

Understanding The Sufferings of Downtrodden Portrayed in The Novel *THE SALT TO THE SEA* BY RUTA SEPETYS

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Abstract- *This a work of Historical fiction. The war between two countries. During the war period, people became Refugees. There is no food to eat or shelter in their lives. is no peace between the two countries. The sinking of the Wilhelm Gustloff is the deadliest disaster in maritime history, with losses dwarfing the death tolls of the two famous ships Titanic and Lusitania. Three of the four Torpedoes were launched, destroying the Wilhelm Gustloff and killing estimates of nine thousand people. The ghost Ship. This is under American Literature. Over two million people were successfully evacuated during Operation Hannibal, the largest sea evacuation in modern history. Hannibal quickly transported not only soldiers but also civilians to safety from the advancing Russian troops. The Wilhelm Gustloff was not only the ship destroyed during the evacuation. The ships were bombed and sunk by British RAF planes, killing over 7,000. It is estimated that in the year 1945 alone, over 25,000 people lost the lives of 6,500 passengers. The Amber Room once called the Eighth Wonder of the World, disappeared during the war and remains one of the most enduring mysteries of World War ii. The Amber Room was last seen in 1944. Many treasure hunters have gone in search of it and some have suffered terrible fates during their quest. Over the years, pieces of the room have allegedly been found. Abandoned or separated from their families, they were forced to battle the beast of war on their own, left with an inheritance of heartache and responsibility for events they had no role in causing.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Ruta Sepetys is a Lithuanian – American writer of Historical Fiction. As an author, she is a New York Times and International bestseller and winner of the Carnegie Medal. She is a Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Fellow and the first American Writer of young adult literature to speak at the European parliament.

It is 1945, and Alfred, Emilia, Florian, and Joana are enduring the harrowing conditions of World War II in East Prussia while Harboring secrets that haunt them as loudly as the terrifying sounds of war. Thousands of displaced refugees are walking to the coast to escape the encroaching Russians. Joana a, 21-year-old Lithuanian woman, along with other refugees, trudges along an icy road, as planes drone overhead and bombs reverberate through the nearby forest. Her group of haggard survivors includes Klaus, an Orphaned 6-year-old boy whom they refer to as ‘the little boy’, or ‘wandering boy’. Heinz, a kindly old cobbler lovingly called the shoe poet, Ingrid an intuitive blind girl, and Eva a Giant outspoken woman. When the little boy discovers a dead Latvian girl buried under the snow, Joana takes her identification papers, Meanwhile, Emilia a traumatized 15year old polish girl seeks refuge in an Abandoned cellar, where a Russian soldier discovers her. Were it not for the sudden appearance of Florian, a wounded young Prussian who has been hiding in the forest, Emilia would likely have been raped and killed. After Florian shoots the soldier, Emilia who is hiding her pregnancy follows Florian to the road, though he tries to lose her. At the port of Gotenhafen, 17-year-old Alfred, an arrogant German soldier, hides in a supply closet.

When a senior officer finds him, he is sent to the port to assist with the extensive evacuation and to avoid becoming Moscow's girlfriend. In a harrowing scene, Ingrid who has bandaged her eyes to appear injured pretends to see a soldier's scarf to avoid arrest. The resourceful shoe poet masterfully distracts the young Nazi at the checkpoint by offering to repair his shoes. In Copenhagen, Alfred continues to weave tails or grandeur in letters to Hannelore while stripping the ship of furniture and décor in preparation for the voyage. Joana discovers that the drawing from her cousin is missing from her suitcase. Florian sneaks away from the group and hides behind the organ pipes in a nearby cathedral where the others eventually congregate to sleep while the lagoon freezes. Florian privately admires what he has been keeping a secret, a tiny swan, the Fuhrer's favourite treasure from the precious Amber room a glittering chamber of amber, jewels gold and mirrors, that the Nazis stole from Leningrad in 1941. The shoe poet awakens the group to cross the lagoon.

