



Pedagogická  
fakulta  
Faculty  
of Education

Jihočeská univerzita  
v Českých Budějovicích  
University of South Bohemia  
in České Budějovice

Jihočeská univerzita v Českých Budějovicích

Pedagogická fakulta

Katedra anglistiky

Bakalářská práce

Hranice fantastických prostorů v dětské literatuře

The Borders of Fantastic Spaces in Children's Literature

Vypracovala: Blanka Vrtalová – 3. ročník, AJu-NJu-SZu

Vedoucí práce: PhDr. Alice Sukdolová, Ph.D.

České Budějovice 2021

Prohlašuji, že svoji bakalářskou práci jsem vypracovala samostatně pouze s použitím pramenů a literatury uvedených v seznamu citované literatury.

Prohlašuji, že v souladu s § 47b zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. v platném znění souhlasím se zveřejněním své bakalářské práce, a to v nezkrácené podobě - v úpravě vzniklé vypuštěním vyznačených částí archivovaných ... fakultou elektronickou cestou ve veřejně přístupné části databáze STAG provozované Jihočeskou univerzitou v Českých Budějovicích na jejich internetových stránkách, a to se zachováním mého autorského práva k odevzdanému textu této kvalifikační práce. Souhlasím dále s tím, aby toutéž elektronickou cestou byly v souladu s uvedeným ustanovením zákona č. 111/1998 Sb. zveřejněny posudky školitele a oponentů práce i záznam o průběhu a výsledku obhajoby kvalifikační práce. Rovněž souhlasím s porovnáním textu mé kvalifikační práce s databází kvalifikačních prací Theses.cz provozovanou Národním registrem vysokoškolských kvalifikačních prací a systémem na odhalování plagiátů.

Datum

Podpis studenta

**Acknowledgment:**

I would like to thank my supervisor PhDr. Alice Sukdolová, Ph.D. for her time, advice, recommendation, support and help.

## **Anotace**

Práce se bude zabývat koncepcemi fantastických prostorů v současné britské dětské literatuře, z nich některé jsou založeny na konceptu klasické pohádky (Neil Gaiman, Hansel and Gretel) a jiné svou hranicí přesahují do žánru gotických příběhů a hororové fantastické tvorby, přestože se jedná o literaturu určenou dětskému čtenáři. Práce se pokusí srovnat literární adaptace pohádek a původní tvorbu současného autora dětské a fantastické literatury Neila Gaimana s cílem soustředit se na hranice uvedených prostor a přesahu jednotlivých žánrů.

## **Abstract**

The bachelor thesis will explore concepts of fantastic spaces in contemporary British children's literature. Some of them are based on concept of the fairy tale genre (Neil Gaiman, Hansel and Gretel) and others are crossing the border into gothic fiction and horror fantastic creation, although it is considered a part of children's literature. My work will compare the literary adaptation of fairy tales and the original work of contemporary children's and fantastic literature of Neil Gaiman. The aim is to focus on borders of spaces and particular genres.

# Contents

Neil Gaiman .....	2
Gaiman's Bibliography.....	3
Genres .....	5
Fairy tales .....	5
Fantasy .....	8
Horror .....	10
Science Fiction.....	11
Comedy.....	12
Gothic Novel.....	13
Comic books .....	16
Theatre .....	17
Selected Novels.....	18
Coraline .....	18
The Fantastic Spaces in Coraline .....	21
The Graveyard Book.....	22
The Wolves in the Walls.....	28
Comparison of original fairy tales and Gaiman's adaptation.....	29
Hansel and Gretel.....	30
The Fantastic Spaces in Hansel and Gretel.....	31
The Sleeper and the Spindle.....	32
Conclusion .....	36
Sources .....	39

## **Introduction**

The aim of my bachelor thesis is to analyse fantastic spaces in children's literature written by Neil Gaiman in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I will compare the original work of the contemporary children's fiction author and the concept of classical fairy tales. My aim is to look at his work from many perspectives and not to see it as one genre.

At first, I would like to introduce Neil Gaiman, his life and notable works. It is also important to analyse the genres and sub-genres of fantasy literature. Horror, science fiction and gothic fiction must be included. It is hard to tell what genre N. Gaiman's books represent because he is very creative in terms of mixing genres.

Last but not least, I am going to analyse the works – *Coraline*, *The Graveyard Book* and *The Wolves in the Walls*.

N. Gaiman was inspired by classical fairy tale Brothers Grimm when he wrote "Hansel and Gretel". It is interesting to compare the original story and his adaptation. I will include more books because he was inspired by more authors. He likes to create his own fantastic spaces.

## Neil Gaiman

Neil Gaiman was born on November 10, 1960 in Portchester, England. Gaiman is an extraordinary writer, he writes in variety of formats, graphic novels, children's book, short stories, novels and scripts for television. There is a number of different genres, from horror, fantasy to science fiction. His work can have multiple genres just in one book. He knows the rules of conventional writing but he does not follow them. He uses a lot of his imagination and that is why people admire him. He is known for his series of comic books called *Sandman*. He began writing on them in the late 1980s and finally published his graphic novel *Sandman: Endless Nights* in 2003. This book became a bestseller according to New York Times. Gaiman also achieved success with a novella titled *Coraline*, published in 2002. He was awarded by Bram Stoker award, which is given to outstanding works of horror.<sup>1</sup>

J.K. Rowling was accused of stealing Gaiman's ideas and putting them in *Harry Potter Books (1997 – 2007)*. Gaiman was always on Rowling's side. He even contacted the newspapers when they published an untrue information. It was claimed that Rowling had stolen Tim Hunter from *Books of Magic (1990)*.

He is now living in Minneapolis and has four children. Some of his children are now adults and they have dual nationality. He lives in a house inspired by *The Addams Family* which is a fictional household from a book series published in 1938. Gaiman left England and wanted one of these things that only American can provide and that was *Addams Family*. He was surprised when he learned how complex America can be. He lives in Midwest and he understood it more than other large cities, such as New York City or Los Angeles. He wanted to show people the Midwest and he had fun writing about it. In USA he wrote the novel *American Gods (2001)*. Gaiman thinks that comics will go away as much as poetry. Authors nowadays write rarely poetry. He wanted comics to be more commercial medium. People had tendencies to compare everything to *Sandman*. It took him years to write it and it is impossible to compare it. He thinks with *American God* it changed.

---

<sup>1</sup> Neil Gaiman Biography. Encyclopedia of World Biography [online]. accessed [2021-02-22]. <https://www.notablebiographies.com/news/Ca-Ge/Gaiman-Neil.html>



In 1984 he wrote Duran Duran's, afterwards he bought electric typewriter. He owned the copyright to it and because the company went bankrupt, they wanted him to bring it back to the print.

The first time when he was approached by Hollywood, it took him many days to communicate with the company. The company went bankrupt and he didn't get paid. Even that he looks like a rock journalist, wearing sunglasses, leather jacket and blue jeans, he didn't consider yourself as a rocker.<sup>2</sup>

#### Gaiman's Bibliography

One of his early novels is *Good Omens*. *Good Omens* was written by Gaiman and co-writer Terry Pratchett in 1990. It is written in dark humorous way. It deals with the question of Antichrist and the coming of an Apocalypse.<sup>3</sup> After *Good Omens* came *Neverwhere* and *Stardust*. *Neverwhere* was written in 1996. "*Richard Mayhew is an unassuming young businessman living in London, with a dull job and a pretty but demanding fiancée. Then one night he stumbles across a girl bleeding on the sidewalk. He stops to help her--and the life he knows vanishes like smoke.*"<sup>4</sup> *Stardust* is a fantasy novel written in 1999. The novel tells us about a love story between Tristan Thorn and Victoria Forester. The novel can also be described as fantasy.<sup>5</sup> *American Gods* has been one of Neil Gaiman's most successful novels. It was published in 2001. As mentioned before, Gaiman wrote this book when he started living in the USA. It received great critical praise. It has been said that *American God* is "*One of the most talked-about books of the new millennium, American Gods is a kaleidoscopic journey deep into myth and across an American landscape at once eerily familiar and utterly alien. It is, quite simply, a contemporary masterpiece.*"<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> RICHARDS, Linda. Neil Gaiman. Encyclopedia of World Biography [online]. 2001 accessed [2021-02-22].

<http://www.januarymagazine.com/profiles/gaiman.html>

<sup>3</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers accessed [2021-03-02].

<https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/Good+Omens/>

<sup>4</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-03-02].

<https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/Neverwhere/>

<sup>5</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-03-02].

<https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/Stardust/>

<sup>6</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-03-02].

<https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/Stardust/>

That is why it was awarded: Hugo Award for Best SF/Fantasy Novel, Nebula Award for Best Novel, Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel, Bram Stoker Award for Best Horror Novel.<sup>7</sup> *Coraline* is a children's novella published in 2002, however it is also appealing to adults. It received great critical praise.

It was the best book of the year according to Child Magazine and the best book according to Publishers weekly. It contains beautiful illustrations.<sup>8</sup> *Anansi Boys*, a novel written in 2005 tells us a story about Charlie Nancy, called Fat Charlie. Gaiman gives us mystical deceptions, killer birds and many more. He uses a mythology for a modern age. He uses the mythology of gods. I am going to mention a one bird called Bird aka The Bird Woman, the female god in this book.<sup>9</sup> *"He wondered where he was. This was not the Bird Woman's copper-coloured universe, nor her cave, but neither was it the place he had previously tended to think of as the real world. It was closer to the real world, though, close enough that he could almost taste it, or would have tasted it if he could taste anything in his mouth but the iron tang of the blood; close enough that, if he were not staked out on the ground, he could have touched it."*<sup>10</sup> *Interworld* was published in 2007. The main Character Joe gets lost and he appears in another dimension. He has the power to travel between dimensions. In the end it is up to him to save the world and he has got many possibilities. In 2013, a sequel *The Silver World* was published.<sup>11</sup> *The Graveyard Book* is a novel published in 2008 tells us about a boy Bod, who can live outside of the graveyard. He was raised by ghosts and werewolves. He has to survive in a human's world.<sup>12</sup> *Norse Mythology* is A novel from 2017 inspired by ancient mythology, where Gaiman stays true to the myths.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-03-02]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/Stardust/>

<sup>8</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-03-03]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/Coraline/>

<sup>9</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-03-03]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/Anansi+Boys/>

<sup>10</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *Anansi Boys*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2005. p.154.

