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The Holocaust in Popular Film: A Comparison between the Remembrance Politics of Poland and the Netherlands

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The Holocaust in Popular Film

A Comparison between the Remembrance Politics of Poland and the Netherlands

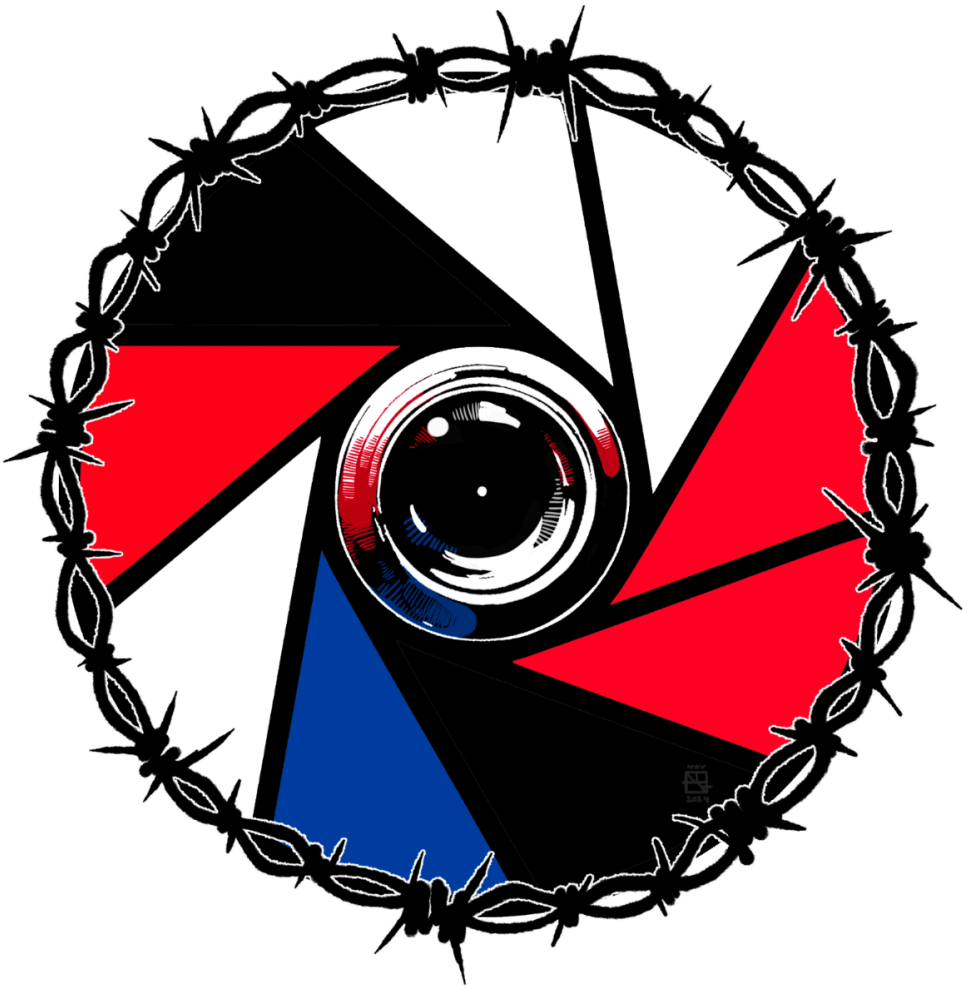

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Illustration I: Title Page Image

The cover image was created by Morgane-Fleur Monpert, commissioned by the author specifically for this thesis (November 2024).

The Holocaust in Popular Film:

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Introduction

Motion pictures, through their combination of auditory and visual elements, possess a distinctive capacity to engage audiences. As a communicative medium, film offers a dynamic alternative to static images and an accessible complement to written texts. Christopher Browning's *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* demonstrates how the memories of Holocaust survivors have been shaped by public narratives and cinematic portrayals. Browning's research quotes Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* as maybe the most influential of Holocaust films, providing a telling example of its influence in how survivors' testimonies were afflicted. They mention relief when water poured out of the showers upon their arrival in a camp, instead of the feared gas. Such accounts were given after the release of the film, but were scarce before.[1] The influence of cinema on public memory should not be underestimated.

Illustration II: Still from *Schindler's List*, showing relief at the sight of water in the showers of Auschwitz.[2]

Even after eighty years, interest in the events that came to be known as the Holocaust does not seem to fade, as big productions showcasing (parts of) it are still being made and

[1] C. Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp* (New York 2011) 19-26, 173-207.

[2] This particular still was retrieved through: David Calhoun's blog, *Schindler's List (1993) (Top 100 Films),* (posted january 2016), https://www.davidbcalhoun.com/2016/schindlers-list-1993-top-100-films/ (accessed 19-11-2024).

planned. To historians, the medium of motion picture is interesting to research, as both cultural *zeitgeist*, as well as political messages, play a role in the writing of scripts. Anything shown in a movie is a conscious decision by its producers, making the messages they convey non-accidental, though up for the interpretation by its viewers. The message does not have to be (completely) true or delivered on the nose. Many Holocaust victims saw use in movies and other forms of (abstract) art as a way of telling their story, as they had trouble talking about their experiences.[3] Language alone often proved insufficient to deal with the gravity of the events.[4] Survivors faced alienation through this distance between trauma and ways to communicate; Barbara Engelking and Gunnar S. Paulsson reveal in their book *Holocaust and Memory* an interview in which survivor Krystyna Żywulska says:

''Everything that I say is a kind of... echo of what I would like to say... I can't formulate."

describing the struggle of communicating about Auschwitz with those who were not there.[5] Survivors have used various forms of art to fill this gap, cinema being one of them.

With the cultural influence and the historical worth of cinema in mind, it would be compelling to look into such different approaches to the sensitive topic. While the Netherlands is frequently compared to Belgium and France in discussions of World War II, Poland offers a compelling yet underexplored perspective.[6] Both nations have a compelling, and politically loaded, connection to the Holocaust. The Nazis targeted Poland as the epicenter of the industrialized killing aspect of the Holocaust, and (contemporary) Poles have to cope with their own history of antisemitism. The Netherlands statistically failed to shelter their Jews, reaching a loss of around seventy percent of pre-war Jewry, which is high for a country on the Western side of the German border.[7] Yet both nations are also known for the opposite; Poland has the absolute most allocations of 'Righteous Among the Nations', which Yad Vashem only rewards to those who helped Jewish people during the war without the

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[3] B. Engelking, and G. Paulsson, *Holocaust and Memory* (Bloomsbury 2002) 304-330.
[4] Engelking, and Paulsson, *Holocaust and Memory,* 304-330.
[5] K.L. Brackney, *Surreal Geographies: A New History of Holocaust Consciousness* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2024) 80-101.
[6] Frank van Vree, for instance, compares the Netherlands to Belgium and France in his book *Nederland en de Herinnering Aan de Jodenvervolging, 1945-2024*, but barely mentions Poland outside it being the place Jews were to be deported to. The Dutch situation with a government heavily influenced by the racist SS is vastly different compared to the Belgian and French regimes.
[7] P. Griffioen and R. Zeller in collaboraton with the Anne Frank Stichting, *Nederland: het hoogste aantal Joodse slachtoffers in West-Europa* https://www.annefrank.org/nl/anne-frank/verdieping/nederland-het-hoogste-aantal-joodse-slachtoffers-west-europa/ (accessed 19-11-2024).

prospect of personal gain and without being related to them. At the same time, the Netherlands has the most of these allocations relative to population.[8] To summarize; these nations perceive their own Holocaust experiences through various valid, yet conflicting, truths. In this thesis, these truths will be explored in the context of remembrance politics and culture, as well as how these come to light in Polish and Dutch cinematic industries. The mutual influence of remembrance and cinema, and how the globalization of Holocaust films intersects with these processes, are also delved into. By contributing to the ongoing discourse on historical memory and Holocaust representation, this study illuminates the critical role of cinema in shaping contemporary understandings of national identity, specifically for the Polish and the Dutch cases.

In the first chapter, the relation between Poland and its remembrance politics will be explored. Furthermore, several movies depicting (parts of) the Holocaust will be analyzed to see how remembrance politics are present in the Polish cinema. Secondary literature has already been published on the topic of Polish political memory, such as *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* by Michael C. Steinlauf, as is the case with analysis of Polish Holocaust cinema. Joanna Preizner's *Kamienie na Macewie. Holokaust w Polskim Kinie* and *Polish Film* and Marek Haltof's entire body of work should be noted, to this research especially his *The Holocaust: Politics and Memory*. These examinations, however, fail to link Polish remembrance politics to cinema, and their mutual influence is underexposed. Historians such as Haltof did provide an analysis, but fail to link this to (contemporary) Polish politics, barely mentioning influential essays like Jan Błoński's *The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto,* or the controversy of Jan Tomasz Gross's book *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland.*[9] The chapter shall explain the political dualities in the remembrance of the Holocaust in Poland, and how this is present in Polish films before 1993, when the internationally influential *Schindler's List* was released.

The second chapter will similarly examine Dutch remembrance politics and cinematic culture prior to 1993. Historian Bart van der Boom's *Wij Weten Niets Van Hun Lot*, released

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[8] Yad Vashem, *Names and Numbers of Righteous Among the Nations - per Country and Ethnic Origin, as of January 1, 2022,* https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/statistics.html, (accessed 18-10-2024). The Polish number at a total of 7232 on 07-11-2024, whilst the Dutch number 5982.

[9] *The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto* is the title of one of Haltof's chapters, yet the essay itself is not mentioned in *The Holocaust: Politics and Memory*, Haltof's most influential work regarding memory in Polish cinema. Jan Gross's works are briefly mentioned, mostly in footnotes. It should be stressed that *The Holocaust: Politics and Memory* was released in 2012. Other works on Polish cinema play less tribute to politics, such as Haltof's *Polish Cinema: A History*, which was released in 2002 and received an updated version in 2019. This paper will strive to elaborate on it by exploring the years passed since.

in 2012, touches upon the memory of the Holocaust throughout the post-war decades. More recently, Frank van Vree explored this subject in depth with his *Nederland en de Herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging 1945-2024.* This will be further backed with *We Were All in the Resistance;* Jazmine Domenique Contreras' dissertation on Dutch memory of World War II. Historical research into Dutch cinema is limited, but is provided through accounts of the official canon of Dutch film, of *Images of Occupation in Dutch Film* by Wendy Burke, and of Peter Verstraten's *Dutch Post-War Fiction Film Through a Lens of Psychoanalysis*. These secondary sources do not specifically cover the Holocaust in Dutch Cinema, a gap in historical research that this paper fills with the analysis of several of such films.

The third and final chapter will focus on the consequences of the globalization of Holocaust film industry for the Polish and Dutch narratives, which was accelerated by *Schindler's List*. Gaps in previously mentioned secondary sources on Polish Holocaust cinema will be filled, such as how the influence of the *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*-party (or PiS-party, internationally known as Law and Justice), became relevant in recent years. This chapter will also detail the Polish and Dutch shifts towards a more global Holocaust narrative, though the foundations of this can be seen even before the release of *Schindler's List,* especially in the Netherlands. This chapter will once again analyze films as primary sources with a historical backing in more broad, globally focussed, secondary sources, such as Annette Insdorfs' *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* and Dan Stone's *The Holocaust: An Unfinished History.*

Chapter I:
The Holocaust in Polish Cinema and its relation to Remembrance Politics before 1993

This chapter will focus on the Polish perspective on the Holocaust, from wartime Poland until the release of *Schindler's List*. This chapter concludes by analyzing three Polish films; *Ulica Graniczna* (*Border Street,* 1948), *Koniec Naszego Świata* (*The End of Our World,* 1964) and *Korczak* (1990). The chosen works encompass a wide range of release years, and show the visions of various moviemakers. These three movies are comparable in length and production, albeit with, of course, varying success and limitations due to technological advances. The chapter ends with brief concluding remarks.

The Early Polish Perspective

The Poles are in a peculiar position when remembering the Holocaust. Polish soil was the stage for many of the atrocious hate crimes associated with the Second World War, yet the instigator of some of these is up for debate. Several instances of Polish outbursts of antisemitism are by now well known, at least in the academic world. Prime examples of this include the preparation of concentration camp Stutthof near Gdansk even before the Nazi invasion, the massacre of Jedwabne Jews, pogroms after the Nazi occupation ended, a refusal to help Jews by the underground resistance forces, and of course various instances of regular citizens denouncing Jews to the governing forces (as happened in all Nazi-occupied countries).[10] As this is the truth on one hand, it should also be noted that Poland has had its fair share of people selflessly helping their Jewish neighbors; Poland has the highest absolute number of recipients of the Righteous Among the Nations allocation, providing a second, evenly valid, yet contrasting truth.[11] Though this cannot give an indication of the amount of people who truly helped, and only indicates which helpers are currently known to Yad Vashem, it does undoubtedly prove Polish Christians' empathy towards Polish Jews.

Before the German occupation, clear signs of integration of Jews and of the complete opposite were present in Polish society.[12] A dislike for Jewish neighbors was not unheard of,

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[10] J.T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Princeton 2002) will be mentioned further in this paper. It should be noted that these examples do require some nuance; the ethnicity of the establishers of Stutthof as Polish, for example, can be disputed. For a wider understanding of Polish antisemitism, J. Kopstein and J. Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the eve of the Holocaust* (Ithaca 2018) is recommended.
[11] Yad Vashem, *Names and Numbers of Righteous Among the Nations - per Country and Ethnic Origin, as of January 1, 2022*.
[12] S.A. Cramsey, *Uprooting the Diaspora: Jewish Belonging and the Ethnic Revolution in Poland and Czechoslovakia, 1936-1946* (Indiana University Press 2023) 18-49.

but this is not to say that Poles would later condone mass murder of Jews. Aggression was frowned upon by the ever so influential church. Fantasy of mass emigration was seen as a potential solution to this awkward predicament.[13] However, this idea was never viable.

