

## Chapter 7

### Membering the Holocaust: Names and Types

"He was a terrorist, in his way--a hostage-taker. Use--and dispose. Kill, if you must." (p. 264)

The question of the role of art in depicting monstrous death and horror has been a preoccupation of literary critics since the Holocaust. It was a problem even in the Tanach. The critic, Aharon Appelfeld, regarded depictions of the Holocaust on the screen with disdain. Even literary representations could rarely be trusted.<sup>1</sup> For Appelfeld, representing the horror of the Holocaust could only be accomplished by bringing individuals to life in literature, by restoring to them their names and rescuing them from the anonymity to which they were condemned by the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Does Spielberg succeed on the level of the particular?

In the novel, but for chance, Oskar could have been Amon. Oskar and Amon are pictured as twins with only two basic differences. Oskar is a confidence man; Amon is a crook. Oskar is a protector and lover of those he befriends; Amon is a sadist. "(T)he reflection can hardly be avoided that Amon was Oskar's dark brother, was the berserk and fanatic executioner Oskar might, by some unhappy reversal of his appetites, have become." (p. 171) Oskar says of Amon that it was the war that made him what he is. For Keneally, it is luck and nature reinforced by circumstance<sup>2</sup> that determined that Oskar did not go the route of Amon. In the movie, does Oskar become a saviour because of the interaction of nature, luck and circumstance as Keneally would have it?

Spielberg has a different view. This chapter will explore the characterization of Oskar and Amon in Spielberg's movie as the respective expression of the forces of good and evil to indicate that, in Spielberg's interpretation, it is not just luck and circumstances that determined their very different responses to the Jews. In Spielberg's version, Oskar was a sinner who was open to grace; he was literally saved in an epiphany which, in turn, allowed him to become a saviour.

In contrast, in the movie, *Six Degrees of Difference*, luck and circumstances account for the changes in Paul. Put Paul, the street urchin, in a different cultural setting and he transformed himself into a new person through the mechanism of erotic desire.<sup>3</sup> Eros is also a critical clue to the character of both Amon and Oskar. They are both ladies men, lovers of fine wine and beautiful women. However, in the novel, Amon is clearly described as charming; there is no sign of that charm in the film or any indication that these two men are spiritual twins.

Goeth was some eight months younger than Schindler, but shared more with him than the mere year of birth. Like Oskar he had been raised a Catholic and had ceased observing the rites of the Church as late

as 1938, when his first marriage had broken up. Like Oskar too, he had graduated from high school in the Realgymnasium-Engineering, Physics, Math. He was therefore a practical man, no thinker, but considered himself a philosopher. (p. 159)

Amon, a German from Vienna rather than from the Sudetenland, (so many of the Nazi villains were raised as German outsiders),

shared with Oskar not only his year of birth, his religion, his weakness for liquor, but a massive physique as well. Goeth's face was open and pleasant, rather longer than Schindler's. His hands, though large and muscular, were long-fingered. He was sentimental about his children, the children of his second marriage whom, because of his foreign service, he had not seen often in the past three years. As a substitute, he was sometimes attentive to the children of brother officers. He could be a sentimental lover too, but though he resembled Oskar in terms of general sexual voraciousness, his tastes were less conventional, running sometimes to his brother SS men, frequently to the beating of women. Both his first wives could have testified that once the first wave of infatuation had died, he could become physically abusive. He considered himself a sensitive man, and thought that his family's trade proved it. His father and grandfather were Viennese printers and binders of books on military and economic history, and he liked to list himself on official papers as a *Literat*: a man of letters...He had become a reckless drinker and believed he held his liquor with an ease he had not known in his youth. Again like Oskar, he never suffered the hangovers he deserved.

(p. 160)

This is not the Amon portrayed in the film. In the movie, Oskar and Amon are opposites, one of them the bourgeois opportunist who becomes the humane saviour, and the other the military officer and brutal sadist. Oskar and Amon are not twins with one or two different inherited differences who have been thrust into different circumstances.

Nevertheless, in both the film and the book they are portrayed as similar in many respects. Neither of them seems to be circumscribed by any rules or procedures. Oskar is not bound by the expected conventional behaviour of the bourgeois businessman. Amon is not bound by the conventional rule-bound

behaviour of a banal Eichmann routinely killing millions of Jews as part of a mass bureaucratic network. Although not governed by convention, a characteristic of the Socratic vision of the classical philosopher, Oskar and Amon are **not** philosophers. Nor are they political animals. Oskar manipulates the system with payoffs and charm. When referring to the crooked bureaucrats in the German Trust Agency, in the book Oskar says, "I am a capitalist by temperament and I don't like being regulated." (p. 45)

In both presentations - the movie and the book -Schindler is portrayed as an outlaw, someone who acts outside the rules of the system and does not hold himself subject to those laws. Secondly, unlike ordinary outlaws, he rules over others *also without recourse to the law*. In that sense he is not only an outlaw, but a ruler. As a ruler who is also an outlaw, that is, who rules outside the law, he is a tyrant by definition. Since he rules for the benefit of those under his rule, he is a benevolent tyrant.

Political systems governed by the rule of law, even the set of laws incorporating evil into the very body of the law and designed to eliminate the Jews by systematic means, do not seem to govern even Amon's behaviour, even though the rules of the SS "demanded complete subordination to the organization. Members had to ask permission for any major decision."<sup>4</sup> Amon runs his little satrap at his whim. No Nazi hierarchy seems to exist requiring that he report and justify his executions or that he keep detailed records of his actions. He is a singular ruler not subject to any hierarchy, any rule of law or even any ideology. Nor does a change take place in the film, as it does in the book, when the Nazi bureaucracy and its penchant for justifying and recording its murders, takes command.<sup>5</sup> Amon is the prototype of the cruel tyrant. Oskar does not rival Amon's tyrannical rule with reason - with one exception.

