



RESEARCH PAPER

WARMONGERING NAZISM AND REMINISCENCE

FILM PERSPECTIVES:

*THE PIANIST, SCHINDLER'S LIST, LIFE IS
BEAUTIFUL*

ALICIA GONZÁLEZ Y GÓMEZ

ABSTRACT

Keywords: *WWII narratives, Nazi ideology depiction, artistic interpretation, ethical considerations, comparative film analysis.*

This paper will compare the films *The Pianist* (Roman Polanski, 2002), *Life is Beautiful* (Roberto Benigni, 1997) and *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993). All of them revolve around World War II and, specifically, the Nazi ideology and invasion. In any case, the paper will deal with the perspective of each film, the different points of view from which the theme is developed in each one. Moreover, the paper will clarify the level of veracity, reality and fiction that is captured in each of the narratives, as well as the messages that are intended to be given in each one, reducing ourselves to a single theme: the repercussions of Nazi ideology. The given context comes under the spectre of the end of the First World War, when in 1919 the Deutsche Arbeiter Partei was formed. That year Adolf Hitler joined as a member, taking on the role of propaganda chief. In 1920 the name was changed to the "National Socialist German Workers' Party", better known as the Nazi Party. The new regime that was established, the Weimar Republic, faced economic, social and political problems. This included uprisings from different political sectors and the difficulty of establishing its authority. Among the various coup attempts was that of the Nazi Party in November 1923, under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. The persecution of Jews, a real turning point for this paper, began with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. Hitler's profile was one of a person full of brutality and criminality, lacking in sensitivity as well as vindictiveness, intolerant of criticism and with a tendency to belittle people. His confidence and egotism were exuberant, and hysteria, neurosis, schizophrenia and, among others, paranoia are noted. Based on the viewing of the three films, as well as an in-depth analysis of the period at the heart of the film motifs, and the exhaustive reading of books that study the films in question, such as *I Witness Spotlight: Schindler's List* (2019, march 1st) and Logan, B. (1999, January 29th) *Does this man really think the Holocaust was a big joke?* | *Life is Beautiful* (The Guardian); the paper has been able to encompass the different perspectives that can be offered on the same subject. In addition to this, there's a global vision of the laborious work involved in the production of narratives of this nature. With the films analyzed, a fully objective vision is offered when dealing with Nazi ideology, as well as the fidelity and veracity offered by Polanski and Schindler, contrasting with Benigni. This leads us to the conclusion that the border between fact and fiction is a fine line. Regardless of a specific case, whatever veracity is offered, it is spoken in terms of humanity, terms that should never be forgotten, but which instead fade with time. The central theme of the films is elevated to a psychological level of various dimensions of ethnic segregation, uprooting, humiliation, and in each of these, the common thread is chosen, be it will, love, passion or reminiscence.

INTRODUCTION

Film perspectives form a fundamental part of the collective mind of society. When we talk about films whose central theme is as historical as the consequences of the Nazi invasion, we must be able to assess the degree of education and the ideological position that has been employed. Photography was almost unanimously regarded as a visual record of reality, of what the observer would take to be reality. So, taking this origin as its pivot, the filmic enterprise took that form. Nowadays, there are different connotations that lean towards the yellowish and bizarre interest of such enterprises. Thus, morbidity blocks the significance of the passive receiver. The lack of connotation, the lack of human interest in itself poses a human crisis. From realism, we move on to truthfulness in order to reach the realm of the credible. With the principles that will be presented later, we offer an analysis concerned with surprising the spectator through an individual portrait of humanization with the collective portrait. In this case, we are faced with three perspectives that lean towards the points of view we will discuss below, but all lead to the title of the research paper: warmongering, Nazism and reminiscence.

The harsh ideology to which the films analyzed outline the ideas of opposition to Jewish domination of the world and the reiteration of the danger posed by communism. The way forward was the purification of the nation by eliminating subversive elements, and the conquest of land rich in resources to revive the economy and bring the country out of its prostration. In *The Pianist*, Wladyslaw Szpilman, a brilliant Polish pianist of Jewish origin, lives with his family in the Warsaw ghetto. When, in 1939, the Germans invade Poland, he manages to avoid deportation thanks to the help of some friends. Even so, he will have to live hidden and completely isolated for a long time, and to survive he will have to face constant dangers. The film evokes an adaptation full of objectivity. It is based on two very clear sources of documentation: on the one hand, the director's own experiences and, on the other hand, the book *The Pianist* by Wladyslaw Szpilman. The director himself said: *"When I read The Pianist I knew this was something I wanted to do, and the reason was that the description of the events was extremely truthful and that was precisely because it was written just after the war. I don't think someone writing about this stage 20 or 30 years later could have the same kind of documentation, the same kind of detail, which was true for me, a child of that same era."*¹ It stands out above the rest, great objectivity and also tremendous optimism, which brings us to the key point of the film and the perspective itself that sets it apart. The victim survives thanks to his passion for art and for music in particular, and thanks to his willpower. If anything, it aims to be optimistic and inspirational despite all the horror it chronicles. The atmosphere of war, cruelty and dehumanization stems from the great execution and production of the film, which lies above all in the work of Allan Starski and Anna Sheppard, production designer and costume designer respectively. The former carried out the reconstruction of the Warsaw ghetto. This is one of the most important facts when it comes to documentation, as they create the perfect atmosphere for a correct storytelling.

