

The Holocaust on Screen: Examining the lens of genocide, tragedy, and remembrance
and the making of the film *The Inheritors: A Return to Bergen-Belsen*

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II. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND SIGNIFANCE

My senior project is a documentary film chronicling our family's journey through my grandmother's Holocaust experience. The film simultaneously documents my grandmother's Holocaust story while at the same time depicts our family's recent trip to the Netherlands and Germany to retrace her steps through the war. Starting in her birth place, Amsterdam, and ending in Berlin, our trip included each part of her Holocaust experience from her childhood home to the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen to the mass grave site of her mother in the German countryside. The film includes footage of conversations with historians and Holocaust experts that we met at each place, as well as ordinary people who witnessed or whose parents witnessed some of the same horrific events my grandmother experienced. The film also include interviews with my grandmother retracing her

experiences during the war, as well as giving background context on her family and her life post- Holocaust.

By pairing together images of our trip with my grandmother's story of her past, I wanted to illustrate two distinct but undeniably interlinked stories: my grandmother's story and ours. While the ultimate goal of the film is to share what happened to my grandmother during the war, it is also very much a film about our experience revisiting the places and people that shaped my family's history and identity. I hope that the film achieves a sense of duality between the past and the present- telling her story through the lens of our experience and ultimately, illustrating the intergenerational transmission of trauma and loss. With the film, I hope to underscore the intrinsic link between past and present and the undeniable influence of my grandmother's experience on both my mother's generation and mine, and how each of us has been influenced in varying ways in our identities and memories.

Through the duality of the narrative, I wanted to create a film that not only illuminates an extremely important piece of history through a personal story, but also deals with questions of Jewish identity and the influence of the Holocaust on the modern Jew. How has the enormity and tragedy of the Holocaust shaped my mother's Jewish identity? How has it shaped my identity? What does the Holocaust mean for both Jews today and future generations? And further, as people lose a connection to Judaism, whether by choice, marriage, or otherwise, what will the Holocaust mean to them? I question whether those who are no longer connected to the religion in future generations can maintain a meaningful connection to the life-changing events of their ancestors.

When thinking about the Holocaust, we often focus on past, but with this film, I hoped to show the undeniable presence of the past in the present and how it is impossible to separate Jewish identity from the experience of the Holocaust and how the past informs many of our present experiences. The film explores these questions and more through both verbal and visual storytelling.

This project also grapples with how to tell stories of the Holocaust on screen. When dealing with an inherently dark topic like the Holocaust, what is the best way to visualize the narrative? This film is in many ways an experiment of one of the many ways to visualize genocide and deal with a topic that requires restraint and careful consideration of artistic choices. When making this film and thinking about the research that informed it, I often thought about the question of how to find a balance between artistry and sensitivity to the subject matter. When visualizing the Holocaust, how do we respect those whose stories we tell while still creating a piece that is engaging and informative? And further, what is the best way to show the contrast between the present settings and the horror of the past without exploiting shock?

Finally, because of the deeply personal subject matter of my film, I navigated the difficulties of many filmmakers who are close to their subjects. Often times, documentary filmmakers either start their projects already close to their subjects or throughout the course of filmmaking, form a personal bond with the stories or the people they are filming. This is an aspect of filmmaking that I not only had to learn how to navigate, but also was an area that I looked into when conducting background research on Holocaust genre filmmaking. How does a documentarian maintain some objectivity when close to his or

her subject? Does a personal connection become problematic when making artistic or narrative choices? In what ways do our personal histories, views and biases ultimately shape what we shoot and how we shoot it, how we arrange the narrative of our films, what we choose to leave in and what we choose to edit out? These questions informed my filmmaking process and my research during this project.

This film is first and foremost personally significant for myself, my family, and especially my grandmother. Until a few years ago, my grandmother was never comfortable sharing her story (even with family members) and never openly spoke about her status as a survivor. However, now that she is willing to share her story, it is extremely important to me and the rest of my family that her experience be documented. This documentation of her experience is not only significant to us, but also for future generations of our family. And beyond just her story, the film's documentation of our trip back to Europe is also an important preservation of a significant event and memory for our family. I hope that my film can serve as a memorial not only to my grandmother and our family members that were murdered, but also for the millions of Jews who shared the same fate.

Additionally, since her story has never been fully documented, it not only needs to be preserved for personal reasons, but also because it has historical and social value. It is extremely important to bring her story (as with all Holocaust survivors) to light in order to ensure that people never forget the horrors of the war. Documenting these stories is essential in combating Holocaust deniers and current anti-Semitism. Preserving stories like my grandmother's only adds important material to the Holocaust documentary film genre.

Films that depict genocide and extreme tragedy are not limited to the tragedy of the Holocaust, and so the significance of my grandmother's story extends beyond the Holocaust and offers historical significance within the context of genocide studies. From the horrors of Rwanda to the massacres of Armenia and the former Yugoslavia, there is an entire genre of films that grapple with the topic of genocide. This group of films, while vast in scope and varied in topic, share the commonality of storytelling that seeks to uncover truths and share the stories of survivors and victims. This genre uses the tools of filmmaking to reflect, commemorate, and ensure that these unfathomable events in history will never be forgotten. With its documentation of historical events and places and personal, firsthand testimony of genocide, my grandmother's story is an important piece of historical information.

Because my grandmother was just a young child during the war, she is one of the youngest living survivors, adding an extra element of significance and uniqueness to her story. Within the canon of Holocaust survivor documentaries and interviews, my grandmother's story is particularly special because of her young age during her time in a concentration camp and her status as the only living survivor of her family. Her story is especially important at a time when survivors are getting older and older. As the survivor generation ages, it is still imperative that the tragedies of the Holocaust are told to each new generation so that the horrific events don't ever fade from memory. I hope that the film is both socially and personally significant and also achieves a level of storytelling and artistry that elevates the narrative and heightens the impact of the story.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Section A: Holocaust Documentary Films

Varied in focus and style, produced across cultures, and depicting unique and compelling stories, the Holocaust documentary film genre offers valuable artistic, filmic, and historical contributions. The genre comprises films that have storytelling at their core and often document the tragedy of the Holocaust through a specific lens or narrative focus. These documentaries share stories of survivors and victims alike, often focusing on specific people, places, and events to help frame and focus the enormous magnitude of a historical event like the Holocaust.

What follows is a review of a sampling of Holocaust documentaries, but certainly not a comprehensive listing. The films chosen are representative of a variety of styles and artistic approaches to the genre. Each was chosen first and foremost for its storytelling qualities and ability to visualize a compelling narrative, but also for its filmic and artistic qualities. The chosen films are significant not only because of what they depicted, but also *how* they told these stories. This genre is rarely written or spoken about without the inclusion of one of the earliest works, Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*, the seminal masterpiece *Shoah*, and the character study that is *Forgiving Dr. Mengele*, and the love story *Steal a Pencil For Me*, four works that I've included in my overview and that offer four distinct styles of filmmaking. In addition to these key works of the canon, I choose three films created by Israeli documentarians, *The Flat*, *Because of That War*, and *A Film Unfinished* because of my own position as an Israeli-American filmmaker, my film subject

being my Israeli resident grandmother, and the important connection between the Holocaust, the formation of the state of Israel, and its people.

***Night and Fog* (directed by Alain Resnais, 1955)**

Completed ten years after the liberation of all concentration camps, Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* made an impact when it was released in 1955 and still stands as an incredibly important piece of Holocaust film today. Directed by the acclaimed director Resnais, the short film shows images of the grounds of concentration camps Auschwitz and Majdanek after liberation while a voiceover describes what the prisoners of the camps endured. The footage of the camps is a mix of horrifying and seemingly pleasant images creating a powerful array of imagery. Michel Bouquet's informative, yet detached voiceover gives an eerie tone to the film and couples the imagery coupled with the descriptions of the horror of the camps and the unbelievable conditions prisoners faced during the war results in an extraordinarily haunting, yet simultaneously very informative film.