Though neither man is a philosopher and only in the novel does Oskar have the guidance of Stern as a quasi-philosopher, for one brief moment in the movie Oskar assumes the mantle of the philosopher to try to prove to Amon that forgiveness, redemption and mercy are higher expressions of power than the ability to shoot someone, anyone, in the head or through the temple with a pistol.

This one moment of intellectual exchange between Oskar and Amon, however, is an exception. It not only provides a humorous interlude, but inserts into the narrative Spielberg's explanation for Schindler's change though the movie watcher remains unsure whether this is a sincere expression of Oskar's philosophy or merely an attempt to manipulate Amon so that he will stop killing the Jews arbitrarily. In the ambiguity

whether this is one of Schindler's con games, or an expression of his genuine belief, (or, perhaps, both), the impression one gets is of wily calculation. When Oskar's success is only short term, the view that it was a calculated ploy is reinforced.

Oskar's lesson in philosophy appears primarily to be about effectiveness rather than justice. The dialogue's intention is to exhort Amon as the tyrant to exercise his rule "in a spirit of shrewd benevolence."<sup>6</sup> Oskar's own goal is not to be an effective and powerful tyrant, but to gain "love and admiration ...by deeds of benevolence on the greatest possible scale."<sup>7</sup> Oskar is a tyrant, but a beneficent one. He is Herr Direktor. He is the ruler. He decides. There is no law that binds him with those he saves. Oskar's appetite for rescue and the means he will use are as unconventional and unboundaried as were his efforts to acquire wealth in the first place.

Oskar, the benevolent tyrant, is Amon's rival, not to take away Amon's power, not to engage in an insurrection, but to undermine that power nevertheless by drawing a line around a group who will be protected from the arbitrary murderous instincts of Amon. Amon is the evil tyrant and Oskar is the beneficent one who saves his Jews.

There are no other instances of education that occur in the movie in the sense that the observations, perceptions, analyses of one human are conveyed to another so that we observe a process of learning and change in outlook. In the movie, Oskar changes because of what he directly observes. The change occurs as an epiphany as he watches from the hilltop the total and wanton killing and murder taking place beneath him as the SS begin to clear the Krakow ghetto, house by house and street by street. In contrast to the novel which makes clear that Oskar was already committed to assisting the Jews.

In the movie, it is from direct observation, not reports from others, not suggestions by others, that Oskar comes to his convictions. Oskar lives on his own credit and owes his own life to no other person. There are no references to others assisting him to get out of prison or cooperating with him in any essential sense in his rescue efforts. Nor is he influenced by any knowledge of contemporary events, such as the progress of the war. Neither the Polish partisans, the Palestinian underground, nor the German dissident movement have any connection with his activities. Oskar is *sui generis*. There is certainly no need to have any family or religious influence prompt his behaviour.

For example, Oskar's women have no influence on his

behaviour. As a critical feature in the film's construction, they are pushed into the background. The mistresses play the role of anonymous playtoys to whom Oskar has no apparent commitment; they are present in the film only for Oskar's pleasure. Oskar is a man of fine tastes and a lover of female flesh. Oskar's credo could be lifted straight from Nietzsche. "Voluptuousness: to free hearts a thing innocent and free, the garden-happiness of the earth."<sup>8</sup> Although a secretary is seen phoning someone immediately after Oskar is arrested by the Gestapo in the movie, there is no real sense that Victoria Klonowska - Oskar's beautiful, blond Polish secretary - was his key contact to arrange his release, not once, but on three different occasions when he was arrested. Victoria as Oskar's rescuer has no real presence in the film. The fact is, in a terrorist film, a character like Steven Segal in *Under Siege* can have a female side-kick as a matter of sexual interest, but these are macho films in which women are conventionally placed behind and in the shadow of men.<sup>9</sup>

His wife, Emilia, is the symbol of the woman resurrected. Though she assists Oskar in Brinnlitz, she is never portrayed as ministering to the Jews in her own right as she is described in the book. Spielberg evidently filmed scenes dramatizing Emilia's heroism, but these scenes were left on the cutting table.

To Emilia, Oskar makes a vow of fidelity symbolically after he has himself been 'saved' and had become totally committed to the rescue of the Schindler Jews; *'you will never again be mistaken as his mistress by a doorman or maitre D'*, Oskar whispers to her as he sits behind her in a church pew. When Oskar has committed himself to be a rescuer, he is seen making a cross on his chest. He has become a saviour; he has given up his wicked ways. Oskar as the lapsed Catholic has rejoined the church of his youth. We are not presented with an Oskar who continued to have mistresses in Brinnlitz or who continued his black-marketing activities.

The hero (or villain) in Hollywood movies often has a sidekick to highlight the characteristics of the hero better.<sup>10</sup> In the movie, Ben Kingsley brilliantly portrays the sidekick Itzhak Stern, the manager of Oskar's business affairs, a blending of the real Stern with Oskar Schindler's accountant, the short Abraham Bankier, the one whom Oskar actually rescued from the cattle car and shipment to Auschwitz. When Itzhak Stern has been appropriated to work in the construction office of Amon Goeth's Administration Building (p. 207), he is portrayed as secretly working with Schindler to help save Jews and relocate them in Schindler's factory while continuing to help run the company of Oskar. Schindler himself is the

hapless administrator who can only supply a business with a front, with panache.

