

Tribhuvan University

Subversion of Traditional Gender Roles in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U.
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English

By

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Kirtipur, Kathmandu

July 2019

Tribhuvan University

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Letter of Recommendation

Anju Bhandari has accomplished her thesis entitled "Subversion of Traditional Gender Roles in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*" under my supervision. She has carried out her research from September 2018 to June 2019. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

Dr. Anju Gupta

Supervisor

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled “Subversion of Traditional Gender Roles in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*” submitted to Central Department of English, has been approved by the undersigned members of research committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

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Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude towards my respected Assistant professor and research supervisor, Dr. Anju Gupta for her valuable guidance, suggestion, inspiration and subversion to accomplish my thesis to present form.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude Prof. Anirudra Thapa, Head of the Central Department of English for providing me this opportunity for research.

Along with I delightfully take this opportunity to thank all other lecturers encouraging me and sharing their generous knowledge in completing this thesis.

At the same time I thank my parents whose love, care and support continuously drives me towards my better future and academic achievements. My thanks to my other family members who managed favorable environment and provided all sorts of financial and familial support during the process of writing this thesis. I'm equally indebted to my friends for their direct and indirect support.

At last, I thank the staffs of the Central Department of English, for their support.

July 2019

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Subversion of Traditional Gender Roles in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*

Abstract

This research paper inquires how The Book Thief by Markus Zusak subverts traditional gender roles through the characters Liesel, Max and Hans. The author argues that gender is not by born quality. Liesel Meminger, the central character, subverts traditional gender roles which were assigned to women. My research shows disagreements with those critics who view gender as biological with the help of Judith Butler, Julia Woods, Judith Halberstam's ideas. The main concern is that gender is not biological rather it is socially constructed. The purpose of this thesis is to deconstruct the traditional evaluation of women, as they were taken as mere object of men, and men were taken as rulers of society. At the time of Second World War both males and females have fearful condition; both had to suffer at that time, but Liesel and other women take challenges and they lead the society. They come out of fear; they are the supporters of their family because male members are almost paralyzed by not coming outside the house to support the family. She has positive mind as bravery, rationality, independence which used to be regarded as masculine traits in traditional society. She steals books from different places; she steals even when she cannot read those books, by stealing and practicing reading. Gradually, she becomes literate; she helps to recover Max from trauma and helps him to come out of the house without fear. She maintains her courage and patience till she becomes an author herself to record all such traumatic events.

Keywords: Traditional gender roles, sex, femininity, masculinity, subvert, biological, social construction of gender, Jews, Nazis

This research paper entitled “Subversion of Traditional Gender Roles in Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*” analyzes on the changing role of female which subverts the traditional notion of gender representation in the light of gender studies. This research paper mainly focuses that ‘Gender’ is not by born quality, it is shaped by society. The character Liesel, being a woman by birth is no longer a stereotyped girl; she takes the role of male of the traditional time. At that time people from society divided male and female’s work. They set the boundary of people what role they must play. There is a division of work for males and females, and that works tag people as male and female. *The Book Thief* centers around the main three characters Liesel Meminger, ten years Jew girl, Hans Huberman, foster father of Liesel and Max Vandenburg, Jewish fist fighter.

This research paper makes comparison between Liesel, Hans, Max and the traditional people, how at the time of 1940s people challenged the notion of society, why men of the novel followed women's quality and why women followed male’s quality. The purpose of the study is to depict the subversion of conventional gender roles. This research aims to deconstruct the patriarchal evaluation of women as mere object for men, and men as Supreme Being of the society. It establishes the importance of female character in the reunion of a family and their role to make men more responsible and dutiful.

This novel *The Book Thief* is divided into ten chapters. The story starts from a train where Liesel, her mother and her brother are travelling, her brother is full of injuries and after some time her brother died in the train. In this opening page, the novelist tries to show that the little girl survives from brutality of Nazis, but her brother died in the attack of Jews and Nazis, after the funeral of brother, Liesel's mother escaped somewhere and Liesel was taken to the Himmel Street of Germany, to

stay with her foster parents Hans and Rosa. It is Liesel Meminger who, being a Jewish woman, deconstructs the traditional notion of gender representation in Nazi community. At first she had to struggle to adjust in Nazis community. She is hardworking, book robber, kind- hearted and star of the novel. She loves books very much, she steals them even before she knows how to read, she steals first book *The Gravedigger's Handbook* from her brother's funeral, and another from Hitler's birthday celebration. Next time she steals from Mayor's library and this time Rudy is afraid and he says, "Are you stealing books?" She replied, "I'm not stealing. I am borrowing it" (185). Reading is crime at that time but she proves that she is not like traditional women. She challenges traditional society; she reads those books which were related to Jews. The male characters of the novel Max and Hans have been attributed all the stereotypical female characteristics. Max is almost paralyzed and stays inside the house. The main concern of this research lies with how a little girl Liesel deconstructs the socially imposed role upon females and takes a book as a source of inspiration and sympathizes with male characters who are almost paralyzed by not going outside the house because of the fear of being killed by Nazis in the community.

