

TEMPORAL DIMENSION: ORDER, DURATION AND FREQUENCY IN MARKUS**ZUSAK'S *THE BOOK THIEF***

Débora Almeida de Oliveira

Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul

ABSTRACT: This article aims at analyzing the temporal dimension that guides the young-adult novel *The Book Thief*, by the Australian author Markus Zusak. Written in 2005, this work shows the life of Liesel Meminger, a nine-year old German girl who witnesses the Nazi period in Germany. The story is narrated through the eyes of Death, the soul collector who follows Liesel's trajectory making comments about her life and about humanity. Consequently, as death is supposed to be a timeless omniscient entity, it is relevant to discuss the representation of time, which is analyzed through the theoretical propositions of Gérard Genette and Mieke Bal, mainly. The focus of this analysis relies on the aspects of order, duration and frequency of the events, since the narrator manipulates time through constant shifts in the chronological order and frequently interrupts the narrative to add his comment, which also affect the temporal dimension in the book.

KEYWORDS: Narratology; Time; *The Book Thief*; Markus Zusak.

RESUMO: Este artigo objetiva analisar a dimensão temporal que guia o romance juvenil *A Menina que Roubava Livros*, do autor Australiano Markus Zusak. Escrito em 2005, este trabalho retrata a vida de Liesel Meminger, uma menina Alemã de nove anos que testemunha o período Nazista na Alemanha. A estória é narrada através dos olhos da Morte, a coletora de almas que acompanha a trajetória de Liesel tecendo comentários sobre sua vida e sobre a humanidade. Conseqüentemente, como a morte supostamente é uma entidade ominisciente e atemporal, é relevante discutir a representação do tempo, o qual é analisado com base nas pressuposições teóricas de Gérard Genette e Mieke Bal. O foco dessa análise recai sobre os aspectos de ordem, duração e frequência dos

eventos, uma vez que o narrador manipula o tempo por meio de constantes mudanças na ordem cronológica e frequentemente interrompe a narrativa para adicionar seus comentários, o que também afeta a dimensão temporal da obra.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Narratologia; Tempo; *A Menina que Roubava Livros*; Markus Zusak.

INTRODUCTION

The Holocaust is considered the ultimate horror perpetrated against humankind, and its representations abound in literature. *The Book Thief*, one among many works which touch this subject, is not only a story “about” death but also a story told “by” Death. *The Book Thief*, published in 2005 by the Australian author Markus Zusak, tells the story of Liesel Meminger, a nine year-old German girl whose biological mother, a communist militant, disappears during the Nazi regime. Liesel is adopted by Hans and Rosa Hubermann, a poor German couple who lives in Molching, a fictitious small town near Munich and way down to Dachau, the concentration camp. Although Liesel and her foster parents live among Nazi supporters, they do not agree with Hitler’s system and decide to give shelter to a young Jewish man, Max Vandenburg, who is hidden in their basement for almost two years. After such period, Max leaves Liesel’s house for a matter of security and, during his escape, he is taken by soldiers and sent to Dachau. Liesel continues living her life, always worried about her close friend Max, until the day her town is bombed by the Allies. Liesel is the only one in the neighborhood who survives, as she was reading in the basement when the bombs fell. After some notes on her life after the tragedy, the narrator skips years and finds her in her last moments, when she is old enough to die. It would have been a very common plot, which has been seen in literature and movies countless times. However, Markus Zusak personifies Death as the narrator which witnesses Liesel’s life through constant disruptions in the temporal presentation of the narrative, which turns time into a very complex matter in this work.

