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A Comparison Between the Movie and Book Versions of *The Reader*

Movie adaptations of books are notorious for not respecting the source material. I feel that the movie adaptation of *The Reader* by Bernhard Schlink is an exception to this stereotype, as it does a very good job of telling the same story as the book, but in a more impactful way. I feel this is especially prevalent in the second to last scene from the book where Michael is trying to give Hannah's money to the daughter of a woman directly harmed by Hannah's atrocities. I prefer the movie version, as I feel it is both a more accurate representation of what a conversation between Michael and the daughter would actually be like and that film is a better medium for this scene specifically.

The movie's version of the daughter is much less hospitable and colder than the daughter in the book. In the book, Michael notes that, "As soon as we had sat down, the tea had been poured, and the sugar had been added and stirred, she switched from the English in which she had welcomed me, to German." (Schlink, 212). Only after the bitterness of the tea is removed do they speak to each other, which may be a nod to the bitter topic Michael is there to discuss with the daughter. She also switches from English to German. This is very hospitable considering the circumstances, as many German Jews refused to speak German at all after the war because of the

trauma it brings up in people who went through the Holocaust. This is in contrast to the film version, where the daughter does not serve Michael tea at all, nor does she switch to German. The film version of the scene feels more realistic to what a conversation between someone like Michael and a survivor would look like. The daughter in the movie is far more cold and defensive in both her speech and her body language towards Michael, as you would expect from a person having to relive their trauma again. I feel that the book portrays the daughter as far happier and accepting about what happened to her than in the movie, and as such makes this scene a bit less impactful to me than the movie is.

I find that the movie is a more impactful medium than the book for this scene because the acting, soundtrack, and visuals that come with the movie are able to convey pain so much clearer than literature can in some cases. The actors throughout a few points in the scene are able to very clearly communicate non-verbally. Something about seeing the actual pain in the eyes of both Michael and the daughter makes the scene far more emotionally charged for me. The actor who played Michael does a very good job of playing the part of a broken man looking to tie off a few loose ends, and the actor who played the daughter did a stellar job portraying a victim of the Holocaust in a very realistic way. The lighting and camera work in this scene really add to the overall tone of the movie. Most of the colors in this scene are cooler colors, and the few warm colors that are present are all muted. This lighting represents the dark, gloomy nature of the conversation they're having, and aids the rest of the elements in the scene to make the view feel just as glum as the two characters do. There is almost no music throughout the entire scene. The composers chose to use silence as a way to build tension, and keep the focus of the scene on the two characters. Only after Michael leaves does a soft and sad piano play as the daughter puts the

tea tin by a picture of her family. This soft melody releases the tension built by the silence into a melancholic sadness. All these elements are not achievable by just words alone, and they lift the movie version of the scene above the book scene.

In summary, the movie version of this scene speaks to me far more than the book's version of the scene does. The movie portrays the daughter as a far more defensive, cold, and skeptical version of the daughter than the book does. I find this portrayal to be more accurate to how Holocaust survivors spoke about it in real life, at least in my experience listening to survivors speak. This combined with the absolutely masterful lighting, camerawork, music, and acting make this scene far more emotional than the book's version is.