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

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By

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Shankar Rimal has completed his thesis entitled “Representation of Holocaust History in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*” under my supervision. He carried out his research October, 2015 to February, 2016 I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled “Representation of Holocaust History in Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Shankar Rimal has been approved by the undersigned member of the Research Committee.

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### Abstract

This present research focuses on the issues of representation of Holocaust History in order to show the tale Holocaust setting, period of Second World War and narrativization of holocaust story in Zusak's *The Book Thief*. Zusak continues to offer more historical explanations through the serious tone of Death. The irony of the character of Death being serious is prominent throughout the novel, especially when this is contrasted with the cruel realities of the war-torn world. Death is a narrator who narrates the story of Liesel's especially in the setting of Second World War. Main protagonist Liesel who is victimized from Nazis, she loses her relatives in the Second World War. In books such as Zusak's *The Book Thief*, stories unfold about courageous child protagonists who rise above the terror and torture of the Nazi regime in order to protect the ones they love and the religion, culture, and society for which they stand. The message of hope and defiance is an honorable one, and yet it raises the question of whether or not such a message is appropriate. Drawing upon the notion of Foucault and Louis Montrose, this research proves *The Book Thief* represents holocaust history.

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## **I. Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* as Historical Fiction**

This research explores the issue of representation of Holocaust history in Marcus Zusak's *The Book Thief*. The novel is a historical fiction in terms of its setting, events, war history, problem and characters. The fiction begins with setting of May 1933. Liesel, Death, Hans Hubermann, Max and Isa Hermann as the representative characters resemble holocaust history. It revolves around the people of Germany who while living were forced pathetic life in Germany because of unbearable condition in the time of the Second World War. In this time people were suffering from physical destruction as well as mental harm. The biggest part of this book is about Liesel's interest in book, and one portion of the book is dedicated to a book burning hosted by the Nazis. Liesel attends this event and has to be happy about the loss of Jewish books. Taking place on May 10, 1933, this picture clearly depicts the massive amount of people that turns up to support Hitler and the towering pile of books that were being burned because of religious, cultural or political opinion that opposes those of the Nazis. Liesel takes part in many Nazi activities such as the Hitler youth. The Hitler youth was mandatory for children over the age of ten. When Liesel turns ten, she is admitted to the Hitler youth, and this starts feeling anger towards the Nazis, yet she is surrounded by their propaganda, guards and rules in a German town. It is deep rooted in historical atmosphere of the Second World War.

The novel produces the young characters Liesel so as to fit her in certain historical time period of Holocaust. The narrator of the novel, Death tells the story of Liesel who suffered from holocaust and was traumatized from world war period. Some characters of this novel are representatives of new generation, whereas other some characters are representatives of the old. All characters are common individuals who are suppressed from Holocaust activities directly or indirectly and they accept

certain ideological assumption that at least existed or could have lived in the historical setting of Second World War. The protagonist of the book, Liesel is also its moral center. Having lost her father because of his Communist sympathies, and soon thereafter her brother and mother, she understands the pain of loss, and these experiences inform her actions and attitudes towards other characters. When she first comes to live with her foster family, the Hubermanns, Liesel has a hard time trusting or allowing her to be vulnerable and is characterized more by defensiveness than compassion. But as her foster family and new friends treat her with kindness and gentleness, she opens herself to the pain of others, while learning to express and transform her own pain.

*The Book Thief* takes place in the small, and fictional, town of Molching, just outside of non-fictional Munich, Germany. Molching is on the way to the concentration camp Dachau. Himmel Street, where the Hubermanns and Steiners live, is where much of the action takes place. Other important action takes place on Munich Street, the main street in town. It is on Munich Street that Rudy is beaten by Franz Deutscher, the sadistic Hitler Youth leader, and it is on Munich Street that Liesel and Max are reunited when he is being made to march to Dachau. This is a clue that the city of Munich is very important to the setting of the story.

The novel dramatizes the pathetic situation of holocaust history. In January of 1939, Liesel comes to live with the Hubermanns on Himmel Street. The story traces her life over the next four years, up to the night Himmel Street is bombed and everyone she loves dies in their sleep. 1945 brings the end of Hitler, the end of the war, and the reunion of Max and Liesel. The epilogue takes us far into Liesel's future, to the time and place of her death in Sydney, Australia. Thus this research explores the issues of holocaust history on the basis of Marcus's *The Book Thief*.



The major objective of the thesis is to explore the holocaust history. The central issue of the research is how the society suffered from Nazis during the holocaust period in Germany and then how the German society developed culturally, materially and economically. Through the stories of the pathetic characters the novelist Markus Zusak explores the effects of the Second World War that makes the life of national groups with the motto of eliminating the group itself. The characters in the novel *The Book Thief* are suffering from the violence which repeats the mental harm due to the Second World War led by Hitler. The more they try to move away from violence, the more their psychology is affected by legacy of the World War Second, decay and destruction. It deals with how those German people hope to live freely and decently when they are haunted by the war violence. It investigates why those German people are compelled to encounter with such World War, and how their life is pathetic because of such unbearable condition by war. The answer of such questions will be fathomed out by this research. Since the year of publication in 2005, Zusak's *The Book Thief* has been analyzed by a number of critics.

Markus Zusak was born in Sydney, Australia, on June 23, 1975. He grew up listening to his parents' stories of their childhood in Vienna and Munich during The Second World War. One story his mother often told was about watching a group of Jews being marched down the street on their way to the concentration camp in Dachau. An old man was struggling to keep up with the rest of the group. When a boy ran up to the man and offered him a piece of bread, the man fell to his knees, crying and kissing the boy's ankles. Then German officers took the bread from the man and whipped the boy. This scene became the basis for *The Book Thief*. In the book, it is the main character's foster father who offers the old man the bread and is whipped by

the officer. Zusak says that the story symbolizes for him everything that is beautiful and everything that is horrible about humanity.

In an interview with *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Zusak explains his motivations for writing a sympathetic portrait of the Jews during the World War II, saying, “We have these images of the straight-marching lines of boys and the ‘Heil Hitlers’”(3) This idea that everyone in Germany was in it together. But there still were rebellious children and people who did not follow the rules and people who hid Jews and other people in their houses. So there's another side to Nazi Germany.” Like Liesel’s foster father Hans Hubermann, Zusak’s father was a house painter, and the writer originally thought to would be a painter as well. But after accompanying his father in jobs, he realizes painting bored him. As a teen, he loved the novels *What’s Eating Gilbert Grape* by Peter Hedges, *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway, and *The Outsiders* by Albert Camus?and *Rumble Fish* by S.E. Hinton, and he began writing fiction at the age of sixteen. After many years of rejections from publishers, he published his first young-adult novel, *The Underdog*, in 1999. The sequels *Fighting Ruben Wolfe* and *When Dogs Cry* followed. In 2002 Zusak published *The Messenger*, which won the Prinz Honor for young adult literature. Initially, Zusak imagined *The Book Thief* as a 100 page novella, with Death as a boastful, remorseless narrator. But after writing more than half the book, Zusak realized he needed his narrator to be more sympathetic, and decided to make Death as afraid of human beings as they are above him. *The Book Thief* was published in 2005 and has been translated into 30 languages, as well as being a best-seller in many countries.

