PUNCHING NAZIS: DECONSTRUCTING FASCIST VILLAINS IN FANTASTIC SCREEN CULTURE FROM ZOMBIES TO OUTER SPACE

Shaun Wilson, RMIT University

Throughout the mid to late twentieth century, World War Two era Nazi Germany quickly became the centre point of the ultimate cinematic villain. Whether this be historically based or integrated into fictitious stories, depictions of Nazis in cinematic tropes have proliferated antagonist sub-genres pitted against the forces of good. This article will consider these villainous others as a simulacre of historicity in fantastic screen culture to derive an understanding of how screen Nazis manifest an ongoing dialogue in cinematic villainies.

Keywords: Screen Nazis, fantastic cinema, metamodernism, science fiction

When Charlie Chaplin satirised Adolf Hitler in *The Great Dictator* (dir. Chaplin, 1940), the cinematic trope by which this stood became ostensibly prophetic while at the same time, pioneering how screen Nazi characterisation would develop as future subgenres of villain tropes over the preceding decades. *I'll Never Heil Again* (dir. White, 1941), *Invisible Agent* (dir. Marin, 1942) *Ghosts on the Loose* (dir. Beaudine, 1942), *Tarzan Triumphs* (dir. Thiele, 1943) and Disney's *Der Fuehrer's Face* (dir. Kinney, 1943) enabled a unique characterisation that gentrified Nazism on screen as 'the bad guys' yet remained entertaining enough as permissible viewing for wartime audiences who, first, resided outside of Nazi occupied territories and secondly, were mostly yet uninformed to the full extent of Hitler's monstrosity. Performances of these early screen Nazis were quintessentially flawed villains prone to arrogance and vagueness, and who often appeared bumbling and far removed from the actuality of the psychopathy of Nazi doctrine. Such films differentiated fantastic screen culture from, say, war films where the deliberate reigning in of pesky brown shirts created an alter ego of Nazism to be fictionalised as an 'other' characterisation, portrayed as calculated, limited, and misguided yet decidedly no match for the forces of good who opposed such doctrine. 'In the majority of these, Nazis are seen as no more than buffoonish figures who are frequently defeated by their own petty pomposity.' (Moria) Whether these be protagonists fighting Nazis such as Tarzan or Invisible Man, or the cartoon characters Daffy Duck or Popeye, screen Nazis became inadvertently pantomime not to mention steeped in government sanctioned propaganda. Even the creation of the *Superman* comics in the late 1930s 'was a

reaction-formation to the rise of Nazism in Europe and antisemitism at home… [who] cathartically punched Nazis in the face.'(Schwartz)

These wartime films are differentiated from, say, post-war depictions after the fact. If, for example, comparison between *The Great Dictator* and *The Yesterday Machine* (dir. Marker, 1963) considers the proliferation of screen Nazi characterisation, Chaplin's formalism is framed as allegorical satire ridiculing Nazism by an epistemology within neutral America whose screen audiences had no yet knowledge of what Nazism *could* actually do. Marker's film, however, utilised the experience of hindsight to what Nazism *did* do as a formalism for an ontology that villainized his screen Nazis based on the emotive sentiments of horror from the then known actualities of genocide within collective conscious plot points of, among others, the Jewish holocaust. Audiences of Marker's time had already labelled screen Nazis as 'the baddies', which in itself is a cartoonised characterisation of their historical other. Moreover, as the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 publicly revealed the extent of atrocities surrounding the holocaust, scientific and technological advancements, and the genocidal governance of Nazi rule, a mythology emerged in popular culture at the same time that, for example, Toho Studios in Japan introduced the Kaiju Eiga characters of Godzilla and later, Mothra in response to the defeat of Japan and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the next generation of children who had grown up after the war had ended. Young people from the 1950s to the 1970s consumed screen Nazis as genre-based villains who lived as fictionalised renditions in comic books - *Captain America*, *Commando Comics*, *Batman and Robin, Superman, World's Finest Comics* - in television programs - *Star Trek: Patterns of Force* (1968), *Wonder Woman, Fausta: the Nazi Wonder Woman* (1976), *Moonstrike* (1963) - , and in literature - *The Man in the High Castle* and *The Iron Dream*. Once the merchandising of generic Nazis was aided by the post-war availability of cheap, instantaneously produced plastic resin compounds, plastic toys became the materiality of choice of popular culture merchants that drove an entirely new generation into fighting Nazis as a screen-to-play hybridisation through merchandise, comics, popular culture, and souvenirs that their relatives brought back from the war enacted as childhood play in bedrooms, backyards, and school grounds. These people were the audiences that drove financial capital in fighting Nazis in postwar decades, where nostalgia, toys, and the preoccupation of fighting villains in childhood fuelled industries to capitalise on such too great avail. Hake argues that the anti-Nazi wartime films which set up this legacy 'laid the foundation for the postfascist imaginary shared by Hollywood and European cinema and marked the starting point for the seemingly unstoppable filmic productivity surrounding the Third Reich as the absolute other of liberal democracy. (Hake, p.35)

