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Preddiplomski studij Engleski jezik i književnost i Pedagogija

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Doc. dr. sc. Biljana Oklopčić

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Humanističke znanosti, filologija, teorija i povijest književnosti

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Abstract

This paper discusses the terms of narration and narrative, i.e. a story, a spoken or written account of events along with the narrative criteria including the existence of a human narrator, the existence of a sequence of events, and the temporal setting of a story. The paper further asserts the difference between the point of view, which is defined as "who" tells a story, and perspective, which shows "how" a character with a point of view perceives the story. These principles are analysed in *The Raven Cycle* by Maggie Stiefvater. The five main characters – Blue Sargent, Richard Gansey, Adam Parrish, Ronan Lynch, and Noah Czerny – have been given unique perspectives and they are unveiled through their separate character arcs. Blue's perspective is clad with assumptions; Gansey's is a clash between the perceived and perceiving; Adam's comes to light only when compared to other's; Ronan's is postponed and contrary to expectations; Noah's is absent until the very end of the series.

Keywords: narration, narrator, point of view, perspective, Maggie Stiefvater, *The Raven Cycle*

Introduction

The paper deals with the narrative and how the usage of point of view and perspective can manipulate the perception of the characters for the reader and for the characters within the story. First, the definition of the narrative will be provided, followed by a brief overview of the term narrator and the types of narrators and their importance. A distinction between the perspective – how a character perceives the world and characters around them – and the point of view – who tells the story – will be set. After taking a closer look at Maggie Stiefvater's the *Raven Cycle*, a series of four books with a large cast of characters, each section of the paper will analyse one of the main characters of the series and how the usage of point of view and perspective works within the story.

1. On Narration and Its Importance

1.1 Definitions of a Narrative

Narration is the glue that keeps a story together. According to Oxford's Dictionary, a narrative is "a spoken or written account of connected events; a story." Monika Fludernik (2009) further defines it as "everything narrated by a narrator" (13). She also draws a distinction between a historian and an author: historians create a "story" based on historical facts they have gathered and they cannot go outside the restrictions that writing down history entails. On the other hand, authors of fictional works create "fictional narratives," which in turn "create fictional worlds" (Fludernik 15). In addition, Fludernik asserts that a "narrative is the story that the narrator tells" (15) and, as such, is defined as a story plus its narrator. Simpson (1993) provides another, expanded, definition: "Narrative (...) is the means by which the story is told, the actual text with all its linguistic idiosyncrasies" (42). As such, Simpson continues, a narrative may exhibit various strategies, some of which are flashbacks, flashforwards, etc. There are, too, several criteria of what makes narrative a narrative. First, as "acting, thinking and feeling are constitutive to human existence in this world, the existence of a human character in and of itself will produce a minimal level of narrativity for the play or fiction in which s/he occurs" (Fludernik 17). In other words, having a human or human-like character serving the role of a protagonist is a pre-requisite of a narrative. The second criterion is what Fludernik calls a narrative report, or "sequences of events" including "chains of events in report form" (17). The final criterion is the temporal location of narration, i.e. "the existence of every human being is bound to a specific time and place" (Fludernik 17) and the same goes for characters within a narrative. When all these criteria are combined, we get the following definition:

> A narrative (Fr. récit; Ger. Erzählung) is a representation of a possible world in a linguistic and/or visual medium, at whose centre there are one or several protagonists of an anthropomorphic nature who are existentially anchored in a temporal and spatial sense and who (mostly) perform goal-directed actions (action and plot structure) (Fludernik 17).

