

THE HUMANIZATION OF 20TH CENTURY EUROPE'S PERPETRATORS

How Humanizing Our History's Perpetrators Can Better Our Future

by

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This thesis examines the need for the humanization of 20th-century Europe's perpetrators, the Nazis, through literature. The purpose of this project is to make clear why the standpoint that Nazis were once ordinary citizens is not detrimental but rather helpful in our understanding of the Holocaust. I focus on literary works *Der Vorleser (The Reader)*, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, and *The Dutch Wife*, as they support my argument that the humanization of perpetrators can be educational. Within these chapters, I discuss the psychological explanations of how and why a moral person dehumanizes him/herself in order to take part in mass genocide, the relationships between the Nazis and their complicit-by-extension loved ones, and how such ideologies affect future generations. Essentially, I propose that novels which humanize fictional Nazis are useful in our strife to create a future society in which extraordinary evil, such as seen during World War II, is a thing of the past.

The Humanization of 20th Century Europe's Perpetrators
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by

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband for being an endlessly faithful supporter of my ambitions.

This thesis is also dedicated to all of those who have survived the worst the world has to offer.

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INTRODUCTION

The Nazis are seen as Europe's great enemy, the cause of mass destruction, the monsters we must speak of in hushed tones. Yet, what would happen if we looked at these formidable antagonists as nothing more than human beings? Would it take away from all the ruin and misery they caused? Would it somehow make the victims less important? The answer is no. So, that leaves us with the question: why should we go beyond our perception of these men and women as Europe's monsters of the 20th century? Well, as James Waller argues in his book *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (2002), it is "equally appropriate to believe that there may be just as much to learn by ripping off the masks that disguise perpetrators of extraordinary evil as monsters" (17-18). Within this thesis, I utilize novels that have humanized these perpetrators to support my argument that looking beyond our one-dimensional, jaded perception will allow us the possibility of creating a better future in which there is less, or even no, extraordinary evil.

In his study of the novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, Michael Gray suggests, "if moral education discusses the Holocaust, which no doubt it could, it must ensure that it avoids generalisations or simplifications, which undermine the complexities of the past" (124). The black-and-white portrayal of Nazis does nothing to help us comprehend how such a great number of people were complicit in, and even active participants in, the annihilation of millions of people. If we are to ever have a realistic hope of creating a society in which mass genocide is not in existence, then we must objectively view those who have been responsible for such happenings in the past. The fact of the matter is, Germany was not a nation of madmen out for blood, but a nation of normal people who found it within themselves to do the unthinkable.

This thesis examines the ways in which ideology, corrupt bureaucracy, influential propaganda, post-war devastation, shame, fear and self-preservation all play a role in transforming once docile and ordinary human beings into mere cogs within a dictator's destructive machine. Additionally, I will examine the relationships between the Nazis and loved ones, as this illuminates how even those who did not have a hand in the murders allowed themselves to be complicit, even when they themselves did not agree with Nazism. I will also investigate how people can numb their emotions in order to carry out unthinkable acts, for it is through the deadening of emotions that a feeling human may transform into a dehumanized tool. Finally, and maybe most importantly, explore how Nazism has affected future generations, as we need to study this in order to see how such immoral ideologies can impact our future. In summation, argue that we need to accept that the humanization of these villains is neither a form of white-washing nor excusing, but rather a necessity in securing a safer and more humane future.

Chapter one discusses Bernhard Schlink's *Der Vorleser* (*The Reader*, 1995), a novel about a love affair between a young man and a former Nazi. This novel, as the critic Jeffrey Roth contends, "seeks to uncover and assess guilt rather than to hide or attenuate it" (163). Chapter one begins by delving into the way in which Schlink uses his character to illuminate how shame is one probable reason for someone metamorphosing from an ordinary person into an instigator of torture. I address the numbness and indifference that is necessary for the survival of both victims and perpetrators, as it helps the audience to comprehend the dehumanization that is needed to commit and survive such horrors. Furthermore, I analyze the love affair, which I propose is meant to be an illustration of humanity's duality, as well as a tool to assist the audience in understanding the intricacies of both loving and condemning a former perpetrator.

Lastly, I argue that the transformation of Hanna from a Nazi back into a recalcitrant member of society is essential in that it portrays the ever-evolving complexities of the human psyche. In her study of *The Reader*, Katherina Hall asserts that the novel's "humanisation of the perpetrator enables it to raise genuinely difficult questions about the Nazi past, the most disturbing of which is how an 'ordinary' individual, capable of loving and being loved, could participate in the Holocaust" ("The Author, The Novel, The Reader" 457). My overall argument within this chapter is much the same, as I assert that we need the humanization of characters such as Hanna so that we may understand how an entire nation of seemingly normal people are able to participate in mass genocide. Such education on the subject will allow future generations to terminate the extraordinary evil before it has a chance to get its grip on the masses.

Chapter two focuses on John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006), a fable of a young Nazi child living just beyond the bounds of history's most gruesome killing camp. Like Gray, I assert that this novel "does do an effective job in humanising the perpetrators and showing that despite the scale and barbarism of their crimes, they were, by and large, typical human beings conducting an untypical phenomenon" (126). To further explore and support this notion, I delve into the relationships between SS Nazi officials and their loved ones.

Additionally, I examine the ways in which the conditions following the first World War, propaganda, fear, and bureaucracy could change a beloved, typical member of society into a follower of an ideology as corrupt as Nazism. Then, I assert that the direct karma faced by the narrator's father is meant to further demonstrate the three-dimensionality of someone history has deemed a one-dimensional monster. From there, I analyze how the next generation is affected by the Nazi influence that pervades their reality. Finally, I argue that the innocence that Bruno's narration offers is beneficial in that it allows a jaded audience to take a new perspective. In

summation, this chapter, much like the others, is meant to convey the message that humanizing the perpetrators is necessary in our attempt to evolve.

Chapter three examines Ellen Keith's *The Dutch Wife* (2018), a historical fiction book told from the perspectives of Karl a Nazi official, Marijke a concentration camp prostitute, and Luciano an enemy of the corrupt Argentinian government during the time of the Dirty War. Within Karl's narrative, I suggest that Keith is humanizing this character to portray the duality of history's villains, as well as to illustrate how ideology, bureaucracy, and human nature all played a role in the transformation of the average citizen into a cog within Hitler's killing machine. As for Marijke's character, I propose that her narrative further demonstrates the duality of humanity, and also how one may become complicit by extension. Thirdly, I assert that Luciano's narrative highlights the ways in which evilness will continue should we refuse to study it objectively, and it also, illuminates the hope there is for the morality within humanity. Last of all, I delve into the ways in which each narrative demonstrates the allure of self-preservation and a numbing of emotions for survival, which can be used to explain not only how such atrocities can happen but also how people survive them. In conclusion, this final chapter, as in the first two chapters, considers the ways in which the humanization of our history's perpetrators can be beneficial.

CHAPTER ONE

Der Vorleser (The Reader):

The Humanization of a Former SS Guard Through the Eyes of a Lover

Bernhard Schlink's *Der Vorleser*, which translated into English means *The Reader*, has been the focus of much critique and analysis for scholars worldwide due to its humanization of a fictional Nazi official. This novel, set within post-war Germany, centers around a young man named Michael, who has a brief affair with an older woman, Hanna, whom he later discovers to be an illiterate former member of the Nazi SS. In the words of scholar Jane Alison, the book was praised because "Schlink had replaced the black-and-white Nazi monster with a *fatale monstrum*, the more shaded and humanized Hanna Schmitz" (163). Within this chapter, I will elaborate on why it is essential to our growth as a species to accept and indulge in novels such as this, which step away from the easy, black-and-white portrayal of a Nazi being purely evil, and instead delve into the realistic world in which Nazis are average, everyday people. By doing so, we are allowing ourselves not only to understand how such a great mass of people could permit something as unfathomable as the Holocaust to take place but also to have a better idea of what it would look like should it start to happen again.

Throughout the book, readers see Michael's interpretation of Hanna's characteristics alter from that of bewilderment to an assumed understanding. Many of Hanna's outward mannerisms are, at first, portrayed as that of a former Nazi. Even though the reader is ignorant of Hanna's past for the first half of the book, one who is familiar with the stereotypical depiction of a Nazi, can easily identify her characteristics as such. Within the second half of the book, once Michael has made his realization of Hanna's struggle with illiteracy, his interpretation of Hanna begins to change, as he now relates all of her peculiarities to her desperation to hide her handicap. In

Katherina Hall's research, she paraphrases the words of fellow academic William Collins Donahue, who like many other scholars, believes that in this instance "Hanna shifts from the position of perpetrator to victim and becomes the centre of reader sympathies as a result" ("Text Crimes in the Shadow of the Holocaust" 200). However, I assert that this is not meant to promote the feeling of empathy for the wrongdoer but to "raise genuinely difficult questions about the Nazi past, the most disturbing of which is how an 'ordinary' individual, capable of loving and being loved, could participate in the Holocaust" ("Text Crimes in the Shadow of the Holocaust" Hall 257).

To dive into this argument, we shall take a closer look at the ways in which Hanna is depicted as your typical, run-of-the-mill Nazi. As has been established over the decades, the conventional Nazi is seen as cold, calculated, orderly, and above all, assured of his/her superiority. Through Michael's eyes, we see Hanna as someone who is obsessed with hygiene, order, control, and has a distinct lacking in sentimentality. For instance, Michael says of Hanna, "She was scrupulously clean, she showered every morning" (Schlink 32). Hanna even engaged Michael in her routine of cleanliness, as he says, "I liked to soap her, and she taught me not to do it bashfully, but with assurance and possessive thoroughness" (Schlink 32). Jane Alison made note of scholars Stuart Parkes and J.J. Long, who both "regard Hanna's cleanliness as 'obsessive' and 'in keeping with the cliched view of the fascist personality'" (qtd. in Alison 167-168). Schlink was creating an image here. Within this same passage, we see her proclivity towards possessiveness and control, as Michael also says, "she took possession of me as a matter of course. . . . she told me where to touch her and how . . . I was only there because she took pleasure in and on me" (Schlink 33). Hanna made Michael all too aware of his place within her life.

Aside from these depictions of hygiene obsession and need for control, Michael's description of the relationship leaves the reader with the notion that Hanna is abusive and cold-hearted in nature more often than not. During their fights, Hanna often does whatever she must in order to assert dominance and keep the upper hand in all matters of the heart, making sure to never allow herself to be seen as vulnerable. Their first significant fight over the streetcar incident resulted in Hanna showing a fissure in her façade as the unfeeling superior when she said with just a little too much emotion, ““You think it looks like you upset me? *You* don't have the power to upset me”” (Schlink 48). Michael noted that from this point on ““Whenever she turned cold and hard, I begged her to be good to me again, to forgive me and love me”” (Schlink 49). In this way, she was able to stay in control and assume a nature of the unsentimental member within the relationship. However, during their second fight, the pattern shifted as things escalated to the physical realm. Hanna, filled with a fear that was unbeknownst to Michael, beat him with her belt and fists before collapsing and trembling against him (Schlink 55). Through all of this, readers are left with the impression of a former Nazi allowing her past ways to show through in her current relationship. As it was so eloquently put by Omer Bartov in his essay “Germany as Victim,” Hanna is “tall, blond, physically strong and disdainful of sentimentality,” which can be translated into she was an ideal German during the reign of Nazism (30).

As Michael moves into the next stage of his narration, he describes his first sighting of Hanna at the trial after years of separation, in which he says he “recognized the body, the head with the hair gathered in an unfamiliar knot, the neck, the broad back, and the strong arms. She held herself very straight. . . . She wore a gray dress with short sleeves” (Schlink 95). Automatically, we see a person, rigid in form and style, once again reminiscent of a member of the Nazi regime. Yet, as the story progresses, and Michael makes the connection between her

handicap and her mannerisms, both Michael and the reader begin to rethink former assumptions of Hanna's character. Suddenly, the audience is asking themselves, was she really so distant and calculated because she was a Nazi, or was she using those traits as her shield? Schlink needed the reader to first be blinded by the infamous image of an evil Nazi straight out of a World War II survivor's nightmare so that he could then use this armor of Hanna's to make the reader question the impenetrability of the Nazi façade.

As Michael makes the connection between Hanna's fear of others learning of her inability to read with her Nazi-esque mannerisms, the reader starts to see, through Hanna, how the common Nazi can be humanized into your average person rather than simply immortalized as an inhuman monster straight from a fairytale. For example, Hanna's obsession with his schoolwork took less of a militant tone and turned into Hanna's desperate need for Michael to not turn out like her. Suddenly, Hanna's eruption at Michael dismissing his schoolwork as unimportant, during which she said, "Idiotic—you don't know what idiotic is. . . . you can come. Provided you work first" became the admonition of an elder who knows what it is to miss out on something as essential as learning (Schlink 36). Not to mention that past fights and dismissals began to make sense as they each revolved around a note or letter of some sort which Hanna could not read. In that instant, even as Michael was learning of Hanna's disgraceful past deeds, she was becoming more understandable before his very eyes.

Michael's words continue to humanize Hanna throughout the book as he relates her misdeeds to her desperate need to cover up her condition. During the trial, Hanna is accused of using the "weak and delicate" girls to "read aloud to her" (Schlink 116). Michael swings back and forth between explaining her having chosen girls sentenced to die as her favorites "because she wanted to make their last month bearable" and accusing her of choosing those girls because

she could “silence them in case they had noticed something” (Schlink 117; 132). Michael finds himself landing on the idea that “Hanna had not decided in favor of crime... She did not calculate and she did not maneuver” (Schlink 133). Just as when Hanna allows herself to be the scapegoat in regard to the burning of the Jewish women within the church, he concludes that she does this as a way to preserve her image of a literate German. Michael came to see that “she was guilty, but not as guilty as it appeared” (Schlink 137). It seems that Hanna continues to use her Nazi persona to hide her true flaws and fears, as during the verdict reading, Michael says, “I don’t know if Hanna knew how she looked, or maybe she wanted to look like that. . . . as if she were in uniform” (Schlink 162). It is at this point in the novel that

The reader is strongly encouraged to accept illiteracy as an explanation for Hanna’s involvement in the Holocaust, less because this is the theory that Michael as narrator puts forward, but because to do so makes interpretive sense in relation to the rest of the novel. (“The Author, The Novel, The Reader” 463)

I argue, like Jeffrey Roth, that “Hanna is not a sympathetic character and was not intended to be one. . . . if love blinds Michael to her faults, it does not blind us, the readers” (171-172). We are able to take Hanna’s humanization in stride with an objective mindset because unlike Michael we are not hopelessly in love with the character.

While I believe the topic of illiteracy to be the supporting theme of the larger issue rather than Schlink’s attempt to give Hanna an excuse for her actions, there are those who have made substantial arguments against Schlink’s use of illiteracy. One critic, Frederick Raphael, interviewed historian Michael Burleigh, who stated that ““Every recruit [to the SS] had to fill in a form,”” which led Raphael to the conclusion that it would have been impossible for Hanna to be an illiterate SS guard (2009 para 20). Cynthia Ozick, also shocked by Schlink’s portrayal of

illiteracy, noted that “Germany before World War II was known to have the most educated population in Europe, with the highest standard of literacy” (26). Bill Niven, on the other hand, contests that “Schlink's concern is not with Hanna's illiteracy in itself, but with her fear of stigmatization. . . . That shame is the key to Hanna” (382-383). To further this argument, we can look at Bartov, who writes, “The reason she both becomes an SS guard and keeps moving from place to place in postwar Germany, is her desperate effort to hide that shameful disability” (30). The arguments made by Niven and Bartov support my assertion that illiteracy is simply a supporting element of the story. The real point of the story is how an average person came to be one of the world’s most feared villains, which as Niven and Bartov pointed out, was due to a level of shame.