From a fantastic screen culture perspective, and when considered as a cinematic genre that oscillates fact and fiction, absurdity and horror, and morals and the ignoring of such together into an 'hybrid' of history and its imagined version, this article will examine contributions from films portraying screen Nazis as this 'other', distinctive

from biographical accounts of *Downfall* (dir. Hirschbiegel, 2005), *Schindler's List* (dir. Speilberg, 1993), and *The Diary of Anne Frank* (dir. Stevens, 1959) or historically linked such as *Life is Beautiful* (dir. Benigni, 1997), *Sophie's Choice* (dir. Bakula, 1982), *The Night Porter* (dir. Cavani, 1974), and *The Pianist* (dir. Polanski, 2003). This kind of focus manifests a different approach to comprehend aspects otherwise omitted from dramatic and fictionalised works about Nazisim to instead embrace the absurd - *Jojo Rabbit* (dir. Waititi, 2019) - , the ridiculous - *Under the Rainbow* (dir. Rash, 1981) featuring dwarf Nazi spies invading the set during the shooting of *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)' (Moria) - the allegorical - *It Happened Here* (dir. Mollo, Brownlow, 1965) - , the preposterous - *Dead Snow* (dir. Wirkola, 2009) - and the pastiche - *Iron Sky* (dir. Vuorensola, 2012). Even as these kinds of subgenres permit fantastic cinema to be inclusive of a wider range of tropes to posit villains in such a way as to incorporate, on the one hand, social commentary of fascism and far right extremism, and on the other hand, ethical and moral dilemmas for an audience when accessing such exposition. For example, an audience may laugh at Waititi's portrayal of bumbling Nazi officers in *Jojo Rabbit* but in doing so, sets up a clever moral dilemma through ironic absurdity in finding humour from, ontologically framed, hate speech, and epistemologically framed, the intentionality of genocide. Such an argument invites an audience to view fascism and far right extremism in society with a sense of responsive condemnation. Yet the vulnerability of doing so can also reinforce the ideological aims of audiences who identify as being in agreement with Nazi doctrine with a sense of affirmation and self validation. Cocks argues that for Nazi movies 'no figure in fact or fiction embodies absolute evil as much as the Nazi' (Cocks, 2015), Rosenfield argues a 'hunger for the horrible' (see Friedman, p.269), as does other work from Almereyda (2023), Frankenheimer (2023), and Yogerst (2020) contribute to further debate about Nazis on screen.

There are of course other subgenres of screen Nazis not related to fantastic screen culture outside of this article's discussion, such as Nazi-sexplotation films - *The Gestapos Last Orgy* (dir. Canevari, 1977), *Salo or the 120 Days of Sodom* (dir. Pasolini, 1975) - Nazi gonzo films - *Sharkenstein* (dir. Polonia, 2016), *Nazis at the Center of the Earth* (dir. Lawson, 2012) - Nazi-themed pornography - *Nazi Love Camp #27* (dir. Caianon, 1977), *SS Hell Camp* (dir. Batzella, 1977) - and films about far right extremism exploring aspects of fascism - *Romper Stomper* (dir. Wright, 1992), *American History X* (dir. Kaye, 1999), and *Black Garden* (dir. Wilson, 2020). In the 1970s, for example, Italian new wave cinema directors contributed to a sizable number of Nazi themed films outside of the mainstream Hollywood histo-fiction arena, that 'experimented with the connections between sexuality, politics and history.' (Stiglegger, p.25) In contrast, numerous Scandinavian films of the 2010s addressed screen Nazis away from a sexually focused psychology to instead explore more supernatural schlock in the form of zombies and hyper violence that tended to drift towards splatter video game territory. Mockbuster Nazi films of the same era, though, tended to mimic existing Hollywood mainstream films with cheap,

meta-crafted and poorly crafted visual effects such as *Nazi Overlord* (dir. Palatina, 2018) and *Sky Sharks* (dir. Dir. Fehse, 2020).

