “creates a counter discourse of the past”. Films challenge and interact with historical facts offering “images, sequences, and visual metaphors” that help us to make sense of the past (ibid.: 186). These visual images are not gender-neutral (Reading, 2002: 100), but they variously confirm, reinforce and challenge dominant discourses about women’s lives during the Holocaust. If the films about the Holocaust provide us with a specific gender lens and orientate our perception towards certain discourses rather than others, it is vital to underscore and understand them. Taking stock of all the above concerns, my research aims to explore how women’s experiences have been addressed in European Holocaust cinema, highlighting the aspects that have been exposed, concealed or reconstructed by the filmic medium.

The particularity of this thesis is that it emerges at the crossroads between four main areas of scholarship: Film Studies, Gender Studies, Holocaust Studies and Perpetrator Studies, each one with its theoretical background that needs to be taken into account. The result is a very broad, interdisciplinary field that encompasses textual analysis, filmic discourse,

gender, and historical data, all in reference to a corpus of 310 feature films from all corners of Europe. While the focus is on the analysis of the film as a text, attention is also paid as well to the social context in which the films emerge and to the background of the filmmaker. In examining the representation of the Holocaust, other elements might also become relevant such as the involvement of the film producing country in the war (as a perpetrator, collaborator, bystander, neutral, allied, or occupied nation), relevant personal experiences of the filmmaker in relation to the Nazi persecution, censorship policies dictated by various post-war regimes, political ideologies and national collective memory of the Holocaust. Therefore the challenge is to embrace all these aspects without losing depth and detailed attention to each one of the significant films within the corpus I am considering.

The following sections explain which films fall under the umbrella of “Holocaust cinema”, why the research is limited to European feature films, the process of selection of the films to be taken into consideration, the main theoretical concerns, the categorisation process of cinematic women, and finally some notes on the use of specific terminology.

4.2. Defining Holocaust Cinema

Over the last decade or so, nearly every year has witnessed the publication of at least one book about Holocaust films analysed from different perspectives, such national productions (Doneson 2002; Picart and Frank 2006; Millicent 2007; Lichtner 2008; Perra 2010; Haltof 2011; Ferzina 2012; Hicks 2012; Gershenson 2013; Pakier 2013), more general studies on Holocaust film (Davies 2000; Insdorf 2003; Baron 2005; Haggith and Newman 2005; Baron 2006; Bathrick, Prager and Richardson 2008; Frodon 2010; Kerner 2011), two dictionaries (Picart 2004; Reimer and Reimer 2012), studies that include but go beyond the filmic medium (Zelizer 2001; Raphael 2003; Lentin 2004; Boswell 2012; Bangert, Gordon and Saxton 2013), and many others on specific topics such as trauma, ethics and reception studies (Hirsch 2004; Van der Knapp 2006; Ginsberg 2007; Saxton

2008; Brodie 2008; Levine Ginsparg 2010; Pollock and Silverman 2011; Moldovan 2012; Adams and Vice 2013). It is important to note that this plethora of publications includes only the English language publications that reach a greater international public, but the total number of books is surely much higher. Considering that there were few more than a handful of publications on Holocaust films before the 2000s (Avisar 1980; Doneson, 1987; Avisar, 1988; Insdorf, 1989; Colombat, 1993; LaCapra, 1994; Loshitzky, 1997), this sudden interest mirrors the joint effect of two factors. On the one hand it reflects the progressive increase in the number of films on the Holocaust annually produced globally; the Yad Vashem Institute⁹ in Jerusalem lists 143 media products¹⁰ made in the year 2000, 460 in 2005, and 659 between 2010 and 2012. The numbers are striking if one considers that in 1980 only 45 media products were made and in 1990 there were 94 made. On the other hand, the surge of research on Holocaust films is due also to the acknowledgement of a certain maturity in the filmic representation of the Holocaust marked by watershed productions such as *Schindler's List* (1993) in the United States and *Life is Beautiful* (1997) in Europe.

In some of the books named above, scholars have attempted to define and delimit Holocaust cinema. What emerges is a considerable lack of consensus among scholars, whereby the term “Holocaust film” seems to eschew inflexible classifications the more the scholars endeavour to provide an exact definition. Judith Doneson (2002: 6) claims that the term refers to all filmic productions “that reflect what historian Raul Hilberg [1961] describes as a step-by-step historical process, beginning with the laws of April 1933, which removed the Jews from the civil services in Germany, and ending in 1945, when the last concentration camps were liberated and the war ended”. Further she argues that in a broader interpretation any film “influenced by the Holocaust” fits in the same category. Similarly, for Annette Insdorf (2003) the definition of Holocaust films is underpinned by the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust. She supports this statement by asserting that “unlike their fellow victims of the Nazis – such as political opponents, Gypsies, and homosexuals – Jews were stripped not only of life and freedom, but of an entire culture that flourished throughout Eastern Europe in the early thirties” (Insdorf,

2003: xvi). Nevertheless, Insdorf includes in her book films such as *High Street* (1976), which focuses on the story of a non-Jewish woman who loses her sanity after her Jewish husband is taken away by the police and never returned. The narrative is only tangential to the Jewish persecution as a whole, and the film's inclusion in her sample indicates a more extended category compared to rigid definitions.

Media studies scholar Aaron Kerner (2011) argues for the necessity of flexible boundaries when considering the notion of "Holocaust film". Interestingly, although Kerner (2011: 3) considers the Holocaust as a "uniquely Jewish event," he challenges overly rigid delineations by highlighting the impossibility of a clear-cut definition. For Kerner it is difficult to discern whether the Holocaust applies only to death camps or if it includes labour camps (therefore extending victimhood to political prisoners), mobile killing units (Einsatzgruppen), which started to function as early as 1942 and the establishment of the ghettos. Moreover, Kerner acknowledges that although Holocaust and Nazism are two distinct topics, it is impossible "to pry one from the other" as often films about the Holocaust cannot avoid portraying its social, political and cultural context.

On an even wider level, the definition provided by the historian Lawrence Baron (2005) extends the category of Holocaust films beyond Jewish specificity of the event. In his vision, the similarities between the filmic depiction of different categories of victims justify their collective inclusion under the umbrella of Holocaust cinema. As Baron (2005: 12) explains:

I consider any group that experienced discrimination, incarceration, liquidation, or sterilization because it supposedly posed a biological, cultural, political, or social threat to the Aryan race as victimized by Nazism. Without broaching the whole debate whether the Jewish genocide was unique, I perceive more similarities than differences in cinematic depictions of the eugenics and euthanasia programs, the imprisonment and torment of homosexuals in concentration camps, the liquidation of gypsies in death camps, and the "extermination" of European Jewry by gassing, mass shooting, starvation, and overwork. (...) I also broaden the spectrum of what is deemed Holocaust film to

include movies that depict the postwar displacement and immigration of groups the Germans and their allies victimized on ideological and racial grounds. Films featuring the capture, trial, and punishment of the perpetrators of wartime atrocities also belong to this category. Another type of Holocaust film explores the continuing impact of the event on the collective memory of states like France, Germany, Israel, Poland, and other nations directly or indirectly affected by Nazi crimes against humanity. Character studies of how the Holocaust shaped the personalities and values of perpetrators, survivors, and their children fall under the rubric of Holocaust cinema.

Baron's all-inclusive definition is the one that reflects most closely the approach in this thesis. The only category omitted here from Baron's long but extremely useful definition is films about Neo-Nazis, which would expand too much what is already a broad canvas for my research. As Chapter 2 and 3 have highlighted, this study focuses on the cinematic portrayal of female perpetrators, resisters and victims (both Jewish and non-Jewish). Such a wide choice is underpinned by Joan Ringelheim's (1990: 142-143) contention that a complete picture of the Holocaust cannot be achieved without taking into consideration the intertwined relationship between Jewish and non-Jewish victims and their perpetrators. Under the umbrella of Holocaust cinema I include, therefore, as is presented in detail in the next section, films that portray explicitly the persecution of Jews, Gypsies and, homosexuals and other categories, or that discuss the implicit effects of the Nazi persecution on any of these categories of victims. Films that deal with the roots of the Holocaust as well as with its aftermath are included for their potential to illuminate our understanding of such dreadful events. Films about perpetrators also have an important place in this research, whether they are portrayed in relation to victims or taken out of the main context for their crimes in order to focus on their personality, as it is the case in *Max* (2002) and *Downfall* (2004). Included in this research are productions that focus on survivors and their connection to memory, be it second or even third generation, if the film narrative affords direct knowledge on the Holocaust. An illustrative example here is *Louba's Ghosts* (2001), which addresses how the daughter of a survivor relates to the persecution suffered by her parents. The definition employed here also includes films that illuminate our understanding of resistance activities - both Jewish and non-Jewish - in relation to the Holocaust. Films that do not fit this category, such as *Into the White* (2012)

by Petter Næss or *Betrayal* (2009) by Håkon Gundersen, refer exclusively to patriotic acts of resistance against the Germans during the war, on behalf of the occupied countries or the allied forces, but do not mention the Holocaust. This encompassing definition informs the selection criteria and the final form of the corpus used in this study.

4.3. Selection Criteria for Film Corpus

The corpus selected for this research contains films that match three concurrent criteria: they are feature films, they are intended primarily for the big screen¹¹, and they are produced in Europe (co-productions included). The decision to include only feature films is justified by two main reasons. Firstly, although feature films are often discredited and criticised by historians, they help the modern audience to connect with remote events in the past and to transform history into a lesson grounded in the present. For sensitive topics such as the Holocaust, by subjecting the facts to artistic imagination, often films find a way to narrate stories that otherwise would be hard if not impossible to tell. Taking stock of Robert Rosenstone's (1995) claim, Lawrence Baron (2005: 6) argues that:

Even though feature films based on historical events simplify their subject matter and alter or invent characters and incidents to make for a more coherent and dramatic plotline, they are not inherently “poor history” but rather an alternative form of history that informs us about the past through different means.

Secondly, the choice of limiting the research to feature films is motivated by the overwhelming number of documentaries about the Holocaust that have been made in the nearly seventy years since the end of the Second World War. Lynne Fallwell and Robert Weiner (2011: 452) acknowledge the existence of “literally thousands of Holocaust documentaries”, mostly produced by the countries where the events unfolded (Germany, Poland, France) or where the survivors settled (United States, Canada, Israel, England), but also in places disconnected to the event such as China, Japan and Tibet. For the purpose of this research, documentaries would pose not only the problem of addressing

an impossibly large number of films, but also difficulties in sourcing them for viewing. Moreover, the different stylistic approaches to the subject of Holocaust in documentary compared to feature film could be problematic in analysing the films as a coherent group.

The focus on films for the big screen, as the second selection criterion, is justified by a further necessity of this research to limit the number of films taken into consideration. Nevertheless, a clear-cut distinction between films for cinema and those made for television raises significant challenges due to funding and distribution mechanisms as some of the texts chosen for analysis in this research are co-productions between national televisions and independent producers. While the vast majority are films for theatrical distribution, the corpus necessarily includes some films made for television. This inclusion is justified on the basis that they are important texts about the Holocaust, they reached large audiences and most of them were screened at film festivals. Moreover, given changing patterns of film consumption from movie theatre to DVD, internet downloads and mobile platforms, the distinction between films for cinema and films for television is increasingly blurred (Creeber, 2002). A case-point is the film *Spring of Life* (2000) a co-production between Czech Television and independent producer Happy Celluloid. *Spring of Life* premiered at the Berlin Film Festival, has been screened in several other film festivals and received four awards¹². Also its visual grammar, length and aesthetic are identical to films for the big screen, therefore is included in my corpus of films. Generally though, films made for television are the exception rather than the rule within this corpus.

The third general criterion for selection relates to the films' origin. The decision to consider only European films (co-productions included) is due mainly to historical reasons. According to Claudio Gaetani (2006: 72), because the United States never experienced the Holocaust first-hand but wanted to make it a lesson for its own people, Hollywood's representation of the tragedy is based either on fictional scripts or, when inspired by real stories, is subjected to a "mellower" effect. Due to its proximity to the event, European cinema instead confronts the Holocaust more directly and is more

cognizant of the need to address the full extent of the atrocities. In a similar vein, although in a much more critical tone, Annette Insdorf (2003) highlights the “cautiousness” of American cinema in depicting the Holocaust and its inability to engage with the subject with the same sharp focus as the European films. As Insdorf (2003: 22) claims:

The cautiousness of the American film and television industry is also reflected in the fact that almost all its movies dealing with the Holocaust are adapted from another medium –successful plays (*The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Cabaret*) or novels (*Exodus*, *Ship of Fools*, *Marathon Man*, *Julia*, *The Boys from Brazil*, *Sophie’s Choice*). (...) It seems, therefore, that Hollywood will take a chance on films about the Holocaust only after the material has proven its commercial potential in another medium. And even then, the films merely touch upon the historical horror rather than grasp it. The American cinema often uses Nazi images to evoke instant terror or tears, whereas many European films use the cinematic medium as an instrument to probe responsibility. Perhaps the cinema of a country that has never experienced occupation cannot plumb into the depths of the Holocaust experience. Or – more likely – perhaps the commercial imperatives of Hollywood and the networks tend to preempt the possibilities for truthful representation.

Ilan Avisar, one of the first scholars to write about Holocaust cinema, is in broad agreement with Insdorf in this respect. According to Avisar (1988: 132-133):

Unlike the personal drives of west and east European filmmakers, who deal with the Holocaust in order to explore and express their own national traumas (many continental Holocaust movies are indeed based on autobiographical experiences of the film directors and their screenwriters), the American interest in the subject is motivated by other considerations which are not necessarily rooted in a genuine concern with the disturbing truth of the historical tragedy.

At the other end of the spectrum, Baron (2005) strongly contradicts Avisar and Insdorf, arguing that the United States were part of the Allied forces against Germany and therefore the American army witnessed the staggering images of the liberation of concentration camps throughout Europe. According to Baron, the Holocaust was imprinted on the American conscience by magazine photographs and newsreel footage

published in the immediate aftermath of the war and by the numerous films made between 1945 and 1960. He argues that “even before blockbusters like *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Exodus*, and *Judgement of Nuremberg*, attracted mass audiences, Americans heard about the Final Solution from Jewish inmates in the displaced persons camps and the 140,000 Jewish survivors who settled in the United States” (Baron, 2005: 10). Moreover, Baron claims that over the past two decades the film industry witnessed significant changes with the resurgence of independent filmmakers, the worldwide distribution of films and the globalization of film production, which encouraged the flow of actors, filmmakers and crews between Hollywood and other national producers.

In light of the divergent comments presented above, it is important to clarify that my own position lies somewhere between these two extremes. I do not totally share Insdorf’s criticism of the American film industry which, despite its flaws, has given rise to landmark productions that shaped the international image of the Holocaust, such as *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), *The Pawnbroker* (1965), *Sophie’s Choice* (1982), *Schindler’s List* (1993) and the acclaimed television miniseries *Holocaust: The Story of the Family Weiss* (1978). Also, both European and American cinemas have changed considerably in the 70 years since the Holocaust occurred so broad generalisations are no longer applicable. European films haven’t been spared from commercial and political imperatives, and eulogising one cinematic industry by detracting from another does not help our understanding of the representation of the Holocaust. Nor do I concur with Baron either, since his arguments demonstrate only the exposure of the American public to the subject of Holocaust immediately after the war. In Europe by contrast, there was significantly more than “exposure” to the Holocaust, as the ravaging consequences of the war left indelible signs on its people and places. This widespread, first-hand experience is reflected in a greater number of films made in Europe than anywhere else. According to the database of Yad Vashem 221 feature films have been made about the Holocaust in the United States since the war, whereas in Germany alone 314 films have been released over the same period of time¹³. Also, European cinema - unlike any other - boasts an impressive number of filmmakers and screenwriters who survived the Nazi persecution or

are children of survivors, such as Wanda Jakubowska, Kurt Maetzig, Artur Brauner, Aleksander Ford, Alfréd Radok, Andrzej Munk, Arnošt Lustig, István Szabó, Juraj Herz, Lena Einhorn, Marceline Loridans-Ivens, Roman Polanski and Agnieszka Holland, to name just a few. It seems plausible that the cinematic output of filmmakers who experienced persecution first-hand or whose close family had been affected by it, would offer more insightful and gripping accounts of the Holocaust. On a similar note, literary scholar Lillian Kremer acknowledges significant differences between Holocaust novels of European and American writers which she explains as a consequence of the proximity to the event. As Kremer (1999: 23) claims:

Perhaps because the Europeans experienced the moral conflicts of survival, they explore the ambiguities and ethical dilemmas confronted by victims more penetratingly than do Americans. (...) Spared the moral dilemmas the Europeans faced, the American writers are reluctant to criticize the victims as fellow victims themselves have. The American-born writers are less likely to portray the oppressed as morally flawed or as tormented by the quandary of self preservation at the expense of another.

Obviously American cinema is not the only one to have made films about the Holocaust, but it is clearly the main contender to European cinema. It is also important to point out here that Israeli cinema has been omitted because “the Shoah is memorised and commemorated differently in Israel than anywhere else due to the special relationship between the Israeli state, the Jewish diaspora and the Shoah¹⁴” (Lentin, 2000b: 122). According to sociologist Ronit Lentin (ibid.: 122-124), the process of nation building of the state of Israel was based on the negation of the diasporic Jew and thus of the Holocaust. The contrast between the weak diasporic Jew and the strong Israeli state, impacted upon the commemoration of the Holocaust, which “was employed to strengthen and encourage Israeli ideologies and self-image” (ibid.: 124). Due to its particular context and sensitive issues related to it, Israeli cinema needs to be studied separately. It is very significant that the film database of Yad Vashem lists only 51 films exclusively or in co-production with Israel that have been released over seven decades.

Last but not least, it is important to acknowledge that no study to date has taken into consideration the entire corpus of European films about the Holocaust, while there are publications dedicated exclusively to American Holocaust films (Doneson 2002; Picart and Frank 2006). This research attempts therefore to do justice to the long tradition of European cinema and to analyse its multifaceted and complicated relation to the Holocaust, from an original perspective: the representation of women. However, it would be nearly impossible to set rigid boundaries to the corpus of films because of the many co-productions between European and non-Continental cinemas. A perfect example here is the film *The Reader* (2008), considered by many authors a Hollywood film. However, *The Reader* is a co-production between the United States and Germany, with the script based on the German novel *Der Vorleser* by Bernhard Schlink, and directed by British-schooled filmmaker Stephen Daldry. Taking into consideration all these elements, the film can be considered both an American and European product, although the balance could easily lean towards the European side.

4.4. Compiling the Corpus of Films to Be Considered

Defining with accuracy the selection criteria for the corpus of films represents an important step for this research, yet after completing it, the whole work of building the film corpus is only about to begin. Considering that no other study attempted to analyse the entire corpus of Holocaust films made in Europe, there was no pre-made list on which I could rely. The filmographies listed at the end of more general studies such as Avisar 1988, Insdorf 2003, Baron, 2005, Haggith and Newman, 2005, Haltof 2011, Kerner 2011, offered a starting point in compiling the database. In most cases these books have a rather elaborate list of films, including documentaries, films made for television, productions from a wide span of countries both European and non-European. Despite the fact that none of these lists was exhaustive regarding European cinema and generally missed many of the films that would be later included in my filmography, they proved to be quite useful in reaching a first draft of my corpus. Also, in this process I have used other

sources such as Internet Movie Database (IMDB) which offers a list of 653 films under the category “Holocaust”¹⁵ which includes, along with the films that would match my three criteria, several other short films, documentaries, television films and animation. A great number of films were also produced outside Europe, many in the United States, but some others in Canada, Israel, New Zealand and even in Japan.

After compiling a thorough list from all the possible sources, I cross-checked my draft with the latest dictionary of Holocaust cinema (Reimer and Reimer, 2012) and the filmographies offered on their websites by two reputable institutions of Holocaust research: the World Centre for Research, Education, Documentation and Commemoration of Yad Vashem¹⁶ in Jerusalem and the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt. The *Historical Dictionary of Holocaust Cinema* by Robert C. Reimer and Carol J. Reimer, the latest of its kind, lists nearly 500 films spanning 71 years (between 1940 and 2011). Nevertheless, Reimer and Reimer’s list is hardly exhaustive, as there are significant European films about the Holocaust missing, such as *Malou* (1981), *Louba’s Ghosts* (2001), *Unfair Competition* (2001), *Monsieur Batignole* (2002), *Nina’s Journey* (2005), *A Secret* (2007), *Good* (2008), *Army of Saviours* (2009), among others.

An important reference point in this research is the website of Yad Vashem Institute, especially its Visual Center that offers a rich online film database. Having as its main objective “to create the world’s leading digital film library of Holocaust cinema”, the Yad Vashem’s Visual Center boasts a catalogue of more than 5,700 titles and over 10,000 survivor testimonies in digital format¹⁷. It is significant that the collection is not limited to the testimonies from Jewish survivors, but contains also those of Roma and Sinti, Jehovah’s Witnesses and homosexual survivors. Similarly the filmic database is very inclusive, listing not only productions directly related to the Holocaust, but also films about other genocides, such as *The Killing Fields* (1984) on the Cambodian genocide, and *Sometimes in April* (2005) on the Rwandan genocide. Also many of the films listed in the online database of Yad Vashem belong to the broader category of “war films”, narrating romantic or action dramas that are set during the Second World War, but not directly

related to the Holocaust. In this latter category are included *Into the White* (2012), *This Life* (2012), *15 Lads* (2011), *Eve* (2009), *Betrayal* (2009) and *Flame and Citron* (2008), to name just a few recent ones. These films and other similar ones that better fit the category of “war films” than “Holocaust cinema” are not included in the filmography. It is important to highlight that despite its impressive collection of films, Yad Vashem’s database does not list some very important European Holocaust films, such as *Conspiracy of Hearts* (1960) by Ralph Thomas, *Enclosure* (1961) by Armand Gatti, *Samson* (1961) by Andrzej Wajda, *The Condemned of Altona* (1962) by Vittorio de Sica, *The Hour of the Truth* (1962) by Henri Calef, *Diamonds of the Night* (1964) by Jan Němec, *The Fifth Rider is Fear* (1965) by Zbyněk Brynych, *Sandra* (1965) by Luchino Visconti, *We’ll Go Into Town* (1966) by Nelo Risi, *The Square of Saint Elisabeth* (1966) by Vladimír Bahna and *The Fed One* (1970) by Vatroslav Mimica.

The “Cinematography of the Holocaust” provided by the Fritz Bauer Institut¹⁸ in Frankfurt makes reference to 1,792 films including short films, documentaries, feature films, newsreels etc. I cross-checked my corpus of films with the entries on the Fritz Bauer Institut database because, compared to the all-inclusive definition of Holocaust films provided by Yad Vashem, their category seems to adhere more closely to the subject of the Holocaust. Unfortunately, however because their list focuses on films in English, it fails to acknowledge some of the landmark Holocaust films produced in Europe, such as *Border Street* (1948), *Stars* (1959), *Kapo* (1960), *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (1960), *Samson* (1961), *The Gold of Rome* (1961), *The Shop on Main Street* (1965), *Cremator* (1969), *Lacombe, Lucien* (1976), *Black Thursday* (1974), *David* (1979), *Job’s Revolt* (1983), *Good Evening, Mr. Wallenberg* (1990), *Look to the Sky* (1993) and even the internationally acclaimed *Life is Beautiful* (1997).

Having cross-checked with these three major sources, the final corpus on European Holocaust cinema contains 310 titles, including co-productions. It is worth noting this entire process because the mapping of these films constitutes an ambitious and useful empirical exercise in itself. This exhaustive list is an important scholarly resource and as

such is an added bonus to the research. However, access all these films for viewing was more challenging than initially thought. Some of them are not available anymore, others are hard to obtain and very costly. Moreover, as films in Europe are often fragmented between different national languages, some of them never made it outside their own national borders or have circulated in very few countries, which further limits the subtitles available for these productions. The fact that I speak six languages has helped me in this process, but in spite of this it was impossible to obtain and view all the films. Despite the confined distribution of many films, coupled with my own limited financial resources and the inevitable language barriers (especially for some of the films in Polish, Hungarian, and Czech), I have managed to gain access to 90% of the films listed in my corpus. It is important to mention that the remaining 10% of films that were physically unavailable have not been completely left out. Internet Movie Database has proven to be a very useful tool, since the information it provides for most of these films (cast, synopsis, and reviews) helped me to understand whether or not they had any female characters of interest for my research.

Most importantly, this study aims to determine what kind of images of women European Holocaust cinema promotes. The portrayals which are most likely to prevail in the collective memory are those that reached a widest audience. In light of this objective, films that had a limited distribution turn out to be somewhat irrelevant in the overall goal of this research. Therefore, exploring the missing 10% of films with the help of Internet Movie Database has an informative purpose for a more comprehensive picture, but is neither crucial nor decisive.

4.5 Textual Analysis and Filmic Discourses on Women

Once the corpus of films was identified, the research proceeded towards examining the cinematic representation of women as victims, perpetrators, and resisters. I chose the three categories of female characters for a number of reasons. According to the renowned

historian Raul Hilberg (1992: ix) the Holocaust was experienced by three distinct groups of people: perpetrators, victims and bystanders. As he claims: “Each saw what happened from its own, special perspective, and each harboured a separate set of attitudes and reactions.” While there is no doubt about including the first two categories in my research, however the third one is highly problematic. Firstly, Hilberg includes as “bystanders” several groups spanning from the nations in Hitler’s Europe and the Allied countries, to individual rescuers who got involved in helping the victims. In my opinion this latter group does not fit very well into the category of “bystanders” which by definition choose to stand-by and therefore not to get involved. Within Hilberg’s three categories there is not much room for the people who opposed the regime or resisted its policies. Moreover, from a cinematic point of view, “bystanders” would generally be included in an undistinguishable mass of un-credited characters and therefore would not have much relevance for analysis. By contrast, there are several films that focus on the acts of resistance of organised groups or individuals, both Jewish and non-Jewish. These films often place at the centre of their stories a heroic character whose portrayal is well defined. I therefore chose as my third category not Hilberg’s group of “bystanders” but the people involved in the resistance and rescue activities. This category is particularly significant for this research because “as a subject, women and the Holocaust poses a challenge to traditional definitions of heroism and resistance” (Baer and Goldenberg, 2003: xxiv). This study focuses, therefore, on examining the representation of women in Holocaust films according to these three categories: perpetrators, victims and resisters. In relation to the category of victims, this research adopts an inclusive approach and explores the discourses and cinematic representation of both Jewish and non-Jewish victims. Recent studies on other categories of female victims such as lesbians (Schoppmann 1996; Giles 2011) and Gypsy women (Milton 2003) play an important role in this research and form much of the bedrock upon which the current analysis builds. However, given the broad canvas of female profiles to be analysed and the limitations inherent in a doctoral thesis, some categories had to be omitted, such as prisoners of war and political prisoners. The omission of these two categories is justified also by the fact

that they are often encountered during wars or dictatorial regimes, and are not necessarily directly related to the politics of extermination set in place by the Nazis.

Significantly, the purpose is not to create a general survey of European Holocaust films and the women represented in them, but to provide an in-depth analysis of the female figures on the basis of their roles and discursive construction by the filmic text. The research employs qualitative textual analysis with a special interest in its variants related to feminist film theory aiming “to expose underlying and possibly conflicting or contradictory meanings of the film” (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012: 425). While the focus will be on the analysis of the film as a text, attention will also be paid to the social context in which the film emerged, possible ideologies related to the culture and society where the film was made, the background of the filmmaker and critical reception of the films. The theoretical framework for the research is provided by some of the landmark feminist theories: Laura Mulvey’s (1988) approach on cinema’s visual pleasure and its relation to the female body, Pam Cook’s (1988) theories on the role and persistent use of female stereotypes in films, Barbara Creed’s (1993) theories on the monstrous-feminine and also Kaja Silverman’s (1988) and Mary Ann Doane’s (1985) studies on the use of the female voice in the cinema.

Last but not least, a very significant theoretical background will be provided by Annette Kuhn’s (1990) theories on film, feminism and representation. According to Kuhn, the film analysis must take into consideration not only how women are represented in terms of explicit visual images and roles in the film narrative, but also how they are not represented, highlighting the absences in the filmic text. As Kuhn (1990: 73) claims, feminist film analysis aims towards:

drawing attention to certain matters which often go unnoticed in these films. These matters are centred not only around presences – the explicit ways in which women are represented, the kinds of images, roles constructed by films – but also around absences – the ways in which women do not appear at all or are in certain ways not represented in films. Given the argument that in a sexist society both presences and absences may not be immediately discernible to the ordinary spectator, if only because certain representations appear to be quite ordinary and obvious,

then the fundamental project of feminist film analysis can be said to centre on making visible the invisible.

In order to highlight significant absences in cinema, this research compares the representation of women with their male counterparts. However, the comparison is feasible only in the case of perpetrators and rescuers, due to the limited number of characters in these two categories. The large number of male victims renders such analysis impossible and could in itself merit a doctoral thesis.

Since this research considers only fictional texts, the question of historical accuracy and of how much these films represent what women actually lived is not what is at stake. Instead I shall focus on the filmic discourses on women, emphasising to what extent these discourses coincide with, re-frame, reinforce or veil the Holocaust-related experiences of women. The comparison will not be therefore directly between cinematic and real women, but rather between their filmic representation and the historical knowledge prevailing at the time when the film was made. According to Pierre Sorlin (2001: 45), many books on the filmic representation of history do nothing more than comparing the written description of historical events with their cinematic portrayal. As he claims such an approach is ineffective, as films need to be compared with “the version of history given at the time.” Sorlin’s comment is very useful as it points towards the necessity of taking into account the context in which the films emerged and the level of historical knowledge at a specific time. For a study on the Holocaust as this one, it would be therefore significant to consider during the analysis the following set of questions: To what extent did the developments on historical research on the Holocaust influence its filmic representation? What was the impact of the Nazi trials on the cinematic depiction of the Holocaust? What was the image of the Jew before the “Holocaust” had its name? How the collective memory of the Holocaust in a certain country exerted influence over its cinematic representations?

These questions highlight the importance of tracing the relationship between the evolution of Holocaust historiography and its impact on the cinematic depiction of the

event. The same goes for the issue of gender in relation to both the filmic representation and the Holocaust research: it is crucial to acknowledge the seminal changes in the way we relate to gender that took place during the arc of time between the Second World War and the present. What role did the feminist revolution and the emergence Feminist film theories play on the representation of women in Holocaust films? How did the emergence of gendered research on the Holocaust shape the filmic discourses on the event? How and why does the representation of women differ in the 21st century compared to the immediate post-war period?

By taking into account all these questions, this study acknowledges that the filmic representation of the Holocaust in general, and of women's experiences as part of it, is shaped over time by a multiplicity of factors. Also the research does recognise the importance of considering the discourses formulated by Holocaust films as part of a broader set of concerns existing at national and global level in a certain period of time. Interestingly, scholars noticed that Holocaust films are grounded in history, but also closely connected to present-time discourses. Zoë Vania Waxman (2006: 151) claims that "the function of collective memory is not to focus on the past in order to find out more about the Holocaust, but to use the past to inform and meet present concerns." On a similar vein, Matthew Boswell (2012: 4) argues that not all representations of the Holocaust are driven by the desire to illuminate the tragic event, but they are rather motivated by the need to bring "knowledge and revelation in respect to our own lives and societies." As the Holocaust becomes widely recognised as a modern "paradigm for evil" (Bauer, 2001: x-xi; Baron, 2005: 10) and a platform for addressing present concerns, it integrates within a broader ongoing media discourses on gender, racism, bigotry, power.

As is already evident in the literature review on women's representation in Holocaust cinema (Chapter 3), stereotypes play an important role in the portrayal of and discourses about women. It is important, therefore, to provide a theoretical grounding to the concept of "stereotype" and to explain how it works in cinema. Quoting O'Sullivan et al (1994:

299-300), Pieter Jacobus Fourie (2007: 248) provides the following definition to the concept of stereotype:

The social classification of particular groups and people as often highly simplified and generalised signs, which implicitly or explicitly represent a set of values, judgements and assumptions concerning their behaviour, characteristics or history.

According to Fourie (ibid.: 249-252), stereotypes are linked with and can be explained by two main theories. Firstly, they draw upon Claude Lèvi-Strauss's (1978) theory of binary oppositions, which claims that people make sense of the world in terms of oppositions and differences between people and groups such as good versus bad, right versus wrong etc. Fourie claims that, based on Lèvi-Strauss's theory, stereotypes "are the result of emphasising opposites". Secondly, stereotypes also connect with Roland Barthes's (1977) theory of social myths, which are stories without foundation, transmitted from one generation to another to determine which our values are. Importantly, as Fourie (ibid.: 256) argues, "all groups tend to strengthen their myths about other groups by thinking and responding to them in terms of stereotypes". Fourie further explains that all stereotypes are reductive, they depend of simplification and generalisations, acting as shorthand labels to characterise particular groups and identities. For example, all Jews are considered to be scheming, women are posited as inferior to men and black people are characterised as lazy. Despite their fictitious origins, stereotypes have "very real and mainly negative social consequences for the group and the individual as part of the stereotyped group" (Fourie, 2007: 256-257). Stereotypes are highly problematic because of the way they conceive the relationship between negative traits and discrimination. While stereotypes focus on a feature and expand it, they flag it as the most important characteristic in defining a particular group. The result, as Fourie (ibid.: 257) explains, is a "social reality that creates the impression that the stereotypes are accurate all along" and which can further persuade the member of the stereotyped group to identify with and assume the stereotype. Moreover, "because stereotypes form part of the social and psychological make-up of a society", any form of resistance to them seems "abnormal" and "an assault on security".

Significantly, Rayner, Wall and Kruger (2004: 66) argue that, “the unfortunate side effect” of stereotyping is “to dehumanise people” by denying them the individual complexity. Furthermore, stereotypes can be used to “marginalise and devalue the worth of whole groups of people” and to transform them as a “scapegoat for broader ills within a society” (ibid.: 67). Thus, rather than acknowledging that certain clichéd images and features of groups are the result of discrimination, stereotypes encourage and normalise sexism, racism and homophobia. Rayner, Wall and Kruger (ibid.) claim that the use of stereotypical representations in the media reflects the “power relations within society” by subordinating certain groups to others. They maintain that this process often involves not only categorisation but also (negative) evaluation of the group in question “by suggesting that certain groups of people are intellectually challenged or more prone to criminal activity than the rest of the population”. Rayner, Wall and Kruger also highlight the under-representation in the media of people from various minorities and the fact that, when they are eventually portrayed, their presence is often confined to “mere tokenism”. Thus, for example, people with disabilities are highly absent in the media, while their limited representations are generally framed in a particularly negative way as “evil and dangerous people intent on causing harm to able-bodied people” (ibid: 68).

According to Richard Dyer (1990: 386), the concept of stereotype has been central to feminist theory and its critiques of dominant cinema. For Dyer, “stereotypes provide a lot of information very economically” and “rely on complex knowledge about the ordering of social relations to which they refer”. In relation to stereotypes in cinema, they “draw on and feed into our ‘knowledge’ of stereotypes in other areas”. Dyer also challenges the idea that stereotypes are highly static, by claiming that their meanings are “determined by the particular historical moment of their use”. He contends that feminist readings of films have highlighted that, while male stereotypes “became increasingly differentiated and individuated”, female characters remained fixed in “shallow stereotypes reflecting the ideology of femininity as eternal and unchanging”. In a similar vein, Pam Cook (1988: 53) claims that in cinema history “male stereotypes changed much more rapidly than

female stereotypes”. This analysis is thus keenly aware of the problems inherent in female stereotypes and, whenever possible, compares them with male ones.

In order to outline the gendered discourses made by European Holocaust cinema throughout its nearly seventy years of existence, this research shall attempt to group the films on recurrent images and key themes, tracking an evolution of the filmic representation of women and identifying specific concerns that films foreground in different periods of time. The analysis of the cinematic representation of female victims, perpetrators, and resisters will be guided by a specific objective which is different for each one of the three categories. With regards to women as victims, the thesis aims to discover how films mediate the understanding of the response of victims to the Holocaust and to what extent they articulate personal gendered-differentiated perspectives on the events. Regarding the involvement of women as perpetrators, the research aims to underpin the differences in portraying the contribution of women and men to the genocide and to explore to what extent the portrayal of Nazi women is connected with sexist stereotypes. And finally, regarding the female resistance, the goal is to examine whether the cinematic image departs from patriarchal representations of male-armed resistance, how the power relations male-female are represented in the film narrative and what is the role of heroic women in the collective memories of different nations.

Given the limited dimensions inherent to a PhD thesis and the huge corpus of films, it is nearly impossible to analyse in detail each film that proves to be relevant to the topic. Rather I shall focus therefore on certain films more than others, based on their relevance to each one of the three categories to be analysed, to the theoretical topics being discussed, and also to the international recognition the films have achieved.

4.6. Notes on Terminology

Finally, I shall explain my preference for the word *Holocaust* instead of *Shoah*, *Judeocide* and others¹⁹ that have been used in different contexts by various scholars. The Yad Vashem Institute explains the correspondence between the terms *Shoah* and *Holocaust*, both intended as “the sum total of all anti-Jewish actions carried out by the Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945.” Nevertheless it recognises an inclusive use of the term *Holocaust* among scholars and for this reason it advocates the use of the word *Shoah*²⁰:

The biblical word *Shoah* (which has been used to mean “destruction” since the Middle Ages) became the standard Hebrew term for the murder of European Jewry as early as the early 1940s. The word *Holocaust*, which came into use in the 1950s as the corresponding term, originally meant a sacrifice burnt entirely on the altar. (...) Many understand *Holocaust* as a general term for the crimes and horrors perpetrated by the Nazis; others go even farther and use it to encompass other acts of mass murder as well. Consequently, we consider it important to use the Hebrew word *Shoah* with regard to the murder of and persecution of European Jewry in other languages as well.

According to Walter Laqueur (2001: xiii), while the term *Shoah* is preferred in Israel and increasingly adopted in many European countries, the term *Holocaust* is “deeply rooted” in the English-speaking world and therefore “it is impractical to deviate from it”. Yet my choice for the word Holocaust is motivated not only for reasons of practicality but also because of its flexibility and inclusiveness. It is interesting to note the diversity of approaches regarding the term Holocaust among scholars, especially in interdisciplinary studies: some authors refer and stick exclusively to the Jewish tragedy (Avisar, 1988; Ofer and Weitzman, 1998; Kremer, 1999), others acknowledge the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust, but even so their books include studies related to non-Jewish victims (Baer and Goldenberg, 2003; Kerner, 2011) and finally some acknowledge an all-encompassing notion of victimhood under the umbrella of Holocaust (Haggith and Newman, 2005). Donald Niewyk and Francis Nicosia (2000) attempt to solve the problem by offering nothing less than four possible definitions to the term Holocaust, leaving it to the discretion of scholars whether to embrace a traditional, Jewish-orientated explanation, or

a broader, all-encompassing definition. According to Niewyk and Nicosia (ibid.: 51-52), the fourth definition and the wider one, consists of “seeing Nazi racism whole and describe the Holocaust as an inseparable complex of policies and events encompassing all racially motivated crimes and all their victims.”

Considering this ongoing controversial dilemma, I shall definitely leave the definition of the term *Holocaust* in the hands of historians, and justify my preference for it because of its flexible borders that leave room for the inclusion of non-Jewish victims and therefore is more suitable for the purposes of this thesis. Given the broad spectrum of this research that considers a multitude of films, it would actually be very interesting to note whether European Holocaust cinema refers exclusively in its depictions to the Jewish tragedy or whether it adopts an all-encompassing perspective.

4.7. Conclusion

This thesis examines how women have been represented in European Holocaust cinema and what kind of understanding they bring in terms of a gendered approach to the Holocaust. Structured upon three main categories, it endeavours to analyse the portrayal of women as victims, perpetrators and resisters within a corpus of 310 films made partly or entirely in Europe. It is important to mention that this is not the only existing study on the representation of women in Holocaust films. Judith Doneson (1978, 1992, 1997) and Esther Fuchs (1999a, 1999b, 2008) have already tackled the topic and their landmark studies brought significant knowledge on the subject. Nevertheless, from a methodological point of view their studies are not very elaborate and neither representative for the whole body of Holocaust cinema. Both Doneson and Fuchs analyse a very limited number of films, mixing together documentary with fiction, short and feature films, American and European productions. They do not acknowledge either an evolution over time in the filmic representation of women.

My thesis aims therefore to fill in a gap in the gendered research on Holocaust films. It will be the first time that all the European feature films dealing with the Holocaust will be part of a body from which the most relevant female figures will be extracted for analysis. The research combines the qualitative method of textual analysis with theories specific to feminist film study and a fruitful dialogue between the films and their context. The groundbreaking theories of Laura Mulvey, Annette Kuhn and Pam Cook regarding the reading of a film through feminist lens will have a significant place in the analysis. Since this research is grounded on a historical event, a steady reference point is represented by the scholarly texts on the history and historiography of the Holocaust, and its cross-disciplinary intersections with theories and studies on gender. The seminal studies of Sybil Milton, Joan Ringelheim, Dalia Ofer, Lenore Weitzman, Elisabeth Baer, Myrna Goldenberg, Judith Tydor Baumel, provide the theoretical background for the whole thesis and an important connecting link between chapters and the topics discussed.

And finally, the research attempts to point out the main discourses in representing women in Holocaust cinema and their role in shaping our understanding of both the past and present concerns.

Chapter 5

THE CINEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AS PERPETRATORS AND ACCOMPLICES OF NAZISM

Anyone who studies female perpetrators does so in the context of a culture that has sensationalized Nazism by locating evil in eroticized women.

(Koonz 2007)

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 highlighted the paucity of research on women as perpetrators of the Nazi regime, attributing the silence on the topic to three possible causes: firstly, the impossibility of reconciling the idea of femininity with the monstrosity of their crimes; secondly, the disputes between scholars regarding the involvement of German women in the persecution versus their status of victims of a patriarchal nation; and thirdly, the fact that women had less access than men to work inside the Nazi apparatus and were excluded from leadership roles. The analysis presented in this chapter thus contributes to a slowly emerging body of work within both Holocaust and Film Studies on women perpetrators and their filmic representation. Recent studies on female guards (Brown, 2002; Sarti, 2012), women denouncers (Joshi, 2003) and nurses (Benedict, 2003; Lagerwey, 2003; Harrison, 2008; Benedict and Shields, 2014) play a crucial role in demystifying women's contribution in the plan of destruction enacted by the Nazis, and form much of the bedrock upon which the current analysis builds.

As Chapter 3 explains, the general disinterest, until the 21st century, in research on women perpetrators went hand in hand with a flourishing film industry based on the pornographic "exploitation" of fictional images of female perpetrators. The "cultural

obsession” (Rowland, 2013) with the figure of the Nazi woman due to the sensationalist framing set up by the Allied media in the immediate post-war period, has confined her cinematic representation to a number of violence-related clichés and sexist imageries. In the same vein, Claudia Koonz (2007: 161) claims that the study of women as perpetrators inevitably takes place “in a culture that has sensationalized Nazism by locating evil in eroticized women”.

While it has become almost commonplace in the literature to claim that female perpetrators in Holocaust films are represented through erotic stereotypes, it is still not entirely clear who exactly these cinematic women are. Some research has been done on the figure of Ilsa, “the Bitch of Buchenwald”, as part of *Nazisploitation* cinema (Rapaport 2003; Kozma 2012), and more recently on the character of Hanna Schmitz in the film *The Reader* (Donahue, 2010). However, with the exception of reviews and articles that analyse a specific film and might examine in passing the portrayal of women perpetrators, as in the case of *Downfall* (2004), the subject of cinematic representation of female perpetrators during Nazism has been largely ignored. Adam Brown (2013) is, to my knowledge, the only scholar who tackles the subject through a systematic exploration of some of the women perpetrators portrayed in Holocaust films: from the inevitable “Ilsa” in the exploitation film *Ilsa, She-Wolf of the SS* (1975), to Hilde the camp commander in *Seven Beauties* (1976), Frau Lagerführerin’ Maria Mandel in *Playing for Time* (1980) and finally Irma Grese in *Out of Ashes* (2002). Brown mentions as well the “fleeting shadows” of female guards employed in uncredited roles in films such as *Kapo* (1959), *Holocaust: The Story of the Family Weiss* (1978), *Sophie’s Choice* (1982), *Triumph of the Spirit* (1987), *Schindler’s List* (1993), *Life is Beautiful* (1997) and *The Devil’s Arithmetic* (1999). Despite the fact that Brown mixes together films made for television and for the big screen, produced in Europe and in the United States, his sample is far from a comprehensive analysis of female figures of perpetrators in the films about the Holocaust.

The present chapter therefore fills a substantial gap in a hitherto poorly researched area, by charting the representation of women perpetrators and accomplices of crime in the Holocaust films made in Europe since 1945 to the present. Rooted in the same assumption that female perpetrators have been marginalised both in “popular and scholarly discourse” and claiming the need for a more investigative approach (Brown 2013), this chapter departs from Brown’s study for its exclusive focus on European films for the big screen and because it moves beyond the category of camp guards. This study aims to discover who these women are, by identifying the main categories and by analysing the relevant female figures represented in Holocaust film.

The framing of Allied media of Nazi women as deviant and the ulterior “recycling” of this image in fiction and film does not alone explain why the stereotypes employed in representing women perpetrators has lingered for more than six decades. This chapter examines therefore the representation of female perpetrators from a comparative point of view with their male counterparts, highlighting the differences and similarities between their portrayals.

