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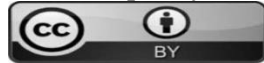
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Ethical Conduct of Billeting Soldiers in The Nightingale
by Kristin Hannah

A B S T R A C T

This paper explores the ethical dimension surrounding the conduct of military soldiers in Kristin Hannah's *The Nightingale*, specifically focusing on the situation involving billeting German soldiers in Vianne's house. The paper delves into the moral complexity present in wartime scenarios through an examination from an ethical viewpoint, i.e., jus in bello principles. It examines the ethical dilemma experienced by soldiers and civilians, encompassing issues such as human rights, power dynamics, invasion of privacy, and safety of non-combatants. Moreover, the analysis evaluates the extent to which soldiers adhere to jus in bello principles, including discrimination, proportionality, and respect for civilian property. By unraveling the ethical complexity depicted in *The Nightingale*, the aim of this paper is to illuminate the multifaceted nature of soldier conduct during house billeting and provide a more profound understanding of the ethical challenges in wartime.

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السلوك الأخلاقي للجنود المقيمين مع العوائل المدنية في رواية العنديلين لكريستين حنا

الباحثة: فاطمة عصام كاظم أ.م.د. مها قحطان سليمان

جامعة بغداد / كلية التربية للبنات

المستخلص:

تستكشف هذه الدراسة البعد الأخلاقي المحيط بسلوك الجنود العسكريين في رواية "العنديلين" لكريستين حنا، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على الموقف الذي يتضمن وجود جنود ألمان في منزل فيان. تتعمق هذه الورقة في التعقيد الأخلاقي الموجود في سيناريوهات الحرب من خلال فحص من وجهة نظر أخلاقية، أي مبادئ قانون الحرب. وهو يدرس المعضلة الأخلاقية التي يعاني منها الجنود والمدنيون، والتي تشمل قضايا مثل حقوق الإنسان، وديناميكيات السلطة، وانتهاك الخصوصية، وسلامة المدنيين. علاوة على ذلك، يقيم التحليل مدى التزام الجنود بمبادئ قانون الحرب، بما في ذلك

التمييز والتناسب واحترام الممتلكات المدنية. من خلال الكشف عن التعقيد الأخلاقي الموضح في "العندليب"، فإن الهدف من هذه الورقة هو إلقاء الضوء على الطبيعة المتعددة الأوجه لسلوك الجندي أثناء وجودهم في منازل المدنيين وتوفير فهم أكثر عمقاً للتحديات الأخلاقية في زمن الحرب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاحتلال، الأخلاق، قانون العدالة في الحرب، التعقيد الأخلاقي، الجنود، الحرب.

Introduction

In times of war, moral boundaries tend to blur, presenting individuals with deep ethical dilemmas that challenge their very humanity. An example of this exploration of war ethics can be seen in Kristin Hannah's novel, *The Nightingale*. The story unfolds during World War II during the German occupation of France, focusing on Vianne, a French woman navigating the moral complexities brought on by the war. Central to Vianne's story is the billeting events by two German soldiers, Captain Beck and Captain Von Richter, which trigger an examination of soldiers' conduct during the war in the context of *jus in bello*.

At the core of the story is Vianne, a character who reflects the challenges experienced by many individuals trapped in the chaos of war. While she deals with the obstacles and ethical dilemmas imposed on her, the novel presents the moral complexities of soldiers' behaviour. The decisions soldiers make, particularly how they treat civilians while billeting, serve as a powerful perspective for examining the ethical implications of warfare.

Jus in bello, which is also known as conduct during war, provides guidelines for the ethical treatment of civilians during times of war, including protecting civilians, and minimizing unnecessary suffering. This paper aims to analyze the conduct and choices of soldiers through the lens of *jus in bello*, considering their duties and obligations as combatants and providing insights into the moral complexity of war and its significant impact on both soldiers and civilians. The analysis of soldiers' behaviour provides valuable insights into the ethical complexities of war. It urges us to reflect on the moral dilemmas soldiers encounter during conflicts and the consequences of their choices on others, especially innocent civilians. Moreover, it raises questions regarding the responsibility of soldiers for their conduct and the lasting importance of adhering to ethical values amidst violence and chaos.

The question arises as to why starting a war is considered to be wrong. The answer to this question is all too familiar to us: lives are lost, often in great numbers. War is a horrific and devastating experience. But there's more to it than that because our perceptions of war and military behaviour are heavily influenced by how people are murdered and who they are. Then, maybe, the simplest way to explain the crime of war is to argue that there are no limitations at any of these points: people are killed with every possible cruelty, and people of all ages, genders, and morals are killed (Walzer, 2006).