Aside from the massive losses of Polish Jewry during the war, Poland lost most of its highly educated individuals (the *intelligentsia*) and around twenty-two percent of its overall population. General mass-destruction of Poland, caused by both fighting and bombings, should be noted, too. Poles, regarded as inferior by the Nazis, faced significant barriers to collaborating with the occupying forces, except through acts of corruption.[14] Contrast this with the Netherlands, where an occupying government was installed with which could be somewhat bargained. Because of this, a double martyrdom of both Jewish suffering and Polish suffering was difficult to support at the same time within Polish national history after the war; ninety percent of Poland's Jews had perished, but as did ten percent of the Poles, which is an extremely high count of civilian victims compared to other nations.[15] Jewish self-identification as Polish or Jewish integration is not taken into account in these statistics. The Polish, public, after-war image of Jews should be seen somewhat as *shtetl*-dwelling outsiders, even though Jews could, and in many cases did, perceive themselves as loyal Polish citizens.[16] People of Jewish heritage getting baptized is not unheard of, and the Warsaw ghetto even had two operating Catholic churches.[17] At the same time the perception of a good patriotic Pole did not exclude antisemitism, whilst in other countries (like the Netherlands) such racism was considered a form of collaboration during, and after the war.[18] It should be noted that the Nazis did not pick Poland as the location for factory-like genocide because of its present pre-war antisemitism, but because of logistics.[19] This contributes to the image of Poland as a victim, rather than a perpetrator.

Polish Film

Early works of Polish cinema detailing, or making reference to, the Holocaust were limited by several factors. Many established names in the filmmaking business, directors and actors

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[13] M.C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse 1997), 1-22.
[14] Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead,* 23-42.
[15] M. Haltof *Polish Film and the Holocaust, Politics and Memory* (New York, Oxford 2012) 1-10, and Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead,* 23-42.
[16] Cramsey, *Uprooting the Diaspora,* 18-49.
[17] K. Person, *Warsaw Ghetto Police: The Jewish Order Service during the Nazi Occupation* (Ithaca 2021) 76-89.
[18] Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead,* 23-42.
[19] Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead,* 75-88.

alike, had perished during the war. Production was stopped for the entire duration of the conflict. This left the industry with a shortage of experience.[20] Surviving actors and directors, of whom a fair share had Jewish origins, often wrote their own experiences of wartime into their stories, albeit with incredible historical inaccuracies. An example of this would be *Ostatni Etap* (1948, in English known as *The Last Stage*) by Wanda Jakubowska; though Jakubowska had survived Auschwitz herself, the dramatised scene detailing the liberation of the camp showcases an epic intervention by the Russian military battling the Nazis to take over a still fully operational Auschwitz, instead of the partly abandoned site of horrors the actual Red Army encountered.[21] This plot was approved personally by Stalin himself.[22]

Though outnumbered by men, women contributed and worked in Polish cinema, aside from the acting roles they took, as Jakubowska's contribution, which is now known as 'The Mother of Holocaust Films', proves.[23] The Netherlands was behind in this regard.[24] Like Jakubowksa, Agnieszka Holland is well known for her politically loaded contributions to Polish cinema from the 1970s onwards (up to present day), with her most famous movie being about the Holocaust. The events of the war traumatised the industry, yet in the early years after the conflict, multiple films were shot and released on the topic, some detailing the Holocaust more than others. The last noteworthy Yiddish-language film made in Poland was released in 1948; *Unsere Kinder* (*Our Children*). This film detailed how three Jewish orphans dealt with their war trauma.[25]

The 1960s and 1970s saw a nosedive in interest for the topic of the Holocaust in cinema. The dwindling interest in Holocaust stories was caused by growing antisemitism, an overall fatigue for war stories, and the Soviet abandonment of Anti-Zionism, which resulted in more emigration of Jews during the late 1950s.[26] Moreover, the memory of Nazi-crimes against the Polish people as a whole was pressed more, leaving less room for the attention for the unique nature of the crimes against Jews. It was believed that the Nazis would have killed all Poles, and Jewish suffering was merely a first step in the process. Prior to the 1980s, the

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[20] Haltof, *Polish Film and the Holocaust*, 11-27.
[21] Retrieved through YouTube; 1080p Classics, *Ostatni Etap 1948,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySHy-YAkTYE (accessed 18-10-2024).
[22] M. Haltof, 'Return to Auschwitz: Wanda Jakubowska's 'The Last Stage' (1948)' *The Polish Review*, vol. 55, no. 1, 2010, pp. 7–34
[23] H., Loewy, 'The mother of all holocaust films?: Wanda Jakubowska's Auschwitz trilogy', *Historical journal of film, radio, and television,* 24 (2004) 179-204.
[24] Women were vastly outnumbered by men in the Dutch cinematic industry (not taking acting roles into account). The Netherlands still struggles with this, as per W. Sanders, *Beter is nog niet goed: De positie van vrouwen in de film- en televisiesector 2011-2020* (Utrecht 2022).
[25] A. Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, 2002) 313-356.
[26] Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead,* 62-74.

Auschwitz-Birkenau museum focused more on Polish martyrdom and bravery than on the extermination of Jews.[27] Within this paradigm, the story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising had a unique position, as it partly entails the story of brave Poles helping their Jewish neighbors, partly foregoing the agency these interned Jews took back in their resistance within the ghetto. This example of the Warsaw Ghetto displays the conflicting truth of Poles helping Jews incredibly well, and is used in various film scripts, as will be seen below. The discourse on the Jewish suffering of the occupation moved away from the public sphere and became something more intimate to discuss.

The Soviet influence

When comparing an Eastern-European country to a West-European country during the Cold War, Soviet censorship comes to mind as a possible differentiating factor. The Soviet approach to memory made Jewish Holocaust victims somewhat of a taboo topic, yet it was possible to express their victimhood through cultural means like art, books, and movies. Censorship compromised historical research more than art forms.[28] Polish filmmakers retained the option to choose who to work with and dealt with relative artistic freedom compared to other nations under Soviet grip and compared other mediums.[29] Artistic choices had more influence on production than ideology, especially after the death of Stalin in 1953.[30]

Polish national history was rewritten with Marxist theory, an ideology which was to be presented as positive.[31] Furthermore, the Second World War had to be commemorated as the great victory of Russia. Granting strong attention to Jewish suffering would take away the limelight from Russia as a victor, thus the suffering of the Jews should be taken into account when discussing the crimes the Nazis committed, but should not stand above the sacrifices Russia and its people had to make.[32] Movies had to fulfill their propagandistic role. In practice this meant that historical accuracy was not of utmost importance.

In 1947 the movie *Forbidden Songs* (*Zakazane Piosenki*), which is the first Polish movie produced after the war, shows a Jew in hiding.[33] The in-hiding element of this is

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[27] Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead,* 62-74.
[28] J. Loeffler, '"In Memory of Our Murdered (Jewish) Children": Hearing the Holocaust in Soviet Jewish Culture' *Slavic Review,* 2014;73 (3): 585-611.
[29] A.L., Fenny, *The Representation of the Second World War in Polish Cinema, 1945-1970: Directors, the State and the Construction of Memory* (Oxford 2020) 32-56.
[30] Fenny, *The Representation of the Second World War in Polish Cinema 1945-1970,* 273-282.
[31] Haltof, *Polish Film and the Holocaust*, 11-27.
[32] J. Hicks, '"Too gruesome to be fully taken in": Konstantin Simonov's "The Extermination Camp" as Holocaust Literature' *The Russian review* 72 (2013), 242–259.
[33] Haltof, *Polish Film and the Holocaust*, 11-27.

interesting, as hiding was only possible with a considerable amount of help by free Poles. Stalinist censorship blocked the heroic portrayal of Polish underground forces if these were involved, or perceived to be involved, with resistance to the Soviet regime. This blocks the depiction of the Polish underground forces that did support Jewish citizens.[34]

Outside of the cinematic cultural remembrance, in 1951 Polish former prisoners of Auschwitz were supported by the Communist government to organize an international meeting of former prisoners. This was not limited to political prisoners; (Dutch) Jews were also welcomed cordially.[35] From the mid 1950s onwards some relaxation towards censorship and the demand for Socialist Realism set in, giving Polish filmmakers more freedom when portraying nationalism and history.[36]

After the fall of Communist influence, open discourse on national history grew. This period also saw an increase in appreciation for western movies and a fatigue in interest in Polish historical cinema.[37] Because of this, several early post-Communist era Polish productions failed miserably. This shows a Polish step towards the global cinematic culture, but as will be seen in the third chapter, this was not a straight-forward process.

Perspectives After the Cold War

In 1987 Jan Błoński's essay *The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto* already called for a paradigm change; stressing Poland's reluctance towards antisemitism during World War Two, and, by extent, the guilt of Poles as witnessing bystanders.[38] Because of this essay, which is of Polish origin and thereby a harsh self-reflection, it is apparent that this debate on Poland's guilt in the Holocaust is not new. Yet since the release of *The Poor Poles Look at the Ghetto*, whose cynical title is striking in itself as it implies a strong sense of self-pity by the Poles, not much seems to have changed in remembrance politics and culture. The early 2000s marked the release of the controversial book *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* by Jan Tomasz Gross. In this book, and in others he has had published since, Gross argues that Poles were in fact avidly contributing to the genocide of Jews, maybe even more so than the Nazis themselves. Though the book is not without criticism for its method, its harsh conclusions, and use of its sources, the book did shatter the idea of a guilt-free Poland and painted a picture of Poles as perpetrators. Furthermore, it renewed

[34] Haltof, *Polish Film and the Holocaust*, 1-10.
[35] F. Van Vree, *Nederland en de herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging: 1945-2024* (Almere 2024) 253-302.
[36] Haltof, *Polish Film and the Holocaust*, 1-10.
[37] Haltof, *Polish Film and the Holocaust*, 187-210.
[38] P. Forecki, *Reconstructing Memory: The Holocaust in Polish Public Debates* (Bern 2013) 87-132.

academic attention for Polish-Jewish relations, as it sparked an ongoing debate in regards to the Polish involvement in the extermination of the Jews. This new analysis clashed too harshly with the self-image of Poles as victims. Though both images have truth in them and they should not be mutually exclusive, they were seen as such.

The identity of the victims should also be taken into consideration as this is relevant to contextualize the role in memory politics and culture of the later to be discussed films. Jewish collaboration with the Nazi occupying forces is sometimes used in argumentation regarding the severity of the genocide. The Jewish Council (*Judenrat*) and the Jewish Police forces that were established in ghettos have a dubious public image and are used to argue that Jews were willingly complicit, too.[39] Regrettably, current day antisemitism also has its effects. The conspiracy of *Judeo-Bolshevism*, which claims that Jews brought Communism (and with it its own set of crimes against regular citizens) to Eastern European countries, is still existing for example.[40] Similarly, antisemitism did not disappear overnight in early postwar Poland, with homecoming survivors facing (harsh) discrimination and even pogroms.

Theory into Practice: the Polish Holocaust on the Big Screen

Ulica Graniczna / Border Street (1948)[41]

The movie follows several stories at once, though they are linked through location and acquaintanceship between neighbors. The street is situated near the border with the Warsaw Ghetto. The inhabitants form a diverse group; two Jewish families, a family of collaborateurs, resistance fighters, and some more neutral people, the latter being the supporting cast. This supporting cast is the closest this film gets to the portrayal of simple bystanders, but they are mostly present to fill the street to a believable populace.

When the movie was filmed, memories of the events of the war were still fresh. Anyone acting in, or watching the movie, to a certain extent, lived it. The film found success in post-war Poland; eight million people saw it and it won a golden medal at the Venice film festival.[42] The Jewish character of Grandfather Liberman was portrayed by an actual Jewish actor, Władysław Godik, who survived the war by fleeing to the Soviet Union.[43] The

[39] Person, *Warsaw Ghetto Police* 147-154.
[40] Stone, *The Holocaust,* 263-296.
[41] Though the movie is well known by its Polish name, this paper will refer to it by its English name for simplicity's sake. The movie can easily be found online, YouTuber Gianluca Fantoni has uploaded an accessible copy of the movie through *Border Street (Ulica Graniczna), by Aleksander Ford, 1948, with English Subtitles* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzFAZXmhaiY&t=1535s (accessed 01-12-2023).
[42] Fenny, *The Representation of the Second World War in Polish Cinema 1945-1970,* 84-98.
[43] Film Polski, *Władysław Godik* https://www.filmpolski.pl/fp/index.php?osoba=1112554 (accessed 15-12-2023).

producer of the movie, Aleksander Ford, had similar affinity to the subject matter. The characters in the movie are black-and-white. Either they are the 'good guys'; resistance fighters and innocent Jewish people, or they are one dimensional antagonists: traitorous collaborators or the German evil themselves. The only arguably gray area is the character of a young boy who has a quick change of heart in regards to his antisemitism, having a short redemption arc. Characters with less screen time dislike the occupying forces.

The Nazis are portrayed as evil and ugly, hurting their own dogs and having literal crooked teeth. Their auxiliaries are portrayed as less educated, poor (yet greedy), alcoholics, and as cowards, especially compared to their good Polish (Christian) neighbors. Moreover, they are revealed to be *Volksdeutsche*, distancing them from the Polish identity. The majority of the Poles, who are portrayed as good people, somehow help their Jewish neighbors or are seen to feel sympathy for their situation. A recurring theme can be found in the notion that Jewish suffering should not be seen as unique:

''*They intent to separate us* [The Jewish population] *from the Poles, it will be much easier to exterminate us separately."*

This is said in regards to the establishment of the Jewish ghetto, and hastily followed by the notion that the Poles will surely fight and when that happens, the Jews will join them in battle against the oppressor.[44] Similarly:

''*Dark times will fall upon the Jews.*
Not only upon the Jews."

The suffering of the Jewish people is equalized to that of the Poles. This would condemn idly watching as the Jews are persecuted, as it is a mere first step before the Nazis start persecuting others, like the Polish Christians. This ties in with the closing words of the movie, claiming everyone is equal. These notions of equality are often linked to the character of Natan, who is portrayed as a stereotypical socialist worker. He is Jewish, which in a way might contribute to the stereotype of Jews bringing Communism, yet Natan is positively portrayed as righteous and brave. The Jewish grandfather is made to look much like a stereotypical Jew, but their limited monetary ability does defy the stereotype of rich Jews.

[44] This conversation can be heard about twenty-four minutes into the movie.

The Polish resistance and the actual uprising are barely shown. Notable is how Polish firefighters come to the aid of the Jews. The bravery of the Jews is depicted through various characters, such as the young Davida who chooses to fight, rather than to flee to safety. However, the Jewish female protagonist is mostly passive and in need of help. Some children are shown to be capable of secretly leaving and entering the ghetto through a hole in the wall to smuggle food, which was indeed possible but much more dangerous than depicted. In regards to realism, however, the movie takes liberties when convenient to the plot, but overall strives to show a relatable story. The relatability of the movie is important, as so close after the war wild inaccuracies could not have been made. Showing extra brutality by Germans or the positive side of Poles do not adhere to this rule. Though people experienced the war differently, a general Polish narrative to which people could relate would be born from such depictions. The movie exaggerates certain aspects; in regards to the collective memory of the Holocaust it is making the Poles more heroic and less antisemetic than some of them realistically were, and it emphasizes Polish suffering.

