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Ethical Representation of Holocaust Trauma in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Prabhat Acharya has completed his thesis “Ethical Representation of Holocaust Trauma in Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*” under my supervision. He carried out this research paper from August 2015 to June 2016. I hereby recommend this thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled "Ethical Representation of Holocaust Trauma in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Prabhat Acharya, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

The research entitled “Ethical Representation of Holocaust Trauma in Markus Zusak’s *The Book Thief*”. Zusak here deals with the issue of ethical representation of trauma within characters from the perspective of La Capra’s notion of trauma and Margalit’s notion of ethics. Further, he brings the concept of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida’s sort of ethics into application. It aims to justify the main characters of the novel as the ethical beings. Markus Zusak here valorizes anti-liberal humanist characters who are guided by the infinite sense of responsibility towards the needy ‘Others’. The author is aware of the self-centeredness, hierarchical relations, and universalizing tendency of liberal humanism and critiques them through the portrayal of ethical or anti-liberal humanist characters like Liesel, Hans, Rudy, Max and others and tries to show that even in the heart of tragedy morality is still possible that means good can withstand evil. Characters risk their life to follow what they believe to be morally right. Liesel care and love Max as her own brother. She prays for his survival. Ethical representation is most to reduce the intensity of trauma. Liesel and Max reduce their trauma through literacy and cope up with it but Mitchel cannot reduce his trauma which results in suicide. Similarly, Frau Holtzapfel gets reduced her trauma with Liesel’s help. The real solution of the violence is adaptation of Levinasian-Derridian version of ethics to accept ‘Others’ and respect the particularity instead of searching for universality as Kantian ethics. Further, Markus Zusak also deals with the circulatory nature of trauma and almost impossibility of trauma resolution without revisiting it.

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I. Holocaust Trauma in *The Book Thief*

This project aims to analyze the issue of ethical representation of traumatized characters in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* (2005) from the perspective of trauma studies. Markus Zusak's novel *The Book Thief* explores the traumatic effect of war upon the youths of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Zusak here addresses the ethics through the relationship of different characters with protagonist Liesel. Zusak presents his characters' ethical responsibility towards their fellows despite their own pathetic situation.

Most of the characters in this novel are guided by morality that is question of right or wrong that binds them, so they cannot escape from their ethical responsibility towards others. Though Walter Kuglar himself is a German, he helps Max to run away from the Nazi and help him to escape. Hans Hubermann helps Max survive by hiding him in the basement. Liesel reads book for Max to recover his health. In air raid shelter, Liesel's story telling helps the children and other people who were in fear of death get some relief from trauma. Liesel and Rudy help the Jews marching to Dachau by providing bread to them. Though there are some conflicts among the character they help each other in need. Liesel and Rudy show sympathy by placing the little teddy bear by the side of pilot who is going to die in the wrecked plane.

The finding of this research is a sacrificial act of the characters who are guided by the 'morality' that proves them as ethical characters. Most of the characters in the novel are guided by the 'responsibility' that binds them tightly and they cannot escape from their ethical duty. It aims to outline and define ethical representation of trauma in *The Book Thief* through close reading of the theorists such as Dominick LaCapra, Avishai Margalit, Emmanuel Levinass and Jacques Derrida.

In the very beginning of the novel the narrator says, "Here is a small fact. You

are going to die” (13). Which gives us the sense of war or genocide. “It was January 1939” (28), the story set in the year 1939, just before the declaration of World War II, visualizes the hard times of the Jews and in some instance for Germans too. In the very beginning when the protagonist Liesel was introduced, she was “dreaming about the Fuhrer, Adolf Hitler” (28), which portray the fear of Hitler among the children of that time. Markus is an Australian citizen, grew up listening to his parents’ story who were from Vienna and Munich, the first hand survivor of the World War II. Markus’s story is based on the memory of his parents which he repeats in his interviews. During the World War II his parents saw Jews being marched to the concentration camp. The basis for the book is a story about a boy who offers bread to the marching Jews and later whipped by Nazi soldiers. Though the situation was too tuff some rebellious Germans showed their sympathy to Jews.

In an interview *with The Sydney Morning Herald*, Zusak clarifies the intention of sympathetic portrait of the Germans during the World War II as “We have these images of the straight-marching lines of boys and the ‘Heil Hitlers’ and this idea that everyone in Germany was in it together. But there still were rebellious children and people who didn’t follow the rules and people who hid Jews and other people in their houses. So there’s another side to Nazi Germany”. In these lines he not only shows the actual effect of the war but also praises those German people who were very sympathetic to their fellow beings whether they were German or Jews.

By the time the story starts in 1939, Hitler already declared himself a leader. Nuremberg laws were already implemented. Jewish blood was declared as impure. Communist, Socialist and any other who did not follow the Nazi rule were considered enemy to Nazi party, were arrested and sent to labor camp, “[O]ne day, that woman was taken away for questioning. She didn’t come back” (38). Jewish business was

destroyed and boycotted. Books which were considered as non-patriotic were burned or destroyed. This story traces how the gradual encroachment of Nazism affects the everyday life of the normal people and family and how their personal freedom was controlled. Almost every characters in the novel resembles the real person during the world war, Zusak has said his father was a member of Hitler Youth as a boy and was a house painter like Liesel's foster father. Zusak's mother also grew up as a foster child as Liesel.

Markus, as a young adult author, shows his strong affection towards long oral tradition of storytelling. This book *The Book Thief* was based on real life story which is told to him by his parents who were the survivors of war. The writer portrays the morality and ethical feelings in almost all characters, mainly in Liesel, Max, Hans and Rudy and others. For his protagonist, happiness of others is more important than the self. These characters have strong affection towards each other because they share the similar fate.

Zusak's book *The Book Thief* was set in Nazi Germany and the story is narrated by the Death and here he explores the theme of war, death, friendship, love, hope, guilt, survival and redemption. Here he departs from the traditional meaning of philosophy, romance, friendship and the destruction of war. War becoming the vital element of the text *The Book Thief* influences the life of protagonist, Liesel and her relationship with other characters and her foster parents. Sympathetic story of an orphaned child Liesel Mimenger narrated by Death, finds new foster family and friendship in a small town in Nazi Germany during World War II. Zusak's characters in his almost all texts are guided by ethics and morality. They find their meaning of life in helping others or supporting the family.

Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* is a simple story of a girl named Liesel

Miminger, narrated by Death which takes place in the fictional town named Molching, Germany. Liesel Miminger, the central female character of this novel, departed from her real parents' moves to live with her new foster parents on 33 Himmel Street. When she arrives, she is nine years old and already lost her brother on the way and separated from her mother too. Initially when she arrives she could not read and other student makes fun of her. Then she realizes how powerless she is without education. Hans, the father teaches her how to read the book she steals from her brother's burial: *The Grave Digger's Handbook*. At the beginning when she arrives at Himmel Street she has nightmares and Hans helps her. Gradually, Hans earns her trust. Rudy, the neighbor boy and she become good friends.

Initially for Liesel the Himmel Street is a happy place. She goes to school with Rudy; helps her mother Rosa in delivering the washing clothes especially from Ilsa Hermann, Mayors wife. Meanwhile, Nazi encroachment increases in Molching. Jewish shops were destroyed. Girls and boys were forced to join the band of German girls and Hitler Youth, respectively. Hitler's birthday was celebrated by burning enemy's propaganda including books. Liesel collects one book from the bonfire and takes it hiding under her shirt. When she learns to read and write she begins to realize that Hitler is responsible for everything even for her mother's absence and her brother's death. Meanwhile, mayor's wife finds out the love of Liesel towards books and opens her library for Liesel. To Liesel, the Library is the most beautiful sight she has ever seen.

