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Bakalářská práce

The Fantastic Space of Neil Gaiman's Neverwhere

Fantastický svět románu Nikdykde
britského autora Neila Gaimana

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Poděkování

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Abstract

The key subject of the research of this bachelor thesis is the fantastic world of *Neverwhere*, a novel written by the contemporary British author of fantasy literature Neil Gaiman. The theoretical part will focus on the main types of fantasy according to the monograph by Farah Mendlesohn (*Rhetorics of Fantasy*), it will also present the specific features of urban fantasy and mention the greatest British authors of fiction along with their well-known writings. The following chapter will characterize the literary works of Neil Gaiman and classify them as those of young adult or children's fiction. The aim of this thesis is to analyse and compare the real world of London Above to the imaginary one of London Below. It will also include the characteristics of closed spaces, the maiden in distress and other elements typical of the Gothic fiction.

Anotace

Předmětem zkoumání bakalářské práce bude fantastický svět románu *Nikdykde* britského autora dětské a fantastické literatury Neila Gaimana. Práce v teoretické části představí hlavní typy fantastické literatury podle monografie F. Mendlesohn (*Rhetorics of Fantasy*), dále charakterizuje žánr tzv. urban fantasy a v rámci britské, případně americké literární tradice uvede hlavní zástupce fantastického žánru v britské próze pro dospívající čtenáře. Následující kapitola charakterizuje tvorbu Neila Gaimana, kterou se pokusí rozdělit na literaturu pro dospělé čtenáře, tzv. kategorii „young adult fiction“, a tvorbu pro děti včetně adaptací klasické pohádky. Jádrem práce bude srovnávací analýza skutečného prostoru Londýna jako reálného a fiktivního světa v Gaimanově románu *Nikdykde* a tzv. Podlondýna, fantastického světa pod městem, jehož hlavní body prochází stanicemi londýnského metra. Literární analýza se krom teorie fantastického prostoru zaměří na symboliku tradičně uzavřených prostor gotického románu (Aguirre), souboje dobra a zla, na motiv ochránce pronásledované hrdinky a na symboliku relativizace zla v románu.

Contents

Introduction	1
1. FANTASY LITERATURE	2
1.1 The Portal-Quest Fantasy	3
1.2 The Immersive Fantasy	4
1.3 The Intrusion Fantasy	4
1.4 The Liminal Fantasy	5
2. THE URBAN FANTASY	6
2.1 Main areas of urban fantasy	7
2.1.1 Worlds and Settings	7
2.1.2 Cities and Urbanity	8
2.1.3 Distinctive Characters	8
2.1.4 Fantastic Elements	9
3. BRITISH AUTHORS OF FANTASTIC FICTION	10
4. NEIL GAIMAN AND HIS WORK	11
4.1 Gaiman's Children's Fiction	12
4.2 Gaiman's Young Adult Fiction	13
5. NEVERWHERE: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LONDON ABOVE AND LONDON BELOW	14
5.1 London as a multidimensional city	15
5.1.1 London Above and London Below	16
5.1.2 The concept of mobility in Neverwhere	17
5.1.3 Richard's quest: the process of self-education and maturation	18
5.2 The inhabitants of London Above and London Below	20
5.2.1 London Abovers and London Belowers	21
5.2.2 Gender differences between characters	23
5.2.3 Figurative meaning of characters' names	23
6. THE GOTHIC SYMBOLS IN NEVERWHERE	25
6.1 The spatial interpretation in relation to the Gothic	25
6.2 The Gothic characters of Neverwhere	27
Conclusion	32
BIBLIOGRAPHY	34

Introduction

Neverwhere, a masterpiece of the contemporary British writer Neil Gaiman, is considered a fantasy novel which also bears typical elements of the genre of urban fantasy. To classify Gaiman's works into literary genres is nearly impossible, for he creates mixtures of features belonging to diverse genres and tends to change the traditional concepts, or even comes up with brand new unusual meanings and stories. He is a well-known writer whose works are popular with readers among different age groups.

Neverwhere falls upon two literary genres which will be introduced in the first part of this thesis, the genre of fantasy and the urban fantasy. Four different types of fantasy literature based on the monograph by Farah Mendlesohn will be further described as well as the characteristic elements of the urban fantasy genre. British authors of fiction will be mentioned at the end of the first theoretical part too.

The following part will comment on Gaiman's writings and divide them into two main groups in relation to the particular age group the books are intended for – children or young adult readers.

The core of the thesis will be the detailed comparative analysis of the fantastic space of Neverwhere, concerning mainly the doubled space of London where the story takes place, its citizens along with their values and behaviour, the crucial places of the protagonist's journey, and also the important main characters of this novel. In addition, the prominent events significant for the plot will be discussed.

The last part will mention characteristics typical of the genre of the Gothic which can be found in the novel and will explain the function of their use.

1. FANTASY LITERATURE

Todorov defines the fantastic as a specific literary genre located between the uncanny and the marvellous and based on unresolved structural tensions. The character of the narrated events is what the reader hesitates to understand and is a necessary condition of the fantastic. If the narrated events are revealed as natural, we find ourselves in the domain of the uncanny; if they are confirmed as supernatural, we are in the sphere of the marvellous.¹

The Fantastic interrelates with the Gothic for the presence of the supernatural concept and the moral aspect of the works. In the Gothic genre, the moral aspect plays a key role and protagonists must overcome severe missions; this can be seen in the works of portal-quest fantasy as well. Nevertheless, the supernatural elements are perceived differently in each of these genres. In the Gothic, the reader is required to believe in ghosts, devils, miracles or spirits he comes across in such works, whereas, in the fantastic these elements become supernatural only if the reader hesitates between natural and supernatural explanation of the strange events.²

According to the monograph on *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, written by a British academic historian and writer Farah Mendlesohn, the fantasy literary genre is divided into four main categories in relation to the narrative structure and the pervasion of fantastic features to reality and vice versa. The categories differ in several essential questions: How do we get there? How do we meet the fantastic? In what ways does the meeting affect the narrative and rhetorical choices? The most crucial one is probably: Where are we asked to stand in relationship to the fantastic. The reader's relationship to the framework is what Mendlesohn is mostly interested in.

¹ Doležel, L. (1976). *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach To A Literary Genre*. By Tsvetan Todorov. Translated from the French by Richard Howard. Foreword by Robert Scholes. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975. xii, 180 pp. \$3.95, paper. *Slavic Review*, 35(2), 382-382. doi:10.2307/2494651

² *The Gothic and the Fantastic: The Gothic and the Fantastic: two interrelated genres* [online]. 6 March 2016 [cit. 2021-02-26]. Dostupné z: <https://www.skyminds.net/the-gothic-and-the-fantastic/#ii-the-gothic-and-the-fantastic-two-interrelated-genres>

As for the core rhetorical strategy of fantasy, it is constructed with precision through the point of view, otherwise, the reader can stand in "the wrong place" and therefore get a puzzling image or experience instead of the intended one.³

1.1 The Portal-Quest Fantasy

As the name suggests, a portal fantasy is simply based on entering a fantastic world through a portal of various kinds such as a wardrobe which serves as one in C. S. Lewis's book *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950); this work is therefore considered a classic portal fantasy. Crucially, the magic happens on the other side of a portal and does not leak, while the individuals can cross both ways and are always given a chance to come back.

The worlds of works coming under this genre are firstly introduced as stable where the fantastic is very distant or unknown after which the stability is attacked and the protagonist is torn out from his everyday mundane life and faces an important task he must fulfil. Accordingly, portal fantasy is not only about entering the fantastic world, it also concerns transition and negotiation with the world via the personal manipulation of the fantastic realm.