1.2 The Narrator

The narrator can be a "figure in the plot" (Fludernik 32), which is a characteristic of the first-person narrative, or the narrator can "stand aloof from the world of the characters and describe the fictional world from his/her perspective as authorial narrator" (Fludernik 32). Another term for this is an *overt* or *covert* narrator. Overt, and the most prominent type of narrator used in literature, is "one that can be clearly seen to be telling the story – though not necessarily a first-person narrator – and to be articulating her/his own views and making her/his presence felt" (Fludernik 32). The functions of a narrator within a narrative are numerous. The first function is the narrative function, i.e. "it is s/he, technically speaking, who presents the fictional world" (Fludernik 38). The second function is the function the narrator fulfils with comments, i.e. "s/he explains why events occur, ascribes them to political or social circumstances and conditions, indicates what it is that motivates the characters" (Fludernik 38). The third function is the function of a narrator as a philosopher or a moralist who "articulates universally valid propositions" (Fludernik 38). Lastly, the narrator has discursive functions which include "directly addressing the narratee, [and] making metanarrative comments about the process of telling the story" (Fludernik 38). These functions are often blurred or combined within the narrative.

1.3 Perspective vs. Point of View

On the surface, the distinction between the perspective and the point of view is simple. As Rasley (2008) puts it, the perspective means "perception, thought, and emotion" of the characters within the narrative (14) while point of view (from here on referred to as POV) determines "whose perception, whose thoughts, whose emotions you get as you read a passage" (14). With this in mind, we can say that perspective is pervasive in all types of POV. Furthermore, Rasley lists two main types of POV: the personal POV (first and third person) and the impersonal POV (e.g. omniscient POV in which narrative presence exists but does not take part in the story). There are four basic elements of POV: narration, perception, introspection, and voice. Since narration is dealt with in greater detail in the first section of this chapter, we will deal with the other three elements here. Perception is "the unique way the narrator perceives an event and its effect on the narration" (Rasley 15). Introspection deals with "the thoughts and feelings of the narrator and the characters" (Rasley 16). Voice is "the

diction, style and attitude of the narration" (Rasley 16). The importance of perspective lies within the importance of POV because one uses a POV "to reflect" a "particular purpose and the unique perspective of the characters" (Rasley 47). Thus, "POV choices can affect narrative not only because each character has his own perspective on what the story's action means but also because all characters might not experience the same events" (Rasley 47). As shown above, POV allows authors to choose who, or which character, tells the story whereas perspective allows authors to show how the characters perceived the events within the story. With that being said, the choice of POV is important in figuring out the theme of the story. For example, Rasley claims that the first-person POV "explores questions of persona and identity" (30) while the second-person POV "explores the nature of identity construction" (30). The single-third person POV "explores the issues of the interior life" (Rasley 31) and multiple-third person POV, which is prominent in the book series analyzed in this paper, "explores the issue of perspective" (Rasley 31).

2. *The Raven Cycle*

The Raven Cycle is a young adult series of four novels written by Maggie Stiefvater. The novels follow a group of teenagers on a quest to locate and wake a mythical king who is claimed to be sleeping somewhere in their hometown of Henrietta. The novels are predominately character-driven, the personalities and backgrounds of their characters such that, if not for their joined quest, they would not have found each other and strived to reach their goal together otherwise. Stiefvater shows instances of their characters clashing and developing throughout each of the four novels, most of which is depicted in the first two novels of the series *The Raven Boys* and *The Dream Thieves*. This conflict between the characters is important as we "intuitively recognize that characters must contrast on some grounds; that is, the juxtaposition of several characters within a single work is structured on some thematic, psychological, metaphysical, ethical, or social ground" (Punday 66). The series is written in the multiple third person POV and, according to Rasley, those authors who "are attracted to multiple POV often believe that reality can only be apprehended through a composite of perceptions—that the reader will figure out what the truth is only by hearing several people's versions of the event and putting them together" (190). Stiefvater does this through her five main characters: Blue Sargent, Richard Gansey, Adam Parrish, Ronan Lynch and, with a little exception of a lack of point of view and consequently perspective, Noah Czerny. The five of them, despite striving towards the same goal, perceive each other in different, often contrasting, ways, which in turn affects the reader's perception of them. Another key point is that, while the reader can gather information from reading the perspectives of each character, the characters themselves take a longer time to learn the truth about each other, which Jesch and Stein (2009) confirm by saying that "the reader can know more about the 'actual world' (cf. Ryan 1991) than the fictional perceiving subject" (68). This fact sends not only the characters on a journey to learn about each other but also the reader. Each chapter of the novels is told from another character's point of view in such a way that the reader picks up bits and pieces about the characters and their stories but never enough to form a full picture until much later in the series. The following sections of this chapter will analyse three types of character's perspectives through concrete examples. First, the character's perception of themselves. Second, how a character is perceived by other characters. Third, how the reader perceives the character based on the textual evidence.