In a concise manner, Resnais is able to create a whole range of emotions for his audience, from shock to disgust to confusion. He toggles between past and present, showing both black-and-white footage of the past and color images of the remnants of the camps. This contrast between black-and-white and color footage further emphasizes the divide between what happened at these sites in the past and their existence in the present (in 1955.) He edits the film in a way that creates a shocking juxtaposition between the footage of the horrible conditions and practices of the camp with quiet, almost serene im-

ages of the empty camp. This cutting between images of the past and the present emphasizes how unfathomable it is to think of what happened on these abandoned camp grounds that now look peaceful and calm. With this short, but incredibly impact-inducing film, Resnais informs his audience of the happenings of the concentration camps, and in doing so, raises the question of ultimate responsibility of the murder of millions of people with the world watching.

***Shoah* (directed by Claude Lanzmann, 1985)**

With over nine hours of footage, Claude Lanzmann's groundbreaking 1985 documentary film *Shoah* features both interviews with survivors, perpetrators, and witnesses and trips back to concentration camps across Europe. Lanzmann's film is often considered one of the seminal pieces of Holocaust cinema because of its scope, attention to detail, and understated artistic style and truth-seeking filmmaking technique. Lanzmann's documentary style differs from most that deal with the Holocaust because of its lack of use of archival film of the camps, reenactments, or news footage, instead focusing on storytelling through interviews and imagery of the present.

By interviewing people from all sides of the conflict and canvassing such a wide scope of people, places, and topics, Lanzmann paints an extraordinary picture of the Holocaust, creating an epic film to match the scale of the horrific events that occurred. His film reveals the intrinsic connection between the past and the present and the inability to create a future without the shadow of trauma. Lanzmann's work is especially powerful because of its coupling of interviews and images of the places which the interviewees

discuss. By pairing post-war images of these horrific places with the words and stories of those who experienced them firsthand, Lanzmann is able to perfectly capture the co-existence of past and present and the pervading presence of the events of the Holocaust.

***Because of That War* (directed by Orna Ben-Dor Niv, 1988)**

Israeli filmmaker Orna Ben-Dor Niv's 1998 documentary film *Because of That War* (Or *Biglal Hamilkhama Hahi* in Hebrew) illustrates the multigenerational implications of the Holocaust through the stories of two children of Holocaust survivors. By focusing on the children of survivors rather than the survivors themselves, Ben-Dor Niv highlights the far-reaching consequences of war, trauma, and genocide on not only the immediate population that experienced them, but also on the second generation and beyond. Through the stories of two Israeli musicians Yaacov Gilad and Yehuda Poliker, the film asserts the intergenerational transmission of trauma, while at the same time highlighting the differences between their own feelings about what happened to their parents and how their parents feel about it. Ben-Dor Niv's film is driven by the music of Gilad and Poliker, using this framework to shape the narrative. The songs of the film are meant to reflect the two main subjects' feelings and because they are both musicians, their feelings are emitted through their creative outlet. By documenting the stories of both the second-generation children and the survivor parents themselves and using the framework of music to do so, Ben-Dor Niv illustrates the variance in memory, emotional experience, and reflection between her characters and the intersection of music and memory.

***Forgiving Dr. Mengele* (directed by Bob Hercules and Cheri Pugh, 2006)**

Premiering in 2006, *Forgiving Dr. Mengele* tells the story of Auschwitz survivor Eva Mozes Kor. Not only a young survivor of Auschwitz, Eva is also a survivor of Dr. Josef Mengele's medical experiments, a part of a group coined "Mengele's Twins." However, her story (and that of the film) does not just end with her survival of the Holocaust, instead it documents her life and work post-war through the filmmakers' following her for over four years. In particular, the filmmakers focus on Eva's mission of forgiveness and her work to find forgiveness in any way that she can when it comes to the Holocaust and its perpetrators. For Eva, forgiveness is her way of coming to terms with what happened to her at Auschwitz and she tries to spread her beliefs about forgiveness as a form of relief to other survivors and Holocaust experts, but she is met with mixed responses. The film documents her many conversations and experiences with other people during her journey to forgiveness, as well as her life's goal to educate people about the Holocaust through speaking engagements and her own memorial museum in her small Indiana town.

The film is especially successful because it creates a very cohesive, multifaceted picture of Eva and who she is while at the same time never becoming two singularly focused or narrowly opinionated about her beliefs. Instead, we see the multidimensionality of a fascinating woman and her busy life. By carefully explaining her story during the Holocaust, but mostly focusing on her present-day life, the filmmakers underscore the intrinsic link between past and present and the unbelievable impact Eva's Holocaust experiences had on her life. And beyond just Eva's own story, the film's examination of the

idea of forgiveness (whether linked to the Holocaust or not,) highlights the intricacies of a concept that is both wide- reaching and complex.

***Steal a Pencil For Me* (directed by Michele Ohayan, 2007)**

Telling the story of Jack Polak and Ina Soep, *Steal a Pencil For Me* is both a Holocaust documentary and a love story. While the film shares the story of both Jack and Ina's Holocaust experiences, it does so through the lens of their romance. In many ways, their love was "forbidden" as they not only came from two different spheres of society in Amsterdam, but Jack was also already married when they first met. Adding even more intrigue to the story of their relationship, Jack, his first wife Manja, and Ina all ended up in the same concentration camp together, with Ina and Manja even sharing the same barracks. Although Jack and Manja's relationship was already close to ending before the war even started, Jack and Ina must hide their relations so they send each other secret love letters while in the camp. What unfolds is a unique love story that undergoes the extraordinary circumstances of the war and ultimately blossoms into an over 50- year marriage.

Using interviews with Ina, Jack, and their family members, current footage of the pair living their lives, and reenactments of scenes of the past, Ohayan is able to shape and visualize their romance for her film. Ohayan's film is composed and edited to create a seamless, almost glossy final result. In this way, her film is very much a "Hollywood" documentary, certainly eliciting strong emotions and a compelling narrative, but doing so in a well-packaged, carefully shot and edited, and stylized documentary. Her very subject

matter- *a love story* of the Holocaust- immediately adds a layer of romance and hope to the film that differentiates it from other films of this genre.

However, using the frame of a love story makes Ohayan's film easily digestible considering the subject matter, making the film an extremely important addition to the Holocaust film canon because of its marketability and ability to reach an audience that otherwise would not be exposed to the stories of the Holocaust. By focusing on the story of this coupling of Jack and Ina, Ohayan not only documents two people's survival of the Holocaust, but also highlights the presence of humanity during a time of extraordinary difficulty. Her film shows that feelings like love and acts of courtship could exist even in the most trying circumstances, capturing an element of the Holocaust that is not ordinarily documented.

***A Film Unfinished* (directed by Yael Hersonski, 2010)**

Helmed by Israeli director Yael Hersonski, *A Film Unfinished* expertly weaves together never used Nazi propaganda footage, current footage of interviews with survivors, and reenactments to create a powerful and informative final product. The film focuses on the never completed Nazi propaganda film about the Warsaw Ghetto just a few months before it was brutally liquidated. Hersonski's film focuses on the footage of the ghetto, how it was filmed, and the various motives of the Nazis for capturing this footage. The film questions why certain scenes were shot, how much knowledge the camera operators had of what they were doing, and why the film was never actually completed or

seen. What unfolds is a film that is able to simultaneously dissect the footage and also use it to inform its audience about the ghetto and its happenings.

Further, the interviews with survivors are particularly powerful. Not only do they provide insight and context to the footage, but they are also shown reacting to the reels, the images of the ghetto flashing across their faces. The film intercuts footage of the ghetto with moments of the survivors watching it, creating a powerful image of past meets present. Watching the survivors of this ghetto liquidation watch this footage is undoubtedly the most effective part of Hersonski's documentary. In real time, the audience is able to observe their reactions to the footage, whether wonderment, surprise, or horror, resulting in an unbelievable collision of two worlds. Additionally, the interviews with the survivors themselves are very revealing to the psyche of a survivor and the role of memory within the context of genocide. While a lot of it was staged by the SS, the footage of the ghetto nevertheless triggers real memories or reflections from the survivors of what *really* happened or how they really felt, underscoring the importance of documentation during traumatic events.