<sup>11</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-03-04]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/InterWorld/>

<sup>12</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-03-04]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/The+Graveyard+Book/>

<sup>13</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers accessed [2021-03-04]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/Norse+Mythology/>

Another notable work for children is *Chu's Day*, *Crazy Hair*, *Fortunately the Milk*, *M is for Magic*, *Wolves in the Wall*, *Blueberry Girl*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Odd and the Frost Giants*, *Stories: All the new Tales*, *Now We Are Sick*, *Smoke and Mirrors*, *The Dangerous Alphabet* and *Unnatural Creatures*.<sup>14</sup>

## Genres

Gaiman's work contains multiple genres. His work is made of fantasy, horror, science fiction, fairy tales and comedy. In order to understand him, we need to understand particular genres and where they come from.

### Fairy tales

Fairy tales are one of the oldest known form of literature. They are central part of our imagination. We remember them from our childhood and they tend to reappear in songs, movies and even in our dreams. The experience is represented in vivid symbolic form. Sometimes we need to have the truth more dramatic and fantastic in order to accept it.<sup>15</sup>

*Hansel and Gretel* (1812) may show us the fact, that some children are living in poor conditions and they are underfed, while others may overfeed their children. There is a contrast between Hansel, Gretel and the witch, who lives surrounded by sweets. The message of fairy tales can be different for each reader and that makes it even more beautiful. Modern fairy tales are very popular and still written. Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, T.H. White, Angela Carter, Carl Sandburg, James Thurber, Bernard Malamud, H.G. Wells, Louis Erdrich are all authors of modern fairy tales. Most of the time they have child protagonists but there are hidden and sophisticated comments for adults. Originally, they were passed on orally, the heroes or heroines were young people. The understanding of fairy tales was different in the nineteenth-century and in the twentieth-century. Age is also important in terms of understanding. For example, in *The Little Princess* (1864) by George MacDonald, the princess is enchanted and the only way to break the enchantment is falling in love. A modern reader may think that the way to grow up faster is to fall in love.

---

<sup>14</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-03-04]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/>

<sup>15</sup> LURIE, Alison. *Boys and Girls Forever: Children's Classics from Cinderella to Harry Potter*. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2003.

To a Victorian reader it might be a book about a proper behaviour of a woman. English Illustrator George Cruickshank began to write about fairy tales from a different point of view.

One character in his *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1853) turns out to be an alcoholic and Cinderella's wedding is destruction of all the drinks in Prince's castle.<sup>16</sup>

Other writers wanted to improve morals, in Catherine Sinclair's *Uncle David's Nonsensical Story about Giants and Fairies* (1839) the overfed children are supposed to be eaten.

In other books there is a punishment for lazy and greedy people. John Ruskin's *The King of the Golden River* (1851) promotes Ruskin's political beliefs. Lucy Lane Clifford's *The New Mother* (1822) has a dark ending. Two innocent children are encouraged in a naughty behaviour by a strange woman. Eventually their mother leaves them and they are sent to another mother. After Grimm and Perrault, there was another influence on children literature. Hans Christian Andersen, he heard many stories from his grandmother and was influenced by Christianity. He composed original stories, full of stoicism, self – sacrifice and piety. Andersen's Christian mortality is shown in Oscar Wilde's *The Selfish Giant* (1888).<sup>17</sup>

Many modern fairy tales are also happy and humorous and entertaining. For example, Charles Dicken's *The Magic Fishbone* or Kenneth Grahame's *The Reluctant Dragon* (1898) features a dragon, who is very sentimental and wishes to be admired by villagers. But they are terrified by him, this represents a certain behaviour in a human race.<sup>18</sup>

E. Nesbit's *The Book of Beasts* (1900) deals with the magical power of art. In this fairy tale, exotic creatures are coming alive, when the pages are opened. H.G.Wells tried to put metaphors for science in his book *The Magic Shop* (1903). In the story of the same name are both supernatural creatures and the actual future inventions, including a train without steam. Other British writers composed more romantic stories. *The Lovely Myfanwy* (1925) by Walter de la Mare and *Bluebeard's Daughter* (1940) by Sylvia Townsend Warner contains typical traditional old-fashioned background with princesses, castles and possessive paternal love. Others take place in a contemporary world.

---

<sup>16</sup> LURIE, Alison. *Boys and Girls Forever: Children's Classics from Cinderella to Harry Potter*. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> LURIE, Alison. *Boys and Girls Forever: Children's Classics from Cinderella to Harry Potter*. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

John Collier's *The Chaser* (1941) takes place in modern London, Naomi Mitchison's *In the Family* (1957) is set in Scotland. It is common that authors are inspired by classical stories.

*The Kith of the Elf-Folk* (1910) is a happier version of *The Little Mermaid* (1837) by Andersen. The main character rejects her new human soul and returns to her former life. Angela Carter became well-known for her dramatic retellings of original fairy tales.

They are set in modern place but are full of mystery, the characters are updated but love is very important thing in her books. It is very interesting that she does not feel that mystery and magic is not connected to the past. It is also in the present and we may recognise it. In Carter's *The Tiger's Bridge* (1979) the hero turns out to be a tigress, instead of a handsome prince.

In modern fairy tales we can compare the contrast between exotic, luxurious background and everyday background. T.H. White's *The Troll* (1935) is set in a hotel in Sweden, while Joan Aiken's *The Man Who Had Seen the Rope Trick* (1976) takes place in boarding-house in England.<sup>19</sup>

It was different in America, instead of imaginary creatures, they had more realistic characters. The stories were full of wild animals, Indians and the enchanted lakes were real lakes for example Niagara Falls or The Rocky Mountains. European fairy tales are more fixed. There is a social bubble, usually an extraordinary boy or a girl with courage and kindness. Usually, they become rich and marry into royalty. There are also evil stepmothers, cruel kings and queens. The wealthy people are usually portrayed as evil. It seems that everyone wants to marry and be rich and happy. The social system stays the same and only the protagonist and the idea change. In many American fairy tales this does not happen. In Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* (1820), the main character falls asleep, he wakes up twenty years after to find that people have changed and British Colony has become a new nation.<sup>20</sup>

The world does not change but the character and the values of the people do. Looks and wealthiness is not as important as in British stories. Many British writers have strong feminism beliefs and they are portrayed in novels. Good young woman is more independent and does not act like the stereotypical portrait of woman.

---

<sup>19</sup> LURIE, Alison. *Boys and Girls Forever: Children's Classics from Cinderella to Harry Potter*. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2003

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

Some of them rebels and do not marry a prince. In Angela Carter's *Bluebeard* (1979) the heroine is rescued by her mother and not by a male character.

Another example is Jane Yolen, her novels are often pro-feminist. She also touches the subject of sexual violence.

But at the end, they are more powerful and the evil man does not win. Today the fairy tale is more appropriate for children, they tend to be silly and mostly have happy ending. Children are often overexposed to the cartoon version of classical stories. They can entertain them but they also leave a good message.<sup>21</sup>

## Fantasy

Fantasy literature is a wide term. Under this term people imagine different things and it is impossible to define it. Fantasy novels are written for all people, no matter what age or gender. Usually there are supernatural symbols and things that are impossible for us.

Fantasy exists not only in written form but when we talk about fantasy writing we usually mean different genres of fantasy. Utopia, myth, science fiction, magic realism, the Gothic, space opera, allegory. We try to keep our feet on the ground but in fantasy, we can dream.<sup>22</sup>

English children's fantasy has its sources in the Romantic glorification and early English industrial revolution. Authors of all places in the UK have been writing fantasy literature for children. The fantasy is usually set in their local environment. In Kingsley's work, there is a celebration of the beauty of landscapes in Yorkshire and Hampshire. Some of the books are a pure imagination of author's mind. Lewis Carroll brought us a new whole world with *Alice's Adventures in the Wonderland* (1865). He created highly believable characters, who talked with each other in an imaginary world. The skill to make believable story is a key part. The playfulness is important, children must feel drawn to the story.<sup>23</sup>

The English have always loved games, the children understand them and feel excited about them.

---

<sup>21</sup> LURIE, Alison. *Boys and Girls Forever: Children's Classics from Cinderella to Harry Potter*. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2003.

<sup>22</sup> ARMITT, Lucie. *Fantasy Fiction: An Introduction*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005. p.1.

<sup>23</sup> MANLOVE, Colin. *From Alice to Harry Potter: Children's Fantasy in England*. New Zealand: Cybereditions Corporation Christchurch, 2003. p.194-96

There are more means to change our mind and play with our head, for example French Saint – Exupery's *Petite Prince* (1943). Fantasy for children in the twentieth century is about difficult times and overcoming problems. English fantasy tends to go for a shock, there is a big interplay and the story tends to keep one level of reality. Authors tend to put opposites together; it may come from their comic sense of disparity.

It expresses a strong empiricism and clear sense of boundaries. There is a strong fascination with the supernatural and the particular reality playing interest. Fantasy is not often symbolic or allegorical. C.S. Lewis, the author of *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956) claims that he was not writing allegory but the myth. Tolkien opposed the allegory in *Lord of the Rings* (2002). There are a few authors who had written allegorical fantasy such as George Orwell and his *Animal Farm*. Russell Hoban's *The Mouse and his Child* (1967) is a satire on American consumerism.

These books use fantasy as way to point on problems or meanings to real life. The protagonist is usually an animal, not a child or a real person. <sup>24</sup>

We need to mention the popular *Harry Potter* (1997-2007) series by J.K. Rowling, where the main characters use power to help others, not themselves. It is about the courageous children who are about to help in order to make life better. Another book that is about wizards is *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) written by Frank Baum. At first, adults wanted to control children fantasy books but since 1950s the voice of the child was heard. The 20<sup>th</sup> century (from 1950 to 1970) tends to put effort on everyday experiences and closeness to real life. The Victorian Era put emphasis on the morality and responsibility. 1900 – 1950 was all about morals, the Victorian Era had really a strong influence. It was partly mirrored in the 1960s and 1970s, they wanted to make children believe in old values and the society was scared of rebellious children. It was suitable for children of all ages. In the 1950s children's fantasy had been a good alternative for authors who were used to writing adult novels. They brought more maturity to stories. The insecurity in 1970s shifted in 1990s into a positive trait. The stories were linked to death, vampires, demons, witches and wizards.

