# Preserving Memory or Fabricating the Past?
# How Films Constitute Cinematic Archives of the Holocaust

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*Abstract*

The article discusses the filmic representation of the Holocaust within the framework of the archive. To what extent adopt films archival techniques and operations or constitute something like 'cinematic archives' of the Holocaust? Films can assemble footage from the archive and bring it in a specific order but they can also use it as model for cinematic recreations. Thus, the preservation of visual and nonvisual traces in feature films is always transformative and sometimes even distorting. By repeating and circulating 'images of images' such films turn visual heritage into a pattern of visual icons and create a stock of usable imagery, which in reverse also leaves other memories and remnants to forgetting. Such technique of repetition is also the basis for the transtextual character of cinematic archives, which also interconnects the storage (the assembling of images) with the register (the references towards earlier cinematic representations). To describe the logic, operations and the impact of cinematic archives of the Holocaust the article reviews such films as *Schindler's List*, *X-Men*, *The Pianist* and *Everything Is Illuminated*, and discusses theoretical approaches by Gérard Genette and Jacques Derrida.

Once French filmmaker Claude Lanzmann noted that Steven Spielberg's attempt to make *Schindler's List* (USA 1993) meant in fact to fabricate archives.[1] With this statement Lanzmann indicated a crucial aspect of Spielberg's depiction of German businessman Oskar Schindler's evolution from a profiteer of anti-Jewish measures to a rescuer and caring friend of 'his' Jews. Actually *Schindler's List* constituted new archives on several levels and became a reservoir for imagining the Holocaust. On the one hand the film literally constituted a new archive and became the cornerstone of Spielberg's Shoah Foundation Institute and its unique collection of survivor's testimonies. On the other hand *Schindler's List* reused and created iconic images and stereotypical figurations to visualize

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[1] Claude Lanzmann, *Ihr sollt nicht weinen. Einspruch gegen Schindlers Liste*, in Christoph Weiss (ed.), *"Der gute Deutsche." Dokumente zur Diskussion um Steven Spielbergs Schindlers Liste in Deutschland*, Rohrig Universitätsverlag, St. Imbert 1995, pp. 173-178, p. 175.

the Holocaust and offered certain familiar patterns to construct a narrative that eliminated its unease and disturbing challenges. Thus the film most influentially transformed the history of the Holocaust from an experience of destruction and death into a story of rescue and survival and offered certain patterns and formulas as well as iconic depictions for its future representation.[2]

According to Lawrence Baron films and stories about the Holocaust are drawing "on a rich source of previous movie plotlines and images,"[3] hence the well-known images of Nazism and the Holocaust are repeatedly represented in the media, in film and in television. This ongoing repetition creates a situation in which the circulating images also become a basic part of our mediated memory.[4] Thus media and memory can linked on several levels. Through the notion of post-memory Marianne Hirsch has emphasized the fact that photographs and other visual evidence of the Holocaust are blended into personal family stories. Within this "*structure* of inter- and trans-generational transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience" children of survivors refer to those images to illustrate experiences that their parents did not have communicated.[5] Hirsch and others also proved that the technique of post-memory became a striking device within the representation of the Holocaust, but also of other atrocities.[6] Furthermore relying on Pierre Nora's work on places of memory Alison Landsberg introduced the concept of 'prosthetic memory,' interpreting cinema as a technical tool to create sensual access to the past.[7] Thomas Elsaesser then pointed towards the "parapractic logic of Holocaust memory"[8] and related it to the "parapractic poetics"[9] of Holocaust cinema. I myself tired elsewhere to investigate particular narrative and stylistic operations of using and reusing iconic images and narrative patterns to visualize the Holocaust in feature films.[10]

[2] This tendency was already regarded and broadly discussed when the film was released. See: Miriam Hansen, "*Schindler's List* is not *Shoah*: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism and Public Memory," in *Critical Inquiry*, no. 22, Winter 1996, pp. 292-312; Lynn Rapaport, "Hollywood's Holocaust: *Schindler's List* and the Construction of Memory," in *Film & History*, no. 1, May 2002, pp. 55-65.

[3] Lawrence Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary Holocaust Cinema*, Lanham Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham 2005, p. 240.

[4] Anton Kaes, *History and Film: Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination*, in Bruce A. Murray, Christopher J. Wickham (eds.), *Framing the Past: The Historiography of German Cinema and Television*, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale 1992, pp. 308-323, p. 309.

[5] Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," in *Poetics Today*, no. 1, Spring 2008, p. 106.