Females in the traditional roles were supposed to remain within four walls of home, whereas males were considered victorious who could lead the society. The very notion of traditional gender representation has been dismantled. Liesel Meminger transforms herself from an ignorant, timid and dirty to a courageous and challenging woman. And Max is transformed from timid, ignorant, lazy man to fearless, powerful and active man only with the help of Liesel. The stereotypical gender role is subverted in *The Book Thief* with her arrival in Himmel Street.

Question of gender lies in the heart of the book and it plays on different

cultural and literary influences. *The Book Thief*, published in 2005, mainly talks about gender roles. The narrative is deeply invested in the notion of gender studies, as in the novel the male character is shown as passive and female characters as active. This research hypothesizes that the female representation in literary texts as in tradition is dismantled and growing women empowerment is depicted through the central character of the novel Liesel Meminger, with her gradual transformation from an uneducated, fearful individual to educated, challenging and empowered girl. By doing so the writer wants to show that gender inequality is not an in born quality; it is the society which creates differences between male and female.

At that time, Jewish men and women both faced fearful conditions. They are feared of being killed in any time so most of them hide inside their houses with fear and terror for being killed but Liesel is one who proves herself superior to many men. She fights for justice and proves that she can do anything which could be done by males in the society. In the novel, male were opposed to traditional society. They hide inside the house and they did all works of traditional women. In the novel Hans does household works and Rosa and Liesel work outside the house. Traditional gender roles requires that women must show femininity remaining inside the house and male must show masculinity by working outside the house but here women are portrayed as hardworking, brave and powerful. Liesel plays soccer with boys by betting them. She is like traditional males. She fights with boys, when she is unable to read at school Ludwig Schmeikl started to tease her, she kicks him as harder as she can. Ludwig Schmeikl certainly buckled, and on the way down, he is punched in the ear by Liesel. She takes the boy near death. Her behavior seems like a tomboy. As Judith Halberstam in her book *Female Masculinity*.

Males, who are being coward, fearful, passive, are the qualities which were

opposed to traditional gender roles regarding males. Hans's own son regarded him as coward because of social circumstances, males and females are two cultures and their life experience is different from one another. Although this novel's story was related to the period of 1940s, but novel was written in 2005. Society was seen through the eyes of today's period. There is fear in both males and females, but males were afraid to go outside the house as a result, they could not fulfill their family's needs. In the novel males are portrayed as must helpless and coward. In fearful condition also, women show their bravery, so the notion of gender inequality is not biological it is this society which constructs it. People can change their gender related behavior through the condition and situation. Male can show femininity and female can show masculinity only because of the social conditions. Behaviors of males and females are changing it is not fix as sex. Sex is fix as male and female, but gender is not fix it changes according to time and period.

Markus Zusak's novel *The Book Thief* is one of the famous and well-known texts at that time. It has received numerous criticism and appreciation from different critics and scholars, different critics analyze this text differently like as a theme of literacy, as a war fiction, as an historical novel during 1930s, however the critics have not analyzed this text as the theme of gender studies. Gender issue is new topic for this book. None of them sees the text through the eyes of gender studies. And main concern of my research is that gender is not biological, it is society which constructed the gender as male and female.

In *USA Today Review*, Carol Memmott defines *The Book Thief* as a novel which rises above horrors of war. He claims:

Liesel learns the worst and best in human kind. Her foster parents hide a Jew in the basement for two years. She, of course, is the book thief of the title, and

the books she steals from the cemetery where her brother is buried, from bonfire and from the mayor's library are symbolic of her struggle to understand the horrors of war. (7)

From the above lines, Memmott says that the novel tries to collect the memory of Second World War and there is War between Nazis and Jews. Hitler is at the peak of War. He made Jews frightened of Nazis community and hide inside the house; they were terrified of being killed. Horror of war made people separate from their dear ones. Liesel's brother and mother were separated from her, her brother died on the way to Himmel Street and mother is taken to the concentration camp by Nazis. Carol's research talks about the war between Nazi and Jews and the fearful life of Jews is including in it. By robbing books and reading makes Liesel to come out of trauma. Her foster father hides Jews boy Max inside the house, she sees their fearful situation, she sees Nazis brutality upon Jews, and she sees Nazi's burning books of Jews, that's why she steals books to learn about the condition and situation. She was unknown about the all circumstances about Jews Nazi's war, after stealing books from different places she comes to know that there is power of Nazis, and she realizes the hidden secret of Max and other Jews. She understands the secret of her dead brother and her lost mother; she understands all things have happened only due to Nazi power. She realizes that she is parted from her dear ones only because of Nazis. By realizing those things, she did not make herself fearful, she struggles to give justice to all her dearest who sacrifice their life only because of Nazis. This is how she understands the horror of war.

