

FROM LIFE TO DEATH: BARE LIFE IN *THE BOOK THIEF*

Mahnoor Farooq¹, Prof. Dr. Mazhar Hayat², Dr Saira Akhter^{*3}

¹M. Phil. Scholar, Department of English, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus, Pakistan

²HOD, Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus,
Pakistan

³Assistant Professor, Department of English, Government College Women University, Faisalabad, Pakistan

¹mahi786grewal@gmail.com, ²dr.mazharhayat@riphahfsd.edu.pk, ³sairaakhter@gcwuf.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: *

Dr Saira Akhter

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ABSTRACT

This article examines Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* through the theoretical lens of thanatopolitics, arguing that the novel represents Nazi Germany as a regime that systematically reduces political subjects to "bare life." Drawing primarily on Giorgio Agamben's concept of homo sacer, alongside Michel Foucault's articulation of biopolitics and thanatopolitics, the study analyzes how Jewish characters, political outsiders, civilians, and children are rendered legally abandoned and exposed to death. Rather than depicting death as an episodic outcome of war, the novel presents everyday existence as a gradual movement toward death, marked by hunger, fear, surveillance, and disposability. The narrative voice of Death further exposes the administrative and normalized nature of killing under totalitarian rule, functioning as a witness to lives stripped of protection and value. By focusing on thanatopolitical exposure rather than trauma alone, this article contributes to Holocaust literary studies by reframing *The Book Thief* as a political narrative of sovereign power, killability, and ethical abandonment. It demonstrates how the novel illuminates the mechanisms through which modern states transform living into a slow form of dying.

Keywords: Biopolitics, bare life, homo sacer, holocaust literature, killability, thanatopolitics

1: INTRODUCTION

Holocaust literature has often been read through the lenses of trauma, memory, and ethical witnessing. While these approaches have yielded valuable insights into suffering and remembrance, they risk obscuring the political logic that enables mass death in the first place. Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* is frequently positioned as a sentimental or humanist narrative that foregrounds compassion amid brutality. However, such readings underestimate the novel's sustained engagement with political power and the

governance of death. This article argues that *The Book Thief* offers a compelling literary representation of thanatopolitics, specifically, the reduction of human beings from political subjects to bare life under Nazi rule.

Set in Nazi Germany and narrated by Death, the novel depicts a society in which death is no longer an exceptional event but an omnipresent condition of life. Jews, political dissidents, civilians, and even children are progressively stripped of legal, moral, and social protection.

Their existence is governed not by rights but by exposure to hunger, violence, surveillance, and arbitrary killing. This condition corresponds closely to Giorgio Agamben's concept of *bare life*, in which individuals are excluded from the political order while remaining fully subject to sovereign violence. Legally, exclusion was formalized through measures such as the Nuremberg Laws, which removed Jews from citizenship and withdrew the protections of law. This legal abandonment preceded physical violence: individuals were first rendered unprotected before they were killed. Bureaucratic systems then normalized this exclusion. Registration, rationing, surveillance, and deportation transformed violence into routine governance, making precarity an administrative condition rather than an exceptional act. Ideology reinforced these mechanisms by portraying targeted groups as threats or burdens, diffusing moral responsibility and normalizing indifference. Crucially, the production of bare life extended beyond camps into everyday spaces. Streets, homes, workplaces, and schools became sites where vulnerability was displayed, enforced, and internalized. Death functioned not only as an event but as an atmosphere shaping daily life. Michel Foucault's analysis of biopolitics explains how modern power governs populations through the management of life. Biopolitics, however, always contains a lethal underside: the power to "make live and let die." Thanatopolitics emerges when death itself becomes an explicit political strategy rather than a residual outcome.

By situating *The Book Thief* within a thanatopolitical framework, this article reframes the novel as a critique of modern sovereignty and its capacity to normalize death. The study narrows its focus to a single central claim: that Nazi power in the novel operates not merely through spectacular acts of killing but through the slow, administrative production of killable life. In doing so, the article advances Holocaust literary studies beyond moral witnessing toward a political analysis of death as governance.

