

FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FOCALIZATION IN LITERARY TEXTS (ANALYSIS OF SECTIONS IN D. MITCHELL'S NOVEL "BLACK SWAN GREEN")

ФУНКЦИОНАЛЬНЫЕ ОСОБЕННОСТИ СВЯЗКИ ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫХ ТЕКСТОВ

EDEBİ METİNLERDE BAĞLANTI ÖZELLİKLERİNİN FONKSİYONLARI

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the problem of analyzing a literary text from the viewpoint of narrative studies and focuses on the category of focalization, a term suggested by the French scholar Gerard Genette. Focalization usually refers to the structure of a narrative perspective which implies its communication to the reader. In narratology, the term "perspective" denotes choice of narrative instance including interference with the events depicted, that is forming the narrative perspective/focalization. In this article, the structure of **Black Swan Green** will be analyzed in accordance with the perspective suggested by Russian scholars B.A. Uspensky and V. Shmid. These instances are: perceptive, ideological, spatial, chronological and linguistic.

Keywords: literary text, narrative, narrator, focalization, perspective, instances.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье рассматривается проблема анализа художественного текста с точки зрения повествовательных инстанций. При этом особое внимание уделяется категории фокализации. Сам термин был предложен французским исследователем Ж.Женеттом. Как правило, данный термин связан с изучением структуры точки зрения в повествовании и способами донесения ее до читателя. В нарратологии термин «точка зрения» подразумевает выбор повествовательной инстанции, включающий в себя вмешательство в описываемые события, что позволяет формировать точку зрения повествования, или фокализацию. В данной статье структура романа "Black Swan Green" будет проанализирована в соответствии с аспектами точки зрения, предложенными российскими исследователями Б.А. Успенским и В.Шмидом. Данные инстанции включают в себя перцептивную, идеологическую, пространственную, временную и языковую.

Ключевые слова: художественный текст, повествование, повествователь, фокализация, точка зрения, инстанции.

ÖZET

Bildiride edebiyat metinlerinin hikaye tarzı açısından yapılan tetkik konuları incelenmiştir. Bundan dolayı fokalizasyon kategorisine özel dikkat çekilmiştir. Bu terim ilk defa Fransız araştırmacı olan J. Jennet tarafından kullanılmıştır. Kaide olarak, anılan terim okura anlatma ve aktarmada metin yapısının incelenmesi ile ilgilidir. Narratolojide “Bakış Açısı” diye kullanılan terim anlatılan olaylara müdahale edildiğinde anlatma şekillerinin seçeneklerini içeriyor ve bu da fokalizasyon yani anlatma görüşlerinin şekillendirilmesine yol açıyor. Makalemizde “Black Swan Green” romanının yapısı Rus araştırmacılarından B.A. Uspensky ve V. Şmidt tarafından kullanılan “Bakış Açısı” denilen terime göre tetkik edilmiştir. Anılan tarzlar partseptivsel, ideolojikselse, mesafeselse, zamansal ve dilsel kavramları içeriyor.

Anahtar elimeler: Edebi metinler, hikaye, hikayeyi anlatan, fokalizasyon, görüş açısı, tarz.

Study of literary text is particularly interesting from the viewpoint of the analysis of its language and author’s individual style, as well as literary and psychological trends. Such aspects as its categories, generation of meaning, tropes and vocabulary, perception and interpretation are also being the center of scholars’ close attention.

A literary text is a polysemic and multi-layered system. Each of its elements interacts with others thus unfolding the author’s intentions. Thus it is the analysis of such interaction between various layers of text that is of special interest.

Focalization is one of the most interesting and meaningful categories of literary text. The term itself was introduced by the French literary theorist Gerard Genette in his 1972 essay “Figures III”. By “focalization” he means the structure of a narrative perspective which implies its communication to the reader.