*The Book Thief* was first published in Australia in 2005 and in the US in 2006. It's Australian author Markus Zusak’s fifth novel, and it emerged on the scene when Zusak was only thirty years old. Zusak took over three years to complete the piece

and even went to Munich, Germany to research some of the finer points. He tackles all sorts of dicey issues concerning one of the most difficult topics over the Holocaust. Markus Zusak's choice to portray the excitement and influence of books in the context of the Holocaust highlights just how powerful they are. When the Nazis burned books by Jewish authors, they were in essence burning the identity of the Jewish people. It was a terrible, frightening and grim period of human history. But Zusak shines a little light into that horror with the story of Liesel the books that the female protagonist steals represents a glimmer of hope for her, for the Jewish community, and for the post-Holocaust world.

*The Book Thief* tells the story of Liesel, a little girl who is taken to a new home because her mother cannot afford to take care of her. The story is told by Death, who becomes a character you come to respect and even feel sorry for by the end. The narration puts an odd perspective on the story. Much of what Death says is very philosophical, and even beautiful. The novel is set in Nazi Germany, at the start of the World War II. On the journey to her new home, Liesel's younger brother dies and she steals her first book: *The Gravedigger's Handbook*. When she arrives at her new home, she suddenly has a new mama and papa. Haunted every night by nightmares of her brother's death, Liesel and her Papa set themselves the challenge of reading the book, Liesel's last link to her brother. In reflection, *The Book Thief* leaves behind a sense of guilt, in some ways. Because it is the British bombs that are falling in Germany, the Britishers who kill so many in the story and leave the reader's cheeks soaked in tears.

Different critics have analyzed the novel from the multiple perspectives which preserves the universal importance of the novel. Regarding the nature of protagonist and her life, John Boyne claims:

*The Book Thief* with an image in mind, he grew up in Australia listening to his German parents' stories about their childhood, including several dramatic stories about their experience of the war in Germany. Zusak's childhood gave him the German perspective of the Holocaust that he presents in this book. As he describes in the Reader's Guide" to *The Book Thief*, he felt that the sympathetic German perspective was not often represented in Holocaust literature; he wanted to show the viewpoint of people who were not in agreement with Nazi ideology and who actually tried to do something to help those who were being murdered. (10)

*The Book Thief* is about an illiterate nine-year-old girl named Liesel whose communist mother seeks to protect Liesel by sending her to live in a German village. Her foster parents are Hans, a kind and playful house painter played by Geoffrey Rush, and Rosa, a mean, brusque laundress played by Emily Watson. With Liesel heartbroken over her absent mother and the death of her younger brother, Hans consoles her by teaching her to read from a book she had stolen. Jean Webb claims:

*The Book Thief* gives those who are suppressed and powerless a way to stand for themselves and against the culture of Nazi Germany.

Literacy's power to enable is exemplified by the way it affects Liesel's perspective on place, her coping with her emotional trauma, and defying Nazi culture during her short years in Molching. Lastly, literacy empowers Liesel to share her narratives, giving her a voice to witness against the culture of Nazi Germany. Thus, literacy transforms Liesel to become a rhetorical Jew as it gives her a way to stand up for

herself when she is powerless and suppressed, especially when we see her circumstances in parallel with Max's circumstances. (13)

The major character of the novel, Liesel Meminger is nine years old. She is traumatized by the death of her mother and her parents have been taken away to concentration camp. She lives with the foster family in Himmel Street.

Because of the violence, she steals books and read to get solace, she also reads book for others when the bomb began to fall on Himmel Street. She is taught to read by her foster father Hans Huberman. Don Gallo writes:

The character of Death yes, Death personified tells the touching story of Liesel Meminger, a young girl living with a poor foster family in a small town outside Munich, Germany , during Hitler reign . Liesel finds comfort in reading books she's stolen –from a pile being burned by the Nazi , from a snowdrift, from the mayor's wife's library –as she develops a close relationship with a Jewish man that her family is hiding in the basement . From her perspective we see she reactions of townspeople when captured Jews are marched through town, when Allied bombs rain own on their innocent village , when death comes to young and old alike. We stand silently in the basement as innocent young girl's fear of the Jew slowly turns to understanding, appreciation, and pure love. (121)

The major character of the novel is Liesel Meminger who is a school girl. The novel is set in Germany during the Second World War. Liesel Meminger lost her parents and her dear brother during the time of war. After she is taken to her foster family where she grapples to live, when she comes to know the power of words, she begins

to steal book as much as she can. At first she could not read, but her foster father helps her to read and write.

This research is based on new historicist methodology in order to excavate representation of Holocaust history in Zusak's *The Book Thief*. The nomenclature 'new historicism' came in western academia during the early 1980s, came against formalism and new criticism's focus on the text as an autonomous entity. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, a book by Stephen Greenblatt is regarded as the early text for the development of new historicist reading of the text. New historicist reading often prioritizes parallel reading of literary or non-literary text. Moreover, it denaturalizes the hierarchy that privileges either literary text over the non-literary text as in the non-literary text or new criticism like history over literary text as in biographical-historical criticism.

Louis Montrose and Michel Foucault are some of the prominent new historicists. For new historicism, every literary text has its own situation, background within discourse, institution, social norms, values, characterization, conflicts, and social practices that become the document culture of particular time and space. In this regard, Louis Montrose takes new historicism as "a shift from an essential or immanent to a historical, contextual, and conjectural model of signification and a general suspicion of closed system, totalities and universals"(393).

New historicism as a theoretical approach to literary texts negates both the autonomy of individual genius, talent of author and the autonomy of the texts. It assumes literature is the protection of the foregrounding techniques. It contains politico-cultural, social and economic background. So, these aspects are inseparable while analyzing historical texts and author himself/herself remains in the grip of historical time period while producing the texts. Therefore, history is included in

literature. Hence, literature is not only the chronological series of historical elements rather it actively exploits history through its participation in discursive practices. In this perspective, Montrose argues, "The new historical criticism could claim to be in refusing unexamined distinction between "contexts" in resisting a tendency to posit and privilege autonomous individual-whether an author or a work to be set against a social or literary background"( 398).

By formulating the term " Historicity of the text (means to suggest the historical specificity, the social and material embedding of all modes of writing-including not only the text that critics study but also the texts in which we study them. Thus I also mean to suggest the historical, social and material embedding of all modes of reading. By the textuality of histories, I also mean to suggest, in the first place, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past. . . In the second place, those victorious traces of material and ideological struggle are themselves subject to subsequent mediations when they are construed as the "documents" on which those who profess the humanities ground their own descriptive and interpretive texts (410)

Here, 'textuality of history,' for Montrose, is that no one has completed and authentic histories of past in the textual forms because one cannot become totally familiar to historical events and circumstances. Therefore, it happens to be fictional. In this regard, one piles up some reminiscences through artistic use of creative imagination. In similar way, 'historicity of texts' defines historical issue mentioned in the texts which notice similar type of action or events, and material surrounding with socio-cultural, political, economic atmosphere. Such event helps one locate the texts on the basis of its eruption. In this view, we give emphasis on the text rather than

foregrounding materials which rejects multiple voices of the people. Hence, new historicist reading of texts attempts to champion the marginal, subdued or out-casted figures, opinions, and the like. In this regard, a literary text includes historical context not as a factual, independent series of events that exists apart from the reader.

