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# Fairy Tale Landscape in Neil Gaiman's Children's Fiction

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## **Poděkování**

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## **Anotace**

Hlavní téma této bakalářské práce je analyzovat pozadí pohádek od Neila Gaimana. První část se zabývá popisem gotické fikce a pohádek, dále se první část zabývá lehkým shrnutím životů autorů Bratří Grimmů a Neila Gaimana. Druhá část pojednává o analýze tří děl od zmíněných autorů. Jeníček a Mařenka, Sněhurka a Šípková Růženka jsou tři pohádky, které jsou použity k analýze.

The main focus of this thesis is to analyse the landscapes of Neil Gaiman fairy tales. The first part focuses on the description of elements of gothic fiction and fairy tale, and it also briefly describes the life and works of the Brothers Grimm and Neil Gaiman. The core of the thesis focuses on the literary analysis of three works from the authors mentioned. Hansel and Gretel, Snow-White and the Sleeping Beauty are the fairy tales used to analyse the landscapes.

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# 1. Introduction

Children's literature – or fairy tale – is an amazing part of the development of a child. Among 300 authors in literary canon belong the Brothers Grimm, German folklorists and linguists and Neil Gaiman, a contemporary English author of children's books. The biographies of those authors are analysed in the first part of the thesis alongside the gothic fiction and fairy tale. The second part focuses on the analysis of three stories from the Brothers Grimm and Neil Gaiman.

## 2. Gothic fiction

Gothic fiction has a negative aesthetics and gothic tales were set in the Middle Ages. The theme of darkness (an absence of light) forms the looks, moods and atmospheres of the genre. More introduction to Gothic texts could be seen below. <sup>1</sup>

“Gothic texts are, overtly but ambiguously, not rational, depicting disturbances of sanity and security, from superstitious belief in ghosts and demons, displays of uncontrolled passion, violent emotion of flights of fancy to portrayals of perversion and obsession. Moreover, if knowledge is associated with rational procedures of enquiry and understanding based on natural, empirical reality, then gothic styles disturb the borders of knowing and conjure up obscure otherworldly phenomena or the ‘dark arts’, alchemical, arcane and occult forms normally characterised as delusion, apparition, deception. Not tied to a natural order of things as defined by realism, gothic flights of imagination suggest supernatural possibility, mystery, magic, wonder and monstrosity.”

BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*. Routledge, 2013.

The creation of gothic novels is set into late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, a period of great explorations in science and industry in England and when the Enlightenment was establishing itself. The first gothic novel and considered as one of the founding novels of gothic literature is “*The Castle of Otranto*” by Horace Walpole, published in 1764. Another titles, for example are “*Dracula*” by Bram Stoker, “*Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*” by Mary Shelley or “*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*” by Robert L. Stevenson.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*. Routledge, 2013. pg. 2

<sup>2</sup> Gothic Novels: Characteristics & Examples. (2015, May 29). Retrieved from <https://study.com/academy/lesson/gothic-novels-characteristics-examples.html>.

The gothic genre is dark and scary, most of the times it evokes feelings of terror and madness. Usually a gothic tales are morbid, bizarre and are set in antiquated places like a castle or an abbey, graveyard, dungeons, churches and so on. Within those spaces, or a combination of those places, there are hidden secrets from the past that haunt the characters, either psychologically or physically, during the main time of the story. Those hauntings take forms of ghosts, monsters, spectres or a different being. Gothic fiction generally plays with the possibility of the supernatural and with the laws of nature.<sup>3</sup>

Ann Radcliffe is a woman who belongs between the most successful of gothic writers. She lived in her home in Bath, England and her novels were enormously popular and also greatly criticised. Her best-selling work were "The Mysteries of Udolpho" from 1794 and "The Italian" from 1797. Radcliffe chose young women as heroines of her novels set in the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. Her settings mainly referred to the southern part of Europe, Italy and France in particular. She also connected Catholicism with superstition, passionate extremes and arbitrary power. When looking at her psychological settings, ruined castles, isolated abbeys and dark forests with spectacular mountain regions, they were suitably gothic. Radcliffe's heroines took the form for example as orphans who were separated from protective domestic structures and their journeys were mysterious, threatening and corrupted.<sup>4</sup>

Those tales were different from the text which were written before with their development of terrifying and mysterious scenes. The heroines in response to the dark settings inhabited by robbers imagined ghosts and supernatural powers. In "The Romance of the Forest" from 1791 and old manuscript is discovered by the heroine, and it tell the story of a murdered man.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> HOGLE, Jerrold E.; HOGLE, Jerrold E. (ed.). *The Cambridge companion to Gothic fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> HOGLE, Jerrold E.; HOGLE, Jerrold E. (ed.). *The Cambridge companion to Gothic fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 59



Radcliffe's technique is characterised by later explanation of spectral event after they caused curiosity and terror. The rational explanation that are offered, however, brings reader back to eighteenth-century convention of realism.<sup>6</sup>

The gothic writing began to move inside during the period dominated by Romanticism, and it represents the most significant shift in the genre. The darkness of sublime landscapes became markers of inner mental and emotional states. The gothic fiction has its own hero. Usually male character is the protagonist who is selfish or evil. The individual is outcast, part villain with disturbing and demonic features, however, he stays darkly attractive, as a rebel against the constraints of social norms.<sup>7</sup>

Without sustaining the sense of his own identity, the hero encounters a form of the gothic ghost – the double or shadow of himself. The double presents a limit that the hero cannot overcome, it is the representation of a division in the individual psyche.<sup>8</sup>

We could divide the range across a continuum between a “terror Gothic” which holds the characters of the story in anxious suspense about safety, sanity and the threats to life and the “horror Gothic” which controls the characters with the violence of physical a psychological dissolution and shattering social norms with shocking consequences.<sup>9</sup>

Horror asserts its effects in tales of terror. It freezes human abilities to think straight and move. This is caused mainly by a direct encounter with physical mortality, the sight of a decaying body or the touch of an cold corpse. The absolute limit is presented as death. Horror never leaves the scene of gothic fiction and in order to contain gothic effects, gothic fiction can neither close satisfactorily nor fully externalise evil.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pg. 60

<sup>7</sup> BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*. Routledge, 2013. pg 84

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. pg. 84

<sup>9</sup> HOGLE, Jerrold E.; HOGLE, Jerrold E. (ed.). *The Cambridge companion to Gothic fiction*. Cambridge University Press, 2002

<sup>10</sup> BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*. Routledge, 2013. pg 69

“He was now in total darkness, and with his arms extended began to ascend the second staircase. A dead cold hand met his left hand and firmly grasped it, drawing him forcibly forwards – he endeavoured to disengage himself, but could not – he made a furious blow with his sword, and instantly a loud shriek pierced his ears, and the dead hand was left powerless in his – He dropt it, and rushed forwards with a desperate valor.”

