

Genres in "Coraline" and "The Graveyard Book"

Dolanski, Dora

Master's thesis / Diplomski rad

2024

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education / Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Učiteljski fakultet**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:147:061889>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2024-12-28**

Repository / Repozitorij:

[University of Zagreb Faculty of Teacher Education - Digital repository](#)



SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE

Dora Dolanski

GENRES IN *CORALINE* AND *THE GRAVEYARD BOOK* BY NEIL
GAIMAN

Diplomski rad

Zagreb, rujan, 2024.

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE

Dora Dolanski

GENRES IN *CORALINE* AND *THE GRAVEYARD BOOK* BY NEIL
GAIMAN

Diplomski rad

Mentor rada:
doc. dr. sc. Nikola Novaković

Zagreb, rujan, 2024.

Table of contents

SAŽETAK	
ABSTRACT	
1 Introduction	1
2 Neil Gaiman's <i>Coraline</i> and <i>The Graveyard Book</i>	2
3 The family story	4
4 The coming-of-age novel (<i>Bildungsroman</i>)	7
5 Gothic fiction	10
6 Fantasy	14
7 The adventure story	18
8 Magical realism	22
9 Conclusion	25
References	27
Izjava o izvornosti rada	29

SAŽETAK

Glavna je svrha ovog rada identificirati i analizirati različite žanrove u djelima Neila Gaimana *Coraline* i *The Graveyard Book*. Iako se ta dva djela razlikuju po svojim pričama, dijele značajne sličnosti u kontekstu žanrova. Žanrovi koji se istražuju u radu uključuju obiteljsku priču, roman o odrastanju (Bildungsroman), gotičku fikciju, fantastiku, pustolovnu priču i magični realizam. Svako poglavlje usredotočeno je na identifikaciju i analizu jednog od šest žanrova unutar Gaimanovih djela. Ti su se žanrovi mijenjali i razvijali tijekom svog postojanja. Neki su noviji, poput magičnog realizma (Bowers 2004), a neki su prisutni stoljećima, poput gotičke fikcije (Smith 2013) i pustolovne priče (Butts 2004). Svako poglavlje usredotočeno je na identifikaciju i analizu jednog od žanrova. Žanr obiteljske priče istražuje nekonvencionalne obiteljske strukture i dinamiku unutar obitelji te način na koji ti odnosi doprinose odrastanju glavnih likova. Žanr odrastanja, tzv. Bildungsroman, fokusira se na emocionalni i psihološki razvoj glavnih likova. Gotička fikcija istražuje ravnotežu između jezovitog i bezbrižnosti, što je čini prikladnom za mlađu publiku. Poglavlje o žanru fantastike u navedenim djelima analizira nadnaravne pojave i borbu između dobra i zla. Pustolovna priča prati i istražuje uzbudljiva putovanja glavnih likova djela dok se suočavaju s opasnim situacijama i prevladavaju nadnaravno. Magičnim realizmom povezuju se stvarni i fantastični elementi, brišući granice između stvarnosti i mašte. Cilj ovog diplomskog rada je istražiti književne elemente svakog od navedenih žanrova i načina na koji se oni očituju u Gaimanovim djelima *Coraline* i *The Graveyard Book*.

Ključne riječi: fantastika, gotička priča, magični realizam, obiteljska priča, roman o odrastanju

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this thesis is to identify and analyze the various genres present in Neil Gaiman's works: *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. Although these two novels differ in their narratives, they share notable similarities in the context of genre. The genres explored include: the family story, coming-of-age novel (Bildungsroman), gothic fiction, fantasy, the adventure story, and magical realism. These genres have evolved during their existence. Some are newer, such as magical realism (Bowers 2004), and some have been present for centuries, such as gothic fiction (Smith 2013), and the adventure story (Butts 2004). Each of the chapters focuses on the identification and analysis of one of the genres within *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. In these works, the family story genre explores the unconventional structures and dynamics within the families, and how these relationships contribute to the protagonist's growth. The coming-of-age genre, or Bildungsroman, focuses on the protagonist's emotional and psychological development. Gothic fiction explores the balance between the uncanny and light-heartedness, making it suitable for a younger audience. The chapter about fantasy in the aforementioned works analyzes supernatural phenomena, and the struggle between good and evil. The adventure story follows and explores these novel's protagonist's thrilling journeys as they confront dangerous situations and overcome supernatural threats. Magical realism combines real and fantastical elements, blurring the lines between reality and imagination. By examining these genres, this thesis aims to explore each genre's literary elements, and how they manifest in both *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*.

Keywords: coming-of-age, family story, fantasy, gothic fiction, magical realism

1 Introduction

The term “children’s literature” refers to materials specifically crafted for children, published by children’s publishers to be read by children and young adults. Those materials are usually found in children’s and/or young adult sections of bookstores and libraries (Reynolds, 2011). Children’s literature genres encapsulate everything from folk and fairy tales, legends, and adventures to ballads and nursery rhymes. Combining those genres has been a common occurrence in children’s literature, from Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies* (1863), which overlaps fantasy and the moral tale to J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* books (1997–2007) intersecting the school story with fantasy (Grenby, 2008, p. 144).

This thesis will identify and analyze the genres in Neil Gaiman’s *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. It aims to compare how each work embodies its respective genres and how both stories reflect the characteristics of those genres.

The first chapter of the thesis summarizes the stories of both books. The following chapters examine different genres that appear in both *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. The genres include: the family story, the coming-of-age novel (Bildungsroman), gothic fiction, fantasy, the adventure story, and magical realism. The focus of each chapter is to identify and analyze the elements of each of the mentioned genres in the stories of both works. The conclusion will provide an overview of the key insights derived from this analysis.

2 Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*

Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* challenge conventional genre categorizations by combining narrative elements of various genres. Combining genres is not a new concept, as mentioned by M.O. Grenby (2008) while discussing the school story: "[...] it has successfully combined with other genres, appeared in a range of different media..." (p. 113). *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* exemplify this approach to genre blending by incorporating six genres: the family story, the coming-of-age novel (Bildungsroman), gothic fiction, fantasy, the adventure story, and magical realism.

Both narratives are set somewhere in present-day England. Coraline and her family move to a house in the countryside, and Nobody "Bod" Owens from *The Graveyard Book* lives in an English graveyard. Although the ghostly figures around Bod are decades, even centuries old, there are clear indicators of modern times, such as mentions of "a mobile phone" (Gaiman, 2008, p. 32). Neither of the narratives stops at ghosts when it comes to fantastical elements; rather, both stories also include magical places, creatures, and parallel worlds.