Max arrives in their house, she is afraid of him initially but slowly she begins to realize that they have much in common to share with each other. Both of them have nightmares, they both are fist fighters and they both have lost their family. Liesel helps Max by describing the outside world and celebrating Christmas in the basement.

Days go on; Liesel keeps the secret about Max. Max helps Liesel to read and write as he understands the power of words, he makes a book by painting over the pages of *Mein Kampf* about his own life how he was forced to leave his family, how he comes to Hubermanns and about Liesel and gives name to the text *The Standover Man*. Max used to have daydreams about boxing with Fuhrer and always gets defeated because Hitler always uses his words to make people against Max.

Many people loses their jobs on Himmel Street, Rosa also loses her washing jobs also at Ilsa Hermann's. Liesel in fury, with Rudy broke down the house of Ilsa Hermann through window and steals a book *The Whistler* from her library. Here she earns her title 'The Book Thief'. Then Rudy and Liesel join a group of children who steals fruits and potatoes from the farmers. Liesel spends happy time mostly with Hans. He tells his story and plays accordion for her and at once they even share a glass of champagne at home. Rudy continues his training for Hitler Youth carnival where he succeeds to win four gold, as Jesse Owens' in 1936 Olympics. Again Liesel and Rudy visit to Ilsa Hermann's and take another book *Duden Dictionary and Thesaurus*. Shortly, days become worst after the air raids begin. Liesel and her family take shelter in Fielder's basement to protect them from bombing. They leave Max behind. Everyone including children was too afraid. Liesel then starts to read the book in the basement. Gradually everyone gathers around and listens to her which calms them as Liesel and Max feel. Here she realizes that words are her accordion.

Jews were taken to Dachau through Molching, Liesel saw them and their suffering; Hans offers his hands to one of them, and soldier pushes him back and punished him. Due to this action they decide to send Max away because if Nazi soldiers search then everyone will be taken away. Instead Gestapo came for Rudy. Rudy's father refuses to send Rudy so he gets punishment and is sent to the war along

with Hans.

Rosa gives a book *The Word Shaker* to Liesel which Max prepared for her that contains Max's story, thoughts and description that how Liesel could use words skillfully as Hitler. But her words are for good purpose not for evil. Meanwhile, Hans arrives home with a broken leg. In 1943 Jews were frequently taken to Dachau through Molching. Liesel always looks for Max but she gets whipped every time. Liesel gets angry with words and she tears the pages from a book in Ilsa Hermann's library and writes an apology note saying that she will never come back. Later on Ilsa visits Hubermann's house, gives Liesel a black journal and suggests Liesel to write her story.

Later, in October 1943, bomb was dropped on Himmel Street while everyone was sleeping. Liesel was writing her words in basement. So she survives but everyone dies whom she loves. She is taken away by the officer and her journal is found by the Death and he comes to know her story. At last, she and Max meet with happiness as well as sadness. Death as a narrator ends the story by telling us about Liesel's life in Sydney and her death.

Although the issue of ethics within trauma is one of the vital features of the novel *The Book Thief*, different critics, reviewers and magazines have not given due importance to the issue. Instead, they have commented on the issue like setting, nature of story, narrative, and effects of books, education and political awareness among contemporary adults and so on.

April Brannon in his article state that the story is "narrated by death" (725) as he hints the narrative of the text is from the death's point of view. Further Brannon describes how Liesel begins her obsession with books, "Liesel impulsively steals *The Grave Digger's Handbook*, the training manual for the morticians, and thus begins her

fascination with books and reading” (725). Similarly, he describes how Liesel learns to read and write and its effects on her: “... her new father teaches her to read using *The Grave Digger’s Handbook* as a text. Slowly, Liesel learns to read and write as she becomes acclimated to the new town and her new life. She makes friends with the local kids, earns a position in the neighborhoods soccer game...” (725).

Here he ignores the fact that through learning she tries to overcome from the nightmares which haunts her every night. He describes the setting and the story of the text but does not pay due to its historical context where people even adults were affected by trauma. Brannon again focuses on the setting and the nature of story writes:

The Book Thief is set in the bleakest of circumstance but is a surprisingly hopeful story about the atrocities that occurred during the Nazi years in Germany. The narrator, death, is both sarcastic and poignant, and the imagery is surreal and often stunning. This book provides a unique testament to the Holocaust, and in so doing, forces the reader to reflect on what it means to be human. Because of its depth, artistry, and sophistication, this book would work best with high school audiences and could provide enrichment to any Holocaust unit. (726)

Brannon thus makes different point of view excluding the historical context of the text and the war fear during the contemporary period. He excludes the traumatic effect and ethics within people of the period.

Another critic John Green In his Article “Fighting for Their Lives” talks about thieving nature of Liesel:

She commits her first theft at her brother’s funeral, taking “The Grave

Digger's Handbook," which had fallen on the ground. Hans teaches her to read it at night. While Liesel sometimes joins up with a gang to steal and the like, her only thieving passion is for books. Not good books or bad books—just books. From her bedroom to the bomb shelter down the road, reading helps her commune with the living and the dead.

(Par.5)

He further focuses on the poetic element of the novel and says that, "Sounds are tasted, visions are heard, and death has a heart, the strong do not survive, and your best chance of living may be a concentration camp" (Par. 11) Analyzing the conflict between Adolf Hitler and the Jews and declination of Nazi Reign Green states:

In *The Book Thief*, where battling to survive is sometimes an act of weakness, we see fighting in all its complexity. Max dreams, for instance, that he is boxing with the Fuhrer. "There was only one round, and it lasted hours and for the most part nothing changed. The Fuhrer pounded away at the punching-bag Jew." But then Max recovers and knocks Hitler down. Hitler takes off his gloves, seemingly defeated—until he whips the crowd into a fury. The "fist of an entire nation" attack Max, and he cannot fight them all off. This is fighting as "The Book Thief" understands it: winners often lose. (Par. 10)

John Green somehow tries to deal with the conflict between Jews and Nazi, he does not incorporate the whole traumatic effect upon the Jews.

Philip Ardagh, another critic, cites in his article, "It's a steal" that the story Zusak presents in the novel is somehow autobiographical which is narrated to him by his German Parents:

... the book was inspired by two real-life events related to him by his

German parents: the bombing of Munich, and a teenage boy offering bread to an emaciated Jew being marched through the streets, ending with both boy and Jewish prisoner being whipped by a soldier. It is, however, the way in which Zusak combines such terrible events with such believable characters and the minutiae of everyday life in Nazi Germany... (Par.6)

Ardagh here tries to relate the story with real life event. He does not bother to find out the actual fear of the period which is experienced by the people of Germany in general and the parents of the writer in particular.

The novel is definitely a great work in the field of storytelling. It aims to dig out the cause behind the bind of the character. The characters in this novel even reach to the stage of effacing self, due to the ethical cause. This proposed research aims to fulfill the gap by making the study of this novel from the perspective of Trauma studies and Ethics. This research does not aim to bring the whole ethical and traumatic epistemology into discussion rather it aims to bring Dominick LaCapra's notion of 'acting out' and 'working through' of trauma and Avishai Margalit's notion of ethics of Memory along with the concept of ethical responsibility towards others by Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida.