Time is one of the elements without which a narrative barely exists. According to Gerald Prince (1982, p. 32): “It is practically impossible to narrate a series of events without establishing a set of temporal or temporally bound relationships between narration and narrated.” Indeed, a narrative, with few exceptions, normally allows an insight into the temporal condition in which either the narration (time *locus* of the narrator) or the narrated (time *locus* of the events) are inserted. It is true that usually the reader has no clues about the temporal dimension of the narration, and it is often impossible to determine the exact moment in which the narrator recounts the events,

however, it is easier to perceive the time of the events. Some works, in order to produce specific effects, manipulate the temporal *axis* by breaking the chronological order of the narrated and by playing with the duration and frequency of events. *The Book Thief* is such piece of work. The narrator tells a story he witnessed in the past, and he tells this story based on the three moments he saw the protagonist (then he uses his past memory) and he also bases his narrative on the reading of a book the protagonist wrote and lost (then he mixes past memories and present comments). Thus, Genette's considerations on order, duration and frequency are skillfully manipulated as most of the events narrated only make sense when the narrative completely unfolds.

The temporal disruption presented in *The Book Thief* reflects both the nature of the narrator as well as the social and political events of the Nazi era. Death, as a supernatural being, does not experience time the same way humans do. Consequently, past, present and future get entangled. The narrator lives these three human conceptions at once, which allows a panoramic view of the events which are gone and the ones which are still to come. The immediate result of this temporal presentation is the construction of meaning, since the readers must be attentive to the linear break in order to grasp the features which give significance to the narrative. Besides, such disruption also represents the fragmentation of identities of the Nazi era and all the confusion which blurred the minds of people in Germany. Liesel and her foster parents, for instance, live a double life, pretending to be Nazis while they were truly against the whole system. Max, a Jewish man, travelled from his former hideout to Liesel's house carrying the *Mein Kampf*, the book written by Hitler to spread the idea of Nazism. Due to this book, Max is able to pass as a German and find the Hubermans. For a non-attentive reader, the time in *The Book Thief*, as the Nazi regime in German, may be confusing to understand. An analysis of the temporal aspect in such piece of work contributes for the reader to relate the historical happening of the Holocaust to complex time structure used in *The Book Thief*. Huehls (2009), when speaking of a set of authors who wrote after the WWII, says: "(...) historical events complicate temporal experience, (...) they [the authors] develop innovative literary forms that deliver new experiences of time—all of them qualified in

some way—that in turn produce new ideas about and approaches to the political themes (...).” (HUEHLS, 2009, p. 08)

ORDER

As a general rule, narratives are thought to unfold in time generating a sequence of past, present and future events. Yet, not all literary works follow the traditional chronology which puts readers at ease by not switching to-and-fro between temporal strands. In some works, the order of events in the story level (the content of what is told, the narrated time) differs from the order in the discourse level (the manner of how the content is told, the narrative time). Therefore, the order of events, as one of the aspects concerning time (together with duration and frequency) allows the reader to perceive meaningful relationships within the temporal dimension. About the analysis of order Genette (1980, p. 35) states:

“To study the temporal order of a narrative is to compare the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these same events or temporal segments have in the story, to the extent that story order is explicitly indicated by the narrative itself or inferable from one or another indirect clue.” (GENETTE, 1980, p. 35)

In *The Book Thief* the order in which the events occur are rearranged in the discourse level. The responsible for the realization of this discourse is the narrator, whose time locus is uncertain. The time locus of the narrator is part of “a traditional framework which underlies much of the narratological study of fiction” (CURRIE, 2007, p. 31). However, sometimes, the time locus of the narrator is impossible to be inferred. In *The Book Thief* the only thing known is that Death narrates the events after they have occurred and after the main character Liesel has died. As he is death, it is supposed that his insertion in time cannot be equaled to human’s. First he admits: “Which in turn brings me to the subject I am telling you about tonight, or today, or whatever the hour and color. It’s

the story of one of those perpetual survivors—an expert at being left behind” (ZUSAK, 2007, p. 05). Later, Death concludes: “It has been many years since all of that, but there is still plenty of work to do” (ZUSAK, 2007, p. 543). In these cases, when there is “little in the text to tell us about the time frame of the narrator’s performance, it is the time of *reading* which is the important reference time for discourse” (BRIDGEMAN, 2007, p. 53).

