

Nazis... I Hate These Guys:

Indiana Jones, Schindler's List, and Radical Jewish Storytelling

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Steven Spielberg is a director known for many things; namely, crafting the Hollywood blockbusters that helped shape the American cultural landscape of the 70s, 80s, and 90s, including classic films such as *Jaws* (1975), *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), and *Jurassic Park* (1993). He is not, however, known for being a radical Jewish filmmaker. His first overtly Jewish film was *Schindler's List* (1993), which I would not consider to be particularly radical. However, I would argue that before the release of *Schindler's List*, a film specifically about the Holocaust, Spielberg had already crafted several successful, and indeed, quite radical, stories about Jews during World War II with *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989). By radical, I am here referring to the film's ability to allow, in particular, American Jewish audiences to both have a respite from antisemitism and the residual trauma of the Holocaust, as well as to feel a sense of triumph over Nazism. While the *Indiana Jones* films are certainly not overtly or explicitly Jewish, the character of Dr. Henry "Indiana" Jones, Jr., portrayed by Harrison Ford, is coded as a Jewish character, and is afforded a level of power--here defined as the ability to resist oppressive structures, such as Nazism--within the films' narratives in ways that the explicitly Jewish characters of *Schindler's List* are not. Further, the *Indiana Jones* movies, as action-adventure films only tangentially about the Holocaust, are allowed to be humorous and ahistorical in ways that *Schindler's List*, a "realistic" and serious film specifically about the Holocaust, is not. By first examining the Jewish-coded attributes of the character Indiana Jones, it is possible to then read the first and third films of the *Indiana Jones* franchise as Jewish narratives. I am focusing primarily on these films, as *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984) is a prequel to *Raiders* and as such does not involve Nazis in the plot. By subsequently contrasting these stories of Jewish power during WWII with the relative lack of Jewish power in *Schindler's List*, it becomes clear that the *Indiana Jones* movies indeed provide a more radical example of Jewish triumph over Nazism in Spielberg's films.

It is necessary to first establish Indiana Jones as a Jewish character. Nowhere in the films is he stated to be of any particular religion or ethnicity; indeed, he says in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, as his colleague Marcus Brody (Denholm Elliott) discusses the supposed mythical power of the Ark of the Covenant with him, "I don't believe in magic, a lot of superstitious hocus-pocus. I'm going after a find of incredible historical significance. You're talking about the boogeyman." But this statement is, in itself, a sort of argument for Jones' Jewishness.

Throughout the series, Jones is confronted repeatedly with the power and existence of various deities and mystical powers. For example, in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984), a prequel to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, he confronts a cult whose leader can pull people's still-beating hearts out of their chests as well as the power of various Indian deities--indeed, Jones defeats Mola Ram (Amrish Puri), the cult leader, by invoking the name of Shiva. So, canonically, by the time Jones has his conversation with Marcus Brody, he has already faced undeniable proof of at least one deity.

From an external sense, we can infer that Indiana Jones is Jewish because Harrison Ford, the actor who plays him, is Jewish. While this fact alone is certainly not enough to definitively claim Jones' Jewishness, it is important to note the deliberate casting of Harrison Ford in the role by Steven Spielberg. The character of Indiana Jones was originated by George Lucas, who originally intended to cast Tom Selleck in the role; however, Selleck became unavailable due to other commitments, and Spielberg convinced Lucas to cast Harrison Ford in the role following the success of *Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back* in 1980. While of course Ford was not cast by Spielberg specifically for his Jewishness, it is prescient to note that several Jewish people were involved with the film at key points and certainly influenced the development of Indiana Jones as a character. Steven Spielberg, Harrison Ford, and Lawrence Kasdan (who wrote the screenplay for *Raiders*) are all Jewish. And again, while this is not on its

own definitive, it is undeniable that the experience of being American Jews necessarily influenced their artistic practice in some way, even though none of these individuals were setting out to craft a specifically Jewish story with the *Indiana Jones* movies. In the book *American Jewish Filmmakers*, authors David Desser and Lester D. Friedman write that