¹ *A Story of Survival: Behind the Scenes of 'The Pianist'*

This optimistic objectivity is added to the passion and will, which contrasts with the classism, rise of Nazism and its representative figures embodied in Schindler's List, is added to the passion and will. Oskar Schindler, a German businessman with a talent for public relations, seeks to gain the sympathy of the Nazis for his own personal gain. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939, Schindler, thanks to his relations with the top Nazi hierarchs, was given ownership of a factory in Kraków. There, he employed hundreds of Jewish workers, whose exploitation made him prosper rapidly, thanks in particular to his manager Itzhak Stern, who was also Jewish. As the war progresses, Schindler and Stern begin to realise that the Jews they employ are being saved from almost certain death in the dreaded Plaszow concentration camp, which is run by Nazi commandant Amon Göth.

In this case, it is based on the director's own sense of religious discrimination and not an adaptation, but on the basis of Thomas Keneally's Schindler's Ark. A figure is chosen to portray the facts of the Holocaust and the inhuman Nazi ideology itself to carry out the narrative. We meet the profile of Oskar Schindler, played by Liam Neeson, portrayed by Spielberg as the Great Gatsby in many ways. He made high-class friends in the SS who carried out arms contracts, manipulated different factions of society to serve him. Also, it is very important to remember this because at the beginning of the war to remember this because at the beginning of the war he was only concerned only with himself. At the beginning of his career he was only trying to get the people of Krakow to give him business. On the other hand, he adds that "being Oskar Schindler being a German, Nazi, misogynist and war profiteer, all these paradoxes and all these paradoxes and inconsistencies made it impossible to believe that he could save the people of Krakow, made it impossible to believe that he could save anyone, except himself. When we speak of Schindler in the film, we must not forget his accountant Itzhak Stern. We would perhaps say that he is like his conscience, during the film, we see that he makes Schindler see his most human and emotional side in a way. The parallels drawn by Spielberg portray a gentle symbolism that contrasts with the harshness of the narrative. On numerous occasions, to tie in with this latent classism, Spielberg opts for sequences of fast-paced scenes that cause chaos and at times stress, one might say. With this, the viewer is shown the differences in life that existed, and how even knowing all the segregation and abuse that was taking place, nobody did anything about it.

In the latter case, there is a radical change, and that is that it is perhaps more in depth a fable and a love story. In *Life is Beautiful*, in 1939, with World War II about to break out, Guido, a flamboyant man full of life, arrives in Arezzo, Tuscany, with his friend Ferruccio and a great dream of running his own bookshop. There he meets Dora, whom he calls "princess", with the drawback that she is already engaged to an important Fascist, Rodolfo, although he eventually marries her and has a son, Giosuè. When the war breaks out, he is forced to subordinate himself and his son to a concentration camp, where Dora joins them out of love; and it is there that Guido does his best to make his son believe that the terrible situation they are going through is just a game. From the outset Benigni made it clear that he is a comedian and that this fable and satire, latent throughout the film, was "the only way to make this film". Even so, at no point has the film not been faithful to the facts and the Nazi invasion. Therefore, in order to have a more complete documentation, he consulted throughout the production with the Documentation Centre of Contemporary Judaism

based in Milan. Together with two Italian Auschwitz survivors, the Centre appears in the screen credits and its spokesman, Marcello Pezzetti, has always been enthusiastic about the film.