Ethics is regarded as a moral theory and it has its history parallel to the origin of human civilization. The first person who started the ethical tradition is Socrates. Trauma theory focuses on victim basically but also to the perpetrator who were traumatized by witnessing of being part of the traumatic event. Zusak's novel *The Book Thief* sounds to be a 'self-understanding' kind of story. It gives the sense of all kind of concept in trauma theory like post memory, Trans generational transmission of trauma, victim's trauma, perpetrator's trauma, survivor's guilt, sense of individual

and collective trauma, and also the unspeakability of trauma. Here Zusak links the individual trauma of Liesel to the collective traumas of the people in Molching. By assigning Death as an omnipresent and omniscient narrator Zusak succeeds to give both the victim's and the witnesses' side of story and secures the unbiased and objective view point.

Trauma is an unpleasant emotional experience which effects directly to mind and the personality because of its repeated nature. If we focus on the question of morality then as Margalit claims we need morality because we do not care about people in general, we care only those we know, for those who are near to us. In the novel also Liesel only cares for those who are close to her as Margalit claims. Moral, according to Margalit, is abstract and general, whereas ethics is material and specific. According to him, ethics is limited; whereas morality is unlimited which regulates our "thin" relation means our common humanity. He writes, "Morality is long on geography and short on memory. Ethics is typically short on geography and long on memory." (8).

Margalit's *The Ethics of Memory* talks about the two types of human relations: thick relation and thin relation, as he attributes ethics with thick relation and morality with thin relation. He writes, "Thick relations are in general our relation to the near and dear. Thin relations are in general our relations to the stranger and the remote" (7). It means being human is our thin relation with others whereas our relation with our loved and dear one is thick relation. According to him, ethics "tells us how we should regulate our thick relations; morality tells us how we should regulate our thin relations" (8). Further he focuses on "the primary concern of both ethics and morality is with certain aspects of human relations". According to him "morality is greatly concerned...with respect and humiliation... among those who have thin relation" and

“ethics... is greatly concerned with loyalty and betrayal, manifested among those who have thick relations” (8).

The ideas of “Acting-out” and “Working-through” of trauma are the basic concepts of Domonick LaCapra as he states in his book *Writing History Writing Trauma*. He focuses on the need of memorizing the traumatic past as it cannot be totally forgotten without revisiting it. He writes, “Active forgetting is, of course, a compliment of, not an alternative to, remembering and memory work” (96). According to him, “Trauma is a disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in existence; it has belated effects that are controlled only with difficulty and perhaps never fully mastered” (41). Further he correlates loss with lack and states that, “Loss is often correlated with lack, for as loss is to the past, so lack is to the present and future. A lost object is one that may be felt to be lacking, although a lack need not necessarily involve a loss” (53). Further, LaCapra tries to relate acting-out to working-through itself and says:

In acting-out, one relives as if one were the other, including oneself as another in the past—one is fully possessed by the other or the other’s ghost; and in working-through, one tries to acquire some critical distance that allows one to engage in life in the present, to assume responsibility—but that doesn’t mean that you utterly transcend the past. (148)

The novel consists of a series of responsibility towards others who are in need. The central character Liesel and others like Hans, Rudy, Max, Rosa and Max German Friend Kuglar are guided with the sense of ethics and strongly bounded by the ethics as Margalit’s concept of thin relationship. The central character Liesel as a humanist character always searches for the goodness of others and is guided by ethical duty and

responsibility. She is ready to give up everything for others. She has thick relation with Hans, Rudy and Max in Margalitian sense. She also shows her humanity to other by helping the marching Jews.

Emmanuel Levinas came up with the anti-liberal thought regarding ethics. The thought on ethics between Kant and Levinas is full of controversy in the field of western metaphysics. Kant always follows the liberal humanist tradition which is opposed by Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida. Kant searches for the universal remedy through which always the elitist got benefit. “[T]he basic principle of Kant’s ethics is autonomy . . . Kantians are . . . self-legislators” (*Infinitely Demanding* 32). “Kant argues that ethical laws are universal” (Shah 75). We can understand that Kantian philosophy is self-centered and searches for universality whereas Levinasian-Derridean ethics is other-centered and respects particularity. The whole problem faced by the western individualistic society is due to Kantian ethics. Levinasian ethics demand for the effacement of self and care the marginal. The responsibility to the others is the basic formula of Levinasian ethics which many critics find as the fertile ground for the deconstructionists and leftist ideology.

The introductory chapter of this research revolves around the concepts of ethical demands, ethical relationship and the ethical responsibility towards other. It aims to justify the major characters of *The Book Thief* as the ethical characters. Discussing the history of ethics briefly this research finds the similarities and differences among various ethical philosophies. In the following chapter, it approaches the real binding element that is ethics, and co-relates the characters in the theoretical framework. Through the detailed analysis of the theoretical part and the text, it aims to find out the ethical rendition of violence in Zusak’s *The Book Thief*. And the final chapter of this research shows how ethical response to the traumatized

persons helps them to reduce their intensity of traumatic burden.

II. Ethical Representation of Holocaust Trauma in *The Book Thief*

Australian novelist Markus Zusak in his novel *The Book Thief* (2005) represents anti-liberal humanist ethics, because his approach towards ethics is guided by his faith on anti-liberal humanism. He critiques liberal humanist ethos through the characters like Liesel, Max, Hans and others. He portrays the character who believes in helping others, showing empathy and are guided by morality and 'responsibility'. His characters are guided by ethics and morality and they find their meaning of life in helping others or by supporting the family.

Zusak's *The Book Thief* valorize anti-liberal humanist ethos. The characterization and narrative technique makes a powerful shock to the liberal self, money-minded rationality and hierarchical thought. So, the narrative technique, characters presentation, language, setting and the whole plot are the valorization of anti-liberal humanist ethics. The use of dual narrative technique is a way to know the marginal perspective. The whole plot moves back and forth on the perspective of one major character Liesel. Markus Zusak gives prime focus on Liesel as 'other' characters to present the story that valorizes the ethical responsibility towards others and it also glorify the communitarian value rather than individualism. So, the novel from every corner promotes the thought of "putting others first".

The main cause of the traumatic experience among characters is the loss of their beloved ones. As LaCapra states, "Losses are specific and involve particular events, such as the death of loved ones on a personal level" (49). The central character Liesel also losses her brother Werner in the train when they were travelling towards Molching. Immediately she was left behind by her own mother in the hand of foster parents. Then she also loses her foster family at the end of the novel. Her best friend Rudy is also dead at the end. In this way, she faces a layer of events that led her to the

traumatized situation. The loss of her beloved one definitely pierced a deep stress on the mind of the 9 years old girl. LaCapra says, “[T]raumatization typically involves the betrayal of trust” (History in transit 64). As the protagonist feels the same betrayal when her mother handed her to the foster family, Liesel says that: “If her mother loved her, why leave her on someone else’s doorstep? Why? Why?” (38). Similarly Max, a Jew, another character also is traumatized severely as he is abandoned from his motherland that is Germany. He was forced to live his family behind him and was hiding to save his own life: “For the next two years he remained in hiding, in an empty storeroom” (202). Further he was placed in the basement for a long time, “He had not seen the outside world for twenty-two months” (385).