SANDNER, David. *Fantastic literature: a critical reader*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004

The painful sensation arising from a scene of misery is fascinating. After experiencing such sensation readers want to come back for more instead of flying from it with disgust and horror. The apparent delight is a paradox with much more complex explanations. One of the most favourite fiction – tragedy – has a full share of disasters such as earthquakes, fires and tales of ghosts and murders. It has been more popular because of those disasters than feared.<sup>11</sup>

One of the most notorious work of English fiction is “*The Monk*” by Matthew Lewis from 1796, because of the scandal the publication of this work caused. The text embodied a kind of horror and as a cautious response to the scandal “*The Monk*” created, a year later, in 1797 “*The Italian*” was published, with a central figure in the form of a villainous monk.<sup>12</sup>

Gothic writers were fascinated by the past, mainly the period of Enlightenment. The obscurity of characters of feudal darkness and barbarism are carefully constructed antitheses of light and dark. The antitheses of light and dark, positive and negative are effects specific to gothic texts. A movement from and back to a rational present can be set by a historical setting. It does not long for terrifying aristocratic power or supernatural events, but it juxtaposes terrors of the negative with an order authorised by reason and morality. The movement is sensitive to other places and times, and it causes the feeling

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<sup>11</sup> SANDNER, David. *Fantastic literature: a critical reader*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004 pg. 31

<sup>12</sup> BOTTING, Fred. *Gothic*. Routledge, 2013. pg 69

of instability where further ambivalence and disorientation can arise. Superstition, tyranny and violence are characteristics involved in an opposing movement, returns of the past. For example, an ancestor's crime threatens a family's status.<sup>13</sup>

Another feature, which is hidden in the work "*Frankenstein*" is dream and nightmare. Dreaming is a mental activity that occurs while a person is asleep and it evokes strong emotions such as joy, sadness, and terror. Because of strong emotions, dreams are part of gothic literature. Another way we could look at dreams is the connection with ancient times and their foretelling. While a character in the story is asleep, we can see inside his or her mind and learn about what he or she is afraid of but will not admit to himself or herself or his or her deepest desire and so on.<sup>14</sup>

In "*Frankenstein*", the character of Victor Frankenstein recreates once dead corpse but shortly after he is horrified at the monster's disgusting appearance. Exhausted from his work and failed expectations he falls asleep and starts dreaming. His dream starts with him kissing his love, Elizabeth. However, the kiss changes rapidly and Elizabeth transforms into a corpse of Victor's dead mother. When he awakes, the monster he created is standing beside his bed and staring into Victor's face. There are multiple interpretations of this dream; signalling the oncoming death of Elizabeth, Victor's horrible act of creating life, and a fashionable critique's opinion on Mary Shelley's confrontation with her own mother, who died giving her birth.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. pg. 3

<sup>14</sup> epublications.marquette.edu, Glossary of the Gothic: *Dreams*, Douglass H. Thomson, Department of Literature and Philosophy, Georgia Southern University

<sup>15</sup> SHELLEY, Mary Wollstonecraft. *Iconoclastic Departures: Mary Shelley after Frankenstein: Essays in Honor of the Bicentenary of Mary Shelley's Birth*. Fairleigh Dickinson Univ Press, 1997. pg. 20

### 3. Fairy Tale

What enchants readers and is captivating them is the possibility of laying down their head for some rest and listening to delightful story. The courtesy, understanding for the poor and aged, kindness towards animal, the love of nature and the aversion to brute force and tyranny is something that keeps people coming back to read those stories again.<sup>16</sup>

“Fairy tales are short narratives, set in the distant past, of events that would be impossible in the real world. Traditional fairy tales are a subset of folk tales which also include fables and legends. They are ‘wonder tales’, characterized by magical happenings and may include fairies, but do not need them. The heroes and heroines are usually mortal human beings, though with no psychological complexity. Such creatures as giants, dwarfs, witches, and ogres frequently play a part, as well as talking animals. “

HAHN, Daniel; MORPURGO, Michael. *The Oxford companion to children's literature*. Oxford Quick Reference, 2015.

This is one of many descriptions of fairy tales. Another one is, for example, from J.R. R. Tolkien, who wrote it in his essay. He felt like the definition of a fairy tale is not explicitly said anywhere, so that he wrote his own detailed one.

“Faërie cannot be caught in a net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible. It has many ingredients, but analysis will not necessarily discover the secret of the whole. “

TOLKIEN, John Ronald Reuel. *On fairy-stories*. 1947.

Many descriptions of fairy tales could be found in literature or on the internet, but one of the simplest one is

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<sup>16</sup> SANDNER, David. *Fantastic literature: a critical reader*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004 pg. 56

"A fairy tale in just a fairy tale, as a face is just a face..."

SANDNER, David. *Fantastic literature: a critical reader*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004

Fairy tales often follow a pattern: the story begins, then it builds up a problem, after that comes a dilemma, which is then solved and it all ends with a happy ending (or bad, could be both). The beginnings of fairy tales cannot be exactly set, people used to tell their stories many years ago, so no explicit date could be said. They had the same function as print and electronics have nowadays, to pass the time. Among the well-known fairy tales belongs "Snow White", "The Sleeping Beauty", "Little Red Riding Hood", and uncountably more.<sup>17</sup>

Romance, power, and wealth are made real in the form of precious stones and metals, crowns, thrones or sceptres. Also, it could take the shape of glittering gowns or a princess with golden hair. In the Grimm's version, Cinderella chants and a bird tosses down a dress which allows her to shine and bedazzle everyone. In another story, there are three avenues with threes, one with golden leaves, one with silver leaves and the last one with diamond leaves.<sup>18</sup>

Another aspect we could talk about are numbers, mainly the number three – e.g. "The Three Little Pigs" or three sisters and sons. It is simply called "the power of three". Fairy tale origins from oral tradition and in order to remember them better the number three is used, because it is easier for the listener to recall them later.<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, there is the number seven, which is connected with the creation of the world. The God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh. If we look into different religion, we can also see the use of number seven. In Koran, Muslim pilgrims walk around

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<sup>17</sup> BYATT, A. S. *The Grimm reader: The classic tales of the Brothers Grimm*. WW Norton & Company, 2010. pg. xxiv

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. pg xxiii

<sup>19</sup> LIABENOW, Alonna, "The Significance of the Numbers Three, Four, and Seven in Fairy Tales, Folklore, and Mythology" (2014). Honors Projects. 418

the Kaaba in Mecca seven times, Hinduism talks about seven higher worlds and seven underworlds and Buddhism's Buddha rises and takes seven steps.<sup>20</sup>

There are more numbers to talk about, for example the number four, which was important in life of the Mayan people and other Native American tribes. It is the number which is closest to the nature (the seasons, the cardinal directions), but not in China though. In China, the pronunciation of number four is similar to the pronunciation of the word death, so many Chinese buildings skip the fourth floor.<sup>21</sup>

“An all-important part of our response to the world of the tales is our instinctive sense that they have *rules*. There are things that can and can't happen, will and won't happen-a prohibition is there to be broken, two of three brothers or sisters are there to fail, the incestuous king will almost always dance at his daughter's wedding to the prince in whose court she has found refuge as a kitchen slave or a goose girl.”

BYATT, A. S. *The Grimm reader: The classic tales of the Brothers Grimm*. WW Norton & Company, 2010.

