

## Abstract

**Research Paper:** “Then I Will Be Free Too:” The Ontology of Hope and the Politics of Death in *Dirty Pretty Things* and *Children of Men*

**Student:** Katlyn Williams

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**College:** Sciences and Humanities

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My research project, through a reading of the British films *Children of Men* and *Dirty Pretty Things* seeks to explore the phenomenon of human life being subjected absolutely to sovereign power—a process that can result in the production of a state of living death. I will illustrate the effects that such productions have on ideas of individual and collective existence when beset with the constant, immediate threat of death and the concomitant reduction of human bodies into a site of extreme object-hood, or the state of meaningless flesh. I am interested in viewing each of the visual representations of these spaces as examples of Giorgio Agamben’s “state of exception,” where the power of citizenship and individual rights are forfeited and the government holds ultimate power over life and death. I will also focus on exploring the figuration of temporality in such zones of emergency, where the banal occurrence of violence collapses and seals the sign of the future into a glacial present—an experience where the movement of time seems meaningless and repetitive. The major goal for this project is to examine the question of hope within these zones; is there hope at all, and if so, how is it expressed and what does it mean? I will argue that, ultimately, death takes on a different role in such zones of exception, where mobile conceptions of time have collapsed. For instance, the sacrificial death of Theo, the protagonist in *Children of Men*, serves as a symbolic gesture towards a future-to-come, rather than symbolizing futility and nothingness. The corporeal sacrifice exposes a futural gaze that indicates profound hope and demonstrates the capability of the body to act as agent even in extreme environments.