New historicism and cultural criticism come in similar line for theoretical ground.

Both of them emphasize on the historical contexts, politico-social-cultural background for eruption of the texts. Cultural criticism remains a part of new historicism. These theories directly attack structuralism and new critical assumption in terms of timelessness, objectivity, autonomous verbal entity, and the like. H. Aram Veerer writes in preface of *The New Historicism Reader* that new historicism really asserts:

That every expressive act is embedded in network of material practices; prey to the practices it expresses; that literary and non-literary " texts" , circulate unalterable human nature, and that a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participate in economy they describe. (2)

Veerer as a new historicist argues that new historicist reading champions expressing, critiquing and disseminating the embedded religion, culture, society and political, materials on the ground of the people who change the unchangeable alter the unalterable.

Michel Foucault was equally a philosopher, a psychologist and a historian.

The power problem is central to his thinking regarding the relations between society, individuals, groups and institutions. He investigated this problem from a critical and historicist viewpoint in his notion of discourse power and truth, and also in many articles, studies and interviews. The fundamental idea emerging from all these works is that the privileged place to observe the power in action is the relation between the



individual and the society, especially its institutions. Consequently, Foucault studies in what he calls “the analysis of power” how various institutions exert their power on groups and individuals, and how the latter affirm their own identity and resistance to the effects of power.

Moreover, Foucault has contributed to the idea of discourse and power.

Foucauldian concept of discourse has equal position to generate the ideas of power and knowledge. Discourse is regarded as discipline that came to prominence during the late 1960s. By the term "discourse" means "discursive formation" that denotes large heterogeneous discursive entities. Discourse helps for eruption of power and power creates knowledge that becomes truth at last through representation. Truth also is vulnerable to change after certain time period because the same case repeats and established truth can be replaced by new discourse. Therefore, discourse is always moved ahead through the process of formation, correlation and transformation.

Similarly, for Foucault discourses are everywhere in society. Discourses are inherent even in social, political, cultural and even economic power operates through discourse. Here, discourse is interconnected with power, knowledge and truth. So, discourse is inseparable from power because discourse is vital and ordering force that governs every social and political institutions.

'Will to Power' is a prominent concept in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. The will to power describes what Nietzsche may have believed to be the main driving force in humans namely, achievement, ambition, and the striving to reach the highest possible position in life. These are all manifestations of the will to power. However, the concept was never systematically defined in Nietzsche's work, leaving its interpretation open to debate. In contemporary Nietzschean scholarship, some interpreters have emphasized the will to power as a psychological principle

because Nietzsche applies it most frequently to human behavior. However, in Nietzsche's unpublished notes Nietzsche sometimes seemed to view the will to power as a more general force underlying all reality, not just human behavior thus making it more directly analogous to Schopenhauer's will to live. Nevertheless, in relation to the entire body of Nietzsche's published works, many scholars have insisted that Nietzsche's principle of the will to power is less metaphysical and more pragmatic than Schopenhauer's will to live: while Schopenhauer thought the will to live was what was most real in the universe, Nietzsche can be understood as claiming only that the will to power is a particularly useful principle for his purposes.

New historicist reading of the text *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak helps to study Holocaust history. It attempts to dig out the suppressed voices of marginal groups especially serfs' condition locating them during the Second World War period. Through the theoretical concept of new historicism like truth, power relation, discourse, issue of culture, gender problems, hierarchic dimension and so on, it reads Zusak's portraiture of Holocaust survivors and Nazis side in particular and the Second World war.

## **II. Representation of Holocaust History in Zusak's *The Book Thief***

Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* as a historical fiction represents Holocaust and socio-political issues of 1939 and 1942 in relation to the period of Second World War. Zusak utilizes the forms of the fairy tale, the fable, and a very unique narrator to represent the Holocaust in narrative. The novel is narrated by Death, and tells the story of Liesel, a young German girl growing up during the WWII. Zusak has chosen the Death as the narrator for *The Book Thief*, conceivably giving him the ability to represent every single horror of the Holocaust. The novel represents the theme of post- Holocaust memory, forced imprisonment and camps, victimization and liberation.

*The Book Thief* also with the Second World War and the Holocaust. It is told from the perspective of Death, narrated by him and focused on a German girl of nine when the book starts. Zusak, by offering the German perspective, is upsetting the binary of Germans against the Jews and that is present in other Second World War or Holocaust novels. He also focuses how on non-Jewish Germans drop light on the hunger and joblessness caused by the war, the manipulation of the community by the party, and feelings of hopelessness, guilt, and depression that plagued the society. As such, it is a novel that considers the equalizing effects of violence felt on both sides of the war as well as it represents the characters as Holocaust survivors.

Moreover, Zusak's novel is unique where the character Death narrates the novel. Death is omniscient and especially in this context omnipotent. The character is witty, irreverent, and humorous, an interesting way to approach such a serious topic and it serves to break down some of the barriers that have arisen in terms of explaining and discussing the Holocaust. Additionally, Death is directed even obvious about the approach with which it will tell the story. In the opening lines of the novel

Death admits: "I am in all truthfulness attempting to be cheerful about this whole topic" (3). This sentence is particularly interesting because it emphasizes that there is an inherent difficulty in how to present the tragedy of the Holocaust and then it turns that difficulty on its head by presenting the story in a unique way. Zusak does not shy away from the difficulty of the topic at hand, nor does he glorify it by making it sacred and unmentionable. Instead, he attacks the topic through humor, at times touching, at times sarcastic, but always honest and forthright. By weaving this type of form, structures and characters, Zusak represents the novel as a holocaust history.

Simply Holocaust history is known when Adolf Hitler's rise to power in the 1930s through the end of Second World War in 1945. Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, and the Nazi Party quickly rose to be the dominant force in the German government. Hitler created a government-controlled Propaganda Ministry to control the national media networks to help with his cementing of power. The ministry created films such as *Triumph of the Will*, as well as news publications, posters, radio broadcasts, children's literature, and many other types of propaganda to bring Hitler's message to his people. This was a great tool that served the Nazis well throughout the 1930s and continuing through the first years of World War II, but when the tide of battle turned against Germany, propaganda lost a great deal of its effectiveness. However, Hitler and the Nazis continued to support and finance propaganda in the belief that it still was one of their greatest weapons.

