

The Literary
Representation
of World War II
Childhood

The Literary Representation of World War II Childhood:

*Interrogating the Concept
of Hospitality*

By

Mary Honan

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2017

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-9592-X

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9592-7

Dedicated to the memory of my beloved parents,
Myra and Cyril Honan (RIP) xx



*They are the morning dew shimmering lightly on the leaves,
The noon-day breeze softly whistling through the trees,
The stars flickering brightly in the night sky,
The birds that spread their wings to fly,
They are all that ever was and is.
—Mary Honan (2017)*

Remembering with love also my beloved grandparents (RIP)

This photograph of the author was taken on November 2016 at the conferring ceremony of graduates of Dublin City University. The ceremony was held at The Helix, on DCU's Glasnevin campus Dublin, Ireland.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

‘A job done by half is never done properly’ was one of my mother’s favourite sayings, and to her and my father I owe my social conscience, profound sense of justice and determination to finish that which I have started. I will never know two more dignified, decent, compassionate and loving people than my parents, and my feelings are bitter-sweet because of the pride I feel at having been their daughter and the heartbreak of not having them to share the completion of this research. Nonetheless, they have maintained a non-visual but spiritual presence throughout my work, helping me in their own special way to tentatively weave my way through the many obstacles and self-doubt I encountered along the path to completion of this research.

For academic assistance, I thank Dr Paula Murphy (DCU), Dr Michael Hinds (DCU), Prof Catherine LeBlanc, Catholic University of Lille, France and Dr Keith O’Sullivan (DCU). I would also like to acknowledge Dr Michelle O’Riordain (DCU), Dr (Fr) Gabriel Flynn (DCU) and Dr Andrew McGrady (DCU). Added to this long list of academic support I would like to show my appreciation for the support I received from Dr. Michael Casey (Fellow of the Irish State), Dr. Patricia Kieran (MDI), Dr. R. John Pritchard, (Formerly Simon Senior Research Fellow at the University of Manchester and Inter-Faculty Research Fellow at St. Antony’s College, Oxford), Dr Louise Murphy, (DCU), Dr Sandra Cullen (DCU) and Dr Kevin Williams (DCU): also Dr Eugene O’Brien (MDI), Dr Lillian Burke (MDI), Dr Orfhlaith Ní Bhriain (UL), Dr Mikael Fernstrom (UL), Deirdre Daly (DCU), Annabella Stover (DCU), Miriam O’Gara Kilmurphy, Margaret Morgan and Christine Bean Uí Chasaide.

For her hospitality and friendship and for helping me gain access to Mercy College Library New York, in the early stages of my research, I thank Kerry Kelly Oster ADCRG, also the staff at Mater Dei Institute Library Dublin, Mary Immaculate College Library Limerick and Limerick City Library.

I am especially grateful to the following people, survivors, children of survivors and authors with no personal experience of World War II, for allowing me to interview them: Dr Helena Ganor, Tomas Reichental, Zoltan-Zinn Collis (RIP), John Boyne, Toba Abramczyk, Eva Dawidowicz, Yocheved Artzi, Prof. Micheal O’Siadhail (Trinity College Dublin), Jane Yolen, Sr Mary Sullivan and Eve Bunting.

With the greatest of love I recognise my Aunt Mary, Uncle Stan, Aunt Margaret, Uncle Danny (RIP), Derwynne, Gavin, Dereck, Suzi and Diane Honan and, all my family in England and my handsome God son Evan Gaule. With love and appreciation I acknowledge Breeda Hanley for her long and loyal friendship to my parents, for the love, kindness and support she has shown me since the day my parents died and throughout my research. Thanks also to my relatives Adrian Gavin, Nancy and Gerard Waters for their unwavering support; and last, but not least in this segment I thank Breeda O'Brien - O'Dwyer, one of my mother's life-long friends for being with her as she breathed her last. It is somewhat comforting to know that mammy's final moments on this earth were spent with someone whom she cared so deeply for. I thank Breeda also for her continuing kindness towards me.

Besides family, good friends are fundamental and I am indeed fortunate in mine: Anne Reddan, Carmel and Nigel Gaule, Maureen Monaghan, Una Walsh, Geraldine Condon, June Deegan-Way; and also, John Breen, Tony Tyrell, Pat Barry, Gerard Stack, John Sherlock, Tony Fleming, Tony Browne, Brian Hinchy, Chris Lyons, Barry Zbar, Dirk de Klein and Cllr. John Loftus. Although I have known many of these my whole life, others more recently, nonetheless, I value deeply my friendship with each one.

There are five very special places in my heart in which the names of my Nanna and Grandpa Honan (RIP), Madeleine and Paddy Tierney (RIP) and 'Uncle' George Waters (RIP) are indelibly etched. I do not imagine this select few family members and friends could ever comprehend the extraordinary impact they had on one particular child's life. Well that child has grown up, but the love I felt for them then, remains undiminished by time or death. I know one of 'Uncle' George's dreams was to write a book but sadly he never lived to achieve that goal. Well this one's for you 'Uncle' George.