2.1 A Case Study of Blue Sargent: Assumptions

The Raven Boys, the first novel in the series, opens with Blue Sargent's POV and she warns to "stay away from Aglionby boys, because they were bastards" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 11). This gives the reader a preconceived idea of what kind of boys Aglionby boys are and what one can expect from them – nothing good. Blue comes from a family that is tight on money and Aglionby is a school for the kids who come from money. Namely, Blue has developed a specific dislike for rich boys after seeing them on a daily basis wearing their rich boy uniforms while driving their rich boy cars and spending their time in rich boy ways. The oldest cliché is that rich people are conceited, self-centred and self-serving with their noses pointing towards the sky because everyone who does not speak in "money" is not worthy of their attention. And that is what we are made to believe while we are given Blue's POV. Blue's thoughts during the first encounter with Gansey are full of envy:

> Before her stood the multitasking cell phone Aglionby boy, looking tidy and presidential. His watch looked as if it cost more than her mother 's car, and every area of exposed skin was a flattering shade of tan. Blue had never figured out how Aglionby boys managed to tan earlier than locals. It probably had something to do with things like spring break and places like Costa Rica and the Spanish coast. President Cell Phone had probably been closer to a pygmy tyrant than she would ever be. (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 37)

The first time her beliefs are challenged is when she meets Adam, also a Raven Boy and Gansey's friend, who does not fit her preconceived view of them and she does not understand why that is so:

> "Hi," Blue said, softer than she would've if she hadn't noticed the fray. She didn't know what sort of Aglionby boy wore hand-me-down sweaters. "Adam, is it?"
>
> He gave a jerky, abashed nod. Blue looked at his bike. She didn't know what sort of Aglionby boy rode a bicycle instead of driving a car, either. (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 46)

Blue perceives Adam as an atypical Raven Boy because she has seen evidence of him perhaps being similar to her, which is why she gives him her number and why he is an acceptable company. At this point, neither Blue nor the reader know what the deal with Adam is or why he does not wear his uniform outside of school or why he smells like a garage or why he has a

bruise on his face. Yet, Blue finds him different from Gansey, Ronan and Noah and the reader is made to believe that he is different in some way too. Blue's thoughts slide back to Gansey shortly thereafter and her perception of him goes askew when she notices his car: "It was not exactly what she'd have expected an Aglionby boy to drive — they liked new, shiny things, and this was an old, shiny thing — but it was clearly a raven boy's car nonetheless" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 80). All of this makes Blue realize that her life is bound to get entangled with the lives of the Raven Boys she regarded with contempt until now:

> And just then, Blue had a falling sensation, like things were happening too fast for her to properly absorb them. There was something odd and complicated about all of these boys, Blue thought — odd and complicated in the way that the journal was odd and complicated. Their lives were somehow a web, and she had somehow managed to do something to get herself stuck in the very edge of it. (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 80)

