CHILD PROTAGONISTS IN THE POST-MILLENNIUM HOLOCAUST MOVIES AS HETEROTOPIC MEMORY SITES

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Abstract: This paper tries to analyze child protagonists in post-millennium holocaust films as a heterotopic memory site. It views juvenile characters in holocaust films from a pedagogical position by examining the role assumed, the image projected, and the way they embody the plurality and performativity within collective memory. It ponders over their functions and how they are dynamically revised and reformed in this twenty-first century, producing mediated memory that reflects the ethical dilemmas of victims. The present generation has not directly experienced the Shoah. Still, it is fed with stories of holocaust victims or is exposed to the fictionalized visual versions of the Holocaust, which could have a traumatizing effect. Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz explain this indirect relation to the past using the phrase "memory citizenship" (Rothberg and Yildiz, 2011). The interpretations produced and the vacuum left while the memory citizens acquire the retold history become incompatible spaces that produce heterotopias. Michael Foucault's concept of heterotopia addresses multiple histories, cultures, and ideologies by moving across and merging spaces and time. This study analyses child characters present in holocaust cinema as virtual heterotopias. By working through memory, the study identifies child characters as a site to sustain the traces of past catastrophes, determine and address different discursive spaces, produce multiple perspectival representations of the same event, discuss numerous human conditions, and explicitly express opinions about the complex unresolved political situations of the past and present. It explores the notion of virtual heterotopia in four recent Holocaust-based movies: The Little Traitor (2007), The Boy in Striped Pyjamas (2008), The Book Thief (2013), and Jojo Rabbit (2019).

Introduction

Holocaust films of the post-World War period place the memory of Shoah in an experiential dimension where multiple perspectives of the same event shuttle between fact and fiction. Holocaust witnesses and survivors started revisualizing memory to disseminate the history of this twentieth-century event to the younger generation and the world. The present generation encounters the holocaust memory in the form of images, documentaries, oral stories, autobiographies, and mnemonics to become the recipients of the Holocaust, even in the absence of direct experience. Their identities are defined by the narratives that preceded their birth. These stories of previous generations, shaped by trauma, can neither be fully comprehended nor recreated. However, they helped to revive the holocaust memory by mingling with individual memories of the same event, which is carried over through time. Marianne Hirsch defines this generation as the "post-memory generation, whose growth, behaviors, and interactions are dominated by narratives of the bygone event that preceded their birth." (Hirsch, 2012) This memory fills the present generation's social, cultural, and emotional milieu. It leaves an indelible impression on their psyche and molds their later perceptions. It also helps to reinforce the holocaust memory, which in turn has multiple functions within the present society.

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In the late twentieth century, holocaust movies played a vital role in unfolding the irrationality of Holocaust execution and the fanatic racist, classist, and anti-Semitic approaches of the Nazi party and its supporters. During the 1970s, authorities perceived televising memory as the best means to spread knowledge and revitalize the collective trauma of the holocaust among both regional and universal audiences. Memorializing and archiving the traumatic experiences of the holocaust became a crucial part of sustaining the identity of Jews and non-Jews of Europe after the 1970s. (Finkelstein, 2003, 4)

The impact of technology, especially visual media, facilitated the transmission of memory from the victims and survivors to the younger generations by recreating multisensory experiences. Diane K. Roskies' *Teaching the Holocaust to Children* (1975) explains how the demand for and supply of juvenile fiction and audiovisual materials on the topic increased with the incorporation of the Holocaust into the public school curriculum and then burgeoning to international curricula as a universal phenomenon representing collective trauma. (Roskies, 1975)

This paper tries to analyze child protagonists in Holocaust films as a heterotopic memory site. It views children in Holocaust-based films from a pedagogical position by examining the role assumed, the image projected, and the way they embody plurality and performativity within collective memory. It ponders the functions of juvenile protagonists and the way they are dynamically revised and reformed with the dawn of the twenty-first century.

The directors of Holocaust movies had to address three groups of children. Firstly, it was observed that the children of traumatized Holocaust survivors, witnesses, and victims searched for mental help to escape from the intergenerational trauma that they experienced. The anecdotes of their parents and victims in newspapers, magazines, autobiographies, photographs, and documentaries based on the realities of genocide, concentration camps, gas chambers, and other haunting terrors experienced by them molded their character and perceptions. Recollecting memory and representing it became a chronic experience producing trauma among individuals and in the Jewish community. These individual memories were collected and archived, gradually forming a collective memory transcending time and space. Secondly, some children were unaware or oblivious about the catastrophe of the recent past as it was a taboo topic after the Second World War, and their parents might have tried to conceal the realities of genocide. Thirdly, there were children and their parents who were privileged to escape from Nazi slaughter and remained indifferent during Hitler's rule. However, even after realizations and subsequent regrets, they had to follow the Nazi party for the sake of their existence. History was erased, manipulated, and reconstructed to fit into the Nazi nation's demands. Hence, it would have been incumbent upon the film directors to educate children about the history of the Holocaust to avoid further traumatizing children. The central motif was to provide strength to resist any situation and create space for resilience, giving them hope to survive. Filming holocaust from children's perspective by sandwiching innocence and hope between terror and trauma was a challenging task. The directors started employing different techniques and forms with holocaust as the theme