Portal fantasies are very often quest novels where the reader follows the journey of the main protagonist who fights evil and tries to overcome challenging obstacles to fulfil a goal which must be met. Unlike intrusion fantasies, which are chaotic, portal fantasies are not focused on surprising the reader but rather on leading them through the story by using descriptive elements; there are works like *Diana Wynne Jones's Tough Guide to Fantasy Land* (1996) where the main protagonist provides us with a guided tour of the landscapes and can therefore serve as a travel guide.

The stories of portal fantasy usually include an educational and moral aspect, both the protagonist, and the reader are required to be gaining experience from the point of entry and the protagonist's skills are challenged through the journey.⁴

³ MENDLESOHN, Farah. *The Categories. Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0819568687.

⁴ MENDLESOHN, Farah. *The Portal-Quest Fantasy. Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0819568687.

1.2 The Immersive Fantasy

The immersive fantasy is the closest to science fiction in case of using an irony of mimesis. There are works of immersive fantasy which are almost indistinguishable from science fiction: once the fantastic becomes assumed, it acquires scientific cohesion all of its own. There are many immersive fantasy novels which differ only from science fiction in that they are set in apparently archaic worlds which are not connected to ours.

This genre of fantasy invites us to share not only the fantastic world, but also a set of assumptions of realism that denies the need for explication. Even though the reader sits on the protagonist's shoulder, has access to his eyes and ears, he is not provided with the explanatory narrative.

In contrast to portal-quest fantasy, the worlds are rather on the decline and demoralized, the relatives and friends turn their back on the others, the gods abandon their faithfuls. The reader also does not enter the fantastic world, he is rather assumed to be of it and be aware of its own history, norms, and future. The character's point of view is characterized by taking the fantastic elements with which he or she is surrounded for granted even if he or she is not magical.⁵

As the works of immersive fantasy can be considered *The Song of Ice and Fire* (G. R. R. Martin) or *Eragon* (Christopher Paolini).

1.3 The Intrusion Fantasy

While the least fantastic element of the immersive fantasy may be the plot, in the intrusion fantasy it is the plot and an intrusive narrative which makes the work a work of fantasy. The fantastic is the bringer of chaos, it is a horror and amazement often both at the same time.

This category is usually associated with the "real world" fantasy for the reality and the fantasy being strictly demarcated by the presence of a clear line between them. The base of the intrusion fantasy is the assumption that the real world is organised and after

⁵ MENDLESOHN, Farah. *The Immersive Fantasy. Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0819568687.

that attacked by a supernatural creature or an invisible evil such as an incurable disease which needs to be defeated and forced to retreat to its own world. The reader is assumed to be engaged with the ignorance of the point of view character, usually the protagonist who may not be able to perceive the fantastic even while they experience its effects. In comparison with the portal-quest fantasy, the protagonist and the reader should never become accustomed to the appearance of fantastic elements.

The task of the main protagonists is to overcome the struggles and deal with the twisted normality of their real world caused by the intrusion of the supernatural evil. As for the works of the intrusion fantasy including this feature can be named Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* or Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black's *The Spiderwicks Chronicles*. The innocence of the main protagonist who later gains control over his skills and is competent to fight evil is also one of the typical characteristics of this category shown for instance in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* where a young, brave, curious girl fights evil in order to save her life and get her parents back. This book resembles the Gothic genre for the presence of psychological and moral aspects and there are similarities to portal-quest fantasy as well because she enters the other world, a pocket-size world, through a door.⁶

Another popular work of literature carrying the characteristics of this genre is the J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter Series* for Harry becoming competent to fight evil embodied in Lord Voldemort.

1.4 The Liminal Fantasy

The category of liminal fantasy is quite rare; perhaps therefore it is considered the most interesting one. Magic is a part of the real world; however, the reader is very often uncertain of the existence of it because the fantastic and the real world appear to be alike.

M. John Harrison speaks about the trans-liminal moment, the point of invitation of the reader to cross the threshold into the fantastic, but he says it is better to rather refuse

⁶ MENDLESOHN, Farah. *The Intrusion Fantasy. Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0819568687.

it because the fantastic leaks back through the portal, unlike in works of the portal-quest fantasy. The trans-liminal moment has much greater potential to generate fear, awe, and confusion, all intensely important emotions in the creation of the fantastic mode.

The reader somehow knows that the world outside is dangerous and can simply recognize those supernatural elements intruding into reality, while the protagonist perceives such elements as completely natural and takes them for granted. This behaviour usually appears as absurd to the reader who is then questioning it and magic evokes feelings of irony in him, forces him to hesitate, which often leads to the moment of doubt about the existence of the otherworld.

The difference between quest and liminal fantasy is not only in the leakage, but also the availability of readings; liminal fantasies create possible readings whereas quest fantasies are the direct opposite according to this ability.

The difficulty with this form of fantasy is not having obvious boundaries. The works coming under this category are described by Attebery as fuzzy sets which are supported by and between the other modes that Mendlesohn discussed in her monograph. The effectiveness of such works depends on the understanding and subversion of our expectations of the fantastic and our notion of multiple fuzzy sets.

There are several techniques which writers of liminal fantasies use, but central to its construction are mainly two elements: irony and equipoise. Crucial to the construction is a two-way process dependent on knowingness which Barthes rather describes as a shared code between reader and author.⁷

Among the works belonging to this genre can be named *The Sword of Truth* by Terry Goodkind or Neil Gaiman's novels such as *Neverwhere* and *American Gods*.

2. THE URBAN FANTASY

According to Brit Mandelo's suggestion, it does make sense not to refer to urban fantasy as a subgenre of fantasy literature but rather see it as a genre in its own right for how

⁷ MENDLESOHN, Farah. *The Liminal Fantasy. Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0819568687.

much space it can cover thematically.⁸ It is a result of a combination of elements from a wide range of genres, among which fantasy, Gothic horror and romance are most frequently mentioned, but it can also draw on mystery, science fiction and crime fiction.⁹ The Victorian tale of the magic city, the Gothic roots, and the meeting between folktales and modernity are all present; therefore, it is often called a generic hybrid.¹⁰

Helen Young and many others see the urban fantasy as a recent phenomenon which originates in the 1980s. Algis Budrys considers Fritz Leiber to be a perfectly valid candidate for a progenitor of this genre by writing a story called ‘*Smoke Ghost*’ in 1941, which is set in the city of Lankhmar, in Nehwon. Today, the usage of this genre increases and mirrors a growing popularity as well; there are so many texts published as urban fantasies that critics have decided to subdivide into several subcategories. However, it makes a little difference in assigning texts to certain literary genres. Attebery suggests that a more interesting question about any given story is not whether it is an urban fantasy or paranormal romance, but rather what happens when reading it as one of those things.¹¹

2.1 Main areas of urban fantasy

Next chapter covers the main areas of urban fantasy concerning worlds and settings, cities and urbanity, distinctive characters, and fantastic elements.

2.1.1 Worlds and Settings

Stefan Ekman analysed varied views of eleven accounts on four main areas of urban fantasy: worlds and settings, cities and urbanity, central characters, and the sources of fantastic elements.¹² As for the settings and worlds, there are different positions taken on primary and secondary worlds; both can provide a setting for urban fantasy. Based on Clute’s work *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, urban fantasies are characterized as ‘texts where fantasy and the mundane world intersect and interweave throughout a tale

⁸ Ekman, Stefan. “Urban Fantasy: A Literature of the Unseen.” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 27, no. 3 (97), 2016, pp. 452. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26321148. Accessed 26 Feb. 2021.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ekman, Stefan. “Urban Fantasy: A Literature of the Unseen.” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 27, no. 3 (97), 2016, pp. 455. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26321148. Accessed 26 Feb. 2021.