During the first few chapters of Blue's POV, we get the impression that the Raven Boys are untouchable, tinged with possibilities, occasionally insufferable and above all unreachable, but towards the end of the first novel she finds herself drawn to them as an irreplaceable part of their lives. At that point in the story, Gansey's and Adam's POV have shed light on who they really are – the reader already knows – and now Blue is starting to see it too. Blue finds herself attracted to Adam, though this may only have been her defence mechanism to protect her from falling in love with Gansey, because "it was very difficult to imagine Adam as a raven boy as he greeted her, his hands neatly in his pockets, scented with the dusty odor of mown grass" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 101) and because "Adam did not seem to go to Aglionby like other boys went to Aglionby" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 101). As the only female member of their private little group, Blue feels out of place not only because of her gender but also because of her family history and background as displayed in her urgency to interrupt their conversations and switch them to something she can participate in as well. Their behaviour "seemed very manly and Aglionby to Blue, this calling of one another by last names and bantering about outdoor urinary habits. It also seemed like it could go on for a long time, so she interrupted" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 114). Her inferiority complex is not hard to relate to while reading her POV; the discrepancy between the rich and the poor permeates all four novels especially as the graduation comes near and she becomes aware that the kind of future Aglionby boys have will not be the kind of future she would get: "He delivered the nonsensical statement so matter-of-factly that Blue felt abruptly stupid, as if maybe the public school system really was lacking" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 114). Her

need for validation from the Raven Boys is prominent in the beginning: "Blue was absurdly pleased that he remembered, and also absurdly pleased that he'd replied to her instead of Gansey, who was now swatting gnats out of his eyes and waiting for her response" (Stiefvater, *The Raven* Boys 114). She is not aware that Adam, Gansey, Ronan and Noah have seen her as an equal and a part of their group from the very beginning. Gansey notes that Blue is "the missing piece that he'd been needing all these years, like the search for Glendower wasn't truly underway until she was part of it" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 122). Gansey, whom Blue tries so hard to stay away from, was "struck by what a glorious and fearless animal Blue Sargent was" (Stiefvater, *The Dream Thieves* 105). Blue has a considerably lower opinion of herself compared to other character's perception of her and, consequently, the reader's too. She only understands that she has found her true place of belonging where she can accept and be accepted once she sees past her prejudice and stops seeing them as Aglionby boys, as something foreign and contemptible, but as her friends. She notes that she "was a little in love with all of them. Their magic. Their quest. Their awfulness and strangeness. Her raven boys" (Stiefvater, *The Dream Thieves* 12). Blue's perspective is a lesson on moving past one's preconceived ideas about somebody before getting to know them properly; about people who do not have to come from the same place in order for their lives to intertwine.

2.2 A Case Study of Richard Gansey: Self-Awareness

Gansey's POV is not often about Gansey, even though his POV is present in all four novels and his character is set up as the key character in the unfolding events of *The Raven Cycle*. His POV is about Blue, Ronan, Noah, Adam, about everything Gansey possesses and ultimately about the quest to awaken the sleeping king, his obsession. Gansey is all of them and they are all him. Though he himself is a mass of anxiety and insecurities, his friends see the grandness about him. For Blue, his grandness is in the way he holds himself: "this (...) was how Gansey got places — striding" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 140) because "walking was for ordinary people" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 140). It is also visible in the way he talks: "When Gansey was polite, it made him powerful (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 79). For Ronan, the Raven Boy who is hardest to like, Gansey is irreplaceable. Ronan himself states that when he "thought of Gansey, he thought of moving into Monmouth Manufacturing, of nights spent in companionable insomnia, of a summer searching for a king, of Gansey asking the Gray

Man for his life. Brothers" (Stiefvater, *The Dream Thieves* 225). For Adam, Gansey is both a flawed and an awe-inspiring ideal:

> Adam remembered finding him intimidating when he first met him. There were two Ganseys: the one who lived inside his skin, and the one Gansey put on in the morning when he slid his wallet into the back pocket of his chinos. The former was troubled and passionate, with no discernible accent to Adam's ears, and the latter bristled with latent power as he greeted people with the slippery, handsome accent of old Virginia money. It was a mystery to Adam how he could not seem to see both versions of Gansey at the same time. (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 28)

The real Gansey is a sum of all these parts and more. He is shown to care deeply for his friends and it is this love that makes him vulnerable, nothing like the image of a king they conjured up for him. He shows his most pitiful, unstable self when the love and care he gives goes unrequited:

> He couldn't stand it, all of this inside him. In the end, he was nobody to Adam, he was nobody to Ronan. Adam spit his words back at him and Ronan squandered however many second chances he gave him. Gansey was just a guy with a lot of stuff and a hole inside him that chewed away more of his heart every year.
>
> They were always walking away from him. But he never seemed able to walk away from them. (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 184)

With that in mind, Gansey's POV is like a magnifier to help the readers see the good in his friends. Or the good he wants to see in them. His blind faith in them is what allows for his confidence and his status as their leader:

> Even though Ronan was snarling and Noah was sighing and Adam was hesitating, he didn't turn to verify that they were coming. He knew they were. In three different ways, he'd earned them all days or weeks or months before, and when it came to it, they'd all follow him anywhere. (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 32)

Although Gansey holds his friends in high esteem and his friends hold him in high esteem too, the way he perceives himself is harsher than the way other characters perceive him. When he is introspective, he both acknowledges and condemns parts of himself that he does not want others to see, parts of himself that he tries to hide:

> Gansey had always felt as if there were two of him: the Gansey who was in control, able to handle any situation, able to talk to anyone, and then, the other, more fragile Gansey, strung out and unsure, embarrassingly earnest, driven by naive longing. That second Gansey loomed inside him now, more than ever, and he didn't like it. (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 153)

These two versions of him are the relatable human parts of him that come across as easy to understand by the reader. While Blue, as mentioned in the section above, sees his money and privilege as power, Gansey laments his powerlessness despite his wealth: "You've had it the easiest. What good is all your privilege, you soft, spoiled thing, if you can't stand on your own legs?" (Stiefvater, *The Dream Thieves* 76). This fits into the final and wishful version of Gansey which comes into full view much later in the series:

> Richard Gansey III had forgotten how many times he had been told he was destined for greatness. He was bred for it; nobility and purpose coded in both sides of his pedigree (...) The Ganseys were courtiers and kings, and when there was no castle to invite them, they built one.
>
> He was a king. (Stiefvater, *The Raven King* 9)

The third version of Gansey is reflected in his quest to find the sleeping King Glendower; a quest in which he is meant to find himself too. It is important that he acknowledges that "Glendower was more than a historical figure to … [him]. He was everything Gansey wished he could be: wise and brave, sure of his path, touched by the supernatural, respected by all, survived by his legacy" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 29). Gansey's perspective is a lesson in patience, overcoming insecurities, and endless striving for more. It is about how people with the shiniest armour may have holes in it that often feel like they are larger than the person wearing the armour.

2.3 A Case Study of Adam Parrish: Being "Unknowable"

Adam Parrish's POV is a tumultuous ride starting with his desire to move out of an abusive, poor household and to make it on his own in Aglionby which he attends on a scholarship. His worldview is tinged with the kind of darkness that characters like Gansey and Ronan, and even Blue, cannot fathom. He works multiple jobs while feeling envious of his friends who

are of higher social status and while enduring his father's violent behaviour. The situation with his abusive father is a particularly sensitive topic for him, one he finds as a dead-end street when he claims that if he "turned his father in, everything … [would have] crashed down around him. If Adam turned him in, his mother would never forgive him. If Adam turned him in, he could never come home again" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 179). Being raised in a household like this left him with a swelled sense of pride, unable to accept kindness for what it is even if it is given by somebody who he knows cares about him, like Gansey. Even though he is aware that Gansey cares for him, he knows why he has to be the one to save himself and why he "couldn't move in with Gansey. He had done so much to make sure that when he moved out, it would be on his own terms. Not Robert Parrish's. Not Richard Gansey's. On Adam Parrish's terms, or not at all" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 179). The difference between him and somebody like Gansey is that, aside from their magical quest, Adam has to worry about money, his behaviour and his grades otherwise he will lose his privilege of attending Aglionby:

> The following year's tuition was increasing to cover additional costs, although his scholarship was not. They understood the tuition raise presented a hardship for him, and he was an exceptional student, but they needed to remind him, with as much kindness as possible, that the waiting list for Aglionby was quite long, inhabited by exceptional boys able to pay full tuition. (Stiefvater, *The Dream Thieves* 39)

In his eyes, those who are not struggling like he is are unable to understand him. Therefore, when he is rejected, when he fails or when he is feeling down, he tries "not to let it sound like he was still hurt, but he was and it did" (Stiefvater, *The Dream Thieves* 38). His perception of himself is that of something "unknowable" (Stiefvater, *Blue Lily, Lily Blue* 149). He claims that he "trusted his skills on his own. His emotions he trusted on his own. He could hurt no one in an empty room. No one could hurt him" (Stiefvater, *Blue Lily, Lily Blue* 149). Adam sees himself as a jagged lonely creature who is only capable of the worst deeds, just like his father is. He compares himself to his friends and notes how "appropriate it was that Ronan, left to his own devices, manifested beautiful cars and beautiful birds and tenderhearted brothers, while Adam, when given the power, manifested a filthy string of perverse murders" (Stiefvater, *Blue lily, Lily Blue* 125).

This perception he has of himself is at odds with the perception other characters have of him. Because he is so caught up in his inner war, Adam does not see that Gansey "wished that he could be him, because Adam was so very real and true in a way that Gansey couldn't ever

seem to be" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 185). He does not see that Blue "wanted him to explain himself" (Stiefvater, *The Dream Thieves* 36) in order to understand him. He does not see that Ronan cares for him so much that he left "a colorless lotion that smelled of mist and moss" (Stiefvater, *Blue Lily, Lily Blue* 66). Even though Adam's story arc is the most sensitive and the thorniest one, the way he deals with his problems and struggles does not induce pity within the reader but rather admiration. Adam himself asserts that "the most important thing (...) has always been free will, the ability to be his own master" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 207). The world as he sees it may be distorted but he proves himself to be as much of a Raven Boy as the rest of them and comes to love himself for who he is:

> He left bloody fingerprints on the rock, but there was something satisfying about that. I was here. *I exist. I'm alive, because I bleed.*
>
> *He hadn't stopped being thankful for his body. Hello, Adam Parrish's formerly chapped hands, I'm happy to have you.* (Stiefvater, *Blue Lily, Lily Blue* 156)

His arc comes to a satisfying close when he realizes that the "Adam" everyone sees him as and the "Adam" he wants to be are the same person:

> Was it okay? Adam had turned down so many offers of help from Gansey. Money for school, money for food, money for rent. Pity and charity, Adam had thought. For so long, he'd wanted Gansey to see him as an equal, but it was possible that all this time, the only person who needed to see that was Adam.
>
> Now he could see that it wasn't charity Gansey was offering. It was just truth. (Stiefvater, *The Raven King* 148)

Adam's perspective is a lesson in accepting kindness, moving on, and how insignificant pride is in the face of friendship and forgiveness.

2.4 A Case Study of Ronan Lynch: Discrepancies

Ronan Lynch's POV is absent from the first novel. This adds a layer of mystery and anticipation to his character but also leaves him to the mercy of other characters' opinions and perceptions of him as they are the ones telling the reader who Ronan is, whether or not that is the real Ronan. The characters with dominant POVs, like Blue and Adam, often tiptoe around

Ronan at the early stages of their relationship when their understanding of him is not complete. Blue feels apprehension and a sense of inferiority from the first time she and Ronan meet:

> Blue moved on to Ronan, though she was a little afraid of him. Something about him dripped venom, even though he hadn't spoken. Worst of all, in Blue's opinion, was that there was something about his antagonism that made her want to court his favor, to earn his approval. The approval of someone like him, who clearly cared for no one, seemed like it would be worth more. (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 79)

