

# The Influence of Time on Artworks: A Hermeneutical Reading of Holocaust Films

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**Abstract:** This article's aim is to focus on the close relationship that exists between the notions of prejudice and historicity and the time in which a film director of genocide lives and the extent to which their temporality unavoidably colors their artistic response to a historical event, such as the Holocaust. In this regard, depending on such an event, a categorization of people will be offered: victims and survivors, survivors' children who born after genocide, witnesses of victims and survivors, and, finally, people born after the genocide. In this way, according to the main argument of this essay, the time period the film director lives in relative to the event is one of the criteria for evaluating their artwork in virtue of the formation of their prejudices and of their approach to the Holocaust as a historical event. But it must be noted that this essay will not argue that films of the directors belonging to any of the particular categories are better representations of the Holocaust than the films of the others. Instead, it will be stated that there appears a two-stage linguistic gap among human beings when directors narrate their own experience or highlight the significance of the event per se.

**Keywords:** Genocide, Holocaust, Prejudice, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Differend, Film.

**Öz:** Bu makalenin amacı, ön yargı ve tarihsellik kavramlarının bir soykırım filmi yönetmeninin yaşadığı zaman dilimi ile olan yakın ilişkisi üzerinde durmaktır. Zira kişinin zamansallığı, Holocaust gibi bir tarihsel olaya yönelik verdiği/vereceği sanatsal tepkisini kaçınılmaz olarak şekillendirir. Bu minvalde, bir olayın zamanı temel alınarak insanların şu şekilde sınıflandırılması düşünülebilir: Kurbanlar ve hayatta kalanlar, hayatta kalmış olanların soykırımdan sonra doğan çocukları, olaya ve hayatta kalanlara şahit olan diğer insanlar ve soykırımdan sonra doğanlar. Bu şekilde, makalenin ana argümanına göre film yönetmeninin yaşadığı zaman dilimi, kendi ön yargılarının oluşumu ve Holocaust'a tarihsel bir vaka olarak yaklaşımı bağlamında, çalışmasını değerlendirebileceğimiz kıstaslardan biri olacaktır. Ancak dikkat edilmelidir ki bu çalışma, herhangi bir kategorideki yönetmenlerin filmlerinin Holocaust'u tasvir ve temsil etmesi bakımından diğer kategorilerdeki filmlerden daha iyi olduğunu iddia etmeyecektir. Aksine yönetmenlerin kendi tecrübelerini hikâyeleştirmek ya da olayın önemine işaret etmek istediklerinde iki aşamalı bir dilsel boşluğun açığa çıktığına değinilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Soykırım, Holocaust, Ön yargı, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Differend, Film.

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## Introduction

In his article "Who Owns Auschwitz?", Imre Kertész asserts that as someone born after the Holocaust, Steven Spielberg, the director of *Schindler's List* (1993), can have no idea of the authentic reality of the concentration camps (Kertész, 2001). On the basis of this point of view, I can safely say that when the subject comes to genocide, Bosnian Genocide matters more than the Holocaust for me. The main reason for this is that I have no temporal connection with the Nazi period. Rather, the fact that I grew up with the reality of Bosnian War means my connection to that conflict has greater personal significance for me. War was at home every day. Unlike many television viewers, people in Turkey had greater concern for the Bosnian people because they share neighborhoods with relatives, descendants or predecessors of the latter. Even if I did not bear witness to the Srebrenica massacre, I always had an opportunity to contact survivors during the war. And even if I am incapable of understanding the bear truth of the genocide, I witnessed the event and its aftermath.

Naturally, being witness to genocide -both in the sense of an eyewitness and personally seeing its remnants- deeply affects and radically changes one's view of life and can reflect traces of the catastrophe upon the artwork they do. To illustrate, Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's *Harburg Monument against Fascism* appears (or rather, disappears) in order to defy the traditional didactic function of monuments (Young, 1992, p. 274). In order to avoid realism, while some artists such as Peter Eisenman, Richard Serra, and Susan Hiller tend towards abstraction (Godfrey, 2007, p. 4), writers like Samuel Beckett and Paul Celan prefer being silent about the horror of the camps, perhaps because they believe silence is the best cry (Godfrey, 2007, p. 11). Whereas Tarik Samarah's photos turn to black and white as if life's colors were faded out,<sup>1</sup> Taryn Simon concatenates the text and image in order to show the impossibility of absolute understanding and space (Simon, 2012).