Lastly, in memory of the victims of Nazism, of whom 2.5 million of the dead were children, and in particular to the memory of Die Kinder Vom Bullenhuser Damm, I leave the final words to my very dear friend Toba Abramczyk. Toba's father Majer Abramczyk survived several Nazi camps, the last of which was Auschwitz-Birkenau. Recalling her own visit to Treblinka in 2008 as part of 'The March of the Living', and as though channelling the voices of those who suffered and died, she writes

'Remember us, Take us with you.

A piece of history, a piece of family, a piece of mind.

A community and life never forgotten' (Abramczyk, T, 2008, Email).

ABSTRACT

This book investigates a cross-section of World War II inspired literature, both fact and fiction, with children as a central focus, through the concept of hospitality. It argues for the inter-connection between hospitality and a network of other Derridean concepts which are used to explore the texts. This study interrogates the notion of childhood, how it has evolved as a concept socially and in literature, and how this is reflected in the chosen texts.

The forms and genres of literature studied include diaries, letters, novels, memoirs, fairy-tales, allegorical novels, comics, graphic novels, and time-travel novels, from the perspective of real child victims of Nazism as well as fictional child protagonists. The study contextualises the works analysed in relation to deconstruction, the historical context of World War II and concepts of the child.

This analysis results in a philosophical exploration of the texts, which in turn yields the discovery of a number of common themes, and a critique of the definitions of childhood in World War II literature. The exploration allows for an articulation of the differences and similarities between real and fictional accounts of life in the shadow of Nazism; the importance of remembering and commemorating the lives of those who suffered and those who died. Also explored is the impact of deportation, camp life, the definition of childhood, both past and present, and whether or not lessons have been learned from World War II.

—Mary C. Honan

FOREWORD

Mary Honan's book offers an analysis of children's literature that focuses on children and young child characters during World War II, a time in which millions of people were sent to concentration camps and exposed to utmost suffering and barbarism

It is in the context of complete dehumanisation at the hands of people who had known cultural glory that Mary Honan chooses to concentrate and shed light on how finally, and despite that which opposed them, children were able to forge friendship while offering each other hospitality. This original research also manages to coordinate Derrida's vision of friendship and hospitality as a filter to screen how some human beings retain their humanity against such a genocidal backdrop

The book preserves an essential power of emotion given the interviews led with survivors such as Helena Ganor who was saved by several people including a member of the Gestapo, as well as Jane Yolen, author of *The Devil's Arithmetic*, and John Boyne, author of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. It is important to speak about emotions, since emotions are generally at a distancing of oneself from any scientific approach. Consequently the first virtue of a study or an analysis is generally to remain detached; it is to be coherent, well-built, well-informed, etc. But in this particular context, one has to remember that to become a torturer or a perpetrator, a man has to be, little by little devoid of his capacity of emotion or empathy. The perpetrator learns how to remain distanced from emotional connection, how not to weaken when faced with someone who is suffering at his/her hands. So, given the lethal power brought about by the lack of emotion, one has to raise the question of the nature of a comment on mass-killing. Should we not embrace emotion for the sake of scientific approach? Is it only possible to avoid emotion in a commentary, in an analysis that addresses extreme barbarity versus the extreme humanity that can arise at some moments in the life of all those poor victims? This is a question of method that should be considered in the future.

Not all of the books analysed here are based on the true experiences of their authors, neither are they necessarily autobiographical but there is an important question to raise, namely that of what memory is made of. It has been discussed in some survivor circles whether imaginative stories, organised into novels are able to contribute in the same way to memory as

biographies or true stories. The aim of such publications is precisely to stir emotions in the heart of the reader or those who hear the stories first-hand from survivors. The capacity to be moved is a proof of our humanity and how we react to such stories is an exercise of our humanity. In this respect, a novel that would respect the context of deportation and historical data has got the same function as the story told by a survivor. One cannot measure the impact of such narratives but one can be sure that it pushes one to exercise his/her capacity to be moved by the distress of the Other or by the moral beauty of the Other when this particularly arises in extreme situations.

Although all this could easily be drawn in an emotional pathos, and even though emotion should then be part of a pedagogical approach to memory, Mary Honan has created a path for objectivity and hermeneutical distance. At the same time, she settles an extraordinary proximity with the characters she describes and an exceptional insight enlightening the doubts, the questions, and the strangeness each may feel at any moment.

Now, emotion may be at its heights when children are the primary focus of the research. That adults may appear in concentration camps is horrific and should be highly condemned but children as the innocent victims of adult's ideological views and actions possess something even more unbearable than the facts themselves. We are in a world "beyond". Something still higher than awfulness appears then. The reason is that children have not experienced as much of life as their adult counterparts and have not developed their responsibility yet, they are not citizens in the same way as adults are and they do not have any political power. They just receive what is going on, while trying, little by little as their education proceeds, to contribute to society, at least until they have reached adulthood when society becomes theirs.

We are seventy years after the facts and our vision of childhood has radically changed. It has become the opposite of what it was in the 1940s and it seems that children today are able to be children, at least more than they were in the 1940s. Children at that period in history were expected to become young adults at a much earlier age and in this respect these analyses also bring us knowledge of what the psychological impact was for children in the 1940s. It does not mean that children were less innocent than they can be today, but their sense of responsibility was developed very young. The age at which people started to work was not the same as today, whilst, at the turn of the century children used to start working at a very early age, that is to say, ten or twelve... In the 1940s, you could find children in the coal mines at the age of 14. So, children were very mature in that they were different from children today where more care and

attention is lavished on them now by family and society. They are no longer subjected to the corporal punishment which was quite common at the time, especially in lower social classes where education was not there to teach parents how to convince reasonably their children to act properly. The question of knowing how to describe the child of that time or even have an idea of his/her insight is very delicate and one, of course, needs a reference.