Because of lingering antisemitism in Poland, the message the movie conveys had to be altered during production. Like with *The Last Stage*, its directors had to fight to have the film being made because of its (original) thorough depiction of the persecution of the Jews, subject matter that had to be subordinate to Polish struggle.[45] Originally, the story was much more focussed on the wrongdoings of Polish people, yet this was censored. The production, which took place during a wave of Polish antisemitism, was moved to Prague, and doubts arose whether the film would be suitable for Polish audiences. The original script was deemed ‘anti-Polish propaganda’. The story was altered, playing down Polish involvement in pogroms and putting emphasis on Polish help to Jews and overall resistance.[46] This took away the original political message of the movie, but is in line with that of the earlier described remembrance politics. The film shows sympathy towards socialism and, interestingly, a positive image of Polish nationalism, which clashes with Stalin's doctrine. A possible explanation for this is how implementing Socialist Realism by the new authorities took time, yet as previously mentioned, Polish filmmakers enjoyed relative freedom.

[45] Fenny, *The Representation of the Second World War in Polish Cinema 1945-1970,* 84-98.
[46] T. Żukowski, ‘Metamorfoza antysemity: „Ulica Graniczna” Aleksandra Forda’ *Studia Judaica* (1), 2019, 107–142.

Illustration III: The portrayal of German characters in *Border Street*; left the Volksdeutche who started dressing as Hitler, right a German officer. Notice the crooked teeth and the lack of light to make them seem more evil.[47]

Koniec Naszego Świata / The End of Our World (1964)[48]

Koniec Naszego Świata (*The End of Our World*) paints an eerily accurate picture of the camplife in Auschwitz. The museum sites of *Stammlager* and Birkenau were actually used as filming locations. The filmmakers, who were survivors themselves, included survivors in the filming process, with Wanda Jakubowska as the director. Jakubowska (and most others involved in the production of the film) had been interned in Auschwitz as a resistance fighter, not because of racism. This shows; for a movie showcasing Auschwitz, Jews are barely present compared to Polish political prisoners and Soviet prisoners of war.[49] This strengthens the feeling of Poles as victims, and as righteous people. When shown, however, Jews are given a special brutal treatment that does showcase the racism of Nazism.

The movie follows Henryk, a former prisoner that sets out to visit Auschwitz some twenty years after his internment. He does this spontaneously as two tourists need a ride to the museum, and he offers to help them and guide them around without letting them know of

[47] Still from 1 hour, 23 minutes and 47 seconds into the film, the screen capture was made through YouTube; Gianluca Fantoni, *Border Street (Ulica Graniczna), by Aleksander Ford, 1948, with English Subtitles*.
[48] Retrieved through YouTube; Logan Rainwood, *Koniec Naszego Świata - Polski Film Wojenny Full HD, Występują: Lech Skolimowski Andrzej Kopiczynksi*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7saVwnaMwk (accessed 12-09-2024).
[49] Fenny, *The Representation of the Second World War in Polish Cinema 1945-1970,* 60-83.

his past. One of the tourists is American. He is an annoying character that does not understand what he sees and hears, thereby serving as a reminder that Auschwitz is not comprehensible unless someone has a personal connection to the place, a belief also mentioned in the introduction. The character furthermore serves as an anti-Western propaganda mechanism, especially when this obnoxious American is juxtaposed to the brave Soviet prisoners. In this, the development of Soviet influence from *Border Street* to *The End of Our World* is evident.

The story of Henryks' time in Auschwitz is told through flashbacks. Much like the film's director, he was interned because of his rebellious actions during the occupation, not due to racism. Within the movie, the Jews that are shown are ostracized and treated even worse in the camp; Henryk is brought into the camp with some unnamed Jews, who are immediately heavily beaten and scolded by the SS for their heritage. The SS doctor that plays a supporting role to the story is shown almost exclusively talking about how much he despises the Jews. When showing an arriving transport, both Jews wearing yellow stars as used in the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, as well as those with armbands as used in Poland are depicted. This, combined with the different languages heard, show the international character of the prison camp. Only one Jewish character is properly named and has influence on the progress of the story, that being the character of Samek. Samek is a friend of Henryk within the camp, and helps the resistance within Auschwitz. The resistance movement plays a vital role in the story, with the *Sonderkommando* revolt being shown. This *Sonderkommando* is shown to consist of political prisoners, when in actuality the *Sonderkommando* that revolted in October of 1944 consisted of Jewish prisoners, once more putting strong emphasis on Polish and Communist resistance and bravery.[50]

In general, one has to look closely to see how the Holocaust is presented within this film. Compared to *Border Street*, it is a mere side note whilst positivity towards Marxism is exaggerated. This absence makes sense, given the attitude towards the topic of the Holocaust at the time. The bravery of Poles, the positivity towards Communists and the Soviets, and general suffering at the hands of the Nazis is much more present. These Nazis are portrayed with little depth; they are racist and have no redeeming qualities. Violent kapos are also shown, but with no explicit nationality. This film strives to show a realistic picture of what life in the camp entailed, albeit somewhat colored by political sentiments and personal

[50] This information can be found within the permanent exhibition of the Auschwitz Museum, but can also be learned about through the official website through the tabs: Memorial and Museum: Auschwitz-Birkenau *History* → *Resistance* → *Preparations for an Armed Uprising*, which can be found through the following link: https://lekcja.auschwitz.org/en_16_ruch_oporu/ (accessed 17-10-2024).

accounts. As the majority of people working on it were survivors themselves, this production must have been therapeutic and challenging, but the strive for realism makes sense as these survivors were in the special position to tell the story of Auschwitz, especially at this dawning time of Holocaust denial and dwindling interest. Furthermore, this film provided the (at the time thought to be the) last chance to film at the site of the camp.[51] Some notable contributors to the movie are Wieslaw Kielar, who would release his Auschwitz memoirs *Anus Muni* four years later, the title of which is mentioned in *The End of Our World.* The term, which translates to 'Anus of the World', was originally coined by SS doctor Heinz Thilo to describe Auschwitz, in a conversation that made its way into the movie at about one hour and twenty minutes.[52]

The End of Our World did win a Polish state award and can be considered the epitome of Jakubowksa's filmmaking, yet it found little audience and further critical acclaim, indicating the state of Poland's interest in the Holocaust at the time.[53] It can also be attributed to the fact that, aside from an accurate picture of camp life, the movie does not add much, especially when *The Last Stage,* which was released much earlier, is also taken into account.

Korczak (1990)[54]

Korczak tells the story of Henryk Goldszmit, a pediatrician of Jewish descent. The movie is titled *Korczak* as this is the pseudonym Goldszmit used to omit his Jewish descent. Korczak has become a well known figure in Warsaw ghetto stories; the real Wladek Szpilman, the protagonist of *The Pianist*, mentions him in his memoirs, and Korczak also makes an appearance in the American movies *Uprising* (2001) and *The Zookeeper's Wife* (2017). Aside from these popular cultural cameo's, several streets have been named in his honor and his writings are still read today. The 1990's movie, however, became a box office blunder, partly because of the previously mentioned Holocaust story fatigue that would later be remedied by the success of *Schinlder's List*.[55]

The movie shows Korczak to be passionate about defending children from the horrors of war. He is depicted as heroic and noble; he will put the children of his orphanage before

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[51] Fenny, *The Representation of the Second World War in Polish Cinema 1945-1970,* 32-56. Later projects were granted the chance to film in the actual concentration camp Auschwitz, such as the later to be discussed *The Zone of Interest* (2023).
[52] M. Kieta, "Foreword," in Wiesław Kielar, *Anus Mundi: Five Years in Auschwitz*, translated by Pszisko Jacobs (London 1973) 5-16. Kieta was present for this moment.
[53] Fenny, *The Representation of the Second World War in Polish Cinema 1945-1970,* 60-83.
[54] This movie, too, is easily accessible through YouTube: Romeo Alfa, *Korczak 1990 HD English Subtitles* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zICEzFgSPI&t=2600s (accessed 14-12-2023).
[55] Haltof, *Polish Film and the Holocaust*, 187-210.

anything, even his own health. The story begins before the war; Korczak runs a Jewish orphanage with other (also non-Jewish) professionals. In the time leading up to the war, Korczak excitedly states how Jewish children were able to learn Polish within one generation, leading the viewers to believe that Jewish integration was taking place actively, and Korczak playing a role in this. Polish antisemitism is also shown; Korczak's radio program is canceled due to his heritage, in spite of his popularity and the usage of his pseudonym. Now-adult, former orphanage inhabitants, seek out Korczak to talk about this growing antisemitism. The movie then moves on quickly; the events of invasion are mostly glossed over.

War-torn Warsaw is then shown; Germans marching the streets, the first decrees of segregation of Jews; the wearing of the star of David and the infamous move to the ghetto. The entire orphanage is moved. German aggression towards non-Jewish Poles is shown; they are called 'Jewish servants' and treated as subhumans by the Nazis.[56] After twenty minutes Korczak makes the opinion of the movie on the role of (Christian) Polish citizens clear:

''A Pole will never betray his brother, only because he is Jewish."

The movie also shows how a Polish woman (a former coworker of Korczak) chooses to save one child from the ghetto when the opportunity arises. In the same fashion, a Polish man is seen to bring bread to the ghetto, though he is beaten viciously for it. Most help given to Korczak does seem to stem from his prewar fame; he is saved from jail after he refuses to wear the star of David by a German doctor, for instance, and within the ghetto he is helped partly because he is saving children, partly because he is a famous doctor himself. He is even given the opportunity to flee the ghetto multiple times, yet he refuses because he does not want to leave his two hundred orphans to fend for themselves. The German doctor saving him from jail is not the only instance in which German soldiers are humanized; the children are taught by Korczak that the German soldiers can 'merely be following orders' and to show some sympathy for them as they, too, are humans. Korczak himself states that after the war he would want to help German orphans.

About forty minutes into the movie Korczak and one of the children are subtly ridiculing Communism; they converse about the elimination of money so poor people would not exist anymore, and how that is not possible and a naive dream.[57] This shows a break from ideology, previously still propagated in both *Ulica Graniczna* and *Koniec Naszego Świata.*

[56] This plays out about fourteen minutes into the movie.
[57] This conversation takes place forty-two minutes into the movie to be more exact.

Other political messages this movie seems to convey can be found regarding the Jewish Council and the Jewish Police within the ghetto. The Jewish Police was established in the Warsaw ghetto by the Nazi regime in collaboration with the Jewish Council (*Judenrat*), which in turn was established by the occupational forces, too.[58] The council defends itself in literal terms as the lesser of two evils, as other people, possibly Germans, would do their work if they did not. Their moral challenges are shown; the difficulty of organising a fair food distribution, and the dilemma of the drafting of deportation lists. After the deportation of the orphanage, the chairman of the council, Adam Czerniaków, is seen to have committed suicide, which also happened in real-life when Czerniaków realised deportations equalled death. The Jewish Police is shown in the movie as well. A strong opinion on them is not expressed, but it should be noted that they are not present during the deportations (for instance, they are not shown at the *Umschlagplatz*, the collection point for deportation) and are mentioned to want to save children by the Jewish Council. Round-ups (a euphemism used for manhunts within the ghetto) are carried out by German soldiers instead. This clashes with the reality of the Jewish Police, which was involved in such manhunts and are known to even catch children to reach their quota of people on the trains.[59]

In regards to production, *Korczak* uses outdated methods of filming for artistic purposes. For example, the film uses actual footage from the period it takes place in, and uses iconography of infamous propaganda film *Die Ewige Jude* (1940).[60] Agnieszka Holland was involved in the writing of the script, her influence is most apparent in the antisemitism of Poles.[61] The 1990 movie was not the first attempt at adapting Korczak's story to the big screen; in 1974 a German movie was released aiming to tell his story. An important difference between the two scripts can be found in the identification of Korczak; in the 1974 version he is characterized as a typical Christian saint, whilst the 1990 film fully restores his Jewish identity.[62] Criticism towards the 1990 film does mention how his character seems to be depicted as a Christian martyr rather than a Jewish one.[63] Korczak, throughout the film, mentions his heritage often and though he does not wear his armband out of principle, he is often pictured with the star of David in other ways, making such an analysis somewhat far-fetched.

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[58] Person, *Warsaw Ghetto Police* 4-32.
[59] Person, *Warsaw Ghetto Police* 111-120.
[60] T. Ginsberg, *Holocaust film: the political aesthetics of ideology* (Newcastle 2007) 60-90.
[61] J. Preizner, *Kamienie na Macewie. Holokaust w Polskim Kinie* (Krakow 2012) 368-373. Holland is known for tackling brutal history, not limiting herself to the horrors of the Holocaust, but also those of the Holodomor, for instance, with her film *Mr Jones* (2019).
[62] Haltof, *Polish Film and the Holocaust*, 187-210.
[63] Ginsberg, *Holocaust film: the political aesthetics of ideology*, 60-90.

Illustration IV: The moving to the Ghetto as per *Korczak*. Korczak himself is in the center, wearing a lighter jacket and turning around. Notice the infamous Ghetto bridge on the right upper corner.[64]

The Polish Perspective on the Holocaust and its Cinema in Short

Polish Holocaust cinema before the release of *Schindler's List* is subject to a couple of patterns. Firstly, the portrayal of Germans during the war is black-and-white; an evil incarnate with no room for morally good actions. The Poles are portrayed as the opposite in these earlier works; they are righteous and brave, or they will be depicted as victims of the Nazi-terror. If Poles act complicit in genocide, they are partly German, as is the case in *Border Street*, but full-blooded Poles are shown to help their Jewish neighbors in *Border Street* and in *Korczak*. In *The End of Our World* Poles are the leads in the resistance at Auschwitz. The Jews are portrayed to be suffering, but often in service of a narrative in which all Poles suffer greatly, as is emphasized in *Border Street*, or to provide righteous Poles with a helpless victim to save. This is in line with Polish remembrance politics, that neglect Jewish suffering to focus on the Polish victim-role and in which there was little room for Polish complicity in the genocide. The quotes from *Border Street* and *Korczak* highlight this, as well as the actions of the (mostly Polish) resistance in Auschwitz in *The End of Our World*.

