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## THE IMAGE OF THE NARRATOR IN MARKUS ZUSAK'S NOVEL "THE BOOK THIEF"

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The article deals with the lexical, syntactic, stylistic means of creating the image of the narrator in Markus Zusak's novel "The Book Thief". Among the most frequent devices are the accumulation of the words and expressions related to Death for it becomes the narrator in the novel, detachment, prospections and retrospection, transferred epithets, rhetorical questions, repetitions.

**Keywords:** narrator, prospection, retrospection, detachment, rhetorical questions, repetition.

**The problem under discussion.** Markus Zusak is the author of "The Book Thief" which has become an international bestseller, was translated into many languages and got the screen version. The novel is devoted to the Holocaust. Liesel Meminger comes to Molching to live with her foster parents. Her small brother Werner dies on the journey. The girl takes with her a grave-digger's handbook which later on she uses as her first reading Manual. Characters of the book represent different types of people. Liesel becomes the only survivor of the air raid. The novel depicts horrors of war, psychology of the people living in those tragic times. To describe events the writer chooses Death as his narrator who comments on the development of the plot. To create the image of Death the author uses a number of devices. Death is not a scary old witch with a scythe. Death is a gentleman that is able to tell the story but in his own peculiar way. The narration is Ich-form, but other types can also be found in the text: description, dialogues, represented inner and uttered speech. A special role is given to words related to death, verbs of motion, parenthesis, detachment, rhetorical questions. Illogicality manifests itself in the use of transferred epithets and paradox. The novel includes philosophical observations, vivid imagery and syntax structures.

**The general overview of the latest literature on the subject and identifying the previously unsolved parts of the general problem.** Markus Zusak, an Australian writer from Sydney, was born in 1975. He is the author of five books. His novel "The Book Thief" has become an international bestseller that has been translated into more than forty languages and has already got a screen version. Writing this novel was inspired by real-life events related to the author by his German parents. This young-adult book has got its reviews in the main newspapers and has been called "a novel of breath-taking scope, masterfully told" (Guardian), "beautiful and angry", (Sunday Telegraph), "un unusual and compelling novel" (The Irish Examiner).

The book that appeared at the top of the New York Times bestseller list is a story about the Holocaust. In 1939, nine-year-old Liesel Meminger is being taken to live with her foster parents Hans and Rosa Hubermanns in Molching, a town outside Munich on the road of Dachau. Liesel's small brother dies on the train journey. At the brother's burial the girl finds and takes with her a grave-digger's handbook dropped in the snow, which is destined to become her first reading manual.

Hans Hubermann is a house-painter and an accordion player who hides a Jew named Max Vandenburg because Max's father once saved his own life during the World War I. Characters from the novel represent different types of the Germans, both inhuman Nazis and common people who are the victims of the war. Liesel's close friend, classmate and neighbor Rudy Steiner is passionate about the black athlete Jesse Owens. Ilsa Hermann, the mayor's wife, cannot recover from the loss of her son. In the last part of the novel 14-year-old Liesel is writing about the experiences in the notebook presented to her by Ilsa Hermann in the basement, thus becoming the only survivor of the night air raid that completely destroyed Himmel Street and killed its inhabitants. The book shows the horrors of war, the psychology of people living in those tragic times, the tremendous losses of the devastation.

To depict these the writer chooses Death as his narrator who comments on the events, their development and consequences. D.A. de Oliveira, S.S. Maggio argue that the issue concerning focalization is relevant to be taken into consideration when a literary work is analyzed. The novel is discussed under the assumptions from the narratological field. It is stated that focalization in "The Book Thief" is one of the main literary techniques which helps to create the atmosphere and meaning of the text [3, p. 135]. Death sees beyond the frontiers of human eyes and perception, the writer provides panoramic bird's eye view, shows the supernatural nature of the narrator enhancing the dramatic effect of the story. D.A. de Oliveira, S.S. Maggio state that Death is atemporal and mention the support of colorful imagery and imaginative syntax of the novel [3, p. 135–142].

**The aim** of the article is to analyse the devices of the author that are used to create the image of the narrator in the book. **The tasks** will be to show different levels of the narration – lexical, phraseological, syntactic, stylistic, to analyse the findings and types of narration that are used in order to reveal its main ideas. **The method** of contextual analysis proved to be helpful in the work as well as the descriptive one. The method of phraseological identification lies in the basis of selecting phraseological units from the text.