[6] *Ibidem*. Elke Heckner, *Whose Trauma Is It? Identification and Secondary Witnessing in the Age of Postmemory*, in David Bathrick, Brad Prager, Michael Richardson (eds.), *Visualizing the Holocaust: Documents, Aesthetics, Memory*, Camden House, Rochester 2008, pp. 62-85.

[7] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York 2004.

[8] Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema: Terror and Trauma: Cultural Memory since 1945*, Routledge, London-New York 2014, p. 63.

[9] *Ivi*, p. 59.

[10] Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, *Geschichtsbilder im medialen Gedächtnis. Filmische Narrationen des Holocaust*, Transcript, Bielefeld 2011.

Those concepts proved increasingly helpful to review the cinematic depictions of the past in relation to the personal and inter-personal struggles of commemorating the Holocaust. Departing from approaches to understand the interconnection of 'cultural memory' and 'communicative memory'[11] those concepts emphasized the particular role media plays in this construction and transmission of 'Holocaust memory.'

In the following paper I will discuss the filmic representation of the Holocaust within a different framework: the logic of the archive. To what extend adopt films about the Holocaust archival techniques and operations or constitute something like 'cinematic archives' of the Holocaust? This slight change of perspective, compared to the memory-related discussion of Holocaust films, also departs from the concept of cultural and communicative memory and its distinction into 'Speichergedächtnis' (stored memory) and 'Funktionsgedächtnis' (functional memory).[12]

> *While the functional memory fulfills such important tasks as identity construction or the legitimization of an existing societal form, the stored memory is no less important. It serves as a 'reservoir for future functional memories,' 'as a resource for the renewal of cultural knowledge' […].*[13]

Films seem to interrelate both aspects. They constitute particular archives for imagining the past and recreate what was not recorded or preserved (stored memory), and they embed those images within a particular narrative (functional memory). In the following I want to discuss how far those films follow or even constitute a particular logic of cinematic archives. Besides the question how films use and reuse images from earlier films I am particularly interested in reviewing the impact of transtextual aesthetics, which might also provide a specific access to this 'stock' of images and patterns similar to the index of an archive.

## *The logic of cinematic archives*

A film can adopt historic footage and assemble it in a specific order but it can also use archival material as model for cinematic recreations. While documentary films mostly use and reuse footage from public and private archives to illustrate the past feature films about the Holocaust also fill the gaps of missing images through imagination and re-enactments and thus provide 'new' images

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[11] Jan Assmann, *Communicative and Cultural Memory*, in Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, De Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2008, pp. 109-118.
[12] Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann, *Das Gestern im Heute. Medien und soziales Gedächtnis*, in Klaus Merten et al. (eds.), *Die Wirklichkeit der Medien. Eine Einführung in die Kommunikationswissenschaften*, Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen 1994, pp. 114-140, p. 122-123.
[13] Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2011, p. 36.

of the past. While documentary films mostly refer to witnesses whose words are supposed to 'revive' the past in the imagination of the spectators feature films can bring into shape non-visual evidence such as testimonies and thus create definitive images out of the imagination of the listeners or readers. Thus the preservation of visual and non-visual traces in feature films is always transformative and sometimes even distorting. By repeating and circulating 'images of images' such films turn visual heritage into a pattern of visual icons and create a stock of usable imagery, which in reverse also leaves other memories and remnants to forgetting.[14] Thus such cinematic archives of the Holocaust assemble images that circulate in popular culture and are especially mediated through films and television.

Cinematic archives occupy an ephemeral and virtual place, thus different from the 'archive film,' which is stored in a physical (film) archive. Film itself serves as storage room for the traces of the past. But while the film compilation out of archive footage at least in part makes visible the 'original material' and assembles the loose findings from the archives in a certain order feature films provide a different access towards the visual remnants of the past. They use the power of imagination to fill the gaps between the preserved images and often fabricate the content of a new (imaginary) archive. Furthermore they are sometimes pretend to gather definite images of the past ('as it really was') although these recreations are nevertheless fragmentary, unstable and in permanent transition.