My primary task in this article is to focus on Holocaust films as one of the fields of art which respond to genocide by seeking reasonable answers for the question of when one intends to represent such a disaster and how the time during which one lives affects their work. By doing so, I will attempt to unravel the relationship between man's historicity, his prejudices and his work of art in the Gadamerian sense. Finally, based on this relationship, I shall offer a categorization of people according to their temporality in relation to the Holocaust as a historical event, and argue that using this categorization will help us evaluate their artistic responses to genocide. However, it must be noted that the present work aims to draw attention to the categorical (or, temporal) difference among artists, rather than judge the films shot by various directors.

1 See. <http://tariksamarah.com/thumbs.htm>.

### **The Concept of Prejudice and Man's Historicity**

To begin with, since it is the most crucial part of this paper, I want to scrutinize the term "prejudice" on the basis of Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Needless to say, the term, by gaining a negative connotation following the Enlightenment (Gadamer, 2013, p. 284), has become an annoyance that we need to avoid completely. According to Merriam-Webster's definition, "prejudice" means "a feeling of like or dislike for someone or something especially when it is not reasonable or logical." As can be seen, the term is still associatively used with unreasonableness and illogicality. When we have prejudgments about an event or issue, we are recognized as being someone unable to give up their subjectivity, which falls contrary to the expectations of objectivity in the sciences. In sum, prejudice is deemed a judgment preventing us from approaching a problem as it really is.

For the Enlightenment, prejudice is the main barricade standing in front of getting rid of tradition, of all kind of authorities, and of religion (Gadamer, 2013, p. 285). As opposed to the discredited prejudice of the Enlightenment, Gadamer embeds prejudice in the center of understanding. According to Gadamer, "our prejudices do not cut us off from the past, but initially open it up to us. They are the positive enabling condition of historical understanding commensurate with human finitude" (Linge, 1976, pp. xiv-xv).

On the other hand, lack of prejudice, which is seen rather possible theoretically, is quite out of the question in practical terms since "man is [even] alien to himself and his historical fate in a way quite different from the way nature, which knows nothing of him, is alien to him" (Gadamer, 2013, p. 288). Whether they reckon among them or not, human beings depend upon the conditions, which have formed around them, such as the historical, social, and ecological. Hence, we cannot view from the point of nowhere; we have to take up a position. Gadamer here designates the Enlightenment's assertion of true reasoning without any subjective judgment as a kind of illusion: "A critical consciousness that points to all sorts of prejudice and dependency, but one that considers itself absolutely free of prejudice and independent, necessarily remains ensnared in illusions" (Gadamer, 1976, pp. 93-94).

Here we arrive at the gist of Gadamer's critique. He challenges the belief of absolute historicism that is based on the supposition we should not research, analyze, or interpret historical events and phenomena on the ground of where we are today. According to historicism, the aim of a historian is to approach the event as it is. In case of need, they even take off, so to speak, their personality uniform when entering the laboratory. Needless to say, historicism, in this way, regards historical events as quasi-concrete objects waiting to be analyzed like the objects of the natural sciences (Gadamer, 2013, p. 288). However, the past does not play its role that simply.

Linge notes, "The role of the past cannot be restricted merely to supplying the texts or events that make up the 'objects' of interpretation. As prejudice and tradition, the past also defines the ground the interpreter himself occupies when he understands" (1976, p. xv). Moreover, the fact overlooked is reciprocal: historicism, as well as omitting the essential role of the past, also fails when it neglects man's own historicity. As Gadamer remarks,

in fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. *That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being.* (2013, pp. 288-289; italics in the original).