The fine line in terms of accuracy and veracity of historical facts, enters with temporal and historical inaccuracies, because at all times, Benigni makes it clear that he does not intend to make a documentary, as it is the sources together with the testimonies of survivors that can offer a work that tells an accurate documentary truth. As such, he does not claim that the film is a realistic depiction of the extermination camps and admits that marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew, as depicted in the film, would have been forbidden at the time by Mussolini's fascist racial laws. So, we would say that the comic thread, in the style of Chaplin or the Marx Brothers, is the common thread. for we speak of a "will to power", a subtle will, possessed in such a banal way that not even the possessor is aware of it (in Nietzschean terms). But it is in the smallest, the most insignificant, the most delicate, that the will to power must be studied, if we want to understand its cases in world history. What Nietzsche called *amor fati*, "that one does not want to have anything else, neither in the future, nor in the past, nor in all eternity, comes into play. Not only to bear what is necessary, let alone to conceal it (...), but to love it"². The common factor we are led to is that the recipients have to be witnesses to what has happened, as if the photographs turn out to be phases. This idea of eyewitness is almost a chronicle of the work. In this process, an added value is produced and little by little this trace is created that unites the rhetoric of the information, making the receiver a participant.

² F. NIETZSCHE, *Ecce Homo*, KSA 6, p. 297

METHODOLOGY AND INVOLVEMENT

The methodology employed in this comprehensive research paper is a sophisticated, multi-layered comparative analysis that scrutinizes the depiction of Nazi ideology within three pivotal films: *The Pianist*, *Life is Beautiful* and *Schindler's List*. This intricate examination leverages an interdisciplinary methodology, intertwining historical research to anchor the films within their accurate socio-political contexts, psychological analysis to probe into the depths of character portrayal and narrative influence, and film studies to critically assess cinematic techniques, narrative structures, and their emotive power over audiences. By delving into each film's approach to historical representation, the paper seeks to uncover the balance struck between historical verisimilitude and creative narrative construction. It critically explores how these cinematic endeavors navigate the ethical landscape of Holocaust representation, grappling with the challenges of portraying traumatic history with integrity and sensitivity. The research meticulously evaluates the narrative strategies employed by each director, the thematic resonance of their films, and the consequent impact on collective memory and historical discourse. Through a comprehensive exploration of these films' contributions to the understanding of Nazi ideology, the Holocaust, and their ongoing influence on cultural memory and identity, the paper aims to provide a profound insight into the dynamics of film as a medium for historical reflection, ethical consideration, and societal education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The foundational step for undertaking a comparison of the aforementioned films necessitates a theoretical framework. *The Pianist* (2002), directed by Roman Polanski, outlines the life of Wladyslaw Szpilman, a brilliant Polish pianist of Jewish descent living with his family in the Warsaw Ghetto. Suddenly, in 1939, the Germans invade Poland, and he manages to avoid deportation with the help of some friends. Nevertheless, he must live hidden and completely isolated for a long time, facing constant dangers to survive. Transitioning from pure objectivity and reminiscent testimony, we move to the stylized symbolism employed by Steven Spielberg in *Schindler's List* (1993). Oskar Schindler, a German businessman with a knack for public relations, seeks to ingratiate himself with the Nazis for personal gain. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939, Schindler, through his connections with high-ranking Nazi officials, acquires a factory in Krakow. There, he employs hundreds of Jewish workers, whose exploitation rapidly brings him prosperity, especially through his Jewish manager Itzhak Stern. As the war progresses, Schindler and Stern become aware that by employing Jews, they are saving them from almost certain death in the dreaded Plaszow concentration camp, led by Nazi Commander Amon Göth. So, what happens when the realm of reality becomes so harsh, yet there remains a need to be faithful to history? We can observe Schindler's stylized symbolism, while other directors like Roberto Benigni, decide to invoke epistemology and black humor as a veil for cruelty. *Life is Beautiful* (1997) takes us to the years just before the Nazi invasion, specifically, on the verge of World War II. Guido, an eccentric and lively man, arrives in Arezzo, Tuscany, with his friend Ferruccio and a great dream of running his own bookstore. There, he meets Dora, whom he calls "princess," despite her engagement to an important fascist, Rodolfo, though he eventually marries her and they have a son, Giosuè. When the war breaks out, they are forced into a concentration camp, which Dora joins out of love; and it is there that Guido strives to make his son believe that their dire situation is just a game.