Regardless of a Jewish author's past or present involvement with organized religion, current faith or cultural practices, and personal sense of group attachment or isolation, the underlying critical assumption is that the work of a Jewish writer must either overtly or covertly reflect a Jewish sensibility...We do not contend that 'being Jewish' is the sole determining factor in movies made by these directors; rather, we assert that the importance of Jewish elements and motifs in their films has been insufficiently acknowledged and understood...Primarily, we stress what it means to be Jewish in the United States and how that fact colors the creation of a number of films by a handful of prominent American Jewish filmmakers.¹

I believe this statement can be extrapolated to include not only Spielberg, as the director--who, as a high school student constantly bullied for being Jewish, turned to filmmaking as a form of empowerment²--but Kasdan and Ford as well, as individuals who were instrumental in the development and characterization of Indiana Jones. While none of these individuals were setting out to make a "Jewish film", as it were, their experiences as Jewish American people have informed their modes of storytelling, leading to the use of motifs and themes that can be best understood from a Jewish lens. Harrison Ford himself once stated during an interview for *Inside the Actors Studio* that he considers himself "Irish as a person, but [he feels] Jewish as an

¹ David Desser and Lester D. Friedman, *American Jewish Filmmakers* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 4.

² Shone, Tom, "Steven Spielberg: 'It's all about making kids feel like they can do anything,'" *The Guardian*, July 16, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/jul/16/steven-spielberg-kids-can-do-anything-bfg>.

actor.”³ While this was said partly in jest, it is relevant, particularly when considering the statements of Desser and Friedman. It does not seem like a stretch to conclude that Ford’s lived experiences as a Jewish American have likely colored his acting style and technique.

Returning to the text of the films, their narratives constantly poke at Jones’ inclination to atheism by forcing him to confront his own doubts. At the end of *Raiders*, as rival French archaeologist René Belloq (Paul Freeman) and the Nazis test the powers of the Ark, all Jones’ rejections of the Ark’s true power are disproved when the literal power of God emerges and utterly destroys all the Nazis who bear witness. In *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, Jones finds the Holy Grail in a chamber guarded by a knight who has been kept alive for seven hundred years, and which, when filled with holy water, saves his father’s life by instantly healing a bullet wound. *Last Crusade* actually most overtly confronts Jones’ lack of faith, as he must pass three tests in order to reach the Grail itself, with each of them asking for a certain level of religious observance--from a trap whose only hint is that “Only the penitent man will pass” (that is, any unfortunate soul who doesn’t kneel will be beheaded), to a nigh-invisible pathway across a chasm which asks prospective Grail seekers to make not only a spiritual but a literal leap of faith. In order to save his father, Jones must confront his atheism and truly believe that he will both be able to find the Grail and that it will indeed have the healing power of legend. Of course, the existence of various deities is “proven” in the three original *Indiana Jones* films, not just a Jewish god (with *Temple of Doom* involving Indian deities, and *Last Crusade* the existence of a Christian god and the power of Christ). But more importantly, Jones is asked over and over again, to wrestle with faith. In the Torah, Jacob wrestles all night with an angel; at daybreak, the angel bestows upon him the name Israel, meaning “contends with god”, god-wrestler. So, too, is Indiana Jones a God-wrestler--and so too, then, can we conclude that he is Jewish.

³ *Inside the Actors Studio*, season 6, episode 13. “Episode #6.13.” Created by James Lipton, featuring James Lipton and Harrison Ford. Aired August 20, 2000 on Bravo.

