


## Irony in Jonathan Glazer's *The Zone of Interest* (2023) : a Cinematographic Analysis of Long Shot

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i5.1347>

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### A B S T R A C T

This research examines how irony is conveyed through long shot cinematography in Jonathan Glazer's *The Zone of Interest* (2023). Using Joseph M. Boggs and Dennis W. Petrie's six types of irony such as dramatic, situational, character, setting, tone, and cosmic as the main framework, the research analyzes how these forms manifest visually through cinematic language. Set in the domestic sphere of Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss, the film employs visual distance and static framing to juxtapose everyday normalcy with atrocities occurring beyond the frame. Adopting a qualitative descriptive method, and drawing on theories from Mario Klarer and Gustavo Mercado, the analysis reveals that long shots function not only to emphasize physical and emotional detachment but also to heighten ironic contrast between visual calm and unseen violence. This creates a compelling visual irony that confronts viewers with the moral indifference and normalized evil within the setting. The research contributes to broader discussions on how irony in films can represent historical trauma through indirect yet deeply affective cinematic strategies.

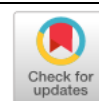
**Keywords:** *Cinematography, Irony, Long Shots*

#### Article History:

Received 08<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Accepted 30<sup>th</sup> August 2025

Published 07<sup>th</sup> September 2025



## INTRODUCTION

Film has long been recognized as a powerful medium for exploring complex human emotions, and historical events. Besides, film offering an escape from reality and providing audiences with amusements, and emotional experiences (Lu, 2023). In order to represent that, there are two important elements in a film, namely cinematic and narrative elements, both elements are included in the intrinsic elements in literature. Filmmakers often use these elements and techniques to convey meaning and achieve emotional responses from audiences (Kashaka, 2025). Narrative elements contain themes, characters, settings and plots, and cinematic elements contain the elements of cinematography, mise en scene, editing and sound design. In addition to making the film more attractive, both elements are also able to evoke the image of the audience when watching the film. Cinematography is important in displaying aesthetic value in the film, through the play of the camera such as camera movement and camera placement, cinematography imply certain messages, even describing certain situations of what happened in the film, social phenomena and historical events are often the concern of filmmakers to include these elements into it, one of the social phenomena that occurred was the tragedy of Holocaust, one of the tragedy in the history.

Some filmmakers are interested in raising the theme, some of which are the films *Schindler's List* (1993), *The Pianist* (2002), *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* (2007), and *The Zone of Interest* (2023). Among all the categories of films above raised the issue of the Holocaust tragedy that occurred in Auschwitz, Poland. one of the movies that has a difference is *The Zone of Interest*, a film made by the A24 studio directed by Jonathan Glazer. Jonathan Glazer's

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The Zone of Interest (2023) presents an exemplary case research for analyzing the use of irony in cinematography. The film, inspired by Martin Amis' novel of the same name, examines the domestic life of Rudolf Höss, the commandant of Auschwitz, and his family, who lived in a house right next to the concentration camp or Ghetto. Told from the perspective of Höss' wife, Hedwig, the film depicts the stark contrast between the comfortable daily life of the Nazi family and the brutality of the camp. Their seemingly normal life with a tidy garden and children playing takes place next to the horror and suffering of the prisoners occurring just beyond its walls, illustrating how atrocities can be normalized in everyday life. However, what is different in this film are the elements of cinematography and sound design that reflect a different atmosphere.

The Zone of Interest provides the different kind of cinematography and sound design other than any holocaust films. Bordwell et. al in the book Film Art: An Introduction stated that "Cinematography (literally, "writing in movement") depends largely on photography ("writing in light")." "controlling mise-en-scene, the filmmaker stages an event to be filmed. But what happens in front of the camera isn't the whole story. That event has to be captured, on a strip of film or in a digital format. The recording process opens up a new area of choice and control: cinematography." Bordwell et al., (2010) also explain sound, and their dimension in film, "Sound, like every other technique, offers a plenitude of possibilities, but the filmmaker judges which ones to pursue, based on how they suit the film's overall form and how they shape the viewer's experience."

In cinematography, camera placements (shots) is important as it is the main component of the film, to be said, it is the grammar of the film. The film will give a deep meaning to the audience through a well deserved camera placement. Eikhbaum in Tecucianu (2014), said that shot itself is like the phrase or sentence in language. The shots can create meaning to the audiences. Klarer (2023), divide shots into three types, as he stated that "Terms like close-up, medium and long shot refer to the distance of the camera from the object or to the choice of a particular section of that object or person to be represented." These are the standard camera shots technique used in film cinematography.