In fairy tales, everything seems to be happening only by chance and this has the effect of making it look like nothing happens by chance. The result is that every action or event is fated.<sup>22</sup>

Peasants or merchant daughters can have the same personality traits and chances of getting help from others, solving riddles or obtaining magical objects as princesses. Every girl in fairy tale can be modest and beautiful or vain, stupid and ugly. Hard-working girls get rewarded and lazy girls get punished. Max Luthi described the world of fairy tale as “an abstract world, full of discrete, interchangeable people, objects and incidents, all of which are isolated and are nevertheless interconnected in a kind of web or network of two-dimensional meaning.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> BYATT, A. S. *The Grimm reader: The classic tales of the Brothers Grimm*. WW Norton & Company, 2010.

pg xii

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. pg. xi-xiii

Anyone expects magic from fairy tales (positive or negative), magical characters (dragons, elves, dwarfs, witches, fairies, etc....), clearly described good and bad characters, the plot focused on a problem that needs to be solved and so on. Most of the stories can also provide a moral lesson for children to remember.<sup>24</sup>

In fairy tales the good and bad is described clearly for children to understand, one sister is beautiful the other is ugly, one parent is strictly good the other is strictly bad, one brother is clever and the other one is stupid. Another example of showing bad characters is the similarities in appearance between them through stories, beautiful and powerful witch, fire-breathing dragon, or mighty giant. Evil is clearly shown in every fairy tale and children are learning through life to understand that evil is part of the real life as well, maybe not as a witch or a beautiful evil queen, everyone has their own evil in themselves, but it is okay as long as they remember that good is part of them too.<sup>25</sup>

Parents, relatives and other people, who take care of the child, are number one influential element during the child development. The culture heritage comes at a second place in the form of literature; however, it has to be delivered appropriately.<sup>26</sup>

Most of children's literature nowadays do not broaden children's imagination, it has the purpose of information, entertainment or both. The ability of reading is completely meaningless to children, whose life is focused more on the present than the future in contrast to their parents, if they do not receive the right pleasure they desire.<sup>27</sup>

If the purpose of the story is to catch children's attention, it has to be entertaining, to arouse curiosity, to inspire imagination, to clarify children's feelings and to suit their wishes and delights. With those standpoints, nothing will enrich children's imagination like a "folk tale" which offers new dimensions for children to explore and which they would not find themselves.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> BETTELHEIM, Bruno. The uses of enchantment: The meaning and importance of fairy tales. Vintage, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. pg. 16

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pg. 10

<sup>27</sup> Ibid pg. 10-11

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. pg. 11-14

Diving deep into a tale brings moral experience by believing that misdeed is bad and does not get rewarded but instead punished. On the other hand, the hero is so appealing with his actions to children's eyes that they agree with him and believe in him in every situation. Not every fairy tale has the moral lesson based on whether the character is good or bad though, sometimes they help to build the children's personality by believing that even the weakest one can succeed by wit or a trick.<sup>29</sup>

Strictly real stories are against children's pure personality. They will listen, maybe learn but nothing in those stories could children evaluate as an enrichment for their personality. Children themselves feel which fairy tale has the values they need in certain time in their life.<sup>30</sup>

The explanation of fairy tales is not needed, however, a small guidance from the narrator is welcomed. The tone of the narrator's voice or his facial expressions are the key elements for children to find their own explanation of the fairy tale.<sup>31</sup>

However, the importance of fairy tales should be respected. Everyone who considered it knows well that a nation without some romance and fancy could never find a great place under the sun. The little books with stories should be preserved and taken care about to preserve them in their usefulness. It is important to keep them at their state of purity and simplicity.<sup>32</sup>

As long as the changes of moral tempers and children's manner of life are accidental, effortless and inevitable the core of the story remains true. The deeper the meaning of those changes is the more it destroys the child's natural power of imaginable vision. The more the story is calm and complete, the less is the young reader's attention to be confused. Careless and confused story will lead to careless and confused reading.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. pg. 17

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. pg. 71-77

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. pg. 192

<sup>32</sup> SANDNER, David. *Fantastic literature: a critical reader*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. pg. 62



"Let him know his fairy tale accurately, and have perfect joy or awe in the conception of it as if it were real; thus he will always be exercising his power of grasping realities;"

BYATT, A. S. *The Grimm reader: The classic tales of the Brothers Grimm*.  
WW Norton & Company, 2010.

Children should be able to develop their own imaginable vision, so it is a great mistake to multiply unnecessarily or to richly illustrate everything. They should multiply and illustrate by themselves and if their imagination is powerful enough, wonders and mystery will come to their dreams and enrich them.<sup>34</sup>

Children are not likely to trouble someone with the meaning of a story, they will find what they are capable of finding, more would be too much.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. pg. 62

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. pg. 67

## 4. The authors

I have chosen to talk about three children fiction authors, the Brothers Grimm and the contemporary author of children's books Neil Gaiman.

Wilhelm Grimm and his brother Jacob Grimm are known as the Brothers Grimm, who collected stories and folklore in Germany during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Neil Gaiman is a British bestselling author of fantasy and young adult fiction.

### 4.1. The Brothers Grimm

Wilhelm Carl Grimm and Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm were German folklorists and linguists, who are best known for their "*Kinder – und Hausmärchen*" collection ("Grimm's Fairy Tales"). They were born in Hanau, Germany in years of 1785 and 1786, and together they collected folklore music and literature. During their lifetime, they were also professors at the University of Gottingen, where they taught Germanic studies.<sup>36</sup>

Among other of their works, we could count Jacob's "*Deutsche Mythologie*", Wilhelm's edition of epigrams by the 13<sup>th</sup>-century poet Freidank and their ambitious take on German dictionary, which, unfortunately, were they able to finish only up to the letter F. There were many more works about scholarly, linguistics and medieval studies, but we will be talking about some of their collected fairy tales.<sup>37</sup>

In 1830, King Ernest Augustus made the brothers and other five professors ("Gottingen Seven") leave the city of Gottingen, where they worked. They continued to work on their collection, which reached up to 211 stories with illustrations. After Wilhelm died in 1859, Jacob was deeply mentally deranged and then died after four years, in 1863.<sup>38</sup>

The brothers collected material from different countries (Scandinavia, France, Italy, etc.) Most of the stories were recommended by one early critic to not be read by children, because they portrayed things like sex, brutality, and incest.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Biography.com, MYINT, B. 2014 (updated 2020)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> BYATT, A. S. The Grimm reader: The classic tales of the Brothers Grimm. WW Norton & Company, 2010. pg. xxvii

“Danger lurks in the dark woods and also at home. Cruel stepmothers chop up children and serve them in a stew. Homicidal husbands hang their dead wives on the walls of dark chambers. Crazy widowers propose marriage to their own daughters.”

BYATT, A. S. *The Grimm reader: The classic tales of the Brothers Grimm*. WW Norton & Company, 2010.