All these narratives revolve around World War II, specifically the implications of Nazi ideology and invasion. In any case, we will address the perspective of each film, the different viewpoints from which the theme is developed in each one. Thus, we will clarify that this historical situation was triggered under the spectrum of the end of World War I, in 1919, with the formation of the Deutsche Arbeiter Partei. That year Adolf Hitler joined as a member, taking on the role of propaganda chief. In 1920, the name was changed to the "National Socialist German Workers' Party," better known as the Nazi Party. The Nazi Party was among those expressing discontent with Germany's surrender and the imposition of severe compensatory measures on the country after World War I. The new regime that was established, the Weimar Republic, had to face economic, social, and political problems. This included uprisings from different political sectors and the difficulty of establishing its authority. Among the various coup attempts was that of the Nazi Party, in November 1923, under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. Hitler was sentenced to five years in prison, though he was released after 10 months. During those months in prison, he wrote his book *Mein Kampf*, which outlined the ideas of opposition to Jewish domination of the world and reiterated the danger posed by communism. The path forward was the purification of the

nation, eliminating subversive elements, and conquering resource-rich lands to reactivate the economy and lift the country out of its prostration.

The persecution of Jews, a real turning point for this paper, began with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. These laws established a racial classification system and limited citizenship rights to "those of German blood," also prohibiting Jews from marrying Aryan race individuals or working in non-Jewish owned businesses. In any case, to expand its territory, Hitler began signing pacts and occupying territories from 1938. Hitler's profile was that of a person filled with brutality and criminality, lacking sensitivity and vengeful, intolerant of criticism, and prone to belittling people. His confidence and egotism were exuberant, and he exhibited hysteria, neurosis, schizophrenia, and, among others, paranoia³.

³ *Analysis of the Personality of Adolph Hitler*, Henry A. Murray, M. D., Harvard Psychological Clinic

Objective cinematographic adaptation, belicism and dehumanization lead to passion and will in The Pianist

In Roman Polanski's *The Pianist*, we start from the basis of two very clear sources of documentation: on the one hand, the director's own experiences and, on the other hand, the book *The Pianist* by Wladyslaw Szpilman. The director himself said: "When I read *The Pianist* I knew that this was something I wanted to do, and the reason was that the description of the events was extremely truthful and that was precisely because it was written just after the war. I don't think someone writing about this stage 20 or 30 years later could have the same kind of documentation, the same kind of detail, which was true for me, a child of that same era."⁴ Within this book, there is great objectivity and also tremendous optimism, which brings us to the key point of the film and the perspective itself that sets it apart. The victim survives thanks to his passion for art and for music in particular, and thanks to his willpower. If anything, it aims to be optimistic and inspirational despite all the horror it chronicles. The film's great execution and production lies above all in the work of Allan Starski and Anna Sheppard, production designer and costume designer respectively. The former carried out the reconstruction of the Warsaw ghetto. This is one of the most important facts when it comes to documentation, as it creates the perfect atmosphere for the right storytelling.

Filming began at Babelsberg Studios in Germany and required the recreation of the Warsaw ghetto and the surrounding city. Although the war left the city in ruins, most of it was rebuilt. Old Soviet barracks were used to recreate the ruined city, as they were going to be demolished anyway. The first scenes of the film were shot in the old military barracks, and the crew later moved to a house in Potsdam, Germany, which served as the house where Szpilman meets Hosenfeld. Filming continued at an abandoned Soviet army hospital in Beelitz, Germany. The scenes where the Nazis destroy the hospital with flamethrowers were shot there. This was followed by filming at Babelsberg Studios. The first scene to be shot at the studio was the one in which Szpilman witnesses the resistance of the ghetto Jews being put down by the Nazis. The filming moved from the studios to the Prague-Pólnoc neighbourhood because of its abundance of original buildings from the period. The art department built on top of these buildings, recreating World War II Poland with symbols and posters from the period. Additional scenes were shot in the surroundings of Warsaw. Scenes such as Umschlagplatz⁵ were filmed at the local military academy.

On the other hand, Anna Sheppard, talking about the process, commented that the aim was to "start using specific colours by making a film full of colour with the typical tones of the 1940s, brown, coral, and then lose the colour completely. When people were already in the ghetto, to represent all those moments of sadness with a monochromatic scale."⁶ Another key point that makes this film an excellent depiction of the Nazi invasions was not to depict the action in its

⁴ *A Story of Survival: Behind the Scenes of 'The Pianist'*

⁵ Where Szpilman, his family and hundreds of Jews are beaten onto a goods train that will take them to the concentration camp.

