THE SPACE THAT SHAPES US VS WE WHO SHAPE THE SPACE. A LITERARY ANALYSIS: "BETWEEN THE SHADES OF GRAY" AND "THE BOOK THIEF"

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Abstract: *In The Crowd: a "Study of the Popular Mind" (1895), Gustave le Bon wrote: "It is only the uniformity of the environment that creates the apparent uniformity of characters. I have shown elsewhere that all mental constitutions contain possibilities of character which may be manifested in consequence of a sudden change of environment". The present paper understands the concept of "literary space" not only as "setting" or "territory." A three-dimensional reality cannot convincingly delineate the entire universe of a narrative. At the beginning of the 20thcentury, Albert Einstein introduced a new variable into the equation – time. Thus, "literary space" or, if we are to use le Bon`s terminology, "environment", in our understanding, also encompasses the concept of time. Both novels that we analyse are set during the Second World War. Regarding the proxemics, however, they diverge fundamentally. While in "The Book Thief" (Markus Zusak), the nine-year-old Liesel Meminger shapes the space, in "Between the Shades of Gray" (Ruta Sepetys), the fifteen-year-old Lina Vilkas is shaped by the space. What does it take for a character to subdue the space-time, and how does the reader perceive the connection a character has with the space he/she occupies? Both characters being children, an analogy between the way they occupy/ let themselves being occupied by space proves to be relevant and insightful. They both step outside the comfort zone forcibly and have to handle the fundamental threat the war poses, i.e. losing humanity. They both find refuge in writing or reading. While Liesel Meminger designes a space of tranquillity, subjected to her own will and desire (a basement where she shelters Max), Lina Vilkas`s private space is shrinking by the day. It seems like a minor detail, but, for what it is worth, it might be a significant twist in the narrative.*
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Introduction. Space, Time, Chronotope

Space and the nature of space preoccupied, over the centuries, artists, philosophers and scientists. In his book, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Immanuel Kant argued, using arguments from mathematics, that space was not an objective, independent reality but a representation of our mind, a form of intuition that our mind imposed onto us. What Kant called a "transcendental ideality of space" referred to the idea that space was a subjective projection but at the same time an *a priori* reality.

> The transcendental concept of appearances in space [...] is a critical reminder that absolutely nothing that is intuited in space is a thing in itself, and that space is not a form that is proper to anything in itself, but rather that objects in themselves are not known to us at all, and that what we call outer objects are nothing other than mere representations of our sensibility, whose form is space, but whose true correlate, i.e., the thing in itself, is not and cannot be cognized through them, but is also never asked after in experience. (Kant, 1998, p. 161)

In his *Decline of the West* (1918), Oswald Spengler repudiated Kant`s theory.

> Kant's error, an error of very wide bearing which has not even yet been overcome, was first of all in bringing the outer and inner Man into relation with the ideas of space and time by pure scheme, though the meanings of these are numerous and, above all, not unalterable; and secondly in allying arithmetic with the one and geometry with the other in an utterly mistaken way. It is not between arithmetic and geometry — we must here anticipate a little — but between chronological and mathematical number that there is fundamental opposition. (Spengler, 1927, p. 6)

For Spengler, the space was detached by time. "The space is; the principle of its existing at all is that it is, outside time and detached from it and from life" (p. 173). He perceived the space as an expression of the "soul".

The need for such a unifying theory was and still is stringent since the understanding of the mechanisms that drive literary characters to behave in one way or another is a task that involves finding the intersection between all the three concepts mentioned above. When Gustave Le Bon (1895) discusses the influence of the

environment on humans` mindset, he identifies in people dormant character traces that can be activated by a sudden change of environment: "[...] all mental constitutions contain possibilities of character which may be manifested in consequence of a sudden change of environment" (Le Bon, 2001, p. 14).

In the light of Le Bon`s findings, it becomes paramount to use a literary concept similar to what the French sociologist understood as"environment". It was still difficult to find a unifying theory that embodied three of the fundamental notions of any narrative: space, time, literary characters. Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin provides us with such a concept. Unlike Kant and Spengler, Bakhtin did not differentiate between space and time. He coined the term "chronotope" (1937) and included Einstein`s findings into literary studies. Since then, space and time have constituted a single unit.