Dark aspects are mostly associated with the Grimm Brothers, aspects like monsters and ogres, cruel stepmothers and husbands, victims and enchanters, eating and being eaten and as I mentioned previously sex and violence.<sup>40</sup>

Sex often takes the form of incest and child abuse and Wilhelm Grimm turned out to be really skilled in this particular writing. In the collection with the title “*Nursery and Household Tales*” he showed some extraordinary editorial zeal for lurid portrayals of child abuse, starvation and cruel punishments. The first edition was written for Grimm’s colleagues rather than for broad audience and because of that preface and notes were included in the volume.<sup>41</sup>

The biggest shock comes when we notice that nobody in the stories is surprised by events that are happening there. A wolf starts a conversation with a girl in the woods, a king gives up his unborn child just to give his queen a piece for her salad, a donkey spits gold pieces, and everyone who witnesses those events is not shocked at all.<sup>42</sup>

The third edition of the “*Nursery and Household Tales*” went through editing procedures, illustrations were added, and the text was based on the version of 1819. Wilhelm Grimm put together fifty of the best-known stories and cut off all things that had some resemblance of scholarship. Unwanted pregnancies were eradicated, and marriage was introduced, however, the Brothers did not eliminate the violence, they avoided detailed descriptions of children abuses and of abusers punished. On the other hand, they did not

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. pg. xix

<sup>41</sup> TATAR, Maria. *The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales: Expanded Edition*. Princeton University Press, 2019. pg. 10-11

<sup>42</sup> BYATT, A. S. *The Grimm reader: The classic tales of the Brothers Grimm*. WW Norton & Company, 2010. pg. xxii

excise passages that portrayed fingers flying through the air or heads rolling on the ground.<sup>43</sup>

## 4.2. Neil Gaiman

Neil Richard MacKinnon Gaiman was born in November 1960 in Portchester (Hampshire, England), he discovered his love for literature in early age while reading the works of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, E. A. Poe and many more. However, Gaiman started his writing career as a journalist, his two first works were biographies the first one was "*Duran Duran*" about a band of the same name and the second one was "*Don't Panic: The Official Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy Companion*" a biography of an English writer Douglas Adams.<sup>44</sup>

In 1989 the comic series "*Sandman*" was published and collected a large number of US awards. After two years, "*Sandman*" was the first comic ever to receive a literary award – the 1991 World Fantasy Award for Best Short Story.<sup>45</sup>

Neil Gaiman's work attracts readers of all ages and genres as he:

"...focuses on the sense of the fantastic, the gothic and the uncanny; those three elements form the basis of his fiction that he addressed both to children and young adult readers."

SUKDOLOVÁ, Alice, *The Fairy Tale Space of Neil Gaiman's Children's Fiction*, Lingua viva. České Budějovice: Katedry jazyků Jihočeské university, 2005-.

Gaiman's work for young readers continues with the titles like "*M is for Magic*" (2007), "*The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish*" (1997) or a gothic horror story "*Coraline*" (2002), which won the British Science Fiction Award, the Hugo, the Nebula, the Bram Stoker, and the American Elizabeth Burr/Worzalla award. Then we can continue with his

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43 Ibid. pg. 19-20

44Neil Gaiman, [https://www.neilgaiman.com/About\\_Neil/Biography](https://www.neilgaiman.com/About_Neil/Biography)

45 Ibid

books for adults, *“Neverwhere”* (1995), *“Stardust”* (1999), and *“American Goods”* (2001), as well as his work in collaboration with Terry Pratchett *“Good Omens”* (1990). More work include a short story collections *“Smoke and Mirrors”* (1998) and *“Fragile Things”* (2006).<sup>46</sup>

Gaiman lived his early life in England, but he moved to Menomonie, Wisconsin in 1992 in order to be close to his then-wife and his three children. However, in 2011 he legally married a songwriter and performer Amanda Palmer. He spent a lot of time with his now-wife and their four-year-old son in Auckland, Australia. Last year (2020), Gaiman undertook a dangerous act, when he flew his way back to his home on Scottish Isle of Skye and has been criticised since for “endangering” local people in those hard times during Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>47</sup>

This bestselling author likes to have his career and life adventurous. He read many authors and created his own fiction that has a heart which feels true and personal. People, who read those stories keep them in their memory for a long time. Gaiman created his own worlds that feel timeless with his intricate writing style. He mixes together many genres as if he is hosting his own cooking show “... a spoon of horror, a cup of fantasy, a pinch of sci-fi to taste.” Those are the ingredients that make the reader keep turning the pages and continue reading.<sup>48</sup>

Gaiman’s biggest desire was to write comics, so he left the world of journalism and his two works - *“Duran Duran”* and *“Don’t Panic: The Official Hitch Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy Companion”* – behind.<sup>49</sup>

One project in early eighties brought together the young Gaiman and an art student Dave McKean and they made *“Violent Cases”* together. This work started Gaiman’s career in the US and a lifelong partnership between Gaiman and McKean.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Neil Gaiman, [https://www.neilgaiman.com/About\\_Neil/Biography](https://www.neilgaiman.com/About_Neil/Biography)

<sup>47</sup> BBC, 17 May 2020

<sup>48</sup> CAMPBELL, Hayley. *The Art of Neil Gaiman*. Hachette UK, 2017. pg. 11-12

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, pg. 12

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, pg. 12

In 1987, after the American comics changed with Alan Moore's work, editors from DC came to the UK to look for more comics writers. Gaiman already had an experience with this kind of writing and with McKean as an illustrator, they made their first comic for DC, the "*Black Orchid*". The "*Sandman*" followed shortly after.<sup>51</sup>

Gaiman moved to the US in early nineties. He moved in a big Addams's family house with his American wife and his children.<sup>52</sup>

The book that changed him was the first work from Ray Bradbury he read, "*Homecoming*". On his seventh birthday, Gaiman got the whole collection of seven books of the Narnia series from his parents. He had already bought the first and the third book of the series but not the second one, because the store had an incomplete collection.<sup>53</sup>

The collection from C. S. Lewis was the first time that Gaiman went crazy for reading, but it was W. S. Gilbert with his comic opera masterpieces "*H. M. S. Pinafore*" and "*The Pirates of Penzance*" that made him obsessed with words. Although he loved those works the most important thing that happened to Gaiman was when he received a box full of American comics, such as "*Fantastic Four*", "*The Brave and the Bold*" with Batman, "*Inhumans*" and "*Spider-man*". He read them several times over and never figured out where they came from.<sup>54</sup>

1977 was the year of the defeating punk era and Gaiman was geographically in the middle of it, in his final year at the Groydon's Whitgift School. In those years Gaiman fronted his own punk band with belief that you do not need to be able to sing to do vocals.<sup>55</sup>

The whole punk era gave him a new way of thinking. He made his way through the era with the DIY attitude of punk, being in a band that did not have good covers, buying records and dying hair. Without punk, Gaiman would probably not end up in the comic industry.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, pg. 13

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, pg. 13-14

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, pg. 25

<sup>54</sup> CAMPBELL, Hayley. *The Art of Neil Gaiman*. Hachette UK, 2017. pg. 26

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, pg. 30-31

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, pg. 31

Gaiman's journalist era started with a plan. Journalists are allowed to ask questions and he could use them to find out everything he needed to know about the world of books while also, being able to feed himself.<sup>57</sup>

He started on page one in the "*Writer's & Artists' Yearbook*" where the addresses and phone numbers of editors of every magazine, newspaper, periodical and publisher were written. A 22-year-old Gaiman found his first targets to interview, Gene Wolfe and Robert Silverberg. The first editor he called redirected him to the "Daily Telegraph", but they did not know who Wolfe and Silverberg were, so they told him to call the "Penthouse", because they like „anything artsy with a sex edge.“<sup>58</sup>

The "Penthouse" accepted Gaiman's offer and published his interview, but that was the only interview he did for them.<sup>59</sup>

After that, he decided to write for "Knave" a soft-core pornography magazine and every time they published his article, he carefully cut it out and archived it in a ring binder.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, pg. 38

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, pg. 38

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, pg. 38

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, pg. 39-40

## **5. Literary analysis**

The literary analysis will be about comparing some stories written by the Brothers Grimm and by Neil Gaiman. To see different adaptations and how we can merge the two previous settings – the gothic fiction and fairy tale.

