

## COMING OF AGE NOVELS IN THE ERA OF “NEW SINCERITY”: TRAUMA AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT OF A TEENAGER (BASED ON THE NOVELS “BLACK SWAN GREEN” BY D. MITCHELL AND “TIME TO SPEAK” BY K. KLIMOVSKY)

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Abstract: Trauma and Personality Development of a Teenager are investigated within multidisciplinary paradigm, based on the novels “Black Swan Green” by D. Mitchell and “Time to Speak” by K. Klimovsky. Postmodernism and irony are distinguished as underlying concepts of the vector of research.

Keywords: New sincerity, Personality development, Postmodernism, Trauma.

### 1 Introduction

The era of ‘new sincerity’ was introduced into literary criticism in the late 1980s-early 1990s. A long period of postmodernism with its total irony was gradually replaced by new concepts which expressed different needs and set new demands to literature. With the need to fight for survival and ‘daily bread’ weakening significantly, the reading and writing humanity appealed to their feelings and emotional experiences and started talking about the human soul.

Many psychoanalysts, used to treating wealthy strata clients, now remarked on the stunning growth of the middle-class and poorer-off people in need of their consultations. An increasing number of men and women, seeking awareness of the psychological processes taking place in their lives, wanted to be heard and understood. This process can be attributed to the undeniable influence of the Internet with its open access to the vast audience that anyone can receive at the touch of a button, the audience, potentially ready to absorb anyone’s problems.

The new reality required a new style, and this style had to be more humane, more sincere, and spiritually enriching. This point was made clear by the Russian poet and painter Dmitry Prigov who predicted the return to the “traditionally established lyrical and confessional discourse”, to the problems of “a non-exclusive person in a non-exclusive state” [4].

Almost similar ideas were expressed by an American writer D.F. Wallace who wrote in 1993: “The next real literary ‘rebels’ in this country might well emerge as some weird bunch of ‘anti-rebels,’ <...> who dare to back away from ironic watching <...> to endorse single-entendre values. Who treat old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction. <...> These anti-rebels would be outdated, of course, before they even started. Too sincere. Clearly repressed. <...> The new rebels might be the ones willing to risk the yawn, the rolled eyes, the cool smile, the nudged ribs, the parody of gifted ironists, the “How banal”. Accusations of sentimentality, melodrama. Credulity” [8, p. 193].

But the rejection of the postmodernist irony was inevitable. The new era wanted sympathy and empathy, which irony obviously abstained from. Irony maintained the distance and helped to objectively analyze the situation. It actually created a barrier between a reader and a character. Postmodernists accumulated enough irony to give birth to the term ‘irony poisoning’ and it often degenerated into the cynicism that threatened to justify real aggression.

### 2 Materials and Methods

The characterological trait of the personality of the third highest mental level is the accumulation of a large supply of potential energy (what experts in science call “psychic fund”). There is a spiritual richness of the individual, the diversity and

differentiation of individual manifestations, characterized by a high degree of intensity.

In fiction, there is a noticeable desire to create similar types that amaze the imagination with their efficiency, breadth of interests, high mental potential, ability to grasp details and make deep generalizations from isolated facts.

Thus, if individuals, as a rule, poorly adapted, belong to the lowest mental level, the average level represents those who have adapted, people of the third mental level, with their inexhaustible supply of energy and high mental potential, are never limited to what they have achieved. They continue to discover and methodically develop their active qualities, truly extraordinary abilities and talents, even in adverse and extreme conditions.

In the works of fiction writers, one can find a considerable number of examples in which lyrical characters correspond to all three indicated mental levels. But the works of realist writers were acceptable to a much greater extent for the present study. The transfer of the phenomenon of the world and the motives of the individual's behavior in images is a vivid characterological feature of literature: a work of art in that case sounds the most convincing, strongly and comprehensively affects the reader when the author's thought is contained in perfect artistic images-characters. The versatility and multidimensionality of personality is most clearly highlighted in the author's creation of a typical character, which will be considered in this article.