> We will give the name chronotope (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. This term is employed in mathematics and was introduced as part of Einstein`s Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (almost, but not entirely). What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time [...]. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84)

Since Bakhtin, a four-dimensional universe, innovative in science, has become, with Bakhtin, a tool available for literary studies as well. A chronotope is subjected to alteration by the nature of the literary characters. The process is visible and evident in novels that document atrocities. The mere presence of Anne Frank or Malala Yousafzai as leading characters in *The Diary of a Young Girl* or *I am Malala* distorts the reality of the tragedy described by inserting islands of normality and hope into the chronotope otherwise dark and gloomy. One can easily witness a similar pattern in the novels by Khaled Hosseini, Andrei Makine or Elif Shafak. A literary character can either take possession of the time-space, creating ruptures in the fabric of it or become a constitutive part of the space-time, moving alongside and being embedded in its structure.

The chronotope of the literature of atrocity (Holocaust, deportation, ethnic cleansing, genocide, etc.) does not function in the same manner it does for adventure novels, for instance. In adventure novels, the chronotope is not restrictive, determined, and strict. The hero can influence it decisively or even create it anew through his/her extraordinary abilities, while the hero of a Holocaus or deportation narrative has limited options. Thus, in the latter case, a recurrent theme of the literature of atrocity consists of coping mechanisms individually designed and mastered to grant survival (physically and psychologically). There is no hero morally and intellectually equipped to deal with atrocities when they arise; while adventures require exceptionalism, the characters of the literature of atrocity crave for normality and the restoration of the fundamental human values.

> The basic problem facing writers of the holocaust was the brutal fact that nothing in their experience, or in the cultural tradition, had prepared mankind for its sheer atrocity [...] Incomprehensible for those exposed to it, it was unbelievable for those who later heard about it through reports and the various postwar trials. (Ziolkowski, 1977, p. 135)

From this perspective,the analysis of *Between the Shades of Gray* by Ruta Sepetys and *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusakmight be relevant and insightful. The use of similar chronotope results in different literary outcomes. Ultimately, in dealing with the reality of the Holocaust (*The Book Thief*) or deportation (*Between the Shades of Gray*), Lina and Liesel, the main protagonists, have to find ways of *bending* time, of living partly in an alternative reality.

Common grounds and dissimilarities

Born in 1967, in the US, Ruta Sepetys is a contemporary American writer. Daughter of a Lithuanian refugee, she specialises in historical fiction. *Between the Shades of Gray* is a novel published in 2011, translated worldwide, and adapted into a movie, in 2018 (*Ashes in the Snow*, directed by Marius A. Markevicius). The novel tells the story of a Lithuanian family (Elena, Kostas, Jonas, and Lina Vilkas) deported to Siberia by the Soviets, in 1941. Lina Vilkas, a fifteen-year-old girl, tells the story in a first-person narrative where images from deportation are intertwined with memories from the family life before the occupation.

Markus Zusak was born in 1975, in Sydney, Australia. His family, of German origin (mother – German, father - Austrian), emigrated to Australia in the 1950s. He published *The Book Thief* in 2005. In 2013, a movie based on his book was released (*The Book Thief*, directed by Brian Percival). The narrator is Death itself, who tells the story of a young girl, Liesel Meminger, adopted by a German family at the dawn of the Second World War. The story starts in 1939. Liesel is nine years old at the time of her adoption and tries to make sense of a world in which Jews and Communists are hated and face execution. Liesel helps his foster family to shelter a young Jew (Max Vandenburg).

Both novels explore the same chronotope of the atrocity: the Soviet occupation, on the one hand, and the rise of Nazism and antisemitism, on the other hand. Nonetheless, the novels differ greatly from each other regarding the general atmosphere: while Lina Vilkas seems incapable of creating a space-time buffer, Liesel designs and occupies a safe space in the basement of her foster family. The two children protagonists encounter the same moral dilemma: what could one do when forced to face a destructive reality that collides with one`s ethical conviction and education? It all starts with the displacement; Lina is taken away from her home, Liesel is given a new family. They both react by succumbing to denial, by refusing the new reality, by being abashed by the incoherence of the world: "Were we being arrested? Where was Papa?" (Sepetys, 2011, p. 6).