Florian remains hidden but watching. Joana devises a clever story for Emilia's identity. Ingrid, claims she can truly feel the ice if she is alone, insists she leads the group across the frozen, blood-stained lagoon. Suddenly, Russian planes release a shower of bullets, firing holes in the ice Ingrid is shot and falls into the freezing water while the others scatter. Florian heroically appears to save Joana from the cracking ice. As she attempts to rescue Ingrid, the traumatized group retreats to the bank. The little boy cries 'Make it stop no more, and a distraught Joana sobs. Florian is unable to embrace Joana. Emilia gently lifts his arms and places them around her. After several hours, the group makes the long trek across the fragile lagoon, though no one celebrates their safe arrival on the peninsula. Joana and Emilia pressure Florian to tell the checkpoint guard the group belongs with him, Florian uses his forged status to arrange for a boat to Gotenhafen.

Alfred concocts yet another imaginary letter to Hannelore. He brags that he has been given a special assignment "assisting a young recruit on a very important mission for Gauleiter Koch. The Regional Nazi Party leader was known for his brutality. Florian is running from Koch, as well as Dr Lange, whom he is afraid might have discovered the missing swan.

Alfred is hiding in the toilets, he tells Hannelore, My catalogue of heroics is growing so rapidly. Alfred does deliver the blank boarding pass to Florian in the Theatre. Where Florian gets chummy with him to further manipulate the unsuspecting Alfred. He tries Alfred to send Joana and makes a point of saying I've heard she's already spoken for. Joana visits Florian as requested, but she is annoyed he has summoned her. Florian finally tells her his name. Joana takes a reluctant Emilia to board the ship, as her labour is progressing. The poet, little boy and Florian bundle up in the projection room, where Florian shares his growing affection for the boy and cobbler, Emilia's labour intensifies aboard the Gustloff, which Joana describes as a 'Floating city'. Emilia finds the steel ship claustrophobic and wants to go back outside. Her anxiety intensifies when a doctor assures her she will have a Latvian translator once the ship is boarded. Emilia discloses the ship's history. It was named after Wilhelm Gustloff, the former leader of the Swiss Nazi Party who was murdered. She says "The Ship was born of Death". Florian forges his boarding pass and remembers his father, who told him he should do more than imitate the work of others.

Florian describes the dazzling amber room, from which the crystal swan was taken as six tons of pure, glistening amber. In his hollowed-out heel, he hides the map and key to the bunker where the Amber room is hidden. Alfred imagines another letter to Hannelore, remarking the 'East Prussians are a different Germanic breed altogether'. Avoiding work as usual, Alfred walks around until a soldier sends him to the infirmary to have the blistering rash on his hands looked at. There he plans "to spy on the pretty nurse". Joana and Emilia sleep nose-to-nose on cots in the maternity ward, bringing Joana bittersweet memories of her cousin. Emilia goes into labour and remembers her mother's death during childbirth 6 years ago. she assumes she will die, too. As her pain increases, she believes she is being punished for her lies. You must tell the truth, Emilia. A voice tells her, and Emilia admits to Joana, "There is no August. The hideous story of her pregnancy unfolds; Frau Kleist, August's mother, gave Emilia to Russian soldiers when they tried to take August's sister. The Kleist family watched as Emilia was "dragged to the cold cellar" and raped. In the morning, Florian, the Poet and the little boy waded through crowds to get to the dock.

Rumours of Russian attacks fill the packed streets with terror. A Desperate woman tries to buy the little boy so she will be given access to the ship. The Little boy unintentionally distracts the guard from Florian, who fears his forged documents will incriminate him. Eva appears to return their luggage and leaves to board the Hansa, another ship destined for Germany. Beginning with Joana's, Alfred is called a "Bedwetter" by fellow sailors when he claims he is on special assignment to avoid duty. Florian makes it through an intense luggage inspection by boldly threatening to report the arrogant young Nazi in charge to Gaultier Koch. Unbeknownst to Joana, Florian provides a forged letter with her signature indicating that Koch has assigned Joana as his Nurse. Later, Joana takes Florian's stitches out in the infirmary and asks him to see Emilia. After Florian shares a touching moment with Emilia's baby, "She is you, she is your mother, your father, your country both Emilia and Joana are smitten with his Tenderness. Joana and Florian laugh about gullible Alfred, whom Florian promised an award for his Service. They share their first kiss. Florian hides in a chimney. The Cobbler and Little Boy make money repairing shoes. In a letter to Hannelore, Alfred describes Gustloff as a "living, breathing city" for all the people and Activities. He is increasingly obsessed with his "allegiance to our country and our Fuhrer". Emilia continues to process memories of the vicious Frau Kleist, who gave her to the Russians. The Little boy introduces himself to her baby, "I am Kluas and the shoe poet calls the baby "a miracle". The Young Nazi from the dock from whom Florian threatened questions Joana about Florian and tells her Florian said Koch assigned her to him. The Soldier says he is going to call Koch's office. Alfred brings Florian a meal in the chimney and shares his extreme political views, which raise hairs on the back of Florian's neck. He says, "This guy wasn't a sailor. He was a Sociopath in Training. Joana is furious with Florian for implicating her in his scheme. Emilia begs her not to expose him. She continues to process painful memories of the cruel Frau Klein and the Hideous events leading up to her Pregnancy. Alfred seeks out Joana for Florian, and then spies on the hundreds of young female cadets staying in the empty swimming pool. They laugh at him when he is discovered, and Joana confronts Florian for putting her life in danger. He admits to forging her signature from the note she left in the mansion, Joana is relieved the incriminating