Firstly, this chapter explores the three main categories of female perpetrator (guards, nurses and administrative personnel), demonstrating that among the few hundreds of European fiction films made between 1945 and 2004 there is only one to have a female overseer in the main role (*The Passenger*) and a handful of other films that feature Nazi women in roles that engage with one of the leading characters (*The Last Stage* 1948, *Seven Beauties* 1976, *Europa, Europa* 1990, *Look to the sky* 1993, *Life is Beautiful* 1997, *Gloomy Sunday* 1999 and *Spring of Life* 2000). Secondly, my analysis highlights the uneven portrayal of female perpetrators in comparison with their male counterparts, who received a variety of roles spanning from zealots, desk murderers, unwilling executioners and even good Nazis. Finally, the analysis reveals that in the Third Millennium, European Holocaust cinema underwent a significant shift toward the portrayal of “ordinary women” in *Downfall* (2004) and *The Reader* (2008). Far from the sketchy and clichéd depictions

that prevailed in the previous period, these two films portray women who are not evil, but rather unable to see the bigger picture of the persecution to which they were contributing.

5.2. Embodying Female Perpetrators in Holocaust Films between 1945 and 2000

Only a small number of films depict female perpetrators in roles that are relevant²¹ to the plot, namely *The Last Stage* (1948), *The Passenger* (1963), *Seven Beauties* (1976), *Europa, Europa* (1991), *Look at the Sky* (1993), *Life is Beautiful* (1997), *Gloomy Sunday* (1999) and *Spring of Life* (2000). Given that these eight productions come from a corpus of 217 Holocaust films released between 1945 and 2000, this section has a twofold focus: it analyses the roots of women's absence as cinematic perpetrators and it also highlights their stereotyped portrayals.

Holocaust cinema has included women in the roles of perpetrators since its beginnings in the aftermath of the World War II. With the intention of denouncing the tremendous dimensions of the Holocaust, some of the early films staged their stories in concentration camps and featured women as guards and head overseers. Whether these women inhabited the screen for a few brief seconds – as in the case of *Distant Journey* (1949) and *Kapò* (1960), or played a major role as in *The Last Stage* (1948) and *The Passenger* (1963), they all had one feature in common: their evil nature. Some of the scenes seem to function solely to demonstrate the monstrosity of these women's characters, the inhumanity of their behaviour and the excess of their brutality: Nazi women watch passively as naked women and children are herded like animals towards the gas chambers, they perform selections brutally beating and chasing naked women with dogs, they slap defenceless people in the face, they take pleasure punishing unjustly and they beat inmates with leaded whips or incite dogs to attack them.

It is no surprise that the image of the cruel camp guard was present at such an early stage in Holocaust feature films. Ulrike Weckel (2005) claims that, since the image of SS

women was so unusual and unexpected for viewers, all post-war documentaries made by the Allied forces included footage of SS women captured in the extermination camp of Bergen Belsen. The recurrence of these images has undoubtedly also influenced the depiction of women perpetrators in feature films. Similarly Anthony Rowland (2013: 129-130) argues that, “there is a wider cultural fascination with the figure of female perpetrators in western countries” which originated from the way the Allied media framed the women perpetrators brought to the trials. He explains how, contrary to the trials that took place in the German Federal Republic which “played down the guilt” of these women, the Allied trials emphasised the “masculinity” of female perpetrators while they were “prosecuted and demonized as atavistic beasts”. It is significant that the first post-war feature film set in a concentration camp (*The Last Stage* 1948) was directed by Wanda Jakubowska and co-scripted with Gerda Schneider, two ex-inmates of the female section of Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. As Hanno Loewy (2004) claims, Jakubowska’s film is “the mother of all Holocaust films” since it performs the role to introduce “the iconography of the Holocaust in film”. Even though Loewy does not explicitly mention the representation of women overseers, but focuses more on symbols such as the arrival of the train in the camp, the mud, the barbed wire, the shaving of women’s hair, the tattoos, etc, Jakubowska’s depiction of the camp wardens and especially the head overseer sets the tone for ulterior subsequent representations.

Despite the fact that the female guards portrayed in *The Last Stage* are different in age and physical appearance, their representation borders on stereotype: the plain-looking, hard-featured guards stand out for the bestiality of their behaviour, while the attractive guard draws attention through her frivolous character (she flirts with the camp commander, and aspires to become a head-overseer, claiming that she deserves the position because she is “young and pretty”). Her comment points out not only the superficiality of her thinking, but a certain general misogynistic attitude that categorises Nazi women according to their countenance. The scene of the selection is very illustrative in highlighting that all these women are nothing more than cruel beasts who abuse their position of power over defenceless people (the camera focuses explicitly on the faces of

two very young inmates and an old woman, while rumours of the upcoming selection are whispered). Later, the hellish chaos created by the camp prisoners screaming and running in all directions to save their lives emphasises the unleashed brutality of the overseers, who randomly beat, attack and shoot the female inmates. Among the guards portrayed in *The Last Stage*, the nameless head-overseer stands out for her exceeding enthusiasm in enacting the “the final solution”. She is a fanatical Nazi who is in favour of the immediate gassing of people on their arrival in the camp, and complains that the extermination process is too slow because “in the meantime, we must suffer this old carrion infecting the air in the camp”²². In her impeccable uniform, with a whip that she uses both to threaten and to beat the female inmates, she often stands with her legs apart in a very mannish position. Otherwise she is blonde, attractive and very young, the same attributes that were emphasised by the media during the post-war trials in the case of Irma Grese, as Sarti (2012: 121) points out. While it cannot be argued that Grese inspired the figure of the head-overseer in Jakubowska’s film, this observation confirms that the filmmaker made use of the same range of stereotypes stressed by the post-war media in spite of having been an ex-inmate.

Moreover, sixteen years later the actress who played the head-overseer in *The Last Stage* (Aleksandra Slaska) interpreted the role of another camp guard, Liza, in *The Passenger* (1963) by Andrzej Munk, only this time as the main protagonist of the film. To my knowledge, this is the only European feature film that has a Nazi overseer as the central character. “You’ll never understand how we had to live and obey our leaders” - with these words Liza begins to narrate “her own version” of what it meant to work in a Nazi concentration camp. The pretext for bringing the past alive is an unexpected meeting, after the war, with one of her former victims, Marta, a Polish prisoner. The film is structured in two parts, coinciding with two different scenarios of the same story: one is the version that Liza recounts to her husband - where she saves the life of Marta, and the other is the real story - which she keeps for herself – revealing her lack of humanity as a camp overseer. According to Ewa Mazierska (2000: 1), this is one of Andrzej Munk’s “most amazing, and most disturbing” films since “only 15 years after the liberation of the

concentration camps, Munk took his viewers into the mind of a female SS guard, so they could hear her claim that she too had been a true victim of Auschwitz”²³.

However, if one takes a closer look at the film, Liza’s claim for victimhood cannot be taken very seriously. The film’s construction, especially when presenting the two sides of the story, leaves no doubt about Liza’s inhumanity. It is not hard for the audience to see who is the victim and who is the perpetrator. At the most, one can say that Liza is a victim of her own jealousy and selfishness rather than of the system. Despite the fact that both stories are told from the perpetrator’s perspective and one does not get to hear Marta’s side of the story, Marta’s actions²⁴ and choices speak louder than Liza’s voiceover. The author’s extradiegetic voice plays an important role in de-constructing Liza’s claim for victimhood. Intervening from outside the film, his voice performs a double role: he tries to explain Munk’s directorial choices²⁵ and acts as a critical consciousness that guides the spectator’s interpretation of the two stories. By taking a position in the story, from outside of it, the author’s voice is more powerful than Liza’s intradiegetic narrative voiceover. The ironic tone of the male author further serves to undermine Liza’s credibility, especially at the film’s conclusion: “But we shouldn’t ask too much of the overseer, she’s admitted enough. Justifying oneself is only human”. In the end, despite its unique value in depicting the Holocaust and its innovative choice to present the story from an overseer’s perspective, *The Passenger* does not engage in exploring the issue of guilt and does not contextualise Liza’s decision to become a perpetrator.

Nevertheless, *The Last Stage* and *The Passenger* play a fundamental role in establishing a preliminary profile of the female overseer in Holocaust feature films. The wardens that stand out (and therefore receive more complex portrayals) are mostly attractive and blonde, and their physical beauty is contrasted with the viciousness of their character. These overseers, full of hatred towards the inmates, perform a whole range of ferocious acts: from beatings, whippings, kicks with the fists and the boots, punishments, to random selections and killings.

Another cinematic woman that has a more relevant role in the film narrative is Hilde, the camp commander in *Seven Beauties* (1976). She is a classic example of a “phallic woman”²⁶ (Studlar, 1990) and every detail in her portrayal combines to highlight her dominatrix role: the hulking body with broad shoulders, the aggressive language and intimidating attitude towards the male protagonist Pasqualino, the menacing whip in her hand, her manly appearance while standing with legs apart while smoking, the masculine underwear and the black leather boots that she keeps on even during the intercourse scene. Presumably under the influence of both *Nazisploitation* cinema and the emergence of the Feminist movement in the 1970s, *Seven Beauties* brings new features into the portrayal of Nazi women: firstly, the exercise of power is now directed towards men and secondly, a sexual element enters their portrayal.

It is interesting to note that in early films the violence of Nazi women was directed mostly towards female victims, but after the 1970s male protagonists are more often portrayed as casualties of the Nazi women who abuse them physically, decide their life or death or take sexual advantage of them. Along with Hilde, the camp commander in *Seven Beauties*, similar fictional female characters working within the Nazi system are: the nasty warden who whips Jonah’s hands in punishment for having dropped his working tool on the floor in *Look to the sky* (1993), an anonymous Nazi woman who engages in sexual intercourse in a train with the young protagonist in *Europa, Europa* (1990), a female overseer who sentences Guido to death by whistling and pointing him out while he was trying to pass unnoticed in *Life is Beautiful* (1997) and, in the same film, another camp woman who mistakes Joshua for one of the German boys playing in the courtyard and scolds him for not obeying the orders. In the same category it is possible to include Klára, the director of the Race Commission in *Spring of Life* (2000), who punishes Leo (the only Jewish character in the film) by ordering him to spend a night kneeling in the snow after a bucket of water was poured on his head. It is difficult to determine with precision the origins of these new added features in the representation of Nazi women; on one level, *Nazisploitation* cinema is surely accountable for placing Nazi women in the sex-death-violence triangle and for propagating this stereotyped image into mainstream

films. On another level, it is possible that the rise of the Feminist movement and feminist film theory in the 1970s partly and indirectly facilitated greater representation of women in positions of power over men. The figure of the Nazi woman lends itself particularly well to representations that emphasise her phallic nature: the uniform, the long black boots and the whips easily fall into the category of “phallic substitutes”, as defined by Barbara Creed (1993: 156-158) and Gaylyn Studlar (1990: 313-314).

In trying to map out the different categories of cinematic women working within the Nazi apparatus, besides the “camp women” one can distinguish the administrative body (secretaries and other functionaries) and medical personnel (nurses, doctors, specialists of the breeding programmes). The secretaries working within the Nazi system have not received much visibility in films. They are represented by short-lived characters, performed mostly in un-credited roles. The mechanical sounds of the typing machine often compensate for their silence, since Nazi secretaries are rarely seen speaking in films. Placed in this context, Frau Häberle from the film *Gloomy Sunday* (1999) stands out from this anonymous mass, not only because the audience gets to know her name, but also because she has a few lines in the film’s narrative. Professional in her flawless uniform, Frau Häberle creates an impression of being nice, polite and well informed on her duties. She even shows initiative by trying to correct her boss twice, quoting the Duden dictionary. Even though in the first two scenes her role is relatively brief (less than a minute each), her character seems to create the premise for a more complex portrayal. However, the initial impressions of a composed and efficient secretary are turned up-side-down in the last scene when she exhibits a totally inappropriate outburst. This is the first time a woman stands out from the group of invisible Third Reich secretaries in a Holocaust film; and here the filmmaker allows her to speak only to make her look ridiculous and rigidly rooted in black and white thinking.

The film *Spring of Life* (2000) brings to the fore another category of women working within the Nazi apparatus: medical personnel. Similar to the portrayal of secretaries, the representation of nurses and doctors in Holocaust films relegates them to insignificant

roles (for example in *The Passenger* (1963) a wide shot depicts a group of children being accompanied to the gas chambers by a few nurses, and in *Mr. Klein* (1976) the opening scene shows four silent nurses performing their duties in an overcrowded medical studio where a doctor establishes the racial purity of people called for the medical check). As the film narrative in *Spring of Life* is set in one of the institutes known as *Lebensborn*, the filmmaker employs several female figures of nurses and caretakers, but the focus is on two of them in particular: Waage, the head-doctor of the institute, and Klára, the director of the Race Commission. Waage, blonde and attractive, is often portrayed in very sensual poses and is even shown getting sexually excited by looking at the radiography of one of the girls. The male helper of the institute describes her as “a bitch” and “a lesbian”. However, the film does not offer any other information about her, besides her fanatical Nazism and her sexual preferences. Klára is a massive woman with masculine traits; she is highly indoctrinated and faithful to the Nazi regime. Very suggestive is one of the final scenes when Grétka, the teenage protagonist of the film, while looking for her child tries to find out from Klára where she sent the newborns. In an angry outburst Klára attacks Grétka and totally refuses to help the young mother reunite with her child.

What is striking about *Spring of Life* is not the framing of the two Nazi women as “deviant” or “masculine”, but the reiteration of such a highly clichéd representation (that corresponds to the post-war image of female perpetrators) fifty-five years after the end of World War II. As the previous overview pointed out, the noticeable absence of female figures working within the Nazi system goes hand in hand with their confinement to stereotyped roles. Illustrative in this sense is the fact that, while between 1945 and 2000 more than two hundred European feature films dealt with the persecution put in place by the Nazis (both in a wider or narrower sense), only these eight films employ Nazi women in roles that are relevant to the plot. Even within this small number of films, representations of Nazi women are confined within stereotypes of violent, sexually perverted or ridiculous behaviours. This phenomenon is intriguing considering that Holocaust cinema has changed greatly over time and its evolution paralleled the development of a “historical and moral consciousness” (Gaetani, 2006: 16). Moreover,

the highly repetitive portrayal of female perpetrators as “inhumane” is contested by Zygmunt Bauman (1989), who stresses the human character of actual perpetrators who, in certain circumstances and with state authorisation, performed untold cruelty. Making use of Herbert Kelman’s (1973) study, Bauman (ibid.: 21) explains that the “moral inhibitions against violent atrocities” are eroded when any of these three conditions are met: the violence is “authorized” by a higher power, the actions are “routinized by rule-governed practices” and the victims are “dehumanized” through indoctrination. Thus, according to Bauman, the Final Solution was accomplished not by disturbed people, but instead by ordinary citizens who turned into murderers because the Holocaust enabled a combination of all the three mentioned factors. How was it possible then for the image of female perpetrators to remain frozen for almost six decades in such superfluous stereotypes? Is this clichéd representation rooted in the paucity of studies on female perpetrators or has it to do more with (phallogentric) cinematic mechanisms and the broader patriarchal stereotyping of women?

According to Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann (2008: 41), it was not until the 1990s that Perpetrator Studies started to take women’s contribution to the persecution into consideration. Previously, research on female perpetrators was an “almost completely neglected topic”. The dearth of historical research on the women involved with the Nazi regime can explain – to a certain extent - the disinterest on behalf of filmmakers to explore this topic in depth or to create roles for women who were historically unexplored. The persistency of clichéd images is also partly linked to the failure of historical research to challenge such depictions of female perpetrators. While these explanations are plausible, the persistence of stereotypes over such a long period invites further investigation as to whether contemporary sexism and patriarchal ideologies are affecting historical representations of female perpetrators. By comparing the similarities and discrepancies between female perpetrators and their male counterparts, will be possible to ascertain the presence in women’s portrayal of sexist ideologies that inhibit representations that step outside of the existing canons.

5.3. Uneven Representations: Complex Men and Poorly Drawn Women

According to Annette Kuhn (1990: 73), feminist film analysis needs to expose the absences in the representation of women, highlighting the aspects that often go unnoticed in films:

These matters centred not only around presences – the explicit ways in which women are represented, the kinds of images, roles constructed by films – but also around absences – the ways in which women do not appear at all or are in certain ways not represented in films.

This observation is instructive since it acknowledges the necessity to place the portrayal of female perpetrators in the wider context of gendered representation of perpetrators in Holocaust films. As highlighted in this section, the cinematic representation of perpetrators is gender-differentiated: while women are confined to poorly drawn and stereotyped depictions, men have received more complex and humanised portrayals. The analysis of cinematic images of male perpetrators indicates that they mirror the categories distinguished by historian Raul Hilberg (1992): zealots, desk murderers, unwilling executioners and benevolent Nazis. In order to achieve such a varied representation, several films move away from stereotyped depictions and exhibit alternative portrayals of Nazi men. These films are: *The Murderers are Among Us* (1946), *Stars* (1959), *Death Is My Trade* (1977), *Korczak* (1990), *My Mother's Courage* (1995), *The Pianist* (2002), *Amen* (2002), *Max* (2002), *Before the Fall* (2004), *Eichmann* (2007) and *Good* (2008). However, often within the same film, especially when there is a character that personifies the “good” Nazi, there are counter-characters depicted as evil through the use of clichéd images. Most films avoid contextualising the life of Nazi men, but there are also others that reflect upon their actions with the wisdom of hindsight (*The Murderers are Among Us*), or attempt to explain how the character came to be involved with the Nazis (*Death is my Trade*) and finally some that intertwine the work of the Nazi men with their family life for a more rounded portrayal (*Death is My Trade*, *Amen*, *Good*).

This comparative gendered analysis of the cinematic representation of perpetrators starts by acknowledging that both women and men are often portrayed through the use of stereotypes. Depictions of excessive brutality on behalf of Nazi men towards Jews and other categories of victims can be found in abundance in Holocaust films – from the early ones like *The Last Stage* (1948), *Distant Journey* (1949), *Kapò* (1960) to recent releases such as *The Last Train* (2006), *Good* (2008) and *The Round Up* (2010). Similarly to women, male Nazi officers are shown shouting, attacking people, beating them for no reason, and humiliating, maltreating, and killing innocent victims. This kind of portrayal, realised mostly through the use of the stereotypes (as in the case of female perpetrators), fits the category defined by the historian Raul Hilberg (1992: 51) as “zealots”. Interestingly, Hilberg (ibid.) notices that:

The personality characteristics of the perpetrators did not fall into a single mold. The men who performed destructive work varied not only in their backgrounds but also in their psychological attributes. As German domination of Jewry became more pronounced and complete, the perpetrators assumed their roles in noticeable different modes. Some of these men displayed eagerness, others “excess,” while still others approached their task with reservations and misgivings.

This articulate historical picture of (male) perpetrators corresponds very closely to the way in which the films portrayed Nazi men. While stereotyped depictions of “zealots” are often encountered in films, the portrayal of male perpetrators is not limited to this category. Unlike their female counterparts, male perpetrators have received more diverse treatment in Holocaust films. Surprisingly, alternative images date back to the early post-war period: the East German production *The Murderers are among Us* (1946) is centred on Hans Mertens, a military surgeon assigned to the German army in Poland during World War II. On Christmas Eve of 1942, he takes part in the execution of 121 innocent victims, among which are many women and children. He intervenes for leniency for them before his commandant Ferdinand Bruckner, but his pleas are not answered and he has to obey. Hans Mertens belongs to the category of unwilling executioners; he personifies the humane Nazi, trapped between professional obligations and moral torments, full of compassion but unable to oppose a morally wrong system. It is interesting to observe that

the film insists that Mertens does not belong to the category of “murderers among us” that the title exposes. Since the action is set in the post-war Germany, the audience does not find out about Mertens’ reprehensible past until the very end of the film. The gradual exposure of his inner post-war torments, his radical change and desire for justice cast a benevolent light on his obedient complicity with the crime revealed at the end of the film. In order to downplay Merten’s guilt, the filmmaker contrasts his character with that of Bruckner, his superior during the war, the classical “Nazi villain”, who has no hesitation in sentencing innocent civilians to death. While the film is permeated by Mertens’ trauma and sense of guilt, Bruckner is striking by his absolute lack of remorse and conviction that he is innocent. The antagonism works very well since, while demonising Bruckner as an “evil” Nazi, it emphasises Mertens as the “good” Nazi. As Szejnmann (2008: 28-30) points out, this framing corresponds to a specific discourse on perpetrators which was typical until the 1980s. He points out how, before the 1980s, “perpetrators historiography uncritically followed the interpretation that blame and responsibility for the Holocaust lay with a few top Nazi leaders” while allowing “large parts of the population to exonerate themselves from guilt” (ibid: 28-30). The ending of *The Murderers are among Us* emphasises the divide between the villain and the good Nazi: one is punished (Bruckner finishes up behind bars), while the other is exempt from any blame (Mertens will continue his life with Susanne).

Another category of male perpetrators represented in Holocaust films are the desk murderers, people who were not directly involved in the killing process but who took important decisions to facilitate it. The film *Death Is My Trade* (1977), which portrays the life of the Auschwitz commander Rudolf Höss, is one of the most significant works in this regard. Audacious by having a Nazi perpetrator as a main character, the film highlights Höss’s unexceptional life and depicts him as an “ordinary man”, which is an unusual perspective considering that the film was released just thirty-two years after the war. Using a similar narrative strategy as in *The Murderers are Among Us*, the film constructs a very humanised portrayal of Rudolf Höss, revealing his identity as perpetrator only towards the end of the film. The filmmaker, therefore, deliberately

changes his name to Franz Lang in order to avoid judgemental distancing on behalf of the audience and to invite understanding as to how such an ordinary man became a mass murderer. Höss' contribution as a perpetrator is therefore contextualised by his life from early teenage years until his execution in Poland in 1947. The film admirably captures scenes from his prosaic and genuinely simple life: it shows him sewing a hole in his uniform or sharing with his friend a slice of buttered bread topped with raw onions. His modest background and strict upbringing, his life full of struggles and exhausting manual labour are used as a justification for his choice to join the Nazis. Without demonising the Nazis, the film creates a portrait of humanity, inviting the audience to believe that Rudolf Höss was not a particularly evil person, but rather one who was notable for a strong sense of duty and obedience, for his work efficiency and his loyalty towards his superiors. The chilling scene in which he sums up the numbers from the crematorium reports emphasises the detachment with which he carried out mass murder: he seems to be dealing with objects rather than with human lives. Minutes after, Höss passes by the window, just in time to see his wife entering the concentration camp to visit him with their latest born in a pram. He opens the window and smiles at her. This scene encapsulates the schizophrenic nature of his job: at one moment an unscrupulous desk murderer and the next a tender husband. This filmic portrayal of Rudolf Höss also mirrors a trend established by historical research. Following Eichmann's trial in 1961, Hanna Arendt's (1963) famous dictum on the "banality of evil" challenged the view that perpetrators were "pathological killers" and emphasised that they "were not particularly evil, but orderly, conscientious and thus extremely suitable to take part in the anonymous mechanism of modern mass murder" (Szejnmann, 2008: 33). The film *Death is My Trade* (1977) thus brings to the screen a humanised profile of the perpetrator that fits into the academic research of the time. The film also aligns with later research (Bauman 1989; Browning 1992) on the ordinariness of perpetrators. In his seminal study *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Bauman (1989) explains how the hierarchical and functional divisions of work within the Nazi system facilitated the Holocaust by dissociating people with the outcome of their deeds and their moral evaluation. As Bauman (ibid.: 99) claims, many functionaries of bureaucratic hierarchies (such as Nazism) "only have an abstract, detached awareness" of

the effects of their actions and, in their minds, the final outcome of their deeds is “best expressed in statistics” or “as a column of numbers”. In light of Bauman’s statement, the scene in which Höss carefully sums up the thousands of victims from the crematoria perfectly illustrates the fact that the Holocaust was “a product of routine bureaucratic procedures: means-ended calculus, budget balancing, universal rule application” (ibid.: 17).

Films portraying “benevolent” Nazi male characters are also worthy of mention: *Stars* (1959) is centred on a Nazi officer, Walter, who helps Jewish prisoners on several occasions by procuring medicines and even bringing a doctor to assist a pregnant woman in labour. *Korczak* (1990) depicts a brief scene in which an SS doctor is concerned about Korczak’s fate and writes a paper requesting his immediate release from the ghetto. *My Mother’s Courage* (1995) shows an SS officer saving the life of the main character Elsa Tabori after she has been rounded up, while *The Pianist* (2002) depicts a similar situation in which an SS man discovers Wladyslaw Szpilman, the film’s protagonist, but instead of killing or denouncing him, brings food to Szpilman and ultimately saves his life. These sporadic gestures of kindness performed by SS officers point out that not all the Nazis were the same and indeed that many were complex and far removed from the simplistic “monster” stereotype that characterises the depiction of female perpetrators.

In recent years, an increasing number of European feature films daringly proposed such examples of benevolent Nazi men as protagonists, exploring their humanity and the difficulty of their choices. Good examples are also the character of Kurt Gerstein in *Amen* (2002), who tries to subvert and expose the Nazis’ apparatus of mass destruction, and John Halder in *Good* (2008), who struggles to reconcile his moral principles and his involvement with the Nazis. A similar dilemma between personal values and the Nazi ideologies consumes Friedrich Weimer, a German teenager enrolled in Napola, the élite school for future Nazi leaders, in the film *Before the Fall* (2004). Also in *Eichmann* (2007), the character of Adolf Eichman, without mitigating the seriousness of his crimes, is a far more complex and articulated portrayal than most of the depictions of Nazi

women. However, this list would not be complete without mentioning the films that offer a humanised portrayal of the leader of the Third Reich, Hitler himself: *Max* (2002), *Downfall* (2004) and *My Führer* (2007).

These films are the most salient examples of alternative representations of Nazi men that do not fit into the stereotyped canons of Nazi brutality. The handful of alternative visions on Nazi men cited above demonstrates that the construction of images of perpetrators is gender-differentiated: while women are confined to limited roles and sketched representations, men have received more complex, humanised and differentiated portrayals. The discrepancy in the portrayal of male versus female perpetrators re-echoes a wider tendency in cinema in which stereotypes of women are more static and resistant to change than the male stereotypes (Cook, 1988: 53; Dyer, 1990: 386). In the light of these observations, returning to Kuhn's (1990) theory regarding the need of feminist film analysis to expose the ways in which women are not represented in films, it is possible to acknowledge that female perpetrators are confined to a much more simplistic and clichéd representational repertoire than their male counterparts and that there is a greater disconnect between their cinematic representation and the types of characters described in the historical and memoir literature than is the case with men. Arguably, then, the absence of meaningful representations of women working within the Nazi apparatus points to an adherence to phallogentric codes and conventions within Holocaust cinema and mainstream cinema generally, rather than to a wider societal disinterest in the figure of the female perpetrator. Ruth Holliday's claim is instructive in this regard. Holliday (2008: 194) states that "since media organizations are mostly owned and run by powerful white men, this inevitably has an impact on the kinds of products they produce, and in particular, on the ways in which women and men are represented". The dominance of male directors in European Holocaust cinema coupled with the impetus to fulfil the demands of conventional male gaze (Mulvey 1975) results in a mainstream style that is highly unlikely to disrupt conventional spectatorial dynamics and representational practices. Given the political economy and resultant spectatorial dynamics of mainstream cinema, therefore, certain, highly gendered representational tropes persist, in spite of the

obvious demand for historical veracity associated with Holocaust cinema and the ready availability of historical knowledge about and memoirs written by women. The patriarchal fantasy of the woman as a monster or femme fatale has well established origins in other cinematic genres (film noir, horror). Thus, these archetypal characters are clearly both accessible and appealing to many filmmakers, and arguably function less as three-dimensional characters than they do as symbols of or ciphers for the evils of Nazism. This echoes a broader trend in cultural representation, whereby women are generally afforded less complex, more archetypal roles than men. In the realm of advertising, for example, Bell and Milic (2002) have found using content analysis of magazine adverts, that women are more likely than men to be depicted “conceptually” or symbolically (i.e. classified as a certain “type”).

This argument is supported by the fact that both scholarly writings and the testimonies of victims emphasise the differences and complexities of women perpetrators. Gisela Bock (1998: 91) claims that the women who participated in the genocide belonged to “all walks of life and all social classes”, while Brown (2002: 16) points out that among the female guards some volunteered for the job, but the majority were conscripted. Brown (ibid.: 17-18) acknowledges that, even though “brutal and cruel overseers were the norm in the camp”, there were also exceptions of women who “stood up for decency at considerable risk”. Similarly, Holocaust survivor Lucille Eichengreen (2011: 107-113) mentions in her memoir three “women in the SS” whose profiles couldn’t be more different: Kristie, a 21 year old blonde and fashionable girl from an affluent family, “drafted into the job” but intimidated by her position, who was often on the phone imploring her friends to save her from camp work; Elisabeth Mullen, cross-eyed and with ugly hair, who “took great pleasure in torturing and calling us names”; and finally Elisabeth Robert, who did not beat the inmates and whose small acts of kindness were recalled by the survivor.

Holocaust cinema thus offers an uneven, gender-differentiated depiction of perpetrators. Unlike their male counterparts, female perpetrators are confined to a simplistic representational repertoire that hinders the perception and understanding of women’s

contribution as perpetrators and accomplices of Nazism. In this sense, it can be argued that Holocaust cinema up until the 2000s, unlike historical or memorial accounts, has done little to provide useful insights into women's participation in mass murder. The following section acknowledges an important change in the depiction of female perpetrators in European Holocaust cinema of the Third Millennium: the representation of "ordinary women".

5.4. "Ordinary Women" as Perpetrators

According to historian Claus-Christian W. Szejnmann (2008: 37, 141), Perpetrator Studies underwent a significant shift in the 1990s, not only with the acknowledgement of the role played by female perpetrators in the overall persecution set in place by the Nazis, but also due to ground-breaking research by Christopher Browning (1992) that emphasised the ordinariness of most perpetrators. In his research on the motivations of the Police Battalion 101, responsible for the murder of at least 38,000 Jews in Poland, Browning claims that a great majority of them were not anti-Semites and became perpetrators for a series of less ideological reasons such as obedience, career ambitions, indoctrination and group conformity (Szejnmann, 2008: 37). In a similar vein, Bauman (1989: 19) claims that "the initial attempts to interpret the Holocaust as an outrage committed by born criminals, sadists, madmen, social miscreants or otherwise morally defective individuals failed to find any confirmation in the facts of the case". As Bauman (*ibid.*) further argues, the fact that "most perpetrators of the genocide were normal people" is "morally disturbing" and "theoretically puzzling" (*ibid.*). Thus, acknowledging that most perpetrators were neither demons nor fanatical Nazis but often "ordinary men" caught in extraordinary circumstances represented a significant breakthrough in the research on perpetrators. Adopting Browning's expression "ordinary men", Gisela Bock argued in 1998 for the first time that female perpetrators were also "ordinary women". She claims that "women of all walks of life and all social classes, actively participated in racist and genocidal policies; their beliefs, motives, and acts were similar to those of comparable ordinary men" (Bock, 1998: 91).

My analysis reveals that the 2000s heralded a significant change in the representation of female perpetrators in European films: the portrayal of “ordinary women”. Two key European films adopted this new perspective: *Downfall* (2004) by Oliver Hirschbiegel and *The Reader* (2008) by Stephen Daldry. The following analysis demonstrates, in particular, how Hirschbiegel and Daldry construct the characters of two women who worked within the Nazi apparatus, Traudl Junge, Hitler’s last secretary, and Hanna Schmitz, a fictional camp guard. Through particular cinematic strategies and choice of narrative structure, *Downfall* and *The Reader* portray these women as not fundamentally evil, but as unable, or unwilling to see the bigger picture of the persecution to which they were contributing.

Both films, while internationally acclaimed by the public, were also strongly contested by historians and Holocaust scholars for their propensity to sympathise with the perpetrators. David Bathrick and Johannes von Moltke questioned the right of the filmmakers to display a humanised portrayal of Hitler in *Downfall*, arguing that this “politics of emotion” was intended to create sympathy towards characters that were perpetrators (Moltke, 2007: 38) and questioning the “ahistorical representation of historical figures” (Bathrick, 2007: 14). The most recent study on *Downfall* by Matthew Boswell (2013) highlights the “myopic perpetrator view on events” that conceals relevant historical elements that would provide a more complete and accurate image of the events. *The Reader* attracted similar criticism, especially regarding its portrayal of perpetrators as victims. By contrast, William Collins Donahue’s study (2010) established a fruitful dialogue between Stephen Daldry’s film and Bernhard Schlink’s book on which it is based. Donahue (ibid.: 155) claims that “Daldry’s film is not only a cleaner, more streamlined version of the original story but also a work of considerable beauty in its own right”.

While the above studies are significant contributions, they fail to contextualise the portrayal of Traudl Junge and Hanna Schmitz in relation to previous representations of female perpetrators. Neither do they acknowledge that, despite their limitations and questionable approach to the subject of perpetrators, *Downfall* and *The Reader* attempt

for the first time to depart from the stereotypes of earlier films. This novel approach to the portrayal of female perpetrators in *Downfall* and *The Reader* is important. On the one hand, alternative depictions of female perpetrators can provide a better understanding of the complexities of the Holocaust, moving away from black-and-white scenarios based on simplistic representations of good and evil. On the other hand, the cinematic portrayal of “ordinary women” allows the audience to draw parallels between the Nazi persecution and issues that challenge many of today’s societies such as discrimination, racism, prejudice and xenophobia. Finally, by replacing the monster stereotype with the key concept of “ordinary perpetrators”, contemporary cinema removes the distancing effect between the audience and the figure of the perpetrator, and hinders “the moral comfort of self-exculpation” (Bauman, 1989: xii). Significantly, Bauman (ibid.) claims that:

The implication that the perpetrators of the Holocaust were a wound or a malady of our civilization – rather than its horrifying, yet legitimate product – results not only in the moral comfort of self-exculpation, but also in the dire threat of moral and political disarmament. It all happened ‘out there’ – in another time, another country. The more ‘they’ are to blame, the more the rest of ‘us’ are safe.

This study thus acknowledges that, to some extent, these films disrupt what Jenni Adams (2013: 31) calls “the conventional pattern of identification in Holocaust discourse” with the victim’s perspective. Adams further claims that “While such identification cultivates compassion and regard for persecuted others, it also shades into an appropriative position that facilitates an evasion of ethical self-examination”. My analysis is sympathetic to Browning (1992)’s claim, quoted by Adams (ibid.: 28), that “not trying to understand the perpetrators in human terms would make impossible....any history of Holocaust perpetrators that sought to go beyond one-dimensional caricature”. It is exactly the “one dimensional caricature” exhibited by European Holocaust cinema prior to *Downfall* and *The Reader* that is questioned and chosen as a point of departure for this section. My analysis supports Adams (ibid.) by contending that exploring perspectives and representations of perpetrators “can play a powerful role as a catalyst to ethical thought”.

A close analysis of the two films highlights several important points of departure from previous depictions of female perpetrators in European Holocaust films. Firstly, both *Downfall* and *The Reader* deal with the issue of guilt in relation to women perpetrators, while none of their forerunners have so far attempted to do so. On the contrary, all of the Nazi women portrayed up to this point seemed to enjoy their sadism and cruelty, which they perform with a zealous excess. In previous cinematic depictions of Nazi women, there is no place for repentance or subsequent reflections on personal guilt: only their violent characters are shown in the films, and the spectator does not know whether these women ever felt any guilt and how they dealt with it. Even *The Passenger* by Andrzej Munk, which is narrated with the advantage of hindsight and from the perspective of the perpetrator, fails to engage with this issue. Liza, the overseer, pities herself and considers herself to be a victim to the same extent as the inmate Marta. She does not express any remorse or feelings of guilt during or after her involvement with the Nazis.

In the case of Hitler's secretary Traudl Junge from *Downfall*, the trope of guilt is explicit from the beginning of the film. Hirschbiegel's choice to open the film with a brief excerpt from the documentary "Blind spot: Hitler's secretary" featuring interview footage with Traudl Junge shortly before her death impacts the whole trajectory of the film. Traudl's introductory words lend a self-referential tone to the film: it becomes her statement of guilt and her plea for understanding. By mentioning her incapacity to forgive and understand her actions as a young girl, she is implicitly asking the audience to consider the possibility of forgiving and understanding her. Traudl's words permeated with guilt coupled with the close-ups of her as an elderly woman set the emotional tone for the entire film.

In relation to Daldry's film *The Reader*, the issue of guilt is more complicated because our knowledge about Hanna is mediated by Michael Berg, her former teenage "lover". In the film she doesn't make any explicit statement of repentance, nor does she openly express any feelings of guilt for the actions she committed while working as a guard in a Nazi concentration camp. In the trial scenes, the audience takes note of her crimes: she is

accused of taking part in the selection process within the camp and of murdering 300 inmates by not opening the doors of the church where they were held after a fire started, for which the judge gives her a life sentence. After 20 years in prison, when she is about to be released for good behaviour, she is visited by Michael. This is one of the key moments, which raises the issue of how Hanna might have dealt with her guilt:

Hanna: Before the trial, I never thought about the past. I never had to.

Michael: Now? What do you feel now?

Hanna: It doesn't matter what I feel. It doesn't matter what I think. The dead are still dead.

Michael: I wasn't sure what you'd learned.

Hanna: Well, I have learned, kid. I've learned to read.²⁷

If one isolates this dialogue from the rest of the film, it is possible to read this scene as a refusal on Hanna's part to reflect on her past crimes. The ironic reply and the reluctance to talk about the past could imply that she feels no guilt. However, this scene needs to be read in the light of two other key moments. In the first one, the day before the final hearing of the trial, Michael meets Professor Rohl, asks him for advice regarding what he knows about the defendant (her illiteracy) and expresses his doubts about disclosing the information in court. Significantly, the professor's reply ("What we feel is not important. It is utterly unimportant. The only question is what we do") is echoed by Hanna 20 years later, when she points out that her feelings are "utterly unimportant" since her past actions cannot be undone. By linking these two phrases, the film suggests that she felt guilt. The second key moment casts further light on this question: after Hanna's suicide, in the scene where her will is read out loud by the prison officer, Michael discovers that her last thoughts before dying were of the Jewish girl who survived the fire. Even if Hanna is not able to disclose her feelings about the past during Michael's brief visit in prison, this key scene, read in the light of the other two, indicates that she spent a lot of time in prison reflecting on her crimes and felt the burden of guilt. Offering all her savings to her former victim, it transpires, is Hanna's way of repenting for the past.

This recognition that Nazi women were not merely monsters and that they had to deal with complex feelings of guilt is a significant new development in Holocaust films. However, this is not the only element that distinguishes *Downfall* and *The Reader* from

their predecessors. Both films are structured within multiple time frames, moving between present and past in an attempt to contextualise the life of the two women and to expose their possible motivations for joining the Nazis. With the exception of *The Passenger*, whose narration unfolds, similarly, between present and past recollections, all of the portrayals of Nazi women analysed thus far are fixed in a single temporal dimension. Whether they are brief, elusive presences or whether they play more elaborate roles, the characters are limited to their involvement as perpetrators. There is no “before” or “after” the Holocaust in the narrative construction of their experiences and therefore elements that could allow the spectator to contextualise their life, to understand the circumstances that determined their involvement with the Nazis or to grasp any other element that would allow a more human picture of female perpetrators. They are merely anonymous figures in an indistinct mass of perpetrators and their clichéd portrayals are intended only to signify the monstrous.

In *Downfall* and *The Reader*, by contrast, the construction of the two female characters involved with the Nazis - Traudl Junge and Hanna Schmitz – attempts to break the stereotype of the monster and to emphasise the ordinariness of the two women. In *Downfall*, Traudl is portrayed as a beautiful and modern young girl, who is caring and compassionate, who worries about others and tries to help and comfort. She is emotional and impulsive (when she tells the Führer that she is not going to abandon him, she later confesses that she does not know why she said that). The film unfolds in the rhythm of the last days in Hitler’s bunker and explains why, as a young woman, Traudl was so blinded and charmed with the figure of Hitler. *Downfall* admirably highlights the discrepancy between Hitler’s behaviour in his private life and in his role as Führer, the gap between his caring attitude towards Traudl and his outbursts of fury in the presence of his generals. The presentation of his paternal and human side (most of the time Hitler addresses Traudl as “my child”) serves an explanatory role in the film dynamics, showing how it was possible for his young secretary to be so blinded. Traudl herself points out this inner conflict:

Traudl: ...he can be so caring in his private life... and then he uses that horrible language again...

Eva Braun: When he's the Führer you mean?²⁸

In one of the scenes in the secretaries' private room, Traudl confesses that her family and friends totally opposed her joining the Nazis. Despite the brief duration of this scene, this confession is very important since it offers some insight into Traudl's life before joining Hitler, and again points out her immaturity and unwise judgement (doing exactly what the parents advised her not to). The intimate atmosphere created by lighting and close-ups, the subjective shots from the perspective of her colleagues and the use of dramatic music amplify the emotional charge of this moment, emphasising Traudl's inner turmoil and the feeling that she cannot undo her choice, yet needs to confess that she made a mistake:

Traudl: I wouldn't know where to go. My parents and all my friends warned me. Don't get involved with the Nazis. What should I say: 'Hello, I made a mistake'? 'When things went wrong I realized my mistake.'²⁹

Traudl's normalness and humanity is emphasised through juxtaposition with the character of Magda Goebbels, wife of the Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. While Traudl declares in the opening sequence that she was never "a fanatical Nazi", Mrs Goebbels is portrayed, by contrast, as an extreme fanatic. This is signalled when she throws herself at Hitler's feet begging him not to commit suicide and when she poisons her six children with cyanide. While the first scene can be interpreted as the hysterical outburst of a desperate woman, the second is intended to posit Magda as beyond human comprehension. Her decision to poison her children is motivated by her belief that they "cannot grow up in a world without National Socialism". Just minutes after this chilling scene, she starts to play cards on her own, resigned to her belief that "there's nothing left to live for" without Hitler and his ideology. The antagonism between the two female characters functions to illustrate Traudl's humanness. Twice, Traudl is seen to disagree with the Führer's ideas: first during a meal when he argues in favour of the "extermination of the weak" and claims that "compassion for the weak is a betrayal of

nature”, and later, when Hitler refers to his anti-Judaism policies while dictating his will. Even though Traudl does not utter a word, her facial expressions speak louder than her silence pointing out that not only does she disagree, but she is terrified by Hitler’s ideas, by his “horrible language” as she later claims. Traudl is also shown to be more caring towards the children in the bunker than Magda: just before Hitler’s death, Traudl finds the little ones sitting on the stairs, hungry and neglected, and brings them upstairs to offer them food.

The Reader uses similar strategies to contextualise the life of female perpetrators and to explore their actions and possible motivations behind their behaviour. Hanna Schmitz is constructed by bringing together different events in her life: the love affair with Michael, the trial of the six female guards and events that happen long after the trial. This more rounded picture leads to a better understanding of who Hanna was and, in particular, it allows us to see that far from being a monster she was just what Gisela Bock (1998) describes as an “ordinary woman”. Bock (1998: 91) uses this term to emphasise that the women involved with the Nazis were ordinary people, similar to male perpetrators. The audience gets to know Hanna progressively through the enamoured eyes of Michael: she is a passionate lover, she has a special interest in books, and her life revolves routinely between her job and housework. She lives everything at high intensity: she cries when the character of the novel that Michael is reading for her aloud dies, is excited at the idea of going on a cycling trip with Michael, has an outburst of anger when she notices Michael watching her from the other carriage of the tram she works in, and is upset and confused after receiving the news of the work promotion.

This palette of feelings functions to humanise Hanna. The scene in which she becomes emotionally overwhelmed while listening to a children’s choir in an old country church is especially significant in this regard. Hanna cries and laughs in the same time as she listens to the choir’s angelic voices, while Michael (together with the audience) is pleasantly surprised to see how such a simple thing could touch her so deeply. Beside this humanised portrayal constructed “through the eyes of love”, the camera’s gaze focuses on

Hanna as a simple woman living in a poor neighbourhood, lonely (she does not seem to have friends or family) and living a life defined by hard work. The “heaviness” of her life is accentuated by the buckets of coal that she has to bring up the stair every day. The well kept secret of her illiteracy, which the audience learns only during the trial, impacts all her decisions: from the very small ones such as reading a menu during the trip with Michael, to life-changing choices such as giving up her job because she was promoted. All this detailed information about Hanna’s life before the trial, is provided not only to emphasise her humanity, but, as Donahue (2010: 166) claims, is a way to explore “the intriguing question of criminal causality”. Donahue (ibid.) argues that “this studied attention to the working class provenance of the film’s chief perpetrator is not meant to excuse or expunge her guilt but rather to reflect upon how she became an SS guard in the first place”.

In addition to exploring the problem of guilt and offering a more contextualised exploration of the life of women perpetrators, *Downfall* and *The Reader* are notable for a third element of originality in that they invite the possibility of audience identification with their female Nazi characters. *Downfall* and *The Reader* thus shift the focus away from a detached position of accusation to one in which the spectator is encouraged to assume a position of imaginative empathy and ask “What would I have done in their place?” This represents a significant shift in the portrayal of women perpetrators in particular, but is also an audacious and arguably controversial development in Holocaust films in general. The following paragraphs explain the mechanisms that allow such process of identification with perpetrators.