Rudy also faces traumatic moment when his father was taken away by the Nazi army and sent to the army hospital to serve, because he refuses to send Rudy. In the same way Hans Hubermann is also a traumatic figure as he was nearly get killed in World War I. Further when he “held his hand out and presented a piece of bread, like magic”(401) to a Jew marching to Dachau, then he realize that by helping Jew he brings trouble in his family and get traumatize and say “ ‘Oh my god, Liesel, what have I done?’ ” (402). Rosa Hubermann is so traumatized, when Max gets ill in their basement. She says, “What if he doesn’t wake up? What if he dies here, Hansie?” (338), because “A Jewish corpse was a major problem” (338) in Nazi Germany.

In this way, by creating complex characterization and connecting with the Protagonist Liesel, Zusak links the individual trauma of Liesel's to the collective trauma of the inhabitants to get more real picture of the life in the 'Ordinary' Nazi Germans and to understand trauma from more complex perspective. As LaCapra says, “[T]raumatic events are not fully owned by anyone and, in various ways, affect everyone”(Writing History Writing Trauma xi). That is everyone from both side is

affected by the traumatic event. So we can say that "one's identity is only understood in relation to others" (Interruption 2). The traumatic experience of the individual carries collective nature also. Individually some of them are traumatized by the state and some others are traumatized by the Nazi members but in the collective nature all trauma is caused by the Hitler's regime that promotes fascism. The fascist nature of the state becomes unable to resist the different voice and in a sense guided by the Western concept of 'universalism'. The liberal humanist thought that always seeks for the homogeneity among people and cannot respect the diversity.

The situation of Germany was highly dominated by the fascist perspective which never welcomed the questions. The narrator gives example of a teacher who used to teach the children and was taken away. The novelist writes, "One day, that woman was taken away for questioning. She didn't come back" (38). The situation of the people who were not the members of Nazi party in Germany was notably very dreadful. The condition of Hans Hubermann was also full of security risk because he was not the member of Nazi party. The writer writes:

To most people, Hans Hubermann was barely visible. An un-special person. Certainly, his painting skills were excellent. His musical ability was better than average. Somehow, though and I'm sure you've met people like this, he had the ability to appear in the background, even if he was standing at the front of a queue. He was always just *there*. Not noticeable. Not important or particularly valuable. (40)

Here Zusak presents the story from the perspective of ordinary Nazi Germany who carries the anti-liberal humanist ethos. Novel is narrated by Death as it questions our concept about death. By assigning the trauma narration to Death Zusak try to suggest the circulatory nature of trauma and the impossibility of complete healing "The

survivor witness in recounting a past that will not pass away.” (*Writing History Writing Trauma xiv*)

The hierarchical society is introduced by Hitler in the German society. He, following the Western liberalist tradition, treats Jews as the insignificant creatures, “And in the red corner, we have the Jewish, rat-faced challenger” (261). The then social context in the novel clearly shows that for not being the member of Nazi Party several characters were taken up, killed or tortured, and the misbehave and dreadful violence over the Jews cannot be expressed in the words.

Being the mouthpiece of liberal humanist ethos Nazi rulers are guided by the sense of hierarchical relation between superiority of ‘self ‘and the inferiority of the ‘others’. In the fanatic sense of patriotism and opposition, Hitler manipulates the Medias and uses his oratory skills to provoke violence over the Jews and the communists. A reader of philosophy Sanjeev Upreti writes, “Western Civilization is based on the violence over ‘other’ Violence is not only to kill others through gun but also to use other for the benefit of the ‘self’ and have control over freedom and existence of ‘others’” (309). Here critiquing the Western civilization Upreti clearly portrays their affection towards the violence. Violence is not only the use of physical attack to finish others rather it is also to restrict others freedom and confine them in limited sphere. In the novel, except the members of Nazi Party, the natural liberty of the common people is denied. The policy of the Nazi ruling class is to finish the diversity and ‘preserve’ the Nazi. Moreover, the mother of Liesel, despite being a German, is taken away because of her belief over socialism.

Moreover, Trauma theory as LaCapra’s concept of ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’ is basically interconnected with ethics and socio-cultural tension. According to him, “In acting-out, one relives as if one were other, including oneself as another in

the past... and in working-through, one tries to acquire some critical distance that allows one to engage in life in the present, to assume responsibility-- but that doesn't mean that you utterly transcend the past" (*Writing History Writing Trauma* 148).

Further he focuses on the need of remembering the traumatic past because without revisiting it trauma cannot be totally resolve or forgotten. According to him, "Trauma is a disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in existence; it has belated effects that are controlled only with difficulty and perhaps never fully mastered" (*Writing History Writing Trauma* 41).

Here Zusak establishes the link between trauma and the power of words as an "acting-out" mechanism from trauma. Further, characters and their ethics or morality towards each other also helps them to come out from trauma. At her brother burial Liesel, encounters first with the words in the form of book named *The Gravediggers Handbook* though she cannot read it, she needs something to fill the 'metaphysical' gap left by the loss of her brother and her mother. Writer writes: "the point is, it didn't really matter what that book was about. It was what it meant that was more important" (45). Further this book means, "The last time she saw her brother. The last time she saw her mother" (45). She is subconsciously 'acting-out' for the tool to cope up with trauma as reading becomes a therapeutic tool for Liesel to cope up with trauma. Liesel has a recurring traumatic dream that features the image of her dead brother which later on mixed with other traumatic images. The writer writes:

For the most part, all is identical. The train moves at the speed.

Copiously, her brother coughs. This time, however, Liesel cannot see his face watching the floor. Slowlyshe leans over. Her hand lifts him gently, from his chin, and there in front of her is the wide-eyed face of Max Vandenburg. He stares at her. A feather drops to the floor. The

body is bigger now, matching the size of the face. The train screams.

(339)

Here, Liesel brother was replaced by Max in her dream though everything other was the same. Later on she tries to interpret her dream:

Was it a premonition of Max's death? Or was it merely a reaction to the afternoon conversation in kitchen? Had Max now replaced her own brother? And if so, how could she discard her own flesh and blood in such a way? Perhaps it was even a deep-seated wish for Max to die. After all, it was good enough for Werner, her brother; it was good enough for this Jew. (340)

This shows her contemporary trauma and other fragmented symbols of trauma like her nightmare, bed wetting.

Literacy helps Liesel and Max to acknowledge and cope up with their trauma as both Max and Liesel's traumas disrupt their sleep and hold them back from acknowledging, reconnecting, and accepting their past. Those who does not have literacy to cope up with trauma faces the tragedy as Michael Holtzapfel. He commits suicide as he does not have medium to share his trauma. Liesel explain, "That in the end, Michael Holtzapfel was worn down not by his damaged hand or other injury, but by the guilt of living" (507). If he talks about his experience whether orally or through writing, perhaps he can overcome his trauma. In contrast Max and Liesel use literacy and be able to cope up with their trauma and stress. Liesel ask Max to share his story when she finally finds the courage to ask him if *Mein Kampf* is a good book. He says, "It's the best book ever" (225); "it saved my life" (225). Then after the series of storytelling phase began in the living room and in basement. Max finds his voice literally as Jew was taken as

“voiceless human” and “the Jewish Rat” (223) in Nazi Germany. Max had been less than a human, as the word “rat” indicates an unwanted animal. And because of Liesel he finds his voice. And this storytelling helps him to overcome his trauma because Liesel (and Hans) is there to listen to him and even remember his story. Death narrates, “When Liesel looked back on the events of her life, those nights in the living room were some of the clearest memories she had” (225). Similarly literacy also proves to be coping mechanism for Mrs. Holtzapfel, even in her extreme traumatic moments she calls for Liesel and made her recite the book as words sounds comforting to her.