In the movie, Schindler is effusive whereas Stern is a man of few words. Schindler is open and will drink with anyone; Stern is wary of Schindler.<sup>11</sup> Schindler is a risk taker; Stern is cautious. Schindler is cool and unflappable; there is never any sense that he could 'blow his top'.<sup>12</sup> Stern keeps control, not by a natural, relaxed, easy calm, but by being uptight. He is really a nervous nelly. Oskar is calculatingly generous; Stern is calculatingly frugal. Schindler is flamboyant; Stern is modest. Stern is totally dependent on Oskar Schindler's leadership, though he is the one selecting the Jews to work in Schindler's factory, including among them a one-handed man, the rabbi and a number of children whom Schindler reluctantly agrees to take. In spite of that apparent reluctance, Schindler initiates the inclusion of the Perlman's after a direct appeal was made to him. If Schindler is the total extrovert in which there is no sign of introspection but only action, Stern gives the image of an introvert. Schindler works on the big vision; Stern takes care of the details. If Schindler is Don Quixote, Stern is the necessary Sancho Panza without whom Schindler's fantasies could never be executed.

Thus, although Oskar Schindler has a sidekick, Liam Neeson play the true lone hero, the powerful figure of salvation. He does not listen to the radio. The war is not there and has no effect on what he does. He has no contacts with either the German dissident movement or the Jewish resistance and underground. The Polish underground, the allied bombing, the Russian offensive - none of these affect Oskar's actions in any way because they are simply absent from the film. In fact, the larger war and the fact that the Schindler Jews represented such a tiny remnant of those saved is not communicated. This is precisely why the film works so well - the rest are heaps of corpses, killed, slaughtered, maimed.

The same is true on the side of evil. The Nazi war machine against the Jews is virtually absent. Himmler, Heydrich, Eichmann, not to say Hitler, are not even mentioned. (By contrast, in the book, the prospect of Hitler's demise at the hands of assassins plays a very important part in revealing the manic fantasies and hopes of Schindler.) Enormous photos of Hitler or Himmler do not dominate the walls. There is no insertion within the film of the customary documentary footage of Hitler giving the Nazi salute at enormous rallies as there is in *Triumph of the Spirit* when Salomon met clandestinely in a Salonica movie house. Every German official perceived is venal and cruel to different

degrees. No thoroughly efficient and honest, though perhaps equally cruel German officer appears. They are all crooks<sup>13</sup>, and Amon is simply the cruellest of them all.

Amon Goeth is portrayed as a sadistic and arbitrary killer, but with no redeeming characteristics.<sup>14</sup> He never waxes philosophic. Unlike Oskar, he never shows any tenderness, or any charm for that matter.<sup>15</sup> He is the epitome of the doctrine that might makes right. He is a greedy crook. He does describe Jews as having a magical power to control Germans, but this tenet of the SS is more a part of his psychological madness than a central foundation stone in the ideology of the SS,<sup>16</sup> an ideology that gave the SS its binding unity. "SS members saw themselves as an elite, with common values, common practices, a shared mystique, a sense of camaraderie, and devotion to their organization, ideology, and cause."<sup>17</sup>

He is a human being without any sentiment at all - he is no cuddly and cozy Hitler in his interpersonal relations with intimates.<sup>18</sup> There is no indication that Amon, in fact, had a wife and children or even parents. His greed and his psychological view of Jews enhance his portrait as a pure savage. In the scene with Helen Hirsch, he is just the sexually repressed sadist who diverts his sexual energy into murder. He selected Helen as his Jewish servant/slave because she showed no sign of trying to win the position and seems somewhat aloof; his goal seems to be to humiliate her and make her cower. In a climactic scene with Helen, Amon Goeth reveals this repressed desire, but acts it out by beating her up rather than having sexual intercourse with her. A proud woman does not submit, and Helen faces Amon's cruelty and sadism stoically and in silence.

Amon has a perverse, unrequited passion for Helen. As an unloved and unloving man, he is a man of instinctual and arbitrary terror and a man of repressed desires. Oskar is a man of expressed desires. Neither are depicted as philosophers, though each possessed the requisite status Platonists require to undertake philosophy; each has the luxury of not needing to devote waking moments to the maintenance, care and needs of their own bodies since each has a bevy of slaves to take care of them. But they are definitely not reflective thinkers. First, they lack the self-doubt and inherent conviction about their own ultimate ignorance to be philosophers. They show no love for abstract ideas. Nor is their focus on all of humanity; each of them is concerned only with the slaves that serve them. But Oskar, in absolute contrast to Amon, tries to mitigate the suffering of his slaves as far as it is in his power to do so.



Oskar Schindler is the opposite of a man who is physically abusive. He saves the lives of the Jews by sacrificing his own fortune. If Amon is the killer of the Jews, Oskar Schindler is their saviour. But what kind of a saviour is he? Amon dispatches death with dispassion. But Oskar, though maintaining a surface control that is requisite for the rescuer of victims from terrorists, becomes passionately devoted to his chosen cause.

What does Oskar's experiences have to do with his becoming a rescuer of Jews? What is the relationship between what Oskar sees and what he comes to believe about the inevitable fate of the Jews in the Krakow ghetto? Is it the extent of the wanton cruelty? Is it its arbitrariness?

