



Of the Wrong Stripe, by Frances Ferdinands

*Children of the Shoah:
Holocaust Literature and Education*

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rather in agreement with it (for discussion of the German historical narrative see, for instance, Angress; Brockmann; Diner, "Historical Experience and Cognition"; Domansky; Friedlander, "National Identity and the Nazi Past"; Gilman; Moeller, and Peitsch).

The following is a rough outline of the "story" a German child is likely to learn about the Third Reich and the Holocaust after having read a range of historical novels for children in German:

There was a terrible war in Germany, in which the Germans suffered dreadfully. People had no food and were often forced to flee their homes. Hitler alone was responsible for this war, since the German people themselves had no desire for it. The Germans were not Nazis and the Nazis were not Germans. In fact, the German people were victimized by Hitler. Under the Third Reich, the Germans assisted the Jews, resisted Hitler, and some even risked their lives to oppose him by joining the Resistance movement. The Nazis oppressed the German people, who are the main victims of the Third Reich. It is true that the Jews, in most cases, the German Jews (Jews of other countries hardly ever receive attention), were also oppressed by the Nazis, but nevertheless they are to be blamed for their own fate.

The first reaction to this story, at least when read by a non-German, is to wonder how "reality" can be depicted in a manner that is so distorted and yet retains historical relevance: How is it possible to create this kind of historical narrative? What mechanism underlies this construction of historical narratives that may seem totally falsified, at least to some of the groups involved, such as "the Jews" and "the Israelis"? The answer seems to be simple, almost trivial: German books for children, like most other national narratives, represent a wishful image of history. What they wish to achieve, first and foremost, is a certain retelling of the national past which provides a source of national pride and a sound basis for the child's feeling of belonging.

Every national children's literature produces direct and less-direct historical narratives, which aim to shape a child's view of their nation through a certain understanding of the past. The ways in which the available historiographic material is modified and altered, and, the ways in which the subsequent "story" of a community's history is told, are determined by the given community or nation's cultural and political needs at a given point in time. However, although such attempts are typical of the construction of all national narratives in Western culture, the German case distinguishes itself by the lack of almost any alternative narrative, which is present in other cases of Western national-historical narratives. In other national literatures, there is almost always a group of writers, usually of higher status, which challenges overprotective attitudes towards children and actively confronts or contests the limits of social consensus. This is also true for books in German — as long as they do not deal with the Third Reich. Once German

writers treat the Third Reich, even writers such as Christine Nöstlinger and Peter Härtling, who have shown themselves to be challenging and daring elsewhere, conform to consensual models.

Generally speaking, German children's literature is known throughout the world as provocative and progressive. German books for children are enterprising in the sense that they present an anti-establishment range of themes. It is only in the context of the Third Reich that German children's books prefer the consensual "story" of German history. Surprisingly enough, these prominent models of German children's literature have changed only slightly over the period of more than thirty years; some of the prominent models were established as far back as the sixties and have continued to dominate the field.

The first model describes the persecution of the Jews, filtered through the story of a friendship between a German and a Jew, which is narrated from the perspective of a German protagonist. The theme of the persecution of the Jews has changed slightly with the introduction of translated texts, although the selection of texts for translation appears to have been determined primarily by their adherence to the governing original models. The second model describes the trials and tribulations of the German refugees.

Although new models did enter the field, those which prevailed in the sixties still dominate. The most prevalent models are autobiographical, offering the story of a German childhood under the Third Reich; a plot involving the citizens' helplessness in the face of dictatorship; or an account of the German underground. There have, however, been some changes in children's historical fiction over the last 30 years. In particular, the literature for children gradually begins to deal with themes previously prohibited (although the number of books based on new models is relatively small). Still, the governing themes of the books, even those which are based on new models, remains as before: German suffering and the victimization of the Germans. Even when the persecution of the Jews is described, it is described from the perspective of the Germans and has usually been annexed to the suffering of the Germans.

As in the case of other historical narratives, the German historical narrative for children is the result of constructing and reconstructing available historiographic material. Meta-historical, sociological, philosophical and psychological studies, including numerous recent ones, address the creation, recreation and denial of the various phases of communal and national images of the past (Bond & Gilliam; Caruth; Diner, "Between Aporia and Apology"; Friedlander, *Memory, History*; Halbwachs; Hobsbawm; Hutton; Jonker; Kaes; Johnson & al.; Ladurie; Lewis, "Masada and Cyrus"; Lewis,

"Medium and Message"; Morgan; White; Yates; Young; Vaughn). All these studies appear to agree that the image of the past is subject to manipulation, serving national, political and social interests. I shall, therefore, not repeat the shared arguments in this rich corpus, but will use them as a point of departure. In other words, I will examine the ways in which texts for children serve as a major and effective source for creating, disseminating, and internalizing (self)images of the past, and crystallizing (self)perceptions of the past, in communities which produce books for children. The point of departure for this discussion is the understanding that any historical narrative is the result of a societal attempt to reconstruct historical material according to its own needs.