This reference is found in the image of the romantic child. It contrasts with the roughness of these worlds of intense suffering and dehumanisation. The romantic vision of the child refers to the essence of the definition one could give of the child. But it remains an ideal that is to be nuanced as regards the social and historical reality. The social perspective does not necessarily feed this definition not even for Rousseau who did not care about abandoning his wife and children despite his all too nice theories on the education of children that he developed in his famous *Emile*.

The difficulties of such an analysis is thus to respect a hermeneutical distance made of a shift in time, but also a shift in social habits, representations and vocabulary. The metaphysical centre of gravity is essentially different from ours. No need to underline the difficulty to immerse oneself into such peculiar worlds, worlds, the context of which is made of suffering, injustice, wickedness, but worlds made of reciprocity, innocence and love.

But the main factor rendering the hermeneutical distance so difficult to settle remains the emotional frame of the stories for it implies a direct contact with the characters, the directness of which prevents one to look from afar and appreciate the rational data of the scene and facts. Moreover, to recognise the Other, be it the Other embodied in a literary character, the human being, including the commentator is supplied with captors named mirror neurons that make him/her feel in a certain way, that which the Other feels. This is part of our humanity and it is this very humanity which also invades the fraternity relationship in the novels which are reviewed in this book. In this perspective, it is of prime importance to consider the role of emotion in the shaping of the human being and this, in contrast with the shaping of the perpetrator who little by little is deprived of his capacity for empathy and sometimes “helped” by drugs so as to become a cold-blooded human being or what remains of a human being who happens to be capable of crimes against humanity.

The asset of the literature analysed in Mary Honan’s book is to focus on the child’s world, which is a world without prejudice as we can see in *The Boy in Striped Pyjamas*. This novel shows how friendship naturally springs from two child characters on both sides of adult constructed

camps: one side for the Jews and the other for the Nazis. The child character does not know about politics or ideology. He just listens to his heart and curiosity and this leads the two children to build such a strong link, such that they were mistaken for each other by the conclusion of the novel. This is the very meaning of empathy: feel what the Other feels, become, in some way, what the other is. But in the context of horror, this leads to a catastrophic situation, that is to say a *Shoah* as this is precisely what the Hebrew word means before it was filled with the meaning of mass-murder led during World War II. Of course many other nationalities were also represented in the camps, the first victims of the camps being German opponents to the Nazi regime.

But the difference, if one may speak of difference, between those six million Jews who were deported and massacred and the other six millions who were deported and massacred is that the former were submitted to such a treatment because of who they were and the latter because of what they did, thus, the difference between the persecution deportation and the latter repression deportation.

The value of Mary Honan's study is to bring back, through the exercise of writing in the context of concentration camps, a perspective of that which writing enables in terms of personality construction, enhancement or overcoming. This is precisely what emerges from Frankl's ideas since the meaning was for him precisely that which could save people from self-destruction in the concentration camps.

In this respect a diary such as Anne Frank's was also a way to survive. We could quote other concentration camps writers such as Paul Ricoeur or Emmanuel Levinas with a difference nevertheless since they were in what was called "stalags", that is to say in "less worse" conditions than those who were in the concentration camps or extermination camps. It remains that the death rate was very high and the context sordid. In those conditions, Ricoeur wrote his philosophy of the will and Levinas gave us his captivity notes which are very meaningful in terms of progression through writing. At the beginning of the notes, we've got fragments relating to the sordid, but little but little philosophy emerges just as philosophical discourses easily emerges when people are in extreme situations.

It is for this reason the concept of "hospitality" is such a nice tool in approaching the reciprocity of the relationship that resists this context, for it focuses on the welcome, and more generally the problematic of the Other. This notion enables connections to be established and thus opposes familiarity to strangeness, a strangeness described, for instance in chapter 5, especially when Mary Honan describes Auschwitz-Birkenau as "a cold,

misty place where death reigns” quoting Croci, 2002, p.79, “a place devoid of compassion and humanity and where those within are left with little hope of survival.”

Compassion, which goes further than empathy, is essential in the building of perpetrators: a work is subtly done to devoid them of that quality, which enables them to see their victims as sheer “Stück”, which refers to a numeric element in a set. Their capacity to be moved by the fate of their victims was just destroyed by their training. Moreover, they were acting within a hierarchical system without any feeling of responsibility, which clearly emerged during the Nuremberg trials.

The notion of responsibility has to remind us of studies such as those Milgram produced in the 1960s. He shed light on how people could get involved in mass murder procedures, “just” obeying orders. Let us also notice that German law did not allow people who had acted out of obedience to be sued, which rendered many a Nazi innocent of any crime he/she has been complicit in.