Existing scholarship on *The Book Thief* emphasizes emotion, narrative technique, and humanism, often treating death as a tragic

outcome of war rather than as a political instrument. This leaves a critical gap in understanding how the novel represents death as structured, normalized, and governed by sovereign power. This article, therefore, asks: Firstly, how does *The Book Thief* depict the reduction of individuals to *bare life* under Nazi rule? Secondly, how does it portray thanatopolitical conditions in which certain lives become killable without legal or moral consequence? Addressing these questions shifts the focus from individual trauma to the political conditions that make such trauma systematic.

2: Literature Review

Trauma studies, cultural critique, and political theory increasingly converge around biopolitics, thanatopolitics, and necropolitics frameworks that explain how modern power governs life, manages vulnerability, and authorizes death. While Michel Foucault grounds biopolitics in governmentality and population management, later expansions by Giorgio Agamben and Achille Mbembe shift attention to sovereign violence, exclusion, and death-worlds. These debates have produced influential accounts of exception, race, and governance, but they often remain structurally abstract to how such power is *represented, felt, and contested* in cultural texts.

This review pursues two aims: firstly, to map the genealogies of key concepts across political theory, postcolonial critique, and trauma studies; and secondly, to identify a persistent gap in limited engagement with literary and cultural forms that narrate, embody, and resist these regimes of life and death. The review covers biopolitics/thanatopolitics, necropolitics, grievability, mourning, and trauma theory in relation to postcolonial critique.

Foucault conceptualizes biopolitics as a modern shift in power: from sovereignty's right to "take life" to the governance of populations through regulation, health, security, and economic management. However, this framework has been critiqued for its limited engagement with colonial histories and lethal continuities of biopower, prompting broader theorization by Agamben and Mbembe.

Agamben extends biopolitics into thanatopolitics by arguing that modern sovereignty operates through the state of exception, producing bare life subjects excluded from political belonging yet kept within a zone where violence becomes legally and morally normalized. Contemporary scholarship has sought to refine these debates. Prozorov, S. (2022) proposes a “double temporality” of biopolitics that holds together modern governmental dispositifs and older logics of exclusion; Lemke T. (2005). distinguishes philosophical and biomedical appropriations of biopolitics while urging renewed attention to governmentality; and Meloni M. (2023). argues for a multi-scalar temporality that exceeds an eighteenth-century “origin story”, enabling biopolitical analysis of current crises.

Mbembe’s necropolitics deepens biopolitical critique by centering sovereignty’s capacity to create conditions where entire groups become disposable, producing “death-worlds” tied to colonialism, racial capitalism, and contemporary security regimes. Although analytically expansive, necropolitical scholarship often privileges structural description over the cultural and affective textures through which death is experienced, narrated, and sometimes countered. Recent crisis-focused work by Brantly & Brantly, (2023). particularly on pandemics, war, surveillance shows biopolitical frameworks’ adaptability but often remains thin on cultural mediation, how populations interpret, internalize, or resist governance through narrative. Studies by Sohail, (2025), Zucconi, (2022) focussed on applying thanatopolitical reasoning to military doctrine and bureaucratic systems (e.g., operational logics that normalize civilian death; Holocaust administration as “financial bios” and mundane infrastructures of managed risk) reveal how killing can be rationalized as ethics, optimization, or necessity; yet, these accounts frequently neglect how such logics circulate in fiction, memory-work, and cultural imagination. This gap motivates the present study. Political theory explains the architectures of life and death. Literary analysis shows how these architectures are lived at the bodily scale through narration, memory, grief, and the struggle for dignity. *The*

Book Thief is approached here as a narrative intervention that renders systemic violence ethically legible, foregrounding how storytelling preserves personhood against exterminatory power.