[64] Still from 17 minutes and 22 seconds into the film. A version of this still without a watermark was not available to the author. Screen capture was made through YouTube, Romeo Alfa, *Korczak 1990 HD English Subtitles*.

Chapter II:
The Holocaust in Dutch Cinema and its relation to Remembrance Politics before 1993

In Dutch Cinema the Holocaust is not necessarily ignored, yet, especially in early works, no special attention is given to it unless in direct relation to resistance. This absence (or loaded presence) can be explained through the exploration of Dutch remembrance culture and politics throughout the decades. This will first be explored within this chapter. These findings will be illustrated through the analysis of *Niet te Vergeefs* (*Not in Vain*, 1948), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), and *Soldaat van Oranje* (*Soldier of Orange*, 1977). The internationally acclaimed *Zwartboek* (*Black Book,* 2006) is not included as it was made by the same director as *Soldier of Orange*, Paul Verhoeven. The choice in favor of *Soldier of Orange* is made as this film is regarded as the second best Dutch film ever produced, and its influence is still strongly felt in its musical adaptation over fourty years later.[65] *Black Book,* on the other hand, though at the time (internationally) popular, was produced with a more global audience in mind. This fact in itself is interesting to keep in mind as the globalization of memory culture is explored in the next chapter.

The Early Dutch Perspective

Prior to the events of World War II, the Dutch popular self-perception was that of a tolerant nation, though the protestant, catholic, socialist, and an unofficial liberal pillar lived somewhat segregated. Officially the Jews were not recognised in this system, but were welcomed in political parties and respected in their living choices nevertheless, showing strong integration.[66] The Dutch radical right-wing party, the *Nationaal Socialistische Beweging* (or NSB), had lost most of its popularity between its peak in 1931 and the onset of the war. It was possible prior to 1938 to become a member of the NSB regardless of Jewish identity, indicating that the NSB, though seen as a Dutch NSDAP, saw less room for racism in their program (at least initially), possibly because it was known this would not make their party popular in a nation that regards itself as tolerant.[67] This tolerance juxtaposed to the high number of deported Jews is known as the Dutch Paradox. This can be explained as the Jews

[65] P. Verstraten, *Dutch Post-war Fiction Film Through a Lens of Psychoanalysis*, (Amsterdam, 2021), 175-180. *Soldaat van Oranje* was, in 2021, considered second to *Turks Fruit* (1973).
[66] J.D. Contreras, *"We Were All in the Resistance": Historical Memory of the Holocaust and Second World War in the Netherlands* (Minnesota 2020) 1-53.
[67] K. Prenger, *NSB (Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging) – Geschiedenis: Opkomst en ondergang van de Nederlandse politieke partij, 1931 tot 1945* https://historiek.net/nsb-nationaal-socialistische-beweging-tweede-wereldoorlog/129548/ (accessed 16-10-2024).

were persecuted as a group, and not merely as the individuals that the Dutch neighbors came to accept. The Jews as a people were less accepted than individuals.[68] The high percentage of deported Jews should not be seen as evidence of widespread Dutch antisemitism; the new government of the Netherlands was highly influenced by the racist SS, compared to the Belgian *Wehrmacht* regime and the French Vichy-collaboration.[69] Furthermore, the Dutch identification system made Jews more traceable. The non-Jewish Dutch in fact protested more against Jewish persecution than Belgians or French, giving more validation to the portrayal of the relation between resistance and the Holocaust in Dutch cinema.[70] Nevertheless, Dutch civil servants were, sometimes unknowingly, complicit, either through their bureaucratic contribution to deportation, or through more pragmatic order following (as was the case with policemen, for instance).

The Netherlands was hit relatively hard by the war compared to other Western European countries, but mildly compared to Eastern European countries such as Poland. Immediately following the end of the occupation, the immense losses suffered by the Jewish population became evident as the full extent of the deportees' fate came to light. Dutch Jews in particular were hit hard because of the nature of the Dutch occupation compared to the Belgian and French. Not all Jews who survived were treated well; especially those trying to regain their prewar possessions were met with hostility. Furthermore, tax had to be paid for the years spent in concentration camps.[71] Because the Netherlands were liberated later than Belgium and France, the return home was less prepared than in these countries, making for an experience Holocaust survivors often experienced as bleak. Nevertheless, the Dutch were relatively quick to incorporate the Holocaust into its collective memory; the monument at former *Umschlagplatz* Hollandsche Schouwburg in 1962 (coincidentally after the highly influential Eichmann trials of 1961; plans were made as early as 1958) is an example of this. Historians were relatively quick to work with the Holocaust in new publications.[72]

Like the Poles, the Dutch tended to neglect the Holocaust in favor of other topics. The solidarity of the Dutch nation during the war was emphasized. Racism was considered an awkward foreign problem, pushed during the war by the Nazis. At the same time, the loss of

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[68] B. Van der Boom, *'Wij Weten Niets Van Hun Lot': Gewone Nederlanders en de Holocaust* (Amsterdam 2012) 147-188.
[69] P. Griffioen and R. Zeller in collaboration with the Anne Frank Stichting, *Nederland: het hoogste aantal Joodse slachtoffers in West-Europa*.
[70] B. Van der Boom in collaboration with De Universiteit van Nederland, *Waarom werden er zoveel Joden uit Nederland gedeporteerd? (4/5)* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GGhpff4pKY&t=45s (accessed 20-11-2024).
[71] Contreras, *"We Were All in the Resistance"* 1-53.
[72] Van Vree, *Nederland en de herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging,* 9-16.

colonies took up the attention of the public and the politicians. The genocide of Jews during World War II was not necessarily forgotten or repressed, but remembrance of these events was something that happened in more private contexts (like in Poland), or it was woven into a national narrative, often to strengthen the image of solidarity or the Dutch resistance mythos.[73] Bart van der Boom explains this resistance mythos perfectly in his introduction to *Wij Weten Niets Van Hun Lot*, and furthermore it provides the inspiration (and main theme) for *We Were All in the Resistance* by Jazmine Domenique Contreras. This mythos is exemplary for post-war Netherlands; according to this, with the exception of a few bad apples, the Dutch people were morally good during the war and most were part of the resistance.[74] This notion had to be emphasized, and memory of the Holocaust was used for this cause by putting an emphasis on events like the *Februaristaking;* the massive strike in February of 1941 by Dutch workers (instigated by Dutch Communists) to protest the anti-Jewish decrees of the occupier. This Dutch approach is reminiscent of the Polish; both emphasize resistance in favor of Jewish suffering. This self identification also has its validation in truth; Belgium and France did not have similar protests to the *Februaristaking*.[75]

A Changing Perspective

The 1960s started with the kidnapping and subsequent trial of Adolf Eichmann. At the time the Netherlands only had one television station (though the medium was becoming more popular by the year) of which the news, which closely covered the trial, was the most popular show. Television, radio, and newspapers gave much attention to the trial, strengthening interest in the topic of the Holocaust. During this period a new television show titled *De Bezetting* (*The Occupation*) was airing. This show gave little attention to the Holocaust, and all the more to Dutch resistance forces. Thirdly, at the same time, Raul Hillberg released the first version of his influential work *The Destruction of the European Jews*, the first real noteworthy scholarly work on the Holocaust. These three events combined left the Dutch with the realization of the scale of the annihilation of Jews at the hands of the Nazis. Eichmann commented during his hearing about how easy it was to organize the deportations in the Netherlands. Attention to the Dutch 'bad apples' that had been complicit in this grew, yet this was still considered to be a minority consisting of loyal bureaucrats that followed

[73] Van Vree, *Nederland en de herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging,* 45-98.
[74] Van der Boom, *'Wij Weten Niets Van Hun Lot'* 9-18.
[75] Stichting Joods Monument, "Transport Lists from Westerbork to Sobibor," 29-10-2011, https://web.archive.org/web/20110929140015/http://www.joodsmonument.nl/page/274192 (accessed 30-11-2024).

orders.[76] The 1965 release of *De Ondergang*, a popular Dutch historical work by Jacques Presser that argues that anyone could have known about the fate of Jews during the war, if they had wanted to, broke with this idea. The excuse of not knowing (*''wir haben es nicht gewusst''*) was shattered. Furthermore, collaboration (also between Jews and the German occupiers in the form of the Jewish council) were explored and condemned.[77]

Commemoration and a more realistic view of the past began to grow after this. In the 1970s a wider interest in personal stories and ego documents grew, especially amongst youngsters who did not have their own memories of the war years. Previously, such accounts were dismissed because rebuilding the nation took priority and a fear of new conflict because of the Cold War blocked interest in the previous wars, but now these testimonies became popular. Video testimonies gained international popularity from the late 1970s onward (and especially after the release of *Schindler's List*).[78] At the same time, the popularity of (Dutch) films and television grew, which combined nicely with the nature of ego documents. These (sometimes American) shows made the story of the Holocaust more understandable to laymen, but took some artistic liberties and were not able to tell the full history.[79] A prime example would be *Holocaust*, an American show from 1978. In the Netherlands this show was received with little shock, compared to in the United States and West-Germany, indicating that the Dutch public by now had some familiarity with the gruesome nature of the topic.[80] Today this is still the case, as Dutch youngsters are found to understand the Holocaust and its significance (within identity politics, too) well compared to other historical events.[81] From the 1980s onward attention for Jewish victims of the genocide the war brought about grew during the bigger, official, commemorations, such as the national commemoration of the dead at De Dam in Amsterdam on the 4th of May.

Dutch Film

The Dutch film industry prior to the occupation years is hard to compare to the Polish; it was much less established and smaller in size. Many of the known productions, if one were to even call them productions, were shot by amateurs or small beginning (and often immediately bankrupting) cooperations. By the 1930s, films with sound became a possibility, even to the small Dutch industry. Nevertheless, the occupation devastated the Dutch film industry before

[76] Van Vree, *Nederland en de herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging*, 99-154.
[77] Contreras, *"We Were All in the Resistance",* 1-53.
[78] Brackney, *Surreal Geographies,* 80-101.
[79] Van Vree, *Nederland en de herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging,* 211-252.
[80] Van Vree, *Nederland en de herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging,* 253-302.
[81] Van Vree, *Nederland en de herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging,* 353-362.

it could even properly take off.[82] Some productions were released during the war in the Netherlands. These were small films made by hobbyists, or most of the making of these productions was done before the occupation, with the exception of *Drie Weken Huisknecht* (1945), the only truly Dutch film fully made and completed during the war. The completion of this movie was immensely difficult, and as the SS positively received the film, the Dutch disliked it by association.[83]

The Dutch film industry was hit hard by the occupation, even compared to the Polish industry. The Nazis virtually abolished the production of features, and the two biggest studios were destroyed in the war. As the industry was already small, there was not much to work with after this fact.[84] Directly after liberation, however, steps were taken to revive the industry by setting up national collaborations and even a Dutch film academy in 1958. Because of such developments the industry relied less on hobbyists, but Hollywood still overshadowed it greatly in views.[85] The first real Dutch film production after the Second World War was titled *Bezet Gebied* (1946), or *Occupied Territory*. The film details the resistance movement in the Netherlands during the war.[86] This emphasis on resistance is typical for the Dutch remembrance of the occupied years. Movies and documentaries on the rebuilding of the country (and especially Rotterdam) were made as well in the first two decades after the war. The perseverance of the Dutch, as well as their strength against an unlawful, evil, occupier, is stressed, but this special attention leaves little room for different aspects of the war within popular media. Before the big productions of the 1970s, for example *Turks Fruit* (1973), and the later to be discussed *Soldaat van Oranje* (1977), Dutch cinema was financially challenged and mostly released in black-and-white. More attention was given to the production of television series, which found quite some success, especially the ones catered towards youngsters.[87] By the 1990, interest in Dutch films had dropped immensely, but in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Dutch film industry's popularity slowly returned.[88]

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[82] IsGeschiedenis, *De Nederlandse filmgeschiedenis,* https://isgeschiedenis.nl/nieuws/de-nederlandse-filmgeschiedenis (accessed 27-09-2024).
[83] H. van Gelder, *Hollands Hollywood: Alle Nederlandse speelfilms van de afgelopen zestig jaar* (Amsterdam, 1995) 57-58.
[84] IsGeschiedenis, *De Nederlandse filmgeschiedenis.*
[85] J. van Nieuwenhoven, Albers, R., Dibbets, K., Ekker, J. P., Hogenkamp, B., de Leeuw, S., de Ronde, A., & de Wit, H. *Canon van de Nederlandse film.* (Stichting Nederlands Film Festival 2007).
[86] Eyefilm, *Bezet Gebied*, https://filmdatabase.eyefilm.nl/collectie/filmgeschiedenis/film/bezet-gebied (accessed 29-09-2024).
[87] Prime examples include *Swiebertje* (1955-1975) and *Floris* (1969), the latter one of which was produced by Paul Verhoeven, who would continue to produce *Soldaat van Oranje* and *Zwartboek*.
[88] Van Gelder, *Hollands Hollywood*, 5-9.

The war did continue to captivate Dutch audiences. The distinction between *goed* and *fout,* right and wrong, during the war, became vital within films detailing the war. It is not uncommon for old stories being remade to incorporate elements of the war into their narratives. The most well-known example would be that of *Ciske de Rat,* a book trilogy released between 1941 and 1946, which only deals with the events of the war in the third book. The cinematic adaptations of 1955 and 1984 do not give any attention to the war, yet the musical adaptations of 2007 and 2016 do write the titular characters' Ciske wartime experiences into the narrative.