Further, Jones' character also exemplifies the struggles of Jewish people in diaspora, as Spielberg, Ford, and Kasdan all are. Desser and Friedman write as well that

...[M]ost American Jewish novelists perceive of themselves as marginal to mainstream culture. This traditional concept of Jews as cultural hybrids--psyches trapped between the old and the new, between partial acceptance and partial rejection--forms the underpinnings of much critical work on Jewish creative artists and thinkers and much sociological writing about Jewish identity.⁴

Similarly, Jones is caught between the two worlds of academia and fieldwork; his twin identities of the mild-mannered professor, ignorant of his students' affections, and the whip-wielding, Nazi-punching archaeologist. This also speaks to how Jones' character both subverts Jewish filmic stereotypes while simultaneously embracing several Jewish attributes, a complex and contradictory existence that is, at its heart, itself extremely Jewish. On one hand, the character of Indiana Jones is not visibly recognizable as being Jewish--he does not wear a tallis or kippah, he is not visibly Orthodox or Chasidic, he does not inhabit the role of the neurotic or the schlemiel. On the other hand, Jones is also depicted as a studious researcher (a "person of the book"); he often succeeds by outsmarting his enemies (as opposed to defeating them through brute force) or by being the only person smart enough to decode the clues to recovering an artifact; and he has a strong sense of justice (in alignment with the Jewish imperative "tzedek, tzedek tirdof," or "justice, justice shall you pursue"). It is also of note that Ford's portrayal allows for a Jewish man to be playing a part that, while not overtly Jewish, can be interpreted as such; this is important because of the relative lack of complex Jewish characters in film. So often,

⁴ David Desser and Lester D. Friedman, 4.

Jewish characters are relegated to, as Noah Berlatsky writes in *The Forward*, being “JEWISH or being...narratively invisible as Jews.”⁵

From a purely craft sense, the films also hint at a deeper spirituality to the story and character. Most telling would be Spielberg’s use of a unique visual style wherein either characters are backlit by the light source or there are visible beams and shafts of light in the shot. Spielberg “evolved this visual style, called ‘God Lights’ after childhood experience of similar emanations in a synagogue”.⁶ Examples of God Lights can be noted in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* at various points: when light hits the headpiece to the Staff of Ra, revealing the location of the Ark of the Covenant; when Jones determines where the Ark is buried and oversees the dig; and finally, when the Ark is opened and the power of God emerges to destroy the Nazis. Each of these moments is one where Jones triumphs over the Nazis. In another, non-lighting example, in one shot from *Raiders*, Jones is standing behind a metal screen door whose pattern resembles the Magen David, with one of his eyes framed in the center of a star. The scene that directly follows this shot involves Jones narrowly avoiding death by poisoning. While this seems to be luck, it can be read instead as an example of deus ex machina in which God prevents Jones’ death, instead punishing a monkey who had been working with the Nazis. Thus it is evident how, through lighting, set design, narrative, and external factors, Indiana Jones can easily be read and interpreted as a Jewish character.

I would like to now examine Spielberg’s later film, *Schindler’s List* (1993), in order to more accurately compare and contrast the films. *Schindler’s List* is specifically a film that deals with the Holocaust, focusing specifically on the true story of Oskar Schindler (Liam Neeson), a

⁵ Berlatsky, Noah, “Stephen King’s ‘It’ Shows Hollywood Still Has A Jewish Problem,” *The Forward*, September 8, 2017, <https://forward.com/culture/382175/stephen-kings-it-shows-hollywood-still-has-a-jewish-problem/>.

⁶ Nigel Morris, *The Cinema of Steven Spielberg: Empire of Light* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 13.

Nazi factory owner and businessman who ended up saving the lives of around 1,200 Polish Jews. Much has been written about the “Americanization” of the Holocaust due to the popularity of *Schindler’s List*. In 2008, *New York Times* film critic A. O. Scott wrote:

Though the Holocaust was not a central event in American history, *Schindler’s List*, even more than [the miniseries] *Holocaust*, made it into one by turning it into the basis of a Hollywood epic...