### 3 Results and Discussion

In the article “Cultural and anthropological conditions for the possibility of psychotherapeutic experience”, F.E. Vasilyuk develops M. Foucault's concept of a “homo psycho-logicus (psychological persona),” [1, p. 516] as an individual absorbed in the inner world and focused on its research and inner comfort, a reflective person. “First of all, a “psychological persona” (to use M. Foucault's term) must have a basic sense of unconditional significance of his personal life, which is regarded as having a socially self-evident significance that does not need validation, although perhaps it does need protection. My private existence, my life is inherently valuable, it does not require justification and confirmation by any higher values or by any institution. The significance of my life is in its original value as a gift, it is not the reward for merits [7, p. 88].

Defining a ‘psychological persona’, F.E. Vasilyuk focuses on a number of characteristics. A psychological person, in his opinion, treats life as a possession he can dispose of on his own will, that's including its premature interruption. He perceives happiness as a norm of life, and any inconsistency with this basic idea of happiness is regarded as tragic, extrinsic, and transcendent. He interprets the desire for a better quality of life as a process that can be controlled/managed and so has an active attitude to life as opposed to “non-action, waiting, patience” [7, p. 89]. He focuses on problem solving.

A ‘psychological man’ is rather a product of the 20th century. The post-traumatic effect, first among those who survived World War I (with the representatives of the “lost generation” taking an important place) and then World War II, forced those outsiders, overwhelmed by the sense of futility of life, to analyze their minds and souls in search of the reasons for this feeling. Post-traumatic states became the subject of particularly serious research in the United States after the Vietnam War. This explains numerous stories with a ‘psychological persona’ as a hero-protagonist in fiction of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

So, the era of ‘new sincerity’ can be defined as a personal acquisition of a psychological voice and courage to speak about the innermost, about obstacles that stand on the way to achieving harmony with oneself.

A psychological person realizes his need to solve the accumulated problems and, gaining the voice, gets the chance to confess and find a comrade in misfortune, a virtual interlocutor who is ready to listen, understand, and advise. And, while talking aloud about their worries and experiences, one often finds a key to overcoming these problems.

In such a way people become more sensitive to their state of heart, make an effort to recognize the sources of certain sensations, suffering, mood swings. In this context, the broad appeal to the concept of 'psychological trauma' and its use beyond the boundaries of psychological science proper becomes understandable.

New sincerity presupposes new sensitivity, which, in turn, entails a new interpretation of psychological trauma. Traditionally this term was used to define extreme situations which negatively affect the mental health of an individual and threaten his life or physical safety. In the era of 'new sincerity', however, virtually all life situations and stressful events fall under this concept. People become more susceptible and scrupulous as regards their psychological state and the reasons that affect it.

There comes a time when anyone can talk about their problems openly, it becomes possible and fashionable to discuss them. Being a victim ceases to be shameful. The status of a victim becomes a point of a cult in society. Therefore, both journalism and fiction initiate new themes – relevant but never discussed previously. Family conflicts, intimate problems, betrayal, financial discrepancy as 'an apple of discord', demarches of teenage children, and other situations that used to concern only a narrow circle of close people – now become a subject for discussion of thousands of Internet readers and an object of research by authors of fiction.

Highly accomplished and wise adults with great life experience openly talk about the innermost, often aiming at creating a certain image and even gaining popularity. When the teenagers of the pubertal period, however, face unbearable problems, as a rule, they close themselves, absorb their sufferings and dare not tell even the closest people about them, cannot ask for help.

The desire of the 'liberated' adults to work with their current psychological problems (often with the assistance of professional psychotherapists) leads them to the analysis of the conditions of their own development, for most traumas come from childhood.

Hence the increased attention to the period of childhood and adolescence, both in special scientific research and in journalism and fiction. Teenage literature has its own goal: to protect teenagers from problems that have piled up, to lend a helping hand at a time of difficult socialization, to catch them "in the rye."

