

**INDIVIDUAL FORMS OF SUBTLE RESISTANCE TO NAZI HEGEMONY:
PORTRAYALS IN MODERN BOOKS AND FILM AVAILABLE TO AMERICAN CONSUMERS**

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to the graduate faculty of Salve Regina University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy**

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By

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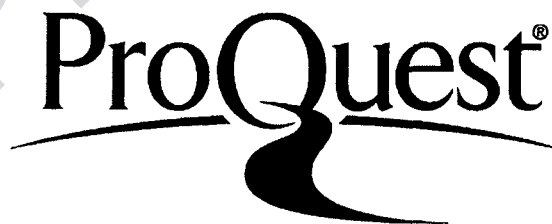
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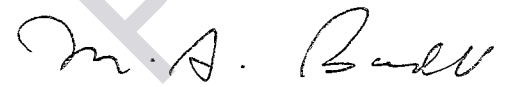

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PREVIEW

SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE STUDIES

This dissertation of Amiee Shelton entitled "Individual Forms of Subtle Resistance to Nazi Hegemony: Portrayals in Modern Books and Film available to American Consumers" submitted to the Ph.D. Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Salve Regina University has been read and approved by the following individuals:

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Dedication & Acknowledgements

This dissertation is dedicated to all the German citizens I know, as well as those I do not know, whom have struggled with their identity-both collectively and individually since World War Two.

I must say special thanks to several people, particularly my mother who spent Innumerable hours editing each word found in the pages of this dissertation. Without her I never would have been able to complete it. My son, age 6, who went into full time daycare for the summer so I could stay home working: to answer your question baby, Yes! I Am Done! Let's go kayaking!

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It has been a process. A process that has exhausted me, worn me down, and elevated me to heights I never knew existed. The process of becoming Dr. Shelton has opened my eyes to new ways of thinking, and changed my life. Like the process those who resisted went through to get to the point where they could act, the process of a dissertation makes you understand what you are capable of doing. For this I need to thank Michael Budd, Ph.D. the Program Director at Salve Regina. He was my tour guide while I explored questions of human meaning in a dynamic study of the past, present and future. I also must thank Dr. Daniel Cowdin, Dr. Melvin Deflur for providing guidance, critical reviews, and "plain English" when needed.

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Abstract

This study investigates portrayals of ethnic German resistance to Nazism in literature and films as read and seen by Americans. At the heart of this study is the question: what do Americans know about German resistance efforts to Nazi hegemony? To investigate this, an interdisciplinary lens was used to chronicle how popular books and films available to American consumers frame German resistance. This study categorizes the types of resistance portrayed and illuminates the characters motivations behind each action providing a typology of resistance. This typology provides more context for understanding the circumstances in which individuals under a totalitarian regime are constrained when making choices about resistance. The study follows the Reader-response theory which recognizes the reader as an active agent who imparts real existence to the work and completes its meaning through interpretation. In this vein, three types of source material are important to learn what people know of the subtle non-conformist, dissenting strands of opinion and “unorganized” individual resistance efforts of Germans: historical fiction, memoirs and films.

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Preface

I have always been interested in World War II. Perhaps this is due to the multiple books I read as a child, or the number of movies distributed in the United States I watched concerning the war. It could also be because my grandfather, Boatswain's Mate First Class Laurence Eberly, was on a ship at Pearl Harbor during the bombing in 1941. As the attack started, he was in the process of writing a letter to my grandmother. My grandfather did not speak of the war as I was growing up. I suppose it was too painful. Only after a close family friend joined the Navy was he able to talk about his experiences, speaking at schools about his experiences and becoming active in the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association.

I grew up with German reminders of WWII around me: my uncle was called "Kraut" for his German heritage; my neighbor Jan Giltjes was imprisoned in Dachau for political resistance in Belgium and lived by escaping in a manure truck; Jan's sister Jane who had worked in a uniform factory in Belgium, sewing hot pepper into the seams to make German soldiers itch, and who transported messages in the saddlebags of her bike as part of the resistance; and my mother's German exchange student, Brigitte Heucke from Bavaria who has become a lifelong friend. Perhaps it is not surprising then that I immediately felt an affinity to Germany upon visiting the country.