The tradition of just war is a comprehensive framework that examines the ethical and moral aspects of armed conflict, dating back to the end of the Roman Empire. The tradition revolves around three main thematic concerns: *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello* and *jus post bellum*. The first one among these, *jus ad bellum*, where the key question concerns the circumstances that justified war. The second is *jus in bello*. Its scope includes behaviour and activities

during war and the limits that justify the use of force. The third is the concept of *jus post bellum*. It revolves around the question of how wars can be justly concluded. It focuses on the obligations of those involved in the immediate aftermath of war (Brunstetter & O'Driscoll, 2017).

Michael Walzer is acknowledged as a key figure among political theorists in the following postwar era, and his contributions to the field of international relations are merely a fraction of his extensive engagement with modern political theory (Griffiths, Roach, & M Scott Solomon, 2009). Understanding Walzer's status as a just war thinker is challenging. Most people consider him to be the most prominent just war thinker of the last century. His book *Just and Unjust Wars* is widely regarded as the most important contemporary work in the field. It was first published in 1977, immediately following the end of the Vietnam War (Brunstetter & O'Driscoll, 2017).

Jus in bello is the term used by just war theorists to describe justice in war, which refers to the proper conduct during battle once the war has already begun (Orend, 2006). The regulations governing proper behaviour during war, known as *jus in bello*, are based on two main principles: discrimination and proportionality. Discrimination addresses the identification of legitimate targets in war, while proportionality focuses on determining the ethical use of force (Moseley, n.d.).

The Nightingale by Kristin Hannah is an engaging historical novel that transports readers to France during World War II. Taking place during the German occupation, the story unfolds amidst a war-torn nation trying to preserve its identity and freedom. Hannah skillfully depicts a vivid picture of a small village named Carriveau, located in the French countryside. Within this village, people confront the harsh realities of war, with German forces tightening their control over the country and imposing strict rules on the civilians. The novel explores the stories of two sisters, Vianne and Isabelle, during the occupation. Both Captain Beck and Von Richter play significant roles during the billeting, showcasing contrasting behaviours. Captain Beck, despite being part of the occupying force, shows moments of empathy and understanding towards Vianne and her family. On the other hand, Von Richter represents the hardness and brutality of war, causing pain to the civilians. Through these characters, the novel reveals the complexities of human actions during wartime.

As France loses the war and the German occupation army begins to approach the city, the German soldiers march towards Carriveau. The military assumes authority over major civilian facilities such as schools and seminaries to create administrative centres. The most intense and intimate pressure on civilians is experienced when soldiers are billeted with French families. This situation reminds French citizens of their dire circumstances on a daily basis (Smith, 2010). Vianne's life changes when her husband goes to war. She faces uncertainty and anxiety alone with her daughter Sophie. Vianne's house is chosen to be billeted by the German army, along with the other houses in the village. Vianne struggles to protect her family while maintaining her dignity.

Captain Wolfgang Beck, one of the German soldiers. He demonstrates the complex nature of human behaviour in times of war. He struggles with conflicting loyalties and shows glimpses of compassion against the backdrop of the occupation. The first time he appears in the novel

is when he is assigned to billet in Vianne's house "I am not the general, alas. I am simply a captain in the Wehrmacht. I follow orders, Madame, I do not give them. And I am ordered to billet here. But I assure you that I am a gentleman." (Hannah, 2015. P. 78). Captain Beck's statement highlights the military's hierarchical structure as well as his position as a captain in the Wehrmacht. He asserts that he has to obey orders rather than give them, implying that his decisions are influenced by superiors. This raises ethical concerns about the obligations and responsibility of soldiers within the realm of *jus in bello*. When it comes to billeting, soldiers need to take into account the rights of civilians whose homes they are taking over. Captain Beck's claim of being a "gentleman" could indicate an understanding of the ethical responsibilities linked to treating civilians with dignity and reducing harm.

Vianne refuses the order to billet of a German soldier in her house, saying her husband will be home soon. Vianne knows there is no choice, and she must keep her daughter safe until her husband comes home. This situation highlights the challenges faced by civilians in times of war. Then Captain Beck replies to Vianne saying, "This, I'm afraid, is the situation. Many of your fellow villagers are facing the same dilemma, I fear." "If we leave, will we get our home back?" "I would not think so, Madame." (Hannah, 2015, p. 78). Captain Beck's response, "I would not think so, Madame," suggests that he does not anticipate that they will be able to regain their homes once they leave. The question regarding the reclamation of residences brings up concerns connected to property rights in times of war. The principle of proportionality in *jus in bello* requires that armies have the right to strive for victory in their wars, however, they do not have the right to engage in actions they believe are necessary for winning (Walzer, 2006). Preventing the villagers from going back to their houses once they leave raises concerns about the proportionality of the actions carried out by the occupying army.