document is no longer in the house, but Florian is unsure he can trust her. Back in the Infirmary, Emilia names her baby Halinka, after her dead mother, and longs for Poland.

The ship finally leaves the harbour, carrying ten times its capacity of Passengers. Florian considers exit strategies for the arrival in Kiel, while Alfred deals with terrible seasickness. He tries to gain entry to the Infirmary, where he is laughed at by the injured soldiers. Joana and Florian go to the Chimney, so Joana can cut his Hair to disguise him. Florian asks Joana what she told him the night in the mansion as he couldn't hear her in his deaf ear. Joana says, "I told you that I am a Murderer". Then she tells the sad story of how her actions unintentionally caused the deportation, and likely death, of her cousin's family. Florian tries to comfort her, and they look forward to arriving in Kiel. Joana tells Florian the message given to her by the young Nazi searching for him. "Have Beck contact me directly. Florian assumes he will be the next to die. Emilia remembers an incident that symbolized her Death. Her wreath that was supposed to float down the river caught fire and burned. She wonders if Florian rescuing her change her fate since "Saint Florian was a Fighter of Fire" in Poland'. Alfred's nausea worsens with the extreme weather. He retreats to the music room. There a little girl mimics his vomiting with her suffering bear, and Alfred rips the bear's eye off. Florian ventures to the deck to check on the little boy and shoe poet, who introduces himself, I'm Heinz". Heinz shares that he is a widower and encourages Florian to pursue Joana. At 9.15, a massive jolt rocks the ship "BANG!" Alarms signal Danger. Three more Explosions follow. Emilia takes action in the Maternity ward, directing Joana and the others. Emilia flashes back to the burning wreath she thinks predicted her death, Joana wants to wait for Instructions. Emilia insists they move.

Alfred discovers they have been hit by torpedoes. The little girl with the bear is crushed by a moving piano. Alfred takes a life vest from near her feet and makes his way out. Florian, Heinz and the little boy push through crowded halls. The little boy makes sure Opi has the coins they earned repairing shoes. Joana helps women out of the Maternity ward as the hallway fills with water and Hysteria. Trampled bodies are caught in the stampede. Alfred steals a coat and watches an

officer about to commit suicide after killing his family. Alfred mentally documents the event; ‘‘Torpedo strike; Approximately, 9.15, Ship’s capacity 1463’. Passengers on board 10,573. Ten of the twenty-two lifeboats are missing. Desperate passengers scramble toward the lifeboats. Emilia calmly protects her child while mayhem erupts. Joana watches a full lifeboat get crushed. Terrified Alfred thinks hateful thoughts and tries to find a raft. Florian screams for Joana. Emilia crawls to the edge of the deck, where Joana meets her and the others. Joana makes it into a raft. Emilia insists Florian goes first and takes her baby. Florian leaves his precious pack with Alfred. And the poet gives him his life vest. Emilia sends the little boy when there is room for just one more. The raft leaves with her baby and the others. Emilia kicks lose a frozen raft and grabs paralyzed Alfred. Heinz jumps from the ship with the bag of coins and drowns. The Survivors watch as the sea begins to swallow the Wilhelm Gustloff in one large gulp. A new character, Chris Christensen, Joana wonders what she will do with the baby and the boy. Florian wonders where Emilia and his pack are. Emilia has faith in her ‘‘Knight’’. Florian will save her baby. Alfred observes, ‘‘Bodies were strewn like human confetti. Would I still get my Medal?’’

