

## A MORAL DILEMMA: EVALUATING *THE READER* AS A REPRESENTATION OF THE HOLOCAUST

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### ABSTRACT AND INTRODUCTION

Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader* depicts the predicament of second generation Germans through the sexually exploitative relationship between an illiterate former SS soldier and a fifteen-year-old boy. Using an allegory as the foundation for his narrative, Schlink crafts the love affair between Michael Berg and Hanna Schmitz as a symbol of the difficulties that the children of the perpetrator generation experienced when confronted with the guilt associated with their country's historic past. Reflecting the difficulty of separating emotion from justice, the novel navigates the possible moral responses of this generation – shared national responsibility and forgiveness of the parent generation. As the novel progresses, Hanna is put on trial for the crimes she committed as an SS concentration camp guard, and here that Schlink reveals an explanation for Hanna's actions: illiteracy. Such motivation, however, is problematic because it can suggest a reason to exonerate Hanna's crime. This, in turn, creates a moral dilemma because the absolution of a perpetrator may transgress a moral limit of Holocaust representation. This essay assesses *The Reader* for its value as a representation of the Holocaust in two steps. First, it proposes a moral limit to address the criticisms raised by the text and evaluate the novel borrowed from Berel Lang's "Radical for Historical Representation." Second, establishes that *The Reader* valuably contributes to our understanding of the historical past by meeting Lang's criteria.

### BEREL LANG AND THE MORAL COMMUNITY

Lang's "The Limits of Representation and the Representation of Limits," establishes a radical to calculate the moral value of a representation of the Holocaust. Lang founds radical on the dual nature of representation; that is, that in any given representation there is a representation that is excluded, a story untold by the story told. The choice in representing a historical event in a particular way leads Lang to a theory of the limits of representation. If there is a story untold, then there could be a misrepresentation, thus the transgression of a moral limit to the "imaginable and possible."<sup>1</sup>

This limit is represented in a mathematical radical as something established by a moral community. It is the "moral weight ascribed to a description or explanation [that] reflects the context of social proximity or identity in which the historical representation is addressed."<sup>2</sup> The "radical"  $R = (A1 - A2) \times W$  calculates the factual distance between,  $A1$ , the text, and  $A2$ , the representations excluded by the text, multiplied by  $W$ , the weight of the moral community. The application of this radical to Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader* serves as a useful method for evaluating the inherent moral criticism which the novel inspires – especially since it features a measure of moral judgment in its calculation. Before applying the radical to the text, however, this essay needs to establish a means for understanding how a moral community creates a limit to a representation.

A moral community, as defined by Lang, is a consensus among individuals in a social group that agrees upon an understanding of right or wrong and thus possesses moral power for condemning or valorizing a representation – in this case, of the Holocaust. The question arises, however, of how the community determines what is morally right and wrong. Is there an ultimate truth that they prescribe? Can there be multiple moral communities and, if so, is there a truth among all of them that supersedes their differences? How do we evaluate a piece of work for its representational value if moral communities possess differing opinions as to what is appropriate, what is a truth, what is morally

responsible? Lang begins by explaining, “the notion of the moral community [is] the interwoven dependencies and claims that, ill defined as their boundaries are, are nonetheless distinguishable from the conception, indeed from the possibility of a universal moral language, on the one hand, or a private moral language, on the other.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, the moral community does not determine what is morally acceptable, what is a limit to representation in accordance with either universal truths or private subjective terms. Rather, there is a third realm in which Holocaust representation is understood in the context of universal morality yet depicted through an individual lens. Finding this explanation unsatisfactory, and frankly, ambiguous, I endeavor below further to define how a moral community determines what is morally acceptable and what answer we can find in Lang’s third realm.

### **MORAL RELATIVISM, MORAL OBJECTIVITY, & PLURALISTIC RELATIVISM**

Berel Lang’s explanation of the moral community reflects the long philosophical debate of whether moral questions have objective answers. Indeed, the way in which moral limits are established can be understood within the framework of the arguments in this debate. Are answers to moral questions always relative, indeterminate by a universal dictum? Or is there always a negotiation of the moral values of a particular group?<sup>4</sup> Moreover, does the Holocaust create a realm in which the answers to an ethical question about representation require a fusion of moral objectivity and moral relativism within the moral community assessing the text?

