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Abstract

This is a book review of *Historical Dictionary of Holocaust Cinema*, by Robert C. Reimer and Carol J. Reimer. (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2012), and "Holocaust Movies," by Guy Matalon, in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*, edited by William L. Blizek. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013). Previously published as *The Continuum Companion to Religion and Film*, 2009.

Author Notes

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Historical Dictionary of Holocaust Cinema, by Robert C. Reimer and Carol J. Reimer. (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2012).

“Holocaust Movies,” by Guy Matalon, in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*, edited by William L. Blizek. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013). Previously published as *The Continuum Companion to Religion and Film*, 2009.

The most prominent message in reviewing the works by Matalon and Reimer & Reimer is that one must carefully weigh the significance of cinematic genre while trying to comprehend the history of the Holocaust. Most references pertaining to this matter begin with the discussion of how filmmakers and their reviewers grapple with the issue of creating Holocaust film. There is almost an apologetic preface among these and other reviewer sources. Both Matalon and Reimer & Reimer, among others, default to sentiments such as this by Elie Weisel: “I who was there do not understand.”¹ How is it possible to create a film about the Holocaust if even those who were there cannot comprehend?

Clearly, as demonstrated in the works that will be reviewed here and as observed in numerous other sources, utmost respect must be given to the subject matter. Reimer & Reimer quote Wiesel from Robert Franciosi’s - *Elie Wiesel: Conversations*, “the opposite of history is not myth but forgetfulness.”² Although it is practically impossible to create imagery that might reflect the occurrences of this murderous time, we must find a way to retell the history. That has been the task of filmmakers, and the critique of those who review their work. Within the *Introduction* of the *Historical Dictionary*, Reimer & Reimer continue to reference Wiesel’s thoughts, “After all, think about it: Auschwitz as entertainment, a docudrama. There’s something wrong with that.” In the same interview he adds: “The paradox is we cannot tell the story, and yet it must be told.”³ Film reviews have referenced this message from Wiesel almost as a license for permission to create film. The challenge is whether cinema has fulfilled the task?

Similarly, Matalon utilizes comments by Wiesel from Annette Insdorf's *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* when trying to come to terms with his own review of a variety of films,

“...what is unsayable? The image perhaps? Can it be more accessible, more malleable, more expressive than the word? Can I admit it? I am wary of one as of the other. Even more of the image. Of the filmed image, of course. One does not imagine the unimaginable. And in particular, one does not show it on screen.”⁴

Throughout his reviews, Matalon carefully weighs how the images have represented what is indescribable. In principal, it seems, Matalon scrutinizes whether the filmmaker has incorporated who the film is about (Jews in the Holocaust) and whether the message has been delivered.

The process of reviewing the vast collection of Holocaust film from the period prior to World War II's end until today is daunting. Countless resources on this topic have been written and numerous categories have been attached to the decades of film. All who have created film have faced the challenge of representing a history which is impossible to replicate.

In “Holocaust Movies” Matalon defines various genres of Holocaust film as well as schools of thought within the field. In surveying film in this way, Matalon categorizes sections of cinema selection, while reflecting on Wiesel's inference of how challenging it is to represent the Holocaust in this medium.

It is interesting to note that in the introduction of Matalon's article, the word "Holocaust" is not capitalized. Paradoxically, the *Historical Dictionary of Holocaust Cinema* defines the word, "holocaust."

"The word "holocaust," when preceded by a definite article and written with an uppercase *H*, refers to the Nazis' ultimate pogrom against the Jews and their program to annihilate the Jewish people and their culture in Europe."⁵

This leads the reader to wonder why the "h" is not capitalized when the Holocaust is the subject of the film and the reason for creating the films. This is an additional phenomenon of the sensitivity of the subject matter and how "sacred" references are to the material.

Matalon inspects the genre of Holocaust film by arranging the works into four categories. The first grouping in the article is Post Liberation films. While he mentions numerous films in this Post Liberation genre, Matalon suggests that *Night and Fog (Nuit et brouillard)* (1954) is the beginning of the "Holocaust" film genre. *Night and Fog*, a powerful French documentary short about the horrors of the concentration camps exposes the truth about the death of millions. Reimer & Reimer, on the other hand, begin their discussion with many titles within a category called "The Holocaust and Pre-1945 Films" mentioning numerous films that had been produced up to 1945 with content that treated some of the topics dealing with the Holocaust, such as anti-Semitism and propaganda. Most of the brief film reviews by Matalon in this category show that the content often "fails to address the Jewishness of the Holocaust and particularly the effect of the war on Jewish survivors."⁶ This point is also noted in the review of films in the *Dictionary* which will be discussed later in greater detail.

