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Bakhtin's Dialogism: A Study of R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*

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Abstract

Mikhail Bakhtin is one of the most important theorists of dialogical discourse in the twentieth century. His most influential theoretical notions related to modern novel are Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia. Within the Bakhtinian theoretical context the study argues that Palacio's *Wonder* discusses the issue of disability through different perspectives, namely the deformed face, August, and other characters. The novel is a call and response between August whose deformed face places him in the position of inferior Otherness and other characters whose normality identifies them as the superior Self. This is tackled through the technique of multiple narrative voices. The study aims at answering the following questions: Does Palacio raise the issue of diversity in her *Wonder* because she is inspired by her personal experience or she is completely detached and thus deals with the issue of disability as a relative truth that is in need for discussion through dialogical perspectives. The study relies theoretically on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogisms. Also, it tackles the theory of disability and the issue of giving voice to the disabled since they form an important group in society. The research's main goal is to give voice to the silenced people, namely disabled and deformed individuals. This goal motivates feelings of sympathy, empathy, and thus solidarity. In fact, Palacio's *Wonder* was chosen because it talks about a disabled boy in a clever way giving him a chance to be a productive individual in society. Since disabled people form a wide social group, therefor there must be studies which handle their problems and to encourage them to be better persons in spite of their deformity. The main significance of the research is to show the experimental technique of modern and postmodern novel that is dialogisms. The present study is divided into two sections and a conclusion. Section one places the novel in its theoretical, literary, and historical backgrounds. Section two discusses August's issue of deformed face through multiple points of view in the novel, namely August, Via, and Summer. The last part is the conclusion which includes the findings of the study.

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Keywords: Dialogism, R.J. Palacio, Wonder, disabled and deformed individuals.

Section One

1.1. Introduction

Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism, heteroglossia, chronotope, and polyphony raised a significant interest among researchers because of their relatedness to the way modern literature in general and modern novel in particular are analyzed and thus comprehended. These concepts were introduced in the West in (1960.) Since that time, Bakhtin was recognized as a unique thinker in a sense that he questioned the author's interference as well as his monological and egocentric discourse. Bakhtinian concepts, in fact, elaborate on the sociological concepts of language and the way it is used by different speakers to reveal different discourses. While heteroglossia indicates the plurality and multiplicity of discourses, dialogism refers to the mixture and interaction of these discourses within one particular structure, namely social, political, and literary texts. Drawing on Bakhtin's dialogic theory, the purpose of this paper is to contribute to discussions about engagement in multiple social encounters related to disabled literature,

Mikhail Bakhtin is a Russian philosopher and literary critic who is categorized as the most important fictional theorists in the twentieth century. He is well known for his essays about the dialogue of imagination; in these essays, Bakhtin analyzes language and discourse in the novel. According to Michael Holquist, "Bakhtin is a system-builder, but not in the sense of methodological closure. Rather, his system consists of open-ended connections, and refuses to view issues in isolation". Indeed, Bakhtin's structural orientation emphasizes the idea that themes can never be detached from each other within the magnitude of the literary texts and thus simply seen as single entities. Instead, they should be treated in relation to each other and through the prism of 'unfinalizable' perspectives.

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin presents the concept of dialogism which enhances the idea of multiple narrative voices. He proposes different distinct meanings for dialogism, according to him "any utterance, whether spoken or written, that people use in communication with each other is internally dialogic" (Bakhtin, 1986 as cited in Marchenkova, 2005, 72). Furthermore, he mentions that dialogue is: "The nature of human life itself, in dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body" (Bakhtin, 1984, 293). In this regard, the text is born out of different ideologies adopted by different characters. As such, the characters are no more passive and silenced receivers, but rather agents capable of obtaining the will to power the author himself. In this regard, the role of the author is fundamentally changed, as he can no longer monopolize the characters. In dialogism there is always a room for arguing since questions show everybody's point of view rather than one unified universal truth. According to Bakhtin every human being likes to resist, confront and make personal meaning out of social interactions.

Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist write: "the phenomenon that Bakhtin calls 'polyphony' is simply another name for dialogism" (Holquist, 1984, 242). David Lodge also talks about synonymy between the two terms. He writes: "in Bakhtin's theory, 'polyphonic' is virtually synonymous with 'dialogic'" (Lodge, 1990, 86). Lynne Pearce makes a subtle distinction between the two terms when she writes: "'polyphony' is associated with the macrocosmic structure of the text (literally, its 'many voices') and 'dialogue' with reciprocating mechanisms within the smaller units of exchange, down to the individual word" (Pearce, 1994, 21). Hence, "polyphony" and "dialogue" are interchangeable terms in a sense that polyphonic text should be necessarily dialogic.

It is through the lenses of these two concepts, namely dialogism and polyphony, Bakhtin reads Dostoevsky's literary works. He considers polyphony to be a special characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels. He states that "we consider Dostoevsky one of the greatest innovators in the realm of artistic form. He

created, in our opinion, a completely new type of artistic thinking, which we have provisionally called polyphonic" (Bakhtin, 1973, 3). According to Bakhtin "Dostoevsky created a new novel genre and was able to create a polyphonic world and destroy the established forms which were in use in monological European novels" (Ibid.: 8). He elaborates on the way each of these works have different narrative voices that are unmerged into one particular perspective, and thus released from being subjugated to the voice of the author. Each of these voices, in fact, has its own perspective, its own validity, and its own narrative weight within the structure of particular text.

Graham Pechey states that Bakhtin through dialogism, raised dialogue from mere compositional or linguistic status to a sort of architectonics of the everyday – while he pursued a translinguistics of discourse conceived as always already rich with those emancipatory-consummatory possibilities that are supremely realized in novelistic polyphony (Pechey:74)

However, Bakhtin shows that monologism is opposed to dialogism. Michael Holquist affirms that official languages are masks for ideologies of many different kinds, but they all privilege oneness. He suggest that the more powerful the ideology, the more totalitarian (monologic) will be the claims of its language. Also, he explains that extreme versions of such language would be religious systems and certain visionary forms of government that have as their end that prelapsarian condition in which words are not necessary. Speech falls away because—in the state such ideologies wish to underwrite—no mediation is necessary since everyone's thought is in step with everyone else's. There is no difference between individual and society. Of course, such an extreme monologism is both theoretically and practically impossible: dialogism is a realism (Holquist:51).

In fact, most of the Victorian novels can be considered as examples of monologism while most of the modern novels usually are dialogical in their treatment of the characters as they are given voices to express themselves.

1.2. R.J. Palacio

R. J. Palacio was born on July 13, 1963 in New York City. Her birth name is Raquel Jaramillo. She was an art director and graphic designer for more than 20 years, while waiting for the perfect time to start writing her own novel. Her early works appeared in *The Village Voice* and *The New York Times Book Review*, which eventually segued into her storied career as the art director of several major book publishing companies. She designed thousands of book covers for countless writers in every genre of fiction and non-fiction, including Paul Auster, Thomas Pynchon, Salman Rushdie, Louise Ehrdrich, Sue Grafton, and John Fowles (among many others). In addition to designing book covers, Palacio illustrated several of her own children's books that were published under her birth name, including *Peter Pan: The Original Tale of Neverland*; *Ride Baby Ride*; *Look Baby Look*; *The Night Before Christmas*; *The Handiest Things in the world*; and *Last Summer*.

1.3. *Wonder*'s Literary Background

R. J. Palacio's *Wonder* follows the same dialogical notion that Faulkner follows. Palacio captures the voices of girls and boys, fifth graders and teenagers, with equal skill. She shifts her point of view, telling the story through the eyes of characters other than Auggie. This allows the reader to get to know characters like Auggie's sister, Via, who talks about the way her brother takes over the family's life and how she wrestles with her resentment, guilt and concern.

Originally, R. J. Palacio first thought of the idea for *Wonder* when she and her children were on vacation. While there, they saw a young girl who had a condition similar to Auggie's. Her children reacted badly, which got Palacio thinking about the girl and what she goes through on a daily basis. Palacio also thought about how she could have better taught her children to respond to situations like this. About this experience Palacio says: "I honestly don't believe that empathy is something that can be taught. It can only be inspired." The novel, in fact, teaches valuable lessons about tolerance, compassion and kindness while

helping kids be grateful for things they take for granted every day. *Wonder* is a story that encourages readers to consider the interactions and relationships we form in our lives.