The new conditions trigger new literature, which comes out at the turn of the 20 and 21 centuries. A number of novels and short stories written by authors of different national cultures talk about the formation of an adolescent's personality: "Black Swan Green" by D. Mitchell (England), "The Perks of Being a Wallflower" by S. Chbosky (USA), "Difficult Age (Permafrost zone)" by E. Moldanova (Russia), "Time to Speak" by K. Klimovsky (Israel) and many others. It is a 13-16 years old teenager who is the narrator of these works, going through problems, suffering and reflecting in front of the reader, forcing us to empathize with the new teenage sincerity.

Actually, the reading public has already encountered similar precedents. Take for example Russian classics. Leo Tolstoy's protagonist in "Childhood", "Adolescence" and "Youth", novels written in the 1850s, reflects over his life and grows up right in front of readers' eyes. Tolstoy's famous "dialectics of the soul" is evident in the abrupt mood swings of Nikolienka Irtenyev. The boy actually lives in his anxieties and troubles, which succeed one another, analyzes them, and, experiencing them, learns about

the world. Yet, the hero is never depicted in a situation where he needs daily socialization in a group of peers.

J.D. Salinger's novel "The Catcher in the Rye", published in the 1950s, became an instant bestseller not only due to the author's skill and talent. The concerns of the restless personality of a teenager who did not fit into the surroundings, his painful discord with the world – these problems were acutely perceived first by the American and later by the world readers as new insights on the teenager's process of socialization in the modern world. But until the era of 'new sincerity' of the late 20 and early 21 century, such works were rare.

Besides, time dictates its own rules. In the new psychological teenage literature of the turn of the century, the young protagonist-hero is shown in relationships (more often in conflict) with the environment of other teenagers that surround him every day, and who, no doubt, form a part of a new society. The new reality associated with incredibly rapid technological development, globalization, the process of reassessment of values forces a person to face a new moral choice.

School bullying, which becomes a very common problem, lack of response from adults to the moral oppression of individual adolescents, complex family relationships, and sometimes domestic violence, a huge increase in the number of divorces, the gadgetization of society, which has given rise to various forms of psychological impact, and many more facts like that have expanded the concept of psychological trauma that seriously affects both health and the social comfort of a child.

Teenage diary, or rather confessional, prose, which offers a glimpse into the soul of a protagonist, is designed precisely to show a whole host of problems that overwhelm the young storyteller, who, as a rule, comes from a seemingly intelligent, absolutely auspicious and respectable family. In D. Mitchell's novels "Black Swan Green" and K. Klimovsky's "Time to Speak", the narrators are a boy and a girl of similar age, Jason Taylor and Michelle Aronson, who live, respectively, in England and Israel and go through a complex process of personality formation, socialization, initiation into the adult world with its often cruel laws. D. Mitchell's novel focuses on the early 1980s, K. Klimovsky describes the late 1990s-early 2000s. The authors create a diegetic narrator who is both the subject and the object of narration. These are deep, intellectual, reflective personalities who perceive (cognize) the world through their emotional experiences – a vivid manifestation of psychological personas who care about their inner world and strive for personal growth and self-realization. The character of each protagonist is influenced by a number of psychological traumas. And the first of them is a split in family relationships, which affects the protagonists in different ways, but equally strong.

Michelle, the protagonist of the novel "Time to Speak," having learnt of her father's infidelity to her mother, feels that her world is collapsing. The father's betrayal brings pain to the girl's soul for the deceived mother, who has already been in severe depression for a long time. The girl fears for her mother's mental and physical health: what if her broken soul cannot stand this trial and she will die of grief? The author makes the girl face a difficult moral choice: should she tell her mother about what has happened or leave her in happy ignorance? The dilemma induces a severe stressful state: the girl endlessly analyzes what has happened and what caused it, examines her own feelings. Michelle understands that her father finds an alternative for a reason. For many years, the girl's mother has been feeling depressed with only rare remissions.