The question raised here is also that of the responsibility of the child. Can a child be responsible for killing a person as he is sent as a soldier on the battle sites? Of course a child taking part in the murder of another human being will lose part of his/her humanity, of course he/she will go through the trauma of the perpetrator, incapable of finding himself/herself back after his deed, but as the child’s responsibility is not even recognised by society, then, it is as though this responsibility did not exist when one has to judge his responsibility for having killed or participated in massacres. On the Other hand, in no way can a child be responsible for a crime against humanity for the child does not decide of that which is done. This chief of accusation has to be reserved for those who, like Eichmann organized the death of millions of people. Since 2015, that is to say, 75th anniversary of the Nuremberg trials, many documents have been published on-line on the trials, and the sentences, but also on how children were trained to become soldiers. One can grant particular attention to Kathleen Raschke’s online documentary about *Kindersoldaten im zweiten Weltkrieg*.

In the process of writing this book, Mary Honan has succeeded in shedding light on the creativity of a community that was already known for erudition and capacity of learning and the mastery of languages; the number of authors and commentators questioned is also worth praising. The author has also obviously estimated the need for taking distance and reading the events with intelligence; she has also produced a comprehensive number of interviews that shed a new light on the way she

works and that is, obviously, not strictly limited to the written exercise of her book.

—Prof. Cathy Leblanc (Catholic University of Lille, France).

INTRODUCTION

Settling on an appropriate generic term to describe the suffering under Nazism is a contentious issue, particularly because the suffering and death during World War II was not confined to one specific ethnic group. It is difficult also when trying to avoid causing offence to any particular one of these groups or individual victims. There are many words that could be used to describe the horror of Nazism, some refer 'to it as the Holocaust; some with a capital "H", others a lower case "h", the word holocaust with a small "h" was used long before the events of World War II, having come "from the ancient Greek, [and] originally meant a sacrifice burned on an altar"' (Springer, 2010, p.48). However, the word poses a problem as to whether it is appropriate to use the lower case 'h' without demeaning the catastrophic level of suffering to which the victims, from all corners of society, not just the Jews were exposed during World War II.

According to Dominick LaCapra difficulties still 'arise in the very terminology one uses, for no names are innocent or politically neutral. It makes a difference whether one calls events the Holocaust (capital "H"), the Nazi holocaust' (lower-case "h"), Judeocide, the Shoah, the Nazi genocide, *le pire*, and so forth' (1998, pp.206-207).

The word 'Holocaust' suggests sacrifice, implying that the victims in some way accepted their suffering or that their lives were sacrificed for some greater good; on the other hand, the Hebrew word Shoah means 'disaster'. In

Israel, as well as among some non-Israeli scholars and artists (and most recently also in France and to some extent in Germany), the Hebrew word "Shoah" is used to describe the Holocaust. Modern Hebrew uses the word *shoah*, that is, disaster, in many other contexts as well, such as "nuclear disaster" (*shoat teva*), and so forth. The word "Shoah" is an accurate description of the genocide of the Jews from a Jewish perspective, since it evokes the fact that this was indeed a disaster for Jewish people (Berenbaum, 1998, p.81).

Derrida finds it hard to comprehend how the events during the Third Reich could have occurred in the Western world. He asks how, 'Western culture, dominated by what is called philosophy, by Judeo-Christian traditions,

etc., could have made possible, or not have made impossible an event such as the one named Auschwitz or the Shoah' (1998, p.2).

Although accepting the uniqueness of the suffering of all victim groups under Nazism, he asks 'what does the word "unique" mean in this case? Any event is unique, any crime is unique, any death is unique. So what would constitute the singular uniqueness of the Shoah? This for me is a topic of anxious reflection, also of debates with many other philosophers' (1998, p.2). Whether the events of World War II should be referred to as 'Holocaust', 'Shoah' or 'Auschwitz' also poses a difficulty for Derrida, though his work avoided the use of the Hebrew term 'Shoah'. Of this he writes, 'For me, the question of the name, that is the singularity of this event, has always remained suspended, open, has always been a matter of debates, even disagreements with many of my contemporaries, contemporary philosophers' (1998, p.2).

According to Gil Anidjar, not only did Derrida have problems with the word Shoah but he also found it 'obscene, the mechanical nature of improvised trials instigated against all those whom one thinks one can accuse of not having named or thought 'Auschwitz' and persisted in writing the word "holocaust" without capitalizing' (qtd. in Anidjar, 2014, online). It is as though, such 'improvised trials' are suggesting that memorialisation is not possible without using what is seen as the appropriate word to describe it.

Yad Vashem in Jerusalem is arguably the world's largest and greatest memorial to the Jewish victims who suffered and died during The Third Reich. Just as Derrida sees Nazism as having been an attempt

to erase the names, not only to put [people] to death, but to destroy the archive ...Yad Vashem is primarily the memory of names ... The act of Yad Vashem has consisted of keeping the names and the dates, finally, which are inseparable. For what is a date? A date is an instant, but it is also a place, it is the irreplaceability of the event (1998, p.10).

A date can be seen as simply a certain time in history, each individual date also connected to separate events from singular people's lives. In protecting the dates, archiving also protects and restores the memories, as well as the places, events and people associated with those dates.

