

Holocaust Film

Richard Raskin

Picart, C. J. (2004). *The Holocaust film sourcebook* (Two Vols.). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers. 447 pp and 544 pp. \$249.95.

Now that this two-volume reference work is available, it would be unthinkable to plan a course or to write a piece on Holocaust cinema without consulting *The Holocaust Film Sourcebook*.

Far more comprehensive than earlier works on the subject, this sourcebook provides, for each of the approximately 770 films covered: (1) a selection of film facts, such as the names of the director, screenwriter, cinematographer, editor, and cast members; (2) a brief summary of the film's story; (3) a list of primary sources, referring for example to "scripts, posters, documents relevant to production history, and newspaper clippings, located in film archives," as well as video or DVD copies of the film itself; and (4) selected secondary sources, "in the form of books, journal articles, newspaper clippings, and even selected websites ..., employing both scholarly and popular approaches" (vol. 1, p. xxiv). These entries vary in length, averaging just over a page per film, and with up to five or six pages devoted to a number of major films.

In addition to these entries, the sourcebook contains ten spotlight essays, focusing either on specific films or on aspects of wartime filmmaking or the representation of the Holocaust. Among the films singled out for attention in these essays are *Prelude to War* (1943), *Casablanca* (1942), *The Restless Conscience* (1991), *Schindler's List* (1993), *Life Is Beautiful* (1998), *Train of Life* (1998), *Apt Pupil* (1998/1999), *Jakob the Liar* (1999) and *The Specialist* (1999). All ten essays make interesting reading, often either challenging what the authors see as clichés and stereotypes, placing an emphasis on gender and sexuality, or in some other way opening fresh perspectives. There are also introductory essays in both volumes, and a section called "Resources" includes addresses and contact information for relevant archives and rental outlets, a list of useful databases, bibliographical indices, etc.

Volume I (447 pp.) covers fiction, while Volume II (544 pp.) is devoted to documentary and propaganda, with the nature of that distinction explained in the second volume's introductory essay. Not all of the films covered in these two

Richard Raskin (Dr. Phil., University of Aarhus, Denmark, 1983) is Associate Professor in the Department of Information and Media Studies, University of Aarhus. Correspondence to: Helsingforsgade 14, DK-8200 Aarhus N, Denmark. Email address: raskin@imv.au.dk

volumes are “Holocaust films” in the strictest sense of the term. Films only marginally related to the Holocaust are also included, such as *Casablanca* (1942) and *The Third Man* (1949). But that the sourcebook delivers even more than its title promises is hardly a shortcoming. The only films I miss in these volumes spanning so many decades and cultures are *Pimpernel Smith* (1941), *Kaddish After a Living Memory* (1968–1969), a little-known short called *With Raised Hands* (1985), and *Liebe Perla* (1999).

The individual film entries will be extremely useful, even to specialists who have worked in this field for decades. By and large, at least judging from the random samples I tested, the bibliographies provided in these entries are excellent selections of the available material. For such major films as *Night and Fog* (1955), *The Pawnbroker* (1964), *Shoah* (1985) and *Schindler’s List* (1993), for example, the reader will find more than a full page of secondary sources, and for *The Great Dictator* (1940), more than four pages of references. In some few cases, however, secondary sources are entirely lacking (*The Juggler*, 1953; *The Specialist*, 1999), limited to a single review (*Exodus*, 1960, *Julia*, 1977), or out of date (for *The Third Man*, 1949, no study published after 1986 is listed). But these are exceptions and on the whole, the bibliographical work that went into *The Holocaust Film Sourcebook* is solid and comprehensive.

The story summaries contained in these entries are also generally good, giving a reader unfamiliar with any film at least a reasonable sense of its content. Occasionally, however, a summary misses its mark, as is the case for *Night and Fog* (1955), to which only one rather shallow sentence is devoted: “Focusing on the atrocities endured by Jews in Nazi concentration camps during World War II, this documentary was filmed at Auschwitz and compares how the camp looked and was used during World War II versus how the camp looks today.” Fortunately, this missed opportunity to evoke the film in more meaningful terms is an exception, and the vast majority of the story summaries are quite adequate to the task.

Some readers will be surprised to find the entries on such films as *The Great Dictator* (1940), *Casablanca* (1942), *To Be Or Not To Be* (1942), *Hangmen Also Die* (1942/1943), and *The Third Man* (1949) in the propaganda section of Volume II, rather than the fiction section, Volume I. These films are classified as propaganda on the grounds, for example, that *Casablanca* was part of a concerted effort “to convince the American public to move from a predominantly political stance of isolationism to interventionism” (I, p. xxii). Although I find the arguments for this classification to be highly questionable, the editor and her co-authors should nevertheless be commended for pointing out the difficulties of defining propaganda, and for taking a bold stand on that issue. And whether the entry on a particular film is in the propaganda or fiction section of the sourcebook will in no way affect its usefulness to the reader.

Looking at this reference work as a whole, this reviewer is impressed by the enormous breadth of its coverage, including as it does in its repertoire not only those films that immediately come to mind in relation to the Holocaust, but also lesser known East European films, as well as films that evoke the Holocaust only mar-

ginally or obliquely. It also spans every genre, “high brow” and “low brow,” includes productions made for television (e.g., *Holocaust*, 1978; *The Winds of War*, 1983), and covers films as recent as *The Pianist* (2002). All in all, *The Holocaust Film Sourcebook* is an extremely useful and inspiring reference work that anyone studying, teaching, or writing within this area will want to consult, and that any well-stocked library will want to own.