Schindler’s List undoubtedly gave rise to a new pedagogical and commemorative impulse. It also, however, helped to domesticate the Holocaust by making it a fixture of American middlebrow popular culture. Which I don’t mean entirely as a criticism, since that culture is better than a lot of the alternatives. But Hollywood trades in optimism, redemption and healing, and its rendering of even the most appalling realities inevitably converts their dire facts into its own shiny currency.

Thus *Schindler’s List*, for all its unsparing and powerful re-creations of the horror of the Krakow ghetto, is a story of heroism, resilience and survival.⁷

I would argue that the reason why *Schindler’s List* comes across in this way is a result of Spielberg’s filmmaking style and history of creating action-adventure movies. The way that *Schindler* is filmed is actually closer to the style of an action movie than a historical drama, which is what makes it comparable to *Indiana Jones* franchise. Indeed, Miriam Bratu Hansen first noted this in her 1996 essay “‘Schindler’s List’ Is Not ‘Shoah’: Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Memory”, writing that in Spielberg’s film, the story “became about *survival*, the survival of individuals, rather than the fact of death, the death of an entire people or peoples”.⁸ She notes also that one popular criticism of *Schindler’s List* is that the film is

⁷ A. O. Scott, “Never Forget. You’re Reminded.”, *The New York Times*, November 21, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/23/movies/23scot.html>.

⁸ Miriam Bratu Hansen, “‘Schindler’s List’ Is Not ‘Shoah’: The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Memory,” *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 2 (1996): 299.

“circumscribed by the economic and ideological tenets of the culture industry, with its unquestioned and supreme values of entertainment and spectacle...*Schindler's List* is usually aligned with Spielberg's previous megaspectacles”; that is, the film, as a product of the Hollywood machine, was made for the primary purpose of entertainment, and as such follows the formula of Spielberg's previous blockbuster works.⁹ As we have now established the common link between these films, I will further expand on this and compare the films by examining several of their key aspects.

Let us first consider the representation of Jewish characters in these films. In *Schindler's List*, the Jewish characters have come under scrutiny from Jewish critics for being flat, at best, and playing into antisemitic stereotypes, at worst. Hansen notes that

...some critics contend [that the Jewish characters] come to life only to embody anti-Semitic stereotypes (money-grubbing Jews, Jew-as-eternal-victim, the association of Jewish women with dangerous sexuality, the characterization of Itzhak Stern [Ben Kingsley], Schindler's accountant, as 'king of the Jewish wimps'). This argument not only refers to the degree to which characters are fleshed out...the argument also pertains to the level of filmic narration or enunciation, the level at which characters function to mediate the film's sights and sounds, events and meanings to the spectator, as for instance through flashbacks, voice-over, or optical point of view.¹⁰

Schindler's List, as critics have stated, plays into several stereotypes regarding its Jewish characters. It was felt by essayist and op-ed columnist Frank Rich as well, in his 1994 review of *Schindler's List* for the *New York Times*, that “The [other Jewish characters, aside from Itzhak Stern], who have the generic feel of composites, are as forgettable as the chorus in a touring

⁹ Miriam Bratu Hansen, "'Schindler's List' Is Not 'Shoah'", 296.

¹⁰ Miriam Bratu Hansen, 300.

company of *Fiddler on the Roof*, or, for that matter, the human dino-fodder of *Jurassic Park*. They blur into abstraction, becoming another depersonalized statistic of mass death.”¹¹

However, these stereotypes are not upheld in *Indiana Jones*. Jones, as a Jewish character, is not portrayed as a victim in any sense--indeed, he is the hero of the franchise. He is physically strong and can hold his own in fistfights against Nazis, knocking them out (such as when he disguises himself to stow away on a submarine in *Raiders*) or even killing them with impunity at various points (such as when he shoots them without hesitation during the fight scene atop a moving tank in *Last Crusade*). Jones also is not visually coded as Jewish; that is to say, despite Harrison Ford's actual Jewish identity, Indiana Jones does not possess stereotypically Ashkenazic features or demeanor, and he does not conform to the archetype of the schlemiel (popularized in film by the likes of Woody Allen and others). Jones is allowed instead to be a complex character, wrestling with his faith as well as exemplifying the identity struggles of individuals in the Jewish diaspora.