I proclaim that by humanizing Hanna, a former SS Nazi, Schlink is addressing the issue of the formidable German Nazi actually being, in more cases than is acknowledged, an ordinary person. In Donahue’s analysis, he writes that

Schlink's stated purpose in writing *Der Vorleser* has been to humanize the monster, and one can hardly deny him success in this. Criminals are no doubt often very compromised human beings, whose free will has been seriously circumscribed by disadvantaged childhoods, a condition that Hanna is clearly meant to symbolize. (296)

While some scholars, like Alison, feel that Schlink’s portrayal of Hanna “comes at the expense of the actual victim” (174), I argue that humanizing such an enemy does nothing to take away from those who suffered but rather allows us to see potential reasons for why someone would inflict such suffering. The fact of the matter is that many of the Nazis were your run-of-the-mill people, who were drawn into a life of Nazism for various reasons, including the chance to escape

from their own misery. In the words of Ronnie Landau, writer for the *Jewish Chronicle*, learning about the Holocaust “can civilise and humanise our students and . . . has the power to sensitise them to the dangers of indifference, intolerance, racism and the dehumanisation of others” (20). By humanizing the Nazis, we are not white-washing the German past nor showing empathy for those who destroyed so many lives but are merely attempting to understand how seemingly normal people could become active participants in one of the world’s greatest atrocities.

In keeping with the theme of understanding why and how a person could be a part of something as appalling as the Holocaust, Schlink invites us to look at the allure of numbing one’s emotions. Bartov contests that “Schlink's novel is a tale of emotional numbness and sexual passion. This emotional numbness becomes the main trademark of the trial” (31). Within his narrative, Michael discusses the numbness felt by both victim and perpetrator, and the ways in which this numbness is necessary for survival. During the trial, Michael describes the heightened emotions of those who come and go in comparison to his own numbed feelings as he has been there every day. Michael even goes so far as to compare his numbness to that of the Holocaust victims. To discuss the numbness of the victims, Michael says, “All survivor literature talks about this numbness, in which life’s functions are reduced to a minimum, behavior becomes selfish and indifferent to others, and gassing and burning are everyday occurrences” (Schlink 103). He continues on to discuss this same numbness within the perpetrators, “In the rare accounts by perpetrators . . . reduced to their few functions and exhibiting a mental paralysis and indifference, a dullness that makes them seem drugged or drunk” (Schlink 103). It is in this numbness that people find themselves able to both survive and commit such horrendous crimes against nature.

Michael's encounter with the erratic driver is another phenomenal example of his coming to terms with the reality of how and why a person becomes a killer. This man almost mocks Michael's attempt to understand the senseless murders that took place. In his speech, he says to Michael, "there was no war, and no reason for hatred. But executioners don't hate the people they execute, and they execute them all the same" (Schlink 151). Surprisingly, he shoots down the possibility that these murders are executed because of an obedience of orders. He continues on to say,

An executioner is not under orders. He's doing his work, he doesn't hate the people . . . he's not taking revenge . . . he's not killing them because they're in his way or threatening him or attacking him. They're a matter of such indifference to him that he can kill them as easily as not. (Schlink 151)

While this may seem a devastating answer in that it is almost incomprehensible in its unfeelingness, it is an essential answer. That numbness and indifference was the key between being a benevolent family member who comes home for supper every evening and an executioner who kills by the dozens every day. Destroying the lives of others became the new version of someone "just doing their job." Hannah Arendt, within her book *On Violence*, writes that "It is no doubt possible to create conditions under which men are dehumanized. . . but that does not mean they become animal-like; and under such conditions, not rage and violence, but their conspicuous absence is the clearest sign of dehumanization" (63). Ultimately, in humanizing the perpetrators, Schlink allows us to see how they had to dehumanize themselves in order to carry out such acts.

While humanizing a former Nazi, Schlink also uses this novel to bring to light the struggles of the parent/child dynamic between the war generation and post-war generation. As an

explanation for the post-war generation, scholars Xiaomin Chen and Xiaohong Zhang wrote, “In 1968, a movement was launched by the post-War generation against former Nazis’ holding powerful positions, against their parents’ complicity in the Nazi crimes, and the subsequent conspiracy of silence” (288). As Tania Crasnianski further explains in her nonfiction book, *Children of Nazis*, “students of 1968, were the first generation of Germans who had not experienced the war, and they had no qualms about digging up that era. The old habit of placing blame on Hitler alone no longer satisfied them” (194). Michael, being from the latter generation but in love with a member from the former generation, was able to look at the situation from both sides. It is Michael’s generation that first opened the curtain behind which the generation of the war hid their past selves and former misdeeds. We needed this curtain to be opened in order to shed light on what really happened, but we also needed a character like Michael to guide us along because if we focused only on the words of the ’68 generation, we would simply condemn without attempting to understand. Michael struggled as we all do today, which we can see when he says,

I wanted simultaneously to understand Hanna’s crime and to condemn it. But it was too terrible for that. When I tried to understand it, I had the feeling I was failing to condemn it as it must be condemned. When I condemned it as it must be condemned, there was no room for understanding. . . . I wanted to pose myself both tasks – understanding and condemnation. But it was impossible to do both.

(157)

The struggle to relate the person whom one loves to the person who commits such abominable acts is an insurmountable challenge that many do not wish to acknowledge because any failure to outright condemn said person is seen as complicity. Through Michael, we see what it is to battle

the feelings of love while still striving to uncover and understand the past. We need to acknowledge and strive to understand positions such as his because it is through those who both love and hate the former Nazis that we get a peek into the dual personalities most Nazis possessed.

Michael's story is unique in that his parents were neither completely complicit nor entirely innocent. For the argument that Michael's father cannot be condemned as a complicit German, we can look at Michael's own words: "I had no one to point at. Certainly not my parents, because I had nothing to accuse them of" (Schlink 170). Some scholars, such as Roth took this to mean that "that his own family was blameless during World War II" (167). Others, however, looked at the situation with more scrutiny. In Arthur Scherr's analysis, he states

We never learn how he felt about the Nazi regime and the Holocaust, except that he was fired from his job as a university lecturer for planning a lecture about the Jewish philosopher Spinoza, which he likely did because of his philosophical importance rather than because he wished to champion the Jews or publicly oppose Nazism. (245)

Chen and Zhang concluded that "Even if he didn't participate in the crime, he was certainly involved in the Holocaust" (290). Michael's words summarize it best when he says, "We all condemned our parents to shame, even if the only charge we could bring was that after 1945 they had tolerated the perpetrators in their midst" (Schlink 92). So, despite his parents having had little part in the Holocaust itself, Michael, for a time during his life, wanted to condemn them. Scherr notes of Michael's father that "Michael respects his intelligence, dedication to his work, and sober judgement. Still, this does not prevent him from wanting to blame him" (246). If the 1968 generation were able to blame the former generation, they would not feel like they, too,

were complicit by association. Roth explains this in his summation that “For the second generation, coming to terms with Germany's Nazi past means coming to terms with their parents. Even if the parents had not committed atrocities, the children condemn them self-righteously for not ridding post-war Germany of those who did” (167). Michael simultaneously wanted to blame his parents, and yet knew, that the blame he was placing on their heads was too great for their actual crimes. Michael says it most articulately in his statement that “Pointing at the guilty parties did not free us from shame, but at least it overcame the suffering we went through on account of it” (Schlink 170).

Although Michael was unable to entirely place responsibility on the heads of his parents as a way of working through his German heritage, he did find himself going through this process via his relationship with Hanna. Carmelle M. Stephens, within his scholarly essay on Boyne’s novel, eloquently phrased it as “Hanna effectively shatters the protective barrier of Michael’s spotless family history and places him within the German inter-generational narrative of shame and moral contamination” (198). He was essentially drawn to the offender by desire rather than being tied by blood (Stephens 198). Hanna was needed for Michael to be able to work through his own generational guilt. Roth states that “Without Hanna, Michael would never confront these issues, for his own parents were blameless” (172). Of course, since Michael *chose* Hanna, the guilt and confliction he felt about his relationship with her in relation to her past crimes was magnified. Stephens iterates this point when she states that “the turbulent relationship between Michael and Hanna is intended to dramatize the struggle of later generations of Germans in attempting to ‘master’ their nation’s genocidal history” (184). At the beginning of part two, Michael works through this inner conflict, as he says, “But the finger I pointed at her turned back to me. I had loved her. Not only had I loved her, I had chosen her” (Schlink 170). Critics such as

Scherr take this to mean that “Unlike Michael's apathetic father, Michael. . . has actually become a Nazi sympathizer of a sort” (255). In a way, I would agree that Schlink is portraying for the reader how one becomes complicit by association. However, I believe that his relationship with Hanna shows the true complexities that come with being a part of this greater thing known as humanity. It is rarely black and white, but often, messy with strings connecting us to both the good and evil in life. To paint it as anything so simplistic as Scherr did does an injustice to our intricacies as a species.

Schlink wrapped up the book in much of the same manner as he wrote the beginning and middle. His ending made the reader feel conflicted, just as we often feel conflicted within our own lives when it comes to such complex issues, which I believe to be the point. When Hanna learned to read, Michael was filled with both joy and sorrow. His joy was due to her having “advanced from dependence to independence, a step towards liberation,” and his sorrow for her “delayed and failed life” (Schlink 188). Schlink uses Hanna’s newfound literacy to have her come to terms with what she has done. The guard talking with Michael post-suicide recalled Hanna having requested “books on women in camps, both prisoners and guard” and that “As soon as Frau Schmitz learned to read, she began to read about the concentration camps” (Schlink 205). Chen and Zhang summarize this by saying, “Being illiterate, Hanna simply perceives her brutal deeds as exercises of duty. . . . Literacy both shapes her self-awareness and traumatizes her. Literacy transforms remembrance into the unbearable heaviness of being” (295). I believe that this part of the story is meant to help readers recognize the fluidity of a person’s mental, emotional, and psychological being as it is displayed here by an ordinary person turned murderer turned repentant citizen. By seeing Hanna’s full circle of transformations, we gain insight into how a country full of average people comes to find the will to commit such an atrocity, and then

within the aftermath, find both the shame and guilt that tears them between hiding their past and making up for it.

However, it was this same skill that allowed Hanna to fully grasp her former complicity within the Holocaust, which also led to her suicide. Eva Hoffman, who wrote on the use of illiteracy within this novel, summarized it by saying “Hanna killed herself partly as a result of her late-won literacy, because she could not bear to know what she had done” (34). There are those who, like Hall, believe this suicide “provides a romanticised resolution to the perpetrator narrative, with readers invited to see echoes in her life of a religious journey from sin to atonement to spiritual redemption” (“The Author, The Novel, The Reader” 264). I argue that Hanna’s character development, and subsequent suicide, is not meant to instill feelings of sympathy for the perpetrator but rather to highlight the fact that humans, along with life, can never be defined within the strict confines of labels such as black-and-white, villain and hero, or good and evil. If we are ever to even begin to make sense of how an entire nation could do something on such a grandiose scale as the Holocaust, we must understand this.

Schlink’s last pages are focused on Hanna’s search for absolution. Of course, this angered critics everywhere as they argued of Schlink’s audacity to write of absolution for such a character. Hanna’s former victim, the daughter who survived, wondered the same thing upon being approached by Michael, when she asks ““And grant Frau Schmitz her absolution?”” (Schlink 212). Michael mentally acknowledged that “Hanna was indeed asking a great deal,” but also felt that “[h]er years of imprisonment were not merely to be the required atonement: Hanna wanted to give them her own meaning, and she wanted this giving of meaning to be recognized” (Schlink 212). He felt that she knew what she had done, and that she “dealt with it intensively during her last years in prison” (Schlink 212-213). It can be seen as either preposterous or fitting

that Hanna's money was donated to the Jewish League Against Literacy, but the shocking aspect is that it was done so in her name. Again, I would like to point out that as the reader, we are not Michael, and therefore, have the ability to separate ourselves from his feelings in order to look at the situation objectively. By doing so, we are able to recognize that Hanna's journey to acknowledging and taking responsibility for injustices she committed is a portrayal of humanity's ebb and flow.

In summation, to understand is to accept that the human species is neither black nor white. To understand is to know that anyone can be capable of anything, and it is our responsibility after such a monumental crime, to attempt to comprehend how just anyone can be drawn into that life. Research by Scherr shows that by Schlink "depicting Michael's father as a professor . . . and placing him and the illiterate Hanna in the same scale, even the most exemplary individuals may be no more than 'ordinary men'" (261). Schlink humanized a former monster so that we may see why a person chooses the life of murdering. He also illuminated the powers of shutting down one's emotions in order to both survive and commit the crimes we can barely even imagine. He even portrayed the complexities of loving someone, whether by relation or choice, who has done the unthinkable. As I previously stated, it is our duty to accept that by humanizing someone such as a Nazi, we are neither accepting nor sympathizing with them, but allowing ourselves the chance to look past the wall we placed between ourselves when being short-sighted, so as to understand and even prevent such atrocities from repeating themselves. An awareness of *how* and *why* an entire country of ordinary people finds themselves taking part in mass murder, whether by complicity or direct action, can help future generations stop the process before it has a chance to advance. As Karl Jaspers, author of *The Origin and Goal of History*, once said, it is "possible for this to happen, and it remains possible for it to happen again

at any minute. Only in knowledge can it be prevented” (149). In our discussion of this monumental period of history, we should seek to study the past with the intent to comprehend rather than condemn so that we may evolve past such ignorant hatred.

CHAPTER TWO

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

The Humanization of a Nazi Family as Seen Through the Eyes of a Child

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas, penned by John Boyne, is a juvenile historical fiction fable turned movie that has been critiqued for its unique portrayal of the Holocaust through the eyes of a Nazi official's child. Boyne's novel, set within Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II, features a young, naive boy, Bruno, whose father is the commandant of Auschwitz and whose only friend is a prisoner within Auschwitz. Michael Gray states that "Since its publication in 2006 and subsequent film adaptation two years later, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* has become an influential and important representation of the Holocaust" (109). Other critics, such as Debbie Pinfold, disagree, as she states that "*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* not only reflects outdated understandings of the Third Reich, but also risks presenting the perpetrators themselves as victims" (254). Like Gray, I find that this book is an important representation because it gives us another perspective that is so rarely seen, yet critical to our understanding of this period of history. I will use this chapter to expand upon the notion that by humanizing the Nazis, as this book does, we are allowing ourselves possible understandings into the relationship between SS members of the concentration camps and their families, brief insight into the people the Nazis were before they became monsters in the name of the Fatherland, and the effects of such an upbringing on future generations. My argument is that these attempts to understand and gain insight allow for the study of the Holocaust to broaden so that we may see this brief period of history from all angles, therefore ensuring that future generations are not as susceptible to such misguided fanaticism, racism, and dehumanization.

This book is told from the perspective of an adolescent boy with an innocent, and often immature, mindset. As can be expected from such a narration, the antagonists are seen not just as being on the wrong side of the protagonist but as something akin to monsters. Within this young German boy's tale, the demonization falls onto the heads of Nazis whom Bruno, perhaps unrightfully, compares to his father whom he holds in such high esteem. Looking at the situation from the perspective of naïve Bruno, readers see the Nazis, aside from his father, as Other. One thought process would be that this allows for the possibility of young readers seeing the Commandant as more guiltless than his compatriots, as that is how Bruno sees it. However, I would argue, that with the proper education about the Holocaust the reader would be able to look beyond Bruno's naivety to see that this one-sided depiction offers understandings into the relationship dynamic between SS officials of the concentration camps and their families.

To support this argument, I would like to take a look at the different characteristics seen between the party members Bruno described as being the clichéd Nazi beasts and that of his father, whom he holds in the greatest esteem, as most young boys do. The most notable Nazi within Bruno's tale is Lieutenant Kurt Kotler, who is regaled as a disturbed young soldier seemingly out to disrupt every aspect of Bruno's life. Ceylan Ozcan, within his critique of Boyne's book, accurately describes this character as "a stereotype of the heartless, evil Nazi, the sort typically used in demonizing Nazis" (188). Upon first meeting Kurt, Bruno describes his hair as "an almost unnatural shade of yellow," which portrays him as a fanatical German desperate to appear as the "perfect Aryan" (Boyne 18). This is an image that continues in later encounters, during which Bruno says that he wore "a uniform that appeared to be ironed while he was wearing it" with "black boots [that] always sparkled with polish . . . yellow-blond hair . . . held perfectly in place" (Boyne 71). Boyne later writes that "There was an atmosphere around

him that made Bruno feel very cold” (71). Bruno’s initial descriptions of this character set the scene for future interactions in which Kurt is fully portrayed as the monstrous stereotypical Nazi.