> "For Liesel Meminger, there was the imprisoned stiffness of movement, and the staggered on slaught of thoughts. [...] This isn`t happening. This isn`t happening" (Zusak, 2013, p. 29)

The instinct of self-preservation does not just cover the need to preserve one`s life but, more importantly, the desire for protecting life as it was before the atrocity had arisen. The instinctive reaction of both Lina and Liesel is to hide in an artificially induced space-time, a territory of normalcy and balance. Throughout the long journey to Siberia, Lina constantly remembers fragments of her family life before the invasion; small flashbacks that make the return to reality even more traumatic. Memories are vivid, regretful and nostalgic.

> We all set on the velvet settee, Jonas on Papa`s lap. Mother wore her green silk dress with the full skirt. Her yellow hair fell in shiny waves against the side of her face, and her emerald earrings sparkled under the lights. Papa wore one of his new dark suits. I had chosen my cream-colored dress with the brown satin sash and a matching ribbon for my hair. (p. 34)

On the other hand, Liesel constructs her comfort zone within the reality itself. The basement where she hides Max and reads or studies is as tangible as the Nazis marching outside the house. In the basement, the girl bonds with her foster father. The location becomes a sanctuary and a territory of knowledge and wisdom.

> In one of their basement sessions, Papa dispensed with the sandpaper (it was running out fast) and pulled out a brush. There were no luxuries in the Hubermann household but there was an oversupply of paint, and it became more than useful for Liesel`s learning. Papa would say a word and the girl would have to spell it aloud and then paint it on the wall, as long as she got it right. After a month, the wall was recoated. A fresh cement page. (p. 77)

Regarding narratology, Martin Zusak successfully avoids the narrowing of the perspective, by not telling the story exclusively through the eyes of a young girl. Death, as a narrator, has the liberty of moving to and fro across the narrative, giving the reader a broader view of reality. When the ambience becomes too dense, when the development of the story gets too emotional and anxious, Death can change the scenery or create more tension by inserting thoughts and ideas that briefly distract the reader or redirect his/her attention.

> Now for a change of scenery.
> We`ve both had it too easy till now, my friend, don`t you think? How about we forget Molching for a minute or two?
> It will do us some good.
> Also, it`s important to the story.
> We will travel a little, to a secret storage room, and we will see what we see. (p. 145)

Liesel herself, seen from above by the omniscient narrator, acquires a three-dimensional profile; she gains depth and

astuteness. Death pretends to be distant and apathetic performing surgical depictions of terror. The result is a chilling sentiment that the reader experiences alongside with an augmented sense of empathy. Death depicts one of Liesel`s dreams about the trip she took by train, with her mother and her soon to be dead brother. The richness of details and the uniqueness of perspective come from the writer abandoning the first person narrative in favour of a third person narrative.

> For the most part, all is identical. The train moves at the same speed. Copiously, her brother coughs. This time, however, Liesel cannot see his face watching the floor. Slowly, she leans over. Her hand lifts him gently, from his chin, and there in front of her is the wide-eyed face of Max Vandenburg. He stares at her. A feather drops to the floor. The body is bigger now, matching the size of the face. The train screams. (p. 339)

Ruta Sepetys chooses to deliver her story through the eyes of a child. Lina becomes the narrator. A significant side of the story, therefore, remains hidden for the reader. The writer submits herself willingly to the restrictions of the narratological perspective she so has chosen; as a result, the novel suffers a loss regarding drama and climax. Whenever there is a need for witnessing the story from a different angle, Ruta Sepetys simply abandons her narrator or makes her observe, "hear whispers" (p. 72) and express thoughts or views slightly incongruent with the age and the experience of a fifteen-year-old girl.

> People discussed the war and how the Germans might save us. For once, the bald man said nothing. I wondered if what he said about Hitler was true. Could we be trading Stalin`s sickle for something worse? No one seemed to think so. Papa would know. He always knew those sorts of things, but he never discussed them with me. He discussed them with Mother. Sometimes at night I`d hear whispers and murmurs from their room. I knew that meant they were talking about the Soviets. (p. 72)

Space, the final frontier!