¹² Ibid.

which is significantly about a real city'. He allows for the possibility of locating such a story in a city of a secondary world, but in such case, the city must be depicted as 'an environment', not just as a backdrop.¹³ The setting could be in an alternative history or in the near future; supernatural forces have always been around or the world has gone through some form of revelation, awakening, reintroduction of them.¹⁴

2.1.2 Cities and Urbanity

The question of urbanity is also an issue where views diverge, the opinions range from an emphasis on the urban (Clute, Irvine) to any contemporary, primary-world location (Waller, Ormes, Young). According to Clute and Irving, the city itself is considered one of the main characters in an urban story whereas Young's attitude to 'urban' in urban fantasies is that it covers a cultural feature or mind-set rather than a place and that the urban landscape is not a dominant characteristic of this genre. Waller and Ormes accept a town, rural areas, or a journey as a setting as long as it is our contemporary world.¹⁵ The scenes portrayed in urban fantasy stories are often set outside the city, in forest or undefined locations.¹⁶

Nanette Wargo Donohue distinguishes between traditional and contemporary urban fantasy where the setting is slightly different. 'The locales and modern urban environments' are typical for the traditional urban fantasy whereas stories coming under the contemporary type are linked to the modern urban-Gothic tradition and therefore are usually set in 'grittier urban landscapes'.¹⁷ Also, contemporary urban fantasy 'plays on themes drawn from popular culture, including horror movies or TV shows.'¹⁸

2.1.3 Distinctive Characters

Regardless of various opinions on the city being a central character or not, more distinctive for urban fantasy is a variety of human and parahuman characters which

¹³ Ekman, Stefan. "Urban Fantasy: A Literature of the Unseen." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 27, no. 3 (97), 2016, pp. 456. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26321148. Accessed 26 Feb. 2021.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

include mainly strong female protagonists who most frequently fulfil the tasks of investigators, detectives, monster-hunters or supernatural problem-solvers. Judging from the book covers, the overwhelming majority of protagonists in urban fantasies today are women of bold and confident demeanour, usually dark or red-haired and wielding some sort of weapon. There are at least two kinds of parahuman characters which have entered urban fantasy from dark fantasy and horror fiction: werewolves and vampires.¹⁹

2.1.4 Fantastic Elements

The portrayal and origin of fantastic elements is a final major area of Stefan Ekman's chapter on urban fantasy literature. Clute's opinion on how the fantastic elements enter the environment of urban fantasy stories concerns 'intersecting and interweaving' of the supernatural and the mundane and he excludes 'stories merely about irruptions of supernatural forces within a city'.²⁰ On the other hand, Mendlesohn and James provide us with a description that suggests the urban fantasy being best understandable as a metropolitan version of Mendlesohn's intrusion fantasy.²¹

According to the genre's hybridity, there are elements which can be pulled from other genres with varying degrees of emphasis placed on each of them. The fantastic elements are considered 'trappings of medievalism' (Ringel), taken from 'older fairy tales and folklore' (Irvine) and often created in conjunction with 'the nature and history of the city.' (Irvine) The overall atmosphere of urban fantasies is definitely of Gothic horror story rather than fairy tales, the female protagonists are ready to deal with whatever unseen threat waiting in the dark, shadowy environments.²²

Examples of this genre include Charlaine Harris's *Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2001-2013), Kim Harrison's *Hollows series* (2004-2013) and Liz Williams's *Detective Inspector Chen series* (2005-2015).

¹⁹ Ekman, Stefan. "Urban Fantasy: A Literature of the Unseen." *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 27, no. 3 (97), 2016, pp. 459. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26321148. Accessed 26 Feb. 2021.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* (1996) comes under this genre as well and is considered one of the first proper London urban fantasy books set in the underground stations and tunnels.

3. BRITISH AUTHORS OF FANTASTIC FICTION

The literary tradition of British fiction during the 1970s and 1980s was considerably retrospective rather than futuristic. Almost all works from this period juxtapose a narrative of a present-day story with one set of historical events; the continuing repercussions of World War II can be mentioned as one of the most frequently recurring topics. The interest in remote history can be also felt in Graham Swift's work *Last Orders* (1996). Another author who became known by writing novels set in European cities and works with historical events is Ian McEwan. Two of his masterpieces *The Innocent* (1990) and *Black Dogs* (1992) are set at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, therefore in the late 1980s.

As for the British young adult Fantastic fiction, J. K. Rowling, and her *Harry Potter* Series (2001-2011) including seven books must be mentioned for it has enjoyed a huge worldwide success. Philip Pullman is often considered by critics a worthy successor to J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis who wrote the best-known fantasy series *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, respectively, which also fall upon the genre of young adult fiction. Pullman is famous for writing the epic trilogy called *His Dark Materials* (1995-2000) which follows the maturing process of Lyra and Will while they wander through a set of different parallel universes. The trilogy consists of three books: *Northern Lights* (1995, also known as *The Golden Compass*), *The Subtle Knife* (1997) and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000).

Considering female writers of young adult fiction, there are several reasons to highlight Malorie Blackman as one of the most influential authors mainly for covering the racial issues in her works. For instance, *Noughts and Crosses* (2001) a novel which shows an inverted society where black people are of higher social status and are referred to as 'Crosses', whereas the whites are confined to a lower status, they are rather called 'noughts'. The main topic of this book is a love affair between a black girl and a white

boy; it was followed by *Knife Edge* (2004) which focuses on expressing hatred and after that, Blackman wrote the third novel concerning hope called *Checkmate* (2005).²³

4. NEIL GAIMAN AND HIS WORK

Neil Gaiman is a contemporary British writer whose works cross literary genres and appeal to a large audience. He currently lives in the United States near Minneapolis, however, he was born into a Polish-Jewish family, on November 10, 1960, in Hampshire, UK. Even though his parents worked in the scientific sphere, they encouraged him to do what he was most passionate about, reading books. Neil managed to learn how to read at the age of four; he describes himself as a 'feral child who was raised in libraries' where he spent time reading books not only those which belong to children's literature.²⁴

Gaiman's works can be classified neither as clear portal-quest fantasies, nor as clear liminal fantasies according to Mendelsohn for he combines features of both these categories in his works. He often uses spatial elements such as portals and thresholds which help to establish a dialogue between the real and the imaginary world and therefore enable the reader to follow the storyline and avoid getting lost in it.²⁵ In his fantasy novels the narrative usually begins in a real world, within geographical reality, from which it turns into an imaginary world often overlapping the real one.

Those specific worlds function in conjunction with the main characters; they allude to a mapping of the transformation of self and identity. Such features can be seen in *Neverwhere* and *MirrorMask* where the main characters' skills are challenged throughout their journey and they are expected to learn from their past actions or in case of being lost, find themselves again.²⁶

²³ O'REILLY, Elizabeth. Malorie Blackman: Critical perspective. *British Council Literature* [online]. 2007 [cit. 2021-02-26]. Dostupné z: <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/malorie-blackman>

²⁴ About Neil: Biography. HARPER COLLINS PUBLISHERS. *Neil Gaiman* [online]. [cit. 2021-02-26]. Dostupné z: https://www.neilgaiman.com/About_Neil/Biography

²⁵ Inverted Spaces: Rising from the London Below and the Dark Lands in *Neverwhere* and *MirrorMask*. SOMMERS, Joseph Michael a Kyle EVELETH. *The Artistry of Neil Gaiman: Finding Light in the Shadows*. Mississippi: The University Press of Mississippi, 2019, s. 134. ISBN 9781496821683.

²⁶ Ibid.

4.1 Gaiman's Children's Fiction

Children Fiction, as the name suggests should be appealing mainly to children, nevertheless, Gaiman tends to enrich the familiar concepts of well-known fairy tales by adding an extraordinary feature to it and some of them are of the Gothic horror dark quality.