Anyone who knows me knows I have no problem standing up for something when I have determined it wrong. I'm not saying I'm particularly moralistic, but there are times I consider principle to be involved. Therefore, I do not think it would have surprised anyone that I have a hard time seeing myself as a bystander in Nazi Germany. The point I am making is that I am not unique. There are people like me everywhere,

people who stand up for what they think. If I am like this, then there are others too. How many people are like me? Hundreds? Thousands? Millions? Even in Germany during Nazism.

What I think crystallized this study for me came from my capstone course at Salve Regina University while working on my doctorate. I had been planning to do my dissertation on civic duty and had collected some 1000 surveys from college students investigating their thoughts of civic duty and where they believed they had learned the concept. However, a discussion concerning morality during war shook me enough to change the direction of my research. In a class full of U.S. military officers, some teaching at the Naval War College in Newport, the opinion was that being in the German army was synonymous with being a Nazi; that all German citizens supported Hitler's regime. While I know some parts of the German military indeed committed crimes against humanity, to lump everyone into categories of all or nothing sincerely upset my sense of justice, of reality. I empathize with the German people for the strict categories they found themselves placed. Furthermore, I know it is wrong. Wrong, not only because it does an injustice to people, however, more importantly for me, wrong because it is not true.

It is all too easy for citizens who did not live during the years of Nazi rule to place Germans in rigid categories, such as ally or enemy, persecutor or resistor. Most of us have certain expectations about bystanders or witnesses to events. Depending on the circumstances, we usually make assumptions about behavior and make moral judgments about the consequences of what we perceive to be their noninvolvement or passivity (Barnett, 1999). Furthermore, the pictures and films taken by allies in the days after the

war depicting the inhumane treatment in concentration camps make it easy to label all Germans as Nazis. Studies, both quantitatively and qualitatively through a variety of disciplinary lenses into the complex nature of German resistance to the Nazis are still ongoing.

This present study takes an interdisciplinary approach to study how German resistance is framed in various narratives in an attempt to understand what Americans know about how citizens of Germany remained human in the inhumane times of Nazism. Thus, this study investigates portrayals of German subtle resistance to Nazism in literature and films to determine what Americans know about German resistance efforts to Nazi hegemony. This project chronicles how popular books and films available to American consumers frame German resistance, categorizes the types of resistance portrayed, and illuminates the characters' motivations behind each action providing a typology of resistance. Ultimately, this study provides documentation concerning what knowledge American consumers have concerning the various constraints individuals faced when making choices about resistance in Nazi Germany.¹ This investigation will yield additional context in understanding American attitudes towards Germans in the postwar world.

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¹ Langer (2000) claims that the choices made during the Holocaust were 'Choiceless Choices' because the Nazis "human domination put people in positions that strained the boundaries of moral choice again and again" (p. 221)

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“Dissent is the highest form of patriotism.”
- Unattributed

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Humans face choice everyday. These choices affect us both directly and indirectly. Some of the choices reveal positive outcomes. Langer (2000) explains that Nazi domination “put people in positions that strained the boundaries of moral choice again and again” (p. 221). Langer pushes this idea farther by explaining that many in death camps faced a “choiceless choice” where morals did not play an important part in decision- making because they were eventually lost. Through this investigation into portrays of resistance in films and books from the 20th century, we are able to examine what knowledge Americans have concerning the various constraints German citizens had when deciding to resist.

One cannot classify all Germans into fixed categories. To do so ignores all reference to free choice. “When we hold individuals accountable for their actions, we are affirming that the roots of human morality—even on the collective level—are ultimately based upon the freedom of each individual to decide for good or evil” (Barnett 1999, 16). Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman considers moral behavior “conceivable only in the context of coexistence, of being with others, that is, a social context” (Bauman 1989, 104). There were roots of humanity in Nazi Germany, despite the “transfer of responsibility from the individual to the collective” (Bauman, 1989). Humanity existed even as researchers, such as Daniel Goldhagen finds a clear pattern that all Germans were willing participants in World War II or the Holocaust² as evidenced by Oliner and Oliner’s 1992 study *The*

² In Germany 14,574 Jews were hidden and survived World War II (Blau 1953, 189).