The history of juvenile holocaust movies can be traced back to the film adaptation of Anne Frank's autobiography in 1959. The next major holocaust icon was the girl in red coat in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993). She was the epitome of innocent children who were unaware of the political unrest going on. She was a prominent symbol in the movie as her coat was the only colored object in the three and a half hours long black-and-white movie. Initially, in the twentieth-century movies about Shoah, the directors presumed children innocent of the adult mind's complex and repressed emotions. The focal intentions of most of those post-holocaust movies were to expose the irrationality in the deeds of Hitler's rule and cultivate collective Jewish identity across the

world. Anne Frank and "The Girl in the Red Coat" became archetypes in the "holocaust industry.

An array of children's movies was produced in the late twentieth century, like *Snow Treasure* (1968), *Lucky Star* (1980), *Sarah and the Squirrel* (1983), *A Friendship in Vienna* (1988), *Alan and Naomi* (1992), *Swing Kids* (1993), *The Island on Bird Street* (1997), *Life is Beautiful* (1997) and *Miracle at Midnight* (1998). All the visual and verbal cues within these movies promoted universal themes like the friendship between different races, blending of class distinctions, good versus evil, morality and ethics in the dark age, family bonds, gentile families rescuing friends, reincarnation from the debris of war, the theme of hope, the innocence of children and the way they are caught between personal and social dilemmas. These universal themes were amalgamated into themes that proselytized the uniqueness of Jewish identity, the need for a Jewish State, and the reason for returning to the Promised Land. In his controversial book *The Holocaust Industry* (2003), which drew both praise and criticism, Norman Finkelstein traces the different phases of Shoah memory representations after World War II and states the following:

> The Final Solution was a taboo topic of American Jewish elites... Everything changed with the June 1967 Arab–Israeli war. By virtually all accounts, it was only after this conflict that the Holocaust became a fixture in American Jewish life. The standard explanation of this transformation is that Israel's extreme isolation and vulnerability during the June war revived memories of the Nazi extermination. [1]

With the beginning of the twenty-first century, the number of first-hand victims started diminishing. Defining Jewishness concerning victimhood increased, and memorializing history became crucial for the existence of Israelites and Jews all around the world. As the context has changed, it can be observed that there has been a shift in focus concerning theme and form of memory representation from event-centered (related to collective memory) to victim and witness-centered approach (addressing individual memory rather than living with collective memory) to address multiple perspectives in the act of framing memory. (Byford, 2013, 205)

Directors started experimenting with the theme of Holocaust victimization. Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* (1997), which blends terror and humor, marked the gradual change in the stream of thought in children's movies. It depicts a Jewish father and mother belonging to an Italian gentile family enduring hardships and a child spared from it by making him assume that life within a concentration camp is part of a game and a gift for him. It narrates how a father shielded his son from the horrors of concentration camps. This Oscar-winning movie was criticized for trivializing the Holocaust, though, in fact, it was a haunting black comedy, making the audience dwell on the child's future.

Therefore, the archetypal innocent child protagonist in holocaust movies has become a floating memory site that transcends space and time. The phrase "site of memory," coined by French historian Pierre Nora, refers to the places that evoke memory to assimilate to a "collective or shared knowledge of the past on which a group's sense of unity and individual identity is defined." (Nora, 1989, 7-24) This paper identifies child characters existing in the virtual realm (cinema) of Holocaust memory as a site to sustain the traces of past catastrophes. Anne Frank exemplifies a memory site whose character has been reinvested many times since 1959. There have been several remakes of her autobiography, including *No Asylum: The Untold Chapter in Anne Frank's Story*, a documentary produced in 2016. The reconstruction of innocent child characters who had

[1] This statement is quoted from the first chapter (Capitalizing the Holocaust) of Norman Finkelstein's controversial book, *The Holocaust Industry*, London: Verso, 2003.

to witness the holocaust has found its way into textbooks, novels, and big screens; it instills holocaust memory and questions of identity into the minds of the younger generation.