The situation explores the wider framework of occupation in times of war. The rules and responsibilities that govern the behaviour of an occupying military are specified in international humanitarian law. These rules include property rights and the well-being of civilians. The statement raises that the occupying force might not be fulfilling these lawful duties. Before 1949, the Geneva Conventions provided protection for injured, ill, shipwrecked, and captured soldiers. The civilians convention acknowledged the changing nature of conflict and established legal protection for civilians who are not involved with military forces or armed factions. This protection extended to civilian property as well (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2010). The authorities that are occupying seek to expand their control in the state they have taken over, aiming to stay there for an extended period to fully utilize the benefits of occupation, including economic, political, and strategic advantages (Al Hassani, 2008).

After a while, Captain Beck informs Vianne that he is making a list for his superior at the *kommandantur*. He mentions that they need to know the names of some teachers from her school. Therefore, he asks Vianne to provide him with a list of teachers' names.

“ Jews. Communists. Homosexuals. Freemasons. Jehovah’s Witnesses. Do you know these people?”

“I am Catholic, Herr Captain, as you know. We do not speak of such things at school. I hardly know who are homosexuals and Freemasons, at any rate.”

“Ah. So you know the others.”

“I don’t understand...”

“I am unclear. My pardons. I would appreciate it most sternly if you would let me know the names of the teachers in your school who are Jewish or communist.” (Hannah, 2015, p. 115).

The quote implies that Captain Beck is questioning Vianne about individuals who are part of specific groups of minorities. His questioning may be viewed as discriminatory, implying a desire to target and oppress people based on their religious, political, or sexual identities. *Jus in bello* emphasises the importance of protecting civilians and prohibits discrimination based on these characteristics. A legitimate act of war is one that respects the rights of the civilians it is directed towards. The focus is on the preservation of life and freedom, both of which are considered on an individual basis rather than collectively (Walzer, 2006). Regardless of their internal stance, civilians are not considered dangerous individuals in any external context. Therefore, they should not be targeted directly and intentionally in military attacks (Orend, 2006).

Captain Beck offers Vianne a seat, and Vianne gazes at the empty paper in front of her, explaining that the information is not secret and can be shared by anyone. She wants to tell him that she does not want to write those names, but she realizes that anyone in town could provide him with the names, considering the control he has over her house and the threat of eviction. Then she starts to write the names, and when she is done, he tells her: “You have forgotten your friend.” “Did I?” “Surely you meant to be accurate.” (Hannah, 2015, p. 116).

Vianne looks down on the list and thinks that she should not have done this, slowly feeling sick to her stomach, she writes the name of her best friend. Vianne is faced with a moral dilemma in which she must choose between two conflicting ethical considerations: she is under pressure to comply with Captain Beck's demand for information, a decision that might result in negative consequences or mistreatment of innocent civilians. On the other hand, she is faced with the risk of being expelled and jeopardizing her family's safety if she declines to collaborate. This situation requires Vianne to carefully consider the potential consequences of her actions and make a difficult ethical decision.

Vianne's internal conflict and the feeling of sickness she endures mirror moral distress, which is common in situations where people find themselves torn between their moral beliefs and the practical realities of war. The complexities of war frequently push people into dilemmas where they have to sacrifice their moral values in order to guarantee their own well-being or that of their loved ones. How far can someone go to protect themselves and their loved ones without compromising their moral compass.

When Vianne returns from her Sunday sermon on a freezing morning, she becomes extremely ill, shivering and coughing uncontrollably. By the time she reaches her yard, she is

breathing heavily and coughing intensely. At that moment, she begins to collapse and ultimately faints. Captain Beck promptly carries her to her house, and he brings her food. He tells Rachel, Vianne's best friend, about what happened: "She fainted in the snow, Madame, and cracked her head on the step. I carried her up here." (Hannah, 2015, p. 226). When Captain Beck discovers Vianne in the snow and brings her inside, it demonstrates a strong sense of responsibility and a commitment to help those in need. This action is in line with the principle of *jus in bello*, which highlights the duty to provide medical aid and care to the wounded, even if they are on the opposing side of a conflict. This situation reveals a glimpse of humanity amidst the harsh realities of war.

Captain Beck tells Vianne: "You hit your head and could have died." Vianne touched her forehead, felt the bump that was tender. "What happens to Sophie if you die?" he asked. "Have you considered this?" (Hannah, 2015, p. 227). This conversation explores the ethical concept of responsibility towards dependents or loved ones. It prompts reflection on the obligation to provide care and protection for those who depend on us, even in times of personal challenges or risks. His words inspired her to prioritize her well-being and to be cautious in order to prevent similar situations and ensure her survival for the sake of her daughter. Although his words may have appeared harsh, their purpose was to cultivate her resilience and self-reliance amidst challenging circumstances.