Aldeia (2023) reconceptualizes biopolitics as inherently thanatopolitical by extending its scope beyond human populations to include multispecies relations. The study argues that modern efforts to “make live” are fundamentally dependent on the systematic production of death, particularly through the exploitation and extinction of non-human species. By highlighting the interdependence of human and non-human life, the article demonstrates that contemporary ecological crises especially accelerated species extinction are not accidental but are intrinsic outcomes of biopolitical governance. This multispecies perspective challenges the anthropocentric limits of Foucauldian theory and shows that the preservation of human life in modernity is inseparable from the destruction of other forms of life.

Daniel Zimmer (2025) argues that Michel Foucault’s concept of biopolitics must be reconsidered in light of modern technologies like nuclear weapons and genetic engineering, which introduce “the power to kill life itself.” The article highlights that contemporary political power no longer only manages and sustains life but also holds the potential to annihilate humanity, thereby challenging traditional notions of sovereignty and marking a “biological threshold” where the survival of the human species becomes dependent on political decisions.

This study argues that literature and cultural analysis are essential to a fuller account of systemic violence. Political theory maps how power sorts lives; trauma studies explains how violence becomes embodied; literary criticism reveals how these logics are narrated, contested, and ethically reconfigured through voice, form, and memory. Reading the primary text through these intersecting frameworks positions narrative as a methodological instrument: not merely reflecting necropolitical order, but making visible its intimate operations and the counter-politics of mourning, remembrance, and dignity. The next

section outlines the study's methodological design and justifies close reading as the primary mode of inquiry.

3: Theoretical Framework: Bare Life and Thanatopolitics

This study is based on the theoretical construct of thanatopolitics, an expansion of the idea of biopolitics, which describes how the state regulates life through the political regulation of death. Foucault (1976) traced the change in the medieval prerogative of sovereign power to take life or let live to the power of the modern state to make live and let die. This is extended by Giorgio Agamben (1998) to the concept of bare life, which refers to members of the population who are not recognized as political or legal subjects, whose deaths are politically acceptable and socially insignificant. The theory of necropolitics developed by Achille Mbembe (2003) goes further to explain how sovereign power dictates not only who must die, but also the circumstances under which they must die, specifically in colonial and war Contexts.

This framework applies directly to the book *The Book Thief*, where Nazi Germany is used as a thanatopolitical regime in which the protection of lives, their expendability, and their active elimination is systematically planned. Death as a narrator becomes a symbolic and analytical prism, based on which the death apparatus of the state has been mediated to the reader. The theoretical framework explores how narrative form displays sovereign power over mortality and the way the characters represent the states of bare life and political exclusion, and the way resistance is produced using storytelling and memory as a counter to thanatopolitical erasure.

Together, these frameworks illuminate how Nazi Germany transformed biological existence into a political liability. Optional engagement with Judith Butler's concept of grievability further clarifies how certain deaths are rendered socially invisible, while Achille Mbembe's necropolitics underscores the racialized and spatial dimensions of sovereign killing.

Nazi Germany offers a clear historical example of how a modern state can produce what Giorgio

Agamben terms *bare life* existence stripped of legal, political, and moral protection. This condition did not arise from wartime chaos but was systematically created through racial law, bureaucratic administration, and ideological indoctrination that redefined who belonged to the political community.

The Book Thief captures this reality by depicting how civilians and children inhabit a world of conditional safety structured by fear, conformity, and exposure. While some lives are marked for elimination, others are trained to live alongside disposability. In this sense, bare life emerges as a systemic condition that reorganizes society itself, demonstrating that political death begins long before physical death, in the erosion of rights, recognition, and protection.