This paper tries to explain how the memory site called "child protagonist" in select postmillennial holocaust movies works as virtual heterotopia. Heterotopia, by Michel Foucault (1986), determines and addresses different discursive spaces. (Foucault, 1986, 22-27) Holocaust characters have become disturbing, intense, contradictory, and transforming "other space." This paper explores the notion of virtual heterotopia by studying four recent Holocaust-based movies: *The Little Traitor* (2007), *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas* (2008), *The Book Thief* (2013), and *Jojo Rabbit* (2019)

I

Lynn Roth's *The Little Traitor*, based on Amos Oz's novel *Panther in the Basement* (1995), is a bildungsroman film that revolves around the life of a spirited Jewish boy, Proffy Liebowitz, his pro-Israelite underground cell organized along with his two friends and his unlikely friendship with a kind British soldier. The film is set just before Israel was declared a state. Mark Herman's film *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas*, adapted from John Boyne's novel with the same title, is a poignant fiction about the friendship between a Nazi officer's son Bruno and a Jewish captive boy named Shmuel. The movie is set in occupied Poland. Brian Percival's *The Book Thief*, an adaptation of Markus Zusak's novel with the same title, exploits the potential and techniques of cinematography to blend imagination, fantasy, and escapism to depict the hellish realities of holocaust and the Second World War.

The Holocaust is approached from an inverted perspective where Death narrates the story of lives and humans haunt Death. It interweaves many lives into a single plot. It mainly revolves around the life of Liesel Meminger, who came from a communist family and was later adopted by her foster parents, Hans and Rosa Hubermann. The plot develops into multiple levels through the life of Liesel to include many more victimized lives: her foster parents, her schoolmates, her friend Rudy Steiner, the other residents of their neighborhood, a Jew named Max who avoids deportation by hiding in the basement of Liesel's home and her friendship with Ilsa Hermann (Mayor's wife). Taika Waititi's recent movie *Jojo Rabbit* is a black comedy deeply imbued with sarcasm, fluctuating between despair and hope. It depicts the life of Hitler Youth Cadet Jojo Betzler, whose indoctrinated mind is surrealistically represented by Waititi as his imaginary companion in the form of a buffoonish Hitler. It is set in the fictional city of Falkenheim during the collapse of Nazi Germany. The storyline advances through the shock and realization of Jojo that his mother Rosie is hiding Elsa Korr, a Jewish friend of Jojo's late sister, and Jews are not as he is taught. He also realizes that his parents, though Germans, secretly resisted Nazism. The film is set between a few days before the fall of Nazi Germany to a few days after the suicide of Hitler

Working through the memories of the holocaust in the twenty-first century produced multiple perspectival representations of the same event. The present generation is the ones who have not directly experienced the Shoah but are fed with stories of holocaust victims or are exposed to the fictionalized visual versions of the Holocaust, which could have a traumatizing effect. Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz explain this indirect relation to the past using the phrase "memory citizenship."(Rothberg & Yasemin, 2011, 32-48) The interpretations produced and vacuums left while acquiring this retold history, which the memory citizens grasp, become incompatible spaces that produce heterotopias. Michael Foucault's Heterotopia concept is a discursive space that can address or encapsulate multiple histories, cultures, and ideologies by moving across and merging spaces and time.

It can dynamically transform the mindset of society with time. According to Foucault, heterotopias are real and geographically accessible. This paper explores its presence on digital platforms, too. It can be substantiated using the six principles formulated by Foucault to define heterotopia. The cumulative effect of the crystallized realization of the scope of the film industry led to the production of several post-millennium Holocaust films, discussing multiple human conditions and explicitly expressing ideas about the complex unresolved political situations of the past and present through the innocent child protagonist

Foucault stated that heterotopia can be found across cultures. The function of heterotopia will change with time. Heterotopia, which carries a specific function at a particular time, may grow to function differently at another time. When analyzed diachronically, children's films over the years consist of generational responses to the holocaust. The significant functions of child protagonists in post-world war holocaust movies were to propagate ethnicized understandings of Jewish identity, to focus on victimhood, and to increase the self-esteem of Jews, as discussed earlier. It simultaneously mirrored and constructed social attitudes. In recent years, directors realized the importance of including the message in children's fiction that Jews were not the only victims of transgenerational trauma. So were the children of other communities too who witnessed and experienced the brutal dictatorship of Hitler. They intended to treat genocide depictions in films as an allegory of the humanitarian crisis around the world rather than of just one community. On the other hand, this breakthrough in thought has given birth to many ethical contradictions, too (in the minds of victims). This transition shall be probed more profoundly in the analyses of the selected movies

When the surfeit of holocaust movies changed the social attitude towards the event from disturbing horrors to cliché, film directors started reimagining and creating other unsaid themes, too. Lynn Roth's *The Little Traitor* was a product of imagination legitimized by adding footage. This film, set in Palestine, begins with an augmented statement, "After World War II, the British tried to curtail the flood of post-Holocaust refugees into Palestine." (Roth, 1947, 00:01:00 to 00:01:15) When the demographic history of Palestine is taken into consideration, in 1918, Palestine was under British Mandate, and the number of Jews in Palestine was approximately 55000, around eight percent of the total population. Later, this percentage of immigrants increased to 31.4 (around 6,46,000). This increase would not have happened if British Mandates had curtailed the flow of Jews throughout their rule. In 1929, a series of riots occurred in Palestine as the number of immigrants increased day by day, and the purchase and encroachment of Arab lands increased without any restriction. In response to these riots, The White Paper was passed by Lord Passfield (British Colonial Secretary) in 1930, emphasizing the policy of treating Arabs and Jews equally and reducing Jewish immigration as there was no sufficient land for Arabs to live. It was critical of the Zionist organization's policy of employing only Jewish labor, leading to high unemployment among Arabs. In 1931, British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald responded to the White Paper, reaffirming British support for the continuation of Jewish immigration in large numbers and land purchase in Palestine. Arabs renounced the letter as a Black Letter. [2] Lynn Roth projects this one year to refer to the long years of the Mandatory Palestinian period. Such historical inaccuracies were employed to meet the ultimate purpose of projecting Jewish identity. Proffy and his family switch between English and Hebrew throughout the film, emphasizing the importance of learning and practicing