---

<sup>24</sup> MANLOVE, Colin. From Alice to Harry Potter: Children's Fantasy in England. New Zealand: Cybereditions Corporation Christchurch, 2003. p.194-196.

The supernatural schema became normal and the stories were full of horror and mystery. Such as Annie Dalton's *Demon Spawn* (1991) or Helen Cresswell's *Stonestruck* (1995).<sup>25</sup>

## Horror

Horror genre usually contains unsolved mystery, demons, scary and old houses, enchanted forest, graveyard or non-humans. Horror exists in many forms, some of them are suitable for children and the others are not.

The purpose of horror in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to make people feel scared and shocked. With a new technique and more unrealistic television tricks it can get very tricky.

In the twentieth century prevailing moral and tension between the individual and socio-political order was affected by some major shifts in social and cultural life. This evil re-configured into horror texts.<sup>26</sup> Horror genre is predominantly concerned with effect of the past and death.

The horror genre is mostly dystopia and does not have clearly defined boundaries. Many of elements were turned into a thriller. In many cases the monsters represent alternative perspective on issues of social context. Central to horror is the main monster, it is off the limits of human existence. There is usually a struggle between a good and an evil. Monster may express the real-life monsters that surround us or we may see it as a metaphor. A major theme is the expression of ways, individuals manage their life.<sup>27</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was no such thing as horror stories for children. Children were able to read *Dracula* or *Frankenstein* for example.<sup>28</sup> People question whether children should have access to stories like *Hunger Games trilogy*. They may suffer from anxiety or fears. The popularity of horror among children, teenagers and adults continues to grow. L.R. Stine, an author of gothic horror series *Fear Streets* has sold more than 350 million books. The best-selling young adult's series includes *Harry Potter books*, *Divergent trilogy*, *Hunger Games*, *The Mortal Instruments* and *The Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*.

---

<sup>25</sup> MANLOVE, Colin. From Alice to Harry Potter: Children's Fantasy in England. New Zealand: Cybereditions Corporation Christchurch, 2003.p.196-200.

<sup>26</sup> WELLS, Paul. The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch. London: Wallflower Press, 2000. p.1-2

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* p. 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> MCCORT, Jessica, ed. Reading in the Dark: Horror in Children's Literature and Culture. Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2016.p.3-4



Mentionable are also vampire themed series, such as *Twilight saga*, *Vampire Academy* or *The Vampire Diaries*. In 2009 *Twilight* was the best-selling book series and in 2011 and 2012 high-selling book series was *Hunger Games trilogy*.

After everything the society have been through – wars, consumerism or economic collapse, horror obsession for young people looked like a great idea.<sup>29</sup> By many theorists, the appeal to read or watch terrifying stories comes from the physical responses we feel, when we interact with it. The feeling of excitement is one of the main reasons, why individuals start to interact with horror elements at such a young age. Children's horror novels never leave us in insecurities and we are not terrified that the world is not going to be normal again. Not all books want to scare children, some just want to release their dark emotions. Faux horror, where monsters are the protagonists might seem funny to the reader.<sup>30</sup> Great example of horror novels is Neil Gaiman's work. In his children's horror fiction *Coraline* (2002) readers can see, that the evil can be defeated. The dragon exists but he can be beaten. Children's horror books can be a safe space of symbolic release. Sometimes the monster is not a monster at all. It can also be warning for children and they can teach them a lesson.<sup>31</sup>

#### Science Fiction

Science fiction is another hardly definable genre. The writers imagine how educated people who use technology and industrial machines were. In the past, there were two ways of how we could look at it. The first one, already mentioned was extrapolation. In extrapolation, exploring is a trend. They extend the present into the future. The speculation worked with the phrase "What if", the authors tend to make stories about things that could have happened.<sup>32</sup> The Sci-Fi is based on science but the content is imaginative. It relies heavily on facts and that makes it different from fantasy. Some prime common characteristics are: living in the future, it features real scientific information, it places in another planet. There is soft and hard science fiction. Hard science fiction strictly follows the facts. It is often written by real scientist and is strongly focused on natural sciences.

---

<sup>29</sup> MCCORT, Jessica. *Reading in the Dark: Horror in Children's Literature and Culture*. Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2016. p. 5-7

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.* p.7-13.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* p.13-14

<sup>32</sup> LATHAM, Rob. *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. p.25

Soft science fiction focusses on social sciences. It addresses the possible consequences of human behaviour. Authors usually combine these two for better storytelling. Science fiction has endless number of sub-genres, including utopian/dystopian, alternate history or space opera.

Space opera is a genre taking places in outer place. It usually features conflicts in space with powerful technologic societies. Great example is George Orwell and his *1984*.

It shows the future in a dystopian space.<sup>33</sup> *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* by Roald Dahl, written in 1972 is a sci-fi sequel to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. It is a recommended book for children.

Another children's book is *Zita the Spacegirl* by Ben Hatke from 2011. Zita, an ordinary girls is transported to a mysterious alien planet.

Smart but not complex book series is also *The Complete Adventures of Lucky Starr*, written in 1952 by Isaac Asimov. *Ender's Game* (1985) by Orson Scott Card is criticized for its violence but shows children on a military space station. It won Hugo and Nebula awards, although it was criticized by the newspaper *New York Times*. For a very young children is popular a picture book *If You Decide to go to the Moon* (2005) by Faith McNulty and Steven Kellogg. *The Giver* (2004) by Lois Lowry appeared on the American Library Association's list of most challenged books of the 1990s. It is set in a society that is presented as utopian, but appears more and more dystopian.<sup>34</sup>

## Comedy

Comedy is one of the most popular genres of storytelling. The goal is to make audience laugh and the literature is supposed to be funny. It is not all about entertainment. Writers try to express important ideas through satire. Writers use humour to expose political parties and foolishness of individuals. It can be a biting critique. Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) is one of the most succesful plays written in English.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Science Fiction. Literary Terms [online]. [cit. 2021-03-24]. Dostupné z: <https://literaryterms.net/>

<sup>34</sup> 25 Best Science Fiction Books for Kids. The Best Sci Fi Books [online]. accessed [2021-03-24]. <https://best-sci-fi-books.com/25-best-science-fiction-books-for-kids/>

<sup>35</sup> Comedy Literary Terms [online]. accessed [2021-03-24]. <https://literaryterms.net/>

In children's literature there are three types of humor. The first one is using talking animals for humorous purpose. The second type is tall tale and frontier humor and the third one is family comedy.

The tall tale style is typical for American writers. The family comedy is for example Beverly Cleary's series *Ramona* (1995). Repetition, wordplay, funny names and forbidden word are the key to successful family comedy.

The sense of humor develops, it moves from tickling to inventive wordplay.<sup>36</sup> One of the bestselling authors of 21<sup>st</sup> century John Green used comedy in his books.

He is known for his novel *The Fault In Our Stars* (2012) and *Paper Town* (2008). He is a bestseller author, according to newspaper *New York Times* and *Publishers Weekly*. Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker Guide Series* (1979) has been really popular since its first release.

Terry Pratchett who worked with Neil Gaiman on *Good Omens* published young adults' books. He is known for his *Discworld* (1983–2015) series.<sup>37</sup>

#### Gothic Novel

Gothic novel is a European Romantic pseudo medieval fiction. It gained popularity in the 1790s. Its imaginative impulse was drawn from medieval buildings and ruins. Gothic novel authors commonly used castles, hidden panels and trapdoors. This trend was initiated by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), it is believed to be the first gothic novel in England. This genre explored horror and violence. The classical horror stories *Frankenstein* (1818), by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley and *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker brought mystery and terror. Gothic atmosphere continued to influence many writers. Edgar Allan Poe, the Brontë Sisters or Charles Dickens. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the term gothic novel was applied to paperback romances.<sup>38</sup> Both fairy tales and gothic fiction offered readers an escape mechanism. One of the leading artists of contemporary fiction is Neil Gaiman.

---

<sup>36</sup> CULLINAN, Bernice E. a Diane Goetz PERSON. *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. Great Britain: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005. p.389.

<sup>37</sup> Barnes & Noble [online]. Barnes & Noble Booksellers accessed [2021-03-24]. [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/b/books/teen-fiction/humor-teen-fiction/\\_/N-29Z8q8Z2mc9?Nrpp=20&page=1](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/b/books/teen-fiction/humor-teen-fiction/_/N-29Z8q8Z2mc9?Nrpp=20&page=1)

<sup>38</sup> Gothic Novel. *Encyclopedia Britannica* [online]. accessed [2021-03-29]. <https://www.britannica.com/art/Gothic-novel>

*The Wolves in the Walls* (2003), *Coraline* (2002) and *The Graveyard Book* (2008) are novels for children, written both as fairy tales and gothic fiction.

Gaiman addresses anxiety and fears of children. The loneliness, the pressure to conform, abandonment is included. The Gothic tradition helps Gaiman to write down the message. He uses multiple realities, dreams, scary villains or spooky settings. He leads children into a different world and explores their fears. Gaiman's novels offer psychoanalytical insights about children in modern Western society.

Big influence on Gaiman's novels were the Grimm's fairy tales. The Brothers Grimm's collection of folklore and wisdom in the average man is often viewed as an important work of the Romantic era.