The study addresses the following Research Questions:

3.1 How does Nazi sovereignty in *The Book Thief* reduce individuals from political subjects to bare life?

3.2 In what ways does the novel depict everyday existence as a gradual movement toward death?

3.3 How does the narrative voice of Death expose the normalization and administration of killing?

4: Analysis of *The Book Thief*

4.1 Jews and Political Outsiders as *Homo Sacer*

Max's existence is defined by what he lacks: light, air, movement, and, to some degree, even a name of his own. The over-painted pages of *Mein Kampf* that he turns into books to give to Liesel are more than just a clever narrative device; they are a form of undoing the archive of power. Rather, the regime's text systemizes and exemplifies exclusion through doctrine. Max's palimpsests overwrite the sovereign script and return a narrative and meaning to where the state voice would like to impose silence. However, the concealment of the palimpsests, of the author, and of the entire exercise speaks to Agamben's core insight: meaning is deeply fragile and relies on the will to conceal and the moral will of others.

Max lives in a state of radical contingency, whereby his existence is unacknowledged and could be

removed at a moment's notice. If the inspectors weren't to remain in the captivity of the status quo for so long, it would be alarmingly easy to shatter this delicate status quo. Max's life in the Hubermanns' basement exemplifies Agamben's bare life. He exists in a state of complete bare life. He is described as "the Jewish fist fighter, of course, lived in the Hubermanns' basement," a sentence that synthesizes a certain identity into a description while completely denying any form of social relationality.

Under the pressure of this environment, Max's handmade book becomes a valuable act of reclamation. Creativity, narrative, and relational meanings all emerge inside an environment predicated on erasure. The basement, then, functions both as a locus of hiddenness and as a counter archive, where storytelling thwarts reductive measures and celebrates the enduring humanity of people under circumstances of legal disappearance. "Max had cut out a collection of pages from *Mein Kampf* and painted over them in white" (Zusak, 2005, p. 228). By overwriting Hitler's text, Max reclaims narrative agency against a regime that sought to obliterate him.

4.2 Civilian Vulnerability and Normalized Death

The representation of Max Vandenberg's life in the basement of the Hubermanns' is the purest form of bare life; life that exists irretrievably without the go of life. In Agamben's text, Max is a homo sacer: a life without any legal or civic status and, thus, constantly subjected to life-threatening conditions. They have forgotten who he is, as Max lives a life where every feature that defines existence is manipulated, as the text states, 'German and Jewish' lungs have to share the little 'freed' breath circulating in the space. He is forced to exist as a living being, to be more precise, as a naturally existing collection of body parts. It is not hard to see that every single aspect of his life has stemmed from his being situated within the political system that forms the country. It wouldn't be a stretch to say that his 'freed' existence is a parasite that is living off the political system of the country. To be sure, he breathes of the political system as a whole, yet the only thing that it provides is suffocation.

Max's works portray an interesting idea of reclaiming lost narration, with loss resulting from an attempt to craft a text through a medium, where the original cultural text, *Mein Kampf*, is iterated by the author in his works. Where ideological texts seek to control the narrative, trampling the humanistic side of the text, these works reclaim voice at the flexible border of humanity. These works also highlight the state's contradictory nature. These books show that the state has stripped him of all fundamental rights, but unlike the authoritarian regime that takes away one's rights and voice, Max can create and express these ideas. Therefore, unlike the rest of the world, Max builds and describes his own narrative. These works reveal the Agamben 'homo sacer' idea uniquely, showing that lives are endured through the silent 'death' of invisibility, together with these works, which assert life narrated through acts of reclaiming narrative. "He was either too lucky, or he deserved to live, or there was a good reason for him to live" (Zusak, 2005, p. 179). His survival is contingent on secrecy, charity, and sheer chance, hallmarks of bare life.

"THE LONG WALK TO DACHAU. One of the prisoners collapsed from starvation and sickness. I have no idea where the convoy had traveled from, but it was perhaps four miles from Molching, and many steps more to the concentration camp at Dachau" (Zusak, 2005, p. 390).