Derrida accepts that the role of archives like Yad Vashem is to protect and maintain a record of those Jews who were persecuted and murdered but he also sees archiving as a destruction of memory, of leaving the Jewish victims' suffering under Nazism open to revisionists. He says, 'There is always this risk, and that is the ambiguity of the concept of archive, that I've been concerned with elsewhere, one always runs the risk

of losing one keeps and of forgetting precisely where memory is objectivized in acts of consignment, in objective places' (2008, p.11). In other words, when victim-hood and memory is confined to a museum or an archive, when seen only from the perspective of a photo or a document, Derrida contends that

revisionists can always say that this was constructed, that proves nothing. What would prove is not physical evidence or archives, it is living testimonies. But by definition, there is no living testimony, either because those who experienced this have disappeared in the crematoria, or because – as these are testimonies which appeal to faith, to belief – it may always be considered that the witnesses lied (2008, p.12).

Here he is suggesting that, in an ideal world, the survivor or witness testimony produces an image of World War II and life under Nazism that cannot be replicated. Of course, revisionists will always exist, irrespective of testimony or even visual documentation. Conversely, this must not deter witnesses and survivors from testifying or monuments like Yad Vashem from seeking to memorialise the victims or to protect what has survived. After all, eventually, there will be no more living victims, no more first-hand record of the events of World War II and the archived documents, photos and testimony protected in places like Yad Vashem will remain as a structural witness to the events under Nazism and to the lives lost.

There will also always be those, including some survivors and their children who have lived with such suffering for so long that they now wish to forget, some even seeing the archiving of memories as assisting in the prolongation of the survivors' suffering and/or their children's suffering. Many, like Eva Dawidowicz, have grown up in the shadow of their parents' grief and feel the money used to memorialise the dead would be better spent on the poor. In my interview of her, recorded in the appendix, she says, that this would be far better than 'trying to push that memory down our throats' (2016, p.446). Of course many will vehemently disagree but such is the legacy of anguish that, whilst many will forever wish to remember, there are countless others who will try hard to forget. Torment and sorrow comes in all forms and it is impossible to say with utmost clarity whether one person's right to remember takes precedence over another's wish, and indeed need to forget. Each is, after all, a different way of coping with the misery, the agony and the past to which they were exposed.

I could have chosen any of a number of the terms already listed, as well as others such as 'deportation literature' or 'concentration camp

literature' to describe the genre in which my primary texts fall. However, although many of the narratives in the book explore the subject of deportation not all the victims of Nazism were deported to transit or death camps, many died much sooner than that. Again it must be stressed that, although six million of those killed were Jewish, at the same time, from the remaining four million victims it is clear that the Third Reich had monstrous consequences for so many of all nationalities, ethnic backgrounds, religious persuasions, and those with no religious beliefs. Taking all this into consideration, and so as not to single out any one ethnic or religious group, individual or group of individuals, I have instead chosen to avoid the usage of names that are associated with these particular groups and opt instead for the more generic umbrella term 'World War II', and 'World War II literature'. Through the various primary sources chosen in this corpus a spotlight will invariably be shone on the many different socio-political/economic, ethnic and religious groups and those with disabilities who each suffered under Nazism.

According to Chi-Ming Lam 'Despite the multiplicity of constructions of childhood in such disciplines as philosophy and psychology, the prevalent view is that children are *incompetent* in the sense of lacking reason, maturity, or independence' (2008, p.28). Later in a section looking at the child soldier, I will expand on how such generalisations can be challenged knowing what we now do about the roles children continue to play in violent conflict and the atrocities perpetrated by many of them, both past and present. Whether or not these children can be held responsible will also be explored in more depth later in this book.

Of the adult propensity for defining childhood, Lam writes:

Adults, having enormous social and political power over children, can define the reality of children by shaping and restricting the ways in which it is possible to talk and think about issues concerning them in society. But the key question is, does the adult-made reality of childhood reflect the true state of affairs fairly and adequately? An exceptionally useful way to address this question is by deconstruction, for it typically seeks to transform the taken-for-granted (2008, p.30).

This research gathers together a cluster of World War II literature, again both factual and imaginative, collectively focused on childhood during the Third Reich. Some of the texts chosen have been written by children who died as a consequence of Nazism, and others have been written either by survivors, their children or penned by authors with no personal experience or familial connection to the events of World War II other than the desire to tell these victims' stories. To what degree can literature, both factual and imaginative about childhood during World War II, be read and

understood through the Derridean concept of hospitality? This is the core research question being asked in the book.

My research investigates the chosen narratives through a framework of key Derridean ideas in which I argue for the inter-connection between hospitality and a network of other Derridean concepts: the gift, debt, Messianism, friendship, life/death, host, guest and forgiveness. These concepts will also be utilised to shed light on common themes and concerns found in the texts.

A number of arguments related to these concepts will help to interrogate the chosen texts, and these are as follows:

There is always an element of hostility in all acts of hospitality and true hospitality must be open to all, including the stranger who has not yet been encountered.

The will to live of the children and child characters in the corpus can be understood through the Derridean idea of 'messianism'.

A distinct connection exists between community, hospitality and hostility, community seen as both a hospitable and hostile space.

By giving a gift, the person to whom the gift is given has been given a debt, the giver becoming the recipient, even of those gifts given without expectation, reciprocation, acceptance or appreciation. As a gesture and an idea, gift giving is a way of understanding hospitality, friendship and life in the sense that these imply gifting from one to another.