Philosopher Gilbert Harman explains that “moral relativism claims that there is no such thing as objectively absolute good, absolute right, or absolute justice; there is only what is good, right or just, in relation to this or that moral framework. What someone takes to be absolute rightness is only rightness in relation to (a system of moral coordinates determined by that person’s values.”<sup>5</sup> Applying this theory to Lang’s moral community and radical, every moral community creates limits according to its own moral framework, its understanding of what is good, right or an acceptable representation. In effect, the moral community in the radical does not have to be a constant across cultural groups and norms. Different communities can at the same time find a representation to be within the limits or to have transgressed a moral limit of representation.<sup>6</sup> There is no one universal truth that applies to all moral communities. Moral limits are, and depend on, the individual reader, social group, critic, or culture assessing the textual representation of the Holocaust.

The converse of this view of moral limits is founded in moral objectivity. According to Judith Jarvis Thomson, Moral Objectivity claims that “it is possible to find out about some moral sentences that they are true.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, moral objectivity and Lang’s radical would affirm that from one moral community to another there exists a constant, ultimate truth, and that it is this universal truth that establishes a moral limit. The differing moral communities consolidate their relative moral values in recognition of an overriding moral truth, one that they come to recognize already exists. While Moral Relativism dictates that two different moral communities can create distinct moral limits, Moral Objectivity would say that eventually both of these moral communities would find that they must subscribe to a universal moral limit established by the natural order of things.

Neither of these theories, however, can fully explain how the moral community should determine the moral limit. Moral Relativism puts disagreeing communities at odds, while Moral Objectivity erases individual, dissenting views.

This dilemma is complicated further when put into the context of representing the Holocaust, which, having changed the perception of the imaginable, affected the world at large, and thus permitted a variety of perspectives and experiences to represent its historical impact. According to Lang, there was not a single person living during that time, or afterwards, not in some way affected by the Holocaust.<sup>8</sup> Experiences, though, were subjective, and as such, perceived in relative terms. Yet, the Holocaust changed the way in which morality was perceived. Human rights tribunals pushing for norms against crimes against humanity created a need for universal criteria that would create a standard for right and wrong so that such an atrocity would not recur. It follows that individual experiences had to be negotiated to some extent to reflect this new world order: “the instances of historical representation judged in that formula are individual events; no less necessarily, the weights attached to them would reflect the same particularity,” meaning a normalized universal particularity.<sup>9</sup> Lang provides an example

of such an individual event that reflects a universal particularity when considering the case against Holocaust deniers: “facts immaculately conceived can only be immaculately judged.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, to deny that the Holocaust happened would be to cross a fact immaculately conceived and would transgress a universal truth, a moral limit based on an objective moral value. That the Holocaust happened is fact, and to deny this fact in the post-Holocaust consciousness would be impossible. Where does this leave the question then? Lang suggests a contextualization of moral weight; a third realm. It is useful to view this third realm in the context of Pluralistic Relativism.

Pluralistic Relativism contends that “a person can be fully committed to, and engaged in, a particular moral outlook while recognizing that other moral outlooks, in some respects incompatible, are also valuable. . . .”<sup>11</sup> That is, differing moral communities strive to compromise as they negotiate their moral conceptions and arrive at an accommodated truth. The moral limit is an agreed upon accommodated truth that satisfies the differing moral communities while establishing one moral limit by which all differing communities can measure a representation. Using Pluralistic Relativism, moral communities can retain relative, subjective value judgments, while being accommodated to a universal truth that functions to evaluate a representation and in which a Holocaust representation can be justly calibrated.