In her book *Images of Occupation in Dutch Film* Wendy Burke explores movies detailing the war period in the Netherlands. Burke concludes that within these films, most of the attention is reserved for heroic Dutch characters, whilst Jewish persecution (and other aspects of the war, such as the Hunger Winter) are largely forgotten. *Soldaat van Oranje* provided a change to this tradition, by showcasing more aspects of life under occupation, such as co-existence with the occupying forces.[89] Dutch films historically have a tendency to focus on realism or telling stories that realistically could take place. The Netherlands does not entertain the fantasy genre, outside of children's media.[90]

Political messages are also present in post-war films due to the mentality brought about by the Cold War; directly after the war some special respect was shown towards Communists as these were often relatively active within the Dutch resistance (like in the *Februaristaking*), but this support dwindled almost completely after the first few post-war years. Reference to this will be touched upon in the discussed media below. This is interesting to reflect next to the Polish situation, which went from occupation by Nazi-Germany to what is often perceived as Communist occupation, which subsequently dealt differently with these themes.[91]

Theory into Practice: the Dutch Holocaust on the Big Screen

Niet te Vergeefs / Not in Vain (1948)[92]

Similarly to *Bezet Gebied* of 1946, this film, produced two years later, puts a strong emphasis on the Dutch resistance. The title translates to *Not in Vain*, which evokes a strong heroic sentiment as it implies that all loss and danger the resistance faced was to serve a higher

[89] W. Burke, *Images of Occupation in Dutch Film: Memory, Myth, and the Cultural Legacy of War* (Amsterdam 2017) 211-214.
[90] Verstraten, *Dutch Post-war Fiction Film Through a Lens of Psychoanalysis*, 29-34.
[91] Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead,* 23-42.
[92] This film was also found on YouTube through EyeFilmmuseum, *Niet te Vergeefs*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lG9FtN3rdgc (accessed 04-11-2024).

purpose. Though this story is mostly about resistance, the characters do mention how they dislike racism. The resistance is shown to help Jewish people in hiding, and emphasis is put on the fact that they risk their lives in doing so. Resistance is in this movie less organized as it would be in later cinematic works. Christianity motivates some of the characters to do good.

The overall story has little to do with the genocide on Jews, but when mentioned, the discrimination is used to depict the Dutch that challenge it in a positive light. The further absence of the Holocaust, which is now widely regarded as one of the most important aspects of the Second World War, is telling in itself about the attitude of the Dutch right after the war (and how this would come to change over the years). Dutch missteps towards betrayal are shown, but not out of malice, but out of the stupidity of miscommunication. That is, until it is revealed in the last ten minutes of the film that Anton, the main characters' son, has joined the SS. The portrayal of a Dutch person blatantly betraying his family (who are all active in the resistance) and fatherland is unique compared to Poland, where Polish collaboration was not so explicitly shown in movies of this period. Anton's family and parents ostracise him, and his father ultimately even shoots him.

Interestingly German characters are mentioned in the film who are anti-Nazi, a feat that was not possible in Polish films of the same period. Nevertheless, humanisation of the Nazis is difficult to find; they claim whatever they can find as theirs, such as the horses of the main characters. This is exemplary for the prevailing (yet exaggerated) belief during the occupation that the Germans took everything from the Netherlands.[93]

The main characters discuss Marxism towards the end of the war; they argue whether it would be a valid option to work towards socialism in a future liberated Netherlands. Within the same discussion, some 54 minutes into the film, some feminist notions are made, too. More interestingly, though, is that one of the characters is called a Nazi as a slur to mock him within the discussion, to which he promptly responds:

''*I cannot be a Nazi, I do not condone racism. Look at Mark, I like him, even though he is a Jew."*

Mark responds that he 'even though' part of the statement does imply racism. The discussion is dismissed with a statement of solidarity; that liberation should not make people start fighting amongst themselves. The film establishes how antisemitism and collaboration are

[93] Van der Boom, *'Wij Weten Niets Van Hun Lot',* 119-146.

often considered the same faulty ideology by the Dutch. The Hunger Winter is shown through actual videos made during the winter of 1944. This does not happen often in Dutch cinema, as evident by Wendy Burke's research.

The Diary of Anne Frank (1959)[94]

1959s *The Diary of Anne Frank* was not a Dutch production. The Dutch influence on this movie should not be underestimated, however, as it tells a story set in Amsterdam, and Otto Frank heavily influenced the production. Early post-war Netherlands did not have as big of a film tradition or production as Poland did, making foreign productions, especially in languages most Dutch people understand such as English, culturally vital. Furthermore, the effect the movie had on Dutch remembrance culture is not to be understated. For these reasons, the film is incorporated into this research.

The publication of Anne Frank's diary was initially received well in the Netherlands immediately after its release in 1947; the first 3036 copies sold-out quickly, with the second numbering 6830, and the third even 10 500. By 1950 the book was ready for its sixth edition.[95] Dutch interest in the book, however, seemed to stagnate; in these early years directly after the war, personal war-time accounts were popular in the Netherlands, but this ebbed away until the 1970s due to emotional fatigue of its audience, as was initially becoming the case with the diary. However, the success of the American theatrical adaptation, and its subsequent (Academy Award winning) movie, remedied this. This international success brought about an international (renewed) attention for the diary, and in turn for the Holocaust, between 1955 and 1959, which was the foundation of Anne Frank's international role as face of all Holocaust victims.[96] The success of the musical and film made the diary itself more popular world-wide. In the Netherlands Anne Frank became the prime example of an individual telling the story of the masses, which is strongly in line with the memory culture visible in the Netherlands from the 1970s onward (as explained above).

The movie itself takes some liberty with the historical facts to make it less complex, such as the organization of the going into hiding. This does serve in Otto Frank's favor; he is shown as a great leader and an incredible loving father. As he was involved in the process of making the film, it makes sense his relationship to his daughters is elaborated upon; this must

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[94] This film can be found on YouTube; Jeremiah Dillon, *The Diary of Anne Frank 1959,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVT47g8ocCI (accessed 04-11-2024).
[95] Anne Frank Stichting, *The publication of the diary,* https://www.annefrank.org/en/anne-frank/diary/publication-diary/ (accessed 13-11-2024).
[96] Van Vree, *Nederland en de herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging,* 99-154. Especially in the United States, Anne Frank gained an almost cult-like recognition in the 1950s.

have been somewhat therapeutic for him at the time. The mundane and scary aspects of life in hiding are mostly portrayed, as well as the role of their Dutch helpers providing them food and care in their secret annex. Because of the nature of the story, this hardly contributes to the Dutch resistance mythos. They have to be quiet during working hours because they do not want to be found by Dutch people, either. Otto Frank (within the movie) provides a noteworthy quote one hour into the story on his perception on the Dutch sentiment:

‘’*Nobody is going to tell us Dutchmen what to do with our damned Jews.”*

Soldaat van Oranje / Soldier of Orange (1977)[97]

When the *Canon der Nederlandse Film*, an official Dutch list consisting of sixteen of the most influential and important films to Dutch culture, was established in 2007, the exclusion of one particular film raised outrage; *Soldaat van Oranje*. It had won the prize of best Dutch film ever in the year prior.[98] The film tells the real life, though edited and dramatized, story of Erik Hazelhoff Roelfzema, the most famous Dutch resistance fighter of the Second World War. His name is altered to Erik Lanshof. *Soldaat van Oranje* translates to *Soldier of Orange*, referencing that the particular soldier would be loyal to the Dutch royal family of Orange. The movie follows Erik’s experiences during the war. Though the movie has a strong emphasis on him and his courageous acts, the movie also displays various instances of the racism Jews faced during the occupation. Furthermore, two prominent characters within Erik’s group of friends are of Jewish heritage. The movie (and the later musical adaptation) focus on the theme of choices. Erik has been analyzed before as an accidental hero; stating he could have made different choices leading to a life on the wrong side of history.[99] This analysis, however, seems ungrounded. Erik is portrayed as righteous and he barely wavers in his heroism, making him the perfect embodiment of the Dutch resistance mythos.

Without getting lost in the details of the somewhat complex plot, it is compelling to explore how the movie deals with the Holocaust. The Jewish characters do not hide their identities, but it is not their driving characteristic either. Nor is it the first the viewer learns about them, making them relatively well-rounded. The trajectory of their lives during the war

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[97] This film is found on YouTube; Ma Flodder, *Soldaat van Oranje (Film),* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hq6if33obws (accessed 04-11-2024).
[98] J. van Nieuwenhoven e.a., *Canon van de Nederlandse film.* It should be stressed that the canon was established with not necessarily the best, but the most culturally influential films in mind. *Turks Fruit* and *Soldaat van Oranje* seem to take turns having the title of best Dutch film, depending on the outlet of the allocation.
[99] Verstraten, *Dutch Post-war Fiction Film Through a Lens of Psychoanalysis*, 175-180.

are not representative for Dutch Jews, however. Esther, a Jewish girl who is engaged to one of Erik's friends from the resistance, does not face much antisemitism as she has false identity papers. Later on, it is revealed that her fiancee protects her from the Nazis by collaborating, which makes for an epic story of betrayal and blackmail. As a result, she is even assaulted after the liberation for being friendly with a collaborator, even though she is Jewish and even helped the resistance at times.[100] Jan, the other Jewish character, is shown in an even braver light; he protects a Jewish man who is pestered by the NSB, but this conflict escalates as Jan is a proficient fighter. Erik helps Jan to flee to England subsequently, which fails and results in Jan's capture. A German firing squad executes him near *Oranje Hotel* (the famous prison where resistance fighters were kept). His death is far more comparable with that of a resistance fighter than that of an average Dutch Jew.

Over the course of the film, several instances of antisemitism are shown. During the first scenes, showcasing the *ontgroening* at the student association Minerva, one of the boys is made to say that Hitler is bad.[101] The others reply that this must have been a Jew making him do this. Such small instances keep coming up; if someone shows compassion towards the Jews they are immediately presumed to be Jewish themselves. The movie supports this notion, as the Jewish characters are far more concerned with the war before it breaks than the non-Jews are. Similarly, before the outbreak of the war, Jewish refugees were mentioned as a reason not to go on holiday to Germany. These first comments are tongue-in-cheek, as the story progresses they are made less often; the gravity of the racism towards Jews becomes apparent to the other characters and they take it more seriously as a result.

This movie mostly tells a stereotypical story of Dutch resistance glory. The Dutch are brave, and only make bad choices if they are threatened or if the situation is nuanced in any other way. The character from Erik's group of friends that joins the NSB is explicitly part German, cleansing the Dutch identity of his sin, something that was not yet done in *Not in Vain*. The Nazis are typically evil; if they are being nice or polite it is only to be even worse moments later. Elements of the Holocaust, such as the pestering of Jews, the mandates excluding Jews from public places or the forced wearing of yellow badges, are recurring within the movie. Some anti-Communist sentiments are shown, but are quickly forgotten within the movie as they have to work together within the resistance with these reds. This is

[100] This treatment of 'moffenhoeren', girls who slept with Germans or collaborators, was common enough to become infamous after the war; it is often referenced in films and personal accounts of the days surrounding liberation.
[101] *Ontgroening* is a Dutch student tradition comparable to hazing. My personal paraphrasing of 'bad' is an euphemism for the terms used in the movie to keep this thesis professionally polite.

surprisingly historically accurate for the Cold War *zeitgeist*, as socialists were famously present within Dutch resistance.

Illustration V: The romanticization of the Dutch resistance in *Soldier of Orange*.[102]

The Dutch Perspective on the Holocaust and its Cinema in Short

The Dutch would not openly identify with the racist policies of Nazi-Germany, before, during, and after the war. In the collective Dutch memory, the Holocaust was relatively quickly incorporated, which is also visible in early films such as *Not in Vain*. However, this incorporation is mostly to serve the Dutch mythos of resistance; the belief that almost all Dutch were in the resistance and only a few bad apples would collaborate with the occupying forces. Though not historically accurate and often debunked, this mythos prevails even in *Soldier of Orange*, in which the representative of Nazism in the Netherlands is of German descent, employing the same technique as *Border Street* to clean the Dutch conscience. In the Dutch perception, especially during- and right after the war, antisemitism is synonymous with being a Nazi, whilst in the Polish perspective these could be mutually exclusive. Not all films follow this narrative, as *The Diary of Anne Frank* shows, through quotes and the fear of the families in the secret annex, how the Dutch do not act morally pure towards the Jews. This indicates the interaction between memory culture, and memory politics.

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[102] Image retrieved through: S. Raatgever, *Het Parool 06-12-2020,* ''Soldaat van Oranje: 'Nog steeds de grootste film ooit gemaakt in ons land'", https://www.parool.nl/kunst-media/soldaat-van-oranje-nog-steeds-de-grootste-film-ooit-gemaakt-in-ons-land~b337a79d/?referrer=https://www.google.com/ (accessed 04-11-2024).

Chapter III:

The Internationalization of Holocaust Cinema

After the end of the global tensions due the Cold War, global memory culture had the chance to develop and spread further. *Schindler's List* was released not much later, and found international success. This chapter will explore how this film and this international globalization affected the memory cultures of Poland and the Netherlands. This chapter will deeply analyze more recent films fitting this context; the Polish *The Pianist* (2002) and *The Zone of Interest* (2023), and the Dutch *Left Luggage* (1998), *Grenzeloos Verraad* (2023), and the musical adaptation of *Soldier of Orange* (2010-present), whilst also referencing other cinematic productions when relevant.

Views on the Holocaust after 1993

In Poland, the debate on Polish complicity did not end after the release of Gross's book; it is part of a wider Polish refusal of acceptance of guilt. Gross was brought to court for libel for insulting the Polish nation in 2015, but insufficient evidence could be produced as his claims, though controversial, were found to be within the limits of academic debate.[103] As recently as 2018 the PiS-government of Poland tried to pass on legislation illegalizing the framing of Poles as collaborators in any form.[104] This extreme legislation should be remembered when discovering the Polish cultural remembrance of the Holocaust. The Polish former government's attitude towards their Holocaust history seems to encourage research and depiction as long as the results do not show Polish involvement in any way. Another, even more recent, example of this policy can be found in the case of Barbara Engelkings and Jan Grabowksi's book *Night without End* (*Dalej jest Noc*), for which they were brought to court in 2021. The suspected crime was, once more, defamation of the Polish nation as the book tells the history of a Pole complicit in the murder of Jews during the Nazi-occupation of Poland.[105] Whereas contemporary Germany strives to make peace with its troubled history and educate their public on it, contemporary Poland still seems to struggle with recognizing its complicity in a genocide of nearly eight decades ago, and choses to focus on the heroic deeds of Poles during the war. Now that the majority rule of the PiS-government has recently ended, it remains to be seen how Donald Tusk's third cabinet influences Poland's Holocaust

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[103] Times of Israel, *Holocaust scholar who said Poles killed Jews grilled by police* (14-04-2016).
[104] D. Stone, *The Holocaust, an Unfinished History* (London, 2023) 263-296, and T. John, 'Poland Just Passed a Holocaust Bill That Is Causing Outrage. Here's What You Need to Know' in *Time* (01-02-2018).
[105] Stone, *The Holocaust,* 263-296.

remembrance politics. Though certainly more pro-European, the new government has urged Germany for financial compensation for the events that took place eighty years ago.[106] Tusk has expressed distaste for antisemitism and has criticized previously mentioned controversial policies of his PiS-predecessors in the past, yet it is too soon after the changing of governments to make a meaningful statement on this break and its overall influence.