Evidently, in *Schindler's List*, there is a real issue with the way in which Jewish characters are portrayed, and this portrayal is linked intricately to the point of view taken by the film. Hansen explores in further detail criticisms of how the film's point-of-view shots “are clustered not only around Schindler but around [Nazi commandant Amon] Goeth, [portrayed by Ralph Fiennes,] making us participate in one of his killing sprees in shots showing the victim through the telescope of his gun” and asks whether this might mean that “the viewer is...urged to identify with Goeth's murderous desire on the unconscious level of cinematic discourse”.¹² *Schindler's List* participates in a kind of sadism in which the audience is asked, on a filmic level, to identify with the Nazis' point of view. Another example of this comes, as the scholar Omer

¹¹ Frank Rich, “Extras In the Shadows,” *The New York Times*, January 2, 1994.

¹² Miriam Bratu Hansen, 300.

Bartov writes, in his essay "Spielberg's Oskar: Hollywood Tries Evil", with the infamous shower scene. Bartov notes:

...it seems that Spielberg, possibly unconsciously, catered to Hollywood's tradition of providing sexual distraction to the viewers. Most troubling of all, of course, is the shower scene, since that mass of attractive, frightened, naked women, finally relieved from their anxiety by jets of water rather than gas, would be more appropriate to a soft-porn sadomasochistic film than to its context...The fact that this 'actually' happened, is, of course, wholly beside the point, since in most cases it did not, and even when it did, the only eyes which might have derived any sexual pleasure from watching such scenes belonged to the SS...Spielberg makes the viewers complicit with the SS, both in sharing their voyeurism and in blocking out the reality of the gas chambers.¹³

Because *Schindler's List* is centralized around the Nazi characters in this way, and because the Jewish characters are so flatly portrayed, Frank Rich writes that it's "no wonder the unhinged Nazi commandant...runs away with the movie."¹⁴ The Nazi characters of *Schindler's List* are humanized in ways the Jewish characters are not, and portrayed as complicated characters making difficult choices; through all this, the Jewish characters are simply bystanders and victims, subject to the whims of the Nazis, and in particular the whims of Schindler and Goeth. Indeed, the character of Amon Goeth is depicted as attempting to grow as a person, exploring the concept of being merciful at the behest of Schindler, and even goes so far as to express a desire to protect his Jewish maid Helen Hirsch (Embeth Davidtz), for whom he has romantic feelings. Even Fiennes, who portrayed Goeth, stated, "In playing Amon, I got close to his pain. Inside him is a fractured, miserable human being. I feel split about him, sorry for him. He's like

¹³ Omer Bartov, "Spielberg's Oskar: Hollywood Tries Evil," in *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 49.

¹⁴ Frank Rich, "Extras In the Shadows."

some dirty, battered doll I was given and that I came to feel peculiarly attached to.”¹⁵ Of course, Schindler, too, is depicted as a complex character who evolves over the course of the film from simply an opportunist into a hero, a fact which has been widely criticized. Hansen even weighs in herself, writing that she “could have done without the last third [of the film], when Oskar Schindler...the opportunist, gambler, and philanderer, turns into Schindler, the heroic rescuer”.¹⁶ The Jewish characters, by contrast, experience no growth or character change over the course of the film. In a further exploration of Schindler’s characterization, Bartov writes that

....*Schindler’s List* subtly (indeed, perhaps quite unintentionally) undermines the Hollywood convention of a cinematic world neatly divided between good and evil. Nevertheless, the film succeeds in remaining within the fold of the genre by simultaneously drawing much of its pathos from the traditional image of the tough, rough, undisciplined, and yet ultimately moral and supremely courageous hero of the American Western.¹⁷

Bartov is quite right to liken Schindler to the heroes of American Westerns. In fact, action movies were deeply influenced by Westerns, and as Spielberg is known for being one of the most prominent action film directors of the 1980s, it is no surprise to find that the influence of Westerns is present in *Schindler’s List* as well.