Coraline, a stubborn eleven-year-old girl who likes to explore, moves into an old house with her preoccupied parents. Bored and lonely, she discovers a passage to the "Other World" that appears to be an improved version of her own home. There, she meets her "Other Mother" and "Other Father" who resemble her real parents, apart from the fact that they have black buttons for eyes. They cater to Coraline's every want and need, providing the attention and affection she craves from her real parents. However, Coraline soon realizes that the Other Mother and her creations, including the Other Father, are not what they seem. The Other Mother, revealed to be a sinister creature called the beldam, seeks to capture Coraline and steal her soul by sewing buttons over her eyes. As Coraline navigates difficult situations, she faces her fears of losing herself and her parents to the creature. The adventure teaches Coraline a valuable lesson about bravery and the importance of appreciating the relationship she has with her parents. Gaiman's stories often use hardships to teach protagonists to appreciate the good people and other creatures around them. He has done the same in *The Graveyard Book*. This is a story of a toddler who wanders into a nearby graveyard while unaware that he is running away from a serial murderer named Jack, who killed his whole family and wanted to kill him as well. Nobody "Bod" Owens was the name given to him by the ghostly figures in the graveyard. Mrs. Owens, one of the ghosts, promised his mother that she and the others would protect and raise him. Bod is granted "The Freedom of the Graveyard," which gives him the ability to see,

interact with, and use the abilities of the dead. As years go by, he continues to hide from Jack with the help of his mentor Silas, a vampire, the Owens couple and many more ghosts and creatures. His adventures and quests, just like Coraline's, help him to realize how brave and strong he is and ultimately prepare him for the final battle with Jack.

3 The family story

The family story is a wide genre. It can encompass many different types of stories, characters, and the relationships between them. The genre is found in every narrative that touches upon family and family dynamics. This traditional genre has evolved from “Victorian moral tales,” according to Attebery (2009) into a more diverse and dynamic space with more freedom for exploring different roles within a family and interacting with a broader and more open view of what a family is. Attebery (2009) also argues that happy families are not as prominent or frequent as they were during the beginning of the genre, a perspective that resonates with Neil Gaiman’s works *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*, both of which are about dysfunctional family situations: “The additional descriptor indicates that happiness is no longer the norm among fictional families. In the 1940s and ‘50s it was simply assumed that books for children would portray a reassuring world, whereas by the end of the twentieth century such portrayals stood out as unusual and archaic, if not downright inartistic” (p. 119).

The family story is very prominent in *The Graveyard Book*. Many children’s narratives begin with having the protagonist’s parents shipped off, disappearing, getting divorced, or dying by the end of the first chapter (Grenby, 2008, p. 123). The child’s newfound freedom is a device for introducing adventures and exploration into the unknown but, interestingly, being devoid of one or both parents actually emphasizes the value of family in the narrative. The protagonist, Bod, finds his new family in a graveyard. Bod has a couple of prominent figures in the graveyard, Mr. and Mrs. Owens, who are presented as substitute parents; Silas who is his mentor and guardian, the one he looks up to most; and Miss Lupescu, who serves as a guardian when Silas is away. Everybody in the graveyard knows and cares for the living boy and helps him defeat the evil secret society called “The Jacks of All Trades” (Gaiman, 2008, p. 144). Aliston notes that “larger families also afford a method of survival since the group can defend itself better than the individual [...] The grouping of humans for safety and survival is a basic Darwinian concept” (Aliston, 2008, p. 8) This method is highlighted in the book through the undead teaching Bod about the world and granting him abilities that only the dead can use, such as fading – not being seen by people who are alive. Bod has to learn how to fade so he can protect and hide himself from the killer and other people who want to harm him.

Coraline, on the other hand, has parents who are alive but are not as invested in Coraline’s life as they should be. *Coraline* depicts a newer, more turbulent life in the modern world where

both parents are busy with work while the child has to occupy itself without the parents' engagement. The traditional stereotype where the mother and the father have their specific roles is challenged in the book as the Other Mother and the Other Father both present "perfect parents" with traditional views of the household but are revealed to be malevolent and very manipulative. The Other Mother lives in a parallel world known as the Other World, which she has curated specifically to lure and entrap children. In the Other World, Coraline sees what her life could be like if she stays; however, the price of this is replacing her eyes with black buttons and giving up her soul. According to Parsons, Sawers, and Mcinally (2008), the Other Mother cooks food that Coraline likes, gives her what she wants, and prioritizes her over a career (p. 373): "It was the best chicken that Coraline had ever eaten. Her mother sometimes made chicken, but it was always out of packets or frozen, and was very dry, and it never tasted of anything" (Gaiman, 2002, pp. 20-21). Coraline quickly recognizes the Other Mother's intentions and realizes she has to save her parents: "I'm going back for them because they are my parents. And if they noticed I was gone I'm sure they would do the same for me" (Gaiman, 2002, p. 35).

In the beginning, Coraline's mother is portrayed as an emotionally distant career woman who does not consider her desires: "Coraline saw some Day - Glo green gloves she liked a lot. Her mother refused to buy them for her, preferring instead to buy white socks, navy blue school underpants, four gray blouses, and a dark gray skirt" (Gaiman, 2002, p. 18). This scene perfectly depicts how Coraline's mother prioritizes usefulness over preference. As the story unfolds, Coraline embarks on a journey of self-discovery. During her courageous act of saving three lost souls and her parents, she gains a deeper understanding of her mother and her mother's love and care, and even though her parents cannot remember all that has happened with the Other Mother, her real mother recognizes Coraline's newfound bravery and maturity. This change in their relationship tightens their bond and demonstrates how Coraline's journey not only helped her grow but also improved their relationship.

Coraline's father is portrayed as a kind man who loves and cares for Coraline but is often distracted by his work. That leads to him being impatient and Coraline feeling neglected. He is the one who cooks and experiments with food in their household, which further shows how both of Coraline's parents do not follow traditional gender roles. The recipes he makes excite him, but Coraline does not like them: "When Coraline's father cooked chicken he bought real chicken, but he did strange things to it, like stewing it in wine, or stuffing it with prunes, or baking it in pastry, and Coraline would always refuse to touch it on principle" (Gaiman, 2002,

p. 21). That is when the role of the Other Father comes into play and we are introduced to an attentive father figure who likes to sing and play the keyboard. At first Coraline seems to like him. He does not take part in domestic duties like Coraline's real father, and instead does outdoor activities such as gardening, which is also something Coraline is interested in. It is later revealed how the Other Father is a being created and manipulated by the Other Mother. He does whatever sinister thing he has to in order to please her, even attacking Coraline. As she does with her mother, Coraline also finds a new appreciation for her father while on her journey to save them. She is encouraged by a story she recalls about her father's bravery: "But going back again to get his glasses, when he knew the wasps were there, when he was really scared. That was brave" (Gaiman, 2002, p. 35).