The components are seen to be crucial in conveying the idea through camera production. Later on, the approach will be used in a variety of combinations with other camera techniques to create film messages. Mercado (2013) in his book Film Makers' Eye, categorized more about camera placements (shots), namely:

*Extreme Close-Up : The extreme close-up concentrates the audience's attention on a tiny portion of a character or on small objects, making it ideal for isolating minute, single visual details from the rest of a scene. Using an extreme close-up instantly generates the expectation that what is being shown is important to the narrative. Extreme close-ups enable spectators to focus their attention on a character's or an object's minute details. The extreme close-up can successfully separate even tiny, single visual details from the rest of the picture, while the close-up allows the viewer to observe subtleties of a performance that would typically be lost in wider shots. Although these photos are occasionally taken with specialised lenses and are referred to as macro shots when the detail is very microscopic, they nevertheless serve as extreme close-ups for narrative purposes. When a minor object or a character element is framed with an extreme close-up, it immediately creates the impression that the subject matter is significant and relevant.*

*Close-Up Shot : The close-up is relative new to the cinematic vocabulary, Early silent films replicating the experience of viewing a staged play by using wide shots and no editing. The close-up eventually became a crucial component of the cinematic lexicon as the language of film evolved and editing was developed. The introduction of the close-up as a narrative tool would have a tremendous impact not only in the way audiences connected with the character, but also in the development of a more naturalistic style of acting that departed from the exaggeration commonly seen in the theatre. The most*

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*important feature of a close up is that it lets the audience see nuances of a character's behavior and emotion (especially those that play across the face) that cannot be seen in wider shots. That's why the close-up is one of the most powerful shots in cinematic storytelling.*

*Medium Shot : Medium shots typically show one or more characters from the waist up, while still including some of the surrounding area. A medium shot is tighter than a medium long shot, but wider than a medium close up, When they include more than one subject, they can also help visualize relationship dynamics through character placement and blocking, for instance, by placing them far apart to imply there is a conflict between them, or by putting them closer together to suggest they are compatible or in agreement.*

*Long Shot : The long view captures the complete character as well as a significant amount of the surrounding landscape. Although a long shot may have a prominent subject, the perspective is too far away to reveal facial emotion. The primary focus of this photo is the body and its contents. Long shots, like extreme long shots, are frequently employed as establishing shots at the start of scenes to inform viewers of the location of the action that will follow.*

*Extreme Long Shots : depict a wide-angle shot of a scene with one or more distant characters taking up a very small portion of the frame. Since characters are too far away for their body language or facial expressions to fully convey their mood, the primary focus of these shots is the scene where the action is taking place.*

This research has their chance to stand among others based on previous research titled There are several studies that have relevance to the topics and objects of the research to be studied, and several research books that examine similar topics and objects. Stefanie Rauch (2018) in "Understanding the Holocaust through Film : Audience Reception between Preconceptions and Media Effects" analyzes several Holocaust films to see how cinematography and narrative techniques are used to depict traumatic events. The research covers English-language films produced in the UK and the US. It analyzes the cinematographic techniques used in films such as Schindler's List and The Pianist to depict the horrors of the Holocaust. It also explores how narrative and storytelling structures are used to convey Holocaust. Discussions on how the cinematography and narrative of these films affect the audience and help to understand the trauma of the Holocaust.

Naufal Nurrahmat (2019) in his thesis "Cinematic Language in Batman: The Dark Knight Movie (2008), involves several of assumptions about the film's meaning and cinematic style. The researcher of this undergraduate thesis employed theories offered presented by Mercado (2011) and Boggs and Petrie (2008). Boggs and Petrie's idea of irony served as the basis for the analysis's initial examples. Dramatic irony, situational irony, character irony, setting irony, irony of tone, and cosmic irony were the six categories of irony. The researcher then used cinematic language techniques, such as camera movement and positioning, to analyse the data. Camera placement was split into five sorts; namely extreme close-up, close-up, medium shot, long shot and extreme long shot. Additionally, there were several sorts of camera movement techniques for data analysis, including bird's eye angle, high angle, and eye level angle.