A particular example of this addition and an atmosphere of dark present in the book is a graphic novella *The Sleeper and the Spindle* (2013) which portrays a fusion of two famous stories about *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White*. The purpose of writing such work was to show different interpretations of the values of society and the approach to men and women's role in the 17th and 21st century. Gaiman points out the perception of a woman in present-day society being capable of doing great things, even becoming a heroine or a leader; in comparison, a typical French woman of the 17th century is usually pictured as a woman incapable of making her own decisions, a woman who is taken care of and is told what to do.

Odd and the Frost Giants (2008) is considered a children's book; however, it covers stories of ancient mythology which Gaiman frequently focuses on. The reader follows a story of a twelve-year-old boy Odd whose luck is initially bad, but after releasing a trapped bear it starts to change. Throughout the book he encounters three Nordic gods Odin, Loki and Thor who are trapped in animal form because of the Frost Giants who now rule over the city of gods 'Asgard'.

Fortunately, the Milk (2013) is undoubtedly a witty children's story starting with children not having milk for breakfast. Therefore, their dad goes out to a corner shop to get it for them; after he comes back, he shares with his children the insane adventures which happened to him on the way while he was trying to get the milk. Milk plays an important role of fantasy because it helps the dad in strange situations, for that reason the title being 'Fortunately, the Milk'. Gaiman felt quite disconcerted about just mothers and children being the main characters, experiencing the most exciting adventures in children's books; he found it unfair because it is not realistic that dads would be expandable to the family. Consequently, he decided to pick dad as the character who

does all the really cool and exciting things like being rescued by a dinosaur or being captured by a pirate crew from the 18th century.

4.2 Gaiman's Young Adult Fiction

Young Adult Fiction is a literary genre intended for teenage readers; in accordance with this particular age group, the chosen topics and stories should be known by the readers and contain either an entertaining, or an educational meaning. For instance, several times awarded novels such as *The Graveyard Book* (2008), *Norse Mythology* (2017), *Coraline* (2002) and *Neverwhere* (1996).

The Graveyard Book (2008) shares certain characteristics with Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* for being focused on the same premise. Both tell a story of a little boy who is brought up by strange peculiar creatures like animals or ghosts. The boy who appears in *The Graveyard Book* is given a name Nobody Owens, Bod in short, by his foster parents Mr. and Mrs. Owens who are ghosts living in a graveyard where the environment and the atmosphere is typically dark and shadowy; the dead creatures living there come from different historical periods and their clothing and acting also correspond with it. Bod is not afraid of them; it is actually the other way round for he grows up with them and is taken care of by them; he also gains diverse knowledge from those creatures based on their skills and life experience. Such a weird piece of knowledge like the ability to fade or pass through solid objects eventually ends up being crucially important to him.

Norse Mythology (2017) is a vivid rendition of the great Norse tales focused on introducing multiple Gods in whom the ancient people believed and to whom they made sacrifices such as Odin, his son Thor, Loki or Freya who Gaiman admires most for her wisdom and beauty among others. Gaiman was primarily inspired by a book by Roger Lancelyn Green called *Myths of the Norsemen*; he was absolutely thrilled when he first happened to encounter stories of the ancient Scandinavians at the age of 6 or 7. Contrary to myths of other countries, Norse mythology counts on an inevitable downfall of the gods described as 'Ragnarök'.

The classification of *Coraline* (2002) as for the genre it falls into is complicated; on the one hand, it usually comes under children's literature at least for the topic, but on the

other hand, it includes a number of horrific frightening elements which can be perceived unsuitable for children. Gaiman got the inspiration for writing it from his daughters who loved stories about young girls who live with evil witches pretending to be their mothers who lock them up, but eventually they escape. Therefore, this novel is about a young girl Coraline who is incautious about her desires and dissatisfied with the empty and unexciting life she leads. The message Gaiman intended to convey by writing Coraline was to be careful about what young readers wish for.

Neverwhere (1996) is known mainly as a BBC series based on Gaiman's script, it quickly gained popularity among audiences of all ages. Nevertheless, Gaiman decided to rewrite the series into a novel and add certain essential points which were omitted on the series' purpose.

5. NEVERWHERE: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LONDON ABOVE AND LONDON BELOW

Neverwhere is a fantasy novel taking place in two different spaces, both located in London during the nineties: a real world of London Above and an imaginary world of London Below where Richard Mayhew, the main character, experiences crucial moments of searching for his identity and learning how to understand himself better and look at the world around him from a different perspective. In fact, Gaiman wrote this novel as a consequence of being dissatisfied with accepting so many compromises made when writing the script for the *Neverwhere* BBC series; he found the script incomplete. *Neverwhere* is considered a young adult fiction; however, adult readers can critically acclaim the narrative as well for Gaiman's astonishing ability of mentally involving readers to the story who can have first-hand experience of the quirks of fate of the book's characters. Gaiman's artistry of describing a number of personal qualities, places and the environment, or the characters' feelings in such a short sequence of words is outstanding indeed.

Before the comparative analysis a short storyline should be presented. Richard Mayhew, the protagonist, leads an ordinary life in London Above working as a businessman and spending time with his fiancée Jessica; however, Richard's life radically changes when he comes across a wounded girl Door and decides to help her. This crucial momentary

decision ends up having a dramatic effect; Richard unintentionally joins Door's quest of uncovering hidden secrets of a murder of her family formerly living in London Below.

5.1 London as a multidimensional city

Gaiman frequently draws literary maps in his works which are usually built on physical maps; this also works for *Neverwhere* where the story takes place in two different dimensions both located in the city of London. Even though they occupy the same place, they differ from one another in a number of aspects: the hierarchical structure of societies, the norms established by local people, the rules which govern people's lives in there, the perception of past events, their vertical position in relation to one another and last but not least the environment itself.

What have those main dimensions in common is the London Underground whose stations function as navigational tools allowing us to mentally follow the characters' journey through both of those places. Richard Mayhew receives an umbrella at the very beginning of the story which turns out to be a well-arranged map of the London Underground; however, this happens at his farewell party in a pub and he does not pay full attention to it. What becomes a bit confusing are the directions and names of stations in the London Underground where going down does not necessarily mean a movement downwards, for example when Richard needs to get to Old Bailey's rooftop, he has to descend or one can only get to Down Street by walking through a building.²⁷

Farah Mendelsohn explains a dissonance which Gaiman creates "by overlaying the fantasy world on the familiar diagram of the London Underground system. We are never fully in the other world."²⁸ As for the stations of the underground in London Below, they are in accord with those of London Above, however, they are often given different names which somehow define the space they occupy. For instance, Knightsbridge in London Above, is actually Night's Bridge in London Below.

²⁷ Inverted Spaces: Rising from the London Below and the Dark Lands in *Neverwhere* and *MirrorMask*. SOMMERS, Joseph Michael a Kyle EVELETH. *The Artistry of Neil Gaiman: Finding Light in the Shadows*. Mississippi: The University Press of Mississippi, 2019, s. 132. ISBN 9781496821683.

²⁸ MENDLESOHN, Farah. *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008, s. 38. ISBN 978-0819568687.

5.1.1 London Above and London Below

London Above is the realistically portrayed city of London embodying the image of contemporary society including the citizens' values and desires. The urban space of the city is depicted as chaotic during the day, full of working people and passengers commuting to work; whereas at night it changes into a quiet peaceful place which is caused especially by people being already at their homes wanting to stay safe from any threats hidden in the night. The only private sphere of London Above is home of its citizens; a sacred place for establishing family, building mutual relations, and accumulating memories.²⁹ However, the function of home is not as significant as it used to be in the past; it rather becomes just an individual's private space which serves mainly as a separation from people and events of the outside world.