References

- Abt, A. (Producer), & Lanzmann, C. (Director). (1985). *Shoah* [Motion picture]. France, Switzerland: French Ministry of Culture and Communication, Historia, Les Films Aleph.
- Bachmüller, H. (Producer), & Fruchtmann, K. (Director). (1968–1969). *Kaddisch nach einem Lebenden (Kaddish after a living memory)* [TV film]. West Germany: Radio Bremen, Isra-Film.
- Baschet, M., Boeken, L., Dumas-Zajdela, F., Dussart, E. (Producers), & Mihaileanu, R. (Director). (1998). *Train de vie (Train of life)* [Motion picture]. France, Belgium, Netherlands, Israel: Belfilms, Centre National de la Cinématographie, Centre du Cinéma et de l’Audiovisuel de la Communauté Française de Belgique, et al.
- Beller, H. (Co-Writer/Director). (1991). *The restless conscience: Resistance to Hitler within Germany 1933–1945* [Motion picture]. United States: Direct Cinema Limited.
- Benmussa, R., Champagnon, D., Gutowski, G., Polanski, R. (Producers), & Polanski, R. (Director). (2002). *The pianist* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom, France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland: Agenca Produkcji Filmowej, Beverly Detroit, Canal + Polska, et al.
- Berger, R. (Producer), & Chomsky, M. (Director). (1978). *Holocaust* [TV miniseries]. United States: Titus Productions.
- Braschi, G., Cotone, M., Davis, J., Ferri, E. (Producers), & Benigni, R. (Director). (1998). *La vita è bella (Life is beautiful)* [Motion picture]. Italy: Cecchi Gori Distribuzione.
- Capra, F. (Producer/Director). (1943). *Prelude to war (Why we fight)* [Motion picture]. United States: U.S. Army Special Services Division, U. S. War Department.
- Chaplin, C. (Producer/Writer/Director). (1940). *The great dictator* [Motion picture]. United States: United Artists.
- Curtis, D. (Producer/Director). (1983). *The winds of war* [TV miniseries]. United States: Paramount Television.
- Dauman, A., Halfon, S., Lifchitz, P. (Producers), & Resnais, A. (Director). (1955). *Nuit et brouillard (Night and fog)* [Motion picture]. France: Argos Film.
- Haft, S., Williams, M., Gillott, N. (Producers), & Kassovitz, P. (Director). (1999). *Jakob the liar* [Motion picture]. United States, France, Hungary: Blue Wolf, Kasso Inc. Productions, TriStar Pictures.
- Howard, L. (Producer/Director). (1941). *Pimpernel Smith* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom: British National Films, Ltd.
- Lustig, B., Molen, G., Spielberg, S. (Producers), & Spielberg, S. (Director). (1993). *Schindler’s list* [Motion picture]. United States: Amblin Entertainment, Universal Pictures.
- Kowarski, E. (Producer), & Rozen, S. (Director). (1999). *Liebe Perla* [Motion picture]. Israel: Eden Productions Ltd., Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Keshet Broadcasting, New Israeli Foundation for Film and Television.
- Kramer, S. (Producer), & Dmytryk, E. (Director). (1953). *The juggler* [Motion picture]. United States: Columbia Pictures Corp.
- Landau, M., Langner, P., Lewis, R., Steinmann, H. (Producers), & Lumet, S. (Director). (1964). *The pawnbroker* [Motion picture]. United States: Landau Co., Pawnbroker Co.

- Lang, F. (Producer/Director). (1942/1943). *Hangmen also die* [Motion picture]. United States: United Artists.
- Lubitsch, E. (Producer/Director). (1942). *To be or not to be* [Motion picture]. United States: Romaine Film Productions.
- Murphy, D., Singer, B., Hamsher, J. (Producers), & Singer, B. (Director). (1998/1999). *Apt pupil (Un élève doué)* [Motion picture]. United States, Canada, France: Paramount Pictures, Phoenix Pictures, TriStar Pictures, et al.
- Panov, M. (Producer/Writer/Director). (1985). *With raised hands* [Short fiction film, 5 min.]. Poland: PWSFTv&T (National School for Film, Television and Theater, Lodz).
- Preminger, O. (Producer/Director). (1960). *Exodus* [Motion picture]. United States: Alpha and Carlyle Productions.
- Reed, C., Korda, A., Selznick, D. (Producers), & Reed, C. (Director). (1949). *The third man* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom: British Lion Film Corp., London Film Production.
- Roth, R. (Producer), & Zinnemann, F. (Director). (1977). *Julia* [Motion picture]. United States: Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corp.
- Sivan, E. (Co-writer/Producer). (1999). *Un spécialiste, portrait d'un criminel moderne (The specialist)*. France, Germany, Belgium: France 2 Cinéma, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Radio Télévision Belge Francofone, et al.
- Wallis, H. (Producer), & Curtiz, M. (Director). (1942). *Casablanca* [Motion picture]. United States: Warner Brothers.