In another situation, Sophie becomes seriously ill, with her fever rising to the point where she is constantly plagued by high temperatures. These difficulties become even more challenging during times of war, as obtaining necessary medication becomes extremely difficult. Despite the willingness to pay any price, it becomes impossible to obtain anything as basic as aspirin. Vianne is unsure of how to assist Sophie in such circumstances. "If only she had some of Dr. Collis Browne's Chlorodyne. It worked magic on a cough, but of course there was none left." (Hannah, 2015, p. 236). At that moment Captain Beck appeared in their bedroom he looked down at Sophie and said: He looked down at Sophie. "She coughed all night. I could hear it." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a small bottle of antibiotics. "Here." (Hannah, 2015, p. 236).

This act of assisting a young girl who is severely ill and saving her life is a genuine display of human manner and aligns with his ethics to help those in need, particularly considering the gravity of her condition. He prioritizes human life and aspires to alleviate suffering, regardless of the opposing sides in a conflict. Witnessing the girl's suffering and being in a position to access medical supplies, despite the risks associated with providing unauthorized aid, highlights the sacrifices individuals make to follow their moral compass amidst the complexities of war. He felt a sense of duty to help her, similar to the previous act that demonstrated the presence of humanity and hope in the midst of challenging times such as war.

It is important to note that Vianne's close friend, Rachel de Champlain, happens to be Jewish. Upon witnessing the commencement of the arrests of Jewish people, Captain Beck arrives to alert them of what is happening "He glanced left to right and then leaned slightly toward Vianne. "Madame de Champlain should not be at home tomorrow morning," he said quietly.

“I am telling you that if she is here tomorrow, she will not be here the day after.” “If she were my friend, I would find a way to hide her for a day.” (Hannah, 2015, p. 253-54).

The German army was engaged in the task of gathering the names of Jewish individuals in order to detain and transport them to camps. These people, who were mainly women and children, were forcefully taken away from their homes with the help of the French police. German officials, as well as French police, carried out the arrest of Jewish people in both the territories that were under occupation and those that were not occupied in France during the summer of 1942. The policy mandated that initial deportation convoys from France should transport only adult Jews to the East. Police operations cruelly separated families, with parents, grandparents, and older siblings being torn apart from younger children at collection points and at French or German assembly camps (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019).

In this situation, Captain Beck's alert to Vianne regarding the upcoming arrest of her Jewish friend, Rachel de Champlain, showcases a deep sense of empathy and compassion. Even though occupying the role of a German officer with power, Captain Beck decides to tell Vianne about the threat Rachel is under and advises finding a means to shelter her temporarily. The captain's behaviour continues to be contradictory, adding complexity to his character. Despite showing concern for people's well-being and a desire to protect them, it conflicts with his past discriminatory attitudes and actions. This contradiction emphasizes the moral complexities that can emerge during conflicts and the possibility of soldiers displaying conflicting behaviours and beliefs. In this situation, he is taking a risk in order to protect innocent people who are being targeted. This creates a significant internal conflict within him. He should decide whether to remain loyal to his military superior or to act in accordance with his personal morals. In the end, he follows his conscience and remains true to his personal sense of right and wrong.

This incident exemplifies the ethical complexity encountered in warfare and the soldiers' accountability one faces within this context. “That is all I came to say, Mesdames, and I should not have done it. I would be ... punished if word got out. Please, if you are questioned about this later, do not mention my visit.” (Hannah, 2015, p. 254). However, Captain Beck's decision to oppose injustice and provide a warning to enable others to escape arrest, in spite of being aware that he may face punishment if discovered by his comrades or superiors, is consistent with his previous actions. It demonstrates how soldiers face moral challenges during the war, where personal connections, moral convictions, and empathy can impact their decisions, even if it involves taking chances or defying orders. This further solidifies his identity as a person who adheres to his moral sense.

After what happens that day, when Vianne decides to go and help her friend, on her way out, Vianne sees Captain Beck sitting and an oil lamp is lit beside him. He is holding a small portrait of his family. He looks up at her and says: “Bad things are happening, Madame. Impossible things. I trained to be a soldier, to fight for my country and make my family proud. It was an honourable choice. What will be thought of us upon our return? What will be thought of me?” (Hannah, 2015, p. 255). This statement and situation expose a complex internal struggle. The captain is observing "bad things " and "impossible things" that

contradict his training and the idealized portrayal of war as a noble duty to fight for his country and make his family proud. Soldiers join the army because they believe their country must be defended, or they have been conscripted (Walzer, 2006). Captain Beck struggles with the harsh realities of war and may be burdened by feelings of guilt and shame for his actions or the things he has witnessed. Soldiers face psychological pressure due to war, making it a source of distress and stress (Khalil & Sahan, 2022). His concern about his family's opinion of him and their perception underlines the clash between his personal morals and his loyalty. Morals and human values are universal; they transcend cultural boundaries and time limits. This is the reason they are relevant to individuals everywhere, regardless of the time or place (AL-Husseini & AL-Zubbaidi, 2022). His fears about their judgment upon his return indicate an internal conflict between following orders and upholding his own values and ethics.