From the stories of her father's sister, the girl learns that it was her, Michel's, birth that triggered the depression. And the reasons for the family disaster take on a fairly clear outline for her: it is she who is to blame for everything, her birth. If not for her, the mother would be the same as she used to: beautiful, bright, tidy, cheerful, and nothing like this would have happened. The girl is ready to any sacrifice for life to come back to normal (she behaves well, improves mathematics, reads her father's favorite "Karamazovs"), but she understands that it is

beyond her power to rectify the situation, which soon resolves with her father's leaving the family. She can express discontent with her parents only in her dreams. In reality of the day, the stormy childhood fantasy, fueled by an impressive number of books read, makes her experience the fear of potential orphanhood in an asylum in case the conflict ends tragically. In addition, the emotional and amorous Michelle firmly rejects love, regarding it as a transient feeling that brings pain. It is significant that the heroine fights her problems alone. Adults are too preoccupied with their own problems to see their daughter's state, and if they do, they do not make any attempts to help her (mother – due to her illness, father – due to selfishness and the complexity of the situation): “Mishka, what has happened?” – I didn't know what to answer, and muttered that my head hurt, but my mother didn't believe me, and my father didn't notice anything: he was thinking his own thoughts” [2].

Jason Taylor, the hero of the novel «Black Swan Green», also has to deal with his problems alone. His seemingly happy family is far from a castle for the 13 year old teenager, it is not a place where he can feel protected. Nervousness that reigns in the house is evident in the tense relations between his parents, which the boy feels most acutely. His father, who is obsessed with his career and, as it appeared later, has an affair with another woman, shows disrespect to the boy's mother and sees her only as a housewife. Feeling humiliated and suspecting her husband's infidelity the woman tries to assert her rights in daily skirmishes.

Preoccupied with themselves the parents do not know what is happening in their son's life, what problems he is having and how psychologically traumatic they are for the boy. Meanwhile there are a lot of causes for concern.

Jason is a thoughtful, well-read and romantic boy, who writes poetry published in a local newspaper under a penname but he keeps it secret from his classmates realizing what it may be fraught with. An ordinary school in a small British town is depicted by the author as a source of misery for the teenager. Rigid hierarchy predominating in the boys' relations makes any manifestation of humanism impossible. Boorishness, brute force, direct aggression as well as ability to insult and humiliate are highly revered. As a result decent intelligent children get dependent upon primitive, vulgar, dim-witted boys forming packs to increase their power.

Some victims become pariahs other children are ashamed to communicate with as the representatives of the lower levels of the existing hierarchy. Any sign of humanity is viewed as a shameful weakness, intellectual development is not encouraged. Flourishing bullying (insulting nicknames, verbal and physical humiliation etc.), among whose victims we can see Jason, goes absolutely unnoticed by the teachers. For that matter some of them can afford to ridicule students mincing no words, with no thought for the consequences and the possible effect of their words on the teenager's standing in class.

The hero's sensitive soul cannot bear the strain. The boy develops progressive stammer which he finds more and more difficult to cope with. Realizing that his speech defect will lead to his classmates' sneers and result in his losing as little authority as he has, the boy is trying to hide it carefully. When Jason feels the stammer attack coming while he is answering a teacher's question, he just stops speaking. The teenager prefers to look stupid and unable to answer a simple question rather than make his stutter evident to the class.

The hero of the novel has a sensitive soul and a subtle mind, he is prone to reflection, continuous analysis of his own and other people's behaviour and their assessment. Jason's visual thinking makes him distinguish several alter egos in his personality. When against his will he commits some unseemly acts, caves in to the primitive majority making the rules of existence in a school community and the criteria to assess its members, Jason discerns Maggot in himself, of which he is ashamed and which he tries to eliminate. Unborn Twin makes itself evident much rarer, it symbolizes self-sufficiency, independence and the ability to act boldly – the qualities Jason is unable to show as often as

he wanted because of dominant influence of Maggot whose characteristic traits are cowardice and weakness.