Old Traudl Junge opens the film with a declaration on the impossibility of forgiving herself: “I feel as if I should be angry with that child, that naïve young girl”. But the construction of the phrase has exactly the opposite role: to pinpoint the impossibility of being angry with her, for her childish behaviour and thinking. It is precisely Traudl’s youthful naïveté that is emphasised in the film by associating her, in two key scenes, with children who are the symbol of innocence. In the first scene, Traudl is placed in the

company of Goebbels' six children offering them something to eat while Hitler puts an end to his life. The cinematic alternation between the scenes of heavy dramatic content that show the reactions of Hitler's closest followers before and after his death, and the scenes of cheerful atmosphere in the room where the children are, has the role to point out the gap between two worlds: one weighed down by guilt and another of innocent lightness. While Magda Goebbels desperately throws herself at Hitler's feet imploring him to leave Berlin, on the upper floor the children, happily eating, affirm that they feel safe there and they are not scared of the constant rumbles of bombings (which they think to be thunder). Even if they are caught in the middle of the events, the children are totally unaware of what is really happening – their innocence is protecting them from seeing the brutal reality. By placing Traudl with the children and separating her from the other characters in such a key moment of the film, the filmmaker astutely validates her innocence: she was not able to fully grasp the extent of the events in which she took part. In the second scene, at the end of the film, Traudl finds her way towards freedom hand in hand with a teenage boy who was decorated by Hitler. Like Traudl, the boy became one of Hitler's followers by disobeying his father's warnings and his world fell apart with the death of the Führer and the surrender of the German army. He symbolises "youthful innocence" as he blindly believed in Hitler, fascinated by his charisma and patriotic goals. Their union at the end of the film, in which hand in hand they help each other as they walk among the Russian army, carries the implicit message of their young age as an excuse for the collaboration with Hitler. They were too young and too inexperienced to understand, but their innocence somehow saved them. The epilogue of the film confirms in fact that Traudl was classified as "a young follower" so she was pardoned for collaborating with Hitler on the grounds of her youthfulness. The overall positive and sympathetic portrayal of Traudl, combined with her association with children and the final exoneration by a post-war court, facilitate the identification and favour a benevolent view of her involvement with the Nazis.

While in *Downfall*, Traudl Junge's guilt for collaborating with the Nazis was played down by the verdict of innocence granted by the post-war courtroom, in *The Reader*

Hanna assumes full culpability for the acts she committed as a camp guard. As a result, the process by which the audience is invited to identify with her character is subtler than in *Downfall*. At the film's emotional and philosophical centre sits the unanswered question that Hanna addresses to the judge: "What would you have done?" The shot/reverse-shot sequence between her, the judge, and the audience in the courtroom (represented by Professor Rohl and Michael), functions symbolically to place the burden of the inconvenient question on the shoulders of the judge, the auditors of the trial and finally on the invisible audience of the film. The two scenes that follow represent the search for an answer, and Michael's quest for understanding effectively guides that of the audience. Firstly, the scene of the dispute between Michael and his colleague during the seminar illustrates two different approaches to the trial of the female guards, and in general to the subject of perpetrators. One accuses indiscriminately (not only the guards, but extends guilt to the bystander population) and is moved by the need for punishment, while the other – personified by Michael – is motivated by the desire to understand. Since Michael is the protagonist of the film, the audience is clearly invited to empathise with his decision to seek understanding rather than with the impulsive reaction of his colleague:

Colleague: What are we trying to do?

Michael: We are trying to understand!

Colleague: Six women locked 300 Jews in a church and let them burn.
What is there to understand? Tell me, I'm asking? What is there to understand?³⁰

In the second scene Michael visits a concentration camp before the final hearing of the trial. The visualization of the iconography of persecution (the barracks, the piles of clothes and other belongings, the crematorium) has a double role: to confront Michael (and the audience) with the monstrous reality of the concentration camps and to suggest the inaccessibility of the past – as much as one would like to fully understand, some things will remain deeply buried. In this scene, Michael mediates the position of the spectator, who observes, reflects on the past, but cannot intervene in the trial. Just like the audience, Michael won't be able to disclose it in court or to meet Hanna. His guilty

silence at the trial replicates that of the spectator, who also knows his secret but is unable to disclose it, so that the spectator becomes an accomplice with him in hiding Hanna's secret. The question addressed by Hanna "what would you have done?" remains unanswered, yet continues to operate as a structuring device throughout the film, directing the audience's understanding and identification.

Downfall and *The Reader*, therefore, challenge our understanding of the topic of perpetrators during the Nazi regime and also pave the way for alternative portrayals of Nazi women in European Holocaust cinema. From a cinematic point of view, reshaping female perpetrators from monster-like characters into "ordinary women" makes them appealing to psychological scrutiny and more susceptible to connections with the lives of today's audiences.

5.5. Conclusion

The films examined in this chapter reveal interesting aspects regarding the representation of women as perpetrators and accomplices during Nazism. In the first place, they acknowledge a highly stereotyped portrayal: if dominant images of Nazi women were derived exclusively from cinematic sources, it would be assumed the women working within the Nazi apparatus were little more than obedient, brain-washed secretaries, bloodlust overseers and silent nurses carrying out orders from above. Between 1945 and 2004, the filmic construction of female perpetrators was frozen in one or more of the above categories. In its first six decades, Holocaust cinema has been strikingly deficient of Nazi women: only a handful of films employ women in roles of perpetrators and, when they eventually do, these female characters are vicious, cruel, sexually perverted or incompetent. The highly stereotyped portrayal coupled with the attribution of minor roles that usually last only a few seconds in the film narrative, relegates cinematic Nazi women to an insignificant position in the broader image of perpetrators during the Third Reich.

Moreover, it limits our understanding of the role that women played in the persecution set in place by the Nazis.

Secondly, the gendered representation of perpetrators is discriminatory towards women: while the portrayal of female perpetrators is superficial and highly stereotyped, their male counterparts have received more attention and more nuanced depictions. Films such as *The Murderers Among Us*, *Stars*, *Death is My Trade*, *Amen*, *Good*, illustrate that Nazi men were not all the same and especially that they were not all monsters, but very often ordinary men caught in extraordinary circumstances. The same thing cannot be argued for Nazi women, since the male fantasy of the woman as a monster held a firm grip, until recently, on the representation of female perpetrators in Holocaust films. While the origins of this phenomenon have been traced by Weckel (2005) and Rowland (2013) to the portrayal of female guards during the post-war Allied trials, the persistence of such clichéd images and the unevenness with the representation of male perpetrators seems to point towards patriarchal ideologies within the cinematographic system.

Finally, the chapter claims that the 21st century has witnessed a significant shift in the representation of Nazi women. With *Downfall* and *The Reader*, European Holocaust cinema has undergone an important transition: from earlier sketched depictions that either avoided to deal with female perpetrators or recycled sexist stereotypes of Nazi women, towards more complex and challenging portrayals. For the first time Holocaust films attempts to portray female perpetrators as “ordinary women”, marking a break with previous representational clichés.

The next chapter examines the trajectory undertaken by films in depicting female victims, from early universal images of Jewish women to the process of recovering women’s memories performed by contemporary Holocaust cinema.

Chapter 6

FEMALE VICTIMS IN HOLOCAUST FILMS: FROM UNIVERSALISED PORTRAYALS TO RECOVERED MEMORY

So are you living in Auschwitz? No, I live next to it. Auschwitz is there, unalterable, precise, but enveloped in the skin of memory, an impermeable skin that isolates it from my present self.
(Charlotte Delbo 1995)

6.1. Introduction

According to the film scholar Aaron Kerner (2011: 4), the depiction of victims and perpetrators is “one of the major thematic tropes of a Holocaust film”. Indeed, along with the representation of perpetrators (see Chapter 5), victims are one of the major categories brought to our attention by films about the Holocaust. Content analysis of the corpus under investigation reveals that several recurrent themes emerge in the cinematic depiction of Holocaust victims, namely life in the ghettos, the horrors of concentration camps, the extermination process and the risks associated with hiding. By and large, these topics reflect the main categories of historical research in the area of Holocaust Studies.

The representation of victims is almost a “given” in Holocaust films, since it is difficult to speak about the Holocaust without mentioning its devastating consequences on the lives of innocent people. As a result, the portrayal of victims in Holocaust cinema is often assimilated by scholars into broader topics. For example, Annette Insdorf’s (2003) chapter on the narrative strategies in Holocaust films is mostly concerned with the portrayal of victims, grouped into four main categories: the Jew as a child, the Jew in hiding, the Jew as a beautiful and socially integrated character, and victims doomed by the shadow of their Holocaust legacies. In a similar vein, Lawrence Baron’s (2005)

chapter on the main themes in the Holocaust biopic takes into consideration Jewish victims under the following profiles: the Jew as martyr, the Jew as fugitive and the Jew as inmate. Although fundamental in the overall research on Holocaust films, such analyses have been largely gender-blind. As mentioned in Chapter 3, only two cutting-edge scholars, Esther Fuchs and Judith Doneson, explicitly address the portrayal of women, analysing a relatively large group of Holocaust films. Their exemplary work sets the parameters for this research by highlighting significant gender dynamics within Holocaust cinema: the feminization of the Jew (Doneson, 1978; 1992; 1997), the depiction of women as secondary victims of male-dominated narratives (Fuchs, 1999b) and the portrayal of Jewish women within the virgin/whore dichotomy (Fuchs, 1999a; 2008).

Taking stock of the groundbreaking articles of Fuchs and Doneson, this chapter aims to chart the portrayal of women as victims in European Holocaust films. It looks at how filmmakers have handled female victimhood in different periods since the aftermath of World War II up to the present day, and aims to determine to what extent they have engaged in exploring gendered experiences. Compared to the representation of women perpetrators discussed in Chapter 5, the number of female victims and the screen time allocated to their depiction is significantly greater. By taking into account the myriad of films that depict women as victims of the Holocaust, the challenge has been to decide which cinematic characters are most representative during certain periods. Moreover, this chapter demonstrates how differences in the portrayal of women over time relate to the broader historical context, the Nazi trials, the development of Holocaust research, the emergence of the Feminist movement in the 1970s, and to the collective memory of the Holocaust generally.

The content analysis of gender and victimhood in the selected corpus of films revealed four major stages in the representation of women. In the first stage, which refers to the films made in the immediate aftermath of the war, the portrayal of Jewish women is universalised at the expense of their real Jewish identity. The second stage, which takes

place between the mid 1950s and the end of 1960s, includes a cycle of films that designate the Jewish woman as the epitome of innocent victimhood and exhibit a similar pattern in their portrayal. During the third stage, which occurs between early 1970s and the late 1990s, the depiction of women is diversified to include women in crisis, second generation, sexual abuse and other victims of the Holocaust. Finally the fourth stage, represented by the films made in the Third Millennium, performs a process of recovery of women's voices and memories by portraying them as complex and articulate protagonists of their own stories.

6.2. Universalised Victims: Jewish Women in Early Holocaust Films

The immediate aftermath of the war witnessed the release of 21 films from all corners of Europe (East and West Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Italy, France, Soviet Union, Hungary, Switzerland, Belgium, United Kingdom), which depicted the horrors of the Holocaust, its roots and aftermath. The narratives of these early Holocaust films tackle a variety of subjects, among them antisemitism in pre-war and post-war Germany (*The Blum Affair* 1948, *The Last Illusion* 1949), persecution and resistance in ghettos and concentration camps (*We Lived through Buchenwald* 1946, *The Last Stage* 1948, *Morituri* 1948, *Border Street* 1948, *Distant Journey* 1949), perpetrators leading a normal life in post-war Germany (*The Murderers Are Among Us* 1946), resistance in France (*A Friend Will Come Tonight* 1946) and the fate of post-war displaced children (*The Search* 1948, *Our Children* 1949). Four of these films are particularly significant in the context of this section as they focus on the experiences of Jewish women during the Holocaust: *Marriage in the Shadows* (1947), *The Last Stage* (1948), *Border Street* (1948) and *Distant Journey* (1949).

Interestingly, although these films depict Jewish women in protagonist roles, they arguably converge into an archetypal, universalised portrayal at the expense of real, lived Jewish identities. Due to the post-war climate in which the films have been produced, to

national ideologies or simply to commercial imperatives, the most emblematic Jewish female characters in post-war Holocaust films are portrayed as universalised victims through characters that provide a broad spectrum of identification. Similar tendencies, in which the cinematic image of the Jew is “de-Judainised” and “de-Semitised” by removing typically Jewish characteristics or cultural markers, have been highlighted in Hollywood cinema of the 1940s and 1950s by Patricia Erens (1984: 136) and Nathan Abrams (2012: 5). Similarly, the renowned historian Omer Bartov (2005: 48) claims that in early post-war films, “the ‘Jew’ as a victim could be represented most powerfully precisely when he revealed no traces of Jewish identity”. Hence, the universalisation of Jewish women in the immediate aftermath of the war is not necessarily a negative process; on the contrary, it appears to be rather a cinematic strategy that allows filmmakers to depict the persecution of the Jews, despite the fact that most countries tried to emphasise their own national suffering during the war. For this reason, the universalisation of the Jewish female protagonist is also an excellent example of how cinematic representations are altered to reflect present concerns, such as national suffering and/or the heroism of communist fighters. In order to better understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to take a step back and examine the historical context of European countries in the aftermath of the war.

Known as the deadliest conflict in modern history, the Second World War offered a desolate post-war picture: countless displaced people, countries in ruin, devastated by the war, and 72 million dead. Among this staggering number of human losses, the Holocaust accounted for 12 million people sentenced to death as a result of Nazi genocidal policies (Friedman, 2011). As the historian Jonathan Friedman (2011: 1) explains:

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC defines the Holocaust as the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies during World War II. (...) At the same time, while the Jews were the primary victims, slated for total physical annihilation, six million non-Jewish victims also suffered grievous oppression and destruction.

However, these numbers were only known much later, since the Holocaust and the Jewish extermination gradually emerged during the trials of Nazi criminals. According to Devin Pendas (2011), the genocide of the Jews rarely emerged as a major crime in the trials because the countries that had been occupied during the war were mostly interested in exposing the atrocities committed against their own citizens. As he further explains, the crimes perpetrated by two of the main culprits of the Holocaust, Rudolph Höss, the commandant of Auschwitz, and Amon Goeth, the commandant of Plaszow labour camp, were accounted for during the Polish trials not as crimes against the Jews, but against Polish citizens (Pendas, 2011: 427). Pendas maintains that it was the Eichmann trial in 1961 in Jerusalem and the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial of 1963-1965 that specified the Holocaust “as a distinct and central element within the broader universe of Nazi atrocities” (Pendas, 2011: 432). Similarly the historian Raul Hilberg (2008: 25-28) claims that before the 1960s, in the “early period of research and writing” of what was to be later called “Holocaust” the victims were “a mass of indistinguishable people”.

The tendency of countries to emphasise their own national suffering in the aftermath of the war is significant since it helps us to understand the way in which national cinemas engage with the topic of Jewish persecution in its early representations. The four landmark films mentioned above exhibit interesting features in their portrayal of Jewish women as universalised victims. While the universalisation facilitates a broad spectrum of identification with the main protagonist, it simultaneously allows sub-discourses about the Jewish persecution during the war. *Marriage in the Shadows* (1947) by Kurt Maetzig is the first film in post-war Germany to tackle the subject of Jewish persecution during Nazism. Based on the novel “*Es wird schon nicht so schlimm*” (*It Won't Be So Bad*) by Hans Schweikart, the film is inspired by the real story of Meta and Joachim Gottschalk, two well-known actors in Nazi Germany, who committed suicide to avoid separation and the deportation of Meta who was Jewish. The German filmmaker Kurt Maetzig was familiar with the subject since his own mother, being of Jewish origin, had committed suicide after the antisemitic Nuremberg Laws were issued in 1935.³¹

Given that the film was produced in East Germany and released only two years after the end of the war, it is unsurprising that the protagonist Elisabeth Maurer is hardly depicted as Jewish. As Robert Shandley (2001) explains, the Nazi legacy of antisemitic representations of Jews was a hindrance to anyone attempting to make a film about the Jewish persecution in post-war Germany. The vulgar language of the Third Reich cinema coded the image of the Jew as a morally corrupt and physically repugnant character. In the wake of such negative representations pervading German media before the war, filmmakers had to respond to the challenge of finding a new, innovative portrayal of the Jew. As Shandley (ibid.: 79-80) claims, filmmakers opted to “dispense with stereotypification of Jewishness altogether” and to “generalize the identities of those who suffered under Nazi persecution” in an attempt to “attract sympathies of an audience for a segment of the population they had learned to hate”. Shandley (2001: 80) further points out that, from a commercial point of view, screening the atrocities committed by Germans against the Jews “at a time when Germans were being punished for those crimes”, would have been totally counter-productive because it would have gone against the expectations of national audiences in defeated Germany. Shandley’s comments are illustrative of how perceptions about the audience’s desires and sensitivities impact upon cinematic representation of history. For example, Kurt Maetzig, director of *Marriage in the Shadows* (1947), anticipated that the claims of German people regarding their own national victimhood and the antisemitic attitude that did not simply vanish after the war, would have had a negative impact on the reception of his film. This explains the universalisation of its main character, Elisabeth Maurer, who was constructed to meet these expectations of post-war German cinema.

Elisabeth is portrayed as a beautiful and young woman, at the peak of her artistic career, adored by the fans and courted by two men: Hans Wienland and Herbert Blohm. At the beginning of the film, the Hans - Elisabeth – Herbert love triangle adds romantic intrigue, as she is courted by both men, but does not accept the advances of either. Throughout the film, Elisabeth is remarkable for her elegant presence and stylish clothing as she often wears long dresses, fur coats and fashionable hats. Her “Aryan” appearance and

distinctive presence are misleading, therefore, as there is no indication of her Jewishness and the film does not signal the drama of the Jewish persecution about to erupt. Significantly, as Shandley (2001: 86) observes, Elisabeth's Jewishness is made known much later in the film, after she has already won the audience's sympathy. Once Elisabeth's Jewishness is disclosed, the film gradually introduces elements of Jewish persecution that culminate with the *Kristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass) pogrom. As Elisabeth marries Hans and is banned from the stage, she becomes visually static and passive in contrast with her initial exuberance. The scene in which she watches the pogrom of the Jews from behind the curtains of her bedroom during *Kristallnacht* is significant, as it signals her temporal safety, but also suggests that she is trapped within the confinement of her apartment. This image stands out in stark contrast with her previous exuberance, whether on the stage or at the Baltic Sea running on the beach with Hans. Interestingly, even after the film shifts its focus to the Jewish tragedy, Elisabeth exhibits few, if any, Jewish markers. Moreover, she is described in antithesis to the other characters, whose Jewishness is well highlighted in the film. As Shandley (2001: 87) explains:

One of the successes of the film is its depiction of the arbitrariness of her characterization. She never feels comfortable in the role, nor is she ever believable in it. The only sign of her Jewishness is her sense of solidarity with the other Jewish characters. And, the portrayal of Jewishness in those characters is also done through language, through names such as Bernstein and Silberman or through explicit statements about their situations.

By blurring her identity as a Jew and universalising Elisabeth's character, the film facilitates powerful images of persecution in the background of the romantic drama without risking losing its post-war audience. The film's dramatic closure re-directs the audience's attention away from the generalities of the Jewish tragedy to the personal drama of two lovers who chose to die rather than be separated.

A similar discourse on the representation of Jewish women as universalised victims is delivered by two Polish filmmakers, Wanda Jakubowska in *The Last Stage* (1948) and

Aleksandr Ford in *Border Street* (1948). In the case of *Marriage in the Shadows*, the watering down of Jewish identification was attributable to commercial imperatives, whereas in the case of *The Last Stage* and *Border Street* the universalisation of the female characters is more closely related to the directors' ideological worldview. Both films are underpinned by Jakubowska and Ford's self-proclaimed communist sensibilities, and thus bear the stamp of the post-war political context in Poland. Several factors need to be taken into consideration, therefore, before focusing on the portrayal of the two Jewish women in *The Last Stage* and *Border Street*.

Firstly, as Marek Haltof (2012: 2) acknowledges, the version of history prevailing in Poland after the war was the communist one, based on the dual tropes of resistance and martyrdom of the Poles during the German occupation. This account of history left little room for narratives exploring the persecution of the Jews. Secondly, the fragile Polish-Jewish relationship in post-war Poland climaxed in the Kielce pogrom against the Jews in July 1946, in which forty-one Jews were killed (Haltof, 2012: 56). Last but not least, it is significant that Jakubowska and Ford were both fervent communists and had been subjected to the persecution set in place by the Nazis. As an active resistance fighter, Wanda Jakubowska was imprisoned for nearly three years in the Pawiak prison and in the concentration camps of Ravensbrück and Auschwitz. It is in Auschwitz that she came up with the idea of the film, whose script she would write with Gerda Schneider, another fellow inmate, immediately after the war (Loewy, 2004: 181). Aleksandr Ford, on the other hand, was Jewish and survived the war and the persecution only by moving to the Soviet Union. The combined impact of these factors is a cinematic discourse in which the Jewish element, though not absent, is integrated in the mainstream depiction of collective victimhood and heroism during the war.

A closer look at the two films reveals that Martha, the protagonist of *The Last Stage*, and Jadzia, her counterpart in *Border Street*, are portrayed as symbols of the communist egalitarian ideal at the expense of their Jewish identity. Since its inception, the communist doctrine emphasised that freedom for women could be reached only through

communism. While recognising their equality with men in all spheres of activity, communism stressed the need for hard-working, politically aware and emancipated women, who would share the same revolutionary ideals as men (Schuster, 1971). Accordingly, both Martha and Jadzia are portrayed as capable and heroic women who assume an active role in shaping history and in symbolising the hope that characterises the closure of each film. They are beautiful and good-hearted, ready to sacrifice for their loved ones or in the name of an ideal. In several circumstances they prove to be as strong and valiant, if not more so, than the male characters portrayed in the film.

In Jakubowska's film, the Jewish interpreter Martha Weiss shares the leading role with several other brave female protagonists: Helene, a Polish girl who gives birth in the camp, Anna, a German nurse, and Eugenia, a Russian doctor. Martha does not figure in the film from the beginning, as she arrives on a night transfer of 2,500 Jews. She is a newcomer and the filmmaker uses this pretext to gradually expose the atrocities of the camp: the brutal separation of families once unloaded from the train, the confiscation of personal belongings, the routine of cutting hair and tattooing numbers on arms, the selection for the gas chambers and the existence of a crematorium that Martha believes at first to be a factory. Due to her fluency in different languages, Martha is chosen as an interpreter, which will result in a less harsh treatment in the camp and the possibility to keep her hair, while all the other Jews have their heads shaved. The screen time allocated to Martha in the first half of the film is relatively little; she gets a more significant role once she becomes involved in the resistance. "Here in the camp I've learned to think,"³² confesses Martha to Tadek, another member of the underground resistance. Together they will play an important role in smuggling out plans for the destruction of Auschwitz. Although not explored in depth, the film alludes to a romantic connection between Martha and Tadek, played out through their conversational familiarity and, especially, Martha's concern while waiting for Tadek in the hiding place outside the camp. Their mission is successful, although they are later caught and tortured by the Nazis. Interestingly, the film does not provide further knowledge about Tadek's fate, focusing instead on Martha's martyrdom, in a highly dramatic closure of the film. Condemned to death, she delivers a speech under

the gallows, cuts her wrists and pushes away the camp commandant. While the Allied planes fly over Auschwitz generating chaos among inmates and Nazis, Martha pronounces her last words, as a testament not only to those who survived, but also for the generations to come: “Never let Auschwitz happen again”.

Significantly, despite the fact that Martha’s character is inspired by the legendary figure of the Jewish resistance fighter Mala Zimetbaum (Loewy, 2004: 182; Haltof, 2012: 39), the elements that identify her as a Jew are minimal. With the exception of the yellow star on her coat at the arrival in the camp, Martha does not seem or act Jewish, although she is receptive to the plight of her people when the Jewish women are called out for selection. Martha’s Jewishness remains in the background, as her character is gradually defined by elements related to the underground resistance in the camp. One would expect that a Holocaust film made by a female director who was herself imprisoned in a concentration camp, might offer more insight into the experiences of women, but clearly the political agenda of the time did not allow for this perspective. As Hanno Loewy claims, Wanda Jakubowska was asked several times by Film Polski (the National Board of Polish Film) to significantly alter the screenplay, placing the emphasis on resistance, political impact and on the “conscious fight” (Loewy, 2004: 181, 183).

Similar tropes are at work in *Jadzia Bialkówna*’s character in the other Polish post-war production *Border Street* by Aleksandr Ford. The film narrates the persecution of the Jews in Warsaw beginning with the outbreak of the war in Poland, culminating with the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The action is seen through the eyes of five teenage children belonging to families living in the same building but with different economic and social backgrounds. *Jadzia Bialkówna*, the only female character among the five friends, is a beautiful teenage girl, with long, blonde hair. The daughter of a doctor, she has a privileged life: she takes piano lessons and has a private teacher Miss Klara. Climbing on the roof, escaping through the window or fighting with the boys seem to be a part of her daily life, despite her good education and the scolding she gets from Miss Klara. *Jadzia*’s loyalty and courage are appreciated by her male friends, who treat her like an equal and

enjoy her company. As in the case of Elisabeth in *Marriage in the Shadows*, Jadzia's Jewishness is revealed much later in the film. The fact that she is a Jew comes as a surprise not only for the audience, but for Jadzia too, since her father has carefully guarded this secret, attempting to erase any proof of their Jewish ancestry. The revelation is mostly formal as Jadzia's portrayal contrasts with the depictions of other Jews in the film, who are all dark haired, weak and in most cases resigned to their tragic fate. Jadzia instead refuses to comply with the situation, and proves to be fearless in her determination to be reunited with her father who has been sent to the ghetto. Two scenes are particularly important in highlighting her strong character: in the first one, she does not hesitate to enter the ghetto in search of her father, despite the warnings of her older friend Bronek about the hunger and spread of typhoid fever. The second scene takes place in hiding when Jadzia is found by a Nazi man and responds to his threatening attitude by bravely spiting his face.

Jadzia in *Border Street* and Martha in *The Last Stage* are both well-defined female characters that facilitate a broad spectrum of identification by emphasising their heroic attributes and noble spirit, while minimising the elements that label them as Jewish. Despite the dramatic narrative, elements of a romantic plot are present within both films. *The Last Stage* alludes to a relationship between Martha and Tadek, while *Border Street* has a scene of innocent flirting in which Jadzia gives a ring to her friend Fred.

The Jewish doctor Hana Kaufmannová in *Distant Journey* by Czech director Alfréd Radok is a slightly different case. Among the four productions taken into consideration, this film engages the most in picturing the Jewish persecution. As in the previous cases, there is a personal link with the filmmaker's background as Alfréd Radok lost his Jewish father and grandfather in the ghetto of Theresienstadt, near Prague (Hames, 2010: 98). The film artistically mixes together newsreel footage from Nazi propaganda films with the love story between Hana and Toník, a Jew and a Gentile, against the backdrop of the increasing Nazi persecution. It is not a coincidence that, here again, the Jew is a woman. Contrary to the previously discussed films, Hana's Jewish identity is clear from the

beginning and the viewer is reminded about it throughout the film through visual codes (the presence of Jewish ritual objects around the house, the yellow star she wears) and plot development. Hana loses her job as a doctor after the implementation of the antisemitic laws, she marries her colleague Toník out of love but also to avoid deportation, her parents are sent to Theresienstadt ghetto, where she will eventually end up trying to spare Toník from being sent to a labour camp as the spouse of a Jewess.

The film highlights the tragic fate of the Jews, their different reactions in the face of increasing persecution, from fleeing abroad, to suicide, heartless neighbours taking advantage of their tragedy, the de-humanising transformation of people in the ghetto as they fight for a potato or a piece of bread, widespread typhus, harsh treatment, violence and death. Despite the focus on the specificity of the Jewish persecution, however, Hana's portrayal in *Distant Journey* acquires a universal register. Viewers can easily identify with her as she is beautiful, elegant, a woman of career and of culture. Although Jewish, she remains somehow above the tragedy that engulfs her own people: first by temporarily escaping deportation, and then in the ghetto where she does not succumb to despair, as the others do. While the other Jews seem to be an indistinguishable mass of people, dressed similarly and equally doomed, Hana stands out through her bright and distinctive presence. She refuses to enter the spiral of selfishness and subhuman behaviour that seems to predominate in the ghetto, refusing to fight for a bed and preferring to starve than to quarrel for a potato. Illustrative in this sense is also the scene of the arrival in Theresienstadt of a train loaded with typhus victims; while all inmates are caught by panic, Hana stands by the train as it arrives and then, fully equipped as a doctor, walks into the middle of the victims.

The ending of the film, where Hana and Toník as they walk hand in hand through the cemetery of Theresienstadt, is especially significant. This symbolic scene carries a double message: on the one hand, it suggests that love is stronger than death since the two protagonists are reunited after the war, and on the other it suggests that the Jews were not the only victims of the Nazi persecution as the cemetery appears to have more Christian

graves than Jewish ones. Toník's voiceover, claiming that "Man was victorious", levels any distinction between Jew and non-Jew, amalgamating the different categories of victims and survivors. Film scholar Jiří Cieslar (2005: 222) claims that the importance of *Distant Journey* lies in the representation of the evil of war at three levels: "as a Holocaust tragedy; as the universal tragedy of man; and lastly as a metaphor for an inner prison which potentially threatens each of us". The last two aspects point out the universality of the filmic message that touches deeply but goes beyond the Jewish tragedy.

All the four films discussed here achieved considerable success: *Marriage in the Shadows* had 10 million viewers in its first release (Shandley, 2001: 83), *The Last Stage* was very successful in Poland and abroad (Mazierska, 2006: 153) and won awards in two film festivals according to the Internet Movie Database, *Border Street* received many awards and had more than eight million viewers (Haltorf, 2012: 53) and *Distant Journey*, although banned for forty years in former Czechoslovakia, is considered "one of the country's film masterpieces" (Cieslar, 2005: 217). Seen from today's perspective, their success can be explained through their use of a common formula: they all rely on melodramatic conventions, romance is always present in the plot, and they offer a broad spectrum of identification mediated by protagonists who are universalised and idealised. Most importantly, the four films have in common a depiction of Jewish women as universal icons of victimhood during the Nazi persecution.

It is worth noting that all of the films that universalise the portrayal of Jewish women were released in the immediate post-war period. By contrast, 1950s European Holocaust cinema (with a couple of exceptions in the latter half) was characterised by the absence of Jewish women as protagonists. Paradoxically, it was the American public who would witness a further transformation of the Jewess as universal symbol of the Nazi persecution, namely in the story of Anne Frank, whose diary was published in the United States in the early 1950s, and shortly after dramatised for television (in 1952 as *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and in 1959 as *The Diary of Anne Frank*), marking what the historian Lawrence Baron (2005: 34) called "the decade of the diary". Not only

does Anne represent “the universal figure in the film” (Doneson, 1992: 150), but the internationally acclaimed film *The Diary of Anne Frank* universalises the Holocaust itself by adjusting its features “in order to allow a broader consensus of the population to identify with the event – this, inevitably, at the cost of its Jewish particularity” (Doneson, 2002: 61).

6.3 Jewish Woman: the Epitome of Holocaust Victimhood

Since the mid-1950s, the cinematic figure of the Jewish woman has re-emerged in European Holocaust films. Given the universalised portrayal of the few Jewish female characters in the immediate aftermath of the war, it is important to acknowledge that, between mid-1950 and the late 1960s, Holocaust cinema did exactly the opposite: it recognised the Jews as the main target of the Nazi persecution and designated the Jewish woman as the epitome of innocent victimhood. This period was characterised by the emergence of a significant cycle of European films that identified Jewish women as prime victims of the Holocaust and exhibited a similar pattern in their portrayal. These films are: *Spring in Budapest* (1955), *Stars* (1959), *Kapò* (1960), *Romeo, Juliet And Darkness* (1960), *The Ninth Circle* (1960), *Samson* (1961), *The Gold of Rome* (1961), *The Shop on Main Street* (1965), *We'll Go into Town* (1966), *The Square of Saint Elisabeth* (1966), *Cremator* (1969). Films such as *The Story of a Murder* (1965), *Witness Out of Hell* (1966) and *Dita Saxová* (1968), while sharing a similar portrayal of women, introduced some novel features (the post-war narrative, the flashback structure and the sexual abuse of women) and thus bridged the gap between this cycle and the subsequent wave of cinematic representations of women heralded by the 1970s. It is worth noting that the 1960s, the decade during which twelve of these films were made, saw the release of only four other films centred on Jewish male victims (*The Fifth Rider is Fear* 1965, *Diamonds of the Night* 1964, *Samson* 1961, *Professor Mamlock* 1961) and another four that focused on Jewish children (*The Two of Us* 1967, *Naked Among Wolves* 1963, *Birth Certificate* 1961 and *Conspiracy of Hearts* 1960). Such a high ratio of films (12 out of

48, or 1:4) that single out Jewish women as victims is unique within European Holocaust cinema. As further sections will show, beginning with the 1970s, the sharp increase of Holocaust films was not paralleled by a similar increase in the number of cinematic Jewesses.

The unprecedented wave of Jewish women as prime victims of Holocaust films can be explained by at least three related factors: the evolution of Holocaust historiography, Doneson (1992)'s concept of "feminization of the Jew", and finally the cinematic clichés of women's representation prior to the emergence of feminist theories about film. Several scholars acknowledge the shift between 1950s and 1960s as a watershed in Holocaust historiography due to the increased recognition of the distinct place the Jews had in the extermination politics of the Nazis. It was in the same period that the capitalised word Holocaust started to be employed in reference to the Jewish tragedy. Referring to Gerd Korman (1972)'s article, Jon Petrie (2000: 57) claims that this semantic change occurred between 1957 and 1959. Meanwhile, Sol Steinmetz (2005: 70-71) contends that, although the term was sporadically employed prior to the 1960s, it was first recorded as a capitalised word in a book entitled "The Holocaust Kingdom" published by Alexander Donat in 1963. Despite the lack of consensus among scholars regarding when the "Holocaust" began to signify the mass murder of the Jews set in place by the Nazis, the adoption of the term indicates a major recognition in the 1960s of the fact that the Jews were singled out as a distinct category within the Nazi's murderous policies. The trial of Adolf Eichmann, one of the main perpetrators of the Nazi crimes, which took place in Israel in 1961, was a key contributory factor in this recognition, and was transformed in a mass-mediated event broadcast on radio and television throughout the world (Laqueur, 2001: xvi; Bernard-Donals, 2006: 29; Crowe, 2008: 433; Pendas, 2011: 432; Haggith and Newman, 2005: 10; Gaetani, 2006: 15; Waxman, 2006: 115). As historian Michael Bernard-Donals (2006: 30) explains: "The great success of the trial, in the eyes of many, was that it pointed to the particularity of the Holocaust as a crime aimed at Jews". The trial of the Auschwitz guards held between 1963 and 1965 also had an important role in publicising the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust (Pendas, 2011: 431-432; Baron, 2005:

41). Taken together, all these elements put the Jewish persecution placed under the spotlight, and European films did not delay in acknowledging it as core element within the Nazi policies of extermination.

These historical events clearly had a significant influence on the representation of victims in Holocaust films, in the sense that they were instrumental in placing Jewish characters at the centre of their narratives. Interestingly, as the Jews emerged in the 1960s as a distinct category within the mass of twelve million victims, filmmakers turned towards female rather than male characters for the role of victims. Several other elements need to be taken into consideration, however, in order to understand why the female figure fitted so perfectly the profile of the victim in Holocaust cinema.

To some extent, the proliferation of the image of Jewess as epitome for the Holocaust victim can be explained by the paradigm of the “feminization of the Jew”. According to historian Judith Doneson (1992: 139), the filmic representations of Jews recycle some of the old negative stereotypes that led to the Holocaust itself. She argues that most of Holocaust films have allowed these clichéd images to linger by portraying the Jews as powerless and passive characters. As Doneson (1992: 140) claims:

The overriding vision that informs films concerned with the Holocaust is one based on ‘popular theology,’ that of the Jews as weak, passive, somewhat feminine being protected by a strong Christian/gentile, the male, in what concerns to symbolize a male-female relationship.

Doneson (1992: 140) further argues that, such a depiction is rooted in “racist thinking, which often perceived the Jew as having a feminine nature.” In her three articles on this topic, Doneson (1978; 1992; 1997) analyses some of the films above such as *Stars*, *Kapò*, *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness*, *The Gold of Rome*, *The Shop on Main Street*, *Lacombe, Lucien*, *Black Thursday*, and three American ones - *The Great Dictator*, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, *Schindler’s List*. Based on this limited number of films, she asserts that the “feminization of the Jew” is a pattern that lingers in numerous Holocaust films from *The Great Dictator* (1940) right up to *Schindler’s List* (1993) by associating the survival of

the Jew with the benevolent attitude of Gentile people (Doneson, 1997: 149). Although the trope of the feminised Jew is undoubtedly important in all of the films mentioned by Doneson (and indeed all of the others discussed in this section), her statement needs to be challenged on at least two points.

Firstly, if we refer strictly to European Holocaust cinema, there is no consistent evidence for the survival of the “feminization of the Jew” after the late 1970s. As I shall point out further in this chapter, the filmic representation of Jewish characters changes greatly over time, and later representations of strong, complex characters challenge subsequent claims about the feminization of the Jew as a general pattern. Examples of such later films are *For Those I Loved* (1983), *Korczak* (1990), *Aimee and Jaguar* (1999) and *Train of Life* (1999). The films released in the 2000s use first-person narrative voices and shift attention away from the dynamics of feminisation towards concepts such as trauma, post-memory, survivor testimony and gendered memories. The feminisation of the Jew may appear in some recent films, but not as a significant paradigm of representation. In the same vein, historian Lawrence Baron (2005: 104) acknowledges that “in the 1980s, this rigid gender stereotyping started to break down”. He further claims that some recent films reverse the dynamic between the Gentile and the Jew by portraying the latter as the initiator of change.

Secondly, the portrayal of victims as feminine does not belong exclusively to the Holocaust. To a large extent, all victims of war and atrocity are feminised. According to sociologist Ronit Lentin, the world’s catastrophes are gendered and feminised by adopting images of women as tokens for atrocity. As Lentin (2000c: 97-98) claims:

The figure of woman is the chosen representative image of catastrophe. (...) Woman as universal victim, motherhood as the epitome of suffering, shattered female beauty as symbol of ‘man’s inhumanity to man’, catastrophe’s feminised images served for media consumption as part of a lexicon of victimhood.

In addition to this, the image of women as icons of victimhood, innocent and passive, waiting to be rescued by a male hero, goes hand in hand with the representational requirements of classic cinema. It was not until 1972, “the watershed year for feminist film theory” according to Annette Kuhn (1990: 75), that feminist scholars started to highlight and challenge the biased cinematic representation of women. Before this, with very few exceptions, women were restricted to a range of roles that defined them strictly in relation to their male counterparts in film. According to filmmaker Budd Boetticher, quoted by Laura Mulvey (1985: 309) in her seminal article published in 1975 on the peripheral role assigned to women in cinema:

What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance.

According to Mulvey, the male gaze of classic cinema structured the film upon a narrow stereotyping that assigned to men an active position as bearers of the look and relegated women to a passive, exhibitionist role as objects of voyeuristic display. For Mulvey (1985: 309), “the pleasure of looking has been split between active/male and passive/female”.

The films about the Holocaust made between the mid-1950s and the late 1960s reflect much of this patriarchal narrative – and hence spectatorial - dynamic. The Jewish woman functions as the catalyst that enables men - the real protagonists of the filmic narrative - to exhibit their courage as well as their desire for the Jewess. As the male characters take on active roles in protecting and attempting to rescue the Jewess, the latter is represented as a passive recipient of help. Moreover, in most cases the Jewish woman actually hinders male efforts to save her and the film holds the Jewess accountable for her own death. A perfect example of this pattern is *Spring in Budapest* which unfolds as a love story between Zoltan, a deserting soldier, and Jutka, a beautiful twenty-year-old Jewish girl hiding in the house of her auntie. When the relatives complain that her presence in the house endangers all their lives, Jutka leaves without notice, leading to her arrest and

execution. Zoltan's search for Jutka is finalised with a poignant scene that takes place in prison where the two meet. Their brief dialogue is very suggestive as it highlights several aspects: firstly, she is resigned to her fate, secondly she acknowledges that her passivity was not perhaps the right attitude and thirdly, she begs for his help. The film emphasises that only Zoltan can save her but, despite his efforts, Jutka is killed. Jutka's death plays a significant role as the catalyst that transforms Zoltan from a deserter who just wants to survive into an active member of the partisan resistance.

It is worth noting the striking resemblance between *Spring in Budapest* and some of the subsequent films in this cycle, which are – with few exceptions - variations on the same theme. *Stars* is a similarly doomed love story between a German soldier, Walter, and the Jewess Ruth, interned in a transit camp from a small Bulgarian village. *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* takes place in Prague and is about Pavel's efforts to hide in the attic, startling Hanka with whom he falls in love, while *We'll Go into Town* follows the story of the Jewish Lenka in love with Ivan, a local partisan, in a small Yugoslavian village. In *The Square of Saint Elisabeth*, Slovakian Igor struggles to get his girlfriend christened, while the protagonists of *The Ninth Circle* and *The Gold of Rome* go as far as marrying the Jewess, although in the end none of them is able to save her from death. In all these films, the helpless female figure is depicted by contrast to the male active one who endeavours to achieve her salvation.

The Shop on Main Street is something of an exception in that it does not narrate a love story but rather one of mutual friendship and growing affection between an old Jewish shopkeeper, Rozalia, and the 'Aryan' supervisor of the shop, Tono. Following a similar narrative pattern, however, Tono does everything in his power to save Rozalia from the fate that awaits her, while all other Jews are being gathered in the town square and deported. Rozalia, however, forgetful and old, tests Tono's patience and resourcefulness as she refuses to see the tragedy surrounding her. The ending in each of these films is significant as the Jewess willingly chooses a certain death because she does not want to jeopardise the life of the others (*Spring in Budapest*, *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness*, *We'll*

Go into Town), because she wants to share the fate of her fellow Jews (*Stars*, *The Gold of Rome*), because she does not grasp the full extent of her situation (*The Shop on Main Street*) or because she simply gives up (*The Ninth Circle*). Despite the efforts of their male counterparts to rescue them, these women adopt a passive and resigned attitude towards survival, which inevitably leads them to death.

Without exception, all of the Jewish female characters mentioned above are beautiful both physically and spiritually, or what Esther Fuchs (1999a) refers to as “beautiful souls”). As Fuchs (1999a: 97) claims, Jewish heroines “are glorified for being high-minded, innocent, optimistic, humane, kind, beautiful, and asexual.” Although Fuchs’s sample shares only one film with the corpus analysed here, her statement is relevant as all of the women mentioned above fit her description, with the exception that they are not all asexual. It is worth noting that all of the filmmakers emphasise the humanity and exceptional qualities of their Jewish female characters, both verbally and visually. Jutka in *Spring in Budapest* and Hanka in *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* both aspire to become physicians, while Lenka dreams of being able to afford eye surgery for her blind little brother. Perhaps the most eloquent example is the scene in which Ruth in the film *Stars* proffers her ideals of humanity and love. Ruth is viewed in close-up through a low angle shot on the background of the cloudy sky, which has a twofold purpose: to give strength to her poetic statement and to portray Ruth in a divine light, suggesting her sainthood. Ruth later challenges Walter by saying that he is afraid to love and claiming that to love somebody means to take action by doing something for that person. This latter phrase hints at Walter’s inability to save her at the end of the film. In spite of this, Walter changes under the presence and righteous attitude of Ruth; after his unsuccessful attempt to rescue his loved one, Walter becomes involved in the resistance.

Two obvious exceptions to this pattern are *Kapò* and *Samson*, in which the female character undergoes a transformation under the influence of the male character. Out of love for the communist Sasha, Edith/Nicole in *Kapò* changes from a selfish and ruthless kapo into a resistance fighter. Similarly, for the sake of love, Lucyna in *Samson* chooses

to finally assume her identity, thereby abandoning her safe hiding place and returning to the Jewish ghetto at the cost of her life. Nevertheless, in both cases, it is the presence of male characters that propels the narrative forward. While *Samson* is centred on the protagonist Jakub Gold, *Kapò* features three male characters who play a significant role in Edith's transformation as a character: the camp doctor saves Edith's life by giving her the identity of a political prisoner who died that same night, the SS man gives her a privileged status in the camp, and finally the Russian inmate revives Edith's humanity. The Jewess's character evolves, therefore, only in relation to the male figures.

By and large, all of the films in this cycle portray women from within the constraints of the male perspective. In some of the films, this is emphasised by the male voiceover that guides the narrative (*Stars* and *Cremator*), by the flashback structure of the film (*Romeo, Juliet and Darkness*) or by the subjective shots from the male point of view. *Cremator* is the most illustrative of these devices as the whole film is structured as a male, nightmarish vision of life. The protagonist, Karl Kopfrkingl, is a Czech cremator obsessed with the after life, reincarnation and blood purity, which kills his own family. Throughout the film, the voice of Lakmé, his Jewish wife, is heard only a few times in superfluous dialogues. The film is instead dominated by long monologues and excessive close-ups, combined with claustrophobic shots from Karl's point of view. Several times the protagonist gazes directly into the camera, engaging with the audience, from a decidedly authorial position. The most suggestive of these is the scene of the crime, built upon the discrepancy between Lakmé's muted face and the hypnotic voice of Karel, who tells her exactly what to do. At first puzzled and later engulfed by terror as she realises the intentions of her beloved husband, Lakmé is totally passive, and puts up no resistance. The filmmaker highlights Karel's punctilious gestures who, after the cold-blooded murder, takes time to tie her shoelace and to feed the cat just beneath the hanging body. Lakmé in this film is merely the object of Karel's insane obsession and the perfect symbol of the victim – passive, with no voice of her own, submissive into death.