Herewith, we have united the historicity of the subject who analyzes a historical event with their indispensable fate, that is, their full-prejudiced life. Now we can move on to the next step, genocide as a historical event.

### **Genocide as a Historical Event**

Following Gadamer, we are able to say that the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) such as history are not subject to the method in natural sciences (Gadamer, 2013, p. 576). Therefore, a historical event cannot be analyzed like a chemical experiment. For history, here rise a lot of questions about how we know about the past, who is creating history or the nature of language and writing.

In his work *The Holocaust and the Postmodern*, Robert Eaglestone elaborates on the nature of history with regard to Jean-François Lyotard's idea of the *differend*. According to Eaglestone,

Events happen in one temporality ("forwards") but are learnt about and written about in another... History is made up of these events made significant in prose. Of course, not all the historical knowledge a historian has is written down, but the events of the past are always seen, explained, and represented retrospectively (2004, p. 234).

This retrospectiveness of history expels the perception of the watertight truths from the mainstream approach to history and makes narratives drawn near to fiction. Eaglestone continues,

For all these reasons, there is a difference between the past (the events that have now gone, are no longer actually present, however strong our memories of them) and history. History is not the recreation of the past as it actually was but, this transformation: 'history' is the name for a sophisticated and highly developed genre of the narrative told about the past and works of history are works that stem from this particular genre (2004, p. 234).

Here we had better skip through to our main subject, the genocide as a historical event. The term "genocide" was coined in 1944 by a lawyer of Jewish descent, Raphael Lemkin, from the words *genos* (family, tribe, or race in Greek) and *-cide* (killing in Latin). Then, in 1948, the UN declaration on genocide designated the limits of the term. In "Article 2" of the convention it writes,

genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

1. killing members of the group;
2. causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
3. deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
4. imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
5. forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (The Human Rights, 2013).

At this point, I will not go into deep the debate about the adequacy of this definition. Rather I want to dwell upon the historicity of genocide. Nevertheless, it is necessary to say that the definition is not sufficient to draw a reasonable picture of genocide. For instance, the intention of the perpetrators can never be proved. What is worse, by the time the UN arrives at the final decision about whether an act is genocidal or not, the process is not irreversibly effective as we witnessed in Srebrenica, Rwanda, or Darfur.

As a historical event, genocide indicates a two-stage gap between the narrator of the event and their listener. First, there exists an initial gap between the event itself and the comprehension of the eyewitness by virtue of the fact that human consciousness is not a machine saving chronicles as they truly are. Truths of what happened abstrusely differ from truths of how it is remembered (Young, 1998, p. 698). The secondary gap exists between the eyewitness and their audience. This gap, as Jean-François Lyotard states, is the *differend* in the very nature of language. For Lyotard, "a differend represents a serious wrong that is neither easy to rectify nor to compensate for" (Sim, 2011, p. 51). In other words, in any context, there must be some misunderstanding between the utterer's meaning and the utterance meaning (Ricoeur, 1976, pp. 12-19). As a discourse, the experience "belonging to one stream of consciousness cannot be transferred as such into another stream of consciousness... The experience as experienced, as lived, remains private, but its sense, its meaning, becomes public" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 16). For instance, a survivor of genocide can never prove that they were the victim of a genocidal act. The only proof one can offer is to be dead as a victim (Godfrey, 2007, p. 12). However, the way I see it, the secondary gap in language paves the way for art as long as it exists, art responds to genocide.

Cultural works have developed by putting genocide in themselves (Leaman, 2003, p. 248) as a new way of thinking (Glowacka, 2002, p. 98). Consequently, as long as the

*differend* in discourse exists, art will respond to genocide by representing the events or by making ways for a new kind of literature. This means that due to the fact that presuppositions and agreement on opinions between users have not disappeared yet, culture in general and art in particular continue to proceed (Glowacka, 2002, pp. 102-103).