Despite having a family, both Bod and Coraline feel alone, neglected, and out of place in their own way. Their feelings are presented in that manner to showcase how they find comfort in their solitude by being very courageous during hard times and when faced with difficult decisions. Families help one learn, grow, and navigate through life. *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* explore the protagonists' struggles to come to terms with their parents' imperfections. As they overcome challenges, the characters discover that real relationships are built on understanding, empathy, and acceptance: "Gaiman's protagonists learn that lasting human relationships are built not in the absence of, but despite our own and other people's shortcomings" (Oziewicz, 2015, p. 86). Coraline faces her fears by being inspired by her parents, especially her father. Bod becomes independent because the graveyard creatures help him get rid of the evil clan chasing him, which allows him to live a normal life.

4 The coming-of-age novel (Bildungsroman)

The Bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, is a genre that follows the protagonist's psychological and moral development from childhood to adulthood (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The reader follows the protagonist's path in finding a sense of self as they overcome challenges and experience the world that shapes their identity and worldview. Mikhail Bakhtin (1986) states that the Bildungsroman reflects how people and their cultures change with time and gives a broad explanation of what this genre represents: "the image of man in the process of becoming in the novel." (p. 19) In both *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*, Gaiman effectively portrays the protagonist's psychological and emotional growth. Through their fantastical adventures they learn from their mistakes and evolve, embracing their hardships as something positive. The Bildungsroman is a prominent genre in both narratives, as they revolve around young protagonists who go through life-altering experiences that lead to them maturing beyond their years.

According to Ljubica Matek and Zvonimir Prtenjača (2021), although *Coraline* incorporates quite a few gothic elements, and was inspired by fantasy writers C. S. Lewis and Lewis Carroll, the core narrative still follows the bildungsroman tradition, focusing on the protagonist's journey of self-discovery as she confronts her fears and deals with complex feelings regarding her parents (p. 280). The narrative starts with Coraline already experiencing a change in her identity. As Prtenjača (2019) notes, her parents have a big impact on her identity formation by refusing to acknowledge her need to express her individuality through small incidents. When Coraline wants a pair of gloves, her mother refuses to buy them for her. The gloves represent something important for Coraline: as she has to wear the same uniform as everybody else in school, the gloves represent something unique (p. 48). These moments of anger and conflict are common for the Bildungsroman genre, as the protagonist searches for a way to navigate and then understand the complexities of family relationships while trying to develop a separate sense of self. Moreover, when she stands up for herself it is apparent that Coraline detaches herself from her parents and becomes more assertive. Throughout her journey she speaks her mind and stands up for herself and her needs. For example, when the three ghost children tell her to go and save herself, she firmly refuses and says "I'm not running away (...) She has my parents. I came to get them back" (Gaiman, 2002, p. 49). Her parents' neglect and her love for exploration bring her to the Other Mother and the parallel world. Boredom and curiosity are strong facilitators for learning about one's sense of self.

The Graveyard Book follows Bod's development from an inquisitive child to a young adult, prepared to venture out on his own. Maria Nikolajeva's (1996) analysis of the Bildungsroman genre provides a clear structure for understanding the coming-of-age journey of Bod. She highlights the importance of the protagonist's search for identity and a sense of belonging in the Bildungsroman (p. 8). This connects well with Bod's journey, as he struggles to understand his past and searches for a purpose in life. He finds himself somewhere in between his ghostly upbringing and his human nature. His experiences in and outside the graveyard make him a unique individual who eventually defeats the evil in his world and becomes a mature and independent young adult, now ready to safely step out of the graveyard and travel the world.

Bakhtin writes about different types of heroes in the Bildungsroman. The ready-made hero and the one that changes with the plot: "The hero himself, his character, becomes a variable in the formula of this type of novel. Changes in the hero himself acquire plot significance, and thus the entire plot of the novel is reinterpreted and reconstructed" (Bakhtin 1986, p. 21). In *The Graveyard Book*, Bod's character is not static like the ready-made hero, but rather evolves and changes throughout the novel. His experiences in the graveyard and the outside world shape his character and his perspective. For example, at the beginning of the novel Bod is a toddler, unaware of the dangers that lurk in the outside world. However, as he grows older and encounters various challenges and obstacles, he becomes more mature, resilient, and self-aware. His relationships with the ghosts from the graveyard, his guardian Silas, his human friend Scarlett and all the other creatures, good or bad, considerably contribute to his growth as he learns valuable lessons about empathy, understanding, and acceptance. Bakhtin's concept of the hero as a "variable" in the Bildungsroman is evident in Bod's character arc. His changes and growth have a significant impact on the plot. The entire narrative of *The Graveyard Book* is shaped by Bod's journey of self-discovery and maturation as he confronts his fears, learns from his mentors and friends, and in the end finds his place in the world, away from the graveyard, which is to signify a child's transition into the adult world.

Coraline and *The Graveyard Book* contain numerous elements common for the genre of the Bildungsroman. Both narratives have stubborn protagonists learning about themselves by saving themselves and the people around them. Although they are seemingly dissimilar, both are very courageous in the face of danger. Additionally, Gaiman uses fantastical and gothic elements to emphasize the intensity of emotion that a child can feel while coming of age: "Magical adventures in recent fantasy become a quest for identity, and protagonists are no longer obedient pawns in games played by higher powers but are developed into active and

engaged participants who are often central to the plot” (Nikolajeva, 1996, p. 73). Both novels explore themes of identity, sense of belonging and maturation. The protagonists go through significant personal growth and transformation as they explore and learn from the challenges presented to them.

5 Gothic fiction

The genre of Gothic fiction has been evolving for centuries. Andrew Smith (2013) claims that the genre is heavily influenced by the national and social contexts of a country. He adds how the “British Gothic” started gaining popularity in the midst of the eighteenth century, calling it the Gothic Heyday (p. 4). This is noteworthy given that both *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* are written by a British author. The gothic tradition has continued to grow in popularity, appearing frequently in contemporary literature. Numerous elements of the genre can be found in children’s books and young adult novels. Michael Howarth (2014) argues that the genre has always been present in children’s literature, and that it was meant to educate through fear, rather than experience (p. 4). Gothic stories give an indirect outlet for readers to deal with their own unpleasant feelings. By reading about monsters and ghosts, readers can confront and process fears and anxieties without directly facing these emotions (Howarth, 2014, p. 6). Gaiman’s approach to the gothic genre was inspired by Edward Gorey’s works. Gorey was an “American writer, illustrator, and designer, noted for his arch humour and gothic sensibility” (Britannica, 2024). In an interview, Gaiman discussed how Gorey’s illustrations inspired his own work on *Coraline* (Seufert, 2018).

The Gothic genre often features supernatural elements, transgressive characters, family issues, and secrets. In *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*, the gothic tradition is modified for a young adult audience. Both novels deal with supernatural threats (transgressive characters), absent parents, and young protagonists stumbling upon parallel universes, that turn out to be dangerous. Nevertheless, the anxious protagonist in a gothic tale is absent from both *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. While Coraline and Bod face significant hardships throughout their unique adventures, their narratives present their strength and resilience as a positive life-changing experience rather than manifestations of anxiety (Matek & Prtenjača, 2023, p. 276).