Joana and Florian watch as thousands perish. Passengers trapped onboard pound the glass and choke on seawater infants are thrown at rafts and fall into the sea. Dead bodies knock against steel lifeboats packed with screaming passengers. Joana clings to Florian and the baby, as the snow and sleet batter their frozen faces. Emilia longs for her baby and watches the sinking ship ignite in flames and disappear into the black. Florian and her mother remember Emilia’s courage when she sent the little boy to the raft in her place. Florian sees a light Alfred’s final letter to Hannelore reveals the truth about their relationship and why he could never truly love her, Alfred reported Hannelore’s Jewish Father. When they came to arrest the family, Alfred told the authorities Hannelore was ‘‘part of the race’’ Hannelore repeatedly screamed ‘‘I am Jewish, ‘‘which Alfred found rude. Alfred slips into a psychotic state and accuses Emilia of stealing his medal. Without thinking, she defends herself in Polish. He attacks her, screaming ‘‘Einer weniger. One Alfred then sings the disturbing song he made up to remember all the groups of people Hitler hates. Emilia begs him to stop. He lunges at her and slips,

hitting his head. Emilia reaches to steady him. When Alfred jerks away from her hand, he falls into the water and drowns.

Emilia finally begins to relax and dreams of Poland and her mother. She feels she finally made it home. A ship arrives to rescue Florian and Joana. Joana slips on the rope ladder, kicking Florian into the water. He is rescued. Florian, Klaus, Joana and the baby huddle together. Florian wonders who he will be when they arrive in Kiel. Emilia dreams she’s making fairy bread with her mother and daughter and passes away feeling safe at last. Time moves ahead twenty-three years. Florian and Joana are married and raising the kids. Florian reads the letter from Chris Christensen, a Danish woman whose husband found Emilia’s raft on their beach a month after the ship sank. She contacts Florian after reading a story about Halinka, a renowned swimmer, in which Halinka said, she lost her mother, Emilia, on the Gustloff. Chris put the story together, with the details of Florian’s idea. No one else claimed Emilia. Finally, she found a connection to Florian through Halinka’s story. Chris assures Florian that his ‘‘saviour’’ Emilia is buried under a bed of roses.

CONCLUSION

In the epilogue, people face difficulties and sufferings in the aftermath of war. The characters Alfred, Emilia, Florian, and Joana come across the war field and the happenings around them. There are no proper things to use or shelter to live in, and people don’t know what to do or where to go. The people of Prussia and Germany countries have struggled a lot in their life due to War. The group of people started moving to another area to protect themselves from the destroyed place during Wartime. The group of people like the pregnant Lady, Blind man, Old man, and Shoemaker were crossing that time and faced terrible situations. The motif of gunshots shows throughout the play. Sepetys also employs the sounds of gunshots to unify the experiences of the characters, who, regardless of what they are thinking or doing, feel the same fear as the others when a shot is fired or the sound of a bomb reverberates through the Atmosphere. The motif of gunshots closely relates to the motif of the ‘Hunter’. Salt to the Sea is the story of the biggest maritime disaster of all Time.

The motif of water in its various forms appears throughout the text, including the title. The Setting is January 1945, and temperatures are bitter. Snow covers everything, It slows the movements of the evacuees, on the Frozen Roads. The characters eat snow to avoid dehydration. The open waters of the Baltic Sea promise freedom to those desperately fleeing the region. The frozen lagoon provides a shortcut to the Coast. Ice also becomes the Weapon of warfare when the Russians shoot holes in it to kill refugees crossing the lagoon. When Gustloff thinks, over nine Thousand perish. Some drown, and others freeze to death in the icy waters.

Thousands of dead bodies float in the water after the ship sinks. Water gives life and also takes it away. For the survivors, water is a place of freedom, for the deceased, the ocean is an icy grave. The memory closely relates to the theme of reinventing Family. The 4 main characters as ensconced in memories of the past as they are engaged in the present. Memory is a source of comfort and also a source of suffering. Each is hunted by memories and must come to terms with what memories will not allow them to forget. For Joana, Florian and Emilia, even the most painful memories ultimately inspire change and help create new relationships and hope for the future. For Alfred, who refuses to remember his real life and instead lives in a fantasy world, disconnection from memories of his troubled past indirectly leads to his Death.

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