The commonality of all of these tropes is the Nazi villain posited against protagonists, no matter what the story, context, or agency that these films depict. Even at its most disturbing, *Salo or the 120 Days of Sodom*, arguably at the heightened end of screen Nazi extremity, intersects with a question of why should such a film be made when the actions of its historical other are cautioned against repeating? Geuens defines Theodor Adorno's warning about the aftermath of World War 1 as '"wringing pleasure" from the event…[where] he worried that some artistic treatment would not so much fail to take the enormity of the crime into full account but that the very success of an aesthetic rendering would have consequences of its own...' (Geunes). Other hesitation is argued by Mann who claims 'the task of an anti-Nazi picture is *not* to present, with emotional disapproval and sadistic zest, those sickening, monotonous atrocities.' (Mann, p.175) While other commentary rests the occurrence of screen Nazis on the demand from audiences who watch them as Ward raises that 'these creatures and the films they inhabit may not belong in the usual catalog of horrors associated with World War II, but they reinforce the suspicion that we may not be finished with the Nazis, or that they may not be finished with us.' (Ward, Verlocci)

These concerns are further exacerbated when examining the historical context of actual Nazi wartime cinema. For example, the Nazi propaganda film *Ich klage an* (dir. Liebeneiner, 1941) was a fictitious wholesome domestic story promoting euthanasia, commissioned by Goebbels in support of the later termed 'Aktion T4' involuntary euthanasia program that murdered up to 300,000 people (Jenner) in psychiatric hospitals throughout Germany and other Nazi occupied countries. The tentacles of Nazism entrenched in German wartime cinema were 'made to incite anti-Semitic passions and justify Nazi atrocities.' (Jenkins) Even in 2023 as the German government holds 40 banned Nazi-era films in a vault, the premise behind the bans is the fear of what these films may incite or transmit, echoed as a sentiment within criticisms of screen Nazis in general. Yet despite these legitimate concerns, why is it that screen Nazis in fantastic cinema still make such compelling villains?

The first known screen villain appeared in *L'Arroseur Arrose* (dir. Lumiere, 1895) where a young boy torments a gardener by stepping on his hose then releasing the water flow to spurt in the face of the gardener. Once caught by the gardener, the boy is punished by spanking then runs away. What this short 60 second film did was to set up a three-step blueprint for quintessential screen villains that's been used in cinema ever since. The first step is for a villain to hatch torment on an unsuspecting victim, the second step is for the victim to suffer from the action of the torment, and the third step is for the victim to rise up and defeat the villain where 'good' inadvertently prevails. The structural implications of Lumiere's formula utilise the same context that 'Frances Pownall shows [in] the ways in which fourth century historians created what she calls a "paradigmatic history" which views the past as a way to illustrate

moral points.' (Woods, p.6) Back to screen Nazis, as the work of Gilman asks, can one make fun of Hitler and not offend those who suffered in the Holocaust? (Gilman, 2000 see Friedman), Friedman discusses a particular point that screen Nazis and their films 'represent a persistent fear not only that the Nazis have survived but that, under the right circumstances, it could happen again… characters in these films personify the endurance of the Nazi philosophy in our own time.' (Friedman, p.268) Such questions are part of the endurance of screen Nazis as they continue to appear in fantastic cinema seemingly less as historical monsters and more so, as mythologised villains. Numerous studies of screen villains, for example, intersected with what determines a screen Nazi. The work of Cromley, Reese, and Wagner (2015) on dermatological features of movie villains gives insight to the characteristics of bodily depictions of screen Nazis as a now stereotype fitted as imaginary not necessarily factual account. 'Classic dermatologic features of villainous characters [on screen can] include facial scars, alopecia, deep rhytides, periorbital hyperpigmentation, rhinophyma, verruca vulgaris, extensive tattoos, large facial nevi, poliosis, and albinism or gray-hued complexions.' (Croley et al) In fantastic cinema culture, these stereotypes have crept into the physical attributes of screen Nazis even though from an historical context, much of these characteristics were, in reality, part of the list of defects that the Nazis tried to eradicate by murdering people of matched descriptions. Movies have inadvertently invented its own Nazi villain where 'the *imagined* historical reality of Nazism became a historical reality in its own right.' (Barta, pg.136). Stereotypical aspects appear in Gestapo agent Arnold Toht from *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (dir. Speilberg, 1981) who bears a medallion scar on his hand, Hitler youth Jojo's facial scars from a hand grenade accident in *Jojo Rabbit*, exaggerated facial mutilations from Karl Ruprect Kroenen in *Hellboy* (dir. Mignola, 2004), and SS officer and evil Nazi scientist Red Skull has every known body disfiguration imaginable in *Captain America: the First Avenger* (dir. Jonston, 2011).