### **The Unbearable Weightiness of Time**

As we may sum up what has been discussed above so far, whether they are a victim or not, an artist responds to genocide since there is an inevitable reciprocal gap, the *differend*, between the events per se and their experience, and between their discourse and its meaning as it is comprehended by the other people. One of the leading reasons for the existence of this gap is that we ourselves are historical beings and we have unavoidable prejudices consisting of the influences of our family, our society, and the state in which we live.

Our historicity and prejudices lead us to a main structure: the unbearable weightiness of place and time. On the one hand, place and time put a weight on our shoulders since they play a crucial role in our historicity and form our perception and prejudices. They are unbearable, on the other, because of the fact that these dependences leave an intricate enigma on the question of free will. Hereby we have arrived at our main issue: Art responds to genocide *in a way depending on place and time*. However, even though both structures have the same importance for us, I will limit my paper to scrutinizing the influence of time.

By the term "time", I mean the span of the time from which we begin to leave traces on the earth (being a fetus)<sup>2</sup> to our death. In other words, our temporality, unlike historical time, begins and ends. In accordance with a historical event in historical time, the time in which we live is supposed to be overlapped with the event. This temporal connection to the event determines our existential, intellectual and artistic responses to the event. That is also to say, this connection has a very strong relationship with prejudices. Thus we are able to argue that people can be classified into four categories, in general terms, with respect to the event.

1. People who bear witness to the event,
2. Children, born after the event, of those who bore witness to the event,
3. Witnesses of people who bore witness to the event,
4. People born after the event, with no acquaintance to its witnesses.

2 I accept the fetus as a being bearing witness to the event by basing John D. Caputo's opinion on one's experience. To Caputo, our experiences begin before the delivery since we are in relationship with the mother biologically (Caputo, 1992, pp. 205-208).

If we adapt this quad categorization to genocide as a historical event,

1. Victims and survivors,
2. Survivors' children, born after genocide,
3. Witnesses of victims and survivors,
4. People born after the genocide, with no acquaintance to its witnesses.

According to our main argument, one's period of time in relation to the time of the genocide is one of the dominant factors for evaluating that person's artistic response to genocide since their prejudices are strongly influenced by this temporality. That is to say, the characteristics of an artwork made by a person who bears witness to gas chambers or slaughterhouses in Auschwitz are radically different from those made by people born after the Holocaust. This differentiation also accompanies the idea of horizons. A victim or a survivor of genocide is always one step ahead of the rest in terms of the authenticity of their experiences.

However, strictly speaking, the categorization does not mean that the artworks of survivors of the genocide can totally represent the reality. For instance, the Muselmann, the figure of the impossibility of seeing (Agamben, 1999, p. 54), can never be represented. Non-transferability of the event is equally recognized for all people. As I quoted above, Eaglestone opposes the discipline of history's main obsession with objectivity and evidence:

Nearly all information is not recorded or is evanescent. Moreover, the past is not an account, but events, responses, and situations that have passed, and it is impossible to judge the accuracy of an account of the past by going back to the events, the way a natural scientist might be able to recreate an experiment: it can only be judged by being compared to other accounts. Further, events happen in one temporality ('forwards') but are learnt about and written about in another. The retrospective nature of history is philosophically significant (2004, p. 234).

Here emerges an important feature of narratives of an event. They are polysemic. In the Ricoeurian sense, although an event takes places in one way, it is inevitably narrated differently from the literal and single account. Ricoeur designates this feature of narratives as "emplotment" (Eaglestone, 2004, p. 235; Worsley, 2012, p. 310). As well as obstructing us from seeing the bear truth of the event, this diversity in narratives establishes a bunch of illusions of reality.

In this context, we can claim that even though a survivor's close connection to the event (being an eyewitness) is the primary factor better fusing their horizon to the horizon of the event, Imre Kertész's quasi-autobiographical novel *Fatelessness*, Paul Celan's poems, Samuel Beckett's *Watt*, Claude Lanzmann's documentary film *Shoah* (1985), and, of course, Roman Polanski's blockbuster, *the Pianist* (2002), are not able to

reveal the ultimate historical reality of the Holocaust. Even a survivor's narrative, novel, or artwork is a kind of reproduction. In this respect, instead of being a subject of art or literature, these responses to genocide are regarded in terms of whether or not they are valid depictions of the genocide. Now the key question has become "how close did [the film] come to documenting the atrocity of the actual event?" (Flanzbaum, 2001, p. 285). As can be seen, the point slips from the art towards the field of didactic documentarism. Thus, when spectators handle a film, they replace the representation of the genocide with the genocide *per se*.