Liesel learns to read and to deal with her trauma in the basement as it represents unconscious drives, trauma and fear. She unknowingly feels comfort in the basement while facing with trauma. She writes number of letters to her mother and received no response, she gradually realize that it is very unlikely that she will see her again. In response to this realization, she crawls and hides underneath the table. When she remembers her mother, Zusak writes “Liesel revisited those dark rooms of her past” (117). This basement does, in fact, provide Liesel, Max and to some extent Hans, a space to cope up with their trauma. For Max it is the place which saves his life literally and figuratively too. Zusak writes, “The basement was the only place for himas far as he was concerned. Forget the cold and the loneliness. He was a Jew and if there was one place he was destined to exist, it was a basement or any other such hidden venue of survival” (215).

Like Liesel, Max also finds his coping mechanism for trauma in the basement. He feels free there to write his story effacing the pages of *Mein Kampf*, even he fantasies boxing with Hitler there in the basement. “Every night, I wait in the dark and the Fuhrer comes down these steps. He walks down and he and I, we fight for hours”

(265). Much more than his day dream, fighting Hitler becomes an act of imaginary re-empowerment as he answer the Liesel that he wins when he fight with Hitler. As, he is fighting back against his powerlessness as a Jewish man in Nazi Germany. Actually he transform his anger from death “when death captures me he will feel my fist on his face” (197) to Hitler. In this way, the basement is not just a room for reading, but a space where Liesel, Hans and Max proactively rebel against the limitations of Nazi Germany. Finally when Max leaves the basement only when he feels mentally strong enough to leave. Thus literacy is important to the Jew as it gives the way define themselves, to resist Nazi and to cope up with their trauma and to stand for themselves against the Nazi Culture. After Max leaves Liesel decide to write her story in the basement as this is the place of her secret, place of Max, and the only space where she can cope up with her layer of trauma.

The ethical flavor in the narration is another brilliant part of this novel. Ethics is regarded as a moral theory. It depends on the relation with other which according to Avishai Margalit’s is of two types’ that is “thick relation” and “thin relation”. He writes about this two types of relation in his book *The Ethics of Memory*:

Thick relations are grounded in attributes such as parent, friend, lover, fellow-countryman. Thick relations are anchored in a shared past or moored in shared memory. Thin relations, on the other hand, are backed by the attribute of being human. Thin relations rely also on some aspects of being human, such as being a woman or being sick. Thick relations are in general our relation to the near and dear. Thin relation is in general our relations to the stranger and the remote. (7)

Liesel here maintains thick relation with Hans, Rosa, Max, and Rudy. She also attributes with thin relation as she maintains such relation with Jew in general and

other inhabitant in Molching. According to him, Ethics “tells us how we should regulate our thick relations; morality tells us how we should regulate our thin relation” (8).

The use of the Death as a narrator has a significant role since it sarcastically teases the unsympathetic behaviors of human beings. Death as a narrator talks about everyone and visits everyone indiscriminately. Unbiased and objective view was secured through the narrator by Zusak. “First the colours. Then the humans. That’s usually how I see thing. Or at least, how I try. Here is a small fact. You are going to die” (13). Here Death politely foreshadows the certainty of death for every one and tries to suggest that only in death itself trauma can resolve and functions as a last hope for trauma resolution. The violent Hitler is ruder than the death itself. Death itself becomes sympathetic to the psychic thought of the ruler. The Holocaust incidents are so brutal that treated human beings from diverse caste and political thoughts as the enemy of humanity or hardly as a creature.

Hitler’s perspective that ‘Jews have no right to live’ shows the fascist ruler has no minimal affection towards the others and ethical values. For Margalit, “Nazi crimes carried out by an ideology that denied our shared humanity” (9). According to him, we need morality because we do not care about people in general; we care only for those we know, for those who are near us. Therefore, caring is placed in a now, and so to speak localized. Consequently, to pose the question what actually happened is only important from a moral point of view. Moral, according to Margalit, is an abstract and general, when ethics is material and specific. Hence, ethics presupposes a shared past, memory and community whereas memory does not.

Following Margalit’s concepts, ethics presupposes an enclosed social space. Morality on the other hand is unlimited. It regulates our “thin” relations, our common

humanity. Morality is born out of principles and therefore the result of an act of negotiation and legislation. Margalit writes, “Morality is long on geography and short on memory. Ethics is typically short on geography and long on memory” (8).

According to Margalit, shared memory requires communication whereas common memory requires experience of events individually. Liesel and Max shared their memory through communication in the basement. They exchange their stories and Max even shares his memory through writing.

Ethical relation, according to Margalit, cannot be immoral, because for him “*good* and *bad* are to be directly attributed to relationships” (85). Just what we “need to distinguish between good and bad with in relation and goodness and badness of the relation” (85). But for him, “ethical relation involve partiality—that is, favoring a person or a group over others with equal moral claim” (87). That means “Ethical relation are allowed to be partial as a moral tie breaker but not otherwise”, so ethical relation “faces a situation of picking, not of choosing between the two” (88). This “picking and choosing can go for the big and the small, saving a life or buying soup” (88). Further he justify his statement by giving the example of two drowning people one is the rescuer wife and other complete stranger:

The two in danger have equal moral claim to be saved. But in this case the man is not supposed to pick; he is require to choose. The requirement is not moral, since the two people in danger are in a moral tie. The blood of the one is not redder than the blood of the other; both have an equal moral right of life. The requirement is rather ethical. For the husband to be impartial, he would have to approach the problems as though he were facing two strangers. His obligation, however, is not to be impartial. Picking between the two, rather than choosing his wife,

might be justifiable, but it would be ethically cursed. (88)

So, in this ground of morality ethics somehow based on thick relation “requires partiality” (88). When Max left their basement she always search him when “a new batch of fresh, tired Jews was being taken on foot to Dachau” (512). Her ethics based on moral ties as Margalits claim’s she only cry for max. She try to match the faces of other Jew with Max, “She raced through the files of face after face, trying to match them to the Jew who wrote *The Standover Man* and *The Word Shaker*” (513).

Zusak’s characters try to maintain some critical distance while they were “working through” trauma. As LaCapra says in his book *Writing History Writing Trauma*, for him it is a desirable process and, “In working through, person tries to gain critical distance on the problem and to distinguish between past, present, and future” (143). Further LaCapra explains:

Working through does not mean avoidance, harmonization, simply forgetting the past, or submerging oneself in the present. It means coming to terms with the trauma, including its details, and critically engaging the tendency to act out the past and even to recognize why it may be necessary and even in certain respects desirable or at least compelling. (144)

Trauma in LaCapra sense cannot be fully avoided or forgotten. What can be done is that trauma can only be minimized by critically engaging and working through by maintaining some critical distance.

In working through person tries to maintain some distance from his post traumatic experience and allows himself to be a part of the present and the future possibilities. Liesel and Max maintain some distance from their post-traumatic symptoms and through acknowledging, reconnecting, and accepting their past, they

work through or have been able to cope up and to overcome their emotional trauma with the help of literacy that is whether orally or through writing which provides them a voice and a way to release their trauma. Sharing their traumatic experience they engage themselves as a part of the present and of the future.