The act of holding the portrait reveals the heavy emotional burden carried by soldiers, not only for themselves but also for their loved ones who anxiously await their return. His statement indicates that he is presently encountering a moral crisis and is doubting the purpose behind his actions. The captain exemplifies the toll that war imposes on soldiers, not only through physical wounds but also through mental anguish and ethical predicaments. Soldiers, as a group, are distinct from the realm of peaceful; they receive training for combat, providing with weapons, and required to fight in battle on command (Walzer, 2006). This situation highlights the blurred boundary between duty and morality, emphasizing the complex decisions that soldiers must confront as they strive to reconcile their personal values with their military obligations.

Rachel is arrested and subsequently transported to a train station for deportation to a labour camp. Vianne arrives at the station and, at that very moment, something happens. "A train waited, puffing black smoke into the already hot air. Two German soldiers were standing on the platform. One of them was Beck. He was holding a whip. A whip." (Hannah, 2015, p. 266). Seeing the Captain standing there, holding a whip, and witnessing all the women and children being deported to the camp and treated poorly, Vianne is surprised by the sight. When she confronts him about it at home:

"Where's your whip, Herr Captain?"

"You were there?"

"How does it feel to whip a Frenchwoman?"

"You can't think I would do that, Madame. It sickens me."

"And yet there you were."

"As were you. This war has put us all where we do not want to be." (Hannah, 2015, p.269).

The behaviour and justification of the Captain provide a rich foundation for analysis and exploration of the complexities of war. The words he uses indicate that he is only fulfilling his obligations due to his military duty and that it weighs heavily on him. Despite his personal reservations, he is compelled to carry out his responsibilities, highlighting the pressure of obedience and the constraints of soldiers within a hierarchical structure. Captain

Beck's reply, stating that the war has placed everyone "all where we do not to be" and in undesired situations "it sickness me", demonstrates the ethical complexities of wartime. It recognizes the moral challenges face by soldiers trapped in the midst of a war, where their personal beliefs and principles might clash with the expectations of their role or the current conditions.

This conversation emphasizes the ethical dilemmas and moral challenges that people face in times of war. It showcases the intricate connection between personal beliefs, duties, and the challenging decisions people must make in morally ambiguous situations. The conversation between Vianne and Captain Beck acts as a prompt for the complexities of human conduct and the multifaceted nature of ethical decision-making during times of war.

Vianne makes an assurance to her friend Rachel that she will ensure the safety of her son. She is concerned that the captain might report her for helping a Jewish person, which could result in severe consequences, even death. "I promised Rachel I'd keep him safe. Will you turn me in?" she asked. "I am not a monster, Vianne." (Hannah, 2015, p. 270). The Captain assures her that he is not a heartless person "a monster ". This reassurance demonstrates his empathy and refusal to contribute in the persecution of innocent people. He aims to minimize harm on civilians, acknowledging the suffering experienced by innocent people, especially children. Walzer asserts that during War, civilians are necessarily put at risk, which is another dimension of its horrific nature. It is only reasonable to urge soldiers to reduce the threats they cause (Walzer, 2006). Despite the actions he may be forced to take, Captain Beck's statements highlight his inherent compassion and unwavering moral values, creating a conflict between his duties and his personal values.

The American army joins the war as allies of France. One day, the German soldiers shoot down an aeroplane. They search for the airman but can not find him, so the Commandment blames Captain Beck for the failure. When Vianne sees Captain Beck at the house, she has never seen him like that before. He wears his gun, something he never does inside the house. He tells her about what has happened:

"An aeroplane went down near here last night," he said, facing her at last. "An American aeroplane. The one they call a Mustang."

"I thought you wanted their aeroplanes to go down. Isn't that why you shoot at them?"

"We searched all night and didn't find a pilot. Someone is hiding him."

"The Kommandant is blaming me for this failure to find the airman. I am charged with doing better today." He went to the front door, opened it. "If I do not..." (Hannah, 2015, p. 285).

The Captain displays desperation and potentially a breakdown. Wearing his gun which he never does in the house that signifies a shift towards more extreme measures due to pressure. Observation of Captain Beck exposes the inner fear and desperation inside him. This uncovers the depth of his character and illustrates the emotional toll of the war and his circumstances. The captain's desperation portrays the psychological impact of the war on soldiers, compelling them to behave in ways they normally would not. It emphasizes the moral price of war and the dehumanization it imposes. The novel depicts the dehumanizing and traumatizing effects of the war on soldiers. Captain Beck's search for the airman is

motivated by his obligation to follow orders, as well as the fear and threat of execution if he fails. Tragically, as Captain Beck seeks out the airman, he ultimately meets his demise.