When the World War II began on 1 September 1939, the Pro-Mi's charge was to maintain public confidence and to increase support for the war effort. Goebbels and his ministry were initially very successful at their mission, focusing intensely negative propaganda against the Allies and promising victory to the German people. The German military defeated every major power it faced between 1939 and 1940, and

even though Great Britain and Russia maintained their resistance through 1941 and 1942, Germany clearly still had the upper hand. However, as the Russians counterattacked in the East and the Americans joined the British in the West in 1942, the tide began to turn and with that, propaganda gradually began to lose its effectiveness. As the Second World War officially began in 1939, the beginnings of the Holocaust followed in 1941. The Holocaust was an ambition, instigated by Hitler and the Nazi Party, to clean Germany of Jews, primarily, and to perfect an Aryan race of peoples. Hitler believed that Aryans were genetically superior and he legalized the persecution of Jews, Gypsies, Poles, communists, and the mentally and physically disabled in his pursuit of the superior race:

Once in a while a man or woman no, they were not men and women; they were Jews would find Liesel's face among the crowd. They would meet her with their defeat, and the book thief could do nothing but watch them back in a long, incurable moment before they were gone again. She could only hope they could read the depth of sorrow in her face, to recognize that it was true, and not fleeting. I have one of you in my basement! she wanted to say. We built a snowman together! I gave him thirteen presents when he was sick! (265).

In this regard, *The Book Thief* is set in Nazi Germany, at the start of World War II.

The novel opens in January of 1939; Hitler had been self-declared "führer," or leader, of Germany for more than four years. The Nuremberg Laws, implemented in 1935, declared anyone with Jewish blood non-Aryan, and removed their civil rights.

Communists, Socialists, and anyone else were considered enemies of the Nazi Party who were arrested and sent to labor camps in Dachau. In *The Book Thief*, the biological parents of the main character, Liesel are Communists. Germans were

encouraged to boycott Jewish businesses and held book burnings to destroy texts considered non-patriotic. Like Liesel and her friend Rudy, sixty percent of German youths were members the youth group, Hitler Youth.

This research proves *The Book of Thief* as historical holocaust fiction because the place and time setting of the novel indicates invasion during the Second World War. In June 1941 Germany invaded Russia. The invasion lasted the remainder of the war, and resulted in to more than 30 million deaths due to combat, starvation, exposure, and disease. Several of the characters in *The Book Thief* are sent to the Eastern Front, including Hans and Rosa Hubermann's son, Hansi, and Frau Holtzapfel's sons, Michael and Robert. The war would not end in Europe until 1944. Liesel's story in *The Book Thief* ends in October of 1943, with the Allied bombing of Munich and Stuttgart and the fictional town of Molching, where the book is set. Zusak's mother, who, like Liesel, grew up a foster child, described to her son watching Munich burn after being bombed.

This research is based on new historicist methodology in order to excavate social, political, cultural, aspects of the Holocaust history. The nomenclature 'new historicism' came in western academia during the early 1980s, came against formalism and new criticism's focus on the text as an autonomous entity. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (1980) book by Stephen Greenblatt is regarded as manuscript for the development of new historicist reading of the text. New historical reading often prioritizes parallel reading or literary or non-literary text. Moreover, it denaturalizes the hierarchy that privileges either literary text over the non-literary text as in the non-literary text or new criticism like history over literary text as in biographical-historical criticism

Stephen Greenblatt, H. Aram Veerer, Louis Montrose, and Michel Foucault are some of the prominent new historicists. For new historicism, every literary text has its own situation, background within discourse, institution, social norms, values, characterization, conflicts, and social practices that become the document culture of particular time and space. In this regard, Louis Montrose asserts new historicism as "a shift from an essential or immanent to a historical, contextual, and conjectural model of signification and a general suspicion of closed system, totalities and universals".(393) Moreover, new historicists seek to dig out the relationship between texts and their socio-historical and cultural contexts. For them, texts not only document the social forces but inform and constitute history and society. It also features in the social processes which form both individual identity and the socio-historical situation. Greenblatt writes:

The whole passage has the resonance of an allegory of the fall of man: we were whole, agile, integrated; we were individual subjects but not individuals, we had no psychology distinct from the shared life of the society; politics and poetry were one. Then capitalism arose and shattered this luminous . . . (3)

In this extract, Greenblatt focuses on the relationship between text and context, and art and society. For Greenblatt, poem should be interpreted as poetry where artistic form along with context that remain as the inherent characteristics. For him, all human beings are individual subjects but not individuals. That is to say, each person is different to each other but their behavior, the way of thinking represent certain group, society in which they belong to. We have psychology which is not distinct from our society. He means to say that individual is the part of society because he is the socio-cultural construct.

In *The Book Thief*, author Markus Zusak depicts the events of life in Europe during the World War II through the lens of his parents' experiences covered with his own imagination. His mother, Lisa grew up in Germany while his father, Helmut, was raised in Austria. In an interview with Random House Kids, Zusak explains that he was inspired to write this novel because of hearing stories of bombings. Zusak was particularly moved by one of his mother's stories in which she remembered hearing a noise in the street that reminded her of cattle stampeding through the fields. When she looked out of her window, she realized that the noise was coming from people being herded down the road to the concentration camps.

New historicists recognize the idea that a work of art should not be judged in terms of its formal structures isolating it from context. So, context plays vital role to understand various aspects of that society. New historicist reading helps one understand different discourses, truths, power relation, conflict and many other issues that exist in the text. New historicists believe that after reading a text, one can find the use and dispersion of power, marginalization or subjugation of social classes within the creations. New historicists assert that examination of literature is based upon one's cultural background where environment also affects.

Foucauldian notion of discourse goes against the traditional notion of linguistic discourse believing in the discourse as the socio political statements constructed by the certain power location operating in the network of truth, power and representation. Discourse determines the functioning of the society constructing the truth through the creation of power. A certain group of a society goes to the power in its evolution and creates the socio-political statements as truth that is supposed to be transhistorical by the discourse makes but in reality the discourse becomes the constructed truth that rules society till the time when the individuals will not find



defect. Discourse in a society is created with the help of object, and concept and theory. First of all the object is focused, concept is formulated and finally the theory is made which becomes discourse. In the creation of discourse, the powerful location of society plays an important role because of which the supports of discourse remain in centre and the opposed are silenced, making them reside in the society that rule the common individuals hegemonically or the discourse created in the society rules the common individuals taking their consent to be ruled.

Zusak graphically depicts the horror of the showers and the complete numbers of the concentration camp victims. He does not shy away from the scope of the crimes committed in favor of writing a more romantic or acceptable novel for school students. Because of the unexpected transitions between complete seriousness and casual joking, the horrific events described have an even more loud and devastating impact on readers. In order to explain Hitler's power over his willing followers, Zusak uses the metaphors of a boxing match, a word shaker, and thievery. Zusak uses the imagery of a boxing match to symbolize the plight of the Jews and the goals of their aggressor, Hitler. He uses the language of the ring to illustrate Hitler's evil propaganda to downtrodden German people. In his daydreams, Max imagines fighting the Fuhrer. However Fuhrer strikes him and knocks:

When a Jew shows up at your place of residence in the early hours of morning, in the very birthplace of Nazism, you're likely to experience extreme levels of discomfort. Anxiety, disbelief, paranoia, each plays its part, and each leads to a sneaking suspicion that a less than heavenly consequence awaits. The fear is shiny. Ruthless in the eye, Every day when they worked together, he would tell Liesel his stories. There was the Great War and how his miserable handwriting helped

save his life, and the day he met Mama. He said that she was beautiful once, and actually very quiet-spoken. “Hard to believe, I know, but absolutely true.” Each day, there was a story, and Liesel forgave him if he told the same one more than once.(34)