Some of the modern interpretation tend to share feminist perspective or they tend to be more politically multicultural. Gaiman borrows dark elements.<sup>39</sup>

His stories tend to be very scary for young children. Protagonists occur in certain positions, where they have no power or control over their life. Every of Gaiman's novel has different targeted audience but they do have common features. The main characters are put in risky situations by the adults, very much in the tradition Grimm's fairy tales. Bod, in *The Graveyard Book* has a traumatic childhood as his parents are brutally murdered at the start of the book. Coraline's parents are physically present but mentally absent. Lucy's parents in *The Wolves in the Walls* are always busy. These protagonists raise a lot of questions about emotional development of a child. Children are curious and they need to explore the negative sides of life. Gothic fiction in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was mainly focused on fears, murderers and horror. In the 19<sup>th</sup> there was a shift and it was focused on internal fears. Gaiman's protagonists have both, internal and external fears. They are not themselves; they are just a mirror of the society around them. They want to explore the world but are shut down by adults. Gaiman used the metaphorical mirror. He has argued that children prefer the truth, even if it is unpleasant than being fed by lies. Truth is important for their selfhood and identity.

---

<sup>39</sup> JAGANNATHAN, Padma. Ghosts of Romanticism in Neil Gaiman's Children's Fiction. *Inquiries Journal* [online]. *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, c2021 accessed [2021-03-29]. <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1582/2/ghosts-of-romanticism-in-neil-gaimans-childrens-fiction>

It is claimed that the hero of Gothic romance is an outsider and in Gaiman's stories, the main characters are in fact outsiders. They are different and not like the ordinary child in their age.

All the protagonists experience trauma and fear. They are left alone and wonder about life. It perfectly fits the gothic fiction.<sup>40</sup>

Gothic fiction is fascinated with the unconscious and uses location as its metaphor." *Gothic settings in graveyards, faraway castles, or ruins using symbols of crypts, tombs, sepulchres, bones of the dead, communicate that every location has traces of history and the movement of the psyche between the real and imaginary space is aided by transitions in physical space.*"<sup>41</sup>

Gaiman tries to make shifting boundaries between the real and imaginary. Gaiman choose locations that have rich history and are important for the character. In *The Wolves in the Walls*, the wolves exist but within the walls of their home. In *Coraline*, the family don't own the whole house and other people live there as well. They exist in a parallel universe in a different reality. The old house also have many memories and informs Coraline.

*The Graveyard Book* is a traditional gothic fiction.<sup>42</sup> There are werewolves, ghosts and it is set in a graveyard. Gaiman works with hidden memories and past which affects the present fates of characters. Children have many questions about their life and some of them are answered. The Romantic period did not pay attention to children's identity. They were seen as innocent, part of the nature and were influenced by adults.

Times have changes but children still face a lot of pressure. Peer pressure starts with young age and they are supposed to grow up too fast. Children in Gaiman's fantasy books appear to have no ground in the real life. For them is very important, when an adult listen to their ideas and imagination. They are also valid and valuable for society. Gaiman believes that fictions help us to fight the issues in a real world."<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> JAGANNATHAN, Padma. Ghosts of Romanticism in Neil Gaiman's Children's Fiction. *Inquiries Journal* [online]. *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, c2021 accessed [2021-03-29].

<http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1582/2/ghosts-of-romanticism-in-neil-gaimans-childrens-fiction>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> JAGANNATHAN, Padma. Ghosts of Romanticism in Neil Gaiman's Children's Fiction. *Inquiries Journal* [online]. *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, c2021 accessed [2021-03-29].

<http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1582/2/ghosts-of-romanticism-in-neil-gaimans-childrens-fiction>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

*Truth can be daunting to children, but truth is life affirming and children need to hear it even if it is packaged in fictional stories, which explains why Gothic Fairy Tales have become pervasive, everlasting and continue to inspire Neil Gaiman's children's fiction even today.*"<sup>44</sup>

Comic books

Comics and cartoons have been popular in the USA and England since the 1800s. Originally, they were satirical and political cartoons in the newspaper. Thomas Nast was the most popular cartoonist of this period. Cartoons developed into comic books. An American comic book publisher National Allied Publications, later named DC Comics started publishing in 1935. The Golden Age of Comics began in 1938 with the debut of *Superman* and later with *Batman*. In 1939 Marvel's comics were published as well. Marvel's *Captain America* and DC's *Wonder Woman* became extremely popular. In late 1950s there was a shift from dark and supernatural themes to the comics with silly plot. Batman and Robin teamed up with comedian Jerry Lewis to fight the Joker in *Jerry Lewis* (1966). In the 1970 came the younger generation of artists, including Neal Adams, John Byrne, George Perez and Frank Miller. Murder of innocent people were common in comic books. In *Amazing Spider-Man*, the girlfriend of Peter Parker was shockingly murdered. Horror comic genre returned, it included titles *The Tomb of Dracula* in 1972 and *Ghost Rider* (2002) and *Tales of the Zombie* in 1973.<sup>45</sup>

From the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, anti-heroes were popular. The great example is Frank Miller's *Batman*, where Batman has retired and is critically injured. Alex Ross's *Kingdom Come* (1996) started the modern era. The success of *X-Men* (2000) helped with the popularity of superheroes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The comic book industry stays relevant because of the film and television market.<sup>46</sup>

Neil Gaiman has been creating comic books as well. *Violent Cases* (1997) is the first known collaboration between Gaiman and artist Dave McKean.

---

<sup>44</sup> JAGANNATHAN, Padma. Ghosts of Romanticism in Neil Gaiman's Children's Fiction. *Inquiries Journal* [online]. *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, c2021 accessed [2021-03-29].

<http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1582/2/ghosts-of-romanticism-in-neil-gaimans-childrens-fiction>

<sup>45</sup> KOWALSKI, Jesse. Comics: Comic Books. *Illustration History* [online]. Stockbridge: Norman Rockwell Museum, c2020 accessed [2021-04-01]. <https://www.illustrationhistory.org/genres/comics-comic-books>

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

It is an exploration of violence and the failings of memory.<sup>47</sup> *The Sandman* (1989) is a collection of comic books. It is a story full of supernatural gothic symbols. It is probably Gaiman's biggest collection of comic books.

The art was made by many artists including Michael Zulli, Charles Vess or Colleen Doran.<sup>48</sup> *Troll Bridge* (1993) is a collaboration between Gaiman and Doran.<sup>49</sup>

*Signal to Noise* (1992) is the story of a film director dying of cancer.<sup>50</sup> *1602* (2003) is a story happening in 1602, where appear most of the Marvel's characters. Spider-Man, the X-Men, Nick Fury, Dr. Strange, Daredevil, Dr. Doom, Black Widow, Captain America and more are in this book.<sup>51</sup> *Black Orchid* (1991) is about a transformation of murdered woman into a black orchid.<sup>52</sup> *Books of Magic* (1990) is the collection of adventures of Timothy Hunter.

The famous novel *Coraline* (2002) was republished into a graphic novel.<sup>53</sup> Another well-known comic books are *Harlequin Valentine* (2001), *Creatures Of The Night* (2004) or *The Last Temptation* (2000).<sup>54</sup>

## Theatre

Gaiman's graphic novel *Mr. Punch* (1994) was transformed into a theatre play by Rogue Artists Ensemble in Los Angeles.<sup>55</sup> *The Wolves in the Walls* (2003) became a theatre play as well. It was made by National Theatre of Scotland and Improbable.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-04-01]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Comics/Violent+Cases/>

<sup>48</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-04-01]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Comics/The+Sandman+Vol.+1%3A+Preludes+%2526+Nocturnes/>

<sup>49</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-04-01]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Comics/Troll+Bridge/>

<sup>50</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-04-01]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Comics/Signal+to+Noise/>

<sup>51</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-04-01]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Comics/1602/>

<sup>52</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-04-01]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Comics/Black+Orchid/>

<sup>53</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-04-01]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Comics/Coraline/>

<sup>54</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-04-01]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Comics/>

<sup>55</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-04-01]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Theater/Mr.+Punch/>

<sup>56</sup> Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. accessed [2021-04-01]. <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Theater/The+Wolves+In+The+Walls/>

Gaiman has been successful in radios and television as well. Gaiman's books are also portrayed in movies and television.

## Selected Novels

As the subject of my literary analysis, I have chosen three of well-known and successful novels of Neil Gaiman. The first one is *Coraline* (2002), the second one is *The Graveyard Book* (2008), the third one is *The Wolves in the Walls* (2003).

### Coraline

Coraline is a smart girl. She is very curious about the world and because she is bored, she decides to explore the house. Coraline does not believe the people in her house, she does not believe when a strange man told her that he works in a circus. The curiosity and the behaviour of Coraline plays a big role. She has been warned by the old actresses Miss Forcible and Miss Spink about the garden and the house, but she decides to explore it anyway. On a rainy day, she decides to talk to her parents. Her parents did not pay a lot of attention to her. She discovers a door but her mother says it goes nowhere. Coraline wakes up in the night and hears noises. Her curiosity shows again and she decides to explore it. The story is getting more mysterious. The next day she meets the strange man again. He has mice and he tells her, that mice have a message for her. The man tells her not to go through the door. At home, she is turned down by her parents once again. Miss Spink and Miss Forcible decide to read her future from tea leaves. They keep telling her, that she is in danger. Coraline receives a gift for protection. It is a stone with a hole in it.<sup>57</sup>

Coraline decides to enter the door, she knows it is wrong but she does it anyway. Children's curiosity is very strong. She realises that she is in her own house. Everything looks the same but her mother is a completely different mother. She is tall, thin and very white. Her dad has eyes like buttons. Coraline's other mother cooks dinner for them and they care about her. This symbolizes a perfect family that Coraline always wanted. Coraline is enjoying her time in a different world and she is playing with rats. Rats can talk and they sing for her.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *Coraline*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2012. p.5-15.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p.15-21



Coraline's neighbours are the same and Coraline is able to speak to a black cat. The cat has deep thoughts on her mind and Coraline keeps asking her questions.