⁶ *A Story of Survival: Behind the Scenes of 'The Pianist'*, 2003

entirety, but to focus on the character's inner journey and paranoia. Polanski chooses to give glimpses of what the genocide was like, but at the same time show that there were many aspects that were unfeasible. Pawel Edelman, director of photography, said: "We realized that it had to be an unobtrusive film. Simple camera work, simple lighting, everything had to be invisible. All our technique, all our tricks, we should forget and think better about people, characters, and we should hide behind the characters". (2003)

In any case, the fidelity offered in the film is embodied by the screenwriter Ronald Harwood. In the making of the film, the aim is to show the war for what it is: "It's a dreadful historical event and you can't start glamorizing it, you can't sugarcoat it. You have to tell it as you think it is. I mean there is no ultimate truth because we can't explain it in any way, so it's very difficult to get to the truth. But whatever the truth is in you about that subject, you have to be true to that truth. "⁷ Polanski commented that he used a wide range of his memories and experiences⁸. In addition to this, there is obviously a collection of documentation on which he commented: "you study the films, the archives, the vast amount of it, the photos, and it's very hard (...)". Polanski emphasised, along with Harwood, how there was someone behind the camera recording these terrifying moments, photographing all this. They did it with taste and passion, or they did it as if it was something fun with military propositions.

An atmosphere is created in any case gradual in terms of spontaneity. It reflects Szpilman's life, real life, survival. Then, within this chaotic and distressing process, we come to the actual perspective of the film. So far we have been portraying the documentation work that was done and justify why the film is true to the facts in a high percentage. So now, we move on to the art, to the music. This fact is emphasised in the omniscient escapism. The piano is portrayed in its hiding place, in the scenes where, in order not to be found, it plays the keys in the air. The big turning point is reflected when he is found by one of the SS officers and keeps his secret, making this Szpilman almost cry with a piece. This totally unexpected twist enlightens us, but at the same time clarifies that it is not the emotion, but the luck of being alive, as told in the book. All art and skill are at the core of the will to survive, the very survival of the human spirit.⁹

⁷ Roman Polanski, 2002

⁸ For example, how his father was slapped because he wasn't walking on the road, and that was just the beginning, when the ghetto didn't even exist yet.

⁹ "I think there are a lot of important messages in this film. Obviously the evil nature and the bloodthirstiness, but it also illustrates the strength of music and how one man's love of music helps him to survive and the survival of the human spirit. I think another important message, although the result of the holocaust is attributed to the German nation, there were Germans who refused to participate in carrying out these horrific acts. It's a wonderful realistic journey and has a lot of hope and strength during all the pain in this world." (Adrien Brody in *A Story of Survival: Behind the Scenes of 'The Pianist'*, 2003)

Schindler's List interlines classism, nazism and symbolism

In this case, we start from the director's own sense of religious discrimination and not an adaptation, but based on Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark*. A figure is chosen to portray the facts of the Holocaust and the inhuman Nazi ideology itself to carry out the narrative. We meet the profile of Oskar Schindler, played by Liam Neeson, portrayed by Spielberg as the Great Gatsby in many ways. He made high-class friends in the SS who carried out arms contracts, he manipulated different factions of society into serving him. Also, it is very important to remember this because at the beginning of the war he was only concerned with himself. At the beginning of his career he was just trying to get the people of Krakow to give him business. On the other hand, he adds that "Oskar Schindler being a German, a Nazi, a misogynist and a war profiteer, all these paradoxes and inconsistencies, made it impossible to believe that he could save anyone but himself". When we talk about Schindler in the film, we must not forget his accountant Itzhak Stern. We would perhaps say that it is as his conscience, during the film, we see that he makes Schindler see his most human and emotional side in a way. The deep-rooted cruelty and horror is also portrayed in the figure of Amon Göth.¹⁰ "Amon Göth got up every morning, went to his balcony with his powerful hunting rifle (...). He would take aim with his rifle and destroy the life of anyone he thought was faking, taking a break or short of breath". Starring Ralph Fiennes, it has turning points where the fidelity to historical fact is entirely truthful and excellent.

In terms of setting and atmosphere, he decided to shoot in or very close to the places where the real events took place. Even so, the Płaszów camp had to be recreated in a nearby abandoned quarry because numerous modern buildings were visible from the site of the original camp. Many scenes were filmed in Kazimierz, the former Jewish quarter. There, too, in Szeroka Street, scenes were filmed that actually took place on Plac Zgody, the square of the former ghetto. The Płaszów camp would be reconstructed in the Liban quarry. On the other hand, there too, fragments of buildings marked for demolition belonging to Solvay were used as locations, as well as a former chemical company, and the Bonarka railway station in Olkusz, and the military base near Skarzyska Kamiennej¹¹. Again, as in *The Pianist*, great importance was attached to these reconstructions and costumes, which were also carried out by Allan Starski and Anna Sheppard respectively. Allan Starski brought his design proposals for Spielberg's approval. The videotapes brought back images of locations that Spielberg had not seen during his two visits to Kraków¹².