Oskar does not identify with the victims. The audience does not have the sense that he feels their fear in the very marrow of his own bones, trembling right down into his toes in his polished leather riding boots.<sup>19</sup> The epiphany and transformation does not come as a result of the empathetic identification with those suffering beneath him. Though he remains overwhelmingly poker-faced, by subtle gestures and the reaction of his more expressive mistress, we come to believe he is disgusted by what he sees. The mass murder assaults his senses. Bullets shot into the head and bodies thrown on heaps abuse his love of life. Grace comes in a single moment as he sits upon the horse on the hill overlooking the beginning of the extinction of over 500 years of habitation by Jews in Krakow, not because he is sensitive to historical continuity or demonstrates any sense of cognizance of that history, but because his eyes and his ears have been assaulted with unspeakable but highly visible crimes.<sup>20</sup>

What is the relationship of his epiphany as he watches the ghetto being cleared from his horse and the action he subsequently takes? In carrying out his rescue, does Oskar take great risks? Is he a man of extraordinary courage? He is certainly tenacious. But there is no sense of immanent danger to him. When he takes risks - he kisses the Jewish girl on the lips who brings him a cake - his arrest by the Gestapo afterwards seems to be a result of his wanton disregard for normal prudence given the Nazi racial laws. If memory in the Greek map of the mind is a virtue which belongs to Prudence, Oskar seems to lack both in spades. After Stern has been transferred to work for Amon in the movie, he tries to teach Oskar the very simple organization of the payoffs. Oskar, in exasperation, says, "I have no mind for all this."

If, as Aristotle claimed, courage is concerned with things that inspire fear<sup>21</sup>, then the SS certainly inspired

fear. Although Oskar might be fearless, he was not courageous in Aristotle's definition. For Aristotle, courage is a mid position between being rash and being cautious. Oskar is rash. He evinces a mad, magical rashness that virtually succeeds every time. It is not a Platonic courage governed by reason and moderate in its efforts. It is never a world in which reason - purity, order, limit, the unchanging - govern his actions. But this classical philosophical definition of courage requiring rational control and prudence may be the problem. For, although imprudent at times, Oskar was clever and calculating. How does Oskar get out of the clutches of the Gestapo? Through his own guile, charm and bribery.

Oskar's will develops into a mad passion to save his Jews. He is unwilling to trade the Jewish women who have evidently by accident been sent to Auschwitz for an equal (or perhaps even greater) number of Jewish women from Hungary who could have been diverted from their train trip to Auschwitz to his labour camp at Brinnlitz. Oskar's conversation with Helen Hirsch when he tells her that Amon won't shoot her because he enjoys her is interesting as a revelation and projection of Oskar's own character.<sup>22</sup> Oskar tells Helen that Amon only shoots people who mean nothing to him. in the film, Oskar only saves people who mean something to him.

Oskar saves those whose names he knows; those he does not know, he ignores. Both men are affected only by those that touch them; the ambiguous masses mean nothing to either man. In the film (in contrast to the book **and** historical fact), Oskar does not exercise his salvation by providing food for Jews at other camps. He saves Jews when there has been a direct appeal to him or when they are **his** Jews. The movie Oskar is not out to rescue Jews, or even as many Jews as he can within his ambit. Oskar is out to rescue the Schindler Jews and to make as many Jews as he can Schindler Jews. He does not seem to be a rescuer who is devoted to the salvation of others simply because they are human beings. He seems devoted to their rescue because they have become **his** human beings. It seems that he has to know their names before he will rescue them. It is Schindler's **list** of Jews, not Jews, who are saved. And we watch, mesmerized, as each magnified, but fuzzy rather than crisp and precise, letter of a name is typed onto the page. These are not anonymous people. They are Schindler Jews. The small remnant saved constitute the antithetical list to the millions whom the Nazis murderers listed and destroyed.

"An existentialist might have been defeated by the numbers at Prokocim (the train depot), stunned by

the equal appeal of all the names and voices. But Schindler was a philosophic innocent. He knew the people he knew. He knew the name of Bankier." (pp. 123-4)

In Keneally's version, this ability to focus is a virtue accounted for by Oskar's philosophic innocence; he, thus, was undaunted by the enormous numbers who were being killed. What seems to be communicated in the movie is that Oskar is committed to saving *his* Jews, creating a protective barrier around *his* people, because they are *his*. Though the movie is quite clear in depicting that Oskar regarded the Jews as fully human and that he did not share the Nazi ideology which relegated Jews to the status of lice, there is no impression in the movie that Oskar was governed by a humanistic commitment, that Oskar had a conception of what the essence of being human is and that he was dedicated to preserving that essence. In watching the film, the impression is that Oskar sees the Jews as helpless and totally dependent on his efforts, in spite of his final speech at Brinnlitz.

One historical scene, included in the book, is absent from the film.

Informed that a train with evacuated Jewish detainees from the Goleszow camp was stranded at nearby Svitavy, Schindler received permission to take workers to the Svitavy railway station. There, they forced the ice-sealed train doors open and removed some one hundred Jewish men and women, nearly frozen and resembling corpses, who were then swiftly taken to the Brünnlitz factory and nourished back to life...<sup>23</sup>

Such a scene would reinforce the impression that Oskar is dedicated to the helpless, but it would detract from the impression that he was simply dedicated to **his** Jews. The film focuses only on the Jewish victims introduced within the norms of a terrorist film. There are no last minute arrivals to be saved.

Similarly, there are no significant losses. The fact that most of the Jewish workers in his Enamelware works were sent to extermination camps when his employee quota was reduced from 1000 to 300 is omitted. The fact that there was a great deal of fraud and chicanery, not only in adding names to the list, but in crossing others off because of personal vendettas, is also omitted.<sup>24</sup> The focus is on one group of survivors and a representative sample of them.

We can only identify with a very few survivors. In the tradition of rescue films, they are introduced at the beginning. So we are never even given a personal sense of more than a dozen people - Stern, Poldek and Mila Pfefferberg, Helen Hirsch, Bachner, the young pharmacist, Mordecai Wulkan, the jeweller and his wife, Diana Reiter, the architectural engineer who complained about the poorly poured foundation and was shot by Albert Hujar, Amon's NCO, Rabbi Menasha Levartov, Josef Bau, the sensitive architectural draughtsman who we see get married in the women's prison to Rebecca Tannenbaum (Amon Goeth's manicurist), Mrs. Dresner and her daughter, Danka. And of those, we probably only remember the name of Stern at the end of the film. For they are virtually all representative potential victims, not dramatic personalities in their own right.