### **PLURALISTIC RELATIVISM AND THE READER**

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With a method for establishing a moral community determined, the moral limit of Berel Lang’s radical can now be applied to Bernhard Schlink’s *The Reader*. For the purposes of this analysis, the moral community is defined as the critical community: the readers and literary critics of the novel. This permits a normalization of the cross-cultural readership in which categories of critical reception, negative and positive, become the valued assessors of the novel.<sup>12</sup> As an international best seller, *The Reader* has been widely praised and criticized in both Germany and abroad. Therefore, to have prescribed the moral community by culture and geography would have distorted critical receptions. Rather, we can view the two major opposing views as two separate moral communities that negotiate a limit under the principles of Pluralistic Relativism, so that the novel may be properly evaluated against the Langian radical.

There are two main streams of criticism of *The Reader*. The first regards *The Reader* as an exemplary piece of Holocaust literature because of its unique expression of the second generation German dilemma. The second, by contrast, finds that the novel violates a moral limit by offering a reading that absolves an SS soldier responsible for many deaths. These two critical stances reflect two distinct moral communities, each with different perceptions of the transgression of moral limits. One establishes a moral limit at the possibility of forgiving an SS officer and contends that the novel transgresses the limit. The other believes that the possibility that readers might think an SS officer is forgiven is secondary to the real issue of the novel, second generation German guilt, and thus does not find that a moral limit has been transgressed. Daniel Reynolds and William Donahue perhaps epitomize these two opposing moral communities.

William Donahue in his article, “*Der Vorleser* and the Moral Limits of Holocaust Fiction” reviews the various responses to the novel, and finds that there is an overwhelming sense that “*Der Vorleser* [the Reader] is more concerned to establish Hanna, [the murderous SS officer,] as victim than as perpetrator. . . . Hanna’s wartime guilt is not absolute or specific, but relational and vague.”<sup>13</sup> He cites three prominent American critics who individually criticize the novel for the same reason. He quotes Cynthia Ozick: “the plot of Schlink’s narrative turns not on the literacy that was overwhelmingly typical of Germany but rather on an anomalous case of illiteracy, which the novel itself recognizes as freakish.”<sup>14</sup> By using a character that is symbolic rather than realistic, Schlink is asking his audience to forgive Hanna for her actions since she is a victim of her socioeconomic circumstance. Furthermore, Donahue cites Eva Hoffman: “In linking illiteracy and brutality . . . Schlink is introducing explanatory ideas about the Holocaust that have been deeply discredited precisely by that event.”<sup>15</sup> Hoffman cautions readers that it is impermissible to exonerate Hanna just because she is illiterate, which is what the text seems to do.<sup>16</sup> According to these readers and critics, and therefore, to this moral community, “whatever [Berg] may have done or failed to do in his adolescent love affair with Hanna is clearly incommensurate with the guilt of adult guards who stood by while their wards burned to death; and from an analytic point of view

it verges frankly on the obscene that [Schlink] should even juxtapose these two kinds of guilt."<sup>17</sup> The exoneration of Hanna, in the view of this moral community, is unacceptable; it transgresses the moral limit of representation: "[The Reader] is a book that crosses boundaries, both national and aesthetic, and that subtly blurs distinctions between perpetrators and their victims, between participants and observers."<sup>18</sup>

Daniel Reynolds responds to these critics, including Donahue, by asserting that a reading that identifies Hanna as a victim ignores the very message the allegory of the novel presents.<sup>19</sup> Reynolds and the moral community he represents do not create a moral limit of the text at the exoneration of Hanna because they do not read the text as having exonerated her at all. Rather, they credit such a moral limit to a misreading of the text: "Both Ozick and Bartov correctly identify the sympathetic strains . . . but their readings fail to account for the perhaps less obvious . . . critical strains."<sup>20</sup> For Reynolds, these same issues of illiteracy and style do not indicate Hanna's absolution but her culpability: "Her conscious refusal to expose her illiteracy at the trial reveals her agency not passivity, and illustrates her concealment as a choice, for the consequences of which she is morally accountable."<sup>21</sup> In this moral community, illiteracy is not seen as an excuse to forgive Hanna, but a reason to condemn her. "It is true," Reynolds avers, "that Michael never explicitly rejects the notion that illiteracy excuses Hanna's crimes, but it is also the case that he regards it neither as adequate nor as exonerative."<sup>22</sup> Such a notion is supported by another critic, Jeremiah Conway: "Michael accepts that Hanna is responsible for her actions. If he did not, his lifelong struggle to reconcile his love for her and his horror at her deeds would have never materialized. He has compassion for Hanna *in spite of* her responsibility for her actions. This is what makes the novel so compelling."<sup>23</sup> Thus, this moral community does not believe that *The Reader* has transgressed a moral limit of representation since it did not read the novel as raising the possibility for her exoneration.