Boyne has ensured that the readers have been on alert in regard to this character from the start, and it begins to make sense as Bruno interacts with him more and more. The pivotal moments are when Kurt brutally assaults Pavel and Shmuel, both of whom Bruno sees as blameless and friendly as opposed to Kurt’s evil nature. Following Kurt’s vile treatment of Pavel at dinner, Boyne writes, “while Bruno realized that Father was generally a very kind and thoughtful man, it hardly seemed fair or right that no one had stopped Lieutenant Kotler” (149). In this instance, we see how Bruno struggles to correlate the man he so admires with someone who would passively allow a demon such as Kurt to act so viciously against another human being. Debbie Pinfeld reflects that “by focusing on the ‘wrong’ victim and extending his victimhood to his perpetrator parents” the audience may be moved, which she then states may be “because (s)he is allowed to identify passively with the child victim rather than explore the meaning of the Holocaust as a responsible adult” (262). While this may prove to be true, I think this perspective is essential in illustrating for readers the struggle a child of a Nazi official would have with associating his/her beloved parent with the horrendous acts said parent commits.

Of course, Kurt’s misdeeds are not restricted to that of the Jewish prisoners but are depicted throughout many other instances within Bruno’s tale. Early on in the book, Bruno recounts stumbling upon Kurt inappropriately flirting with his sister, during which time, Kurt attempts to exude his manly superiority by referring to Bruno as “little man.” Kurt’s apparent effort to insert himself into the minds and hearts of Bruno’s family is also shown in relation to his mother, who “laughed at his jokes more than she laughed at Father’s” (Boyne 162). If one were to take this, as well as other instances of secrecy and flirtation between Bruno’s mother and

Kurt, to mean that they are engaging in an affair, it would further support the notion that Bruno's father is being endorsed as an innocent bystander in comparison with the evilness of other Nazis.

From Bruno's perspective, Kurt will forever be the sadistic Nazi who upon hearing a dog bark, "marched right over to the dog and shot it" (Boyne 162). He is the perfect representation of a Nazi, as he strides "around in his black boots as if there was no one in the whole world of any more importance than him" (Boyne 95). In summation of this disconcerting young soldier's misdeeds: he flirts with Bruno's sister, blatantly belittles Bruno, beats and dehumanizes Jewish prisoners, and even, as an older reader can easily deduce, seems to be carrying on an affair with Bruno's mother. Kurt is the spot-on image of a reckless German soldier desperately trying to hide his family's opposition to the Nazi rule through overcompensating with his cruelty. At no point, do we see Bruno recount his own father acting in such a manner, despite the fact that he, too, is a Nazi, and arguably, one responsible for even more evil than Kurt.

During one of Kurt's final moments within Bruno's tale, we begin to see Kurt's human side just as we see Father's Nazi undercurrent brush the surface. While having dinner with Bruno's family, Kurt accidentally reveals his own father's opposition to the Nazi regime. Bruno's father begins to question, one could even say harass, Kurt about his father. Kurt does as one would expect a Nazi soldier of his pedigree to do and begins to grovel. The reader almost feels sorry for Kurt at this moment, especially if the reader is aware of what this conversation means for his future. As for Bruno, he found this to be exciting due to his pure hatred of the vile Lieutenant, but he was also "frightened by the atmosphere," which goes a long way in showing the fear of such an encounter, even from a bystander with little knowledge of its true significance. Following this conversation, Kurt proceeds to brutally injure Pavel as a way of taking out his own emotions on another while simultaneously showing his commitment to the

Nazi mindset. This is when we see Bruno question his parent's lack of interference, as was referenced above. I would argue that at this point, readers can sense how strongly Bruno must be fighting internally to remain naive and ignorant of his father's role in the evil he notices around him. Much of Germany's youth must have been having this same internal struggle as they witnessed those they love doing things they could not understand.

Further exploration of the novel finds that Kurt is not the only character who is meant to possess characteristics that are in direct opposition of Bruno's own Nazi father. There are other characters who do this as well, such as more subordinates of his father's, Bruno's tutor, and even "the Fury" (the Fuhrer). The soldiers that worked under Bruno's father, much like Kurt, were the picturesque Nazis. These men dressed the part, groveled at the feet of those who were deemed superior in rank and/or authority, and showed little to no regard for lives they considered to be unworthy. Upon seeing these soldiers surrounding his father, Bruno's narrative states that

He didn't like the look of the other men quite as much. They certainly weren't as handsome as Father. Nor were their uniforms as freshly pressed. Nor were their voices so booming or their boots so polished. They . . . seemed to be fighting with each other for Father's attention. (Boyne 42)

When noticing them within the bounds of Auschwitz, a considerably different setting than his own home, he noted that they "wore uniforms of varying quality and decoration and caps and helmets with bright red-and-black armbands and carried guns and always looked terribly stern" (Boyne 100). The notion that he should be wary of these men is further instilled when Maria says to him, "I'd steer clear of the soldiers" (Boyne 19). Whether observing their inferiority to his father or their intimidating nature inside the bounds of the concentration camp, Bruno never feels like these men are anything like his father. Bruno's sentiments are highlighted during his

discussion with Shmuel, during which he says, “‘I’m going to be a soldier. . . . Like Father. . . . I don’t mean one like Lieutenant Kotler. . . . I mean one like Father. One of the good soldiers’” (Boyne 139-140). When Shmuel argued that there were “no good soldiers,” Bruno felt that “Father was Father . . . didn’t think it was right for someone to say something bad about him” (Boyne 140). In Bruno’s mind, he simply could not connect such ominous creatures to his beloved father. This highlights one of the important aspects of this book as it is portraying for readers the idea that Germans could see their own family members as “good soldiers,” while still acknowledging the others as “bad soldiers.” If so many people throughout the country were turning a blind eye to the actions and transformations of those they love, it would help explain their complicity.

As one would expect, the Nazis Bruno encountered were not limited to his father and other soldiers. The tutor hired by Father for both Bruno and Gretel proved to be a significant Nazi within Bruno’s life. Not only did his character serve to illuminate the difference in Bruno’s mind between the Nazis that surrounded him and his own Nazi family, but he served to further instill Nazi propaganda into the mind of his impressionable older sister. As Ozcan notes, “The tutor’s teachings exemplify the rationale the Nazis used to justify their actions and the anti-Semitic discourse of Nazism which demonized the Jews, making them the enemy” (188). While Herr Liszt was noted for not being as abusive as some of Bruno’s former instructors, it is written that “Herr Liszt was a mystery to Bruno. . . . something in his eyes made Bruno feel there was an anger inside him just waiting to get out” (Boyne 96-97). Herr Liszt is able to fill the role of an academic Nazi who strives to indoctrinate the minds of others with the Nazi way of thinking. Leonard Doob makes the conclusion that “propaganda is supposed to affect personality in order to control human behavior” (qtd. in Moskała 108). If one were a child eager to appear intelligent

or earn the praises of his/her mentor, as Gretel was, it would explain how propaganda was able to work from this angle. One with superior intelligence is more easily trusted as being correct. Knowing the effect that propaganda can have, especially that of which was peddled out by those considered to be of higher intellect, is essential not only to our understanding of an entire nation's complicity but in our awareness of its appeal for we are forever susceptible to that which we do not comprehend.

In keeping with the notion of Bruno's father's importance, Boyne has Hitler make an appearance in Bruno's short tale. One of the most notable aspects of Hitler's role within Bruno's life is that Bruno can never learn how to properly pronounce his true title but instead refers to him as "the Fury." Gerd Bayer, in his scholarly essay "World War II and The Ethics of Trauma," suggests that "By referring to Hitler, the 'Führer', with the near-homophonous word 'fury', the novel uses Bruno's intuitive reaction to his environment as a means of addressing directly the actual significance of Hitler, the concentration camps, and the Holocaust" (165). I believe this to be an accurate analysis of Boyne's intention with this particular word play. To further support this idea, one need only take a closer look at Bruno's direct and indirect interactions with the man.

During the first part of the story, Hitler's role within Bruno's tale is that of his father's superior who both "had big things in mind" for Father and was responsible for their undesirable departure from Berlin (Boyne 4). At this point, we see that Bruno's Father, though unlike Hitler in nature, is a follower of a his. It is while preparing to leave their home, that Bruno's mother slips and says, "Some people and their determination to get ahead" (Boyne 40). At this moment, we can begin to ascertain that Hitler's charm has not quite won over everyone. Bruno himself begins to show distaste for the Fuhrer upon meeting him and Eva. While taking in "the

Fury” in all his glory, Bruno makes the observation that “The Fury was far shorter than Father and not, Bruno supposed, quite as strong” (Boyne 121). For this particular Nazi, Bruno does not just compare him to his father but to his companion, Eva, as well. Following his comparison between “the Fury” and his father, Bruno notes that “The woman standing beside him, however, was quite the most beautiful woman he had ever seen in his life” (Boyne 121). These comparisons continue as “the Fury” shows contempt for Bruno’s interest in learning French, to which Eva politely states, “I can speak French too” (Boyne 122). Hitler persists in making a bad impression on Bruno, as Boyne writes, “the Fury, who was the rudest guest Bruno had ever witnessed, turned round and walked directly into the dining room and promptly sat down at the head of the table – in Father’s seat” (Boyne 122). Finally, the last judgment comes when Hitler and his companion make their departure, as Bruno notes that “the Fury did not open the door for his companion but instead climbed in and started reading a newspaper, while she said goodbye once again to Mother and thanked her for the lovely dinner. . . . What a horrible man” (Boyne 124). My argument is that these negative portrayals of Hitler from the perspective of a prominent Nazi official’s son are meant to instill in the reader’s mind the level of innocence and moral sense of young Bruno, his unfailingly blind and faithful love for his father, as well as illuminate the fact that not all Nazis possessed the undesirable qualities seen in Hitler. Some Nazis were polite and mundane people who were following the lead of madmen like Hitler.

Throughout Bruno’s tale, we see him struggle to make sense of his father’s place in the disturbing world he sees around him. Even as similarities between his father and those he deems to be the antithesis of his father are pointed out to him, Bruno seems to have a child’s stubbornness about his father’s true character. For example, when Maria remarks on the quality of seriousness shared between the abysmal Lieutenant Kotler and Father, Bruno responds, “Yes,

but he's Father'" (Boyne 19). Intuitive young readers will notice that Bruno's father, despite being so different from other Nazis in the mind of Bruno, has Nazi-esque tendencies. When arguing with Father about their current place of living, Bruno's actions reflect a level of fear that goes beyond that of a son who respects his father. Boyne writes, "Bruno licked his lips and looked away. He felt it would be a bad idea to hold Father's eye" (Boyne 51). It is during this same tense discussion that Bruno mentions his curiosity about the people outside his window, to which his father responds, "'Those people . . . well, they're not people at all. . . . You have nothing whatsoever in common with them'" (Boyne 53). Father's words do not make much sense to Bruno but because of his blind faith in his father, he just accepts what he says. I contest that this continual denial is not only because of his love for his father, but because, in reality, most Nazis were both monsters and average humans. Even though this is hard to digest, information such as this can make people more conscious of the fact that a regular person is vulnerable when faced with the kinds of challenges that arose in post-World War I Germany.

Early on in the book, it is made clear that Bruno "wasn't entirely sure what job Father did" (Boyne 4). As scholar Paweł Moskała notes within his critique of the book "the knowledge about the function of his father as well as the actual role of the camp remains carefully concealed from the boy" (107). Bruno's innocence and unawareness are what make his story so poignant because it allows us to see those whom we consider dark and evil in a unique light. It is stated by Crasnianski that "all of these Nazis thought of themselves as moral beings" (xvi). One can imagine that if a young child's parent speaks and acts as someone who believes him/herself to be a moral being, that the child who admires and loves said parent would believe it too. By looking at the Nazis through the eyes of the unaware children who loved them most, we are allowing ourselves to see that Nazis can come in all shapes and forms. The World War II monsters many

of us have imagined did not look so monstrous when removed from that specific setting, which is one of the most galling and critical points of all. When given the right circumstances, any average joe could become something from our worst nightmares. Ignoring this fact does not make it disappear.

The readers of this book are privy to the point of view of both those who love and those who abhor Bruno's father. The uniqueness about being aware of the viewpoint of those who love him and have known him for many years is that we are able to see what he used to be in their eyes and how he has changed to fit the Nazi persona. We are able to use these viewpoints in comparison to those who only know Bruno's father as a demonic Nazi. By doing this, we are able to piece together the picture of who this man truly is and was outside of being either just a loved one or just a Nazi. In coming closer to piecing together the full picture of what it really means to be a Nazi, we can be more knowledgeable in answering the question: how could so many people take part in such a heinous crime? In exploring the background of Bruno's father and men like him, we will be able to gain some insight into possible answers for this question.

To further investigate who Bruno's father truly is, we need to understand who he was before he became the Nazi within the nightmares of Auschwitz's prisoners. Men like Bruno's father were a part of World War I, which we learn when Bruno's mother tells the story of Herr Roller, a man whom Bruno considered to be mad. When speaking of Herr Roller, Mother says, "You have no idea of what the young men went through back then. Their suffering" (Boyne 68). This is not meant to encourage sympathy for the Germans, but rather to help us understand how they came to be so broken and desperate as to resort to supporting a man such as Hitler.

Through Maria, we learn that Father used to be the sort of man who would lend a helping hand in a selfless fashion for any who needed it. When Bruno is angry at his father, Maria tells

him the story of how he once helped her family by giving her a job, as well as paying for her mother's medical bills and subsequent funeral bills. Her story ends with her saying, "He has a lot of kindness in his soul, truly he does, which makes me wonder" (Boyne 62). When she says this, we must think back to how the conversation started, when Bruno asked, "You're part of the family, aren't you?" and Maria responded, "I'm not sure whether your father would agree with that" (Boyne 58). In these few short pages, we get the sense that Father used to be a respectable man but that he has changed to the point that even those who have known him for years are left to wonder about his metamorphosis into just another Nazi cog in Hitler's plan of world domination.

One of the most telling moments within Bruno's recollection was the argument between his grandmother and father. While Bruno's grandfather and mother both placated his father, his grandmother was having no part of it. Young readers can get a feel for how wrongly things have turned when the grandmother says, "I wonder if all the performances I made you give as a boy led you to this. Dressing up like a puppet on a string" (Boyne 90). This bold woman goes on to mock his treasured uniform: "Standing there in your uniform . . . as if it makes you special. Not even caring what it means really. What it stands for" (Boyne 90-91). It is here that readers with little knowledge of the Holocaust or Nazis are once again made aware of something amiss. The argument finishes with her screaming that her son, the company with which he surrounds himself, and his cherished uniform make her sick (Boyne 93). From that point on, Bruno did not see his grandmother very much. The reader gets the sense, once again, that Father used to be someone else, someone good and unlikely to take up such a position. One must wonder at the vast transformation that had to have taken place for his own mother to no longer be able to tolerate his choices. I would argue that this scene goes a long way in ruining any arguments that

the book is showing favor towards the perpetrators, but rather, merely showing their humanity underneath the armor of evil. Acknowledgement of the humanity within the inhumane is essential in our quest to view this time of history in its entirety because without it we can never truly understand, therefore hurting any chance of fighting such radical hatred in the future before it manifests as it did during the Holocaust. Once upon a time, most of these Nazis were just your fellow humans. Dismissing that fact will not change it, and without it, we are opening ourselves up to a scary amount of possibility for repetition.