The main protagonist Liesel is nine years old, almost ten, at the start of the novel. She is about fifteen when the bombs destroy her home and kill her loved ones. The novel ends when she is an old woman and Death comes to collect her soul. Liesel is the book thief. At the start of her story, Liesel is without words and cannot read. She understands that there is great power in words, though, and she hungers for them. She reads with her Papa and visits Frau Hermann in her library, one of the greatest places Liesel has ever seen. She also reads to those around her in the basement when there are air raids. Books become a source of comfort for herself and for those around her. She loves how words can fill her up, but then she also realizes that words can be ugly things, especially in the way Hitler can use words to encourage the German people to carry out horrific acts of violence and cause so much suffering. She realizes, too, that these same words are responsible for taking her mother and her brother away, and for Max's having to hide in the basement. Sometimes, she hates words and wishes she could be without them, but she goes on to write her own story, hoping that she can find the right words to tell her tale.

Death is the narrator. He is fascinated by humans and the colors of the world, but he struggles throughout the novel to decipher how humans are capable of so much ugliness and so much beauty. He takes an interest in Liesel and her story, and he believes that Liesel's story is one of a handful of beautiful stories he possesses. Throughout the novel, Death often provides humorous, informative, or dark asides. He also likes to skip around in the story's timeline, revealing events to come and then

apologizing for giving parts of the story away. He steers the story with a heavy hand. While his commentary often focuses on his perception of humans, he also works to correct humans' perception of him, revealing that he does have a heart, that he does not carry a scythe, and that he, in fact, appears quite human

The narrator of the novel *Death* approaches the historical events that are woven into the plot in a jocular way. Throughout the novel, when Zusak brings up certain topics, the character of Death approaches the subjects in a joking or simplistic manner. For example, when Death references the concentration camps, it comments that "Germans loved to burn things" or when Death discusses Hitler's birthday, it says "there would be fire" and "a day full of burning and cheering" (84). Death describes the Nazis saying "people may tell you that Nazi Germany was built on anti-Semitism, a somewhat overzealous leader, and a nation of hate-fed bigots, but it would all have come to nothing had the Germans not loved one particular activity: to burn" (Zusak 84).

New historicism denaturalizes the impermanence of literary criticism. Recent literary criticism is directly or indirectly affected that includes the beliefs and assumptions of our present time. In the same manner, literature deals with society or it is reflected by its own socio-economic and politico-cultural contexts. New Historicists claim that as time changes our understanding of literature also changes. However, historical context remains the same in silent form there in the text. M. H. Abrams writes, "In the place of dealing with a text in isolation from its historical context, new historicists attend primary to the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meaning, its effects, and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations"(190).

He argues that historical context cannot remain in isolation. Through the contextual reading, meanings and effects of text come to the fore that ultimately results into critical interpretation. For him, concept of new historicism dominated academia and taken as the important tool in the 1980s. As a literary theory, it came against the concept of new criticism that focused on self-sufficient verbal entity. New critical reading of the text prioritized figurative use of language like simile, metaphors, ambiguity, irony, and the like. Unlike new criticism, new historicist analysis takes context on the top of other. Therefore, it undertakes to dig out socio-cultural context with respect to the context of text itself. New historicism argues that literature cannot be understood by separating from its contexts. Hence, context is the soul for new historicist to generate the meaning.

Zusak continues to offer more historical explanations through the serious tone of Death. The irony of the character of Death being serious is prominent throughout the novel, especially when this is contrasted with the cruel realities of the war-torn world. Death mentions the practice of saying 'Heil Hitler' and muses: "It actually makes me wonder if anyone ever lost an eye or injured a hand or wrist with all of that. "You'd only need to be facing the wrong way at the wrong time or stand marginally too close to another person" (111), Zusak manages to tear away.

Zusak depicts the reality of effectiveness of Nazi. Life in Molching is increasingly difficult for Hans and Rosa as they are not members of the Nazi party. Hans Hubermann does not agree with some of their policies and as the war progresses this dissention will cost him heavily. Work will become harder to find and his family will be in more danger. To add to this trouble, Hans and Rosa take in a Jewish man, Max Vandenburg, and for years they hide him in their basement. During World War I Max's father had saved Hans' life at cost of his own and Hans feels indebted and

obligated to help Max. Though he feels this way, there is nothing begrudging about his help and in this family the German versus Jew division that is prevalent in much of Molching, is suspended. The presence of Nazi soldiers in the town has manifested itself in several ways, chiefly in an increase in anti-Semitism. It is illegal to help or be found sympathetic to a Jew. This sentiment or anti-Semitism is expressed publicly and politically and is expected of the citizens of Molching.

Zusak chooses to represent the character of everyday German people. They are non-sympathizing, but need to fly the party flag from time to time in order to avoid trouble. They are very poor and work is hard to come by for everyone, but it is even harder if you are not a member of the party. They stay under the radar and they even hide Max Vandenburg, a Jew. In a tangible way Zusak is humanizing the average German and positing that there is more to the German of the World War II than just the Nazi that is often presented in opposition to the Jewish character. In Max's case the reason for the loss of his mother was clear. His mother was a Jewish woman in a Germany occupied by anti-Semitic Nazi soldiers and government. Liesel's case is not so clear. We know as readers that Liesel's mother was in serious trouble; she was voluntarily giving up her two children for adoption. We know nothing of Liesel and Werner's father and nothing else about their family or life before life on Himmel Street becomes Liesel's reality. There is, though, a small instance of bullying towards Liesel in which a reference to her biological mother being a communist is made. While this is not explicitly confirmed it is an extremely logical answer to the mystery of why Liesel's mother was giving up Liesel and Werner. It would explain the necessity of their exit from her life and quite possibly the non-existence of their biological father. Communists, regardless of ethnicity, were persecuted in much the same way as the Jews in Germany during this time.

As Liesel continues to read in Ilsa's library, she finds that many of the books have a name inside them that she does not recognize. She asks about it and Ilsa reveals that many of the books had belonged to her son, who has since died. Liesel, even though she has now lived in Molching a few years, never knew that the burgermeister had a son. With the revelation of the boy's death the Nazi German is further humanized. The reader is allowed to see that everyone is affected by the war and that no one, regardless of status or affiliation, is untouched. This equalizing nature is also alluded to with the voice of Death as the narrator. Death talks about everyone and visits everyone indiscriminately.