Like all other historical narratives, the German historical narrative is processed and configured through the selection, according to a preset model, of elements, events, and historical figures (Even-Zohar; Lotman; Tadmor). Each historical narrative is constructed according to a set model of presentation, be it a historical novel, or a scientific historiography. Although it is commonly believed that historical novels enjoy more freedom than other historical narratives, in principle they are built on the same methodology. They, too, harbour pretensions to historical accuracy, and they, too, seek historical credibility.

Thus, the questions raised in my analysis concern the kinds of models and principles which guide the process of selecting historical events and protagonists: Which events are included and which are overlooked and/or excluded? Why are certain events valorized over others? And what are the relations between these and other events? It is not the events and persons described that are contestable; it is the way these events and persons have been constructed in the narrative that is open to question. The difference between the various historical narratives lies in the way they organize incontestable data such as racial persecution and the murder of millions. Thus, historical narratives may be based on the same data, but they organize it on the basis of different narrative models.

Since the history of the Third Reich and the Holocaust are beyond human imagination, any depicted episode can be made credible, if it refers to a corresponding slice of "reality" in a series of "real events." In other words, the most monstrous occurrences, along with the most unlikely manifestations of human empathy, can be accounted for in referential terms, for it is possible to base all the events comprising the history of the Third Reich and the Holocaust on acknowledged historical sources and documents. Thus, historical credibility is not contingent on an event's "facticity," or whether or not specific events actually transpired, but depends rather on the extent to which events are represented, and the ways in which they are hierarchized in historical narratives. This holds true for historical novels as well.

In the construction of the historical "story," repeated patterns play a significant role. In fact, it is the repeated patterns that underline the "hard core" of the texts. After reading several of these historical novels, the reader would quickly become familiar with the patterns. For instance, the reader will identify a person who is described as having an advantage over his German friend as either a Jew or a Nazi. If a person is described as small and/or dark, the reader can anticipate that s/he will be introduced as a Nazi or as a Jew. The narrative created by these patterns is constructed primarily along the following lines:

- Certain facts, emotions, and perspectives are displaced elsewhere;
- the novels' temporal and geographical frameworks avoid certain years and certain locations;
- descriptions of the Jews have both anti- and philo-semitic overtones;
- analogies are drawn between Nazis and Jews;
- oppositions between Nazis and pseudo-Nazis are set up;
- the German Underground is highlighted;
- the victimization of Germans assumes a certain character and importance;
- the burden of guilt for the Holocaust is rejected.

Given this relatively broad range of constructions I will allude only to a few, and briefly at that; I will address the displacement of facts and perspectives, the temporal and geographical dimensions of the novels, the representation of Germans, Nazis and Jews, German victimization, and German guilt. My analysis will focus on Hans Peter Richter's *Damals war es Friedrich*, which is regarded as the jewel in the crown of German children's literature. One of the first books to deal with the Third Reich, it established a preferred model for representing the Third Reich, was sold in almost a million copies, and translated into several languages, including Hebrew (by Yad Va-Shem).

Displaced Elements

At first glance, texts addressing the Third Reich and the Holocaust appear to cover a range of well-known historical events and key figures associated with the history of the Third Reich: the Nazis, Hitler, the war, the trains, food deprivation, the persecution of Jews, the terror of the occupying forces, and the concentration camps. By recounting events regarded as typical of the period in question and which illuminate well-known historical characters, these texts seem historically valid. However, the proportional staging of their components, the contexts into which these components are placed, and the ways in which they are interrelated, are clearly manipulative strategies in themselves. In other words, these "stories" of the past are determined neither

by elision nor exclusion, but by the modes of representation they deploy.