**The main part of the investigation.** Death threatens at the beginning of the book, everyone is afraid of it, but the image created by the author differs greatly from the spooky and scary old witch

with a sickle or a scythe, with the face without a nose and the holes instead of the eyes, dressed all in black, with loose cloak on that takes people's lives and deprives them of any joy. The image of Death is that of a chivalrous gentleman that is able to tell a story, but in his own peculiar way. The task of analyzing this peculiarity is set in the given paper. In order to show Death a number of different recurrent devices are used. Among them is anaphoric repetition: "I am all bluster. – I am not violent. I am not malicious. I am a result" [5, p. 16]. The desire to reassure the readers causes this statement, simple yet profound. Parallel constructions with unexpected end add to the emphasis of the idea forming anticlimax. Repetition may be combined with graphic stylistic devices; they mean the Nazis [5, p. 121]. The exclamation may be repeated denoting strong feelings, emotional stress: "Jesus, Mary and Joseph!" This exclamation sometimes can be only partially reproduced: "Jesus, Mary ..." Aposiopesis shows dismay, surprise and admiration of Liesel when she got into Mayor's library [5, p. 141].

The image of Death in the book is quite contradictory, for he may be ruthless and tender at the same time. Death may speak about the lightness of the soul in his hands and display compassion. But to take humans' souls is his job and it is kind of an eclipse when a human dies. "I've seen millions of them. I've seen more eclipses that I care to remember," – says Death [5, p. 21] This can hardly be called a hyperbole as a stylistic device for the action takes place during the World War II and indeed millions and millions of precious lives were aimlessly taken. As we can see the narration is I-form, it is told from the first person singular, but in the text one can also find other types of narration as well: author's speech, represented inner and uttered speech. The text provides a lot of examples of direct and indirect speech, monologues, dialogues, autologues, and polylogues. The variety of the types of narration, though sometimes being a bit mosaic and telescoping, representing the scenes from different perspectives, for example, as a photo [5, p. 34], is well motivated by the author as his aim is to show something that is above space and time, Death as a narrator helps the writer to tackle global problems, which are topical in our time as well the value of human life, the greatest sin and crime of taking it needlessly, life that under any other circumstances would have been so accomplished and fruitful.

One of the most often used devices is the indented line and starting the sentences which are to be specially emphasized with a new line, providing enumeration, explanation, lyrical digression, reminiscences or preparing the description of further events. This also leads to revealing the dynamic character of this unusual narration. A special role is given to the stylistic device of detachment. Liesel would not get out of the car when she was brought to her parents' home. Only Hans could coax her: "It was the tall man who did it. / Quietly" [5, p. 35]. Detachment as a stylistic device is long known and used in different pieces of literary written and oral creations, oratory, texts, samples of belles-lettres style and especially in the novels, but not in such quantity, such a big number.

If one takes for example, Erich Seagull's novel "Only Love" [4], one can find there only some sentences with detachment being also used in a strong position, at the end of the chapter, placed on a new indented line. Markus Zusak uses this device excessively. Detached are separate words – an adverb, as in the abovementioned example, word combinations, phrases, parts of the sentence. There is hardly any part or chapter of the book written without detachment.

Death is a curious narrator. He has got the right to give illogical descriptions. The main peculiarity of the depiction is the combining of animate and inanimate objects. Some objects are ascribed the quality of the living beings, thus creating the unusual effect of illogicality and keen observation at the same time. In this respect the description of Frau Diller is pronouncing. She developed her evil look "to discourage the very idea of stealing from her shop, which she occupied with soldier-like posture, a refrigerated voice and even breath that smelled like Heil Hitler. The shop itself was white and cold, and completely bloodless [5, p. 55]. Single epithets in preposition (soldier-like posture, refrigerated voice), chain epithets in postposition (white and cold, and completely bloodless), emphasizing adverb (completely), polysyndeton (repetition of the conjunction and), simile showing the commitment to Nazi ideas are used to describe Frau Diller with magnified bullet-proof eyes fastened to the window, who lived for her shop which itself lived for the Third Reich [5, p. 56]. In order to create the dynamic narration verbs of motion are used: walk, march, disappear, abandon, splash, trample, lope.