Ronan's behaviour, from skipping school to his curse-ridden speech, suggest that he is to be handled with care because "if it had a social security number, Ronan had fought with it" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 19) and "he could intimidate even a piece of plywood into doing what he wanted" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 98). "Everything about him was a warning: If this snake bit you, you had no one to blame but yourself" (Stiefvater, *The Dream Thieves* 100). Adam offers a testament to how unusual Ronan's large and violent presence is next to a straight-laced Gansey:

> when I first met Gansey, I couldn't figure out why he was friends with someone like Ronan. Gansey was always in class, always getting stuff done, always a teacher 's pet. And here was Ronan, like a heart attack that never stopped (...) I asked why Gansey was even friends with him if he was such an asshole all the time. And I remember Gansey told me that Ronan always told the truth, and the truth was the most important thing. (Stiefvater, *The Raven King* 67)

From the second novel onwards, when Ronan is given a POV, the narrative zooms in on who he really is. He does not see himself as the uncontrollable monster on a rampage nor is he self-centred nor does he care only about himself. Ronan has been struggling with himself all throughout the first novel, but neither the reader nor the other characters know about it until Ronan decides to let it be known. Essentially, Ronan himself stays the same but the perception of him changes. We see how Ronan cares for Gansey:

> Just then, in that moment, the thought of Gansey leaving for D.C. without him was unbearable. They had been a two-headed creature for so long, Ronan-and-Gansey. He couldn't say it, though. There were a thousand reasons why he couldn't say it. (Stiefvater, *The Dream Thieves* 119)

We see Ronan paying attention to each of the character's individual needs, not with empty words but with actions:

> Adam twisted off the lid. Inside was a colorless lotion that smelled of mist and moss. Replacing the lid with a frown, he turned the container over, looking for more identifying features. On the bottom, Ronan's handwriting labeled it merely: *manibus*.
>
> *For your hands*. (Stiefvater, *Blue Lily, Lily Blue* 66)

He and Blue take the longest time to become comfortable with each other and, as Adam notes, it is "amazing that she and Ronan didn't get along better, because they were different brands of the same impossible stuff" (Stiefvater, *Blue Lily, Lily Blue* 150). Blue is the first one to notice when Ronan grows into the person he is meant to be, someone they do not know yet:

> He had changed over the summer, and now Blue felt less unequal in the group. Not because she knew Ronan any better — but because she felt as if maybe Gansey and Adam now knew him less. He challenged them all to learn him again. (Stiefvater, *Blue Lily, Lily Blue 150*)

This new Ronan is a Ronan whom both the characters and the readers start seeing in a new light. He is not a cold weapon or a merciless storm; he is a boy who loves and dreams and is not as tough as those who do not know him try to paint him as:

> He imagined Adam, ever the scientist. Ronan, ferocious and loyal and fragile. "Don't break him, Adam."
>
> Adam continued peering out the window. The only tell to the furious working of his mind was the slow twisting together of his fingers. "I'm not an idiot, Gansey."
>
> "I'm serious." (...) "He's not as tough as he seems." (Stiefvater, *The Raven King* 138)

Ronan's perspective is a lesson in looking past one's appearance and demeanour, acknowledging that some people who appear hard to love have the biggest heart of all.

2.5 A Case Study of Noah Czerny: The Absence of POV

Though Noah Czerny appears in all four novels, his POV is only present in a chapter of the final novel. Whoever Noah Czerny is, Noah Czerny does not say himself. In a series of novels

with multiple POVs, choosing not to give a POV to one of the most important characters is a statement. He is described as "a little grubby" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 30). He is ever-present, somewhere in the background, like a camera lens out of focus and the characters closest to him are used to him being this way as they do not question it:

> Gansey became aware that Noah was lurking at his elbow, looking strained and urgent. Both were typical for Noah, so Gansey was not immediately troubled. He passed a folded-over packet of bills to the cashier. Noah continued to hover. (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 41)