To get an idea of how far Bruno's father has fallen from grace, one should look at remarks made by Bruno's disgruntled mother. From the very first page, we get the sense that Bruno's mother does not think much of her husband's behavior and has higher hopes for her son, as Boyne writes, "his mother had always told him that he was to treat Maria respectfully and not just imitate the way Father spoke to her" (1). This underlying feeling of unsettlement and unhappiness continues upon Bruno learning of their rather abrupt departure. Mother says, "We don't have a choice in this. . . . We don't have as much time to prepare as I would have liked, thanks to some people" to which Bruno's narrative responds, "knowing that 'some people' was a grown-up's word for 'Father'" (Boyne 8-9). Moskala takes statements such as this by Bruno's mother to mean that there have been "Attempts to throw off responsibility for reality" (112). I would argue that these statements merely portray the position the family is in due to Father's choice of career. This pattern of speaking ill of Father, and even the Fuhrer, continues as she later says, "We should never had let the Fury come to dinner. . . . Some people and their determination to get ahead" (Boyne 40). In this statement, we can see that neither Hitler nor Bruno's father are held in high esteem in his mother's mind.

In different areas throughout the book, Bruno overhears arguments and senses tension between his parents. It is clear that his mother believes Auschwitz a place unfit to raise her children, while his father knows that they risk endangering their children if they do not uphold the image. In the words of Moskała, “Fear also affects the boy's father, a declared supporter of only the right doctrine, on the one hand a symbol of power, on the other - obedience and loyalty” (112). Arguably, there were many families of Nazi officials in this same position. Even as children around the continent were being murdered, there were not many who were willing to risk the lives of their own children for the sake of another's. In reality, people of today's society who claim to know that they would be on the “right” side of history had it been them, cannot confidently make that assertion when they have yet to know the fear and panic that comes with having their loved ones' lives threatened.

Unfortunately, this phenomenon of doing as one is told and keeping one's nose down to avoid conflict is a central theme within the lives of Bruno's family, especially his father. Even when it appears that Father is unhappy with his position or the things he is forced to do, such as moving his family to Auschwitz, he makes it clear that he has little choice in the matter. This falls in line with Hanna Arendt's theory of bureaucracy, as she argued that it was “very common in Germany, that to be law-abiding means not merely to obey the laws but to act as though one were the legislator of the laws that one obeys. Hence the conviction that nothing less than going beyond the call of duty will do” (137). When speaking to Bruno about the move, he says, ““Do you think I would have made such a success of my life if I hadn't learned when to argue and when to keep my mouth shut and follow orders?”” (Boyne 49). Upon Bruno asking if they are being forced to move because Father upset “the Fury,” Father laughs and says, ““You don't understand the significance of such a position”” (Boyne 50). Maria, who acknowledges her

disdain for the Nazis through thinly veiled comments, such as, “Well, they have very serious jobs. . . . Or they think so anyway,” tells Bruno something akin to what Father is always telling his wife and son (Boyne 19). She says to Bruno something that many Germans must have thought at the time: “We must all keep ourselves safe until this is all over. That’s what I intend to do anyway. What more can we do than that after all? It’s not up to us to change things” (Boyne 65). Are we meant to excuse their actions or lack thereof because they wanted to protect themselves? Absolutely not. However, we are meant to use this kind of information to see how an entire country, even those who were not Nazis themselves, became culpable in the murder of millions of their fellow humans.

For much of the story, Bruno’s father had become someone who forsook his loved ones for the sake of his own misguided beliefs. No longer was Maria someone whom Father wished to spare unnecessary misery but simply someone who was “overpaid” (Boyne 138). Instead of mending the broken fence with his estranged mother, he simply let it go until she died, leaving him feeling bereft. He was no longer the father who would thank another for tending to his son’s wounds, but the Commandant from whom such acts of kindness must be hidden simply because the healer was a Jew. Sadly, Father was so far gone from who those he loved once knew him as, that outsiders, such as Shmuel, were left to wonder “how such a man could have a son who was so friendly and kind” (Boyne 196). In his fight for his beloved Fatherland, he gave up much of his humanity.

As seen is through Bruno’s father, the condition of the country following the first World War, enrapture of Hitler and his plan for their country, and the desperate need to protect one’s family all play a part in the transformation from human to brute. People wanted their country and people to thrive again, which led to the appeal of Hitler, his plan, and his scapegoat, the Jews and

all other “undesirables.” As time went on, even those that began to see the fault in such a plan found themselves acting out of a desperation to save their own families. For some, their complicity even began as a means to protect their own. Not all Nazis were fanatical madmen despite the popular notion that they were all Hitler juniors. Bruno’s father allows readers to see that many, even some of the highest-ranking Nazis, were beloved family members who, for complex reasons, had turned off their humanity. Knowing this makes us more cognizant of just what humanity is capable of when given the right circumstances, such as starvation, economic collapse, etcetera.

Nevertheless, by the end of the book, Boyne had brought Father back to his senses through one of the most unimaginable situations known to man: the loss of a son due to the faults of the father. As stated by Bayer, Boyne is focusing on “the question of whether people might rethink their attitudes once they are turned into the victims of their own crime” (164). While Father had begun to display feelings of regret at having kept his family in such an abominable place, he was still very much the Commandant of history’s greatest hell. It was not until the disappearance of his son that he began his transformation from inhuman demon back into a humanized man. As Bayer notes, “Bruno’s father will at first desperately search for his son, then he will slowly understand that his own machinery of destruction has killed Bruno and, finally, he will guiltily acquiesce in his own death” (165). When Boyne writes that Father “didn’t really mind what they did to him anymore,” Bayer states that it meant he had “at last come to acknowledge his own culpability” (216; 166). I concur with Bayer’s analysis, as my interpretation is that Boyne meant for readers to see Bruno’s father come to terms with his own part in the monstrosity that stole his and many others’ sons. By having this reckoning, Bruno’s father fulfilled the role of turning a one-dimensional stereotype into a three-dimensional person.

On the other hand, there are some scholars who find this to be Boyne's attempt to create sympathy for the Germans and draw away attention from the actual victims. Gray, who is one of these scholars, states that it is incomprehensible that such a tale should cause the audience to "sympathise with one of the key perpetrators of the Nazi regime and to feel upset over a German death rather than a Jewish death. It seems inconceivable that a book which is set in the Holocaust turns the murderers into the victims" (125). However, I contest that Boyne's book is notable not for the sympathy it draws for the Germans but rather the unique way it brings justice and accountability to the perpetrator through a sort of direct karma. This, in turn, goes a long way in humanizing a notable Nazi, showing that not all Nazis were madmen like Hitler. To support this claim, we should look back to the same scholar, Gray, who states that "It is important for adolescents to get away from the mentality that all the perpetrators were psychologically deranged" (127). Gray even goes on to acquiesce that the work of art "does do an effective job in humanising the perpetrators and showing that despite the scale and barbarism of their crimes, they were, by and large, typical human beings conducting an untypical phenomenon" (126). We must not make the assumption that simply because these perpetrators were committing the inhumane that they were inhumane themselves.

Sadly, some children of Nazis, such as Gretel, found themselves more morally affected and open to suggestion than others, such as Bruno. While throughout the book, Bruno maintains his innocence and overall moral compass, Gretel, whom Bruno refers to as the "Hopeless Case," finds herself swayed by those of influence within her daily life. Both Bruno and Gretel are subjected to Nazi teachings and propaganda. Moskala proposes that "The indoctrination of Bruno and his sister, based on symbolism and using lies, half-truths and manipulation, is to shape the views and character of children in the spirit of Nazi ideology, in which the teacher Herr Liszt,

hired by the father, plays a special role” (109). This is true for Gretel but does not fully fit Bruno as he was never fully indoctrinated. Gretel’s age and comprehension renders her more susceptible to a significant influence. On the other hand, Bruno is at a critical age where he is on the cusp of losing his innocence and obliviousness but has not yet reached that point. Boyne has given the reader the two different types of Nazi children, those who fight for the same beliefs as their parents and those that remain blissfully unaware.

The “Hopeless Case,” an apt name for the girl who is formally known as Gretel, goes through some rather large changes throughout Bruno’s tale. At the beginning, Boyne writes of the bickering discord one would expect from a blossoming young teenager and her little brother. For instance, from Bruno’s perspective, we read that “She had some very unpleasant friends . . . who seemed to think that it was clever to make fun of him. . . . seemed to enjoy nothing more than torturing him” (Boyne 22). While one could read into this as her having a proclivity towards mean-spirited acts from the get-go, I believe that Boyne is only trying to establish the typical brother-sister dynamic. It is just a few pages later, however, that we see her penchant for upholding her father in an unrealistic light, as Bruno says that it was she “who always spoke of Father as if he could never do any wrong and never got angry” (Boyne 25). Though we know that both children adore their father, Boyne is marking the difference between an innocent child who believes in his father (Bruno) and one who adores her father to the point of believing as he believes and assuming he can do no wrong (Gretel). To understand Gretel, one should look to the words of Crasnianski, who states that “The closer to home something is, the harder it is to judge it objectively, as if recognizing the crimes of a father could irremediably sully the bonds of filial love” (196). In other words, children of Nazis who were close to their parents, such as Gretel, were often blinded by their love.

Gretel's character began to take on its own form during her conversation with Bruno during which they discussed the peculiarities of their new home. When faced with the strangeness that was Auschwitz, Boyne writes that Gretel "couldn't find any words to express her surprise, and so she did the only sensible thing she could think of and closed it again" (32). As they further analyzed the state of the unfamiliar children outside of Bruno's window, Gretel remarked that they were "'Not the type of children *I* want to play with. . . . They look filthy'" (Boyne 37). This can be construed as a more literal expression of a Nazi-esque point of view as Nazis were commonly known for viewing the Jews as a filthy Other. Bruno, on the other hand, tried to explain their state of appearance by saying "'maybe they don't have any baths?'" (Boyne 37). In the end, Gretel shivered and turned away to head back into her room, stating that "'The view is decidedly nicer from there,'" which is a sentiment expressed by many Germans during this time period (Boyne 38). Gretel's reaction represents much of Germany in that she chose self-preservation and the survival of her mental state rather than branching out into the uncomfortable dangers posed by "the other side of the fence" so to speak.

As time went on, Gretel became more and more of a representative of the stereotypical Nazi child. When Bruno confessed to having an "imaginary friend," Gretel responded by telling him to not let Father find out because "'It's the first sign of madness'" (Boyne 159). Madness is another characteristic that the Nazi regime marked as an unacceptable form of Other. Gretel's awareness of the fact that Father would not approve of something such as this brings to light her own knowledge and acceptance of Nazi ideals. Unfortunately, Gretel continued this acceptance, and soon to be promotion and adoration, of the Nazi regime. Within the latter half of the novel, Bruno notices that his sister "didn't like the dolls anymore. . . . In their place she had hung up maps of Europe that Father had given her, and every day she put little pins into them and moved

the pins around constantly after consulting the daily newspaper” (Boyne 180). Moskała notes that “The effects of the propaganda ideology of Herr Liszt [which] can be seen in Bruno’s sister’s room” (109-110). To further support this notion, we can look at Bruno, who states that “Herr Liszt was particularly pleased with her for doing this” (Boyne 188). Gretel has found her niche within the family, one that brings her closer to feeling as an adult, while simultaneously achieving the approval of those she deems worthy. Upon this alteration, her transformation from the innocence of childhood to the dangers of a teenager supporter of Nazism is complete.

Gretel’s Nazi ideals are further expressed when she explains to Bruno the notion of what it means to be a Jew. She explains that Jews are not to be mixed with non-Jews but are meant to be with their own kind, which is the purpose of Auschwitz. Although it is clear that she is not fully aware of what exactly it is about Jews that makes them so different from her own family, she is quite aware of their inferiority, as she responds to Bruno’s inquiry about their own Jewishness by stating, ““you shouldn’t even say something like that”” (Boyne 182). Even though she cannot tell him what they are if not Jews, she knows that they are “opposite” (Boyne 183). Bruno, assuming that his family is the Other, asks, ““Don’t the Jews like the Opposite then,”” to which Gretel responds, ““No, it’s us who don’t like them”” (Boyne 183). Gretel feels her own superiority and the pressure to condemn those labeled as “less than.” Nazi propaganda has been used on Gretel to, as Moskała phrases it, “build a sense of belonging and unity, but also the depersonalization and dehumanization of people on the other side of the fence” (111).

However, despite all transformations, Gretel, like her father, suffered the loss of Bruno at the end of the book. Boyne writes that Gretel “spent a lot of time alone in her room crying, not because she had thrown her dolls away and not because she had left all her maps behind at Out-With, but because she missed Bruno” (Boyne 215). By writing that she is not distraught over the

loss of her dolls or maps, Boyne is making it clear that Gretel has not made the connection between Nazism and her brother's ill-fated death but is simply mourning his loss. While this can be construed as trying to separate the Nazis from their role in the death of Bruno and millions of other children, my argument is that it is meant to portray Gretel's own stilted knowledge of what it means to be a Nazi, a problem that affected many of the Nazi youth.

Bruno, on the other hand, sustained his youthful naivete despite his surroundings and teachings. Throughout Bruno's short time at Auschwitz, he is exposed to a myriad of new ideas, people, and complex situations that he does not know how to handle. For one, his father and tutor engage him in Nazi propaganda, which he never fully grasps. Father, when explaining why they must accept their new home, says that Bruno must assume that he, as the father, knows best by using his relationship with his own father as an example. Father says, "I was just a child and didn't know what was for the best" (Boyne 49). In this statement, we can see the Nazi ideal that those who are considered the Nazi elite know what is best. Bruno's father also tells him that "This is my work, important work. Important to our country. Important to the Fury. You'll understand that some day" (Boyne 48). He expects his son to blindly accept that Hitler knows what he should do, and that the work he does, however morally corrupt, is in the best interest of their country. In his words, "We are correcting history here" (Boyne 144). However, despite everything that is said around him and to him, Bruno remains within his bubble. When Herr Liszt says that studying history is important because it has to do with "Your family's heritage. The Fatherland. . . . About the great wrongs that have been done to you," Bruno has the naïve mental response of "He wasn't entirely sure that Father had any land" (Boyne 98). Nationalism, which is what is being experienced by Bruno's father, sister, tutor, and many other Germans at this time, is a form of ideology. Louis Althusser, in his essay *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*,

delves into two different theses about the functioning and structure of ideology. In the thesis that I believe applies here, Althusser notes that ideology “represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (693). This imaginary relationship is due to material alienation and oppressive individuals’ “domination and exploitation of the ‘people’ on a falsified representation of the world which they have imagined in order to enslave other minds by dominating their imaginations” (694). In other words, the Nazi elite were using their own fabricated depiction of the world to capture the minds of those that were oppressed, which were the struggling German people. However, Althusser goes on to explain that such exploited classes might find a way to resist the interpellation of in the Ideological State Apparatuses by using the contradictions within the Ideological State Apparatuses or by seizing opposing positions in the Ideological State Apparatuses during struggle. Even though ideologies can enslave the mind, there are ways to overcome them, which gives hope for the future. One might say that Bruno represented the possibility of overcoming the dominating class as his mind was still pure despite the propaganda.

Bruno is continually confused and at a loss. Pinfold takes this to mean that “Responsibility for the Holocaust is thus assigned primarily to the ‘obvious’ perpetrators, the Nazi elite, while the audience is allowed to align itself with Bruno’s naiveté, ignorance” (268). Contrary to popular opinion, this does not take away from the reality of what the Holocaust meant but allows the readers to “face the unspeakable as if encountered for the first time” (Bayer 164). Readers need this innocence that Bruno provides to fully appreciate the story that is being told. Without said innocence, many readers would find themselves unable to take that step back required when looking at the situation objectively or from another standpoint. Experiencing the Holocaust, as Bruno does, brings it to life in a whole new and unnerving manner, which is

something we need to do any time we discuss something this infamous in order to see it all beyond our already jaded point of view.