Let's look at some concrete examples:

(a) *The terror of the occupying army*

The terror of the occupying army is never denied; on the contrary, it is strongly and vividly manifested. Only it is not the terror of the German army which is made manifest, but rather that of the Russian army. In *Maikäfer flieg*, the appalling state of the Russian army is described with empathy even as it is treated ironically; in *Stern ohne Himmel*, the entire population, not only the Nazis, is terrified of the approaching Russians. The narrative hardly questions this terror, and the Russian army is portrayed as ruthless and savage:

Und wer in Gefangenschaft geriete, verhungere oder werde zu Tode geprügelt oder käme zu Zwangsarbeit nach Sibirien, so hieß es. (*Stern ohne Himmel* 62)

Those who are captured by the Russians will either die of starvation, be beaten to death, or sent to Siberia for hard labour, so it was said. (my translation)

'Die Russen kastrieren alle' ... 'So, kastrieren?' fragte Antek, 'weißt du denn überhaupt, was das ist?' (*Stern ohne Himmel* 117)

'The Russians castrate them all' ... 'Really, castrate?' asked Antek, 'Do you have any idea at all what this means?' (my translation)

'Die Russen schneiden den Frauen die Busen ab und erschießen die Kinder und rauben die Häuser aus und zünden alles an, und alle verbrennen,' sagte meine Schwester. (*Maikäfer flieg* 29)

'The Russians cut off women's breasts, shoot children, loot homes, then set everything ablaze and they all burn to death', said my sister. (my translation)

Meine Mutter hatte vor betrunkenen Russen Angst. Betrunkene Russen wurden schreckliche Dinge nachgesagt. Vielleicht zu recht, vielleicht zu unrecht. Wer konnte das schon wissen? Meine Mutter konnte es nicht wissen. (*Maikäfer flieg* 100)

My mother was afraid of drunk Russians. There were rumours that drunk Russians were doing terrible things. Perhaps they were, perhaps they were not, who could have known that? My mother could not. (my translation)

So streiften die Russen in der ganzen Gegend herum und wurden gefährlich. Wenn ihnen ein Deutscher mit dem Fahrrad begegnete und es ihnen nicht sofort gab, wurde er erschossen. (*Nacht über dem Tal* 99)

The Russians were everywhere and a danger to all. If they met a German riding his bicycle who didn't hand it over immediately, they would shoot him on the spot. (my translation)

Und die Nachrichten aus den von den Russen besetzten Gebieten waren

schrecklich. Mit Panzern war die Rote Armee den Flüchtlingszügen nachgefahren, hatte sie eingeholt und in den Schnee gewalzt, mit den Panzerketten sich auf ihnen gedreht, bis nichts mehr übrig war. Wo immer sie hinkamen, hatten sie die Frauen vergewaltigt, von denen viele sich nachher das Leben nahmen. (*Nacht über dem Tal* 116)

And the news from the Russian occupied areas were dreadful. The Red Army with its tanks came after the marching refugees, ran them over and rolled them over with the tank chains into the snow, until nothing was left. Wherever they came, they raped the women. Later on, many women committed suicide. (my translation)

b) *Concentration camps*

While concentration camps are featured in the background, they appear to be far away, and what actually takes place in them is never very clear. In Fuchs's *Emma*, for instance, the half-Jewish grandmother is taken to a concentration camp. The child asks the grandmother what will happen to her there and gets a blunt answer: "Ich weiß es nicht!" (*Emma* 93) — "I don't know" (my translation).

There is no further reference in this story to concentration camps, nor is there any attempt to try to account for what happened to the grandmother. Such presentation is possible because the narrative adheres to the perspective of the child. Books for children are usually told from an adult perspective, sometimes in embedded speech, and rarely from the child's perspective. However, in the case of books on the Third Reich and the Holocaust, the books tend to adopt the child's perspective. Furthermore, the books in question refrain systematically from confronting the child's perspective with that of the adult, even though all the books are written from a later and much more knowledgeable standpoint. Although the books make this retrospective point of view clear, they do not use it to introduce into the texts what they as children could not have known, but most probably knew as adults. Neither do the books generally use the option of constructing an additional story over and above the "story" told from the child's point of view, as does, for instance, Gudrun Pausnwang in her *Reise im August*.

It may be that the German writers in question adhere to the child's perspective, which enables them to screen the described events through the child's perspectival limitations, because this limited perspective furnishes them with an easy and reliable way of presenting the consensual historical narrative.

Auschwitz is seldom, if ever, mentioned in novels describing this period, except in rare instances, such as Schönfeld's *Sonderappell*. This book describes the girls recruited to the RAD, the girls' labour groups who were assigned to the concentration camps as part of Germany's war efforts. The

girls' camp is located near Auschwitz, and the reader is led to perceive Auschwitz as nothing more than a neighbouring camp in which there is a pharmacy:

Sie arbeitete in Auschwitz in einer Apotheke ... Übrigens, ich bin jetzt auch einmal da gewesen, wo sie die Juden einsperren. Sie stehen hinter dem Stacheldrahtzaun, und mein Freund sagt, sie hätten nichts zu essen, aber es sind ja auch keine Menschen wie wir, das sieht man gleich.' (Sonderappell 98)

She worked at a pharmacy in Auschwitz.... By the way, once I was also there, where they imprison the Jews. They stand behind a wire fence, and my friend says they have nothing to eat, but clearly they are not human beings like us, this you can see immediately. (my translation)

At this point the story ceases to mention Auschwitz, but later briefly and very vaguely notes the extermination of the Jews.