The next category referenced by Matalon in “Holocaust Movies” is titled Hollywood Melodramas. He mentions films such as *The Diary of Anne Frank*(1959), *Exodus*(1960), and *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961). The author suggests this category to be composed of popular cinematic techniques of the day and well-known actors such as Paul Newman and Spencer Tracy. The use of these elements creates a dramatic narrative to the historical reference as well as supplements of memorable musical scores that often accompany the films.

Hollywood Melodrama is followed by television network documentaries and interview films documenting personal interviews. These films began to appear not only in the US but in other countries such as Israel and the United Kingdom.⁷ Matalon does not, however, mention the popular miniseries *Holocaust: The Story of the Family Weiss* (1978), which Reimer & Reimer view as “a turning point in raising Holocaust awareness to new level.”⁸ During this period, a number of years following the Eichmann trial in Israel, acknowledgement of the horrors of the Holocaust was much more prevalent.

There were other influences that brought the history of the Holocaust to the forefront in the late 70s and early 80s. Holocaust deniers were surfacing and survivors began to find their voice to give testimony after two decades of silence. Neo-Nazis threatened to march in Skokie, Illinois in the late 1970s, and in active response, Chicago-area survivors joined together to form the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois, which has since become the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center.⁹ In addition, as cinematic themes were focused more on indescribable concentration camp experiences, plans for a US national museum honoring and commemorating the Holocaust began.

On November 1, 1978, President Jimmy Carter established the *President's Commission on the Holocaust*, and charged it with the responsibility to submit a report on three significant issues: the creation of an appropriate memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust; the feasibility of creating and maintaining a memorial through contributions by the American people; and recommendations for appropriate ways the nation could commemorate Days of Remembrance each year for victims of the Holocaust.¹⁰

This movement to deal with Holocaust as collective memory through education, memorial and survivor testimony changed the way the world observed the topic. A parallel result is the way film treated the subjects, attempting to find truth in the historical story but also pushing the limits.

Matalon groups the last category of films as European-made Post Realist films. The author's descriptions are choices not reviewed in the *Historical Dictionary*, although a few are mentioned in the extensive Filmography listing of the *Dictionary*. Matalon concludes that European Art Films "provide an aesthetic profile that was later adopted by Hollywood."¹¹ Here, he mentions a variety of films that embrace dramatic story lines, sexual undertones, and stretch the genre as well as the historical context. The doors then opened, in his opinion, to a host of well-known icons of Hollywood produced films that have been the basis for extensive review and critique in the field. Among these films are *Sophie's Choice* (1982), *Jacob the Liar* (1999), *The Grey Zone* (2001), and *The Pianist* (2002).

Matalon raises a number of issues with the ever popular *Schindler's List* saying these questions “must be addressed in evaluating Holocaust films.”¹² Clearly, Matalon is dissatisfied with the popularization and praise *Schindler's List* acquired. He debates four points in his review:

- Is it possible to make entertainment out of the single most devastating event of the 20th century?
- How does fictional narrative distort historical accuracy and what is the significance behind this change?
- What does the viewer understand when the film is portrayed through the eyes of the perpetrator and not the victim?
- How can the director or historian provide an image of the unimaginable?¹³

There have always been issues surrounding the portrayal of the Holocaust in film. What is the right approach? Critics place importance on truthful story lines and accurate representation of historical fact. Matalon's article, more so than the *Historical Dictionary*, shows great caution on the side of any fictionalized representation of historical truth, especially in his review of *Schindler's List*.