Wonder tells the story of Auggie, a tough, sweet, 10-year-old boy, who was born with distorted facial features — a "craniofacial difference" caused by an anomaly in his DNA. Inside, he knows he is like every other kid, but even after 27 surgeries, the central character of *Wonder* bears facial disfigurements so pronounced that people who see him for the first time do "that look-away thing" — if they manage to hide their shock and horror. "Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse," he says of his face as the book begins. He's used to the stares and mean comments, but he's still terrified to learn that his parents have gotten him into middle school at Beecher Prep and want him to go there rather than be home-schooled. But they persuade him to give it a try.

Section Two

2.1. The Distorted Face: Between Subjectivity and Otherness

In his essay "Characters in Bakhtin's Theory," Anthony Wall states that Dostoevsky, Bakhtin's favorite author, once he created his characters, they seemed to speak for themselves (Wall, 1984, 41). This finds its echo in the way Palacio lets her main character speak for himself, elaborate on his disability and how he is identified as the "Other" by others. August, the main character of the novel, speaks for his malformation and the way he is Othered by people: "I wish I had a normal face that no one ever noticed at all. I would wish that I had a normal face that no one ever noticed at all. I would wish that I could walk down the street without people seeing me and then doing that look-away thing." (Palacio, 3). Though he is unordinary in the eyes of others and extraordinary in the eyes of his mom, dad, and his sister Via, he believes that he is "the only person in the world who realizes how ordinary [he is] (Ibid). Palacio, in this sense, examines how disability affects the character's interaction with family and wider

community, how people with disabilities are treated, and the problems that these characters confront.

Jean Paul Sartre in his essay "The Look" elaborates on the concept of the look which occurs when a consciousness Self, placed at the center of its own being, is a mere object in the world of others. August recognizes the dichotomies of his subjective and objective being; they are manifested when he finds himself in a direct confrontation with the outside world. Explained by Sartre's concepts of the look, August's unity with his ordinary "self" is achieved when he takes the role of the observer who is watching a scene behind a closed door by looking through a keyhole: "Since I've never been to a real school before, I am pretty much totally and completely petrified." (Palacio, 4). However, this unity is disrupted when his role of an observer is converted to be that one of an observed when he is suddenly interrupted by the sound of footsteps behind him: "what I wanted was to go to school, but only if could be like every other kid going to school" (Ibid.). The look is always accompanied by shame, the shame of having been rendered an object. Accordingly, the way he is viewed by others causes him alienation and thus possible objectifying of August's subjectivity. His freedom would be doomed to get fixated in the gaze of the Other.

August's relationship with the Other's gaze can be represented by means of "being over-looked" which pulls him in two directions at once. To be overlooked' implies that the object of the gaze decides to be invisible; 'to be over-looked' suggests that there is an excess of looking, that the object of the gaze is scrutinized which is matched by the lack of attention to other aspects related to personality. Invisibility is practiced by August intentionally in certain occasions; when he looks for protection, he hides himself behind his mom. This is noticed when his mother and father join him in his first day in the school:

"there weren't a lot of people around. And the few people who were there didn't seem to notice me at all, though that may have been because they didn't see me. I sort of hid behind Mom as I walked. I know that the sounds kind of babyish of me, but I wasn't feeling very brave right then." (17)

In many other occasions, August finds himself with no parental protection and thus has to go through the whole situation by himself and ignore the way he is scrutinized by others: "Hi, August," she said smiling at me very nicely when I went up to get my folder. I kind of felt everyone's eyes burning into my back for the few seconds I stood in front of the class, and everybody looked down when I walked back to my desk." (39)

Children with facial differences are obliged to face many challenges related to the emotional hardship of their different appearance. August's self-awareness of his facial "wonder" fuels the overwhelming experience that he is obliged to confront. With each experience he is just "like a lamb to the slaughter": something that you say about someone who goes somewhere calmly, not knowing that something unpleasant is going to happen to them." (43) In this sense, Palacio deviates from the stereotypical representation of deformity which literature used to depict that is outer deformity represents inner defects of the mind, symbolically referred to as the "twisted mind in the twisted body." Palacio does not try to show that the conflict between normality and deformity symbolically equates the conflict between good and evil. Instead, she tries to attract the readers' attention to the crucial question of:

"who we are! Us! Right? What kind of people are we? What kind of person are you? Isn't that the kind of question we should be asking ourselves all the time? What kind of person am i?...And learning who you are is what you're here to do." (47)

Disabled people are a minority group like other social ethnic, religious, linguistic groups who are discriminated against the mainstream society in their attempts to secure the right to life, freedom, education, shelter, and employment. Alan Gartner has compared this discrimination to racism in the following lines:

"Just as whites have imposed their images upon blacks, and men upon women, people without disabilities have imposed their image upon people who are disabled. These images have told us not only what is beautiful

and right, they have also warned us that the image of disability is ugly and evil." (Gartner, 1984, 31)

August is initially discriminated by natural forces of malformation which impose upon him the image of "some prehistoric swamp thing" (50). This is linked with the weird look August identified with whenever he eats. There is a hole in the roof of his mouth thus whenever he eats he has to chew the food in the front of his mouth otherwise "the food crumbs shooting out of [his] mouth" (50). The way he looks like at lunch in the school, enhances his feelings of otherness and estrangement as well: "I could tell I was being stared at without even looking up. I knew that people were nudging each other, watching me out of the concerns of their eyes. I thought I was used to those kinds of stares by now, but I guess I wasn't."(Ibid)

The only occasion which saves August from staring is that one of Halloween. In this particular occasion all people can wear masks all the time and thus no one is different from the other, the line that distinguishes August from other is completely blurred and the pronounces I and they is transformed into a collective "we": "We could all wear masks all the time. Then we could walk around and get to know each other before we got to see what we looked like under the masks" (73). This folkloric celebration and the way it demolishes the differences among people may bring to memory the Bakhtinian notion of Carnavalesque literature which challenges authority, traditions, and rules. This is often done by breaking down boundaries of class and position, celebrating the grotesque and forbidden, and reveling in that which is usually derided. In Carnavalesque logic, the rich serve the poor, the ugly are declared beautiful, and religious ceremonies are replaced by burlesque. The resultant environment is often described as 'upside-down', since the Carnavalesque isn't about *ignoring* rules, but rather deliberately breaking or reversing them. In this way, the Carnavalesque is a reaction to the status quo, a quality that keeps it relevant even as society changes over time. This kind of transgressive reversal of status is fertile ground for stories, prompting characters to become aware of their

previous status and that of others around them. It can also be used to make unlikely relationships feel justified. This is applicable on that night of Halloween when the distinctions between August and others is removed and his feelings of being different from others is transformed to be just like others. That night he feels himself different not from others but rather from the way he used to be and thus feel: “I was different. Where I usually walked with my head down, trying to avoid being seen, today I walked with my head up, looking around” (76). He looks around not to know who stares at him but rather to enjoy life around him. Therefore, this particular day, he considers, “is the most awesome days in the history of [his life]” (Ibid.).

The phenomenon of staring, according to Rosemarie Thomson emphasizes the social process of stigmatization which “hurtles a body from safe shadows of ordinariness into a bull’s eyes of judgment.” (Thomson, 1997, 45). Stigmatization can be clearly recognized when Summer, a girl in August’s school, shares him the same table during lunch time. Summer’s friend comes over the table to ask her “why [she] is sitting here,” namely with August. When Summer looks confused, August realizes that Summer’s friend is one of the girls August has caught looking at him just few minutes earlier. However, August finds an alternative to such bitter social punishment when Summer shares him the table and tries to establish a bridge of conversation regardless his disfigurement. She fuels him, consciously or unconsciously, with such a healing dialogue that transcends his physical wound: “We can make this the ‘summer only’ lunch table,” she said. “Only kids with summer names can sit here. Let’s see, is there anyone here named June or July.” (52) By means of using the pronoun “we” she transcends his existential deformed and “Otherd” being, instead she equates their beings within the frame of “summer table.” This unified being of “we” finds its echo in August himself when he, himself, uses the same pronoun to describe his zealous response to Summer’s suggestion: “we had come up with a whole list of names of kids and teachers who could sit at our table if they wanted.” (Ibid.)