The descriptions of Noah, handed out by Gansey or Adam, suggest that something is off about him. Yet, as the reader does not see the action from his POV, the reader can only guess what is wrong about him while reading the passages that describe him as "pale and insubstantial in the yellow, late-night light of the room behind him; the skin beneath his eyes was darker than anything" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 52) and that he "looked less like Noah than the suggestion of Noah" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 52). The next thing the characters and the reader notice is that Noah knows things. Noah knows things that he is not told and things he did not see:

> Noah said, "He sent her flowers."
>
> "How did you know?" Adam demanded, more mortified than curious.
>
> Noah merely smiled in a far-off way. He kicked one of the wooden boards off the plywood, looking triumphant. (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 99)

He is often described as "so shy and awkward and invisible that he could be easily ignored or made fun of" (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 124). His presence is soft and unobtrusive, yet he is unmistakably always there. The reader is offered an explanation near the end of the first novel:

> But the corpse was long beyond fingerprints. The bones were clean as a museum piece, the flesh long since rotted off, and there were only threads remaining of whatever the person had worn. Picking carefully at leaves, Gansey uncovered the entire skeleton (...) The skull's cheek was smashed in. She wondered if that was how the person had died. (Stiefvater, *The Raven Boys* 144)

The novel finally gives an explanation about Noah's random absences and presences, his smudgy and pale appearance, and his high intuition and sensitivity. From that point onwards, the characters' perception of him adjusts to their new awareness of his deadness and how much of him is with them and how much is gone:

> They had always had the sense that the Noah they knew was not the true Noah. It was just disconcerting to hear how much *Noahness* death had stripped. It was impossible to not wonder what Noah would have done with himself if he had lived. (Stiefvater, *The Raven King* 57)

It becomes clear why Noah does not get a POV or why the reader is not allowed to see the events unfold from his perspective – because Noah is dead and he knows more than the reader and the characters are allowed to know. The technique of postponing a POV of such a crucial character builds up suspense until his moment finally comes:

> Noah was more interested in the spiritual weight of a minute (...) Sometimes he got caught on a loop of constantly understanding that he had been murdered, and rage made him smash things in Ronan's room or kick the mint pot off Gansey's desk or punch in a pane of glass on the stairs up to the apartment. Sometimes he got caught in this moment instead. Gansey's death. (Stiefvater, *The Raven King* 215)

Noah sheds light on questions that have been asked multiple times throughout the novels, *how*'s and *why*'s, and if his POV has come any sooner than the climax of the series, it would have diminished its importance.

Conclusion

In order for a story to exist, somebody has to be there to tell it. In the non-fictional world, we have historians who try to piece the history together while trying to stay as true to the evidence that supports it; in a fictional world we have characters, carefully chosen by their authors, who are living and telling the story through their eyes, their perspective. The story in a work of fiction does not have to be credible or in-tune with the non-fictional world or truths, so authors can play with their characters and consequently with their readers. This is where perspective and POV come in play. Perspective is the *how* to point of view's *who* and they are both equally important in the sum of narration. In *The Raven Cycle*, Maggie Stiefvater wields a large cast of characters, all of which are as contrasting as day and night and some of which are the merely different sides of the same coin. Even though they are all actors in the same play, the characters of *The Raven Cycle* draw the reader into their own versions of the world, which are the versions of the world they have spun based on their experiences, their differing personalities, their backgrounds and their relationships. Stiefvater's deliberate choice to tell her story through breadcrumbs given away by an unreliable, ever-growing and ever-developing cast of teenage characters not only adds to the complexity of the narrative but places heavy weight on the shoulder of each character who thinks, feels and acts and therefore alters their own and the reader's perception of the world. After all, perspectives that are handed to the characters and the readers at the beginning of the story do not have to stay the same throughout the story. That is the point of the story: they evolve, in a positive or negative way, and it is up to the author of the work to take both the reader and the characters on the journey to get to the point where their perceptions align. Maggie Stiefvater's *The Raven Cycle* is an example of how this is done.

In conclusion, the reader should always pay attention to who is given a voice and why.

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