How far then do feature films about the Holocaust constitute cinematic archives at all, especially when an archive, in the words of Jacques Derrida, has to "be deposited somewhere, on a stable substrate, and at the disposition of a legitimate hermeneutic authority."[15] One might argue that film could be seen as a 'stable substrate' but what about the place and the 'hermeneutic authority' that are mentioned. While the specific mobility and accessibility of film, in various media and at various places in different times, is part of the distinct logic of cinematic archives the 'hermeneutic authority' might be a specific dispositive, an alignment constituted by the film, its spectators and the social and political discourses that are framing it. Furthermore Derrida's notion of "consignation" might be of help. Next to the "functions of unification, of identification, of classification" consignation does not only mean "the act of assigning residence or of entrusting so as to put into reserve (to consign, to deposit), in a place and on a substrate, but here the act of *con*signing through *gathering together signs*."[16] The latter is of specific importance as cinematic archives can be mainly seen as doing such "gathering together signs," which they assemble within a specific order (or narrative) of the past:

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[14] Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, "Migrating Images: Iconic Images of the Holocaust and the Representation of War in Popular Film," in *Shofar*, no. 4, Summer 2010, pp. 86-103, p. 90.

[15] Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive*, Ed. Galilée, Paris 1995 (Eng. ed. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 1996, p. 3).

[16] *Ibidem*.

> Consignation *aims to coordinate a single corpus, in a system or synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration. In an archive, there should not be any absolute dissociation, any heterogeneity or secret which could separate (*secernere*), or partition, in an absolute manner.*[17]

Similarly the cinematic archives of the Holocaust tend towards visibility, closeness and repetition, which Derrida marks as a fundamental technique of the archive.[18] Such technique of repetition is also the basis for the transtextual character of the cinematic archives, which also interconnects the storage (the assembling of images) with the register (the references towards earlier cinematic representations).

Departing from these assumptions two aspects that constitute the archive, the 'assembling mode' and the 'indexing mode,' are intertwined. I suppose that this is a very important notion of what I call cinematic archives. But, as Derrida highlights, there is "[n]o archive without outside,"[19] and that refers also to the destabilizing force of transtextuality. By adding a third mode – the tracing mode – I therefore also want to include those examples that implicitly or explicitly uncover their affinity to the archive.

*The transtextual character of cinematic archives*

In retrospective *Schindler's List* can be seen as one of the most influential attempts to approach the Holocaust through a specific composition of recreating, repeating and superposing images and elements from earlier films and photographic evidence. Thus Daniel R. Schwarz emphasized that "Spielberg's Holocaust images are generic crystallizing images borrowed from prior texts and films that become a reservoir of intertextual resources. In a way, Spielberg's film depends on evoking memories from our past knowledge of Holocaust texts […]."[20] In the following I want to illustrate the operations of cinematic archives by investigating the transtextual techniques within the film's composition that help to constitute a visual archive that superposes but also preserves earlier cinematic representations of the historic events. Thus we should take a closer look on the palimpsest character of such transtextual configuration of cinematic archives.

The French literary theorist Gérard Genette emphasizes that a palimpsest is characterized by transtextual operations, which relate a particular text (or in our case: film) in a manifest or secret way to another.[21] He describes five subtypes of transtextuality, which are useful to analyze the films that are discussed here. Intertextuality, the most common type, indicates the coexistence of two or more

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[17] *Ibidem*.
[18] *Ivi*, p. 11.
[19] *Ibidem*.
[20] Daniel R. Schwarz, *Imagining the Holocaust*, St. Martins Griffin Press, New York 1999, p. 229.
[21] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes,* Le Seuil, Paris 1982, p. 9.

texts in another text, which constitutes an interchange of meanings and effects. The main techniques of intertextuality would be quotation and allusion.[22]

In *Schindler's List* we find intertextual allusion in the scenes from the evacuation of the Krakow ghetto, which mark a turning point in the transformation of the protagonist.[23] In this sequence recreations of historic images are embedded, such as of a historic photograph picturing suitcases and luggage scattered on a street after the brutal evacuation. Also the representation of camp Plaszow, to which the inhabitants of the ghetto were then transferred, is referring to well-known historic photographs. A famous image that depicts its topography from a bird's eye perspective serves, for example, as a warrant for the authentic reconstruction of the place. But *Schindler's List* puts the visual evidence in different order by changing its original intention, the documentation of the camp's efficient and orderly operation, to illustrate the commandant's almighty controlling gaze.

Besides such references to real time events Spielberg also imparts recreations of well-known iconic images that already became an integral part of the Holocaust's visual heritage. This includes, for example, the shots of female prisoners standing behind barbed wire, which is clearly based on a famous picture taken by American photographer Margret Bourke-White after the liberation of Buchenwald that is showing the former prisoners standing at the camp's fence.[24] By placing such recreations at the cornerstones of its narrative the film, seen under the aspect of the cinematic archive, makes it also possible to fill the gaps in-between those iconic images. For example the recreated photographs of abandoned suitcases during the evacuation of the Krakow ghetto frame the cinematic imagination of the events including point-of-view shots from the perspective of the Jewish inhabitants. Thus the fabrication of a cinematic archive encompasses the inclusion of recreated archive footage and photographs as well as the imaginary reconstruction of the events from which no images were preserved.