In defining movie cinematography, figurative language or figure of speech has it's role to define meaning inside the film. Figurative language is known as the use of words or sentences that have a meaning distinct from the literal interpretation. We hardly ever employ figurative language in our everyday conversations. Figurative language is frequently used in literary works, including newspaper articles, ads, novels, poetry, and more. Figurative language often go beyond their typical meaning. Determining the researcher's meaning demands creativity. A researcher is merely presenting the facts as they are when they employ literal language.

According to Abrams & Harpham (2009), figurative language is a conspicuous departure from what users of a language perceive as the standard meaning of a word, or else the standard order of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect. As stated above, figurative language is the language that the user creates in the language to make it striking and give the implied meaning. In Abrams & Harpham (2009) and Reaske (1966), there are found seven kinds of figurative language, namely; Metaphor, Simile, Synecdoche, Personification, Allegory, Paradox, Irony.

Irony is the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case, not however, in order to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effect. Irony result from the contrast between the actual meaning of a word or statement and the suggestion of another meaning. The intended implications are often actually a mockery of what literally being stated. (Reaske, 1966)

Irony analysis in film also brought up to this research, this theory examining how the element structure of film such as cinematic and narrative supports the idea of irony itself. Literary critic I.A. Richards, in James Macdowell's *Irony in Films*, states that, "irony in poetry as 'the bringing in of the opposite' - the poetic balancing of themes, attitudes, or impulses that seem contradictory but are actually complementary." (MacDowell, 2016). In a film, irony represents itself in the forms of dialogue, scene through cinematic language, and the expression of the character based on the narration that the director trying to build.

The irony posted on the works in several conditions. Based on the theory, the irony can separate its' position between the work and the audience, when the knowledge of characters and audience being two different spectrum: the audience knows something that the characters do not. As reported by Barbe (1995), there are usually three participants in irony: the speaker (ironist), the hearer (often the victim of the irony), and an audience (evaluator). The three aspects can be a perfect combination to make a construction of irony as a message in a film. The work of transferring meaningful message based on the ideology and theory will be putted in the scene through cinematic language. Boggs and Petrie in their book *The Art of Watching Film* stated that, "Irony, in the most general sense, is a literary, dramatic, and cinematic technique involving the juxtaposition or linking of opposites" (Boggs & Petrie, 2008). So irony can be defined as a situation where something is contrary or opposite to what should happen. Irony in film will have a position as the result of its technique.

There are various types of irony that can be found in films, in the book *The Art of Watching Film*, Boggs and Petrie categorise Irony in films into six types, namely; Dramatic irony, irony of situation, irony of character, irony of setting, irony of tone, and cosmic irony. Each of the six irony in film according to Boggs and Petrie has its own focus with its determining elements, in this research, the researcher will examine such as irony of tone made by the cinematic elements and sound design. In filmmaking, irony becomes a significant topic of discussion. The process of making a movie will take into account adding irony to it. Irony can also be used to make a movie more engaging to watch and easier to understand. According to Boggs and Petrie's (2008) book *The Art of Watching Film*, Irony as a production of the message in film can be categorised as follows:

Dramatic irony is one of the ways that cinematic language can tell a tale in a distinctive way. When a movie has dramatic scenes, the characters will provide the audience with knowledge that will affect the story in a new way. It is explained that dramatic irony create two separate meaning:

"The filmmaker provides the audience with information that a character lacks. When the character speaks or acts in ignorance of the true state of affairs, the dramatic irony functions to create two separate meanings for each line of dialogue: ( 1 ) the meaning of the line as it is understood by the unenlightened character (a literal or face-value meaning), and (2) the meaning of the line to the enlightened audience (an ironic meaning, opposite to the literal meaning). (Boggs & Petrie, 2008)

Every conversation line conveys a message that the filmmaker wants to convey to both the audience and the character. based on situations where the characters do not understand

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the implications and meaning of what is being said or what is happening on stage, but the audience does. Dramatic irony will therefore produce an engaging or dramatic situation.

When discussing situational irony, the character will be placed in a circumstance that differs from what the character intended. Irony of situation or irony of plot are interchangeable terms. The plot will have situations that are more contradictory than the characters anticipated. Irony results from the conflict between the audience's perception and the character's knowledge. Boggs and Petrie (2008, p. 67) stated that irony of situation "It involves a sudden reversal or backfiring of events, so that the end result of a character's actions is exactly the opposite of his or her intentions."