Schindler's relationship with all the victims is the epitomy of kindness, courtesy, generosity and consideration. Although the Schindler Jews become Schindler's Jews, they never become *Schindlerjuden* in the movie. Oskar commits himself to them; they are his Jews. They, in turn, come to respect and honour Schindler. But they show no sense of having made him a loving part of their family.<sup>25</sup> At the end, in the final scene in the movie when Oskar and his wife leave the camp at Brinnlitz, they are sent off alone to escape with a symbol of their respect, the ring, and a letter of recommendation signed by them all, but not their willingness to give their lives for him. If they tender him respect and thanks, it is because they owe their lives to Oskar. He does not seem to owe them anything. That is why, when he breaks down crying, and they huddle around him to give him comfort, the scene seems so maudlin.

Schindler, as portrayed in the movie, is more passionate than sentimental. By the time he became madly devoted to the rescue of the Jews, so that he takes all kinds of extraordinary measures to rescue the Schindler women from Auschwitz, by the time Oskar's soul has been stung to frenzy in a mad passion to ensure that every single one of the Schindler Jews are saved, by that time, Oskar has become drunk on love for his rescue mission which seems to have displaced his love of cognac and women. In the movie, he is even willing to sacrifice the last ounce of his accumulated wealth for the salvation of his *Schindlerjuden*. He will dare anything and sacrifice all for the sake of those to whom he has now dedicated his life.

He has become a rival ruler to Amon because he is ruled, not by the power of a gun, but by the respect of **his** people in response to his total and absolute sense of self sacrifice. So

he needs neither guns nor the rule of law to run his camp. But, in the movie, in the final labour camp near his home town in the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia, in Brinnlitz, we don't observe a co-operative community in which each owes an obligation to the others because they are linked by sentiment and dedication to a common enterprise, but because they are led by a charismatic leader who has dedicated his total effort and wealth to their rescue. On the other hand, Oskar is not a cosmopolitan rescuer with a frenzy to save everyone. Though he has become a demon, a madman, in his rescue efforts, in the movie (to repeat and drive the point home) it is a madness restricted to his Jews.

As portrayed in the film, Oskar Schindler was a benevolent tyrant. But a tyrant nonetheless. He became beneficent in one single epiphany that aroused his sentiments for the people being wantonly rounded up and murdered as the SS cleared out the Krakow ghetto; his sensibilities and appreciation of life were assaulted by what he saw. In the novel, Oskar Schindler is portrayed as an opponent of tyranny as early as 1939 when he saw the behaviour of the German Nazis following the annexation of the Sudetenland.<sup>26</sup> In the film, there is no past life, no history for Schindler. We do not learn that his next door neighbour when he grew up in the industrial town of Zwittau was a German liberal Rabbi, (a *Reform* rabbi in North American terms). The two Schindler children, Oskar and his sister, played with the two sons of Rabbi Felix Kantor. The two sons went on to become Jewish professors at the German University of Prague, at least until Czechoslovakia was occupied by Hitler. Oskar never heard from them again after that.

Consistent with the ahistorical character of heroes in such fables, there is no sense in the movie that Oskar had a mother and a father. But in the book, his antagonistic relationship with his father, Hans, may have had something to do with his general disrespect of those in positions of formal authority. Dr. Sedlacek, the contact with the Palestine underground, the dentist to whom Oskar had reported the events in Poland, described Oskar in the book as follows: "There were both an impressive surface calm and a fundamental anger in him." (p. 149) That deep-rooted anger may have been related to his feelings for his father, as suggested in the novel. Since this antagonism was based on his father leaving his mother, it might also explain his selection of a woman as his wife who had the same ascetic temperament as his mother and to whom he remains loyal but very unfaithful. More importantly, since his reconciliation with and forgiveness of his father corresponded to the time when he made a much deeper commitment to the saving of the Jews - in the spring of 1941, Oskar visited home

and reconciled with his father - this psychological factor might be critical in explaining Oskar's development. When he learned to love his father, he could give up competing with him to show he could earn more money and employ more people. He could inherit the essentially humanistic outlook of his father who, evidently, always opposed the Nazis. But this important piece of personal history is also omitted from the film.

"History grows out of evidence, the more the better...The best drama, in contrast, is spun out of the fewest number of documents, the least amount of detail and nuance. For the sake of theatre, the less we know of thoroughly radicalized figures like Malcolm X, the better."<sup>27</sup> Painter, an historian, goes on to note that, "When we know enough about a man to analyze his childhood family dynamics...then we know enough to realize that what has happened between self, parents, and siblings counts as much as--more than?--the oppressiveness of segregation in the public sphere." Similarly, if Spielberg had portrayed much more of Schindler's family dynamics, then we would know it was not just the external witnessing of the Krakow ghetto that led to Oskar's commitment to the rescue of the Jews.

Not only is Oskar cast in the movie as an ahistorical figure of his own creation, but he is also the product of his own development with respect to his humanitarianism. The book tells a different story. Stern **chooses** Oskar as having the potential to be a righteous Gentile. Stern is not just an uptight accountant who is slowly won over by Oskar. Stern is a scholar who detects in Oskar his potential.