Within the other types mentioned by Genette, para-, archi-, and metatextuality, the concept of hypertextuality is of particular interest for our case. Hypertextuality describes the relation between a preceding hypotext and a subsequent hypertext, which superposes, modifies and transforms the former.

*Schindler's List*, seen as a hypertext, refers for instance to the Polish feature *Ostatni etap* (*The Last Stop,* Poland 1947) by former Auschwitz prisoner Wanda Jakubowska as a hypotextual film.[25] This film was already being planed

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[22] *Ivi*, p. 10.

[23] Miriam Hansen has discussed this particular sequence in detail mainly focusing on its sound/image relation, but she did not mention its intertextual references to archive footage. See: Id., "*Schindler's List* is not *Shoah*: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism and Public Memory," cit., p. 304-305.

[24] Marianne Hirsch also refers to this motive in context of her studies on post-memory and shows for example how Art Spiegelman is using this picture to fill the gaps of his own 'family album,' see: Id., "The Generation of Postmemory," cit., p. 113.

[25] Stuart Liebman, "Pages from the Past: Wanda Jakubowska's *The Last Stop (Ostatni Etap)*," in

when Jakubowska was liberated from Ravensbrück concentration camp and shot shortly after on location in Auschwitz. It was based on her own memories from everyday life in the camp, and several of her fellow comrades participated in the filming. *Schindler's List* preserves Jakubowska's film for the future but at the same time absorbs it into its narrative what can foremost be seen in the depiction of the camps. In *Schindler's List* typical situations from *The Last Stop* are embedded, such as the wet and muddy ground, roll call scenes, yelling during raids and the bleak atmosphere.[26]

But *Schindler's List* does not only reuse elements from feature films. During the preparation Spielberg was researching particularly documentary films as source for the visual representation.[27] Thus obviously the film also restages a central sequence from Alain Resnais' *Nuit et Brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, France 1955) in which numerous suitcases, shoes, eyeglasses and other ownerless belongings are recorded by a tracking camera. What is particular striking in this insertion of the recreated sequence is that already *Night and Fog* had constituted an archive by collecting recently unseen and even unknown footage from different archives.[28]

Also the third hypotext, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, constituted a new archive. Although Lanzmann avoided including any iconic and emblematic archive footage in his documentary film its collection of testimonies provides new access to the past and, as Thomas Elsaesser has emphasized, had already created "a different kind of archive."[29] By recreating testimonies from *Shoah* and imposing them into the narrative of his film Spielberg claims a definitely pictured past. This becomes obvious in a central sequence in *Schindler's List*, in which a group of women from Schindler's factory is accidentally transported to Auschwitz. In this sequence Spielberg shows three times and from different perspectives a young Polish boy indicating with a gesture of his hand the nearby death awaiting the deportees. This gesture is directly borrowed from *Shoah*. Thus the crystallized image in *Schindler's List* inverts Lanzmann's testimonial approach.

Thus the specificity of cinematic archives is that in contrast to other archival operations they are assembling the material within a new narrative order that is already providing a certain way of reading. Besides that they hide the origin of the collected material. It is already stored in a transformed, sometimes even distorted manner. Thus although providing the inventory for visual historical consciousness of popular culture such films constitute a kind of fabricated archives that are supposed to fill the gaps of the existing historical archives and replace its missing images.

*East European Performance: Drama, Theatre, Film*, no. 3, Fall 1996, pp. 56-63.
[26] Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema*, cit., p. 74.
[27] Hellmuth Karasek, "Die ganze Wahrheit schwarz auf Weiß. Regisseur Steven Spielberg über seinen Film *Schindlers Liste*," in *Der Spiegel*, February 21, 1994, pp. 183-186, p. 184.
[28] Sylvie Lindeperg, Nuit et Brouillard*: Un film dans l'histoire*, Edition Odile Jacob, Paris 2007. *Night and Fog* even includes two sequences from *The Last Stop* and matches them with documentary footage from the camps.
[29] Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema*, cit., p. 77.