"Space, the final frontier" is the opening line of a well-known sci-fi series created by Gene Roddenberry in the 60s. The long and adventurous voyages of starships through space are an analogy for

the human spirit refusing to be confined to a singular reality. Even before *Star Trek*, the metaphor had been widely explored in a novel published by Arthur C. Clarke in 1953 (*Childhood`s End*). There, an advanced race of aliens, the Overlords, seized the Earth, assuring its prosperity provided that humans would not explore the space anymore.

In all the major utopian/dystopian narratives (*The Bible*, Thomas More`s *Utopia*, George Orwell`s *1984*, Aldous Huxley`s *Brave New World*, Tarun Tejpal`s *The Valley of Masks* s.o), individuals are compelled to comply with a space that others have created for them. As a recurrent outcome, the being upon whom the restriction is dropped rebels. Scrutinising the motivation of such refusal in accepting a space shaped and imposed by others, one may attain an inevitable conclusion: space has to be moulded to a certain extent by those who inhabit it. When the possibility removed, humans face the anxiety of surrendering their freedom.

Marc Augé, in his book *Non-places:An Introduction to Anthropology of Supermodernity*, published in 1992, defines the opposition between an "anthropological space" and a "non-space". While the former delineates a space charged with human emotions, the latter refers to a space of transience. An elevator is an anthropological space for the lift attendant while remaining a non-place for the individual who uses it occasionally. Augé`s concept eases the understanding of the complex mechanism of rejecting and dismissing space that does not resonate with one`s self.

> If a place can be definedas relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological spaces and which, unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of `places of memory`, and assigned to a circumscribedand specific position. (Augé, 1995, p. 78)

Liesel and Lina perceive the Soviet occupation and the Nazism as non-places. Compensatorily, they react by designing anthropological spaces. It is a common practice and a coping mechanism that literature uses when having to solve the

discrepancy between the outer and the inner reality, the contradictions of a horrific world that dramatically and drastically alters the coherence of a previous one:

> "Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten" (p. 79).

The basement where Liesel Meminger shelters and hides Max, a young Jew, turns into an epitome of the lost coherence of the world. There, Liesel, her foster father (Hans Hubermann), and Max read, talk and discuss the subjects that are dangerous and taboo in the outside world. Mythologically, the choice of the basement as space of normality and coherence is, at the same time, a catalyst of joy and sorrow. The fact that there is at least one zone of coherence falls into the realm of optimism, while the location of such a zone (underground, where Greek mythology places the Kingdom of Hades, god of the underworld, associated by modernity with the idea of death) becomes an indication of hopelessness.

Martin Zusak constructs three layers of reality, corresponding to three spaces; the basement, where the Nazis and their ideology are powerless; the house of the Hubermanns, where the turmoil of the outside world brutally and savagely discontinues but do not entirely suspends the commonality of a decent existence;Band the fictional city of Molching (probably, Munich), where the horrors seem to have wholly confiscated the everyday life. The three layers are separated by physical doors; when one opens, the reader gains access to a new reality. Two of the realities oppose each other (the basement and the streets of Molching), while the third one constitutes an agreeable transition retaining elements from the other two.

> The Hubermanns lived in one of the small block houses on Himmel street. A few rooms, a kitchen, and an outhouse shared with neighbours. The roof was flat and there was a shallow basement for storage. (p. 39)
> With the weather warming, Max remained downstairs all the time. During the day, the basement door was left open to allow the small bay of daylight to reach him from the corridor. (p. 257)

The smallest of the layers (the basement) holds the most humane of the three realities, while the biggest (the city itself) hosts large-scale atrocities. One can decode the message as an antinomy between the decency of the individual vs the irrational of the collective. Many times throughout the novel, the most emotional scenes take place underground, either in the basement or in a bomb shelter where individuals bond and rediscover values long forgotten in the city, such as generosity, kindness, compassion or empathy. The undisputed queen of them all is the young Liesel Meminger. She controls space with gaiety and sensibility, refusing to surrender to the outside world. Waiting for the sound of the sirens to indicate the threat is over, thecrowd gathered in the Fiedler`s basement experiences fear and regains compassion.