Matalon grapples with the genres that he has identified and refers to Wiesel's questions of how film should represent the events of the Holocaust. He suggests that those from the school of thought who do not believe in depicting the Holocaust through feature film are more inclined to accept documentary film as long as it represents the facts correctly. Matalon continually questions film representation saying “if the Holocaust is a unique event and hence

incomprehensible then the Holocaust is mystical and irrelevant. That is, unless it was experienced there is no point in attempting to understand it.” At the same time, Matalon argues that even when historical fact is absent in a feature film this does not necessarily mean that the viewer cannot understand or learn what happened in a particular place or situation during the period of the Holocaust.¹⁴

In “Holocaust Movies,” Matalon also discusses four main schools of thought regarding Holocaust film:

1. Depicting the Holocaust through art (and film) is obscene.
2. Trivializing the Holocaust through popular film is an issue – but the “disappearance of the Holocaust from the Western cultural discourse and memory is a more acute problem.”
3. Questioning the assumption that Holocaust films must portray the Holocaust as realistically as possible.
4. Recognizing that ordinary conventions used in cinema to depict the Holocaust are insufficient – need for a new style.

Additionally, Matalon refers to those who partake in “unlimited artistic license” as a threat to the memory of the Holocaust. He references Hilene Flazbaum in the concern that even popular film such as *Schindler’s List* can “run perilously close to Holocaust denial.”¹⁵ Once the facts are fictionalized, is it possible to prove the past?

Contrary to Matalon and Flazbaum’s thoughts about *Schindler’s List*, Reimer & Reimer comment in the *Introduction* of their book that, “of 40-plus narrative films, *Schindler’s List* (1993) stands out for its phenomenal commercial and critic success...it helped elevate the

importance of the Holocaust in school curriculum as much as the miniseries *Holocaust* had done in 1978.”¹⁶ Commercial success, according to Reimer & Reimer led to the study of the Holocaust in school classrooms. A new era of teacher education and preparation for teaching the topic resulted in the popularity of *Schindler’s List*.

Matalon includes the *Grey Zone* as a film influenced by the European Art Films that provide an “aesthetic profile later adopted by Hollywood.”¹⁷ His focus is that the film is based on the true story of the Sonderkommando uprising in Auschwitz-Birkenau. He does not necessarily discuss how the character of the film is applied to his choice of categorization. Reimer & Reimer, on the other hand, begin their discussion on the film as “arguably one of the bleakest films of the Holocaust ever made, both because the movie focuses almost entirely on the genocide and the killings taking place in a death camp and because of its major theme, that man will do anything to survive.”¹⁸

The title of the film is not discussed in either review but represents the evolution of the terminology and colloquiums that have crept into Holocaust vocabulary throughout the years by survivor and intellectual writer, Primo Levi.

“*The Drowned and the Saved*, Primo Levi’s last work published in 1986, is the fruit of 40 years of dialogue and reflection on the experience of the extermination. The questions and paradoxes raised, each central to a chapter and relating to the ‘upside-down world’ of the *Lager*, give Levi a chance to develop points of view and define extraordinarily fruitful interpretative tools. In particular, the concept of gray zone met with rising fortunes over the years because of its evocativeness and its originality, to such a degree

that it has entered common language and has been used in contexts very far from that for which it was proposed in the first place.”¹⁹

Reimer & Reimer explain that the film uses relayed events from the novelistic memoir by Miklós Nyiszli, *Auschwitz: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account*. There also had been a stage play of the aforementioned book by Blake Nelson, also the producer of the film *The Grey Zone*.

To better understand how this film can be recognized within the phase Matalon describes as Hollywood films which adopted “European Art Films” characteristics, Reimer & Reimer describe that although the film “relies heavily on dialogue, leaving much of the violence off-screen, there are a number of brutal scenes.”²⁰ They express how one of the film’s central themes is that humans are prepared to do anything to stay alive, and both authors reference the fact that the reason for the uprising was to stall the killing process of the Germans and to save lives.