The imagined fantastic realm where most adventures happen is London Below, a completely different world from the one above it. A dark and neglected space where murderers and angels are living is the best way of describing it; however, this world should not be portrayed as just dangerous though it represents a sort of certainty; everything and everyone that is rejected in London Above or is perceived as redundant there is welcomed in the world of London Below which is often referred to as 'the realm of things lost and forgotten'. This fictional world of abandoned underground stations and sewer canals eventually becomes Richard's sanctuary, even though initially the physically realistic world of London Above seemed to be of that function.

Not only underground stations, but also districts existing in London Above have inverted counterparts in London Below very often portraying a certain contrast. Knightsbridge is a famous district near Hyde Park where Kensington Palace is situated; its counterpart is Night's Bridge, a dangerous place which can cause people to lose their minds because of omnipresent nightmares. The novel's villain is an angel named Islington who initially looks like a positive character pretending to help Door and her companions. In fact, it represents a fallen angel imprisoned in the world of London Below. This angel lives in its citadel in London Below which serves as a counterpart to Islington district and Angel

²⁹ KULA, Julia. *The Image of Contemporary Society in Neil Gaiman's Neverwhere* [online]. 2016. 2017, 9. s. [cit. 2021-02-28]. ISSN 2543-8980. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17951/nh.2016.1.51>. Dostupné z: <https://journals.umcs.pl/nh/article/view/4889>

Underground Station of London Above providing a number of attractive sights for tourists, such as Angel Wings in the centre of this district or London Canal Museum which will definitely be attractive to readers of *Neverwhere*.

The purpose of running a museum is to keep alive the past events and traditions of preceding generations; on the contrary, it is not true about the message carried by the British Museum described in the book which is rather focused on preserving snobbery of contemporary society. Jessica, Richard's ex-girlfriend, organizes the Angel Exhibition held in the British Museum where pieces of contemporary art were exposed and were at the centre of visitors' attention instead of famous significant relics placed in a dark repository. In London Below there is a cave which is considered a counterpart for a museum located in London Above; nevertheless, the cave serves primarily as a repository emphasizing the flow of time where past events and artefacts are captured and it portrays the magnitude of history and tradition which is the evolution of human existence based on.³⁰

There are also myths and legends entering the storyline of this novel, such as the allusion to beasts in sewers which seems to be spread all around the world, present not only in Europe, but also in great American cities. The legend of 'Black Swine of Hampstead', which was widely popular during the 19th century (Boyle, 1989), is considered an inspiration for the Beast living in the labyrinth in London Below which endangers all its inhabitants.

5.1.2 The concept of mobility in *Neverwhere*

The mobility does not concern only the characters, such as Door, belonging to the House of Portico who is able to become a portal herself and has the ability of opening 'doors', but places as well, such as Floating Market. It is very important to distinguish between places and spaces in London Above and Below; although The Floating Market and Harrods occupy the same place, it does not mean they occupy the same space.

The function of offering sanctuary is surprisingly expected rather from the moving spaces in London Below, than the stationary ones. Throughout the adventures in the

³⁰ KULA, Julia. *The Image of Contemporary Society in Neil Gaiman's Neverwhere* [online]. 2016. 2017, 9. s. [cit. 2021-02-28]. ISSN 2543-8980. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17951/nh.2016.1.51>. Dostupné z: <https://journals.umcs.pl/nh/article/view/4889>

novel there is a specific event visited by London Belowers called the Floating Market, a dynamic, loud, and dirty space. As the name suggests, it takes place at a different spot each time but there is no rule which would predict where will the next one take place; the inhabitants who want to visit it have to ask the others about the location, for example the rat speakers. Unlike the unpredictability of the spot change of the Floating Market, the Earl's Court moves along the tracks of the London Underground which is the only element that links the two spaces of London together.³¹ The Earl's Court is a special medieval court in a tube carriage which is frozen in time, if not in space as well; it is also a place where lost possessions of the travellers are stored. The Earl is described as a powerful aristocrat who rules his own domain consisting of stations coming under the Underside Line.³²

5.1.3 Richard's quest: the process of self-education and maturation

Richard Mayhew, the main character of *Neverwhere*, feels quite lost before the encounter with Door; he fails to juggle his work life with his social life, he also struggles with building relationships. London is not his birth town, unlike his girlfriend Jessica, he comes from Scotland; nevertheless, in Chapter 3 he describes London as their city. Later, he finds out he could only exist there as an independent individual; London was never his city.³³ He realizes he has no true friends in London and he simply leads a very boring life focused on work and being so busy that he forgets about all that matters in life. In the prologue of this book Richard meets a woman and receives an umbrella from her, she also foresees he has a long way to go starting with doors; at this moment his quest is not clear, however, it becomes more and more visible through the storyline.

All through his journey he finds himself in several crucial spaces which test him not only physically, but also mentally in order to metaphorically kill the thoughts and doubts in his mind and him experiencing a rebirth which would help him to feel even stronger

³¹ Inverted Spaces: Rising from the London Below and the Dark Lands in *Neverwhere* and *MirrorMask*. SOMMERS, Joseph Michael a Kyle EVELETH. *The Artistry of Neil Gaiman: Finding Light in the Shadows*. Mississippi: The University Press of Mississippi, 2019, s. 140. ISBN 9781496821683.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

sense of purpose in his life each time.³⁴ Through the fulfilling of Richard's quest, he finds himself in situations where he faces a decision vital to his near future.

The first of such spaces is Night's Bridge; night is accompanied by darkness, causes creatures and human beings to feel scared or even frightened and is also responsible for nightmares appearing in people's mind when the sun goes down. When crossing the bridge, the night shows the creatures visions of their worst fears, then chooses and takes one victim; in the book it takes Anastasia, a girl who kept Richard company and whom he trusted. The individual experience of passing Night's Bridge can be considered a nightmare coming to life; however, Richard manages to walk through it without any scars left by the night apart from feeling frightened because of being assaulted by vision of his own death.

The second place of a significant importance as for Richard's quest is the Floating Market where Door hires a warrior Hunter as her bodyguard who protects her since then. Door's purpose on going to the Floating Market at Harrods is mainly to discover more about the death of her relatives. She meets Angel Islington, who she considers a friend of her father's, for she thinks it could know something more and she is right, it tells her about suspecting Mr. Vandemar and Mr. Croup of her family's murder; in exchange for this piece of information it wants her and her companions to bring him the key from the Blackfriars, monks.

Therefore, the third space which they have to visit and ends up being crucial for Richard is the Blackfriars platform. He is brought to a dreamlike territory where the Ordeal of the Key starts; his mind is challenged and invaded by Blackfriars who force him to envision his life in London Above, try to persuade him about that life being hopeless and pointless, tease him and make an effort to make him commit suicide. The only way to save himself is getting on the train of the dead and therefore going through his own death and being reborn as a new hero. What helps him to pass this task is also the ability

³⁴ Ibid.

of moving mentally from the present to the past and moving physically from the Blackfriars platform onto that train.³⁵

This acquired ability of navigating and moving through space keeps aiding him on his journey to the very end, especially in the part of the book where he finds himself in the labyrinth. The labyrinth was built of lost fragments of London Above such as roads, sewers or corridors and is located in the depths of London Below where Richard has to face and kill a Beast, which is sometimes mentioned in association to minotaur. This is another of the important events where that ability emerged as something very useful along with a talisman Richard's group possessed, a Beast statue; it served not only as a means of protection from the Beast, but also as a compass which enabled them to walk through this unmappable space. Richard eventually becomes the compass himself after defeating and killing the Beast. In addition, he also slightly accidentally becomes the hero and the greatest warrior of London Below by anointing his eyes and tongue with the Beast's blood and by receiving the Hunter's spear. This means, he is no longer lost in the unmappable space of the labyrinth, on the contrary, he is completely aware of where to go to find and rescue Door.