Berel Lang's radical, however, does not allow for two distinct moral limits when evaluating Holocaust representation. An ultimate line or truth must exist. Pluralistic Relativism offers a method for determining the moral limit in *The Reader* by permitting these two moral communities to *negotiate* an ultimate right or wrong; a universal truth; a moral limit. Although the two communities differ in their moral assessments, they do accommodate each other in agreeing, consciously or not, on the actual moral limit. Both concede that to exonerate an SS officer in a representational of the Holocaust would be to cross the boundaries of morality. The opposition arises because one community declares this limit and finds that the novel has transgressed it, whereas the other does not read the limit as valid since it does not see the novel as offering a reading, a possibility of exonerating an SS officer. How, then, do we accommodate their opposing opinions of whether or not the work has actually established and transgressed the moral limit? Perhaps it is useful to see the issue of exoneration as more of a possibility than an absolute. That is to say, if the moral communities can accommodate their values to grant the possibility that the text permits both interpretations – that the novel offers a *reading* of exoneration but does not *exonerate* the SS officer – then the two moral communities can agree. The moral limit of exoneration has not been transgressed, but the suggestion still has value as an evaluative force. The suggestion of exoneration still raises the question of relevance when put into the context of second-generation German experience. In this accommodation of moral value, both communities agree that the novel suggests a consideration of the moral limit of exonerating an SS officer in *The Reader* as a representation of the Holocaust, but does not transgress the limit.

### EVALUATING THE READER

Having established a definition for the moral limit and the moral community in evaluating *The Reader*, all the components of Berel Lang's radical can now be applied. The formula of  $R = (A1 - A2) \times W$ , requires that we calculate the factual distance between the particular representation of second-generation Germans provided by *The Reader* and all other representations of second-generation Germans excluded. The remainder is then multiplied or measured against the weight of the moral community, in this case the moral limit of exonerating an SS officer in a representation of the Holocaust. Finally, after a value is determined, the representation is measured against the test of silence; determining whether or not

“silence itself would have been more accurate or truthful or morally responsive”<sup>24</sup> than the contribution of this text.

Before evaluating the novel in the formula, it may be useful to recall the narrative, which is split into three parts. In the first, a sexual relationship develops between fifteen-year-old Michael Berg and Hanna Schmitz, a woman twice his age. Hanna exchanges sex for Michael’s reading to her, sometimes withholding intimacy if Michael does not read. Then, Hanna disappears and the second part of the narrative commences with Michael a law student attending a special seminar involving a trial in which concentration camp guards are being prosecuted by an international tribunal. At this time, Hanna reenters Michael’s life as the reader and Michael learn that she is an illiterate former SS concentration camp guard. As the trial proceeds, Hanna is sentenced to life imprisonment while Michael is increasingly tormented by conflicting feelings of guilt, justice, love, and betrayal. For the rest of the book, Hanna teaches herself how to read with reading tapes that Michael sends to her in prison. The narrative concludes with Hanna committing suicide the day before her release and Michael bringing a tea caddy and Hanna’s savings to the daughter of the Jewish witness who wrote an account of the crimes the concentration camp guards committed.<sup>25</sup>

The representation of Germans in *The Reader* is unusual, since, as Cynthia Ozick, remarks, “Schlink’s narrative turns not on the literacy that was overwhelmingly typical of Germany” . . . “but rather on an anomalous case of illiteracy, which the novel itself recognizes as freakish.”<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, as Donahue points out, “the narrative logic of this book excludes the notorious Nazi perpetrators in its focus on the more common and less enthusiastic collaborators.”<sup>27</sup> The second-generation German stories that are not represented by the text, then, are all other stories inclusive of families in which parents were perpetrators or uncles, aunts, and cousins were bystanders or guards or high-ranking officials in such groups as the *Einsatzgruppen*, the mobile killing squads, and the Gestapo. The large distance between the particular of what was represented in the novel and what was not, however, can perhaps be bridged by what was represented, and the medium with which the narrative was created.