### **5.1. Hansel and Gretel**

#### **5.1.1. “Hansel and Gretel” by the Brothers Grimm**

The story starts with the introduction of a poor wood-cutter and his family – his wife and Hansel and Gretel. One day, when they had nothing to eat the wife suggested that they could lead their children into the forest and leave them there. The children heard the conversation and after their parents fell asleep, Hansel got up, crept outside, collected white pebbles and went back to bed.

The next day both of their parents went in the forest with the children. During their walk, Hansel kept peeping at their house and throwing the white pebbles from his pocket on the ground. When they reached the middle of the forest, the mother told them to wait there, after that, the parents set a tree branch to knock into a tree to make it seem like they were chopping wood. When the dark fell Hansel and Gretel waited for the moon and went home thanks to the path of pebbles.

After some time, the situation repeated. There was no food, parents had a conversation and Hansel and Gretel heard them. When Hansel wanted to go and collect the pebbles, the door was locked, so he could not do it.

In the morning, the parents took them deep into the forest and Hansel made a crumble path from a bread. Unfortunately, forest animals ate the crumbs and Hansel, and Gretel could not find a way home.

Three days after, they came across a small house built out of bread, cakes, and clear sugar and they began to eat it.



When a voice came from inside the children answered, after that, an old woman crawled out of the house and scared the children. The old woman took them in and fed them with lots of sugar. Afterwards, she showed them their clean and soft beds and let them sleep.

The witch locked Hansel in a metal cage and made Gretel do all the work around the house. Every morning for the following four weeks the witch went and checked on Hansel's fatness, and he always gave her a little bone instead of his finger. Then the witch told Gretel to light up the fire in the oven and then check on it. Gretel played dumb and when the witch hurried to show her, she pushed her into the fire. After that, they collected the treasure from the dead witch and escaped her house.

When they came across the river, they did not know how to cross it. So, Gretel called a white duck, which helped them get across the river safely. Then Hansel and Gretel arrived at their home and their father came to greet them without his wife, who was dead.

In the end, they all lived together happily.

### **5.1.2. Analysis**

This version has many fairy tale aspects. It is visible in naming the characters, we do not have a mother, but stepmother. We do not have an old woman but a witch, it is clearly written that those women are bad, as children expect them to be. On the other hand, Hansel and Gretel and their father are pictured as good, because the father did not want to take the children into the forest, but he obeyed the stepmother.

The number three makes an appearance here in the three days that the children spend alone in the woods. After the three days, the children find the witch's hut with the help of snow-white bird, began to eat the hut and a voice came out of the hut. This time unlike in any dialogue, here it is a rhyme.

If we move on with the story and focus on the nearly ending after the good punished the evil, we can see how the children cross the river then encounter, on a duck's back. Christianity portrays rivers as a re-birth and cleansing. This could mean that Hansel and Gretel overcome their fears and they are coming home as a different people now, more adult.

The story of Hansel and Gretel is important for young girls in a way that even a girl can save a boy. Hansel is locked up in the metal cage and is able to play with the nearly blind witch, but it is Gretel who pushes the evil witch into the oven and murders her and it is Gretel who calls the white duck to help them cross the river.

### **5.1.3. "Hansel and Gretel" by Neil Gaiman**

The story is set in a forest where a woodcutter and his wife live, they had two children, Margaret, who they shortened to Gretel and a younger Hans, which they made longer into Hansel. The family was living a peaceful life in their small house in the forest, the woodcutter would buy meat if there was enough wood to be chopped and enough people to buy it and the children were happily playing in the woods. This was all before the war.

The woodcutter's family was far away from any source of war, but soldiers came and took everything, the crops in surrounding fields, animals in the forest and all men. Soon, the family had nothing to eat so the woman suggested to take Hansel and Gretel into the forest and leave them there. The woodcutter disagreed with her but eventually, he led the children into the forest. Hansel overheard their conversation during the night, so he decided to collect some small white stones from a stream and took them with him.

The next morning, the woodcutter walked the children deep into the forest and left them there, but Hansel made a small path of the stones, which helped them to get out of the forest. After another two weeks, the woodcutter woke Hansel and Gretel up and took them with him into the forest once again. Hansel did not have time to collect the pebbles, so he made the path from bread crumbs their mother gave them.

They were deep, deep in the forest, where the trees had weird shapes and the sunlight was green, stained by the leaves. The woodcutter left the children there and walked away from them. Hansel and Gretel knew he was not coming back for them.

They tried to find the way back to their home, but the animals ate all of Hansel's bread crumbs. They were hungry and afraid but one morning after a few days of starvation, Hansel smelt something sweet in the morning air – gingerbread. After the kids followed

the smell, they found a small house made from the gingerbread, decorated with sugar candies and barley sugar. They reached out and ate.

A voice from the inside came and Hansel and Gretel did not say anything back, after a while an old woman came out, surprised that children were eating at her home. She brought them inside and fed them till their stomachs were full. Then she showed them their soft, white beds and they felt asleep right away, the food was poisoned.

While they were sleeping, she brought Hansel outside and locked him in a metal cage and chained Gretel by leg to a table. The old woman made Gretel cook meals for Hansel to make him fat, so that she could eat him. Hansel was wise and saw through the woman's plan, so every time she came to his cage to check how fat he was, instead of his own finger, he gave her a bone to check on.

After a month or more, the old woman's patience run out and she commanded Gretel to light the fire up in the oven. Gretel obeyed her and started the fire, but when the woman told her to check if the oven is hot enough, Gretel played dumb and told the woman that she does not know how to do that. The old woman rushed forward to show Gretel how it is done, but when she leaned into the fire, Gretel pushed her inside.

Gretel then took the keys from Hansel's cage and let him out. Then they waited till the old woman was burned. They found a silver key in the cold oven, which opened a chest under the woman's bed. There they found jewels and clothes of people who the old woman ate. They changed their clothes and filled their pockets with the treasures. After that, they left the small house forever and headed south.

When they reached a river, they found a shallow place to cross it and rushed back home. In no time, they began to recognize all the places where they have played and soon after they found their home. Their father came to meet them and was very happy to see them. When they asked about their mother the woodcutter showed them a grave, he himself dug out for her.

At the end, Hansel and Gretel then lived with their father happily for many years until they both got married into their own families.

#### **5.1.4. Analysis**

This is the story Neil Gaiman wrote about Hansel and Gretel in year 2014. In this classic fairy tale, there is much less direct speech than in the version from the Brothers Grimm and the witch here is just an old woman and is not pictured much as an evil witch as anyone would expect.

We see only two names; this fact is also a big part of fairy tales. If we see a name, it is attached to a certain character and no one is named the same, just like Hansel and Gretel, there is no other tale that would have those names. Other possibility is that the name is somehow deduces from its owners' qualities, e.g., Snow White and Sleeping Beauty.