Who were these Sonderkommando? The historical record notes that prior to the formal decision to implement the Final Solution, the first extermination camp, Chełmno was already opened on December 8, 1941. Thousands of Jews in the newly German occupied territories in the east had been slaughtered in the months prior to this by the Einsatzgruppen. SS commanders were looking for a more effective method to get rid of the Jews. In the camp, Jews were rounded up and killed by being enclosed in vans with deadly exhaust. Sonderkommando units, eventually made up of Jewish prisoners in Chełmno, were responsible for unloading and burial of the corpses, sorting through garments, and cleaning of the vans.²¹

Reimer & Reimer note that the Sonderkommando depicted in *The Grey Zone* were “a special unit, whose members, Hungarian Jews, (who) do the work the Nazis refuse to do.”²² The

film glorifies the benefits they receive for agreeing to do the work of the Sonderkommando in order to stay alive. Primarily, the gruesome job of Sonderkommando (in Sobibor, Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau) was forced work to empty the gas chambers of dead bodies and take them to the crematorium. Yehil explains that in 1944, during the mass transport and extermination of the Hungarian Jews, most of the Sonderkommando units were actually Jews from a number of different countries and social backgrounds. They knew the Nazis would ultimately send them to their death, as they were considered eyewitnesses to the murderous actions in the extermination camp.²³

This group of Sonderkommando had been involved with an international underground within Auschwitz who had planned a revolt to attempt to slow down the mass murder. The Sonderkommando unit went against the timeframe of the underground and moved forward with a revolt to blow up the crematorium in the beginning of October, 1944. They acquired explosives from four young women who smuggled the materials from their work in an ammunition factory inside Auschwitz. The men detailed their plans in the days prior to the uprising in diaries hidden near the crematoria and found after the war.²⁴

Following investigations into the revolt, the four women who supplied the explosives from the ammunition factory Roza Robota, Regina Safirsztajn, Ester Wajcblum and Ala Gertner were discovered, tortured and publically hanged in Auschwitz. Ala Gernter, who is mentioned in a recently written book by Ann Kirschner, *Sala's Gift*, alludes to letters written to Ann's mother, Sala prior to Ala's incarceration at Auschwitz.

The narrative of *The Grey Zone* incorporates the content of Miklós Nyiszli's memoir within the film, and takes the aesthetic profile adopted by Hollywood to adapt to the historical context. This is an example of how fragile and yet powerful films can influence the public.

Ultimately, Reimer & Reimer admit “Unlike in many Holocaust films, individual or collective acts of humanness or kindness could not save anyone. There is no Oskar Schindler or Raoul Wallenberg to come to the rescue, not even of one girl.”²⁵ Perhaps this is the beginning of a new era that forces even popular Hollywood film to look carefully at the portrayal of the Holocaust after decades of fictionalizing the hard facts. The historical content in *The Grey Zone* has been deflected, but the message that Jews were targeted for death in the Final Solution is the heart of the film.

Ultimately, there is a fine line when attempting to tell the story of the Holocaust through film and its various genre and schools of thought. The issue with film is that the audience begins to believe the truth of the film but is unaware of the historical truths. Who becomes responsible for preserving that truth?

The task that Reimer & Reimer took on to create this *Historical Dictionary* was tremendous. On one hand, it was necessary to identify the genre and categories that make up the enormous collection of Holocaust film. On the other hand, it was critical not only to bring a wealth of knowledge of Holocaust history to the task, but to take risks with critique and commentary within the dictionary entries. In order to accomplish these objectives, the additional components of the book, the *Editor’s Forward*, the *Preface* and *Introduction* are very significant, especially to those who will use the resource for Holocaust film research. They express their hope that this volume serves as a guide but also as a resource by which to ask questions for further research of Holocaust film.

The volume *Preface* prepares the reader for the overwhelming amount of film that has been created to come to terms with the systematic murder of millions of individuals by the Nazis.

“We have been selective in the films we chose to highlight in the dictionary but not limiting or one-sided. That is, we have included narrative feature films from the early 1940’s, before the extent of the Holocaust was widely known and acknowledged, and feature films made 70 years later, by which time the Holocaust has become a paradigm of universal suffering. From those 71 years spanning 1940 and 2011, we have chosen films that represent multiple genres...and documentaries.”²⁶

Understanding the choices made by Reimer & Reimer within this preface is critical to understanding what was included or excluded in the collection of work reviewed in the *Historical Dictionary*. This *Preface*, as the other preparatory sections in the book, are vital to understanding the complete work.

The *Chronology*, beginning in 1933, provides an historical time line of events within Germany and the rise of National Socialism through the end of World War II and up to 2011, providing some information on war crimes trials and other significant events that have a connection to the Holocaust. Woven into this section are film titles and reference to their openings or other information about the film. Many of the films mentioned in this section are reviewed within the *Historical Dictionary*, but others are not.