(c) Key elements

The use of elements commonly identified with the narrative of the Third Reich seeks to colour these texts with, as it were, the "truth." In *Rosa Weiss*, Roberto Innocenti uses an image that has a particular symbolic value, and inserts it into a different context. The title of the book alludes to the famous underground group. In addition to the use of this evocative title, Innocenti incorporates an illustration alluding to the famous picture of a child holding up his hands, which has come to represent the Warsaw Ghetto. As he inserts it into his narrative, Innocenti changes the original meaning of the photograph, finally inverting it (see colour plate 6).

It almost goes without saying that the original photo is identified with the uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto. The title of the photo reads: "dragged out of the Bunkers" and it was taken from an album belonging to Jürgen Stroop, the SS Commander who fought the Jewish uprising and annihilated the Warsaw Ghetto. In the original photo, a huddle of helpless and frightened women and children are standing in the background with their hands raised, surrounded by Wehrmacht soldiers who have their rifles pointed at them. The photo conveys a sense of the terror they must have experienced at that moment, their lives hanging in the balance. They are clearly quite submissive, if not subservient, before the camera, and the eye behind the camera is plainly malevolent and menacing. The original photograph was unquestionably taken by a Nazi officer ready to massacre a line-up of frightened subjects who are staring straight at him.

Roberto Innocenti has entirely inverted the original point of view of this photograph. To begin with, he has omitted from the background the women and the children standing with their hands raised, and replaced

Wehrmacht soldiers with members of the SS; this is evident by their uniforms. Further, in this illustrated version of the photograph, one of the children is raising his hands and looking out in fear, but what the child is looking at is not at all clear. Since the entire text is presented in an embedded speech with Rosa Weiss, it may be assumed that the child is facing a guileless and innocent gathering, especially because the Nazi mayor of the city and the SS people are not placed in front of him, but rather behind him, next to him, and diagonally across from him.

In the next illustration, Rosa Weiss is watching the surrendering child being driven to a truck, in which a number of people are already seated; how they got there is not described by the text. The child is not looking at her face. She is not depicted as the executor, nor is the child about to be executed. In fact, the text merely suggests that the child is Jewish, yet does not unequivocally identify him as such. The point of view depicting the surrendering child has been transformed: in the original photo it was the Nazi commander, while in Innocenti's story it is the helpless child himself, in defiance, as it were, of the regime. The text further informs us that it is eventually Rosa Weiss who gets killed, not the child with the raised hands.

Thus, while on the surface the displaced versions of the well-known photograph seem to enhance the documentary nature of this story, at closer inspection, one sees that they actually divest the story of its historical credibility.

Temporal and Geographical Borders

In terms of time and space, the texts seldom refer to events that took place outside Germany, nor do they cover events that occurred between 1942-1945. The years between 1942 and 1945 are only addressed in order to describe the suffering of German civilians during the final years of the war. For instance, *Nie wieder ein Wort davon*, *Im roten Hinterhaus*, *Wir waren dabei* and *Damals war es Friedrich*, begin with Germany's economic inflation during the early years of the Reich. They end with Friedrich's death in an Allied bombing raid in 1942. *Maikäfer flieg* concerns itself mainly with the events of the last months of the war, as do *Stern ohne Himmel*, *Nacht über dem Tal*, *Emma*, *Wir werden uns wiederfinden*, *Kritike*, *Das Jahr der Wölfe*, *Geh heim und vergiß alles*, *Er hieß Jan*, *Sonderappell*, *Johanna*, *Die roten Matrosen* and *Der erste Frühling*.

Dwelling on the 1920s keeps the focus on Germany's deficient economic situation, its high rates of unemployment, and its absence of civil rights; it constructs Germany as a society not yet fully Nazified whose concentration camps were filled with Germans. This makes it possible to overlook, as it were, the more ruthless oppression of the Jews, not to mention their extermination, and allows the texts to emphasize the plight of the Germans while minimizing the distress of the Jews. Centring on the final years of the

war also highlights the plight of the Germans, who unquestionably experienced hardship and adversity then and after 1945, and provides an expedient excuse for ignoring the plight of the Jews, for Germany is indeed by then "Judenrein," as explicitly remarked in *Stern ohne Himmel*:

Richtig hatten sie alle noch keinen Davidstern gesehen, denn Juden gab es nicht, auf die schimpfte man nur. (*Stern ohne Himmel* 26)