The *Aktion* OF THE NIGHT OF DECEMBER 4 (1939 - the first SS *Aktion* on the Cracow ghetto - ch. 4) had convinced Stern that Oskar Schindler was that rarity, the just Goy. There is the Talmudic legend of the *Hasidei Ummot Ha-olam*, the Righteous of the Nations, of whom there are said to be at any point in the world's history-thirty-six. Stern did not believe literally in the mystical number, but the legend was psychologically true for him, and he believed it a decent and wise course to try to make of Schindler a living and breathing sanctuary. (p. 68)

"Men like Itzhak Stern, official and unofficial agents of the *Judenrat*, had already developed a list of sympathizers, Germans to whom they could appeal. Schindler was on that list; so was Julius Madritsch." (p. 73) In the movie, Stern is Oskar's minion who becomes his confidante. But in the book,

Stern is more exalted than that. "Stern was the only father confessor Oskar ever had, and Stern's suggestions had a great authority with him." (p. 293)<sup>28</sup>

In fact, in the movie, Oskar has no friends and no real allies. Herman Toffel, the policeman, Steinhauser, the army surveyor, Oswald Bosko, the *Wachtmeister*, are just figures in the background. Oskar is the archetypal lonely leader. The fact that he had friends in the middle ranks of the *Wehrmacht* - not just acquaintances or people he needed and used - and even in the SS who helped him, not for bribes or women or because he plied them with drink, has no place in the movie.

If Oskar is depicted as this self-made figure in the movie without friends and allies on his own side, in other words, as an ahistorical *bon vivant* with many acquaintances but no close friends, he is equally depicted as being cut off from the larger outside world and with no sense of the future. But in the book, he follows the course of the war closely on BBC. He goes to Budapest to meet with the Palestinian Jewish underground leaders. He may be a convivial, flamboyant drinker in both the book and the movie, but this wheeler and dealer, this "man of transactions" as he is called in the book, is a very different humanitarian than the Oskar character depicted in the film.

In the novel, he is clearly cast as a Biblical prophet, though he is also a pagan god and worshipped by women as such. The Oskar we see portrayed at the beginning of the movie is simply a business opportunist, and an unscrupulous one at that. The fact that he tips off Stern on the occasion of their second meeting that the Nazis will instigate a pogrom in the ghetto the very next day, a day on which the *Einsatzgruppe* would herd Jews into the oldest synagogue in Poland, shoot them and set the synagogue on fire, is left out of the movie.<sup>29</sup> In the book, Oskar is an early opponent to Hitler's tyranny and there are key stages in the development of his opposition and evolution into a saviour of the Jews. No such historical development is proffered in the movie.

This is a crucial difference between the film and the book. The film concentrates at the end on Israel as a witness against the intention of The Holocaust. The book concentrates on witnesses against the perpetrators of The Holocaust. These include not only Bloch and Amon's male Jewish secretary with the photographic memory, but Oskar Schindler himself who anticipated providing evidence against the perpetrators of murder. There is no suggestion in the film that Oskar has any plans or is collecting evidence in order that he might help convict the Nazi murderers. The fact that Oskar Schindler was

an important war crimes witness is omitted from the movie.

Oskar is not a victim of the horror of the Holocaust. He is portrayed in the film as a lone and self-sufficient figure who acts as if he is invulnerable to the Nazi terror. Further, he is the witness for the child in scarlet. And when he sees the child in red, the first time we see colour in the film, and observes the slaughter, Oskar has his epiphany.

In the book, however, this is merely a moment of recognizing the extremes which the SS were willing to use. There would be no witnesses and Oskar determined to be that witness. When Oskar observes the prisoners being shot from Montelvpich prison at the Austrian hill fort, "The conclusion to be drawn, Oskar decided, was not that Chujowa Górka was a separate world from Plaszów, but that all of them, those brought to the mound fort by truck and those behind the wire down the hill, were under sentence." (p. 192) Oskar in experiencing the cattle cars for the first time when he rescues Abraham Bankier, his office manager, from one of the cars, reflects, "Now, the cattle cars told them, we are all beasts together." (p. 125) This is all before Oskar rides a horse into the hills and observes the "cleansing" of the ghetto.

Thus, in the book, Oskar develops from an historical witness and observer into a personal witness as he is gradually drawn into the action of salvation itself. In the film, Oskar is the untouchable, self-sufficient hero, and as such, acts as someone who feels himself invulnerable, as one who is not destined to become someone providing evidence after the war. Neither, however, does Oskar have his own inner witness. Oskar is someone who neither witnesses historically nor is witnessed from within, but must become and transform himself into a witness of salvation.

The fact that Schindler develops in stages as a humane man from a self-centred, charming opportunist, but with no sympathy for the Nazi persecution of the Jews, is conveyed in the very structure of the novel in contrast with the film. The book begins with party scene in Amon Goeth's house and the scene of Helen Hirsch as a victim of Goeth's brutality and unrequited obsession for her. The movie, on the other hand, develops in narrative sequence from the very beginning. The point is that the opening chapter of the novel conveys Schindler's concern for the other rather than at a climactic point in the film. In the book, it is the strengths of his conviction and the risks he is willing to take which alter; there is no radical transformation.



Tyrants do not and cannot have friends. That is why, in the book, Oskar cannot be depicted as a tyrant. In the film, he is, though he is clearly a benevolent one. Oskar has no permanent loyalties to any man or woman, though he tries to resume his loyalty to his wife at the same time as his loyalty to the Schindler Jews solidifies. This is not true in the novel. There are men who are his friends and men whom he befriends in order to use them. The women are not merely playtoys for his amusement. In the book, Schindler is portrayed as in love with (though not faithful to) his German mistress Ingrid (also from the Sudetenland), who was the *Truehänder* or supervisor of a Jewish hardware company. "They were a glamorous couple, Oskar and this Ingrid, frankly in love, stylish, with lots of friends in the Abwehr." (p. 42)

In the book, Oskar's attraction to philosophical reflection emerges very early, when he first meets Stern. In the book, Stern is **not** his manager, though, in fact, Herbert Steinhouse from his interview with Stern in 1949, attests that Oskar Schindler did hire Stern to manage his plant. Further, the Stern, who is portrayed in the film as an uptight, repressed accountant who only very gradually and suspiciously warms up to Oskar Schindler, is, in the book, a scholar of comparative religion. He was the philosophical mentor of Schindler. According to Herbert Steinhouse, the initial discussion that Schindler had with Stern, at Stern's home on the third day after they became acquainted, was about Yiddish writers.