Introduction of the term enabled to 1) further detail the complex notion of narrative structure by distinguishing between perspective and narrative voice; 2) single out the narrative instance to which the “visual information” is vectored and for which it is aimed when being transmitted via the “focalizator” – that is the instance of the “implicit viewer”; 3) not just to actualize the visual (spatial) aspect of narrative but also to emphasize it being structured since focalization suggests structuring the narrative space and modeling its perception by recipient; 4) discover and analyze the mechanisms of text by means of which its ideology is actualized. (Gennet, 1998).

Narrative structure is comprised of such text categories as narrative perspective, subject of speech, type of narrative and addressee. Elements of narrative structure interact throughout the whole narrative. Perspectives may represent both the characters and particular subject of speech – the narrator. There manifoldness and interrelatedness then become the source of textual actualization (Nikolina, 2001)

Novel under consideration in the article is a system of ideological and literary aspects. Each element of this system comes into interaction and interrelation with one another. I.R. Galperin introduced a system of text-forming categories and parameters. They are as follows: cohesiveness, connectedness, completeness, absolute anthropocentricity, social

orientation, dialogue orientation, uncoiling, continuity, static character, dynamic character, intensity, aesthetic quality, imagery and interpretability. (Galperin, 1981: 47)

According to N.A. Nikolina's classification "structure of the text" is related to such textual categories as narrative perspective subject of speech and type of narrative. Perspectives of narrative may vary; their fixation may be related to the speaker. Literary text determines the dynamic correlation between various aspects of subject and speech, narrator's speech and characters' speech. Forms of speech may also vary and acquire different forms. On the other hand, in case narration lacks the means of representing one's speech, that character's perspective may be motivated by selection and sequence of descriptive components. (Nicolina, 2001; 135)

"Perspective" itself is subdivided into internal and external one depending on the way the events are represented and is not always determined by the type of narrator. Among many definitions of perspective we decided to follow the definition suggested by V. Shmid according to which the elements of narrative structure include type of narrative, types of narrators and perspective. In narratology the term "perspective" carries a certain "organizational" character, being connected to generating and structuring a text. That is, "perspective" is viewed as a device of certain sort. B.A. Uspensky uses the term "perspective" in two ways and represents it in four aspects that are: ideological; linguistic; space-and-time characteristics; and psychological. (Uspensky, 1970: 89).

G. Genette in his "Figures" re-considers perspective studies introducing an important borderline between "who is viewing?" and "who is speaking?" aspects, thus bringing the term "focalization" into view. Focalization means structuring perspective within the narration and communicating it to the reader/viewer. G. Genette singles out three types of narration which in their turn imply three types of focalization: zero-focalized narration, internally focalized narration (fixed, variable or multiple) and externally focalized narration. A text may contain more than one focalization – novel, for instance, usually focuses on more than one problem and uses several plotlines. An array of focals (formed by characters' and narrator's perspective) comprise author's world model eventually leading to the main idea. (Genette, 1998)

Let us give a brief description of the analyzed novel. "Black Swan Green" is fourth work of the British author David Mitchell published in 2006. The novel is set in a provincial English town of Black Swan Green and gives the record of one year in the life of 13-year old Jason Taylor, both the narrator and protagonist. Each chapter of the novel depicts the events of one month in chronological order from January 1982 to January 1983. The given structure allows neither to rearrange nor to decompose it into elements. The method of narration used by the author quite suits the depiction of a period of adolescence when each month may bring about changes so numerous that one might fail to compose them logically.

Each chapter represents quite an independent storyline complete with complication, climax and denouement. Connection between the chapters is provided by the author's intentions. Titles of each of them are related to an important episode in Jayson's life, each time revealing a new aspect of his life and personality. All the titles have metaphorical meaning which only unfolds when reading the corresponding chapter.

The narrative is an autodiegetic one where the narrator and protagonist are one person. The narrator is auctorial; he is in contrasted to the author and is placed within the fictional

space. Thus, the reader is to focus on reflections and comments of the narrator – Jason. The tradition of teenage narrator was primarily introduced by J.D. Salinger in “Catcher in the Rye”. Both novels deal with problems of growing up, sexual relations, family ties and self-identification.