In fact, none of them has seen the Star of David, because there were no Jews, they were only cursed by people. (my translation)

The texts in question draw a new, partial map of Germany, very different from that depicted in the dream of the thousand years of the Reich. Confining themselves to those parts of Germany which suffered heavily from the Allied bombardment, these texts frequently refer to Berlin as a preferred location. Another popular theme is the flight of German refugees westward en masse from various parts of the Reich such as Bohemia and Czechoslovakia. (On the *Vertreibungsliteratur* see Dahrendorf). Even concentration camps which were located on German soil, like Dachau and Buchenwald, are hardly mentioned, except in a few texts which seek primarily to recount the trials and tribulations of the German prisoners there. For instance, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* recites the sufferings of a well-known scholar in a concentration camp:

A famous professor had been arrested and sent to a concentration camp (Concentration camp? Then Anna remembered that it was a special prison for people who were against Hitler). (*When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* 81)

Another example appears in *Stern ohne Himmel* which details Kimmich's sufferings in the concentration camp (*Stern ohne Himmel* 57, 58), and in passing mentions that 8,000 Jews were exterminated there by gas.

Representing the Jews

The texts in question seek to counteract the imposition of negative traits onto Jews. In so doing they create an alternative set of stereotypes grounded on the premise of an essential difference between Jews and Germans; these characterizations draw on a reservoir of converging anti- and philo-semitic traditions, with basic commonalities, which also fed Nazi ideology. As a result, these books are rife with traditional German philo-semitic and anti-semitic stereotypes, between which there are finally only marginal differences. Undoubtedly, the authors of these German books for children mean well. They attempt to point out the injustices committed and are repentant of the atrocities inflicted upon the Jews during the Third Reich. In the name of their good

intentions, philo-semitic stereotypes are placed, as it were, at the forefront, while anti-semitic ones are relegated to the background.

On the surface, it would appear that the teacher's speech in *Damals war es Friedrich* is delivered in protest against Nazi policy and conduct, and in the desire to express empathy for Friedrich, who is no longer permitted to attend school. Officially, the teacher says: "Juden sind Menschen, Menschen wie wir!" (*Damals war es Friedrich* 57) — "Jews are human beings, human beings like us!" (*Friedrich* 63). Out of sheer philo-semitism, he adds: "Die Juden sind tüchtig!" (*Damals war es Friedrich* 57) — "the Jews are very capable people!" (*Friedrich* 63). Implicated in the allusion to Jewish "capability" is a certain *a priori* advantage over the Germans. In other words, through this philo-semitic ambiguity the teacher in fact constructs an anti-semitic superstructure. To begin with, the teacher explains that anti-semitism has a long tradition dating back to Roman times, thereby rationalizing it historically, for such longevity must surely be justified on certain grounds. At the same time, representing anti-semitism as a universal phenomenon means that the Germans cannot be held more responsible than others for having held anti-semitic beliefs.

Next, the teacher tells his students about Christ's crucifixion:

Weil sie nicht glaubten, daß Jesus der wahre Messias sei, weil sie ihn für einen Betrüger hielten, wie es deren schon andere gegeben hatte, deshalb haben sie ihn gekreuzigt. Und das haben ihnen viele bis heute nicht verziehen. (*Damals war es Friedrich* 56-57)

Because Jews did not believe that Jesus was the true Messiah, because they regarded him as an impostor like many before him, they crucified him. And to this day many people have not forgiven them for this. (*Friedrich* 62)

This seemingly cordial explanation, which is actually quite hostile, leads to a discussion of Jewish responses, in which the apologetics for Jewish traits clearly transgress the thin line between philo- and anti-semitism:

Man wirft den Juden vor, sie seien verschlagen und hinterlistig!

Wie sollten sie es nicht sein?

... Man behauptet, die Juden seien geldgierig und betrügerisch! Müssen sie das nicht sein?

... Sie haben erfahren, daß Geld das einzige Mittel ist, mit dem sie sich notfalls Leben und Unversehrtheit erkaufen können. (*Damals war es Friedrich* 57)

Jews are accused of being crafty and sly. How could they be anything else? ... It is claimed that Jews are avaricious and deceitful. Must they not be both?