This characterization is also present in *Indiana Jones*--yet its impact is quite different. Jones, as a character, can also certainly be described as “tough, rough, undisciplined, and yet ultimately moral and supremely courageous”¹⁸, but the key difference between how this characterization is utilized in *Indiana Jones* and how it is utilized in *Schindler’s List* lies in the

¹⁵ Richard Corliss, "The Man Behind the Monster," *TIME*, June 24, 2001, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,163870,00.html>.

¹⁶ Miriam Bratu Hansen, 296.

¹⁷ Omer Bartov, "Spielberg's Oskar: Hollywood Tries Evil," 43.

¹⁸ Omer Bartov, 43.

Indiana Jones films' point of view, as well as their refusal to humanize their Nazi characters.¹⁹

Indiana Jones utilizes some of the exact same shots as *Schindler's List*--in *Raiders*, there is a scene just before the climax wherein Jones aims a gun from the top of a hill at the Nazis below as they prepare to test the powers of the Ark of the Covenant. Just as *Schindler's List* asks the audience to identify with Goeth's point of view as he aims a gun from his balcony, *Raiders* asks us to identify with Jones'; unlike *Schindler's List*, however, in *Raiders*, the gun is instead trained on the Nazis and wielded by a Jewish-coded character. Further, despite the plethora of Nazis Jones must fight, the majority of them are not named, none of them are portrayed as complex or sympathetic, and all are punished by death within the narratives of the films. Nazi collaborators, such as Belloq in *Raiders* and Elsa Schneider (Alison Doody) in *Last Crusade*, are portrayed as slightly more complex characters who do not always agree with Nazi ideology, yet are still ultimately punished with death--Belloq is annihilated when the Ark is opened, and Schneider falls into a bottomless pit as she reaches for the Holy Grail.

This brings me, finally, to my point regarding genre and how it functions in *Indiana Jones* versus in *Schindler's List*. Because the *Indiana Jones* films are blockbuster action movies working within the Hollywood system, the line between good and evil is clearly delineated; the audience is firmly on the side of the "good guys", and the "bad guys" get what they deserve. Action movies are so categorized due to their possession of various attributes, such as the influence they derive from Westerns, as previously noted, but also including their use of special effects and physical feats, their depiction of violence, and the presence of a singular hero who saves the day despite the odds being stacked against them. These attributes are certainly present not only in *Indiana Jones*, but in *Schindler's List* as well. One example of this is that the same extremely memorable stunt is used in both *Indiana Jones* and *Schindler's List*, to very

¹⁹ Omer Bartov, "Spielberg's Oskar: Hollywood Tries Evil," 43.

different effect. In *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, during the sequence wherein Jones fights off Nazis atop a moving tank, he uses a single bullet to kill three Nazis who stand before him in a row. In *Schindler's List*, as the Kraków ghetto is being liquidated, Schindler witnesses Nazis line up five Jews and shoot them all with a single bullet. Though the trick is the same, the payoff is much more satisfying when a Jewish-coded character employs it to destroy Nazis than when it is used to depict the atrocities of Nazis as they massacre Jews in the ghetto. Because of the presence of these attributes in the film, *Schindler's List*, while being officially a historical drama, also functions essentially as an action film--which is why it is less successful than *Indiana Jones* at telling a truly radical and powerful story of Jewish triumph over Nazism. *Schindler's List*, as a film explicitly dealing with the Holocaust and attempting to accurately portray a historical reality, has created much discourse amongst Jewish critics. Omer Bartov writes that