Following the death of Captain Beck, a new character appears, Captain Sturmbannführer Von Richter, a member of the German army and holding a high-ranking position. His initial appearance occurs during an interrogation scene wherein he questions Vianne regarding any knowledge or information she may possess about the disappearance of Captain Beck. "I am Sturmbannführer Von Richter. You are Madame Vianne Mauriac?" (Hannah, 2015, p. 305). After his interrogation with Vianne about Captain Beck, he says these words to her: "I need a new place to billet. The Hôtel Bellevue is unsatisfactory. I believe your house will do nicely." (Hannah, 2015, p. 306).

Captain Von Richter's statement implies his intention to pressure Vianne into providing accommodation without offering a choice. This raises concerns regarding coercion and violation of civilian's rights. Captain Von Richter's suggestion that Vianne's house can serve as a suitable alternative to the Hôtel Bellevue is a violation of the civilians' property rights because there is no valid reason for occupation or military necessity, such actions are unjust. Captain Von Richter's request stems from a simple dissatisfaction with the hotel, which is not justifiable to take over someone else's house. The principle of proportionality in warfare dictates that the methods used should not be excessive compared to the anticipated military benefit. In this case, occupying Vianne's house would likely be considered disproportionate to the alleged problem.

After what happened, Captain Von Richter arrives at the house and immediately requests Sophie to carry his luggage. Furthermore, he selects the most superior room within the house for his accommodation. "You, girl, go get my bags." To Vianne, he says, "Show me the rooms. I will choose the one I want." (Hannah, 2015, p. 309). Ordering a young girl to carry his luggage not only reinforces his sense of entitlement but also shows his disregard for the comfort and independence of the family. Furthermore, his choice of the best room without considering the needs of this family demonstrates his lack of respect for their personal space and belongings. By exploiting the vulnerability of the family, he demonstrates his negative character and enjoyment of exercising power over others, completely disregarding civilian rights and dignity.

"He was a man who had stumbled into a little bit of power and seized it with both hands. She'd known that within the first few hours of his arrival, when he'd chosen the best room and gathered up the warmest blankets for his bed, when he'd taken all of the pillows left in the house and all of the candles, leaving Vianne a single oil lamp for her use." (Hannah, 2015, p. 314).

The portrayal of Von Richter above, as depicted through these words, aims to establish his negative character traits. He is a soldier characterised by both power and authority, and he ensures that he exploits it. War turns soldiers into machines with machine guns, devoid of feelings and emotions (Ahmed, 2015). The man's separation from the natural world resulted in him rejecting the natural within himself. As a result, the man's psyche became diseased and corrupted (Sulaiman, 2015). Just as Von Richer, he serves as an illustration of a soldier who is corrupt and lacking in emotions and feelings.

His choice to remain in this specific house is not founded on any official order, but rather on his personal interest. Furthermore, his interactions with the people of the house and his selection of a room for his own comfort do not serve any legitimate military purpose. Captain Von Richter's behaviour, such as taking over the finest room, monopolizing the cosiest blankets, and claiming all the pillows and candles, reflects an abuse of authority. This conduct demonstrates a lack of concern for the well-being of others, particularly Vianne, who is left with limited supplies. *Jus in bello* requires actions to be directly linked to achieving military objectives, and seeking personal comfort falls outside the scope of this principle.

Every morning Von Richter ensures that Vianne can smell the coffee, but he never allows her to have any. He even poured the entire bottle of coffee into the sink. One morning, he came to Vianne and: “His hand snaked out and coiled around her wrist tight enough to leave a bruise. “I am having men over for supper tonight. You will cook. And keep that boy away from me. His crying sounds like a dying pig.” (Hannah, 2015, p. 315). The captain's behaviour indicates further violations of ethical principles and highlights his abusive nature. The act of gripping Vianne's wrist with enough force to cause a bruise represents a shift from verbal and psychological abuse to physical intimidation. The actions conducted during billeting serve as a harsh reminder of the powerlessness experienced by civilians living under occupation. These behaviours not only represent the oppressive nature of the occupying force but also show how the system disregards the fundamental dignity and basic needs of civilians. As a result, Vianne finds herself compelled to fulfil every demand of the captain, highlighting the dehumanizing effects of war.

Captain Von Richter visits the school where Vianne teaches following the arrest of a man from the resistance movement by German soldiers. He goes there to inquire if Vianne knows this person, as she has been seen with him in the town, and Von Richter even goes so far as to threaten her. “I will speak to you more about this, Madame. In a small room with no windows. And believe me, I will get the truth out of you. I will find out if you are working with him.” (Hannah, 2015, p. 353). He increases the strength of his grip to the point where she fears her bones could break. “If I find that you knew anything about this, I will question your children ... intensely ... and then I will send you all to Fresnes Prison.” (Hannah 2015, p. 354).