Furthermore, instead of attempting to grasp the Holocaust itself, one can quite easily accept the hyper-real terms which are given via the media (Baudrillard, 1994, pp. 1-2, 12-13). To illustrate, for a child born after the genocide—the fourth group in my categorization—the Holocaust is made up of depictions like *the Pianist*. The child can conjure up the Holocaust as much as the film represents. What is worse, kitsch-ness of representations also engenders people to regard the Holocaust with commercials. For instance, it is possible to think of Adrian Brody, protagonist of *the Pianist*, kissing Halle Berry at the Academy Awards when the subject comes to the Holocaust. Consequently, the reproduction of the event, or the simulation in Baudrillardian sense, irreversibly substitutes for the authentic reality.

Apart from the problem of the simulation of the reality, the didacticism we mentioned above is another issue here. In terms of representing the real events, whomever produces it, even if an eyewitness, a film on genocide should not be used didactically in terms of representing the real events. This didacticism of films of genocide seems to me a proof that the Enlightenment project continues. Genocide as a cultural thing, ironically, has been used as an instrument for being more conscious of history, as opposed to Theodor W. Adorno's criticism of culture (Adorno, 1983, p. 23, 30; Leaman, 2003, p. 248). In other words, the only way to bear the truth of what the Holocaust was or how the victims were killed is to be informed of these "super-real" films. This pressure of the cultural fetishism shows us the Enlightenment is still well and truly alive.

In the second class, the children of survivors who were born after genocide, are more apt to grasp the narratives than those (from the third class) who watched the genocide on their televisions or those (from the fourth) who heard the narratives from their parents. As can be seen, I discriminate between child survivors and the children of survivors. According to my categorization, even if a child is an infant who literally does not know who they are or who the tortured and killed people are when they survived, I fit him into the first category due to the very fact that the trauma has been already inherited and processed (Brodzki, 2001, pp. 156-157). For instance, in Mark Jonathan Harris's documentary film *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (2000), we see some children who survived the Holocaust thanks to the Kindertransport operation, transporting Jewish children to England in order to make them adoptees by British families. Even if none of them bore witness to the Auschwitz concentration



camps, the trauma they underwent brings them into a different relation with the Holocaust. Parting from their families is the only thing they have never forgotten.

Nonetheless, the trauma of the second-generation, of survivor's children born after genocide, is closely connected to the ghost of genocide, so to speak (Kertész, 2001, p. 272). "As this second-generation moves toward middle-age, it has increasingly addressed, from its vantage point, the complex relationship between traumatic history and personal identity" (Brodzki, 2001, p. 156). Strictly speaking, children's artistic response to their parents' traumatic legacy is a kind of intralingual translation from the parents' utterance of the catastrophic experience into the branches of art and literature (Brodzki, 2001, p. 163). In this sense, as well as this translation is a renewal of the original, it is conversely a rupture between the children and the authentic reality of genocide in terms of the comprehension of the events per se. For instance, as a new form of historical narrative, Art Spiegelman's comic book *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* is one of the significant examples. Art's father, Vladek, a survivor of Auschwitz, tells of the concentration camps and his story of survival. Art, however, in lieu of only drawing on his father's narrative, illustrates his own experience to the historical event Vladek recites. As Vladek has testified to his experiences of the Holocaust, Art himself testifies to his own experience to the event (Young, 1998, p. 698).