Death knows all the past and future events and it is only natural to find all types of prospection and retrospection in the text. The prospection may be found in the description of the town: "the imposing town hall, which in later years would be chopped off at the knees and buried" [5, p. 56]. In the prospection the pronoun I meaning the narrator is sometimes changed into we in order to strengthen the effect of final result: "We'll give him seven months. / Then we come for him. / And, oh, how we come [5, p. 135]. Besides the change of the pronoun in the two final sentences of the chapter Present Tense is used in them to show future action. Hans Hubermann finds Liesel's first book – a black book with silver writing on it – and Liesel recollects the circumstances under which she had got it – retrospection [5, p. 68]. It is often combined with metaphor: Liesel revisited those dark rooms of her past [5, p. 117]. In order to show previous events some expressions are used: "Even in hindsight, Liesel told herself that it was not such a big deal" [5, p. 268]. At the same time, as a narrator Death is able to give exact facts and the events as well as provides the readers with precise dates of the most important moments: 1939 – The German invasion of Poland.

One of the stylistic devices used to show the presence of Death as a narrator is parenthesis: "Children scrunched their eyes. A halo surrounded the grim reaper nun, Sister Maria. (By the way – I like this human idea of the grim reaper. I like the scythe. It amused me.) [5, p. 80]. Sister Maria calls on students to read in turn and for Liesel it is a crucial moment as she considered herself to

be prepared, but failed to read. Instead she told by heart some experts from graveyard manual. Alongside historic facts some elements of fantasy and even horror novels are used. This is reflected in a curious mixture of religious, fantasy and horror vocabulary: halo, the grim reaper, nun, scythe. At the same time the narrator is not void of the sense of humour which this gentleman displays throughout the novel for irony, humour, funny observations are also present in the narration. Parenthesis can have the form of a phraseological unit: "Rationing had begun a few days earlier – the writing on the wall – and now it was official" [5, p. 78–79]. The phraseological unit the writing on the wall is inserted into the part of the compound sentence. It is informal, and denotes an event, decision etc., that is a sign or warning of future ruin, failure, unhappiness, etc. This phraseological unit is usually used after the verb to be and often in the phrase see the writing on the wall to realize that ruin, failure, etc., is soon to come. The phraseological unit is taken from the Bible (Daniel 5), in which the coming destruction of the Babylonian Empire is made known to King Belshazzar at a feast through the mysterious appearance of a man's hand writing on the wall [1, p. 377].

Epithets that are used in the narration can be fixed. Especially it concerns the description of the characters. Rudy Steiner is constantly described as a lemon-haired boy, but later in the book as he grew up he became a candle-lit boy – his hair changed its colour. Hans is often referred to as a person with silver eyes. One of the inhabitants of Himmel street becomes wire woman. Transferred epithets are also frequent: the tired light [5, p. 210], advisory hands [5, p. 368]. In the narration the illogicality sometimes manifests itself in the form of paradox: "She loved and hated her best friend, Kudy Steiner, which was perfectly normal" [5, p. 91].

One can find in the text words related to the noun death: dead, deadly, die, dying. "Dead Letters" is one of the chapters of the book [5, p. 103–106]. Dead in this context means no longer in use, not functioning any more, dead letters are the letters that were not answered. First Liesel received a letter from an ironing customer who refused Rosa's services and then she secretly took money and sent her own letters to her missing mother, but never got any reply.

In a short story that explains the confrontation between father and son the author uses the description of the wind, the bird's view of the events, the breeze of the Third Reich. "Or maybe it was just Europe again, breathing" [5, p. 110]. Panoramic, global description of the events is combined with personification that is one of the most often used stylistic devices in the text. Another stylistic device frequently used in the narration is the rhetorical question, which may be used in author's speech, retelling from the first person (I-form), inner speech, represented uttered speech. They may be singled out and have a small title: "Two questions", then are printed in bold type and each is placed on a new line.

Death puts questions, addresses the readers directly giving additional warning about a change of scenery. The narrator has got some peculiar way

of introducing new characters. The Chapter where Max Vandenburg is shown for the first time is entitled "Enter, the Struggler and the way to the room that is small and black is portrayed in the form of a Guided Tour of Suffering" [5, p. 145]. Alongside the description of the events of 1940 which the reader and Death know about there are descriptions of summer attributes. To show the main elements the phrase from the peaceful sphere of present culture is being used: "And the Nominees Are" [5, p. 149]. After several chapters Max appears again – "The Struggler, Concluded". Death has Liesel in one hand, Max in the other. Soon he will clap them together and asks the reader only to give him a few pages [5, p. 175]. The usual way to put it is to give somebody some time, possibility, opportunity.