## The stock of cinematic archives

To describe the impact of such cinematic archives of the Holocaust the opening sequence of *X-Men* (USA 2000) deserves a closer look. This first part of a series about mutants with supernatural capabilities who are increasingly persecuted by their fellow 'normal' humans surprisingly starts somewhere in Poland in 1944. We witness the arrival and selection of Jewish prisoners in a camp. By using well known iconic images, metonymic motifs and stereotypical figurations the opening establishes the historic setting within minutes because the audience immediately knows how to understand these visual and narrative cues.

It starts with a particular setting and atmosphere. We picture muddy ground and rainy weather, a motif that constantly reappears in Holocaust movies.[30] The dull and gloomy mood is intended to enhance the impression of a strange and threatening place. Accordingly the following shot depicts a uniformed guard with a rifle that probably not by accident recalls a historic photograph taken at Camp Sachsenhausen from the overlooking perspective of a watchtower.

The next shot pictures a line of walking people on a gangway in-between barbered wire, another well-known motif that was already part of the film footage, which Polish and Soviet camera men shot quickly after the liberation in Majdanek and Auschwitz. It is followed by a series includes close ups of individual faces. First we see a man with a hat. Attached to his coat is the 'Yellow Star,' another iconic sign of the Holocaust. Then the camera pans towards a young boy and a woman. Mother and child are a prototypical figuration in films about the Holocaust as well as the separation of a Jewish family, which established already the main narrative conflict of the television series *Holocaust* (USA 1979).[31]

These shots are succeeded by a series of views that are explicitly indicated as point-of-view-shots of the boy. A close up of his face marks the following depictions of forced laborers in prisoners' clothes with tattooed numbers on the one hand as subjective perspective and on the other accentuates those images as iconic. The following tumultuous scenes include further familiar situations and figurations: the selection, the confrontation of prisoners and guarding soldiers, barking dogs, barbed wire. Within only a few minutes nearly the whole set of Holocaust images are triggered by relying on condensed information clusters and visual stereotypes.[32] Within the genre of an action film the historic event is invoked as a cinematic stereotype that – in the words of Lawrence Baron – "establishes more substantial connections to the Holocaust to clarify the motivations of its leading villain and draw parallels between it and contemporary prejudices."[33]

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[30] Hanno Loewy, *Fiktion und Mimesis: Holocaust and Genre in Film*, in Margrit Frölich, Hanno Loewy, Heinz Steinert (eds.), *Lachen über Hitler – Auschwitz Gelächter*, Edition Text + Kritik, Munich 2003, pp. 37-64, p. 38.

[31] Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, *Geschichtsbilder im medialen Gedächtnis. Filmische Narrationen des Holocaust*, cit., p. 294.

[32] Anton Kaes, *History and Film: Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination*, cit., p. 315.

[33] Lawrence Baron, *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary*

Finally in a significant twist the ending of the opening sequence superimposes an emblematic image, the familiar depiction of the entrance gate of Auschwitz, with a fantastic substitute. Shaped by the supernatural power of the mutant the cross fading of this visual icon enables a change of perspectives: from historical reconstruction towards the fictional mode of popular culture. Only now also the 'outside' of the archive – the imaginary power of cinema – is addressed and we witness the destabilizing force of the transtextual structure of the cinematic archives.

Interestingly *X-Men* furthermore did not only rely on the visual material that was provided by earlier films dealing with the period of the Holocaust such as *Schindler's List*. The opening sequence of the first part became also a new intratextual archive on which the succeeding prequel *X-Men: First Class* (USA 2011) could exclusively rely.[34] This episode depicts the back-story of Magneto and opened with the very same arrangement of images like the first part. Shot by shot the prequel recreated the opening sequence of its predecessor from 2001 and thus used it as an archive for visualizing Magneto's trauma. Through this reference both films are also interconnected and *X-Men: First Class* is thus indexed as *X-Men*'s missing link.

## *The recording gaze of the cinematic archives*

But although such cinematic archives are trans- and intratextually porous they nevertheless seem to correspond what Derrida addresses as the problem of the "concept of the archive": "To have a concept at one's disposal, to have assurances with regard to it, is to presuppose a closed heritage and the guarantee sealed, in some sense, by that heritage."[35] Thus turning back to the question of consignation we should not address the homogenous character of the archive but also the assembling of disparate material. This becomes notably challenging in case of cinematic archives of atrocities, because: "Without this evil, which is also archive fever, the desire and the disorder of the archive, there would be neither assignation nor consignation."[36]

*The Pianist* (UK, Poland, Germany 2002) by Polish-Jewish director Roman Polanski, who himself survived the Holocaust as a child, can be seen as such an archive of assignation due to its specific palimpsest character of assembling dif-