The eighteen page *Introduction* is a critical component to this *Historical Dictionary of Holocaust Cinema*. It is here that the authors approach the issue, mentioned earlier in the Matalon article, of whether it is morally correct to try to recreate images of the Holocaust. This section breaks down the chronology of Holocaust film history into five areas:

- “The Holocaust and Pre-1945 Films”
- “Immediate Postwar Years”
- “The Second Wave, 1950-1970”
- “The Third Wave, 1970-1990” and
- “1990-2011”

In the first section, “The Holocaust and Pre-1945 Films,” Reimer & Reimer note the documentation of the liberation of the camps and the fact that this material provided confirming news reels that had filtered out to the world toward the end of the war. They comment that “the filmic revelations compiled by the liberators of the camps were not the first acknowledgement in film of Nazi crimes; they were simply the first to show the result of Nazi policies against Jews.”²⁷ Articles and other documentation had been exposed prior to the end of the war, but the documented reality was shocking. This is surprising as Nazi propaganda film, news media and footage of the persecution of Jews in Germany was available to the outside world even before the war. Documentation from inside the ghettos and camps had been created as well. Reimer & Reimer do point out, however, that films that may have embraced the theme of pre-war Europe often ignored the topic of anti-Semitism or focused on individual stories rather than the plight of the Jews.

The specific details of two films in this section do reference acknowledgement of the mass murder of Jewish and others prior to the end of the war, an argument also made by Matalon in his review. *None Shall Escape* was directed by André Toth in 1944. This film depicts a war crimes trial prior to the end of the war and the accompanying Nuremberg trials. Also, *Hotel Berlin*, directed by Peter Godfrey in 1945 foretells of “a postwar political climate that will

require differentiation of Germans and Nazis.”²⁸ Neither of these films are reviewed formally in *The Dictionary*.

It is interesting that by 1944 a film was created about a war crimes tribunal even though no trials had been conducted following World War I. Although it was not unknown that Jews were murdered and there was knowledge of the camps, putting individuals on trial for the responsibility of a country had been dismissed after the Great War.

“ ‘Crimes against international law are committed by men, not by abstract entities, and only by punishing individuals who commit such crimes can the provisions of international law be enforced.’

These words are taken from the judgment of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg. This was the first attempt in modern times to hold accountable in criminal proceedings before an international tribunal the perpetrators of crimes against international law. An earlier attempt at the end of World War I to establish a Tribunal to try the Kaiser for “a supreme offence against international morality and the sanctity of treaties” had collapsed when the Dutch authorities refused to hand him over for trial. War crimes trials were held before the Supreme Court in Leipzig but these were before domestic courts and were described by one commentator as a ‘judicial farce.’ The record of domestic courts in enforcing international law has not been impressive.”²⁹

Hollywood is also referenced in this first section, although the theme of anti-Semitism took hold of some popular film which was delivered through humor. They viewed Hitler as a caricature and did not take the threats to the Jewish peoplehood seriously. Even Charlie Chaplin directed a

satire using Hitler and the National Socialists. Later Chaplin “conceded that, had he known the extent of Jewish suffering, he ‘could not have made fun of the homicidal insanity of the Nazis’.”³⁰

The Dictionary section of this work references numerous films in alphabetical order. Each annotation includes background information, filmmakers, and a synopsis of the film. In some cases, the authors offer thoughts on critical analysis of particular films. Upon reviewing the film entries, the reader is also able to see the recurring themes in the work of producers and directors. At the end of each annotation are names of films that have similar themes or subject matter. The content of the films takes on a wide variety of genres. They are internationally produced, documentary, known and less identifiable. The content includes material about the persecution of Jews, Roma, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals and the disabled.

The Dictionary notes numerous references to films dealing with the story of Anne Frank. Having these mentioned provides an interesting opportunity for comparison of the films, when they were made and how the version of the diary was dealt with in the films. Additionally, the Anne Frank story is one that appears throughout the seventy year history of Holocaust filmmaking. The content has been rewritten, rediscovered and retold in a variety of genre from different eras.