Nazis have also appeared as a secondary effect on fantastic screen culture by allegorical references in ways that intersect mainstream media that otherwise may be hidden in plain view. For example, the Darleks in *Dr Who* (BBC) have a Nazi connection where 'Designer Terry Nation… based his concepts for the Doctor's iconic enemy off aspects of Nazism – their distinctive salute, their use of the catchphrase "exterminate" and their wholehearted belief in their own genetic superiority.' (Peterson) Likewise, in an interview with Empire magazine, J.J. Abrams explained the concept of The First Order in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (dir. Abrams, 2014) which 'all came out of conversations about what would have happened if the Nazis all went to Argentina but then started working together again?' In *The Fifth Element* (dir: Besson, 1997) 'Zorg (Gary Oldman), with his rabid rhetoric, small beard and black, distinctly parted hairdo is clearly fashioned after Adolf Hitler.' (Lokotsch Aube, pg.2) Let's not also forget the fascist lampoon of *Starship Troopers* (dir. Verhoeven, 1997) where 'Verhoeven cast gorgeous ingenues such as Beverly Hills 90210's Casper Van Dien, Dina Meyer and Denise Richards in a nod to Leni Riefenstahl's Nazi propaganda films and their depiction of flourishing,

square-jawed Aryan youth.' (Child). Furthermore, other fascist romps such as *V* (1983) replicated Nazic chic production design where 'the aliens' weaponry was modelled after German Luger pistols, their uniforms were designed to channel those worn by the German Wehrmacht in the 1940s, and their flag is a variation of the Nazi swastika.' (Copp, 2015) And finally, special mention simply because it defies all belief also goes to the most reprehensible fast food establishment in existence, 'Hitler Fried Chicken' in Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand featuring the face of Hitler 'wearing a Colonel Sanders outfit instead of a Nazi uniform as its mascot.' (Merwin)

In contrast to, say, Shaffner's *The Boys from Brazil* (dir. Shaffner, 1978) that presented a dramatic ontology of science fiction Nazism as part of the 'what if' genre, the moronic buffoonery personified in the struggle between democracy and fascism, *Iron Sky* amplifies its absurdity from kitsch-esque pastiche in its contrasted buffoonery. echoing the sentiment from Hake who claimed 'Anti-Nazi films are, at their core, films about democracy and its others.' (Hake, p.35) Francoise work on Nazi occultism (2023) points to similarities intersected by *Iron Sky*'s observation of the obsessive Nazi interest in mediations of the supernatural embodied in occultist stereotypes portrayed in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Further, stereotypes of screen Nazis are using the same rehashing of defining features 'ending up equating Nazism with ideology as such: deviant, deficient, and dangerous. (Hake, p.40) I would argue that *Iron Sky* addresses these concerns of Hake and subverts them through absurdist cinema to both prove a point that Nazism is abhorrent while at the same time, respond to the demand for screen Nazi media consumption driven by a trope detached from history. As one of the only screen Nazi films to receive a trilogy with the sequel *Iron Sky: The Coming Race* (dir. Vuorensola, 2019) and it's yet to be released third instalment *The Ark: An Iron Sky Story* (dir. Vuorensola, nd), *Iron Sky* has a secret weapon of ridiculousness that leads us to what *Iron Sky* does best - space Nazis.