However, August later one recalls their different beings by means of using the same collective pronoun of we: “We’re kind of like Beauty and the Beast.” (56)

Disabled children can be seen as a burden to their families since their bodies are fatally deformed and thus transformed into something alienated and deeply influenced by its repressed melancholy. In the case of August, however, his family tries its best to fuel his tormented self with much emotional support so as to enhance his self-esteem. August after his first day in the school pretends that everything goes well. However, what he shows is the other extreme of what he hides and struggles to repress; his calmness bursts suddenly and he finds himself crying and wrapped by his mother’s arms around him:

she kissed me all over my face. She kissed my eyes that came down too far. She kissed my cheeks that looked punched in she kissed my tortoise mouth. She had soft words that I knew were meant to help me, but words cannot change my face. (60)

Words, on the contrary, can sometimes have a linguistic vulnerability; they can be verbal wounding in a sense that Other’s speech can produce injury. As a child, August struggles to confront the forces of demeaning face; he resists not to think of it as something defined by its deformity. However, each attempt is encountered by stigmatization which drives him more and more to the desire not of hiding but rather of being hidden away. In this regard, quoting Thomson, “the meaning attributed to extraordinary bodies reside not in inherent physical flaws, but in social relationships; it is social framing and cultural norms that determine the meaning and value of bodies that disrupt the normal.” (Thomson, 1997, 32) On the one hand, Palacio tries her best to depict this denaturalization and allows insight into the psychological impact of the process of “Othering”. On the other hand, she tries to deliver an important message that is: “The things we do are the most important things of all. They are more important than what we say or what we look like.” (*Wonder*: 65)

2.2. The Dialogic Structure of Binary Oppositions

Stories about people with disability are actually stories about people without disability around them. Though August is the pivot of the whole conflict in the novel, the narrative is not filtered through his perspectives only. It rather signals powerfully the response of other characters to August's deformation which "everyone has a story about it." (84) Thus, through other perspectives of other characters Palacio elaborates on the process of "othering" within the whole society. This finds its echo in the Bakhtinian discourse of dialogism who believes that "the very foundation of reality is created through the binary oppositions of pull and force found in our natural and social world." (Bakhtin, 1981, 272). This idea can be traced in the dialogical call and response that permeates the narrative structure of the novel. In fact, the multiple voices that feature the narrative structure of *Wonder* can be considered as a metaphor through which Bakhtin describes life. A semi picture of life can be recognized in August's family whom he describes as the following: "Mom is beautiful, by the way. And Dad is handsome. Via is pretty. In case you were wondering." (7) The way August is different from the members of his family motivates their continuous desire to talk and to share ideas, suggestions, and even anxieties: 'Let's just talk about' (9)

Wonder projects the voices of other characters who respond to August deformed face. Via, August's sister, responds to his deformed face in such a way that does not categorize him as the typical "Other": "I never used to see August the way other people saw him. I know he didn't look exactly normal, but I really didn't understand why strangers seemed shocked when they saw him. Horrified. Sickened. Scared." (85) From a Bakhtinian perspective, the contradiction of how society perceives August, on the one hand, and how his sister perceives him, on the other hand, can be understood as an ongoing dialogue between the possibilities of dealing with August as an individual, no matter how different he seems to be, and the voice of others who are blind to this individuality.

Via tries all the time to reflect on the traumatic nature of being cast out; she constantly asks:

Does August see how other people see him, or has he gotten so good at pretending not to see that it doesn't bother him? Or does it bother him? When he looks in the mirror, does he see the Auggie Mom and Dad see? Or does he see the Auggie everyone else sees? Or there is another August he sees? Someone in his dreams behind his misshapen head and face..." (89)

The tension between the two contradictory perspectives finds its most eloquent expression through the questions by which August\Auggie is placed between the "Self" and the "Other". Though this tension deprives him and his family from the ability to find a solace place in one stable position, in some other times they try to confront the outside forces by means of being engaged in a dialogue that would provide them with an empowering energy: "The point is we all have to put up with bad days. Now, unless you want to be treated like a baby the rest of your life, or like a kid with special needs, you just have to suck it up and go." (115)

The multi-voiced is the product of alternative and often opposing narrative voices. Each voice has its own life story; each competes with other voices for dominance in thought and action; and each is constituted by a different set of affectively-charged attachments: to people, events, and objects. As such, August's Otherness is constituted by good and bad stories in dialogical relationship. G. S. Gregg (1991) emphasizes this moral perspective in his structural approach to studying self-representations. He writes:

the self is performed as a kind of contrapuntal dialogue of voices between which the locus of subjectivity (and hence the nature of identity) continually shifts . . . The voices of the self-speak passionately about the endless quest for love and the struggle for power. They debate and dispute among themselves the moral basis

of the . . . social order in which they and themselves positioned
(Gregg, xiv).