***The Flat* (directed by Arnon Goldfinger, 2011)**

Arnon Goldfinger's 2011 documentary film *The Flat* (or *Ha Dira* in Hebrew) documents the filmmaker's experience cleaning out his late mother's apartment and the resulting revelations he makes about his family's past. The Israeli filmmaker inserts himself into the story, making the focus of his film just as much about his Jewish parents' concealed past friendship with Nazi perpetrators as it is about the implications for his

own identity. The film begins innocently enough when Goldfinger sets out to chronicle the many family mementos and belongings of his grandparents when he finds an odd coin in the flat, one side a swastika and one side a Star of David. These newspapers soon lead him to uncover a family mystery, taking him back to Germany to retrace his grandparents' past and understand new revelations about their relationship with a high ranking Nazi propagandist.

As the story unfolds, Goldfinger learns not only did his grandparents conceal their friendship, but also that his own mother never asked them about their memories of the Holocaust. What emerges is an extremely telling division between Goldfinger's fervent desire to understand his past and his mother's complacency with not knowing and never asking. Goldfinger becomes increasingly frustrated with his mother for never asking her parents about her past and her lack of curiosity, highlighting the shift between the second and third generation. For Goldfinger, his ties to the Holocaust and his newly uncovered knowledge about his grandparents will come to define his identity and his actions in the present, while his mother seems to want to bury or even just not acknowledge the memories. With his film, Goldfinger underscores the relationship between past and present while at the same time showing the undeniable impact that time and distance can have on the desire to remember and understand the past.

Narrated by Goldfinger, the film is very much a reflection of Goldfinger's own experience with his grandparents' story. He inserts himself as a visible character of the film, essentially have the audience come along with him on his journey to seek the truth and uncover their story. The film is shot in "real time" and edited together in a way so

that the audience experiences the action and learns new information at the same time as Goldfinger for the majority of the film. This creates an element of uncertainty and mystery that results in a final product that is very much a thrilling film. Goldfinger is simultaneously acting as detective and filmmaker, uncovering information throughout the course of the film and at the same time documenting his reactions, his mother's reactions, and the consequences this newly discovered information has on his family and beyond. Beyond the narrative composition of the film, Goldfinger has a distinct artistic style in his editing choices and his use of images to tell a story. Often in his documentary, the director uses still images or bits of video to visualize part of the narrative, creating powerful and lasting images that make an impact when paired with his narration.

Section B: Holocaust Narrative Films

In order to have a more holistic understanding of the Holocaust film genre, it was critical to also examine narrative films. Like the documentary sector of the genre, the narrative films about the Holocaust are varied in focus and style, produced globally, and tell powerful and compelling stories. These films are often the gateway to the Holocaust for many people, becoming an essential component of education on the subject. The films of the genre all approach the Holocaust with a unique focus and with the framework of a particular story, character, or place. Even more so with these narrative films than with their documentary counterparts, artistic choice, directorial style, and filmic qualities are essential considerations.

Because of the sheer scope of films that have been created on the subject, what follows is review of only a small sampling of Holocaust narrative films. It is in no way a comprehensive listing, but rather a group of films that each offer a specific viewpoint and contribution to the canon. A look at this genre would be impossible without the inclusion of *Schindler's List*, often considered the single most important Holocaust film because of its critical acclaim and wide-reaching commercial success. Again, I chose an Israeli film, *The Summer of Aviya*, for its ability to connect the Holocaust to the creation of the state of Israel and the survivors that live there. *Sophie's Choice* offers a unique way to tell a Holocaust story, framed as the story of a love triangle and focusing on the inability to escape the trauma of the past in the present. I included *In Darkness* for its similarities to *Schindler's List* in focusing on the efforts of a non-Jew to save Jews and the fact that it is not a Hollywood film, but rather helmed by a French director and filmed in Polish. Finally, *Inglorious Basterds* is a black comedy offering that stands alone amongst its dramatic cohorts in the genre, making it a unique approach to the subject matter.

***The Summer of Aviya* (film by Gila Almagor, 1988)**

Released in 1988, *The Summer of Aviya* is a narrative film based on a Hebrew-language book that captures the essence of the summer of 1951 in Israel. The people of the newly established state are documented, and Almagor focuses on the lives of a little girl named Aviya and her mother Henya. As the film continues, it becomes very clear that Henya (a concentration camp survivor who lost her husband during the war) suffers from irreparable psychological and emotional damage. She teeters the line between lucid and

psychotic, often displaying crazy behavior. The rest of the townspeople not only ridicule her psychosis, but they also outcast Aviya and her mother for their behaviors. The weight of the memories of the war have left too large a scar for Henya to overcome her instability. In the years immediately following the war, Henya must grapple with the trauma she has experienced and try to lead a normal life and create a new future for her and her daughter.

Through the character of Henya (as both director and actor), Almagor illustrates the immediate effects of trauma and loss and how close the past is tied to the present and beyond. As for Aviya, Almagor highlights the undeniable affects that this trauma can have for the next generation, even as early as when they are children. Instead of focusing on an adult who has grappled with this intergenerational sharing of trauma, Almagor's young protagonist gives an honest portrayal of how this devastation can very much effect children and how they form their own identities. Aviya's identity as a Jew, Israeli, and person are very much defined and informed by her mother's experiences. She cannot exist without the shadow of the Holocaust always around her, despite her indirect contact with it. Additionally, the film also paints a picture of how the Israeli Jewish identity was formed in the early days of the newly established state. The development of this identity and society as a whole was undoubtedly influenced by the Holocaust, creating the foundation of experience for this new Jewish group.

***Sophie's Choice* (directed by Alan J. Pakula, 1982)**

Based on the novel of the same name and winning Meryl Streep an Academy Award for Best Actress for playing the titular character, Alan J. Pakula's *Sophie's Choice* is as much a Holocaust film as it is a romance story. The two layers of the film create a narrative that links the unique stories of the three protagonists, and underscores the inescapability of the past in the present. The film is framed through the eyes of a young writer named Stingo who moves to New York in pursuit of a writing career. He meets a couple, Sophie and Nathan, who share the same boardinghouse as him, beginning a passionate, yet tumultuous friendship amongst the three of them. It quickly becomes evident that Stingo is infatuated with Sophie, forming a love triangle of sorts that is a constant source of underlying tension between Stingo and Nathan. What unfolds throughout the course of the film is a rollercoaster of a relationship between the couple and the young writer, part twisted love triangle, part loving friendship.

However, as close as the trio seem to be with each other, they all hold secrets of their past, and as the truth begins to be revealed, it becomes very clear that their relationships cannot exist without being influenced by the past. The very bases of their relationships are built on falsities and hidden pasts, further emphasizing the intertwining of past and present. For Sophie, she tries to escape her experiences during the Holocaust by creating false memories that she tells Nathan, and in many ways, she conditions herself to believe these lies as well in order to better reconcile her past identity and actions with her current life. When she reveals the truth about her identity before the war and how she actually survived Auschwitz to Stingo, she slowly starts to free herself from the lies she has created.

Over the course of the film, it is revealed that Sophie's father was extremely anti-Semitic, that she was arrested and sent to Auschwitz for stealing food, and that she chose which of her two children would live or die when prompted to by a SS officer. Ultimately, the truth of this unfathomable choice of her past is too much to bear for Sophie (and along with Nathan) she commits suicide. Pakula attempts to tell a survival story through the lens of a non-Jewish survivor and through the frame of a love triangle, but in doing so, produces a film that is not able to reconcile its many layers into one cohesive unit.

***Schindler's List* (directed by Steven Spielberg, 1993)**

Often considered the seminal work of Holocaust cinema, Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* was critically acclaimed and commercially successful when it was released in 1993 and still continues to be a celebrated and important work today. Nominated for 12 Academy Awards and winning seven of them (including Best Picture), Spielberg's film is extraordinarily detailed, carefully telling the story of "Schindler's Jews" in black-and-white and with a documentary-like feel. The film focuses on the story of one group of Jews, while at the same time visualizing much of the Jewish Holocaust experience on film, depicting everything from the liquidation of the ghettos to the gas chambers of Auschwitz to the Nazi "medical exams" on the Jews to the haunting lives of Nazi perpetrators. The sheer detail and breadth of the film is what makes it not only a Hollywood classic, but also a visual textbook for Holocaust education.

