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Fairy Tale Tradition in Neil Gaiman's
Children's Books
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*I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.*

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Author's signature

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PREFACE

The first encounter with literature in one's life is usually through children's books. They shape child's attitude towards literature and influence future willingness to read. They form critical thinking using metaphors of real life, they teach what is good and bad, they give advice but also provide reading practise, entertainment and adventure. Before the eighteenth century despite their merits, mass production of children's books was non-existent. The social changes and shifts in attitude towards children in the eighteenth century gave rise to a new genre - children's literature. The question of what is appropriate for children and what they should learn from their reading suddenly became topical. The need for simple moral tales initiated the interconnectedness of children's literature and fairy tales. Although from today's point of view they are children's domain, the original folktales were created for adults. The simple but captivating narrative, fantastic elements and setting engage the young imagination so children adapted them as their own, but many a collection of fairy tales is merely a re-imagined version of folktales without the adult themes. Authorial children's books follow the tradition of fairy tales in their narrative structure and motifs but are enriched with elements specifically designed to appeal to children. Such elements contribute to educational significance as well as to the enjoyment of the story. One of the most dominant elements in this sense is the main character, the hero or heroine being a child. The young reader feels included, empathises with them and learns valuable lessons about growing up. Children's literature is not only important for the child but also interesting for the adult.

The reason I chose this topic is the intertextuality and allusiveness of children's literature that can only be seen through the eyes of an adult reader. The continuum of folktales, wondertales, fairy tales, literary fairy tales and children's literature makes

reading children's literature an astonishing journey with many levels of meaning left to uncover.

The paper focuses on the employment of fairy tale motifs, archetypes and narrative strategies in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book.* The aim of the paper is to structurally show how modern children's literature relies on and alludes to traditional folktale. In the *Introduction* I provide a theoretical framework for the analysis itself which is covered in the *Conclusion*. Since the books are not widely known, their synopses as well as a short biography of the author, is included.

Since it is not the objective of this paper to judge the authenticity of a collection of fairy tales and the authorial input in literary fairy tales in relation to folktales I do not strictly separate traditional folktale motifs from those found in literary fairy tales but rather treat them as a continuum. In this place I would like to quote Jack Zipes's *Introduction* to *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*:

> During its long evolution, the literary fairy tale distinguished itself as genre by 'appropriating' many motifs, signs, and drawings from folklore, embellishing them and combining them with elements from other literary genres, for it became gradually necessary in the modern world to adapt a certain kind of oral storytelling called the wondertale to standards of literacy and make it acceptable for diffusion in the public sphere. (XVI)

Instead of comparing Gaiman's books to a representative fairy tale or two, I work with Aarne–Thompson index of folktale motifs and various secondary sources that deal with literary fairy tales as well as traditional folktales to identify and collaborate on the motifs and plot devices relevant to *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book.*

Last but not least I would like to thank Prof. Milada Franková for her kindliness and Dr. Věra Pálenská for setting me on the right track.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction deals with establishing fairy tale as a genre within folklore, literary fairy tale and children's literature based on audience, plot devices and didactic features; brief historical overview closes the chapter.

GENRE

According to most literary critics and theoreticians there is not a satisfactory definition of a fairy tale as a genre. Since the term *fairy tale* encompasses folktales, literary fairy tales and in broader sense children's literature; it is hard to rigorously define it. Jack Zipes, an acclaimed expert on fairy tales points out that: "…fairy tale distinguished itself as genre both by appropriating the oral folk tale and expanding it, for it became gradually necessary in the modern world to adapt the oral tale to standards of literacy and to make it acceptable for diffusion in the public sphere" ("Spells of Enchantment" 3).

Fairy tales emerged from oral tradition–from folk wondertales. These tales can be easily decomposed into universal motifs (as done by Aarne and Propp) which obscure their uniform plot. In his famous and influential study *Theory and History of Folklore*, Vladimir Propp establishes basic plot devices of traditional fairy tales. He calls them folk *wondertales.* Although *fairy tale* and *wondertale* are not synonymous, most folk fairy tales and literary fairy tales share the properties and plot devices Propp describes in his study. The properties are: violation of a prohibition, a dispatch and departure on a quest, assumption of a task, encounter with a villain or a magical being bearing a gift, a battle with the adversary, temporary setback, the use of a magical object and ultimate success (Propp 82-97; Zipes, *When Dreams Come True* 3-4). By applying different processes onto the introduced elements, Propp argues that all wondertales are a combination of a set of elements with a fixed plot outline. These