In the film, at the climactic scene just after the war when all of Schindler's Jews are watching Schindler prepare to flee before he will be arrested by the Communists as a war criminal, and in the one truly false note of unadorned melodramatic schmaltz when Oskar is weeping that he failed to sell his car and his golden insignia pin to save two or three more Jews, Stern turns to Schindler and quotes the Talmud: he who saves the life of one man saves the entire world. The homily does not emerge as the words of a philosopher at that moment, but as the words of a comforter. Stern is no philosopher in the film.

Schindler is the only one who expresses an idea in the whole film, even if he only does so once. In the book, it is Stern, on their first meeting, who believes he is to be credited with planting the seed that led to Schindler becoming a saviour to 1300 Jews. In the film, Oskar Schindler is Münschhausen; he becomes a saviour by pulling himself from the depths of capitalist exploitation and opportunism, from a bon-vivant sexual profligate, with the magic of grace and a revelation to become a saviour.

This does not mean the film and the movie are totally at odds. Quite the reverse. Most of the scenes, with some exceptions mentioned above, are taken from the book. But the scene between Oskar and Stern at the beginning and between Amon and Helen in the middle and between the *Schindlerjuden* at the end are given very different twists in the movie.

Oskar's pleasure in drink, women and food is the same in both. So is his largesse. In both, he is possessive about the Schindler Jews. However, if the book articulates Oskar's possessiveness more clearly, the movie expresses it as the sole, dominating characteristic of Schindler. So his madness is made more extreme. For there is none of the stories of his assistance in food and in other ways to Jews who were not *Schindlerjuden*. The character of Schindler, as more obsessed in the movie than even in the book, is facilitated because he is more godlike and aloof in the film. Not only does he not have any close friends, he suffers none of the fits of depression that the novel records him as experiencing.

The fact is, in the book Schindler is governed by a inner pagan god, a demiurge, a daimonion to overcome his pragmatism and sense of limits. In the movie, Oskar Schindler is transformed from a self-seeking hedonist through a moment of grace into a saint. If Thomas Keneally told a story of the dialectic between pragmatism and possession, Steven Spielberg tells the classic Christian tale of conversion from selfishness to self-sacrifice.

- . Cf. Aharon Appelfeld, *Unto the Soul*, New York: Random House, 1994.
- . Steiner's study of the SS supports this interpretation. "The shifts occurring in the display of personality characteristics when social conditions characteristically is absolutely striking. The sadistic-prone - or authoritarian character, who may have played a meek or even friendly role under one set of circumstances, may become an absolutely destructive individual in a totalitarianistic society in which aggression is rewarded." (J.M. Steiner, *The Holocaust: Yesterday and today: A sociopsychological study of some SS killers*, New York: Basic Books, 1972, p. 432.)
- . Paul, however, was born into another culture, and developed another personality which cannot simply be sloughed off like the skin of a snake. It is that personality that undermines and subverts his attempt to create a new persona.
- . Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 129. In spite of the bound disciplinary system of the SS, Staub explained Amon's deviance as follows: "Amon Goeth may have been this kind of person, run amok in a system that runs amok." (p. 139)
- . There was a change in the status of the camp on January, 1944 when Plaszow was put under the higher authority of Eichmann-like bureaucratic exactness of General Oswald Pohl's SS Main Economic and Administrative Office at Oranienburg

. Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*, eds. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth, New York: Free Press, (1963) 1991, p. 29.

. Ibid, p. 30.

. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, III:54:2, p. 209.

. Spike Lee in a very different film of black salvation, *Malcolm X*, effectively faces the strong character of Ella Little in the film for much the same reason Spielberg does with the women mistresses and wife of Oskar Schindler. The point is made by Neil Irvin Painter, "Malcolm X Across the Genres," *American Historical Review*, April, 1993, p. 435.

.. For example, Smie's relationship to Hook in *Peter Pan* or *Hook*.

.. Herbert Steinhouse's published article on Oskar Schindler opens as follows: "I was from the accountant Itzhak Stern that I first heard of Oskar Schindler. They had met in Cracow in 1939. 'I must admit now that I was intensely suspicious of Schindler for a long time.'" Herbert Steinhouse, "The Real Schindler," *TURDAYnight*, April 1994, p. 43.

.. As Herbert Steinhouse said of Oskar, "Schindler, however, seems to have maintained an equilibrium throughout this period that was virtually unshakable. 'Perhaps I had become fatalistic,' he says now. 'Or perhaps I was just afraid of the danger that would come once the men began to lose hope and acted rashly. I tried to keep them full of optimism.'" (Herbert Steinhouse, "The Real Schindler," *TURDAYnight*, April 1994, p. 76.) Steinhouse also describes how Schindler let his cool one time and threw a drunken SS officer down the stairs and almost killed him.

.. The SS was rife with financial corruption. "In reality, all Jewish property belonged to the Reich. In reality, the SS members appropriated some possessions of Jews and others they rounded up. They were also open to bribery." Ervin Staub, *Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 130-1.