The film tells the true story of Schindler's Jews, a group of Jewish men, women, and children that were essentially "saved" by a German factory owner named Oskar

Schindler. Schindler becomes increasingly attached to his group of workers throughout the war and what starts as a good business decision becomes his life's mission to save Jews by insisting on their employment at his factory during the war. By becoming well-liked amongst the Nazis, but mostly because of his monetary bribery towards key officers, Schindler is able to convince officials to let him employ Jews and stop their deportation to Auschwitz, saving their lives. While Schindler's actions are the focus of the film, Spielberg focuses on the individual stories of many of the Jews he saved and the twisted mind and actions of SS officer Amon Goeth, who orders the liquidation of the Krakow ghetto and oversees the Plaszow concentration camp. By focusing on a multitude of personal stories, but also paying close attention to detail, Spielberg creates a masterpiece that manages to be both all-encompassing and intimate.

Spielberg's film particularly stands out in the Holocaust genre and across all types of cinema, for that matter, because of its unique filmic qualities and style. The film is shot entirely in black-and-white, giving the film a documentary-like feel which results in a final product that has a sense of solemnity and restraint. The film does not glamorize or trivialize the Holocaust, but rather visualizes the story with integrity and respect to the people it portrays. Spielberg's respect for the story of the Jews is best captured in the Krakow ghetto liquidation scene which he carefully captures with great detail in a long sequence that would have been edited down in a different film or by another director. The sequence is long and painful to watch, but successfully depicts the unfathomable events of the liquidation. Perhaps the film's most memorable moment occurs during this part of the film, when a little girl being pushed through the mass of people running and scream-

ing in the streets appears on the screen in a red dress. This is the only moment of color in the entire film except for when this same little girl's dead body reappears later. The red color creates a powerful and lasting image. At first viewing, it almost seems like a mistake, a moment not meant to be there, but the little girl in red stands out amongst the mass of people to remind both Schindler and the audience that this is a mass of individuals, each with a name, a purpose, and a life to live.

***Inglorious Basterds* (directed by Quentin Tarantino, 2009)**

Although it could be considered less of a Holocaust film, and more of a World War II film, Quentin Tarantino's 2009 film *Inglorious Basterds* is an essential addition when thinking about the Holocaust film canon. The satirical film quite literally changes the narrative of the Holocaust, suggesting a very different ending for how the war could have ended, raising questions about pushing the limits of historical representation in film, especially when dealing with a subject matter like the Holocaust. The film follows a few parallel storylines, all culminating in one unbelievable ending that effectively ends the Nazi regime.

The three main intersecting stories include following a group of Nazi hunters led by American Lieutenant Aldo Raine as they travel around Europe hunting and killing Nazis, a Jewish woman secretly posing as a French movie theater owner named Shoshanna, and the pursuits of SS officer Hans Landa otherwise known as the "Jew Hunter." Lieutenant Raine and his group of misfit hunters plot to assassinate the entire Nazi leadership unknowingly infringing on Shoshanna's own plan to blow up her movie theater

during a Nazi film premiere. Meanwhile, the “Jew Hunter” Landa does everything he can to not only live up to his nickname, but also to stop Raine’s plot after building and confirming his suspicions of the American’s plan.

As the two assassination plots unfold, Tarantino introduces the audience to a colorful group of characters who inject dark comedy into the seemingly dark subject matter that includes graphic Nazi scalping, a dramatic shooting of a family of Jews, and a bloody bar shootout. His characters are so outrageous that many of them, including Adolf Hitler himself, are reduced to caricatures, larger-than-life versions of the WWII archetypes that they represent. Beyond just his characterizations, Tarantino’s representation of the Nazi regime through meticulous set details and glossy production design create a distinctive visual style that is far from the dark and gritty visualizations of other Holocaust-era films.

***In Darkness* (directed by Agnieszka Holland, 2011)**

Agnieszka Holland’s 2011 film *In Darkness* tells the harrowing, but ultimately triumphant true story of a group of Jews hiding in the Lwow sewer system for over a year, aided by a Polish sewage worker named Leopold Socha. What begins as a good business deal for Socha (the Jews he hides pay him), he ultimately ends up deeply caring for them and continuing his duties hiding them even when their money runs out. Holland’s film is as much about the plight of the Jews hiding in the sewers and their unfathomably difficult lives underground as it is about Socha and his progression from money hungry sewage worker to compassionate caretaker. Throughout the course of the film, Socha and his

group of refugees learn to trust and care for each other, going through periods of distrust on both sides before they can be fully comfortable with one another. After over a year of constant fear and extreme living circumstances for Socha's Jews, they survive until liberation of Lwow and are freed from the sewers.

In Darkness is quite literally in darkness for much of the story with its production design, mirroring the uncertainty and "in the dark" feelings of the Jews underground. The disorienting effect of the darkness of the film mimics the disorientation of the characters, thrusting the viewer into the space and feelings of the Jews. Furthermore, one of the greatest parts of the film is the extreme contrast between light and dark, underground and above ground. This contrast between light and dark is never more profound, both visually and narratively, when Socha's Jews are brought above ground after the town is liberated and they are free. As each Jew reenters the world above the sewers, their vision (and ours) is disoriented and hazy, almost dreamlike, capturing the surrealness of the moment and of their reality. Much of the film's power comes from its sophisticated and tastefully crafted mise-en-scene. This mise-en-scene is what aides the film in veering from being overly dramatized or glamorized, instead telling an extraordinary story of survival.

Section C: The Holocaust as genre, the Holocaust documentary, and Hollywood and the Holocaust.

As the Holocaust film genre has emerged, so too has emerged criticism, theory, and scholarly work on the subject. There are countless thematic trends amongst this work, ideas and discussions that often examine the intersection of Holocaust cinema and other

areas such as psychology, history, and other art forms. In many ways, Holocaust film theory and criticism has shaped the genre itself and become an integral part of the public consciousness of many of the involved films. When discussing these films, it is essential to think about what defines this group of films and how Holocaust cinema came to be a genre. Next, what are the defining characteristics and specific films that shaped the subcategory of Holocaust documentaries? And finally, there is no stronger relationship within this genre than the one between Hollywood and the Holocaust, so it is essential to examine this relationship, its history, and the films that have emerged from this pairing. What follows is a discussion of these three key areas of Holocaust film theory, offering a sampling of the themes and ideas that have emerged out of the genre.

The Holocaust as genre:

More than any other historical event of the twentieth century, the Holocaust had an immense influence on visual representation and most notably, cinema. Certainly no other genocide has had such an enormous effect on filmmakers, both documentary and narrative ones alike. The sheer amount of works that emerged from this historic event, however, has raised some key questions not only about how “Holocaust film” is defined, but also the limitations, challenges, and thematic trends of the genre.

The very pairing of the word “Holocaust” with “film” is problematic because of the complexities of the word “Holocaust” and its Greek origins that mean “a sacrifice wholly consumed by fire; a whole burnt offering” (Kerner 2). For this reason, a better term for this genre is perhaps Shoah cinema (using the Hebrew word Shoah in place of

Holocaust) and Claude Lanzmann popularized the use of this term with the release of his film of the same name. Lanzmann's use of the word as the title of his film suggested a sort of universality around the word "Shoah" and its meaning as not just a reference to a specific event at a specific time (like "Holocaust" might suggest) but rather threats to humanity on a greater scale (Mondzain via Frodon). However, ultimately, the most-used and widely-known signifier for the genre is Holocaust cinema, which encompasses all the works associated with this event in history, not just the specific suffering of the Jewish people. This canon of films is not limited to those that visualize stories of Jews, but rather includes all films that refer to the specific place and time of the event of the Holocaust.

One key aspect of this genre is the distinction between the actual event and the visualization of it on screen. Kerner explains, "A 'Holocaust film' is not the event; it is a re-presentation of the event, "(Kerner 3). This distinction is essential when looking at the genre because of the inherent problems, limitations, and criticisms that can arise when attempting to visualize such a complex event on screen. It is imperative to remember that this representation of the Holocaust is just *that*: a representation and not reality on screen. Despite an inherent desire to uncover truths or present a definitive history, visualizing an objective truth or reality through Holocaust cinema is not possible, nor should be attempted, according to Kerner.