The organization of the discourse time in *The Book Thief* intensely employs anachronism (GENETTE, 1980, p. 35 – 36), a literary device which disturbs the chronological order of story events by narrating past events out of turn or making excursions into the future. These deviations receive the name of analepsis, retrospection or flashback when referring to the past and prolepsis, anticipation or flashforward when referring to the future. Although sometimes deviation the sequential ordering is not easy to be identified, in *The Book Thief* it is not only clear but also highlighted by the narrator, who emphasizes he is about to stop the narrative to add some past or future information about the present events and action. By and large the most used anachronic device in *The Book Thief* is the anticipation of events through prolepsis. About future information provided by Death, Tem (2011, p. 44) realizes: “Having Death as the narrator provides Zusak with some rather unique opportunity for foreshadowing. Because he is Death we assume he is timeless and completely reliable in his predictions of what is to come.”

It is interesting to notice that *The Book Thief* shows the opposite of Genette’s argumentation about the general use of prolepsis. According to the author: “Anticipation, or temporal prolepsis, is clearly much less frequent than the inverse figure, at least in the Western narrative tradition” (GENETTE, 1980, p. 67). The very beginning of the narrative in *The Book Thief* is an anticipatory summary of the three decisive events where the narrator will meet Liesel, who anticipates that she manages to escape death. Aside that, all chapters start with an anticipatory brief list of all crucial moments that are to come. The next extract, the short introduction for chapter 1, serves as example:

PART ONE

“the grave digger’s handbook

featuring:

himmel street—the art of *saumensching*—an ironfisted woman— a kiss
attempt—jesse owens—
sandpaper—the smell of friendship—a heavyweight champion— and the
mother of all *watschens*” (ZUSAK, 2007, p.
17)

Maybe one would argue that this excess of anticipations kills the narrative suspense as the outcome of all main events is already known. Notwithstanding the end of the mystery about the future results from present actions, the use of prolepsis is not a suspense killing technique. Putting forward Genette’s thoughts on literary prolepsis, Bal (1997, p. 95) affirms: “The suspense generated by the question 'How is it going to end?' disappears; (...) another kind of suspense, or rather a tension which keeps the reader engaged, may take its place, prompting questions like 'How could it have happened like this?’” Indeed, *The Book Thief* shows constant anticipation of events either through prolepsis or through the arrangement of situations that allow the reader to predict, to a certain extent, the aftermath of significant events. The matter in this narrative is not *what* is going to happen, but *how* things are going to happen, which produces a great amount of tension and also expresses a fatalistic point of view. Even the narrator recognizes:

“Of course, I’m being rude. I’m spoiling the ending, not only of the entire book, but of this particular piece of it. I have given you two events in advance, because I don’t have much interest in building mystery. Mystery bores me. It chores me. I know what happens and so do you. It’s the machinations that wheel us there that aggravate, perplex, interest, and astound me.” (ZUSAK, 2007, p. 243)

The narrative of *The Book Thief* also shows a good deal of analeptic devices, filling in important gaps about the past of the characters or providing relevant past information on current events. This disruption in time, which moves the story back to a description of an earlier event,

usually interrupts the story-flow, especially when they are lengthy and detailed or when they configure an embedded story. In *The Book Thief* flashbacks are presented both in the form of brief insertions and in the form of long passages. The long descriptions of past events produce a very important effect on the story of *The Book Thief*: they finally answer Bal's question "How could it have happened like this?" (1997, p. 95). As the narrator sprinkles the narrative with hints of coming events, which sometimes are just cleared up many chapters ahead, the narratee becomes curious and focuses on the story, waiting for the moment when he will finally fully understand the actions that led to a specific result. The analeptic manipulation of the temporal frame is explicit and long in many moments. Chapter four, for instance, begins with the arrival of Max Vandenburg on Himmel Street, knocking on Hans Hubermann's door and asking him for help. Then the narrator suspends the narrative at the crucial point when Hans was expected to answer "yes" or "no", shifting the sequential ordering backwards, to a past memory of the time Hans fought in the World War I, saying: "It all dated back many years, to World War I. They're strange, those wars. Full of blood and violence – but also full of stories that are equally difficult to fathom" (ZUSAK, 2007, p. 174). Only on page 185, after explaining how Hans met Max's father and how Hans had to adapt to the Nazi system, the narrator returns to the earlier point, finally showing Hans's attitude of accepting Max as a fugitive Jew in his house.

