



# Frames of Evil: The Holocaust as Horror in American Film

*Caroline J S Picart, Professor David A Frank Ph.D. M.A. B.A.*

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## Challenging the classic horror frame in American film

American filmmakers appropriate the “look” of horror in Holocaust films and often use Nazis and Holocaust imagery to explain evil in the world, say authors Caroline Joan (Kay) S. Picart and David A. Frank. In *Frames of Evil: The Holocaust as Horror in American Film*, Picart and Frank challenge this classic horror frame—the narrative and visual borders used to demarcate monsters and the monstrous. After examining the way in which directors and producers of the most influential American Holocaust movies default to this Gothic frame, they propose that multiple frames are needed to account for evil and genocide.

Using *Schindler’s List*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, and *Apt Pupil* as case studies, the authors provide substantive and critical analyses of these films that transcend the classic horror interpretation. For example, *Schindler’s List*, say Picart and Frank, has the appearance of a historical docudrama but actually employs the visual rhetoric and narrative devices of the Hollywood horror film. The authors argue that evil has a face: Nazism, which is configured as quintessentially innate, and supernaturally crafty.

*Frames of Evil*, which is augmented by thirty-six film and publicity stills, also explores the commercial exploitation of suffering in film and offers constructive ways of critically evaluating this exploitation. The authors suggest that audiences will recognize their participation in much larger narrative formulas that place a premium on monstrosity and elide the role of modernity in depriving millions of their lives and dignity, often framing the suffering of others in a manner that allows for merely “documentary” enjoyment.

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