Three films from this decade (1960s), *The Story of a Murder*, *Witness Out of Hell* and *Dita Saxová*, adopt a different approach to Jewish women. Located in the aftermath of the war, these films make extensive use of the flashback technique to highlight the trauma lived by the female characters and the impossibility of a normal life for the Holocaust victims. The suicide of the Jewish woman in both *Witness Out of Hell* and *Dita Saxová* and the complexity of the plots seem to suggest new trajectories opening up in the portrayal of female victims. Nevertheless, in these cases the role of the woman also rotates around the male figures. The dichotomy of the passive Jewish woman versus the active male character is again the cornerstone of the films' narrative structure. In *Witness Out of Hell*, the story of Lea Weiss is first spoken by two men, a war crime prosecutor and an old friend of Lea's. Only later is she introduced in the film, and she refuses to speak about her experience as a camp inmate. It is therefore the two male characters who once more take an active role in helping her to deal with the past and in trying to convince her to testify against one of the perpetrators.

Taken together, the Jewish women in this cycle of films are mysterious and inaccessible, reduced to the status of iconic figures, but with no subjectivity outside of male experience and perception, which determines whether they live or die. Moreover, the exceptional beauty of these women and the frequent close-ups used freeze the action into contemplative moments, emphasising their status as images of male fantasy (Mulvey, 1985: 62). Significantly, there is a striking physical similarity between these young, attractive brunettes (with the exception of the protagonist in *The Shop on Main Street*). Their dark hair and eyes can be considered a clichéd image of the Jew, although as Molly Haskell (1987) claims the brunette girl is the typical feminine image in the films of the sixties and the seventies. According to Haskell (1987: 329-330):

The ideal white woman of the sixties and seventies was not a woman at all, but a girl, an ingenue, a mail-order cover girl: regular featured, generally a brunette, whose "real person" credentials were proved by her inability to convey any emotion beyond shock or embarrassment and an inarticulateness that was meant to prove her "sincerity".

Cinema's preference for the Jewish woman as the epitome of suffering includes but goes beyond the mere recycling of Jewish stereotypes pointed out by Doneson. Its roots can be traced in the more general tendency to feminise the victims of atrocities, and also in the cinematic codes of representation prevailing at the time when the films were made. It is worth noting the wide variety of countries that produced these films: Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland, East and West Germany. From all corners of Europe, therefore, the films made between the mid-1950s to the late 1960s adopt the image of the Jewish woman as token of victimhood. The risks of this leveling process in what concerns representations of Jewish women, are suggestively pointed out by James Young. According to Young (2009), the arts of Holocaust memory often split the women "from their lives and deaths, their stories and experiences." As Young (*ibid.*: 1778) further explains:

We may hold the pain of women in high regard, but when we regard it, we also find spectacle in it, converting their suffering into cultural, even psychological, objects around which we tell our own stories, find large meanings, fixed and full of symbolic portent.

By raising Jewish women to the status of epitome, European Holocaust cinema performs a similar process as the one mentioned by Young: it levels all victims in the process to accommodate cinematic, political, historical, ideological and/or commercial constraints, and it plays on ready-made clichés for the audience to easily read the film. Such a process goes against more nuanced portrayals and a deeper understanding of women with "their stories and experiences".

From the 1970s onwards, however, the depiction of female victims in Holocaust films became more varied and began to exhibit features intended to challenge the image of Jewish women as the epitome of victimhood. As explored in the section below, films move away from uniform portrayals of Jewish women towards exploring new profiles of victims.

6.4. Newcomers to Holocaust Cinema: Women in Crisis, Second Generation, Sexual Abuse, and Other Victims of Persecution

According to Barbie Zelizer (1998: 171-175), between the late seventies through to the nineties there was a resurgence of Holocaust memory manifested through an increase of journal articles on the topic, memoirs, scholarly studies, films, television broadcasts, novels, museums and commemoration ceremonies. Survivors encountered a new interest in their stories, liberators began offering public lectures, Holocaust education was introduced in secondary schools and universities (especially in Great Britain and in the United States) and the former concentration camps became “pilgrimage destinations”. As Zelizer (1998: 175) further claims, the horrors of the Holocaust increasingly prompted the “imagination of writers, poets, playwrights, and filmmakers on both continents”. Zelizer’s statement is significant as it acknowledges the seventies, eighties and nineties as a period in which the Holocaust was foregrounded by various means into popular consciousness. Films played an important part in this process as they mirrored and amplified much of the renewed interest in the subject of the Holocaust. Among the films to emerge from this period were *Schindler’s List* (1993) and European productions such as *The Last Metro* (1980), *Angry Harvest* (1985), *Goodbye Children* (1987), *Europa Europa* (1991), *Life is Beautiful* (1997) and *Train of Life* (1998).

That is not to say that these three decades were characterised by homogenous output. Baron (2005: 25, 66, 202), for example, acknowledges a sharp increase in the number of films produced in the seventies compared to the eighties and nineties, but also a change in themes and film genres. However, from the point of view of women’s representation, this period is unspectacular as male victims started to replace the female ones in protagonist roles and also, with very few exceptions, Holocaust films continued to exhibit a male perspective. Some examples of continuity with previous patterns are: *The Garden of Finzi-Continis* (1970), *Lacombe, Lucien* (1974), *Black Thursday* (1974), *Farewell to Maria* (1993), *Deborah* (1995), *Holy Week* (1995) and *I’m Alive and I Love You* (1998). These films, similar to those analysed in the previous section, focus on the actions of the

male characters to help or rescue complacent Jewish women. The only positive element that can be identified in the representation of female victims between the seventies and the nineties is the emergence of greater diversity. Moving away from the stereotypes that dominated during the sixties, this diversification process brought four main elements of novelty: diverse figures of women in crisis, explicit elements of sexual abuse, second generation women and other victims of the persecution. Below I explain why these alternative depictions of persecuted female victims have emerged and what they tell us more broadly about how the Holocaust was perceived between the seventies and the late nineties. The focus here is on films such as *The Night Porter* (1974), *High Street* (1976), *Charlotte S.* (1981), *Malou* (1981), *At November Moon* (1985), *Angry Harvest* (1985), *And the Violins Stopped Playing* (1988), *Warsaw – Year 5703* (1992), *My Mother's Courage* (1995), *The Proprietor* (1996) and *Aimee & Jaguar* (1999), which are significant examples of cinema's efforts to challenge previous portrayals of gender and to include victims that had until then been ignored by Holocaust cinema.

From the seventies onwards, European Holocaust cinema brought to the fore unconventional images of female victims: characters who were variously temperamental, depressed, suicidal, mentally unstable, troubled or in crisis. Within this category are *The Night Porter* (1974), *High Street* (1976), *Charlotte S.* (1981), *Malou* (1981), *Angry Harvest* (1985) and *Warsaw – Year 5703* (1992). While there is no simple, linear explanation for the emergence of such characters in Holocaust cinema, they are arguably a product of the social and political changes afforded by the Women's Movement. The 1970s witnessed major changes in terms of new ways of thinking about gender in society, politics and, most importantly, in the media. One of the most significant elements of the "Feminist revolution" was denouncing the way in which the media encouraged limited and stereotyped depictions of women, thus reinforcing patriarchal norms and values (Nelmes, 1999: 273). In the same vein, theorists such as Claire Johnston (1973), Laura Mulvey (1975) and Pam Cook (1975) paved the way for feminist film theory and identified significant issues related to women's representation within the constraints of a male-dominated cinema system.

Molly Haskell (1987) identifies the seventies and the eighties as “the age of ambivalence”. She claims that, in the wake of the Women’s Movement, on the one hand women reclaimed central positions on (and outside) the screen with a new consciousness, while on the other hand, male cinema exhibited a backlash to the perceived threat that women posed. This “age of ambivalence” resulted in a repertoire of female characters that were characterised as either strong or mentally unstable. According to Haskell (1987: 373), “On the flip side of the superwoman coin – and its most fascinating contradiction – were the crazy women”. It is worth noting that, according to Haskell, the trope of crazy women was encountered both in male and female-directed films. As Haskell (ibid.: 374) contends:

Whether the films were made by men or by women, the “crazies” weren’t sultry (and diabolical) femmes fatales of traditional male fantasy (...), but postfeminist types whose moves were orchestrated less by male needs than by some mysterious prompting of their own. They could be liberating as well as destructive.

Haskell’s comments are useful here as they mirror many of the representations of female victims in European Holocaust films from the early 1970s up to the late 1990s. While the figure of the strong woman who does not succumb to her victimhood is still rare in Holocaust films (exceptions are *My Mother’s Courage* 1995, *Aimee and Jaguar* 1998), the crazy or troubled woman prevails in most representations of female victims. Interestingly, when films exhibit distinctively feminist perspectives (*Malou* and *Charlotte S.*) the crisis of the female character, her temperamental behaviour and/or suicidal tendencies are constructed as symptoms of an ongoing inner-search, which is conceived of as a liberating process. By contrast, in the films dominated by a male gaze (*The Night Porter*, *High Street*, *Angry Harvest*, and *Warsaw – Year 5703*) the crisis of the female figure is configured as self-destructive and, in most cases, these films end with her death.

An example of the first category is the film *Charlotte S.* based on the life and works of Charlotte Salomon, a young German-Jewish painter who died in Auschwitz at the age of twenty-six. Told in flashbacks and with frequent use of voiceover, the film attempts to

penetrate the troubled mind of a young woman who had to resist not only the Nazi persecution, but also her family's propensity for suicide. Her inner struggle is suggestively expressed in the film through voiceover:

My life began when my grandmother wanted to commit suicide, when I found out that my mother had taken her own life and that so many others in her family had done the same. When I found out that I myself am the only survivor and deep down inside I felt the same predisposition, the same tendency towards despair and death. Now I knew I was faced with a choice: either to take my own life or to start doing something insanely out of the ordinary.

The film is the journey of Charlotte towards self-discovery with the help of 1,000 drawings in which she narrates her personal story paralleled by the rise to power of the Nazi party in Germany and her escape in the south of France to avoid persecution. Despite her depression, suicidal tendencies and overall life crisis, Charlotte stands out in her quest for meaning and for not accepting to take her own life as all the others in her family; at a symbolical level she represents a new generation of cinematic Jewish women who reject passivity and do not consent to be led to an anonymous death. This is one of the first attempts in European Holocaust cinema to engage with the female protagonist at a deeper level, by narrating a story from her perspective.

By contrast, in the films dominated by a male gaze, the crisis of the female character is self-destructive, ultimately leading her to death. Illustrative of this category are *The Night Porter* and *High Street*. *The Night Porter* portrays the disturbing relationship, in post-war Vienna, between a concentration camp survivor, Lucia, and her victimizer, Max, a former SS man. Their unexpected encounter in the aftermath of the war results in re-opening the sadomasochist relationship that will eventually lead to their demise. Similarly, *High Street* depicts an ostensibly crazy woman, Mimi, living with the man who arrested and deported her Jewish husband during the war. Both films depict two women unable to live in the present, confined instead to an obsessive repetition of the past. The films explore their traumas without offering solutions and neither narrative has a redemptory ending – in fact Lucia and Mimi both die. The two films depict the female victim from the

perspective of the male victimizer as neither Lucia nor Mimi speak about their past suffering, but their trauma is mediated by flashbacks. In the case of Mimi, it is the perpetrator who discloses the enigma of her behaviour at the end of the film. The interdependence between the victim and the victimizer is significant in the dynamics of the two films: while the victims are, understandably, incapable of overcoming their harrowing trauma, the perpetrators are depicted as guilt-ridden and equally unable to let go of the past or of their victims.

The second element of novelty in the process of diversification evident in European Holocaust cinema between the seventies and late nineties is the introduction of explicit elements of sexual abuse within the narratives. This topic had been previously hinted at in some of the European Holocaust films, given that Ruth in *The Ninth Circle* (1960), Nicole in *Kapò* (1960), Ruth in *The Story of a Murder* (1965) and Leah in *Witness Out of Hell* (1966) all worked as prostitutes in Nazi brothels during the war. Although they touched on this sensitive subject, however, none of these earlier films explicitly depicted any sexual activity, nor did they engage with the topic beyond flagging it as an element inherent to the persecution of women. The most overt reference is found in *The Ninth Circle* where the brothel is presented as a dimly lit room in which SS men are dancing with female inmates, pulling their hair and stepping on their feet. The women seem to be lifeless rags: they are totally passive in the hands of these brutal men, an image strongly suggestive of their objectification. It was not until *The Night Porter* (1974) was released in over twenty countries, however, that the cinematic depiction of women's sexual victimization was opened up as a subject to be discussed, acknowledged or contested in a wider context. Precisely because it is so explicit and received such a global distribution, the film broke a major taboo in this respect. Other Holocaust films which share similar interests in portraying abuse, rape or violence against women are very few, but are nonetheless significant. In *November Moon* (1985) the protagonist November is raped by a Nazi man and then forced to be a prostitute in a brothel. *Angry Harvest* (1985) depicts the rape, vulnerability and long-term abuse suffered by a Jewish woman, Rosa, while in hiding in a farmers' house. Both Sara in *Farewell to Maria* (1993) and Irena in *Holy*

Week (1995) manage to escape a rape attempt by some of Polish men. *My Mother's Courage* (1995) shows how middle-aged Elsa Tabori is molested by an unknown man while crowded in a cattle train deporting Jews from Budapest. Meanwhile, Ilona in *Gloomy Sunday* (1999) has to accept sexual intercourse with an SS man Hans as the price for having her lover Laszlo spared from deportation. Similarly, *Warsaw – Year 5703* (1992) and *Keep Away from the Window* (2000) further highlight the perils to which women in hiding were exposed: not only rape and abuse, but also being forced to accept loosing their own husband or children.

By far the most complex of these films is *Angry Harvest* (1985), in which Rosa, a Jewish woman escapes from a cattle train on the way to a concentration camp, is found and sheltered by a Polish farmer, Leon. What at the beginning seems like a genuine act of benevolence turns into a story of abuse as the farmer starts to be sexually attracted to her. Held captive in the cellar, humiliated, sexually and verbally abused, with no one to trust, the story of Rosa illustrates one of the many possible scenarios of women's vulnerability and sexual abuse during the Holocaust. The film ends with the suicide of Rosa who, after becoming totally dependent on the alcoholic farmer and forced to satisfy his sexual needs, is unable to cope with the risk of being moved into another shelter. Interestingly, Ringelheim (1998: 345) and Waxman (2006: 136; 2010: 124) point out that the popularity of Anne Frank's story created the "paradigm of hiding" that assumes that the highest peril faced by women in hiding was to be caught by the Germans. Set against the background of the globally acclaimed Hollywood film *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), which had shaped the representation of female victimhood for many subsequent decades, *Angry Harvest* challenged the "paradigm of hiding" by calling attention to the sexual victimisation of women, while also portraying the full extent of the horrors experienced by Rosa in hiding.

This acknowledgement of sexual abuse and other gender-specific risks to which women were exposed during the Holocaust is absent or under-reorted in academic and memorial literature. According to Lillian Kremer (2003: 263) women's testimonies, both oral and

written, “acknowledge but generally refrain from graphic development of sexual abuse”, while “[female] novelists have more license to develop this topic under the guise of fiction and thereby represent a portion of women’s Holocaust experience that is often muted in testimony”. In the same vein, Rebecca Scherr (2003: 278) acknowledges that direct references to sexuality and eroticism are “almost nonexistent” in women’s memoirs, instead they figure in some of the fictional narratives as part of the portrayal of the main characters. The films analysed here thus demonstrate that cinema, like literature, is often to the fore in dealing with difficult or “unspeakable” themes, precisely because of their fictional nature. Considering that the first academic book in the English language to tackle the subject of sexual victimization of (Jewish) women during the Holocaust was published as recently as 2010 (Hedgepeth and Saidel 2010), the films made between the seventies and the late nineties exemplify cinema adeptness at providing important counter-discourses and addressing gaps in the testimonial and academic literature.

A third aspect of diversification evident in European Holocaust cinema in this period is an engagement with the topic of postmemory and the portrayal of second-generation women. Two films, in particular, illustrate this development by highlighting the way in which trauma can affect later generations, namely *Malou* (1981) and *The Proprietor* (1996). By far the most important of the two is the autobiographical feminist film *Malou* (1981), directed by second-generation survivor Jeanine Meerapfel. The film is concerned with the struggles of a woman in search for her identity mirroring much the filmmaker’s own life and experience. Born in Argentina after her parents left Germany in the early 1930s to avoid the Nazi persecution³³, the protagonist of the film, Hannah Rethmann, tries to make sense of her mother’s past, Malou, a converted Jew who survived Nazism by moving to Argentina. Told in flashbacks, the film parallels scenes from Malou’s tragic life with Hannah’s journey to the very same places where her mother’s story unfolded. The mirroring effect between the present and the past that Hannah tries to re-create is significant in her quest to understand who she is by making sense of her mother’s life. The film clearly juxtaposes the characters of mother and daughter: while Malou is docile and submissive as a wife, ending up as an alcoholic, suicidal and a depressed woman,

unable to live a life on her own, Hannah is rebel and unpredictable. Her moody, temperamental behaviour is a desperate gesture by a woman who chooses to fight for own identity and place in a society (Germany) which has trouble dealing with its own past. Hannah's efforts to reconstruct her mother's story, her obsession with the past and the parallels drawn between her own life and that of her mother are suggestive of Marianne Hirsch's work postmemory. According to Hirsch (2012: 5):

“Postmemory” describes the relationship that the “generation after” bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they “remember” only by means of their stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right.

By dealing with the issue of second-generation survivors and the trauma of postmemory, and by presenting the narrative from a feminist perspective, *Malou* signals a significant development, that took another two decades to come to fruition in European Holocaust cinema (discussed in detail in the next section). It is worth noting that Memory Studies did not emerge until the 1980s (Zelizer 1998), when Hirsch first coined her famous concept of postmemory (Hirsch 2012). Considering the period in which *Malou* was made (early 1980s), its self-reflexively feminist sensibilities were unusual in pre-2000s European Holocaust cinema (the only other example is *Charlotte S.*). Its engagement with postmemory and its unapologetically female perspective are remarkably innovative and prescient, and can only be understood when considered in the specific context of Germany. As Barbara Kosta (1994: 6) argues, in Germany during the 1970s and the 1980s, the women's movement resulted in a prolific body of literary and cinematic narratives intended to challenge “established epistemologies, either ideologically propelled versions of history and the repressed German past or sedimented notions of gender”. According to Kosta (ibid.: 6-8), women authors and filmmakers felt compelled to explore personal and national identities, repressed memories of the past and “inquiries into the self not as essential or universal (meaning male), but as embedded within historical, cultural, and psychosocial contexts”. Viewed in the socio-cultural context from which it emerged, *Malou* is a key example of how cinematic representations of the

Holocaust are insinuated in and constantly interact with wider historical, memorial and political national discourses.

A fourth significant new development foregrounded by European Holocaust cinema between the seventies and nineties is the representation of non-Jewish victims. As historians acknowledge, along with the six million Jews as the primary target of the Nazis, the persecution engulfed the lives of another six million victims (Friedman, 2011: 1) such as Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals and people with disabilities. As Ringelheim (1990: 142-143) claims, their supposed "otherness" fostered a long silence and transformed them into "victims with no names in much of the literature and the public perception". Two of the categories of non-Jewish (female) victims that received major attention in European Holocaust cinema starting with the 1980s are lesbians and Gypsies. According to historian Lawrence Baron (2005: 12):

The belated appearance of these groups in movies about the Nazi reflects several developments: (1) new research on hitherto neglected victims of Nazism, (2) the lobbying by these groups to document their suffering and gain legal restitution for it, and (3) the rise of the multicultural model to accommodate ethnic, gender, racial, or religious diversity in democratic societies.

The first academic writings in English on gays and lesbians as "forgotten victims of Nazism" were published only in the 1990s: *Hidden Holocaust* (1995) by Günter Grau and Claudia Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade* (1996) by Claudia Schoppmann and the chapter *Lesbians and the Holocaust* (1999) by Amy Elman. In light of these facts, it comes as a surprise that European Holocaust cinema was addressing narratives centred on lesbian victims since the early 1980s. In this category are the films *November Moon* (1985) and, more than a decade later, *Aimee & Jaguar* (1999).

According to Cathy Gelbin (2007), the 1980s witnessed a shift in the representation of lesbianism in Holocaust films: while in earlier films the depiction of same-sex relationships was intended to illustrate the depravity of Nazi perpetrators, later productions bring to the fore lesbians as victims of the Holocaust. As Gelbin (ibid.:180)

claims, the cycle of lesbian-feminist films that emerged in the 1980s “draws on the modes of queer representations of the 1960s, only to perform a double normalization: to domesticate the lesbian against the notion of perversion and to make all women during the Holocaust into victims”. Gelbin further argues that, especially in the German context, the feminist debates during the 1980s strived to exculpate women as perpetrators or bystanders, by emphasising their status as victims of a patriarchal society.

November Moon and *Aimee & Jaguar* narrate a “doubly doomed love” to use Baron’s (2005: 121) expression, indicating not only the lesbian nature of the relationship, but also the fact that one of the two women is a Jew. This narrative device is needed since “lesbians were not victims of the Nazi regime per se,” being endangered for other reasons such as being a Jew or for antifascist activities (Schoppmann, 1996: 23). Schoppmann emphasises that unlike men, prosecuted by law for their homosexual activities, in the case of women “there was no systematic persecution”. Similarly, Baron (2005: 121) acknowledges that while the gay men were persecuted in Hitler’s Germany, lesbians “lived a political purgatory” being punished only if they “flaunted their homosexuality”. Reflecting much of this historical context, *November Moon* and *Aimee & Jaguar* imply that November and Felice are persecuted on the grounds of their Jewishness, and - in Felice’s case - also because of her underground resistance activities.

Another significant element in the two films is the portrayal of the lesbian Jewess as strong and fearless, in clear opposition to the passivity of her cinematic forerunners. These women are resourceful and able to outwit the Nazis. November kills a Nazi and manages to escape from the brothel in which she was forced to prostitute, while Felice uses her job for a Nazi newspaper as cover for her underground activities. While reversing the passivity of cinematic Jewish women, the agency and courage of November and Felice is instrumental in emphasising a greater suffering experienced by her non-Jewish lover. In fact, as Fuchs (2008: 298) also points out, despite the persecution of November and Felice, both films convey the idea of a greater suffering on behalf of their non-Jewish lovers who appear as the main victims.

Another category of “other” victims portrayed by Holocaust films beginning with the 1980s are the Roma and Sinti. Although the persecution of Gypsies is hinted at in earlier films such as *The Last Stage* (1948) and *We’ll Go Into Town* (1966), the Polish-American co-production *And the Violins Stopped Playing* (1988) represents the first film to approach the topic in a systematic manner. Inspired from the autobiographical novel by Alexander Ramati, who also was the film’s director, it follows the plight of a Roma community from Poland during the persecution set in place by the Nazis. In doing so it highlights their precarious situation once the anti-Gypsy laws were issued, the imminent round-up, the decision to flee to Hungary and finally their internment in Auschwitz. The film constantly parallels the fate of the Gypsies with that of the Jews, from a comparative perspective as if to legitimise their persecution. The film’s intent to document the Gypsy persecution is evident throughout the film by its division into chapters clearly marked by historical data, but mostly in its epilogue, enunciated by a male voiceover:

Half a million Gypsies perished in wartime executions and in concentration camps. No compensation has been paid to the Gypsy nation. The documented historical events have been denied by the Germans and remain unknown to the world. This film is not only a tribute to the Gypsies valiant struggle to survive, but also a plea to end the discrimination still suffered by them forty years after their forgotten Holocaust.

As a text that denounces and documents the tragedy that engulfed the lives of half a million Gypsies, *And the Violins Stopped Playing* is similar to some of the early films about the Jewish persecution released immediately after the war. Because its focus is on documenting events as accurately as possible and owing to its classic narrative style, Ramati’s film does not pay attention to gender issues. Women are represented in a stereotyped manner and the only girl to whom the filmmaker dedicates more screen time is emphasised because of her beauty. As the film unfolds, she falls in love, gets married and finally dies in Auschwitz, although there is not much insight into her experience. Another two later films that refer to the persecution of the Gypsies are *Train of Life* (1999) and *Freedom* (2009), which similarly lack a gendered depiction.

Such a limited number of films shows the peripheral position assigned to lesbians and Roma within the myriad of cinematic representations of persecution set in place by the Nazis. Nevertheless, the films *And the Violins Stopped Playing*, *November Moon*, *Aimee and Jaguar* play a significant role in opening the door for representations that challenge and complete the mainstream, Jewish one. As Joan Ringelheim (1990: 143) astutely points out, the Holocaust is not one but many different experiences of a multitude of people. The films discussed above as “newcomers” of European cinema illustrate precisely this diversity of experiences and variety of perspectives on the same unique tragedy: the Holocaust. The same cannot be said for other categories of victims who are totally absent from the pantheon of cinematic representations about the Holocaust, such as people with disabilities. With the exception of some disabled people who briefly feature in the film *Amen* (2004), other categories of victims are entirely absent.

These four new developments that characterised European Holocaust cinema between the seventies and the late nineties are illustrative of the way in which cinematic discourses constantly interact with and are shaped by other historical, political, gender, memorial, national and trans-national discourses. As this section has outlined, a number of factors were instrumental in diversifying the discourses and representational paradigms of Holocaust films: the resurgence of Holocaust memory (Zelizer 1998), the newly established area of Memory Studies and its related concept of postmemory (Hirsch 2012), the emergence of Women’s Studies and its intersection with Holocaust Studies in the early 1980s (Nelmes 1999; Baer and Goldenberg 2003), and research on hitherto neglected victims of the persecution coupled with the rise of multiculturalism (Baron, 2005: 12). Although the films in this section provide a somewhat fragmented picture of female victims, this diversity has allowed for a variety of new perspectives and portrayals. Moreover, as is explained below, it also laid the foundation for a cycle of post-2000 films that would engage with women’s memories from a distinctly female authorial perspective.

6.5. The Trauma of (Post)Memory: Women's Memories in the Holocaust Cinema of the New Millennium

The final scene of the film *The Third Half* (2012) shows the protagonist Rebecca Cohen, now in old age, visiting the Holocaust Memorial Center for the Jews of Macedonia, located in Skopje. Getting close to one of the symbolic funerary urns in the memory of the victims, she starts a monologue with her dead father while holding a family photo against the glass box that protects the urn:

Here we meet again, Dad... Remember me? Your little daughter, who listened to her heart and ran away from you. Both you and the man I loved have been dead for many years now. I'm going to join you soon. But before I die, there's something I'd like to show you. These are my sons and daughters, their husbands and wives, my grandchildren and their children. They are the fruit of my betrayal and descendants of your blood. They are my proof that a woman can score as well... I won the game, Dad!³⁴

Rebecca's final exclamation and the photo of her numerous descendants are a celebration of life as she rejoices her victory against the Nazis. This culminating moment of the film takes place after Rebecca narrates her memories, in a flashback, on the occasion of a visit with her great-granddaughter to Skopje for the inauguration of the Holocaust Memorial. *The Third Half* exemplifies a recent cycle of films that engage with the past from the point of view of first generation of survivors, as well as 1.5³⁵, second and third generations of Jewish women. Originating from varied corners of Europe such as France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Croatia, Macedonia, Italy, Sweden and Belgium, these films explore to different extents the life of Jewish women in connection to the Holocaust, and in doing so they create valid premises for analysing the relation between gender, memory and representation. These films are: *Louba's Ghosts* (2001) by Martine Dugowson, *Nowhere in Africa* (2001) by Caroline Link, *Rosenstrasse* (2003) by Margarethe von Trotta, *The Birch-Tree Meadow* (2003) by Marceline Loridan-Ivens, *Tomorrow We Move* (2004) by Chantal Akerman, *Nina's Journey* (2005) by Lena Einhorn, *One Day You'll Understand* (2008) by Amos Gitai, *Army of Saviours* (2009) by Ludi Boeken, *Berlin '36*

(2009) by Kaspar Heidelbach, *Lea and Darija* (2011) by Branko Ivanda, *Remembrance* (2011) by Anna Justice, *Retrace*³⁶ (2011) by Judit Elek, *The Third Half* (2012) by Darko Mitrevski, *Ida* (2013) by Paweł Pawlikowski, *For a Woman* (2013) by Diane Kurys, and *Anita B.* (2014) by Roberto Faenza. Significantly, some of these films are directed by first or second generation survivors such as Martine Dugowson, Marceline Loridan-Ivens, Chantal Akerman, Lena Einhorn, Judit Elek, and Diane Kurys. Other films are based on novels and memoirs written by survivors (*Nowhere in Africa*, *One Day You'll Understand*, *Army of Saviours*, *Anita B.*), on testimonies by/about survivors (*Berlin '36*, *Lea and Darija*, *The Third Half*) or on scripts written by second generation survivors (*Rosenstrasse* and *Remembrance*). It is worth noting that nine of these sixteen films are directed by women: *Louba's Ghosts*, *Rosenstrasse*, *The Birch-Tree Meadow*, *Nowhere in Africa*, *Tomorrow We Move*, *Nina's Journey*, *Remembrance*, *Retrace* and *For a Woman*.

All of these films are connected by two elements: the presence of the female survivor³⁷ and the concept of memory as dialectic between remembering and forgetting. The emergence in the 21st century of the character of female survivor is not a random one. Historian Lawrence Baron (2005: 202, 217) acknowledges a growing interest in the topic of survivors, reflected by the fact that it was rated the third most popular theme of Holocaust films in the 1990s³⁸. He also further highlights the tendency towards more positive portrayals compared to the past. Baron argues that the foregrounding of survivors in cinematic narratives is due to the increasing attention they have generally received over the last decades, starting with the Nobel Prize conferred to Elie Wiesel in 1986, the opening of the U.S. Holocaust Museum in 1993 and the growing number of memoirs and oral testimonies by survivors. Also, the figure of the female survivor that emerges in Holocaust cinema of the New Millennium is undoubtedly related to the anxieties expressed by scholars and survivors alike regarding “the end of the witness era”, which will have its symbolic closure with the death of the last survivor (Vitiello, 2011: 8). As the Holocaust recedes into the past and the world contemplates the prospect that the last witnesses will pass on, films manifest a growing concern with the figure of the survivor as repository of knowledge and memory of the Holocaust.

The increasing preoccupation of Holocaust cinema with the figure of the survivor, and more generally of the witness, is also due to the emphasis on memory in both academia and popular discourse over the last decades. According to Barbie Zelizer (1998: 173), “by early nineties Holocaust-related books abounded with titles that incorporated notions of memory”. Marianne Hirsch (2012: 3) connects the emergence of memory as an “analytic term” and of its corresponding field of research - Memory Studies - to the work of “second generation” writers and artists, those who did not experience the atrocities, but gained their knowledge through the filial bond with the survivors. Using the term “postmemory,” Hirsch (ibid.) claims that the descendants of survivors who witnessed traumatic events “connect so deeply to the previous generation’s remembrances of the past that they identify that connection as a form of *memory*, and that, in certain extreme circumstances, memory *can* be transferred to those who were not there to live an event”.

In a similar vein, Froma Zeitlin (1998: 6) claims that this very belatedness “seems to engender the desire of representing the past through modes of reenactment—even reanimation—through which the self, the ‘ego’ of ‘the one who was not there,’ now takes on a leading role as an active presence”. Examining Claude Lanzmann’s film *Shoah* (1985) and Art Spiegelman’s comics *Maus*, Zeitlin states that these works are both exemplary for the way in which they enable members of the second or third generation to transform the act of witnessing into a “lived performance for witness and listener alike”. According to Zeitlin, two recent Holocaust novels – namely Henri Raczymow’s *Un cri sans voix* (1985) and Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz’s *Umschlagplatz* (1992)³⁹, represent “further and even bolder developments” in Holocaust literature towards the experience of the “vicarious witness”. His analysis of the two writings accurately pinpoints the main elements that characterise the experience of the “vicarious witness”. As Zeitlin (1998: 15) explains:

Both texts are driven by the compulsion to bear vicarious witness. Both are preoccupied with the problems of reconstructing and recovering memory, which can only be acquired second or third hand, and both stage obsessive quests for knowledge about the Holocaust that entail quite uncommon efforts at identification with others through fictional

means. Finally, both foreground the process—the vocation—of writing as the essential means of creating an authorial presence, one that involves the reader throughout in the anguish, the guilt, the necessity, the doubts and contradictions, but also the remedial nature, of the task that is performed in the stance of the self-reflexive or "middle voice".

Alison Landsberg (2003: 148-149) uses the term "prosthetic memories" to take the relationship between "the one who was not there" and traumas of the Holocaust even further; as she explains "it has become possible to have an intimate relationship to memories of events through which one did not live". Landsberg claims that the prosthetic memories "are indeed 'personal' memories, as they derive from engaged and experientially oriented encounters with the mass media's various technologies of memory". These memories which "often mark trauma" are not anymore confined to a geographical area or to a specific group, but they are widely available to people living in various places.

Hirsch, Zeitlin and Landsberg's assertions are very useful as they provoke fundamental questions for this section: to what extent are the sixteen films in this section concerned with the experience of the "vicarious witness" and if so, does this facilitate a stronger "authorial presence" of the writer / director? If films are "producers and disseminators of memory" (Landsberg, 2003: 148), whose memory do they express? How are these memories gendered? If cinema is a "key medium in our inheritance of the history and memory of the Holocaust" how does it articulate its gender dimension? (Reading, 2002: 178). Finally, given the affinity between trauma and memory (Traverso and Broderick, 2010: 5), how is trauma (en)gendered through "vicarious witnessing"?

As this chapter has shown so far, with very few exceptions, European Holocaust cinema had, until the 2000s, taken only tentative steps toward challenging the image of woman as a token of victimhood. It is very relevant that all sixteen films discussed in this section narrate their stories using as a device the survivor or a close witness. By comparison, most of the female characters – whether victims or survivors - analysed in the previous sections of this chapter die at the end of the films. Moreover, they are rarely in the

position of narrators of their own stories, they do not have a voice of their own, being usually defined by their relationship to their male counterparts and portrayed through either a male or an omniscient perspective. The element of voice, as I shall further point out, plays a fundamental role in highlighting the cinematic authorship of the text (Silverman, 1988: 48; Doane, 1985: 573) and its relation with trauma (Hirsch, 2004: 58). The authorial voice is understood here as a “‘discursive subject’ identifiable in the text through the network of different discourses by which it is made up” (Cook, 2007: 461). According to Cook (ibid.: 461-462), the discursive subject is not produced by a person existing independently of the films, but by the interaction of discourses. Taking stock of Clare Johnston’s seminal article “Women’s Cinema as Counter-Cinema” (1973), both Cook (2007: 468-469) and Silverman (1988: 205) point to the importance of auteur theory for feminism and the role of feminist filmmakers in challenging the ideologies of mainstream cinema. By analysing the cases of Dorothy Arzner and Ida Lupino, two female directors working within the male-dominated Hollywood system, Johnston claims that female authorial discourse can challenge and disrupt patriarchal ideologies.

The sixteen films that are the subject of this section differ greatly in terms of style, narrative, tone, and engagement with the past: from the black and white of *Ida* to the green-blue tones of *The Birch-Tree Meadow*, and from the omniscient perspective in *Anita B.* to the highly subjective point of view in *Remembrance. Nina’s Journey* uses a quasi-documentary format, blending survivor interview and newsreel within the narrative, while commercial Academy Award winning productions such as *Nowhere in Africa* are more melodramatic. The films also depict or make reference to a broad range of Holocaust experiences: in ghettos (*Nina’s Journey*), in concentration camps (*The Birch-Tree Meadow*, *Remembrance*, *For a Woman* and *Anita B.*), in hiding (*Rosenstrasse*, *Nina’s Journey*, *Army of Saviors*, *Remembrance*, *The Third Half*, *Ida*) and in exile (*Nowhere in Africa*). Three of these films enhance the truthfulness of the film by the presence of the now aged, real-life female survivor at the end (*Army of Saviours* and *Berlin ’36*) or throughout the film (*Nina’s Journey*).

Kaja Silverman's and Mary Ann Doane's theories on the role of voice in assigning female authorship and Joshua Hirsch's analysis of posttraumatic cinema⁴⁰ with the use of three parameters (*tense*, *mood* and *voice*) were employed to determine to what extent this cycle of films engages with traumatic memories and succeeds in establishing the authorial presence of the female witness or survivor. According to Hirsch (2004: 20)'s method:

tense regulates the relations between the temporality of the film text (screen time) and the temporality of the historical events represented by the film. (...) *Mood* regulates the point of view of the film on the images and events represented. And *voice* regulates the film's self-consciousness of its own act of narration.

In relation to the use of voice in the film, Silverman claims that through the technique of synchronisation, classic films suppress women's voices and reduces them to the status of object. The voiceover, instead, is able to reclaim the female voice on an authorial level, as outside the diegesis and therefore "a voice that speaks from a position of superior knowledge, and which superimposes itself 'on top' of the diegesis" (Silverman, 1988: 48). In a similar vein, Doane (1985: 572-573) argues that by "by-passing the 'characters'" the voiceover speaks directly to the spectator and refers to him/her as "an empty space to be 'filled' with knowledge about the events".

This analysis starts with the premise that memories and the narratives used to present them are all gendered (Bos, 2003: 34). Unlike oral and written testimonies, fictional films do not necessarily provide a direct correspondence between the memories of a survivor and their representation. In relation to the Holocaust fictional writings, Lillian Kremer (1999: 3-4) suggestively points out that the work of male authors "reflects their male experience and perspective" and neglects the gender-related experiences of women. As she further claims: "Not until we turn to women's texts do we encounter the depth and breadth of women's Holocaust experience". When examining cinematic representations, the relation between gender and memory is much more complex and multifaceted because the testimony or fiction by a survivor is mediated by the work of the male or

female filmmaker. Thus, screening the adaptation of a female survivor's memoir or of her oral testimony does not guarantee a female perspective on the events that are depicted. A case point is the film mentioned above, *The Third Half*, based on the true story of Neta Koen, one of the few Jews who survived the persecution in Macedonia. The passage quoted in the beginning of this section seems to suggest that the film engages deeply in representing Rebecca's memories and Holocaust experiences. This assumption is totally misleading, however, as the focus shifts from her love story with a non-Jew and the way she eschewed the persecution by concealing her identity, towards the incredible account of the victory achieved by the national soccer team. The film takes the opportunity to provide a general overview of the persecution of Jews and Gypsies in Macedonia. As a consequence, although the film starts promisingly with an aged Rebecca as she embarks on the trip towards Skopje and remembers the past in a flashback lasting almost the entire film, Rebecca's story loses its focus and recedes into the background as soon as she gets married in the first half of the film. Her protagonist role is relegated to a passive witness position in a story told from an omniscient perspective. The only voice-off towards the end of the film is contained within the diegesis, announcing the closure of the story and the return to the present for the epilogue.

Similar observations can be made by examining five other films directed by male filmmakers (*One Day You'll Understand*, *Army of Saviours*, *Berlin '36*, *Ida* and *Anita B.*). Despite each having a female survivor in the leading role, the structure of these films undermines their voices and memories. For example, two of these productions (*Army of Saviours* and *Berlin '36*) insert brief sequences with the real-life survivor that inspired the film. But the presence in the film of both Marga Spiegel and Gretel Bergmann go against the grain since, instead of making the story personal, the scene has exactly the opposite effect. Marga Spiegel seems slightly confused, looking around and asking "It's all done now, isn't it?" She does not seem comfortable or believable on the set of a film meant to re-present her own memories. On the other hand Gretel Bergmann, maintaining the same line of the film, emphasises the difficult fate of her colleague Marie Kettler, as a man forced into being a woman, and does not engage much in her own survival story. The

omniscient perspective, the lack of a female narrator and the inability to evoke trauma prevent these films from foregrounding a female perspective and from engaging with women's memories. An exceptional case is the male-directed film *Lea and Darija*, which uses the voiceover of the main protagonist as a narrative device. In spite of giving the female protagonist a voice that narrates the whole story, we are reminded that the thirteen-year-old Lea is just a "ghost" as she died years ago on the train to Auschwitz. The film script does not represent "her" memories, but the recollections of different people about her, transformed into a story by Branko Ivanda. Moreover, the off screen self-narrator is strongly questioned by the aged Darija, the witness of the film, who claims that she remembers everything except Lea, implying that Lea never existed. Despite depicting the lives of protagonist Jewish women during the Holocaust, *One Day You'll Understand*, *Army of Saviours*, *Berlin '36*, *Lea and Darija*, *The Third Half*, *Ida* and *Anita B.* seem to indicate the failure of filmmakers in engaging at a deeper level with the representation of women's experiences and in giving a voice to their memories.

By contrast, *Louba's Ghosts*, *Rosenstrasse*, *The Birch-Tree Meadow*, *Nowhere in Africa*, *Tomorrow We Move*, *Nina's Journey*, *Remembrance* and *For a Woman* – all made by female directors – offer a clear female perspective through the use of voiceover, flashbacks and subjective shots. Although the number of these female directed films is relatively small, their impact on recent Holocaust cinema is noteworthy. Interestingly, the 21st century has witnessed an unprecedented wave of female directors in European Holocaust cinema⁴¹; as Table 1 shows.

Decade	Number of films
2011-2014	11
2001-2010	10
1991-2000	6
1981-1990	7
1971-1980	3
1961-1970	2
1951-1960	1
1945-1950	1
TOTAL	41

Table 1: Holocaust films directed or co-directed by women

Between 2001 and 2014, women directed 21 films about the Holocaust, a number that surpasses all European productions made by female directors since the immediate aftermath of the war (20 films).

However, not all Holocaust films made by female directors that have been released since 2001 are explicitly concerned with women's memories, exhibiting a variety of topics and approaches to the subject of the Holocaust. Moreover, if one has to consider how pre-contemporary Holocaust cinema has approached its female characters, there are several contrasting examples of men doing feminist films and of women filmmakers that have internalised traditional patriarchal perspectives. It is worth mentioning here, the German film *The Nasty Girl* (1990) by Michael Verhoeven, which is discussed in-depth in Chapter 7, as an excellent example of a film that prioritises a feminist female perspective. Verhoeven invests the main character of the film, Sonja, with a strong authorial voice, which not only narrates the events through voiceover, but also intervenes from outside the film as an alter-ego of the filmmaker himself. Similarly, *Charlotte S.* (1981) directed by Frans Weisz, analysed in the previous section, frequently uses flashback and voiceover techniques to deliver a powerful feminist message through the character and life story of German-Jewish painter Charlotte Salomon. At the other end of the spectrum are films such as *The Night Porter* (1974) by Liliana Cavani and *Angry Harvest* (1985) by Agnieszka Holland, that despite being made by female directors reinforce the dominant, male perspective in narrating women's experiences during the Holocaust.

These examples illustrate and reinforce Butler's (1990) claim that masculinity and femininity are not allied to biological sex, but are social norms; they are performances. Furthermore, these cinematic productions challenge the assumption that men's films definitely present neutral perspectives and address universal truths, while women's films are inevitably feminist and expected to speak for all women. However, although it cannot be hypothesised that female directors, unlike their male counterparts, are generally more insightful and exhibit a feminist perspective when depicting women's experiences during the Holocaust, this correlation holds with respect to the films analysed in this section.

Louba's Ghosts, *Rosenstrasse*, *The Birch-Tree Meadow*, *Nowhere in Africa*, *Tomorrow We Move*, *Nina's Journey*, *Remembrance* and *For a Woman* exhibit a deep engagement with women's memories, which are narrated from a strong, authorial female perspective. These authors resurrect the female authorial voice in their films by using narrative voiceover (*Louba's Ghosts*, *Nowhere in Africa*, *The Birch-Tree Meadow*, *Nina's Journey*, *Remembrance*), subjective shots and flashbacks (*Louba's Ghosts*, *Rosenstrasse*, *Nowhere in Africa*, *Nina's Journey* and *Remembrance*) and characters that represent the alter-ego of the filmmaker⁴² (*Louba's Ghosts*, *The Birch-Tree Meadow*, *Tomorrow We Move* and *For a Woman*). According to Silverman (1988: 215), the presence of a fictional character that "stands in" for the filmmaker is one of the ways in which cinematic authorship can be inscribed into the text. Moreover some of the filmmakers in question here, such as Chantal Akerman, Diane Kurys, Margarethe von Trotta and Marceline Loridan-Ivens are well known for their engagement with feminist cinema.

Importantly, this cycle of recent films made by female directors highlights how contemporary understandings of gender have influenced the way we narrate the past. Firstly, these films adopt a significantly more sophisticated understanding of gender, which acknowledges the specificity of women's suffering during the Holocaust without resorting to biological-essentialist constructions of the feminine. On the contrary, these films provide a feminist analysis of women's gendered suffering at the hands of patriarchy. Secondly, at a more metatextual level, the contemporary films draw attention to the socially constructed nature of gender and emphasise the inequity of gender relations by challenging male accounts of history. In the light of these assertions, the emergence of a feminist perspective in contemporary European Holocaust cinema supports Kremer's (1998) contention that male written memoirs do not do justice to women's experiences.

While there is no doubt about the strong feminist perspective embedded in these films, they differ a lot in their ability to engage with trauma and to instill the experience of the

“vicarious witness” which, I argue, can be visualised as three concentric circles (see Figure 2 below).