In general, the temporal markers in *The Book Thief* are consistent. The time of the "now" and "then" is clearly demarcated and Death refers to years, months and seasons to mark the passage of time even during the anachronic deviations. Aside that, time is also used in a more meaningful way, as to express years of great disasters, plagues or war, which made death work a lot. As the narrator confirms: "Death's Diary: 1942. It was a year for the ages, like 79, like 1346, to name just a few" (ZUSAK, 2007, p. 307).

DURATION

According to Genette (1980, p. 86), the duration of events is one of the three aspects, along with order and frequency, which must be taken into consideration when one analyzes the use of time in a narrative, be it the story time (the chronological sequence of events and the length of time that passes by in the story) or the discourse time (the manner as the events are presented and the respective number of words, lines, sentences, paragraphs or pages devoted to them). It is true that there is a problematic matter about the practical impossibility of measuring the duration of a narrative; yet, the temporal aspect of duration reveals expressive peculiarities in a literary work, since narratives do not tell absolutely everything that supposedly happens in a story. On this matter, Bridgeman (2007, p. 58) was clear when she stated: “The treatment of duration is an important way of foregrounding certain events and reducing the status of others. If an episode is narrated in great detail, this leads us to assume that it is of some significance”.

There are five main categories that involve the relation between story-time and discourse-time: scene (the story-time equals the discourse-time, as in a dialogue), summary (story-time longer than discourse-time, also known as speed up), stretch (discourse-time longer than story-time, also known as slow-down), ellipsis (discoursetime omits parts of story-time), and pause (story-time freezes while discourse-time continues). *The Bok Thief* numbers approximately 586 pages for developing the storytime which covers about four years of Liesel’s lifetime, from 1939 (when she is nine, almost ten) to 1943 (when she is almost 14). Here there is a life span about her early childhood and an ellipsis of many years after she is 14. The narrator, then, devotes about two pages to describe his encounter with the old aged Liesel who died of natural death.

Of the five elements listed in the analysis of duration, the scene is the one which is the least employed, since the story-time would only equal the discourse-time if no interventions are made on the part of the narrator. In *The Book Thief*, Death is extremely intrusive and just few dialogues do not contain any of his remarks inserted, but even in these cases the dialogues are brief, extending no more than five short lines. Death’s intrusions in dialogues are so constant, disrupting the synchrony

between story-time and discourse-time, that the only dialogue without any interruption (characterizing a scene) is highlighted in bold letters and show the interlocutors in italics:

*** THE SWAPPING OF NIGHTMARES ***

The girl: “Tell me. What do you see when you dream like that?”

The Few: “. . . I see myself turning around, and waving goodbye.”

The girl: “I also have nightmares.”

The Few: “What do you see?”

The girl: “A train, and my dead brother.”

The Few: “Your brother?”

The girl: “He died when I moved here, on the way.”

The girl and the Few, together: “Fa —yes.”

(ZUSAK, 2007, p. 220)

Like scene, which is rarely employed without the narrator’s intervention, stretch is not so much perceptible in *The Book Thief*. On the other hand, summary is far more employed, since it speeds up the narrative through brief sentences that cover months or years in the story-time, such as in “For the next two years, he remained in hiding, in an empty storeroom” (ZUSAK, 2007, p. 194). As stretch slows down the speed of the narrative, it is possible to infer that the narrator does not allow the discourse-time to exceed too much certain parts of the story-time because he constructs a narrative that interweaves many plots, leading to different narrative levels. Another fact that corroborates this thesis is that the narrator frequently uses ellipsis. This device, along with summary, contributes to accelerate the narrative, giving the impression that actions are happening quickly. One example of ellipsis which is considered the most noticeable in *The Book Thief* is the period subsequently to Max’s departure from the Hubermann’s home. Afraid of getting discovered after Hans called too much attention of the Nazi community by giving bread to a Jewish prisoner, Max leaves Molching at night. These facts happen in chapter seven (p. 397) but only in chapter ten (p. 511) there is some little light on Max’s disappearance, as Liesel finds him being marched to a