Zusak uses literacy as the coping mechanism for his characters and empowers them to stand up against and faces their trauma. It also helps them resist Nazi culture. Max resists the Nazi culture by writing a piece of his story as a birthday gift for Liesel when she was ready for it as Max say, "I have left something for you, 'but states you will not get it until you're ready'" (404). Death states, "There were the erased pages of *Mein Kampf*, gagging, suffocating under the paint as they turned" (246). This show how writing is so powerful to resist to oppression or working through the resistance of Nazi Culture as it is related to one's own story which Nazis have tried to wipe away. Max's struggle against Nazi Germany is made complete by the fact that Liesel is there to read and know his story.

Similarly, Liesel also uses literacy as a 'working through' mechanism to resist her trauma. Comparatively she resists more actively than Max due to her freedom. She does it when she steals a Jewish book from a large bonfire. She cannot just watch the burning books so she grabs one of them, risking her life. Throughout the novel Liesel shows her respect for books the loves Jews (Max). She invites Max to become her teacher asking Max to help her to strengthen her literacy skill is an act of resistance as "Jewish education" is being continued in some way. Education is an act of resistance as it offers hope of their culture survives. Unknowingly, she transforms herself and becomes a rhetorical Jew when she asks Max to further educate her. Max and Liesel together defy the Nazis when they interact with each other when Liesel find him in the parade of Jews walking over to Dachau. Max stops and listens to

Liesel as she recites the words from *The Word Shaker*. Death claims Max “stood absolutely still as the others swerved morosely around him, leaving him completely alone. His eyes staggered and it was so simple. The words were given across from the girl to the Jew” (515). Max stopping in the parade is a direct act of resistance as he is the prisoner of the Nazi going to Dachau. This is possible only because they both were literate. For Max, “THE BEST word shakers were those who understood the true power of words. They were always able to climb the highest.” (452). He continues, “One such word shaker was a small, skinny girl. She was renowned as the best of her region because she knew how powerless a person could be WITHOUT words” (452). This girl who is the best word shaker be a good friend with, “a man who was despised by her homeland, even though he was born in it” (452).

Zusak, through the use of ethical characters attempts to minimize the horrifying trauma upon the characters. The characters are highly guided by Levinasian sense of ethics and create the more livable environment transcending their trauma. The character uses the storytelling technique to mitigate the traumatic feelings. Max and Liesel share their stories and explore the similarity in their sufferings. Later they realize that the source of the cause of their suffering was Hitler. In that way, the problem of Lisel is not only her but also is of Max. Not only these two characters but also the suffering is equally painful for the Rudy, Hans’s family and others.

Levinas claims that Western philosophy has always prioritized the existence, self, self-sufficiency, and ego-centrism and power seeker. The tendency of giving the most importance to the self is the practice from the beginning in the Western culture. Levinas argues that the Western philosophy namely liberal philosophy is guided by the ethics of self-centered and in the side of power. The affiliation of the liberal philosophy with the power has become the problem for ‘other’, marginal and

powerless people. Levinas's idea further claims that such existential nature of ethics is the cause behind various wars. In this regard Levinas says, "Responsibility for the other, going against intentionality and the will . . . signifies not a discourse of a given and its reception but the exposure of me to the other, prior to every decision. . . . a traumatic hold of the other on the self" (*Otherwise than Being* 141). Levinasian vision always promotes to work for other and give priority to the 'others' over me and 'self'.

In this regards Critchley puts Levinasian ideas as:

Autonomy comes back into the picture for Levinas, at the level of another demand, namely the demand for justice, the just society and everything that he gathers under the heading of 'the third party'. What must be acknowledged is the heteronomous constitution of autonomy that the ethical demand is refractory to our cognitive powers and the other person can always resist whatever concept under which we may try to subsume them. (*Infinitely Demanding* 57)

Levinas' argument is for the heterogeneity, multiplicity of the others and the demand for better and just society which is practiced here by Zusak's protagonist and other characters for the valorization of postmodern ethics.

Liesel is the character who feels respect as well as ethical duty towards the society or the 'other' people. In this regard, summarizing the thought of Levinas, Sanjeev Upreti writes:

Levinas opines, every people, community, or the country takes 'other' people, community, or the country more different than the 'self' and tries to use them for own sake. To use 'other' for the benefit of 'self' is violence. So that, to establish a foundation of new moral science; one has to respect the 'otherness' of the 'other'. One should be aware of

other's right. (310)

Liesel is the Levinasian hero because she has infinite sense of responsibility towards her relatives and the 'others' that is the community

As one of the critics of Levinasian ethics, Critchley writes: “. . . The basic operation of Levinas's entire work is the experience of an exorbitant demand which heteronomously determines the ethical subject. This demand is the imperative 'tu ne tueras point', 'you shall not kill', which is expressed in the resistance of the other's face” (*Infinitely Demanding* 57). Liesel proves herself as a Levinasian ethical character that is ready to sacrifice her 'complete self' for the sake of other. She is so persistent in her decision that she is ready to 'die trying' for 'them'. In this regard, Levinas expresses idea that “[T]he other . . . is the stranger, the widow and the orphan to whom I am obligated”, which becomes the guiding principle for Liesel. And it is the same guideline for Hans, Max and other too. They are ready to serve the needy and helpless people at any cost.

Liesel, female protagonist of the novel is guided by the ethical sense of responsibility towards others. Liesel show ethical responsibility by helping Max to hide in their basement by informing her parents when the Nazi soldier was coming to check their basement for more Air-raid Shelter. Liesel is guided by the sense of unconditional duty towards others. Her unconditional dedication towards others makes her a Levinasian ethical figure. Her such unconditional dedication towards others and towards the community is due to her infinite sense of responsibility as Levinas defines: “The unconditionality of being hostage is not limit case of solidarity but the condition of all solidarity . . . The self, a hostage is already substituted for the others. I am an other” (*Otherwise than Being* 117-118).

Hans Hubermann shows the absolute Hospitality for Max Vandenburg. He

keeps his promise to Max mother to help her when needed, “‘if there’s anything you ever need...’ He slid a piece of paper with his name and address on it across on the table” (186/187) because due to her husband Erik Vandenburg he was saved as he says, “you know,’ ... ‘he saved my life’ (186). Not only he keep his promise he let Max to come in his own house without any question, though letting Jew in your home is very dangerous at that time. Through the character like Hans, Zusak here show the unconditional hospitality as claim by Derrida, “[T]here is an unconditional hospitality; [a]bsolute hospitality requires that I open my home and that I give not only to the foreigner . . . but to the absolute unknown, anonymous other. . . without asking of them either reciprocity of even their names. . . . Just hospitality breaks with hospitality by right” (*Of Hospitality* 25).

Levinas says, “Man as other comes to us from the outside, a separated or holy-face. His exteriority, that is, his appeal to me, is his truth . . . the other, in his signification prior to my initiative, resembles God” (*Totality and Infinity* 291, 293). Max as a man from the outside come to Himmel Street and ask Hans “Do you still play the accordion?” Of course, the question was really, “Will you still help me?” Liesel’s papa walked to the front door and opened it” (193). Thus, the relation between Hans and Max father is based on the Derrida’s notion of friendship which is based on virtue, “for if all the species of friendship imply equality, or equity, only primary friendship demands on equality of virtue between friends” (*Politics of Friendship* 23). So Hans devoted himself to help Max, for the sake of mutual respect and cooperation between Max’s Father, his promise to her mother and himself. Hans helps Max as a protector and respects his friendship with Max Father. This relationship is the result of ‘equality of virtue between friends’. His prioritization of sensibility over rationality too makes him Levinasian ethical man.