Altruistic Personality, or Fogelman's *Rescuer Self* (1994). These works show that the possibility for an individual to decide for good or for evil still existed, and people did choose the good. However, these stories of good in Germany generally have not received the attention that acts of resistance from various territories occupied by the Nazis have. Various literary efforts in recent years have sought to make these acts of resistance known. This study can assist this venture.

Even after more than sixty years, mankind is still trying to come to terms with how Germans could have supported Hitler. The idea of German resistance to Nazism is still a sensitive subject. Traditionally the idea of resistance on an individual level is too close to justification or evasion of any responsibility for Nazism (Cox, 2008). For example, despite research and public interest in resistance, the first exhibition commemorating Germany's "silent heroes" did not open in Berlin until 2008.³ The permanent exhibition provides an understanding of the motivations of the men and women who resisted Nazism and assisted Jews through underground methods. Those who resisted, specifically those that helped Jews, are "silent heroes." Acknowledgement of their subtle and often individual acts had not been undertaken in either East or West Germany before.

I am sure that my argument that there were many who resisted in Nazi Germany will cause cognitive dissonance in many. However, my hope is that this knowledge might lead to a greater self-awareness, a stronger sense of community, even a stronger global stance on basic human values, perhaps leading to a stricter moral code for humanity.

³ The term for those who helped Jews escape Nazi persecution during the Holocaust.

Primarily, this study aims to assist to correct the historical oversight concerning those who did resist. People who held fast to their own standards even when civilized norms were in upheaval were not saints, but instead ordinary people doing what they thought was right for a variety of reasons. By engaging in an analysis of resistance efforts, even those portrayed in books and films, humankind can begin a personal self-analysis. I hope the reflections contained within this study allow individuals to recognize this. After all, as Jaspers reflected (1942) “we must reject collective thinking as fictitious thinking. Any real metamorphosis occurs through individuals—in the individuals, in many individuals.... mutually inspiring one another” (p. 102). Investigating individual resistance efforts to Nazism is not to deny the Holocaust or the inhumane treatment millions suffered under Nazism. Instead, this study aims to show that while propaganda aided in a pervasive ideology in Germany in the 1930s and 40s there were indeed people who remain humanistic.

There is a complex dialectic between adherence and refusal, consent and discontent, compromise and passive resistance, and resignation and deviance (Russo & Golsan 1999, 112). Even where research regarding the question of resistance is fairly advanced such as with Nazism, not one, but several classifications are proposed. “These classifications generally distinguish between public and private behavior, institutional reactions and organized reaction, defensive and more offensive actions, and behavior reflecting a fundamental rejection of the regime and attitudes revealing a partial discord” (Rousso & Glosan 1999, 116). Historians and researchers have come up with a plethora of classifications for resistance, culminating for many in agreement that ‘resistance’ must mean active participation in organized attempts to “work against the regime with the

conscious aim of undermining it or planning for the moment of its demise” (Kershaw 1983, 3).

I think this definition is too narrow in scope. This definition of resistance over-emphasizes physical action and places it squarely above the mental processes unique to humankind. While action or inaction is the most obvious way to distinguish ideology, it ignores the unique human component that allows people to feel empathy. By simply focusing on actions that seek to disrupt the government, how can one determine when or how the individual connects to an injustice? Therefore, I followed Jaeger and Rumschottel’s model (1981), which defines resistance (“Widerstand”) as “every form of active or passive behaviour which allows recognition of the rejection of the National Socialist regime or a partial area of National Socialist ideology and was bound with certain risks” (Kershaw 1983, 3). Adding more subtle forms of dissent and opinion into the mix allowed me to embrace the entire spectrum of resistance in terms laymen and researchers alike will recognize.