Various objects, including costume pieces, original documents and books of original documents and books from the period were needed for the production process, at least 1,000 suitcases from the period, and a wartime chequebook for Oskar Schindler was also sought without success. Regarding the filming process, Spielberg explained that at all times, he intended it to be a personal

¹⁰ Steven Spielberg talks about SCHINDLER'S LIST in 17-minute 1994 interview

¹¹ Palowski, Franciszek (1998) [1993]. *The Making of Schindler's List: Behind the Scenes of an Epic Film*. Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group. ISBN 1-55972-445-5.

¹² Other videos featured the Polish actors that Heritage Films wanted to include in Schindler's List.

experience, a documentary-style re-creation¹³. In addition to the return to his roots that this film meant for Spielberg, it was also a return to his own roots, which made the treatment of the testimonies more than delicate and exhaustive.¹⁴

On numerous occasions, to tie in with this latent classism, Spielberg opts for sequences of rapid-fire scenes that cause chaos and at times stress, one might say. With this, the viewer is shown the differences in life that existed, and how even knowing all the segregation and abuse that was taking place, no one did anything about it. To portray this, Thomas Keneally was a primary source. Spielberg assumed that when he began researching sources, he tried to establish two sources before putting that piece of information into the film. If two people told me the same thing, like a good journalist, that became part of the story. "There are elements and data that are perhaps apocryphal."¹⁵ There is always this dichotomy between the care Schindler gave to his Jews and the concern he began to feel in 1944 when the liquidation took place, and that facet he was trying to give to the world, this totally apathetic, capitalist figure¹⁶.

I would say that there are three clear turning points and these are: the red coat, the candles and the colour. The realism offered in the film lies in the decision to offer it in black and white. Spielberg was the only one who wanted to shoot the film in black and white, the studio did not, although Sid (Sheinberg) agreed. "I don't know what the Holocaust is in colour, I wasn't there when it happened, but I have seen documentaries about the Holocaust and anyone who has seen them knows they are black and white," he said. "I wanted the story to feel real and the only point of reference we had was contextualised in black and white."¹⁷ This then links to the main scene, where the candle goes out and everything becomes black and white, because the Jewish cultural manifestation was undone. That red coat of the six-year-old girl was a turning point for Schindler. It captured his attention because he could not bear to see a little girl walking the streets while the liquidation of Krakow's ghettos was taking place. "For me it meant that people, Roosevelt, Eisenhower and probably Stalin Churchill, knew about the Holocaust, it was a well-kept secret, and they did

¹³ "I approached a documentary filmmaker, rather than an approach to David Lean, who I love to quote and include in my films, because I wanted the experience to be a personal experience rather than a scene from the eyes of the camera. I tried to make the camera more part of the storytelling than a character as such. In most of my films the camera is a character, but in this film, recreation, which I think is more of a document, more of a memory than a film production, I wanted the camera to be almost invisible and to do that I took what I call a news camera approach in some of the scenes like the liquidation of the ghettos (...) Many of the scenes were shot handheld and not planned (...)" (Steven Spielberg, 1993).

¹⁴ "When I was making the film in Poland, at least a dozen Holocaust survivors who had travelled there used the film as a couch to find an end to their nightmares. They introduced themselves and often told us their stories in tears. I kept telling them, thank you for telling me all this, but I would like you to say it in front of a camera because this is an important testimony? I asked them if they were willing to do it, and they all said yes". The New York Times, interview with Steven Spielberg, 10 November 1994.

¹⁵ Steven Spielberg talks about SCHINDLER'S LIST in 17-minute 1994 interview

¹⁶ Schindler was very clever, someone you would never expect to be caught, and not someone you would expect to love the Jews. He convinced the world that he wanted the money, the women and the booze". (Steven Spielberg talks about SCHINDLER'S LIST in 17-minute 1994 interview)

¹⁷ Steven Spielberg On The Legacy Of 'Schindler's List' 25 Years Later, NBC Nightly News, 2018

nothing to stop it.¹⁸ Once the end of the war is announced and the Jews survive thanks to Schindler, colour returns with all these survivors, symbolising the lives saved. In this film, Spielberg aims to make a documentary and bring the essence or judgement of the Holocaust and for people to look back and think that they cannot move forward until they reflect on this. This film is guided by documentation and a fully symbolist perspective to make a call to humanity. In other words, it is a perfect blend of reality and perhaps more poetic reflection. The message is such, and its didactic purpose is so grandiose, that in November 1994, Spielberg announced to the media the creation of the Shoah Foundation on the grounds of Universal Studios¹⁹.

