The Topic:

Psychoanalysis, Trauma and Survivor Testimonies

Reporter:

Elliott Stegall
The Films: 
and *hindler’s* 
*(selections)*
The Text:

*History and Memory After Auschwitz*

by Dominick LaCapra

(Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), Chapter 4

“Lanzmann’s *Shoah*: Here There Is No Why”
The Questions:

1. How do we deal with the trauma of the Holocaust through film?
2. What roles do survivor testimonies in film and literature play in memorializing the Holocaust?
The Approach

- To engage the binary opposition of critical appraisal of *Shoah* and *Shindler’s List* as a means of dealing with and memorializing the trauma of the Holocaust through film.
Estimated Timeline:

- Discussion: Chapter 4 of History and Memory after Auschwitz: “Here There is no Why”: 10 minutes
- Clips from Shoah—3 (4-8 minutes each)
- Clips from Shindler’s List—5 (1-5 minutes each)
- Discussion questions: 10-15 minutes
For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters;

I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. (Isa 56: 4-5)
Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*

*Shoah*, which means chaos or annihilation, and is the name that Israelis have given to the Holocaust, is a nine-hour film completed by Claude Lanzmann in 1985 about the Holocaust. Though *Shoah* is conventionally classified as a documentary film, director Lanzmann considers it to fall outside of that genre.

Unlike most historical documentaries, the film does not feature reenactments or historical photos; instead it consists of interviews with people who were involved in various ways in the Holocaust, and visits to different places they discuss.
Film Elements to be Aware of:

- **In Shoah:**
  - **natural lighting, color, direct cuts, traveling shots, zooms, pans, close-ups, hidden camera, stillness, diagetic sound, hand-held camera; no filmic representation or reenactment; no archival footage**

- **In Shindler’s List:**
  - Black and white (with two exceptions); Low key lighting; multiple editing effects: cross-cutting, dissolves, matching cuts, montage, etc.; high and low angle shots, hand-held camera, diaganetic and non-diagnostic sound; POV shots
Quotes

“In Spielberg’s film there is no reflection, no thought, about what is the Holocaust and no thought about what is cinema. Because if he would have thought, he would not have made it—of he would have made Shoah.”

Claude Lanzmann

“I see both these issues encapsulated in the pervasive polarization of critical argument into the opposition between Schindler’s List and Claude Lanzmann's documentary Shoah (1985) as two mutually exclusive paradigms of cinematically representing or not-representing the Holocaust. This opposition, I will argue, does not yield a productive way of dealing with either the films or the larger issues involved.”

Mirian Hanson; Schindler’s List is Not Shoah
Outline

1. Discussion of chapter 4 of History and Memory after Auschwitz: 
   Lanzmann’s Shoah: “Here There is no Why” (10 minutes)

2. Shoah trailer: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AD_GFqDY2sU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AD_GFqDY2sU) (4:07)

3. Shindler clip 1: chapter. 1: smoke to smoke (20 seconds)

4. Shoah clip 1; Tape One: Tracks to Auschwitz; conductor to Treblinka; child makes throat gesture (5 minutes)

5. Shindler clip 2: chapter 30 – scan a bit to throat gesture; trip to Auschwitz (7 minutes)

6. Shoah clip 2: Tape Two: Simon Srebnick and Polish villagers (8 minutes)

7. Shindler clip 3; chapter 14: liquidation of Krakow ghetto: scan to red coat girl sequence (3 minutes)

8. Shindler clip 4; chapter 28: smoke and ashes (3 minutes)

9. Shoah clip 3: Tape Three: Abraham Bomba (5 minutes)

10. Shindler clip 5: chapter 31: hair cutting (8 minutes)
Discussion

- Is the “interview” superior to filmic reproduction?
- Does Spielberg violate a taboo on representation of the Holocaust?
- Does Lanzmann make a valid claim that the Shoah is not filmically representable, and in fact, no attempt should be made?
- Is *Shindler’s List* a “Hollywood” product?
- Which film is the more “realistic?”
Bibliography


- Ernst Zündel on the film "Schindler's List“
  - [www.nizkor.org/.../censorship/ban-schindler.html](http://www.nizkor.org/.../censorship/ban-schindler.html)


- Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team *Avraham Bomba: Interview with USHMM*. [www.holocaustresearchproject.org/.../bomba.html](http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/.../bomba.html)