The Berlin resistance exhibit of 2008 proves Germans performed multiple acts of charity towards those in need, mostly undertaken in isolation and silence “without committing themselves to any action which could have landed them in trouble” (Barnett 1999, 158). This is why I focus this study on the more subtle forms of resistance undertaken by Germans during World War II. The idea that resistance efforts must be a physical act against the regime or an effort to topple the government does not give justice to those who risked their lives to maintain their moral fiber, thus holding on to what it means to be human. The acts shown in these portrayals, whether

done privately or publicly, still show an individual sense of decency and free will, despite a brutal totalitarian regime.

Researchers and historians primarily have documented the various opposition and resistance movements throughout Europe to support or dismiss the idea that German citizenry knew or even approved of the Holocaust, or have conducted cultural studies to find a reason for the Nazi movement in Germany, using the resistance as a gauge to measure attitudes. Thus, the idea of resistance is not new. In fact, many resistance efforts are celebrated through literature and film, in particular those efforts that saved lives. These narratives form a great part of modern society's knowledge of what it was to live under Nazism. The originality of this study results not from the topic of resistance, but because it examines the subtle non-conformist, dissenting strands of opinion and "unorganized" individual resistance efforts to Nazism undertaken by individual ethnic Germans as portrayed in modern books and films. Texts including novels, memoirs, and films do not merely map an existing world; they can construct worlds for competent readers or viewers to see and live within. De Certeau writes that an individual

...insinuates into another person's text the ruses of pleasure and appropriation: he poaches on it, is transported into it, pluralizes himself in it like the internal rumblings of one's body. Ruse, metaphor, arrangement is an 'invention' of the memory. Words become the outlet or product of silent histories (1998, p. xxi)

This investigation does not use the historical documentation as a basis. Instead, it examines resistance activities through a literature review of novels, memoirs and films beginning in the 1930s and lasting through the 20th century. Although I draw upon existing literature in many fields, much of it academic, my emphasis is on portrayal of resistance in novels, memoirs and biographies in addition to film. Since direct

observation is limited to a small percentage of the population, most of society knows what they do from the mediated reality of books and films.

The Reader Response Theory illustrates this phenomenon.⁴ Reader-response theory recognizes the reader as an active agent who imparts "real existence" to the work and completes its meaning through interpretation. Reader-response criticism argues that literature is a type of performing art in which each reader creates his or her own, possibly unique, text-related performance.⁵ This affirms "that whatever we accept as truth and even the way we envision truth are dependent on the community in which we participate...there is no absolute truth: rather truth is relative to the community in which we participate" (Grenz 1995, 8).

By exploring books and films, I am using history as a "technique of awakening" (Benjamin 1940, 388). Consequently, the idea of resistance, even the subtle non-conformist, dissenting strands of opinion and "unorganized" individual efforts portrayed in these sources, impacts the human condition and forms the population for this study. In the next chapter, I discuss sample selection and my overall methodological approach in full, but the primary research questions guiding this study are as follows:

- What types of subtle non-conformist, dissenting strands of opinion and "unorganized" individual resistance efforts of Germans are found in modern books and films?

⁴ Although literary theory has long paid some attention to the reader's role in creating the meaning and experience of a literary work, modern reader-response criticism began in the 1960s and '70s, particularly in America and Germany, in works by Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss, Roland Barthes, and others.

⁵ It stands in total opposition to the theories of formalism and the New Criticism, in which the reader's role in re-creating literary works is ignored. New Criticism had emphasized that only that which is within a text is part of the meaning of a text. No appeal to the authority or intention of the author, or to the psychology of the reader, was allowed in the discussions of orthodox New Critics. The New Critics' position assumed an objective, fixed text that could be studied apart from any human being and this assumption persisted even into postmodern criticism.

- Who resisted, and what was the manner in which these individuals carried out their tasks?
- Why did these individuals choose to resist?
- What are the themes concerning subtle non-conformist, dissenting strands of opinion and “unorganized” individual resistance efforts by ethnic Germans?
- What, if any, themes are common among different periods, and what external influences may have affected a change in portrayals between years?