Jason’s personality is comprised of several aspects taking the form of imaginary characters. It is also important that Jason is a talented poet – publishing his works under the pseudonym of Eliot Bolivar – and forced to hide this side of his personality for fear of mock and abuse from his less sensitive classmates.

The main theme of the novel unfolds through contrast between the “inner” self of Jayson – a sensitive, clever and rather shy boy, and his “outer” self – striving to be accepted in the “cool” circle and reluctantly partaking in rather brutal activities of other boys. Jayson’s age (thirteen) is also of importance. This is a period of transition from childhood to adolescence when one is no longer a child anymore, but not quite adult yet. The pains of growing up, self-identification within the given society are the main themes of the novel. The novel ends in Jason realizing the importance of self acceptance and ability to stand up for one’s views.

As it was mentioned before, the term “perspective” in narratology denotes choice of narrative instance including interference with the events depicted that is forming the narrative perspective/focalization. In this article the structure of “Black Swan Green” will be analyzed according to aspects of perspective suggested by B.A. Uspensky and V. Shmid. They are: perceptive, ideological, spatial, chronological and linguistic. In our case perceptive and spatial aspects coincide; thus we did not analyze them separately.

The most important factor that influences perception of events and is often identified with narrative perspective or focalization in general is the “prism” through which the events are viewed and perceived. Therefore it is perceptive aspect that is aimed at placing questions like: “Who is viewing the events?” and “Who is responsible for the choice of details?” (Usmanova, 2001: 126)

Perceptive perspective in many cases coincides with spatial one (as does in our case). The main characteristic feature of the analyzed novel is the fact that everything (people, nature, events) are depicted from the perspective of the protagonist Jason Taylor. The world is perceived through his eyes and the author selects and presents the facts according to Jason’s ideological position and emotional state.

Jason is a somewhat unusual boy. His secret imaginary alter-egos are: “Hangman”, “Unborn Twin” and “Maggot”. They represent different angles of his personality. Maggot is the embodiment of Jason’s most ashamed-of characteristics, those of cowardly and pitiful person:

1. *‘Trouble, shouts, threats, police, whimpered Maggot. Stammering in court when you’re called to give evidence. And are you sure you just saw what you thought you saw?’* (Mitchell, 2006: 243) Whimpering and self-defamation at the first sight of slightest danger is Maggot’s usual trend of behavior.

Unborn Twin personifies the idealized version of Jason, courageous and daring always challenging him into doing something that the “real” Jason secretly wants but dares not do. At one point, for example, Unborn Twin urges Jason to drink a glassful of wine, something that the boy’s father would certainly not approve of:

2. “She gestured at the bottle of wine stood on a pearly table. ‘You will drink a little?’ A whole glass, said Unborn Twin. I could hear Dad saying, *You drank* what? ‘No thanks.’ (ibid.: 182)

In Chapter 2 we are introduced to yet another imaginary personality, “Hangman”. The name refers to a popular word game. Hangman first appeared in Jason’s life five years ago when the class was playing this game. The letters already guessed by the players were written on the blackboard: NIGH-ING--E. When Jason raises his hand to utter “Nightingale” his stutter is revealed in front of the whole class. The harder he tries the worse it becomes:

3. “Any duh-brain could work that out, so I put up my hand. Miss Throckmorton said, ‘Yes, Jason?’ and *that* was when my life divided into Before Hangman and After Hangman. The word ‘nightingale’ kaboomed in my skull but it *wouldn’t come out*. The ‘N’ got okay, but the harder I forced the rest, the tighter the nose got. I remember Lucy Sneads whispering to Angela Bullock, stifling giggles. I remember Robyn South staring at this bizarre sight. I’d’ve done the same if it hadn’t been me. When a stammerer stammers their eyeballs pop out, they go trembly-red like an evenly matched arm wrestler and their mouth gupperrupperruppers like a fish in a net. It must be quite a funny sight. ...”. (ibid.: 30)