Bruno's mother, as opposed to his Father and Herr Liszt, spends her time teaching him to be a moral human being. As mentioned before, she taught him how to speak respectfully to their maid. Bruno also notes, when noticing the children of Auschwitz, that he was "not wishing to judge them before he met them but going by appearances, which Mother had told him time and time again not to do" (Boyne 27). Although, it can be said that his mother is also a poor influence in the way that she promotes the common notion throughout Germany during this time to ignore what is happening, as she tells him, "War is not a fit subject for conversation" (Boyne 69). Bruno is surrounded by people who are either raising him to be a future Nazi or trying in vain to teach him how to be a decent human being while simultaneously asking him to ignore the darkness that surrounds him. If those you trust and love to raise you into who you are meant to be are sending mixed signals that mostly point toward the direction of darkness, it makes perfect sense that you would eventually head toward the darkness. While this was not the end result for Bruno, it was for young Gretel. In many ways, this is what happened to much of Germany's youth during this time.

Throughout Boyne's novel, we are reading of an unimaginable place through the eyes of someone who is outwardly oblivious, yet subconsciously aware of an underlying tone of ominousness. Bruno is the boy who wants to tell the people crowding onto one train that his has plenty of room but does not because "something told him that if it didn't make Mother angry, it would probably make Gretel furious" (Boyne 41). He is the curious bystander of an atrocious place that seems like "another city entirely" (Boyne 100). He contemplates "What exactly was the difference. . . who decided which people wore the striped pyjamas and which people wore

the uniforms” (Boyne 100). He is the morally confused child that is able to feel guilt for not defending his only friend yet is unable to explain to himself why he failed to do so in the first place. He is the sweet buddy that brings food to share with his friend, but eats it for himself along the way, not knowing what that food would have meant to one such as Shmuel. Bruno is the naïve boy who feels increasing frustration over the simple fact that he “had to wear trousers and shirts and ties and shoes that were too tight for him when Shmuel and his friends got to wear striped pyjamas all day long” (Boyne 151-152). Through this character, readers are able to experience the confusion of being exposed to something too monstrous to ever comprehend completely.

It is this naivete that has been the discussion of various scholars since the release of both the book and movie. There are those, such as Gray, who feel that “His exposure to constant state antisemitism in his schooling would undoubtedly have shaped his world view and prevented the innocence and naivety which Boyne creates in the character of Bruno” (122). While Pinfold also feels frustration over the “implausibility of the nine-year-old son of a high-ranking Nazi officer not knowing who the ‘Fury’ is and apparently never having heard the word ‘Jew,’” she also makes note of the fact that his ignorance “is key to Boyne’s presentation of childhood ‘innocence’ and ostensibly allows an equally ignorant child reader to discover the ‘[emotional] truth’ of the Holocaust along with Bruno” (258). Pinfold’s latter declaration coincides with that of Bayer and myself, in that I believe we needed that innocence to open up the possibility for humanizing someone that world has demonized. Blindly demonizing the wrongful party does nothing but cut our understanding in half.

Furthermore, Bruno’s world was fabricated for him so that he *could* be unaware. Even as he was being indoctrinated with Nazi ideals, he was being shielded from his own reality.

Scholars Jessica Gildersleeve & Beata Batorowicz believe that this was “not about parents who present a false reality to their children, but parents who insist on a false reality for the nation-state” (36). Germans fiercely relied on this false reality in order to uphold their ideals and assume the moral higher ground when, in fact, they were participating in the twentieth century’s greatest horror. Moskała, who takes note of Bruno’s limited knowledge of both his father’s position and a lacking in information overall, states that

The procedure of creating an alternative reality, typical of Nazi propaganda, is intended to provide the most idyllic image of the surrounding world and at the same time to curb its dangerous - in the eyes of the creators of the system - curiosity about the world. Thus, the Nazi system limits the boy's cognitive abilities. (107)

This leaves us to wonder, was it really so unrealistic that Bruno be only as aware as he was? Within Crasniński’s book, *Children of the Nazis*, there were many children of former Nazi elites, often around the same age as Bruno at the time of the war, who claimed to have little to no idea of the goings on within their own worlds. So, while the naïve narrative allows us to step away from our preconceived notions of the Nazis, it also allows us a certain awareness of the viewpoint of a prominent Nazi official’s young child. Bruno’s narrative puts readers in the position of only seeing the world as the Nazi ideal wants it to be portrayed. A glimpse into this world helps us to see how they lived with what they were doing and what was going on around them.

Additionally, Bruno’s innocent yet perceptive viewpoint allows us to see behind the veil to the place where someone who dehumanizes himself and others struggles to cope with his own humanity when he finds himself once again with those he loves. The humanity that these people

of inhumane actions somehow still possess is the key to prevention because if one is humane, it seems quite possible to stop him/her from being drawn into committing the inhumane. This is something to consider when coming to terms with the fact that even one's friendly next-door neighbor could transform into a supporter of fanatical and outlandish ideals, especially should those ideals serve his/her need for self-preservation. The point here is that it can be anyone, and even though the blood-curdling uniform may seem to demand it, we cannot stereotype evil. In the words of Hannah Arendt, many of the Nazis were "neither perverted, nor sadistic . . . they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal" (276). Even the humane can do the inhumane, which is what the humanization of the Nazis is meant to teach us.

In conclusion, Boyne's novel, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, should be seen as an eyeopener rather than an unrealistic portrayal of Nazi-sympathizing and German white-washing. Through the eyes of Bruno, readers get to learn what it meant to be a child of a Nazi, to love that Nazi, and to know that Nazi as someone other than a monster. We are also able to see the Holocaust through the eyes of one who is innocent yet born on the wrong side of history. Pinfold believes that "*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* not only reflects outdated understandings of the Third Reich, but also risks presenting the perpetrators themselves as victims" (254). I, however, would argue that neither of her statements are true. Instead, we should look at Gerd Bayer, who states that the author "implies that his book should be read as an allegory. By inviting his readers not to rely on the actual truth-value of his text, he implicitly shifts the burden to the significance of his aesthetic representation of the Holocaust" (164). Later generations need to learn about the Holocaust from all points of view because, as Gray notes of Geoffrey Short's analysis, Holocaust education can "promote antiracism, show students that their attitudes are culturally determined and to highlight the perils of turning a blind eye to evil" (123). Many people often assume that a

Nazi is a demonic madman, and that if we were faced with such a situation, we would be able to be on the “right” side of the fight. In reality, it is the height of hubris for us to assume our role in such a situation. Yet, we need books such as this to make us aware of what that evil can look like when it is being conducted by the ones we love most. Boyne creates a world in which we can escape our preconceived notions and experience another side of something we could never understand.

CHAPTER THREE

The Dutch Wife:

The Humanization of a Concentration Camp Official As Seen Through Multiple Perspectives

The Dutch Wife, written by Ellen Keith, a historical fiction novel set within both a World War II concentration camp and Dirty War Argentina, tells the story of a resistor turned prostitute and her affair with an SS official, as well as the story of a homosexual young man considered to be a political menace within tumultuous Argentina. While critical and scholarly reviews for this book are lacking as it was published fairly recently, in 2018, there is one review within Winnipeg's *Herizons* that eloquently sums up the importance of this novel. *Herizons'* critic, Mary Ann Moore, writes that

While it is common to categorize such perpetrators of violent and despicable acts as 'monsters,' and to view them as 'other,' Keith shows us that it is human beings who torture other human beings. This is what is sobering and enlightening about *The Dutch Wife*. Keith uncomfortably writes in the human elements of a man who does monstrous things. (35)

This chapter will follow up on the idea that we need books, such as this, to rid ourselves of the idea that it is not our fellow humans, but monsters that commit the crimes. I will explore how the humanization and inner thoughts of SS officer Karl Müller illuminate the struggles of common men as they are pressured into participating in the brutality they do not naturally condone, how the relationship between victim and perpetrator affects both parties, and how a Nazi officer's past impacts his homosexual son during political warfare.

Within Keith's book, three different narratives are represented. One of these narratives is that of SS officer, Karl Müller, who has just become the Schutzhaftlagerführer (second-in-command) of Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Karl's narrative is noteworthy because it shows the inner thoughts of a humanized Nazi who develops a relationship with a camp prisoner. From the start, readers are aware of the fact that Karl is not what one would expect of a high-ranking SS officer. For one, he is a Nazi by obligation rather than choice as he is the son of a true Nazi believer. For another, he is initially squeamish about all things brutal and unseemly without any remarkable Nazi-esque prejudices against any particular group. Throughout the novel, Karl's character evolves into someone who not only carries out the ideals of the typical Nazi, but occasionally, believes in these ideals himself. My argument is that by showing the inner struggles of this character, Keith is allowing readers to put themselves in the shoes of a once decent man as he both fights and gives in to his transformation into something resembling a stereotypical depiction of a Nazi. By doing so, readers are faced with the fact that, as James Waller, author of "Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing," puts it, "Perpetrators of extraordinary evil are extraordinary only by what they have done, not by who they are" (18). What turned almost an entire nation into monsters was not their souls, as their souls would look much like that of anyone else, but what they did despite having a soul.

Karl's transformation begins early within the story as he goes from an innocent and stable-minded man to just another Nazi drunk on the idea that he is a dominant force within some greater design. As he first enters the camp and takes it all in, there is the sense that he does not belong and is quite naïve. When told about the suicides committed by throwing one's body into the electrical fence, he begins to ask why. Keith writes that Karl naively, "tried to reconcile this gruesome image with the cheerful, robust-looking men from the road sign on the way into

the camp” (22). Until this point, he had little idea of what was really going on within the gates of Nazi concentration camps as he had bought into the propaganda that all was fine and dandy within these murderous camps. Unfortunately, it does not take much for Karl to start to feel the captivating effect of being a Nazi in power. It is during this same initial tour of the camp that Karl “felt what it was like to be a man of power. He envisioned himself a great Bavarian lord of centuries past, surveying the construction of a grand estate. He had the sense that he was part of something important, witnessing the rise of a great empire” (Keith 23). Waller writes “We must recognize that some atrocities are performed because of the positive outcomes . . . they promise for the perpetrators’ self-interest. Extraordinary evil certainly may be brought into being when people do not examine the ramifications of choices made on the basis of rational self-interest” (191). Readers need to see what it is about the Nazi ideology that captures the average mind, such as the feeling that one is powerful and a part of something greater than him/herself, to understand how it can affect so many.

This duality of Karl’s character is something we see again and again throughout the story from both Karl’s and Marijke’s perspectives. Karl struggles to contain who he is naturally with who Nazism is turning him into. One of his first orders as Schutzhaftlagerführer is to paint the walls of the execution room, because he simply cannot stand the blood-stained walls, despite being told that it is pointless. The part of Karl that did not condone the actions of the Nazi ideology in its barbarity could not cope with the job to which he had resigned himself. He found himself unable to eat because “Each time he reached for a piece of bread . . . he thought of those dangling bodies” (Keith 97). To reassure himself, he “fingered the skull insignia on his hat and reminded himself that he believed” (97). We must look at the inner turmoil of Karl’s, not to excuse him, but to understand how any of us can live with and even partake in evil. The

journalist Ron Rosenbaum once said, there is a “perpetrator within [all of] us” (qtd. in Khapaeva 89). Never is this more clear than when a perpetrator is humanized.

Karl’s psychological battle makes all the more clear that not all Nazis, even those of higher ranks, fit the cliched “madman” persona. Before Karl meets Marijke, he blocks out the horrors of his day by drinking and gambling with those he deems beneath him. To support this idea, we can look at the research discussed by Waller:

evidence of perpetrators’ lack of overt psychopathology is found in reports of their early reactions to the human suffering caused by their extraordinary evil. A wide range of perpetrator accounts reveal that initial involvement in killing often led to nightmares, anxiety attacks, debilitating guilt, depression, gastrointestinal problems, temporary impotence, hallucinations, substance abuse, numerous bodily complaints, and many other signs of stress reactions. (69)

Essentially, Karl is engaging in a psychological practice known as “doubling.” Doubling is a term which means to divide oneself into two functioning wholes, so that one of the half-selves can act as the whole self. This proves to be an insufficient psychological barrier as he still desperately seeks comfort elsewhere. Waller finds that “doubling is not sufficient to stand as the only, or even the central, psychological mechanism of even short-term adaptation” (118). He also notes that “Over time . . . fundamental internal alterations in the psychological framework of the perpetrators will increasingly diminish the need to compartmentalize. Harming victims can become ‘normal’ behavior” (Waller 120). Through the portrayal of Karl’s mental battle, Keith is illustrating the psychological metamorphosis that had to take place for a person to become a full-fledged Nazi.

Karl continues in his battle to merge the ideology for which he is fighting with the morality of his ever-present conscience during his encounter with the prison vandal. Though Karl knows what is expected of him, he rationalizes doing the opposite, which is giving the young boy another chance rather than making an example of him. To keep his sanity, when not with Marijke, such as after his dismissal of the young vandal, he fantasizes about being home where “the artists [were] as valued as the art, and where the only orders he had to follow were his own” (Keith 113). Yet, he can never escape the pressure of his duty as a Nazi leader. When he is no longer able to escape his order to exact punishment, he thought of his father “the highly praised officer” and how the “Third Reich had risen on the backs of powerful, decisive men – not cowards” (Keith 114; 113). Karl, unable to make himself disobey the order anymore, is a perfect example of what Nazi ideology represents: the need to please one’s superiors. “Nazi ideology certainly capitalized on this legacy of strong authority orientation. For example, the first of twelve commandments listed in a primer used to indoctrinate Nazi youth was: ‘The leader is always right’” (Waller 182). In this moment, when Karl orders his men to follow through on the command to beat and punish the innocent, we see a man both too moral to inflict the pain himself and yet too cowardly to rebel against what is expected.

One way that the Nazi ideology gained more believers was by portraying the hatred that it was filled with as something that was socially acceptable and even *necessary* for Germany’s revival. As time goes on and Karl is forced to become more invested in his role within the camp, readers see him try harder to make himself fully buy into the Nazi ideology. For example, when made to watch the film that depicts Jews as parasites, he twists the notion around in his brain to fit into how he sees the world. There is a bit of foreshadowing as he ponders the fact that “German officials in Argentina were doing a particularly good job of drumming up Nazi

support” (Keith 142). By Karl’s narrative speaking of the fact that most countries, America included, were turning away Jewish people, not only is the character finding an excuse for his country’s behavior, but the blatant antisemitism (and therefore evil) we are all capable of is brought to light. He goes on to say what many Germans of this time were believing: “wasn’t it only natural for them to protect the very foundation of the Reich. . . . to save their race from turmoil and decay?” (Keith 142). Karl continues this path of rationalization as he recalls World War I, after which, “they had treated Germans like the only aggressors. . . . robbed them of good men and then left them to starve” (Keith 143). Readers even see Karl buying into the propaganda that “the Fuhrer had done everything he could to prevent another clash of nations” (Keith 143). To further convince himself, he maintains that “The Fuhrer needed all of them to play their part . . . in restoring the Nordic spirit to its former glory” (Keith 143). In just these two pages, Keith illuminates the way in which many ordinary people allowed themselves to be fooled not only by the grotesque propaganda that gave them a scapegoat, but by the appeal that they were needed in the fight for their people, their country, their future. Let us look at Waller, once again, who eloquently states

. . . the perception of extraordinary evil is made personally and socially acceptable by portraying it as serving socially worthy for moral purposes. Perpetrators may believe this rationalization to such an extent that their evil is not only morally justifiable but becomes an outright moral imperative. Perpetrators can then justify their evil as essential to their own self-defense – to protect the cherished values of their community, fight ruthless oppressors, preserve peace and stability, save humanity from subjugation, or honor their national commitments. (186)

The power of something being socially acceptable cannot be overlooked, nor should the fact that as soon as an influential person/group declares something to be socially acceptable, the many will easily fall in line.