... They have discovered that in case of need, money is the only way to secure life and safety. (*Friedrich* 63)

This structure of philo-semitic descriptions, which actually invert anti-semitic ones, characterizes other scenes of the book as well. Virtues first considered to be positive are illuminated as negative when viewed in the context of their consequences for the German people. Let's take, for example, the way *Damals war es Friedrich* handles the Jews' putative generosity. A Jewish family asks a German family to join them at the amusement park. The Germans feel obliged to go, although they have no money and know that they cannot really afford it. The Jewish family quite generously treats the German family to almost everything. However, the Germans' pride prompts them to spend their last few pence, treating the Jewish family to some candy and a group photograph. As a result, the Germans cannot afford to buy themselves lunch and end up going hungry, ostensibly, as it were, thanks to the behaviour of their Jewish neighbours. Hence, the Germans pay the price, so to speak, for Jewish generosity.

Jews are also ubiquitously described as extremely kind and genial. *Damals war es Friedrich* portrays them as ever-smiling; particularly the father, mother, and Friedrich. However, elsewhere in the text, their smiles are described as deceptive, as signs of false amiability hiding Jewish cunning, as is later confirmed by an incident in which the father smiles at one of his workers. This process of verifying anti-semitic suspicions continues throughout the text: a small shopowner's claim that the Jews ruin her living is verified by the fact that she has to compete with a large Jewish department store (36); and once Jewish cunning is rationalized in the philo-semitic apologetics of the teacher, it is confirmed in the testimony of a policeman who tells a German boy:

'Glaub mir: Wir Erwachsenen haben unsere Erfahrung mit Juden. Man kann ihnen nicht vertrauen; sie sind hinterlistig und betrügen'. (*Damals war es Friedrich* 39-40)

'Believe me, we grownups have had plenty of experiences with Jews. You can't trust them; they are sneaky and they cheat'. (*Friedrich* 40)

No matter how innocent they seem to be, Jews always appear to be inflicting some damage. For instance, Friedrich is responsible for the mess in his neighbours' apartment, and eats all the potato pancakes, leaving nothing for the German father, who will have to go hungry.

Even as refugees, the Jews cause trouble. In *Stern ohne Himmel*, the Jewish refugee child, Abiram, who escaped from a concentration camp, finds a treasured food hideout and practically robs the German children of it. He is able to get away with this as he is free to move about, while the German

children are locked up in their room.

The Jews enjoy all manner of advantages over the Germans: social, financial, familial, intellectual and even Germanic. Socially speaking, the Jewish families are always superior in status to Germans, and, professionally, they occupy more prestigious positions and reap correspondingly higher financial rewards. Even when living in poor neighbourhoods, Jews are comparatively better off. *Im roten Hinterhaus* describes a poor suburb on the Rhein, where hunger and hardship are endemic. The German boy visits one of the Jewish families who lives there. From his description, it becomes clear that the Jewish family has a better life than the Germans:

'Ich weiß nur noch, daß es darin einen mächtigen Schreibtisch gab und einen riesigen Wandschrank, dessen Glastüren den Blick freigaben auf silberne Leuchter, Schalen und funkelnde Gläser. Dinge, die es damals in keinem Haus im ganzen Rheinviertel zu sehen gab'. (*Im roten Hinterhaus* 121)

'I just know that there was a tremendous desk and a giant cupboard, behind whose glass doors were silver candlesticks and crystal glasses, things which at that time could not be found anywhere else in the whole suburb'. (my translation)

In *Damals war es Friedrich*, the Jewish family is conspicuously more comfortable than the German. The Jewish father has a job, unlike the unemployed German father. In nearly every scene in the book, the Jewish boy Friedrich is depicted as bearing some material possession which shows up that of his German counterpart:

Friedrich und ich bekamen eine große spitze Schultüte;... Meine blaue Tüte war ein wenig kleiner als Friedrichs rote. (*Damals war es Friedrich* 23)

Friedrich and I each received a large, cone-shaped paper bag from our parents.... My blue bag was a little smaller than Friedrich's red one. (*Friedrich* 20)

Mutter hat mir ihr Fahrrad geliehen. Es sah zwar nicht mehr schön aus, aber es fuhr noch sehr gut. Friedrich kam mit seinem neuen blauen Rad. Er hatte es dazu auch noch blank geputzt. (*Damals war es Friedrich* 66)

Mother had loaned me her bicycle. It didn't look beautiful any more, but it still worked very well. Friedrich arrived on his shining new blue bicycle. Not only was the bicycle new; he had polished it as well. (*Friedrich* 74)

In Judith Kerr's *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, the Jewish family's financial advantage is strongly emphasized: Max's best friend, Günther, is frequently invited to eat with Max, is given Max's old clothes and food to

take back home, since his father is unemployed. In *Damals war es Friedrich* the Jewish mother can afford a housekeeper — a German housekeeper — whereas the German mother is forced to hire herself out as a washerwoman. She can afford a housekeeper only after her German husband manages to land a job by joining the Nazi Party. The Jewish mother has time to play with her son, whereas the German mother always has too much work to do.