Finally, when Richard gets back to 'reality' of London Above, it is even better than he remembers, for him being promoted, being given a new flat and a second chance from his fiancée Jessica. Despite all of the changes of his previous life he regarded as real, he eventually realizes that there is nothing in London Above with the capability of replacing his experience of kinship in London Below.

5.2 The inhabitants of London Above and London Below

Even though certain spaces of the below and the above world of London may overlap, it is not true about their inhabitants for they can never belong to both spaces simultaneously. The question which arises from this fact is, how a person happens to get to London Below. In Chapter 4 Marquis de Carabas explains this to Richard by saying:

³⁵ Inverted Spaces: Rising from the London Below and the Dark Lands in Neverwhere and MirrorMask. SOMMERS, Joseph Michael a Kyle EVELETH. *The Artistry of Neil Gaiman: Finding Light in the Shadows*. Mississippi: The University Press of Mississippi, 2019, s. 136. ISBN 9781496821683.

'They fall through a crack and then they can't get back up again.'³⁶ However, Richard's friend Anaesthesia had a different journey to the underside world; she decided to run away from her life in London Above after suffering abuse at home and is taken under protection of rat speakers.

It is during the movement between various places Richard occupies while living in London Above, when Door literally falls in front of him and partly causes his space-shift to London Below; Richard is actually responsible for that drift as well by choosing to talk to her and walk through the portal Door represents. Although he is still physically located in London Above, the interaction with a London Belower has inevitably caused him to become one himself.

There are numerous allusions discussed through this thesis which explain the complex issues of London and its society. One of them covers the diverse menu options for London Abovers and London Belowers; in the book there are mentioned caviar puffs, melon slices, chicken legs, and other meals served at Stockton's exhibition, whereas the destitute living Below try to feed themselves with anything they happen to find in the sewers. This contrast is mainly portrayed in Richard's encounters with people of London Below, such as meeting Old Bailey who offers him a boiled rook or the one with Anaesthesia when she asks him whether he likes cats.

5.2.1 London Abovers and London Belowers

London Abovers tend to live in the present moment and focus themselves on either succeeding in their work life or establishing family and taking care of its members; they are interested only in contemporary issues and forget about past events regardless of their importance and impact on preceding generations.

The relationships among London Abovers seem to be quite cold for everybody cares only about themselves and avoid any social contact; according to Gelfant, those inhabitants are portrayed as 'crowds of total strangers forced into a physical proximity that belies their social isolation'.³⁷ The hierarchy of London Above's society is significantly

³⁶ Inverted Spaces: Rising from the London Below and the Dark Lands in Neverwhere and MirrorMask. SOMMERS, Joseph Michael a Kyle EVELETH. *The Artistry of Neil Gaiman: Finding Light in the Shadows*. Mississippi: The University Press of Mississippi, 2019, s. 135. ISBN 9781496821683.

³⁷ GELFANT, Blanche H. *The American City Novel*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969., s. 25.

dependent on how much money the people have; the rich are considered the most influential, powerful, and successful, unlike the poor, who are treated as invisible, not worth paying attention to. Jessica's attitude to the situation of encountering Door sitting wounded on a path supports the way London Abovers treat those of lower social status for she discourages Richard from helping her. In addition, Jessica's fascination with fame and wealth shows the importance of belonging to the highly respected social class even more.

Money seems to be of an important value to London Abovers, nevertheless, London Belowers do not even use these valuable papers, they just make do with things they get by bartering which means they always have to possess something capable of swapping to survive.

The society of London Below is composed of dispossessed individuals who fell through the cracks in London Above or those unsuitable to live there. The importance of having home such as the one of Door Portico suggests there is another distinction between people living Above and those living Below. In contrast with Richard's apartment serving just as a place offering the possibility of separation from the outside world, Portico's house carries the proper meaning of home where intimate interpersonal relationships are built and emphasizes the value of family and tradition which fell into oblivion in London Above.³⁸

The extreme poverty is represented by Sewer Folk, people who are destitute and fight for their lives every day; they search for all sorts of junk possible of selling, including dead bodies such as the one of Marquis de Carabas. Gaiman's inspiration for this social class were probably Henry Mayhew's mudlarks or pure finders.³⁹

People living in London Below are virtually visible to those living in London Above only if they start to speak to them, but they can only perceive the sounds they make and their appearance for a short while and then they forget about all of it.

³⁸ KULA, Julia. *The Image of Contemporary Society in Neil Gaiman's Neverwhere* [online]. 2016. 2017, 9. s. [cit. 2021-02-28]. ISSN 2543-8980. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17951/nh.2016.1.51>. Dostupné z: <https://journals.umcs.pl/nh/article/view/4889>

³⁹ Rata, Irina. (2016). Representations of London in Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*. University of Bucharest Review: Literary and Cultural Studies Series. 6. 109.

The same situation happens when Richard comes across Jessica at the Angel Exhibition held in the British Museum; she can see him but feels quite puzzled by being able to remind of his name and by him telling her almost every detail about her personality and life. She feels inconvenient and asks Clarence to call the security guards to get him out of the exhibition.

The underground metropolis of London Below is very often depicted as dark, unpleasant, dangerous, or murky; however, in dependence on the point of view it can be perceived as an urgent call for changes in the contemporary society of London Above.

5.2.2 Gender differences between characters

The main difference between male and female characters is their relationship to space which is clearly observable in Gaiman's fantasy novels: *Neverwhere* and *MirrorMask* where female characters, such as Door and Helena, are able to create space and manipulate with it; male characters, such as Richard and Valentine, can only navigate through it. Spaces in Gaiman's narratives are sometimes called gendered for Richard's path in *Neverwhere* followed a different trajectory than Helena's path in *MirrorMask*; Richard followed a vertical trajectory between London Above and London Below, whereas Helena moved back and forth on the horizontal axis. The way of perceiving their life in relation to time also differs; while Richard is presented an image of what he could be in the future, Helena's mirror-world reflects what she was in the past.⁴⁰

5.2.3 Figurative meaning of characters' names

The main character's name, *Richard Mayhew*, functions as a double allusion for it refers to Victorian urban sociologist Henry Mayhew and to Lord Mayor of London. Henry Mayhew was the first to explore the lives of the poor and homeless in the underground of London and wrote up the ideas he discovered into a study of *London Labour and the London Poor*. The second association leads to Sir Richard Dick Whittington who became four times Lord Mayor of London.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Inverted Spaces: Rising from the London Below and the Dark Lands in *Neverwhere* and *MirrorMask*. SOMMERS, Joseph Michael a Kyle EVELETH. *The Artistry of Neil Gaiman: Finding Light in the Shadows*. Mississippi: The University Press of Mississippi, 2019, s. 144. ISBN 9781496821683.

⁴¹ Rata, Irina. (2016). Representations of London in Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*. University of Bucharest Review: Literary and Cultural Studies Series. 6. 106.

'You wants it, we knows it' is a piece of information spread about *Old Bailey* which suggests his knowledge reaches the beginning of London as a city; he remembers all the events which happened there and also London as a city where people truly lived and laughed, very different from the contemporary one. Old Bailey is a roof-man living near Oxford Street who wears a long coat made out of birds' feathers he catches; he is one of the most important characters in connection to a silver box he is given by Marquis de Carabas for it eventually becomes an important rescue tool. His name also corresponds with the sort of nickname of one of the Crown Court's buildings or can be seen as a reference to the Criminal Court of England and Wales as well.⁴² He also represents the London Belowers' relationship to history and traditions which is the exact opposite to that of London Abovers.