The landscape of this whole story is, of course, dark forest, a hut, where the family lives and an old woman's hut. The author also mentions fields and more surroundings of the forest. The whole time flow could be considered to be set up in medieval era, because in present, it is much harder to find an average farmer like it used to be in the past. Most of today's fields are owned by companies (not all of them, of course).

The story starts peacefully, the woodcutter cuts wood and his family is happy, then the atmosphere changes as the war with famine comes and there is not much happiness for the woodcutter's family, only hunger. The uneasy mood continues as the mother decides to take the children to the forest and leave them there.

At first, the father leaves the children in a grove of birch trees, gives them food and starts a small fire for them. The second time he takes the children into the forest, they walk much further than previously, and we can sense the tension that seized the children as they continued walking. The father again, makes a small fire for the children and gives them food, but this time, the trees looks twisted, the sunlight is darkened by the leaves and the atmosphere is much darker than the first time.

Through the book we can find a motif of hunger, either the one of the parents, the old woman, or the animals that ate the bread crumbles. The parents and the birds are driven by hunger for survival however, the old woman desires taste. With hunger the theme of food is connected, the meat here is described differently than the sweet food.

Colours here are used only briefly and mostly associated with affluence and comfort in comparing with the black and white illustrations from Lorenzo Mattotti, an Italian illustrator.

## **5.2. Snow-White**

Snow-White is one of the best know stories for children. It is told in many European countries and languages. The name could be simply “Snow-White” or even “Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs”. This thesis will compare two versions of the story, “Snow White” by the Brothers Grimm and “Snow, Glass, Apples” by Neil Gaiman. Those two have similar names but their story is of a different kind.

Neil Gaiman’s story of Snow White is different from the traditional one by the Grimm Brothers. The whole story is retrospectively told by the queen – Snow White’s stepmother. We get to know her, and it turns out that she is not as evil as in other adaptations.

### **5.2.1. “Little Snow-White” by the Grimm Brothers**

One day, a queen sat at her ebony window sewing when she pricked her finger and three drops of blood fell into the snow. She made a wish to have a child “as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony.”<sup>61</sup>

After some time, she gave birth to a daughter who was just as the queen wished, so they started to call her Little Snow-White. The queen died after the child was born and the king took another woman for his wife.

The new queen was a beautiful woman, obsessed with her look and so arrogant that she could not stand that anyone would be more beautiful than her. Each and every morning she asked her mirror, who was the most fairest in the world and every time the mirror gave back the right answer. She knew that the mirror could not tell lies.

One day, when Snow-White grew older she became more beautiful, even more than her stepmother and the queen could not accept it. She ordered a huntsman to take Snow-

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<sup>61</sup> GRIMM, Jacob; GRIMM, Wilhelm K. *Snow white*. Andrews McMeel Publishing, 1991.

White into the forest and kill her there. When he was about to do it, Snow-White began to cry and the huntsman let her go after all.

Snow-White ran as fast as she could and when she could not run no more, she saw a little house. Inside was everything so small and in numbers of seven, seven plates, seven mugs, table and even seven beds. She could not decide which chair to sit on, which food to eat, from which mug to drink and finally in which bed should she lay. So, she tried everything and after all, fell asleep in the seventh bed.

All of those things belonged to the seven dwarfs who dug for ore in the mountains. After they came home, they found out that they are not there alone. A few looks later, they found Snow-White sleeping in one of their beds. She was so beautiful that they let her sleep until morning. The next day when they all were awake, they made a deal that Snow-White would clean, cook, and take care of the little house and she could have everything she wanted in return.

Meanwhile in the castle, the queen found out that Snow-White was still alive and started to make plan in order to kill her. Firstly, she came up with a bodice laces with which she intended to strangle the young princess to death. This plan was not successful because the dwarves cut the laces in two and let Snow-White breath again.

Secondly, the queen thought of a poisoned comb and when she combed the princess's hair, she succeeded but not for a long time since the dwarves were on their way back and saved the princess once again.

The last thing the queen came with was a poisoned apple but only a half of it so she can eat it with Snow-White at once. This last plan was successful and after one bite, Snow-White fell down dead. When the dwarves came home, they could not help the princess.

The queen was satisfied and the envy in her heart rested.

The dwarves were in a great sorrow, they could not burry her in the ground, so they made a glass transparent coffin and placed it on a mountain with Snow-White in it.

One day a prince came and when he saw the beautiful princess, he fell in love with her. After an agreement he took the coffin with him and let his servants carry it. Eventually,

one of them stumbled on something and dropped the coffin. A piece of apple was dislodged from Snow-White's throat and the princess came back alive. Then she went with the prince into his castle and a big wedding was announced.

The queen did not want to go to their wedding, but she could not find peace. After she arrived, she recognized her stepdaughter and could not move. The servants put a pair of iron shoes in a burning coal and when they were hot enough, they placed it in front of the queen, and she had to dance in them until she was dead.

### **5.2.2. Analysis**

It is set in a castle and a forest. We come across the dark part of the forest when Snow-White is escaping the huntsmen but not really much after that. The darkest part of this story is the queen herself.

The fairy tale's aspects are the dwarfs, evil queen and her mirror, good princess and the prince and the undying beauty of Snow-White. Also, the number three – the three times the queen came to try to kill Snow-White and the three times Snow-White came back to life. Also, the three colours mentioned are black, white and red.

Fairy tales began when the main character is pushed into a blind spot, from which there is nowhere to run away. In Snow-White it is her relationship with her parent. Snow-White tries to escape and spends her hard years with dwarfs in the forest. This story is the best representation of the phases of child's development.

The theme of narcissism belongs to the life of children, and they are supposed to overcome it during their adolescence. It is narcissism that nearly costs Snow-White her life, the corset and the comb were things that "could make her more beautiful". Narcissism is connected to the parents as well, it is what eventually kills the queen at the end of the story.

Because the reader is seeing everything from Snow-White's point of view, he cannot imagine the world from the queen's perspective. This topic is addressed in the version from Neil Gaiman.

### 5.2.3. "Snow, Glass, Apples" by Neil Gaiman

This story starts with a woman being just a young sixteen-year-old who dreamt about a young, gold-haired king. One day he met her and rode her back to her cottage, where he took her whole. Short after, the young king took her to his palace, where his no more than a five-year-old daughter lived with him.

The woman was afraid of the child, pale with dark hair and red lips. The child did not eat with the parents, the woman did not know, where the child ate. One day the princess came to the women's chambers because of hunger. The woman gave her an apple, the princess ate it and then she bit the woman's thumb. She was frozen and scared of the child and after that incident, she locked her chamber and let the smith place iron bars in her window.

The king was weak and dizzy and during one winter he died. The ground was too hard to dig a grave, so they piled rocks on top of his weak body. After that the woman was crowned a new queen being only eighteen years old.

The fear of the little princess made the queen do a drastic thing. She let the servants take the child into the heart of the dark forest, cut her heart out and took it back to the queen. The forest was the border to many kingdoms, and nobody would claim it as their own, only outlaws lived there.

Servants brought the child's heart to the queen, and she hung it up in her chamber, surrounding it with garlic and rowanberries. Then she regularly stared over the dark forest, until the darkness fell.

The time passed slowly and there was the time of the annual Spring Fair, the people from the forest came every year to sell or buy stuff from the town people. The forest people were dwarfs, midgets and hunchback or somehow differently flawed creatures the town people were afraid of.