Captain Von Richter's conduct reveals his true character and raises serious concerns from both an ethical and legal standpoint. He uses threats and intimidation tactics in order to extract information from Vianne, taking advantage of her vulnerable position and exploiting her fear for her children. These actions clearly violate fundamental human rights and clearly demonstrate the captain's abuse of power as an occupying force. According to Walzer's ideas, soldiers must not violate the lives and liberty of enemy civilians (Walzer, 2006). By exploiting Vianne's emotional vulnerability and her love for her children to gain information, he commits a morally reprehensible act that goes against the principle of proportionality.

The phrases he uttered, such as "no windows" and "question... intensely," imply the possibility of torture or cruel degrading treatment, both of which are considered war crimes according to international law. According to International humanitarian law, civilians who are under the control of enemy forces must receive humane treatment at all times, without any discriminatory actions. It must to ensure their protection from any type of violence and

cruel treatment, such as murder and torture (ICRC, 2020). It is morally and legally unjustifiable to threaten harm to civilians, particularly children. Furthermore, this goes against the clear distinction between combatants and civilians. The principle of *jus in bello* prohibits the intentional targeting of civilians or subjecting them to threats of harm. Captain Von Richter's actions clearly violate numerous principles of *jus in bello*, indicating a complete disregard for the rights and lives of civilians. They showcase a clear abuse of power and emphasize the ethical concerns connected to military actions in conflict zones.

An hour later, Vianne is in a room with no windows. Captain Von Richter interrogates her in a windowless room where she is kept for an extended period of time. She denies everything. He asks if she is making a fool of him and wants to punch her. She can see an awful desire in his eyes, which had been planted when she begs him, and she is unsure how to eradicate it. He asks her if she is actually innocent, and in the end, he tells her that if he discovers she is lying, he will hurt her and enjoy it. "If I find out that you are lying to me, I will hurt you, Madame. And I will enjoy it." (Hannah, 2015, p. 345). His statement "I will hurt you" and "I will enjoy it" constitutes a clear threat to inflict pain for his own enjoyment, which violates human rights and potentially meets the definition of torture according to international law. During conflicts and wars, security is crucial. Providing citizen-centered security is vital for peace in war and post-conflict societies (Ghalib & Aziz, 2022). This scene represents the harsh and dehumanizing reality of war, where basic rights are ignored and individuals are subjected to cruelty for personal gain.

Captain Von Richter's actions indicate a deeper decline into ethically unacceptable and potentially illegal behaviour. Interrogating a civilian in a windowless room without any light involves psychological torture, which violates international laws against cruel and inhumane treatment. Such actions clearly violate the prohibition against cruel and inhuman treatment of detainees. Furthermore, denying detainees their basic needs and subjecting them to extended confinement without access to sunlight and fresh air further violates the principle of respectful treatment of detainees. In any case, civilians maintain their full civil capacity and have the right to exercise those rights as far as allowed by the conditions of internment (Al Hassani, 2008). The actions of the Captain exemplify the oppressive nature of an occupying force and the power imbalance that civilians face under their control. His behaviour is both morally reprehensible and illegal based on the principles of *jus in bello*. These actions bring attention to the potential for significant violations of human rights and ethical failures within war zones.

Captain Von Richter returns to the house before Vianne does. He has never been inside the house during the day before. When she calls her children, he tells her that they are in his room upstairs. He gives them chocolate and a game to play. He mentions that her daughter thanks him for the chocolate and calls her a beautiful girl. Then, he began to question Vianne about her son, saying, "He looks nothing like you." (Hannah, 2015, p. 368).

She responds to him by stating that he is the son of her husband's deceased cousin, who died while giving birth. They adopted him shortly before the start of the war, and she possesses both his birth certificate and baptismal papers. He is now considered her son. However, he is aware of her vulnerability and how to inflict emotional pain upon her. As a result, he asks

what she would do in order to keep him. “What would you do to keep him here with you?” “Anything,” she said. (Hannah, 2015, p. 369).

So he starts sexually harassing her, and he does that while saying to her “Anything?” And he rapes her. even when he is about to rape her he demands her to look at him if she wants to keep her son. According to Walzer, the crime the aggressor makes is to force civilians to risk their lives in defence of their rights, presenting them with a threat: either your rights or your lives! Various groups of citizens react differently to this dilemma, either surrendering or resisting (Walzer, 2006). In the case of Vianne, she chooses to surrender herself in order to ensure the safety and well-being of her family. She sees offering herself as a way to resist and protect her loved ones.