The gothic element of a supernatural threat can be tied to a dangerous villain, which is present in both *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. Nikolajeva (1996) identifies the typical representation of monsters in children’s literature, and her analysis can be applied to Coraline and her antagonist, the beldam. She explains how “evil female images” can be traced back to “traditional witches in folktales or the ambivalent good/evil progenitor in myths” and are most often paired with a counterpart protagonist, “an active and independent girl who alone or almost alone triumphs over the evil” (p. 77).

Beldam is a female monster that pretends to be a maternal figure and lures children to their deaths. She traps them by replacing their eyes with buttons and then takes their souls. Her huge build, pale skin, teeth sharp as knives, and buttons for eyes conjure up feelings of fear and anxiety. At first, she resembles Coraline's real mother, but with black button eyes, and only later does she reveal her true form. The beldam's initial pretense of being a loving and caring mother figure exemplifies how "one of the strengths of Gothic literature is that it teaches us things are not always what they seem" (Howarth, 2014, p. 6).

In *The Graveyard Book*, Jack, also known as "the man Jack," serves as the main villain. He is described as dark and dim, which adds to the Gothic theme: "His hair was dark and his eyes were dark and he wore black leather gloves of the thinnest lambskin" (Gaiman, 2008, p. 5). Alison Halsall (2021) argues that the character of Jack is not presented as a big scary man, especially next to the "protector" Silas, but that is what makes him so dangerous: "his crouching shadow emphasizes the threat that this Gothic monster presents to the inhabitants of the suburban home, whom he murders seconds later" (p. 136). Jack also belongs to an evil secret society: the Jacks of All Trades. They have existed for an extremely long time, which suggests that he has a long history of malevolent behavior. Jack's character is well-suited to the gloomy gothic setting of a graveyard as he exhibits traits of a menacing, malicious character.

Some supernatural elements in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard story* also include non-threatening characters. Coraline stumbles upon three ghost children who do not pose a threat but evoke sadness when it is explained why they are trapped in the beldam's lair in complete darkness: "She stole our hearts, and she stole our souls, and she took our lives away, and she left us here, and she forgot about us in the dark" (Gaiman, 2002, p. 47). They are minor characters presented as "Victorian children" to highlight their innocence and mournful death. Rather than scaring Coraline, they warn her of evil, and later help her defeat the horrible beldam (Becher, 2016, pp. 100-101). In *The Graveyard Book*, most of the ghosts are playful and quirky. Gaiman tries to show a "positive approach toward death" to ease the "greatest source of fear [...] death and the terrible armies of undead." The narrative is written as such to represent death as "sublime and beautiful" (Becher, 2016, pp. 102-103). It is in the gothic tradition to position humorous, light-hearted elements against the horror aspect of the stories.

Additional gothic elements in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* are found in their settings. Coraline and her parents move into an old house that holds the beldam's lair, a mirror gateway that leads to a twisted image of Coraline's new home, a very typical gothic setting (Matek &

Prtenjača, 2023, p. 277). The Gothic setting of the old house, with its dark hallway, filled with cobwebs and the strange feeling created by the whispers, and the fogginess, is a classic element of the Gothic tradition. The house can be considered a character, symbolizing the unknown and the unsettling. It is a very big house and Coraline and her parents share it with strange and unpredictable neighbors. They are later revealed to be allies in her fight against the beldam. On the other hand, *The Graveyard Book* setting is a graveyard, which serves as the safest space for the protagonist. The graveyard is depicted with: “stock Gothic components (fog, moonlight, a funeral chapel, tombs and vaults, etc.)” (Halsall, 2021, p. 124). Gothic settings in Gaiman’s novels, like the old, dilapidated house in *Coraline*, or the graveyard in *The Graveyard Book*, evoke a sense of “the unheimlich,” or the uncanny, meaning something oddly familiar and frightening that makes one face their anxieties and fears. Gaiman uses these places as metaphors for his young protagonists’ journeys to gain control over their lives and inner selves. The house and the graveyard become places where the characters must face and overcome their “own psyches and everyday lives.” Gaiman uses the Gothic tradition to explore the psychological growth of his child characters as they navigate these unsettling spaces (Halsall, 2021, p. 124).

Gaiman’s novels *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*, showcase his use of gothic elements, from dilapidated, old houses to ghosts and ghouls. However, Gaiman’s approach to the gothic differs from traditional literary Gothic fiction. While the basis of the gothic is present, Gaiman plays down the intensity of the gothic tradition’s classic elements, such as monstrosity and madness. Instead, he uses: “the Gothic atmosphere and the delicious visual and narrative opportunities it offers his young protagonists,” as a passage to explore their own identities (Halsall, 2021, p. 123). In *Coraline*, the gothic house and its sinister being, the beldam, embody the protagonist’s struggle to face and defeat her own fears and anxieties. Similarly, the gothic graveyard in *The Graveyard Book* seems eerie but ultimately provides a loving and safe environment for Bod, the protagonist, to grow and mature.

Gaiman combines fear and humor for the effect of light-heartedness in very disturbing situations and places: “... providing a safe simulacrum of otherwise possibly traumatic negative experiences [...] Especially in texts for younger children, comic relief is an obvious strategy to contain the negative emotions evoked by the Gothic” (Becher, 2016, p. 93). *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* are examples of narratives in which Gaiman incorporates fear and explores the influence it has on the child’s development: “Gaiman transforms the Gothic,

making use of the thrills and chills that popular Gothic provokes in readers in order to pursue his interest in the developmental and psychological growth of the child” (Halsall, 2021, p. 124).

6 Fantasy

Fantasy as a genre is diverse and often overlaps with other genres, as seen in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*, which blend elements of fantasy with other literary genres. According to Gates, Steffel, and Molson (2003) fantasy is imaginative fiction that explores life's mysteries and the struggle between good and evil without constraints of size, time, or space (p. 2). Gaiman's novels are classic fantasy tales in which good prevails over evil. In *Coraline*, her immense bravery and good heart help her defeat the evil monster, the Other Mother, while in *The Graveyard Book*, Jack and his evil society, Jacks of All Trades, are defeated by Bod, a curious and fearless boy, and his graveyard friends.

There are key elements that define fantasy in children's and young adult literature: the presence of an unreal phenomenon and a human or human-like character that the reader can understand and identify with (Gates, Steffel and Molson, 2003, pp. 6-7). Unreal or supernatural phenomena in *Coraline* are central to the narrative, as Coraline finds a magical passage to a parallel world called the Other World, where she meets the Other Mother – a sinister being who made that world and everything in it. In her world, she holds three ghosts hostage and manipulates other beings she has created. In *The Graveyard Book*, Bod grows from a toddler into adolescence surrounded by numerous fantastical beings he meets during his time in the graveyard: ghosts, ghouls, witches, vampires, and more. To be able to live and mature there, he is given the "Freedom of the Graveyard," which includes ghost powers such as fading and dream walking. Coraline and Bod are both relatable human children, who embody the qualities that make fantasy tales resonate with readers of all ages, particularly young ones. Their experiences and personalities allow readers to connect with their journeys and challenges. These fantastical elements, as well as Coraline and Bod being the main characters, make these narratives prime examples of fantasy literature.