Shivering, she climbed from the mattress. Stupid with fear, she walked through the hallway to Max. After many minutes at his side, when everything slowed, she attempted to interpret the dream. Was it a premonition of Max's death? Or was it merely a reaction to the afternoon conversation in the kitchen? Had Max now replaced her 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, if it was good enough for Werner, her brother, it was good enough for this Jew.(226)

The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. "Holocaust" is a word of Greek origin meaning "sacrifice by fire." The Nazis, who came to power in Germany in January 1933, believed that Germans were "racially superior" and that the Jews, deemed "inferior," were an alien threat to the so called German racial community. As Nazi tyranny spread across Europe, the Germans and their collaborators persecuted and murdered millions of other people. Between two

and three million Soviet prisoners of war were murdered or died of starvation, disease, neglect, or maltreatment. The Germans targeted the non-Jewish Polish intelligentsia for killing, and deported millions of Polish and Soviet civilians for forced labor in Germany or in occupied Poland, where these individuals worked and often died under deplorable conditions. To gain an understanding of the Holocaust, it is important to look not only at the acts of Perpetrators, but also at the experiences of victims and survivors. Yet, it is impossible to truly understand the experiences of victims and survivors of the Holocaust.

From 1941 until the end of the war in 1945 an estimated 6 million Jews were systematically killed. Some of the killings took place in towns, but the majority of them happened in concentration camps. Concentration camps were labor camps where Jews performed hard labor, and were clothed and fed just enough to stay alive. Conditions being so poor, many died from starvation or fatigue, from disease due to subpar sanitation, and from exhaustion. In many of these camps, scattered across Germany and Austria, the work that the prisoners were doing was an effort to support the German war cause. Some camps, most significantly Auschwitz, were not labor camps, but death camps that streamlined the execution of almost all those sent there

Though one of the strongest feelings inspired by the Nazi party was anti-Semitism, an estimated 5 million non-Jewish peoples were also killed in concentration camps during the Holocaust, bringing the suspected total to 11 million dead. Among those mentioned earlier, political prisoners were sent to concentration camps and highlighted in *The Book Thief* as well as in an interview with former Hitler Youth member Zusak grew up in occupied Austria and, like Liesel in the novel, participated in conscripted Hitler Youth activities on the weekends. Max Vandenburg is the Jewish man who hides in the Hubermanns' basement. His father saved Hans's life

during the World War I, and later Hans tries to save Max's life, which puts the Hubermanns' lives in great jeopardy. In many ways, Max and Liesel are similar. They both have nightmares about their pasts, and they both see Hans Hubermann and his accordion as a source of safety. They also share a history of fist-fighting and a respect for words. Max writes books for Liesel about all that she has done for him and about how her words and her tears are able to save him and give him strength. Max's book, *The Word Shaker*, describes how Liesel's words give him strength and have the ability to cut down forests of hate. He boxes the *Führer* in the basement and is constantly aware of how the *Führer* manipulates the crowd with his words, turning the entire audience on Max in his daydreams as well as in reality. He and Liesel become great friends during their time together.

History is not the manuscript of chronological events of the facts. Certain historical, social and cultural practices remain as the background for any literary text. In this respect, literature is simply a means to resemble social reality in which it has been set up. New historicists assert that literature carries the seeds that were embedded in context. These aspects always remains with constant interaction and interchange with other discourses inside the network of institutions, beliefs, and socio-cultural power relation. These components help to conclude that a text includes history where contextual elements liberate multiple meanings in accordance with text. In this line of argument, M.H. Abrams discusses about the role of new historicist while producing and analyzing literary text. Abrams argues:

New historicist acknowledges that they themselves, like all authors are subjective that have been shaped and informed by the circumstances and discourses specific to their era, hence that their own critical writing in great part construct, rather than discover readymade, the textual



meanings they describe-and-rupture the literary and cultural histories they narrate.(194)

Abrams argues that all authors of any literary and non-literary texts bound up with different social practices and other social elements. So, the text is directly or indirectly governed by socio-cultural practice. The author cannot neglect these elements because he himself is the member of the same society. He writes what he finds in the society. In Abrams's understanding, new historicists also assert that when author creates something, subjectivity of the author prevails in the text but such creation is shaped by the circumstances and discourse specific to the particular era. Therefore, text is the representation of particular society and culture as such.

After lodging his form at the Nazi headquarters on Munich Street, he witnessed four men throw several bricks into a clothing store named Kleinmann's. It was one of the few Jewish shops that were still in operation in Molching. Inside, a small man was stuttering about, crushing the broken glass beneath his feet as he cleaned up. A star the color of mustard was smeared to the door.(122)

The book, however, does not only provide the German perspective but also explores the effects of the war on a Jewish person, in the character of Max Vandenburg. Throughout the novel there are bombings in and around Molching. There are houses designated as shelters on each street because of the size and structure of their basements. Towards the end of the novel, the sirens go off, alerting the town of a bombing raid. Everyone goes to his or her respective shelters, except Liesel. Liesel has been in her own basement, reading, and fallen asleep. She does not hear the sirens. When she wakes up she finds that Himmel Street has been bombed. The house that Hans and Rosa and her closest friends are taking shelter in, is destroyed, along

with most of her own. Liesel lost Hans, Rosa, and her best friend Rudy that day, among many others. This is the third time that Death encounters Liesel; she is in the street crying over Rudy's body, kissing him for the first and last time. Rudy is Liesel's best friend in the novel and her neighbor. They went to school together, played together, and their favorite past time was to have foot races. In these races Rudy would always bet Liesel a kiss that he could beat her. He always won, but she never let him kiss her. Even though she is not Jewish and did not go to a concentration camp, she is left alone at the end of the war. Like her life is destroyed, both literally and metaphorically.

Michel Foucault, prominent thinker of poststructuralism has widespread contribution for the development of new historical methodology. Foucault did not take the direct role for developing new historical reading of the text. However, new historicism exploits many ideas of Foucault such as discourse, representation, truth and power.

Foucault came up with concept of truth, discourse, knowledge, and representation. He critiqued truths and said truths are by-products of discourses which are made through knowledge. Power is the matter of representation. Likewise, through power all types of truths can be made up. Truths, discourse, discourse, networks of power, empower certain institutions that privilege other institutions with certain attributed images. Therefore, for Foucault power is creative.

Foucault questioned the authenticity and validity of official history because it binds information in linear order that excludes the important events. Foucault puts forward his notion on official history. For him, official history left the core concept that was subdued due to politics. Foucault asserts "effective history however, deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute

manifestation"(94). Foucault furthermore claims, "Power is everywhere... Power comes from below. That is there, is no binary and also encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations and serving as a general material" (93) in his first volume of *History of Sexuality*. For Foucault power should not be understood as destructive force rather it has productive or creative nature.

*The Book Thief* shows the society during second world war and people who are suffered from Holocaust. Moreover it shows Jewish point of view: how they suffered, the concentration camps, and the prejudices that Nazis accompanied with them.

However, *The Book Thief* is told from the German perspective, with the story of eight year old Liesel Meminger and her foster family. This story is unique, as it is told through the eyes of Death, who comments on everyone he encounters. Also, the book is frequently interrupted with extra information or drawings. These features make the book much more realistic.