...Schindler's List suffers from the difficulties that any film, not only Hollywood productions, confronts when attempting to recreate reality in a convincing, 'authentic' manner...It is precisely because of the inability of cinematic representation authentically to recreate a distorted reality that the claim of authenticity, and the sense of the viewers that they are seeing things as they 'actually were,' is so troubling.²⁰

Raiders, at the time of its release, was criticized for its portrayal of "jokey, cartoon-villain Nazis...[who] were conveniently well-dressed baddies available to dog Indiana Jones' steps, [whereas in] *Schindler's List*, the enormity of Nazi evil was too great to possibly be contained in a single film."²¹ Yet it is *Schindler's List*, not *Indiana Jones*, which has accumulated a plethora of criticism surrounding the humanization and depth of its Nazi characters, and its inability to serve

²⁰ Omer Bartov, "Spielberg's Oskar: Hollywood Tries Evil," 50.

²¹ Saul Austerlitz, "Steven Spielberg: From E.T. to Munich, the Boy Wonder of the Movie Industry Grows Up," *My Jewish Learning*, accessed May 12, 2019. <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/steven-spielberg/>.

as an authentic representation of a real experience. Hansen points out another criticism of *Schindler's List*, which is the claim that the film, as a fictional narrative derived from truth, "does not just represent one story from the Shoah but that it does so in a *representative* matter--that it encapsulates the totality of the Holocaust experience."²² Along with this argument, she writes, comes the criticism of the film's narrative form, in that:

A fundamental limitation of classical narrative in relation to history, and to the historical event of the Shoah in particular, is that it relies on neoclassicist principles of compositional unity, motivation, linearity, equilibrium, and closure--principles singularly inadequate in the face of an event that by its very nature defies our narrative urge to make sense of, to impose order on the discontinuity and otherness of historical experience. Likewise, the deadly teleology of the Shoah represents a temporal trajectory that gives the lie to any classical dramaturgy of deadlines, suspense, and rescues in the nick of time, to moments of melodramatic intensity and relief. There are at least three last-minute rescues in *Schindler's List*, leading up to the compulsory Hollywood happy ending...The rescue of the Schindler Jews is a matter of luck and gamble rather than melodramatic coincidence; and although the story is historically "authentic," it cannot but remain a fairy tale in the face of the overwhelming facticity of "man-made mass death".²³

In other words, there is an inherent inadequacy within the narrative form of *Schindler's List* itself which prevents the film from being wholly successful at portraying factual events. Hansen brings up, too, the idea of "rescues in the nick of time"--moments of *deus ex machina* in the narrative which are characteristic of action films and the result of *Schindler's List* being a product of Hollywood. These moments occur in the *Indiana Jones* films as well; yet, again, they function quite differently. In *Indiana Jones*, they reinforce the ability of the hero to triumph against the

²² Miriam Bratu Hansen, 297.

²³ Miriam Bratu Hansen, 298-299.

villains at all odds, as well as serve as a reminder of the existence and power of the Jewish God--particularly in *Raiders*, when Jones is physically incapacitated and all hope seems lost, upon which the literal power of the Jewish God eradicates the Nazis. In *Schindler's List*, these moments of deus ex machina, such as when the Nazis' guns get stuck as they are about to shoot the Jewish man who isn't performing well enough in the factory, or when Schindler steps in at the nick of time, seem hokey and indeed somewhat disrespectful of the reality of the situation.

The *Indiana Jones* films, having always been billed as entirely fictional action movies, do not face this issue because they have never claimed to be accurate portrayals of true events; they are not attempting to portray the reality of the Holocaust, and so can never fall short in the same way that *Schindler's List* repeatedly does. *Indiana Jones* is radical and exciting because it allows audiences to imagine a universe in which Nazis always get their comeuppance, if not directly at the hands of the Jewish-coded hero, then at the hands of the narrative itself. For American Jewish audiences in particular, this provides relief from the very real horrors of the world, as well as a reminder that Jews, whether on camera or behind it, will always triumph over Nazis.

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