Another critic Don Gallo in "Bold Books for Teenagers" writes this novel is famous for young adults. He says:

The Book Thief is meant for young adults but still has snatches of horrifying

images, though overt ones of death and suffering are not many. But that is something one has to expect in a book about Nazi atrocities and set during WWII. One image remains with me till today as Death muses about the Jews while watching the Germans huddled in a cellar during a raid. (13)

In Don Gallo's view the novel provides historical background of Germany in 1939. Don Gallo praises novel as selection for high school. Gallo criticizes that the book is for the readers who are teenagers. It is also an attempt in selections for high school since the novel is all about a young girl, who gives space to young literature.

Although this book is about a little girl, it tries to attempt the history of Germany during the Second World War, where Jews were killing and living their life by hiding from Nazis. Don wanted to criticize that the little girl also a Jews who struggles to find her originality in Nazis community. She wants to prove that she is from Jews community. Her originality is not Nazis Jews is her real originality. By stealing books from different places, she knows the brutal behavior of Hitler towards Jews, gradually she hates Hitler and wants to prove that her original identity is Jews and at the end she is only one who remains in the village and proves she is Jews in Nazis community. So, Don Gallo wants his readers to be like Liesel to show braveness and courage to gain own right.

On the other hand, another critic Grace Lee research *The Book Thief* as theme of literacy. He states that:

Literacy is a powerful, pervasive theme throughout the novel especially in Liesel's life. Literacy does far more than empowering Liesel to calm herself and in effect calm others down. Literacy transforms Liesel to become a circumstantial, or rhetorical, Jew especially when seen in parallel with Max, a Jew by ethnicity and tradition. (6)

Grace Lee explains how literacy helps those who were in Nazi Germany and the Jews, and he proves that this text explores the theme of literacy and the power of literacy for Jews in Nazi Germany. Because of being uneducated, Liesel was blamed by her friends in her school; she started to read and write; she took the book of Grave diggers from the dead body of her brother. She learns to read, a whole new world opens up to her. Learning to read provides Liesel with a hunger to read new things day by day. Than her foster father Hans teaches her to read and write. Another time she steals book from the place where Hitler's birthday was celebrated and also steals books from mayor's library. By robbing and reading books from different places she came to know about the society, the present condition of the society. First day of school she is blamed in class by friends because of not being able to read. Since then she encourages herself to become literate woman. In novel if she was not interested in reading and writing she might have suffer from trauma. She survives because she reads and writes about her own life. Reading and writing literally saved her life from being traumatized.

Alfred A. Knopf in *Bookmarks Magazine* presents *The Book Thief* as death as an omniscient narrator, he researches and found that the whole novel is presented by a death being omniscient narrator. "I realized that we passed each other once in a while during that period, through neither of us scheduled a meeting. Personally, I had a lot work to do. As for Hans he was doing best to avoid me" (112). Here we can see that the death is speaking those words because Hans was saved many times in the War, so death says he was avoiding me. At that time Hans is avoiding death, he survives many times. Whenever the time come to say 'death' the narrator says, 'I' or 'me'. That's how we can see that death is narrating the novel. Here in the book;

Of Course, I am being rude. I'm spoiling the ending not only of entire too, of

this particular piece of it. I have given you two events in advance, because I don't have much interest in building mystery. Mystery bores me. It chores me. I know what happens and so do you. It's the machinations that wheel us there aggravate, perplex, interest and astound me. There are many things to think of. There is much story. (172)

In the following lines narrator offers the reader to identify death, it is death who narrates the whole novel, when there is the point to say 'death' came, the narrator says, 'I came' and took those people. Although death cannot narrate the novel but here the novelist wants to show the novel is different than others so that he makes death an omniscient narrator, the narrator says death as 'me' and 'I'. It tells us the complete story. It says that it has no interest in building mystery, death says that it don't have time to waste in the same circumstances. It has many stories and much mystery to create so it does not waste time in only people.