Liesel, main character of the novel, is guided by the principle of anti-liberal humanist ethics as she possesses a series of infinite sense of ‘responsibility’ to the needy people, her valorization of sensibility over rationality is for the good of the people. She is ready to serve ‘other’ at the cost of her own life. She is guided by responsibility, sensibility, and other centered postmodern ethics.

Rudy too is guided by the postmodern ethical sense of putting other first. As Levinas always focuses on the ‘other’, Rudy later on transcend himself and be a giver of bread to the Jews marching to Dachau, “Liesel watched the boy. How things had changed, from fruit stealer to bread giver. His blond hair, although darkening, was like a candle. She heard his stomach growl—and he was giving people bread” (446) makes him a Levinasian- Derridean ethical character.

As Levinas emphasizes that sensibility cannot be achieved through observation that means sensory perception rather by the ‘contentment’. Here the characters like Liesel and Hans have followed the core belief to the sensibility based ethical value of Levinas. Markus Zusak following the Levinasian sensible ideas of ethics shows the victory of sensibility over self. In this regard Levinas opines:

To sense is to be within, without the conditioned, and consequently of itself inconsistent, character of this ambience, which troubles rational thought, being in any way included in the sensation. Sensibility, essentially naive, suffices to itself in a world insufficient for thought. The objects of the world, which for thought lie in the void, for sensibility—or for life—spread forth on a horizon which entirely hides that void. The sensibility touches the reverse, without wondering about the obverse; this is produced precisely in contentment. (*Totality and Infinity* 119)

Levinas's *Totality and Infinity* came up with the message of infinite duty and responsibility towards others. His other translated texts include *Otherwise than being or Beyond Essence*, *Humanism of the Other*, *Ethics and Infinity* and more other which are the mouth pieces for the postmodern humanist ethics. These texts open his philosophy regarding the "the face", and the "other". Levinas states that when a person meets other he/she is guided by the infinite sense of "responsibility". The ethical demand is always searching the "face" which we once faced. The idea of "other" is the basic concept of Levinasian thought. Bruce Young introduces the idea as: "The other "invests" my freedom, gives it meaning, and makes it possible for me to make moral choices. I become "responsible," for the other invites me (simply by his or her presence) to respond. The other, through his or her neediness and vulnerability, invites me to offer yourself and what I have in service and sustenance" (2).

For Bruce Young, Levinasian 'Other' always urges us to sacrifice our self for the betterment of the others. Young along above lines analyzes the Levinasian thought, as a means to become "responsible" and offer 'self' for the sake of the needy people. "To take a decision on in the name of the other in no way at all lightens my responsibility, on the contrary, and Levinas is very forceful on this point, my responsibility is accused by the fact that it is the other in the name of other which I decide" (Derrida 84). Derrida is highly inspired by the thought of Levinas due to its nature of other centered, responsibility towards margin, and respect to the particularity. Later he too contributed in the field of ethics following the line of Levinas and critiquing the liberal humanists like Kant.

Levinas ethics is based primarily on caring to otherness of other. For him ethics should be built not on autonomy, but rather, heteronomy. According to him,

personal responsibility is only derived from my responsibility to others that means I am not important in the ethical picture except in relation to other. He emphasize on the otherness of the other. He further opines that, as human we have to be ethical which means we should reach beyond the being of the other. Simon Critchley, in this regards opines, “For Levinas, the ethical demand is a traumatic demand, it is something that comes from outside the subject, from a heteronomous source, but which leaves its imprint within the subject” (*Infinitely Demanding* 61). Zusak main character always emphasizes on the otherness of other, she prays for Max when he left their basement, “please, God, please let Max survive. Please, God please....” (407). She is so caring that when Rosa inform her about Max awaking in her school, after long sickness she wants to run home but she control herself and returned to class; “Instinct told her to run home immediately, but common sense did not allow it. Instead, she placed the ragged soldier in her pocket and returned to the classroom” (341).

The setting of the novel moves dynamically around Molching, Germany, more specifically Himmel Street. It is particularly resonantly evoked by often ascribing ‘emotion’ to a place. “The house was pale, almost sickly-looking, with an iron gate and a brown spit-stained door.” (176). Almost all the major events take place here. Some other action takes place on Munich Street. It is where Rudy is beaten by Franz Deutscher, the sadistic Hitler Youth leader, and is a place where Liesel and Max are reunited when he's being marched to Dachau. Stalingrad another place marked a turning point in the war. When minor character Michael Holtzapfel comes back from Stalingrad, missing three fingers and his brother, the "snows of Stalingrad" come into the houses on Himmel Street.

Laws and propaganda are important aspects of *The Book Thief's* setting in

Nazi Germany. It set the mood of the time which is sick. They passed laws to legalize their crimes. They restrict every aspect of Jewish life. They were barred from government jobs, from being teachers, from attending school, from practicing their professions, from joining the military, from admission to hospitals, and from living among non-Jewish people. They were banished from citizenship and their right to vote. All Jewish property was captured they were arrested and send in concentration camps and ultimately, they were murdered in large scale.

There are two basements in the novel, both on Himmel Street. One is in the Hubermann house, and the other in the house of the Fielders. Both basements are places to hide, one for Jew and other for the habitant of Molching, though they are cold, uncomfortable and small. The basement is where Liesel and Max start their friendship, where Liesel learns to read, where Max writes his books, where Rosa, Hans, and Liesel have their snowball fight. Basement is the place where Liesel realizes that she can use her love of reading to provide much needed comfort to those around her. In the Fielders' basement, she becomes "the word shaker," when she begins reading to her friends and neighbors. Later, in the days leading up to the bombing of Himmel Street, the basement becomes a seat of creativity for Liesel as she writes her life story, as it was for Max when he wrote *The Word Shaker*. Basements are being used to help draw the mood of the story, but also to highlight the creativity of characters like Liesel and Max. It is also used as an insult to the Jew, humiliation and a form of torture: "He was a Jew and if there was one place he was destined to exist, it was a basement... A voiceless human. The Jewish rat, back to his hole" (215/223). In this regard Margalit's opines: "By humiliation I mean treating human as non-humans. There are many forms of such treatment; torture is one of them. So torture is an extreme form of insult and injury, of pain and humiliation"

(119).

The plot of this story revolves around Liesel, Max, Rudy, and Hans. It exposes the ethical responsibility and realization of the character. It exposes that the character are highly guided by morality and bound by the ethical relationship as describe by Margalit's, "Our ethical relations seem like natural extension of family relations. By claiming that family relations are the basis of ethical relations I mean that the formative metaphors for thick ethical relations is familial relations" (102). For example, Liesel helps Max to survive in the basement, she also offers bread to the marching Jew and she soon realizes the ethical responsibility towards others. The characters like Liesel Max and Hans are highly sacrificial and there is no trace of selfishness among them. These characters share the qualities of putting other first, prioritization of sensibility over reason, and subversion of hierarchical relation.

The narrative technique used by the novelist is very pivotal. This helps to explore the ethical element of the novel. He uses the Omniscient Narrator Death which allows him to describe any event or person he chooses. It also helps writer to explain the layer of stories. "A story. Story after story. Story within story" (76). Here narrator made use of third and second person's point of view to make his intimate connection with the reader. "I could introduce myself properly, but it's not really necessary. You will know me well enough..." (14). Death as a narrator, is very close to Liesel throughout the novel. He unfolds the story of the Liesel throughout her childhood years in Molching.