[2] See "White Papers on Palestine." *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*. November15,2021, https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/white-papers-palestine.

Hebrew in Jewish students. Proffy is portrayed as a child who hates the British. He plays war games with Zionists and British Army toys and enjoys hanging toy soldiers on the bars of the cot in his bedroom. He and his friends plan to execute missions to disturb the British soldiers. As life progresses, he befriends a British soldier named Sergeant Dunlop, who is portrayed as a kind human, forced to do his duties as a soldier but eager to learn Jewish culture and Hebrew. This ambivalent relationship leads him to trouble as his community thinks he is a 'traitor' but eventually becomes a turning point in his thought process. In this movie, the child protagonist, Proffy, faces the dilemma of accepting indoctrinated knowledge or knowledge attained from experience

Though it is evident that the movie is set in old Palestine, where Jews were immigrants, there are only very limited appearances of Arabs, but they are depicted as coexisting with the immigrant Jews. They are portrayed as primitive. The young audience who watches the movie to learn the history of Israel might believe the misconception that the Palestinian land was underpopulated and desolate or the notion that it is a land without a people, for a people without a land. (Muir, 2008, 55-62) Despite historical inaccuracies and under-representation of the Arab community in the film, it tries to end with an emotional note in a universal sense. After thirty years, in his speech, while addressing an audience in London, Proffy states, "The clash between the Israelites and Palestinians is a tragedy. Neither Israeli Jews nor Palestinian Arabs can find their homeland anywhere else in this world." (Roth, 1947, 1:19:50 to 1:20:50) He also states that Zionism was the only life choice for Jews. Proffy's coming of age helps him to realize the need for coexistence between Jews and Arabs. He even mentions in his speech the need to tackle the current situation in Palestine/Israel to restore peace. Therefore, this movie knowingly or unknowingly asserts the fact that Palestine was a land that welcomed Jewish migrants, leading to the formation of the State of Israel within Palestine.

II

The dominant motif of promoting the uniqueness of Jewish identity among children started gradually changing to include many other universal themes and multiple perspectives revolving around the holocaust memory after the film *The Little Traitor*. Mark Herman's adaptation of John Boyne's novel The *Boy in Striped Pyjamas* was a milestone in the history of holocaust pedagogy, which ignited many discussions and even became part of the curriculum in many countries. It ponders on the ultimate human conditions and projects that humans are more similar to each other, and attributing prominence to an ethnic group or demeaning others is the product of greed for the political and cultural autonomy of certain groups of humans. The film revolves around the life of Bruno, an eight-year-old boy, and his family. It begins with a scene where Bruno and his friends play, laugh, and imitate planes firing. He is forced to leave Berlin along with his sister Gretel, his mother Elsa, and his father Ralf (Nazi military officer), who gets promoted. The family is relocated to the countryside, where he is lonely and has no one to play with. Being instinctively an explorer, he spots a farm and farmers dressed identically. He finds one among them in his home, too, with a strange and somber expression, wearing a frowzy striped outfit, whom he later finds out to be a doctor from the nearby farm (concentration camp) who had switched his job to peeling potatoes. Bruno and Gretel are characterized as oblivion children who are shielded from the political instability and ethnic cleansing that's happening around them. Mr Liszt, their new tutor, tells them to stop reading fiction and start understanding facts. He avoids history of the past and teaches immediate history (they are provided with Deutscher Almanach III 1924-1937) and current affairs to push an agenda of anti-Semitism and Nazi propaganda. They are taught to hate Jews, who are looked upon as dangerous vermin. The children's plight from

innocence to experience is shown from two perspectives. Gretel readily accepts information instilled into her without questioning. Liszt's teachings and infatuation with Lieutenant Kurt Kotler make her fanatical in her support for the Third Reich. She thinks her father and other soldiers are risking their lives to save "Fatherland." She throws away all her dolls and accepts Hitler as the only role model. In his pursuit of adventure, Bruno is not ready to take the facts he has been taught but wishes to learn from experience