Janet Maslin's review from *The New York Times* in *The Book Thief* as 'Stealing to settle a Score with life' (1). He explains Liesel a robber of brother that she steals book from her brother's dead body. But again he explains that the book changes her life, she stays out of trauma by stealing. She starts stealing and she has passion to read and write that's how she stays out of trauma. In his research he may encourage people to read, it has an element of fanciful. He researches that stealing book and reading totally changed Liesel's life by being traumatized. He reviews that her life becomes safe by stealing books without knowing anything about study (1).

Another critic Jean Webb claims in *Reading as protection and Enlightenment* that the major character of the novel, Liesel Meminger is nine years old. She is saved being traumatized by the death of her brother and loss of her family; she saves herself with the help of reading. He deals this research with trauma experience; he shows that

how people will be traumatized after the death of parents in front of their eyes. She lives with her foster family in Himmel Street. Because of the violence, she steals books for others when the bomb began to fall on Himmel Street. Enlightenment comes for Liesel from the power of the written word which is pursued by Zusak in differing ways through complex narrative. She is taught to read by her foster father Hans Huberman who survives traumatic experience (13).

All these aforementioned critics have studied *The Book Thief* from various perspectives. Some critics have taken the issue of trauma studies; some take it as adult literature and a bold book for teenagers. Some of them talk about war fiction, some of them take as a historical novel during 1930s but my study in this novel is different from them because I have analyzed it from the perspective of Gender Studies; it follows the lead of Judith Butler, Judith Halberstam, Julia Woods, and other related theorists and critics. In Judith Butler's book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, she challenges assumptions about the distinction often made between sex and gender, according to her sex is biological while gender is culturally constructed. According to Julia Woods in her books *Gender Lives: Communication, Gender and Culture* that masculinity and femininity are shaped within contemporary culture, not by born quality. In Judith Halberstam's book *Female Masculinity* she tries to show a hidden history of female masculinity, she suggests that women too have body like males, she suggests women to live freely, and not a body suggests people as males and females. Above mention all critics' talks that Masculinity and femininity are social constructed, it is not by born qualities, one can show masculinity and femininity by the situation not by born.

In traditional society, women were forced to live inside the house, they must stay quiet, and they were not allowed to go to school, reading and writing is not done

by women, women are not literate at that time. And males are supposed to go outside to earn money, read and write, and become literate. Men treated women as their servant but the researcher challenges and shows disagreement with them by subverting traditional role of Liesel. In *The Book Thief* women are leading the role of traditional men and men are leading the role of traditional women, they are passive as women in traditional society. A critical lens of 'Gender Studies' in *The Book Thief* engages in a gendered literary analysis of the representation of masculinity and femininity. This research goes through the study of gender that seeks to understand and explain the various forces that shape gender identities. As this study foregrounds the gender representation in *The Book Thief* in terms of gender studies it follows the lead of Judith Butler, Julia woods, Judith Halberstam, Judith Lorber. Reflecting on the process through which gender is socially constructed.

Gender theorist Judith Butler in her book *Gender Troubles* argues, "Gender is 'Unnatural' so that there is no necessary relationship between one's body and one's gender, one may be a 'masculine' female or 'feminine' male"(46). It is all about environment that men can play roles of females and females play roles of males. In the novel Liesel plays role of male and Hans and Max plays role of females. Liesel shows masculine quality like boldness, courageous, challenging; she challenges boys in playing soccer "Hundred meters" he goaded her". I bet you can't beat me". Liesel was not taking any of that, "I bet you I can"(31)". She always takes chance to win the boy in the society, she always wins in soccer while playing with Rudy. This is the game which is regarded as male's game but Liesel always wins and becomes leader of the game. She is stronger who can fight with boys, on the first day of her school she fights with boy named Ludwig Schmeikl; when he starts to tease her,

She snapped. It was Schmeikl back for more. 'Come on Liesel.' He stuck the

book under her nose." Help me out will you? She stood up and took the book from him, and as he smiled over his shoulder at some other kids, she threw it away and kicked him as hard as she could in the vicinity of the groin. Her knuckles and fingernails were so frighteningly tough, despite their smallness. (47)

Here, she shows her boldness by beating boys in school, she is angry as traditional males. In traditional society men shows their anger when they are treated badly by other people, she is a girl, but she shows her boldness as boys. She does not want to be inferior and a loser as she always wants to win and bet Rudy while playing soccer and she participates in races to win.