Mid-paragraph we observe the shift from auctorial perspective to neutral one. Thus Jason is trying to abstract himself from the embarrassing image of a stutterer with popped-out eyes and short of breath. Growing sense of humiliation and shame experienced by the boy are emphasized by gradation and syntactic parallelism. The effect obtained here is that of “zooming-out” as the boy’s mind gets further and further away – from his classroom, from the town, from the country. He painfully feels how literally everything and everyone – from the teacher and other children and culminating in clouds in the sky and Margaret Thatcher herself – is staring at him waiting to utter the word. Although the section is written in third-person narrative it is still Jason who is the focalizer which allows us to perceive the situation through his own sensations.:

4. “... It wasn’t funny for me, though. Miss Throckmorton was waiting. Every kid in the classroom was waiting. Every cow and every spider in Black Swan Green was waiting. Every cloud, every car on every motorway, even Mrs Thatcher in the House of Commons’d frozen, listening, thinking. *What’s wrong with Jason Taylor?* (ibid.: 31)

The above-mentioned coinciding of perceptive and spatial perspective in the novel might have been determined by the type of narrative, where the reader focuses on judgments and comment of the narrator. At the same time the reader (presumably a more mature person) has better understanding of certain events mentioned in the novel than a 13-year old schoolboy (for example his misinterpretation of parents’ behavior or some historical and political events).

By choosing the words denoting various means of physical perception the author manages to record more than just visual impressions of the protagonist. For example, this is how Jason views and perceives the company of a girl he has a crush on:

5. “Dawn Madden sat in the cockpit of an ancient tractor, whittling a stick. She wore a bomber jacket and mud-sturred Doc Martens with red laces. Her oil-black hair’s sort of punky. She must use gel. I’d love to gel her gel in for her. Her lipstick was Fruit Gum redcurrant. Dawn Madden unzipped her bomber jacket. Her crucifix was chunky and black like a Goth’s and nestled between her subtle breasts. Stewy air stroked Dawn Madden’s

milk-chocolate throat. Dawn Madden eyes are dark honey. Dawn Madden eyes are dark honey". (ibid.: 105) The impression created is a very sensuous one, that of something extremely delightful both to touch, to smell and to taste.

Perception is directly connected with language aspect, for we perceive the reality in categories and notions granted by our linguistic abilities. Literature, for instance, dwells on understanding that while perceiving an event a hero articulates his impression in speech (be that even an internal one). This is the basis of communicating a character's perception of reality via unuttered represented speech. When communicating a character's perception a narrator does not add the language; it already exists before the beginning of communication and within the act of perception. That is why language perspective is relevant for perception of events in literary text. (Shmid, 2003: 125)

Language perspective is of particular importance in fictional narratives where a narrator is able to communicate the event via a character's speech instead of his own. In some cases it is not easy to distinguish between language perspective and ideological one. However it is quite clear that there is a system of lexical and syntactical devices carrying a less obvious evaluative connotations. Therefore in many cases it is not so difficult to differentiate these perspectives. (Shmid, 2003: 125)

In "Black Swan Green" language perspective is expressed in the text by single unique words particularly characteristic of Jason's manner of speaking. Occasional words and combinations form a kind of code system that Jason only communicates to himself and understands:

6. 'Laughter acker-ack-acked after me, like machine guns; "koochy lips"; "a crocodilish dog"; "a graveyard sardined with bodies" (Mitchell, 2006: 117) - all these words and word-combinations reflect the unique vision of the protagonist, his hidden talent to use the words.

Communication of child's perspective, fresh, spontaneous and far from being standard brings the unique manner of comparisons, epithets and metaphors and metonymy, for example, "titchy as commas", "tulips... black plum, emulsion white and yolky gold". They also help to reveal Jason as a poetically gifted child.

Another unique feature of Jason's speech is shown in the form of internal remarks and full internal dialogues he habitually has with other (often imaginary) characters. The author uses italics to show the "remarks" of Jason's imaginary alter-egos:

7. "*I should have been born*, hissed Unborn Twin, *not you, you cow.*" (ibid.: 45)

Jason's lines prevented from being uttered by Hangman are marked with inverted commas:

8. 'Uh.' (Hangman stopped the 'Not' of 'Not bad.') 'Fine. Agnes says you just' - Hangman blocked 'sold' - 'a customer bought a picture.'" (ibid.: 191) Also throughout the novel David Mitchell uses dashes to mark Jason's stutter.