Furthermore, with such a complex genre of cinema comes artistic and ethical boundaries. These questions of ethics have often plagued the genre and its films, raising questions about what what can be acceptably deemed a "Holocaust film." Can the label be used for all kinds of films, even ones that don't represent Jews at all? Or ones that lit-

erally rewrite history (like Tarantino's *Inglorious Basterds*) or use comedy and allegory to represent a story from the death camps like Roberto Benigni's 1997 film *Life is Beautiful*? The broad labeling of the genre poses these questions and more, and underscores the inherent complexities of the representation of such an event and the labeling of these films as a "genre."

Holocaust documentaries:

Anchored by Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* (1955), the seminal, nine hour documentary *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985), and Steven Spielberg's enormous testimony database through the Shoah Foundation, the Holocaust documentary genre is vast in scope and varied in subject. From attempted realism to testimony to personal stories, the subject matter and style of the genre is not limited to one form of documentation. Aaron Kerner offers a breakdown of the genre into four main categories in *Film and the Holocaust*, citing the categories formed by film scholar Bill Nichols: expository documentaries, observational films, personal or interactive documentaries, and poetic documentaries. The Holocaust documentary can either attempt to expose a truth or "tell it like it really was," use the power of testimony to frame a story, visualize a personal narrative or subject, or explore the mode of representation and question the very medium which it is utilizing (Kerner). Because the Holocaust documentary can take on so many different forms and functions, the canon includes a unique and varied group of works that each have a specific style. From Lanzmann's truth-seeking, testimony-filled *Shoah* to Arnon Goldfinger's exploration of a personal story in *The Flat* to the hybrid combination of SS

footage and survivor reactions in Yael Hersonski's poetic *A Film Unfinished*, the Holocaust documentary is never simply a straightforward lens into the past, but rather employs similar filmic and storytelling strategies as its narrative film counterparts to reach a certain objective and offer a specific viewpoint (Kerner).

The documentary genre is never discussed without the inclusion of one of the earliest works *Night and Fog*, which in many ways, shaped the public consciousness of what a concentration camp looked like. Resnais not only included footage of the deserted grounds of Auschwitz from after the war, but also included the now infamous images from Bergen-Belsen of piles of corpses being bulldozed into mass graves. Without Resnais's film, these images would not have reached a wide audience nor would they have had nearly the same power without the director's powerful editing (Frodon). In Frodon's anthology of essays, Sylvie Lindeperg discusses the emergence of *Night and Fog*, and with it, the emergence of a documentarian's perspective on the Holocaust. The work's lasting power has transcended decades and in many ways, has provided the foundation for the documentary works that succeeded it. For Kerner, *Night and Fog* is a poetic documentary, exploring the complexities of representation through its juxtaposing images.

Annette Wieviorka discusses the power of testimony and the idea of the "filmed witness" in her essay in Frodon's collection. For Wieviorka, the terms witness and victim have become synonymous within the schema of Holocaust documentaries. Nothing is more powerful than the testimony of a victim of the Shoah that in many documentaries, functions as a piece of objective truth. The words of filmed witness have the distinct abil-

ity to move the viewer or listener, often more than any other form of documentation (Wieviorka via Frodon). Therefore, the power of testimony is undoubtedly attractive to a filmmaker with the goal of eliciting emotions from viewers, but too often these filmed witnesses are mistakenly equated with undoubtable truth.

This causes an inherent problem with testimony because on the one hand, it is an essential component of the documentary (and of maintaining remembrance of the past), but it can also cause a false sense of truth or fact that can interfere with an attempt at objectivity or perceived objectivity. For this reason and the very nature of the subject matter, Holocaust documentaries are faced with particular challenges in toeing the line between exposing history or truth and telling a story. It is imperative to view this sector of films with the same lens as a narrative film because the entirely objective documentary is nearly impossible to create.

Hollywood and the Holocaust:

From the 1940 Charlie Chaplin comedy *The Great Dictator* to Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, the relationship between Hollywood and the Holocaust is long-standing and an essential part of the genre. Hollywood-produced Holocaust films are important because they are often widely seen and mass distributed, making them standout works of the canon, even if only for the accessibility alone. However, most of the works that have emerged out of Hollywood are not just commercial successes but critical ones, receiving acclaim from film critics and Holocaust scholars alike. Spielberg's film earned the Academy Award for Best Picture and films such as *Sophie's Choice*, *The Pianist*, *Life is Beau-*

tiful, and *Inglorious Basterds*, among others, also earned nominations and won awards (Reimer and Reimer). Even in the new millennium, over 70 years after the genocide, films are produced by Hollywood, continuing to inform and educate a new generation about the Holocaust.

However, the beginnings of the connection between Hollywood and the Holocaust were rocky to say the least, with Hollywood remaining almost entirely silent about the plight of the Jews in Europe for much of the period between 1933 and 1940 (Frodon 149). As Bill Khron details in his essay in Frodon's *Cinema and the Shoah*, Hollywood largely ignored what was happening to the Jewish people of Europe (despite the fact that much of Hollywood was run by Jews) resulting in a sharp contrast between this period of silence and the boom of work on the subject in the post-war period. Between 1933 and 1945, for a variety of reasons, from political intimidation to growing American anti-Semitism, Hollywood steered clear from the subject of Jews being murdered. If the mass murders were mentioned or depicted at all, as in Orson Welles' *The Stranger* (1946), the people being targeted weren't explicitly depicted as Jews but rather a nondescript group. In fact, Khron explains that the word "Jew" was almost entirely absent from the Hollywood vernacular during the war period. "The near-absence of the word Jew from films made during the period of the Shoah was not censorship of the usual kind- it was a taboo that, when broken, might have the power to summon a demon," Krohn explains (Frodon 154). The intimidation of Hollywood during this period went as far as Hitler essentially blackmailing the entire American Jewish community with the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, further silencing Hollywood and raising concern over the release of Chaplin's now fa-

mous *The Great Dictator* (Frodon 153). However, it was with Chaplin's film release, along with two other comedies, *To Be or Not to Be* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1941) and *Once upon a Honeymoon* (Leo McCarey, 1942) that the origins of Hollywood produced and distributed Holocaust cinema took hold.

In the post-war period and beyond, Holocaust cinema produced by Hollywood has not only played a vital role in telling the stories of the war and the Jewish people, but also in being a tool of documentation of the genocide (*Imaginary Witnesses*). In many ways, these films are not just a function of storytelling, but a vital way to document the people, places, and events of the Holocaust. As Daniel Anker suggests in his aptly named documentary *Imaginary Witnesses*, Hollywood films dually shaped public perception and knowledge of the war *and* reflected ever-evolving American sentiment towards the Holocaust. Films such as *Schindler's List* and *The Diary of Anne Frank* were a reflection of what a mass American audience wanted to see during the time each was released. At the same time, these films introduced many Americans to the horrors of the Holocaust and the plight of the Jews, effectively becoming pseudo history books for the general public. Although certainly there are inherent problems with having narrative films be a history lesson for millions of people, there is undoubted power in Hollywood's Holocaust films. Even if to teach someone the very word "Holocaust" or "concentration camp," the relationship between mass produced Hollywood and the Holocaust is extraordinarily powerful and essential for the genre.

By conducting a varied survey of the Holocaust documentary and narrative film canons, as well as examining the written literature of the genre, I hoped to gain a better-informed and influenced viewpoint as a filmmaker. Before and during the process of creating my own film, it was critical to understand a few key points in order to ultimately produce a more successful film. First, I wanted to understand how my documentary film would fit into the genre of Holocaust documentary films that came before it. What contribution would my film make and how would it be received within the greater context of the genre? Second, it was essential to also look at the narrative films of the genre because not only are these films extremely important and wide-reaching, but also they are critical examples of storytelling that deals with the topic of the Holocaust. Finally, by examining the literature that accompanies the genre, mainly film criticism and theory works, I was able to view the films with an informed eye and also think about the components that make a successful film in this genre. All of the films and works that I watched aided my ability to make informed artistic and filmic choices, especially in terms of creating a narrative and honing the style and editing.