The Cat suggested that protection is needed. Coraline is feeling confused and does not know what the cat means. Coraline decides to watch a theatre play, where Miss Spink and Miss Forcible are on stage. They look different, they are also pale, thin and tall. The audience is full of dogs. They chat with Coraline and even offer her chocolate. The perfect family does not seem perfect at all and Coraline wants to go back to her real world. Coraline's new parents are acting strange and want Coraline to stay there. They are being manipulative and Coraline is aware of this behaviour. Coraline's parents are acting too nice to be true.<sup>59</sup>

Coraline is on her way home and she sees her other parents looking at her and Coraline's new mother holds her hand. Coraline returns home and notices that her parents are missing. She takes care of herself. The next day, she decides to visit Miss Spink and Miss Forcible and she tells them about her missing parents. They did not help her and tell her that they are leaving the house. Coraline is back at home crying and the talking black cat decides to help her. But she does not talk in this world, instead of it, Coraline sees a reflection in the mirror of her parents. She is scared and she calls the police. The police officer does not believe her. Coraline decides to go back into a different world. She calls herself brave, because she is scared but decides to do it anyway. This is where her strength and courageous is show.

Coraline puts family on the first place and she is sure they would do the same thing for her. She sees her other parents and keeps asking where are her real parents. She tells her that she is brave enough to handle this. The other mother tells her, that her parents got bored of her. Once again, she is being manipulative. Coraline does not believe her. The other mother tries to show the reflection of her real parents in the mirror. They look so happy without her. Coraline does not believe it is real, she has a strong belief in her family. Coraline's new family keeps asking her about the key to the door but she refuses to give it to them. Coraline talks with the cat about the other mother's intentions with her. The cat thinks she needs somebody to love. Coraline is forced to stay there. The next morning, she decides to search for her parents. When she is exploring the garden, the cat tells her not to. There is nothing to find here. The cat tells Coraline something about this world.

---

<sup>59</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. Coraline. HarperCollins Publishers, 2012.p.21-28.

Her other mother created or found this and it is very small but big enough for her. The other Mother still begs for Coraline to stay here and Coraline does not want to love her. Coraline becomes imprisoned behind the mirror, she explores the room. <sup>60</sup>There are nameless voices. Every animal or creature there is nameless. They are also imprisoned and were manipulated by the other mother. Coraline is not easy to manipulate. She stands strong with her beliefs and that makes her independent. Coraline seems to not have the typical naivety of children. The other mother comes to pick her up and tells Coraline that she is being silly about other people being imprisoned. Coraline offers her other mother to play a game. If Coraline wins, she will return back home with her parents and other children behind the mirror. If she does not, she will stay here. The other mother agrees and swears on her right hand. They play the exploring game. Coraline is looking for marbles. They symbolize the souls in The Other World. The other mother offers Coraline a key from an apartment, the voices tell Coraline not to go there. She goes there anyway and realises it is almost empty. Her other father is there, her other mother got rid of him. Coraline is running away from her evil mother. Coraline is very scared but she needs to get rid of the fear. Fear is an important element in this book. Coraline had to overcome her fears in order to be successful. Coraline finds the apartment of the crazy man and rats try to manipulate her into staying in the other world. The other mother cannot be trusted and she is still going after Coraline.

Coraline is finally able to rescue her family with help of other people and she feels very happy about it. When she returns to her real world with her parents, everything is back to normal but her parents do not remember anything. Coraline soon discovers that there is still the right hand of her other mother. The hand disappears and Coraline is looking for it. She plans a picnic and she puts the key in the middle of the blanket. She knows, the hand is going after the key. Coraline is finally able to shut the other mother when she enters the door to the real world. The next day, she is going to school.<sup>61</sup>

*Coraline* is suitable for children and it is meaningful for adults as well. The main protagonist is a very strong female character and she matures during the story.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *Coraline*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2012. p.22-45.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.* p.46-97.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

Her curiosity changes to braveness and courage. Every child is curious and Coraline is not an exception. Because of her curiosity, she loses her family. But it is time for her to be courageous and she saves them. <sup>63</sup>

The Fantastic Spaces in Coraline

*Coraline* is a novel taking place in two different places, both located in Coraline's household. Coraline moves to a new apartment with her parents and she starts exploring the house. Their neighbours are two actresses and one strange man. When Coraline enters the fantastic world by entering the magic door, she realises at the first sight, both worlds seemingly look the same. There is the same carpet, the same kitchen and the whole flat looks identical. Her parents look too good to be true. The biggest change is in their eyes and behaviour. Their eyes are missing and there are buttons instead of their eyes, which is the horrifying aspect of the story. It is being said that the eyes are windows to the soul and this makes it difficult for the heroine to determine people's actions. Coraline's other mother was thinner, taller than her real mother and white as paper. Food in the other world tastes so much better. The meal is described as attractive, not like the meal in the real world. The same characters are presented in both worlds. The two actresses, Miss Spink and Miss Forcible are retired but in the other world, they still perform. Coraline starts to notice some other differences. Her new room is painted in off-putting shades of pink and green. There were remarkable things: a box, full of toys, windup angels, little dinosaur skulls... The view from the window was the same as Coraline remembers. Trees, fields and distant purple hills. The houses in both dimensions are very similar. The house in the other world is more children like. There are lightbulbs for example. Animals in the other world can talk, especially the black cat becomes Coraline's friend. The rats sing for her. The background between these two worlds is very similar. At first, they might both seem realistic. The talking animals is a very common feature in children's and fantasy's literature. Obviously, the ability is only there in the other world and not in the realistic world. In fantasy literature, mirrors are often magical and the characters are able to go through mirrors. Coraline sees her parents behind the mirror and it is easier for her to rescue them. <sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *Coraline*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2012.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid*

The main point of the book is Coraline saving her parents from the other world. She is crossing two spaces, from the real world to the fantastic horror space full of danger and death threat.<sup>65</sup>

The beldam took Coraline's parents from the real world to the other world. The door is the only way how to travel between the two worlds. By opening the magic doors, it leads the main protagonist Coraline to endless possibilities.<sup>66</sup>

### The Graveyard Book

The *Graveyard Book* starts with a murder. A man called Jake gets into a family house and murders the whole family except for a toddler. The little boy is the main protagonist of the book and he is able to escape. It is fascinating that a small child can save themselves. The baby hears the noises of the murder and escapes to the graveyard. Jack follows him and wants to murder him for unknown reasons. In the graveyard, the toddler meets ghosts Mr. Owen and Mrs. Owen. His murdered family is there as well. Mr. and Mrs. Owens adopt the baby and call him Bod, it is shortened for Nobody. Because he looks like nobody but himself. Mr. and Mrs. Owens never had a child and are happy to have one. The murdered family appears on the scene as well and agrees with the adoption. It is very interesting that the family was murdered recently and they are not buried in the graveyard but still appears there. Mysterious man named Silas appears and makes Jack to leave the graveyard. They have interesting conversation that makes Jack believes Bod is not here. Silas became the Bod's guardian; he is not dead and nor alive. Silas has a power to leave the graveyard and can access food to the baby. The creatures on the graveyard wants to protect Bod and raise him well. The dead people have opinion, there is a democracy on the graveyard. There are three thousand voices on the graveyard. Gaiman creates an after-life. The life may end but then there is an afterlife. Most of the characters in *The Graveyard Book* are dead. The dead were also alive at some point of their existence. They have basic human skills and can take care of the baby. Jack is human being; he does not believe that Bod could save himself and thinks that somebody took him.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *Coraline*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2012.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>67</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.p.5-15

Bod is growing up, he learns how to talk and he asks questions. He does not understand why he can leave the graveyard but is supposed not to. Silas says it is for his safety. This is a great comparison to a normal family.

Family is protecting the child and Silas is doing the same thing for Bod. Bod makes a new friend Scarlett Amber Perkins; she is five years old. Bod has no idea how old is he. Scarlett and Bod both come from different environment.

Bod has a little idea about the life outside of the graveyard. He does not celebrate his birthday and does not have a common sense. This is a great example of how the environment around us, influence us. Scarlett and Bod are very curious children. This is normal behaviour for every living child. They want to visit the oldest living member of the graveyard and go for an exploration.<sup>68</sup>

They visit Sleer and his guards, guard a treasure. Their explorations go too far and the police came to the graveyard to find Scarlett. Scarlett says the last goodbye and her family moves to Scotland.<sup>69</sup> At the age of six, Silas brings substitute guardian named Miss Lupescu to protect Bod. Silas has to leave the graveyard for an exploration. Bod does not like her, Miss Lupescu is very strict and Bod has to learn important lessons. Miss Lupescu gives Bod very healthy food and he has to obey the rules. She also calls him Boy and not Bod. Miss Lupescu teaches him everything what he has to know. Bod hates her. One day, Bod gets in trouble. He meets ghouls and they want to turn him into a ghoul. *In The Graveyard Book* some of the ghouls are real. For example, Victor Hugo, a famous writer is mentioned. Archibald Fitzhugh sound very noble but his character is made up. In order to call for help, Bod uses the skills learned by Miss Lupescu. It is very common for children to hate authorities, school and teachers. It does not seem necessary for them. One day, they realise that school was important for them. This is what happened to Bod. Miss Lupescu saves him and the reader learns that she is a werewolf. At the end of the month, Silas comes back.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.* p.14-29

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.* p.30-46

There is a witch Liza Hempstock buried outside of the graveyard. Witches can't be buried in the graveyard. Bod's curiosity shows again and he wants to see the witch. He chats with her; she is very nice to him. Bod wants to buy a headstone for her.

Bod is a very humble and nice boy. He has found some coins in the graveyard and wants to use them. Bod goes to the world. He visits a store with coins and a part of the treasure.

The shop owner Abanazer Bolger treats him like a child until he realises, Bod is valuable. Abanazer makes sure nobody is waiting for Bod at home. Bod ends up trapped in a room.

This part teaches children not to trust strangers because you never know what their intentions are. People who are nice to you, can do horrible things. Liza helps him to get out of the room. Jake knows that something is going on. He smells Bod.<sup>71</sup> Jack knows that Bod is almost ten years old and he know he has to find him. When Bod is ten years old, he goes to the Danse Macabre. It is a dance where living and dead dance together and then forget about it. He enjoys himself. Bod learns that his parents were murdered. Bod does not to know how to react and he asks Silas if it is true.

For many adopted children it is hard to accept the truth about them being adopted. For Bod it is a big shock to learn that his parents were murdered.