The public collapse signals how suffering itself became a civic ritual, instructing bystanders in obedience. In terms of Agamben's ideas, as researchers approach the complex analytical, historical, and fictional folds of this novel, they briefly discuss the understanding of the notion of the homo sacer conceptualization, starting with the historical context of the Zionist project, from which the position of the Jews as sacrificial life emerges.

This study explores how Jostut Sak describes Jewish life without the protection of the law. Max Vandenberg describes 'Jew, lover,' portraying the Jews as sacrificial characters. All stand in this space of potential denial, which is ultimately political. Each of them is on the borderline of being a refugee. All public disciplinary scenes in Moslking illustrate the power of the state as the sole arbiter of who is included and who is excluded from the

protection of life and by whom life may be taken, restrictions which we consider as close to the heart. Zusak is careful to show that these phenomena do not apply only to institutions. They apply equally to the street in the neighbourhood, the basement, and the classroom. This is more than allowing classroom regulation to be principal, as *the Book Thief* cuts Agambel's assertion regarding the camp as a rotten exception to the statement, modern governance retaliates, and the life of the captured is not an exception but a foundation for the national socialist political provision.

4.3 Children, Hunger, Fear, and Slow Dying

The novel shows children being socialized into a thanatopolitical world early, where hunger, fear, and exposure shape moral life. Liesel's encounters with death, her brother's corpse, public executions, and bombed neighbors render mortality ordinary rather than exceptional. Bare life appears not only as sudden killability but as prolonged erosion through malnutrition, exhaustion, and emotional numbing.

Scenes such as the trembling prisoner on the roadside reveal the regime's bioeconomic logic, where bodies are managed through calculated deprivation. Hans Hubermann's act of giving bread briefly disrupts this logic, only for the state to reassert control, claiming exclusive authority over compassion. The novel thus portrays power as an environment rather than a sequence of acts, sustained through ritual, administration, and everyday social compliance. By translating theory into ordinary spaces and gestures, *The Book Thief* shows thanatopolitics as the lived texture of daily life, where some endure escalating precarity whereas others are conditioned to accept it.

4.4 Death as Narrator and Witness to Exposed Life

Death is portrayed as an overworked functionary and an administrative condition shaped by bureaucratic mass killing. In the primary text, Death serves as more than just a narrative device; he is a reflective being who bears witness to and documents all that is happening. From the very first line, "Here is a small fact: You are going to die," (Zusak, 2005, p. 13), Death claims to be able

to cross all boundaries. As the narrator, he tells the story of Liesel Meminger while occupying a place in the universe that extends to all time, as he travels to all the places where lives are cut short. Death's point is vast and limitless. He is there at public events and mundane activities, at parades and processions, and in all places where there is loss, both large and small. Because of this, Death is both in the story and outside of it, able to watch people's lives in detail while remaining distant enough to see the flow and cycles of history. His narration is characterized by a refusal to exaggerate, to wear down, or to indulge in drama, instead focusing on the monotony of life and the endurance it takes to go on.

Simultaneously conveying both scenarios as bystander and actor, Death highlights the commonality of human dying across the globe while also revealing the mechanisms that hasten, structure, and standardize loss. While adopting this narrative standpoint, Zusak is allowed an opportunity to bring in the workings of power dominating the universe of the novel, in an abstract manner, and without having to reproduce the very logic of the systems, in favour of a stance that both preserves and pays tribute to that which the systems of political power choose to obliterate "I am haunted by humans" (Zusak, 2005, p.536). This admission underscores Death's dual function as a detached collector of lives and an ethically burdened witness. In the Face of Death, there is a human element that helps narrate the larger loss of the human than the administrative efficiency of records, reports, and loss reporting. The loss of humanization is in the large-scale loss, the distant loss, and the loss of humanity.