PRODUCTION LOG

PRE- PRODUCTION AND PLANNING (April/May 2014)

Production Tasks:

- Booked plane tickets, hotels, and car rentals for trip along with my parents and grandmother
- Researched equipment options focusing on finding a camera that would be extremely easy to travel with, carry, and shoot on-the-go

- Rented equipment from Lens Rentals, set- up equipment before leaving for trip, and read manuals and printed guides in preparation for filming
- Prepared family for filming process and expectations for trip and film by speaking to them about how the filming process works and how they should act around the camera and when asked questions
- Prepared my grandmother via phone on the filming process and assured her that she would never be made to feel uncomfortable when filming

Production Log:

I made the decision to take this trip and film it only about a month before we departed. Because of the condensed pre-production period, I did not have much time to prepare for what I was about to see and film. It was challenging not to become overwhelmed by the idea of the trip, both personally and as a filmmaker. One essential piece of preparation that I was able to have before the trip was a phone conversation with my advisor Professor Dobrow. We spoke about my intentions for the film, how I would go about capturing the process, and the importance of keeping a log of my experiences throughout the course of the trip. However, most importantly, beyond our discussion of the technical process of filming, we spoke about the themes and ideas that would help frame my grandmother's story. How would I capture both the narrative of our experience revisiting the camps and my grandmother's experience of them in the past? What is the relationship between memory and trauma, especially when looking at something like genocide? How much of my grandmother's retelling of her life would be actual memories and how much would be an amalgamation of memories, information she's read, and stories she's been told? Ex-

ploring these questions with Professor Dobrow helped frame my intentions for the trip, my conversations with my grandmother and other family members, and my project in general.

On this trip, not only would I be confronting my family's dark and difficult past (with my survivor grandmother), but I would also be capturing these moments with my camera. I tried to prepare myself for this duality: both taking in every moment of the trip and capturing it for eternity. In some ways, I am glad I did not have more pre-production time before the trip, as there was no space to overthink the filming process nor try to make everything too planned and structured. Instead, I decided to mainly pick up the camera and shoot, filming things big and small and just being in the moment (a strategy which would also help to make the camera not feel like an intruder, but a welcome part of our trip and experience.)

PRODUCTION: TRIP TO EUROPE (MAY 2014)

Production Tasks:

- Traveled to Amsterdam and Westerbork (Holland) and Bergen-Belsen, Wittenberge, Trobitz, and Berlin (Germany)
- Filmed every stage of trip from start to finish
 - Gathered educational materials during trip such as other films, books, and informational guides for future use
 - Conducted a number of formal interviews in Amsterdam at the start of the trip
 - Transferred all footage to hard drives

Production Log:

Amsterdam Filming: Again, due to the condensed nature of this trip and filming process, I jumped right into filming. I spoke to my grandmother immediately upon arrival in Ams-

terdam, reiterating my intentions for the film and detailing how I would operate as a participant observer throughout the trip. In addition to exploring Amsterdam for a day and a half, our purpose of being there was to visit my grandmother's childhood home and make a trip to Schouwberg, a holding place for Jews waiting for deportation during the war.

Visiting my grandmother's childhood home from which she and her family were taken by the Nazis was surreal, but unfortunately the first time we visited, there was noisy construction happening on the same street, so the sound during filming was of poor quality.

I spoke to my grandmother in front of her home, asking about any childhood memories she had of the house and living there. I filmed my grandmother and the rest of my family looking at the house, as well as exterior shots of the building and the street. However, after looking at the footage, I decided that it would be best if we returned the next day to film the interview parts again. The challenges in this location continued however because the next day it was raining, so again the sound was compromised. However, we didn't have any more time in Amsterdam, and I was able to make the opening work with footage from these two trips to her home. Something of note happened on our second trip to her home- the family that currently lives there saw us filming and invited us inside.

What followed was absolutely surreal. Not only was it unbelievable to be able to film the inside of my grandmother's home, but also it was extraordinary to see her reactions to seeing the house and her interactions with the family living there. They were moved by her story and very gracious considering we were strangers off the street coming into their home and filming.

Another key shooting location in Amsterdam was when we visited Schouwberg. A Jewish theater, Schouwberg was the holding place for all the Dutch Jews when they were waiting to be deported to camps. My grandmother had already visited Bergen-Belsen (the concentration camp she and her family were in) on a previous trip, but she had never been back to Schouwberg. For this reason, she got extremely emotional at this site, especially when she saw her family members names on the memorial wall of those who had been at the holding place. This was our first stop on our journey through my grandmother's Holocaust experience besides our visit to her childhood home. Consequently, emotions were high for all of us as we faced the horrifying conditions my grandmother and her family endured. We had officially begun the journey that mirrored hers during the war and it was an emotional experience for all of us, making filming particularly difficult.

Westerbork Filming: The next stop on our journey (in keeping with my grandmother's own journey) was the work camp Westerbork, just a few hours from Amsterdam. Pulling into the parking lot of the camp was a bit unsettling because of the sheer beauty of the surroundings. With our knowledge of what occurred at this camp, it was difficult to digest the beauty of the place, as well as the large number of people visiting. Interestingly, a group of apparently non-Jewish Dutch people were visiting the site that day, making the camp rather crowded. We talked about how glad we felt that so many people were aware of this camp, despite it being not being one of the major extermination camps. Our trip to this site consisted of two parts: first, we walked around the actual grounds of the camp and second, we visited the accompanying historical museum that provided context to

what occurred on the grounds. Filming was a bit challenging at times because of noise, but overall I was able to capture some moving shots of the memorial sites on the camp grounds.

The camp had a particularly striking display of letters sent to and from the camp. The letters were blown-up to poster size and displayed on plexi-glass stands scattered throughout the camp. As you read these letters, some written by children and some by adults, you couldn't help but be moved by their words as you looked out across the camp. The letters provided much-needed context to the seemingly beautiful remains of the camp and its surroundings. When seeing the letters, my grandmother recalled a memory of an ear infection from her time at the camp and the letters her parents sent to relatives or friends to send antibiotics. These displays triggered her memory and brought her back to her time at the camp, despite the fact that she was only 4 years old when she lived there.

Bergen-Belsen Filming: Before going to Bergen-Belsen, I mentally prepared myself for an extremely emotionally difficult stop on our trip. I expected that filming would be particularly difficult, for myself and my family members. However, our time at Bergen-Belsen was less sad than it was extraordinarily informative. That's not to say that the visit wasn't emotionally trying and quite surreal, but for all of us, the information we learned about my grandmother, her likely experience there, and how the camp operated was invaluable in enhancing our overall knowledge. We met with a historian and Bergen-Belsen expert who had prepared research beforehand on my grandmother and her family and spent the entire day with us explaining every piece of the Bergen-Belsen museum, tour-

ing the actual grounds of the camp, and even having lunch with us and dialoguing with us about the Jewish experience post-Holocaust. He was an incredible guide, making for fascinating soundbytes and background information. He gave to context to the empty campgrounds, that have the potential to look like an ordinary park, devoid of the enormity that they represent.

Filming the actual grounds themselves was an almost out-of-body experience as it was simultaneously difficult and easy to imagine what occurred in our surroundings. This duality was chilling because on the one-hand, all my shots were almost idyllic-looking images of the German countryside in May, but my knowledge of the horrifying acts that occurred on the very ground I walked on made for an emotionally trying tour of the camp. What I tried to capture on film was the intersection of past and present, but I found it difficult to really capture the unfathomable past of this rather ordinary place.

Wittenberge Filming: This stop on the trip was particularly emotional for my grandmother. Wittenberge is the small German city where my great-grandmother (her mother) is buried in a mass grave. At the very end of the war, my grandmother and her mother Renee (the only two surviving members of their family at Bergen-Belsen) were put on a train with an unknown destination (presumably to another camp), and Renee died just a day or so before the train was stopped and liberated by the Russians. When the train stopped, the Jews on the train removed the dead bodies and buried them in mass graves and so Renee is buried in Wittenberge. My grandmother was extraordinarily affected when she saw the grave and thought about her mother. First, she is troubled by the fact

that she is buried in a mass grave, and second, until this day, she is horrified by the fact that her mother died so close to liberation and medical help. We were the only ones at the grave in a deserted area in a tiny town, and the moments we spent at the grave were emotional for all of us.