The most monumental moment of Karl's inevitable transformation is when he forced himself to not only accept the death and inhumane treatment that surrounded him, but to watch and eventually make the calls for death and inhumanity himself. It is through the power of words that he is able to make this transformation. One notable aspect of this instance (and ones to follow) is it focuses on homosexuals, who both his superiors and his father wish him to abhor. At first, Karl is about to let them off the hook, at which point the prisoners show relief, something that makes Karl "bristle" because he felt it meant that "They took him for spineless" (Keith 147). The loss of this perceived power results in his next action, as Keith writes, "The fear returned to their eyes, driving him on. They were nothing but weaklings, pansies. Degenerates against society, against science" (147). Karl later reminded himself of Himmler's idea that the Jews were pests but "the pink triangles were eating away at the German race from the inside out" (Keith 189). As Harry Oosterhuis points out in his essay "Medicine, Male Bonding and Homosexuality in Nazi Germany,"

Nazis justified their regulations on the basis of population policies. They were apprehensive at the appearance and spread of homosexuality because it would result in larger numbers of Germans no longer procreating. . . . sexuality above all served propagation, population expansion, biological health and the purity of the so-called 'Aryan' race. (187)

So, by rationalizing their inferiority with science and relying on his power, Karl starts to transform in the eyes of the reader. From there, a more brutal guard says, "Homosexuality is

polluting the Reich, impeding the Aryan race,” which if anything, just spurs on Karl’s realization that he must allow these prisoners to be punished. For the first time, Karl makes himself watch the brutality, repeating to himself “Dirty fags. Those damn, filthy fags” (Keith 147). When the beating was done, Karl does the most inhumane thing yet, and orders them to their deaths. It is in this instance that we see how Karl must use what has been taught about homosexuals as a mantra in his head so that he may do what is expected of him, something that goes against his nature. Why do we need to see this? In the words of Waller, “Activities can take on very different appearances depending on what they are called. Perpetrators facilitate moral disengagement by using euphemistic language to make their extraordinary evil respectable and, in part, to reduce their personal responsibility for it” (188). Within these few paragraphs, Keith is depicting the strength of words.

A notable aspect about reading the thoughts of an average man turned Nazi is that the audience is able to see how that person assuages his guilt with a mixture of self-assurance and avoidance, something that ultimately costs him his humanity and sanity. When passing the balcony where Hitler himself made speeches “promising to make Germany great again,” Karl could only think of the bars of the balcony and “the ragged faces of dying men behind them” (Keith 170). While he was having his moment of doubt, he thought of his beloved Marijke, who could both be someone to ease his mind and to remind him, “of the danger in thinking with your heart instead of your head” (Keith 171). Although, it seems that Karl would love to be able to get out of his head, which is seen when Keith writes, “Karl chewed slowly and drank plenty, avoiding thoughts of the man he’d seen throw himself into the electric fence” (171). We are not meant to see Karl’s battle between guilt and self-assurance that he was doing the right thing as

exculpatory but as our own awareness that extraordinary evil does not come naturally and not without a price.

Amos Elon, in his introduction to Hannah Arendt's book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, states "Evil comes from a failure to think. It defies thought for as soon as thought tries to engage itself with evil and examine the premises and principles from which it originates, it is frustrated because it finds nothing there. That is the banality of evil" (xiv). Karl is the perfect example of this as his former self and current relationship make it impossible for him to fully turn off his thoughts, which is why, even as his transformation continues, he can never hide from the reality of the situation that surrounds him. By this, I mean to say that Karl cannot fully complete the transformation because he cannot stop his conscience from trying to make sense of it all. One moment he is condemning Marijke's husband to a life of sterility due to an uncontrollable jealousy and misguided perception of ownership, and in the next, he is favorably comparing himself to the brutish guards he believes himself to be superior to. It should be noted that these same brutal guards had been having their own struggles with their actions as can be seen in the way that they too drank, gambled, and did what they could to survive their surroundings. On this roller coaster morality ride, he has moments of clarity in which he admits their coming defeat and the realization that there would be no sympathy from the Americans once "they grasped what they were doing at Buchenwald" followed by moments of typical Nazi-esque denial in which he feels he must "stay strong, stay dedicated. . . . It was his duty, to his family, to his people. The Wehrmacht had insurmountable power. . . . Hitler would lead the Reich to a magnificent victory (Keith 187-188). Unfortunately for Karl, no matter what he tells himself, he is haunted by the death and inhumanity that pervade the camp. As Keith so perceptively writes, "It took a man with an iron stomach to handle a camp like Auschwitz" (211).

It seems to me that Karl's issue is that he continues to think when he must stop all thought should he wish to fulfill his role as a "Bavarian lord."

Perpetrators often find solace in the notion that what they are doing is for the greater good. As defeat becomes more imminent and Karl's mind becomes more unhinged, he relies on this idea more and more. Following the bombing that took place at the camp, Karl is irrational in his thinking. He expects others, even victims, to feel as he does after the bombing of the camp. For instance, when he is passing joyful prisoners, he thinks "Had they no respect for even their own dead" (Keith 219). This pattern of thinking is continued as he reaches Marijke, only to find her in high spirits herself. He lectures her on the great losses suffered by the German people when he says, "Men with families were killed, even some of their children. . . . Innocent, good German children" (Keith 221). If the reader has not yet noticed, it becomes increasingly clear at this moment that Karl's state of mind is up for question. Not to say that he is a madman but that his inner battle of balancing of evil and morality has started to take a toll. He even begins to see his beloved Marijke as a "pathetic lapdog" whom he has spoiled too much. Thinking back to the Nazi-adored Goebbels, he tells himself that "Some people were born to lead. Others were weak and couldn't see past the end of their noses. They'd drag down society if they were given free rein. That was why Germany needed the camps" (Keith 221-222). Karl was trying with all his might to make sense of the nonsensical, which is explained by Waller's assessment that "People do not ordinarily engage in extraordinary evil until they have justified to themselves the morality of their actions" (186). When faced with his own culpability, Karl begins to think like a true Nazi, one indoctrinated with the lie that what they are doing is saving their country from less-than-human brutes.

Ideologies that are as strong in power and as intense in their ideals as Nazism can change the mindset of even the meekest of men. When an ideology's hatred is paired with paranoia, it can spell disaster, which is something Hitler fed off of as he created scapegoats for the downtrodden Germans. For example, as Karl's sanity continues to unravel, he begins to suspect the prisoners of sabotage at every turn. It is this paranoia that pushes Karl to his next step, the cruelest action of all. Karl initiates and takes pleasure in giving the order for three homosexual men to be beaten. "With each kick, each cry of pain, Karl felt his nerves settling, felt himself growing stronger. They weren't defeated, not yet. They wouldn't let their enemies win" (Keith 248). When called out by Marijke for his inhumanity, he retaliates by calling her a "Self-righteous whore," telling himself that he "couldn't waste the night defending himself to some prisoner, some irrational woman. It was beyond her capacity to examine reality like a man, like a responsible citizen of a powerful nation" (Keith 249-250). When thinking about Karl's idea that Germany is a powerful nation, we can look to Waller's theory that "There seems to be something about the nature of the collective . . . that brings out our worst tendencies" (29). I think Karl is the perfect example of what being a part of an organized and corrupt group can do to a person's state of mind. To support this theory, let us look at research by Gustave Le Bon, which contends that "By the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual: in a crowd, he is a barbarian – that is, a creature acting by instinct" (12). Nazis who may have once been average, and even moral, men allowed an organized and destructive ideology to reduce them to their base instincts, which is what Keith portrays for us through Karl's character.

Something that I find essential in the humanization of Karl's character is his moments of moral clarity. Waller believes that "it is *not* the nature of the collective that limits our possibility

for cooperative, caring, nonviolent relations; it is the nature of the individuals that make up the collective” (36). If we are to assume that this is correct, we can use Karl’s underlying morality to support the idea that the nature of individuals can be used for good rather than evil if people would only make themselves more aware of their own capabilities, both negative and positive. For instance, even as Karl tries to rationalize the imprisonment of so many people, he thinks of Marijke, who “didn’t deserve to be torn from her home” (Keith 253). This gives hope that one can step outside of the influence of even the most intoxicating ideology. To further support this notion, let us look at Karl’s next thought process: “[h]e began to doubt his understanding of the Reich. Were the Allies right to hate him? Was he supporting a nation, a dream for the resurgence of the German people, or supporting one man’s belief?” (Keith 254). He settles on the notion that Marijke was right all along, and “surely that didn’t create enough reason to despise them, to take their lives” (Keith 255). In humanizing Karl, Keith does not wipe him or Germany free of guilt, but rather shows humanity’s possibilities to resist the interpellation of such ideologies as Nazism. One of Karl’s most humane moments comes when he realizes that “he couldn’t ignore the weight of the lives in his hands. . . . that they were sending these men, so close to freedom to certain death. . . . he asked himself whom they were taking these men away from. . . . he started to understand how much blood was on his hands” (290; 310). Karl’s realization is not meant to inspire thoughts of redemption for those responsible for massacres. Nevertheless, we are meant to study Karl, and other Nazis like him, because, as Tinnike Everart says within her thesis, “The perpetrator’s voice cannot be excluded from the equation. On the contrary, understanding evil begins with recognizing the perpetrator in a shared human sphere” (45). We cannot simply ignore the humanity in the evil just as we cannot ignore the evil in the humanity.

In continuing with the destruction of one-dimensional prejudices, Keith depicts a Nazi in love with his victim. One of the most humane and relatable aspects of Karl's character is his adoration for the lovely Marijke. While it is apparent that he loves the idea of her more than the actual woman, as he seems incapable of truly separating his Nazi side from his moral side, his fascination and (mostly) humane treatment of her make him more relatable to the audience. This portrayal of doomed romance between victim and perpetrator is not meant to endear the reader towards Karl, but rather to highlight the fact that even the monstrous can be overtaken by their heart's desire. The unfortunate truth of the matter is that "a purely evil person is just as much an artificial construct as a person who is purely good" (Waller 18). While this ruins our childhood ideals of being able to categorically separate good from evil, it does make us more aware of our own possible demise.

The relationship between Karl and Marijke is significant because it is a merging of the victim and perpetrator. Marijke proved to be the fiery distraction Karl needed from the daily horrors to which he subjected others. Karl's narrative also makes it clear that he sees a distinction between how he reacts to her foul mouth and how another Nazi official would, which once again shows Karl's idea that he is somehow different from the rest. In this way, he is able to keep up the illusion that he is somehow more dignified than others of his kind. While this may seem unfortunate at first glance, I theorize that it is actually important in keeping his morality in mind. In continuing with this theory, we can look at the way Karl relished the fact that Marijke "was the first prisoner at camp who treated him like a regular person instead of someone to fear" (Keith 104). By treating him like a normal person, Marijke was keeping his humanity alive. Their relationship portrayed for the reader how easily the line between evil and good can be

blurred, as well as emphasizing the need to remind each other of the humanity that we sometimes bury within ourselves.

As their relationship progressed, Marijke would become more of a crutch for Karl, serving both as his distraction and his moral compass, something he simultaneously admired and abhorred. What often seems to escape Karl's mind is that she is not there (initially at least) out of love for him, nor is his presence, gifts, etc. some kind of favor to her, but rather she is there as a prisoner. Even though she was seen as a prostitute, a more realistic term would be sexual slave. As academic researcher Katarzyna Person phrases it "What was referred to at the time as prostitution would now be defined as sexual slavery or a form of sexual violence" (107). This begs the question, was it his moral side that fell for her or his Nazi side? I would argue that their relationship is just another way for Keith to highlight both the good and evil in Karl.

It seems to me that even though Marijke's character serves the purpose of keeping Karl from completely transforming into an inhumane monster, as well as, demonstrating how there is good and bad within even the best and worst of us, there is another purpose to their relationship. Waller writes of a shadow self, which is used to describe "the negative emotions and behaviors that lie concealed just beneath our surface, masked by our more proper selves" (113). Karl tries to hide this shadow self from Marijke, showing her only his proper self so as to win her over, yet it does not always work out quite this way. Unfortunately, the influence of the Nazi ideology does, at time, overtake Karl's actions and manner of thinking. When Marijke comes across Karl ordering the ruthless attack against the group of homosexual prisoners, his mask has been shed for them both. Karl, filled with anger and venom, tells himself that "work was work and she failed to grasp that," which is a common phrase used by Nazis unwilling to take on the responsibility for the evil they have inflicted (Keith 249). So, with this in mind, I assert that

Keith is using the love affair between Marijke and Karl as a means to show how he is avoiding facing that in which he is partaking. He is drowning himself in her and the idea that he is still the moral person of before despite his actions to the contrary.

Like the other books discussed within this thesis, Keith's novel has a parental theme represented throughout the book, which is essential in Karl's narrative as it gives background information that explains how someone unsure of Nazi ideals becomes a high-ranking official within the Nazi regime. Through Karl's narrative, the reader experiences the thoughts of one who has struggled but never quite measured up to his father's expectations, at least, not until he becomes the Nazi his dad envisions. Karl does everything from breaking off his engagement to becoming the second-in-command at a concentration camp in his efforts to please his father. Karl had his suspicions that the only reason he *had* gotten the job was because of his father, and "If it hadn't been for his age and declining health, his father might have fought for such a position himself. As a fellow veteran, Wilhelm Müller spoke of the Führer like a comrade, a man who understood him" (Keith 61). The elder Müller was a damaged war veteran, much like Karl himself turned out to be years later. Growing up, Karl's mother would try to assure him that the love was there just that "the war had damaged him in ways they couldn't see," and Karl would find himself "wondering what he'd done wrong, forging plans for ways to please his father" (Keith 61-62). His father continued to teach him ideals that became the pillar of the Nazi regime. For instance, he once said, "Being weak or sickly is not a condition . . . but rather a sign of indolence and a lack of character" (Keith 62). Significantly, the Müller family was "among the first to place their trust" in Hitler (62). Families like Karl's had seen their country crumbling before them, and

The National Socialists vowed to . . . take back what had been swindled by the Jews, the Treaty of Versailles. They would pull Germans from the sinkhole of humiliating defeat and economic weakness. The Reich would be great again, powerful among nations. A fresh start for everyone. (63)

Keith goes on to say that with all these hopes, Karl also hoped that should the National Socialists prevail, “his father might also soften, return to how he’d been before the war, capable of warmth and affection” (63). Keith makes it possible for the reader to see how one, such as Karl, could be swept away in the promises offered by Hitler and his followers. Though Karl had lost his father’s respect when quitting the Olympics, he found a way to regain his father’s confidence by joining the SS. Even as Karl “found himself grappling with the party’s views on race and the Final Solution” he continued on, because “his father had left him with such a feeling of pride and responsibility that he pushed the doubts away” (Keith 64). He even got a letter from his father that said to “expect great things from this man [Hitler]. . . . He’s the answer Germany has been searching for” (Keith 140). One can imagine how impactful the words of the man Karl most respected and wanted to please could be for him. Essayist Christopher R. Browning once wrote that “Explaining is not excusing; understanding is not forgiving. . . . Not trying to understand the perpetrators in human terms would make impossible not only this study but any history of Holocaust perpetrators that sought to go beyond one-dimensional caricature” (99). Trying to understand the influences that led a seemingly mild-mannered human being down the path of murder and destruction is not wrong, but rather crucial for our comprehension of our own race’s capabilities.

In further examination of why the parental relationship is important within Karl’s narrative, we must look at how it inspired the hatred within him. Karl was not one to

discriminate, as we learned from his past friendship with the young Jewish boy. It was his father who first taught him how to hate, and in particular, to hate homosexuals. The significance in Karl's father teaching him to hate this group is that it played a part in how he mentally reassured himself when engaging in barbaric actions against homosexuals within the camp. During Karl's childhood, Mr. Müller insisted that Karl report a fellow friend who was homosexual, to which Karl argued that he could not betray a friend. To squash these protests, his father replied, "Children have friends; men have comrades. Don't let some womanish emotions distract you from your duty" (Keith 144). It was at that moment, that Karl lost the part of him that was moral and innocent enough to fight back against such an injustice. In humanizing Karl and giving the reader this background information, Keith is doing nothing wrong because "to offer a psychological explanation for the atrocities committed by perpetrators is not to forgive, justify, or condone their behaviors" (Waller 275). Rather, she is giving context to a situation incomprehensible to many.