Bod wants to leave the graveyard and he can try a real school. This is very important for a child. Every child wants to find friends and explore the world. He is told to be invisible but he draws attention. The children are not nice to him and he protect himself. Bullying is a big problem and Gaiman shows children that they are not alone and they should tell someone. They call him bad in the head. Bod says it to Silas. Silas stops Bod going to school. Bod gets arrested because he is late outside. He does not know his full name or address. When Bod gets into a car, they hit a man on the road. It is Silas, Silas is so protective. The reader can see their true relationship. Silas cares a lot about Bod. Silas is not mad about the whole situation. He understands that Bod is a child and is wild.<sup>72</sup>

The whole graveyard is talking about Jack. They all know that he is coming back. Bod does not know his name and the others want to protect him.

---

<sup>71</sup>GAIMAN, Neil. The Graveyard Book. HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.p-46-64

<sup>72</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. The Graveyard Book. HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.p.65-93

Scarlett returns back home, goes to the graveyard and she meets Mr. Frost. He helps her to get home when she is lost. Mr. Frost meets her mother and they start dating. Her mother tells him about Bod. She believes that he is imaginary. Mr. Frost has bad intentions, he does not care about Scarlett's mother. He wants to use her to get to Bod. This is very sad and it happens often. Scarlett returns back home and his mother starts dating a detective Mr. Frost. Mr. Frost lives in a house where the murder of Bod's family happened. Scarlett wants him to research the murders.<sup>73</sup>

Bod is invited to Mr. Frost's house and Bod finds out, that Mr. Frost is Jack. Suddenly, four Jacks appears and they chase Bod and Scarlett to the graveyard. There is a brotherhood of Jacks. Bod hides Scarlett, one Jack broke his ankle and three Jacks go straight to the hell. The fourth Jack wants to murder Scarlett but Silas saves her and kill Jack. Silas takes Scarlett back home and erase her memory. They move back to Scotland. The book ends when Bod is fifteen years old, he loses his power and left graveyard by himself. Bod leaves the graveyard with his eyes and his heart wide open.<sup>74</sup>

Bod has an unusual life but he has his everyday struggles. Children curiosity and kindness is very strong and it gets him in trouble all the time. Gaiman teaches children that is normal to be curious and make mistakes. But they need to learn from their mistakes.

Bod struggles with bullying and finding the truth about himself and his family. This could happen to a child and it could be very hard for them.

There are bad and good people on the world. Miss Lupescu was evil for Bod. Later, he learns that she is an amazing person. She helps him a lot. The opposite is with Abanazer, he gains Bod's trust and then let him down.

There is Good vs Evil. Evil is in human form and in inhuman form as well. *The Graveyard Book* teaches the importance of family and friends.

Mr. and Mrs. Owen are not Bod's biological relatives but they love him. Silas is a guardian of Bod and he dedicated his life for him. All these creatures belong to Bod's family. His friendship is precious with Scarlett and Liza is precious. He is a good friend with Scarlett for many years.

---

<sup>73</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* p. 93-134

They did not have seen each other for a long time but still maintain a good friendship. Jack is pretending to be someone else. He influences Scarlett and her mother. They are innocent victims. Jack is very obsessed with Bod, it seems unbelievable. There are supernatural creatures and death but it is still suitable for children. It has happy ending and they can relate to the protagonist because of his struggles.<sup>75</sup>

#### The Fantastic Spaces in *The Graveyard Book*

The plot of *The Graveyard Book* is mainly located in the graveyard. It focuses on a child protagonist, an orphan, who is living with supernatural creatures.

The graveyard is usually a place with gravestones, where dead people are buried. In Gaiman's novel it is the same, except for the fact, that there are living inhumans. People when they die, become ghosts and live there for eternity. Ghosts are portrayed with human characteristic; their souls stay the same. Mr. and Mrs. Owens become Bod's adoptive parents and act like normal parents, except for the fact, that they are dead. There are also werewolves, ghouls and witches. Ghouls are described as something that is in every graveyard, their gravestones are hard to read and the place of the gravestone is usually a cold place. Ghouls are dangerous and Bod is told to avoid them. There is a ghoul-gate that leads us to the underworld.<sup>76</sup> Bod finds an alternative world inside of the open ghoul-gate. The ghoul-gate is a very dark place which can be seen as hell. It is dry and hot like a desert with grit in it. Bod's guardian Silas is probably a vampire. He has the ability to cross both worlds and his ability to appear as a human is significant. The two worlds also connect because of Bod and his friend Scarlett. Bod is growing up in the graveyard and Scarlett is an ordinary girl. They both have little knowledge about the world and they see the graveyard as completely normal. Scarlett comes to the graveyard but mainly stays in the human world. She sees too much and this is where the Silas's magic power appears. His ability to erase memory helps Scarlett to go back to the normal world. Miss Lupescu appears in chapter three at first. She is described as an older non-attractive lady. In the chapter seven, there are a few human characters as well.

---

<sup>75</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2008.p. 93-134

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.* p.30



Mo and Nick are the bullies of Bod, Abanazer is a salesman, who wants to take a profit of Bod by selling him to Jack. The novel starts very realistic with a murder of a family, the fantasy starts when the baby Bod is able to save himself.

This is something unlikely to happen in a real world. The police are not looking for him and the everyday visitors of the graveyard are not mentioned in the book. Jack, the killer of Bod's family is human with the ability to smell their potential victim's smell. This special ability leads him to the graveyard.<sup>77</sup> In the graveyard barrows are also found.

Sleer is a mysterious creature of the body of a snake. His voice is hissing and his purpose is to guard the treasure. Throughout the story, Bod learns how to survive and learn things about the world outside of the graveyard.

*Danse Macabre* is a special event where dead and alive people dance together. Creatures who are in a grey area, neither dead nor alive cannot attend this event. This event is not a regular event, it happens only when flowers in the graveyard blossom. Ghosts are able to leave the graveyard. After the *Danse Macabre*, nobody remembers what happened, except for Bod. This means that Bod is human with ability to be with other creatures. Bod is exposed to death at very young age. The graveyard wall is literally the wall between the death and life and also between the real and the fantastic world. Creatures living in the graveyard are not able to go leave the fantastic world. The graveyard ends at the bottom of the west side of the hill. Liza is a witch buried outside of the graveyard, because the graveyard is blessed and Liza was accused of being a witch. Witches cannot be buried in the graveyard because there are unholy. Liza was burned to death. *The Graveyard Book* can be seen as coming of age story, which means we see Bod's growth from childhood to adulthood. There is a subversion of conventional motifs, the dead are good beings and Jack, the human is the embodiment of evil. As a child, Bod must not leave the space of the graveyard and makes use of the graveyard's protection and freedom.

The world is forbidden to him by the graveyard's inhabitants. At the end, he is able to cross the borderline between the real world and the graveyard. Bod goes to the real world and lives on his own.<sup>78</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *The Graveyard Book*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2008. p.115

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

## The Wolves in the Walls

The main character Lucy hears noises in the wall. Lucy thinks there are wolves in the walls and goes to tell to the whole family. They did not believe her and everyone has different opinion. Mother thinks they are mice noises. Father thinks they are rats' noises. Brother thinks they are bats' noises. Lucy has a pig-puppet toy and she tells him everything.<sup>79</sup>

Lucy tries to convince her family about the noises of wolves by her pig-puppet. Lucy's family keep saying "*If the wolves come out of the walls, it is all over*"<sup>80</sup> because they heard it somewhere. The next day, the noises are very loud and finally the wolves come out of the walls.

The family is scared and they run to the garden. They are wondering about a new place to live. Only Lucy wants to go back home. Lucy finds out that she has lost her pig-puppet and she decides to get her. In their house, there are wolves everywhere.

Wolves are eating their food, watching television and making loud noises. Lucy slipped into a wall and goes to her room. There is a wolf in her socks sleeping on her bed.

Lucy gets pig-puppet and come back to the garden. The next morning, her brother goes to school and her mother to work. Lucy's dad is playing tuba on the garden. The family does not want to spend another night in the garden. They decide to come back to their house. They slipped into the walls and no one can hear them because the wolves are making a lot of noises. The wolves start screaming "*it is all over*" because they know the people are coming of the walls. They are scared and run away and they never come back. Everything goes back to normal but Lucy hears voices. She tells her pig-puppet that she has been hearing elephants. She decides not to tell her family because she knows they find out. And they do...<sup>81</sup>

The Wolves in the Walls is half graphic and half illustrated book. It was illustrated by Dave McKean. The graphic illustration helps to understand the story for a young reader. Lucy struggles that her family is not listening or believing to her. No one believes that there are wolves in the walls. Her parents are busy and not listening to her. Lucy sees a friend in her pig-

---

<sup>79</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *The Wolves in the Walls*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2005.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*

puppet. She tells him everything. For an adult, this is very hard to understand. She risks her own life for a puppet. The wolves eat, watch television, make noises and are lazy. They enjoy themselves. This is common human behaviour.

#### The Fantastic Spaces in *The Wolves in the Walls*

Gaiman's novel *The Wolves in the Walls* is located in a family house. It is an illustrated book, suitable for small children. The strangest thing is that the wolves are jumping out of the walls. This is probably something for children's eyes. It was not explained in the book why it happens. Wolves eat family's food and use their things. The family has to move to the garden because of the wolves. The family dream of places where they could live. The father wants to live in a hot-air balloon, the mother on the island, the brother at the top of a tree but Lucy wants to go home. In reality, they are desperate and want to go back to their house. The family is able to scare the wolves by jumping out of the walls and they are back in their house. The book is illustrated by Dave McKean and the illustrations help children to understand the story.<sup>82</sup>

#### Comparison of original fairy tales and Gaiman's adaptation

Gaiman has adapted original old classical tales and has been retelling them. Original fairy tales has gained popularity during the decades and many versions are known. For the comparison are chosen the German versions of fairy tales from 1812 by the Brothers Grimm.

Brothers Grimm Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm (1785 – 1863) and Wilhelm Carl Grimm (1786 – 1859) were German folklorist and their existence led to the birth of folktale. They worked together, they compiled collections of folk music and folk literature.