Another image appearing in the boy's mind is Hangman, choking him and making him unable to speak during the stammer attacks. It is another peculiar component of Jason's personality reacting to irritants. Hangman suppresses the boy, tortures him, makes him weak and submissive almost like the cruel and brazen top of the schoolboys' community. Jason does not expect any support. His mother is worried about the stammer and even makes her son see a speech therapist, but she is absolutely unaware of the reasons underlying the ailment. It is significant to mention that people supporting Jason, helping him to overcome his complexes and regain self-confidence are strangers. Among them is a speech therapist saving the boy from reading aloud of which he is terribly scared as the moment of his exposure. She understands how traumatic it is for the boy and calls the teacher asking him not to aggravate the situation. Another person playing an important role in the boy's development is Madame Crommelync who gets interested in his poems. A few meetings they had were enough to make the boy believe that he is talented, self-sufficient, that he shouldn't cave in to the opinion of the majority, hide his name behind a pseudonym no matter how poetic, that he should grow, develop his personality and intellect. But Jason has a long and difficult way to go in order to make these ideas come true.

There is no doubt about the fact that actions of people in teenagers' surrounding greatly influence the development of their personality, sometimes this influence is so profound that it causes a psychological trauma. That is just what happens to Michelle, the heroine of the novel “Time to Speak”, who is strongly affected by a suicide of her close friend Ronnie. (It is worthwhile noting that on the next day after the suicide a psychologist comes to school which the girl attended in order to speak with her classmates about the situation and save the children from a severe psychological trauma).

The process of the heroine grasping the horror of the situation takes a long time; it evokes sharp memories about their common experience, definite shared moments, some words and given promises. The realization of her friend's deep loneliness making her commit suicide because she couldn't tell anyone about her problem hurts Michelle and causes her to conduct her own investigation in order to find out what has really happened. Together with Ronnie a problem of sexual violence enters the stage. Ronnie kills herself because of the sexual abuse by her elder brother. The author includes into the novel a legend from “Easter Haggadah” about four brothers that Michelle gets to know and tries to interpret drawing parallels with her own life. Out of the four brothers – righteous, wicked, naïve and the one who doesn't know how to ask questions – she likes the latter most of all and compares herself with him. But the talk with her mother ruins the girl's conception.

Mother sees in her daughter the wicked brother, who is showing doubts, asking awkward questions, trying to get to the heart of each situation and eventually appears to be the engine of progress. It is the desire to get to the heart of the matter that gives Michelle strength not only to get over the tragedy of losing a close friend but also to draw the right conclusions from the situation. Analyzing the legend her mother says that it is doubtlessly good to be a righteous brother but such people are rare. And Michelle understands: Ronnie was a righteous brother, which actually killed her. She endured all the hardships with dignity saving face, she “closely followed the rules, didn't let anyone down, was loyal to the family code to the end”, “was saving face in the best Japanese traditions, and when it became unbearable she committed suicide like a Japanese samurai. The righteous son Ronnie took an overdose of pills without telling anything to anyone, showing no doubts about her own decision. Silently and fearlessly” [2]. The realization of the essence of Ronnie's tragedy helps Michelle to cope with the psychological trauma and live on.

The novels that are analyzed here definitely possess the features of Bildungsroman (coming of age novel) in which the hero faces

a difficult moral choice. Having conducted her own investigation Michelle understands what made her friend commit suicide. But Ronnie's parents are "keeping up appearances" and even after the tragedy do not let anyone doubt the decency of the family. Michelle can keep silent and not interfere into their lives which one of her friends strongly recommends her to do. But she is a whole honest person who always speaks her mind. Ronnie has a younger sister and Michelle understands that if she doesn't tell anything to Ronnie's parents, doesn't make them face the truth and admit that there is a big problem in their family it can lead to another tragedy and the girl cannot let it happen. This act demands from her spirit and courage, which she shows in a very difficult and mature beyond her age conversation with her friend's parents.