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*Holocaust Cinema*, cit., p. 259. Magneto, the young boy Eric Lehnsherr in the opening sequence, represents those mutants who oppose the forced assimilation to 'normal' humans and insist on their difference and particularity. As suggested by the film's opening sequence Magneto's attitude is shaped by his family's separation and his camp experience.
[34] Although not explicitly relying on Holocaust references the latest prequel *X-Men: Days of Future Past* (2014) went even further by taking the *X-Men* films literally as archival source and directly cited images and sequences from its predecessors.
[35] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, cit., p. 33.
[36] *Ivi*, p. 81.

ferent references and sources. Only after he came across the testimony of Polish-Jewish pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman did Polanski find an adequate basis for such his film. Szpilman, who survived German occupation in the Warsaw ghetto and in hiding, wrote down his experiences immediately after the war and used for his testimony a very documentary and sober style. This style also affected Polanski's cinematic adaptation in *The Pianist*. Thus he focusses very much on presenting the events through the protagonist's eyes and avoids overdramatization.

Although Polanski abstains from blending any archive footage or historic photographs into the story line he allusively refers to those well-known images that the Nazis depicted in the Ghetto during spring 1942 in order to produce an anti-Semitic propaganda film. Some of these recreations illustrate the topography of the ghetto and the setting of the film; others present iconic places that are recalled from historic pictures such as the ghetto wall or the significant pedestrian's bridge that connected the two parts of the ghetto.

In his film Polanski tries to counter the ambiguity of these images by reversing their origin and imparting a more emphatic gaze that senses suffering and humiliation. Although therefore hiding the perpetrator's gaze in its recreations the film nevertheless makes visible the filming perpetrators and hints towards the fact that the ghetto was a place where the Germans created a reality according to their anti-Semitic phantasm. Thus *The Pianist* creates a cinematic archive from the visible memory of the ghetto by placing iconic perpetrator footage into a different order and reframes their original perspective.

But even more important is that Polanski changes the source of the witnessing gaze from the perpetrator's camera to his Jewish protagonist who is witnessing life in the ghetto, during the uprising and in wartime Warsaw. Thus the audience sees the events through the eyes of a witnessing victim. The visualization of this act of witnessing constitutes the dominant perspective of *The Pianist* and shapes its narrative form. Through this inversion Polanski thwarts the propagandistic intention of the original images and replaces it with a new look onto the well-known remnants of the past. Through this change of perspectives the film is able to detach oneself from the patterns that were inscribed in the original footage.

This can be demonstrated regarding the highly emotional sequence, in which Szpilman's family is deported from the ghetto. Because Szpilman was safeguarded by a Jewish policeman and is standing behind the barrier watching the deportation he literally changed sides. What he witnesses are indeed reenactments of popular icons of the Holocaust – film fragments that were supposedly shot at the boarding of a deportation train near Lublin, which appear in several documentary films about the Holocaust.[37]

Besides Szpilman's memories and the visual remnants of the Warsaw ghetto *The Pianist* adapts also a third source because Polanski sneaks into the film el-

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[37] One of the first films that presented this material was *Night and Fog*. Resnais combined the footage from Poland showing an old man with two children at a platform and people who are helping others to enter the cattle cars with the famous archive film from the Dutch transit camp in Westerbork.

ements from his own memories of the time when he was in the Krakow ghetto and in hiding. Although he steps back behind Szpilman as main witness of the film's events Polanski creates a certain texture of memories and visible evidence from different sources.[38]

Such a symbolic moment, whose representation is shaped by the director's personal memory, is again the highly emotional deportation sequence. Introduced by the last gathering of the family this sequence visualizes the final separation of Szpilman and his relatives. But Szpilman's wondrous rescue is partly based on Polanski's own experiences. As a boy he was able to escape from the ghetto's collecting point with the help of a Polish policeman who ordered them after starting to run away that they should move slowly.[39] Polanski included this advice into the story line of his film.

Thus Polanski assembled with *The Pianist* a multilayered archive from different sources that preserved their traces and transformed them into a film. Through imparting these elements from the original testimony, his personal memories and the perpetrators' footage into a narrative that is structured by the visibility of witnessing, Polanski is on the one hand able to invert and adopt diverse sources. On the other hand he indirectly also provides a register to index and relate the traces to other archives.[40] That way the sources – Szpilman's testimony, the historic photographs and films as well as Polanski's personal memories – assemble and assign a specific picture from the past. In contrast to Spielberg's attempt of presupposing a 'closed heritage' and thus proclaiming a final archive, which overwrites its sources, *The Pianist* preserves, revitalizes and usurps diverse remnants of the past to make them accessible in the present. Therefore the film can be seen itself as a palimpsest of remembrance that opens access to engage the leftovers of the past.