> Frau Holtzapfel`s eyes were trapped open. Her wiry frame was stooped forward, and her mouth was a circle. Herr Fiedler busied himself by asking people, sometimes repeatedly, how they were feeling. The young man, Rolf Schultz, kept to himself in a corner, speaking silently at the air around him, castigating it. His hands were cemented into his pockets. Rosa rocked back and forth, ever so gently. `Liesel`, she whispered, `come here`. She held the girl from behind, tightening her grip. She sang a song but it was so quiet that Liesel could not make it out. The notes were born on her breath, and they died at her lips. (pp. 381-382)

The Hubermanns die under the ruins of their own house, torn apart by bombs. The underground takes its toll, but the young girl continues to live, and, with her, the hope survives as well.

In *Between the Shades of Gray*, Ruta Sepetys chooses to design the refuge space in a different manner. Lina Vilkas, on her way to Siberia, recollects memories from her life before deportation. Born into a family of intellectuals from Kaunas, Lithuania, the young girl is interested in arts and paints with fervour and talent. Insignificant details from the narrative present trigger Lina`s withdrawal; she goes back in time, compensating the shock of deportation with serene images of a peaceful and happy existence.

> "Our sense of humor", said Mother, her eyes pooled with laughing tears. "They can`t take that away from us, right?" We roared with laughter. The lantern flames flickered in the

> dark. Joana`s brother pumped a playful tune on the accordion. My uncle, who had indulged in blackberry liquor, danced a disjointed jig around the backyard of the cottage, trying to imitate our mothers. He pretended to hold a skirt and looped from side to side. (p. 125)

Lina is incapable of controlling the process, which relies on external factors. Having to leave her house hurriedly, threatened by Soviets, she grabs "the loaf of fresh bread"(p. 8), and the gesture results in Lina remembering a scene from the bakery. Ruta Sepetys uses the same technique of writing whenever she feels the need to transport her literary character back in time. Patent of Marcel Proust (*In Search of Lost Time*), the method seems slightly inadequate in Ruta Sepetys`s novel. Firstly, because it interrupts the dramatical and alert events that take place in the narrative. In *Search of the Lost Time*, Swann escapes a rather placid reality and dives into an infinitely richer world of his memories, while in *Between the Shades of Gray*, Lina often disconnects when a certain climax is about to be attained. Consequently, the reader feels it as a fracture in the fabric of the narrative.

> We waited for our daily stops. It was the only time the door would be open to light or fresh air. [...] I had dreamed of seeing blue sky and feeling the sun on my face. But earlier, it had begun to rain. We had all scrambled to hold cups and containers out of the little slot to catch rainwater. *I snapped my umbrella closed, shaking the excess rainwater onto the sidewalk. A gentleman in a suit emerged from a restaurant, stepping quickly away from the drops I was splashing about.* (p. 63)

Secondly, the refuge-space does not have, as it happens in Liesel Meminger`s case, an invigorating aspect. Lina does not create an alternative reality but works within the limits of a frame controlled and defined by the oppressors. Her escape into the past brings her temporary comfort but does not equip her with a better understanding of the future. Liesel reads and tries to understand and make sense, Lina capitulates and dedicates her energy to surviving and coping: "There were only two possible outcomes in Siberia. Success meant survival. Failure meant death. I wanted life. I wanted to survive." (p. 319)

The transition from the universe of the deportation to the refuge-space, the movement to and fro from one to the other is

always harsh, with no physical door to make things easier. The world of memories finds itself continuously under siege, being the only one expected to compensate for the horrific reality of Lina`s existence. One time, Lina evades from reality to find herself in an equally painful universe, where she remembersone of Munch`s paintings, seen on a trip to the museum.

> I was exhausted but couldn`t sleep. I wondered if my cousin Joana was also on a train somewhere. Maybe she was near Papa. Papa said I could help him, but how could I help him if we were really going to Siberia? I dozed off, thinking of Andrius, trying to see his face. *As I walked by the piece, my feet stopped. The face. It was enchanting, like nothing I had ever seen. It was a charcoal portrait of a young man. The corners of his lips turned up, yet despite his smile, the pain on his face made my eyes well with tears.* (p. 52)