Death is able to give some noteworthy notes in his narration using deviations from the main story: I've seen so many young men over the years who think they're running at other young men. / They are not. / They are running at me [5, p. 182]. At thirteen Max watched his uncle die and, having seen no fight, no struggle, he promised to hit Death on his face [5, p. 197]. But Death explains this only by commenting it as the lack of experience: "He had not looked something like me in the face" [5, p. 196]. Death imagines Max lying in the basement, sees the hand of time and gives one of his philosophic asides, "What great malice there could be in allowing something to live" [5, p. 260]. Such observations of Death scattered in the text of the novel are characteristic of generalization, unexpected turn of thought, paradox.

The narrator provides the reader with the exact place and address as in the following example that has hyperbole: "In the basement of 33 Himmel Street, Max Vandenburg could feel the fists of an entire nation" [5, p. 265]. They are combined with visions as well – Max's fight at the basement [5, p. 267], game of dice with different sides, which symbolizes fate, destiny, thus real events are intertwined with fiction in author's interpretation. Realistic description has some elements of fantasy. Liesel tells Ilsa Hermann that she was not the only one who suffered and here her little brother was next to her, whereas the reader knows that her sibling died on a journey, then he disappeared. In Liesel's direct speech the word dead is used alongside the words died, killed, death and is repeated four times [5, p. 272]. This little brother Werner also appeared again when Liesel revisited the Mayor's House and urged her to knock at the door. When Liesel was left alone with Rosa at night she was haunted by all her dearest people. The Chapter is called "The Ageless Brother" as Liesel had vision of her brother Werner.

The author offers some new dimensions and unexpected depiction of space and time. The last sentence of the Chapter "The Gamblers (A Seven-sided Dice)" ends in the words "somewhere in the seventh side of Germany's dice" [5, p. 276]. This seventh side of dice becomes allegoric and shows the fate of Germany and its people, its bad and good luck. But history is not a thing to be played with. It either teaches you, or it repeats itself, or it is thoroughly studied, but never played with. The image seems to be tricky, a bit playful if childish.



Part Six entitled "The Dream Carrier" contains the first Chapter with the title "Death Diary: 1942" [5, p. 317]. In this chapter Death describes his appearance. The description is combined with direct address to the reader who is invited to the second half of the story. Some chapters further at the end of Part Six the title is repeated. The narrator goes on keeping the diary: "Death's Diary: The Parisians". This time, while Death dwells on his feelings, neologism is used by the author: "I shiver when I remember – as I try to de-realise it" [5, p. 357].

When certain episodes of the narration are provided with comments on the part of Death, they are linked by means of contact repetition and suggestions of explanation. The window of the Mayor's house was opened. Rudy summed it up, but the narrator got some more considerations. Mayor's wife might have done it on purpose – "but that's just me being cynical, or hopeful. Or both." – Death adds [5, p. 337]. After the direct speech may come an unuttered sentence which is given at a new indented line: When I've won. This is used to show the desire of Rudy to win the race [5, p. 368]. But he had a false start and the explanation is provided by the narration in a peculiar way, by means of personification. First the voice sat on Liesel's shoulder, then it made its way to her ear. And only later through emphasized bold type sentence the reader finds out that Rudy did it on purpose [5, p. 372]. Liesel felt unexpected happiness returning from Mayor's house and Death puts two rhetorical questions: Can a person steal happiness? Or is it just another internal infernal human trick? [5, p. 358]. Morphological repetition in paronyms emphasizes the thought.

Markus Zusak describes how Hans Hubermann gives bread to one of the prisoners on their way to Dachau [5, p. 396]. This episode is important for the development of the plot. One can find a similar episode in other books, e.g. Jojo Moyes "The Girl You Left Behind" [2, p. 77]. There is general tendency in literature now to show some inner psychological aspects of people's life during wartime. In such novels one can hardly find a wide heroic and realistic panorama of struggle, the accent being shifted to everyday life and the daily routine of common citizens and their suffering. The tragedy of holocaust stands against this general background and the presence of Death as the narrator adds to its description. The narrator is sure that these prisoners will soon greet him "like their last true friend" [5, p. 398], their eyes pleading for an explanation, for they knew that this humiliation was the prelude to their deaths [5, p. 399]. Death does not believe rumours, he was there and knew everything that had happened and could provide a detailed, precise and trustworthy description. To emphasize Hans's state of mind autodialogue is used alongside with ascribing the objects the qualities peculiar of living beings only: The kitchen cupboards were the shape of guilt [5, p. 406].