Fantasy can be "high" – set in an alternative universe, or "low" – set in our world, or combined (Grenby, 2008, p. 144). In both narratives, the plot moves from the world we know to the uncanny one. Nikolajeva (1996) states how a fantasy narrative has a "link with reality," it is set in "our own time and place," and the characters are normal children. Magical adventures happen when the "magical passage" or place is found (pp. 122-123). In *Coraline*, the magical passage plays an important role in the narrative as it serves as the gateway through which the protagonist, Coraline, confronts her deepest fears and battles an evil entity to rescue herself and her parents. In *The Graveyard Book* the main setting, the graveyard, represents the real

world and the parallel world. Ordinary people perceive only a typical graveyard, while magical beings, primarily ghosts, wander through it unnoticed at all times. There is mention of magical passages to other places, such as Ghouheim, a dangerous realm of the ghouls. The graveyard setting is an example of reality clashing with fantasy (Becher, 2016, p. 93). In both narratives protagonists encounter supernatural creatures, travel to parallel worlds and manage all sorts of fantastical elements that could not be explained in the real world. A very important distinction for fantasy literature is that it goes against common notions of reality, rather than relying on the supernatural or impossible (Grenby, 2008, pp. 145-146).

According to Attebery (2022), the nature of fantasy literature keeps evolving. This literary genre has progressed alongside the changing world. However, it still encompasses the old, creating a natural path where new authors continue the work of past authors: "... there is continuity as well as change" (p. 7). Numerous categories of fantasy have come into existence since the genre's beginnings. Gates, Steffel and Molson (2003) categorize fantasy into three segments: "fairy or folk tales, mixed fantasy (which includes journey, transformation, talking animals, and magic), and heroic-ethical fantasy" (p. 7). Different fantasy works can be categorized into more than one category. Both *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* are categorized within the mixed fantasy genre. They both contain some elements of the other two categories, but they do not fit them entirely. Mixed fantasy is defined as: "children's fiction that combines fantasy and realism in various ways and proportions" (Gates, Steffel and Molson, 2003, p. 49). Gaiman incorporates reality and fantasy by blending them together. In *The Graveyard Book*, Gaiman uses the graveyard as a magical setting, completely accessible only to Bod and the fantastical creatures, while real people see only an ordinary graveyard. In *Coraline*, the blending is noticeable in the similarities of the real world and the Other World for the comfort of children, so it is easier for the Other Mother to trap them inside.

Coraline represents fantasy as a "gradual disintegration of the normal life" (Grenby, 2008, p. 146). The narrative begins realistically, and transfers gradually into a fantasy tale. When Coraline discovers the door to the Other World, she goes through the passage, and she meets the Other Mother. However, not all fantasy tales follow the same path: "...the supernatural and the normal exist together in fantasy texts, in various proportions and combinations, but that there is no ratio which governs their relationship. To increase one is not to diminish the other" (Grenby, 2008, p. 150). The Other World or the parallel universe, that exists in the narrative, defies the laws of agreed-upon reality. Nikolajeva (1996) addresses the term "secondary world fantasy" as having similar features to a "time fantasy": "... what is believed to be the principal

pattern of the secondary-world fantasy, the passage between the worlds, is most tangible in time fantasy.” The passage, although tangible in *Coraline*, is still a part of “secondary world fantasy” (p. 124). Time is sometimes mentioned in the parallel world, but in terms of mimicking the real world: “Coraline was woken by the midmorning sun, full on her face” (Gaiman, 2002, p. 40) talking about the Other World. The narrative does not suggest, nor deny, any existence of other dimensions. It is firmly accepted that the Other World, the universe created by the Other Mother, is limited: “There isn’t anywhere but here. This is all she made: the house, the grounds, and the people in this house. She made it and she waited” (Gaiman, 2002, p. 40).

Gaiman’s fantastical tale of a boy called Nobody has a different narrative structure: a living boy coexisting in the worlds of the living and the dead (Tsung Chi, 2015, p. 9). Unlike in the real world, Bod is quite famous in the fantastical realm. He encounters many strange creatures, with some wanting him harm. Aside from his ghostly family, and other mostly harmless ghosts in his graveyard, the most relevant fantastical creatures are; Siles, the vampire, his most trusted mentor; Miss Lupescu, a Hound of God, his mentor when Silas is away, who saves him from the Ghoul realm (Ghoulheim), with the help of night-gaunts. Strange bird-like creatures are described as follows: “They have hairless wings, and they fly low and fast. They do not visit this world, but they fly the red skies above the road to Ghoulheim” (Gaiman, 2008, p. 39). Furthermore, Gaiman introduces us to the enigmatic figures of the “ancient Indigo man and the Sleer,” who guard treasures beneath the graveyard, and as Tsung Chi (2015) notes: “add fear to the already appalling atmosphere.” These fantastical creatures contribute mystery and horror to the narrative (p. 10).

The cemetery setting, its creatures, and “the macabre atmosphere” are not the only factors that influence Bod’s growth and strength. The real-world experiences also help mold him into a brave young adult (Tsung Chi, 2015, p. 11). As an example, he learns about his bravery when he takes his human friend Scarlett, whom he meets while she is playing in the graveyard, beneath the graveyard, to look for treasure. He feels his sense of justice when he goes to a normal school and confronts the bullies there. It would be hard to defeat “the man Jack” if he did not experience the living world (Tsung Chi, 2015, p. 11). Through Bod’s character arc, Gaiman demonstrates how a human protagonist can navigate the complexities of identity and belonging while growing up in an unconventional environment.

Fantasy can be a gateway into uncharted topics that young people and children may find hard to discuss. That is why one of the many genres often connected with young adult or children’s

fantasy is coming-of-age. Although *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* do not completely conform to the category mentioned earlier, the heroic-ethical fantasy genre, both address common problems that children and adolescents face, such as neglect and isolation (Gates, Steffel and Molson, 2003, pp. 130-132). The narratives can suggest how to handle such problems as the readers follow the protagonists heroic journeys while they learn about themselves and the world.