Space and Nazism hold a particular interest in fantastic cinema when it exploits the connections of former Nazi scientists and engineers who worked with NASA after World War Two to develop the American space program. Nazi 'research in the hard sciences has been a subject for serious academic study and for cinematic exploitation' (Ward, p.61) Literature, comics and manga proliferated this sense in development of the space Nazi trope. Heinlein's *Rocket Ship Galileo* first published in 1947 tells of three youths who fly to the moon on a rocket associated with the Manhattan Project to then discover a Nazi moon base. Mention of space missions backdrop Dick's *Man in the High Castle* that suggests the Nazis colonised Venus and Mars. *The Legend of Koizumi* manga series portrays Hitler and Koiumi playing a mahjong tournament on the moon shadowed by the Fourth Reich, who were already moon residents after a hastily retreat from Earth in 1945. So when screen Nazis go off-world to either the Moon or elsewhere, a sense of ridiculousness is difficult to *not* comprehend in these kinds of movies simply because the plausibility of such moves shifts from absurd to the utterly ridiculous. These qualities make space Nazi movies entertaining to watch as the villainous others because it distances itself from what their historical others did

back on Earth until 1945. Such campy space safaris enable their own self contained villains based on futile impossibility, whereas Earthbound screen Nazis have a lesser palatability because they simply are closer to historical Nazis and their murderous reality.

The sense of pastiche in space Nazis is distanced from historical Nazism because it envelops an equally preposterous conspiracy theories that the Nazis *actually* went to the moon, where this logic turns moves from making fun of screen Nazis to also making fun of people who believe in conspiracy theorists teetering facts made into science fiction. Like its distant counterpoint *Don't Look Up* (dir. McKay, 2021), *Iron Sky* is loaded with allegorical references that play into several key conspiracy theory mythologies, namely, that the Nazis escaped to the moon, Hitler survived, the Nazis held a secret military base in Antarctica, and the master race is returning. This brings *Iron Sky* into a unique pastiche where its structure builds on an oscillating epistemology between dark irony and allegorical commentary on the role of knowledge, or in the case of space Nazis, a lack thereof. The story establishes that a colony of escaped Nazis has been hiding out on the dark side of the moon, preparing for an invasion of their home planet that will establish the Fourth Reich as the new, new world order.' (Felperin) As it makes referential counterpoints by playing *The Great Dictator* as a narrative mechanism to set up a justification of the newly revealed Nazi history, *Iron Sky* relents to assemble parodies of contemporary news media, the United Nations, the United States government, alternative histories, and the aliens invading Earth tropes to neatly package these together into a chain-of-events film ending with nuclear war that's more so a commentary on intolerance, truth, and the ridiculing fascism.

If silliness was a mechanism used by *Iron Sky* to subvert ridicule, then it was also a tactic employed by Waititi in *Jojo Rabbit*. Film critic Richard Brody described the film as 'the movie that Bialystock and Bloom, in "The Producers", would have made when they got out of prison and went legit.' (Brody) I disagree. The strategy used throughout focuses on two critical components to the impressionable Jojo - first, Adolf Hitler and second, everyone else. At the moment when Jojo rejects his imaginary Führer and instead kicks him out of his bedroom window, the veil lifts on Jojo's recollection of Hitler and the propaganda of such is finally seen by Jojo for what it truly is. Yet portrayals of Hitler as 'silly' are perhaps the most difficult to accept on screen. Mel Brooke's portrayal of Hitler in *To Be or Not to Be* (dir. Brookes, 1984) held similarities to Wahiti's performance that was held together in the tragedy that both actors humanised Hitler on purpose to make the idea of his presence more dangerous. As Jojo's imaginary friend, Waititi's Hitler was kind, goofy, and dare I say, lovable, in the most awkward of ways to prompt a moral dilemma - how can you like a man who sanctioned unimaginable genocide? However, what if Waititi's Hitler was portrayed as a savage, would it be an easier fit of condemnation? If performances of Hitler, like Brooke's rendition, remain likeable, it then makes the sting in the tail far worse by the questioning of the self it creates. Or does it?