concentration camp: “There was an intense sadness in his eyes. They swelled. ‘Liesel . . . they got me a few months ago.’ The voice was crippled but it dragged itself toward her.” (ZUSAK, 2007, p. 511). Interesting to notice that, after this moment, there will be another ellipsis concerning Max’s time in the camp, as he will return to Liesel’s life only when the war is over and nothing is mentioned about this period or events. The ellipsis concerning Max’s departure and return to Liesel cannot be exactly measured by specific time expressions, as in other moments in *The Book Thief* when death clearly states the amount of time skipped. About these cases, Mieke Bal clarifies (1997, p. 103):

“An ellipsis cannot be perceived: according to the definition, nothing is indicated in the story about the amount of fabula-time involved. If nothing is indicated, we cannot know what should have been indicated either. All we can do, sometimes, is logically deduce on the basis of certain information that something has been omitted. (...) Sometimes, however, an ellipsis is indicated. Mention is made of the time that has been skipped.” (BAL, 1997, p. 103).

The use of pauses also is recurring in *The Book Thief*. As it normally involves descriptions or narrator remarks, there are countless pauses in this narrative due to the narrator comments. It is true he seldom spends more than brief lines with descriptions of places or people, yet, his judgments, ideas and opinions are spread all over the narration. At first sight one may infer that these pauses, as usual, slow down the narrative. However, these pauses are brief and they normally are used to connect the situations as a patchwork. When the narrator stops to add a comment on a certain event, he often links his comments to another situation which, in its turn, may be happening simultaneously or may be inferred from the past or to the future. Chapter 3 (p. 129), for instance, describes the tension lived by Liesel when she is sent to collect the laundry at the mayor’s house, knowing that somebody from there had seen her steal a book from a bonfire of forbidden Jewish books; such act that could result in her death. However, when the chapter ends and Liesel relaxes a while as nobody accused her, the narrator starts the following chapter (p. 138) by explicitly

proposing a pause on what he has been speaking about Liesel and invites the narratee to change the topic. Consequently, the time of Liesel's life in that moment stands still while Death concentrates on introducing Max and his life over the past two years up to then:

“Now for a change of scenery. We've both had it too easy till now, my friend, don't you think? How about we forget Molching for a minute or two? It will do us some good. Also, it's important to the story. We will travel a little, to a secret storage room, and we will see what we see. (...) A few hundred miles northwest, in Stuttgart, far from book thieves, mayors' wives, and Himmel Street, a man was sitting in the dark. It was the best place, they decided. It's harder to find a Jew in the dark. He sat on his suitcase, waiting.

How many days had it been now?” (ZUSAK, 2007, p. 138)

In a whole, *The Book Thief* uses the elements that compose duration a varied way, affecting the narratee's perception of speed and, mainly, of what matters more according to the narrator's concepts. Minor actions are not described extensively, not delaying the development of the narrative. The relevant and more impacting events concerning Liesel (like her personal losses, Max's hiding and the book theft) are showed in detailed ways, usually loaded with Death's comments. All this variation produces a sensation of fastpaced narrative.