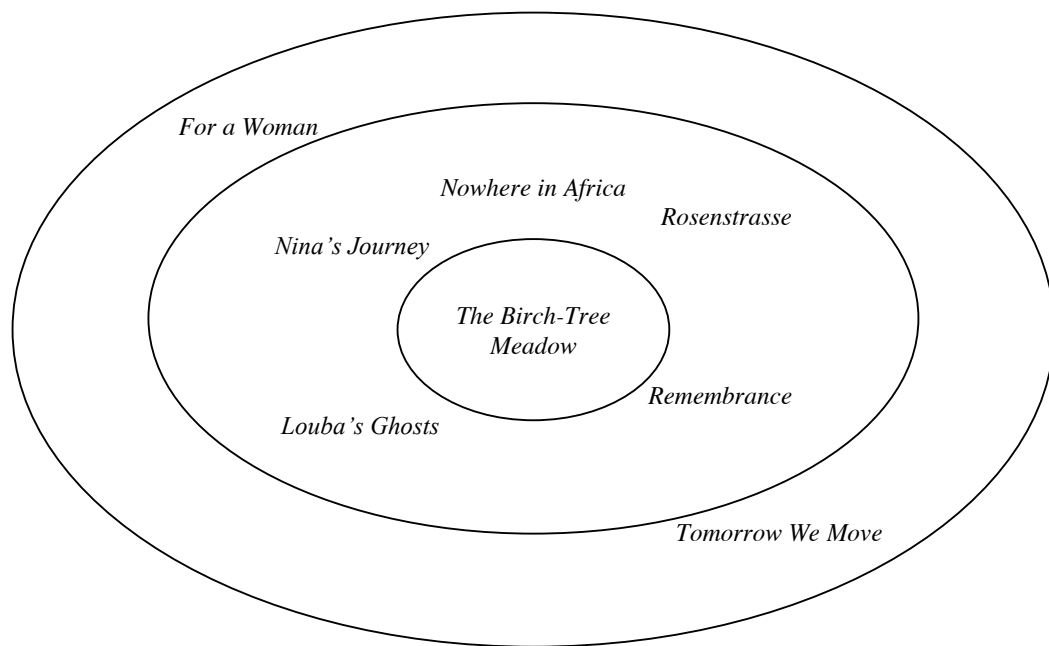


Figure 2: The “vicarious witness” experience in female-directed films

On the external level, the farthest from reaching the “vicarious witness”, are located Chantal Akerman’s *Tomorrow We Move* and Diane Kurys’s *For a Woman*. *Tomorrow We Move*, directed by a second-generation survivor, reflects much of Hirsch’s (2012: 5) concept of postmemory in which the connection with the past is “mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation”. Its main character and alter-ego of Akerman, is Charlotte, a writer of erotic stories living with her mother, a Holocaust survivor. The film is permeated by Holocaust symbolism, although neither the word Jew

or Holocaust are ever mentioned in the film. In this sense, the thick smoke in the house is a reminder of the crematoriums, the disinfectant smell is a similar metaphor for the camps, the empty fridge recalls the hunger in the camps and the constant obsession with moving away can be read as suggesting the deportations.

It is arguable that the construction of the narrative through such highly metaphoric language might be too cryptic for mainstream filmgoers and detract from experiencing the trauma. Interestingly, the same actress, Sylvie Testud, represents both Akerman's alter-ego in *Tomorrow We Move* and, nine years later, Diane Kurys's alter-ego, Anne, in the film *For a Woman*. Kurys's autobiographical film is concerned with exploring the filmmakers' own roots and identity. The film moves back and forth from the present to the past, between Anne's engagement with memory paralleled by the writing of the film script and her parents' love story located in the aftermath of the war. The Holocaust is invoked several times since her (Jewish) parents meet while interned in Riversaltes camp in France from which they managed to get freed, avoiding the deportation. While Akerman addresses the subject of survivor's silence and its effects on the second generation, Kurys completely avoids deepening the Holocaust subject, and focuses primarily on the love story and later divorce of her parents. The topic of the Holocaust is thus left suspended and the spectator is given no further information about her parent's experiences during that time.

On the second (middle) level of the three concentric circles (see Figure 2 above), are situated the films *Louba's Ghosts*, *Rosenstrasse*, *Nowhere in Africa*, *Nina's Journey* and *Remembrance*. The five films draw their inspiration from varied sources: the semi-biographical novel of a survivor in exile Stefanie Zweig (*Nowhere in Africa*), the script based on real events and written by Pamela Katz⁴³, a second generation survivor (*Rosenstrasse* and *Remembrance*), and from personal autobiographical material of second generation filmmakers (*Louba's Ghosts* and *Nina's Journey*). The Holocaust is explicitly described as the film develops between two temporal dimensions, the past and the present. Along with the use of voiceover and subjective point of view, these posttraumatic narratives employ extensively the use of flashback. If in *Nowhere in Africa*

and *Nina's Journey* is used the classic, biographical flashback which narrates life in retrospective (Hirsch, 2004: 94), *Louba's Ghosts*, *Rosenstrasse* and *Remembrance* adopt the posttraumatic flashback. The "posttraumatic flashback", unlike the classical one, is used "to create a disturbance not only at the level of content, by presenting a painful fictional memory, but also at the level of form". This type of flashback registers "the actual disturbances of traumatic experience" determining "an analogue posttraumatic consciousness in the spectator" (Hirsch, 2004: 99). The most relevant example for this second-level circle is certainly the film *Remembrance* directed by the German filmmaker Anna Justice. The film, inspired by true events, has as protagonist Hannah, a Jewish woman in her fifties living in New York with her family. The past is triggered by a televised program in which she recognises her fiancé during the war, Tomasz, whom she thought was dead. The two have met in a concentration camp, fell in love and managed to escape the camp and survive against all odds in hiding. Told in flashbacks, the film unfolds between present and past, from 1976 in New York and 1944 in Poland. The painful experience of remembrance is suggestively expressed by Hannah's voiceover at the beginning of the film: "A memory does not come whole; it's torn from the start. The edges are piercing and sharp. They pierce the skin and make you bleed."⁴⁴

The past narrative has a fast-cut rhythm depicting the vulnerable life in the camp and later the events rushed by their fugitive status, while Hannah's present is described through slow camera movements. The tumult of events is now repositioned from the outside towards the inside, as Hannah is overwhelmed by contradictory feelings and torn apart between two worlds. The close-up shots coupled with long silences that contemplate Hanna's facial expressions are suggestive of her inner agony as she tries to make sense of the past and to understand. Hannah's memories are vivid and tormenting "I'm haunted by memories that refuse to be forgotten. I try to hide, but they always find me. I thought I was finished with the past, done. But you're never done."⁴⁵ The camera boldly insists on highlighting details that emphasise her distress: the breathlessness as she finds out Tomasz might be alive, the hands trembling as she looks through the Red Cross file, the eyes filled with tears, the voice cut by emotion while she speaks with Tomasz.

Hannah's experience in the film *Remembrance* re-echoes much of Charlotte Delbo's concept of "deep memory" which "reminds us that Auschwitz past is not really past and never will be" (Langer, 1995: xi). Lawrence Langer (ibid.) highlights Delbo's suggestive words that claim the unaltered permanence of traumatic memories:

Auschwitz is deeply etched on my memory," she wrote, "that I cannot forget one moment of it. So you are living in Auschwitz? No, I live next to it. Auschwitz is there, unalterable, precise, but enveloped in the skin of memory, an impermeable skin that isolates it from my present self.

Similarly with Charlotte Delbo, Hannah's deep memory "pierces the skin" taking hold of the present. The past that invades Hannah's present is suggested through the powerful image of young Tomasz present in her apartment in New York, closely watching Hannah as she re-opens the search by calling the Red Cross. Tomasz haunting presence is more than a memory; he seems to be there, in his striped uniform, smoking nervously by the window, gulping down the food on the table or declaring his love for her. It is worth noting that both in his ghostly appearances and Hanna's flashbacks from the past, Tomasz is portrayed much more in detail than his aged counterpart who is shown only briefly. Suggestively, during their phone conversation thirty years later, Hannah is filmed in frontal close-up, capturing all her rich expressions, while Tomasz's face is not shown as the shots are taken from the side. Tomasz remains until the end a figure that the audience knows only through the mediation of Hannah.

Remembrance - similarly to all other four films in this second-level circle - manifest a strong engagement with women's memories during the Holocaust, from first-hand or postmemory perspective. However, much of the trauma and identification mechanisms in all five films are created through the use of musical underscores, melodramatic tones, and happy endings marked by reconciliation.

Along with the German production *Remembrance*, another significant example from the second-level circle of vicarious witness experience is *Nina's Journey* (2005). "I'm very

contented; I feel I've had a very good life, a very good life" are the words that the elderly Nina Einhorn pronounces at the end of the film as a sort of epilogue to her incredible story of survival and her life-journey in Poland, Denmark and finally in Sweden. Directed by her daughter, Lena Einhorn, the film is clearly intended to document and preserve her mother's memories. As the epilogue states, the interview with Nina Einhorn, which is integrated into the fiction film, was shot a month after she was diagnosed with breast cancer, in August 1999. Since Nina passed away three years before the release of the film in 2005, it represents a symbolic testament as she performs one last journey through the memories of her "very good life".

Nina's presence throughout the film, in the interview fragments or as a voiceover narrating the film gives authenticity and authority to the story. The film is structured upon a chronology of events that interweaves historical data with life events in Nina's family. Through the newsreel footage, Lena Einhorn captures many of the realities of war and the atrocities of persecution: the daily life of people in Warsaw, poverty, ruins, destruction, the German occupation, the building of the ghetto walls, children begging or smuggling food into the ghetto and so on. The footage enhances the credibility of the story especially when paralleled with scenes that re-create similar situations in the film. The film narrates Nina's story of an ordinary girl coming of age in extraordinary circumstances, and Polish actress Agnieszka Grochowska as young Nina is adept at portraying the lightness and energy that will help Nina to survive against all odds.

What is particularly important in the film is that Nina's character is defined and portrayed in symbiosis with her mother's figure, Fanja. The figure of the mother is very important throughout the film and represents a reference point for Nina, who matures from a sensitive and childish girl into a strong woman like her mother. Interestingly, the portrayal of mother and daughter gradually evolves in opposite directions: while Nina grows stronger, Fanja's personality fades away to finally turn her into a scared, "invisible" person. Her invisibility is suggested by the fact that, in her last appearance in the film she is hiding in a closet, humbled and disturbed.

The journey in the cart from Łódź to Warsaw, which opens the film, marks the beginning of a metamorphosis of the two characters. For the first time, Fanja displays tenderness and opens her heart asking for forgiveness. When Nina asks what for she has to forgive her, the voiceover intentionally covers their discussion. Fanja's answer is in fact unimportant, as the crux of this scene lies in the start of a transforming relationship between the two. With the progressive worsening of their situation as they move into the Warsaw ghetto, Fanja becomes increasingly vulnerable and weak, while Nina, the fragile girl, gradually changes into a strong, well-defined character. One episode clearly emphasises this role reversal between mother and daughter: while Fanja is ill in bed, Nina sneaks home from work to nurture her sick mother. When Fanja's health is finally restored, she becomes apathetic, and refuses to leave her bed and to assume her responsibilities. Aware that this situation might cause them to lose their jobs in the factory, which in the ghetto context would be equal to a death sentence, Nina scolds her mother in a moment of despair. As aged Nina Einhorn comments on this memory: "It was the first time I'd ever shouted at my mother and I got her onto her feet." From this moment on it is increasingly evident that Nina assumes the leading role in the mother-daughter relationship. Given the film's emphasis on the mother-daughter relationship, the title of the film "Nina's journey" can be read both as Nina's journey from Holocaust to life, but also as the journey of re-discovery of a deep relationship between Nina and her mother. In fact, Nina's father and brother are present throughout the film, but their roles are less important than the two female characters. In a very symbolic way, the film's opening and closure point to this relationship between Nina and Fanja: from the cart-driven trip to Warsaw when the two women hug each other for the first time, their relationship and characters have undergone a huge transformation. The film ends with Nina who returns to their parental house to find, in the emptiness of their apartment, a photo of her mother, hidden in the back of a drawer. The two are rejoined beyond death, as Fanja lives now through Nina. Ultimately, the title points out towards the last, tributary journey through the memories of an aged Nina Einhorn towards the end of her life.

This film is located in the middle level of the three concentric circles representing the vicarious witness experience (see Figure 2 above) for two reasons. Firstly, the continuous sliding of the narrative between the documentary footage, the present-time interview and the fictional reconstruction of the past detracts from involving the audience in the efforts of identification with Nina's experience. Although highly preoccupied with the process of recovering and preserving memory, its fragmented structure hinders the transmission of trauma as a vicarious experience. Secondly, the didactic tone of the film and the extensive use of classic flashback (as opposed to the posttraumatic one) render less effective the whole experience of vicarious witnessing. The biographical flashback widely used in *Nina's Journey* is intended to tell the story retrospectively and, throughout the film, is framed in the present by the visual figure of the aged survivor. As Joshua Hirsch (2004: 93-94) explains, contrary to the posttraumatic flashback (encountered in *Remembrance*), this type of classical flashback is pre-announced by elements of plot and dialogue. Thus, by appealing didactically to the spectator, the painful fictional memory does not encourage an analogue posttraumatic experience in her / him.

The autobiographical film *The Birch-Tree Meadow* holds a distinctive place at the centre of the three concentric circles (see Figure 2 above). Directed by Marceline Loridan-Ivens, a French-Jewish filmmaker aged 75 at the release of the film, the film is the fruit of her experience as a survivor of the concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau. As she points out in an interview, there is a strong connection between the film and her experience:

I have let so many years pass before bringing my own contribution to that living memorial of the Holocaust made up from the memories of those who survived it, simply because for all that time I was incapable of doing it. As a person, like so many other survivors, [I thought] it was better to remain silent. But today, as an artist, although I truly fear that I don't have the capacity, I know I have the duty to express myself and add my voice to those of people who have had the courage to speak before the death of the last survivor sends the camps into the realm of History once and for all.⁴⁶

This statement by Marceline Loridan-Ivens is very significant as it highlights the self-reflexive tone of the film. It is worth noting that what sets *The Birch-Tree Meadow* apart

from all the other films discussed so far is not only the presence of the survivor, whose first-hand memories are at the source of both the script and film directing, but also the particular style of the film that refuses to recreate the past visually. *The Birch-Tree Meadow* re-enacts the Holocaust not in a staged reconstruction of the past, as most films do, but by evoking names, stories, and sensations through the voice-off and sometimes disembodied voiceover of the main character Myriam Rosenberg who returns after fifty years to Birkenau. Since the film does not try to reconstruct the past at a visual level, it does so in a very powerful way through the film's soundtrack. The unrepresented past is felt through the evocative power of remembrance as Myriam recalls one by one her long lost memories. In one of the first scenes in the camp, while the camera captures in a long shot Myriam walking away on the abandoned train tracks leading to Auschwitz, the disembodied voiceover narrates the story of her arrival in the camp, aged fifteen, when she was saved from the first selection for the gas chambers by a girl named Françoise. In a second moment, entering her former barrack Myriam pronounces the names of all her roommates, looking at their beds as if she would see them. Her memories become alive through voice-offs from the past: at times she enters into a dialogue with these ghost-like voices, or she listens to them in a contemplative moment. In a particularly evocative scene, one can distinctly hear the women chatting about food, enlisting their favourite dishes and picturing in detail the meals they would like to have. Their voices fill in the empty spaces of the present rendering memory vivid and actual. Significantly, within the context of the Final Solution, "food talk" had a strong gendered dimension being used by women to preserve their dignity and to socialise (Goldenberg, 2003: 164). The past comes alive not only for Myriam, but for the audience too who witnesses these fragments of memories and tries to piece together the puzzle of stories.

In a discussion at the beginning of the film with Suzanne, another survivor with whom she shared the barrack as an inmate, Myriam poses a challenging question: "You see we don't have the same memories. And what can guarantee me that is you to be right?"⁴⁷ The issue of non-coinciding memories between female survivors who lived together the same event surfaces throughout the film as a recurrent motif. Myriam does not accept the fact

that, with the passing of time, her memories might be blurred and imprecise. “I have my memories!” she exclaims, where the pronoun “my” claims a personal relationship with her own past. Myriam’s disagreement with another two women survivor who lived the same exact experience re-echoes the words of Joan Ringelheim, one of the pioneers of a gendered differentiated approach to the Holocaust. Ringelheim totally opposes the concept of ‘sameness’ of the Jewish experience, claiming the uniqueness of memories and experiences: “There is no time, there is no place that is the same for everyone, not even Auschwitz” (Ringelheim, 1990: 143). Moreover, the issue of non-coinciding memories between survivors points to the inability of memory to restore the past entirely for those who have experienced trauma. Janet Walker (2005: 4) defines this process as the “traumatic paradox”, in which “forgetting and mistakes in memory may actually stand, therefore, as testament to the genuine nature of the event a person is trying to recall”. Myriam’s incessant search for a meadow between the birch trees where years ago she had to dig pits and bury the bodies from the crematorium is thus very significant in the film. Tormented by this gap in memory, Myriam returns a few times to the meadow, draws a map of the place, and confronts it unsuccessfully with other survivors. At a metaphorical level “The Birch-Tree Meadow” (the title of the film and also the literal translation into English of the word “Birkenau”) refers not to a specific location within the camp structure or the name of the concentration camp, but it is a metaphor for the “place” where no two memories are the same.

The encounter in Auschwitz-Birkenau between Myriam and Oskar, the grandson of a former SS who worked in the camp, holds a very significant role in the film. Oskar claims that he is trying to capture the tracks of the past, objectively, by taking photos. Myriam’s reply, diametrically opposed to Oskar’s, “I’m looking for the invisible,”⁴⁸ is very suggestive for her constant oscillation between present and past. The walls, the barbed wire, the surveillance towers, the barracks, the bunk beds, the latrines, the overgrown grass covering the whole area of the camp, become all invisible testimonies of a haunting past as Myriam discloses her memories, caught between the will to remember and the desire to forget. The audience is deeply involved in this act of searching the

invisible traces of the past in Auschwitz and in the struggle of the protagonist to remember the facts and the places. The polarity between visible/invisible and the two different quests about the past are indicative of the tension between history and memory. For Myriam the invisible is the memory, are those voices from the past that only she can hear. The visible and objective claimed by Oskar, represents the history and its factual authority. Traditionally history, seen as male, based on logic and order, is considered to be the opposite of memory (feminine) deemed irrational and unable to guarantee veracity (Reading, 2002: 32) In the film, Oskar knows the camp by heart and is able to explain the significance of each room in the Birkenau Museum. On the signpost indicating the “Birkenau Museum” Myriam erases the word “Museum” and replaces it with the term “camp”. In *The Birch-Tree Meadow* the relationship between history and memory is reversed: it is not the history, but the memory which holds the key to first-hand experience. The history, factual and objective, is replaced by memory, albeit fragmented and subjective, disrupted and incongruous, thus reclaiming the precedence of women’s voices and memories over male dominated histories of the Holocaust.

The Birch-Tree Meadow bears stylistic resemblances to the documentary *Night and Fog* by Alain Resnais, considered by Hirsch (2004: 41) as “the founding text of the posttraumatic cinema”. Through its long silences and the absence of past reconstructions, its self-consciousness and the subjective point of view of the traumatised witness, the film establishes the same kind of posttraumatic “dialectic of memory and forgetting, of vision and blindness, of the necessity and impossibility of representing historical trauma” (Hirsch, 2004: 61-62). Because the film is devoid of images from the past and draws heavily on sound and imagination, it challenges the spectator to assume an active role, to undertake his/her own struggle with the past and to become the “vicarious witness”.

6.6. Conclusion

The films discussed in this chapter chart a relatively coherent trajectory from universalised portrayals of the female Jew (*Marriage in the Shadows*, *The Last Stage*, *Border Street*, *Distant Journey*) to stories that are told entirely from the perspective of Jewish women (*Rosenstrasse*, *The Birch-Tree Meadow*, *Nowhere in Africa*, *Nina's Journey*, *Remembrance*). The path towards first-person narratives is a non-linear one, characterised by different stages, spanning from early universal images of Jewish women (late 1940s), the Jewish woman as epitome of victimhood (especially in the 1960s), diversification process which explores new fertile grounds (early 1970s to the end of 1990s) and the recovery of women's memories (2000s). By and large, each of these stages mirrors new findings in the historical research of the Holocaust, landmark events such as the Nazi trials, changes in the collective memory over decades, and last but not least, an increasing interest in gender issues not only in relation to the Holocaust but also in the media and society generally.

In a special way, the 21st century witnessed an important change in the way filmmakers began relating to women's experiences as victims, by portraying them as complex and articulate protagonists of their own stories. These films endeavour to represent in a meaningful way what women experienced during the Holocaust, no longer from the perspective of mainstream history, but in personal, reflective terms that address the specificities of female experience. This tendency can be read as an attempt to give women back their long lost voices and to contrast what Ronit Lentin (2000: 693) has called the "deafening silence" that for decades neutralised the stories of women into a gender-blind perspective. The presence of the female survivor, whether fictional or real, gives credibility to the film narrative and makes the stories personal and real. It is of interest that most of the films in this later cycle are directed by women. Although their number remains much lower compared to male directors, the presence and impact of female directors on recent films about the Holocaust is noteworthy. While this conclusion cannot be generalised for the whole body of films in the European Holocaust cinema, it is

important to acknowledge that despite a growing general interest in gender issues and women over recent decades, women's Holocaust experiences remain a field that is explored mostly by women. The scholars who established the parameters for research on women and the Holocaust, such as Sybil Milton, Joan Ringelheim, Vera Laska, Claudia Koonz, Marion Kaplan, Elisabeth Heineman, Judith Tydor Baumel, Elisabeth Baer, Myrna Goldenberg and many others, are all women. In relation to Holocaust writings, according to Kremer (1999: 3-4), male fiction authors generally write about male experience during the Holocaust, which excludes women's gender-related experiences. Similarly, it appears that the male-dominated film industry also impacts significantly on the visibility that women's lives achieve in Holocaust films. As this chapter has illustrated, with few exceptions, women's gendered experiences during the Holocaust have not been at the centre of male directed films without being universalised, sexualised or used as a backdrop for male protagonists. Moving from tropes of victimhood and suffering to those of heroism and resistance, the next chapter explores images of heroic women in Holocaust cinema, and attempts to establish the connection between collective memory in different European countries and their icons of female resistance.

Chapter 7

GENDERING HEROISM: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN FILMIC DISCOURSES ABOUT RESISTANCE

As a subject, women and the Holocaust poses a challenge to traditional definitions of heroism and resistance.
(Baer and Goldenberg 2003)

7.1. Introduction

Narratives about resistance have always played an important role in the process of shaping the collective memory of the past. Whether an occupied nation, collaborator or even Germany as the main perpetrator nation, all countries involved in the Second World War boast narratives of resistance. In her analysis of the written, filmic and museum discourses about resistance in Germany, Anne Fuchs (2008: 115) claims that they are intended to “offer powerful symbols of non-conformity which bolster a flattering self-image” while representing a “moral legacy for later generations”. She further argues that resistance narratives highlight “the instrumentalized nature of cultural memory” which is altered to reflect “present cultural, social and ideological needs” (Fuchs, *ibid.*: 116). Fuchs’s assertion is very important since it acknowledges the dynamic relationship between the memory of the past and present concerns of societies at different moments in time.

This chapter examines the significant role played by films in constructing and disseminating discourses about resistance from a specifically gendered perspective. The analysis reveals that women’s stories are “less likely to be told, especially as politically influential history” (Stoltzfus, 1998: 166) and demonstrates how European Holocaust cinema confirms dominant discourses about female resistance. By exploring a range of portrayals in European cinema, this chapter highlights how films tend to downplay and

distort the contribution of women and, in doing so, reinforce mainstream historical discourses of female resistance.

As outlined in the literature review of Chapter 2, women have been excluded from the conservative interpretations of resistance, understood in terms of male-dominated armed combat. According to Elizabeth Baer and Myrna Goldenberg (2003: xxiv), “As a subject, women and the Holocaust poses a challenge to traditional definitions of heroism and resistance”. Both scholars claim that patriarchal notions of resistance, seen as armed, organised and male-based activities, need to be broadened to include those activities performed by women such as the rescue of children or the *Rosenstrasse* protest⁴⁹. Interestingly, Lenore Weitzman (1998: 217-218) explains why, for many decades after the war the focus remained on male-based activities, while the role of women in the resistance was largely disregarded. She claims that there are four factors that brought about this situation: (1) armed activities captured public attention more easily than the rescue activities performed mostly by women, which supposed secrecy and invisibility; (2) women often acted individually and were not part of an institutional structure; (3) when women joined organised resistance movements, their activities were usually auxiliary; and (4) the actions of women, especially those involving rescue, were generally devalued. Weitzman acknowledges a paradox in the fact that armed resistance has been emphasised, despite its insignificant military value in the overall opposition against the Nazis. Weitzman’s assertion explains why, until the emergence of academic research on women and the Holocaust, the topic of resistance was largely gender-blind. Beginning with the 1980s, feminist scholars such as Vera Laska (1983), Brana Gurewitsch (1998) and Nechama Tec (2003) started to bring forth collections of women’s testimonies about resistance. Narrow definitions of resistance as armed, male-based activities thus became gradually replaced by broader concepts that include individual, unarmed acts of opposition against the Nazis.

Given that the woman has been seen for decades as an outsider, the key question of this chapter is how cinema engaged with this topic during the seven decades of existence that

have passed since the end of the war. Considered in hindsight, the findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 suggest a chronological evolution in the cinematic representation of women as perpetrators and victims, respectively. The present Chapter (7), however, illustrates that European films about female resistance did not evolve in a single, smooth series of stages. On the contrary, the picture they paint is limited, fragmented and inconsistent. Of the 310 films included in my corpus, only seven depict leading female characters involved in resistance activities. These are *The Last Stage* (1948), *The White Rose* (1982), *Five Last Days* (1982), *Aimee and Jaguar* (1999), *Rosenstrasse* (2003), *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* (2005), and *Black Book* (2006). An additional number of twelve films focus on depicting women who performed activities of rescue: *The Door* (2012), *In Another Lifetime* (2011), *The Round Up* (2010), *Joanna* (2010) *Lucie Aubrac* (1997), *Warsaw – Year 5703* (1992), *Just Beyond this Forest* (1991), *Martha and I* (1990), *The Passerby* (1982), *The Last Metro* (1980), *Conspiracy of Hearts* (1960) and *I Know what I'm Living For* (1955). Based on this limited number of films, the present chapter will focus on women's involvement in rescue and resistance. An in-depth analysis of these films reveals five key tropes or themes, around which the chapter will be structured.

Firstly, I examine one of the landmark films made in the aftermath of the war: *The Last Stage* (1948) by Wanda Jakubowska. Because of its exclusive focus on the communist struggle of women to oppose and defeat the Nazis, within the context of a concentration camp, *The Last Stage* is a distinctive example of politically committed film. Through its insistence on positive representation and emphasis on women's collective resistance in extremis, the film stresses the singularity of these women and the exceptionality of their courage. However, the overtly political ethos of the film undermines their credibility and the female characters function here only as ciphers for resistance. Secondly, this chapter examines Holocaust cinema's treatment of Jewish women involved in the resistance. The topic of Jewish resistance has been widely debated over the decades, ever since renowned historian Raul Hilberg (1961) claimed that the Jews did not resist the persecution and went to the slaughter like lambs. Thus, the representation of Jewish women as resisters poses a double challenge: overcoming the stereotype of Jewish passivity and

acknowledging women's (invisible) heroism. In this context, the poorly drawn cinematic stereotypes of female resistance that culminate in the overly eroticised character of Rachel Stein in *Black Book* (2006) are illustrative of cinema's tendency to sexualise and downplay women's engagement in active resistance.

Thirdly, this chapter explores how the topic of rescue has been depicted in European Holocaust films. Based on a gendered comparison of male and female rescuers, this section reveals the propensity of cinema to downplay female rescuers. While male rescuers have been afforded more complex portrayals, rooted in historical facts, narratives describing women's activities of rescue are undermined by the use of romantic codes and the visual imperative of the male gaze. Fourthly, the chapter discusses two of the most important examples of female resistance in Nazi Germany: Sophie Scholl, a member of the underground group *The White Rose*, and the Rosenstrasse protest of women for the freedom of their Jewish husbands. Close analysis of two recent German productions, namely *Rosenstrasse* (2003) and *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* (2005), reveals that they construct a counter-discourse of the past by highlighting the successful opposition of women to the Nazi regime in a context where even military resistance was ineffective. Finally, this chapter explores two films that offer particularly unconventional images of women as resisters: *The Nasty Girl* (1990) and *Sarah's Key* (2009), both of which are concerned with second and third generation women who act as catalysts of post-Holocaust justice and symbols of non-complicity with the past.

7.2. Women as Ciphers for Resistance in *The Last Stage*

Although already discussed in Chapter 6 from the perspective of female victims, the Polish film *The Last Stage* (1948) by Wanda Jakubowska merits further investigation in this context because of its early post-war depiction of a microcosm of female resistance in a concentration camp. While undoubtedly *The Last Stage* is a landmark film in the pantheon of Holocaust cinematic representations, its propagandistic tone required by the

communist regime results in an overly idealised and simplified portrayal of female heroism.

Inspired by Jakubowska's own experience as a political prisoner during the German occupation in Poland, the film focuses exclusively on the bravery of a group of female prisoners in Auschwitz concentration camp. The female characters of this film, Martha – the Jewish interpreter, Anna - the German nurse and Eugenia - the Russian doctor, are perfect examples of women who are strong, self-declared communists and active in the underground resistance. They are all portrayed as beautiful and kind women, in contrast with the many female characters that represent evil (guards, overseers, block-leaders, kapos) and that are depicted as rude, violent or physically unattractive. Eugenia, the camp doctor, stands out for her integrity and desperate efforts to help the women in the hospital despite the lack of medicines. Willingly she embraces an heroic death as punishment for trying to tell the truth to an international inspection committee about the inhuman conditions in the camp. Tortured to death she remains firm in her beliefs and contemptuous towards the Nazi perpetrators. Similarly Anna, the German nurse, proves to be heroic in at least two key instances. Firstly, when an overseer orders that the inmates in the hospital join the selection, Anna appeals to the Nazi head doctor to let them stay, saving their lives. In a second instance, she denies any knowledge about the smuggling of subversive information within the hospital. After being whipped by a female head overseer, she is put in a car with Nazi officers, leading presumably to her death. Finally, the interpreter Martha is asked to help the resistance by escaping from Auschwitz in order to bring to the Allies the Nazi plans for the liquidation of Auschwitz. The mission succeeds but she is later captured and sentenced to death. Before delivering a passionate speech under the gallows and slapping the camp commandant, Martha cuts her wrists with a knife, preferring to die by her own hand rather than to be killed by the Nazis. Similarly heroic are a group of French inmates who, while condemned to death and loaded into a truck, defiantly sing the French national anthem. While most of the leading characters sacrifice their lives for a noble cause, the Auschwitz female inmates

are seen as victorious: they do not give in to the evil and their heroism is repaid, since the plans to annihilate the camp fail and a multitude of women finally see liberation.

Long before recent theorists took up this theme, *The Last Stage* suggests that reproduction is a form of female resistance. In one of the opening scenes pregnant Helena is held and comforted by her fellow inmates after fainting during a roll call. Anna, the nurse, intervenes bravely by asking the senior block leader to dismiss the roll-call, so that Helena can be helped to give birth. Later, the women decide to do everything possible to keep the baby alive and to protect the mother. The dialogue between the Russian female doctor and the German nurse implies that it is not their first attempt to save the life of a newborn. Although the baby is eventually killed by the Nazi male doctor, the film implies the fact that childbearing in a concentration camp was not possible without female solidarity. Interestingly, in 1948, when *The Last Stage* was released, and for many decades after, the resistance was understood exclusively as a male-dominated, armed form of opposition. More inclusive understandings that encompass childbearing emerged only in recent feminist work such as that of Katharina von Kellenbach (1999: 27), in which she claims that childbearing is a collective act of defiance, since “under the circumstances of extreme deprivation, women depended on a “group” to share their resources in order to deliver, hide, feed, clothe (...) children.”

Precisely because of its exceptional depiction of a microcosm of female resistance in the extreme conditions of a concentration camp, *The Last Stage* remains an exceptional case in European Holocaust cinema. Paradoxically, however, the features that set this film apart (its inclusive approach to resistance and the portrayal of women as active fighters and resourceful opponents of the Nazi regime) are encouraged by the (patriarchal) communist system in which *The Last Stage* was made. Hanno Loewy (2004: 183) claims that the members of the artistic board who reviewed the script in 1946 and 1947, before approving the film, demanded “more political impact, and a clear message related to the cause of the resistance”. Therefore, as Loewy further acknowledges, the filmmaker changed the screenplay, by placing the emphasis on resistance and elevating “the status

of Eugenia, the Russian doctor, to a martyr” (ibid.). In a similar vein, Marek Haltof (2012: 35, 40) contends that “Jakubowska’s own Marxist beliefs” and “the Stalinist model” of the time have both influenced greatly the final shape of the film. Haltof argues that the characters of Martha and Helena also conform to communist ideological requirements. He contends that the interpreter Martha undergoes an important ideological change during the film “from a middle-class character to a communist martyr” (Haltof, 2012: 40). While, on arrival at the camp, she is completely unaware of its realities, such as the existence of a crematorium, later in the film she claims that in the camp she has learned to think. On more than one occasion she is shown outwitting the Nazis in order to help members of the resistance. Similarly Helena, after losing her baby, undergoes “a swift in ideological change” (Haltof, 2012: 41) and becomes actively involved in the underground resistance. Being the only one who survives among the leading female resisters, she plays a symbolic role in the closing scene of the film when she assures dying Martha that she will never allow Auschwitz to happen again.

Interestingly, Haltof (ibid.) argues that Jakubowska’s depiction of the Auschwitz concentration camp stood out in stark contrast with several literary accounts published in Poland in the aftermath of the war, especially with the novels of Auschwitz survivor Tadeusz Borowski. On the one hand, Borowski provides a “despairing picture” in which the boundaries between good and evil are blurred, and the characters in the novel are “infected by the devastating degeneration of human values”. On the other hand, Jakubowska’s film, structured upon “clear divisions between good and evil”, stresses the “human solidarity in the face of evil” and offers a strong pro-communist message (Haltof, 2012: 34-35). Thus, Haltof concludes that *The Last Stage* depicts not an objective, but a “mythologized” vision of the camp.

According to Joan Mellen (1974: 18-19), the portrayal of women as active fighters in socialist films is irrelevant since these films are not intended to highlight the social transformation of women but rather to eulogise the merits of the ruling group and to re-enact “officially glorified events for the purpose of propaganda.” Referring to the

representation of women as fighters against oppression in Chinese cinema after 1949, Mellen (ibid.: 19) argues that:

The purpose is not to discover truth from experience – for example, that women grow through struggle – not to chronicle any process of self-liberation. Rather, these aspirations are invoked as shibboleths to promote the virtue of official power.

Mellen's claim is very useful here since, in *The Last Stage*, the communist convictions of Jakubowska and the propaganda requirements of the time favour a similar image of women as strong and active agents of change. This draws attention to the limitations of restricting the analysis exclusively to a positive/negative representational framework and emphasises the importance of considering representations in the context of the broader ideological poetics of the film. In this sense, it is apposite to distinguish between films that afford their female protagonists a strong authorial voice and/or are concerned primarily with the transformation of the character herself and those films that employ female characters as symbols of or ciphers for change, progress or resistance. In *The Last Stage*, the idealised depiction of women as beacons of strength amid extreme circumstances arguably drives the focus away from their subjective experiences towards the centrality of the communist cause and the resistance ideal. As a result, the female characters remain somewhat one-dimensional, and the overtly political ethos of the film undermines their credibility. The female figure functions here only as a revolutionary/resistance symbol, and the film does not attempt to present a nuanced or complex account of women's experiences during the Holocaust.

Thus, despite having created an iconography of the Holocaust (Loewy, 2004) that inspired many subsequent films, Jakubowska's film has not been commended for its portrayal of women. As this chapter explores in the following pages, by and large, Holocaust cinema has eschewed the depiction of courageous women, enforcing the idea that open resistance in violent circumstances was a no-woman's land. However, while the image of heroic women does not appear to fit into the pantheon of Holocaust cinema with its preference for women as victims, it is worth noting that there are numerous films that

explore women as resistance fighters in the context of German occupation, rather than the Holocaust. These include *Odette* (1950), *A Generation* (1955), *And Give My Love to the Swallows* (1972), *Blanche and Marie* (1985), *Charlotte Gray* (2001) and *Female Agents* (2008). These are not included in the current corpus, however, as this chapter focuses only on those films which feature female resistance and trope of rescue in the context of the Holocaust, namely *Kapo* (1960), *Aimee and Jaguar* (1999), *Black Book* (2006), *Rosenstrasse* (2003), *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* (2005), *The Door* (2012), *In Another Lifetime* (2011), *The Round Up* (2010), *Joanna* (2010), *Lucie Aubrac* (1997), *Warsaw – Year 5703* (1992), *Just Beyond this Forest* (1991), *Martha and I* (1990), *The Passerby* (1982), *The Last Metro* (1980), *Conspiracy of Hearts* (1960), *I Know what I'm Living For* (1955), *The Nasty Girl* (1990) and *Sarah's Key* (2010).

7.3. Patriarchal Discourses/Perspectives on Jewish Female Heroism

This section addresses the cinematic representation of Jewish women who were actively involved in the opposition against the Nazis. The starting point is the historiography of Jewish resistance, pointing out on one side the myth of Jewish passivity and, on the other, dominant, patriarchal understandings of this term. After an overview of the extremely few films that portray heroic women in protagonist roles, namely *The Last Stage* (1948), *Kapo* (1960) and *Aimee and Jaguar* (1999), the main focus will be on the most recent and also the most controversial of them, the Dutch film *Black Book* (2006).

The topic of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust has brought much controversy over the nearly seven decades that have passed since the end of the war. The post-war myth of Jewish passivity based on a narrow concept of resistance owes much of its popularity to the renowned historian Raul Hilberg, who claimed in his study, *The Destruction of European Jewry* (1961), that there was very little Jewish opposition to persecution (Cox, 2011: 328). Historian John Cox points out that the subject of Jewish resistance has also been shaped and distorted to suit the political interests of the Cold War and Israeli

debates over national identity. In line with Cold War politics, it was considered that “only a force that could have potentially overthrown Hitler was worthy of the term ‘resistance’.” Also, the focus on organised and armed resistance was reinforced by the Israeli State and the process of shaping its national identity, which was grounded on the idea that, during the Holocaust, Jews “went like sheep to the slaughter”. As Cox (2011: 328) claims, “Israeli ideologies often advanced the myth of the “weak” Diaspora Jew versus the strong, new Israeli Jew”. In the same vein, sociologist Ronit Lentin (2004: 62) argues that the memory of the Holocaust in Israel is based on the “negation of diaspora,” in other words on defining the Israeli self-image as “other-than the (Jewish) diaspora.” Such a process highlights the dichotomy between the masculine image of Israeli Zionism versus the feminised one of passive diaspora (and by extension the Holocaust). Lentin (2004: 60-62) traces the roots of such a dichotomy to the fact that, in Judaic patriarchy, memory itself is gendered and the nation identifies with a male perspective. Taking stock of Rachel Adler (1991)’s claim, Lentin explains that the masculinity of Israeli memory is embedded in the Judaic language and psyche as the Hebrew word for “memory” (*zikaron*) is derived from the word “male” (*zakhar*), while the word for “woman” (*nekeva*) means literally “hole”. Lentin (ibid.: 62) further claims that “the nationalisation of memory in relation to the Shoah can thus be seen as the pouring of (male) memory into what he sees as a void, a hole, a fertile ground.”

However, due to the cutting-edge work of various scholars (Laska 1983, Gurewitsch 1998, Kaplan 1998a and Tec 2003), Jewish women have slowly found their place in the picture of resistance, both in its armed and unarmed forms. Judith Tydor Baumel (1998) analyses from a gendered perspective the mission of the parachutists, focusing especially on the profile of three women: Hannah Senesz, Haviva Reik and Sara Braverman. Nechama Tec (1998) explores the presence of women among the partisans in the forests of Bielorrussia and highlights the serious risk of death and rape to which Jewish women were exposed. Marion Kaplan (1998a: 215) claims in her study on the Jewish resistance in Germany that in Berlin there was an underground group consisting only of women. The renowned historian Yehuda Bauer (2001) dedicates a chapter to the case of Gisi

Fleischmann, leader of an underground Jewish movement in occupied Bratislava, while Weitzman (2006) analyse the role of female couriers in the Jewish resistance during the Holocaust.

Given that acknowledgement of the Jewish resistance has been gradual and, moreover, that the contribution of women has surfaced only in the last two decades, the absence of heroic women in European Holocaust cinema is to some extent understandable. The convenient image of the Jew as a victim has also influenced considerably the way the topic of Jewish resistance has been perceived and represented. A significant role has also been played by the patriarchal mechanisms embedded in cinematic practice, that tend to portray women as a-historical, passive and unchanging versus the active male figure who is inside history and an agent of change (Cook, 1988: 53). The absence of Jewish women in cinematic narratives of resistance also suggests that Holocaust cinema is a predominantly conservative canon that tends not to challenge prevailing forms of gendered representation.

There is a dearth of films that portray Jewish female protagonists involved in the resistance. *The Last Stage* (1948) discussed both above and in Chapter 6, features a courageous Jewish woman, Martha, who plays an active role in the resistance within Auschwitz concentration camp. As mentioned earlier Martha's portrayal, largely shaped by communist ideology minimises her Jewish identity at the expense of a universalised and symbolic idea of resistance. Her function in the narrative is not to portray a brave Jewish fighter, but on the contrary, to highlight the courage of the many women serving the communist cause, regardless of their nationality. Indeed, Wanda Jakubowska centres the action on several women, all exceptionally heroic, highlighting their varied backgrounds: Polish, German, Russian, Jewish, French. The Italian film *Kapo* (1960) also portrays a Jewish woman who chooses to sacrifice herself for the communist cause and the liberation of a concentration camp. The narrative is not as straightforward as Jakubowska's, since for most of the film, Edith/Nicole's role is not typically heroic: although she is only fourteen she accepts to work as a camp prostitute and later becomes

a ruthless Kapo (female prisoner in charge of other inmates). Her conversion to the communist cause and decision to help a group of resisters is motivated by falling in love with a Russian inmate and member of the underground resistance. Edith/Nicole's portrayal thus reflects the ambiguity of being both a collaborator and a resister, and her only opportunity to help the resistance comes about in the last scene when she chooses to die so the others will be liberated. As Esther Fuchs (2008: 290) astutely points out, Edith/Nicole's sacrifice for the sake of love represents her cinematic "redemption." Fuchs claims that, "Nicole dies as Edith, the whore reverts to virginity as it were, but she must pay with her life for what she has done, for not even love can redeem her for the sin of collaboration."

Seen in this light, the merits of Edith/Nicole's involvement with the resistance are neutralised by the idea of a sacrifice needed to reach "redemption." Another Jewish woman to be involved in the resistance is Felice, the protagonist of the German film *Aimee and Jaguar* (1999), also discussed in Chapter 6. The film is one of the most significant and successful productions to deal with the topic of lesbianism in the context of the Holocaust and its narrative is centred on the love story between Lilly, a housewife and mother of four, and the Jewish member of the underground resistance in Berlin, Felice. Precisely because of the extensive focus on the lesbian love story (as discussed in Chapter 6), Felice's active work as a courier for the resistance is minimised and directed towards highlighting her reckless character. All of the personality traits that Felice displays working as a resister serve primarily to allow the audience understand her latter behaviour in the relationship with Lilly. She is enigmatic, seductive and a risk-taker who lives in the moment – all of these elements taken together give the audience a better understanding of Felice's behaviour than Lilly is able to grasp. To cite Nathan Abrams (2012: 132), Felice represents one of the few "tough Jewesses" in the cinematic representation of the Holocaust, which stands out in sharp relief from the paradigm of passivity that dominates the portrayal of Jewish women. Nevertheless, in relation to the subject of female resistance, her contribution and profile as a resister is downplayed and obscured by the overall purpose of the film.

Against the backdrop of this scarcity of heroic Jewesses in Holocaust films, *Black Book* (2006) is striking in its approach: not only is it centred on the bravery of a Jewish woman but her representation is also heavily sexualised. *Black Book* is directed by the Dutch filmmaker Paul Verhoeven, known for the internationally famed erotic thriller *Basic Instinct* (1992) whose recipe for success relies on ample graphic displays of erotic sexuality and violence. *Black Book* reiterates Verhoeven's favourite tropes, this time in the context of the Dutch resistance during the Holocaust. The story is centred on the beautiful Rachel Stein, a Jewess hiding in occupied Netherlands during the Second World War. After losing her family during an attempt to flee by boat towards the south of the Netherlands, Rachel joins the underground resistance in the hope of avenging her tragic past. She changes her name to Ellis de Vries, dyes her hair blonde and takes on the task of procuring secret information from the Gestapo by seducing its local leader, Ludwig Müntze. The mission is accomplished as Rachel/Ellis manages to place a microphone inside the Gestapo, but in the process the Jewess and the Nazi fall in love. Claiming to be based on true events, *Black Book* was a box-office hit; winning fifteen awards in film festivals around the world, the film grossed 26,768,563 dollars⁵⁰. Its worldwide success can only be explained by the combination of an action film with unexpected plot twists and the romance implicit in an impossible love story peppered with erotic scenes.