Rudy listens to the conversation in the kitchen about his future and the mixed dialogue is produced as the sentences are combined with the words of his siblings. Kurt, his elder brother, on arriving at the room, compares the fallen domino to the dead bodies, thus the game becomes symbolic [5, p. 415] and the symbol is concentrated in the single epithet

"the dead-body dominoes" later on in the text when Rudy tells Liesel about the events [5, p. 421].

The stylistic devices used in the description of minor characters of the book match the nature of the narrator: He was more a black suit than a man. His face was a moustache (metaphor), to the gargantuan nurse to the pint-sized doctor (metaphorical epithet, lexical antithesis, understatement). This adds to the grotesqueness of depicting the humans as Death sees them. Death knows exactly how everything occurred: "I always seem to know – what happened" [5, p. 474]. After such a statement follows A Small War Story with the exact date – January 5, 1943. "Three languages interwove, The Russian, the bullets, the German" [5, p. 475]. And Death made his way through the fallen souls. The narrator describes himself as a loyal servant of the Third Reich with heart the shape of the circle unlike human one which is a line, having the endless ability to be in the right place at the right time. He always finds humans at their best and worst, sees their ugliness and beauty which can be both [5, p. 496]. In the end of the book Death offers the reader a glimpse of the end to better prepare himself for the telling. The narrator says that too many people were calling his name, chasing after him, but he was helpless. Death seems to be the only one to comfort Rudy at his last moment. To show it periphrasis with rhetorical question is used. "Who was there to soothe him as life's rug was snatched from under his sleeping feet? / There was only me" [5, p. 535]. Death was amazed at what humans could do [5, p. 540]. When Liesel says her final good-bye to her dearest people Death wanted to see her better and witness her face, her expression [5, p. 541]. In Epilogue entitled "The Last Colour" the first Chapter is called "Death and Liesel", Death complains of being tired and we learn that Liesel Meminger giving survived the air raid of Himmel Street, lived to a very old age and died in a suburb of Sydney. Even now, at the end of the novel, the narrator urges the readers to come with him and promises to tell a story. The narrator again takes the readers to the events of the past. The book finishes with the last note from the narrator: "I am haunted by humans" [5, p. 554]. Fantastic moments follow this final statement. Death takes the old woman to the place where she had left her storybook and there is a conversation between Death and Liesel. There are also some final generalizing speculations in the book about beauty and brutality of human race.

**Conclusions and perspectives of investigation.** "West Australian" called Markus Zusak's prose punchy and pictorial. "The Irish Examiner" pointed out its deceptively plain language and cryptic style. The reviews call it unusual, elegant, philosophical and moving. A thorough examination of the narrator's image also adds to the evaluation of the novel showing its most frequently used devices: detachment, indented line, variety of narration types, prospecting and retrospection, combination of exact facts, dates, real events with fantastic images, illogicality created by transferred epithets, paradox, lexical antithesis extensive use of rhetorical question, different kinds of repetition. The novel provides a number of phenomena, both linguistic and literary, which still need further investigation.

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**ОБРАЗ ОПОВІДАЧА У РОМАНІ МАРКУСА ЗУСАКА «КНИЖКОВИЙ ЗЛОДІЙ»****Анотація**

У статті розглянуто лексичні, синтаксичні, стилістичні засоби створення образу оповідача у романі Маркуса Зусака "Книжковий злодій". Серед найпоширеніших засобів є накопичення слів і виразів, пов'язаних зі Смертю, оскільки вона стає у романі оповідачем, відокремленням, перспекціями та ретроспекціями, зміщеними епітетами, риторичними запитаннями, повтореннями.

**Ключові слова:** оповідач, перспекція, ретроспекція, відокремлення, риторичні запитання, повторення.

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**ОБРАЗ РАССКАЗЧИКА В РОМАНЕ МАРКУСА ЗУСАКА «КНИЖНЫЙ ВОР»****Аннотация**

В статье рассматриваются лексические, синтаксические, стилистические средства создания образа рассказчика в романе Маркуса Зусака «Книжный вор». Среди наиболее часто употребляемых средств – накопление слов и выражений, связанных со Смертью, поскольку она становится рассказчиком в романе, отстранением, перспективой и ретроспективой, смещенными эпитетами, риторическими вопросами, повторениями.

**Ключевые слова:** рассказчик, перспекция, ретроспекция, отстранение, риторические вопросы, повторение.