Nordic horror cult film *Dead Snow* creates a conundrum for an audience by creating the same moral dilemma in lampooning Nazis by introducing them as zombies - we may love a good zombie film but when they're Nazis, liking them becomes an ordeal. Wirkola's zombie apocalypse masterpiece takes on new levels of ridiculous by, like Vuorensola, creating a trilogy of zombie Nazis to which Dead Snow is the first in the vale of arctic horror posited firmly in the zombie horror film genre except the zombies are Nazi soldiers from World War Two who have arrived in a rural setting to eat the protagonists. 'The film is arguably similar to that of the drauger: an undead creature from Scandinavian folklore, known to greedily protect its (often stolen) treasures.'(Piatti-Farnell, p.82) The portrayal of Nazis is firmly planted in the conventional zombie aesthetics of rotting flesh, gnashing teeth, drooling blood, and in the sequel *Dead Snow 2: Red vs Dead* (dir. Wirkola, 2014), zombie Nazis driving a Tiger tank. The film's story materialises a group of undead Nazis 'who appeared in the present day-once teenagers uncovered their horde of Jewish gold.' (McDavid) Like its zombie counterpart of *Shaun of the Dead* (dir. Wright, 2004) the contention of zombies suddenly appearing to munch their way through human flesh brings a layering of the zombie trope to screen Nazi territory, changing the way an audience is invited to comprehend such villains. These creatures are not just historical others, they are also zombies which then brings expectations from an audience to overlay the quintessential expectations of a zombie film - villains unsuspectedly attack then the protagonists fight back. Such a formula also taps into a Nietzschean philosophy of will to power, and especially on the differentiation of macht and kraft and 'implications of the transgression from power to agency' (Wilson, p.7) which also connects with Nazism as 'Nietzsche was by far the most prominent and respected philosopher utilized by the Nazis as a source and justification for their ideology.' (Yablon, p.740) The ideological thread that runs through *Dead Snow* also galvanises its conviction as an embodiment into the ridiculous simply because the aspect of zombies has casualty implications of resurrection that break the laws of nature and the natural order. *Dead Snow* zombies are an impossibility from the laws we accept and know making their agency different than, say, watching a film about screen Nazis during World War Two. Such awareness invites an accessibility for zombie Nazis pushed into the phantasmagorical where the further a screen Nazi is taken away from the plausible and the historical, the more entertaining they then become actioned by the situational ridiculousness of their screen origin.

The same can be said of Red Skull in *Captain America: The First Avenger*. First appearing in the first *Captain America* comic published by Timely Comics (later known as Marvel Comics) in March 1941, The Red Skull, otherwise known as the fictional character Johann Shmidt, is an early example of a wartime Nazi comic villain who survived decades through iterations in print into the cinematic. Red Skull is perhaps the most stylised of all screen Nazis while at the same time, differentiates himself to a secondary character that's evolved from being a Nazi into his own self-contained villainy. The stereotypical screen Nazi characteristics of humourless, disfigured, and psychopathic tendencies compound Red Skull into being the sum of

all stereotypical attributes that a screen Nazi can amass. Yet the uniqueness of Red Skull in *Captain America: The First Avenger* plays out by way of his back story. In effect, Red Skull is the most complex of all screen Nazis because there are two characters in the one - Shmidt and Red Skull. While other incarnations in comic book canon introduce other versions within the character, screen Red Skull points to the original 1941 version. To articulate this character is to understand a dualism where both the former and the latter oscillate between two distinct parallels. From a structural point of view, Red Skull's polar identity, like Clark Kent and Superman or Bruce Wayne and Batman, differs from other on screen Nazis and creates a vulnerability due to his lack of any substantial super powers apart from being a psychopath. Red Skull's weakness comes from the fact he is physically limited but philosophically survives from out manoeuvring his opponents on an intellectual basis akin to enacting the principles of what Nazism conveyed. Red Skull is an evolved character that's taken on a literal basis, that is to say, he is not allegorical but rather, metafictional, where his former Nazi self, also a friend of Hitler, influences his evolved self where an audience comprehends the back story and the presented character in unison, and so forth.

In doing so, the characterisation of Nazis brings about dialogue into fantastic cinema. As this article has demonstrated, the legacy and iteration from wartime to post-war cinema has addressed fascist villains none the more popularised other than Nazis. They have been a repeated fixture of cinema since the 1930s and through various subgenres of Nazi tropes created by and proliferated through popular culture. If ethical debates are far removed, a screen Nazi makes the perfect screen villain based on their aesthetic, conceptual, and mechanical stereotypes. But forgetting what historical Nazis did also makes screen Nazis a point of contention. To conclude an investigation of this kind, its summary will be intentionally open ended and for good reason. Returning to the ethicality of screen Nazis, the problem of permissibility still remains. The dilemma, whether obvious or hidden, divides into three groups. The first is to consider Nazis as entertaining villains whilst ignoring the actions by which historical Nazism caused; the second is to raise concern about Nazism through irony and allegory on screen by showing their evilness in the hope it will never happen again; and the third is to eradicate the presence of screen Nazis altogether by acknowledging the historical crimes they committed on people during their reign and the risk of it happening again.