7 The adventure story

Grenby (2008) discusses the adventure story as a prominent genre that frequently blends with other literary categories. He notes that a text or a story can be rarely regarded solely as an adventure story. Most often, the genre blends with elements of historical fiction or non-fiction (p. 172). Both *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* are prime examples of the adventure story blending with other genres. In *Coraline*, the adventure the protagonist embarks on is central to the story, engaging readers in deeper topics that connect with her journey. *The Graveyard Book* follows Bod through a series of shorter adventures that ultimately lead him to a significant transformation. He matures into a young adult and departs from the graveyard, leaving behind the world of the dead. *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* both showcase narratives that follow a familiar genre structure. They feature young protagonists, who deal with neglectful or deceased parents, and face supernatural threats that put their safety, and the safety of others at risk. Despite their different settings and plots, both stories share a similar journey of independence and self-discovery as the protagonists confront danger and learn about their own bravery.

The defining characteristics of the adventure story genre are particularly appealing to the young reader. These narratives follow a protagonist as they embark on a journey into the unknown. They find themselves in dangerous situations and experience the thrill of overcoming challenges, either alone or with the help of companions. The adventure story protagonist is often initially portrayed as “powerless and dependent,” which is similar to fairy tale characters. However, as the journey progresses, the protagonist demonstrates how courageous and resourceful they can be, ultimately overcoming their insecurities, and coming out victorious in the end (Grenby, 2008, p. 174). Bod’s character is first introduced as a helpless toddler whose family is murdered and the murderer is after him, unlike Coraline’s family, which is taken from her by the Other Mother in an attempt to make Coraline surrender herself: “The usual hero adventure begins with someone from whom something has been taken, or who feels something is lacking in the normal experiences available or permitted to the members of his society. This person then takes off on a series of adventures beyond the ordinary, either to recover what has been lost or to discover some life-giving elixir” (Cambell and Moyers, 1991, p. 157).

Grenby (2008) describes the adventure story genre as being a “fantasy of empowerment” (p. 174). The sense of empowerment is a key factor that attracts young readers to the genre. They

find it easy to envision themselves as the protagonist, which enhances the appeal for the typical young reader. For example, in *Coraline*, an eleven-year-old girl discovers a magical passage and begins her adventure into a parallel world. In *The Graveyard Book*, a boy named Bod is granted “The Freedom of the Graveyard” and experiences both the real world and the parallel world. He goes on adventures with the help of his supernatural protectors and his human friend Scarlett. Bod’s abilities start to fade as he ages, which represents his transition into adulthood. This suggests that the empowerment provided by the adventures are limited to his childhood, when he needed someone to be there for him. As he matures, he is able to venture out on his own and leave the fantasy world behind him to confront the challenges of an adult life.

According to Nikolajeva (1996), there are canonical texts: “the very essence of information” that inspire non-canonical texts which exhibit a similar structure to the canonical ones. When children read an adventure story they subconsciously compare and relate it with all the adventure stories they have read before. This process of relating the current text to their past reading experiences represents what Nikolajeva (1996) refers to as the “creative work during reading.” This process is often overlooked, especially when children repeatedly keep choosing the same type of story (p. 55). As they read *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*, children inevitably draw comparisons to other adventure stories, both canonical and non-canonical, that they have encountered before.

A classic adventure story often centers around a heroic protagonist who embarks on a transformative journey. This journey typically unfolds in a strange and exotic setting, immersing the character in a world filled with wonder and challenge (Butts, 2004, p. 344; Grenby, 2008, p. 181). These unfamiliar landscapes are defined by danger and mystery, and they play a crucial role in the narratives. They present various conflicts that the hero must face, and they “act in a quasi-symbolical way to reinforce the sense of moral obstacles which the young hero struggles to overcome” (Butts, 2004, p. 344). While this formula works for most, Grenby (2008) argues that the “best adventure stories are the ones moving from the usual formula in intriguing and inventing ways” (p. 181). England, while not being exotic nor unfamiliar, still offers quite unusual settings in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. It creates an eerie and fantastical atmosphere because of the locations: an old dilapidated house with a magical passage to a parallel world and a graveyard that exists in both realms. While the concept of a parallel world is not novel, it becomes particularly intriguing as it serves as an unsettling version of the primary setting of Coraline’s home. Similarly, *The Graveyard Book*’s graveyard establishes an eerie feeling by blurring the line between the living and the dead.

Gaiman uses the graveyard setting as something already considered frightening and populates it predominantly with quirky characters who instill a sense of safety in both Bod and the reader. This contrasts with *Coraline*, whose daunting house happens to be even more daunting in a parallel world constructed to make the protagonist feel more at home.

During their adventures, the heroic protagonists will often find themselves accompanied by a companion (Butts 2004, p. 344). Typically, the companion's role is to assist the protagonist. If the companion is a human, they may help with navigating the local language, especially if the setting is somewhere exotic, or they possess some other quality the protagonist lacks. In *The Graveyard Book*, Bod befriends a human girl named Scarlett. Although she is not present during every adventure Bod takes, she returns later as a teenager. Bod teaches her about the graveyard's mysteries and fantastical beings, while she helps him uncover the truth about his family's murder. In *Coraline*, the protagonist's adventure companion is a talking black cat, an anthropomorphic character which possesses the remarkable ability to move freely between the real world and the parallel, Other World, functioning as a guide for Coraline as she navigates this strange reality. Unlike the other characters in the Other World, the cat does not have a separate, button-eyed clone in the Other World, suggesting its trustworthiness. It is aware of the dangers in the Other World and warns Coraline about the sinister Other Mother: "She wants something to love, I think. [...] Something that isn't her. She might want something to eat as well. It's hard to tell with creatures like that." (Gaiman, 2008, p. 38).

The adventure story genre, which was once considered suitable solely for boys, underwent a significant transformation during the 19th century expansion of the British Empire. These stories were often used to influence young boys to serve in the armed forces or work in British colonies. Popular works such as *The Settlers in Canada* (1844) and *Masterman Ready, or the Wreck of the Pacific* (1841–2) were intended to cultivate the spirit of adventure and loyalty to the British Empire (Butts, 2004, p. 341). However, as the 20th century progressed, British society experienced notable changes. Finally, there was an emergence of women writers and girls as protagonists. New themes were introduced for the modern adventure story, as mentioned by Butts (2004): "racism, the environment, and debates about the meaning of political freedom" (p. 351), which gave the adventure story the means to explore new uncharted territories, as can also be seen in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. For example, *Coraline* features a girl protagonist with strong opinions and a sense of adventure, whose parents reject traditional gender roles. Rather than glorifying adventure for its own sake, Gaiman uses the stories of *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* to explore the emotional challenges of childhood.

These tales deal with issues many young people encounter, and while the protagonists struggle at times, they ultimately learn to navigate their fears and confront their realities.

The adventure story genre has its origins in narratives such as the tales of Robin Hood, as well as 18th century works like Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). While these early adventure stories were initially written for adult audiences, they have also proven enticing to young readers. Over time, the genre has evolved to include stories specifically aimed at children, focusing on themes of survival, exploration, and moral instruction. As the adventure story genre has found its place in children's literature, even the early works mentioned have been adapted and retold for younger audiences (Butts, 2004, p. 340). Like the first adventure stories, contemporary works like *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* are enjoyed by both children and adults. Although these modern tales are published for children, they incorporate unsettling themes, humor, and fantasy elements that captivate readers of all ages (Corbett, 2011).