During times of war, civilians face hardships such as hunger, scarcity, poverty, and the difficulties of living in an occupied territory. These conditions lead women, who previously experienced comfortable lifestyles supported by their husbands and partners, to take to the streets in an effort to survive another day. Engaging in transactions involving their body in exchange for food; it is not a practice they wish to continue (Chiasson, 2015).

Sexual violence during armed conflicts violates international humanitarian law, outlined in Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols. This horrific tactic of war is condemned for its negative impact on international security and peace, causing immense suffering to victims (Daoud, 2023). This particular scene serves as a powerful means of raising awareness about the harsh realities of war, especially the abuse and pain endured by civilians. rape is a clear violation of the rights of civilians to life, security, and freedom from torture and cruel treatment. It is a war crime committed against civilians. Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which directed to protect civilians during times of armed conflict, states that women should be given special protection, particularly against acts such as rape, forced prostitution, and any form of indecent abuse. Protocol 1 of the Geneva Conventions emphasises that women should be treated with special respect and be protected from the horrific crimes of rape, forced prostitution, and indecent abuse (Ellis, 2007).

Rape occurs when a victim is forced or manipulated into sexual interaction (Abed Al-Hussein & Al-Saaidi, 2022). Rape is a crime, whether committed during war or peacetime, since it violates the rights of the woman being attacked. When a woman is used as bait to entice a mercenary soldier, she is being treated as if she is not a person but rather an object, a prize, or a trophy of war (Walzer, 2006). During wartime, the most commonly recognized form of sexual violence is the act of forcible rape committed by soldiers against civilian women, which occurred on a large scale throughout the duration of World War II (Chiasson, 2015). For many women who complied, the reasons varied, and were often intricate situations, such as experiencing sexual violence to ensure the safety and protection of oneself and loved ones, or enduring sexual violence to obtain food for herself and others in order to survive another day (35).

According to Chiasson’s work *Silenced Voices: Sexual Violence During and After World War II*, he states that during World War II, women found themselves involved in personal wars, enduring their own versions of hell. Those who endured such sexual violence felt they had no alternatives and no support. They felt compelled to comply in order to protect

themselves, their families, and their loved ones. To live another day, these women sacrificed themselves and compromised their own bodies (Chiasson, 2015). The act of forcing Vianne to maintain eye contact during the assault adds another layer of humiliation and objectification, with the aim of breaking her soul and exerting complete control over her. Using the children as a means to pressure Vianne into staying silent and complying with his demands is a form of coercion and manipulation. Women are chosen to endure the harsh realities of a brutal war in an unexpected way (Al-Khafaji, 2023).

The captain's action is an abuse of power and goes against the principle of using force, as he is using his force for his own benefit. Furthermore, this act of rape is regarded as a war crime according to international law and a violation of the principles of *jus in bello*. It highlights the potential for severe human rights abuses and ethical failures in war zones. For months, the captain continues rapping her and it worsens when he has a terrible day. As his army faces defeat in the war, he becomes increasingly cruel and furious, as if ensuring that she pays for their losses. Just as the war was about to end, he left the town.

Conclusion

The examination of soldier conduct during billeting, as shown in Kristin Hannah's *The Nightingale*, reveals the ethical complexities that emerge in times of war. By examining *jus in bello* and conducting ethical analysis, it sheds light on the moral challenges and dilemmas faced by both soldiers and civilians amidst warfare. The issues revolving around the billeting of German soldiers in Vianne's house function as a representation of the broader ethical difficulties inherent in armed conflict.

Captain Beck's character embodies the inherent ambiguity of war. He is not a hero or a villain, but rather a multi-dimensional soldier trapped in challenging situations and making choices that have both positive and potentially negative outcomes. His decisions can lead to both positive and negative results, showcasing the complex nature of making decisions in times of war. This uncertainty emphasizes the challenges experienced by soldiers trapped in the middle of armed conflicts, where moral dilemmas and conflicting loyalties can blur the lines between right and wrong. Unlike Captain Von Richter that embodies a more cruel and sinister side of the occupation. He uses his position of power to take advantage of and frighten Vianne and her family, demonstrating the misuse of authority that frequently comes with an occupying military force. Throughout the novel, Von Richter's conducts act as a clear reminder of the brutal reality of war and the way it strips away the humanity of innocent people. The way he behaves is totally different to the compassion and understanding shown by Captain Beck, empasizinng the variety of actions seen in those with authority.

During the billeting, Captain Beck's behaviour reflects closely adherence to *jus in bello* principles and ethical norms. His moments of empathy and understanding highlight the importance of acknowledging and honouring the humanity of civilians effected by war, even within the limits of an occupying force. While Captain Von Richter's actions during the billeting goes against both *jus in bello* principles and ethical norms. His behavior violate the rights and wellbeing of civilians, emphasizing the importance of maintaining ethical behaviour and adhering established laws of war to protect the dignity and rights of all people affected by armed conflicts.

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