

"Black Book": Dutch Prototype or Jewish Outsider

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Abstract : This paper shall demonstrate how films can offer a valuable and innovative approach to the study of images, stereotypes, and national identity. "Black Book" ("Zwartboek", 2006), a World War Two film directed by Paul Verhoeven, tells the story of Rachel Stein, a young Jewish woman who becomes a member of a resistance group in the Netherlands. The main hypothesis in this paper maintains that Rachel's character possesses both features of the Dutch prototype (a white, secular, sexual, freedom-loving individualist who seems "Dutch" enough to be accepted into a Dutch resistance group and even infiltrate the local Nazi headquarters) and features which can be defined as specifically Jewish (a black-haired victim persecuted by the Nazis, transforming herself into a gentile, while remaining loyal to her fellow Jews and ultimately immigrating to Israel and becoming a Hebrew teacher in a Kibbutz). Finally, this paper claims that Rachel's "Dutchness" is symptomatic of Dutch nostalgia in the 21st century for the Jews as "others" who blend into dominant Dutch culture, while Rachel's "Jewish Otherness" reflects a transnational identity - one that is always shifting and traverses cultural and national boundaries. In this sense, a film about Dutch Jews in the Second World War reflects on issues of identity in the 21st Century.

Keywords : Dutch, film, stereotypes, identity

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