Bruno sneaks into the woods, where he is not permitted to play, arriving outside a concentration camp. He befriends a boy named Shmuel. Bruno starts lying to his mother and sneaking food for Shmuel. They meet regularly and play games together, sitting on both sides of the barbed wire fence. Their ignorance of the camp's true nature is revealed: Bruno thinks the striped uniforms that Shmuel, Pavel, and the other prisoners wear are pajamas, and Shmuel believes his grandparents died from an illness during their journey to the camp. Later, Bruno understands that Shmuel is a Jew and finds no difference between them and doubts what he was taught about Jews. He even starts feeling confused about whether his father is a good or bad man. Compared to Gretel and Bruno, Shmuel is depicted as a stagnant, one-dimensional victim who lacks brutal experiences of concentration camps or realizations of truth. He seems to be passive and unresisting. Bruno's mother, Elsa, and grandmother are against Nazi deeds but fear to air voices publicly as it would bring in trouble. Bruno and Shmuel's friendship leads to unexpected consequences. Bruno gets into the camp by digging a tunnel beneath the fence and helps Shmuel search for his father. They are swept into the gas chamber along with other adults and are murdered before Bruno's parents reach the camp. With unendurable pain, they realize that their son, too, has become a victim of Nazism.

This fiction was praised for its universal appeal as it established that we are humans before belonging to any community. On the other hand, it was criticized for the historical inaccuracies and portrayal of child protagonists that help to perpetuate dangerous myths about the holocaust. The directors of many children's movies portrayed child protagonists as autonomous beings with souls, intellection, rights, and values distinct from those of the adult world. A child is presumed innocent of the adult mind's complex and repressed emotions. Bruno is depicted as a nine-year-old child with no previous knowledge of the political turbulence and massacres of humans in the name of ethnicity, even though his father was a high-ranking Nazi. In reality, as per the Nazi law, he would have been a member of the Hitler Youth. Moreover, the opening scene where he and his friends play war and run like fighter planes and his obliviousness towards the people in "striped pajamas" are conflicting. Grete and Bruno would have been trained to believe that war was something to be proud of even before Liszt's class. Elsa and Bruno's sudden recognition of the actual deeds of Nazis and their protests perpetuates the belief among the audience that German civilians were not aware of what was happening around them. The public knew about the persecution of Jews.

Many supported, many remained indifferent, and a few resisted. The regime brutally stopped any resistance. While Bruno is depicted as an enthusiastic round character, Shmuel is described as a flat character with no individuality. Shmuel symbolizes the whole of Jewish victimhood that would be misconceived as a passive group of people ready to accept their faith without resistance. Moreover, children arriving at Auschwitz concentration camps were directly sent to gas chambers or taken as guinea pigs (they were not taken for forced labor). Shmuel is a character with no depth of emotion; hence, the audience will not be able to connect emotionally to the Jewish cause but can easily connect with the distress of Bruno's family despite being a concentration camp Commander's son. Though such criticisms arose (as dangerous means for misconceptions), the ultimate aim of this fiction was to propagate humanity irrespective of ethnicity.

III

Transgenerational holocaust memory paved the way for many more fictions that experiment with the theme of life during World War II. Brian Percival's adaptation of Markus Zusak's novel *The Book Thief* is one such emotionally gripping fiction. German writer Zusak borrows the memories of his German and Austrian immigrant parents to weave the story of Liesel Meminger. Death is the first-person omniscient narrator who reveals the story of many interconnected characters in the life of storyteller Liesel. Death is personified and is used as a device to transcend years and cease time. It meets Liesel when it goes to capture her little brother's soul and then follows her to a fictional place named Heaven Street. Liesel, born to communist parents, is forced to leave them and join her foster parents, Hans Hubermann and Rosa, during the period of political turbulence in 1938. Though Rosa treats her initially with indifference and later with love, Hans supports her since the first day of her arrival. She is portrayed as a blank slate, ready to acquire knowledge. When her classmates mock her for being illiterate, Hans opens his basement for her, helping her enter the world of reading, writing, and thinking. Its walls are filled with blank dictionaries ready to be filled by her. The other two child characters in this film are Franz Deutscher, who challenges her to read at least one word when all others chant "dummkopf" at her, and Rudy, her neighbor and friend.

The title of the film comes from Liezel's repeated act of stealing books: *The Grave Digger's Handbook* was the first book that she stole at the time of her brother's funeral, then she grabs a book from the bonfire that was set to burn and boycott all the books (which include tradition, history, and culture) to date. She was noticed by Burgermeister's wife, Ilsa Hermann, who later welcomed Liezel to her library, which had a vast collection of books. When her husband recognizes this secret reading opportunity given by Ilsa for Liesel, he shuts her out, but she later slips through the window, collects books, and tells Rudy that she is "borrowing."