In *Marijke*, the reader finds a character whose misguided affection for a Nazi exemplify the duality in humanity. *Marijke* is a married victim of Nazi Germany faced with the issue of loving both her husband and the man whom she is meant to hate. Within this character, the reader is able to experience what it is to care for both the guiltless and the guilty by acknowledging the good in the guilty. *Marijke's* character can see both parts of Karl. We, as the audience, need characters like this when studying or learning about the psychology of evil and those who commit it because it awakens us to the fact that evil is banal and in every one of us. Waller, when reminiscing over Hannah Arendt's analysis of Eichmann writes that "The banality of Eichmann's evil leaves us with the real possibility that the potential for committing extraordinary evil exists in each of us" (102). While it would be easy to see the Nazis as an

unlovable evil that is separate from ourselves, that does nothing but cut us off from the possibility of truly seeing our own potential for evilness.

If Nazis were as inherently inhuman, as stereotypes would have us believe, it would not make sense for them to also be loved ones. Marijke's infatuation with Karl is used to show the reader how the Nazis were simply men and women who were just as easily loved as they were hated. For example, early on in the book, Marijke says, "The heart of a Nazi must be no bigger than a toad's" (Keith 44). Yet, it is in Karl's heart that she finds a dose of humanity to cling onto in her fight to survive her circumstances. Through Karl, she finds herself feeling the confusions of one who can see that humanity is rarely so easily categorized into the roles of good or evil. Marijke compared Karl to the other prisoners, and in this, readers get an even stronger sense of the humanity that rolled off Karl, as she says, "None of the other men had shown any concern for me . . . I didn't know what to make of this" (Keith 87). Though Karl was still a Nazi, and Marijke "had trouble relaxing in his arms," it is worth noting that she thought of the "gentleness in his touch" and his talk of music, which left her with "the inapt notion of a refined man" (Keith 89-90). Marijke's narrative goes a long way in breaking the one-dimensional mold as she could not help but to comment that "He wasn't what you would expect" (Keith 91). Could one who is purely evil, as many would expect of a Nazi, be considered "refined" by one whom he enslaves? Despite the obvious dysfunction of their relationship, I would argue that Marijke would not have been able to find humanity within Karl had he truly been the one-dimensional depiction of a Nazi.

Duality within a perpetrator can affect others' perceptions of them. Marijke finds herself thinking that "Perhaps the life of a Nazi was also lonely" (Keith 129). My evaluation is that this is not meant to instill feelings of sympathy for the Nazi in question, but to show how a close

relationship with a Nazi who has the duality found in many of those who commit evil can affect the victimized. She even notes that his “flinty stare and rigid movements” would eventually “soften, the warmth returning to his eyes. The gentleness that followed felt like it belonged to a different man, someone he’d buried within” (Keith 129-130). It is important to note that even as she found herself acknowledging these very humane traits, she still, at this point in the story, felt that “no one who could tear apart a family or kill the innocent deserved to be treated as an ordinary man” (Keith 130). Through these unique perceptions of a Nazi, the audience is forced to notice how a person can both believe themselves to be moral and yet commit the unthinkable. Through Marijke, Keith is able to portray how such duality can affect the minds of others, particularly, those who find themselves caring for the perpetrators.

In reading of Marijke’s feelings for the one who is responsible for such evil, the audience is being exposed not only to the duality of Karl, but the duality of Marijke. In this realization, it all comes full circle that both good and evil are in us all. The fact that she knows she is capable of becoming something less than who she idealized herself to be shows the capability in all of the human race of turning to less-than-moral impulses. She continues to struggle with this idea that she feels something for someone she knows is a part of the world’s evil, as Marijke says, “If I admitted to having some sort of feelings for Karl, would that mean I accepted what he had done as part of the SS? I wished there was a way to separate one version of him from the other” (Keith 206). I find this to be one of the most telling lines in the book as it portrays for the reader the real possibility of loving even those who commit evil, and by extension, becoming a complicit part of it, which was the case for much of Germany at this time.

Marijke, like many Germans of this time, found herself complicit in horrors of which she had no part simply by allowing herself to feel something for one who condoned and even

committed such acts. One of these abhorrent acts was the mistreatment of homosexuals. While it is known, as scholar Beverley Chalmers notes, that the brothels were meant to serve “as *treatment* for homosexuality among male prisoners,” there were also beatings and other medical procedures that took place when said brothels failed to “cure” homosexual men (186). Marijke witnessed such cruelty taking place at the hands of the Nazi she thought might be different. When she confronted Karl, he gave every excuse in the book that one would expect of a Nazi trying to justify his actions

We have to control the spread of that disease before it takes over the nation. . . .

We’re fixing them, my dear. It’s the best thing for them, for everyone. . . . I don’t do it myself, Marijke. I’m not a killer. . . . I do what’s best for my people. . .

Germany is my country. I’m not ashamed of that. . . . I have no choice. (244-245)

Marijke responds by saying, “A nation of executioners. . . . Are you afraid of the truth? Are you scared to admit that you’re like all the others?. . . . you pretend you’re better than them, but you’re just as cold and bloodthirsty” (Keith 245). In the words of Marijke, “I realized the grave risk I took in treating him like any other lover” (Keith 245). Keith does a phenomenal job of both humanizing this Nazi and showing how he rationalizes his unforgivable actions. By having Marijke have such an intense inner struggle about her feelings towards Karl, Keith is portraying for the reader the complexity of human emotion and one of the ways so many people allowed themselves, in a way, to be complicit.

Hannah Arendt, in her explanation for how ideologies such as Nazism are able to prevail, argued that “the essence of totalitarian government, and perhaps the nature of every bureaucracy, is to make functionaries and mere cogs in the administrative machinery out of men, and thus to dehumanize them” (289). Marijke and Karl both rely on this notion as an excuse for why Karl

acted as he did, while still living with the hope that he truly was humane underneath it all. Marijke says to Sophia that “Karl is different. He barely believes in the Reich. . . . he wasn’t beating them himself. What if he was just following orders? He would be in just as much trouble if he tried to defy the Kommandant” (Keith 273). Yet she knew that “Nobody but a fool would look at Mr. Hyde and see only Dr. Jekyll” (Keith 273). I think it is critical that we pay attention to the wording here as Marijke uses the word “only” to insinuate that one should acknowledge *both* sides of the person. While bureaucracy can be used as one of many explanations for how an average Joe can rationalize doing the unfathomable, it does not mean that we should look past the fact that the person finds it within him/herself to do such things. I propose that it is both the influence of bureaucracy and the nature of humanity to be both evil and virtuous that allow for such atrocities to take place. Keeping that in mind, we need to humanize men like Karl and relationships between the innocent and guilty so as to make ourselves aware of not only the pitfalls of bureaucracy but the dangers of our own humanity.

Marijke’s internal dialogue following her separation from Karl is essential because it highlights the roller coaster that is humanity. On the one hand, she fears for his future as a former soldier on the wrong side of history. This should not encourage a forgiveness, per say, but the acknowledgment that one who does the abhorrent can still be a person that another feels empathy for, no matter how irrational. Our acknowledgment of this can bring us that much closer to moving past our black-and-white outlook, which hinders us from ever truly comprehending this time in history. On the other hand, she is left with “the nagging worry that, in some small way, I was also complicit, for who could possibly feel any affection toward a Nazi” (331). We should note the moments of clarity Marijke has as it gives hope for humanity’s future. Her internal

battle with morality shows that we, as humans, can have both the light and dark in us and let the light prevail.

Readers are meant to feel with Marijke the struggle of coming away from the world in which Marijke was in love with not only another man, but a man who was the enemy. She is fighting to come to terms with the fact that even as she feels free to again hate those that did this to them, she still misses Karl. In Marijke's struggle, the audience is shown what it means to love someone who is the perfect representative of both the moral and immoral that comprises humanity, but also how a relationship between a victim and perpetrator can affect the victim even after all is said and done.

The fact that Marijke's story is not full of innocence and victimizing also adds to the theme of duality in humanity. Though she is still fighting internally to forget both the memory of and her feelings for Karl, Marijke also finds herself fighting to hide and forget the way in which she survived. The victimized often had to do things that were outside of their moral norm just to survive, and in this, we see the darker side of those considered to be on the "right" side of history. In order to humanize the Nazi of this tale, Keith also had to humanize the victim. The feeling of shame and desperate need to hide how she survived pervades her mind. Marijke is all too aware that her scars are not going to show through in the ways of other camp survivors. Nomi Levenkorn found within her research that "Survivors' feeling of shame and their sense of guilt that they survived, especially if they survived through the use of their sexuality, created a veil of silence on the topic that lasted for many years before being breached" (27). Through Marijke's shame, readers are able to understand how she had to dehumanize herself in order to survive. Keith's humanization of a Nazi combined with her portrayal of how the victims had to

dehumanize themselves in order to survive further supports my argument that every human is capable of the unimaginable when given the right circumstances.

To make it all too clear where she would stand in society if others knew of her betrayal, Marijke witnesses the suffering of a *Moffenhoer*, one who is labeled as a “Traitor. Dirty, filthy, moffen whore” (Keith 373). Ann Mah, in her study of what happened to female collaborators post-war, notes that *Moffenhoer* accused of “‘horizontal collaboration’ — sleeping with the enemy — . . . were targeted by vigilantes and publicly humiliated . . . heads were shaved, they were stripped half-naked, smeared with tar, paraded through towns and taunted, stoned, kicked, beaten, spat upon and sometimes even killed” (2018). One can only imagine the fear that lived within Marijke, not only for feeling something for one who was a part of the destruction of so many, but knowing what others thought of someone who could feel anything other than hate for such a person. Yet this begs the question, could she have ever felt anything but hatred towards him had he not been more than just a monster? The answer is in the realization that humans rarely ever singularly fit into the categories of good/evil or innocent/guilty. Marijke’s character and her conflicted feelings towards Karl highlight this point. Waller asserts that

We would rather maintain that extraordinary individuals, very much *unlike* you and me, commit extraordinary evil. We can then distance *us* from *them* and rest in the reassurance that extraordinary evil cannot be duplicated in ‘ordinary’ groups or cultures or in individuals with seemingly ‘normal’ human capacities. (102)

Yet, if this were the case, not only would such evil not be produced in such massive numbers, but these people would be unlovable. The fact that Marijke could have had any semblance of feeling for Karl, whether it was influenced by a sort of Stockholm Syndrome or not (which is a

debatable analysis), shows that humanity is not so one-dimensional as the labels of good and evil would have us assume.

To further support the exploration of the Nazi psyche, we can look to Luciano, a character that serves the purpose of portraying for the audience the ripple effect Nazi ideology can have on the subsequent generations and sympathizing nations. Luciano's story takes place in Argentina during the time of the Dirty War. Like Germany, the country of "Argentina . . . had been wounded so many times, its gashes so deep, that time could no longer guarantee recovery" (322). As a result, Argentina was "no longer a country of people but a fighting, snapping, growling pack of beasts" (Keith 301). Erin Blakemore, journalist for *History.com*, writes the Argentinian government would whisk "away political dissidents and people it suspected of being aligned with leftist, socialist or social justice causes and incarcerating, torturing and murdering them," resulting in the deaths of an estimated thirty thousand people (2019). Luciano was one of these unfortunate people. Following World War II, Argentina was the country to which Karl fled because it was a hiding ground for former Nazis, as the country itself was sympathetic towards their ideology. By the time of his son, Luciano's, adult years, the country had become a corrupt dictatorship itself, much like Nazi Germany. In seeing how Argentina followed in the footsteps of Germany through the eyes of a Nazi offspring, we are able to see what can happen should we continue to refuse to study past mistakes. Waller perceptively acknowledges the fact that "the persistence of inhumanity in human affairs is incontrovertible," yet he argues that we must accept our limits as a species if we ever hope to "structure a society in which the exercise of human evil is lessened" (278). I believe, as Waller does, that

It is important to understand the conditions under which we can be transformed into killing machines. . . . If we can understand more accurately how ordinary

people come to commit extraordinary evil, there is at least a faint glimmer of hope that we all may, ultimately, be delivered from extraordinary evil. (278-279)

While it is clear that we have little hope of ever becoming a truly peaceful world, we can hope to, at the very least, rid our society of the extraordinary evil that allows such brutalities to happen.

Keith clearly features the connection between 1970s' Argentina and Nazi Germany. The Argentinian government's tactics remind the reader of that of Hitler's Germany from the beginning of Luciano's story, when he is forcibly taken away in the night with no idea of where he is going. During his time of imprisonment, Luciano, much like the captives within Nazi concentration camps, is tortured for his audacity of speaking out against the government. Like Marijke, Luciano finds himself offering up his services as a collaborator just to ensure his own survival. In this action, Keith is once again drawing attention to the fact that extreme circumstances can easily influence even the most noble minded.

In the many ways that Keith shows how the two points of time in history are similar, she is illuminating for the reader what can happen again and again should we not study our past with complete objectivity. The Argentinian government, like the German government, covered up their mistakes and continued their legacy as best as they could. For example, women who gave birth within the Argentinian prison were not allowed to keep their babies. In order to not "miss out on an opportunity to flaunt their omnipotence," babies were either killed or adopted out to families the government deemed worthy so that the "child would grow up swaddled in secrets and lies" (Keith 153; 299). Another example is the power of the language used, such as referring to their murders as "transfers," and covering up their misdeeds so that they could continue. This is quite similar to Marijke's notion that the Nazis would never "allow us to survive as witnesses

to their crimes” (Keith 242). Following the war, the Nazi medical staff “collected their tools, broke test tubes filled with fluids and shredded stacks of paper” (Keith 327). Luciano, who holds out hope that they will spread the word once they are free, is brought back to earth by a fellow inmate, who says, ““They won’t ever believe what we’ve gone through. The military will do everything they can to make these places vanish”” (Keith 195). Finally, there is the similarity in sexual abuse and homophobia. Most everything that the unfortunate souls with Buchenwald concentration camp suffered at the hands of men like Karl is thereby suffered by his son. The pattern of hatred and destruction under a dictatorship will most certainly prevail should we allow for an ignorance of how these fascist systems are able to take hold.

Karl, like Bruno’s father in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, suffered the same fate as many of the fathers whom he himself was responsible for destroying when his son, Luciano, was taken away to be tortured and murdered under a corrupt system. It is through Luciano’s suffering, though, that Keith demonstrates that even Nazis can produce people who will fight back against evil because Nazis themselves are not inherently evil but have simply done evil things. Luciano’s morality is used by Keith to point out the discrepancies in his father’s own methods of survival. In one of Luciano’s imagined letters to his father, he says,

You think it’s best to stay quiet, stick with the flock, even if the flock is headed in the wrong direction. You’re wrong. We have to fight. We have to do something, we have to do anything we can, to show them they won’t succeed. . . . That we won’t let them win. (Keith 300-301)

In these few words, readers are not only given yet another psychological explanation for why someone falls in line when the line is committing mass murder, but it also shows that even the meek can fight against such unethical ideology. In the epigraph of the book, Keith quotes

Hannah Arendt, who states that, “It is far easier to act under conditions of tyranny than to think.” In order to do the unthinkable, one must stop thinking. Luciano is forcing himself to think whereas perpetrators like Karl, simply did as told more often than not. If an offspring of someone who was once an active participant in mass genocide can find it within him/herself to resist the pull of influential ideologies, corrupt bureaucracies, and human weakness, then there should be hope that through persistent examination, society can eliminate extraordinary evil.

While Luciano has never been told about Karl’s past, he suspects. His father, much like his father’s father before him, acts with the strict and orderly, homophobic, cold nature of a Nazi. He once writes to him “how do you manage to keep track of all your lies? How is it possible to lead a double life for so long without going mad?” (Keith 297). As discussed earlier, Karl, and men like him, engaged in a psychological process called “doubling” in order to achieve this double life. Just as it did not hold up then, it has not held up later in life, as Luciano can see behind the mask. Luciano says that “you’re a complicated man, Father. All iron, like a knight whose armor has rusted around him. But I know there’s more to you than that (Keith 197). There is more to every villain and every hero.