From the late 1980s until present day the Dutch remembrance culture was shifting towards a more global narrative; the national narrative was placed in that of Western Europe and the United States, with *Schinlder's List* having a strong influence on Dutch cultural memory as well. This is a globalization of memory that was less visible in Poland at the time. However, the Dutch resistance mythos somehow remains present within this more global narrative.[107] The overall realization that not all Dutch were good resistance fighters is growing, which can be seen in gestures like (now former) Prime Minister Mark Rutte apologizing for the collaboration of Dutch civil servants, or the Dutch National Railways (NS) apologizing for their contribution to the deportation of Jews and offering survivors financial compensation.[108] Nevertheless, as shall be found in more recent works of art below, the Dutch seem to cling to the comfort of their resistance mythos, whilst the Polish strive for innocence in regards to antisemitism during the war, too. Internationally these local perspectives are not used; when Hollywood portrays Poland or the Netherlands they are discarded, for instance.

The genocidal aspects of the war are used in political debates as a bogeyman whenever a discussion of (in)tolerance rises, and is often referred to when criticizing rightwing populism.[109] Recent research indicates a growing rate of antisemitism in the Netherlands.[110] At the same time, however, remembrance initiatives such as *Open Joodse Huizen* and the placing of *Stolpersteine* gain more footing and are successful, too.[111]

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[106] France 24 (News Wires), *Poland marks 85 years since Nazi Germany invaded, sparking WWII,* https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20240901-poland-marks-85-years-outbreak-world-war-ii-donald-tusk (01-09-2024, accessed 04-11-2024).
[107] Van Vree, *Nederland en de herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging* 253-302.
[108] NOS Nieuws, *Excuses Rutte: overheid schoot tekort tijdens de Holocaust* (26-01-2020) https://nos.nl/artikel/2320304-excuses-rutte-overheid-schoot-tekort-tijdens-de-holocaust and NOS Nieuws, *NS betaalt Holocaust-slachtoffers: wat ging eraan vooraf?* (25-06-2019) https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2290638-ns-betaalt-holocaust-slachtoffers-wat-ging-eraan-vooraf both accessed 04-11-2024.
[109] Van Vree, *Nederland en de herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging,* 253-302.
[110] Contreras, *"We Were All in the Resistance",* 1-53.
[111] Contreras, *"We Were All in the Resistance"* 54-108 and 176-223.

Global Cinema

The development of global cinema was slowed because of the exclusion of Soviet films for some time. Internationally, cinema is regarded as a great medium to raise public awareness of the Holocaust, though used for economic or political gain. Because of its wide use, not in the least directly after the war, the image of Nazism as pure evil is widely established, and therefore also usable in less serious ways.[112] Both Polish and Dutch filmmakers seem to refrain from such a nonchalant approach to the Holocaust, whilst foreign films like *The Producers* (1968, in which two musical producers plan tax fraud by purposely failing a musical showcasing a positive portrayal of Hitler, their plan fails as the public considers it satire) and *Jojo Rabbit* (2019, following a young German boy who is so obsessed with Nazism that his imaginary friend is Hitler himself, yet falls in love with the Jewish girl his mother hides in their apartment) do employ humor in their portrayals of the Holocaust and broader Nazism. Films do not have to be set in the 1940s or even be remotely related to the war; an example would be *Blues Brothers* (1980) in which neo-Nazis are clearly antagonists, but their ideology has little to do with this, or the plot. Portrayals by nations that were less directly affected by the Holocaust (such as American and British), especially recent ones, can also stray from the more serious approach, with examples such as *Kung Fury* (2015, in which time travel results in the titular character fighting side by side with vikings, (humanoid) dinosaurs, and thunder god Thor against Nazis) and *Werewolves of the Third Reich* (2017, in which Nazi experimentation on Jewish prisoners leads to the creation of werewolves) springing to mind.

Somewhat linked is the troublesome trend of imposing the concept of love on Holocaust films and literature. Dutch films are especially guilty of having a character make choices (participating in the resistance, or the complete opposite) for the sole reason that they fell in love (or had intercourse at least once) with a Jewish character. Such motivations can be seen in *Soldier of Orange*, *40-45,* and especially *Grenzeloos Verraad*, which will be discussed below. This is part of a global trend; outrage because of (trashy) fictional romance novels combined with the Holocaust is not unheard of. An unsettling example would be that of *For Such a Time*, which details the story of an SS colonel falling in love with a Jewish girl (who has blonde hair and blue eyes and eventually even converts to Christianity).[113] Such examples

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[112] Ginsberg, *Holocaust film: the political aesthetics of ideology*, 1-59.

[113] A. Flood, *The Guardian,* "When a Jew loves a Nazi: Holocaust romance's award listings cause outrage" (10-08-2015) retrieved through: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/10/jew-loves-nazi-holocaust-romance-award-nominations (accessed 04-11-2024).

do indicate that, though still infamous amongst the newer generation, the understanding of what the Holocaust entailed might be starting to fade after eighty years.

Earlier the usage of the Holocaust in political debates through the medium of film by writing the Holocaust actively into the story was explored. This is not unique to Dutch cinema; an example would be Guillermo del Toro writing Mussolini into his adaptation of *Pinocchio* (2022), a story that originally takes place around 1880. Another trend prevalent in Dutch films would be the political messaging some movies take upon themselves; in 1998s *Left Luggage* (which is discussed below) the past of some Jewish characters during the war is explored, yet the movie also makes a point to comment on inner-Jewish relations after the war. Similarly the (partly Israeli) film *Waar is Anne Frank?* (2021) (*Where is Anne Frank?*) juxtaposes contemporary refugees and forms of racism to Jewish victims of the Holocaust. This is in line with how the memory of the Holocaust is used in politics as seen in the previous sub-chapter.

The Pianist (2002)[114]

2002s *The Pianist* is probably Poland's most well-known (Holocaust) film, having won three out of seven of its academy award nominations (amongst other accolades). Made in post-Communist Poland, it was based on the real memoirs of Władysław (Władek) Szpilman, a renowned Jewish pianist. Though the movie is in English and the lead actors are of British descent, the producing director and the cinematographer, Roman Polański and Paweł Edelman respectively, have Polish backgrounds and the story is Polish in origin. Polański had previously worked together with Polish filmmakers Andrzej Wajda and Aleksander Ford in his years as an actor.

Szpilman published his war memoirs in 1946. Szpilman, when returning as a Holocaust survivor, did not face strong antisemitism relatively. He could resume his work as a pianist on Polish radio easily after the war.[115] His memoirs tell the same story as the movie, though some characters were merged or altered for simplicity's sake. Interestingly to this research, the original book had one more key difference; the nationality of the German army officer that helped Szpilman survive was changed from German to Austrian. In 1946 it was

[114] As *The Pianist* is a far more recent movie and therefore not (in the gray area of international) public domain, this movie is not available on free, legal, platforms. Streaming platform Netflix does offer the movie in the Netherlands, however; Netflix, *The Pianist,* https://www.netflix.com/search?q=the%20pianist&jbv=60025061 (accessed 10-12-2023).
[115] A. Szpilman, "Foreword," in W. Szpilman, *The Pianist: The Extraordinary Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-1945*, translated by Anthea Bell (London: Picador, 1999), 7-14. Szpilman did experience anti-Jewish sentiments through Stalinist censorship and during the wave of antisemitism in Poland in 1968 according to his son.

simply not possible to portray a German as heroic and righteous, and changing his nationality to Austrian made this portrayal less troublesome.[116] A 1999 reprint and the movie did, however, restore the officer's identity and mention his name clearly; Wilm Hosenfeld. Furthermore, the first movie adaptation of the memoirs (of which the title is *Warsaw Robinson*) was made in 1950 under heavy Soviet censorship.[117] This movie did depict a heroic liberation of Warsaw by the Soviet army, however, and omitted the role of Polish resistance because this was deemed too nationalist. The main character in this movie was not even the real Szpilman, let alone a Jew, but a fictional figure from the working class.[118] Though Szpilman's experiences inspired the plot, censorship transformed it to have little to do with the actual history it was based on.

In regards to the influence *The Pianist* might have had on collective memory, some scenes and depictions are striking and important to analyze. The cynical brother of Władek exclaims how everyone (meaning Christian Poles and even Jewish-Poles) wants to be better Nazis than Hitler himself. Along with this, Polish collaboration with the Nazi regime is shown, though not extensively. The film has much more attention for the ways Jews were helped by the Polish; Władek himself enjoys the support of many people outside of the ghetto and survives because of this, not because of his own initiative.

Germans are portrayed as evil, given no redemption outside of Hosenfeld's unique case (and even in Hosenfeld's case, he is still portrayed as cold and distant towards Szpilman, referring to him as *'Jude'*, never even asking for a name). In the beginning of the movie, the German soldiers address the Jews in the polite German form (*Sie*, *Ihr*), yet this is most probably meant as mocking or a juxtaposition to the brutality they display towards the Jews of the ghetto later.[119] The worst cases of violence within the movie are directly connected to the Germans; razia's, hard violence, and killings are solely done by non-Jewish, army uniform wearing Germans. It should be noted, however, that de Jewish Police Service plays a role also. In the movie the Jewish Police is introduced through Władeks brother, who is asked to join. He rejects, in a not-so-subtle, nor polite tone. Even though joining the Jewish Police would provide extra food and safety for the family, rejecting recruitment is depicted as the noble action to take. Later on, the Jewish Police are shown to help in the deportations,

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[116] M. Haltof, *Polish Cinema: a History* (Updated edition; New York 2019) 341-369.
[117] M.U.D. Goldsmith, P.A. Wilson, A.J. Fonseca, *The Encyclopedia of Musicians and Bands on Film* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2016) 218-231 and Haltof, *Polish Cinema: a History*, 69-95.
[118] Haltof, *Polish Cinema: a History*, 69-95.
[119] *'Sie'* and *'Ihr'* do not translate well into English, but can be compared to calling someone 'Sir' or 'Madam', normally indicating a degree of politeness and respect, but also quite usable to add insult to injury.

knowing full well what the fate of the deported Jews will be. They are shown lying to people about where they are going in this same regard. They can be bribed, and if they know someone, they might save them for free, as is the case with Władek, who, as a famous musician, has some pull. The Jewish Police are shown to protect the ghetto's restaurants, in which, according to Władek's brother, 'the parasites of the ghetto' get to dine.

The movie depicts fighting back as honorable, the main characters even hope the Ghetto Uprising will inspire the Polish to fight back. A similar notion to the one *Border Street* made, yet turned around. After this claim, the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 is shown, this combination does indicate some connection although this is historically difficult to prove. Other liberties are taken; the Szpilman family already lived in the part of Warsaw that would become the ghetto.[120] The move in the movie is thus implemented to show a familiar image; the procession of Jews with their entire portable property into the ghetto. This is a popular scene to use in movies depicting a ghetto; Spielberg did the same in *Schindler's List* and *Border Street* and *Korczak* showed it to some extent, too. Other changes stem from the directors own experiences within the ghetto of Krakow, as Roman Polański, himself of Jewish heritage, lived there before escaping in 1943.[121]

The Pianist was internationally well-acclaimed, something that is evident from the numerous Academy Awards and other prestigious accolades it received. The film can be seen as a Polish step towards the global memory culture. Similarly, in 2007 the film *Jutro Idziemy do Kina* (*Tomorrow We Go to the Cinema*) tackles the theme of disillusionment in the early days of the war. The film makes a point of establishing that Jews will face terrible times if the war is lost, which feels suitable for a film that follows a more internationally accepted narrative. The real emphasis and theme of this film, however, is how this young generation is cheated out of their hopes and dreams and how the Poles are ambushed, with the Jews' troubles as a side note. This film was planned for Poland, and not necessarily for international success like *The Pianist*, explaining such a big contrast.[122]

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[120] Goldsmith, and others, *The Encyclopedia of Musicians and Bands on Film* 218-231.
[121] Goldsmith, and others, *The Encyclopedia of Musicians and Bands on Film* 218-231.
[122] This film can be accessed through the platform DailyMotion; Miasto, *Jutro Idziemy do Kina*, https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x8x4jzm (accessed 08-11-2024).

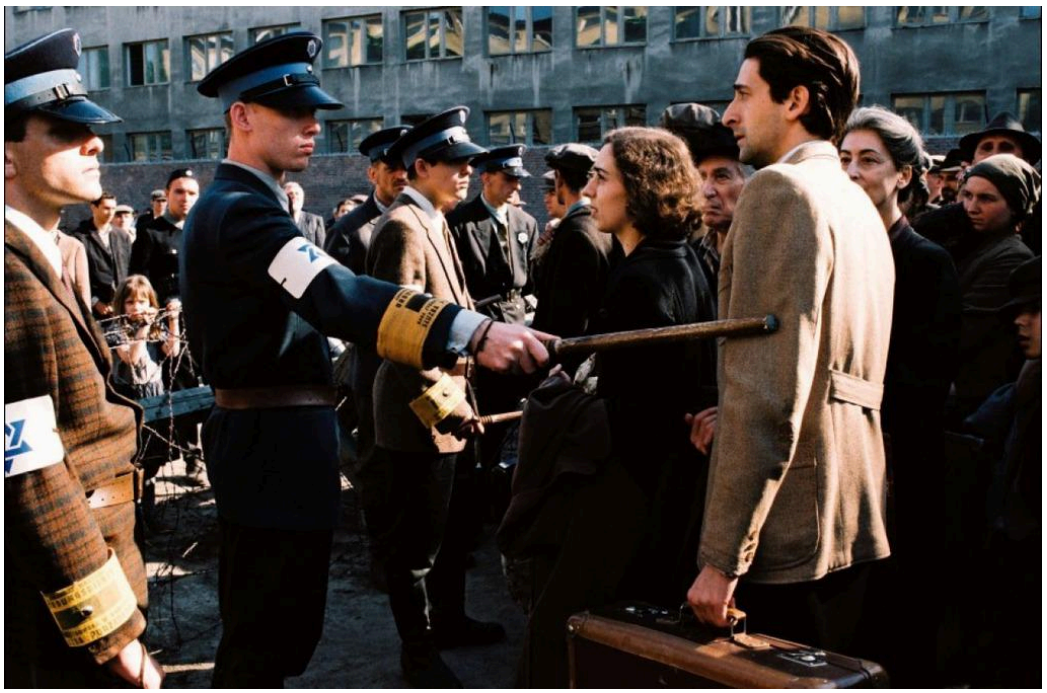

Illustration VI: The portrayal of the Jewish Police in *The Pianist.*[123]

The Zone of Interest (2023)[124]

The compelling aspect about *The Zone of Interest* is how the film, though it takes place at the literal camp of Auschwitz during the war years, does not show events or aggression typically associated with the Holocaust. Blink-and-you-miss-it moments tell about the genocide going on in the back ground, with sometimes more on the nose references, but the true situation in the Auschwitz camp is not shown. An example would be the wife of camp commandant Höss trying on a fur coat, and finding a used lipstick in the pocket. The implication is later fully confirmed when she discusses the possibility of shopping in *Kanada* with other wives of SS-officers, which is the infamous nickname of the section in the Auschwitz camp where the belongings of new inmates were sorted. If one were to watch this cinematic piece without any prior knowledge on the Holocaust, one might think it is a boring movie on a somewhat rich family with the strange inclusion of soldiers and sometimes uncanny screams in the background. The movie calls upon the knowledge and the imagination of its viewers in such scenes. The only 'conflict', if one were to call it that, that drives the plot is the fact that the

[123] Image retrieved through: Unifrance, *The Pianist*, https://en.unifrance.org/movie/22213/the-pianist (accessed 04-11-2024).
[124] As *The Zone of Interest* is, like *The Pianist,* is not in the public domain, this movie is not available on free, legal, platforms. I accessed the movie through payment on YouTube Films; *The Zone of Interest,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzcLiOFzKTE (accessed 16-10-2024).

patriarch is being transferred to a different working location, whilst his wife protests as she enjoys their living situation in Oświęcim (which they call Auschwitz).