Narrators often employ techniques aimed at preventing the reader's mind from wandering and controlling the reader's focus through exact language that tells the story while remaining detached from the narration. To tell a story through a voice shaped by the very mechanized patterns of a system would almost disregard the story's narrative focus. "They were glued down, every last one of them. A packet of souls" (Zusak, 2005, p. 22). This metaphor captures how individuality disappears into the efficiency of enumeration, paralleling Nazi record keeping. Mass casualties are recounted with the language of

storage and transfer. “I carried them in my fingers, like suitcases. Or I’d throw them over my shoulder. It was only the children I carried in my arms” (Zusak, 2005, p. 337). Such phrasing resonates with the systematic deportations and transports that defined the Holocaust.

In the novel’s opening excerpts, the personification of Death raises a unique ethical dilemma. On the one hand, the personification allows the audience to imagine Death as an empathetic, tired, and sad figure who has witnessed others’ losses repeatedly. On the other hand, as a function of the character’s extreme temporality, personified Death embodies the fine line between stoic resignation, extreme melancholia, and apathy over the deaths of millions. By describing lives as one and in a language that recalls the epitome of abstract bureaucratic language, Zusak asks the audience to think of accounts of poverty and the suffering that have been systematized, abstracted, and congealed into forms. Even, and perhaps especially, forms of acts of compassion that are being proposed as an answer to poverty and suffering are in danger of becoming mere schizo expressions, the novel warns, when framed in the context of an ideology of systemization and classification that is unguarded and unconstrained in the extreme forms of repetition involved.

When Death states, ‘Humans haunt me’, the statement is rife with a sense not only of moral and ethical fatigue, but also of composite moral inattention, brought about by a negative inability to act intercessorily, to participate in the events being witnessed. In this regard, Death embodies a mirror for the reader. In the same manner that the narrator dies, records, and moves on, the reader is called to interpose a narrative of historical suffering, weighed down by the ethical encumbrance of retention and the interdict against simplification and the loss of richness and detail. Death’s voice then is empathic, but in the same breadth of the very voice that offers criticism and irony, asking the audience to interpose themselves for the reflective character of an observer in a tale of collective suffering. “It kills me sometimes, how people die” (Zusak, 2005, p. 459). This paradoxical phrasing highlights how narrative voice can mourn and critique

simultaneously, drawing attention to the ethics of witnessing.

The recounting of events like the death of large bodies, the movement of the public, and the announcement of an emergency (for mass death, movement of the public) was recounted with the same efficiency as the state would exercise to maintain administrative control in a process of managing. The phrase ‘a packet of souls’ is jarring, but wedded to transport and souls is the same haunting abstraction of individuality. Zusak shows how the administrative organization and documentation of loss were records of the mass loss of life. Death under the Nazi regime is an order of the state, an order that is, under no circumstances, existential. The narrator speaks of the order and its mechanisms, but he knows the order of death. Here, order is the abstraction that contains the mechanisms of efficiency and silence on ethics.

Simultaneously, Death’s characterisation maintains an ethical tension of disengagement versus empathy. Sequentially, the narrative voice may rely on automaton-like descriptive phrases; however, it remains characterised by a sense of hesitance, serving as a reminder that even the most unrepresentative narration carries the weight of morality. Paradoxically, Zusak encourages the audience to reflect on how narratives of mass death are captured, assimilated, and commemorated in social memory; the ease with which impersonal descriptions of facts perpetuate the absence of a subject is disconcerting. “I am constantly overestimating and underestimating the human race that rarely do I ever simply estimate it” (Zusak, 2005, p. 536). These reflections force the reader to grapple with the ambiguity of judgment, complicating how atrocity is narrated.

4.5 Representation of Sovereign Power and Killability

The analysis of the work study, *The Book Thief*, presents death not as a tragic by-product of war but as a political instrument, an organized means of governing, instructing, and terrorizing the population. Death functions as a communicative tool of sovereign power, teaching obedience,

suppressing empathy, and marking whose lives matter. Rather than isolated catastrophes, mortality is woven into everyday routines, becoming a visible language of dominance.