Zusak's point is to aware people on how real the Holocaust was, not only to Jews, but to Germans living in 1942 Germany. The Hubermanns; parents of Liesel and the other families on their street are faced with everyday challenges. All children must join Hitler Youth and wear uniforms. The program teaches the children basically how to salute, how to march, and how to be a 'perfect' citizen in Herr Hitler's mind. Also, many families go out of business because Jewish customers are taken from them. Liesel and her foster parents have to survive on pea soup for months on end. The crisis only gets worse for the Hubermanns when a young man, Max Vandenburg, comes to their doorstep. He's a Jew, and Liesel's family has to hide him in their basement and care for him. Liesel learns something new with every page. She knows depression from losing her brother and mother. She knows fear from the nightmares she gets every night. She knows hunger from starving every day. She slowly learns

how to read, and she starts a growing collection of books. She likes books so much, that she steals them. How else would she get them in a time like Second World War ? Far more mature than your average child, Liesel teaches people years older than her.

*The Book Thief* in several ways, but most strongly in the fact of Max's story of mostly successful hiding. The Hubermanns hide Max and resist the wishes of the Nazi party, and all of the other people, including the German friend who originally hid him, resisted in their way as well. Resistance to the Nazi ideology in the people of Molching is also represented in Liesel and Rudy's game of throwing bread into the groups of Jews forced to march through their town on the way to Dachau. Liesel steals a book from the book burning, as well as showing a quiet resistance in her hatred of the Nazi youth groups and their organization. Hans resists joining the Nazi party as long as he can without negatively affecting his family too much, and shows through his actions, but not his words, that resistance can be present without it being spoken publically. This is certainly a soft resistance, not comparable with the stories representing follower or other resistance groups, but it is probably one that is more representative of more people.

They watched the Jews come down the road like a catalog of colors. That wasn't how the book thief described them, but I can tell you that that's exactly what they were, for many of them would die. They would each greet me like their last true friend, with bones like smoke and their souls trailing behind. When they arrived in full, the noise of their feet throbbed on top of the road. Their eyes were enormous in their starving skulls. And the dirt, the dirt was molded to them. Their legs staggered as they were pushed by soldiers' hands a few wayward

steps of forced running before the slow return to a malnourished walk.

(264)

Much as in any work based on the Holocaust, post-Holocaust memory for generations is represented in the fact of the story's existence. In addition to that, Death has kept Liesel's story with him in order to share with the reader and in order to remind himself that humankind is worth it despite all the ugliness in the world. Death wants to explain to Liesel when they do finally meet, that he is "haunted by humans" (550). These are reflective words from the personified Death, and they display Zusak's thoughts on life after the Holocaust. Whenever Death addresses the reader and says, "Come with me and I'll tell you a story. I'll show you something" (544), Zusak is representing the space of post-Holocaust literature for generations. He sees that there is something worth sharing that needs to be shared in the book thief's story. For Death, what needs to be shared connects back to his last words to Liesel, and to the "lesson" of the Holocaust: the absolute evil of the Holocaust combined with the good that was present in the actions of a few. Here, an alternative point of view of the Holocaust is presented in a unique way. Witnessing is represented throughout this narrative. Death witnesses all of humanity's faults, is touched by them, and passes them on through his narrative. Although he most consistently witnesses Liesel's trials, he continually comments on his witnessing of the Holocaust in general but without any of the graphic details that would be expected of Death's experiences of the Holocaust. Instead, he makes haunting comments about the atrocities that humans commit against each other and keeps the details to the parts of his narrative that have to do with Liesel. A general comment from Death reads like this: Sometimes I arrive too early. I rush, and some people cling longer to life than expected. (9)

Zusak understands of the Second World War in Germany and his inspiration for writing his novel fall into the paradox of illustrating the Holocaust from a removed, yet effective perspective. Zusak's interpretation is distanced through source since he had to glean understanding from his parents' interpretations. Also, their interpretations were distanced through time as years pass and memories change. As Tim Cole notes in his article, "Scales of Memory, Layers of Memory: Recent Works on Memories of the Second World War and the Holocaust," this source and time distance is central to the problem of representing the Holocaust through literature since "writing as a member of the postwar generation for whom the Holocaust has only been experienced vicariously make up a generation no longer willing, or able to recall the Holocaust separately from the ways it has been passed down" (137). The mayor's wife witnesses her actions and invites Liesel to read books in her library. Around that time, a Jewish prizefighter by the name of Max goes into hiding in the Hubermanns' basement. Max and Liesel become special friends and Liesel nurses him during his sickness by reading to him. Eventually, Max has to leave because his presence is too dangerous for the other inhabitants of the house. During a bombing, Liesel's entire town, including her foster parents and her friends, are obliterated. One of the most prominent uses of imagery throughout the novel is that of color. Death states that it relishes colors and the distractions they bring with them. It continues, "People observe the colors of a day only at its beginnings and ends, but to me it's quite clear that a day merges through a multitude of shades and intonations, with each passing moment. A single hour can consist of thousands of different colors. Waxy yellows, cloud-spate blues. This introduction sets the stage for hundreds of references to colors and their meanings throughout the novel. In an interview with The Mother Daughter Book Club, Zusak noted that the metaphor of color used throughout the

book is “particularly appropriate” (2). Zusak continued, “Death was almost breathing colors in to distract himself from all the misery that surrounds him. That in a way was a metaphor for the idea that this book is about people doing beautiful things in a really ugly time. And that’s what Death is trying to seek out. So, Zusak approached his novel with the mindset of mixing beauty with betrayal, hope with despair, and violence with peace.

Death mixes realism with sentimentality. Although it is sad to see people die, Death indicates that it is much more devastating for defenseless men, women, and children to die at the hands of an evil dictator and a willing army. The German people hiding in the bomb shelter at least had the chance to escape, the illusion of a life waiting on the outside. Meanwhile, the Jewish people were led to their deaths with complete disrespect and disregard. The topic of addressing the humanity on both sides is one with which many authors grapple. Zusak approaches the concept with clarity and decisiveness. To die an undeserved, inescapable death is a horrible thing; to die six million undeserved, inescapable deaths is an atrocity that no amount of claustrophobic, uncomfortable air raid drills can quite erase. Death addresses the concept of punishment for the Nazis by saying that everyone had to take their turn.

The Holocaust is a theological term with a very precise meaning. It is derived via the Latin *holocaustum*’ from the Greek 'olokauston', which specifically denotes a ‘whole burnt sacrifice’. This term was used frequently in the Greek Septuagint and once or twice in the Greek New Testament texts to describe entirely burnt sacrifices. Earlier this century, however, the term was used on rare occasions by Christian theologians and historians to describe a variety of catastrophes in which Christian populations were thought to have been "wholly sacrificed" for their faith. Used in this manner the term was always written "holocaust", with a lower-case "h". Only after

1957 did the term come into popular use to describe loosely the wartime treatment of Jews by the Nazis. Even in the first issue of *Yad Vashem Studies*, published in late 1957, the term repeatedly used to describe the fate of the Jews during World War II was "the catastrophe". Since around the early 1970s 'the Holocaust' has been used by historians and the general public to define the ordered, planned and systematic extermination of approximately six million European Jews the majority in gas chambers and gas vans constructed especially for the task as an act of state by the Nazis with assistance from their collaborators during the Second World War. For want of a better term, 'the Holocaust' is used throughout this thesis even when referring to the subject matter of literature published prior.