Irony focusses on the opposing elements of its work that will provide a variety of effects for the character, setting, plot, and many other elements. Because of the act that will be presented, the character will have a significant influence on the narrative. (Boggs & Petrie, 2008) also said that, "irony of character occurs when the character embody strong opposites or contradictions or when their actions involve sharp reversals in expected patterns of behavior."

Irony of setting will expose audiences to the unusual or opposite through the film's circumstances, ambiance, conversation, and cinematic language. According to (Boggs & Petrie, 2008), "irony of setting occurs when an event takes place in a setting that is exactly the opposite of the setting we usually expect for such an event for example, a birth in a graveyard or a murder in an idyllic setting." The film's irony of tone serves a huge control that the narration uses to heighten the emotion. Such irony can be successfully conveyed in a film by use of opposing emotional attitudes that are conveyed concurrently by the visual picture and the music. A film's entire narrative will convey a clear message through its visual imagery and soundtrack. Irony of tone involves the juxtaposition of opposites in attitudes or feelings. (Boggs & Petrie, 2008)

Cosmic irony is a term that can produce serious effect on what the director trying to explain. Boggs and Petrie (2008) stated, because irony pictures every situation as possessing two equal sides, or truths, that cancel each other out or at least work against each other, the overall effect of ironic expression is to show the ridiculous complexity and uncertainty of human experience. Abrams & Harpham (2009) also explained that cosmic irony (or "the irony of fate") is attributed to literary works in which a deity, or else fate, is represented as though deliberately manipulating events so as to lead the protagonist to false hopes, only to frustrate and mock them.

This research is grounded in the central question of how cinematic techniques, particularly long shot cinematography, can construct and communicate diverse forms of irony, and how such visual strategies shape audience interpretations of historical events. Although irony has been widely examined in both literary and film scholarship, its articulation through specific cinematographic choices. This research seeks to analyze the ways in which Jonathan Glazer's *The Zone of Interest* (2023) employs long shot cinematography to realize six categories of irony; dramatic, situational, character, setting, tone, and cosmic within the framework of cinematic language. The significance of this research lies in its theoretical and methodological contribution to film analysis, offering an integrative approach that bridges irony theory with cinematic language studies, which can be applied to other films and genres. The integration of irony and long shot techniques in this film provides a critical site for examining how cinematic language can negotiate the representation of historical atrocity while fostering reflective engagement with moral detachment and the normalization of systemic violence.

## METHOD

The idea of how a researcher analyses data is known as research design. The research objective or problem must be the main focus of the first part of the research. In this research, the researcher aims to investigate how movie narration is interpreted with irony as a central theme. All qualitative techniques are informed by the descriptive qualitative method used by the researcher.

This research will consider using qualitative method with purpose of sampling, collection of open-ended data, analysis of text or pictures, representation of information in figures and tables, and personal interpretation of the findings. (Creswell & Creswell, 2017)

Data of this research is The Zone of Interest movie released by A24 Films LLC. It was released in 2023 with numbers of achievement gained for some of the elements of the movie. This movie was adopted from a novel by Martin Amis.

There are four different ways that researcher can use to gather the data: observation, questioner, interviews and documentation study. In this research, the researcher will use documentation study. Meleong in Hikmat (2011) said that document as the data resource can be useful to analyze, interpret, or give prediction. In this instance, cinematic language will be utilised to analyse and provide an interpretation of the message using the approach. The process for gaining information from documents is known as documentation study. It can be used to interpret the data.

Scenes were selected through purposive sampling based on three criteria: 1) the use of long shot framing sustained for a significant duration. 2) the potential to illustrate one or more of Boggs and Petrie's six types of irony (dramatic, situational, character, setting, tone, and cosmic). (3) narrative relevance to the thematic juxtaposition between domestic normalcy and historical atrocity. Only scenes meeting at least two of these criteria were included for analysis.