FREQUENCY

The interpretation of the narratee about the narrative presented is greatly influenced by the temporal aspect of frequency, since the number of times an event is mentioned may produce a varied range of understandings and comprehension. Rimmon Kenan summarized the definition and the main features of frequency in the following statement:

“Frequency, a temporal component not treated in narrative theory before Genette, is the relation between the number of times an event appears in the story and the number of times it is narrated (or mentioned) in the text. Frequency, then, involves repetition, and repetition is a mental construct attained by an elimination of the specific qualities of each occurrence and a

preservation of only those qualities which it shares with similar occurrences. Strictly speaking, no event is repeatable in all respects, nor is a repeated segment of the text quite the same, since its new location puts it in a different context which necessarily changes its meaning.”
(RIMMON-KENAN, 1983, p. 59)

Variation in frequency reveals which moments of the narrative are supposed to be more relevant or which scenes the narrator is more (or less) concerned with. In *The Book Thief*, it is interesting to analyze the repetitive telling, or rather, “Narrating *n* times what happened once (nN/IS)” (GENETTE, 1980, p. 119). The repetitive telling in *The Book Thief* falls especially on a distinct moment at the level of discourse: Werner’s death. At the level of the story time, Liesel, her younger brother Werner and their mother are traveling in a train in the year of 1939, on a very cold winter day. In the middle of the trip the boy dies, presumably from a complication derived from the extreme cold weather. At the level of the discourse time, the span between his death and his burial takes approximately seven pages. Previously to his death, in the prologue, the narrator uses an analepsis to tell the narratee that a boy would be dead, as the narrator’s presence would mean this consequence. “As you might expect, someone had died. (...). There were two guards. There was one mother and her daughter. One corpse. The mother, the girl, and the corpse remained stubborn and silent.” (ZUSAK, 2007, p. 07). After this introduction foreshadowing Werner’s death and the description from his death to his burial, there are about other twenty-five mentionings to this event which, most of the time, appear in the form of Liesel’s memories, nightmares and visions. Nonetheless, Werner’s death is also mentioned by the narrator. In the next extract, for example, Death mentions Werner’s death as he comes to the following conclusion:

*** A SMALL ADDITION ***

“The word *communist* + a large bonfire + a collection of dead letters + the suffering of her mother + the death of her brother
= the *Führer*”

(ZUSAK, 2007, p. 115)

This obsession for the boy's death expressed through so many recounting of the same event at the story level shows how obsessed Liesel is for her brother death, which also represents the obsession for death in the cultural era of the German Nazi system. Firstly, the narrator has his own experience of the event, since he is Death and, consequently, he is the one responsible for taking Liesel's brother away. Secondly, the narrator is reading a diary and there he finds notes on the same event, Werner's death. As he develops the reading, he mentions what Liesel wrote about Werner and he adds his personal comments on the subject. This context of witnessing, reading and judging creates an ideal situation for repetitive telling which, in turn, may open a multiple range of interpretations that would take Werner's death as a symbol of the victims of the Nazism, for instance.

Another event which frequency is noteworthy is the one concerning Max's visions about Hitler. Although not so frequent as Werner's death, Max's visions are mentioned six times and they supposedly happen more than once in the story-time, characterizing a type of singulative telling, where an event which happens several times may be related several times. The first time Max has his vision he is in the basement (p. 251). Secondly, he tells Liesel about his visions (p. 255). It is relevant to notice the technique used to make these repetitions vary. After Liesel is told about this vision she imagines it, which constitutes the third time this event is mentioned.

“As she started painting, Liesel thought about Max Vandenburg fighting the *Führer*, exactly as he'd explained it.

*** BASEMENT VISIONS, JUNE 1941***

Punches are thrown, the crowd climbs out of the walls. Max and the *Führer* fight for their lives, each rebounding off the stairway.

There's blood in the *Führer*'s mustache, as well as in his part line, on the right side

of his head. “Come on, *Führer*,” says the

Jew. He waves him forward. “Come on, *Führer*.” When the visions dissipated and she finished her first page, Papa winked at her.”