*The tracing mode of cinematic archives*

As seen, transtextual operations and the recreation of iconic images are an important element of such palimpsest memories. This is also related to another operational mode of the archive, the transmission of transgenerational heritage. In his discussion of the Freudian dimension of the archive Derrida also addresses these "archival problems of oral narrative and public property, of mnemic traces,

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[38] Kobi Kabalek, *Unheroic Heroes: Re-Viewing Roman Polanski's* The Pianist *(2002) in Germany and Israel*, in Vera Apfelthaler, Julia B. Köhne (eds.), *Gendered Memories: Transgressions in German and Israeli Film and Theater*, Turia + Kant, Vienna 2007, pp. 61-82, p. 63.

[39] Roman Polanski, *Roman Polanski von Roman Polanski*, Scherz Verlag, Munich-Vienna 1984, p. 15.

[40] A significant extension of Polanski's cinematic archive of the heritage from the Warsaw ghetto was for example provided by Yael Hersonski's documentary film *Geheimsache Ghettofilm* (*A Film Unfinished*, Israel-Germany 2010), which reviews and investigates the propaganda film from the ghetto.

of archaic and transgenerational heritage, and of everything that can happen to an 'impression' in these at once 'topic' (*topisch*) and 'genetic' (*genetisch*) processes."[41]

The last version of a cinematic archive combines the transgenerational dimension with the topic one. Furthermore it also proves the "everything that can happen" and thus emphasizes cinema's potential to create a different affective relation to the past by turning archiving and preservation into particular cinematic operations and a particular tracing mode of searching for traces in the present rather than reconstructing the past. In contrast to *Schindler's List* and *The Pianist* Liev Schreiber's *Everything Is Illuminated* (USA 2005) is situated in the present and follows the narrative of a journey. That changes the perspective from reconstructing the past to accessing it through memory with the help of leftovers and remnants that still remain. Schreiber's film is based on the successful novel with the same title by Jonathan Safran Foer but mostly refers to the basic plot of its pretext, the story *A Very Rigid Search*, which Foer had published in the *New Yorker* in 2001. This story was not only the nucleus of the later novel but also the outcome of a research trip without any result:

> *I found nothing but nothing, and in that nothing — a landscape of completely realized absence — nothing was to be found. […] I didn't know what questions to ask, or whom to ask, or the necessary names of people, places, and things. The nothing came as much from me as from what I encountered.*[42]

Thus Schreiber's film itself is already a multiple hypertext not only referring to its paratext, the novel, but also to its hidden pretext as a hypotext. The practices of the archive, collecting and storing, overlaying and superimposing, were already at work within the production process and thus shaped the film's composition. At the same time the experience of a quest without a result thwarts the idea of the complete archive, which would be able to preserve the past *in extenso*. While the protagonist of the film, Foer's own alter ego, represents the desire of collecting everything to avoid forgetting, the film itself presents the process of searching as precondition for imagining the past and refilling its gaps – not with definite images but with present experiences.

Therefore the film itself provides a cinematic map for the topography of an imaginary archive that even brings together different geographic spaces. This concept is already visualized in the opening sequence, which juxtaposes the material remnants of the past, from the collection of protagonist Jonathan Foer, with a map of the Ukraine and the voice over of the other protagonist, the Ukrainian tour guide Alexander, who states that he had thought that the past should be buried until he had met Jonathan.[43] From here on both characters represent two

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[41] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, cit., p. 34.
[42] "A Conversation with Jonathan Safran Foer," in *Press Release* Everything Is Illuminated, http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/booksellers/press_release/pdf/everything_foer.pdf, p. 4, last visit 16 June 2014.
[43] Eric A. Goldman, *The American Jewish Story through Cinema*, University of Texas Press, Austin