The also rather complicated first-person narrative in the novel is further complicated by parenthesis breaking into the protagonist's stream of consciousness. Unlike, for example "Catcher in the Rye" where Holden's inner monologues and remarks are not marked in the text, in "Black Swan Green" they are quite frequent. Parenthesis often serves as a context for the protagonist, disclosing the word blocked by Hangman.

In some cases it allows Jason to insert an inner remark. In the example below the parenthesized segment draws out attention to Jason's inner reflection. Its meaning contrasts with the meaning of the main segment: while Dad talks about Holland's former glory Jason reflects upon his words. His thoughts both characterize the father and suddenly reveal hidden disharmony in father – son relations. Without the parenthesis Jason's inner speech would disappear and another angle of inner conflict would become obvious. Each of them talks or thinks about different things without actually listening to each other.:

9. "Dad said how in those days Holland was a powerful as the USSR is today. Holland! (Often I think boys don't become men. Boys just get paper-mached inside a man's mask. Sometimes you can tell the boy is still there.) Julia talked about her afternoon in the solicitors office in Malvern". (ibid.: 127)

Language perspective in the novel is also expressed through a system of school names and nicknames used by the students and marking its bearer's social status. Since Jason's reputation is in constant danger as a result of Hangman's presence (personification of his stutter) this hierarchy is of special importance to him. In the opening section of the novel he gives an interesting observation of this strict and often unforgiving system. The vocabulary and imagery of the segment represents a mixture of childish explicitness and surprising maturity of the 13-year old boy:

10. "Kids who're really popular get called by their first names, so Nick Yew's always just 'Nick'. Kids who're a bit popular like Gilbert Swinyard have sort of respectful nicknames like 'Yardy'. Next down are kids with piss-take nicknames like Moran Moron or Nicholas Briar who's Knickerless bra. It's all ranks, being a boy, like the army. If I called Gilbert Swinyard, just 'Swinyard' he'd kick my face in. Or if I called Moron 'Dean' in front of everyone, it'd damage my own standing". (ibid.: 4)

Jason is always painfully aware of any particular name he is called at school. One's status may change, so can a nickname. In the chapter titled "Rocks" Jason suddenly becomes quite popular. It becomes clear to him when a "cool" kid calls him out:

11. "Neal Brose's been giving me the cold shoulder this term, but today he called out, "What'll it be, Jace?" (ibid.: 157)

In "Maggot" however Jason suddenly loses his luck and is referred to as "Maggot" (coincidentally, the name of his most despised imaginary alter-ego) by other popular classmate:

12. 'Maaaaagot!' Gary Drake sang out of the mist by the Black Swan. 'Where's your bag?' (ibid.: 273)

Chronological perspective denotes the distance between the initial and later perception of events. The word "perception" here corresponds not only to the first impression but also includes its processing and realization. What could be the consequences of shifting the perspective chronologically? If spatial shift is related to the shift in view, then chronological shift causes changes in knowledge and evaluation. As time distance grows one's knowledge of cause and effect grows also which in its turn may result in re-evaluation of the previous events. As grows the time distance between communication of an event and its perception (or between first impression and later realization), a viewer's knowledge may lessen as a result of forgetting certain facts. (Shmid, 2003: 124)

As it was mentioned before the novel consists of thirteen chapters embracing thirteen months from the life of protagonist. Each chapter is compositionally independent linked mainly by characters and setting (a small town of Black Swan Green). Jason himself characterizes it as England's most boring place: "There aren't even any white swans...it's some sort of a local joke". (Mitchell, 2006: 7) Jason has never been outside the neighboring town. The author's attention is fully focused on the inner life of a boy who is both perceiving and trying to evaluate his environment.