People from the town started to notice, that fewer forest people came to the Fair, which was unusual and after five sad, poor years only a handful of them came. It was that time the Lord of the Fair came to the queen and asked for help.



The queen had a gift, she could see events that were happening right now in a different place and a different time through her looking glass. She used this gift and saw young princess in the dark forest. Living and hunting down the trespassers in the forest. She also laid with them and took pleasure of being with them. The queen's decided that she had to make the forest safe and kill the princess by herself.

She stood naked by herself on the highest tower of the palace and performed a sacred act under the moonlight to poison three apples, which she intended to give to the princess. After that, she went undercover to the dark forest to find the princess's cave. Eventually, she found it and hid behind a rock nearby, shortly after, a few dwarfs came out of the cave and nobody else followed. The queen went inside.

In the cave she met the princess, naked and alone, thirteen-year-old. Still perfectly pale with black hair and red lips. She left her basket full of pretty ribbons and the three apples on the ground and run away. The queen did not stop sooner than at the palace.

The queen did not know what happened exactly to the princess. She only reckoned that the princess played with the ribbons and then ate one of the apples. As soon as she took one bite, she fell dead on the ground. The princess's heart that the queen had hanged up in her chamber stopped beating.

The next Spring Fair was slightly better than the last one. The forest people came eventually and travellers from far land too.

After another two years when the queen was twenty-five of age a Prince came to her kingdom. She thought of the connection of their two kingdoms and so she came to his chambers in the night. He let her stand by the window to be as cold as stone, then he made her lay on the cold floor without a move.

The next day, the prince left unsatisfied and made his way through the forest, where he eventually found the dead princess. Slightly after the Prince came back and rushed into the queen's chambers, spited in her face, and brought the princess with him. The princess took her own heart from the queen and put it back into her chest.

The queen was thrown into a cell beneath the palace, in rags she stayed there during the autumn. In the end, guards came for her and took her away, they stripped the rags from her and shaved her head. Then they carried her naked and shaven out and thrust her inside a kiln. The princess and her new husband watched the queen to be burnt alive in the kiln. The queen decided that she would not scream, she would not make a single sound.

#### **5.2.4. Analysis**

There are details related to the original version, like the stepmother, the dwarfs and other beings in the forest, the poisoned apple and the prince who came and saved the princess. It is told differently from what we are used to, but the basics are the same.

The story has a lot of gothic aspects, like the forest people or even the forest itself, the castle and the fact that the princess is a vampire. The whole atmosphere of the story is unpleasant and really erotic. There are some scenes that could make some people feel uneasy. In this version, the forest plays a bigger role in the story than in the version from the Grimm Brothers. It represents the scary part and even the people from the story are afraid of the forest.

Snow-White herself could be counted as the biggest horror aspect. Unlike in the previous version, here the pale skin and the red lips of Snow-White are not signs of beauty but of something else. Snow-White prayed on her own father during the time she was growing up, the queen tells us that when they met, the king only had one scar, but at the time he died he was covered in scars. Later, she became a threat to the townspeople and wanted to return to the castle purely out of revenge. Snow-White is the main reason the townspeople are afraid of the dark forest and why the outlaws and stunted people started to disappear from the forest.

The queen, on the other hand, is written as the benevolent ruler of the kingdom. She tells the story by the way of flashbacks. She ordered to kill Snow-White in order to protect the kingdom from Snow-White herself and hung her still beating heart by her bed. The prince here is not as charming as in other versions. Readers could describe his sexual desires as necrophilia. He is as wicked as Snow-White.

Neil Gaiman was able to take a traditional fairy tale and twist it in order to create a completely new story – haunting, erotic and well-executed.

However, somebody could disagree with Gaiman's version being a fairy tale. As David Sandner wrote in his work *"Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader"* "... Fairy tales should be respected." and "Whosoever alters them to suit his own opinions, whatever they are, is guilty, to our thinking, of an act of presumption, and appropriates to himself what does not belong to him." (2014). Is Neil Gaiman really 'guilty' of taking an original fairy tale and twisting it to his own liking, even though readers like it?

The story is more a gothic fiction than it is a fairy tale. With all its aspects, this guilt D. Sandner is talking about is at place.

### **5.3. The Sleeping Beauty**

The last fairy tale I want to talk about is the well-known story of Sleeping Beauty, named "The Sleeper and the Spindle" by Gaiman and "Little Briar-Rose" by Brothers Grimm. Just like Snow White's story, Brothers Grimm made this one short, Gaiman, on the other hand, made this one really long and again, from quite a different point of view.

#### **5.3.1. "Little Briar-Rose" by the Grimm Brothers**

One day when the queen was having a bath, a frog appeared from the water and told the queen that she will soon have a daughter. When the time came, the king held a great celebration and invited the fairies to. He only had twelve plates and so he invited only twelve fairies, but there was another one that was not invited, a thirteenth one.

When the fairies were giving their wishes to the little princess, the uninvited fairy appeared and gave her own wish, a bad one. She angrily predicted that once the princess is fifteen, she will prick her finger with a spindle and then die. Then she left.

The kingdom was shocked, but there was one good fairy left who has not given her wish yet. So, she changed the curse a little bit. The princess will not die, she will fall asleep for a hundred years instead. The king ordered to destroy all the spindles in the kingdom in order to protect his daughter.

The little princess grew up to be a beautiful young woman. On her fifteenth birthday, her parents left the kingdom, and the little princess was curiously roaming through the castle. She came across a small door and went inside. In the small room where an old woman was sitting spinning flax. The princess talked to the woman and later she tried to spin to. Then she pricked herself and fell asleep.

At the same time the princess fell asleep, the whole kingdom fell asleep. The people, the animals and even the fire. A thorn hedge started to grow around the castle until there was nothing to see out of it.

Many princes tried to save the Brier-Rose inside the thorns, but none succeeded for many years. One day, a prince came across a belief of the castle hidden in thorns with a beautiful sleeping princess inside that no one could save for many years. The prince was not afraid.

When he came to the thorn hedge, they suddenly became flowers and they separated. He walked through them and then the hedge closed and became thorns again. The prince roamed through the castle and discovered everyone and everything asleep.

Eventually, he found the sleeping princess and amazed by her beauty, he kissed her. She woke up, with the entire castle soon after that, the prince and the princess got married and lived happily until they died.

### **5.3.2. Analysis**

We are used to the brief narration of Brothers Grimm, but this one is the shortest one yet. We all know this version of Sleeping Beauty, even the Czech one is exactly the same, only with a little more introduction into the story.

The settings are more fairy tale related. It is all set in a beautiful castle later covered in thorn hedge. Another fairy tale aspect are the fairies themselves, the good ones and the bad one, who told the curse.

During the child's development there are two periods that needs to occur, the period of act and the period of rest. During the time of adolescence there are many important shifts in children's minds so that the energy for physical activity is low – the rest period. It is

represented in the original version of Sleeping Beauty, as the princess is asleep for a long time.<sup>62</sup>

The stories of “Sleeping Beauty” and “Snow-White” are stories that show children that there is no need to be afraid of the rest period. Nowadays, people are afraid of slow, silent development, but “Sleeping Beauty” shows us that the slow motion and focusing on yourself often leads to great successes.<sup>63</sup>

### **5.3.3. “The Sleeper and the Spindle” by Neil Gaiman**

The story starts with introduction of the border between two countries.