dimensions of the archive, the archivist and collector Foer, and the historian and narrator Alexander. The topographic space of this archive is also split, not only geographically between the United States and the Ukraine, but also spatially between the vertical plain 'screen' of Foer's collection of manifold items that are stored in plastic bags and fixed on his room's wall on the one side and the horizontal deep space of the Ukrainian landscape that functions as a stage, on which the memories of the past evolve. The third spatial model of the archive is the small house in the midst of a field full with sunflowers, in which Lista, the last survivor of the Shtetl Trachimbrod lives, which Foer, Alexander and his grouchy grandfather are searching for. The walls of this house are filled with boxes full of remnants from the past, the equivalent to Jonathan's plastic bags at the wall. But while the latter recalls much more the model of a museum, which exhibits such leftovers and thus creates a particular narrative with a particular orderly sense, Lista's boxes in contrast are foremost preserving a lost world for an indefinite future. Thus Lista represents the archivist's function as a "keeper of memory."[44] She even enables access though her personal memories that extend the material remnants such as to a series of photographs, which she has taken from one of the boxes with the inscription "In Case." The fourth archival space is the deserted space of the former Shtetl, which was destroyed by the Germans who also killed the local Jewish population among them Augustine, Jonathan's grandfather's former wife. This place doesn't reveal anything. It represents the archive as a voided grave that finally buried the memory of those who lived and perished here. But the film takes this deserted place, the 'empty screen,' as a starting point for a cinematic evocation of memories through words and imagination. While Lista serves as a medium that reveals the past through narration Alexander's grandfather admits his longtime suppressed memories of these traumatic events, which he himself survived just by chance and only by leaving behind every remnant of his own Jewish past and identity. His memories are embedded into the film as imaginary flashbacks based on iconic signs and images such as the 'Yellow Star' or prototypical situations such as mass executions. But by assembling these floating memories likewise a puzzle little by little the film does not only express the challenges of such a fabrication of a suppressed and traumatic past and its fragmentary and palimpsest structure it also clearly marks it as an encounter between past and present and therefore as an archival operation. Thus the task of the film's journey is not so much the revelation of the past. It is much more the conscious fabrication of memory as a living ground for the future:

> *Jonathan and Alexander, Third Generation, both grandchildren of Trachimbrod, who live on opposite sides of an ocean, now share a common memory, their story, their Haggadah to be shared with their offspring.*[45]

2013, p. 188.
[44] *Ivi*, p. 167.
[45] *Ivi*, p. 200.

The narrative of the search thus is explicitly directed towards accessing the archive from an unrecoverable past. But this archive would not only be composed from documents and authentic material leftovers but also, as Eric A. Goldman's reference towards the Jewish Haggadah that retells the story of the Exodus from Egypt indicates, from story-telling and imagination.

*Conclusion: the quest for the (future) archive*

In this manner cinematic archives do not only lock the past in crystalized images and fabricate archives. Rather they can also create a vivid experience of the challenging impact of the past for our present life. Thus the archive is – as also Derrida emphasizes – always directed to the future:

> *It is not the question of a concept dealing with the past that might already be at our disposal or not at our disposal, an archivable concept of the archive. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow.*[46]

All examples in this paper in a more or less explicit way implied this orientation towards the future. While Polanski assembled different sources to preserve a particular picture of the destruction of Warsaw and the Warsaw ghetto that culminated in the simulacrum-like dystopian image from the ruins of Warsaw, *X-Men* literally related the past experience of its villain Magneto to a future that finally has to deal with the heritage of intolerance and marginalization. It is obvious that *Everything Is Illuminated* constituted new encounters between the 'old' world in Europe and its offspring in the United States for an 'illuminated' future but even *Schindler's List* constituted the cornerstone for a future archive when leading to the establishing of the Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation.[47]

In addition to memory-related approaches the concept of the archive offers another model to describe different cinematic operations of visualizing and thus preserving the past. Such operations can also make visible their own operators and thus their specific logic of cinematic archives. Transtextual transmission is therefore a central operational tool. Either hiding sources or references behind iconic and crystallized images or offering access for reentering the past as a quest from the present the archive becomes a cinematic model. Its moving force (and authority) is the transmission of a still persisting past:

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[46] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, cit., p. 36.
[47] For a discussion of the archive in context of video testimony collections see (though referring to Fortunoff Archive): Amit Pinchevski, *Archive, Media, Trauma*, in Motti Neiger, Oren Meyers, Eyal Zandberg (eds.), *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke-New York 2011, pp. 253-264.

*Without the irrepressible […] force and authority of this transgenerational memory, the problems of which we speak would be dissolved and resolved in advance. There would no longer be any essential history of culture, there would no longer be any question of memory and of archive, […] and one would no longer even understand how an ancestor can speak within us, not what sense there might me in us to speak to him or her.*[48]

By projecting the topography of the archive and its operations of archiving into the cinematic space cinematic archives are able to evoke a porous interspace for such (future) encounters and reencounters with the past.

[48] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, cit., pp. 35-36.