Within the movie, a (presumably) Polish girl is shown to hide food for prisoners. No Polish people supporting the Nazis can be found. The Höss family does employ Polish maids, yet these girls do not seem to enjoy their work or like their bosses. Prisoners are not necessarily portrayed as Jewish; in fact, prisoners are barely included in the film. Jews are talked about; the majority of prisoners are regarded as Jewish by the Höss family. They would not let these Jewish prisoners in their house for work, as they consider Jews the root of all evil. There is no scene humanizing this situation, unlike in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjama's* (2008), in which a prisoner working in the house is seen to help one of the injured children of the camp commandant. This film is far more bleak. The portrayal of the Germans is uncanny and reminiscent of Hannah Arendt's *The Banality of Evil*; though they live next to a factory of death, they seem to have a normal family life. They pay no attention to the screams, to the gunshots, or to the presumed smell of the chimneys. They are not, however, truly humanized as they show no empathy for the prisoners (though they seem fully aware of what is going on inside the camps' gates). Furthermore, Höss is shown to cheat on his wife and she herself is portrayed as incredibly mean to her Polish maids, subtly reminding us that Poles are victims. The SS treat the annihilation of Hungary's Jews with the same emotion one might expect of any other bureaucratic or logistic issue.

Whether the success of this film can be contributed to the fact that it barely shows Jewish suffering is impossible to gauge. However, it offers an intriguing perspective through which to portray the Holocaust. The film is built on the assumption that its viewers will understand what is going on in the background. Apparently the audience understood, as the film has countless nominations for- and wins of prestigious accolades such as (but not even limited to) the Academy Awards, Golden Globes, and British Academy Film Awards. The movie strived for historical accuracy to avoid dramatization or sensationalism; its makers did much research into the location and what the life of the Höss family must have been like.[125] The Polish identity of this movie should receive a bit of a side note; though it was made possible thanks to countless Polish contributors and the Polish Film Institute, the movie came to be as a collaboration between Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. This, in combination with the similar origins *The Pianist* had, does indicate that Polish remembrance

[125] Youtuber Thomas Flight put some research into *The Zone of Interest* and even interviewed its sound designer, Johnnie Burn, for his video on the subject. This can be accessed through: Thomas Flight, *Why The Zone of Interest Does Not Let You See,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Orh20527gVI (accessed 18-10-2024).

culture is more and more participating in the globalization of memory culture. Nevertheless, the portrayal of key elements of Holocaust films, such as the role of the Nazis, the Jews, and the resistance, is in line with what is seen in previously discussed Polish films.

Illustration VII: The Höss family home garden bordering the Auschwitz concentration camp in *The Zone of Interest* during a pool party for the kids.[126]

Left Luggage (1998)[127]

Left Luggage is a bit of an anomaly compared to the other discussed films. Though this cinematic work does comment on the Holocaust and its aftermath, the actual 1940s are not shown at all. The story takes place in the 1970s, and all comments on the Holocaust are made through characters. Flashback scenes are not used, unlike in *The End of Our World*, but it does discuss trauma in a similar fashion; Through Chaya's roommate, comments are made on how one has to have a personal connection to understand this particular trauma. The film is a collaboration between the Netherlands, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, explaining the English title and the usage of English as the language of the film (though most actors are native Dutch speakers).

[126] Image retrieved through: Noa Johannes (NPO 3), *Review The Zone of Interest: wat is er zo briljant, gruwelijk en gewaagd aan deze oorlogsfilm?* https://npo.nl/npo3/film-en-serie/reviews/review-the-zone-of-interest (accessed 04-11-2024).
[127] This movie can be found on YouTube in two parts; Nostalgie TV: *Left Luggage deel 1,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_OphueGieA&t=2748s and Nostalgie TV: *Left Luggage deel 2,* *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TzYppinRM-s&t=1680s* (both accessed 04-11-2024).

Because of the interesting nature of this movie, it mostly deals with memory of the Holocaust and with the trauma it brought about. The story follows a young Jewish girl, Chaya, who lives in Antwerp. Chaya is modern and does not pay much attention to her heritage, though her parents lived through the war. Being a poor philosophy student, she takes a job as a nanny for a strict Jewish (Hasidic) family. The trauma of her parents and the family she works for are explored; immense frustration pesters them. Her mother and father are in conflict whether they should actively remember and talk about their horrible experiences and lost loved ones, or try to act as if nothing happened. Moreover, modern antisemitism is shown extensively; from an awfully rude concierge and an ignorant roommate to even Nazi-inspired graffiti in the area where many Jews live. The Jews are shown to be divided; either by how they deal with the trauma of their people, or by their degree of religion. The Jewish characters have stereotypical Jewish names, which makes sense especially for the Hasidic family. This movie does not portray Nazis in any way, but when talked about the war they are referred to as 'they', and not as specifically Germans (which is the politically correct phrasing to use, especially for a film produced in 1998).[128] There is no real comment on the resistance within the occupied countries, but Chaya's father survived the Holocaust through hiding which implies help. Nevertheless, the people of Antwerp are not shown to be particularly fond of their Jewish neighbors.

The movie expresses critical views on the division amongst Jews in the 1960s and 1970s. Next to that, Chaya's boyfriend, whom she dumps early into the story, is an active Communist. He is shown to be lazy, dirty, and boring. Though idealism is shown to be positive, Communism is frowned upon by the film.

[128] This happens about thirty minutes into the film.

Illustration VIII: The young Hasidic boy Chaya babysits and antisemitic graffiti in a scene of *Left Luggage*.[129]

Grenzeloos Verraad / Betrayal (2023)[130]

This film, which was made for both a Dutch and an international market, repeats the practice of making the collaborating Dutch person half German, but this time in reverse, by making the nice German half Dutch. The story follows the character of Ludwig Mengelberg, who is a lieutenant in the Wehrmacht and from Dutch descent. After being dismissed from the Eastern front, he finds himself near the Dutch-German border on the brink of liberation by the allies sometime in 1945. Here he discovers the local farm harbors Jews, whom he decides not to arrest to prevent any more bloodshed. He falls in love with one of the Jewish women in hiding, a plot point that was originally meant to be central to the story but mostly abandoned during production, leading to a bit of a directionless narrative. The overall story is based on true events, allegedly, which was one of the big focus points in its promotional campaign and in the opening of the film.[131] Absence of evidence should not be seen as evidence of absence, but I was unable to find a story similar to that of Mengelberg, leading me to believe the true

[129] Still from 48 minutes and 48 seconds into the film, the screen capture was taken from YouTube in Nostalgie TV, *Left Luggage deel 1*.
[130] This film can be accessed through YouTube Films, but is behind a paywall. Dutch FilmWorks, *Grenzeloos Verraad trailer (2023) | Nu beschikbaar op VOD,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qucWZF7YtNw (accessed 04-11-2024). The literal translation would be *Betrayal without Borders* but the movie is internationally known as *Betrayal.* An alternative title that was mentioned for this film is *Verraderlijke Liefde* which would translate to *Treacherous Love.*
[131] The film is referred to as 'Based on a true story' and 'The true story of…' in (promotional) articles released before, and after its release.

events the movie is allegedly based on are solely the military operations of Operation Amherst that take place in the B-plot of the film.

A strong distinction between the Wehrmacht and the SS is made to justify Mengelberg as the likable protagonist; the Wehrmacht is barely responsible for bloodshed, and if they are, it is only because the war or the SS required them to follow orders. The SS is depicted as stereotypical movie villain-esque Nazis; racist, ugly, and morbid. The Jewish characters in hiding have stereotypical Jewish names; Levi, Zarah, and Zelda. They do not know what happened to their deported family, but they fear the worst. One harmful stereotype is supported in the film; when they are discovered the response of Levi, who also looks eerily similar to a Jewish stereotype, is to attempt to bribe Mengelberg with his money. Lastly the resistance is peculiar in the film; the farmers harboring Jews do not consider themselves part of the resistance per say, but work closely with them. The resistance movement themself is portrayed as harsh but righteous. The movie ends with a statement by one of the Jewish characters about how inspiring the resistance and Mengelberg were to her.

Overall mediocre acting and an overly dramatized plot characterize the film. It had a small budget of 300 000 euro, for which it does a sublime job in effects, set design, and costumes.[132] It contributed to the oversaturation of the Holocaust film genre by neglecting to find an original angle to tackle this, frankly quite unoriginal, story. Its score on IMDB is a 5.3 out of ten, on MovieMeter a 2.3 out of five, and, presumably because of its lack of popularity and audience, the movie does not yet have a score on Rotten Tomatoes.[133] When looking at similar Dutch cinema from this period, films that focus on typical genocidal aspects of the war or on stories based on truth, such as *Het Verloren Transport* (2022, *The Lost Transport,* based on the story of the lost transport between Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt during the final days of the war) an interesting trend can be found; the portrayal of resistance does not seem necessary, the way the inclusion of a Jewish character seems necessary in films on the resistance.[134] In similar fashion, the popular television show *De Joodse Raad* (*The Jewish Council*, 2024), barely acknowledges resistance (and the resistance that is portrayed, is by

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[132] F. Dynko, *Polariserende Nederlandse oorlogsfilm morgenavond (25 november) te zien op televisie: 'Met veel passie gemaakt'* (24-11-2024) https://www.moviemeter.nl/nieuws/polariserende-nederlandse-oorlogsfilm-morgenavond-25-november-te-zien-op-televisie-met-veel-passie-gemaakt-16003 (accessed 27-11-2024).
[133] IMDB, *Betrayal,* https://www.imdb.com/title/tt9407558/ (accessed 22-10-2024), Dynko, *Polariserende Nederlandse oorlogsfilm morgenavond (25 november) te zien op televisie*, and Rotten Tomatoes, *Betrayal,* https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/betrayal_2023 (accessed 22-10-2024).
[134] This film can be accessed through YouTube Films, but is behind a paywall. September Film Production, *Het Verloren Transport*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsSnhLieS1Q (accessed 04-11-2024).

Jews themselves, returning their agency similarly to more modern Polish depictions of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising).[135] This is an interesting development compared to earlier portrayals.

Illustration IX: Early promotional poster for *Grenzeloos Verraad*, before the changing of the title, several rewrites, and a significant delay (partly due to the Covid-19 Pandemic).[136]

Soldaat van Oranje: De Musical (Soldier of Orange: The Musical, 2010-Present)

This analysis would not be complete if it did not at least mention the existence of *Soldaat van Oranje: De Musical,* which is the Netherlands' longest running musical to this date by a landslide. The musical has won virtually every prize it could in its run (2010-present). It

[135] This series can be watched through: NPO, *De Joodse Raad,* https://npo.nl/start/serie/de-joodse-raad/seizoen-1/de-joodse-raad_1 (accessed 04-11-2024).
[136] This poster was retrieved through the website of the person that also filmed the behind the scenes footage of *Grenzeloos Verraad*; N. Westerhof, *Veradelijke Liefde* https://www.nicowesterhof.nl/wip-verraderlijke-liefde (accessed 04-11-2024).

differentiates from the film. These differences are interesting to briefly take into account within this research, because even though they are not cinema, they do showcase different approaches to the topic with broadly the same story, which is a unique vantage point for comparison. The musical, as of today, has two versions: the original run (2010-2024) and the renewed (September 2024-present) version. Both will be discussed.

Within the first run of the musical, the way the story deals with the severity of the genocide on Jews is limited. The musical takes less time to establish characters, which makes sense when taking the art form into account. The musical only presents us one character of Jewish heritage; Bram Goudsmit. Aside from the fact that this name sounds Jewish, the identity of the character is thrown in the face at his introduction; he is presented as the son of the local rabbi right away, and aside from this his only real characterisation is his love for ballet. This hobby is presented awkwardly at first, but makes for quite the beautiful death scene when he is eventually killed by a fire squad, much in the same way as Jan in the film. Once more the Jewish representation in *Soldier of Orange* does not represent the fate of Dutch Jews accurately. Erik's love interest in the musical, Charlotte, who is a non-Jewish version of Esther, does end up in a concentration camp because of her endeavors within the resistance. Other forms of antisemitism are hardly shown, yet off-hand remarks are made. Bram is very much aware of Jews being killed in Germany before the war even breaks out in the Netherlands, showing the only Jewish character as the only one who truly cares about the fate of the Jewish people.