According to my categorization, Spiegelman's work is the second type of genocidal artworks. He was born after the Holocaust, but grew up under the shadow of the Holocaust, and indeed the shadow of Richiev, his big brother who died during the war. Art's historical being, his world of prejudices, has been formed by the tradition of the Holocaust; and this strong bond to that tradition puts him closer to the events than people who have learned about it by watching television, reading newspapers, or listening to the radio during the war. Photography from the camps means a lot more to him than it does to others. This affection, in my opinion, helps him better understand while representing the genocide. Finally, of course, in order to interpret the Holocaust, Art's work carries a lot of weight for being fused with the horizon of the authentic reality of the event as compared with the artworks of others.

Similarly, Roberto Benigni's *La Vita è Bella* (1997) and Radu Mihaileanu's *Train de Vie* (1998) belong to the second type of response to genocide. While the former, as the narrator Guido says, is like a fable of sorrow, wonder, and happiness, the latter is a counter-historical satire of both the Nazis and Jews. As well as the fact that the main theme of Benigni's film is "the slippage between reality and fiction", there is also the narrative of the protagonist (Guido) intertwined with the director's father, Luigi Benigni, one of the Italian prisoners of war (Ben-Ghiat, 2001, pp. 254, 255-256, 263). Thus, in his film, rather than representing the daily life of the camps, Benigni tells us a tale about a well-structured tragedy. On the other hand, in *Train de Vie*, we watch a visionary recital of a village idiot, Shlomo. According to the plot, people of a small Jewish village organize a fake deportation train and escape the Holocaust together

with Romanis, thus evading annihilation by the Nazis. At the end of the film, we realize that the story Shlomo tells is just fantasy formed in order to avoid the pain of seeing most of his companions exterminated. The film is not a representation of the camps but a story of a tragic hope.

The third category offers a different kind of being witness. People whose life overlaps with the time period of genocide are also witnesses to genocide as a historical event in some sense. They are different by virtue of inhabiting in different distance from genocide. The main instrument building the connection between them and the event is the power of media. As most of us watched the Bosnian War on air, massacres were “living room lights and sounds” (Sontag, 2003, p. 18). By the time following news became our daily routine, we read news from the Balkans. However, even though these news reports, narratives, and photos could not show what war is at all, as the Enlightenment presupposes, we were informed by the media in order to be more conscious. In this regard, with the help of Bosnian photographer Tarik Samarah’s photography project to commemorate the genocide, we bore witness to a mother crying for her lost, to the process of identifying the DNAs of victims, and to the growing of a Bosnian orphan. Or, like in Taryn Simon’s work, *A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters*, we witnessed “time’s passing while looking at any particular photograph” (Batchen, 2012, p. 749, 751). In a word, the other side of genocide, the aftermath, or its remnants, are the things bonding people to witness. My point here is that victims and survivors eyewitness to the massacre per se is one thing, being witness to the remnants is another. In addition to this, I shall argue the remnants of genocide are not simply corpses, bones, a clock once belonging to a victim, a photo frame; but victims and survivors themselves, their existence, their lives after the genocide are also remnants. As Glowacka says,

The trace signals the existence of the Other in a mode that is irreducible to manifestation and designates me in my irreducible duty (Glowacka, 2002, p. 103).

Here I would like to give an example differing from Hollywood and the Holocaust: Bahman Ghobadi’s *Turtles Can Fly* (2004). As an Iranian Kurd, the director tells the children’s story of the Kurdish concentration and rape camps established by Saddam Hussein. Ghobadi was not in the camps, but he witnessed people’s death via survivor’s narratives and media tools. In this sense, Orson Welles’ *The Stranger* (1946), one of the very first films about the Holocaust, Polish film director Andrei Wajda’s *Samson* (1961) and *Korczak* (1990), and French film director and scriptwriter Peter Kassovitz’s *Jacob the Liar* (1999) can be regarded as artworks under the third-category people.