A correlation is established between friendship, death and hospitality as all friendship is fostered in the knowledge that one or other friend will survive to grieve and mourn the death of the other.

True faith or messianic faith can only be experienced through a sense of hopelessness and lack of certainty.

Death is an inevitable part of life and when someone sacrifices their own life in order to protect another from death, the other person's death has merely been postponed, as death is an inevitability at some stage.

By interrogating the analysed texts through the conceptual framework above, this study will posit a number of related arguments as follows

World War II literature crosses boundaries of age and genre and the selected narratives are emblematic of that crossover, most having been written with no specified target readership.

Through the memoirs and fictional narratives, some of the texts under investigation complicate ideas of victim-hood by presenting the Aryan child, the child of active members of the SS, or young members of Hitler Youth organisations as victims of Nazism in their own right. They stress the significance of looking beyond generally held assumptions of victim-hood and of victim-hood coming in all forms. Children and young adult

fictional narratives play a prominent role in ensuring the events during World War II are continuously explored, not least when recalled through child or young adult literature.

Common themes occur across all genres, some of which include the importance of breaking down stereotypes as well as kindness, empathy, compassion, and the willingness to stand in solidarity with your neighbours. More overtly fictitious ways of writing about life under Nazi control, such as allegories and fairy-tales, may allow for the gradual appreciation of the extent of the suffering to which these victims were exposed, for example through the offering of symbolic or allegorical ways into the historical context.

The research suggests that the use of comics and graphic novels do not hinder an author's ability to explore the subject of World War II, Nazism or its victims, and can open up new possibilities for imagining the suffering. It will also be argued that time-travel is an important genre within World War II literature about childhood, in which children and adults characters may step back into the past to draw comparisons with the contemporary world.

This book will use a cluster of Derridean concepts as a framework to survey the chosen texts. The exploration will establish the inter-connection of the key concepts of hospitality with those of hostility, gift, debt, friendship, life and death, as well as forgiveness, justice, host and guest. I will also outline these concepts, and demonstrate how they compare and contrast to one another.

I will attest to the fact that Derrida is not easy to understand; perhaps Derrida would see that as allowing individual understanding and meaning from the text, even his. From 'Positions: Interview with Jean-Louis Houdebaine and Guy Scarpetta' it is clear that both men also had some difficulties understanding fully what deconstruction was about. 'Frequently the principles of interviewing are turned upside down as the interviewee finds himself asking questions of the interviewers' (Brink, p.140) during what was a robust conversation between the three men. On one occasion Derrida tells them that their questions are so multiple and varied that he does not know where to start answering them. Replying to him, Houdebaine explains that answers would help 'to clear up certain misunderstanding and ... to help "move things along" a little bit more' (qtd. in Derrida, 2004, p.48).

It must be noted here that, although 'certainly deconstruction is not "anti-methodological", neither could it be called a "discourse on method" ... What distinguishes a deconstructive analysis, in other words, is that it

always begins from an encounter with the aporias¹ that must be overlooked in order to make **presence** seem undeconstructible' (Lucy, 2004, pp.1-2). This book will use a cluster of Derridean concepts as a framework to survey the chosen texts, in the process establishing the inter-connection of the key concepts of hospitality with those of: hostility, gift, debt, friendship, life and death, forgiveness, justice, host and guest.

The topic of hospitality is one that, Judith Still notes we each feel 'we know something about – [as] it's an everyday experience. Yet it has been a burning topic of philosophical and political debate over the last couple of decades' (2010, p.1). In its simplest form hospitality is the invitation from one person to another to enter the world of the host. In terms of deconstruction, it is the nucleus from which the concepts of friendship, justice and gift-giving stem. Giving a gift is the opening up of oneself to the stranger through an act of hospitality and giving the stranger a debt in the process. With this in mind the book will explore further the foreigner/stranger guest and how the gesture of hospitality benefits the host, even if the gesture of hospitality was not intentionally offered.

Derrida regards the only examples of the perfect gifts or acts of hospitality as being those gestures from which the host or gift-giver has no expectation of gratitude, praise or repayment. Such acts of hospitality or gift-giving could also be looked on as empathetic gestures both given and received. However, according to Roman Krznaric, empathy is distinctly different

from expressions of sympathy – such as pity or feeling sorry for somebody – as these do not involve trying to understand the other person's emotions or point of view. Nor is empathy the same as the Golden Rule, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' since this assumes your own interests coincide with theirs. George Bernard Shaw remarked on this in characteristic style when he quipped, 'Do *not* do unto others as you would have them do unto you – they might have different tastes'. Empathy is about discovering those different tastes (2015, p.X).

In other words, empathy is about trying to understand the other person, in spite of their difference, of not feeling sorry for them but simply trying to understand how it is that they are feeling. The empathetic person does not set out to try to solve the other person's problems but instead is a conduit through which they can express their feelings without judgement.

¹ Aporia is a 'greek term denoting a logical contradiction, "aporia" is used by Derrida to refer to what he often calls the "blind spots" of any **metaphysical** argument (Lucy, 2004, p.1).