Names of chapters are deeply metaphoric and can be fully understood only upon reading their contents. "Hangman" for instance tells not just of the popular game but also of an important aspect of Jason's personality thus helping us to better understand the narrator. The title "Rocks" refers not only to rocky landscapes of the Falkland islands (Britain's war with Argentina is one of the background events in the novel) but also to the rock garden, one of the reasons of "battles" between Jason's mom and dad. In "Souvenirs" we read about birthday presents Jason receives from different people (a kite from Dad's colleague, a fossil from dad and tickets to the cinema from Mom). Some of the gifts however turn out to be of much lesser value later, when it becomes clear that estranged Dad is only trying to make up for his failure to show up at his son's party.

In "January Man", the first chapter of the novel the author introduces us to Jason's family, gradually beginning to unfold the details of the setting, time period, the characters' life and most importantly with the protagonist's inner world. The last chapter has the same title thus framing the novel's structure and composition. Jason however is far from being the same person inside and out. His parents divorce, he moves out of Black Swan Green with Mom, his sister moves out to go to college. Jason is not the same person. Problems that once were crucial to him are now of much less importance and things he used to find fascinating and mysterious turn out to be ordinary and clear. The nearby forest he used to imagine as endlessly vast is now quite small:

13. 'But...I thought this place was...miles from anywhere.' 'Here? Nah! Just between Pig Lane and the quarry. Where the gypsies camp in the autumn. This whole wood's only a few acres, y'know. Two or three footy pitches, tops. Hardly Sherwood Forest.' (Mitchell, 2006: 364)

The local worker's description contains a number of evaluative words bearing a somewhat of degrading connotation: 'only a few acres', 'two or three footy pitches, tops', 'hardly'. Short simple sentences make the speaker's opinion more complete. The fragment also contains a reference to Sherwood forest, the mythic home of the legendary Robin Hood, a symbol of youthful romanticism and chivalry that has now lost its magic. Jason has matured. The theme of growing up is a central one to this novel, the one that makes the narrative both cohesive and complete.

In the beginning of the novel Jason is eager to do anything to be accepted by a gang of popular classmates thus often neglecting the loyalty of his less popular friend Dean Moran whom others refer to simply as "Moron". Finally in order to join the gang both boys are invited to go through initiation ritual. In the example below Jason reflects upon the situation rather cold-bloodily:

14. "This development was confusing, disappointing and worrying. Confusing 'cause Dean Moran's just not Spooks material. Disappointing 'cause what was the point of joining the Spooks if losers like Moran're being recruited too? Worrying 'cause this smelt like a

wind-up”. (ibid.: 165) Here Jason obviously places himself much higher than his “loser” friend and prepares to abandon him if necessary.

Jason passes the ritual successfully already considering himself part of the gang. But when Dean gets into some serious trouble Jason rushes off to help him although he knows the gang will never forgive him. This is the moment when Jason’s character starts to develop from a shy boy ready to go along with anything to become more popular to a far more confident person capable of standing up for himself and choose friends for himself. In the beginning of the novel Jason refers to Dean by his nickname “Moron”:

15. ‘Goodbye, then, Mrs Taylor,’ said Moron. ‘Goodbye, Dean,’ said Mum. Mum’s never liked Moron”. (ibid.: 4)

Mid-novel Jason begins to change; thus degrading “Moron” develops into a more respectful “Moran” (Dean’s actual surname):

16. “Me and Moran listened for the sound of pursuit”. (ibid.: 117)

Finally this changes into “Dean” marking a new stage in the boys’ friendship and a new phase in Jason’s life. Jason builds his own hierarchy and places Dean into it gradually realizing the meaning of inner independence and true friendship:

17. “As surely, the richest kid in the Three Counties, I bought one [toffee apple] for me, Dean and Maxine’ (ibid.: 316).

The unique and precise presence of linguistic perspective therefore allows following the development of Jason’s mind via his verbal connectedness with other characters of the novel.