Leizal and her family became more precarious when they secretly sheltered a Jewish boy named Max, to whose father Han's was committed. The film tries to put forward the idea that the civilians of Germany and communists were also equally victims of holocaust trauma. Apart from a few depictions of Jewish traumatization, as in the case of Max and a single scene where Liezel and Rudy search for Max when they see folk of Jewish prisoners moving through a street, the primary focus is on the difficulties of Germans under Nazi regime like Liezel and Rudy unwillingly joining Hitler Youth Cadet, Hans conscripted to the army after he tries to protect a Jew named Lehman, and Rudy conscripted into the military due to which he tries to run away by poignantly saying to Leizel "I want to grow before I die." Unfortunately, a bomb blast by accident shatters Heaven Street and kills many, including Hans, Rosa, and Rudy. Liezel survives as she falls asleep in the basement. Death captures every soul and narrates the story of many more years (when we occupied Germany and after that) until Leizel was ninety. The melting clock style adopted by the director has helped to keep the memory of the holocaust ironically through the character Death following Leizel by using storytelling as a technique helping to freeze, project, and represent several decades since the holocaust.

From the above movies, it could be understood that parents and the immediate society/surroundings had a significant and influential role in keeping their children innocent of the Holocaust events. Parents shielded children from traumatic experiences and sights. Proffy, Bruno, and Leizel had minimal access to history, which was overcome by their personal experience; they penetrated the taboo spaces through people thought to be distinct but later recognized as similar. Their schools erased or fabricated history and focused on current affairs.

IV

Taika Waititi's satirical film *Jojo Rabbit* tried to deconstruct the notion of children's stereotypical movement from innocence to experience to a more realistic movement from misconception to recognition. This movie, set during the fall of Nazi rule in Vienna, peripherally looks like pro-Nazi propaganda but is an experimental dark comedy criticizing Hitler and Nazis, with the storyline from the 2008 novel *Caging Skies*. Waititi interlocks child protagonist Jojo Betzler's subconscious and conscious mental processes with socio-political tensions to exemplify the life and multiple viewpoints of people who lived under this tyrannical regime.

Jojo is an enthusiastic ten-year-old Hitler Youth Cadet who lives with his mother, Rosie. He fetishizes Adolf Hitler to the extent that he is often visited by an apparition like his friend Hitler, providing him courage and consoling him. At the same time, he is humiliated and gives him emotional investments in moments of dilemma and confusion in his life. Hitler is caricatured as a buffoonish character, initially to strengthen Jojo's beliefs in Nazism and the supremacy of Aryan blood. The slogan "Heil Hitler" is repeated continuously to turn the terrorizing phrase into a funny one. Though a fanatic, he is nicknamed "Jojo Rabbit" due to an incident in the Hitlerjugend training camp, as he failed to obey the orders of a senior cadet to snap a rabbit's neck without any regret. This scene is shown as a part of a training session that teaches children to kill for Hitler. In the camp, Captain Klenzendorf and his team must misrepresent Jews as strange creatures, inject hatred towards them, and teach them to harm or kill others through monstrous rituals of cruelty. Humiliated Jojo (accompanied by imaginary friend Hitler) throws a grenade to prove himself, but it explodes at his feet, leaving him scarred. He is assigned minor duties, letting him spend more time at home. It is when he finds out that his mother is secretly resisting Nazism and is hiding Elsa Korr (his late sister's Jewish friend) in the attic.

Jojo's initial reaction was aversion. He saw her as a specimen to study and made a picture book named *Yohoo Jew* to expose the distinct features to recognize her "kind." She says she is a human like him, but her kind is chosen by mighty God while Jojo and his kind by "a weak little man who cannot even grow a full moustache". Elsa, amused about Jojo's misconceptions of Jews, helps him to fill his book with even more surreal anti-Semitic canards. Eventually, friendship is sprouting between them. They even deceive the Gestapo by Elsa assuming the identity of his sister with the timely help of Klenzendorf. He recognizes that the indoctrination is false, exposing the inhumanity of the Nazi regime. He realizes that his mother is silently spreading anti-Nazi messages throughout the town, and one day, he sees her hanged in the town square. The film then shows the condition after Hitler's suicide through morbid humor. The weak civilian population and young cadets are armed to fight back. Jojo hides himself until the war ends and the Allies win. The buffoonish Hitler with a bullet on one side of his forehead reappears again in front of Jojo, now ironically helping to realize the comic stance on the politics of war and ethnic cleansing. He complains about Jojo's deteriorating patriotism and scolds them for protecting Elsa and not wearing the swastika emblem. This surrealistic image is kicked off by Jojo through his window, symbolizing himself to be free from being a marionette of Hitler. Elsa and he survive, giving the audience a ray of hope.