After the researcher gains the collective data, then the data will be analyzed based on the technique of analyzing data. Meleong in Jauhari (2009) give several steps to analyze the data. The data analysis followed in four steps. 1) the researcher repeatedly viewing of the entire film to gain a comprehensive understanding of its narrative and visual style. 2) segmentation and transcription of selected scenes, noting camera distance, framing, and composition. 3) application of Boggs and Petrie's irony typology to identify the ironic elements present, integrated with cinematic language concepts from Klarer and Mercado to examine how visual techniques support these ironies. 4) interpretative synthesis linking visual form to thematic meaning. Making conclusion as the final step of the research to conclude all of the problems into solution.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Dramatic Irony



Figure 1. Höss's children playing in the yard (00:39:44)

The data in this section is in minute 00:39:44, In the scene, dramatic irony appears in a long shot where children play joyfully in the yard, riding toy cars, while their mother watches from behind the glass wall of the house. In the background, the entrance gate and guard tower of Auschwitz are clearly visible. The innocence and happiness of the children take place just a few meters from the site of the mass murders.

This scene captures a dramatic irony as Petrie and Boggs (2008) stated that, dramatic irony occurs when the filmmaker provides the audience with information that a character lacks, in this scene, as the children remain unaware of the atrocities occurring behind the walls, and the audience equipped with historical knowledge understands the horror surrounding them. The camera long shot not only frames the entire environment in a single frame but also physically and emotionally distances the audience, reinforcing the ironic tension. The visual

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calmness presented in the children's play contrasts sharply with the audience's awareness of the concurrent atrocities.

### **Irony of Situation**



Figure 2. Hedwig Höss's mother visiting her house (00:37:44)

A significant instance of situational irony appears in the scene featuring the visit of Hedwig Höss's mother, who comes to the home for a family visit. Initially, the scenario reveals a sense of coziness. Hedwig proudly displays her refined home and peaceful garden, feeling thankful for the life her spouse has given her. The anticipation inherent in this situation for both the characters and the viewers centers on a joyous family gathering, focused on security, achievement, and unity among relatives. With the use of long shot, this scene contains each character and their surroundings.



Figure 3. Hedwig Höss's mother awake at night (00:56:51)

As her mother stayed longer at home, background noises such as screams and distant flashes of fire from the crematorium could be heard. One night, she woke up feeling distinctly uneasy and made a calm yet ethically charged decision to leave the house without informing her daughter, fleeing before dawn. This change signified a drastic shift from the expected family unity, transforming into a quiet form of ethical resistance.

According to Petrie and Boggs (2008), situational irony arises when the true outcome of events starkly contrasts with the anticipated result, frequently emphasizing the emotional or moral discord within the storyline. Here, the mother's quiet exit during the night juxtaposed with her cheerful greeting and the early atmosphere of familial love forms a touching situational irony. Instead of accepting the comfort and luxury of her daughter's home, she pulls away from it, understanding that it is rooted in widespread suffering and tragedy.



Figure 4. Höss's gardener is fertilising the plants (01:17:18)

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A scene in which a gardener spreads ash into the soil to fertilise the plants in the Höss family garden. A long shot shows the gardener as a small and insignificant figure in the midst of a lush landscape, performing his task with mechanical precision, without emotional expression or narrative emphasis. On the surface, the audience sees routine gardening activities, nurturing life, cultivating beauty, and fostering growth.



Figure 5. Human remains as fertilizer (01:17:11)

The ash being spread is not ordinary compost, it is the cremated remains of victims from the Auschwitz concentration camp, located just a few meters from this garden. This deeply unsettling fact, though not explicitly emphasised, is understood by the audience, creating a strong ironic contradiction between the action performed and the material used. According to Petrie and Boggs (2008), situational irony arises when the outcome or state of affairs sharply contradicts what is logically or morally expected. In this case, the act of fertilising plants, typically associated with life, growth, and renewal, is carried out using byproducts of mass death and destruction. This scene also can be considered as irony of setting, due to the placement of the human ashes that should be in another place and not a garden.

### **Irony of Character**



Figure 6. Polish girl smuggled fruit in workstation (01:05:50)

The scene where a young Polish girl secretly smuggles fruit, into a work area occupied by concentration camp prisoners. The act takes place at night or in low lighting, with shadows obscuring much of the setting and night vision filter. In the background, a train slowly passes on the tracks, its movement steady and indifferent, while faint smoke from the crematoria ascends, silhouetted against the dim sky.

According to Petrie and Boggs (2008), irony of character arises when a figure's behavior contradicts expected roles, moral alignments, or social positions. In this instance, the Polish girl appears young, fragile, and powerless, yet she becomes one of the few characters to demonstrate acts of compassion and moral courage. Her small act of generosity stands in ironic contrast to the behavior of the powerful figures in the film such as Hedwig or Rudolf Höss, who display outward stability, familial love, and civilized domesticity, while participating in systemic murder.