¹⁸ "It was almost as if the Holocaust was wearing red and yet nothing was being done to stop it (...) When this caught Oskar Schindler's attention, it marked a change in his life," Spielberg said of the symbolism portrayed. Later, we see in one of the carts of murdered people this little girl, which prompts Oskar in part, to carry out that list" *Spielberg On The Legacy Of 'Schindler's List' 25 Years Later*, NBC Nightly News, 2018

¹⁹ The new institution, whose full name was the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, would be responsible for conducting more than 50,000 interviews with Holocaust survivors between 1997 and 1998 - more than 100,000 hours of video in total. The Foundation had come into being for the immediate purpose of collecting and archiving these testimonies, but this particular project was part of a broader mission, that of a struggle to eradicate both prejudice and intolerance and the suffering that results from them in any part of the world.

Are fable and comedy justified means of escape from cruelty when we include the cliché of love in Life is Beautiful?

In the latter case, there is a radical change, and that is perhaps more in depth a fable and a love story. Roberto Benigni used Rubino Robeo Salmoni²⁰ and his book *He defeated Hitler: memoirs of an Auschwitz prisoner* as a source in order to maintain that fidelity and truthfulness to the sensitive subject matter. Still, part of what is captured in the film was the life of Benigni's father, Lugi Benigni, who spent two years in a Nazi concentration camp and joined the Italian army after he became a cobelligerent for the Allies in 1943. Benigni, explaining the very purpose of the film and what he wanted to portray after having this basic documentation, the figure of Romeo Salmoni and his father's experiences, was "a man full of life in complete freedom, the image of freedom itself, until he is taken to the most terrifying and even insane place in the world." ²¹

From the outset Benigni made it clear that he is a comedian and that this fable and satire, latent throughout the film, was "the only way to make this film". Even so, at no point has the film not been faithful to the facts and the Nazi invasion. Therefore, in order to have a more complete documentation, he consulted throughout the production with the Documentation Centre of Contemporary Judaism based in Milan. Together with two Italian Auschwitz survivors, the Centre appears in the screen credits and its spokesman, Marcello Pezzetti, has always been enthusiastic about the film. The fine line in terms of accuracy and veracity of historical facts, enters with temporal and historical inaccuracies, because at all times, Benigni makes it clear that he does not intend to make a documentary, as it is the sources together with the testimonies of survivors that can offer a work that tells an accurate documentary truth. As such, he does not claim that the film is a realistic depiction of the extermination camps and admits that marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew, as depicted in the film, would have been forbidden at the time by Mussolini's fascist racial laws.

So, we would say that the comic thread, a la Chaplin or the Marx Brothers²², is the common thread. We see this in different scenes of the film, such as in the representation of the school inspection. Guido pretends to be a Ministry inspector who has to give a talk to the children about the Manifesto of the Race. Guido succeeds in demystifying these differences that the manifesto appeals to, as he is Jewish and has no physical characteristics that distinguish him from these "purely Aryan" Italian children.²³ Guido mocks all these beliefs, dismantles all racist ideology with

²⁰ When German soldiers scoured and destroyed the ghetto of Rome on 16 October 1943, he managed to escape the violence suffered by the more than a thousand people captured and deported in one of the most tragic days in the city's memory. His luck was short-lived: only six months later he ended up in the hands of Mussolini's blackshirts and his life became an ordeal. "A long journey to death", he defined it.

²¹ Roberto Benigni, 1997

²² Benigni borrows from Chaplin, but also from the Marx Brothers, and from an artistic and comic tradition that goes back to the Commedia del Arte.

²³ Here, for example, the lesson takes place in the Gymnastics Hall. A stylised herma of Mussolini is placed on a granite block with the inscription 'DUX'. On the sides stands the fascist slogan '*Book and Moschetto, perfect fascist*'. On the walls is the Manifesto of 'Denouncement of belonging to the Jewish race', following the issue of the Race Manifesto.

witty and amusing remarks. He uses the same technique on numerous occasions, as well as mocking or satirizing the gait of the officers.

"It should not be forgotten that Italy was the country where fascism as such really began. For a long period of time there was a great silence concerning this subject, as if it were almost a taboo".²⁴ This is one of the reflections on the relationship between Germans and Italians that Benigni made when giving an explanation as to why it was set in Italy and not in other countries. In any case, we are talking about a story, and not a documentary or symbolist spectre as in the previous films.