Though *Jojo Rabbit* seems to be a typical anti-Nazi spectacle, it marked an epoch in the history of Holocaust films as it allegorically exposes the irrationality in executing the holocaust with the means of humor and satirizes despotism of some of the tyrannical rulers in power worldwide in a microcosmic way by working through the memory of the holocaust. Didactically, it has mainly two functions. Firstly, to evoke the memory of the holocaust, the ruthless rule of Hitler, and the conditions of civilians who pretended to follow Nazism but resisted it. Secondly, it mocks those who unthinkingly follow the brutal

dictators and see them as cult figures to be worshiped for their livelihood. It might even have adverse effects, like creating panic in the younger generation and prompting them to react against injustice and atrocities, generating fear of the consequences they will face. Jojo is portrayed as enthusiastic and creative but a passive and weak child when compared to his mother, who is daring, due to which she is hanged. It conveys that truth is not what is taught but what is found during the process of self-construction. Personal relationship and coexistence with people from other ethnic groups helps to concede the humanness of deprived minorities. Waititi skilfully created his child characters to manifest the pluralistic psyche of civilians under any dictatorship by merging misconceptions, fears, resistance, heroism, fetishism, and the nature of blind extremists armed to fight. Foucault stated that every heterotopic space has a specific function and cultural signification at a particular time. The function of child protagonists in holocaust movies too dynamically changed concerning the emergence of new generations who had experienced the transgenerational trauma. The memory holders of different periods themselves became the creators, fabricators, and drivers generating new meanings for the holocaust.

It can also be understood from the above films that when the child protagonist's function is analyzed in synchronic terms, the child's innocence is exploited by screen memory in two ways simultaneously: to screen/project memory and to screen/conceal memory. The innocent child's mind in Holocaust movies embodies Heterotopia of crisis and deviation. Their minds are seen as "forbidden places" for history and haunting realities of the holocaust to enter. In the film *The Little Traitor*, Proffy's mind or even the viewer is not exposed to the actual history but only to a small period magnified to form history of decades neglecting other realities. Bruno, Liezel, and Jojo are taught fabricated history and manipulated current affairs. Unhappy realities were never allowed to enter into the young mind, which led to mental crises and a lack of connection with the real world. Experience paved the way for deviations, and crises disappeared with the passage of time. The secret friendships between the fictional characters Proffy and Sergeant Dunlop, Bruno and Shmuel, Liezel and Max, and Jojo and Elsa became spaces of deviation that violated enforced normative behaviors related to ethnic prejudices of Nazism. Basements and attics in the select movies marked the shift from heterotopias of crisis to deviation by providing jolting experiences.

Foucault's second principle stated that the functions of heterotopias are analyzed in terms of the passage of time. As the configuration of time and space of the bygone event was transmitted through different periods, the functions also transformed gradually, sometimes by retaining and neglecting the older ones. It could be traced that the significant tasks of holocaust movies were to cultivate Jewish identity and claim land for victims. Later, the functions changed to incorporate themes of coexistence, the meaninglessness of ethnic discriminations or cleansing, address the fact that other communities, including the so-called 'pure-blooded,' were also traumatized or victims of the Holocaust and even furthermore, it allegorically represented all the victims under brutal dictatorships.

Postmillennial Holocaust films depicting child protagonists also become an epitome of "prosthetic memory," a concept introduced by Alison Landsberg. (Landsberg, 2004) Media memory, though artificial, has the potential to make the experience the public memory privately by those who have no direct knowledge of the Holocaust. The children in these films can influence the young generation as it is included in the student's curriculum to develop collective imagination. These films can be read in the light of the third aspect of heterotopia, its ability to merge several spaces in a single real place. As can be observed, the directors juxtapose incompatible spaces in the form of characters appearing in the child protagonist's environment within a single camera frame. An abiding friendship between a British soldier and a Jewish boy, a friendship developed between an

Aryan and a Jewish boy and them playing by standing on the two sides of concentration camp without any monitoring of soldiers, a buffoonish Hitler accompanying vacillating Hitler youth cadet are all examples of incompatible spaces juxtaposed. These heterotopic spaces can compress long periods into the timespan of cinema, as seen in the lifetime of Proffy and Liezel in *The Little Traitor* and *The Book Thief*, respectively.

The recipients of holocaust movies at specific times are assumed to attain certain characteristics to their existing identities and roles. The children and adults watching these movies from around the world enter into a chronotope (Bakhtin, 1982, 84-85) with a specific context, producing multiple meanings and formulating social organizations. While watching films, the audience or students are transported to a character (memory site or heterotopia) and time beyond their physical self. Heterotopias open into slices of time that Foucault calls "heterochronies." The audience breaks from the regular notion of time for heterotopias to start functioning. Child protagonists can enclose abstract spaces where the narrator can accompany them, like Death in *The Book Thief*, who says, "I have seen a great many things. I have attended all the world's worst disasters, and worked for the greatest of villains. And I've seen the greatest wonders. But it's still like I said it was: no one lives forever." Likewise, Jojo in *Jojo Rabbit* befriends imaginary and surrealistic Hitler, who, towards the end of the film, appears in front of Jojo with a bullet on his forehead.