A brief mention in the *Bibliography* of Reimer & Reimer’s book addresses the documentary *A Film Unfinished* (2010). This film, though not reviewed within the *Historical Dictionary* itself, has a vitally important place in presenting documentary materials nearly seventy years after the war. Cinematic categories have been established, and efforts to replicate, retell and fictionalize the history of the Holocaust have been presented in countless films, some

mentioned in reviews of Matalon, Annette Insdorf, Judith E. Doneson (to mention a few) and now in Reimer & Reimer's *Historical Dictionary*.

An undiscovered reel explored in *A Film Unfinished* reveals raw, staged Nazi propaganda clips of the Warsaw Ghetto. The reel which had been separated from the rest of the 1942 Nazi propaganda footage filmed in the Warsaw Ghetto used to create films like *Warsaw Ghetto Documentary for BBC*³¹, was discovered by British film researcher, Adrian Wood, at an American army base. Directed by Yael Hersonski, the documentary using the disregarded footage confirms the meticulous recording of Nazi atrocities. How filmmakers use this materials can distort its intended creation.

“The Holocaust confronted humanity not only with inconceivable horrors, but also for the first time, with their systematic documentation. More than anything else, it is the photographic documentation of these horrors that has changed forever the way in which the past is archived. Atrocities committed by the Nazis were photographed more extensively than any evils, before or after. Yet since the war, these images, created by the perpetrators have been subjected to mistreatments: in the best of cases they were crudely used as illustrations of the many stories; in the worst, they were presented as straightforward historical truth.”³²

The delicate balance of producing a film to represent historical truth and utilizing intended propaganda film as fact or an example of this truth explains the continued struggle of creating and producing film about the Holocaust from the end of the war until today. With the discovery of these film outtakes, sometimes showing the Nazis themselves entering the camera shot, it can

be understood how film reviewers like Matalon and others are cautious in referencing the critical treatment in the making of Holocaust film. *A Film Unfinished* may very well represent a pivotal change in genre in Holocaust film-making. Discovery of this kind of documentation exemplifies comments from Elie Wiesel and the caution required in taking on the responsibility to tell about the Holocaust through film.

To reinforce the accuracy of *A Film Unfinished*, Reimer & Reimer mention how scenes in the film can be confirmed within the diary of Adam Czernakow, the leader of the Jewish Council or *Judenrat* in the Warsaw Ghetto. His testimony is eerily precise describing the scenes revealed in the documentary produced by Hersonski. One example of a seemingly “normal” (yet ludicrous) restaurant scene in the film was referenced (along with other descriptions) in Czernakow’s diary on May 19, 1942:

“In the morning at the Community (Jewish Council). The film-makers came to a Jewish restaurant. They ordered that food be served. Chance customers devoured everything with an enormous appetite, several thousand zlotys worth. Somebody telephoned the Council that the Community should foot the bill for the alleged costs... Czerwinski’s funeral took place at 4 P. M. It was filmed. The cemetery was visited by a provincial governor (staged)...On their way home the motorcade stopped at the abovementioned restaurant. The governor was astonished at the food which he found there. The movie people ordered a party to be arranged tomorrow in a private apartment. The ‘ladies’ are to wear evening dresses.”³³

Czerniakow's diary, although void of emotion about the scenes that had been carefully planned by Nazi filmmakers, are implicitly accurate and most likely recorded as such in the event that the Nazis commanding his leadership were to review his writing. What is not included in the journal is that there were no restaurants, rarely formal funerals being performed, children begging and dying in the streets of the ghetto, and if women were to wear evening dresses for a film scene, they had been promised either food rations or other benefits that they were probably not to receive even after their voluntary cameo in the Nazi propaganda film. *A Film Unfinished's* brief notation in the *Bibliography* of the *Historical Dictionary* might deserve greater attention of research of the film's significance.

The *Historical Dictionary of Holocaust Cinema* provides a solid overview of countless films produced in more than seventy years of the post-Holocaust era. Footnotes are not notated in the book, nor is an Index included in the resource. Reimer & Reimer do, however, include numerous Holocaust terms within *The Dictionary* section of the book, highlighting these terms when used in other sections of the resource.