Gregg's words can be understood in relation to Summer, August's friend in the school. She tries all the time to justify her attachment to August regardless his deformed head and face:

Some kids have actually come out and asked me why I hang out with “the freak” so much. These are the kids that don't even know him well. If they knew him, they wouldn't call him that. “Because he's a nice kid!” I always answer. “And I don't call him that. ”You are not a Saint Summer,” Ximena said to me the other day. “I couldn't do what you are doing” (119)

It is through the eyes of Summer, that Palacio reflects on the humanitarian values that one should care for in dealing with disabled people. Her notion meets what Taylor observes in his book entitled *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*: “To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you, and what is trivial and secondary. (Taylor, 1989, 28) Summer transcends the space that places her and August in two binary oppositions. Instead she tries her best to establish a bridge of conversation not between her and August only, but rather with others as well. She tries to show others that she accepts his individuality and thus cares much for his humanity that must not objectifies by means of others' uncaring speech. This is materialized in the way she shows her anxiety concerning her mother's response to misshapen face:

I had warned Mom about August's face. I had described what he looked like. I did this because I know she is not always so good at faking her feelings...she was shocked when she came through

the door and saw his face for the first time. ..” Stop making that weirded-out face.” (127)

Through *Summer*, Palacio tries to enhance the culture of accepting other’s difference. Acceptance is the ability to see that others have a right to be their own unique persons. That means having a right to express their own feelings, thoughts and opinions. When one accepts people for who they are, he lets them feel the way they want to feel, he lets them be different and think differently from his own “Self”.

According to Palacio, everyone is different in one way or another. Once we understand this truth, we can stop trying to change them into the people we want them to be and start accepting them for who they are. This collective “we” is what Palacio concludes the novel with: “We put our arms around each other’s shoulders ...And we were all in this big tight huddle as parents clicked a way like we were on a red carpet somewhere...we were all laughing and squeezing in the tight against each other, and no one cares if it was my face next to theirs.” (308) Acceptance of the “other” is not easy especially those who are deformed. By learning the skill of empathy, one will be better able to understand himself and those who are different from him.

Conclusion

Bakhtin’s dialogism is clearly connected to Palacio’s *Wonder*. Truth is often a multiplicity of dialogical perspectives, and sometimes the more viewpoints and versions of events there are, the closer the reader gets to an overarching truth. Palacio skillfully uses the “we” narrators to reflect on a message she conveys at the end of the novel. The message seeps into the word solidarity which necessarily springs from sympathetic and empathetic responses to our differences. The multiple narrators of the novel depict individual experiences that are gathered within the frame of one particular tale and thus collectively share the process of writing the live performance of August.

Disabled people can be productive and have great abundant ideas in spite of being physically deformed. Physical disability is not a cause for mind or spiritual deformity. On the contrary, such people can be great teachers, scientists, and scholars. They can be beneficial to their societies or to the world as a whole. However, they must be given a chance to be so. They must be given care and encouragement. This is what Palacio exactly had done in her novel *Wonder*. Auggie succeeds in his life as a student and as a human being because of the care and encouragement he takes from his family, friends and teachers. The bullying of the envious children does not break or ruin his resolution to prove his ability as a clever productive individual.

With his family's support and love, Auggie gets the highest rank in his school. At the end of the novel, in the award party in Auggie's school, his mother whispers in his ears that "You really are a wonder, Auggie. You are a wonder" (Palacio: 203). Hence, the wonder of the novel is the deformed Auggie. The title of the novel refers to the small child who suffers from the disability and deformity of the face. Thus, Palacio wants to emphasize the fact that deformity and disability are not the real causes of failure. It is the disappointment and fear of bullying and rejecting which makes such people unable to achieve success and to fill their place in society. Palacio gives her protagonist a voice to declare his inner self. Moreover, the voices given to the other characters backup his point of view concerning others opinions about him and their attitudes towards his deformity.

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