8 Magical realism

Magical realism as a genre is a newer term coined in Germany in the 1920s. It gained traction around the 1980s when it became known by three names: “magic realism”, “magical realism” and “marvellous realism.” According to Maggie Ann Bowers (2004), the term is an oxymoron, consisting of two concepts contradictory to one another. However, it is the contradictory elements that made the concept so intriguing and popular, as it highlighted the conversation about alternative approaches to reality (p. 1). It is a genre that blends the highly improbable and the probable and enhances the other genres in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. The protagonists navigate fantastical adventures in unusual settings, real and fantastical, they experience childhood in a unique way, but with similar identity issues every person faces, and discover themselves in the process. They both learn of their bravery and strength by meeting and interacting with strange creatures, good and bad, who influence their lives.

Wendy B. Faris (2004) identifies five primary characteristics of magical realism, all of which are evident in Gaiman's narratives, *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. These characteristics illustrate how Gaiman blends the ordinary with the extraordinary in his storytelling. She refers to the first element as an “irreducible element” of magic. It is a characteristic that cannot be explained by the laws of our universe, just like in fantasy. This element indicates the presence of magical phenomena, unexplainable creatures and events in the otherwise normal circumstances of the real world. It is not logical, nor easily explained as it does not exist. However, to the reader, nothing is definite. Faris argues that it cannot be easily integrated into reality in the same way mythical, religious or folkloric literary traditions can (p. 7). In the process of blending the familiar with the mostly unexplainable, writers in the magical realism genre can create a sense of wonder and mystery within a relatively realistic setting. Gaiman does exactly that in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. The first example is the magical passage in *Coraline*, which is sometimes visible and at other times is just a brick wall behind a small door. There is also a black cat which can only speak in the parallel world; the presence of the three ghostly children as the Other Mother's prisoners; and the Other Mother, who created a whole Other World for her enjoyment, and it is never truly explained why or how. In *The Graveyard Book*, some of the “irreducible elements” include the graveyard itself, as it is a parallel world, and a real world simultaneously. It is an unexplainable phenomenon of ghostly figures and creatures being in the real world, but invisible to the average person. Furthermore, the abilities given to Bod by the ghost community, which they possess as well, allow him to

walk unseen, fade, and communicate with the dead. They defy all rational explanation, as do the ghostly figures and other creatures themselves, especially the community called Jacks of All Trades, whose purpose and existence are very vaguely explained.

The second element of magical realism is the description of the “realism in the magical realism” (Faris, 2004, p. 14). A story is written in a realistic setting, making the magical details more plausible. This technique can be adapted in several ways, as seen in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*, where both settings present a blend of reality and fantasy. In *Coraline*, the fictional world closely resembles the real world. The setting of the Other World is made to look like an alternative, upgraded version of Coraline’s real house and backyard. In contrast, Gaiman takes a more straightforward approach in *The Graveyard Book*, where the magical setting is also part of the real-world setting. The magic part of the graveyard is hidden from the average living person.

The third factor of magical realism is the presence of “unsettling doubt” in a narrative. This element creates uncertainty in the reader’s mind as they struggle to understand if it is fantastical or realistic, or something in between. Before something magical is considered irreducible, the story presents it in a neutral way to confuse and intrigue the reader, to consider what is real, and what is not (Faris, 2004, p. 17). In *Coraline*, the protagonist’s experience with the blending of realities leads her to question what is real. This confusion arises as she begins to see and hear things that are not there, particularly before discovering the parallel world that distorts her familiar space in creative ways. According to Richard Gooding (2008), Gaiman’s *Coraline* is technically innovative, largely because: “Gaiman begins to blur these boundaries [between real and fantasy] almost immediately” (p. 393). For instance, when Coraline initially looks behind the door, where the magical passage to the Other World should be: “Her mother was right. The door didn’t go anywhere. It opened onto a brick wall” (Gaiman, 2002, p. 13). The unsettling doubt in *The Graveyard Book* manifests in Bod’s interactions with the real world. For example, when he attends school, it is described as him being so inconspicuous, that almost anyone barely notices him in class: “... when the Owens kid was out of sight he was out of mind” (Gaiman, 2008, p. 98).

The fourth characteristic of magical realism is called “Merging Realms.” This concept involves the fusion of the ordinary world with the extraordinary, where both realms coexist within the same narrative, and where fantastical elements can be treated as normal by some or all characters. As Faris (2004) notes: “The magical realist vision thus exists at the intersection of

two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions” (p. 21). Coraline and her neighbors demonstrate an acceptance of the magical within their realistic world. The singing mice, the Other World, and the smart cat that helps navigate Coraline all represent fantastical elements that are treated as something ordinary. This concept is even more evident in *The Graveyard Book*, where the graveyard portrays a place where the supernatural coexists with the natural, and Bod is somewhere in between. He can interact with the living people as well as with the fantastic creatures. He is a living human boy being raised by the graveyard ghosts and other creatures.

The fifth and final element, the “Disruptions of Time, Space, and Identity” shifts away from the conventional time, space, and identity. Time and space can easily be distorted in a parallel world or in a magical setting. The disruption of identity is also easily achieved as magical realism opens a place for imaginative creatures: “The multivocal nature of the narrative and the cultural hybridity that characterize magical realism extends to its characters, which tend toward a radical multiplicity” (Faris, 2004, p. 25). The distortion is obvious in *The Graveyard Book*. Time and space in the graveyard do not hold much value as most inhabitants are ghosts attached to the graveyard, but the best example is present in chapter five, “Danse Macabre.” The annual dance between the living and the dead that occurs only when a specific flower, “the winter blossom,” blooms in the graveyard. The dead can leave the graveyard, which is unusual because they are bound to the graveyard, death itself comes to the dance, and they dance with the living, who do not remember anything the following day. Bod and Coraline have their identities challenged as they navigate the realms they occupy and are met with creatures that confuse them. In *Coraline*, the disruption of identity is most prominent with the distorted versions of Coraline’s real parents as she is left to wonder what or who is behind them. Later it is revealed that the Other Mother created them, and everything else in the Other World as she wanted to replicate time, space, and identity from the real world.

9 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to identify and analyze six different genres in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. Both works belong to the broad category of children's literature and are examples of genre mixing. The genres that *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* include are the following: the family story, coming-of-age novel (Bildungsroman), gothic fiction, fantasy, the adventure story, and magical realism.