Ideological perspective includes the number of factors which define the viewer’s subjective relation to the events observed: his/her system of knowledge, way of thinking, judgments and outlook. One’s perception is defined by *knowledge* as well as one’s vision is defined by *evaluation*. Isolation of ideological perspective in a text is often considered arguable. The problem here is not as much the relevance between “ideology” and “perspective” as it is the multidimensionality of this notion as well as the fact that ideological aspect is often difficult to separate from other perspective viewpoints. Ideology is implicitly omnipresent but can also manifest itself in more direct and explicit judgment. Since “Black Swan Green” is largely built around a teenage boy developing and maturing, one should bear in mind when analyzing it that family ties are crucial in the process of any individual’s formation.

Our protagonist constantly faces problems stemming from lack of understanding between his parents that leads to their divorce. Jason is unable to fully comprehend the cause of it, so he starts to take the blame upon himself instead. In the example below Jason mentally compares himself with a “perfect” son he has previously seen in a movie:

18. “If I’d been more like an ideal son like on *Little House on the Prairie*, if I’d been less sulky, then maybe Mum and Dad’s marriage might’ve been’ (the true word was ‘sunnier’ but hangman was active today) ‘friendlier.” (ibid.: 200).

Jason’s personality in the novel is defined by two aspects of his life. Firstly, it is his stutter. Secondly, it is his love for writing and poetry. These two aspects also happen to be his biggest secret because of his fear to be mocked and humiliated especially by his classmates.

He manages to conceal his stutter thanks to his (somewhat forced) talent to find synonyms for “problem” words and following the recommendation of his speech therapist to possibly avoid reading aloud in class. Jason’s poetic side is only known to his family. They know that their son and younger brother successfully publishes his poems under the pseudonym “Eliot Bolivar” (a combination of names “Thomas Eliot” and “Simon Bolivar”) in “Black Swan Green Parish Magazine”. Jason is convinced that once his classmates learn about his poetic activities his life will be over.

Although the novel is a piece of realistic fiction, the book is filled with the feeling of magic characteristic of a certain period in child’s life. Jason is fond of everything exotic and other-worldly. One may conclude that the real world filled with bullies, stuttering, family problems and injustice is in stark contrast with Jason’s imaginary world which helps him to avoid these problems. Jason-the-narrator combines the ability to see the hidden beauty of words and is often as apt with them as a mature writer; but he is also a child with extremely rich imagination. Tales Jason heard as a small child come to life in his imagination: Dad’s office reminds him of Bluebeard’s chamber which visitors enter with awe and fear. He imagines the ghost of a boy who drowned in the lake skating on its ice when nobody sees him. He is drawn to the nearby forest where the mysterious “Gypsies” are camping and an eerie old lady lives in magic cabin. In the example below we see how Jason’s perception effectively interweaves reality and magic:

19. “I sat on the empty bench to eat a slab of Jamaican Ginger cake, then went out on the ice. Without other kids watching, I didn’t fall once. Round and around in swoopy anticlockwise loops I looped, a stone on the end of a string. Overhanging trees tried to touch my head with their finger. Rooks craw...craw...crawed, like old people who’ve forgotten why they’ve come upstairs”. (ibid.: 20)

Jason’s inner world is also deeply marked by the combination of maturity and naivety. When Falkland war ends he keeps an album with newspaper clippings. In the example below he focalizes a historical event as something of a tremendous importance to humanity:

20. “Neal Brose is keeping one too. He reckons it’ll be worth a fortune twenty or thirty years from now when the Falklands War has turned history. But all this excitement’ll never turn dusty and brown in archives and libraries. No way. People’ll remember *everything* about the Falklands till the end of the world”. (ibid.: 111) Twenty-first century reader knows that in the context of many other political events that followed this one is far from being the most crucial – a detail that falls outside the frame of focalization.

As we could see the ideological perspective in the novel unites fragments of other perspectives. It manifests itself in contrasting Jason’s naivety and maturity, moral strengths and weaknesses at the same time bringing forward his poetic imagination, sensitivity and obvious talent as defining aspects of his personality and narrative.

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