So, gender is not natural that the qualities of male and females are similar and differences in some case. It is situation that people show their boldness as Judith Halberstam says in her book *Female Masculinity*:

I am not sure that tolerance in such matters can be measured or at any rate that responses to childhood gender between gender behaviors necessarily tell us anything concrete about the permitted parameters of adult male and female gender deviance. Tomboyism tends to be associated with a 'natural' desire for the greater freedoms and nobilities enjoyed by boys very often it is as sign of independence and self-motivation, and tomboyism may even be encouraged to the extent that it remains comfortably linked to a stable sense of a girl identity. (5-6)

As Halberstam says tomboyish is associated with being free and enjoys like traditional boys. She encourages girls to be like traditional males that males are independent in themselves. In novel also Liesel enjoys like traditional males. She fights, plays and also acts like boys. She has qualities of reading; her qualities were

against the women of traditional society. She suggests girls to enjoy like boys, if gender is biological then why not women in society enjoy like boys? If men have freedom to do anything then women also have rights to enjoy their life. Tomboys show the girl's identity that they have to be free as traditional boys because gender is not natural it is constructed by the society and all the values and restriction regarding masculine and feminine are created by the people of the society, which must be break is suggested by Halberstam. Liesel is also as a traditional which was suggests by Halberstam.

People from the society divide males and females work, According to Judith Butler:

Sex is biological while gender is culturally constructed. Gender is not by born quality, it is shaped by society. People from society divided male and female and males and females work that what role might they play and what role they should not play. Gender is neither the casual result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. (6)

Sex is designation based on biology, whereas gender is socially constructed and expressed, it is natural. But gender's behaviors are determined by the society, society fixes the behavior of Males and Females. Feminine and Masculine are presented as parallel that both cannot be separated as different. In novel Max and Hand shows their femininity because of the fearful environment in the society. Their situation determines their gender as feminine. Max moves from fearful insider life to fearless, stronger, he travels out in the open through Nazi Germany took a great amount of courage for Max. Butler expresses men can play feminine role and a female can play masculine traits. Liesel is much more intelligent that she injured herself while playing soccer and informs her parents that Nazis officers are coming inside their house, so

this shows that she was much intelligent that the notion of traditional gender roles fails to prove women as not knowing anything (288). Again, she shows courage when she reads from the book *The Whistler* in the basement during the first aid raid. This shows courage because despite being afraid of what might happen to her and the other that we hiding in the basement with her. She finds the strength to refocuses herself and put aside her own fear in an effort to make everyone else feel calmer and less afraid (300). Butler adds:

Gender itself becomes a free- floating artifice with consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as male one, and woman and feminine body as male body as easily as a female one. Gender is also discursive cultural means determined by society. As a result, gender is not culture as sex. (6)

From these given extract we can learn that the human's body does not determine whether it was men's or women's. It can show its own power, men's body with women's quality, and women's body with men's quality can also accepted because the situation makes people powerful through their body.

There is no boundary between the bodies of people whether it is men's body or women's. Men's body must be strong and women's body must not be strong is a thought of traditional but here Liesel shows masculinity in women's body. Situation demands her to be stronger than men because it was a time for Jews men and women to hide with the fear of Nazis. She push- ups uncountable in front of Max. Here in the novel:

Liesel was strong and could hold her body weight nicely. she did not count how many she could do, but that night, in the glow of the basement, the book thief completed enough push-ups to make her hurt for several days. Even

when Max advised her that she'd already too many she continued. She knew how to perform. (186)

From the given extract we can learn that Liesel shows masculinity in women's body. She push- ups, she is much strong that she holds her body's weight. She carries the traditional notion of boyhood and she leaves the quality which is regarded as girls work. In traditional society women's body are only for birth giving and only for household works, traditional people thought, remaining inside the house women's body had been passive, they cannot do big works outside the house. But here Liesel does exercise which was only did by men in traditional society. She shows courage and slaps the society of patriarchal. If women also get chance than they can also do difficult work is suggests by Liesel through her work.

While it is a time when girl must hide inside the house, for being killed and being raped mainly Jews girl. But here Nazis teaches Jews, they allows her to enter in their library and encourages her to read and write. After all Liesel becomes a literate woman in Nazis community. And proves that her gender did not allow only to stay inside the house. As Judith Lorber says,

It is not fixed category but an ever- evolving product of culture and society. Gender is not something everyone “does” without thinking about it or being conscious about its implications: it is such a naturalized part of everyday life that unless someone or something breaks our expectations. It tends to go unnoticed. (113)

Here in the given extract Lorber tries to say that gender is not fixed category it is product of culture and society. It grows with cultural ideas. It is part of every day's life that people can behave as males and females, males and females have work division, but they does not have behavior of gender division. People are different

according to their sex not according to their gender. Men and Women usually behave in ways associates with their assigned gender because they are socially programmed to do so, not because it is natural for them to do so. People think girl cannot do anything and they make fun of girl in front of others. "The party man stood and laughed, 'I don't think this girl is learning any lessons out there, Frau...?'" Huberman- 'I think she teaches lessons' He handed a smile. To all those boys. 'Am I right young girl?' (237)". Here the man thinks that girl cannot do anything, he dominates girl that the girl cannot learn any lesson, but she proves that she not only learns lesson she also teaches lessons. And this can be called gender did not determines people's inner talent; it can be inside boy or inside girl. Not a talent can divide gender as male and female.