Trobitz Filming: Trobitz is the small German countryside town where my grandmother was liberated and where she recovered from illness for almost two months after being freed. The town is extremely small and entirely non-Jewish, yet the people of Trobitz (or their predecessors) were greatly affected by the Holocaust and the plight of the Jewish people. I knew that we would visit a few key places in the town that would be essential to film. First, we met with a woman that my grandmother has known for many years who voluntarily tends to the Jewish cemetery and Holocaust commemoration site in the town. This non-Jewish woman has taken it upon herself for years to make sure the cemetery is in order and has even written a short book documenting what happened in Trobitz during and after the war.

I filmed her and my grandmother speaking about her experiences, why she does what she does with the cemetery, and what prompted her to write the book. After our meeting at her home, a younger man that helps her in her old age was tasked with showing us around Trobitz, taking us to the burial site and the small commemoration museum that the people of Trobitz have maintained. It was astonishing the care that has been put into maintaining these sites, despite the people of the town having no real connection to those who died or recovered there many years ago. The man that showed us around was a

particularly interesting character. He was not yet born during the war (although his parents and grandparents were in Trobitz at the time) and he chose to volunteer to help take care of the memorial sites out of a desire to maintain the connection between the people of Trobitz and the Jews that were liberated there.

Berlin Filming: Since my grandmother was not in Berlin during her experience of the Holocaust, I was not as focused on filming every aspect of our time in the city. Instead, I focused on our visits to Holocaust-related sites including the Berlin Holocaust Memorial and Museum. Seeing my grandmother interact with the memorial site made it resonate on a different level than when I had visited the site previously without her. I focused on shooting my grandmother at the memorial site, as well as any other moments that felt like they could fit into the context of my film.

FINAL FILMING AND POST-PRODUCTION PLANNING (SEPTEMBER 2014- DECEMBER 2014)

September-November Tasks:

- Found committee members
- Wrote first draft of problem statement, significance, and created methodology outline
- Conducted research and completed most of the literature review
- Discussed project with various academics and professionals beyond my committee to gain more context and opinions on the project

Production Log:

During September and November, my focus was on gathering the information necessary to inform the rest of my editorial and filmic process. Before really delving into the editing

process, I wanted to be sure that I had a better idea of what I wanted my film to look like and how I would go about my process. Additionally, I found it difficult to really start putting together the pieces of the film without the key interviews with my grandmother that I would conduct in December. I felt like I needed the context of sit-down interviews to frame the footage of our trip. My research during this time and my exploration of my problem statement and significance helped me think more deeply and openly about my project and its value, goals, and intentions, both academically and personally.

December Tasks:

- Created outlines for remaining portions of the writing part of my project and narrowed ideas for the project, finalizing the direction of the research and the film
- Filmed sit-down interviews with my grandmother
- Filmed b-roll footage of documents, letters, and photographs

Production Log:

During my grandmother's visit to Florida in December, we spent a few days filming interviews as well as some b-roll footage of some letters, documents, and photographs that she has collected over the years. Filming of the interviews proved to be particularly difficult because she ended up getting sick for most of her trip, but managed to sit through interviews during her last few days of the trip even when she was still not physically well. I am forever indebted to her for her unbelievable generosity with her time and patience during this interview filming process. Filming interviews took longer than I expected and at times, was more emotionally trying for my grandmother and I than some portions of our trip. When asked to outline her life's story and think directly about memories of her past, my grandmother often became visibly emotional and distressed. We had

to stop and start filming many times during the interviews as my grandmother either became too emotional to film, asked me to stop filming, or had to regain her train-of-thought due to the enormity of the story she was telling. It was an exhausting few hours, but I was extremely happy with the final product of the interviews as they were well- framed visually, but most importantly, her stories, memories, and recalling of her life's journey was extremely moving and informative.

POST- PRODUCTION FOR FILM (JANUARY-APRIL 2014)

January/February Tasks:

- Transfer, log, and review all footage
- Outline film sequences and ideas for certain cuts and edits
- Sort through b-roll footage and organize into categories
- Continue research on documentary film styles and refine the film's editorial direction

Production Log:

In the early months of editing, I focused on sorting through the enormous amounts of footage that I had to work with and transferring it into the editing software. Just going through the footage, understanding what I had to work with, and organizing it within Final Cut took longer than I expected. However, this was a key part of the editing process as it laid the groundwork for creating sequences and shaping the narrative of the film. As I was going through this process, I began to outline and shape the direction of the film and possible sequence ideas. By simultaneously logging and outlining, I was able to form a better understanding of my footage and how the story would take shape. This process was perhaps one of the most difficult parts of the filmic process as it required huge chunks of time and focus as I went through all of the footage.

March 2014 Tasks:

- Put together sequences and create general storyline of film
- Continue research and exploration of different filmic styles and the Holocaust film canon
- Insert b-roll footage
- Create basic title cards to tie together the narrative

Production Log:

During this month, the most critical editing took place as I created sequences and began to put together a cohesive narrative. I went through and basically cut together different clips until I had a basic sequence that told a story. I also added b-roll footage and title cards where needed in order to help form the narrative. This process involved me trying to piece together my sit-down interview with my grandmother with footage of our trip. My focus was on trying to frame the footage from the trip with the interview in order to give context to our own journey. As I created the sequence, I wanted to chronologically tell my grandmother's Holocaust journey, matching her interview re-tellings with each stop of our trip.

With this parallelism between interviews and the actual trip, I hoped to achieve a duality between past and present. By creating this duality, I wanted to emphasize the differences between our experience and her experience of the same journey, as well as show the inescapability of the past in the present. I also hoped that by pairing the interviews with footage of the trip, I could provide visual context to her verbal retellings, providing powerful images to match the power of her story. I had so many incredibly moving b-roll

images of memorial sites that I paired with interviews to give them more emotional resonance and create a fuller visual narrative.

April 2014 Tasks:

- Improve and refine sequences
- Choose final music and apply it appropriately to the film
- Work on improving sound
- Color correction
- Add any remaining b-roll footage
- Add any remaining title cards
- Add credits sequence

Production Log:

During this month, I focused on really refining the narrative of my film and improving the sequence of events. I wanted to be sure that the way I had edited the film together reflected my intentions for the storyline, so I moved different sections of the timeline around as needed. I also wanted to be sure that any b-roll I used was the most visually compelling that it could be, so I added and changed pieces of b-roll that could be improved or more appropriate for the section that they were being used for. I worked on adding music, fine-tuning audio, adding in the credits, and making the title cards more visually engaging. This part of the editing process was both about the details and making sure that I incorporated any suggestions and notes I received from advisors and family members into the film.

RESULTS

After completing my own film about the Holocaust, I questioned a few key areas and how successfully my work fulfilled its intentions. First, how does *The Inheritors* fit into the greater narrative of the Holocaust genre? Second, more specifically, how does it

compare to other documentaries of the genre and what does it contribute to this group of films? How does my film compare to other documentaries with filmmaker as part of the story? Finally, on a broader scale, I thought about how well my film functions as an achievement of documentation and a survivor's testimony. Did the film visually document my grandmother's story? This was perhaps the single most important goal of the film for me both personally and as a filmmaker: to create a visual memorial of my grandmother's experience. What follows is a discussion of these larger themes and how well *The Inheritors* does or does not function within the context of these ideas and goals.

***The Inheritors* as a Holocaust genre film:**

The Inheritors does fit into the general Holocaust film genre because it uses the framework of one person's story to shed light on the greater narrative of millions of people. By focusing on my grandmother's experience during the Holocaust, I was able to tell not only her story, but also in doing so, share the experiences of the Jews of Amsterdam, Westerbork, Bergen-Belsen, and even the Jews of the Holocaust as a whole. Almost all Holocaust narrative and documentary films alike take this structural approach, using a specific character (or place or event) as the lens with which to look at the enormity of this genocide. Ultimately, *The Inheritors* was a model of this storytelling approach and stayed true to the conventions of the genre in this way. The genre as a whole aims to find a balance between informing and storytelling, and I believe my film finds the balance between

giving its audience factual information, while at the same time paying close attention to a narrative arc and anecdotal elements.