In several scenes throughout the film, the camera's gaze is voyeuristically directed at Rachel/Ellis's body, especially her most intimate parts. In one of these scenes, the Jewess indicates that she is sexually available to one of her comrades in the resistance, who often challenges her with sexual innuendoes. As Rachel/Ellis contemplates herself in the mirror, legs spread, her colleague endeavours to strip off her shirt, which is the only piece of clothing she is wearing. Leading up to this moment the filmmaker foregrounds one of the most unusual and provocative shots seen in a Holocaust film: the close-up of Rachel/Ellis pubic hair as she dyes it blonde in order to pass for an Aryan woman. In another scene, set in Müntze's bedroom, the SS gets suspicious about Rachel's identity and claim that she dyes her hair blonde to hide her Jewishness. Semi-naked Rachel/Ellis exposes her breasts and her hips asking "Are these Jewish?" until Müntze, pleased with

her arguments, initiates intercourse. Much of the dialogue that takes place between Rachel/Ellis and her male counterparts - whether protectors, members of the resistance or Nazis - also has implicit sexual connotations.

According to media scholar Nathan Abrams (2012: 63), the film's flashback structure, in which Rachel's memories are triggered by meeting with a friend during the war, serves to prioritise her "memories and subjectivity" and therefore ensure that "she is not merely the object of the gaze". Contrary to this, I contend that the film's structure as flashback is misleading, and sets up a false sense of subjectivity and thus the illusion of affording the female character a powerful position. At the level of narrative, while Rachel/Ellis is an active member of the resistance and occupies a dominant position in relation to the men she appears to seduce and manipulate, she is nevertheless an object of the male gaze. Her body is constantly displayed in erotic terms (Mulvey, 1988: 57) and her primary *raison d'être* is to induce male desire (Cook, 1988: 47). Moreover, the opening and closing scenes - which are situated a decade after the war (in 1956) - serve to normalise and anchor her character in hegemonic power structures by integrating her into society through marriage. According to Laura Mulvey (1988: 74), within the film narrative, the marriage element "sublimates the erotic into a final, closing, social ritual." In *Black Book*, Rachel Stein alias Ellis de Vries is thus transformed into Rachel Rosenthal, a respected primary teacher in her kibbutz, married and mother of two children. The filmmaker highlights the contrast between her brassy blonde appearance with perfect makeup and low-cut blouses while working for the Dutch resistance and the subsequent modest look with her hair covered according to Jewish religious customs. This later image suggests that Rachel's sexuality is no longer a threat and her power over men is neutralised. The need for such a clean image of Rachel at the very beginning of the film is twofold: on the one hand the audience anticipates the happy ending and therefore the filmic narrative can accommodate a more risqué, sexual tone, despite the brutality of the Holocaust, and on the other hand the male audience - while seduced by her sexual allure - is simultaneously reassured by the knowledge that she will return to a conventional female role. Her transformation thus satisfies the paradoxical patriarchal desires inherent in the virgin-

where dichotomy and, moreover, achieves this by means of the flashback narrative device. Rachel's exceptional bravery and potential as a transgressive character are therefore recuperated by placing the epilogue at the very beginning of the film under the pretext of flashback narrative.

This feminist reading of *Black Book* also challenges Nathan Abrams' (2012: 130-133) analysis, in which he argues that *Black Book*, *Aimée and Jaguar* and three American productions *The Grey Zone*, *Defiance* and *Inglorious Bastards* signal the emergence of a new category of cinematic Jewish woman: "the tough Jewess with Attitude". Abrams (2012: 132) argues that, "Those films that focus on female participation in violent resistance are a significant development in cinematic depictions of the Holocaust, showing the signs of reversing the Jewess from passive, brutalised and raped stereotype." He further claims (ibid.: 132):

...the tough Jewess with Attitude not only rebels against stereo(typical) gender roles, demonstrating that she can perform the same roles and tasks as the Jew, but also questions the duality of gender in the first place.

While there is no doubt about the novelty of such representations of female Jews in Holocaust cinema, and Abrams's observations readily apply to the other four films, it is questionable whether *Black Book* achieves a break with the clichéd images about women. Although brave and sharp in her reactions, Rachel's achievements in the resistance seem to be built upon her power of seduction over men and her sexual abilities. The excessive sexualisation, gratuitous bodily exposure and missions accomplished over pillow talk work against her credibility as a valid resistance hero. In this sense, it could be argued that Abrams offers us a distinctly postfeminist concept of female power and autonomy, achieved through a celebratory re-objectification of the female body and premised upon the notion that sexual power over men equates with empowerment more generally. Read from a radical feminist perspective, by contrast, the film arguably downplays women's contribution to the resistance by placing it firmly within a patriarchal framework of female representation.

It is worth noting also that *Black Book* shares three significant elements with earlier productions *Kapo* and *Aimee and Jaguar*. Firstly, each of the protagonists has a double identity: Edith becomes Nicole, a political prisoner in *Kapo*, Felice uses the name Jaguar in her relationship with Lilly, Rachel Stein takes on the name of Ellis de Vries after joining the resistance. In some ways the two names stand for the duplicity of their characters, and all three filmic narratives display the easiness of these Jewish women in changing identity and behaviour. Secondly, the sexual element plays a significant role in all three films. In *Kapo*, although the action takes place off-screen, Edith/Nicole works as a prostitute in the camp and receives protection from a male SS in exchange for her sexual favours. In *Aimee and Jaguar*, Felice poses for nude photos destined for the soldiers in the war. Moreover, the lovemaking scene between Aimee and Jaguar is charged with eroticism and, interestingly, despite the fact that Felice performs the dominant role and initiates intercourse, it is her naked body which is more exposed. Similarly, *Black Book* features frequent erotic scenes and sexually charged dialogues. Thirdly, the protagonists Edith, Felice and Rachel are involved in activities of resistance but also of collaboration. Edith is appointed as kapo, which means she is responsible for supervising and disciplining the other inmates. Her transformation is even more dramatic as from a young, innocent girl she turns into a bitter and uncompassionate woman. Felice covers her underground activities by working in the editorial office of a Nazi newspaper where she is highly appreciated for the quality of her work and finally Rachel, after having intercourse with Müntze, the head of the Gestapo, accepts a job at the Gestapo headquarters. After the liberation, Rachel faces the people's rage as they punish her for collaborating and publicly humiliate her by pouring a bucket of faeces over her. Viewed in this way, the three protagonists replicate the same paradox that characterises the depiction of women in French occupational films, in which collaborators and resisters "inhabit the same space and sometimes the same body" (Hewitt, 2008: 13). As Hewitt claims, these "polyvalent figures" are highly problematic as they "question the ties between women's *actual* activities during the war and their fictive renderings in film." Such female characters cast doubts on the entire topic of participation of Jewish women in activities of resistance.

Overall, the representation of Jewish women as part of the resistance in European cinema is both limited and limiting: the presence of brave, strong Jewesses effectively serves to minimise and downplay the very concept of female resistance. This argument corroborates Yvonne Kozlovsky-Golan's (2010: 244-245) work on the representation of women survivors in Israeli feature films about the Holocaust. She claims that the films made in Israel exhibit a "clear and consistent narrative line" that explains the survival of Jewish women by the fact that they were "German's whores or worked for them". From this point of view, *Kapo*, *Aimee and Jaguar* and *Black Book* are more closely aligned with Israeli than with European filmic narratives. The Jewish woman as a heroic figure represents such a challenge for the (conventional male) audience that her achievements must be recuperated through tropes of sexualisation and collaboration with the oppressor. In all three films, the female protagonist either dies (*Kapo* and *Aimee and Jaguar*) or gets married (*Black Book*), which further reinforces the notion that the threat posed by these women needs to be either normalised by marriage or resolved through the closure provided by death.

7.4. The Trope of Rescue in Holocaust Films

This section explores European cinema's treatment of rescuers, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who jeopardised their lives by coming to the aid of the persecuted during the Nazi regime. In doing so it highlights the discrepancy between historical accounts of rescue as an activity performed more by women than men, and cinematic representations, which privilege the male figure in the role of rescuer.

The historian Michael Berenbaum (2011: 315-317) argues that the rescue activities, which often implied offering food or shelter, were considered extraordinary during World War II because they put at stake the lives of the rescuers and of their families. In countries like Poland, for example, actions intended to help or save the persecuted were punishable by death. According to Berenbaum (2011: 317):

The rescuers were ordinary people from virtually every walk of life – religious and secular, upper-class and peasants, communists and even fascists, scholars and illiterates, and everyone in between, who maintained humane values of decency, hospitality, assistance to one's neighbors, shelter for young and defenceless children, feeding those who were hungry, offering clothing and shelter, deeds that would not be heralded in ordinary times. Nevertheless, given the extraordinary circumstances in which rescuers lived – and given the life-and-death stakes of their simple offers – we view their actions differently. (...) Their deeds were ordinary, and yet out of these deeds came the extraordinary.

Many of the people who survived the Holocaust owe their lives to the help of these brave and altruistic people who came to their rescue. The Yad Vashem Institute established the title of "Righteous Among the Nations" intended to pay tribute to the Gentiles who risked their own lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. So far this recognition has been granted to 25,271 persons from 44 countries.⁵¹ These numbers help us to understand that they constitute a small minority compared to victims and perpetrators. Significantly, more than half of the "Righteous Among the Nations" were women. Some of their profiles, presented on the Yad Vahem website under the heading "Women of Valor", tell the multifaceted stories of rescue performed by women. To name but a few of these brave female rescuers: Johanna Eck - a housewife from Berlin who hid Jews in her apartment, Irena Sendler – a young Polish woman who smuggled children out of the Warsaw ghetto, Elisabeta Strul – a Romanian woman who sheltered her Jewish neighbours during the Iasi pogrom, Antonina Gordey – a Belorussian nanny who saved a girl pretending she was her illegitimate child, Maria Agnese Tribbioli – an Italian nun who hid Jewish families in the convent during the German raids, and Karolina Juszczkowska – a Polish woman who was sentenced to death and executed for hiding two Jews in her house.⁵² Acting both independently and within organised structures, an area where women seem to predominate is the rescue of children. According to Eva Fogelman (2008: 253), many of the networks engaged in the rescue of children were headed by women, while those few headed by men "boasted an overwhelmingly female membership." As she explains, it was considered that women were better suited to the task and that their actions had greater probability of success. Fogelman further argues that Jewish parents also trusted women more than men as keepers of their

children. Nannies and single women were most preferred, since couples were considered more likely to attempt to convert the child or to keep it after the war.

In the light of these facts, the cinematic representation of women is surprisingly different as it dismisses much of the gendered dimension inherent to the topic of rescue and does not reflect the significant contribution of women. Most importantly, however, European Holocaust films tend to acknowledge more the contribution of men as rescuers – rather than women - in narratives that propose them as main characters. These films, which could easily be considered as European counterparts of *Schindler's List*, aim to depict the struggle of brave men in their mission to save one or more Jews. They include *Süskind* (2012), *In Darkness* (2011), *Army of Saviours* (2009), *Monsieur Batignole* (2002), *Divided We Fall* (2000), *Holy Week* (1995), *Les Misérables* (1995), *Life for Life – Maximilian Kolbe* (1991), *Good Evening, Mr. Wallenberg* (1990), *Korczak* (1990), *The Martyr* (1975), *Black Thursday* (1974), *Naked among Wolves* (1963), *The Shop on Main Street* (1965), *The Ninth Circle* (1960), *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* (1960) and *Distant Journey* (1949). Although these are not all the examples in which cinematic men shelter or help the persecuted, they are the most salient ones since in these cases the male figure plays a major role in the overall filmic narrative. Walter Süskind, the main character in the film that bears his name, was a real-life German Jew who saved thousands of lives in the Netherlands as a member of the Amsterdam Jewish Council. Similarly, *Leopold Socha*, who inspired the film *In Darkness* (2011), helped for over a year a group of Polish Jews hiding in the sewers of Lvov. The final lines of the film when Socha, proud to have saved the group, is shouting “My Jews! These are my Jews!”⁵³, struck the same emotional chord as “Schindler’s Jews” in the renowned American film. Moreover the story is inspired by true events and Leopold Socha, like Oscar Schindler, is among the “Righteous Among the Nations” for his merits as a rescuer.

In *Army of Saviours*, Heinrich Aschoff decides to shelter a Jewish woman and her child in his home. Although the film insists on the collective nature of the rescue, as the title also suggests, Heinrich clearly stands out through his insistence on saving the Jews, even when

all other family members seem to be against it. Edmond Batignole, the protagonist of *Monsieur Batignole*, also inspired by true events, leaves his family and comfortable life in order to smuggle three Jewish children over the Swiss border. Similarly, Josef Cízek in *Divided We Fall* and Jan Malecki in *Holy Week* place their own lives and their wives in peril by offering shelter a former employee and an ex-girlfriend, respectively. *Life for Life* is based on the story of the Catholic saint Maximilian Kolbe who, while interned in Auschwitz, volunteered to die in the place of a stranger. The martyr figure is also invoked in the form of Janusz Korczak, doctor and teacher of Jewish origin, who is the subject of both *Korczak* and *The Martyr*. Despite being offered the possibility to escape abroad, he chose to share the same fate as the children from the orphanage he ran and thus perished in a concentration camp. Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who inspired the film *Good evening Mr. Wallenberg*, is another “Righteous Among the Nations”, praised for saving the lives of thousands of Hungarian Jews. Meanwhile, *Black Thursday*, *Naked among Wolves* and *The Shop on Main Street* shift their narratives towards fictional characters, who function as anonymous ‘everymen’ caught in extraordinary circumstances and compelled to help. In *Black Thursday*, Paul tries to warn some Jews and save them from the upcoming round-up in Paris of 1942. In *Naked Among Wolves*, which tells the story of the rescue of a Jewish child within the confinement of Buchenwald concentration camp, the hero here is not one single man, but several inmates who cooperate in hiding and keeping the three year old boy alive. Tono Brtko in *The Shop on Main Street* changes from the unwilling “Aryan supervisor” of the shop belonging to a Jewish old woman, into her protector as he tries to spare her from being deported and killed. Finally, the male rescuers in earlier films such as *The Ninth Circle*, *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* and *Distant Journey* are in love with the women they try to save, although their efforts are nonetheless noble.

Taken together, these films construct a collective imagery of rescuers as men who put their lives in peril in the attempt to save one or many persecuted Jews. Whether their actions are successful or not, what their motivations are and whether the male character is upright or flawed, is less important in the bigger picture. Considering that most of them have achieved substantial international recognition, these films create a powerful image of the rescuer as

male. This image is accentuated by the fact that, in most of the films, there is a female figure – often the wife of the protagonist or a neighbour – who opposes or slows down the rescuing process. In *Süskind*, Walter’s wife argues with him for jeopardising the life of his family in order to save some strangers. Wanda Socha, the wife of Leopold in the film *In Darkness*, is reluctant at first about his decision to help the Jews in the sewers. In *Army of Saviours*, Heinrich’s wife complies unwillingly with her husband’s decision to shelter two Jews and complains on more than one occasion about it. In *Monsieur Batignole*, Edmond’s henpecking wife is portrayed as greedy and lacking moral values; she is unscrupulous in taking the apartment of the Jewish family after they have been deported. Edmond carries out his rescuing work in secret and has to hide the children not only from the Gestapo but from his own wife too. Josef’s wife in the Czech film *Divided We Fall* is caring towards the fugitive Jew hidden in their home but does not miss an opportunity to blame her husband for bringing him in. The Czech film *The Shop on Main Street* is one of the most salient examples in which the woman is posited as the source of all trouble for the male rescuer. Tono’s growing affection for the old Jewish woman and his filial desire to protect her are paralleled by the increased greed of his wife who is hoping to get rich on account of the Jewess. In *Romeo, Juliet and Darkness* it is a female neighbour who stops Pavel, the protagonist, from rescuing the beautiful Hanka. Pavel’s efforts to keep Hanka’s presence in the attic a secret and later to find her a safe shelter in the countryside are thwarted by Kubiasová, the neighbour, who chases Hanka threatening to denounce everybody. Last but not least, in *Black Thursday* and *The Ninth Circle* is the victim herself, the female Jew, who refuses to be saved or gives up despite the assiduous struggles of the male rescuer. Taken together, therefore, these films depict the woman as a hindrance to the male rescuer, obstructing his noble and spiritual mission with base, material desires.

There is also a significant discrepancy in the portrayal of female rescuers when compared to their male counterparts. Not only are there considerably fewer films which explore the profile of women rescuers, but the emphasis is on fictional stories interpreted by well-known actresses. The immediate correlation between the life of existing “righteous” and Jewish male heroes highlighted in several of the films discussed above, is nearly absent in

the representation of female rescuers. This latter choice suggests that, historically, women played a lesser role in the overall rescue process and that their actions have not reached the grandiosity of those performed by men. The most important films which depict women rescuers in leading roles are *The Door* (2012), *In Another Lifetime* (2011), *The Round Up* (2010), *Joanna* (2010), *Lucie Aubrac* (1997), *Warsaw – Year 5703* (1992), *Just Beyond this Forest* (1991), *Martha and I* (1990), *The Passerby* (1982), *The Last Metro* (1980), *Conspiracy of Hearts* (1960) and *I Know what I'm Living For*⁵⁴ (1955).

More than half of these films (*The Door*, *The Round Up*, *Joanna*, *Just Beyond this Forest*, *The Passerby*, *Conspiracy of Hearts* and *I Know what I'm Living For*) depict women as rescuers of children. The portrayal of female rescuers ranges between two extremes: either they are initially misunderstood because of their strange behaviour, or they are overly idealised. *The Door* and *Just Beyond this Forest* fit into this first category. In the Hungarian film *The Door*, the figure of the female rescuer, Emerenc, is a very complex one, misunderstood most of her life and contradictory in her actions. She is portrayed as solitary, eccentric, irascible and oftentimes incomprehensible. The peculiarity of the film resides in the fact that it is only towards the end that we discover that during the war she had saved a Jewish child from death by pretending it was hers. Clearly the intention of the filmmaker is not to portray a brave female rescuer but rather to highlight the paradox between her admirable deed and the high price she had to pay for it, as the rescue is in many ways the source of all her troubles. The second example in this category is the Polish film *Just Beyond this Forest* in which a woman in her sixties, Mrs. Kulgawcowa, agrees to take a young Jewish girl, Rutka, from the Warsaw ghetto to a safe hiding place in the countryside. The beginning of the film portrays her as greedy, arrogant and rude, taking advantage of the desperate Mrs. Stern who is willing to give anything to save her only child. This initial impression of Mrs. Kulgawcowa as nothing more than a heartless profiteer is gradually dispelled as she exhibits compassion for the little girl, confides in her and refuses to abandon the Jewish girl when caught by two armed Germans, even though it is likely that this choice led to her death.

At the other extreme, some of the rescue films overly idealise female rescuers. Such an example is the French film *The Round Up*, inspired by the story of social worker Annette Monod. The film narrates the persecution of the Jews in France culminating in the Vel d'Hiv roundup that took place in Paris on the 16th of July 1942 and resulted in the arrest and deportation of 13,000 Jews, of which 6,000 were children (Weinberg, 2001: 219). The film follows the stories of a few Jewish families prior to, during and after the roundup when they are all confined in the overcrowded Winter Stadium in Paris until their deportation. In the dramatic unfolding of the events, the Red Cross worker Annette Monod emerges as an inspirational rescuer figure. The film constructs the ideal portrait of a young, beautiful and compassionate woman. Annette Monod deprives herself of the basic necessities by accepting the same food ration as the prisoners. She never gives up hope as she keeps writing letters to the authorities about the harsh conditions in which the Jews are kept, she is always caring, patient and attends to the children with motherly love, and she wishes to be deported together with them. At the end of the war, a brief scene shows Annette sheltering over one hundred orphan children in her house. Arguably, the film is limited by its attempt to extend the heroic efforts of one person to the whole French nation, implying that the rescue of Jews was the usual response of common French people during the Holocaust. French antisemitism is thus swept under the carpet, while the film's epilogue states that nearly half of the Jews in Paris at the time of the roundup were saved by brave rescuers.

The rescue of men by their wives is the subject of four other films which cast women in leading roles, namely *Lucie Aubrac*, *Martha and I*, *The Passerby*, and *The Last Metro*. The French production *Lucie Aubrac* is the only one inspired by a real story: the autobiographic book of the French resistance fighter of the same name. The film focuses on Lucie's resourcefulness and courage in saving her Jewish husband, the leader of the French Resistance, from the clutches of the Nazis. The story of Martha in *Martha and I*, however, is a very different one in that it relies less on heroic actions. Martha, a woman of simple background, proves to be much more aware of the progressive worsening of the situation for the Jews than her husband, who is a doctor. Unbeknownst to him, she does everything

in her power to get him a visa to the United States: she steals a phone book and writes dozens of letters to all the people with her husband's surname. Finally her efforts are repaid as she manages to get him a visa and rescue him from a sure death. Elsa Wiener, the main character in *The Passerby*, plays the role of the rescuer twice: she rescues a Jewish boy beaten in the streets of Berlin by some Nazis as well as managing to secure the return of her husband from a concentration camp. Finally, Marion Steiner in *The Last Metro*, married to a Jewish theatre director, has to face the double challenge of managing the theatre and keeping her husband safe in the basement of the building. All these films have in common a strong romantic element as the love story is at the centre of the film. The four films make it clear that, if the heroine manages to rescue her husband against all the odds, it is because of the love she carries for him. Lucie, Martha, Elsa and Marion are all portrayed as strong characters and idealised women; they are able to outwit the local authorities and/or the Nazis, they do not lose their tempers in dangerous situations and are able to juggle their difficult tasks. They keep their husband's spirits up when needed and place their loved ones above their own lives.

Taken together the films portraying female rescuers challenge the idea of female passivity. On the contrary, they feature men who need to be saved physically (*Lucie Aubrac*, *Martha and I*, *The Passerby*, *The Last Metro*) or re-humanised (*In another lifetime*). Although these male characters are depicted as strong, they depend nonetheless on women for their salvation. Moreover, when children are the subject of rescue (*The Door*, *The Round Up*, *Joanna*, *Conspiracy of Hearts*), the men's role in the narrative is either minor or they are identified as perpetrators. The fact that most films in which the protagonist is a woman focus on the rescue of children is indicative of cinema's coherence in this regard with the historical discourse. However, the preference for fictional scripts, manifested in a lack of correspondence between on-screen characters and real people and events, and the choice of beautiful and well-known actresses for the role of rescuers is also indicative of a dissociation from historical and memorial sources.

It is worth noting that with only few exceptions, all the leading roles are played by award-winning actresses, popular within their national borders and often internationally famed, such as Helen Mirren in *The Door*, Mélanie Laurent in *The Round Up*, Carole Bouquet in *Lucie Aubrac*, Marianne Sägebrecht in *Martha and I*, Hanna Schygulla in *Warsaw – Year 5703*, Romy Schneider in *The Passerby*, Catherine Deneuve in *The Last Metro*, Lilli Palmer in *Conspiracy of Hearts* and Luise Ullrich in *I Know what I'm Living For*. As well as guaranteeing commercial success, the directorial preference for physically attractive and well-known actresses further emphasises that, despite their active role within the narratives, these female characters need to comply with the dynamics of classic cinema that designates the woman as site and object of gaze (Mulvey 1988).

Moreover, with the exception of two French productions, *The Round Up* and *Lucie Aubrac*, all the female characters in rescue films are entirely fictional. Even in these two cases, there are several elements to be questioned regarding the films' historical accuracy. Raymond Aubrac's rescue by his wife Lucie has been historically contested and is the source of considerable controversy between historians and former members of the resistance which took place in the 1990s (see Hewitt, 2008: 170-171). The role of Annette Monod in rescuing over one hundred children (which is central to the film's narrative) is also totally fictional. Although her story is one of courage and compassion towards the Jews while working in their midst as a member of the Red Cross, her image as a rescuer is misleading⁵⁵. Moreover, although the director Rose Bosch claimed in the film's press release that the real Annette Monod is one of the *Righteous Among the Nations*⁵⁶, this information is false according to the Department of Righteous Among the Nations in Yad Vashem⁵⁷. The inevitable question that arises from this analysis is why fiction films avoid drawing their inspiration from the stories of the many real women who did perform admirable rescue activities? The preference for fictional scripts at the expense of real stories, and the use of narratives that place the focus on romance, love or friendship, tend to downplay the image of women as rescuers in Holocaust films. Cinematic images of women as rescuers, therefore, do not have an indexical relationship with the historical reality of the Holocaust.

Significantly, those filmmakers who find the figure of the male rescuer more appealing are, by and large, from occupied countries such as Poland, former Czechoslovakia (and later Czech Republic), Denmark and neutral countries such as Sweden. By contrast, most of the films that portray women as rescuers are produced in France and Germany (also one in Austria). This seems to suggest that, understandably, perpetrator and collaborator nations find it more difficult to promote discourses about resistance and heroic male figures. Therefore, the female rescue activities which, by their nature were more invisible and less documented, allowed such countries to claim that common people stood up to their leaders and opposed evil in different ways.

7.5. The Role of Cinematic Heroines in Coming to Terms with the Past in Germany

The findings on female rescue are corroborated by the portrayal of female resistance in Nazi Germany. As this section contends, the representation of women as resisters during the Third Reich is also employed to facilitate discourses about resistance in Germany, the main perpetrator country during World War II. This section focuses on two major films, *Rosenstrasse* (2003) and *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* (2005), arguing that together they create a counter-discourse of the past. Released within two years of each other, they bring a unique perspective on women's resistance to an international audience, which has not yet been replicated in any other European country. Their uniqueness is indicative of a close relationship between the female figure and Germany's sustained efforts in revisiting and coming to terms with its Nazi past. There are a number of reasons why these two films are so significant in this respect. Firstly, they acknowledge a more inclusive concept of resistance that allows women's stories to be told. Secondly, by portraying their female protagonists as everyday women, they highlight the extreme power imbalance between individuals and the brutal authoritarian system they opposed, and thus enhance the significance of their deeds. Most importantly, *Rosenstrasse* and *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* exemplify the tendency of films to use the female figure as a cipher for discourses about resistance in contemporary Germany. This is a significant finding, although it

remains to be seen whether future German films will continue to “feminise” the discourse of resistance in this way.

Hugely successful both in Germany and abroad, the Oscar nominated *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* directed by Marc Rothemund, achieved 22 awards and grossed 10,804,315 dollars at the box office⁵⁸. As the title suggests, the focus is on the last days of Sophie Scholl’s life, the only female of the German resistance group *The White Rose*, who was brought to trial and beheaded on the 22nd of February, 1943. Two earlier films, Michael Verhoeven’s *The White Rose* (1982) and Percy Adlon’s *Last Five Days* (1982), had already brought the story of *The White Rose* to the attention of the German public but they never reached the popularity of Rothemund’s film. While Verhoeven’s film focuses more generally on *The White Rose* as a group and resistance cell, Percy Adlon’s *Last Five Days* is centred on reconstructing Sophie Scholl’s final days from the viewpoint of her cellmate. Marc Rothemund’s film also places the spotlight on the figure of Sophie Scholl. The film narrates her arrest together with the brother Hans while dispersing revolutionary leaflets, Sophie’s interrogation, their brief trial by the People’s Court, and immediate execution. The role of Sophie Scholl is admirably played by the popular German actress Julia Jentsch, who won seven awards for her performance in the film.

Several elements of the film convey an iconic status to Sophie Scholl, as a beacon of justice and resistance amid a crushing and evil system. Firstly, by choosing to focus on the last six days of Sophie’s life, Rothemund astutely avoids the history and formation of *The White Rose* group, including the fact that Sophie was not one of its founding members or a co-author of the leaflets. In fact, when Sophie arrived in Munich to start her university degree, Hans Scholl and his friend Alexander Schmorell had already started their peaceful resistance to the Nazi system under the name of *The White Rose*. Sophie read one of their flyers in class and only subsequently found out that her brother was involved and decided to join in⁵⁹. Through the omission of these elements, the filmic narrative magnifies the importance of Sophie Scholl as a member of the resistance group.

Secondly, *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* carefully pieces together the portrayal of a young, modern girl, so fragile and caring and yet, paradoxically, full of strength to stand up against the evil of Nazism. As Anne Fuchs (2008: 149) notes, the film's opening scene introduces Sophie as a typical student who loves modern American music, as she listens to a vinyl record and sings Billie Holiday's song *Sugar* together with her friend Gisela. Later, during the interrogation, Sophie's body language is very suggestive as she tries to hide her fear and outwit the harsh interrogator with her answers. Under the table, away from the eyes of the interrogator, a close-up shot reveals Sophie's anxiousness as she presses her hands together. After the arrest, she seems to oscillate between two worlds: one in which she needs to appear strong and decisive (at the interrogation and during the trial), and another, between the walls of her cell, in which she can allow herself to cry. Sophie's caring spirit is emphasised by the fact that in her final days she does not worry about herself but about others: her sick mother unable to cope with the loss of two children, and the fate of Christoph Probst, the only member of The White Rose who was married and had children. After the death sentence is pronounced for Sophie, Hans and Christoph, while the latter looks destroyed and repentant, Sophie's face remains composed. By portraying her as an ordinary young girl for her age, who tries to remain brave despite the tremendous circumstances, the filmmaker highlights the disparity between her defenseless situation and the extreme power of an evil, authoritarian regime. In a similar vein, Anne Fuchs (2008: 149) argues that:

Rothemund's focus on the individual also illuminates how the representatives of the totalitarian regime felt threatened by this small group of students. In this way, the film brings to light the utter disproportion between the limited capabilities of The White Rose and the state apparatus for which the smallest sign of personal revolt required a totally crushing response.

This gap is further amplified by the film's final contrast between the scene of the execution with the sound of the guillotine juxtaposed with the black screen, and the epilogue, on the soundtrack of Ella Fitzgerald's song *I'm Making Believe*, flashing archival photos of Sophie Scholl and other members of The White Rose in their happy, carefree moments.

Why Sophie Scholl captured the popular imagination and received more visibility than the other male members of The White Rose is unknown. Both Marc Rothmund and Percy Adlon choose to place her in the limelight when approaching the historical chapter of The White Rose, while some of the books written on the topic also suggestively bear her name in the title (e.g. *A Noble Treason: The Story of Sophie Scholl and The White Rose Revolt Against Hitler* (2012), *Sophie Scholl: The Real Story of the Woman who Defied Hitler* (2010), *Sophie Scholl and The White Rose* (2006)). It appears that not even Hans Scholl, leader and co- founder of The White Rose, reached the same degree of popularity as Sophie Scholl, despite the fact that they shared the same tragic end. As to why Sophie Scholl became a more prominent icon of resistance than her male counterparts, the most plausible explanation is that woman's historical function as symbolic (of nations, virtues or family and motherhood) means she can be readily mobilised as a powerful symbol of the spiritual victory over Nazism. A 21 year old woman – pure, young and with the promise of childbearing ahead of her - symbolises perfectly the innocent victim of such a tyrannical system. Her courage and defiance of an oppressive regime is amplified by her fragility as a young woman, thus accentuating the dichotomy between peaceful activists dispersing flyers and the capital punishment they received. Moreover, by highlighting the profile of Sophie as an ordinary German girl, people are challenged to identify and to draw parallels with their own situations.

A similarly symbolic value is placed on women as inspirational figures of opposition against the overpowering Nazi regime in Margarethe von Trotta's film *Rosenstrasse*. Its narrative is inspired by the historical protest that took place in Berlin in the winter of 1943 when a few hundred German women gathered for days in front of the Jewish Community Centre until they finally obtained the release of their Jewish husbands who were being held in the building by the Gestapo. As Anne Fuchs (2008: 153) and Sally Winkle (2012: 430-433) have both argued, the Rosenstrasse protest is a highly contested episode in the history of German resistance. As both scholars claim, at the heart of this heated controversy lies the effectiveness of the protest in achieving the release of nearly 2,000 intermarried Jews. On the one hand, historians Wolf Gruner (2005) and Beate

Meyer (2004) assert that the protest had little or no influence on the decision of the Nazi leadership to free the prisoners. On the other hand, the American historian Nathan Stoltzfus (1998) states that without the heroism of the female protesters, all of the Jews held by the Gestapo would have been deported to Auschwitz. Winkle (2012: 433) points out that “Von Trotta’s film joined the historical debate by privileging memory as the foundation of her narrative, thus clearly supporting Stoltzfus’s point of view.” Drawing attention to historians’ silence on this topic and its absence in writings about the German resistance, Stoltzfus argues that the Rosenstrasse protest has not been accepted as part of mainstream history because it challenges resistance paradigms by placing women in the spotlight. According to Stoltzfus (1998: 155):

It is possible that Rosenstrasse has been ignored because it challenges accepted wisdom about an ordinary German’s responsibility for Nazi crimes in several ways, and poses women as heroes. The story of intermarried Germans, culminating on Rosenstrasse, is hard to swallow for ordinary Germans since it implies that, had more ordinary Germans not abandoned German Jews socially, many more German Jews could have survived. (...) Also, the story of intermarried Germans and Rosenstrasse challenges the main paradigm of resistance in postwar Germany by showing, in defiance of the model in West Germany, that Germans did not have to choose between passivity and a resistance leading to martyrdom.

Stoltzfus claims that the dismissal of Rosenstrasse by (male) historians is symptomatic of a general reluctance to include women’s resistance in traditional history. As Stoltzfus (1998: 155) contends:

Women have had difficulty with having their stories told at all, in standard histories, and the notion that women would be heroes in the face of Nazi terror is even harder to fit into conventional histories.

Stoltzfus’ statement underscores how *Rosenstrasse* performs a reversal of this process by shifting the focus from male written history towards oral testimonies of women. By adopting a flashback structure and choosing the older Lena Fischer character to narrate her memories, Von Trotta’s film privileges the subjective (female) perspective of a historical event. Lena represents both the witness, whose testimony takes place in the

present, and a symbolic figure of female opposition to the Nazis located in the past. As Winkel (2012: 440) points out, the scene in which Hannah records Lena's interview "signifies a validation of witness testimony to fill in the gaps left by her mother." The flashbacks from Lena's perspective reconstruct the events of the protest from a personal perspective, while emphasising her love for husband Fabian. Disowned by her aristocratic family for marrying a Jew and persecuted by the Nazi regime for not giving up on her marriage, Lena does everything in her power to save her beloved. The ultimate proof of her love, the protest on Rosenstrasse, despite the searing cold and the threats of the Nazis, portray her as a brave woman who never gives up.

Moreover, since the film does not provide full access to the life-stories of the other female protesters, Lena's personal narrative is projected upon all these women and magnified to achieve symbolic value. This process is twofold: on the one hand Lena gives voice to all the women present in the protest, and on the other hand her individual voice is re-absorbed within the group's collective voice to highlight that unity can achieve what for one person is impossible. In a similar vein, Fuchs (2008) highlights the importance of the scene in which women's individual shouting of the phrase "I want my husband back" is suddenly transformed into a collective voice claiming "We want to have our husbands back". As Fuchs (ibid.: 157) claims: "The powerful choreography of this scene transforms what began as a coincidental gathering of women into a Greek chorus in which the individual voice is absorbed by a meaningful collective, giving expression to those events and fears that cannot be articulated by the individual". Lena's symbolic story and voice are thus enforced by being incorporated into the collective destiny of all the women protesting for the freedom of their husbands.

As is the case of Sophie Scholl in Rothemund's film discussed above, *Rosenstrasse* emphasises the gap between the limited resources of these women and the power of the regime against which they were protesting. Several scenes point out the contrast between the small group of frightened and desperate women protesting and the armed soldiers guarding the building, pushing the women or aiming their guns at them. By highlighting

the disparity between these defenceless women motivated by the love of their husbands and the powerful, authoritarian regime represented by the soldiers, Von Trotta stresses the validity of alternative (female) forms of resistance during the Third Reich.

To summarise, *Rosenstrasse* and *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* eschew conventional narratives about resistance by foregrounding women who opposed the Nazis and by adopting more inclusive concepts of resistance. They represent two powerful examples of film intervening positively in the history of women during the Third Reich in a way that other media have failed to do. However, their emergence in contemporary Germany needs to be connected with the country's struggle to redefine and integrate the discourse of resistance, despite its status as a perpetrator nation. According to Anne Fuchs (2008: 109-112), despite the initial post-war reticence towards the topic, Germany boasts more than fifty years of historical research about resistance. In different periods of time, the country's heroic struggle has been re-formulated and challenged: beginning with the existence of two competing narratives in East and West Germany, followed by a rediscovery of the resistance in unified Germany, through controversies between conservative versus flexible definitions, to finally reach a more complex and heterogenous understanding of the topic today. Fuchs (ibid. 160) contends that the changes in German resistance narratives are evidence of a "new historical consciousness in Germany today", characterised by the "privatisation of history".

The multifaceted realities of resistance in Germany point to the country's efforts to build a dignified version of the past and also to revisit and revise narrow, traditional accounts of resistance, judged in conventional terms of male, armed opposition. Thus, this chapter argues that the emergence of cinematic women who opposed the Nazi system can be interpreted in terms of the contemporary nation's vested interests in challenging previous (male-dominated) definitions of resistance and replacing them with more inclusive concepts. The female figures in *Rosenstrasse* and *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* are instrumental in allowing and facilitating discourses about resistance in a national context where this topic remains controversial.

7.6. Women Undoing the Past: *The Nasty Girl* and *Sarah's Key*

The Nasty Girl (1990) and *Sarah's Key* (2010) are not strictly about the resistance in the sense discussed so far. They do not focus on women that opposed the Nazi regime during the World War II, but rather depict members of a second and third generation who break the spiral of silence concerning a guilt-ridden past. These films are, however, very relevant in the context of this chapter for their portrayal of women as catalysts of a complex process of coming to terms with the past in Germany and France. Significantly the two leading characters, Sonja in *The Nasty Girl* and Julia in *Sarah's Key*, share a similar sense of authority in unveiling secrets of the past. They therefore challenge the stereotype of men making history and women as a-historical, by intervening to lift the silence on facts and undo male-authored mistakes from the past. These women challenge the guilty indifference of a whole community/nation and stand out as agents of truth.

Despite their similarities in portraying the woman as a symbol of a non-compromising relationship with the past, *The Nasty Girl* and *Sarah's Key* could not be more different, both from a stylistic and narrative point of view. The West German production *The Nasty Girl* by Michael Verhoeven, based on the true story of Anna Rosmus from Passau, Bavaria, focuses on Sonja's changing relationship with the people from her hometown as she takes part in an essay contest with the topic of "My Hometown during the Third Reich". During the research for her paper, Sonja finds out about the existence of eight concentration camps in the area and is stunned to discover that some of the most respected people in town were involved in the persecution of the Jews. To the discontent of the locals, what was intended to be a paper about the resistance turns into one about the widespread collaboration with the Nazis. Ostracised by her community, threatened and physically attacked, having the house bombed, and abandoned by her husband, Sonja does not give up her search for truth, which will eventually be published in a book. The film's unusual style blends documentary techniques and artificial devices to distance the audience from the story, deploying black and white shots for the scenes in the past, and locating the main character both inside and outside the diegesis.

While more conventional from a stylistic point of view, the French film *Sarah's Key* by Gilles Paquet-Brenner interweaves the story of Julia, an American journalist living in Paris, with the Vel d'Hiv roundup presented from the perspective of a ten year old Jewish girl, Sarah. During the move into the apartment where her husband spent his childhood, Julia finds out that their home-to-be belonged to a family of Jews who were evacuated during the August 1942 roundup. Intrigued by the unexpected discovery, she starts an enquiry that brings together the past of her husband's French family and the fate of the Jewish family after they were taken away.

The search for truth and its consequences within societies that have silenced their inconvenient past is the central element in both films. Significantly, the role of the two female protagonists, Sonja and Julia, is to break this silence and take a position against the complacent attitude of their family or neighbours. They are both depicted as courageous women who do not hesitate to put their own happiness and families at stake in the pursuit of the truth. *The Nasty Girl* and *Sarah's Key* insist on the gradual process of discovery that irreversibly changes Sonja and Julia's lives and places their radical decisions in sharp contrast with the complacent attitude of everybody around them. Both films seem posit the Woman as repository of justice and as signalling a new beginning in coming to terms with the past, which may explain their universal tone. *The Nasty Girl* is intentionally set in a fictional town, Pflzing, in order to emphasise that the events it depicts could apply to virtually any German town. As the director Michael Verhoeven claims at the beginning of the film: "I am not interested in the history of a specific town in Germany, but rather in the truth of all towns in our country." In the same vein, *Sarah's Key* focuses on perhaps the most emblematic moment of the persecution of the Jews in France: the roundup of Vel d'Hiv that took place in Paris in July 1942. Ferzina Banaji (2012: 6) claims that the roundup of the Jews was "the most explicit manifestation of the Final Solution in France". Also, the occupation of the apartments from which thousands of Jews were evicted is a topic that often surfaces in film. In the context of France, this topic is particularly meaningful if one considers the singular case of the transit camp of

Drancy. Located in the suburbs of Paris, the multi-storey building of this former internment camp which hosted 70,000 Jews on their way to Auschwitz is now inhabited.

The Nasty Girl and *Sarah's Key*, therefore, narrate stories that allow a broad spectrum of identification and establish multiple links with the present. Both films suggest that the past cannot be dissociated from the present and that the role of women is to preserve memory and to break with a corrupted past. Importantly, one of the opening scenes of the film *The Nasty Girl* shows graffiti being erased which states: "Where were you between 39 - 45? Where are you now?" According to media scholar Debbie Ging (1996: 58), this scene can be understood as "symbolising man's ability to erase history, the ease with which the written word can be manipulated and the importance of oral memory to overcome this." Significantly, Ging also points out that the initial input for Sonja's research is provided by the oral accounts of women (Frau Guggenwieser and Sonja's grandmother), while the male characters are portrayed as a hindrance as they try several times to stop her from accessing the incriminating documents. On a similar note, in *Sarah's Key* men are portrayed as silencers of the past, as only two male relatives of Julia were aware that the flat belonged to a deported Jewish family. In one of the film's climactic scenes, Julia's father in law, Édouard, witnesses as a child the return of little Sarah to unlock her younger brother from the walled-in closet where she hid him during the roundup. Sarah's return and the discovery of her brother's putrefied body will become a well kept secret between Édouard and his father. When, sixty years later, Édouard discloses his secret to Julia within the confined space of a car, he requests that his mother, now aged 95, is spared the truth. The scene is deeply symbolic, as the aged mother watches their conversation from the window of her room: she is involved and yet completely unaware of the tragic facts.

Unlike the family of her husband who lived in the apartment for 60 years, Julia is very definite in her refusal to move in and even considers returning the flat to its initial owners. There is no room for compromise in her attitude: not only is living in an apartment taken from evicted Jews unimaginable for her, but she also feels responsible

for tracing Sarah, the ten year old girl who managed to return home after the roundup. Indeed Sarah's story captures her imagination to such an extent that she goes to New York and then to Rome in the search of her relatives and people who knew her. When she finds out that Sarah committed suicide a few years after starting a new life in the United States, Julia names her newborn daughter Sarah, in order to keep the memory alive.

Suggestively, both leading characters in *Sarah's Key* and *The Nasty Girl* gave birth to their children during the restless quest for the truth. Moreover, the names that Sonja and Julia chose for their newborn babies are, in both cases, typically Jewish: Sonja gives birth to Sarah and Rebecca, and Julia has Sarah. Both the children and their names function as reminders of the tragedy that engulfed the Jews. Their motherhood places Sonja and Julia as symbolic figures of a better world dissociated from the atrocities of the past. Against the hypocrisy of the people around them, they are portrayed as models of perseverance and non-compliance with the mistakes from the past.

Both films stand out uniquely in the corpus of European Holocaust films as narratives of retrospective resistance and female re-writings of history. In the Polish film *Aftermath* (2012) by Władysław Pasikowski, Józef, a farmer, opposes a whole town by recovering the Jewish tombstones, reminders of the massacre set in place by their own neighbours. The film ends as a tragedy, as the farmer is killed by his co-villagers as a punishment for his actions. By contrast, Sonja and Julia are examples of women who fight against the current and prove themselves to be stronger than the whole society.

7.7. Conclusion

While scholars strive to highlight the role of women in the resistance against the Nazis, European Holocaust cinema, by contrast, has proved slow and somewhat reluctant in portraying women outside the victim trope. The limited presence of leading female characters in narratives about resistance, the popularity of romantic plots and the

preference for fictional scripts mean that women's contribution to the resistance is significantly downplayed in Holocaust cinema. Two antagonistic elements emerge from the fragmented picture of female resistance.

On the one hand, cinematic images attempt to depart from patriarchal notions of resistance by including to some extent rescue activities performed by women and the Rosenstrasse protest. This trope also proves to be highly innovative in the case of *The Nasty Girl* and *Sarah's Key*, where the woman is portrayed as a symbol of justice and non-compliance with a guilty past. If the topic of women and the Holocaust challenges traditional concepts of heroism (Baer and Goldenberg, 2003: xxiv), these films respond to the challenge and find alternative approaches in depicting female resistance.

On the other hand, while acknowledging broader concepts of resistance, Holocaust cinema tends to counteract its very own discourse by relegating women to a series of clichéd gendered images. Firstly, most resistance roles are played by beautiful, well-known actresses. In these cases, the centrality of the female character is not intended to provide an alternative to male heroism, but rather to enhance the visual pleasure of the film in order to assure its marketability. Secondly, the emphasis on romantic elements within the plot also serves to make the film more commercially appealing, while diverting the focus from the darkness of the Holocaust. The romantic devices used in these films are: the wife who rescues the husband or the lover (*Rosenstrasse*, *Lucie Aubrac*, *Warsaw – Year 5703*, *The Last Metro*, *Martha and I*, *The Passerby*), the nun in love with a partisan (*Conspiracy of Hearts*), the love triangle (*Aimee and Jaguar*, *Warsaw – Year 5703*, *The Last Metro*, *The Passerby*), and sometimes the heroine's mission is conditioned by her looking good, flirting or having intercourse with a Nazi (*Joanna*, *Black Book*, *Lucie Aubrac*, *The Passerby*). Thirdly, the hyper-sexualisation of Jewish women involved in the resistance, exemplified by the recent blockbuster *Black Book*, is a sign both of national Israeli discomfort with regard to female Holocaust survivors and of an enduring dismissive attitude versus female heroism. Despite the increasing number of memoirs, testimonies and scholarly studies that focus on female

resistance, the preference of filmmakers for fictional scripts and characters is telling. Divorced from historical sources, the portrayal of women as resisters exposes the patriarchal mechanisms inherent in mainstream realist cinema and the general downplaying of female heroines who fit uneasily into the Holocaust pantheon.