Moreover in this novel the character Death narrates the novel in a series of flashbacks. Because of this, the narrator often drops hints as to what will happen and what the fate of certain characters will be. Death states things simply, in basic terms that any reader of any age level could understand. However, the simplicity of the statements, although often delivered in a joking or sardonic tone is chilling in its grim accuracy. As it introduces the story, Death offers a list of topics that will be covered. 'It's just a small story really about among other things: a girl some words an accordionist some fanatical Germans a Jewish first fighter and quite a lot of thievery' (5). With this brief list, Death simultaneously minimizes and pinpoints the focus of the novel. People say that if he wants to teach someone something break it down to the simplest terms and discuss it in a way that even a child could understand. Through the novel, Death does just that. The narrator tackles the gravest topics with dark perseverance and witty strength. Death reduces the Nazi party and its legion of loyal followers to some fanatical Germans' the heroine to 'a girl' and her desperate pursuit of Hubermanns hide Max, a Jewish fist fighter in their basement for several years



during the war. Max hides in the basement under the staircase with a painter's trap and some discarded cans as his only coverage from prodding Nazi search parties. At one point, Max becomes deathly ill and moves into Liesel's room for seven months until he is fully recuperated. The story hinges on the relationship that develops between Liesel and Max and their interactions shed light on the situation and its consequences, but the idea that a struggling, poor family would be able to help a Jewish man to live unnoticed in a virtually open manner for so long seems extremely unlikely. However, Zusak focuses on the theme that any vestige of legitimacy from the Nazi party by making a joke even of their greeting system. What the Nazis did with such steadfast assuredness is nothing more than a joke in the eyes of Death. Zusak also adds sentimentality and realism to the mix of emotions at play throughout his novel so that fun and jokes do not overshadow the true purpose of the text. For example, when Death discusses the gas chambers in more detail about halfway through the novel, it describes the choking terror of the innocent victims. However, Zusak is careful to show that the Jewish people were the true victims. At one point Death notes the stark contrast between Jewish and German victims, saying.

Liesel Meminger had it easy ... compared to Max Vandenburg. Certainly, her brother practically died in her arms. Her mother abandoned her. But anything was better than being a Jew... I pitied them, though not as much as I felt for the ones I scooped up from various camps in that time. The Germans in basements were pitiable, surely but at least they had a chance. The basement was not a washroom. They were not sent there for a shower. For those people, life was still achievable. (161)

Liesel Meminger takes to Hans Hubermann immediately upon meeting him. There is given an image of him that is kind and giving and when contrasted with Rosa, Liesel had a mother before the war who gave up for adoption, but no mention of a father. Much like Eliezer Wiesel and his father, who go through life in concentration camps together, Liesel and Hans also survive the war that Wiesel and his father share bread. Each sacrifices for the other and their relationship remains dynamic, changing throughout the novel. Hans is at first a perfect father figure for Liesel. He connects with her and it is he who convinces Liesel to come out of the care of the social worker and join him in his life on Himmel Street with Rosa. His patience for Liesel seems without depth as he teaches her to read and he shares her struggles with her. There is a day though, years into Liesel's life with the Hubermanns that the pair are together and Liesel in a rage, speaks out against the further. Hans slaps Liesel after she does this. Taken aback, she realizes that what she has done is unsafe, but the sting of punishment from Hans is severe and lasting. Liesel knows that Hans is unsupportive of much of the Nazi Party's politics, but she also knows the importance of maintaining their appearance as sympathizing Germans. Max's life depends on their performance and Liesel is aware of this, but her anger gets the better of her in this instance and the rebuff takes her by surprise. In an uncharacteristic move Hans has relayed to her the importance of the façade and the necessity of each of them playing their part to ensure the family's survival.

The sentimental nature of the novel emphasizes the importance of storytelling and books as vehicles for social justice and social change. *The Book Thief* illustrates lessons that are applicable to both the historical event and the situations in which modern readers might find themselves. In this way, the novels can be used collectively to find an appropriate balance between studying the Holocaust as an

isolated historical event and post memory narrative. By situating the lessons about scapegoating in the proper historical context, the stories about the Holocaust can be appropriately used to illustrate the modern affect of the historical event. After concluding their Holocaust history research with the realistic, horror and sentimental accounts of the Holocaust, students are interested in the event, are aware of the history of the event, and are empowered to never allow such an event to happen again. Together, the books confront the fact that the Holocaust as a historical event happened and extract appropriate lessons from it.

### **III. Politics of Representing Jews People in Zusak's *The Book Thief***

This research focuses on the representation of holocaust history in Zusak's *The Book Thief*. It explores issues of critical situation of holocaust in society of German people during Second World War period. Zusak denaturalizes the holocaust history and he conveys the message that dramatization of Jews people in Holocaust period which is its self is problematic. Since most of the characters are unhappy and traumatized in practical life. The spaces of the Holocaust that are represented in *The Book Thief* are present in a much less obvious form than might be expected from a narrative that is told by Death. While Death is a unique narrator to use to present images of the Holocaust, the narration is done in a way that handles the Holocaust in a sensitive way and allows for this book's categorization as a young adult or crossover novel. The combination of the unique following pattern, allowing for Death to act as a contemporary commentator, as well as to mediate the story of a Gentile protagonist, Liesel, and the represented spaces result in a complex, interesting, and alternative representation of the Holocaust.

The book employs allusions, foreshadowing, and personification in order to illustrate the terrifying times to modern day readers. Zusak takes a somewhat optimistic approach in order to best convey his message to his audience. As April Brannon notes, *The Book Thief* is set in the bleakest of circumstances but is a surprisingly hopeful story about the atrocities that occurred during the Nazi years in Germany. As compared to the other novels discussed, this novel uses a more equal distribution of sentimentality, realism, and fun, in order to convey its Holocaust story to a young adult audience. The novel follows 9-year-old Liesel Meninger and her life during Second World War in Nazi Germany. During her little brother's funeral, Liesel steals a book from the snow, *The Grave Digger's Handbook*, a manual for morticians

and gravediggers. Liesel holds on to the book like a treasure and sets a goal that she will learn to read it. Days later, Liesel is placed with the poor Hubermann family in the small town of Molching outside of Munich. Her foster mother, Rosa, is always cursing at Liesel, forcing her to do chores, and even beating her with a wooden spoon. Beneath this gruff exterior, however, lurks an affectionate soul who wants the best for Liesel. Hans, on the other hand, is outwardly gentle and compassionate. He plays the accordion and paints. When Liesel wakes up each night with terrifying nightmares, Hans teaches her how to read and write. After a while, Liesel becomes comfortable in her new surroundings, learns her school lessons, makes friends with local children, attends Hitler Youth meetings, and plays soccer. Her life settles into a regular pattern. Under the direction of her foster father, she avoids expressing opposition to Hitler.

In a nutshell, through the minute study of the primary text with the lights of new historicism, researcher has come to the conclusion that Zusak's *The Book Thief* is all about the discussion of existing movements like in the Holocaust in Germany. It not only focuses on general background of Holocaust history but also portrays the ramification of Holocaust or Nazi army.

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