Both Liesel and Lina acquire a taste for art; Liesel steals and reads books, Lina draws. Art, in times of horror, becomes a tool of abandonment, a space in itself, a shelter that can sustain the individual and give him/her hope. However, while *The Book Thief* could fully enjoy her readings, in an isolated basement that offers the illusion of normality, Lina`s art requires the benevolence of her oppressors. Without pencils or papers, in a work camp where there is no intimacy, drawing could not function anymore as a space of calmness and privacy: "My drawings had failed. I had failed. I tried to sketch, but couldn`t. When I started to draw, the pencil moved by itself, propelled by something hideous that lived inside me." (p. 301)

Moreover, not only that Lina`s skill does not seem to help her, but draws attention on her when Komorov, the commander of the NKVD unit, wants his portrait drawn. The scene itself is one of the most emotional throughout the entire novel. The reader witnesses the confrontation between the oppressor and the oppressed, the clash between ingenuousness and acrimony. Lina could not lie in her drawings; she draws what she sees. Consequently, Komorov`s portrait accurately reflects his viciousness, his malevolence, his barbarity. From that moment on, it becomes clear that art could not function as a retreat space anymore; it has been stained and corrupted by a touch of evil.

> The uniform would be easy. I could draw it very accurately. It was his face that concerned me. When I imagined sketching the commander, I had no problem untilI got to his head. My mind saw a clean and pressed uniform, with a nest of wicked snakes sprouting out of his neck, or a skull with hollow black eyes, smoking a cigarette. The impressions were strong. I longed to draw them. I needed to draw them. But I couldn`t, not in front of the commander. (pp. 212 - 213)

The only space left for running from reality remain Lina`s memories. Under constant and permanent pressure, the space of Lina`s memories does not hold for long. There is a glitch in the universe of memories, a Trojan horse in the belly of which fragments from outside reality hide, waiting for the right moment to penetrate and contaminate. If at the beginning of the novel Lina`s recollections are mostly bright and serene, by the end of it they attain a certain gloominess and sadness.

Conclusions

By analysing chronotopes, one gains access to the depths of a literary text. The space-time in the literature of atrocity functions compensatorily as an alternative to an inhumane reality. The literary character becomes a paramount element that could mould the space or allows himself/herself being embedded in its fabric. By designing elaborated techniques of surpassing and transgressing the space, the narrator controls the general atmosphere of the narrative. In novels that deal with atrocities, hope comes from the ability to escape reality and from the capacity to conceive a surrogate universe that holds and preserves sanity. In order to hold, it has to be as robust as the primary reality.

Space depleted of human emotions becomes non-space. In a non-space, mechanical laws function. Individuals are valued only as part of a collectivity, and everything is sacrificed on the altar of a greater good. The greater good is a promise postponed indefinitely. These are the thesis encapsulated in all utopian/dystopian narratives. They equally operate for the literature of atrocity. Liberation may arise from the attempt of turning non-spaces into anthropological spaces, through the refusal of collectivity and the firm pronouncement of one`s individuality. When the oppressive machinery makes the task unachievable, individuals have the option of creating and shaping

their own anthropological space (Liesel Meminger, in *The Book Thief*) or seeking refuge in a pre-existing one (Lina Vilkas, in *Between the shades of Gray*). In the first case, the resistance could be active and tenacious, in the second one, there is always a strong probability that the primary space invades and contaminates the space of resistance.

A buffer zone between the dominant space (Nazism and deportation, in our case) and the safe space (the basement and the realm of Lina`s memories) facilitates the transition to the safe zone, once created. In its absence, the proximity of the two worlds increases the risk of overlapping. Whenever Lina evades from the working camp into her own memories, she brings with her the hardship and the troubles she has experienced in the camp. Liesel Meminger, having a decontamination zone, the house of the Hubermanns, which interposes between the basement and the streets of Molching, succeeds better in preserving her genuineness.

Art is the first target of any utopian/dystopian society because art is the affirmation of individuality. The novels of atrocity often contain passages where Art is perceived by the establishment as a menace. In *The Book Thief*, the Nazis burn the books considered submissive and threatening, and in *Between Shades of Gray* Lina`s fondness for drawing is strongly and severely discouraged. When practised out in the open (Lina`s attempt to draw inside the working camp), Art is subjected to alteration and adulteration. Consequently, it may lose its power to act as an escape route. A literary character needs to unfold Art in a confined space of safety and security (the basement, in Martin Zusak`s novel) to preserve its powers and functions.

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