There are rumours spread about *Mr. Croup* and *Mr. Vandemar* to be assassins in London Below who follow somebody's orders. Initially, they try to fulfil the assignment of killing Door before Richard finds her lying at the sidewalk. They are portrayed as cold-blooded murderers who together with the Beast of London represent the omnipresent danger hidden in the underground. Croup's name can be associated with croup, a pathological disease affecting larynx and causing person's voice sound hoarse, which is pronounced and spelled the same way.

Quite an interesting character is *Hunter*, she eventually becomes the bodyguard of Door's, however, she desires something else more than Door's safety. The name indicates what Hunter longs for, hunting and killing the Beast with her spear. There seems to be a perfect match of the hunter and the hunted. It turns out to be slightly complicated, for she has to fulfil a certain task first to get that spear. The reader is convinced Hunter is a positive character trying to help and protect Door, however, as the story continues, he recognizes whose side Hunter truly stands at. Her story and intentions are revealed just before the end of her life, when she is fatally injured in the dance with the Beast and finally makes amends.

⁴² Ibid.

6. THE GOTHIC SYMBOLS IN NEVERWHERE

There are a lot of elements which define the genre of Gothic, such as its themes; the Gothic has its roots back in the Renaissance tragedies or even the myths of Celtic times, and biblical notions of revenge or inheritance. The atmosphere of Gothic novels seems to be rather dark and unpleasant which also corresponds with its typical setting, concerning dangerous, vast, bleak, and unfamiliar landscapes with old and huge buildings or castles provoking worries, the feeling of alienation and fear. Gaiman captured some of these typical symbols of Gothic in *Neverwhere*, and they will be discussed in this thesis later.

The literary genre of Gothic is by certain critics considered revolutionary for it questions existing social issues and reflects fears and anxieties arisen from the past. Therefore, there is a type of the genre's modification in different time periods in relation to problems the society dealt with. For instance, the themes of the Victorian Gothic include terror, madness and mystery which simply manifest the feelings of people living in those times, however, there is also a scientific progress portrayed in such works. Another example illustrating how Gothic is present and developing through time are modernist texts, such as *Heart of Darkness* (1899) or *The Waste Land* (1922) in which a gloomy environment and other features of Gothic can be found. The twentieth century Gothic developed into later popular genres and subgenres, such as Mystery Novel, Dystopian Novel, Science Fiction or Fantasy. The reason why this genre figures among readers' preferences, is the fact that unlike other literary genres, the Gothic allows expressing repressed feelings of loneliness, anger, or fear, and also people's hidden desires.

6.1 The spatial interpretation in relation to the Gothic

As previously stated, there are several elements recurring in Gothic novels regardless of how remote the time of their publication. Manuel Aguirre wrote several studies focused on the literature of terror in order to elucidate its respective elements, such as the spatial concept in Gothic literature which is described as a 'closed space'. According to Aguirre, there are two domains of being, one of them, the everyday human world, represents the domain of rationality and intelligible events, and the second domain, the

so-called world of the sublime, or of terrifying Numinous, transcends human reason.⁴³ The movement from one site to the other is manifested by thresholds, plots and borderlands; there are crucial moments when characters ponder whether to cross the border and get to the Other world or not; however, very often they already are in there, even though they think, they find themselves only on the passage to it.

In *Neverwhere*, the borderland can be described as an axis going through the underground stations separating London Above from London Below (two domains of being), nevertheless, there are also middle elements bringing those spaces into specific contact such as doors or portals which Door manages to make thanks to the inherited ability of hers. The dangerous, unconventional, unstable setting of this fantasy novel is characteristic of the Gothic as well; not only the dark and gloomy environment of the underground and the world of London Below, but also the labyrinth where Richard faces the crucial task.

The interpretation of London space can be perceived from two perspectives; on one hand, as one place divided into two different spaces, on the other as a doubled space consisting of two parts distinct from one another, one located above and the next one below the surface of the city of London. These parallel worlds differ in their environments and also the beliefs and lifestyles of their inhabitants, as previously stated in the chapter 5.1.1 and 5.2.1. The feature of doubling is quite often portrayed in association with Gothic, not only in the sense of places, but also characters, such as the mother and her daughter in *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, both named Catherine and sharing not only the name, but to some extent parallel lives.

The space of London Below and its parts is crucial for the description of Gothic symbols, for instance, the oldest place in there founded by King Lud on the Thames marshes – the labyrinth. It is located behind a vast Cyclopean gate at the bottom of Down Street which marks both, the end of this street and the beginning of the labyrinth. The Cyclopean gate itself takes the reader back to the ancient tales of King Bran and the giants Gog and Magog.⁴⁴ When passing the gate, one finds himself in an ever-changing place which

⁴³ AGUIRRE, Manuel. Geometries of Terror: Numinous Spaces in Gothic, Horror and Science Fiction. *Gothic Studies*. 2018, (Volume 10, 2), 4-6. ISSN 1362-7937. Dostupné z: doi:<https://doi.org/10.7227/GS.10.2.2>

⁴⁴ GAIMAN, Neil. *Neverwhere*. London: Headline Publishing Group, 2017, s. 318. ISBN 9781472234353.

definitely feels Gothic for it functions as an anisotropic space, i.e., it exhibits different properties in different directions.⁴⁵ This gloomy marshland is full of mud, mosquitoes, a large number of dead people and is in fact a sanctuary for the Beast.

6.2 The Gothic characters of Neverwhere

The prevailing focus of this chapter is the character types of Gothic Fiction, such as the maiden in distress, Gothic villain, and ambiguous characters. In addition, it covers some of the other significant motifs of Gothic, also the topic of revitalization of the good and evil, and the concept of the supernatural in Neverwhere.

The hero-villain dichotomy is very common in Gothic Fiction; male characters are often of the role of powerful, tyrannical heroes or villains who transcend the boundaries of their capabilities, whereas female characters are depicted as vulnerable, orphaned, and pious, dominated by those powerful men.⁴⁶ This dynamic was highly used by writers to criticize the patriarchal society and the position of women in the 18th and early 19th century.

The Maiden in Distress

The female characters' roles change specifically along with the changing position of women in mainly western societies. In early Gothic, the main heroine was usually referred to as 'the maiden in distress', the one in need of rescue, often of spectacular beauty and belonging to the upper class of the society; nevertheless, the perspective of the main female character in later Gothic can sometimes be the exact opposite, for she can appear as the dangerous predator of the story. This does not necessarily have to be applied only to female characters, but to male ones as well, for their role of the offender can be transformed into the one of a victim, such as Jack being a prey of the giantess in Angela Carter's book *Jack and the Beanstalk*.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ AGUIRRE, Manuel. Geometries of Terror: Numinous Spaces in Gothic, Horror and Science Fiction. *Gothic Studies*. 2018, (Volume 10, 2), 4-6. ISSN 1362-7937. Dostupné z: doi:<https://doi.org/10.7227/GS.10.2.2>

⁴⁶ RATA, Irina. An Overview of Gothic Fiction. *Translation Studies: Retrospective and Prospective Views*. 2014, Year VII (Vol. 17), 110-112.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

As for *Neverwhere*, the main female character is Door, a young, innocent teenage girl of higher social status coming from London Below, who can be perceived as such maiden in distress, for she is constantly followed by the pair of assassins Mr. Croup and Mr. Vandemar, who are hired by the novel's villain to kill her just like they killed the rest of her family belonging to House Portico. In contrast to Door's character, Hunter's is much closer to that of the predator for having a lurking evil inside her soul despite it being visible at first sight. The danger is hidden not only in Hunter's soul, but also in other characters' souls and minds, for instance the Velvets. The Velvets are a group of women of astonishing attractiveness living in London Below, who are embodiment of actual evil and death; Richard comes across one of them, called Lamia, and asks her to be their guide and to take him and his companions to Down Street to see Angel Islington. She behaves very politely and tries to be persuasive, however, after convincing Richard of her loyalty, her true intentions are uncovered.