These chronotypes, embedded with heterotopic spaces, project an event like the holocaust of the bygone era to occupy the present. They are catalysts in institutionalizing and organizing Holocaust consciousness with multiple socio-political roles. As these mediated memories affect the construction of individual or collective memories of the present generation who are detached from the actual events, discussion on some key factors involved in the creation of Holocaust films in the post-millennium becomes vital, apart from the effects that are discussed in this study. Though all four films discussed can be understood as projections of the holocaust from multiple perspectives, it is to be understood that these evolve from multiple competing histories of nationalism subsumed into present politics.

The need and responsibility to remember the Holocaust is distinctive for each country that produces the memory, depending on the nationalism that they bear. The sites where these memories are constructed, who directs or edits the memories, and which organization produces and disseminates the films are some of the key factors that determine the way history, national myths, actual or fabricated memories, ideals, and political turbulences get either projected or subjugated through representation. It can be elucidated by referring to the four films discussed above.

Conclusion

It can be noted that the films *The Little Traitor*, *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas*, *The Book Thief*, and *Jojo Rabbit* are all fictions set within the premises of the Holocaust directed by those who had vicariously witnessed or imaginatively lived through the traumatic experience of the victims and survivors of the event of another age. They creatively reconstructed the bygone event, making the film an agency for the transmission of Holocaust memory to the later decades. In *The Little Traitor*, American filmmaker Lynn Roth weaves a political story that revolves around a Jew boy, not specified whether from America, Europe, or any other continent, who externally blames British mandate but internally keeps an ambiguous relationship with the British soldier during the period of creation of Israel. The film was a co-production between Israel (Evanstone Films) and the United States (Panther Productions) and was initially distributed in these nations. *The Boy in Stripped Pyjamas*, a fictional story that is set in Hungary, depicts the friendship of

Jewish and German boys with a storyline constructed using imaginary possibilities within the Holocaust. It was produced mainly in Europe and distributed within the United States (Miramax Films) and the United Kingdom (Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures). This film was not received well in Europe as many scholars criticized the movie for obscuring history and worried about the dangers of creating an equivalence between victims and perpetrators (in the name of children being oblivion), which has the potential to teach a manipulated history to the younger generation.

While studying the history of Holocaust films produced by America and Europe, it can be observed that the American perception of the holocaust is dynamic and is continuously under construction when compared to that of the European experience and understanding. It is mainly because Europe is where the actual event holocaust occurred, and the European Jews are either survivors who experienced the catastrophe or intergenerational trauma victims within the geographical area that was struck by the event. In contrast, the Americans are geographically removed from the event. The Jewish community in America are either immigrants from the places where the holocaust occurred or are natives of America, "who felt a moral imperative to remember and educate, it did so in the face of special challenges—in a society that has at times encouraged assimilation" (as stated by Hilene Flanzbaum in the introduction of the book, *The Americanisation of Holocaust*). Though they wished for moral assimilation with the victims, the motives behind connecting to the victimhood identity were quite political as time passed by.

The identity formed from Holocaust victimhood got spread across the world in the places where the European Jews immigrated or among the whole Jewish community, especially in places like the United States, Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Dominican Republic, and a large number of Palestine. There are a few representations of the Holocaust from these nations except the US, from where it can be observed that there is a prolific production of Holocaust films. Moreover, movie from the US were under continuous evolution depending on the popular tastes of the present society, media hype partially driven by current politics, democratic optimism, and allegorization of resistance by making the Holocaust a metonym to any other struggle based on race or religion and the conciliation mentality of the present generation of multicultural US citizens. This trend could not be encouraged by most European Jews as they did not encourage fictionalizing or altering history for any cause. These moral differences in the representation of the Holocaust can be observed from the reception of the two films, The Little Traitor and The Boy in Striped Pyjamas, by the audience, including film critics. Today, the universalization of the Holocaust has made the event a metonym to represent any other communal violence or human catastrophe. *The Book Thief* is a story written by an Australian author set in Germany. *Jojo Rabbit* is partially adopted from the New Zealand-Belgian novelist Christine Leunens and screenplay written by New Zealand director and comedian Taika Waititi. Both films universalize the Holocaust through fictionalization. They placed many historical elements loosely to recreate the event and expose the absurdity of war seen from the viewpoint of child protagonists, emblematically representing multiple human catastrophes of the present.

Though these filmic heterotopias are transitory and come to life briefly, their impact can cross generations after generations. According to one of the principles, Heterotopias "have a function about all spaces that remain." (Foucault, 1986, 27) Though the primary aim of the above-mentioned movies is to disseminate Holocaust knowledge, they function differently in multi-preventive spaces. The vantage points from which the characters Proffy, Bruno, Liezel, and Jojo view the Holocaust differ. They create an illusory space that helps expose real spaces. Many of the postmillenium holocaust movies, apart from evoking trauma, allegorically revealed the present realities of hegemony, power politics

and irrationality of wars and ethnic conflicts. The transitory nature of time and memory are immobilised by child characters in films, which have the potential to influence the younger generation to use as an ideological weapon against irrational politics, for increasing social responsibility to end ethnic particularism as well as recognise and reconcile with different communities.

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