Finally, it is worth noting that the vast majority of films which feature female protagonists in roles involving acts of resistance and rescue are produced by and set in perpetrator or collaborator nations, especially Germany and France. These films are: *Sarah's Key*, *The Round Up*, *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days*, *Rosenstrasse*, *Aimee and Jaguar*, *Lucie Aubrac*, *The Nasty Girl*, *Last Five Days*, *The White Rose*, *The Passerby*, *The Last Metro* and *I Know what I'm Living For*. This finding is significant since it acknowledges the role of the female figure as an instrument for facilitating discourses about resistance precisely in those countries where this topic remains controversial.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSION

Not until we turn to women's texts do we encounter the depth and breadth of women's Holocaust experience.
(Kremer 1999)

As this study has demonstrated in the Third Millennium, European Holocaust cinema underwent a significant turning point in the representation of women. This shift needs to be acknowledged especially considering that, in its previous decades, European cinema did not do much justice to women's Holocaust experiences. As this study has highlighted, between 1945 and 2000, female characters of Holocaust films have been granted superficial, stereotype-based depictions, mainly from male perspectives, in which the woman has been framed between the extremes of eternal victim and the icon of female evil as perpetrator. In the case of female resisters, Holocaust films (still) rely heavily on the image of the woman as a device to facilitate resistance discourses by perpetrator nations.

Moving away from clichéd images of victims and perpetrators pervading the previous time frame, more recent Holocaust cinema offers a more predominantly female and feminist perspective on the experiences of victims, and also challenges the viewer with portrayals of "ordinary women" as perpetrators. Films such as *Louba's Ghosts*, *Rosenstrasse*, *The Birch-Tree Meadow*, *Nowhere in Africa*, *Nina's Journey*, *Remembrance*, *The Reader* and *Downfall* are illustrative examples of this renewal of cinematic gendered representations about the Holocaust. These films mirror the interest of Holocaust scholars, over the past three decades, in the concept of memory (Hirsch 2012; Reading 2002; Zelizer 1998; Young 1993; Lentin 2009), gender (Ringelheim 1990; Ofer and Weitzman 1998; Baumel 1998; Lentin 2000a; Baer and Goldenberg 2003),

trauma (Hirsch 2004; Traverso and Broderick 2010) and the crisis related to the end of the witness-era (Vitiello 2011; Zelizer 1998). They also play on cinema's ability to create "prosthetic memories" (Landsberg 2003) and the "compulsion to bear vicarious witness" (Zeitlin 1998).

This doctoral thesis has provided a unique multidisciplinary perspective, making a significant contribution both to European Film Studies and to Holocaust Studies especially in the intersection of both with gender. Firstly, most studies of European cinema tend to focus on major aesthetic schools, traditions and national identities (Ezra 2004), highlighting the divide between central-eastern and western cinemas (Elsaesser, 2005: 14), whereas approaching European cinema in relation to the Holocaust cuts across this boundary. While many scholars have drawn attention to the peripheral position assigned to central-eastern filmic traditions in the overall scholarship on European cinema (Iordanova 2003), this research applies a transversal approach to European cinema, bringing together the East and the West, through a thematic analysis that highlights the diversity but also the similarities between different national cinemas in approaching the topic of the Holocaust. By acknowledging the Holocaust as a watershed event of twentieth century history and also as "Europe's foundational myth" (Pakier, 2013: 9), this study emphasises how the event is remembered by various societies and the active role played by the cinematic medium in both reinforcing and challenging dominant discourses about the Holocaust.

Interestingly, by approaching the topic from the perspective of gender, particularly women's representation, this analysis further demonstrates how representations of the Holocaust are inserted into wider discourses that transcend national boundaries. Illustrative in this sense are the findings of Chapter 6 that highlight how, during the 1960s, Holocaust films from eight different countries (Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland, East and West Germany) exhibit similar narratives and identical gendered patterns. As the chapter suggests, the representation of the Holocaust in a specific period of time (1960s) is negotiated through a multiplicity of cinematic,

gendered, historical and memorial factors, both at national and transnational level. Thus, by focussing on the Holocaust not just as an historical event but also as a catalyst for contemporary discourses about the past and filmic representations, this thesis represents an interesting case-study of European cinema.

Secondly, this study fills a gap in the hitherto poorly researched area of women's representation in Holocaust films. Over the last fifteen years much has been written about Holocaust films from perspectives such as national identity, trauma, ethics and the politics of representation. In the overall body of scholarship on Holocaust cinema, only three studies attempt the meticulous enterprise of analysing a vast number, if not the whole corpus, of Holocaust films, namely Insdorf (2003), Baron (2005) and Kerner (2011). Their valuable studies identify narrative strategies, recurring thematic tropes and popular genres of Holocaust films. However, these studies are largely gender-blind and do not provide any insight into the representation of women's experiences. On the other hand, the few studies centred on exploring female stereotypes and the portrayal of women in Holocaust films (Doneson 1978, 1992; Fuchs 1999a, 1999b, 2008) have several limitations in that they are restricted to the scope of academic journal articles, the choice of their films is arbitrary and therefore not comprehensive, their analyses are character-based and ignore film theoretical perspectives such as the gaze and the role of the (authorial) voice and, finally, they often mix together documentary and fiction, feature films and short films. The result is the identification of patterns that, although valid for the films analysed, are by no means representative of or applicable to the entire corpus of Holocaust cinema; nor do they take into account its trajectory from the aftermath of the war to contemporary film production. To date, then, this is the first study to address the representation and discursive construction of women in relation to a comprehensive corpus of European Holocaust films. Its importance is underpinned by a significantly more inclusive account of Holocaust representation than has been attempted before, and that goes beyond Doneson's (1978) paradigm of the "feminised Jew" and Fuchs's (2008) "dichotomy virgin/whore". Along with a more complex and articulated picture of women's representation, it also pays attention to the chronology of Holocaust cinema by

addressing its various phases and patterns in gender representation in relation to wider discourses at work during the period in question on Holocaust historiography, cultural memory, national ideologies and feminist scholarship. As has been pointed out throughout this thesis, the representation of women in different periods of time cannot be dissociated from the evolution of Holocaust historiography or from landmark events such as the post-war trials of Nazi guards, the mediatisation of Eichmann's trial in 1961, the emergence of feminist film theories in the 1970s, the beginning of research on women and the Holocaust in the 1980s and the emphasis on memory from the 1980s onwards. This indicates not only a dynamic and fruitful relationship between film, history, cultural memory and gendered representation, but also enables us to consider the filmic medium as part of a broader platform on which discourses about the past are constantly revisited, challenged and reformulated.

8.1. Restoring Women's Voices: Individual versus Universal

By far the most important finding of this study is the way in which contemporary Holocaust cinema has given women agency and voice, thus enabling the retelling of their stories from a determinedly feminist perspective. In their studies about the Holocaust, many feminist scholars have exposed mainstream history as a male perspective on past events and denounced the propensity of historians to incorporate the experiences of women into a universal, gender-blind perspective (Weitzman and Ofer 1998, Kremer 1999, Lentin 2000a, Baer and Goldenberg 2003, Bos 2003, Goldenberg and Shapiro 2013). The antidote to the universal, phallocentric version of history has manifested itself as a return to the individual by reclaiming the rich particularity of personal experience (Roth, 2003: 14-19; Goldenberg and Shapiro, 2013: 11). Women's experiences and voices need to be told, heard and taken into account as they represent "the missing element" to a comprehensive understanding the Holocaust (Weitzman and Ofer, 1998: 1). Women's voices enrich our perspective of the Holocaust, seen not as a monolithic category, but as a myriad of different experiences that are inevitably gendered.

Since this thesis engages to a great extent with women's memories, it is necessary to acknowledge the tension between what is considered the factual, objective dimension of history and the subjectivity of memory. Although both are concerned with narrating the past, beginning with the nineteenth century, history has been considered as more authentic and authorial (Reading, 2002: 33). Nevertheless, in recent decades feminist scholars and oral historians have started to appraise the importance allocated to personal memories (autobiographical accounts, oral and written testimonies) in complementing historical facts, thus highlighting the fact that the past cannot be constructed or understood anymore in terms of "a singular authoritative historical record" (ibid.: 33). However, as women's personal memories re-enter the realm of history and gender receives increased recognition within the Holocaust Studies, many scholars still claim that women's voices should be considered as a "separate sphere", and thus they are "removed from what counts as the big questions in the field" (Bergen, 2013: 17).

The Silenced Gender Paradigm discussed in Chapter 2 revisits the variety of ways in which women's experiences have been and continue to be overlooked and marginalised within the mainstream research on the Holocaust. The paradigm highlights two enduring patterns that compromise the heterogeneity of gendered experience in relation to the Holocaust: the tendency to universalise and to idealise women. Firstly, the universalisation of Holocaust experience is perpetuated both by survivors and by scholars. As Weitzman and Ofer (1998: 13) claim, female survivors tend to consider that "being a woman was only rarely meaningful in their war experience". Survivors' reluctance to make gendered claims about their experiences is often motivated by a fear of trivialising the Holocaust or by concern that the "feminist agenda" might "take over the Holocaust" (ibid.: 12). In the same vein, Tec (2003: 14-15) argues that in the numerous interviews she undertook for her research, survivors were uneasy discussing comparisons between the experiences of women and men. Tec further claims that, when survivors were confronted with accounts of gender-differentiated experience which had emerged from her research, they usually dismissed them as irrelevant. Thus, by resisting or evading gender-differentiated analyses of Holocaust experience, survivors have

inadvertently colluded in reinforcing the universal (male) approach to the Holocaust. Scholars also play an important role in the process of universalising the Holocaust experience, although in a different way than survivors. According to Waxman (2006: 123), many collections of testimonies and scholarly studies that foreground women's experiences tend to focus "almost exclusively on women's roles as 'mothers' and 'caregivers'". As Waxman (2006: 124) further claims, scholars structure and interpret testimonies based on "preconceived gender roles", favouring "stories that are seen as suitable or palatable for their readers" and ignoring those which do not match "expected women's behaviour". Waxman (ibid.: 151) concludes that the role of collective memory "is not to focus on the past in order to find out more about the Holocaust" and regarding women "the purpose is to say something universal about women, not about their particular Holocaust experiences".

Secondly, along with the universalisation of women's experiences, another enduring paradigm is the idealisation of women. James Young (2009: 1778-1779) contends that in Holocaust memory women are idealised, transformed into icons of "victimization, innocence, or even resistance" and thus their experiences "often concerted into symbolic significance almost immediately on being regarded or are hardly regarded at all". In this way, as Young (ibid.: 1778) claims, parts of women's experiences remain "unexpressed, unregarded, and even negated".

Not surprisingly, the two major tendencies to universalise and idealise women's experiences that characterise historical, testimonial and academic publications are widely evident in pre-2000 European Holocaust films. The findings outlined in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 confirm that over almost six decades Holocaust cinema has universalised, epitomised, idealised and transformed into iconic images its female characters. Relegated to roles of perfect victims or admirable symbols of justice, the female figures in most of the films produced during this period were restricted to a limited and relatively homogenous repertoire of roles, and functioned predominantly as narrative devices used to visualise and re-interrogate (male) history. These findings support Anna Reading's

(2002: 95) claim that filmic conventions universalise the Holocaust experience by “stripping away the rich variety of gendered roles and experiences” which are instead replaced by “gendered stereotypes”.

On the contrary, Third Millennium Holocaust cinema has produced several films that break with previous female stereotyped imagery and assign women a central, privileged, authorial position from which to tell their stories. *Louba's Ghosts*, *Rosenstrasse*, *The Birch-Tree Meadow*, *Nowhere in Africa*, *Tomorrow We Move*, *Nina's Journey*, *Remembrance* and *For a Woman* engage with women's memories which are narrated from a decidedly authorial perspective. What is remarkable about these films is not only that they restore women's voices, but also that they are all made by female directors. In the case of films, as for fictional writings, it is “not until we turn to women's texts do we encounter the depth and breadth of women's Holocaust experience” (Kremer, 1999: 4). Significantly, some of these films translate personal experiences of the Holocaust onto the big screen as they are directed by first- or second-generation survivors such as Martine Dugowson, Marceline Loridan-Ivens, Chantal Akerman, Lena Einhorn and Diane Kurys. Other films are based on novels and memoirs written by survivors (*Nowhere in Africa*) or on scripts written by second-generation survivors (*Rosenstrasse* and *Remembrance*).

Through the use of voiceover, flashbacks, subjective shots and characters that “stand in” for the filmmakers (Silverman 1988), these films recover women's voices and challenge the mainstream, stereotyped depictions of women that prevailed for the previous six decades in European Holocaust cinema. They also break with narrative conventions by offering an authorial female voice and placing women at the centre in a way that mimics testimonial literature. Because women's voices have traditionally been marginalised and “othered”, these films function as powerful counter-narratives to traditional ways of recounting historical events and signal an important break with the dominance of male subjectivity in history. They reinstate the importance of oral memory, generally attributed to women, in complementing and oftentimes challenging male written (historical) texts.

Moreover, by placing the focus on women's voices, these films play a fundamental role in highlighting the importance of individual versus universal histories, and of variegated, personal and unique stories that work against the homogenising tendencies present in Holocaust research. As these contemporary counter-narratives demonstrate, films are much more than (re)presentations of history: they can function as important interventions in their own right, which challenge and re-interrogate history's gender biases.

8.2. The Portrayal of “Ordinary Women” and the Lessons of the Holocaust

Another significant finding of this study is the emergence, again in contemporary cinema, of the image of “ordinary women” as perpetrators. Although this kind of depiction is present in only a couple of films, namely *Downfall* (2004) and *The Reader* (2008), it signals an important turning point in the representation and discourses on women as perpetrators and accomplices of Nazism. Moving away from the poorly drawn and rigidly stereotyped portrayals that characterised the representation of Nazi women in previous European films, *Downfall* and *The Reader* challenge the assumption that all women who assumed an active role in the persecution were vicious and perverted, or that they played peripheral roles which demanded little if any further reflection.

This approach reflects and responds to a twofold development that had taken place in the historical research: on the one hand, the increased interest in women and the Holocaust, beginning with the 1980s (Baer and Goldenberg 2003) and on the other hand the gendered approach to perpetrators developed in the last two decades (Szejnmann 2008). While historical research is often available only to a limited audience, films break this barrier bringing awareness of new research findings and multi-faceted aspects of the Holocaust to a global audience. In this sense the internationally acclaimed films *Downfall* and *The Reader* challenge viewers around the world to reflect upon and interrogate the ordinariness of female perpetrators during the Nazi regime.

The notion of “ordinary men” (Browning 1992) and “ordinary women” (Bock 1998) as perpetrators is not only ground-breaking for Holocaust scholars, but can challenge filmgoers into understanding that an unprecedented atrocity such as the Holocaust is not the product of a few diabolic minds but the work of countless people like any of us. Women, however much they have been stereotyped as the kinder and gentler sex, are no exception to this dictum. Their “ordinariness” provokes interest in exploring who these women were, why they sided with the persecutors and how common people could turn into murderers. From a cinematic point of view, reimagining female perpetrators no longer as monstrous Others but rather as “ordinary women” means that they can no longer be excluded from rational analysis on the grounds that they are incomprehensible or beyond reason and must instead be understood as historically constructed. Their three-dimensionality also makes them more susceptible to connections with the lives of today’s audiences. As the popularity of *Downfall* and *The Reader* demonstrated, modern audiences welcome more complex treatments of history, that present philosophical challenges and move beyond black-and-white moral scenarios.

In spite of this, the seven decades that have passed since the Holocaust have shown that the lessons taught by history are sometimes ignored. The “never again” often pronounced by Holocaust survivors has not eliminated prejudice, discrimination on different levels, xenophobia and racial hatred in many of Europe’s modern societies. Most nation states have responded with hostility to increased immigration, and their multicultural policies are underpinned by assimilationist models and strict immigration control, justified by the pervasive rhetoric that multiculturalism is in crisis (Lentin and Titley 2011). Societies in many countries have been shaken by conflicts and violence. The Bosnian genocide in the 1990s, and the racist shooting spree in Norway that claimed the lives of 77 people in 2011, are just two examples from recent times of ethical, racial violence that continue to happen in the very heart of Europe. In this context, the cinematic representation of perpetrators, both male and female, can function to enhance our understanding of the complex political dynamics of racism, whereby governments and other elite powers mobilise racial, cultural and religious differences to divide societies and thereby justify

military invasions, tighter immigration controls or enhanced anti-terrorist surveillance. The often subtle processes of racialization and discrimination that are used to divide people rely heavily on the cooperation of ordinary people, whose ideas are largely shaped by a mainstream media that colludes with elite groups. Historical accounts which show how these dynamics worked in the past should, in principle, make us increasingly aware, therefore, of their continued presence in the current geopolitical and social landscape of Europe.

Thus, by interrogating Hanna Schmitz and Traudl Junge's involvement with the Nazis, by portraying them as two ordinary women and, moreover, by insisting on their guilt while acknowledging the complex reasons why ordinary people can become seduced by the rhetoric of national identity under threat, Hirschbiegel's and Daldry's films break with what filmmaker Claude Lanzmann (1995) referred to as the "obscenity of understanding" perpetrators. Lanzmann is right in his assertion that understanding the perpetrators of such horrific crimes is indeed obscene. However, as both the recent attacks on the Charlie Hebdo offices in Paris and the Norwegian massacre have demonstrated, blind outrage that casts the perpetrators as either insane, irrational or fanatical, their violence an inevitable symptom of mental instability or of the "dark Muslim soul" (Kimmel 2002), ignores political, social and psychological contexts and motivations and thus fails to advance human understanding of violence and of the ways in which to prevent it. Thus, while it is understandable that many people may feel that to try and understand terrorists, murderers, rapists or paedophiles is to give them attention they do not deserve, accounts that simply place perpetrators as monstrous Others, beyond understanding, traps us in social and intellectual stasis on these issues and ultimately facilitates their recividence. In this respect, therefore, *Downfall* and *The Reader* pave the way towards more nuanced portrayals of female perpetrators, but most importantly, they transform the Holocaust into a lesson which transcends past events and can be related to our modern societies and to its ordinary people.

8.3. Instrumentalising Women to Foreground Present Concerns in Resistance Narratives

Another significant finding of this study is the unaltered patriarchal depictions of women who opposed the Nazi system or distinguished themselves through life-threatening acts of rescue. As the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 asserts, there has been a tendency to marginalise and overlook women's resistance as rooted in narrow definitions given by (male) historians, which refer to resistance in terms of armed, male-dominated, direct combat. Chapter 2 also reviews the collection of testimonies and scholarly studies which emerged in the last three decades on women's contribution to the resistance, including Laska (1983), Koonz (1987), Gurewitsch (1998), Baumel (1998), Poznanski (1998), Weitzman (1998) and Tec (2003). All of these writings acknowledge and question women's invisibility in the mainstream history, and attempt to re-inscribe women's experiences in the pantheon of resistance. As Vera Laska (1983: 8-9) claims: "Women of many walks of life laid their lives on the line for freedom (...) - whatever happened to them and to the thousands of their sisters whose names history no longer recalls?" Similarly, Baer and Goldenberg (2003: xxiv) argue that patriarchal notions of resistance need to be broadened to include women's contribution, which in itself "poses a challenge to traditional definitions of heroism and resistance".

However, despite the recent acknowledgement of women's resistance by various scholars and historians, Holocaust cinema exhibits an enduring dismissal of female resisters. The findings in Chapter 7 highlight that, despite the few films that broaden the concept of resistance to include women, Holocaust cinema has systematically stereotyped, downplayed and overlooked women's contribution to the resistance during the Holocaust. From the entire corpus of films taken into consideration by this thesis, only seven depict leading female characters involved in the resistance, namely *Black Book*, *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days*, *Rosenstrasse*, *Aimee and Jaguar*, *Five Last Days*, *The White Rose*, *The Last Stage*. Only twelve additional films centre their plot around women who performed rescuing activities, namely *The Door*, *In Another Lifetime*, *Joanna*, *The Round Up*, *Lucie*

Aubrac, *Warsaw – Year 5703*, *Just Beyond this Forest*, *Martha and I*, *The Passerby*, *The Last Metro*, *Conspiracy of Hearts* and *I Know what I'm Living For*. Interestingly, in the films that depict men as the main rescuers, there is always a female character to hinder their noble efforts. Overall, the limited presence of leading female characters in narratives about resistance, the preference for famous actresses, the abundance of romantic elements in the plot and the prevalence of fictional characters are characteristic of the ways in which Holocaust cinema reinforces the mainstream invisibility of female resistance. The propensity of European films to overlook and dismiss women's contribution to the resistance can be explained by the effect of two related factors.

Firstly, the roots of such biased portrayal can be traced to both historical discourses about and cinematic representations of women. The long history of relegating women to peripheral positions within the dominant (male) discourses is telling. Significantly, Judith Greenberg (2003: 131) connects the absence of women in resistance history with their "position outside phallogentric discourse". She argues that the invisibility of women coincides with the tendency to highlight activities performed by the "dominant, male culture". In the same vein, Pascale Bos (2003: 38) claims male scholars tend to "read autobiographically" focusing their attention on memoirs written by men and thus ignoring the writings of women. As a result, memoirs authored by men tend to be used more often in academic writings and in class syllabi, fostering what Bos (ibid.) calls the "cycle of neglect" regarding women. A similar conclusion is reached by Doris Bergen (2013: 17) who claims that despite the considerable volume of scholarship dedicated to women, "a remarkable extent of this work remains outside the mainstream of Holocaust studies".

The outsider position of women in mainstream history goes hand in hand with the phallogentric cinematic mechanisms. Generally, mainstream cinema portrays women as passive bearers of look and men as the active agents within the filmic narrative (Mulvey, 1988: 62-63). Thus, films about female resistance require a reversal of cinematic stereotypes in which the woman steps out of this confined position and takes on an active role within the filmic narrative. This process challenges not only the dynamics of the

film, but implies the revision of historical discourses about women's resistance. Taken together, the two elements work in tandem to slow down and inhibit the filmic portrayal of brave women who opposed the Nazis. This two-way process (history-cinema and cinema-history) that relegates women to the margins of the discourse on resistance highlights the discomfort of Holocaust cinema in breaking with gender stereotypes and patterns of representation. Of course, as the findings of this thesis demonstrate, there are a small number of films which create gendered counter-discourses of the past. However, this phenomenon tends to be the exception, rather than the rule. Generally, European Holocaust cinema adopts a predominantly conservative discourse that tends not to challenge prevailing forms of gendered representation.

Secondly, the failure of Holocaust cinema to address women's resistance at a deeper level can be connected with the fact that resistance narratives, more than any other, have the power to reflect present concerns in their negotiations with the past. In the process of filtering the past through a present-day lens, they tend to stick to an orthodox script that conforms to dominant ideologies, cultural memory, but above all a certain politically tailored vision of the past. As Anne Fuchs (2008: 116) claims, resistance narratives "reflect the cultural-political framework of the present". They are politically charged and foreground a process of remembrance specific to each country depending not only on its involvement in the war but also on its current politics of remembrance. Within this representational paradigm, female figures are significant only to the extent that they are able to enhance a specific discourse about the past. For example, as the findings in Chapter 7 demonstrate, female protagonists serve to facilitate filmic discourses about resistance on behalf of perpetrator and collaborator nations such as Germany and France. Otherwise, films relegate women to stereotyped roles, offering unproblematic depictions that conform to the dominant view of resistance as predominantly male. The instrumentalisation of female characters in order to foreground present political and cultural concerns is characteristic of the way in which films tend to use women symbolically, without an interest in exploring their gendered experiences.

The key conclusion to this study is that the representation of female victims, perpetrators and resisters in European cinema should not be considered as three separate domains, but rather incorporated into a broader common discourse on women and the Holocaust. The inclusive approach adopted by this thesis highlights both the similarities and the discrepancies in the portrayal of victims, perpetrators and resisters. Firstly, the three categories complement each other as they facilitate a more complex gendered picture of the persecution set in place by the Nazis. In the same vein as Joan Ringelheim (1990: 142), this study acknowledges that Jews “were not victims in a vacuum” but their lives were interwoven with those of perpetrators, bystanders, resisters and other victims. Thus, the analysis of a singular group of people involved in the Holocaust leads to a partial perspective on the events. From a cinematic point of view, the acknowledgement of these multiple groups enables us to explore the mechanisms that foreground the portrayal of one category at the expense of another. Secondly, the representation and discursive analysis of victims, perpetrators and resisters highlights their uneven treatment in European Holocaust cinema. At a superficial level it could be assumed that the representation of women predominantly as victims is truthful to the historical reality which claims that the victims were by far the most numerous group involved in the Holocaust. Taking stock of the fact that historical films do not project the events in a transparent way (Rosenstone, 2001: 58), the findings in this study explain the overwhelming presence of female victims, compared to the other two categories, by the tendency of films to stereotype women as tokens of victimhood.

The persistence over time of such clichéd images in Holocaust films is explained by the fact that female stereotypes change more slowly than the male ones (Cook, 1988: 53). However, the depiction of women as victims does not belong exclusively to the Holocaust. According to Ronit Lentin (2000c: 98), to some extent all victims of war and atrocity are feminised and serve “for media consumption as part of a lexicon of victimhood”. The cinematic medium disseminates and enhances the discourse of women as victims, while it relegates to peripheral positions female perpetrators and resisters. This study points to Holocaust cinema as a predominantly conservative platform that

acknowledges women, but tends to portray them according to a series of clichéd images. Moreover, unlike perpetrators and resisters, surviving victims are the only category allowed to give voice to their memories, which further emphasises the importance given to the category of victims in the overall representation of women.

This thesis is a considerable contribution, therefore, to knowledge on the representation and discursive construction of women in European Holocaust cinema. To the extent that the size of the corpus examined allowed for comparative analysis, the study has considered female characters in relation to their male counterparts. A comprehensive analysis of men in Holocaust cinema, however, would be an entirely separate and arguably much needed study, especially in relation to the overwhelmingly vast category of victims. Moreover, while this study was focused on European cinema, further work needs to be done to develop a gendered comparative analysis between European cinema and its American and Israeli counterparts. Last but not least, in analysing the discursive construction of women in Holocaust cinema, this thesis is the first of its kind to track the various ways in which the themes, representational patterns and discourses provided by cinema intersect with those that have emerged from the history and historiography of the Holocaust and from autobiographies and memoirs. In this respect, the study makes incisive and original observations about the metatextual discourses around the Holocaust and women, and on how cinema functions as a significant discursive intervention into cultural memory and the politics of remembrance.

NOTES

Chapter 1: Introduction

¹ The term “Shoah” literally meaning “catastrophe”, is an alternative version of the word Holocaust. While the latter is used mostly in America and English-speaking countries, the term “Shoah” is preferred in Israel and in some European countries such as France and Italy. As the Holocaust Studies become increasingly an inter-disciplinary and internationally studied area of research, it is often inevitable to have both terms present within the same study.

² Held in New York in 1983, the conference is considered by Baer and Goldenber (2003: xvii) “the wellspring that shaped the field and established the parameters” of the research on Women and the Holocaust. Four hundred women took part in this two-day conference including many survivors and scholars. The focus of the conference was on the lives of women during the Holocaust, especially victims. To a lesser extent the conference also took women’s resistance into consideration.

³ In differentiating between Jewish and non-Jewish women, one is of course aware that these categories might overlap, e.g. in the case of victims such as the Jewish lesbians or disabled female Jews. In Chapter 6 regarding the portrayal of female victims one is able to see the overlapping between the two categories mentioned here: lesbians and Jewish women. However, for the purposes of this chapter, a more rigid delimitation helps us to understand the specific features of the persecution in each of these categories.

⁴ Friedman (2011: 1) breaks down the category of six million non-Jewish victims as follows: “several hundred thousand Roma-Sinti, two million Polish civilians, three million Soviet prisoners of war, several thousand gay men and Jehovah’s Witnesses, tens of thousands of political prisoners, and 200,000 persons with disabilities”. For the purposes of this research, I shall consider only the Roma-Sinti (Gypsies), the homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses and disabled people. The choice of limiting my sample is justified both by the need to contain the dimensions of this thesis, but also by the fact that the prisoners of war, the political prisoners and the Poles can be included in the category of war casualties and therefore not necessarily directly related to the politics of extermination.

⁵ “The Holocaust might be defined as the systematic destruction of European Jews implemented by the Nationalist Socialist government in Germany and its allies during World War II” (Bernard-Donalds 2006). Similarly to this definition many historians argue in the Jewish specificity of the Holocaust. According to Steven Katz, the uniqueness of the Holocaust resides not only on the fact that the Jews were the largest community targeted by Nazis, but in the attempt of the perpetrators to physically annihilate every single man, woman and child of the Jewish people (Katz 2009 p. 59). Similarly Bauer (2001) argues that the Holocaust had elements that did not exist in other genocides, and that any parallel between the murder of the Jews and of the other categories (like the Gypsies) is not justified.

⁶ Milton uses the terms “Roma” and “Sinti” instead of “Gypsy”, which is considered offensive and it is used only by outsiders of their communities. Sinti (or Sinteza for women) is the ethnic group most prevalent in Germany, meanwhile in Austria the Roma group is the largest. The two terms make reference to their linguistic origins: Roma derives from “Romani” – the language spoken by the Roma group, and the term Sinti regards their linguistic origins in Sind, India (Milton, 2003: 54).

Chapter 3: Gender Stereotypes and Sexual Extremes: An Overview of the Literature on Women in Holocaust Films

⁷ The film is mentioned by Doneson under the alternative title *Sweet Light in a Dark Room*.

⁸ *Exploitation* films, in general, have a history almost as long as the cinema itself: they began in the 1919 and they are still made in the present. The term “exploitation” makes reference to the practice of these films to ‘exploit’ topics like sex, nudity, prostitution, and other cultural tropes considered taboos. The *Nazisploitation* films emerged both in Europe and USA the 1960s and 1970s and they focus on the Nazis in stories full of violence, sex, sadomasochistic or pornographic elements. The representation of the Nazis is stereotyped and contains visual references that make Nazis easily recognized. Craig This, *Captain America Lives Again and So Do the Nazis: Nazisploitation in Comics after 9/11*, in Daniel H. Magilow, Kristin T. Vander Lugt, Elisabeth Bridges (Eds.), *Nazisploitation! The Nazi Image in Low-Brow Cinema and Culture*, London & New York, The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012, p. 219-237.

Chapter 4: Methodology

⁹ Founded in 1953, Yad Vashem or The Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority is the official Israeli memorial of the Holocaust. Its International Institute for Holocaust research, established in 1993, is one of the world leading centres of research and documentation about the Holocaust. Part of this research centre is a digital film library containing a collection of more than 5,700 films and 10,000 survivor testimonies. See www.yadvashem.org

¹⁰ Yad Vashem database is structured on the following categories of media products: amateur film, animation, archive film, audio, docu-drama, documentary, drama, feature film, home video, humor satire, memoirs films, multimedia, music, Nazi film, news reel, play, PR film, propaganda, radio broadcasts, series, short film, silent, student film, television drama, testimony, thriller, TV report, video – art, videodance, and finally Yad Vashem Museum films. (Accessed 15 January 2014)

¹¹ In the sense that they had a theatrical release before being distributed on DVD.

¹² Data collected from the website of the independent producer Happy Celluloid s.r.o., <http://www.celluloid.cz/hc/filmografie.php>. (Accessed 18 February 2014)

¹³ These numbers include also the co-productions. (Accessed 21 February 2014)

¹⁴ The term *Shoah* intended as catastrophe, cataclysm, disaster (Lentin, 2000b: 125), together with the word *Holocaust* will be explained later in this chapter in the section “Notes on terminology”.

¹⁵ Accessed 21 February 2014.

¹⁶ <http://db.yadvashem.org/films/search.html?language=en> (Accessed 21 February 2014).

¹⁷ http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/visual_center/new_collection.asp (Accessed 21 February 2014).

¹⁸ <http://www.cine-holocaust.de/eng/> (Cinematography of the Holocaust on the Fritz Bauer Institut. (Accessed 28 February 2014)

¹⁹ The introduction provided by Yad Vashem explains the other terms used as reference to the Jewish persecution: “Various interpretations of these historical events have given rise to several other terms with different shades of meaning: destruction (used in Raul Hilberg’s book), catastrophe (in use mainly in the research literature in Soviet Russia), and *khurban* (destruction) and *gezerot tash-tashah* (the decrees of 1939–1945) (Used in ultra-orthodox communities)”.
http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/resource_center/the_holocaust.asp (Accessed 28 February 2014)

²⁰ See the section “The Holocaust: Definition and Preliminary Discussion” on Vad Vashem Website:
http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/resource_center/the_holocaust.asp (Accessed 28 February 2014)

Chapter 5: The Cinematic Representation of Women as Perpetrators and Accomplices of Nazism

²¹ In order to filter the brief apparitions of Nazi women in feature films, I will define by “relevant” those characters that engage with the protagonist(s) of the film.

²² Excerpt from the subtitles of the film *The Last Stage* (1948) by Wanda Jakubowska.

²³ Ewa Mazierska, *Passenger*, essay on the booklet accompanying the restored dvd, edition 2000.

²⁴ Marta stands out for her integrity and for the obstinate refusal to comply with Liza. Often Liza’s reactions are paralleled with those of Marta, in order to highlight the stark difference between the two. For example, in the scene when the children are marched towards the gas chamber: one can see first Liza watching with interest but with no sign of compassion, then the camera moves towards Marta, just in time to capture the terrified reaction when she realizes that the little children were lead to death.

²⁵ The Polish film director Andrzej Munk died before the film was completed. His closest collaborators tried to finish it and to keep it as close as possible to the version desired by Munk. See Ewa Mazierska, *Passenger*, essay on the booklet accompanying the restored dvd, edition 2000.

²⁶ According to Barbara Creed (1993: 156-158), the archetype of the “phallic woman” loosely describes a woman with masculine traits, implying that she has a phallus or phallic attributes. Creed claims that the *femme fatale* of *film noir*, carrying a gun in her purse, is a classic example of the phallic woman. In the same vein, Gaylyn Studlar (1990: 313-314) identifies typical signifiers of the phallic woman, such as long black boots, whips, chains or dominatrix clothing.

²⁷ Excerpt from the subtitles of the film *The Reader* (2008) by Stephen Daldry.

²⁸ Excerpt from the subtitles of the film *Downfall* (2004) by Olivier Hirschbiegel.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Excerpt from the subtitles of the film *The Reader* (2008).

Chapter 6: Female Victims in Holocaust Films: From Universalised Portrayals Towards Recovering Women's Memories

³¹ From the website of DEFA Film Library at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, <http://www.umass.edu/defa/filmtour/sjmarriage.shtml>. (Accessed 15 July 2014)

³² Excerpt from the subtitles of the film *The Last Stop* (1948) by Wanda Jakubowska.

³³ Text by Janis Plotkin on section dedicated to women filmmaker on the website of Jewish Women's Archive: <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/filmmakers-independent-european>. (Accessed 30 July 2014)

³⁴ Excerpt from the subtitles of the film *The Third Half* (2012) by Darko Mitrevski.

³⁵ According to Suleiman, the 1.5 generation represents the "child survivors of the Holocaust, too young to have had an adult understanding of what was happening to them, but old enough to have *been there* during the Nazi persecution of Jews." Susan Rubin Suleiman, *The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust*, in *American Imago*, 59, 3 (2002): 277-295.

³⁶ The film *Retrace* (2011) by the Hungarian filmmaker Judit Elek had a limited release in the cinemas of Eastern Europe and it is not available yet in DVD format. I have contacted the distributing company, but unfortunately I got no reply. For this reason I will not consider it in my research.

³⁷ In the Croatian film *Lea and Darija*, the Jewish female character does not survive, but she is present as ghostly voice that haunts her best friend from childhood who, now at old age, is immersed into oblivion.

³⁸ One has to bear in mind that Baron's corpus of film is larger than mine because it includes non-European productions, as well as films made for television.

³⁹ The novels have also been published in English with the following titles: *Writing the Book of Esther* (1995) by Henri Raczymow and *The Final Station: Umschlagplatz* (1994) by Jarosław Marek Rymkiewicz.

⁴⁰ Joshua Hirsch's draws to the study of Gerard Genette (1980) *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, and applies it for the historical film.

⁴¹ In the 2000s there are other Holocaust films by women filmmakers that do not fit in the topic discussed here.

⁴² See also the interviews with Martine Dugowson (<http://www.objectif-cinema.com/interviews/030.php>), Marceline Loridan-Ivens (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdXZisN0EXg>); Chantal Akerman (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDCjAjYDasw>); and Diane Kurys (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bp6IqAznXQ>). (Accessed 3 September 2014)

⁴³ Interview with Pamela Katz available on the website: <http://camerainthesun.com/?p=24233>; (Accessed 3 September 2014)

⁴⁴ Excerpt from the dialogues of the film *Remembrance* (2011) by Anna Justice.

⁴⁵ Excerpt from the dialogues of the film *Remembrance* (2011) by Anna Justice.

⁴⁶ Short biography of the filmmaker Marceline Loridans-Ivens by Sandy Flitterman-Lewis on the website Jewish Women's Archive: <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/loridan-ivens-marceline> (Accessed 21 September 2014)

⁴⁷ Excerpt from the dialogues of the film *The Birch-Tree Meadow* (2003) by Marceline Loridan-Ivens [my translation of the French dialogues].

⁴⁸ From the dialogues of the film *The Birch-Tree Meadow* (2003) by Marceline Loridan-Ives [my translation of the French dialogues].

Chapter 7: Gendering Heroism: the Role of Women in Filmic Discourses about Resistance

⁴⁹ The *Rosenstrasse* protest refers to the successful mass protest of German women for the liberation of their Jewish husbands, which took place in the spring of 1943 on Rosenstrasse Street in Berlin. As a result between 1.700 and 2.000 Jews survived. See: Nathan Stoltzfus (1998) *Protest and Silence: Resistance Histories in Post-War Germany: The Missing Case of Intermarried Germans*, in Ruby Rohrlich (ed.) *Resisting the Holocaust*, Oxford and New York: Berg, 1998, pp. 151-178.

⁵⁰ http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0389557/awards?ref_=tt_awd and <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=blackbook.htm>. (Accessed 11 August 2014)

⁵¹ "The Righteous Among the Nations. Statistics", <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/statistics.asp>. (Accessed on 20 July 2014)

⁵² "Women of Valor: Stories of Women who rescued Jews during the Holocaust," <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/righteous-women/index.asp>. (Accessed 21 July 2014)

⁵³ Excerpt from the subtitles of the film *In Darkness* (2011) by Agnieszka Holland.

⁵⁴ The film *I Know what I'm Living For* (1955) has been impossible to trace down. Therefore, due to its unavailability, it will be taken into consideration only generally, but it will not be analysed.

⁵⁵ In an interview with aged Annette Monod-Leiris taken in 1999 and available on the website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the woman never mentions to have been able to save children. On the contrary she highlights that nothing could be done to save them. <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn508513> (Accessed 29 July 2014)

⁵⁶ An excerpt from the press release is available on the French website *Cinemotions*. <http://www.cinemotions.com/interview/92381>. (Accessed 1 August 2014)

⁵⁷ Personal correspondence with Gili Diamant from the Department of Righteous Among the Nations in Yad Vashem. (Received 3 August 2014)

⁵⁸ <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=sophiescholl.htm> (Accessed 3 August 2014)

⁵⁹ See Frank McDonough (2010) *Sophie Scholl: The Real Story of the Woman who defied Hitler*, Gloucestershire: History Press. Also these specifications are included in the Verhoeven's film *The White Rose* (1982).