Precisely, this vision leads us to a fully philosophical narration, redundant of epistemology. The philosophical references are important to note, as the film has been the focus of criticism since its release, as it is said to make jokes and treat the Holocaust tactlessly²⁵. In this case, instead of labelling the film as "escapist", we have to deal not only with the symbolism, but also with the philosophy of the film. At first glance, the will is presented in terms of Schopenhauer's philosophy, but, according to scholars, Nietzsche is the figure behind the philosophy of the narrative. He spoke of the "will to power", a subtle will, possessed in such a banal way that he himself is not even aware of it. But it is in the smallest, most insignificant, most delicate things that the will to power must be studied, if we want to understand the cases of the will to power in world history. What Nietzsche called *amor fati*, "that one does not want to have anything else, neither in the future, nor in the past, nor in all eternity, comes into play. Not only to bear what is necessary, and even less to conceal it (...), but to love it". It is precisely not to accept with courage what happens, but to transform this acceptance into a ceremony of its own. The artistic trick of *amor fati* is an emotional and mental trick, which absorbs the strength of the opponent, reinforces his impulse, and inverts it to convert it into strength over the opponent. As Roberto Benigni said, "falling in love is like being in a cathedral: you don't see out, but you see through the glass the light and how it splits into colours. When love catches you, you are completely dominated and you don't see anything outside, but you discover new things". But he not only demonstrates this in the beguiling love story, but also in Guido and Giosuè's relationship when they stroll through the city and discover, in the window of a pastry shop, a sign saying "no entry for Jews and dogs"²⁶.

Guido says yes to all these Nazi prohibitions, until the most tragic end comes for him, which is more destructive than any bout of indignation. And just as in this small detail, so runs the whole

²⁴ "It wasn't until the 1960s that people began to talk and reflect on the consequences of Nazi ideology, let's say that the relationship between Italians and Jews was wonderful, until fascism came at a time when, I would say, it was more catastrophic.

²⁵ Logan, Brian (1999). «Does this man really think the Holocaust was a big joke?». The Guardian. Archived from the original on 24 September 2016.

²⁶ -Why can't the Jews and the dogs come in, dad?

-Well, because they don't want Jews or dogs, because everyone does what they want, Giosuè. Behind there is a shop, a hardware store, and there, for example, they don't let Spanish people or horses in. And there's a pharmacy there, right, and yesterday I was with a friend of mine, with a Chinese guy who has a kangaroo, and I said to them, can we come in, and they said no, we don't want the Chinese and the kangaroos! They don't like them, what can I say.

-But we let everyone into the bookshop!

-No, from tomorrow we'll write a poster too, let's see, tell me something you dislike.

- Spiders, and you?

-Me? The Visigoths. Tomorrow we'll write: no entry for spiders and Visigoths... I'm fried by the Visigoths... That's it!

film. At no point does it aspire to offer a realistic depiction of a concentration camp. Rather, it takes the concentration camp as what it has become for public consciousness and discourse, as an essential concept of the cruelty of the period to be referred to at all times. We are talking about a storytelling in the form of a fable in the situation of the tragic limit. "I don't like to make messages, but the best message is to create something beautiful, to create emotions. If I may say so, this is very simple. The film tells a story of love, to protect innocence and purity and to always keep hope, because love and imagination are what never dies."²⁷

²⁷ Roberto Benigni, 1997

CONCLUSION

This research paper delves into the intricate portrayal of Nazi ideology through the lens of cinema, exploring the complex interplay between historical accuracy and creative narrative in films like *The Pianist*, *Schindler's List*, and *Life is Beautiful*. It critically assesses the filmmakers' approaches to depicting the horrors and nuances of World War II, highlighting the ethical considerations in representing such profound human suffering. The paper underscores the essential humanistic messages these films convey, emphasizing the resilience of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable adversity, and the crucial role of memory and remembrance in confronting the past. The research not only contributes to the understanding of historical representation in film but also invites reflection on the power of cinema to shape our collective memory and cultural identity in the aftermath of tragedy. With the perspective of Spielberg and Polanski's objectivity versus Benigni's approach, it becomes evident that Spielberg and Polanski navigate the harrowing narratives of the Holocaust with a discernible commitment to historical fidelity and a nuanced understanding of human resilience. Their films are marked by a deliberate and respectful engagement with the subject matter, portraying the complexities of human experience amidst atrocity with depth and sobriety. In contrast, Benigni's *Life is Beautiful*, while innovative and deeply moving, adopts a more naïve approach, utilizing humor and whimsy in the face of genocide. This method, though controversial, brings a unique perspective to the discourse on memory and representation, highlighting the diverse ways filmmakers grapple with history's darkest chapters.

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