Public rituals, parades, rallies, book burnings, and the marching of prisoners operate as pedagogical spectacles. Emaciated bodies instruct citizens, including children, that survival is tied to compliance and that compassion invites punishment. This depiction aligns with Michel Foucault's account of biopolitics, in which power governs through the differential distribution of protection and exposure to death, sorting lives according to ideological value.

The criminalization of mercy further clarifies this logic. Hans Hubermann's punishment for giving bread shows that compassion itself violates sovereign authority. Death and discipline thus structure social behavior, normalizing fear and eroding moral judgment. Emergency measures, inspections, and public reprimands render life contingent on obedience. These dynamics reflect Giorgio Agamben's state of exception, where legal protection is selectively suspended. The novel embeds this logic in ordinary scenes, basements, streets, and classrooms, extending the camp into everyday life. Max Vandenberg embodies *homo sacer*: a life reduced to biological survival, protected only by secrecy, not rights.

By situating sovereign power within domestic and communal spaces, *The Book Thief* reveals how governance depends on both enforcement and social adaptation. Death becomes administrative, exclusion routine, and injustice normalized, offering a cautionary reflection on how political power can quietly reorganize the value of human life.

4.6 Ethical Implications of Reducing Life to Biological Survival

One of the most notable absences in the existing literature is the ethics of representation and how to narrate extreme forms of suffering without simplification or reduction. Some analysts have bypassed this dilemma by considering plot and character only, while others have relegated form and aesthetic considerations to the periphery. This study engages this concern head-on by examining

Death as a narrative voice that both participates in and critiques the art of narrativization.

By assigning to Death the function of narrator, Zusak has rendered the act of narrating itself as an ethical act. The bureaucratic register, a packet of souls, mirrors the language of the Nazi state but inverts it: rather than erasing lives, Death pays careful attention to recording them. This double movement, the mirroring and subverting of bureaucratic language, is what this study terms administrative poetics. This concept has filled a significant gap in scholarship by demonstrating that at particular points in a narrative, style can function as commentary on the ethics of a specific subject. It shows that ethics in literature may not only lie in the content, but in the manner in which the narrative is constructed.

5. Conclusion

Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* is more than just a historical novel about Nazi Germany as it overviews the concepts of power, the paradoxes of existence, and the persistence of the human spirit. With the use of thanatopolitics, the study illustrates the novelist's philosophical portrayal of the lives of the most mundane of people as governed, and of those who resisted and survived as storytellers. Death, here, is more than just the collateral damage of warfare. It is a 'political death' weapon used to instill control and compliance. The sovereignty illustrated here is Nazi control, which, as Agamben maintains, invades everywhere and, within the state of exception, militarizes everyday life. Max Vandenberg is the soldiers' 'bare life', the life of the townspeople, paraded, silenced, and punished. Thus, Nazi rule replaces Zusak's heroic ideology of life with tragedy. It shows how, under state control, the power to die defies morality in the everyday lives of people. The novel emphasizes positivity rather than negativity through empathy, memory, and language. In this novel, death's perspective gives new meaning to death as a keeper of stories. In a world of no compassion, Liesel's reading and writing resurrect the world. Her writing creates a movement that seeks to preserve remembrance and stands as a protest against severance. In the novel, Zusak suggests that even death cannot limit the

reproduction of language, the language of the silenced.

The findings of this study build on the foundational theories of Foucault, Agamben, Mbembe, and Butler, and develop them into the world of fiction where their theories attain emotional depth. The work understudy is a reminder of the importance of stories. They are how humanity escapes being a collection of numbers and names. They are how memory survives violence and how systems of oppression can be met with compassion. In the end, it is the Death spoken of by Zusak, carrying with him many souls, and to whom, in the midst of cruel systems, the words of Liesel have survived, and with them, compassion. Storytelling acts as a defiance of dominant forces associated with mortality. That may be the final message Zusak has left us, and the message this study wants us to pass along.

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