Reimer & Reimer's book *Introduction* and *Bibliography* are essential additions to the body of the *Historical Dictionary* and should not be overlooked when utilizing the resource. The *Bibliography* provides important suggestions of general usefulness in getting started on researching films, warning against open-source websites that might falsify facts or contain errors. They encourage the reader to utilize their resource as a starting point, or as one of many resources when researching Holocaust film. Among others, they reference Ilan Aivisar's *Screening the Holocaust: Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable*. They note that he:

“...addresses the ethical questions raised when literature and film popularize the Holocaust. As a believer in ‘the singularity of the Holocaust reality,’ Avisar insists that ‘any treatment of the Holocaust is obligated to commemorate the sufferings of the victims with dignity and compassion, and to understand its monumental injustice to the Jewish People.’”³⁴

Reimer & Reimer reinforce their message to the researcher to take responsibility when studying Holocaust cinema and to support their work with solid resources and factual materials.

In conclusion, the article, *Holocaust Movies*, by Dr. Guy Matalon in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film* and the recently published book, *Historical Dictionary of Holocaust Cinema* by Robert C. Reimer and Carol J. Reimer, are two resources that provide a critical look at the genre and categories by which Holocaust film can be observed. Both resources provide an important caution to the reader to be aware of the complicated rationale in producing a film about the Holocaust and to be aware of the nuances of how easily the history of the Holocaust can be subjected to false information.

Matalon provides a sense of critique within his article in reference to how the content of films dealing with the Holocaust must directly reference the fact that Jews were primarily the target of Nazi racial ideology. Although Reimer & Reimer also make this point, more critique of specific fictionalization of some of the films is sometimes lacking in their review and therefore might be misleading for the researcher. The end of the entry in the annotation of *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, for example, states: “At the end of the film, when the camera focuses on the closed gas chamber door, behind which Bruno has died, viewers may be moved to tears more at Bruno’s death than by outrage at the death of millions of Jews.”³⁵ Is this statement strong enough for the reader to ask important questions about the content of this film?

There is a fine balance to viewing and reviewing the vault of Holocaust film available to the public today. The topic is fascinating and requires taking risk and responsibility when dealing with the topic.

¹ Judith E. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film* (USA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1987), 5 quotes Wiesel from George Steiner, *Language and Silence* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 16.

² Robert C. Reimer and Carol J. Riemer, *Historical Dictionary of Holocaust Cinema* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2012), 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Guy Matalon, "Holocaust Movies," in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film*, ed. William L. Blizek (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013). Previously published as *The Continuum Companion to Religion and Film*, 2009, 237.

⁵ Reimer and Reimer, 87.

⁶ Matalon, 232.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Reimer and Reimer, 9.

⁹ "About the Museum," The Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, http://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/pages/about_the_museum/2.php.

¹⁰ "History of the United States Holocaust Memorial Musieum," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005782>

¹¹ Matalon, 234.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Reimer and Reimer, 14.

¹⁷ Matalon, 235.

¹⁸ Reimer and Reimer, 77.

¹⁹ From *On the "Grey Zone"*- The International Primo Levi Studies Center, http://www.primolevi.it/Web/English/Instruments/The_Center

²⁰ Reimer and Reimer, 78

²¹ Leni Yehil, *The Holocaust: The Fate of European Jewry* (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House Ltd., 1987), 321.

²² Reimer and Reimer, 78.

²³ Yehil, 483, 486.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Reimer and Reimer, 79.

²⁶ Ibid.,xiii.

²⁷ Ibid., 3.

²⁸ Ibid., 4.

²⁹ Charles Garraway, "Courts and Tribunals" in *Crimes of War*, <http://www.crimesofwar.org/a-z-guide/courts-and-tribunals>.

³⁰ Reimer and Reimer, 4.

³¹ "Warsaw Ghetto Documentary for BBC," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, http://resources.ushmm.org/film/display/detail.php?file_num=4648. Includes 1942 German propaganda footage shot in the Warsaw Ghetto. It details the daily struggle to survive the Warsaw Ghetto, including scenes of poor sanitation, smuggling food from outside, beggars, Jewish Police and the ghetto prison, deportations, collaboration, and resistance.

³² "About the film," *A Film Unfinished*, <http://www.afilmunfinished.com/film.html>.

³³ Raul Hilberg, Stanislaw Staron, and Josef Kermisz, eds., *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow, Prelude to Doom* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1968), 355-366.

³⁴ Reimer and Reimer, 206.

³⁵ Reimer and Reimer, 41.

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