Jason Taylor also finds himself in a situation where he faces a choice. Moreover during one year depicted in the novel such situations happen in his life very frequently. The boy's social position being rather low he intuitively looks for the ways to get higher in the school hierarchy and gain respect of the high and mighty of the school world. At every turn Jason becomes more and more aware of the fact that the ways of achieving this position as well as the criteria defining it are essentially immoral and inhumane. The teenager rises in the unwritten rating for a short time and wins respect of other boys when he shows ingenuity and courage in a prank against Mr. Blake (though not a nice man, hated by most pupils, but still a human being). As a reasonable person Jason fully realizes that his status grew due to his moral degradation, desire to fit the environment.

The boy is always acutely aware of the situations when he is caving in to the majority, feeling how Maggot is moving to the leading positions in his inner personal rating. Against his will he joins the leaders of the school hierarchy in their favourite game aimed at humiliating physically weak pupils. This clever, well-read, thoughtful, humane teenager subconsciously starts speaking like the representatives of the narrow-minded school community only to remain within the accepted context. He never uses poetic or other bookish forms of speech at school so as not to be considered gay (homophobia is one of the leading features of those who set communication rules). He is very careful about every step he takes, thinks over all the details trying not to become an object of physical and mental humiliation. In order to fit in the boy accepts the invitation to join the Spooks group and is ready to go through the initiation procedure testing his courage, agility, and, to a certain degree, insolence. And here Jason is faced with a choice. While going through a series of obstacles together with his friend Dean Moran, who is not a popular boy at school, Jason has to decide whether to help his friend who got into trouble, which is forbidden by the rules, or to follow the rules, become one of the Spooks and to improve his standing. Humanity and goodness prevail in this situation; Jason helps his friend and completely ruins his reputation.

Psychological traumas often play crucial role in the personality formation of a teenager. The effect produced is not always the same, much depends here on the depth of the trauma itself as well as the ability of the teenager to overcome it and live on. This idea is reflected in the psychological notion "post-traumatic growth" that is understood as "positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises. It is manifested in a variety of ways, including an increased appreciation for life in general, more meaningful interpersonal relationships, an increased sense of personal strength, changed priorities, and a richer existential and spiritual life" [6]. It is noteworthy that the heroes of the analyzed novels who experience post-traumatic growth emerge victorious from the traumatic situations that did not break or suppress them. Having grown up and made conclusions from the situations they went through both Michelle and Jason reach a new higher level of their existence.

It must be said that the resolution of the traumatic situation was far from easy for Jason Taylor. A short-term rise of his status is quickly followed by a downfall. His visit to the cinema with his mother, which contradicted the unwritten code of the boys'

community, leads to another wave of bullying by the classmates. Money extortion and physical abuse make Jason commit an emotional act: during the shop class he deliberately crushes a very expensive new calculator belonging to his main abuser Neal Brose. When accused of property damage Jason is trying to defend his name telling the headmaster the reasons for his behaviour and destroys the image of Neal Brose as a golden boy student (seen as such by the school administration).

In that situation Jason behaves bravely and with dignity. At the same time he is haunted by the thought of being "a snitch". It was only a strict punishment of the teenagers terrorizing Jason and other schoolboys together with the unexpected general respect by the pupils treating him as a hero rather than a snitch that make Jason realize that he has done the right thing. And here one can clearly see the author's message. When touching upon a very difficult issue of bullying, which is practically ubiquitous at present but which used to be hushed up for a long time, D. Mitchell gets across to his teenage readers the idea that it is very important to end the violence by whatever means available. A false sense of honour shown in silence and patient suffering of the victim should not be viewed as a sign of strength or decency, it leads to self-destruction.