Another critic Hilary Lips in his book *Sex and Gender: An Introduction* he says, "Sex is associated with biology and the biological distinction between male and female leads human beings to shape gender in culture that they live in" (1). Men and female live in the society by shaping their sex as male and female but society's people distinct them saying that they are male and female as gender. Men are moving into women's job and women are moving into men's jobs with increasing frequency. And increasing numbers of men are talking over domestic tasks like diaper- changing and everyday cooking that were once women's province. Likewise Hans in the novel that he takes care of Liesel more than his wife Rosa.

Max's condition within his room subverts the stereotypical role of women during the Second World War. He is forcefully taken to the war and victimized. He could not sleep, eat and even talk with people. He is always afraid of something. He had been insider; life like Max inside the room is not suitable quality of male in that period. Max is a boy, but his situation makes him weak and dependent like a

stereotypical girl. And in another way Liesel does not accept qualities of young girl under patriarchal rule but she has characteristics of strong and independent women. Here in the book of Judith Butler, She says, "Gender is the linguistic index of the political opposition between the sexes. Gender is used here in singular because indeed there are not two genders. There is only one: the feminine, the "masculine" not being a gender. For the masculine is not the masculine, but the general" (20). According to her, gender are as feminine and masculine, which can play any roles by male and female.

According to traditional rules women is born passive secondary and non-essential but Liesel is opposite to those values of traditional, she is self-observed. Because of her unorthodox upbringing, she has developed initiation and qualities of leadership that enable her to make decisions and follow them through. She reveals her individual identity which is against the traditional female nature of dependent, passive and obedient. No biological Psychological or economic fate determines the figure that man presents female in society. In traditional gender roles men are supposed to be strong, physically powerful and emotionally static, they are not supposed to cry in front of other because crying is considered a sign of weakness, a sign that one has been overpowered by one's emotions. Failure to provide adequate economic support for one's family is considered the most humiliating failure a man can experience because it means that he has failed at what is considered his biological role as provider but here Hans and Max challenges the notion of male's gender. They cry in front of women in the society, they both remain inside the house until the last bombard in the town. They are not being responsible towards their house and family.

They are in a fearful condition like women in traditional society. In his whole life Max passes with fear, his father did not take care of him because he thought that

he is a boy and he himself can take care of own. Max says,

All my life I've been scared of men standing over me.

I suppose my first stand over man was my father,

but he vanished.

For some reason, when I was a boy.

Many years later, I needed to hide.

I tried not to sleep because I was afraid of who might be there when I wake up.

But I was lucky. It was always, when I was hiding, I dreamed of a certain man.

The hardest was when I travelled to find him.

Out of sheer luck and many footsteps, I made it.

I slept there for a long time. Three days, they told me...

and what did I find when I woke up?

Not a man, but someone else.

Standing over me. As time passed by, the girl and

I realized we had things in common. (155-62)

These lines challenge the traditional society regarding masculine thought that men are powerful, but it is not true that all men are fearless, Max challenges the traditional notion of male that male must be powerful, but he was scared all over his life, he passes many years of his life by hiding, he was afraid to sleep of being alone after his sleep. Introduction of Max was given as "He is starving, he is afraid" (98) almost his life passes being afraid, quality of traditional male was not being afraid but here Max challenges traditional society. Max passes his whole life in a thought that in his whole life who might be his side when he wakes up. In traditional society males were expected to be strong and stay without fear.

But in the novel men and female both challenges the notion so gender is not

biological it is socially constructed, it is situation which determines one's role of gender. Being a female in that fearful time and in patriarchal society she is able to show masculine traits. She handles house, she supports family through other's laundry, she goes outside to earn money and while male members stay at home by hiding "If your papa was any good' she informed Liesel anytime they walked through Mulching, I wouldn't have to do this"(24). Liesel's mother works outside the house and her father stays at home, he does household work by taking care of Liesel more than his wife, he helps Liesel to read and write. Hans own son says him coward, "You Coward, He up turned them into papa's face them into papa's face, and he promptly left the kitchen, and the house" (65). Situation makes people to act the behavior of masculinity and femininity. To challenge traditional notion Liesel plays main role in the novel, Liesel is brave and powerful "She was a girl with a mountain to climb" (53). Her braveness shows that she can climb even mountain, she can do anything even she was Jews girl in Nazi Germany "She was a girl. In Nazi Germany" (103).