In works of Gothic Fiction there is shown an interest in exploring unnatural, unusual, or socially unconventional desires, such as necrophilia or incest. This enables writers to express emotions which are not normally discussed in literature or are considered inappropriate in everyday life, which can be appealing to some readers. Furthermore, female protagonists are often portrayed as sexually powerful, confident, and a threat to male characters; this is the case of Lamia and Richard where she enchants him by her physical beauty and charisma, and pretends to kiss him in order to suck life out of him.

Gothic Villain

The concept of villains in Gothic literature underwent a specific development, especially the perception of such characters. Traditionally, the villain is perceived as an antagonist, a negative character whose sins are unforgettable, whereas the modern villains' sins are often overlooked by modern audience; they are described in a way that it rouses sympathy in the readers, and they also need to be at least as interesting and attractive as the hero, protagonist, of the work. Not only this characteristic fit for the villain of *Neverwhere*, Angel Islington, but another one typical of Gothic, the supernatural entity hidden in a character, for it is a fallen angel exiled from Heaven for being responsible for the sinking of Atlantis. It is imprisoned in a citadel at the end of a labyrinth guarded by

a Beast in purpose of not being disturbed; the only possible way of returning to Heaven is make somebody bring it the key which is watched over by Blackfriars, who prevent Islington from going back and not being properly punished for its crimes, this theme of confinement can be seen in Gothic Fiction very frequently.

The Supernatural

As for the supernatural powers, Door's family has a secret, each of its members has the ability of creating and opening doors, no matter where they find themselves at the moment or whether there are any doors or not; however, they are only able to do it when feeling physically well and each time they make such portal and walk through it, it takes a bit of energy out of them and they had to rest and eat something to obtain it again.

Marquis de Carabas possesses an important, life-saving object which is referred to as a token in the novel. It is a small Beast statue with the powers of navigating its owner through the labyrinth where the Beast lives. Problems occur when Marquis loses it in the massive layer of mud in the labyrinth corridor and Richard is, despite his efforts, unsuccessful in finding it, and moreover, they are disturbed by the Beast's arrival. The plot of Gothic novels usually moves forward through prophecies, visions or dreams and is often called 'a dream literature' or 'the literature of nightmares'.⁴⁸ This applies to the plot of *Neverwhere* as well for both Marquis, and Richard dream about encountering and killing the Beast before it really happened.

Three is a number which frequently appears in tales, the story's protagonist fulfils a particular given task usually with the use and help of three magical objects or can have three lives before death. Talking about *Neverwhere*, the key, the token and Hunter's spear can be considered powerful objects somehow helpful to their owners. Moreover, Richard is always accompanied by two other characters when going through challenging situations; this fact leads to creation of trios, for instance, the trio consisting of Richard, Anaesthesia and Hunter passing Night's Bridge, another one includes Richard, Hunter,

⁴⁸ RATA, Irina. An Overview of Gothic Fiction. *Translation Studies: Retrospective and Prospective Views*. 2014, Year VII (Vol. 17), 112.

and Marquis de Carabas cooperating in the labyrinth; in each of these situations a new Richard's quality is about to emerge.

Another recurrent motif is the one of life and death, characters cross boundaries between life and death, between the living and the dead or the undead.⁴⁹ London Abovers do not seem to notice the poor or the uneducated among them and therefore, consider them the dead people; London Belowers are not seen or heard by the Abovers and can be perceived as dead as well; however all these inhabitants are still alive. The perspicuous borderline between life and death in this story is conveyed by a silver box, a small object of apparent unimportance. However, it eventually turns out to be a crucial lifesaver to Marquis for it contains a very precious entity, a new life. In Chapter 2, when Marquis and Richard come to visit Old Bailey, the old roof-man, Marquis reminds Bailey of owing him a favour and he calls it in by giving Bailey the silver box in order to look after it and use it when needed. Later, after Marquis is killed by the pair of assassins hired by Angel Islington, Old Bailey finds him in the sewers and rescues him by putting the silver box on his chest and by this act also giving him his life back.

The Relativization of Good and Evil

In the works of Gothic fiction, several essential phenomena are questioned, such as the one of good and evil, morality and amorality, or danger and safety. According to natural law, each entity can only exist when having its opposite for the purpose of keeping balance in the world.

The question of good and evil can be quite distinctly portrayed in some characters' qualities, which are often both positive, and negative, however they are not shown at the same time. Such characters are referred to as ambiguous and writers use them to arouse a bit of confusion in the reader's mind.

Angel Islington appears as an ambiguous character for it firstly behaves in favour of Door and Richard, both longing for useful pieces of information, but eventually shows its true intentions and whose side it stands at. During the visit, Islington offers them a glass of

⁴⁹ RATA, Irina. An Overview of Gothic Fiction. *Translation Studies: Retrospective and Prospective Views*. 2014, Year VII (Vol. 17), 111.

delicious, almost magical wine and while sipping it, is trying hard to convince not only them, but also the reader of its innocence, trustworthiness, and close relationship with Door's father. It also manages to persuade them of the key owned by Blackfriars being the one of the capability of fulfilling their desires, and that is why it encourages them to carry on with their journey by attending the Blackfriars platform and promises them to help them solve their problems, but only under one condition - bringing it the key. In Chapter 17, the reader is provided with an explanation to the whole complicated story and fate of Islington. It shows up that the journal, Door's father left her, has been falsified by Mr Croup and Mr Vandemar in order to bring her to Islington and force her to help it get out of its misery.

Talking about ambiguity, it can be deeply felt in relation to Marquis de Carabas. Gaiman wrote it so cleverly, that the reader tends to consider him the traitor of Door's for he leaves Door and meets privately the pair of assassins. However, the reader later discovers who the real traitor is and where the actual threat lurks.

Conclusion

In the theoretical part of my bachelor thesis, I have described two literary genres, which I dealt with during the analysis of *Neverwhere* – fantasy and urban fantasy; four types of fantasy and the main areas of urban fantasy have been defined. I have mentioned several literary works written by British authors of contemporary fantastic fiction and classified Gaiman's writings as those of children or young adult fiction.

In the comparative analysis of *Neverwhere*, I have looked at London as a multidimensional city consisting of two counterparts: the real world of London Above and the imaginary world of London Below; the borderline between them is manifested by the stations of the London Underground. I have tried to note both the similarities, and the differences of those places, including the prevailing atmosphere, the lives of the inhabitants and their fate, the adventures taking place in there; I have also emphasized the fantastic elements in the novel.

The essential events of the plot have been described in relation to the quest of the novel's protagonist who has to fulfil challenging tasks, and because of that, he undergoes, perhaps slightly unintentionally, a process of self-education and maturation. Throughout this part of my thesis, there is an introduction of most of the characters and I tried to point out how different male characters are from the female ones.

Neverwhere bears certain similarities with the works of Gothic fiction, which has been the main topic of the last part of this thesis. I have focused on the closed space and the typical characters of Gothic fiction, such as the maiden in distress represented by Door or the Gothic villain represented by Angel Islington in the novel. The ambiguity hidden mainly in the characters' qualities can be interpreted as one of the most prominent features of *Neverwhere* and Gothic fiction as well. In consideration of having discovered other similarities, for instance the supernatural concept, the magical elements, or the theme of life and death, I presume the resemblance to the Gothic is definitely present.

To sum up, it is difficult to classify *Neverwhere* as a particular literary genre, however, it is usually perceived as a work of the liminal, or portal-quest fantasy containing also

features and elements that point to the tradition of the Gothic which seem to permeate contemporary urban fantastic fiction of Neil Gaiman, among other authors of the genre.

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