Jason who gives away his (and other children's) abusers is shown in the novel as a strong personality, capable of responsible decisions and courageous actions, the one who puts an end to the criminal behavior of a group of bullies harassing a large number of teenagers with impunity. As a matter of fact this action of the hero is a manifestation of post-traumatic growth. The boy goes through numerous difficult situations in his life, which teaches him many bitter lessons, but he stays true to his moral highly humane choice. At the end of the novel we learn that the boy's parents get divorced but Jason manages to reunite with his father who feels guilty that his son did not tell him about the bullying at school. The boy also sees a good example of his mother who copes with her life crisis: she starts working and quickly realizes her highly creative potential.

Besides Jason reconnects with his sister with whom, as he understands, they have always been very close, but grew apart due to the problems of the previous year. Jason grows much more confident in his relations with girls and at school in general. It is interesting that Hangman that made his life even more unbearable backs off. Naturally the boy's speech becomes softer and more fluent owing to mental stabilization and lack of stressors. In addition he now can use all the vocabulary range he possesses and sentence structures that correspond to his level of a well-read and deep personality not trying to conform to the criteria established by the primitive narrow-minded school top brass. He accepts his mother's, his father's and his sister's choices and looks to the future with hope.

Michelle grows up as well. Her way also lies through acceptance. This way is as long and difficult as Jason's. Her father's betrayal causing her mother's severe depression prevents the girl from communicating with her father for a long time. She hates his new wife and blames her for their family breakdown. It was very difficult for the girl to make a decision to visit her father after a long pause in their relations. She is preparing herself mentally for the meeting, thinking of the way to ignore his wife. And it is a kind of trauma for the girl. But Gilly appears to be a clever self-sufficient young woman, whose personal charm Michelle is unable to resist. She accepts her father's new family and their new born baby. Really traumatic for the teenage girl was her first true love to her classmate's brother, a soldier called Tomer. Bright emotions are depicted, as well as sincere letters where she expresses her feelings, shares her innermost thoughts and worries, end in pain when she sees Tomer with another girl, his fellow soldier.

However when some time later Michelle reads in a newspaper about Tomer's military feat she tries to justify him and explains his behaviour by the fact that his life is fraught with constant danger, therefore he is simply sparing her, protecting from worries and sufferings. Besides she is now ready to accept the idea that she needs Tomer more than he needs her (though when

they meet later the guy admits that he misses her letters). Prone to analysis and reflection Michelle has learnt to understand and accept, learnt to see life in its complexity and diversity. She accepts Tomer with his choice. She accepts her father who is still unable to take responsibility though he is having a new family. She accepts Gilly who leaves her father because she has outgrown him and is eager to move on, accepts her mother's personal choice, which is strange and unexpected to Michelle, but it is a choice her mother has a right to.

The girl is growing increasingly aware of the fact that the world is not just black-and-white. In the final part of the novel a 16 year old Michelle realizes that there is a person in her life who all this time has been faithful and loyal, understanding her without words, supporting her in the most difficult situations and never betraying her. It was Bentzi whose love she once rejected not to experience additional pain. When she realizes that their relations are love itself, it makes her stronger and more mature and her life becomes full.

#### 4 Conclusion

The heroes of both novels experience post-traumatic growth. The psychological traumas have not broken them. The teenagers become winners in difficult life situations. Clever and sensitive, they are trying to understand their own inner world.

Michelle and Jason are real examples of the psychological persona, whose image is emerging in contemporary young adult literature. They want to speak about themselves, talk aloud about their problems, live out their experience; they need an interlocutor, a listener that is granted to them by their creators in the form of a reader. It is extremely important that both literary works are highly optimistic. They not only touch upon difficult issues often turning into real psychological traumas faced by teenagers in modern society – they also show that these problems can be solved and traumas can be overcome.

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**Primary Paper Section:** A

**Secondary Paper Section:** AI, AJ