processes include *reduction* (removal of an aspect: "the hut on chicken legs" becomes "the hut"), *expansion* (addition of detail: "the hut on chicken legs" becomes "the hut on chicken legs in the forest on a pancake"), *contamination* (a (il)logical addition or modification of an element in time: the hut "turned" becomes "keeps turning around"), *inversion* (reversal: e.g. gender roles), *intensification and attenuation* (e.g. the hero is exiled instead of being sent on a quest), *substitution* (one wondertale element is substitute for another based on different principles e.g. religion, superstition), *modification* (elements of unknown origins, often local distribution and variations or according to personal preferences are added) and *assimilation* (combining two or more different elements: "a hut by the river" and "a palace under a golden roof" become "a hut under a golden roof") (Propp 89-94). According to this principle a definition of the genre can be drawn: fairy tale is defined in terms of having magical or wondrous episodes, characters, events or symbols, timeless, generic setting and one-dimensional characters (Magoulick).

Although Vladimir Propp based his study of folklore on Russian folktales, his study is applicable on other European, and in part, Oriental fairy tales as well. This exposes "a cross-cultural and multi-layered origins and meanings" of the pan-European folktales (Zipes, "Cross Cultural Connections" 845).

Nowadays fairy tales are viewed as children's domain, but fairy tales were not originally created for children (Zipes, "Introduction" 16). The creation myths and other oral tales of, for example the Native Americans, which from today's point of view would be labelled as tales for children, were created by adults for adults. They were to clarify the process of creation, the laws of nature and to originate a common cultural foundation for communal bonding. Similarly, these properties are valid for the oral tales traditional fairy tales are believed to originate from. As a genre aimed mainly at

children fairy tales were established through the process of Western civilization (Zipes, *When Dreams Come True* 1). However, these tales always appealed to children because of their imaginativeness, simplicity and children's "great desire for change and independence" (1).

The desire for change is also visible in the principal plot. The departure on a quest is initiated by a prohibition or cultural interdiction and the transgression of these restrictions. The outcome of protagonist's actions in regard to social norms and morals can be either positive or negative. Positive outcome is the acceptance of the protagonist's actions and an appropriation of new moral values in the society. Negative outcome means that the protagonist, the wrongdoer is punished and in the process of punishment restored to his original place in the society (Stephens, 986).

DIDACTICS

For the purposes of didactics it is necessary to distinguish traditional folktales from authorial children's literature. Children's literature emerged in the eighteen century as a consequence of important social changes. Childhood was recognized as a separate stage in human life with distinct needs and wants (Conrad 182). Children's books serve didactic purposes as well as entertain children. Problematically, traditional folktales contain adult topics like murder, violence, obscenity and rape. Although they were originally not intended for children they were heard in the households and because of their simple narrative structure, explicit moral values and happy ending children responded well to them (Nikolajeva, "Children's Literature" 185). The tales that were adopted into children's stories and used by educators were often abridged, edited and rewritten to coincide with the current moral climate. These lie on the edge between folktale and literary fairy tale, they are more accessible to children, specifically aimed at them, but they still retain their "double address" (Nikolajeva, "Children's Literature"

186). It proved to undesirable to remove all the adult themes, especially those that are in the centre of the story and eventually lead to the moral of the tale–for example the moral of the Little Red Riding Hood: do not take advice or talk to strangers is showed by the grandmother being eaten or in Perrault's version it is even the unfortunate heroine herself who gets eaten by the wolf.

The eighteenth century saw a renewed interest in folklore. Folktales were being written down, compiled and inevitably altered. Fairy tales we tend to read now are literary fairy tales with recognizable editors who collected and adapted the oral folktales. However, because of their oral roots it is impossible to trace one "original" story, there are always many versions in circulation but the "double address" remains. Children's books on the other hand, are authorial and aimed specifically at children, although many are inspired by folktales, they have a "single address." They are designed to entertain and inform the young audience about life, customs and moral (Lynch-Brown 20). According to Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson the benefits of reading children's books are personal and academic. They provide enjoyment, inspiration, vicarious experience, heritage, they ignite imagination, understanding, empathy and help to develop literary and artistic preferences and moral reasoning; they also improve reading, language and writing skills (3-7). These universally veracious values are in the world of children's books linked to age. Different books are intended for different ages. Books for children under the age of 5 or 6 are likely to be virtually plotless and contain a lot of pictures. The complexity of literature advances in direct relation to the age of the child. From nursery rhymes and repetitive tales, children around the age of 5 are likely to enjoy more intricate fairy tales (15-18). Traditional fairy tales, either read aloud, or retold by parents from memory, seem to be preferred by parents and children

alike in comparison with modern tales with moral and didactic message appropriated for the modern world (e.g. environment, healthy life style, urban dangers).