(ZUSAK, 2007, p. 257)

Again in the narrative, Death makes reference to this vision by stating: “Later, she walked down to the basement, where Max was standing in the dark, most likely boxing with the *Führer*” (ZUSAK, 2007, p. 265). The narrator continues his reference to Max’s visions when he gets sick and almost dies: “Unfortunately, that night signaled a severe downslide in Max’s health. The early signs were innocent enough, and typical. Constant coldness. Swimming hands. Increased visions of boxing with the *Führer*” (ZUSAK, 2007, p. 313). Finally, almost at the end of the narrative (p. 528), the narrator mentions this event for the last time. The fact that Max daydreams about fighting Hitler several times and this is narrated six times means it may function as a symbol of the Jewish resistance, although it is never mentioned and the only kind of fight people (Jewish or not) could offer against the *status quo* of that time happens to be symbolically represented in Max’s delusions.

The frequency of other events in *The Book Thief*, aside the constant reference to Werner’s death and Max’s vision, depends a lot on the impact these same events have on Liesel’s life. There a great deal of minor events which happen just once and are narrated just once, as they do not alter Liesel’s life too much and do not call the narrator’s attention. There are also other events that happen many times and are narrated more than once, yet, they do not possess such a high symbolic importance.

Finally, it is important to remember that Death relates several wars in the story time several times in the discourse time. It is true that these are different wars, and such as so, they are considered different events. However, if one takes war as one general phenomenon, it could be said that the narrator always recounts the war event, and he touches this topic all over the narrative.

FINAL REMARKS

The Book Thief is a piece of work that maneuvers the temporal condition of the narration and the narrated in a defying way. The reader just knows it is a story in the past, but the distance between the actual telling and the happening of the events is never mentioned. The time of the

narrated, on the other hand, is quite clear, since many alternate references to the years of 1939 up to 1945 are made. However, it is important to remember that after 1945 Death returns from his never ending task around Earth to meet the protagonist already old enough to depart from the world of the living and finally meet the narrator personally.

The chronological order of events is broken through the use of many flashbacks and flashforwards, which leads the reader to the act of joining the pieces of the puzzles, since, sometimes, an event is predicted in a moment and it will be totally revealed two chapters later. The social and political aspects and consequences of the Nazism are not fully described as they escape young Liesel's comprehension (although Death knows about them). The frequency of events follows the same logic of their duration. Everything considered extremely important to the protagonist (and by her) is repeated more than once. The death of her young brother and the death of her best friend, as well as her mother's disappearance, are mentioned by the narrator in the form of his comments or in the form of Liesel's nightmares and visions.

All that said, it is possible to consider *The Book Thief* as a piece of work that presents a complex time structure, although it is said to be intended for a young audience who is supposed to read linear stories. Hence, *The Book Thief* escapes the stereotype of young adult literature which is said to be easy and simple. The temporal condition explored in this work is, if not as complex as other literature masterpieces, it is, at least, quite challenging.

REFERENCES

- BAL, M. **Narratology**: Introduction to the theory of Narrative. 2.ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. 254p.
- BRIDGEMAN, T. Time and Space. In: HERMAN, D. **The Cambridge Companion to Narrative**. 1.ed. Cambridge: CUP, 2007. p. 52 – 65.
- CURRIE, M. **About Time**: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time. 1.ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. 160p.
- GENETTE, G. **Narrative Discourse**: An Essay in Method. 1.ed. New York: Cornell University Press, 1980. 285p.
- HUEHLS, Mitchum. **Qualified Hope**: A Postmodern Politics of Time. Ohio: Ohio State University, 2009. 1 ed. 226p.

PRINCE, G. **Narratology**: The Form and Functioning of Narrative. 1.ed. New York: De Gruyter, 1982. 183p.

RIMMON-KENAN, S. **Narrative Fiction**: Contemporary Poetics. 2.ed. New York: Routledge, 1983. 197p.

TEM, S. R. Death and The Book Thief by Markus Zusak. In: OLSON, D. **21st Century Gothic**: Great Gothic Novels since 2000. 1.ed. Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2011. p. 42 – 48.

ZUSAK, M. **The Book Thief**. 1.ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007. 568p.

Recebido em: 27/04/2016

Aceito em: 14/05/2016