.. This part of Amon is captured brilliantly in the film. "He would scan the camp area, the work at the quarry, the prisoners pushing or hauling the quarried blocks on the rails which passed by his door. Those glancing up could see the smoke from the cigarette which he held clamped between his lips, the way a man smokes without hands when he is too busy to put down the tools of his trade. Within the first few days of a camp's life he appeared thus at the front door as a prisoner who did not seem to be pushing hard enough at a cart loaded with a heavy stone. No one knew Amon's precise reason for settling on that prisoner-Amon certainly did not have to document his motives. With one blast from the doorstop the man was plucked from the group of pushing and pulling captives and hurled always in the road." (p. 192)

.. Contrast this with the book as Oskar describes Amon. "'You know that Amon...He's got charm. He could come in here now and charm you. But he's fanatic.'" (p. 173) In this characteristic, Amon Goeth in the novel is more like the slave trader in Caryl Phillips' novel, *Crossing the River* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1993).

.. "Amon was condemned to death and hanged in Cracow on September 13, 1946. It was two years to the day since his arrest by the SS in Vienna on black-marketeering charges. According to the Cracow press, he went to the gallows without remorse and gave the National Socialist salute before dying." (p. 390)

.. Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Gr*  
*olence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 130.

.. This observation is supported in the correspondence between two Jewi  
 philosophers who were refugees living in exile as a result of the rise of Hitle  
 om Paris in 1934, Alexandre Kojève (perhaps the most influential interpreter  
 gel in the twentieth century) sent a letter to Leo Strauss in the United Stat  
 e and his philosophic disciples - the most famous being the late Allan Bloc  
 wrote the best seller *The Closing of the American Mind* - propagated  
 twentieth century version of Plato's philosophy). The letter included a pictu

Hitler and a postscript which claimed the photograph explained a great de  
 out Hitler's leadership: "the man is really very congenial and 'cozy'." (Lett  
 ed May 1, 1934, in Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*, eds. Victor Gourevitch and Micha

Roth, New York: Free Press, (1963) 1991, p. 227.) I have on my desk, as  
 ite this, a photograph of Hitler with young German women taken on the occasi  
 Joseph Goebbels birthday party in 1937 (In Alison Owings, *Frauen: German Won*  
*call the Third Reich*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 199  
 ich seems to confirm Kojève's observation. Hitler was not just the ravi  
 atic portrayed in countless movies. For example, he devotedly took care of h  
 er when she was ill and dying. (For a survey of various analyses of Hitler  
 madman see Howard Adelman, "The Spirit as Will and as Flesh: A Case Study  
 andi and Hitler," *Psychoanalytic Review*, Winter 1980.)

.. There is a photo of Amon Goeth in uniform and riding boots astride a whi  
 ese that appears in the *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (Vol. 2, New Yor  
 millan, 1990, p. 593) and which appears as a sort of computer replica at t  
 inning of Chapter 19 of the novel. In contrast to Oskar in the movie, Am  
 ars his army cap at a cocky angle, is somewhat slouched over and is a k  
 erweight and puffy. What is most noticeable, however, is that he has an Elv  
 esley smile. It is certainly a picture in stark contrast with the appalled k  
 ry controlled look Liam Neeson assumes playing Oskar Schindler astride h  
 ese overlooking the clearing of the ghetto.

.. The experience is reported differently in the book. When Oskar observed t  
 male work gangs at Plaszów hauling stone like the slaves in Egypt, the auth  
 icts Oskar, "Watching this insidious Egyptian-looking industry," a  
 eling, "the same surge of nausea, the same prickling of the blood he h  
 erperienced on the hill above Krakusa Street." (p. 166) In the film, there is  
 ise of nausea or of the prickling of his blood. Oskar does not get sick a  
 nit at the sight of the clearing of the ghetto. Herbert Steinhouse, li  
 nealy and Spielberg, also attributes the events at Plaszów for changi  
 indler, but as in Keneally's version, Schindler is not transformed totall  
 : shifted from a diehard antifascist to a very activist one. "The increasi  
 equency of such incidents (on arbitrary threats, humiliations and killing  
 ws) in the factory and the evil his eyes had seen at the Plaszów camp probab  
 re responsible for moving Schindler into a more active antifascist role  
 ert Steinhouse, "The Real Schindler," *SATURDAYnight*, April 1994, p. 75.

.. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book III, 9:1117a:29-30.

.. I am grateful for this suggestion to my research assistant, Natal  
 igerhut.

.. Mordecai Paldiel, entry on Oskar Schindler, *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*

l. 4, New York: Macmillan, 1990, pp. 1331-2.

.. Cf the personal testimony of Mila Pfefferberg in "Schindler," the 1987 PBS television documentary.

.. In contrast, in the book, Oskar's friendship with the Schindler Jews after the war is depicted as follows: "But his dependence went beyond that sort of instinctive cunning. The *Schindlerjuden* had become his family." (p. 390)

.. "(T)here is no need to doubt that the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia proclaimed by Hitler from Hradshchin Castle in March 1939, surprised him with its early showing of tyranny." (p. 38) "He (Oskar Schindler) would say later that the period of the German Occupation of Bohemia and Moravia he had seen enough of Jewish and Czech property, and forcible removal of Jews and Czechs from those Sudeten areas considered German, to cure him of any zeal for the Nazis." (p. 57) As stated earlier, in the novel, this makes him a Nazi member who is no longer sympathetic to the Nazi cause.

.. Nell Irvin Painter, "Malcolm X across the Genres," *American Historical Review*, April, 1993, p. 433.

.. Herbert Steinhouse, from his 1949 interviews, argues that Stern is much more of an activist than portrayed in the movie. Stern is also not even as wary and suspicious for the long period portrayed in the book. In fact, Stern's suspicions were largely allayed quite early, but they only fully disappeared after the visit to the underground members of the Joint in August of 1943 and the use made in Stern's report on Plaszów.

.. Cf. Yitzhak Arad, Shmuel Krakowski and Shmuel Spector, eds., *Task Force Reports*, New York: Holocaust Library, 1989. The report of the Task Force is **not** included in the selections.