His father, though flawed as both a man and father, cannot help the humanity that seeps through just as he cannot help his past that does the same. Keith further humanized Karl through Luciano by describing Orion, the owl, that Karl painstakingly made for his son. This act shows his remembrance and regret over the painter and his son so many years past, which is significant because only the humanity within Karl would be left with such a strong connection to this memory. There is also the theme of music, which is something that brought together Marijke and Karl. Luciano speaks of the difference in music’s influence over his mood versus that of his father’s when he says,

The music is tormenting me. . . . all I can think of is what they're trying to cover up... Papa, somehow the music also reminds me of you. . . . No matter how much of an asshole mood you're in . . . once the LP starts crackling, everything changes. . . . It's like you become someone else." (Keith 153-154)

The irony is that the one thing that humanizes his father (because it brought him closer to the victim he cared for) is the one thing that threatens to dehumanize his son.

Yet even though the most corrupted minds have humanity within, sometimes, a person lets the fear and hatred overtake the humanity fighting to survive within. For example, when reminiscing on the visit from Jewish neighbors which did not go well, Luciano writes, "Maybe you felt terrible for what your people did, but that comes to those too cowardly to take a stand. Don't forget, you also failed me when they came to take me away" (Keith 225). It is apparent that those who fall into line with one corrupted regime are all the more likely to do so again.

Like humanizing a Nazi, Keith humanized an Argentinian perpetrator. Hawk, one of Luciano's captors, made the mistake of letting his humanity show through when he got the prisoners some more edible food with his own money. This, of course, was punished, which promotes Waller's idea that a culture of cruelty "envelops perpetrators in a social context that encourages and rewards extraordinary evil" (229). When living in a society that promotes evil and punishes virtuosity, it becomes abnormal to portray a sense of right and wrong. However, the fact that even the wrongdoers can do right, in spite of the consequences, is worth recognizing. In the humanization of those whom society has assumed possess an all-consuming evil core, we are acknowledging, as researcher of Nazi doctors, Robert Jay Lifton, did, that "Participation in mass murder need not require emotions as extreme or demonic as would seem appropriate for such a

malignant project. Or to put the matter another way, ordinary people can commit demonic acts” (5). Let us keep this in mind when judging history’s so-called monsters.

Each of these characters share the similarity of numbness mixed with self-preservation. It is essential that we analyze how this numbness and self-preservation affected their actions as it will help us understand how and why they were able to survive. Karl’s narrative, in particular, truly highlighted the allure of and desperate need for self-preservation. One example is when Karl took Marijke to see the flight of the birds yet was caught by his superior. He acted as if he did not know her and reverted back to his Nazi persona. Another, even more crucial example, is his actions during the bombing. At first, he set out to check on Marijke, yet opted for his own survival over the assurance of hers. He not only chose himself over Marijke but over those of his fellow soldiers. He ignored the cries for help because “All he could think of was getting underground,” and yet later, Karl felt “ashamed of how he’d ignored those cries” (Keith 214; 216). We can also look at when he saved her from being raped by the antagonist, Bruno/Hoffman, the supposed brute to Karl’s gentleman. Although he did ensure that she had a better doctor than the one whom he knew to be more monstrous than most, he still feared for what others would think. In his actions, the audience can see the power of both self-preservation and the need to fit into society’s ideals. For the final example, let us recall the way in which Karl chose self-preservation when fleeing the camp rather than staying and facing the music, so to speak. Karl’s narrative of his relationship with Marijke is filled with the ups and downs of morality, and yet, that is the point. Within this depiction of their relationship, Keith allowed the reader to see what it means to fight with the inner selfishness and evil that threaten to overtake our ability to be loving and decent. Some may wonder why we need to analyze Karl’s self-preservation as such selfishness seems to be in line with Nazi behavior, but it is this self-

preservation that got him through the war and even convinced him to make certain choices. For instance, he chose self-preservation by choosing to engage in the brutal acts committed within the camp rather than stand out as a disobedient subordinate. Although striving to comprehend the reasoning behind the unreasonable can seem unfathomable, “We must continually remind ourselves that a psychological explanation of extraordinary human evil is not exculpatory” (Waller 16). While there were many different factors that led him to that dark point, the need to preserve his own status and welfare was one of them. By accepting this, it makes it easier to comprehend how he could have made such choices while still being a three-dimensional character with both good and bad within him. Understanding the power of these things is essential in understanding the psychology behind what it takes to transform into a perpetrator.

While understanding the appeal of self-preservation is important, it can also be said that the comprehension of the role that emotional numbness plays is also essential. Without that numbness, Karl would not have been able to carry on mentally. It is quite remarkable how Karl is able to recognize his own transformation, as his narrative reads, “he grew conscious of how detached he’d become. He no longer flinched at men collapsing in front of him. . . . The corpses that littered the grounds seemed little more than a nuisance . . . the countless rows of prisoners mere numbers. Economic input, the currency of the Reich” (145). In seeing how Karl dehumanized himself, we are able to see how he was able to dehumanize others. Current and future generations need to educate themselves on the inner workings of the Nazi mind because “being aware of our own capacity for extraordinary evil – and the dispositional, situation, and social influences that foster it – is the best safeguard we can have against future genocide” (Waller 217). So, in studying Karl’s process of becoming a part of the collective inhumanity of his time, we can be better prepared to stop such an occurrence from taking place again.

As for Marijke, she chose self-preservation when she voluntarily became a prostitute within the concentration camp, knowing that it was her one chance at survival. She did this because, as authors Esther Dror and Ruth Linn note, in “extreme conditions people will do everything . . . without thinking of a future point in time when they will have to deal with the consequences (266). Marijke was just one of many women forced to make, as Lawrence Langer in his examination of the Holocaust, termed it, the “choiceless choice” (74). Another way she chose self-preservation was by disengaging from the prisoners who surrounded her. She says, “How they wanted to feel loved. I barricaded myself from them, providing the necessary comfort and nothing more” (Keith 200). In this sense, she is numbing herself to the suffering of those around her but had she not, she would not have survived. This is something that must be considered when reading on to Marijke’s stay in the clinic. She was one of the privileged even then as she was “one of few with a heavy blanket” (Keith 303). Yet it was this same blanket that smothered her “with its heat” (Keith 303). I think the symbolism here is that self-preservation comes at a cost. Yet, Keith forces the audience to realize that even the victims choose self-preservation. In this sense, it is all too easy to see how the dual sides of humanity can overlap. This further supports my argument that the nature of humanity is that we all have both good and bad within us, and by acknowledging this through the objective humanization of both our history’s victims and perpetrators, we can begin to create a society that has little to no extraordinary evil.

Readers see through Marijke the pull of giving into the numbness that threatens to take over one’s soul and the fight to feel something despite it all. Marijke knew that if she gave in too much to the numbness that was so appealing, she would lose herself, as is illustrated when she says that she is “determined not to be worn down, not to transform into one of the skeletons that

moved through the camp like the living dead” (Keith 11). She could see how “others looked ahead, their eyes vacant, unseeing. Those were the *Muselmänner*, the walking dead” (Keith 159). Yet, even as she tried to keep the numbness at bay, Marijke and those around her suffered the crippling effects of their work as time went on. Author of “Sexual Exploitation of Women in Nazi Concentration Camp Brothels,” Robert Sommer, says it most adequately when he writes that in response to typical camp apathy “feelings were deadened” (56). I propose that what the audience is meant to gain from this is the insight into what it took to survive such a place, both for the perpetrators and the victims. In seeing the similarities, we are not comparing and contrasting victims and perpetrators, but rather, seeing how human survival can often mean the dehumanization of both oneself and others.

In continuation of our pursuit to understand the temptation of self-preservation above morality, we should look at Luciano, whose response to his dire circumstances is mixture between that of his father’s and Marijke. He, too, chooses self-preservation by agreeing to work for the ones who have captured him and so many others in the hope that it might help him survive. Like both Marijke and Karl, he struggles with the morality of his choice. Keith writes that “Luciano tried to cut through the brambles of guilt, tried to convince himself that translating propaganda wouldn’t cause any pain, that a few English sentences couldn’t kill anyone, not directly” (121). Luciano’s reassurances given to himself are much too similar to that of his father, other Nazis, and Nazi sympathizers who tried to convince themselves that they were not responsible for any of the repercussions of their actions. However, Luciano, like Marijke, found a way to fight back through his work. Luciano knew that self-preservation would cost him too much. He writes to his father that “You probably think I’m scared shitless. You’re right. . . but more than anything, terrified I’ll live out the rest of my life in shame. Shame that in trying to

save myself, I somehow played a role in someone else's suffering" (Keith 323). Geoffrey Short perceptively states that

Students familiar with the Holocaust can hardly fail to realise the perils of turning a blind eye to evil. Conversely, when they learn about the exploits of rescuers, they will find it hard not to appreciate the value of assisting those in need. Most importantly, perhaps, they realise the good that ordinary people, much like themselves, can do even under the most trying of circumstances. (285)

The fact that Luciano fights despite the fear and knowledge of what it will mean for him should give hope that even though the duality of humanity threatens to crumble even the most moral of us under severe conditions, we can prevail.

Luciano's numbness, like that of many who live in times of chaos and misery, is his attempt to survive all that surrounds him. He knew that should he not be able to "hold on to his own thoughts, he would go crazy" (Keith 123). I propose that while his numbness is necessary in that it helped him to ensure the sanity he needed to survive, it was only with the addition of some feeling and awareness that allowed his conscience to override his initial instincts towards self-preservation above all else. In the end, it seems as though Luciano turned off his feelings in a way that allowed him to no longer be afraid, as it is written that "All he wanted was for the pain to end, whatever that took. . . . He was strangely unafraid. . . . he separated himself, his mind a haze" (Keith 355-356; 358). Luciano was able to die in peace not only because he was able to turn on the numbness full throttle, but because he knew that he had done what was right. In humanizing Karl, Keith showed the reader what it means to give in to the desire to survive despite what it does to one's soul, but through Luciano, she showed what it means to fight against those instincts. Karl chose the path of least resistance because he was afraid and allowed

himself to be swayed, but Luciano, decided against giving in to the madness despite his overwhelming fear. In summation, we needed the humanization of both characters in order to see the possibilities for humanity.

Essentially, *The Dutch Wife* is a brilliantly written novel that humanizes one of history's most dangerous perpetrators in order to depict the cruel and instinctual nature that lies dormant within us all and will continue to pervade the world should we not face our past. Yet, even as Keith humanizes the seemingly inhuman, there is nothing in her writing that suggests to the reader feelings of relativity or sympathy towards said perpetrator. To quote Moore, "Keith's writing is exquisitely spare, as if to leave readers space for their own emotions" (35). Within this book, Karl Müller, a high-ranking SS officer of Nazi Germany is shown as a quite normal and even docile man who becomes something much more sinister, all the while trying to hold onto his fleeting humanity. Marijke, a voluntary prostitute within the camp brothel, is a victim whose own conflicted feelings for her perpetrator bring to light how one becomes complicit in something as horrendous as mass genocide. Luciano, Karl's son and a victim of the corrupt Argentinian government, which is quite the repetition of Nazi Germany, is used to depict for the reader the positive and negative outcomes of surviving Nazis and sympathizing nations. These narratives are vital because they help educate the audience about the importance of fully looking at the three-dimensionality of our world's perpetrators in order to successfully move on. Marijke once said, "Don't waste time trying to rationalize their thinking. They don't deserve it" (Keith 43). Yet, I believe this to be a flawed notion as we need to understand the psychological influences that brought the most average of men and women to the depths of inhumanity. Waller notes that "some argue that rather than studying extraordinary human evil, we should simply recognize it for what it is and condemn it. . . . [because] an attempt to explain extraordinary human evil

carries with it an inordinate risk of contamination” (15; 17). However, he deconstructs this argument by saying that

We must not let ‘evil’ be a throwaway category for the things we are afraid to understand. . . . our refusal to attempt to understand human evil is a willful failure to know our own hearts, and, if anything, only facilitates the continuation of extraordinary evil in human affairs. (Waller 18)

Should we give in to the enticing one-dimensional ideal that Nazis are purely evil, we will miss out on the opportunity of understanding our own possibility of becoming dehumanized given the right circumstances, which in turn will result in history continually repeating itself. While there is little hope for a serene world, there should be hope for a world in which we do not engage in mass genocide. For this reason, “generalizations must be avoided” and an understanding must be fearlessly sought (Crasnianki 198). To conclude, we should all be aware enough of our own flawed morality to be objective enough in the study of history’s most paramount of perpetrators.

CONCLUSION

In chapter one, I focus on the possibility that personal shame, numbness, and complicity through love are probable reasons for a person's transformation into a villain and a country's acceptance of a collective evil. I also assert that the same person who allowed him/herself to transform can alter yet again as humanity is never stagnant. Within chapter two, I examine the perspectives of those who love and abhor a concentration camp commandant in order to understand how a once beloved man becomes someone capable of mass genocide. I propose that the calamitous circumstances experienced by men like Bruno's father following the Great War along with corrupt bureaucracies, nationalist propaganda and ideologies, and self-preservation all contribute to the metamorphosis seen not only in the commandant but in the easily influenced as well, such as his daughter. Finally, in chapter three, I use the three differing perspectives of an SS official, a concentration camp prostitute, and the son of said Nazi to explore the influence of Nazi ideologies on those they target, those victimized, and those of the future. I assert that humanity's duality, the interpellation of the Nazi ideology, bureaucracy, the need to please one's parents, misguided hope for a declining nation, self-preservation, and numbness all allows for a country filled with ordinary people to become a country filled with murderers. Complicity through loving the perpetrators, as seen in chapter one, is also used to explain how those who were not directly responsible allowed such atrocities to happen. Yet, despite all of these destructive influences that are shown to negatively shape the past and future, the narrative of the Nazi's son, who fights such wrongs within his own time period, is used to demonstrate the hope that there is for humanity should we choose to persevere.

In our modern world, we are currently experiencing the effects of an incomplete study of our past mistakes. As I write this thesis, Russia, ruled by an unreasonable and murderous man

who gives only half-truths on his best day, is attacking another nation. An article written by David Mack, on April 5th of 2022, alerts the world of Russia's grievous misdeeds within Bucha, Ukraine. Mack writes of civilians who have been

shot inside their homes or crushed by tanks as they sit in their cars. People tortured and summarily executed, their hands sometimes tied behind their backs. Throats slashed and limbs cut off. Women raped and killed in front of their children. (2022)

These are unthinkable actions that are happening *today*. Americans, the so-called "heroes" of World War II, are still whitewashing their own history of slavery, segregation, and the genocide of the nation's original inhabitants. Even as much of the country strives to progress, there are those who fight to keep critical race theory out of the nation's educational system. Asian men and women are being murdered out of misguided hate following the outbreak of this century's pandemic. I point these issues out not to discourage hope for our future but to encourage the education and examination of history's past perpetrators so that we may discontinue such senseless evil.

As flawed human beings, there is often the fear that by recognizing ourselves in those we have deemed inhumane, we are declaring our own blatant inhumanity. Yet, it is through our ignoring of such similarities between ourselves and the monstrous that we are ensuring the continuation of such atrocities. There is something to be said for the objectivity that allows us to step outside of our preconceived notions long enough to educate ourselves. In the words of Waller, "Education has substantial humanizing effects, and, when applied, can be an effective antidote to our collective inhumanity" (217). We need to allow for the objectivity when exploring difficult aspects of the past that ensures our complete education so that we may then do

what the Nazis did not, and permit ourselves to be further humanized, therefore guaranteeing a better future. In other words, we must allow for the humanization of the dehumanized so that we may comprehend how the most ordinary of human beings become the monstrous humans of our collective history.

If given more time, I would further research the impact corrupt ideologies and bureaucracies can have on the average psyche when paired with detrimental circumstances. Also, I would propose ways in which we may overcome such influences when the signs of their infiltration have been noted. I would even like to study which of us are more perceptible to such a metamorphosis as seen during World War II. In summation, I propose that research such as this is critical to our development as a hopeful and humane species.

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