The particularity of representing second-generation Germans through the framework of a romantic relationship encourages an interpretation that requires the reader to consider the narrative as an idea and moral discourse. According to Daniel Reynolds:

*Der Vorleser* . . . makes the case that fiction, including its post-modern variants, offers an alternative to non-fiction that by no means must lead to utter relativism. . . . *Der Vorleser* demonstrates how fiction represents truth differently. To be more precise, fiction foregrounds the process and premise that informs the search for truth.<sup>28</sup>

Reynolds is trying to demonstrate, that by crafting this representation of second-generation German guilt in the form of a romance with such a unique perpetrator, Schlink can prompt his readers to question morality and what is accepted as truth. The romance between the two does not just serve as a traumatic event in Michael’s life; it also “functions as a critique of some Germans’ willingness to be Hitler’s executioners, or it may connote both the love and susceptibility that link the second generation of Germans to their parents.”<sup>29</sup> As such, the fictional framework of the narrative promotes the allegory of this romance as a representation of German society and second-generation German experience.

The question then arises: is the allegory strong enough to overcome the specificity of its lens? An answer may be found by applying Lang’s last component in the formula, which is the moral community. In this case, the moral community, the critics and readers of the novel, have determined that the moral limit of *The Reader* is transgressed only if it is found that Schlink exonerates Hanna Schmitz by the end of the narrative. If the moral community cannot accept this fictionalized account of second-generation German experience because it has transgressed the limits of representation, then the strength of the allegory will not stand up to the formula. But what if *The Reader*, through a Pluralistic Relativist consensus in the moral community, does not transgress the moral limit of exonerating an SS officer, and the novel does not transgress a limit as a representation of the Holocaust?

Ultimately, the allegory of the romance between Michael and Hanna more suggests seduction than mutual love. Seduction evinces itself throughout the novel, for instance when Michael returns to Hanna’s apartment after a quarrel. He asks, “‘Do you love me?’ She nodded again. ‘The tub is still full.

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Come, I'll bathe you.' Later I wondered if she had left that water in the tub because she knew I would come back. If she had taken off her clothes because she knew I wouldn't be able to get that out of my head and that it would bring me back. If she has just wanted to win a power game."<sup>30</sup> The seduction in her words and the intimation of abuse in the relationship – he is a high school student and she, a thirty-six year old woman – is evident. Many times after this incident, when Hanna gets angry she uses sex to reel Michael back in, or she withholds sex, so that Michael will read to her first. Reynolds argues that, "the sexual relationship between Michael and Hanna illustrates this nexus of themes. . . . [D]espite its tender moments, . . . their affair is marked by violence, mistrust and exploitation."<sup>31</sup> This abuse in Michael's developmental years traumatizes him, affecting his life, his relationships, and forever bonding him to her.

The romance as a representation of German society and second-generation German experience continues in the second part of the narrative when Hanna reenters Michael's life, this time as a defendant at the Nuremberg Trials. One day, a witness is asked about Hanna's selection of weak women inmates as servants. As she relays her account, the pattern established with Michael becomes clear:

'Yes, she had favorites, always one of the young ones who was weak and delicate, and she took them under her wing. . . . [O]ne day one of them finally talked, and we learned that the girls read aloud to her, evening after evening.' . . . Hanna turned around and looked at me. . . . [T]he presiding judge asked the lawyer . . . if he had any further questions. . . . Ask her I thought; . . . say it Hanna, Say you wanted to make their last month bearable. That was the reason for choosing the delicate and the weak. That there was no other reason, and could not be. But the lawyer did not ask Hanna, and she did not speak of her own accord.<sup>32</sup>

This part of the narrative makes Michael and the reader realize, that the relationship they shared was an abusive one: that Hanna consciously had used the weak and the vulnerable. Even so, Michael is incapable of believing the truth, which demonstrates the trauma, the deep emotional connection that was fused during their time together.