Function within Holocaust documentary genre:

More specifically, the film functions within the documentary sector of the genre as a model of the type of film in which the documentarian is very close to the subject matter. In the case of *The Inheritors*, my role as filmmaker and subject overlap, and my presence behind the camera is an important part of the story. Like many other documentary filmmakers, I was extremely close to both my topic and subjects, lending an intensely personal voice to the final result of the film. Although my intentions were to follow this model of “filmmaker as subject,” I think that I am less of an active, visible presence in the film (like other documentaries in the same vein), and more of a non-visible point-of-view behind the camera and in the editing room. Unlike a film like *The Flat* where the filmmaker Goldfinger is the main on-camera character driving the narrative, my presence in the film was much more about offering a personal viewpoint to the story. When originally beginning this project, I envisioned *The Inheritors* as more closely modeled after *The Flat* with Goldfinger’s strong presence in the film, but I ultimately felt more comfortable as point-of-view behind the camera and felt that I could offer my voice in that way and put most of the focus on my grandmother and family members’ experiences.

Beyond my role in the film, I was particularly happy with the duality of the images of the camp with my grandmother’s reactions in interviews. Building the narrative using the interview as an anchor to the footage of our trip provided context to our experience. It also gave my grandmother the ability to reflect on what we had seen and how she

had remembered it from the past. This produced a similar effect to the interviews in a *A Film Unfinished* with the survivors' interviews. Similar to Hersonski's film, using this documentarian technique created the effect of the past colliding with the present and showing the inescapability of these events of the past for those that survived them.

***The Inheritors* as documentation/testimony:**

One of the most important aspects of the final result of the film for me personally and as a filmmaker was its ability to document my grandmother's story, with detail, accuracy, and anecdotal qualities. This is perhaps the one aspect of the film that I am most proud of because I think the film does serve as documentation of my grandmother's story. Above all, I wanted to be sure that her story was recorded for personal, historical, and social reasons. It was imperative that the film visually capture her experience during the Holocaust to be persevered for my family and beyond and I think *The Inheritors* is a successful result of this endeavor.

***The Inheritors* and my experience:**

Producing, filming, and editing *The Inheritors* was an enormous undertaking, both personally and as a filmmaker. Creating this work not only gave me a better understanding of the Holocaust film genre, but also documentary filmmaking in general. Through the creation of this project, I came to understand the inherent difficulties of producing Holocaust-related works because of the extremely emotional, horrifying, and unimaginable stories that emerge from this time in history. For me, creating this work was a lesson in dealing with difficult subject matter and made me realize that there is no

right or wrong way to portray the Holocaust. Too often, scholars, critics, and average viewers alike (myself included) are quick to make judgements about the work of this genre, but after dealing with the subject matter myself, I realized that it is impossible to please everyone nor create a work that touches every aspect of the genocide. Instead, my main goal as a filmmaker of this genre was to document an important story in a visually compelling way.

And beyond Holocaust filmmaking, I experienced the general difficulties that come from being a documentarian and being extremely close to the subject matter. Although many filmmakers have a personal connection with their characters or topic, the nature of my film meant that I was intensely linked to my story. In some ways this personal connection helped in giving a unique point-of-view to the narrative, the filming process, and the editing room. It also gave me the ability to ask deeply personal questions of my subject and film her in very emotional situations. Without the intimacy between my grandmother and I, I don't think she would have been as willing and open about her experiences in our interviews or would have been open to being filmed during certain situations. This deeply close relationship was absolutely essential to documenting her story. Without it, I don't think this film or even a basic documentation of her life would have ever come to fruition.

On the other hand, my personal connection to the film got in the way of me having an entirely objective viewpoint. I never could see my film and its story as a completely detached viewer. It made the editing and filming process more difficult as I was extremely sensitive to the needs of my subject, making me attentive to moments she didn't

want to be filmed or parts of the interview she did not want to be included in the film.

Because my grandmother had been so open with me (something she would not have done with a filmmaker she didn't know), I had to respect her wishes when it came to how much or what I could share, which certainly makes the final product less objective. However, ultimately, I tried to tell her story with integrity and respect and form a balance between our closeness and my desire to create a film that had the ability to touch the lives of many.

Beyond my experience as a filmmaker working on *The Inheritors*, the creation of the film effected me personally, making me question issues of identity, my connection to the Holocaust, and my role as a granddaughter of a survivor. This trip and the resulting film were an incredible experience because they made me think about every part of my identity, making me question my thoughts, feelings, and actions and how they were shaped by what not only happened to an entire generation of my ancestors, but also to someone I am extremely close with, my grandmother.

When embarking on this journey and starting this project, I couldn't imagine how I would feel visiting and documenting the places that defined my grandmother's experience during the Holocaust. I envisioned a strong emotional response, but nothing like the surrealism that overcame me when actually visiting Bergen-Belsen, seeing her childhood home in Amsterdam, or walking the halls of the Hollandsche Schouwburg. Although difficult to consolidate the experience into one word, "surreal" is perhaps the best way to describe the act of visiting former sites of genocide today. On one level, this surrealism stemmed from the disjuncture between the appearance of these places today and how

they looked and functioned in the past. Stepping into the glossy, architecturally beautiful halls of the Hollandsche Schouwburg, it was hard to imagine that thousands of Amsterdam's Jews were forced to live in the small space for months. Equally unfathomable was that my grandmother and her family were removed from their beautiful home on a quiet Amsterdam street by large SS trucks or that the grounds of Camp Westerbork, which today look like the perfect place for a picnic, was a space of unwilling detainment and labor for the majority of Dutch Jews.

The ultimate disconnectedness between past and present was embodied on the grounds of Bergen-Belsen, a serene, empty, seemingly beautiful space that was once a place of mass murder. I can imagine that in many ways, the surreality of visiting all of these places mirrored the surreality of the events themselves. How could these horrible things have happened in these places- not just when visiting them today- but over 70 years ago? It was unimaginable. However, these atrocities did happen, making it all the more important to remember that they occurred- in the Western world, in Europe, in bustling, progressive cities like Amsterdam- and millions of people died.

The Holocaust is for most Jews a historic event that they feel strongly about, whether they had a relative that was directly affected by the genocide or not, because they have an inherent connection to other Jews. For me, this connection went even further because I had someone in my life who had lived the Holocaust and experienced the horrors firsthand. However, it wasn't until I began this project, went on the trip, and created the film, did I feel that it was my duty to never let my grandmother's story or the Holocaust for that matter, fade from memory. The sentiment of "never forget," once a phrase that I

repeated earnestly, but without true meaning, became more meaningful than I could ever imagine. As I dedicated myself wholeheartedly to this project, “never forget” went from a once empty phrase to one that became my mission: to never forget the millions that perished, to never forget my grandmother’s family that had been murdered, and to never forget her story of survival.

SELF-REFLECTIVE STATEMENT

When coming to Tufts, I had virtually no film experience other than being a film lover, so as I became more exposed to film as an academic and professional pursuit, I knew that I wanted to use my newfound skills and knowledge to create this film. This project has given me the platform and support to fulfill my goal of creating something that not only combines my filmmaking knowledge with my passion for Holocaust storytelling, but also that will become an important document for my family. I have always been fascinated with the Holocaust film genre and how filmmakers have such varied and unique approaches to the subject matter. In preparation for creating my film, I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to delve into the genre and try and understand how to use the already vast canon of films to inform my directorial and editorial decisions.

The creation of this film pushed me to challenge my skills and knowledge which at times was stressful, and at other times, was exciting, especially as I expanded my skills. Making this film entirely on my own challenged me to be assertive in my decision-making and trust myself during the process of filmmaking. I found myself thinking about my previous academic and professional experiences in film at Tufts, drawing on both film

theory that I studied in other courses or the films and programs I helped work on during internships. In many ways, my experiences during the last four years informed my decisions, knowledge, and thought-process, whether consciously or unconsciously.

Making this film has not only been the culmination of my academic career at Tufts, but also the culmination of a personal journey to document my grandmother's story. Ever since I can remember, my family has wanted to formally document her Holocaust experience, as well as take a trip back to Europe with her, and with this project, we finally got the chance to do so. On a personal level, this project made my already close relationship with my grandmother even closer through both the shared experience of going to Bergen-Belsen with her and our many one-on-one discussions about her story and her reflections on the past. Because of the extremely personal nature of my project, every step of creation and research had both an academic and personal significance to it. At the end of the day, this film is much more than just a project, it is the material embodiment of a very personal journey that started long before I came to Tufts.

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