The primary Derrida text through which the idea of hospitality is explored is Derrida's *Of Hospitality* in which he says of 'absolute hospitality' that it requires that,

I open up my home and ... give not only to the foreigner (provided with the family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.), but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that ... I let them ... take their place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names (2000, p.25).

Because it is the central Derridean text, *Of Hospitality* will also occupy one entire section on its own at the start of the book, as an introduction to the concept of hospitality and its importance.

Following Derrida's thesis, in order for the act of hospitality to be a true gift, the gesture must also be extended, without question or expectation; it must be open to all, even those who are 'foreign' or stranger to the host, what he calls, 'the absolute, unknown, anonymous other', the person or stranger whom the host has not yet met. In short, what is being suggested here is that true hospitality opens itself up, not just to those strangers in the present but those whom they may, or may not come in contact with at some point in the future. As Michael Naas indicates

for Derrida, hospitality ... consists of what might be called a negotiation between two seemingly contradictory imperatives, the imperative to unconditionally welcome the other before any knowledge, recognition, or conditions, indeed before any names or identities, and the imperative to effectively welcome someone in particular and not some indefinite anyone, someone with a name, an identity, and an origin (2005, p.9).

According to Derrida, the gesture of hospitality is also only a pure deed when it requires nothing in return, when it is not a condition of law, religious beliefs or with an expectation of the recipient's gratitude. After all, each person is host of their own home, heart or life, welcoming another person inside one's own personal space implies an expectation of the guests' cognisance of the gesture's limitations. Again, just as with any form of gift giving, Derrida sees hospitality as a restricted gesture, and one that is similar to the conditional gift.

Hans Boersma notes that 'hospitality is an important virtue But the practice of hospitality is difficult. The business of our lives makes it hard to create time for others ... And then there is the fact that hospitality opens us to potential abuse, so that we quickly erect boundaries that offer protection' (2006, p.15). Like any gift given with an expectation of

gratitude or re-appropriation on the host's part, the gift of hospitality and the welcome that goes along with it inevitably become conditional gestures. They are, therefore, not pure gifts, in the Derridean sense of the gift neither are they pure extensions of hospitality; instead they are hostile acts precluding the extension of hospitality to those whom the host rejects.

In greeting another person, it is the host who is empowered by the gesture, the welcomed party left with a sense of obligation, irrespective of whether the guest rejects, accepts without gratitude or disrespects the host's property once inside. According to Derrida, as a consequence of the 'altruistic' feeling that the host gets, the sense of superiority he or she inevitably feels when offering hospitality or gift giving, renders the invitation hostile. It is also interesting that in welcoming someone into one's home and one's life the host often uses the phrase 'come make yourself at home'. By the very nature of one's home the other person is inevitably given a limited invitation to step within that which can only ever be theirs if and when the host relinquishes all rights and ownership. As with any form of gift that has been given without expectation, gratitude or re-appropriation, the true gift of hospitality is only possible when it is offered to someone knowing it cannot ever be repaid. Even then I would argue that through such a gesture the host might be imbued with a supreme sense of power at having given something knowing interchange is impossible.

Derrida's position on the subjects of remembrance and testimony will be explored in relation to keeping the events of World War II in the contemporary mind-set. My research will probe the importance of retaining family traditions: cultural, ethnic and religious. The narratives, whether fictional or real, make the readers witnesses; consequently the burden of responsibility is created to protect the memories and to circulate them to future generations. Nonetheless, as Paul de Man indicates,

[t]he constant danger of confusing remembering and imagining, resulting from memories becoming images in this way, affects the goal of faithfulness corresponding to the truth claim of memory. And yet ... And yet, we have nothing better than memory to guarantee that something has taken place before we call to mind a memory of it (2004, p.7).

Derrida, of course, would favour remembrance and memory above imagining, in that the latter often comes from a non-experiential perspective. Commenting on memory, Vernon W. Cisney notes that, although '[o]ne's memory of a certain experience or event has a different phenomenology than does the original experience of the event ... one never confuses a weakened present perception for a memory' (2014, p.104). In other words,

no matter how far removed from the physical experience and suffering one is, one can never mistake the memory or forget the impact that event had on victims' lives during World War II and in the years since. This is also so in spite of the problematics of reliving such sorrow and anguish in real-time, and separated spatially from the 'in the present' moment of that suffering,

At the same time, when memory and remembrance are put on show in museums or archives Derrida sees that as killing memory because it is no longer physical but recorded and he feels this allows space for revisionists to doubt the legitimacy of the documentation. That being said, and as stated earlier in this section, future generations will have no way of knowing how this event impacted lives but through the memories and memoirs of survivors, albeit that those accounts are often retrospective and the memory of the suffering is inevitably different to the actual physical real-time suffering given the passage of time between both.

Derrida proffers a correlation between justice, friendship and hospitality. Similarly to friendship and hospitality, in order for justice to be true and unconditional it must be given without a second thought, it must be independent from judicial or religious consideration and it must also be given without fear of punishment or expectation of praise, gratitude or reciprocation.