This trauma renders Michael incapable of separating his emotions and judgments. He conflates his ideas of justice with images of sexual interaction.<sup>33</sup> The crimes she committed and the lens through which we perceive the trial are colored by Michael's role as a narrator.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the sympathy and compassion that Schlink presents us with emerges from Michael's confusion. Caught up in the shame and guilt of his past relationship with her, he is unable to separate himself from her. This confusion reflects, fictionally and indirectly, how second-generation Germans felt about their parents and relatives. They could not forgive their parents for what they had done but at the same time they could not forget that they were their mothers, their loved ones, and to separate their emotion would have been unimaginable. Michael's confusion and desire to aid and protect her despite his conviction that she was guilty therefore "addresses the traumas, perceptions, and desires of the second generation of Germans."<sup>35</sup>

That Michael's continues to believe in Hanna's culpability despite his sympathy and compassion for her is demonstrated when he decides not to tell the judge of Hanna's illiteracy. Having convinced himself to speak to the presiding judge, he then says nothing: "I was no longer upset at having been left, deceived, and used by Hanna. . . . It would be too much to say I was happy about this. But I felt it was right. It allowed me to return to and continue to live my everyday life. . . . The verdict was handed down at the end of June. Hanna was sentenced to life."<sup>36</sup> Michael's inaction, coupled with his use of the word "right" to describe Hanna's life sentence reflect the conflict Michael feels and indicate that he does not exonerate Hanna. Rather, the allegorical, twisted, abusive love represents the second-generation dilemma of mixing sympathy and compassion with guilt and a desire for justice.

This allegory, which extends to part three of the novel, demonstrates how Michael's compassion for Hanna, and his portrait of her, epitomizes second-generation German guilt and shame by association. As Michael explains, "I had to point at Hanna. But the finger I pointed at her turned back at me. I had loved her. Not only had I loved her, I had chosen her. . . . I tried to talk myself into the state of innocence in which children love their parents, but love of our parents is the only love for which we are not responsible."<sup>37</sup> Michael blames her and recognizes her guilt but also sympathizes with her.<sup>38</sup> Schlink is not absolving an SS officer in the text; rather he shows the reader what it is like to be the loved one of a

perpetrator. Michael says about as much: "How could it be a comfort that the pain I went through because of my love for Hanna was, in a way, the fate of my generation, a German fate."<sup>39</sup> Bernhard Schlink, through Michael's compassion, evokes sympathy for Hanna, but not to exonerate her. He does this, as Reynolds asserts, to "move his readers away from easy condemnation into a deeper and more meaningful reflection of the moral dimensions of the Holocaust."<sup>40</sup> Schlink creates sympathy so that his reader might understand the perspective of second-generation Germans, who experienced a unique dilemma of forgiveness and guilt.

This analysis indicates that Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader* does not transgress the community's moral limit by exonerating an SS officer in a Holocaust representation. It does however, through its abstract style and invocation of sympathy, suggest a reading of Michael's compassion for Hanna as an exoneration of her culpability. This suggestion accounts for the range of criticisms that arise from a reading of this book, *but the possibility of exoneration does not mean transgression*. *The Reader* and its allegory are able to withstand a narrow representation of second-generation Germans by the universality of the moral questions raised. By representing how second-generation Germans continue to feel guilty because of their compassion, *The Reader* challenges the moral community, and its readers, to consider a different way of understanding the Holocaust and considering the perspective of a community that must deal with the consequences of its historical past.