APPENDIX

CORPUS OF REFERENCE FOR THE RESEARCH: EUROPEAN HOLOCAUST CINEMA

<i>Anita B.</i>	2014. Roberto Faenza. Italy/Hungary/Czech Republic
<i>For a Woman (Pour une femme)</i>	2013. Diane Kurys. France
<i>Ida</i>	2013. Paweł Pawlikowski. Poland/Denmark
<i>Victor "Young" Perez</i>	2013. Jacques Ouaniche. France/Israel/Bulgaria
<i>Wakolda (El Médico Alemán)</i>	2013. Lucía Puenzo. Spain
<i>Run Boy Run (Lauf Junge Lauf)</i>	2013. Pepe Danquart. Germany/France/Poland
<i>The Book Thief</i>	2013. Brian Percival. USA/Germany
<i>When Day Breaks (Kad svane dan)</i>	2013. Goran Paskaljevic. Serbia/France/Croatia
<i>The Door</i>	2012. István Szabó. Hungary/Germany
<i>Süskind</i>	2012. Rudolf van der Berg. Netherlands
<i>Match</i>	2012. Andrey Malyukov. Russia
<i>Closed Season (Ende der Schonzeit)</i>	2012. Franziska Schlotterer. Germany/Israel
<i>The Dead and the Living (Die Lebenden)</i>	2012. Barbara Albert. Austria/Poland/Germany
<i>Secret (Sekret)</i>	2012. Przemysław Wojcieszek. Poland
<i>Lore</i>	2012. Cate Shortland. Germany/Australia/UK
<i>Aftermath (Pokłosie)</i>	2012. Władysław Pasikowski. Poland/Russia
<i>Hannah Arendt</i>	2012. Margarethe von Trotta. Germany/Luxembourg/France

<i>The Third Half (Treto poluvreme)</i>	2012. Darko Mitrevski. Macedonia/Czech Republic
<i>Simon and the Oaks (Simon och ekarna)</i>	2011. Lisa Ohlin. Sweden/Denmark/Germany/ Norway
<i>In Another Lifetime (Vielleicht in einem anderen Leben)</i>	2011. Elisabeth Scharang. Austria/Hungary/ Germany
<i>Remembrance (Die Verlorene Zeit)</i>	2011. Anna Justice. Germany
<i>In Darkness</i>	2011. Agnieszka Holland. Poland/Germany/ France/Canada
<i>Retrace (Visszatérés)</i>	2011. Judit Elek. Hungary/Romania/Sweden
<i>Lea and Daria (Lea i Darija)</i>	2011. Branko Ivanda. Croatia
<i>Wunderkinder</i>	2011. Markus Rosenmüller. Germany
<i>My Best Enemy (Mein bester Feind)</i>	2011. Wolfgang Murnberger. Austria/ Luxembourg
<i>Hotel Lux</i>	2011. Leander Haussmann. Germany
<i>Free Men (Les hommes libres)</i>	2011. Ismaël Ferroukhi. France
<i>Secret Love (Les amours secrètes)</i>	2010. Franck Phelizon. France
<i>Jew Suss: Rise and Fall (Jew Süß - Film Ohne Gewissen)</i>	2010. Oskar Roehler. Germany/Austria
<i>Sarah's Key (Elle s'appelait Sarah)</i>	2010. Gilles Paquet-Brenner. France
<i>The Round up (La Rafle)</i>	2010. Rose Bosch. France/Germany/ Hungary
<i>Joanna</i>	2010. Feliks Falk. Poland
<i>Army of Crime (L'armée du crime)</i>	2009. Robert Guédiguian. France
<i>Freedom (Korkoro)</i>	2009. Tony Gatlif. France
<i>Mein Kampf</i>	2009. Urs Odermatt. Austria/Germany/Switzerland
<i>Berlin '36</i>	2009. Kaspar Heidelberg. Germany

<i>Simon Konianski</i>	2009. Micha Wald. France/Belgium/Canada
<i>Protector (Protektor)</i>	2009. Marek Najbrt. Czech Republic/Germany
<i>Saviours in the Night (Unter Bauern)</i>	2009. Ludi Boeken. Germany/France
<i>Broken Promise (Nedodržaný slub)</i>	2009. Jiří Chlumský. Slovakia/Czech Republic/USA
<i>Kill Daddy Good Night (Das Vaterspiel)</i>	2009. Michael Glawogger. Austria/Germany/France/Ireland
<i>One Day You'll Understand (Plus tard tu comprendras)</i>	2008. Amos Gitai. France/Germany/Israel
<i>Good</i>	2008. Vicente Amorin. Germany
<i>Gruber's Journey (Călătoria lui Gruber)</i>	2008. Radu Gabrea. Hungary/Romania
<i>The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas</i>	2008. Mark Herman. UK/USA
<i>The Reader</i>	2008. Stephen Daldry. USA/Germany
<i>Free Land (Zone libre)</i>	2007. Christophe Malavoy. France
<i>A Secret (Un secret)</i>	2007. Claude Miller. France
<i>Eichmann</i>	2007. Robert Young. Hungary/UK
<i>My Führer (Mein Führer - Die wirklich wahrste Wahrheit über Adolf Hitler)</i>	2007. Dani Levy. Germany
<i>The Counterfeiters (Die Fälscher)</i>	2007. Stefan Ruzowitzky. Austria/Germany
<i>And Along Come Tourists (Am Ende kommen Touristen)</i>	2007. Robert Thalheim. Germany
<i>Hotel Meina</i>	2007. Carlo Lizzani. Italy/France/Serbia
<i>The Black Book</i>	2006. Paul Verhoeven. Netherlands
<i>I Served the King of England (Obsluhoval jsem anglického krále)</i>	2006. Jirí Menzel. Czech Republic/Slovakia

<i>The Last Train (Der letzte Zug)</i>	2006. Joseph Vilsmaier and Dana Vávrová. Germany/Czech Republic
<i>Andersen. Life Without Love (Andersen. Zhizn bez lyubvi)</i>	2006. El'gar Rjazanov. Russia/Italy/Germany
<i>Ghetto</i>	2006. Audrius Juzenas. Germany/Lithuania
<i>Sophie Scholl: The Final Days (Sophie Scholl: Die letzten Tage)</i>	2005. Marc Rothemund. Germany
<i>Nina's Journey (Ninas Resa)</i>	2005. Lena Einhorn. Poland/Sweden
<i>Downfall (Der Untergang)</i>	2004. Oliver Hirschbiegel. Germany/Italy/Austria
<i>Before the Fall (Napola – Elite für den Führer)</i>	2004. Dennis Gansel. Germany
<i>Tomorrow We Move</i>	2004. Chantal Akerman. France/Belgium
<i>The Ninth Day (Der neunte Tag)</i>	2004. Volker Schlöndorff. Germany/Luxembourg/ Czech Republic
<i>The Aryan Couple</i>	2004. John Daly. UK/USA
No English title (<i>En ce temps là, l'amour</i>)	2004. Irène Jouannet. France
<i>Rose's Songs (Rózsa énekei)</i>	2003. Andor Szilágyi. Hungary/Italy
<i>Almost Peaceful (Un monde presque paisible)</i>	2002. Michel Deville. France
<i>The Lullaby (Kołysanka)</i>	2003. Efraim Sevela. Poland/Switzerland
<i>The Birch-Tree Meadow (La petite prairie aux bouleaux)</i>	2003. Marceline Loridan-Ivens. France
<i>Rosenstrasse</i>	2003. Margarethe von Trotta. Germany
<i>Babij Jar – The Forgotten Crime (Babij Jar - Das vergessene Verbrechen)</i>	2003. Jeff Kanew. Germany/Belarus

<i>Pornography (Pornografia)</i>	2003. Jan Jakub Kolski. Poland
<i>Facing Window (La finestra di fronte)</i>	2003. Ferzan Ozpetek. Italy/Turkey/Portugal/UK
<i>Red Sunset (Dans le rouge du couchant)</i>	2003. Edgardo Cozarinsky. France/Spain
<i>Amen</i>	2002. Costa-Gavras. France/Germany/ Romania
<i>Twin Sisters (De Tweeling)</i>	2002. Ben Sombogaart. Netherlands/Luxembourg
<i>The Pianist</i>	2002. Roman Polanski. France/Poland/ Germany/UK
<i>Max</i>	2002. Menno Meyjes. Hungary/Canada/UK
<i>Monsieur Batignole</i>	2002. Gérard Jugnot. France
<i>Geburtig (Gebürtig)</i>	2002. Robert Schindel and Lukas Stepanik. Austria/Germany/Poland
<i>Epstein's Night (Epsteins Nacht)</i>	2002. Urs Egger. Germany
<i>Leo & Claire (Leo und Claire)</i>	2001. Joseph Vilsmaier. Germany
<i>Taking Sides</i>	2001. István Szabó. France/UK/Germany/Austria
<i>Goebbels and Geduldig</i>	2001. Kai Wessel. Germany
<i>The War in Paris (La guerre à Paris)</i>	2001. Yolande Zauberman. France
<i>Invincible</i>	2001. Werner Herzog. UK/Germany/Ireland/ USA
<i>Edges of the Lord</i>	2001. Yurek Bogayevicz. Poland/USA
<i>Louba's Ghosts (Les fantômes de Louba)</i>	2001. Martine Dugowson. France
<i>Unfair Competition (Concorrenza sleale)</i>	2001. Ettore Scola. Italy
<i>Nowhere in Africa (Nirgendwo in Afrika)</i>	2001. Caroline Link. Germany
<i>Qui vive</i>	2001. Frans Weisz. Netherlands
<i>Gripsholm</i>	2000. Xavier Koller. Germany/Switzerland/Austria

<i>Spring of Life (Pramen života)</i>	2000. Milan Cieslar. Czech Republic
<i>Divided We Fall (Musíme si pomáhat)</i>	2000. Jan Hřebejk. Czech Republic
<i>Keep Away from the Window (Daleko od okna)</i>	2000. Jan Jakub Kolski. Poland
<i>The Man Who Cried</i>	2000. Sally Potter. UK/France
<i>The Sky is Falling (Il cielo cade)</i>	2000. Andrea Frazzi and Antonio Frazzi. Italy
<i>All My Loved Ones (Vsichni moji blízcí)</i>	1999. Matej Minac. Czech Republic/Slovakia/Poland
<i>Moloch (Molokh)</i>	1999. Aleksandr Sokurov. Russia/Germany/Japan/ Italy/France
<i>After the Truth (Nichts als die Wahrheit)</i>	1999. Roland Suso Richter. Germany/USA
<i>Jakob the liar</i>	1999. Peter Kassovitz. France/USA/Hungary
<i>Gloomy Sunday – A Song of Love and Death (Gloomy Sunday - Ein Lied von Liebe und Tod)</i>	1999. Rolf Schübel. Germany/Hungary
<i>Sunshine</i>	1999. István Szabó. Germany/Austria/Canada/Hungary
<i>Tracks (Voyages)</i>	1999. Emmanuel Finkiel. Poland/France/Belgium
<i>Aimee & Jaguar (Aimée & Jaguar)</i>	1999. Max Färberböck. Germany
<i>Jew-Boy Levi (Vieħjud Levi)</i>	1999. Didi Danquart. Germany/Switzerland/Austria
<i>Train of Life (Train de vie)</i>	1998. Radu Mihaileanu. France/Belgium/Netherlands/ Israel/Romania
<i>Left Luggage</i>	1998. Jeroen Krabbé. USA/Netherlands/Belgium/UK

<i>I'm Alive and I Love You (Je suis vivante et je vous aime)</i>	1998. Roger Kahane. France/Belgium
<i>The Giraffe (Meschugge)</i>	1998. Dani Levy. Germany/Switzerland/USA
<i>Commedian Harmonists</i>	1997. Joseph Vilsmaier. Germany/Austria
<i>Life is Beautiful (La vita è bella)</i>	1997. Roberto Benigni. Italy
<i>The Island on Bird Street</i>	1997. Søren Kragh-Jacobsen. Denmark/UK/Germany
<i>The Truce (La Tregua)</i>	1997. Francesco Rosi. Italy/France/Germany/Switzerland
<i>Bent</i>	1997. Sean Mathias. UK
<i>My Heart Is Mine Alone (Mein Herz – Niemandem!)</i>	1997. Helma Sanders-Brahms. Germany
<i>Lucie Aubrac</i>	1997. Claude Berri. France
<i>Mendel</i>	1997. Alexander Røsler. Norway
<i>K</i>	1997. Alexandre Arcady. France
<i>Drancy Avenir</i>	1996. Arnaud des Pallières. France
<i>Hamsun</i>	1996. Jan Troell. Germany/Norway/Sweden/Denmark
<i>Conversation with the Beast (Gespräch mit dem Biest)</i>	1996. Armin Mueller-Stahl. Germany
<i>The Ogre (Der unhold)</i>	1996. Volker Schlöndorff. France/Germany/UK
<i>The Proprietor</i>	1996. Ismail Merchant. France/UK/USA
<i>From Hell to Hell (Von Hölle zu Hölle)</i>	1996. Dmitriy Astrakhan. Belarus/Germany
<i>Getting Away with Murder</i>	1996. Harvey Miller. UK/USA

<i>My Mother's Courage (Mutters Courage)</i>	1995. Michael Verhoeven. Germany/UK/Austria/Ireland
<i>Holy Week (Wielki tydzień)</i>	1995. Andrzej Wajda. Poland/Germany/France
<i>Deborah (Debora)</i>	1995. Ryszard Brylski. Poland
<i>Les Misérables</i>	1995. Claude Lelouch. France
<i>The Seventh Room (A hetedik szoba)</i>	1995. Márta Mészáros. Italy/Hungary
<i>The Little Boy (Le Petit garçon)</i>	1995. Pierre Granier-Deferre. France
<i>Pétain</i>	1993. Jean Marboeuf. France
<i>18.000 Days Ago (18.000 giorni fa)</i>	1993. Gabriella Gabrielli. Italy
<i>Look to the Sky (Jona che visse nella balena)</i>	1993. Roberto Faenza. Italy/France/Hungary
<i>Farewell to Maria (Pozegnanie z Maria)</i>	1993. Filip Zylber. Poland
<i>Warsaw – Year 5703 (Warszawa. Année 5703)</i>	1992. Janusz Kijowski. France/Germany/Poland
<i>A Day in October (En dag i oktober)</i>	1991. Kenneth Madsen. Denmark/USA
<i>Milena</i>	1991. Vera Belmont. Canada/France/Germany
<i>Just Beyond This Forest (Jeszcze tylko ten las)</i>	1991. Jan Łomnicki. Poland
<i>Life for Life – Maximilian Kolbe (Życie za życie)</i>	1991. Krzysztof Zanussi. Germany/Poland
<i>The Last Butterfly (Poslední motýl)</i>	1991. Karel Kachyňa. Czechoslovakia/France/UK
<i>Europa Europa</i>	1991. Agnieszka Holland. France/Germany
<i>Bronstein's Children (Bronsteins Kinder)</i>	1991. Jerzy Kawalerowicz. Germany/Poland
<i>Burial of a Potato (Pogrzeb kartofla)</i>	1990. Jan Jakub Kolski. Poland

<i>The Nasty Girl (Das schreckliche Mädchen)</i>	1990. Michael Verhoeven. West Germany
<i>Good Evening, Mr. Wallenberg (God afton, Herr Wallenberg)</i>	1990. Kjell Grede. Sweden/Hungary/Norway
<i>Ladies Tailor (Damskiy portnoy)</i>	1990. Leonid Gorovets. Soviet Union
<i>Korczak</i>	1990. Andrzej Wajda. Poland/Germany/UK
<i>Martha and I (Martha et moi)</i>	1990. Jiri Weiss. France/Germany/Austria/Italy
<i>Abraham's Gold</i>	1990. Jörg Graser. West Germany
<i>Seven Minutes (Georg Elser – Einer aus Deutschland)</i>	1989. Klaus Maria Brandauer. West Germany/Austria
<i>The Red Orchestra</i>	1989. Jacques Rouffio. Italy/France/Belgium
<i>Reunion (L'ami retrouvé)</i>	1989. Jerry Schatzberg. France/West Germany/UK
<i>Cornflower (Kornblumenblau)</i>	1989. Leszec Wosiewicz. Poland
<i>Our Father (Otche nash)</i>	1989. Boris Ermolayev. Soviet Union
<i>Polonaise (Leedvermaak)</i>	1989. Frans Weisz. Netherlands
<i>The Rose Garden</i>	1989. Fons Rademakers. USA/West Germany/Austria
<i>The Passenger – Welcome to Germany (Der Passagier – Welcome to Germany)</i>	1988. Thomas Brasch. UK/Switzerland/West Germany
<i>Hanussen</i>	1988. István Szabó. Hungary/West Germany/Austria
<i>The Commissar (Komissar)</i>	1988. Alexander Askoldov. Soviet Union
<i>The Sandwich Years (Les années sandwiches)</i>	1988. Pierre Boutron. France
<i>Mission to Evian (Küldetés Evianba)</i>	1988. Erika Szántó. Hungary

<i>And the Violins Stopped Playing</i> (<i>I skrzypce przestały grać</i>)	1988. Alexander Ramati. Poland/USA
<i>Country of the Fathers, Country of the Sons</i> (<i>Land der Väter, Land der Söhne</i>)	1988. Nico Hoffman. West Germany
<i>Goodbye Children</i> (<i>Au revoir les enfants</i>)	1987. Louis Malle. France/West Germany/Italy
<i>The Death of the Beautiful Roebucks</i> a.k.a. <i>Forbidden dreams</i> (<i>Smrt krásných srnců</i>)	1986. Karel Kachyňa. Czechoslovakia
<i>'38 – Vienna before the Fall</i> ('38)	1986. Wolfgang Glück. Austria/West Germany
<i>Cuckoo in a Dark Forest</i> (<i>Kukačka v temném lese</i>)	1986. Antonín Moskalyk. Poland/Czechoslovakia
<i>Transports of Death</i> (<i>Eshelonite</i>)	1986. Borislav Punchev. Bulgaria
<i>In the Shadow of Hatred</i> (<i>W cieniu nienawiści</i>)	1986. Wojciech Żółkowski. Poland
<i>The Assault</i> (<i>De aanslag</i>)	1986. Fons Rademakers. Netherlands
<i>The Invitation</i> (<i>Zaproszenie</i>)	1986. Wanda Jakubowska. Poland
<i>Elysium</i>	1986. Erika Szántó. Hungary
<i>Angry Harvest</i> (<i>Bittere Ernt</i>)	1985. Agnieszka Holland. Germany
<i>The Night Overtake Me</i> (<i>Zastihla mě noc</i>)	1985. Juraj Herz. Czechoslovakia
<i>The Ice Cream Parlour</i> a.k.a. <i>Private Resistance</i> (<i>De Ijssalon</i>)	1985. Dimitri Frenkel Frank. Netherlands
<i>Going and Coming Back</i> (<i>Partir, Revenir</i>)	1985. Claude Lelouch. France
<i>Come and See</i> (<i>Idi I smotri</i>)	1985. Elem Klimov. Soviet Union
<i>November Moon</i>	1985. Alexandra von Grote. West Germany/France

<i>Postcard from a Journey</i> (<i>Kartka z podróży</i>)	1984. Waldemar Dziki. Poland
<i>There Was No Sun That Spring</i> (<i>Nie było słońca tej wiosny</i>)	1984. Juliusz Janicki and Sławomir Janicki. Poland
<i>After Your Decrees</i> (<i>Wedle wyroków twoich...</i>)	1984. Jerzy Hoffman. Poland/West Germany
<i>For Those I Loved</i> (<i>Au nom de tous les miens</i>)	1983. Robert Enrico. France/Canada/ Hungary
<i>At First Sight</i> (<i>Coup de Foudre</i>)	1983. Diane Kurys. France
<i>Mother Mary</i> (<i>Mat Mariya</i>)	1983. Sergey Kolosov. Soviet Union
<i>Job's Revolt</i> (<i>Jób lázadása</i>)	1983. Imre Gyöngyössi and Barna Kabay. Hungary
<i>Lynx</i> (<i>Ryś</i>)	1982. Stanisław Różewicz. Poland
<i>Austeria</i> a.k.a. <i>The Inn</i>	1982. Jerzy Kawalerowicz. Poland
<i>The White Rose</i> (<i>Die Weisse Rose</i>)	1982. Michael Verhoeven. West Germany
<i>Last Five Days</i> (<i>Fünf letzte Tage</i>)	1982. Percy Adlon. West Germany
<i>The Passerby</i> (<i>La passante du Sans-Souci</i>)	1982. Jacques Rouffio. France/West Germany
<i>Raindrops</i> (<i>Regentröpfen</i>)	1982. Michael Hoffmann and Harry Raymon. West Germany
<i>The Last Hole</i> (<i>Das letzte Loch</i>)	1981. Herbert Achternbusch. West Germany
<i>The Boat is Full</i> (<i>Das boot ist voll</i>)	1981. Markus Imhoof. Switzerland/Germany/ Austria
<i>Stream Line</i> (<i>La linea del fiume</i>)	1981. Aldo Scavarda. Italy
<i>Malou</i>	1981. Jeanine Meerapfel. West Germany
<i>Charlotte S.</i> (<i>Charlotte</i>)	1981. Frans Weisz. Netherlands/West Germany/ UK/Italy

<i>Mephisto</i>	1981. István Szabó. West Germany/Hungary/Austria
<i>Lili Marleen</i>	1981. Rainer Werner Fassbinder. West Germany
<i>Germany Pale Mother (Deutschland bleiche Mutter)</i>	1980. Helma Sanders-Brahms. West Germany
<i>The Children from Number 67 (Der Kinder aus Nr. 67)</i>	1980. Usch Barthelmeß-Weller and Werner Meyer. West Germany
<i>Levin's Mill (Levins Mühle)</i>	1980. Horst Seemann. East Germany
<i>The Last Metro (Le dernier métro)</i>	1980. François Truffaut. France
<i>David</i>	1979. Peter Lilienthal. West Germany
<i>The Tin Drum (Die Blechtrommel)</i>	1979. Volker Schlöndorff. West Germany/France/Poland/Yugoslavia
<i>Occupation in 26 Pictures (Okupacija u 26 slika)</i>	1978. Lordan Zafranovic. Yugoslavia
<i>Death is my Trade (Aus einem deutschen Leben)</i>	1977. Theodor Kotulla. West Germany
<i>Madame Rosa (La vie devant soi)</i>	1977. Moshé Mizrahi. France
<i>Seven Beauties (Pasqualino Settebelleze)</i>	1976. Lina Wertmüller. Italy
<i>Mr. Klein</i>	1976. Joseph Losey. France/Italy
<i>The Red Poster (L'Affiche rouge)</i>	1976. Frank Cassenti. France
<i>High Street (Rue Haute)</i>	1976. André Ernotte. France/Belgium
<i>Voyage of the Damned</i>	1976. Stuart Rosenberg. UK
<i>The Martyr (Sie sind frei, Doktor Korczak)</i>	1975. Aleksander Ford. West Germany/Israel
<i>A Bag of Marbles (Un sac de billes)</i>	1975. Jacques Doillon. France

<i>Special Section (Section spéciale)</i>	1975. Costa-Gavras. France/Italy/West Germany
<i>Jacob the Liar (Jakob, der Lügner)</i>	1975. Frank Beyer. East Germany/ Czechoslovakia
<i>The Odessa File</i>	1974. Ronald Neame. UK/West Germany
<i>Remember Your Name (Pomni imya svoye)</i>	1974. Sergey Kolosov. Poland/Soviet Union
<i>The Night Porter (Il portiere di notte)</i>	1974. Liliana Cavani. Italy
<i>Violins at the Ball (Les violons du Bal)</i>	1974. Michel Drach. France
<i>Black Thursday (Les guichets du Louvre)</i>	1974. Michel Mitrani. France
<i>Lacombe, Lucien</i>	1974. Louis Malle. France/West Germany/ Italy
<i>Hitler: The Last Ten Days</i>	1973. Ennio de Concini. UK/Italy
<i>The Last Train (Le Train)</i>	1973. Pierre Granier-Deferre. France/Italy
<i>A Tear in the Ocean (Une larme dans l'océan)</i>	1973. Henri Glaeser. France
<i>The Pedestrian (Der Fußgänger)</i>	1973. Maximilian Schell. Germany/Switzerland
<i>Landscape after the battle (Krajobraz po bitwie)</i>	1970. Andrzej Wajda. Poland
<i>The Garden of Finzi Continis (Il giardino dei Finzi Contini)</i>	1970. Vittorio de Sica. Italy/West Germany
<i>The Conformist (Il Conformista)</i>	1970. Bernardo Bertolucci. Italy/France/West Germany
<i>The Fed One (Hranjenik)</i>	1970. Vatroslav Mimica. Yugoslavia
<i>Ascension Day (Wniebowstąpienie)</i>	1970. Jan Rybkowski. Poland
<i>Army of Shadows (L'armée des ombres)</i>	1969. Jean-Pierre Melville. France/Italy
<i>The Damned (La caduta degli dei)</i>	1969. Luchino Visconti. Italy/West Germany
<i>The Cremator (Spalovač mrtvol)</i>	1969. Juraj Herz. Czechoslovakia

<i>Cold Days (Hideg Napok)</i>	1968. András Kovács. Hungary
<i>Dita Saxová</i>	1968. Antonín Moskalyk. Czechoslovakia
<i>A Journey into the Unknown</i> (<i>Wycieczka w nieznane</i>)	1968. Jerzy Ziarnik. Poland
<i>The Long Night (Długa noc)</i>	1967. Janusz Nasfeter. Poland
<i>The Two of Us (Le vieil homme et l'enfant)</i>	1967. Claude Berri. France
<i>The 25th Hour (La vingt-cinquième heure)</i>	1967. Henri Verneuil. France/Italy/Yugoslavia
<i>Living Commodities (Lebende Ware)</i>	1966. Wolfgang Luderer. East Germany
<i>Witness Out of Hell (Die Zeugin aus der Hölle)</i>	1966. Žika Mitrović. West Germany/Yugoslavia
<i>The Square of Saint Elisabeth</i> (<i>Námestie svätej Alžbety</i>)	1966. Vladimír Bahna. Czechoslovakia
<i>We'll Go into Town (Andremo in città)</i>	1966. Nelo Risi. Italy/Yugoslavia
<i>Father (Apa)</i>	1966. István Szabó. Hungary
<i>The Shop on Main Street (Obchod na korze)</i>	1965. Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos. Czechoslovakia
<i>The Story of a Murder (Chronik eines Mordes)</i>	1965. Joachim Hasler. East Germany
<i>The Fifth Rider is Fear (...a páty jezdec je Strach)</i>	1965. Zbyněk Brynych. Czechoslovakia
<i>Sandra (Vaghe stele dell'Orsa)</i>	1965. Luchino Visconti. Italy
<i>The Hour of Truth (L'heure de la vérité)</i>	1964. Henri Calef. France/Israel
<i>The End of Our World (Koniec naszego świata)</i>	1964. Wanda Jakubowska. Poland

<i>Diamonds of the Night (Démanty noci)</i>	1964. Jan Němec. Czechoslovakia
<i>The Beater (Naganiacz)</i>	1964. Ewa Petelski and Czesław Petelski. Poland
<i>Naked Among Wolves (Nackt unter Wölfen)</i>	1963. Frank Beyer. East Germany
<i>Man and Beast (Mensch und bestie)</i>	1963. Edwin Zbonek. West Germany/Yugoslavia
<i>Transport From Paradise (Transport z raje)</i>	1963. Zbynek Brynych. Czechoslovakia
<i>The Passenger (Pasazierka)</i>	1963. Andrzej Munk and Witold Lesiewicz. Poland
<i>The Second Track (Das zweite Gleis)</i>	1962. Joachim Kunert. East Germany
<i>The Condemned of Altona (I sequestrati di Altona)</i>	1962. Vittorio de Sica. Italy/France
<i>The Gold of Rome (L'oro di Roma)</i>	1961. Carlo Lizzani. Italy
<i>Samson</i>	1961. Andrzej Wajda. Poland
<i>Birth Certificate (Swiadectwo urodzenia)</i>	1961. Stanislaw Różewicz. Poland
<i>Enclosure (L'Enclos)</i>	1961. Armand Gatti. Yugoslavia/France
<i>Professor Mamlock</i>	1961. Konrad Wolf. East Germany
<i>People from the Train (Ludzie z pociągu)</i>	1961. Kazimierz Kutz. Poland
<i>The Ninth Circle (Deveti krug)</i>	1960. France Štiglic. Yugoslavia
<i>Bad Luck (Zezowate szczęście)</i>	1960. Andrzej Munk. Poland
<i>Fortunate (Fortunat)</i>	1960. Alex Joffé. France/Italy
<i>Laundryboy (Práče)</i>	1960. Karel Kachyna. Czechoslovakia
<i>Romeo, Juliet And Darkness (Romeo, Julie a tma)</i>	1960. Jiri Weiss. Czechoslovakia
<i>Kapo (Kapò)</i>	1960. Gillo Pontecorvo. Italy/France/Yugoslavia

<i>Conspiracy of Hearts</i>	1960. Ralph Thomas. UK
<i>Encounters in the Dark (Spotkania w Mroku)</i>	1960. Wanda Jakubowska. Poland/East Germany
<i>Stars (Sterne)</i>	1959. Konrad Wolf. East Germany/Bulgaria
<i>White Bear (Biały Niedźwiedź)</i>	1959. Jerzy Zarzycki. Poland
<i>Three Women (Trzy kobiety)</i>	1957. Stanislaw Różewicz. Poland
<i>Incident in Benderath (Zwischenfall in Benderath)</i>	1956. János Veiczi. East Germany
<i>Spring in Budapest (Budapesti tavasz)</i>	1955. Félix Máriássy. Hungary
<i>The Plot to Assassinate Hitler (Der 20. Juli)</i>	1955. Falk Harnack. West Germany
<i>The Last Ten Days (Der letzte Akt)</i>	1955. Georg Wilhelm Pabst. West Germany/Austria
<i>Hanussen</i>	1955. Otto Wilhelm Fisher and Georg Marischka. West Germany
<i>I Know What I'm Living For (Ich weiss, wofür ich liebe)</i>	1955. Paul Verhoeven. West Germany
<i>The Lost One (Der Verlorene)</i>	1951. Peter Lorre. West Germany
<i>Council of Gods (Der Rat der Götter)</i>	1950. Kurt Maetzig. East Germany
<i>Rotation</i>	1949. Wolfgang Staudte. East Germany
<i>The Silence of the Sea (Le silence de la mer)</i>	1949. Jean-Pierre Melville. France
<i>The Monastery of Saint Clare (Monastero di Santa Chiara)</i>	1949. Mario Sequi. Italy
<i>Long is the Road (Lang ist der Weg)</i>	1949. Herbert Fredersdorf and Marek Goldstein. Germany/USA

<i>The Last Illusion (Der Ruf)</i>	1949. Josef von Báky. Germany.
<i>It Will Never Happen Again (Unzere kinder)</i>	1949. Natan Gross and Shaul Goskind. Poland
<i>Distant Journey (Daleká cesta)</i>	1949. Alfréd Radok. Czechoslovakia
<i>Border Street (Ulica Graniczna)</i>	1948. Aleksander Ford. Poland
<i>The Wandering Jew (L'ebreo errante)</i>	1948. Goffredo Alessandrini. Italy
<i>But not in Vain (Niet Tevergeefs)</i>	1948. Edmond T. Gréville. UK/Netherlands
<i>The Search</i>	1948. Fred Zinnermann. Switzerland/USA
<i>Morituri</i>	1948. Eugen York. Germany
<i>The Blum Affair (Affaire Blum)</i>	1948. Erich Engel. Germany
<i>The Last Stage (Ostatni Etap)</i>	1948. Wanda Jakubowska. Poland
<i>Marriage in the Shadows (Ehe im Schatten)</i>	1947. Kurt Maetzig. Germany
<i>Between Yesterday and Tomorrow (Zwischen gestern und morgen)</i>	1947. Harald Braun. Germany.
<i>We Lived Through Buchenwald (Forçats d'honneur)</i>	1946. Georges Lust and Émile-Georges de Meyst. Belgium
<i>A Friend Will Come Tonight (Un ami viendra ce soir)</i>	1946. Raymond Bernard. France
<i>The Murders Are Among Us (Die Mörder sind unter uns)</i>	1946. Wolfgang Staudte. Germany
<i>The Taras Family (Nepokorennye)</i>	1945. Mark Donskoi. Soviet Union
<i>The Last Chance (Die letzte Chance)</i>	1945. Leopold Lindtberg. Switzerland

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Internet Resources

Box Office Mojo, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com>

Cinematography of the Holocaust on the Fritz Bauer Institut in Frankfurt,
<http://www.cine-holocaust.de/eng/>

DEFA Film Library at the University of Massachusetts Amherst,
<http://www.umass.edu/defa>

Interview with Annette Monod-Leiris, on the website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn508513>
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Interview with Chantal Akerman, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDCjAjYDasw>
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Interview with Diane Kurys, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bp6IqAznXQ>
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Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com>

Jewish Women's Archive, <http://jwa.org>

Presentation of the film "Spring of life" on the website of the independent producer Happy Celluloid s.r.o., <http://www.celluloid.cz/hc/filmografie.php> (Accessed 18 February 2014)

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<http://www.cinemotions.com/interview/92381> (Accessed 3 September 2014)

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<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/righteous-women/index.asp> (Accessed 21 July 2014)

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<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/righteous/statistics.asp> (Accessed on 20 July 2014)

The Visual Center – Online Film Database of the Yad Vashem World Center for Holocaust Research, Documentation, Education and Commemoration,
<http://db.yadvashem.org/films/search.html?language=en>

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<i>For a Woman (Pour une femme)</i>	2013. Diane Kurys. France
<i>Ida</i>	2013. Paweł Pawlikowski. Poland/Denmark
<i>Into the White</i>	2012. Petter Næss. Norway/Sweden
<i>The Door</i>	2012. István Szabó. Hungary/Germany
<i>Süskind</i>	2012. Rudolf van der Berg. Netherlands
<i>Aftermath (Pokłosie)</i>	2012. Władysław Pasikowski. Poland/Russia
<i>The Third Half (Treto poluvreme)</i>	2012. Darko Mitrevski. Macedonia/Czech Republic
<i>This Life (Hvidsten)</i>	2012. Anne-Grethe Bjarup Riis. Denmark
<i>15 Lads (Nos resistances)</i>	2011. Romain Cogitore. France
<i>In Another Lifetime (Vielleicht in einem anderen Leben)</i>	2011. Elisabeth Scharang. Austria/Hungary/Germany
<i>Remembrance (Die Verlorene Zeit)</i>	2011. Anna Justice. Germany
<i>In Darkness</i>	2011. Agnieszka Holland. Poland/Germany/France/Canada
<i>Retrace (Visszatérés)</i>	2011. Judit Elek. Hungary/Romania/Sweden
<i>Lea and Daria (Lea i Darija)</i>	2011. Branko Ivanda. Croatia
<i>Sarah's Key (Elle s'appelait Sarah)</i>	2010. Gilles Paquet-Brenner. France
<i>The Round up (La Rafle)</i>	2010. Rose Bosch. France/Germany/Hungary
<i>Joanna</i>	2010. Feliks Falk. Poland

<i>Eve (Eva)</i>	2009. Adrian Popovici. Romania
<i>Betrayal (Svik)</i>	2009. Håkon Gundersen. Norway
<i>Freedom (Korkoro)</i>	2009. Tony Gatlif. France
<i>Berlin '36</i>	2009. Kaspar Heidelberg. Germany
<i>Saviours in the Night</i> a.k.a. <i>Army of Saviors (Unter Bauern)</i>	2009. Ludi Boeken. Germany/France
<i>Inglorious Bastards</i>	2009. Quentin Tarantino. USA/Germany
<i>Female Agents (Les femmes de l'ombre)</i>	2008. Jean-Paul Salomé. France
<i>Flame and Citron (Flammen & Citronen)</i>	2008. Ole Christian Madsen. Denmark/Germany/Norway/France/Sweden/Finland/Czech Republic
<i>One Day You'll Understand (Plus tard tu comprendras)</i>	2008. Amos Gitai. France/Germany/Israel
<i>Good</i>	2008. Vicente Amorin. Germany
<i>Defiance</i>	2008. Edward Zwick. USA
<i>The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas</i>	2008. Mark Herman. UK/USA
<i>The Reader</i>	2008. Stephen Daldry. USA/Germany
<i>A Secret (Un secret)</i>	2007. Claude Miller. France
<i>Eichmann</i>	2007. Robert Young. Hungary/UK
<i>My Führer (Mein Führer - Die wirklich wahrste Wahrheit über Adolf Hitler)</i>	2007. Dani Levy. Germany
<i>The Black Book</i>	2006. Paul Verhoeven. Netherlands
<i>Sometimes in April</i>	2005. Raoul Peck. France/USA

<i>Sophie Scholl: The Final Days</i> (<i>Sophie Scholl: Die letzten Tage</i>)	2005. Marc Rothemund. Germany
<i>Nina's Journey (Ninas Resa)</i>	2005. Lena Einhorn. Poland/Sweden
<i>Downfall (Der Untergang)</i>	2004. Oliver Hirschbiegel. Germany/Italy/Austria
<i>Before the Fall (Napola – Elite für den Führer)</i>	2004. Dennis Gansel. Germany
<i>Tomorrow We Move</i>	2004. Chantal Akerman. France/Belgium
<i>Out of Ashes</i>	2003. Joseph Sargent. USA
<i>Hitler's Hit Parade</i>	2003. Oliver Axer and Susanne Benze. Germany
<i>The Birch-Tree Meadow (La petite prairie aux bouleaux)</i>	2003. Marceline Loridan-Ivens. France
<i>Rosenstrasse</i>	2003. Margarethe von Trotta. Germany
<i>Amen</i>	2002. Costa-Gavras. France/Germany/ Romania
<i>The Pianist</i>	2002. Roman Polanski. France/Poland/ Germany/UK
<i>Max</i>	2002. Menno Meyjes. Hungary/Canada/UK
<i>Monsieur Batignole</i>	2002. Gérard Jugnot. France
<i>Nazi Women</i>	2001. Fiona Procter. UK
<i>Louba's Ghosts (Les fantômes de Louba)</i>	2001. Martine Dugowson. France
<i>Unfair Competition (Concorrenza sleale)</i>	2001. Ettore Scola. Italy
<i>Nowhere in Africa (Nirgendwo in Afrika)</i>	2001. Caroline Link. Germany
<i>Charlotte Gray</i>	2001. Gillian Armstrong. UK/Australia/Germany

<i>The Grey Zone</i>	2001. Tim Blake Nelson. USA
<i>Divided We Fall (Musíme si pomáhat)</i>	2000. Jan Hřebejk. Czech Republic
<i>Keep Away from the Window (Daleko od okna)</i>	2000. Jan Jakub Kolski. Poland
<i>Spring of Life (Pramen života)</i>	2000. Milan Cieslar. Czech Republic
<i>The Devil's Arithmetic</i>	1999. Donna Deitch. USA
<i>Aimee & Jaguar (Aimée & Jaguar)</i>	1999. Max Färberböck. Germany
<i>Gloomy Sunday – A Song of Love and Death (Gloomy Sunday - Ein Lied von Liebe und Tod)</i>	1999. Rolf Schübel. Germany/Hungary
<i>Train of Life (Train de vie)</i>	1998. Radu Mihaileanu. France/Belgium/ Netherlands/ Israel/Romania
<i>I'm Alive and I Love You (Je suis vivante et je vous aime)</i>	1998. Roger Kahane. France/Belgium
<i>Life is Beautiful (La vita è bella)</i>	1997. Roberto Benigni. Italy
<i>Lucie Aubrac</i>	1997. Claude Berri. France
<i>Henrik's Sister</i>	1997. Ruti Peres. Israel
<i>The Proprietor</i>	1996. Ismail Merchant. France/UK/USA
<i>One Survivor Remembers</i>	1996. Kary Antholis. USA
<i>My Mother's Courage (Mutter's Courage)</i>	1995. Michael Verhoeven. Germany/UK/ Austria/Ireland
<i>Holy Week (Wielki tydzień)</i>	1995. Andrzej Wajda. Poland/Germany/France
<i>Deborah (Debora)</i>	1995. Ryszard Brylski. Poland
<i>Les Misérables</i>	1995. Claude Lelouch. France

<i>The Seventh Chamber (A hetedik szoba)</i>	1995. Márta Mészáros. Italy/Hungary
<i>Newland (Aretz Hadasha)</i>	1994. Orna Ben-Dor Niv. Israel
<i>Look to the Sky (Jona che visse nella balena)</i>	1993. Roberto Faenza. Italy/France/Hungary
<i>Farewell to Maria (Pozegnanie z Maria)</i>	1993. Filip Zylber. Poland
<i>Schindler's List</i>	1993. Steven Spielberg. USA
<i>Warsaw – Year 5703 (Warszawa. Année 5703)</i>	1992. Janusz Kijowski. France/Germany/ Poland
<i>Basic Instinct</i>	1992. Paul Verhoeven. France/USA
<i>Just Beyond This Forest (Jeszcze tylko ten las)</i>	1991. Jan Łomnicki. Poland
<i>Life for Life – Maximilian Kolbe (Zycie za zycie)</i>	1991. Krzysztof Zanussi. Germany/Poland
<i>Europa Europa</i>	1991. Agnieszka Holland. France/Germany
<i>The Nasty Girl (Das schreckliche Mädchen)</i>	1990. Michael Verhoeven. West Germany
<i>Good Evening, Mr. Wallenberg (God afton, Herr Wallenberg)</i>	1990. Kjell Grede. Sweden/Hungary/Norway
<i>Korczak</i>	1990. Andrzej Wajda. Poland/Germany/UK
<i>Martha and I (Martha et moi)</i>	1990. Jiri Weiss. France/Germany/Austria/Italy
<i>My Private War (Mein Krieg)</i>	1990. Harriet Eder and Thomas Kufus. Germany
<i>Triumph of the Spirit</i>	1989. Robert M. Young. USA
<i>And the Violins Stopped Playing (I skrzypce przestaly grac)</i>	1988. Alexander Ramati. Poland/USA

<i>Goodbye Children (Au revoir les enfants)</i>	1987. Louis Malle. France/West Germany/Italy
<i>Tel Aviv-Berlin</i>	1987. Tsipi Trope. Israel
<i>Angry Harvest (Bittere Ernt)</i>	1985. Agnieszka Holland. Germany
<i>Shoah</i>	1985. Claude Lanzmann. France
<i>Blanche and Marie (Blanche et Marie)</i>	1985. Jacques Renard. France
<i>November Moon</i>	1985. Alexandra von Grote. West Germany/France
<i>The Killing Fields</i>	1984. Roland Joff�. UK
<i>For Those I Loved (Au nom de tous les miens)</i>	1983. Robert Enrico. France/Canada/ Hungary
<i>Job's Revolt (J�b l�zad�sa)</i>	1983. Imre Gy�ngy�ssy and Barna Kabay. Hungary
<i>The White Rose (Die Weisse Rose)</i>	1982. Michael Verhoeven. West Germany
<i>Last Five Days (F�nf letzte Tage)</i>	1982. Percy Adlon. West Germany
<i>The Passerby (La passante du Sans-Souci)</i>	1982. Jacques Rouffio. France/West Germany
<i>Sophie's Choice</i>	1982. Alan J. Pakula. UK/USA
<i>Malou</i>	1981. Jeanine Meerapfel. West Germany
<i>Charlotte S. (Charlotte)</i>	1981. Frans Weisz. Netherlands/West Germany/UK/Italy
<i>Playing for Time</i>	1980. Daniel Mann. USA
<i>The Last Metro (Le dernier m�tro)</i>	1980. Fran�ois Truffaut. France
<i>As If It Were Yesterday (Comme si c'�tait hier)</i>	1980. Myriam Abramowicz and Esther Hoffenberg
<i>David</i>	1979. Peter Lilienthal. West Germany

<i>Kitty: Return to Auschwitz</i>	1979. Peter Morley. UK
<i>Holocaust: The Story of the Family Weiss</i>	1978. Robert Berger. USA
<i>The Boys from Brazil</i>	1978. Franklin J. Schaffner. UK/USA
<i>Death is my Trade (Aus einem deutschen Leben)</i>	1977. Theodor Kotulla. West Germany
<i>The Beast in Heat (La bestia in calore)</i>	1977. Luigi Bartzella. Italy
<i>Julia</i>	1977. Fred Zinnemann. USA
<i>Seven Beauties (Pasqualino Settebelleze)</i>	1976. Lina Wertmüller. Italy
<i>Deported Women of the SS Special Section (Le deportate della sezione speciale SS)</i>	1976. Rino Di Silvestro. Italy
<i>Mr. Klein</i>	1976. Joseph Losey. France/Italy
<i>Marathon Man</i>	1976. John Schlesinger. USA
<i>High Street (Rue Haute)</i>	1976. André Ernotte. France/Belgium
<i>Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom (Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma)</i>	1975. Pier Paolo Pasolini. Italy/France
<i>The Martyr (Sie sind frei, Doktor Korczak)</i>	1975. Aleksander Ford. West Germany/Israel
<i>Ilsa, She-Wolf of the SS</i>	1975. Don Edmonds. Canada
<i>The Night Porter (Il portiere di notte)</i>	1974. Liliana Cavani. Italy
<i>Black Thursday (Les guichets du Louvre)</i>	1974. Michel Mitrani. France
<i>Lacombe, Lucien</i>	1974. Louis Malle. France/West Germany/ Italy

<i>She-Devils of the SS (Eine Armee Gretchen)</i>	1973. Erwin C. Dietrich. Switzerland
<i>And Give My Love to the Swallows (...a pozdravuji vlastovki)</i>	1972. Jaromil Jires. Czechoslovakia
<i>Cabaret</i>	1972. Bob Fosse. USA
<i>The Garden of Finzi Continis (Il giardino dei Finzi Contini)</i>	1970. Vittorio de Sica. Italy/West Germany
<i>The Fed One (Hranjenik)</i>	1970. Vatroslav Mimica. Yugoslavia
<i>The Damned (La caduta degli dei)</i>	1969. Luchino Visconti. Italy/West Germany
<i>Cremator (Spalovač mrtvol)</i>	1969. Juraj Herz. Czechoslovakia
<i>The Sorrow and the Pity (Le chagrin e la pitié)</i>	1969. Marcel Ophüls. France/Switzerland/West Germany
<i>Dita Saxová</i>	1968. Antonín Moskalyk. Czechoslovakia
<i>The Two of Us (Le vieil homme et l'enfant)</i>	1967. Claude Berri. France
<i>Witness Out of Hell (Die Zeugin aus der Hölle)</i>	1966. Žika Mitrović. West Germany/ Yugoslavia
<i>The Square of Saint Elisabeth (Náměstie svätej Alžbety)</i>	1966. Vladimír Bahna. Czechoslovakia
<i>We'll Go into Town (Andremo in città)</i>	1966. Nelo Risi. Italy/Yugoslavia
<i>The Shop on Main Street (Obchod na korze)</i>	1965. Ján Kadar and Elmar Klos. Czechoslovakia
<i>The Story of a Murder (Chronik eines Mordes)</i>	1965. Joachim Hasler. East Germany
<i>The Fifth Rider is Fear (...a páty jezdec je Strach)</i>	1965. Zbyněk Brynych. Czechoslovakia

<i>Sandra (Vaghe stele dell'Orsa)</i>	1965. Luchino Visconti. Italy
<i>Ship of Fools</i>	1965. Stanley Kramer. USA
<i>The Hour of Truth (L'heure de la vérité)</i>	1964. Henri Calef. France/Israel
<i>Diamonds of the Night (Démanty noci)</i>	1964. Jan Němec. Czechoslovakia
<i>The Pawnbroker</i>	1964. Sidney Lumet. USA
<i>Naked Among Wolves (Nackt unter Wölfen)</i>	1963. Frank Beyer. East Germany
<i>The Passenger (Pasazierka)</i>	1963. Andrzej Munk and Witold Lesiewicz. Poland
<i>The Condemned of Altona (I sequestrati di Altona)</i>	1962. Vittorio de Sica. Italy/France
<i>Judgement at Nuremberg</i>	1961. Stanley Kramer. USA
<i>The Gold of Rome (L'oro di Roma)</i>	1961. Carlo Lizzani. Italy
<i>Samson</i>	1961. Andrzej Wajda. Poland
<i>Birth Certificate (Swiadectwo urodzenia)</i>	1961. Stanislaw Rózewicz. Poland
<i>Enclosure (L'Enclos)</i>	1961. Armand Gatti. Yugoslavia/France
<i>Professor Mamlock</i>	1961. Konrad Wolf. East Germany
<i>Exodus</i>	1960. Otto Preminger. USA
<i>The Ninth Circle (Deveti krug)</i>	1960. France Štiglic. Yugoslavia
<i>Romeo, Juliet And Darkness (Romeo, Julie a tma)</i>	1960. Jirí Weiss. Czechoslovakia
<i>Kapo (Kapò)</i>	1960. Gillo Pontecorvo. Italy/France/Yugoslavia
<i>Conspiracy of Hearts</i>	1960. Ralph Thomas. UK

<i>The Diary of Anne Frank</i>	1959. George Stevens. USA
<i>Stars (Sterne)</i>	1959. Konrad Wolf. East Germany/Bulgaria
<i>Spring in Budapest (Budapesti tavasz)</i>	1955. Félix Máriássy. Hungary
<i>A Generation</i>	1955. Andrzej Wajda. Poland
<i>I Know What I'm Living For (Ich weiss, wofür ich liebe)</i>	1955. Paul Verhoeven. West Germany
<i>Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl</i>	1952. TV episode. United States
<i>Odette</i>	1950. Herbert Wilcox. UK
<i>The Last Illusion (Der Ruf)</i>	1949. Josef von Báky. Germany.
<i>It Will Never Happen Again (Unzere kinder)</i>	1949. Natan Gross and Shaul Goskind. Poland
<i>Distant Journey (Daleká cesta)</i>	1949. Alfréd Radok. Czechoslovakia
<i>Border Street (Ulica Graniczna)</i>	1948. Aleksander Ford. Poland
<i>The Search</i>	1948. Fred Zinnermann. Switzerland/USA
<i>Morituri</i>	1948. Eugen York. Germany
<i>The Blum Affair (Affaire Blum)</i>	1948. Erich Engel. Germany
<i>The Last Stage (Ostatni Etap)</i>	1948. Wanda Jakubowska. Poland
<i>Marriage in the Shadows (Ehe im Schatten)</i>	1947. Kurt Maetzig. Germany
<i>We Lived Through Buchenwald (Forçats d'honneur)</i>	1946. Georges Lust and Émile-Georges de Meyst. Belgium
<i>A Friend Will Come Tonight (Un ami viendra ce soir)</i>	1946. Raymond Bernard. France

<i>The Murders Are Among Us (Die Mörder sind unter uns)</i>	1946. Wolfgang Staudte. Germany
<i>The Great Dictator</i>	1940. Charles Chaplin. United States
<i>Professor Mamlock (Professor Mamlok)</i>	1938. Adolf Minkin and Gerbert Rappaport. Soviet Union