Starting September 2024, *Soldier of Orange: The Musical* altered its original script. The reasons for this are various; the technical aspects of the musical were by now outdated, and the musical received harsh critique over the years for its lack of diversity and its contribution to the Dutch resistance mythos. One of the aspects that the renewed musical set out to improve is the depth of character of Bram. On Instagram, one of the actors who portrays Bram explains how they strive to make the only Jewish character more representative and well-rounded.[137] Though Bram is still the only Jewish main character within the script, more attention is given within the new version to him and the persecution of Jews. Bram's character is still limited; his identity still mostly consists of ballet and being Jewish, but the dancing is made less awkward and elaborated upon slightly. Furthermore, his character is shown to be braver in the new version through small gestures and lines, and most

[137] From an Instagram post by the official Soldaat van Oranje de Musical Instagram account on August 28th 2024: @soldaatvanoranjedemusical, *Wat is er veranderd aan de rol van Bram?* https://www.instagram.com/p/C_N0_8LoaY7/ (accessed 22-10-2024).

of all, his much more blatant refusal to be saved from the firing squad by ratting out another friend. Whilst in the original version his death is mostly forgotten after the fact, it now seems to hunt the other characters. This is justified, as Bram was an important part of the group of friends. The new version also shows Jewish people (wearing yellow badges) being put on a deportation train, which is done hauntingly accurately for a musical production. The renewed version goes on to nuance the Dutch royal house; in the previous version queen Wilhelmina was shown as righteous and brave, this version highlights the fact that Jewish people felt abandoned by the queen during, and right after, the war. The character of Anton, who joins the NSB, is still half-German, but Dutch people collaborating is more highlighted as a possibility in small remarks, such as when Erik remarks '*Dutch policemen haunting Jews in razzia's*'.[138] The renewed musical gives more attention to Jewish suffering, Dutch collaboration, and mistakes by the royals, thereby challenging the resistance myth a little more compared to the original story. The overall plot is mostly the same, still mostly emphasizing Dutch resistance and bravery, albeit with small nuances.[139]

In 2024 a new competitor to *Soldaat van Oranje* reared its head; the musical titled *40-45* of Belgian origin. The script has been altered to suit Dutch audiences. This musical has a much more profound emphasis for the persecution of Jews, which makes for its main theme. It should be noted however, that *40-45* uses the genocide of Jews as a theme to profoundly show Dutch resistance, thereby contributing heavily to the Dutch resistance mythos once more. Furthermore, the musical makes crucial errors in its historical narrative. Small details could have been excused, but the musical portrays a Jewish girl in hiding even before the War broke out, as well as grave errors in the timeline of anti-Jewish measures. Whilst *Soldaat van Oranje* evidently did try to improve itself in regards to the portrayal of the Holocaust, *40-45* uses the events solely for its shock-value and to further the emphasis on the resistance, whilst it fails to understand important aspects, events, or the stupidity of their own historical inaccuracies.[140] This musical can be seen as a step back in the process of properly juxtaposing the conflicting truths in the Dutch Holocaust narrative.

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[138] To the attentive reader: the fact that Anton shares a name with the Nazi-supporting Dutchman from *Not in Vain* is probably a coincidence.

[139] The author of this thesis used to work in the restaurant affiliated to the musical, and thus attended the original version of the musical a couple of times between Januari 2019 and October 2020. The analysis of the renewed version is based on the afternoon performance of the musical of 25-09-2024, which the author attended.

[140] To write this part of the thesis, the author visited the afternoon performance of musical *40-45* on 12-10-2024.

Illustration X: Bram praying right before his execution in the renewed *Soldier of Orange: The Musical.*[141]

Polish and Dutch Cinema after *Schindler's List*

A divergence between the Polish and the Dutch filmmaking can be found in the globalization of memory culture, which the Dutch engaged in earlier (this became apparent sometime in the late 1980s), whilst the Polish only flirted with some of the ideas, like nuancing German characters. Around the 1980s international interest in the role of bystanders grew.[142] The Polish film industry and memory culture denied some notions of global memory culture, such as the internationally accepted Polish guilt as auxiliaries (to at least some extent) in the Holocaust. Dutch memory culture seems to come to terms with the nations' own role in the Holocaust, as is seen in the revisions of *Soldier of Orange* throughout the years. The Polish seemed to neglect this part of history as much as possible, with some understanding for it blooming after the fall of the Soviet influence. Some smaller, artsy film productions from the 1990s, for instance, show Polish post-war antisemitism, like the film *Pogrzeb Kartofla* (*Burial of Potatoes,* 1991).[143] During the same period, productions by well-known filmmakers can show defaming imagery of Jews and the heroism of Poles during the war, such as Wajda's *Wielki Tydzień* (*Easter Week,* 1995), in which barely any sympathy is created

[141] Still from promotional material of the official Soldaat van Oranje de Musical YouTube channel; Soldaat van Oranje de Musical: *Prachtige recensies voor de vernieuwde versie* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tl0UmXYzp_Q (accessed 04-11-2024).
[142] Van Vree, *Nederland en de herinnering aan de Jodenvervolging,* 303-352.
[143] Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows,* 313-356.

for the Jewish heroine, from whom Polish protectors risk their lives, providing an elaboration to the earlier discussed *Korczak*, in which Poles are portrayed are heroes too, but less attention is given to the portrayal of Jews.[144] Similar methods are employed in *Warszawa 5703* (1992) in which the Jewish main characters do not need Nazi interference to find their demise because they quibble too much amongst themselves, gaining no empathy from its viewers.[145] Such hopping about with the sensitive topic of the Holocaust was possible in Poland in the 1990s, but not in the Netherlands. In the 1990s, aside from the Dutch zest for ego-documents, interest in how survivors dealt with trauma can be found in Dutch films. Of course, the already discussed *Left Luggage* is an example of this, but as is *For My Baby* (also known as *Goodnight Vienna*, 1997, which is a Dutch production despite its English title), in which the son of a Holocaust survivor crossdresses to gain attention from his mother who mourns his sister who died in the Holocaust.[146] Whilst the Dutch memory culture mostly participated in the globally accepted narrative of the Holocaust, the influence of the PiS-government (especially in recent years) made the defamation of Poles by showcasing such events or practicing historical research that might bring to light Poland's darker past troublesome. No clear change can be seen (yet) since the installment of the new government in December 2023.

Aside from the expected languages such as German and maybe English, recent Dutch productions also make use of Dutch dialects, Russian, and French if the opportunity presents itself. Recent Polish films strive towards the logical usage of language, having German characters speak German, for instance, but strive less for multilingual productions. Other cultural differences would include the Dutch affection for nudity; Dutch films incorporate more (reference to) sexual intimacy and sometimes rape. This is not particularly relevant for the depiction of Holocaust films (though rape, the implication of rape, or the threat of rape are used in this regard), but it is noteworthy. After the success of sexscenes in especially *Turks Fruit* (and other influential films from the 1970s, such as *Soldier of Orange*), such scenes became almost mandatory (in literature and in film). This was perceived as liberating and appealing, with an element of shock value. This never seemed to fade from Dutch culture.[147]

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[144] Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows,* 313-356.
[145] Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows,* 313-356.
[146] Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows,* 313-356.
[147] Verstraten, *Dutch Post-war Fiction Film Through a Lens of Psychoanalysis*, 29-34.

Conclusion

The analysis reveals that Holocaust representation in Polish and Dutch cinema is not merely a reflection of historical events but an active site of negotiation between local and global memory politics and culture. Both Poland and the Netherlands have to deal with conflicting truths, with on one hand their (preferred) image as savers of the Jews, yet on the other hand the image of a nation in which Jewish neighbours were not safe. This preferred image is most prominently depicted in pre-*Schindler's List* cinema in both nations, but elements of it exist to this day.

Within Poland and the Netherlands the belief that what was happening to the Jews, would eventually happen to every non-German was prevalent during the war and in the early years after, as is present in the dialogue of films like *Border Street* and *Not in Vain.* Both nations' historical narratives reflect biases, emphasizing heroism and innocence while neglecting their antisemitic pasts. Polish history writing and media tends to focus on their own suffering, thereby often neglecting what happened to the Jews and how Poles were compliant in the genocide that came to be known as the Holocaust. The Dutch tend to focus on the heroism of the resistance and use the Holocaust as a means to portray this heroism, whether historically justifiable or not. These conflicting truths depend somewhat on personal wartime experience, but also on remembrance politics and culture. The neglect of the darker past is not necessarily denial, but the selected focus does influence the self-image, which in turn influences the chosen focus in films as well.

For Polish memory culture, one could be antisemitic and still a good patriot, yet in the Netherlands this type of discrimination was synonymous with being a Nazi. Another distinction can be found in the portrayal of the nation as a whole; Polish films often depicted Poland as a (mentally) defeated nation, whilst the Dutch cinema portrayed the Netherlands as not lost, as long as resistance prevailed. For Poles, extensive portrayal of resistance was troublesome in Stalinist times, whilst in the Netherlands the resistance was vital in the memory of the Second World War, resulting in the myth that virtually all Dutch were part of the resistance, with only a few bad apples collaborating with the occupiers. The Holocaust became a utensil in such storytelling; when Jews are depicted, they are helped by good Poles or by Dutch resistance fighters. This resistance is often well organised in the media, even if they were not in real life. Identity politics are also visible in the discussed films; both the Polish and Dutch cinema are guilty of cleansing their people of the sin of collaboration by making the agitators part German (as is the case in *Border Street* and *Soldier of Orange*).

Interestingly *The End of Our World* and *Left Luggage* deal similarly with the theme of trauma, even though they are far removed in time and location.

Ego documents were popular in the Netherlands. Such personal accounts of wartime experience have much potential for movie adaptations, a good example of this is *The Diary of Anne Frank*. International Holocaust films found success in the Netherlands, partly due the small size of its own film industry. The Dutch moved towards a more internationally accepted view on the Holocaust, partly because of this, especially from the late 1980s onward, yet clinged to their local resistance mythos in their own works. This transition, as well as a further removal from the war by time, did provide more nuanced views in which Dutch could be guilty of collaboration or in which German characters could be betrayed as more nuanced instead of undisputed evil. This transition towards an international narrative was different for Poland; the Soviet influence limited cultural exchange. *Schindler's List* found global success and influenced (Holocaust) cinema immensely. After its release, more international collaborations are seen, such as *The Pianist*, *The Zone of Interest*, *Left Luggage,* and various modern adaptations of Anne Frank's diary. The partly Polish film *The Pianist*, which was released after *Schindler's List*, already provided a vastly different view on the Holocaust than *Korczak* did only twelve earlier. *The Pianist* showed steps towards the global narrative, but the subsequent influence of the PiS-party made the nuanced portrayal of Poles involved in antisemitism more troublesome, especially in academics. In Poland, memory politics had a bigger influence than in the Netherlands, where memory culture dominates. Though *The Zone of Interest* still has elements of the narrative of Polish victimhood and righteousness, its cinematic culture seems to shift more towards the global narrative. Recent developments in the Netherlands do indicate a growing understanding for the severity of (contemporary) antisemitism, and how the Holocaust did not end with the liberation of the camps (this is particularly evident in the rewriting of *Soldier of Orange: The Musical*). Nevertheless the Dutch seem to grow guilty of participating in the international practice of making less respectful, uninformed exploitative ventures with productions like *Betrayal* and *40-45*. These two examples even indicate that it still is common practice for the Dutch to focus on their guilt-free resistance mythos, rather than the nuanced view of their own apathy towards- or even complicity in the Holocaust.

One could argue that comparing the Netherlands to an Eastern-European country, instead of the traditionally chosen France or Belgium, contributes to the resistance mythos and the cleansing of Dutch conscience by comparing this relatively worse Western-Europan country to one of the nations where Jews (and other people) were arguably treated the

absolute worst. The argumentation, the historical facts, and the provided nuance presented in this thesis speak for themselves, showing this is not the intent. In a follow-up research, it would be compelling to take other media than films into account more than the constraints of this thesis allowed me to do. While this research focused on Poland and the Netherlands, future studies could expand to other nations to explore broader European trends in Holocaust representation.

As the Holocaust recedes further into history, the role of cinema in preserving its memory becomes ever more vital—not only as a medium for reflection but as a site where history, culture, and politics intersect. Cultural historians must recognize the significant influence of film on memory and narrative construction.

Notes

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Figure created by Morgane-Fleur Monpert, commissioned by the author, November 2024.

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David Calhoun's blog, *Schindler's List (1993) (Top 100 Films),* (posted January 2016) https://www.davidbcalhoun.com/2016/schindlers-list-1993-top-100-films/ (accessed 19-11-2024).

Illustration III: The portrayal of German characters in Border Street

YouTube; Gianluca Fantoni, *Border Street (Ulica Graniczna), by Aleksander Ford, 1948, with English Subtitles* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzFAZXmhaiY&t=1535s (accessed 01-12-2023).

Illustration IV: The moving to the Ghetto as per Korczak

Romeo Alfa, *Korczak 1990 HD English Subtitles* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zICEzFgSPI&t=2600s (accessed 14-12-2023).

Illustration V: The romanticization of the Dutch resistance in Soldier of Orange

S. Raatgever, *Het Parool 06-12-2020, ''*Soldaat van Oranje: 'Nog steeds de grootste film ooit gemaakt in ons land'", https://www.parool.nl/kunst-media/soldaat-van-oranje-nog-steeds-de-grootste-film-ooit-gemaakt-in-ons-land~b337a79d/?referrer=https://www.google.com/ (accessed 04-11-2024).

Illustration VI: The portrayal of the Jewish Police in The Pianist

Unifrance, *The Pianist*, https://en.unifrance.org/movie/22213/the-pianist (accessed 04-11-2024).

Illustration VII: The Höss family home garden bordering the Auschwitz concentration camp in The Zone of Interest

Noa Johannes (NPO 3), *Review The Zone of Interest: wat is er zo briljant, gruwelijk en gewaagd aan deze oorlogsfilm?* https://npo.nl/npo3/film-en-serie/reviews/review-the-zone-of-interest (accessed 04-11-2024).

Illustration VIII: The young Hasidic boy Chaya babysits and antisemitic graffiti in a scene of Left Luggage.

Nostalgie TV: *Left Luggage deel 1,* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_OphueGieA&t=2748s (accessed 04-11-2024).

Illustration IX: Early promotional poster for Grenzeloos Verraad.

N. Westerhof, *Veradelijke Liefde* https://www.nicowesterhof.nl/wip-verraderlijke-liefde (accessed 04-11-2024).

Illustration X: Bram praying right before his execution in the renewed Soldaat van Oranje de Musical
Soldaat van Oranje de Musical: ***Prachtige recensies voor de vernieuwde versie***
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tl0UmXYzp_Q (accessed 04-11-2024).

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