Finally, as a way of evaluating *The Reader* against Lang's ultimate limit of representation – silence – it may be useful to compare the endings of *The Reader* and Simon Wiesenthal's *The Sunflower*. In *The Sunflower*<sup>41</sup>, Wiesenthal, an inmate of Auschwitz and later a Jewish Holocaust survivor, is appointed to a hospital detail where he is assigned to a dying SS soldier. On his deathbed, the SS soldier clings to Simon and confesses his participation in the mobile killing squads. Finishing, the SS officer asks Simon's forgiveness, but Simon refuses. Later, Wiesenthal, who returns to learn that the officer had died, leaves his readers pondering what they would have done in his situation. Would they have forgiven the SS officer? At the end of Schlink's *The Reader*, Michael visits the daughter, the Jewish survivor whose family and friends had been killed by Hanna and the guards, to give her the money and belongings Hanna had bequeathed him to give to her. The daughter similarly refuses to take the money that Hanna offers because to do so would, she believes, exonerate Hanna of her crimes. Instead, she tells Michael to do with the money as he wishes. Michael's forgiveness is never sought or mentioned in the narrative. In both cases, the Jewish survivor is given the authority to exonerate, to forgive the SS officer, and neither does. Michael, however, a second-generation German, must deal with the parcel because the responsibility of Hanna's culpability and exoneration is transferred to him. He must assume responsibility for the woman he loved, for the generation that committed these heinous crimes. Facing up to this transfer of authority and guilt must be measured against the alternative of silence. Without *The Reader* to represent this point of view, the perspectives of second-generation Germans, the moral questions of exoneration, the moral dilemma of an entire generation, and the overriding sense of guilt that now afflicts a nation, would not be presented. And the silence that would exist if this novel had never been written, would not be more morally responsible, more truthful, more correct.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Lang, Berel. "The Representation of Limits and the Limits of Representation." *Holocaust Representation: Art within the Limits of History and Ethics*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2000) 55.

<sup>2</sup> Lang 63.

<sup>3</sup> Lang 64.

<sup>4</sup> Harman, Gilbert and Judith Thomson. *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996) ix.

<sup>5</sup> Harman, Thomson 17.

<sup>6</sup> Harman, Thomson 18.

<sup>7</sup> Harman, Thomson 67-68.

<sup>8</sup> Lang 63.

<sup>9</sup> Lang 64.

- <sup>10</sup> Lang 66.
- <sup>11</sup> Gowens, Christopher. "Natural Moralities: A Defense of Pluralistic Relativism." Rev. of *Natural Moralities: A Defense of Pluralistic Relativism* by David B. Wong. (Notre Dame: Fordham University, 2007) 1
- <sup>12</sup> Donahue, William Collins. "Illusions of subtlety: Bernhard Schlink's *Der Vorleser* and the Moral Limits of *Holocaust Fiction*." (2002) 61.
- <sup>13</sup> Donahue 72.
- <sup>14</sup> Donahue 63.
- <sup>15</sup> Donahue 63
- <sup>16</sup> Donahue 63.
- <sup>17</sup> Donahue 63
- <sup>18</sup> Reynolds, Daniel. "A Portrait of Misreading: Bernhard Schlink's *Der Vorleser*." (2003) 238.
- <sup>19</sup> Reynolds 243-244.
- <sup>20</sup> Reynolds 244.
- <sup>21</sup> Reynolds 244.
- <sup>22</sup> Reynolds 245.
- <sup>23</sup> Conway, Jeremiah Patrick. "Compassion and Moral Condemnation: An Analysis of the Reader." *Philosophy and Literature*, 1999) 1
- <sup>24</sup> Lang 7.
- <sup>25</sup> Schlink, Bernhard and Carol Janeway. *The Reader* (New York: Vintage, 1998).
- <sup>26</sup> Donahue 63.
- <sup>27</sup> Donahue 67.
- <sup>28</sup> Reynolds 240.
- <sup>29</sup> Reynolds 241.
- <sup>30</sup> Schlink, Janeway 49.
- <sup>31</sup> Reynolds 241.
- <sup>32</sup> Schlink, Janeway 117.
- <sup>33</sup> Schlink, Janeway 146-147.
- <sup>34</sup> Reynolds 250.
- <sup>35</sup> Reynolds 251.
- <sup>36</sup> Schlink, Janeway 160 -161.
- <sup>37</sup> Schlink, Janeway 170.
- <sup>38</sup> Conway 298.
- <sup>39</sup> Schlink, Janeway 171.
- <sup>40</sup> Reynolds 241.
- <sup>41</sup> Wiesenthal, Simon. *The Sunflower*. (New York: Schocken, 1976).

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