They first collected folk songs and tales for their friends. For them the folk poetry was the only true poetry. *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812) was their first collection of folktales. Sleeping Beauty, Hansel and Gretel, Snow White were all included in this collection. Most of the stories were taken from oral sources. Brothers Grimm also worked on German grammar or dictionary.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *The Wolves in the Walls*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2005.

<sup>83</sup> DENECKE, Ludwig. Brothers Grimm. Britannica [online]. Encyclopædia Britannica, c2021 [cit. 2021-04-08]. Dostupné z: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Brothers-Grimm>

## Hansel and Gretel

Hansel and Gretel are very poor children of woodcutter and the whole family is starving. Woodcutter's wife wants to get rid of children because she does not want to share food with them. The father does not like this idea, but then he agrees.

Hansel and Gretel hear this conversation, Hansel sneaks out of the house to get flint stones. The next morning, the mother wakes them up and give them bread for dinner. They go to the woods to cut the wood. The plan of the woodcutter and her wife is to leave them there. Hansel leaves flint stones on the path. They are told to rest in the woods and their family disappears. Gretel is terrified but Hansel comforts her with his idea. In the middle of the night, they wake up and follows the stones back home. The mother acts nice when they come back but she wants to take them further to the woods. Hansel and Gretel hear the conversation again and Hansel wants to take more flint stones. But the doors are locked and it is not possible. The next day, they are left in the woods with bread again. Hansel and Gretel are few days in the woods and they find a house made of bread and cake.

They start eating the house and the lady, who lives inside comes to them. She acts nice but, in the reality, she is a witch. The witch feeds Hansel und makes a slave of Gretel. One day, she decides to eat Hansel and Gretel.

She prepares oven for them. Gretel tricks the witch into getting into her own oven. Hansel and Gretel find out that the witch is rich and they take her jewels and treasure. They manage to escape and realise that father is looking for them. They come back and live rich and happily ever after. The evil mother dies of unknown reason.<sup>84</sup>

There are theories around this classical story. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there was a famine in Europe. People abandoned or ate their children. It was common that people had to choose between them and their children.

There is a possibility that *Hansel and Gretel* had been inspired by famine and starving of people. In the original story there is a real mother of the children but then it evolved into an evil step-mother. The father also become more emotional over his children. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm did not write for children. The original stories were filled with murders.

---

<sup>84</sup> BROTHERS GRIMM. *Hansel and Gretel: A Grimm's Fairy Tale*. Floris Book, 2008.

*Hansel and Gretel* is not the only folktale with abandoned children. Giambattista Basile's and his story *Nennillo and Nennella* (1788) is also about a cruel stepmother who forces her husband to leave their children in the woods. *The Little Boy and the Wicked Stepmother* by D. L. Ashliman is a Romanian story about abandoned children in the woods. They are following the trail of ashes back home. When they return, the boy will be murdered.<sup>85</sup>

Neil Gaiman published an adaptation of *Hansel and Gretel* in 2014. The story begins with the birth of Hansel and Gretel. The family lives happily, they have access to good food.

The father is a woodcutter and the wood sells very well. When the famine comes, they would lose access to food. The mother does not want to kill the children but lose them in the woods. The father disagrees but eventually he needs to agree.

Hansel and Gretel get lost and go into a house made of bread and cakes. There lives a twisted witch and she wants to eat them. They are able to escape and get their revenge.

The story is very similar to the original one by Brothers Grimm. In Gaiman's version there is clear setting during the war and famine. It is known why the family is poor. The witch even apologized that there is no meat to eat. Gaiman shows how all people were affected by the war. The witch is finally happy when she knows that she could eat Hansel. She can get some meat. The hunger is the main theme in this story. All the characters are trying to feed themselves. Hunger can do horrible things to people. Gaiman adds something new to the story. The future of Hansel and Gretel is portrayed. Hansel and Gretel find their own partner for marriage and have access to meals again.

The novel is dark with black and white illustrations by Lorenzo Mattotti. The illustrations are also a way of telling stories. Some actions are not mentioned in the text but in the pictures.<sup>86</sup>

The Fantastic Spaces in *Hansel and Gretel*

*Hansel and Gretel* is located in a family house, forest and in the candy house. Hansel and Gretel are very poor children and their house is probably in poor condition. There is nothing to eat and their family suffers. They live in a forest; the forest is huge and children can get easily lost. The forest is full of animals and plants.

---

<sup>85</sup> WILLIAMS, Joseph. Discover The Truly Grim History Behind The Fairy Tale Of Hansel And Gretel. All That's Interesting [online]. 2020 accessed [2021-04-08]. <https://allthatsinteresting.com/hansel-and-gretel-true-story>

<sup>86</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *Hansel and Gretel*. TOON Graphics, 2014.

They are able to find a candy house with a wicked witch in it. The witch tricks them into the house because she has a lot of food to offer and they are starving. There is no surprise that they gain trust because she looks like she wants to help them. The candy house is made of gingerbread and other sweets. Children are very lonely because their own mother hates them and is very happy that she got rid of them. It is obvious that children want to save themselves. Starting by coming back to their home after they were left in the forest and ending by saving themselves from the witch.<sup>87</sup>

The Sleeper and the Spindle

*The Sleeper and the Spindle* (2013) is Gaiman's work of fantastic fiction. It is a combination of the classical fairy tales Snow White (1812) and Sleeping Beauty (1812) by Brothers Grimm.

Sleeping Beauty is a classic fairy tale. There is a princess who was born to a happy kingdom. The king was very happy to finally have a daughter and he manages a feast.

The king invites wise women in so that they might be kind and well-disposed towards the child. There is thirteen of them but he only has twelve golden plates and one has to be left at home. Eleven women made their kind promises, suddenly the thirteenth came in. She makes a curse on the baby. At the age of fifteen, she will prick herself with a spindle and falls asleep. Only prince can wake her up. When Briar Rose is fifteen years old, she pricks herself with the spindle and falls asleep. The whole kingdom falls asleep. A prince come to the kingdom thousands of years later. The prince is not scared and kiss Briar Rose on the lips, Briar Rose and the whole kingdom wake up. The Prince marries Briar Rose and they live happily ever after.<sup>88</sup>

Snow White is folktale about a princess who is white as snow, red as blood and black as the wood of the window-frame. Her mother died and the king finds a new wife. The step-mother is not a nice person. She has a lot of pride and she was talking with the magic mirror.

The mirror says that Snow White is the most beautiful girl in this kingdom. The queen turns yellow with envy and wants to kill Snow White.

A huntsman is supposed to kill the Snow White but he does not want to. She runs away into a small cottage. There is a small house and Snow White starts living with seven dwarfs.

---

<sup>87</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. Hansel and Gretel. TOON Graphics, 2014.

<sup>88</sup> BROTHERS GRIMM. Sleeping Beauty. NorthSouth Books, 2012.

The mirror tells the step-mother that Snow White is still alive. Step-mother dresses up like an old lady and finds Snow White.

Step mother laces Snow White very tight with the new laces. She believes that Snow White is finally dead. Snow White survives and step-mother tries it again with a comb and finally she gives her a poisoned apple.

Snow White appears to be dead and dwarfs put her into a coffin. A prince come to sees her, carries her all the way around and she finally the apple come out of her throat. Snow White has a wedding with the prince and the evil step-mother dies of envy.<sup>89</sup>

Neil Gaiman retells these folktales into a short story *The Sleeper and the Spindle* (2015). The book starts with the coming danger wanting to separate the kingdom Kanelaire from the kingdom Dorimar. People are not crossing from one kingdom to another.

The dwarfs travel between the kingdoms. They want to buy a gift for their queen. The queen is preparing herself for her wedding but she is not sure about the marriage. The dwarfs are on their journey and they realise that the whole kingdom fell asleep. They are asking others but no one seems to know the answer. The dwarfs tell everything to their queen. The queen wants to find out what is happening and with the dwarfs they decide to travel to the kingdom. The whole kingdom is asleep but sometimes they move in the sleep. Only spiders are not asleep. There is also an old woman wandering around. She knows someone is coming to the kingdom. She hides herself but they find her. They believe she is a witch. The queen decides to find the princess and then kisses the Sleeping Beauty on the lips. The Sleeping Beauty has beautiful light-coloured hair. The queen tries it because she fell asleep the same way and it worked. The old lady is talking about the day, she pricked herself with the spindle. They find a spindle and think it was the magic. The girl wakes up and the queen sees her evil step-mother in her eyes. The Sleeping Beauty is not a Sleeping Beauty. She is an evil witch.<sup>90</sup>

And the old lady is the real Sleeping Beauty. It has been many ages since the curse and she has aged. The witch is gaining more power when she sleeps. She wants to make the queen fall asleep too.

---

<sup>89</sup> BROTHERS GRIMM. *Snow White and Other Fairy Tales*. Dover Publications, 2012.

<sup>90</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2015.

The queen is surprised that the evil has been using more and more power through the years. The queen uses the magic of the spindle to kill her. The Sleeping Beauty talks about everything that has been stolen from her. Her sleep, her dreams, her beauty...

The whole kingdom wakes up and see the queen with the dwarfs. They do not understand what happened and the queen disappears.

The queen with her dwarfs lit a fire. They burn the thread and the fibre. Dwarfs tell the queen that they are coming home and the wedding will happen. The queen is sad and she begin to walk. The dwarfs follow her and she tells them, she knows where they are going. Probably, she has left the kingdom...<sup>91</sup>

The main protagonist of this story is probably Snow White. She is not directly referred but it is known that she was poisoned by an apple and fall asleep. In the original stories the main protagonist is a princess, in Gaiman's version it is queen itself.