Screen Nazis in fantastic cinema are not Nazis. Rather, they are stereotypical fictitious villains who serve a purpose to the storytelling process irrespective of context or politicalisation. They are copies of the originals, a manufactured simulacre of sorts who neither existed in reality life nor ever could; they are the filmic 'other' of historicity who serve one purpose - to entertain. Yet in doing so, an audience in this regard must consider a fundamental dilemma by asking a range of questions to themselves - how can we separate these villains from their historical others; do we ignore the death of six million Jews and millions more by the consequential

extermination of people by Nazi doctrine; do we watch these screen villains with a sense of enjoyment and put aside said atrocities their others committed for the sake of entertainment long after the fact; and should the film industry keep Nazism alive by making anti-Nazi movies because film makers want to prove a point that 'Nazis are bad' even though this claim has long been accepted as universal truth? These questions are not definitive nor are they prescriptive. They are, moreover, a reminder for audiences to take accountability for their media consumption in making their own choice about what they watch and by what moral compass, if any, do they follow or ignore outright. It raises questions about our own time when attention to inclusion, political correctness, and the rights of the individual are paramount to the democratisation of all, but to what extent does this enable validity if we selectively ignore the past? We live in times of metamodernism, which exists as an oscillation of contrasts and contradictions between, say, irony and post irony, affect and non affectual states, and, moreover, listening and ignoring. How far into the past do we travel before it doesn't matter what happened back there; because it's now defunct or that there are no living people left from that time to speak on behalf of those who were lost? This dilemma, not unlike those employed by Brookes, Chaplin, and Waititi asks through their films, do we laugh at a screen Nazi or do we protest and condemn? These clever intentional strategies are all designed to gain a response by which creates tension and, if receptive, prompts self evaluation.

The Jewish Holocaust was only one of many crimes that the Nazis committed but it was by far the largest in scale and monstrous evil. Its action presented Nazis as an unimaginable danger that through documentation and knowledge became a reality. Each Nazi crime was equal in horror to the next no matter who fell victim or why; whether it was the murderous rape of Belgium, the extermination of Jews in Auschwitz, or the mass killings of those with disabilities in hospitals in Berlin to name a few. The entirety of Nazi intolerance was as brutal as it was unspeakable. Yet its tragedy to a modern screen audience is that it may not even matter or even be acknowledged. This paper concludes that these dilemmas are for an audience to decide for themselves. It is up to film makers if they wish to continue placing screen Nazis in their films or not. It is up to financiers if they wish to keep funding these films as per the distributors who do the same. The intention of screen Nazis is to personify a character derived near or far from their historical others in a point of separation through fantastic screen culture. The role for an audience is to decide if these characters have a purpose enough to keep watching yet at what cost this surmounts too is on those who engage their continuum.

In the writing of this paper, I have used this question to comprehend the purpose of screen Nazis in fantastic cinema, but in doing so, it's also prompted me to consider my own somewhat lesser scaled personal intolerances and pseudo-totalitarian views in life. Like fascism prescribes, I too am guilty of considering groups of people in our community as lesser than others but for reasons of personal trauma that over time has made me think this way. For example, I had grown prejudiced towards people with

recreational drug habits or a liking for sexual promiscuity as 'the baddies' in as much as I have felt superior to those who have these drug and sex addictions where I, of course, do not. And recognising this slippage of personal bias against vulnerable people is exactly what made me reconsider my own thoughts and views; to consider these attitudes just as cruel and abhorrent as the attitudes of fascism, and the Nazis, whether historical or from a fictitious other. I recognise by watching such villains that the trifecta of moral superiority, intolerance, and prejudice are enough for me to reconsider a more empathetic world view and start again, instead, to find love. Screen Nazis are not just characters to watch on screen. They act as a mirror to view one's self; to see who you really are, to reflect their transmission, and by design, decide what not to become.

When not watching screen Nazis from outer space, Shaun Wilson is an occasional film director, artist and senior lecturer in digital media in the School of Design at RMIT University, Melbourne.

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