The family story genre has evolved from traditional "Victorian moral tales" to a more diverse and dynamic space (Attebery, 2009). Happy families are not the norm anymore as the portrayal of unconventional and dysfunctional family situations has become more common. Gaiman's works, such as *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*, show exactly that. In *The Graveyard Book*, Bod's unconventional ghostly family emphasizes the value of family and community. In contrast, *Coraline* shows a modern family where parents are busy and distant, leading Coraline to seek a perfect family with the Other Mother, who turns out to be malevolent. Both stories challenge traditional family dynamics and explore the importance of family and community in shaping a child's life.

The Bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, follows a protagonist's psychological and moral development from childhood to adulthood, focusing on their quest for identity through challenges (Bakhtin, 1986). Gaiman's narratives exemplify this genre, showcasing protagonists who undergo significant emotional growth while going on fantastical adventures. In *Coraline*, the protagonist confronts her fears and navigates complex family dynamics, while Bod in *The Graveyard Book* evolves from an innocent child to a self-aware young adult, shaped by his unique upbringing among ghosts and creatures. Both narratives highlight themes of identity, belonging, and growth, demonstrating how personal experiences contribute to the characters' development, especially when confronted with challenges.

Gothic fiction has evolved over centuries, influenced by national and social contexts, with the "British Gothic" gaining popularity in the eighteenth century, educating through fear rather than experience (Smith, 2013; Howarth, 2014). Today, it appears in both children's and adult literature. Gaiman's use of Gothic elements, including ghosts, dark settings, and supernatural beings, creates a sense of the uncanny, making readers face their fears and anxieties. However, he balances these elements with humor and light-heartedness, making it more accessible for younger readers.

Fantasy is a diverse genre that explores life's mysteries and the struggle between good and evil. Key elements, such as an "unreal" phenomenon and a human or human-like character, are present in both *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. Gaiman's protagonists, Coraline and Bod, embody relatable human traits while confronting fantastical challenges in their fights against evil.

Grenby (2008) discusses the adventure story as a "fantasy of empowerment," appealing to young readers who can see themselves in the protagonists. The genre often blends with others, such as in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. The narratives feature classic adventure story protagonists, who embark on dangerous journeys, overcoming supernatural threats, which helps them grow and become independent.

Magical realism, coined in Germany in the 1920s, became popular in the 1980s under names like "magic realism." Maggie Ann Bowers (2004) describes it as an oxymoron, combining contradictory elements that spark discussions about alternative realities. This genre blends the improbable with the probable, which is evident in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* when they are compared to Faris's five characteristics of magical realism: irreducible elements, unsettling doubt, realism in the magical realism, merging realms and disruptions of time, space, and identity.

Considering the above, it is evident that Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* incorporate six different genres: the family story, coming-of-age novel (Bildungsroman), gothic fiction, fantasy, the adventure story, and magical realism.

References

- Alston, A. (2008). *The Family in English Children's Literature*. (1st ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203928752>
- Attebery, B. (2009). Elizabeth Enright and the Family Story as Genre. *Children's Literature*, 37, 114 - 136.
- Attebery, B. (2022). *Fantasy: How it works*. Oxford University Press.
- Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel). In *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (pp. 10-59). University of Texas Press.
- Becher, D. (2016). Neil Gaiman's Ghost Children. In M. Fleischhack & E. Schenkel (Eds.), *Ghosts - or the (Nearly) Invisible: Spectral Phenomena in Literature and the Media* (pp. 91–106). Peter Lang AG.
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2024, April 19). Edward Gorey. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Retrieved July 11, 2024 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Edward-Gorey>
- Buckley, C.A. (2020). Reading 'Fundamental British Values' Through Children's Gothic: Imperialism, History, Pedagogy. *Children's Literature in Education*, 51, 21-40.
- Campbell, J., & Moyers, B. (1991). *Power of Myth*. (pp. 156-207). Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.
- Chang, T. C. (2015). I am nobody: Fantasy and identity in Neil Gaiman's "The Graveyard Book". *Journal of English Studies*, 13, 7-18.
- Corbett, S. (2011, October 27). The Case of 'The Graveyard Book'. *Publishers Weekly*. Retrieved July 18, 2024 <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-book-news/article/49277-the-case-of-the-graveyard-book.html>
- Faris, W. B. (2004). *Ordinary Enchantments: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*. Vanderbilt University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv17vf68f>
- Gaiman, N., & McKean, D. (2002). *Coraline*. New York, HarperCollins.
- Gaiman, N., & McKean, D. (2008). *The Graveyard Book*. First edition. New York, HarperCollins Pub.
- Gates, P. S., Steffel, S. B., & Molson, F. J. (2003). *Fantasy literature for children and young adults*. Scarecrow Press.
- Gooding, R. (2008). "Something Very Old and Very Slow": *Coraline*, Uncanniness, and Narrative Form. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 33(4), 390-407.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.0.1874>.
- Grenby, M. O. (2008). *Children's literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Halsall, A. (2021). Visualizing the Gothic in Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* and Its Illustrated Adaptations. In P. Ferstl (Ed.), *Volume 5 Dialogues between Media* (pp. 123-142). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110642056-011>

- Howarth, M. (2014). *Under the bed, creeping: psychoanalyzing the gothic in children's literature*. (pp. 1-11) McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Hunt, P. (2004). *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (1st ed.). (pp.340-351) Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203325667>
- Matek, L., & Prtenjača, Z. (2023). Koralina Neila Gaimana: gotički roman o odrastanju [Neil Gaiman's Coraline: A Gothic Bildungsroman]. *Libri et liberi*, 12(2), 275-291. <https://doi.org/10.21066/carcl.libri.12.2.3>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Bildungsroman*. Retrieved July 04, 2024, from MerriamWebster.com dictionary: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bildungsroman>
- Nikolajeva, M. (1996). *Children's Literature Comes of Age: Toward a New Aesthetic* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315667492>
- Oziewicz, M. (2015). Growing up with (ir)replaceable parents: Neil Gaiman's The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish, Coraline, and The Graveyard Book. *Bohemica litteraria*, 18(2), 83-98.
- Parsons, E., Sawers, N., & Mcinally, K. (2009). The Other Mother: Neil Gaiman's Postfeminist Fairytales. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 33, 371 - 389.
- Prtenjača, Z. (2019). "Where Am I in This M ST": Decoding the Heroic Identity and Maturity of Neil Gaiman's Coraline. *Kick: Students' Magazine*, (2), 47–54.
- Reynolds, K. (2011). *Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press
- Seufert, J. (2018, December 16). *Neil Gaiman Interview #2: Coraline and the Influence of Edward Gorey*. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DANIQOOVXVI&t=5s&ab_channel=ChristopherSeufert
- Smith, A. (2013). *Gothic Literature* (NED-New edition, 2). Edinburgh University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g09zdb>

Izjava o izvornosti rada

Izjavljujem da je moj završni/diplomski rad izvorni rezultat mojeg rada te da se u izradi istoga nisam koristio drugim izvorima osim onih koji su u njemu navedeni.



(vlastoručni potpis studenta)