In terms of family relations, the Jewish family is warm and kind-hearted, while the German is cool and stern. Descriptions of the Jewish family on the Sabbath eve portray it as loving, open and unified. The final scene of the chapter describes the graceful melodies emanating from their house. The parallel German family scene recounts grandpa's visit, which terrifies the family, and the entire evening resembles a military parade more than a family dinner. Further, the Jews enjoy more than mere material advantage. They are also more gifted, both intellectually and physically. Friedrich is much better at math than his German friend, is more adept at riding his bicycle, and is a better swimmer and diver:

Er konnte viel besser schwimmen als ich, und er war ein sehr guter Taucher. (*Damals war es Friedrich* 67)

He could swim much better than I, and was an excellent diver. (*Friedrich* 75)

In *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, Anna is something of a prodigy: she wins prizes for her essays, and excels in math. Her brother, even as a refugee in Paris, wins first prize as the most distinguished student.

Interestingly, the Jews are represented as even more German than the Germans, in that many of the stereotypes applied to them are those which have traditionally been constructed as "German." They manifest, for example, industriousness, cleanliness, and discipline, advantages which imply the inevitability of a struggle between Germans and the Jews — the latter being cast as a precocious foreign people intruding on German soil, with whom it is difficult just to keep up, let alone gain an edge.

Unlike the Germans, the Jews always manage to turn a bad situation to their favour and, even more importantly, they always manage to survive. Whereas the unemployed German father cannot find a job until Hitler comes to power, the Jewish father uses his recent unemployment to find a far better job with a Jewish firm. True, the Jewish father was fired for being Jewish, but we are given to understand that this is compensated for by his greater job satisfaction. Moreover, his new job is the realization of every child's dream: he is director of the toy department in a big department store. This not only assuages potential German guilt over discriminatory employment laws, but also suggests that the Jews have actually benefited from the Nazi regime. When the children visit the father and marvel at his new job, he confesses:

"Ich gefalle mir jedenfalls so besser!" (*Damals war es Friedrich* 52) — "I for one like myself better this way" (*Friedrich* 57). Even when oppressed, Jews manage to take advantage of the situation.

The books' adherence to traditional depictions of Jews is compounded by ignorance about actual Jewish customs and ways of life. For instance, the Jewish family in *Damals war es Friedrich* is presented as a semi-orthodox family: it keeps the Sabbath, the Jewish mother kisses the Mezuzah upon leaving the room, and the family celebrates Friedrich's Bar Mitzvah in an orthodox synagogue.

Yet they are depicted eating non-kosher food: when visiting the big amusement park, the Jewish father treats them all to a manifestly non-kosher Bockwurst. Moreover, as the Jewish mother is in her death throes after the pogrom in their apartment, the Jewish doctor takes it upon himself to administer a version of sacramental last rites, urging her to make a confession:

'Bekennen Sie Ihrem Mann Ihre Sünden!', riet Dr. Levy ihr.

'Höre, erleichtere dich!' bat Herr Schneider. (*Damals war es Friedrich* 85)

'Confess your sins to your husband' Dr. Levy advised her. He looked directly at Herr Schneider, then moved away.

'Listen, unburden yourself!' Herr Schneider implored her. (*Friedrich* 98)

The Representation of Germans, Nazis and Jews

The texts establish a polar opposition between the Nazis and the German people, according to which the Germans were not Nazis and the Nazis were not Germans. In order to draw an even sharper distinction between Germans and Nazis, a symmetry is drawn between Nazis and Jews. Though this sounds absurd, this construction has a logic of its own: The depiction of both Jews and Nazis is drawn from a reservoir of *alien* attributes which has long supplied the range of physical, mental, individual and national features attributed to Jews. Since it is not only the Jews, but the Nazis as well, who are contrasted with the "real" Germans, the symmetry constructed between the Jews and the Nazis as "non-Germans," is almost unavoidable.

As a result, Nazis and Jews share many traits. Whereas Germans almost never receive physical descriptions, both Jews and Nazis always do. For instance, in *Damals war es Friedrich*, Herr and Frau Schneider, Herr Rosenthal and the Rabbi, as well as the "real" Nazis, Herr Resch and Special Delegate Gelko from the District Office, are introduced in the text by direct or indirect physical descriptions.