The use of long shot and dim lighting further emphasize this irony by visually minimizing her presence, almost reducing her to a shadow within the frame. This very obscurity grants her a form of moral clarity. The audience's awareness of the trains cultivates an understanding of victims facing death, with the smoke representing cremation, and the

harsh sterility of the camp makes her action not only compassionate but also a courageous act of subtle resistance



Figure 7. Wounded soldier sitting in public bench (01:17:51)

In a long shot composition set against the stark whiteness of snow, a visibly wounded soldier with a disfigured face sits alone on a bench in a public park, listening to a group of Nazi soldiers performing orchestral music. His bandaged head, deformed visage, and rigid posture stand in sharp contrast to the elegance and harmony of the music that fills the atmosphere. The use of long shot in this scene creates emotional distance, allowing viewers to witness the juxtaposition of physical suffering and cultural refinement without direct sentimentality, thus intensifying the scene's ironic impact.

According to Petrie and Boggs (2008), irony of character is present when a character's identity or role contradicts their situation or surroundings. In this instance, the wounded soldier, once a symbol of Nazi strength and discipline, now becomes a relic of the cost of war, both human and ideological. His presence is a silent testimony to the regime's exploitation and abandonment of its own men, even as the music, played by fellow soldiers, seems to celebrate order, beauty, and control.

The placement of this moment in a park, a space often associated with peace and leisure, further contrasts with the soldier's physical suffering and psychological isolation. The benches, mostly empty, visually reinforce his abandonment. The scene thus serves as a powerful commentary on the dissonance between ideological spectacle and lived reality, making it a poignant example of irony of character.



Figure 8. Höss's children playing around (01:23:29)

A scene in minute 01:23:29 where the younger children of Rudolf Höss engage in what appears to be innocent play inside a greenhouse filled with plants emerges irony of character in the scene. Carefully composed long shot, the scene captures the lush greenery and structured layout of the greenhouse while one child is seen locking their sibling inside and shouting "Leave me alone, you traitor." Behind the translucent glass, smoke from the crematoria rises into the sky, making its presence subtly but unmistakably felt within the frame.

According to Petrie and Boggs (2008), irony of character arises when a character's actions stand in contradiction to their expected role or presumed innocence. In this scene, the children, presumably untouched by the horror of the Holocaust, ironically reenact behavior that mimics the language and control tactics of the oppressive regime that surrounds them. The phrase "you traitor," delivered by a child, evokes the brutal political and racial categorization occurring just beyond their garden walls. The act of confinement locking

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someone in, mirrors the system of imprisonment their father oversees as Auschwitz commandant.

The setting of the greenhouse itself, vibrant and life-sustaining, contrasts sharply with the rising smoke in the background, a reminder of mass death and destruction. The child's behavior becomes a chilling echo of their parents' world, suggesting that violence and dehumanization have seeped into their play, normalized within the family sphere. This contradiction between their assumed innocence and the ideological violence they imitate reflects irony of character.

The long shot emphasizes the spatial separation between viewer and subject, allowing for reflective observation rather than emotional immersion. It offers a distanced but comprehensive view of how institutional violence shapes even the most mundane family dynamics. The visual calmness, symmetry, and natural beauty of the greenhouse sharply contrast the moral disorder it shelters, underscoring the irony embedded in these children's roles as both victims of indoctrination and participants in a culture of cruelty.

### **Irony of Setting**



Figure 9. Höss's gardener walking along the garden (00:11:13)

This scene exemplifies irony of setting as defined by Petrie and Boggs (2008), where in the physical environment contradicts the emotional or moral reality of the narrative. In *The Zone of Interest*, the visual field is dominated by the beautifully arranged and thriving garden of the Höss household. Colorful flowers, symmetrical paths, and lush greenery convey a sense of domestic peace and cultivated beauty. Within this composition, the gardener is seen tending to the plants, but in the background, unmistakably visible through the long shot composition, stands the grey concrete wall of Auschwitz concentration camp, crowned with barbed wire. The spatial alignment in the frame vibrant life in the foreground, a system of mechanized death in the background is not coincidental. The shouting, the gunshot, and the screaming of the victims suddenly appear clearly in the background. The garden, a traditional symbol of growth and innocence, is here repurposed to mask or coexist with genocide, revealing the chilling coexistence of aesthetic beauty and ethical horror.