Research into life in Nazi Germany has supported the thesis that those who resisted or dissented had a choice, and therefore their choices must be “discerned, analyzed, and incorporated into any overall explanation or interpretation” (Goldhagen 1997, 16). As most of society today knows and relates to Nazism through books and films, this study is important in assisting in the human process of understanding what it means to be human. Categorizing and analyzing the more subtle types of resistance provides a more complete picture of Germany under Nazism, and can assist in deeper understanding that Germans were simply people like you and I.

Literature, specifically in the form of historical fiction and memoirs, assists in the conceptualization of what happened, and provides another level of the reader to explicate the point of it all or what it adds up to in the end. “It is we who decide what we want to know, and this decision cannot but inform the way we read and construe the data we wish to understand and interpret. The question about context, then, in the first instance is addressed not to the documents under study but to our position as interpreters” (Green 1993, 4). The goal of this scholarship is the historical understanding and interpretation that resistance manifested in Germans during Nazism. The “appropriate” context for that

enterprise is one that simultaneously allows a text to speak as much as possible in its own terms to its own world. The text must say what it wants to say, yet do so in a language we can understand (Green, 1993). To this end, I reflect on the author/director's life in an effort to capture their framing of the issue of resistance. It is here that the relationship with fiction is so crucial. "Not that the past is unreal, but past reality is, in the strict sense of the word, unverifiable. Insofar as it no longer exists, the discourse of history can seek to grasp it only indirectly" (Ricoeur, as cited in Vanhoozer 1990, 95).

In addition, the idea of 'framing' is important. Frame analysis is a multi-disciplinary social science research method used to analyze how people understand situations and activities.⁶ Frames are powerful rhetorical entities that induce us to filter our perceptions of the world in particular ways, essentially making some aspects of our multi-dimensional reality more noticeable than other aspects. They operate by making some information more salient than other information (Kuypers, 2009).

As an author writes, or a director directs, each 'frame' their narrative consciously or unconsciously, to construct a point of view that encourages an interpretation by others. Narratives are unlike physical events as they are meaningful to others, not just to the analyst. "Readers, or viewers, may decompose what they attend to into meaningful units, recognize compelling structures, rearticulate their understandings sequentially or holistically, and act on them sensibly" (Krippendorff 2004, 30). Each human experience portrayed in the novels and films selected for this study were each created to be watched, read, interpreted and indeed acted on for their meanings. Attention to these narratives facilitates a process of reflection and description in an individual that in turn creates

⁶ The concept is generally attributed to Goffman's (1974) *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*.

meaning for each individual. Frames operate in four key ways: they define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest remedies. Yet, in the actual creation of the text, “frames are often found within the narrative account of an issue or event, and are generally the central organizing idea” (Kuypers, 2009).

Central to my discussion of resistance concerns the definition of history. While there are three accepted definitions, namely that history is the past (whether or not anyone recalls or writes about it), history is the active process of studying and writing about the past, and history is what men and women write (an essay, an article, or a book) following a systematic study of the past. This study, considers “history” as a multi-faceted encounter between the past and the men and women who study it as well as write about it, and the reader of the results.

There exists a historicity of history, implying the movement which links an interpretive practice to a social praxis. History thus vacillates between two poles. On the one hand, it refers to a practice, hence to a reality; on the other, it is a closed discourse, a text that organizes and concludes a mode of intelligibility. History is probably our myth. It combines what can be thought, the ‘thinkable’ and the origin, in conformity with the way in which a society can understand its own working (de Certeau 1988, 21).

To analyze portrayals of resistance we must use sources that are both available and used by the mass public. Imagine a narrative as a way to explain how an individual acquires an identity. They do so by conveying discord and conflicting experiences and events of their past as a coherent story to others. “Words become the outlets or product of silent histories. The readable transforms itself into the memorable” (de Certeau 1984, xxi). The element of a narrative is different from experiences and events. Those attending narratives arrange, rearrange, interpret and reinterpret the text. Ultimately, a narrative provides continuity and coherence in humankind because one can revisit the