The story keeps reminding that she was also asleep. In the original story, Snow White gets married. In this version, she does not have a husband and probably does not want to get married. The queen is independent and wants to live on her own. She has fears that she would have lost her independence. There were seven dwarfs in the originally story. In Gaiman's version there are only three. It is uncommon in fairy tales to be saved by a woman. Snow White kisses platonically the Sleeping Beauty. This is also very uncommon. *Sleeper and the Spindle* is a modern fairy tale and it supports the woman as the heroine. In *Sleeping Beauty*, the Sleeping Beauty pricks herself but she is still the same person. In this story, it is twisted. The Sleeping Beauty is now an unattractive old lady and she never changes back. It is the natural aging. It is also interesting that the people move themselves during the sleep. Two kingdoms are mentioned in story which is unusual. Gaiman holds the original idea of the spindle and the curse. In *Sleeping Beauty*, the sleeping beauty sleeps for decades and the people do not age. In *Sleeper and the Spindle*, the people also sleep for a long time and they do not age. It is almost like the original story but the Sleeping Beauty is not the Sleeping Beauty but an evil witch.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>91</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2015.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*



The evil inside the body of Sleeping Beauty was unexpected. Gaiman made Snow White very strong. In the original story by Brothers Grimm, she was naive. She was tricked into eating and poisoned apple.<sup>93</sup>

She has matured and she recognizes the evil in the Sleeping Beauty's eyes. The dwarfs play bigger role in Gaiman's version. They help her more and are very important friends of her. The ending is unusual because there is no prince or no clear ending.

The queen decides to leave the kingdom with her dwarfs but it is not directly mentioned. The reader can think what could have happened next. Gaiman stays with the happy ending, the evil is beaten and the kingdom is saved.<sup>94</sup>

#### The Fantastic Spaces in *The Sleeper and the Spindle*

The fairy tale *The Sleeper and the Spindle* is located in a fictional landscape, in two kingdoms Dorimar and Kanselaire. The border between these two kingdoms is unbreakable and no human has ever crossed the border.

The female protagonist of the novel lives in a kingdom with her helpful dwarfs. Dwarfs are described as tough and hardy and are able to cross the border because they are able to travel under the mountain range. The novel is illustrated as well and the dwarfs are portrayed as big-nosed, bearded and small creatures. Dwarfs are given names but humans are not obligated to know them. The queen is a pale skinny dark and long-haired woman. It is not directly mentioned but probably it is the Snow White.<sup>95</sup>

The inhabitants of the kingdom Kanselaire live in a village with a pub where a dark wine is served. The kingdom probably does not suffer, it has its own provisions and ministers. In an inn a mysterious creature is found, a big fat-faced man in a cobweb. He does not move and it is very strange. The aspects of horror stories intertwine with the fairy tale fantasy.

The story moves into the castle of the Kanselaire kingdom. A grey, blocky castle, in the Forest of Acaire, grown over with climbing roses is located there.

---

<sup>93</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2015.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*

The roses grow thickly and the castle looks abandoned. Century before, there had been a royal park with animals. Chickens, horses, bears and more were all part of the kingdom.

The kingdom is so huge that it is described as a city. The city with sleeping people, high city gates, direct road and bridges. Fifty thousand people or more were sleeping when the queen passed by. There were some alive animals like wolves. The dungeon castle overgrown in rose bushes and impenetrable wilderness can be felt. This is typical fairy tale space. Nontypical aspect is the fact that Sleeping Beauty is saved by a Snow White. There are subverted roles of heroes/heroines, a princess is not woken up by prince but by princess. Everything is not what it seems, the Sleeping Beauty is in fact an evil witch. She is beautiful but evil inside. The real Sleeping Beauty aged and she is now an old wrinkled lady. Snow White is very smart and she is able to tell by looking into fake Sleeping Beauty's eyes. She sees her evil mother in the eyes. At the end of the story, there is village across the hill with a smoke rising from the village chimneys. This probably means that the queen and her dwarfs found a new adventurous place and possibly a new life begins.<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>96</sup> GAIMAN, Neil. *The Sleeper and the Spindle*. HarperCollins Publishers, 2015.

## Conclusion

The thesis focuses on the fictional and fantastic stories written by Neil Gaiman, the contemporary British author of fantasy and young adult novels. Gaiman is very flexible in terms of genres and that was the reason, why the theoretical part focuses on the description of genres. The borders of fantastic spaces in children's literature are very hard to define. There is a thin line of what is suitable for young readers and what is not. The border is between what subject the book touches and what is hidden. *The Graveyard Book* takes place in the graveyard. This is very unusual for a work of children's fiction. Gaiman works with the genre of horror but he does not reveal brutality and morbidity. It stays in the line of children's literature. If this novel had been written for adults, the brutality and morbidity would have been exposed. The fantasy genre is not over-exposed either. Gaiman uses means of communication that is suitable for children. It is easy for them to understand the full message. Gaiman's work is not shallow and his children's novels maintain a message. In the selected work of the author, there was a happy ending. The main protagonists are very strong leaders. With *Coraline* a big change was made. It was unusual for a female character to be a leader of the story. Coraline is saving her family on her own. The same is with Lucy in *The Wolves in The Walls*. They make ordinary mistakes and children can relate to them. Very interesting part of my analysis was the comparison of original novels and Neil Gaiman's adaptation. With *Hansel and Gretel*, Gaiman sticks with the original idea of the classical fairy tale. The background contains more historical facts. The illustrations by Lorenzo Mattotti make the story darker and more realistic. With *The Sleeper and the Spindle*, an original story was created. Gaiman does not stick to the original idea but takes inspiration of the Brothers Grimm. Most of the characters are not named but are recognizable by certain similarities. Gaiman made the characters more independent and stronger. *The Sleeper and the Spindle* is crossing the border between fairy tales, fantasy and adventure. In some aspects it still remains a classical fairy tale. There is magic spindle and kingdoms. The main protagonist travels with her dwarfs and they are taking adventure on their own. Gaiman's novels are very decent. *The Sleeper and the Spindle* has an open ending at some point. The reader is aware of a possible happy ending but does not know what happens next. In *The Graveyard Book*, the reader may wonder what happened to Bod afterwards. In *Hansel and Gretel* it is the opposite.

The consumer is aware of what is happening after the story ends. Gaiman leaves his novels open for more interpretation.

## Sources

### Primary sources

1. BROTHERS GRIMM. Hansel and Gretel: A Grimm's Fairy Tale. Floris Book, 2008. ISBN 978-0863156236.
2. BROTHERS GRIMM. Sleeping Beauty. NorthSouth Books, 2012. ISBN 978-0735840874.
3. BROTHERS GRIMM. Snow White and Other Fairy Tales. Dover Publications, 2012. ISBN 978-048628327
4. GAIMAN, Neil. Anansi Boys. HarperCollins Publishers, 2005. ISBN 13:978-0-06-051518-8.
5. GAIMAN, Neil. Coraline. HarperCollins Publishers, 2012. ISBN 978-0380807345.
6. GAIMAN, Neil. Hansel and Gretel. TOON Graphics, 2014. ISBN 9781408861981.
7. GAIMAN, Neil. The Graveyard Book. HarperCollins Publishers, 2008. ISBN 978-0-06-170939-5.
8. GAIMAN, Neil. The Sleeper and the Spindle. HarperCollins Publishers, 2015. ISBN 978-0062398246.
9. GAIMAN, Neil. The Wolves in the Walls. HarperCollins Publishers, 2005. ISBN 9780380810956.

### Secondary sources

10. ARMITT, Lucie. Fantasy Fiction: An Introduction. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005. ISBN 0-8264-1685-3.
11. CULLINAN, Bernice E. and Diane Goetz PERSON. The Continuum Encyclopedia of Children's Literature. Great Britain: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005. p.389.
12. MANLOVE, Colin. From Alice to Harry Potter: Children's Fantasy in England. New Zealand: Cybereditions Corporation Christchurch, 2003. ISBN 1-877275-54-9.
13. LATHAM, Rob. The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780199838844
14. LURIE, Alison. Boys and Girls Forever: Children's Classics from Cinderella to Harry Potter. Great Britain: Penguin Books, 2003. ISBN 9781446434475.

15. MCCORT, Jessica. Reading in the Dark: Horror in Children's Literature and Culture. Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2016. ISBN 9781496806444.
16. WELLS, Paul. The Horror Genre: From Beelzebub to Blair Witch. London: Wallflower Press, 2000. ISBN 1903364000.

### Electronic Sources

1. Barnes & Noble [online]. Barnes & Noble Booksellers. Available on: [https://www.barnesandnoble.com/b/books/teen-fiction/humor-teen-fiction/\\_/N-29Z8q8Z2mc9?Nrpp=20&page=1](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/b/books/teen-fiction/humor-teen-fiction/_/N-29Z8q8Z2mc9?Nrpp=20&page=1)
2. DENECKE, Ludwig. Brothers Grimm. Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, c2021. Available on: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Brothers-Grimm>
3. Gothic Novel. Encyclopedia Britannica. Available on: <https://www.britannica.com/art/Gothic-novel>
4. JAGANNATHAN, Padma. Ghosts of Romanticism in Neil Gaiman's Children's Fiction. Inquiries Journal. Available on: <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1582/ghosts-of-romanticism-in-neil-gaimans-childrens-fiction>
5. KOWALSKI, Jesse. Comics: Comic Books. Illustration History. Stockbridge: Norman Rockwell Museum, c2020. Available on: <https://www.illustrationhistory.org/genres/comics-comic-books>
6. Neil Gaiman [online]. Harper Collins Publishers. Available on: <https://www.neilgaiman.com/>
7. Neil Gaiman Biography. Encyclopedia of World Biography. Available on: <https://www.notablebiographies.com/news/Ca-Ge/Gaiman-Neil.html>
8. Neil's Work. Neil Gaiman. Harper Collins Publishers. Available on: <https://www.neilgaiman.com/works/Books/The+Graveyard+Book/>
9. Science Fiction. Literary Terms. Available on: <https://literaryterms.net/>
10. RICHARDS, Linda. Neil Gaiman. Encyclopedia of World Biography. Available on: <http://www.januarymagazine.com/profiles/gaiman.html>
11. WILLIAMS, Joseph. Discover the Truly Grim History Behind the Fairy Tale of Hansel and Gretel. All That's Interesting. 2020. Available on: <https://allthatsinteresting.com/hansel-and-gretel-true-story>

12. 25 Best Science Fiction Books for Kids. The Best Sci Fi Books. Available on: <https://best-sci-fi-books.com/25-best-science-fiction-books-for-kids/>