The long shot used in this scene plays a crucial role in establishing this irony. By maintaining a physical and emotional distance, it prevents the audience from immersing themselves in the supposed tranquility of the garden. Instead, viewers are positioned as observers who are forced to process the entire spatial contradiction of how a place designed for life with blooming flowers and sunlight can exist meters away from industrial death. This compositional strategy refuses sentimentality and denies the audience the comfort of focusing only on the beauty. The broader visual perspective consistently includes the walls of Auschwitz, serving as a reminder to the viewer that no amount of landscaping or domestic care can hide the reality of what is occurs beyond.



Figure 10. Rudolf Höss fishing in the river (00:32:57)

Another example of irony of setting appears in the scene where Rudolf Höss and his children play and enjoys leisure time in a river. The wide long shot emphasizes the idyllic beauty of nature, a space that traditionally symbolizes purity, life, and innocence. Nonetheless, this image is tainted by a horrifying undercurrent, the river itself has been contaminated by the human remains from the crematoria of Auschwitz, where countless human lives are systematically extinguished.

This visual contrast between environmental purity and moral corruption illustrates irony of setting. The setting of the river, once a symbol of cleanliness and renewal, has now become a carrier of the residue of genocide. The irony lies in the fact that the perpetrators of the Holocaust are seen enjoying the spoils of nature while simultaneously defiling it with the physical remnants of their crimes. The clear water, which might otherwise represent spiritual cleansing, becomes a silent witness to the atrocities committed just upstream. This spatial dissonance between the beauty of the scene and the horror of its unseen source is captured effectively through the distant, observational nature of the long shot. The camera deliberately avoids sensationalism, instead allowing the stillness of the image to deliver the complete significant of its symbolic contradiction.

In this scene, nature becomes complicit not through intention, but through the contamination imposed upon it illustrating how evil seeps into even the most innocent corners of existence. The irony of this setting forces the viewer to reflect on how genocidal violence distorts not only human morality but also the sanctity of the nature.



Figure 11. Höss's families gathering in the yard (00:45:26)

This is the scene where the Höss family is gathered joyfully in their garden, surrounded by blooming plants, lush grass, and cheerful children (minutes 00:45:26). The long shot captures a joyful family, the children are laughing, adults are engaged in pleasant conversation, and the atmosphere is filled with warmth and sunlight. This visualizes safety, caring, and familial love. But Ironically, in the background stands the towering, grey wall of the Auschwitz concentration camp, a brutal reminder of the atrocities occurring taking place just beyond the family's sight.

The contradiction between foreground and background constructs an ironic dissonance. The garden, a symbol of life and cultivation, exists directly beside a site of death and destruction. The serenity of the family setting is not merely juxtaposed with violence it is enabled by it. The aesthetic of natural beauty is sustained through the labor and suffering of

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those imprisoned nearby. The children's innocence and the parents' contentment are presented as normal, while the viewer remains acutely aware of the mass extermination taking place behind the walls. The use of long shot highlights the closeness between comfort and atrocity while withholding direct visual interaction with the camp itself. It urges the audience to observe the boundary between appearance and truth, highlighting how the setting conceals its complicity in horror.

### **Irony of tone**



Figure 12. Rudolf Höss leaning in the terrace (00:45:55)

In this scene (minute 00:45:55), Rudolf Höss is shown dressed in an immaculate white suit, leaning casually on a balcony railing, preparing to join his family and guests for what appears to be a pleasant afternoon gathering. The entire mise-en-scène is composed with bright lighting, soft shadows, and a clean color scheme, contributing to a visual tone of serenity, civility, and composure. However, just beyond the garden's edge, in sharp contrast to the tranquil domesticity, smoke rises from the crematoria of Auschwitz the site of mass extermination being carried out under Höss's direct supervision.

This moment powerfully illustrates what Boggs and Petrie define as irony of tone, where "the filmmaker creates a tone that seems inappropriate to the subject matter, thereby forcing us to consider the moral implications of what is shown". The elegance of Höss's white attire traditionally connotes purity and virtue, yet it is disturbingly misaligned with the atrocities surrounding him. The dissonance between visual tranquility and moral outrage forces the viewer into a state of moral and ethical discomfort.