People who were living in one kingdom did not cross into the other one on the other side of the mountain range. Only the dwarfs knew a way to the other side, but not over the mountains, they went under it. Three of them were travelling beneath the mountains to buy the finest silken cloth in the other kingdom. Their queen was getting married in a week and they wanted to give her something different than a stone they had dug.

After the dwarfs climb on the land, they headed to the nearest village inn they knew for a long time and the innkeeper was their friend. He always closed the inn if there were dwarfs to come, but when the dwarfs came this time, they entered a taproom full of people. Drunk, unhappy people. They asked the innkeeper why there were people.

The people started to explain instead. The dwarfs found out that a witch has laid a curse on the land sixty years ago, that the whole kingdom was sleeping, and it was spreading. The next day the sleep would reach that inn too. The princess in the castle, pricked herself on something and everyone and everything fell asleep. Also, a thorn hedge surrounded the castle, killing everyone who would try to get through it. A kiss would wake her up and saved the kingdom.

The dwarfs went to take a look on the whole thing, after that they returned to their queen and told her everything they saw and heard. The queen then decided that she would save the neighbouring kingdom herself. She got her armour on and got on the way together

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<sup>62</sup> BETTELHEIM, Bruno. The uses of enchantment: The meaning and importance of fairy tales. Vintage, 2010. pg 274

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. pg. 275

with the dwarfs. Dwarfs are magical creatures and would not fall asleep in the kingdom, the queen was quite worried about herself falling asleep. The dwarfs soothed her because she was sleeping for a year, so there was no problem with it.

When they have arrived in the inn, they noticed that something was not asleep there. Spiders. Spiders were still awake and threaded their webs in between the tables, and the beards of men. Then everyone raised their heads and looked at the queen but with their eyes still closed. They talked to the wanderers.

After that, they continued on their way to the castle. It was covered with rose bushes. The bushes grew high and far from the castle, further every year. And there, in the highest tower a beautiful girl was sleeping. And everyone in the castle to.

There in the castle was an old woman, wandering the halls and talking to herself, eating alone.

The queen with the dwarfs came into a town, which was sleeping, the people, the animals, and the dead flowers. Later in the town, the people started moving and talking. They were coming closer to the wanderers and following them. They started running, they escaped the city and continued running.

The woman in the castle climbed the highest tower, when she entered in the tower room there was a table, a window, and a bed on which a beautiful princess was sleeping. The woman picked up the spindle a wished to kill the sleeping princess, but she could not.

The four wanderers travelled through a forest and when they passed by a woodcutter, he started talking to them. They passed three bandits and they started moving and talking to them. Everyone they have met started moving and talking to them.

Later that day, they started feeling sleepier as they walked further. More people were walking alongside their path and talking to them. All in the queen's head, her father, mother, and stepmother. Then they arrived at the castle, but they could not enter. The gate was covered in thick thorns and rose bushes. The queen pulled a cloth from a skeleton's shoulder and set it on fire. Then she set the whole castle on fire and then

waited till all the rose bushes were burnt. After that, the queen's sword easily cut through and they walked into the castle.

The old woman knew that the castle has been invaded, but she did not have anywhere to hide. She wanted to go downstairs, but the intruders were already at the stairs into the tower, so she walked back to the tower room. They seized her.

Since they were already in the tower room, they did not need to look for the princess. The queen came to her bed and kissed the sleeping girl on her lips. They did not know if it helped or not, but the queen has slept in the same witch-sleep so the dwarfs knew it would help.

They found the spindle with the yarn laying on the floor again. Suddenly the old woman started talking about the life of the princess and when she came to an end of the story, another voice finished the talking, the sleeping princess on the bed. She was now sitting and wide awake.

The dwarfs and the queen figured out that the girl was not a princess but the witch that put the curse onto the kingdom. The witch stole the beauty and youth from the princess through the yarn and the spindle.

The queen picked up the spindle laying on the floor and came closer to the beautiful girl. The queen saw her evil stepmother in the young girl. She remembered everything she did to her. Then she gave the spindle to the old woman who started to unwrap the yarn from it. The tip of it was still sharp after the years. Then, the old woman thrust the spindle into the girl's chest while still holding the yarn.

The girl was no longer a girl, she started to get older and older. And then, she died.

The old woman was sleeping on the bed and the queen left the castle. In the forest, they started a fire and burnt the spindle and the yarn. Once the fire was out, they buried the rest under a rowan tree.

And then, the four of them headed east, away from those two kingdoms.

#### **5.3.4. Analysis**

This story is again different from what people knew. During the narrative we find out that the queen is a princess we have already come across – Snow White. The dwarfs, long sleep, glass coffin, iron shoes of her stepmother, a rowan tree, those are all things readers can find in the story before.

The atmosphere of this whole story is quite dark and seamy. The main settings here are the two kingdoms and a forest in one of them, where the queen saw her dead relatives, reminding her of her past. Then there are the mountains, dividing the two countries. When we look at the fairy tale aspects, the sleeping curse itself could be included as one, then there are the dwarfs, who helped the queen, the castle in the neighbouring kingdom, which was the place the queen realised what she was missing all along. The new adventures and, eventually, she decided to abdicate the throne and leave the country with the dwarfs.

The witch here is the Sleeping Beauty herself. She made a whole army out of the kingdom by using her sleep magic. The only person who was not affected by the curse was the original princess. She has been forced to stay in the castle and roam its halls for the past seventy years all alone only waiting for death to set her free.

The queen in this story is immune to the sleeping curse in the neighbouring kingdom, only thanks to the fact that she overcame an enchanted sleep before herself. With the help of her dwarfs, she was able to defeat a sleeping curse once again.



## 6. Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis was to analyse the three stories by the Brothers Grimm and Neil Gaiman and describe their landscape.

All of the stories have at least one same setting, the forest, the castle and an evil female character. In *"Hansel and Gretel"* the castle is missing, but it can be easily replaced by their home they come back to. *"Snow-White"* and *"Sleeping Beauty"* have all of the three characteristics. The main protagonists are women from the royal family who live in a castle, the forest is, however, only present in the Neil Gaiman's version of *"Sleeping Beauty"*. Focusing on the evil female character, one word could be used to describe her in all of the stories – the witch. The witch was the one who nearly ate Hansel and Gretel, the witch was the one who nearly killed Snow-White, and we can call the last one the witch who cursed Sleeping Beauty.

The Grimm Brothers collected the original stories, which were only known in the oral form but people nearly all over the world today heard or read them at least once in their life. Their stories in *"Nursery and Household Tales"* came through many adjustments, but the core of them stayed the same. They could be talked about as classic today.

The overall atmosphere in Neil Gaiman's fairy tales could be described as dark and uneasy. Judging by the stories analysed previously, he loves to play with dark places, like the forest and its inhabitants. Readers could be more keen on to describe it as a gothic fiction than a fairy tale. Neil Gaiman is a master of his words, he creates his own fairy tale worlds with their own twist and magical touch.

In conclusion, the landscapes in fairy tales by Neil Gaiman are fascinating, thrilling and overall, really enjoyable to read. However, it is not surprising at all, given that Neil Gaiman wrote many amazing stories and comics.

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