Finally, people born after the genocide, the fourth class, have nothing but narratives about the genocide. This post-genocide generation cannot remember any event in that period as it actually occurred. Remnants and traces of genocide no longer have meaning at all. Therefore, genocide becomes part of education. People who are not

able to connect themselves to genocide are now obliged to be well-informed of the event. A photo of the Muselmann from the concentration camps in Auschwitz might matter nothing for the new generation in this sense. Or, Tsitsernakaberd in Yerevan, Armenia, is just a memorial among others. As we see Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's *Harburg Monument against Fascism*, people who add their names onto the pillar remember an event rather different from the Holocaust. In that project, the twelve-meter high and one-meter square pillar gradually lowers into the ground. By the time it disappears completely, the creators of the monument want people to write their names onto the pillar in order to rise up against injustice and fascism. Thus, as James E. Young points out, "instead of seeking to capture the memory of events, therefore, they [the people who add their names] remember only their own relationship to events: the great gulf of *time* between themselves and the Holocaust." (Young, 1992, pp. 271-272).

In this regard, it is reasonable to agree with Hungarian Nobel laureates Imre Kertész's considering *Schindler's List* as *kitsch*. As a survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp, he criticizes all the representations of the Holocaust by saying that,

It is obvious that the American Spielberg, who incidentally wasn't even born until after the war, has and can have no idea of the authentic reality of a Nazi concentration camp. Why, then, does he struggle so hard to make his representation of a world he does not know seem authentic in every detail?... I regard as kitsch any representation of the Holocaust that is incapable of understanding or unwilling to understand the organic connection between our own deformed mode of life (whether in the private sphere or on the level of "civilization" as such) and the very possibility of the Holocaust (2001, pp. 269-270).

Following Imre Kertész's criticism of *Schindler's List*, films representing genocide directed by those born after it are inevitably kitsch. Novels begin to involve more tragic and touching stories, films attempt to shock the viewer, paintings become more sophisticated. In order to address the consumer culture (Adorno, 1983, p. 26), genocide is one of the topics chosen by those who can have no idea of the authentic reality of a Nazi concentration camp. For instance, in her article, Claudia Card states that genocide as a social death targets people on the basis of their national, religious, ethnic, or political identity rather than on the basis of who they are individually or what they have done (2003, p. 72). On the contrary, the main issue of *Schindler's List* is to disclose who they are individually. In the last scene of the film, the screen becomes colored and "real" survivors of the story appear at the graveside of Oskar Schindler. In addition to Spielberg's reversal of the very idea of genocide (killing people regardless of their names), he attempts to transform his fictional story (even if it is based on a novel, the plot of the film belongs to him) to a didactic documentary production by exploiting authentic survivors. Consequently, we may suppose that genocide has become an industry. Kertész courageously states,

A Holocaust conformism has arisen, along with a Holocaust sentimentalism, a Holocaust canon, and a system of Holocaust taboos together with the ceremonial discourse that goes with it; Holocaust products for Holocaust consumers have been developed. Auschwitz-lies have appeared, and the figure of the Auschwitz con-man has come into being (2001, p. 269).

For this Holocaust industry, in addition to Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, we can mention a lot of blockbusters produced mostly by Hollywood. Liev Schreiber's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2005), Stefan Ruzowitzky's *the Counterfeiters* (2007), Edward Zwick's *Defiance* (2008), Stephen Daldry's *the Reader* (2008), and Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) to name just a very few. Like the others, the director of the latter, Tarantino, notably accomplishes to shock the audience with fictional characters, ostentatious visual effects, and an effective plot. However, the film represents everything but the Holocaust: sound, noises, and explosions, which have already become daily routine for us.

### **Coda**

In this article, alongside the close relationship between prejudice and historicity, I have concentrated my remarks on how important the time which a film director of genocide lives is from the point of helping us evaluate their work. In so doing, I have categorized people into four main groups based on their time period relative to the event: victims and survivors; children of survivors who born after genocide; witnesses of victims and survivors; and, finally, people born after the genocide. Yet, I do not argue that while the films of those directors in the first category are the best representations of the Holocaust, the films of the last category are completely nonsense, or vice versa. Rather, my categorization points out the two-stage gap in language when we narrate an experience, and, more importantly, also highlights the significance of the event per se. In this way, the time period the director lives in is one of the criteria determining the formation of their prejudices and their approach to the genocide as a historical event.

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