Figure 13. Höss's families gathering in the yard (00:46:58)

This scene is in minute 00:46:58, were shown Rudolf Höss's family peacefully gathered in their backyard. The atmosphere feels warm and harmonious. Children play in a small pool, women engage in light conversation, and Höss himself wears white attire, suggesting a sense of purity, familial comfort. The use of natural lighting, creates a warmer tone to this scene.

This emotional tone sharply contrasts with the reality that exist just beyond the garden wall. The Auschwitz concentration camp. The smoke ascending subtly in the background, acts as a haunting reminder of the mass murder taking place meters away. The wall, while physically dividing the Höss house from the camp, also metaphorically separates moral responsibility from individual comfort.

This contrast between tone and content illustrate what Petrie and Boggs (2008) define as irony of tone, where the filmmaker's emotional attitude regarding the subject is in stark contrast to what is being depicted or suggested. This scene use long shot to show the characters

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and objects around them, including the guard tower and the Auschwitz camp, where is only few meters behind.

### Cosmic Irony



Figure 14. Rudolf Höss descending the stairs (01:33:06)

This scene depicts Rudolf Höss in a liminal space, a sterile, geometrically strict staircase and hallway, representing the inner psychological torment he experiences as the architect of mass murder. Höss pauses mid-step, bent over in discomfort, suggesting physical sickness. This moment of physical vulnerability subtly reveals the rupture between his conscience and the systemic violence he upholds. Although Höss serves with unwavering loyalty to the Nazi regime, this gesture suggests his body briefly betrays him. His psychological repression briefly breaks through, signaling a metaphysical conflict between duty and morality. This dissonance is central to cosmic irony, where fate or the universe seems cruelly to manipulate events contrary to human expectations or desires (Petrie & Boggs, 2008).



Figure 15. Future Holocaust museum hall (01:37:11)

The use of the long shot and deep focus highlights Höss's solitude within vast, symmetrical architectural spaces. The subsequent scene abruptly transitions into a contemporary museum corridor in current-day Auschwitz, where cleaning staff tidy up beneath rows of portraits of former victims. This temporal break implies an ironic judgment by history. Höss, frozen in his time, is confronted by a future that memorializes what he tried to erase. The continuity between the cold symmetry of his present and the modern institutional space of remembrance offers a visual bridge between guilt and historical reckoning.



Figure 16. Rudolf Höss gazed at empty space (01:37:20)

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The following scene returns to Höss standing still at the edge of a dark hallway, gazing into the void. He hesitates, then slowly descends into the dimly staircase. The geometric patterns of the tiles, converging in visual symmetry, become symbolic of the unavoidable moral maze he inhabits. Cosmic irony reminds us of the fragility of human control over larger forces (Boggs & Petrie, 2008). Höss might believe he holds authority over life and death, but his body and the narrative universe betray him, revealing his impotence in the face of the moral weight of his actions.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research examined the representation of irony in *The Zone of Interest* (2023) through the lens of cinematography, particularly the use of long shots, by drawing on the six categories of irony proposed by Boggs and Petrie – dramatic irony, situational irony, irony of character, irony of setting, irony of tone, and cosmic irony – and revealed how Jonathan Glazer employs visual composition, camera distance, and mise-en-scène to construct layers of meaning that transcend the literal narrative. The long shot functions as a crucial cinematic device that allows the audience to observe spatial relationships, background details, and character positioning, thereby subtly communicating irony without overt exposition: dramatic irony is reinforced through the juxtaposition of characters' actions with the audience's prior historical knowledge; situational irony emerges from the visual contradiction between idyllic domestic life and nearby atrocities; irony of character is conveyed through behavioral contrasts that reveal hypocrisy and moral blindness; irony of setting is intensified by serene landscapes concealing violence; irony of tone arises from the dissonance between aesthetic restraint and morally charged subject matter; and cosmic irony manifests in the cruel indifference of historical events to individual intentions. Beyond being a stylistic choice, the long shot operates as an ethical and narrative strategy that compels critical engagement with the film's themes, enriching its narrative depth and prompting reflection on the dissonance between perception and reality. While this study highlights the significance of visual language in communicating complex moral and historical commentary, its scope is limited by its focus on a single film and the absence of audience reception analysis, suggesting that future research could expand through comparative studies with other Holocaust or war-themed films or by examining the interplay of irony with other cinematic elements such as sound design or editing.

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