Being a Jew, she was not afraid of anything, she goes Nazis house from window and steals books while Rudy becomes afraid and he says,

What are you doing? Isn't this it?

Liesel nodded that Rudy was right, for she had tried to walk past the mayor's house to buy some time.

Well go on, the boy hurried her.

Move it *Saumensch*. He remained at the gate.

We don't have all day. Rudy's distant voice again. What are the hell are you waiting for? (93)

Here Rudy becomes afraid of Liesel's behavior. She steals books to know about fearful situation of people in the society, Rudy being male afraid to go inside the

house and waits her at the gate. In one way he cannot go inside the house and in another way, she shows her power that she can face at any situation.

Max's situation shows that he is unable to cope up with the society. At the early age, he is afraid of his father. Sociologist Judith Lorber says, "Gender is one of the major ways that human beings organize their lives" (12). These lines clearly show that gender constructs through the social norms and values. People from society assigned the role of male and females. Max is a boy but his situation of growth makes him weak, passive, dependent like traditional girl.

Whereas Liesel understands the society by coming out of the house, she understands situation of Jews by thieving books from different places. She is too young to understand parent's conversation but she acts like mature girl, she understand her father as unemployed man so she herself does the work outside the house with her mother. She takes care of Max, that is how he becomes healthy and somehow he becomes brave, she becomes the most loveable child of Hans, he is nurturing as traditional women. Here in the book:

Are you going?

Bikes, said, 'You can use one of ours.'

On this occasion, Rudy was considerably more enthusiastic about being the enterer. Today it's my turn, he said as their fingers froze to the bike handles.

Liesel thought fast, ' Maybe you shouldn't Rudy. There's stuff all over the place in there. And it's dark. An idiot like you is bound to trip over or run into something.

Thanks very much. In this mood Rudy was hard to contain.

There's the drop too. It's deeper than you think.

Are you saying you don't think I can do it? (225)

Here Rudy is trying to dominate Liesel that she cannot ride bike as he can do, but she is a girl with no fear at all, she tries to say, she is not born as a woman in traditional society, she challenges him. According to Simone de Beauvoir's sentence in *The Second Sex*, "One is not born a woman, one becomes one"(12).

Situation determines people's behavior. Female are also born like male and male also born like females but the shaped of female and male is determined by society. If the society and the family of Liesel forces her to act like women, than she cannot be brave and independent likewise in the novel. If she was forced to act like women than she will not be there in Himmel Street, she might be killed with her mother and brother at concentration camp. In any situation Liesel does not want to be second. At school she cannot read but she wins later after fighting. "Just because I can't read does not mean I am stupid (48)". Reading is the tool to face all the situation is proved by Liesel. It is the time of Second World War and there is more dangerous to female than male. Liesel understands the things of Jews and Nazis only after reading books, she faces the situation, she wants to do anything for survival, she never gets afraid with Nazis, and she just hates Hitler. She herself survives from brutality of Nazis and she encourages Max also to cope up, words had literally saved her. When Max was sick Liesel uses words to keep him awake, she helps him to survive. Day to day she becomes book thief and saves her and Max's life from danger. Liesel was the only one to survive the unexpected bombing. Simone de Beauvoir again adds "Women are not born, they are made" The same is true of men.

The making of men or women is never- ending process that begins before birth from the moment someone begins to wonder if the pending child will be a boy or a girl (7). Men and women are not born they are created through society. Society wants people to act one roles and that follows by them from the ancient period.

'Women are passive than men', this is traditional roles and up to now people follows this but in this novel this is opposite to the characters. They go against the traditional rules. Labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us to make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender cannot define our sex.

From the beginning of the birth men and women are treated differently, it is our society which divides beings as men and women, but at the beginning what kind of treatment do people get depend upon the future of their, if a woman grows up in between men's environment. She starts acting like male and if man grows in between women society than they may work like woman. As Liesel does in the house of Hans. Babies are dressed or adorned in a way that displays the category of boys and girls. Category of sex becomes a gender by naming, dressing. In today's society gender roles change because father is taking care of children like Hans takes cares of Liesel more than Rosa, he helps her to read and write. According to Julia Woods in her book *Gendered Lives* she says, "We are born male and female (sex), but we learn to act in masculine and feminine ways (gender)". Gender is a social, symbolic construct that varies across cultures, over time within a given culture (23). Woods suggests that people's act is masculine and feminine; people can accept any role looking situation. Gender roles can change according to time and situation. People are born as male and female it is sex. And their changeable activities according to time and situation are declared as gender. Furthermore, she adds;