He further argues that death as a consequence of giving one's life to save another is a perfect gift, an unconditional gesture of absolute hospitality, a gesture for which no expression of gratitude or repayment is possible to the host as he/she is no longer living. Absolute hospitality, according to Mark W. Westmoreland 'can only exist as unlimited, as not being within the parameters of laws and concepts. The conditions for such hospitality are both the conditions for its possibility and its impossibility' (2008, p.4). Even if the guest does not show gratitude, then the host who has given without expectation has been doubly gifted with having given unconditionally and without the guest having shown gratitude. In the case of the welcoming of another into your life through the giving of one's own life for another person, the same debt applies. In relation to the texts analysed, this research will consider further this sacrificial life-for-life gesture and how successful it is given the giver is now dead as a consequence of the gesture and the receiver will inevitably die anyway albeit at some later stage.

On the subject of forgiveness, Derrida writes that, even if I say "I do not forgive you" to someone who asks my forgiveness, but whom I understand and who understands me, then a process of reconciliation has begun: the third has intervened. Yet, this is the end of pure forgiveness'

(2001a, p.15). At the same time, reconciliation is another gesture that is not pure forgiveness but political and legal attempts at finding ways of coming to terms with crimes.

According to Derrida, only those who have suffered as a consequence of such deeds of atrocity have the right to forgive and very often they are no longer living, their deaths having, in his view, ended all hope of forgiveness.

Through the chosen texts, I will show how the gesture of forgiveness has begun and exists as a possibility the instant the victim and perpetrator enter into a dialogue with one another. The research demonstrates that forgiveness, hospitality/hostility, host/guest are all forms of gift-giving in one way or another, whether through inviting another into one's home or life, giving another person the gift of life or giving one's own life in order that another person should live. Derrida sees these as attempts at reaching out to another person and welcoming them in some way or other. Of forgiveness Derrida notes that 'the person who forgives is, like forgiveness itself, on high, very high, above the person who asks for or obtains forgiveness' (2001a, p.192) also proffering that there is always an element of hostility where one person's ideological or religious view is embraced and another person's principles are rejected. In gifting another person with friendship or forgiveness, the gesture, as in the case of hospitality, is nearly always conditional on the gesture being reciprocated or the sense of empowerment felt by the giver even if the recipient chooses to reject or ignore the gesture.

Indeed, deconstruction itself can be seen as an act of hospitality. According to John D. Caputo, '[i]f you were intent on making deconstruction look respectable, it would not be a distortion to say that deconstruction is to be understood as another form of hospitality, that deconstruction is hospitality, which means the welcoming of the other' (1997, pp.109-110). Because reading is deconstructive, multi-interpretive, and wholly individual to each reader and each successive reading, this invariably provides for a multitude of reflections and interpretations, requiring an openness to the other that is essential for hospitality. According to Derrida

[t]he very meaning and mission of deconstruction is to show that things – texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs and practices of whatever size and sort you need – do not have definable meanings and determinable missions, that they are always more than any mission would impose, that they exceed the boundaries they eventually occupy. What is really going on in things, what is really happening is always to come (Caputo, 1997, p.31).

That aside, Derrida quite rightly points to the dangers of looking on deconstruction as a method for textual interpretation when he writes that such an approach ‘carries connotations of a procedural form of judgement. A thinker with a method has already decided *how* to proceed’ (qtd. in Beardsworth, 1996, p.4). With regards to this point Beardsworth also suggests that talking ‘of a method in relation to deconstruction, especially regarding its ethico-political aspirations, would appear to go directly against the current of Derrida’s philosophical adventure’(1996, p.4). Deconstruction is not simply a form of ‘reading for dummies’, an ‘a to z’ on how the narrative should be read; instead deconstruction allows for a more organic and varied reading. It is also sensitive to the uniqueness or ‘singularity’ of the individual text. Although Derrida coined the phrase ‘deconstruction’, nonetheless he too found it problematic to explain both in his own language and when translating into other idioms. Discussing this in ‘Letter to a Japanese Friend’ he writes,

there is already in “my” language a serious [*sombre*] problem of translation between what here or there can be envisaged for the word, and the usage itself, the reserve of the word. And it is already clear that even in French, things change from one context to another. More so in German, English, and especially American contexts, where the *same* word is already attached to very different connotations, inflections, and emotional or affective values (qtd. in Wood and Bernasconi, 1985, p.1).

Scholarship on the subject of deconstruction has been largely confined to definitions from secondary critics, such as David Allison for whom deconstruction ‘signifies a project of critical thought whose task is to locate and ‘take apart’ those concepts which serve as axioms or rules for a period of thought’ (1973, xxxii, note 1).

Although they may interpret deconstruction differently and more simply than Derrida, deconstruction allows space for the reader to ‘constantly ... suspect, to criticize the given determinations of culture, of institutions, of legal systems, not in order to destroy them or simply to cancel them, but to be just with justice, to respect this relation to the other as justice’ (Derrida, 1997a, p.18). Deconstruction ‘is not a method if we take ‘method’ to mean a general set of rules, practices, prescribed formulae and so on which will operate consistently every time’ (McQuillan, 2001, p.3). Although deconstruction is not a formulaic methodology I have nonetheless chosen it as I believe it to be a useful tool through which to explore the chosen primary texts, particularly in relation to the concept of hospitality, which will be discussed in further detail below.

Reader-Response criticism might also have been suitable as a theoretical lens for this book. Reader-Response criticism would suggest