The story also evokes the binary between German-Jews relationship, from a political, historical and social category to a humanistic level since Hans Hubermann does not save Max for being or not being Jew but because he is morally obliged to pay back for his own life. Alex Steiner, another character of the novel being German

and the member of Nazi Party, did not hate Jew for being Jew. He was not happy when business of Jews was destroyed. Alex Steiner represents those German who suffered from the moral and ethical crisis. Rudy being the son of the member of Nazi Party is not comfortable with the rule of the Hitler's Youth so later he refuses to go. He also helps marching Jews by placing the bread on the road. Liesel, on other hand develops intimate relation with Max. She helps him to survive in the basement. Even she recites words from the book for Max when he was ill.

Guilt is another important theme presented by the writer. The terrible burden felt by the survivors who not only lament the loss of their loved ones, but also the danger they inflict on others, "To live. Living was living. The price was guilt and shame" (216). When Max has to abandon his family and "the relief struggled inside him like an obscenity. It was something he didn't want to feel but, none the less, he felt it with such gusto it made him want to throw up" (201). When he makes his way out of hiding to seek refuge in the Hubermanns' home, "He reminded himself that this was no time for hope ... How could he show up and ask people to risk their lives for him? How could he be so selfish?" (176). These lines describe the terrible situation of the victim, whose only hope generally lies in risking the lives of others, and whose pain lies in their memory of those they've loved who've not survived. Michael Holtzapfel is one of the many tragic character of such 'survival guilt' and his actions are evidence of the enormous pressure such people place on themselves emotionally. In this regards Death as a narrator remarks:

They're the ones I can't stand to look at, although on many occasions, I still fail. I deliberately seek out the colors to keep my mind off them, but now and then, I witness the ones who are left behind, crumbling amongst the jigsaw puzzle of realization, despair and surprise. They

have punctured hearts. They have beaten lungs. (15)

Here, Zusak emphasized on the Ethical treatment needed to the victim as it helps them to reduce the intensity of trauma.

Through taking into account the significance of literacy in the Jewish identity and looking at the impact of literacy on Max and Liesel, Liesel can be characterized as a circumstantial Jew. Literacy empowers her in the same way it empowers Max. Similar to how literacy influences Max's perspective on the basement from a hiding place to a home, Liesel is able to define the basement as a classroom and sanctuary because of words. Just like how Max copes with his emotional trauma through literacy, Liesel is also able to cope with her own trauma through reading *The Grave Digger's Handbook* and exchanging her nightmares stories. Liesel, like Max, is able to resist the culture of Nazi Germany by continuing the traces of Jewish existence through literacy. Lastly, as she writes her own narrative, she stands as a witness to everything she has experienced and seen, similar to how literacy enables Holocaust Jew to stand as a witness through writing. Literacy proves itself powerful as it goes beyond death, helping narratives endure through time as Death itself is a part of preserving Liesel's narrative, rather than ending it.

Throughout the novel, Zusak tries to prove that even in the heart of tragedy, good is still possible. Liesel, Hans, Rudy even Rosa risks their own safety to follow what they believes to be morally right i.e. good can withstand evil. Zusak's novel *The Book Thief* is self-understanding kind of story its unusual treatment of holocaust, german-jews relationship and the journey into the psyche of ordinary German of the Nazi Germany prior the beginning of the WWII makes it a memorable story. Initially this novel was classified as a children book, but it consists all major concept of trauma theory even survivor guilt and unspeakability of trauma. Trauma thus, can only be

reduced through the ethical treatment to the victim. Without caring and love as based on our thick/thin relation with them the trauma of victim cannot be reduced further it get more intensified and victim may killed themselves if trauma is not treated with ethics. As Michel Holtzafel killed himself because his trauma get intensify because he did not get ethical treatment.

III. Working through of Holocaust trauma through its Ethical Rendition

In *The Book Thief* Markus Zusak attempts to show that the brutality and beauty always goes together through his characters. Zusak establish the concepts of ethical demands, ethical relationship and the ethical responsibility towards other through his major characters. He justifies his characters from *The Book Thief* as the ethical characters incorporating both trauma and ethics within, and he succeed. As ethics unfolds in our relationship to the other, Markus show such relationship between other characters with the main female protagonist Liesel.

Markus here explores the violence, terror, horror and represent trauma of violence penetrated in the course of World War II. War is the cause of trauma, even in this condition some Germans like Hans Hubermann, Alex Stiener, and Walter Kuglar show their morality and help other risking their life. By giving ethical, social and civic responsibility and self-understanding ability to the characters Zusak here show the other side of the Nazi Germany where the blink of anti-liberal humanism as describe by Levinas and Derrida sustains.

More importantly, Zusak through this novel tries to depict how to cope up with trauma. As described by LaCapra there are two way to react with trauma: 'Acting Out' and 'Working Through'. Character like Liesel and Max both uses the literacy as their coping mechanism with trauma. They both act out and work through the language to minimize their trauma. Liesel tells story in the basement and she reads for Max. Max also writes book effacing the pages from *Mein Kampf*.

As our ethics or morality is usually based on our relation with other, as a common people we generally love our closed one. According to Avishai Margalit there are two types of human relation: 'thick one' and 'thin one'. Zusak here depicts both type of relation through his character. Liesel as main character develops thick

relation with whom she loves like Hans, Rudy, and Max. She further helps marching Jew and people in the basement during air-raids as she has thin relation with them. Zusak carefully develop the plot so that he can present himself as the strong supporter of anti-liberal humanist.

The preference to the Western ethical line of universality over particularity, self over others, rationality over sensibility, matter over cultural identity, and mimicry of westerners over the nativity brings the suffocating situation where post-modern ethical sense of responsibility becomes the significant remedy for it. The novel clearly shows the victory of other-centered Levinasian - Derridean ethics over the self-centered Kantian ethics. Further, Markus valorizes anti-liberal humanist characters who are guided by the infinite sense of responsibility towards the needy 'Others'. The author is aware of the self-centeredness, hierarchical relations, money mindedness and universalizing tendency of liberal humanism and critiques them through the portrayal of ethical or anti-liberal humanist characters like Liesel, Hans Max, Kuglar, Rudy, Rosa and others.

Liesel, the central female protagonist, carries the essence of Levinasian-Derridean ethics. She risks her life and limb to save the community and a Jewish man from the imposed trauma of World War II. Liesel Miminger, the central female protagonist as she incorporates both trauma and ethics she uses literacy as the coping mechanism of trauma and tries to minimize it and is ready to efface her 'self' for the sake of 'others' as a Levianasian ethical character. Markus Zusak challenged the self-centered liberal humanism through his characters with a strong message to respect the otherness of the 'Others'. Showing Hans and Liesel and other as the characters putting other first, based on sensibility and subverting their self for the purpose of 'other' makes Markus Zusak a strong supporter of anti-liberal humanist ethos. He promotes

the anti-liberal humanist characters like Liesel, Hans, Max and others who are guided by ethical sense of responsibility towards others.

To sum up, Markus Zusak, here analyses the Western monolithic, universalist ethical practices which redirect human beings towards the promotion of self, neglecting otherness of 'Others' and focuses on materialism. The solution to such problem is to follow, respect and accept the 'Otherness' of the other and promote forgiveness which is the founding principle for the concept of 'democracy to come'. It is because Levinasian-Derridean ethics promotes relationship which is a milestone to solve social conflicts. Further Zusak; successfully show how trauma and ethics can go together. His main female Protagonist, Liesel as a traumatic character she always put 'other' first. She and his other character are always ready to help other who are in need and never step back from their ethical responsibility.

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