Gender is learned. From infancy on, we are encouraged to learn how to embody the gender that society prescribes us. Young girls are often cautioned, 'don't be selfish- share' with others and be careful don't hurt yourself. They are praised for looking pretty, taking care of others (including dolls), and

being nice. Young boys in contrast are more likely to be admonished, 'don't be a sissy', 'Go after what you want' and 'Don't cry'. Males are reinforced for strength, powerful, independence and success particularly in competitive arenas. (24)

Here, Woods is trying to figure out the traditional notion of gender, she says man should be superior in traditional, they must not cry in front of woman they must be independent, strong and successful but in the novel none of the qualities of men seems in the male characters.

But both girlhood and boyhood notion of gender challenges both qualities of man and woman. Girls were expected to be good looking, cute and passive, and take caring but none of the characteristics matches with Liesel in the novel, her characters are far more different than these traditional notions of gender. Max spends all his time inside the house and Liesel spends her time outside playing with boys "You spend half of your time on street playing soccer (56)." She is a girl but her behaviors are alike men. She cannot stay at home like traditional girl. She wants freedom, she wants to know new thing from society, and she wants to gain knowledge. Here Woods adds;

Gender is such a familiar part of daily life that it usually takes a deliberate disruption of our expectations of how women and men are supposed to act to pay attention to how it is produced. Gender signs and signals are so ubiquitous that we usually fail to note them- unless they are missing or ambiguous. Then we are uncomfortable until we have successfully placed the other person in a gender status. (3)

From the above lines we can see that Gender depends upon the thought and expectation of people, society expects from male and female to act or pay attention according to their mind. People's dress and their talking styles are based on gender in

traditional society.

But in the novel these were not match in gender studies like in traditional society. In traditional eating things by men and women also made huge differences in society. Drinking hard drinks are refers to boys in traditional roles but here Liesel drinks more than adult males. Here in the book:

The afternoon had been warm. Liesel was slightly put off by the coolness of her glass. She looked at papa for approval. He grinned and said, 'Prost, Madel-Cheers, girl'...Their glasses chimed together and the moment Liesel raised it to her mouth, she was bitten by the fizzy, sickly sweet taste of champagne. Her reflexes forced her to spit straight onto her papa's overalls, watching it foam and dribble. A shot of laughter followed from all of them, and Hans encouraged her to give it another try. On the second attempt she was able to swallow it, and enjoy the taste of glorious broken rule. (245)

Following activities are opposed to traditional rules which were broken by woman. Being a woman at that society Liesel challenges the man in front of her father, she drinks. It is not a quality of traditional woman, so we can say that Liesel is different than other women. When Liesel get drunk nothing happens nobody says anything to her but when Hans drinks his wife Rosa did not allowed him to get inside the house. "Just get lost, will you?" (288). Here we can see that Men were dominated in the society at that time and women have freedom. Hans is dominated from his own wife Rosa. He gets punishment while drinking hard drinks. So, both Men and women challenge the traditional notion regarding males and females because at that time the situation is not so much fair to show masculinity by both males and females.

In conclusion, Markus Zusak through the presentation of characters like Liesel, Max and Hans proves that the traditional notion of gender representation is

subverted because of male's inability to fulfill their familial responsibility as they suffered from sense of guilt and as a result exhibited femininity. And on the other hand, females who are exposed to public arena with various challenges show their courage and exhibition as traditional males. The analysis of *The Book Thief* concludes the physical quality of human being is unable to determine gender issues. People can be male or female by their behavior. Gender roles can change according to situation. Gender is not a matter of inborn quality rather it is a product of society and a process which is created according to the time and situation. The writer gives role to characters beyond the expectation of the society. If women get chance to perform more than men that we can call them manly. They need courage and inspiration. In *The Book Thief* Liesel is presented as independent, curious of reading, strong and bold as roles of traditional males. She is a female in the eyes of society but from inside, she leads the role of males, like at the first day of school she fights with a boy, she presents herself strongly throughout the novel. Being separated from her brother and mother, she makes herself brave and consoles herself. By reading books she creates herself as an educated and brave girl. And, the situation makes male passive, the characters like Hans and Max challenges traditional society. Through *The Book Thief* we can learn that there are many opportunities but people are unable to see, or they leave saying that this is a work of girls and boys. After big struggle of life Liesel has been stronger. After being separated from family, she does not lose her courage. She struggles in her life and comes out of trauma but in the same case Max was been traumatized by being apart from his parents. By showing masculinity in females and femininity in males, Zusak attempts to challenge conventional gender roles.

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