Moreover, Jews and "real" Nazis always resemble each other: they are physically small, if not diminutive, and dark. Whether Little Cohn of *Maikäfer flieg* who has curly black hair and pointy ears, Abiram of *Stern ohne*

Himmel, Frau Schneider, in *Damals war es Friedrich*, Ruth in *Nie wieder ein Wort davon*, Dr. Jokesch, Lajos and the American commander of the camp in *Geh heim und vergiß alles*, Sofie in *Im roten Hinterhaus*, or the Jewish grandmother in *Emma* — they are all described as small and dark. Only the telltale nose is conspicuously missing, though *Als die neue Zeit begann* makes amends for this oversight:

Die Tür öffnete sich ... Dann erschien eine kleine, spindeldürre Gestalt. Ich kannte ihn gut, der da kam. Er hatte ein vogelnasiges Gesicht, graue Haare, eine viel zu weite Hose, die ihm um die Beine schlotterte, und auf dem Hinterkopf ein schwarzes Käppchen. Auf der Schulter trug das Männchen einen Leinensack. (*Als die neue Zeit begann* 60)

The door opened ... there appeared a small and thin figure. I knew him well, he, who came. He had a bird-nose [vogelnasiges] face, gray hair, baggy trousers loose about his legs, and a small cap on the back of his head. He was carrying a linen sack over his shoulder. (my translation)

Like the Jews, the Nazis are depicted as small and dark, mirroring, it almost goes without saying, the image of Hitler himself as a type of Super-Nazi. For example, there is the parade commander who welcomes the Führer in *Wir waren dabei*, the Nazi Siegbert in *Wann blüht der Zuckertütenbaum*, and the hunchback in *Damals war es Friedrich*, who are all either dark or small, or both.

Another analogy between the Jews and the Nazis is constructed through the way both are shown to be active participants in strange or bizarre ceremonies and rituals. Moreover, the Jews and the Nazis are both ascribed national credos, while the Germans are hardly ever represented through shared national or cultural affiliations, particularly never ones which might be perceived as "peculiar." However, in describing the Jews and the Nazis, the texts are replete with detailed descriptions of seemingly strange ceremonies, such as the Friday night ceremony before Shabbat, Friedrich's Bar Mitzvah, and the consecration of the Nazi Jugendvolk organization.

Another similarity involves the tendency shared by Jews and Nazis for dispensing orders, which is placed in contradistinction to the German trait of simply obeying commands. The Grandfather in *Damals war es Friedrich* is a tyrant who abuses his family, and his behaviour is likened to that of a Jew named Cohn who was once his supervisor. His behaviour also resembles that of Herr Schneider, who obviously enjoys ordering his workers about.

While the Nazis and Jews never wanted for food, the Germans were always either starving or had precious little to eat. Furthermore, the Nazis and the Jews worked in tandem to feed the starving German people: both in

Damals war es Friedrich and *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, the unemployed Germans are "nourished," as it were, by Jews until the Nazis replace them as providers.

What's more, these German texts for children suggest that had they been given half a chance, the Jews themselves would readily have joined the Nazi Party. In *Damals war es Friedrich*, the Jewish protagonists are represented as prepared to join either the Jugendvolk or the Nazi Party. When a neighbour tells Friedrich's father that he has joined the Party, the father expresses his understanding and says that he, too, might have joined the Nazi Party had he not been Jewish:

'Vielleicht — wenn ich nicht Jude wäre — vielleicht hätte ich genauso gehandelt wie Sie'. (*Damals war es Friedrich* 63)

'Perhaps — if I weren't a Jew — perhaps I would have acted just like you'. (*Friedrich* 70)

This notion resonates elsewhere: earlier in the story, Friedrich enthusiastically tries to join the Jugendvolk. Seemingly more Catholic than the Pope, he is the only young child in possession of a swastika ring. Later, when Friedrich takes his friend to the department store, he greets the man outside the District Council building with a rousing "Heil Hitler" (55).

Leaving aside the alleged inclination of the Jews to join the Nazis, we come upon another peculiarity: there are apparently very few Nazis to be found in Germany, and regardless of their ostensible numerical marginality, the Nazis still manage to oppress their victims — the Germans of the Third Reich.

Victimization

The books in question present the "German People" as the ultimate victims. Their tale of woe begins with World War I, continues through the years between the wars, and ends with the rise of the Third Reich, when they too are subjected to Hitler's tyrannical ruthlessness. In corroboration, the texts emphasize prewar conditions which gave rise to the Third Reich: unemployment and its deprivations, postwar devastation and ruin, disease, mourning, family disintegration, and the tragic displacement of individuals.

The texts are saturated with detailed descriptions of German suffering. In an attempt to strengthen the notion that the German people suffered greatly, the texts seem to assume that the more evidence of German suffering they amass, the more persuasive their narratives are bound to be, and finally, the more German suffering will become unquestionable.

Damals war es Friedrich depicts a German family in the twenties who experiences various kinds of hardship. The father is unemployed, and he