One of the demands on children's literature is the presence of morals. Tales that most notably meet this demand are didactic tales: "A moral is a lesson to be learned about right and wrong, and good and evil, especially as it applies to human character or behaviour" (Fernandes, 635). Some tales have its moral lesson explicitly stated at the end of the story in a form of a maxim (Perrault), but most commonly the meaning is implicit.

Exempla and fabliaux popular in the Middle Ages are examples of didactic tales. The distinction between didactic and non-didactic tales was erased as late as the seventeenth century by French moralist who wrote to please and instruct ("plaire et instruir;" Trinquet 266). Since then many folk fairy tales were edited to suit the need to instruct children about the way society works. Other tales with a didactic plot are cautionary tales, which deals specifically with showing the consequences of wrongdoings. They encourage children to obey their parents and reinforce social norms. The plot of the tale revolves around the punishment in a form of a misfortune the protagonist faces as a consequence of their disobedience.

HISTORY

Folktales were principally transmitted orally. Besides wondertales, oral tradition among other genres, includes oral histories, epic poetry, religious and ceremonial appeals, songs, and recipes (Maring, 710). Oral transmission means that each storytelling experience is different and unique. The stories are transformed in time to facilitate new social climate. Orality in this sense is a bearer of diversity and change in time, space and culture. The fluidity and dynamic nature of an oral transmission leads to an independent development of several versions of one narrative. The need to produce a

text without written record contributed to the use of formulaic language but also formulaic images, motifs, characters and story patterns.

Serious research into oral folktales and subsequent transcriptions began in the eighteen century. It was propelled by the interest in defining national identity (Maring 713). By the act of recording the tales, an "original" text was made. Although it serves the role of tradition-bearer it no longer evolves through orality. The transcribed wondertales constitute the fairy tale canon.

Within the European tradition, one of the first systematic collectors and researchers were Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. They included statements on methodology, critical notes on narrators and sources in their collection *Children's and Household Tales* (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen,* 1812). This landmark work started a wave of interest in fairy tales and German became the lingua franca for folklorists up until the 1950's. Grimm's methodology was for a long time surrounded by myths of them gathering their tales from peasants on journeys to the countryside; recent findings, however, show that they transcribed oral folktales from invited storytellers. These raconteurs were mostly "educated young women from the middle class or aristocracy" (Zipes, "*When Dreams Come True*" 73). The tales for their collection were edited, in this manner they restored some of the dynamic properties of oral tales but also dilute the authenticity of the tales. The framework for their editing practise included stylistic changes as well as making the tales more appropriate for children audience.

In Britain the predominant folktale genre to be studied was the ballad, thanks to Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). The first scholarly fairy tale collection was Thomas Crofton Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions of South Ireland* (1825; Stein 170). Another scholar researching fairy tales but criticised for his unscientific methods, was a Scotsman, Andrew Lang. Lang translated selected tales

from Charles Perrault's *Histoires ou Contes du Temps Passé* (*Popular Tales,* 1888), Grimms' collections; and he wrote a 12 volume fairy tale collection, each named after a different colour. The first English collection was Edwin Sydney Hartland's *English Fairy and Other Folk Tales* (1890), which however did not involve fieldwork as it based on written sources. In English literary tradition, fairy tale motifs are present in such works as *Beowulf* (ca. 8th-11th c.)*, Le Morte d'Arthur* (Sir Thomas Malory, 1481)*, The Canterbury Tales* (Geoffrey Chaucer, 1386-1400)*, The Faerie Queen* (Edmund Spenser, 1590) or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (William Shakespeare, ca. 1590-6).

LITERARY FAIRY TALES

Folklore research and the growth of the middle classes brought about a new genre of literary fairy tales and children's literature. Literary fairy tales as opposed to folk fairy tales or wondertales have a unique author and they exist in print without having more than one version (Harries 578). First literary fairy tales, distinctive from oral folktales and authorial narratives with a few fairy tales elements, are believed to be of Italian origin: Giovan Francesco Straparola's *Le piacevoli notte* (*The Pleasant Nights*, 1550–53) and Giambattista Basile's *Lo cunto de li cunti*, or *Pentamerone* (*The Tale of Tales*, 1634–36). These tales, similarly to Boccaccio's *The Decameron* and Chaucer's *The Canterbury tales*, involve a pattern of a tale within a tale.

The genre flourished in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth century around a circle of women writers known as the *conteuses* (Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, Catherine Bernard, Marie-Jeanne L'héritier de Villandon, and Henriette-Julie de Castelnau). The name of their circle is derived from the French *contes de fées* (transl. "fairy tales"; the English term was coined from the translation of d'Aulnois). Charles Perrault writings also fall into this period. Perrault canonized classics like *Sleeping Beauty, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella,* and *Puss in Boots.*

During the eighteenth century literary fairy tales gradually became devised uniquely for children–for their entertainment and education. First by the process of abridging the adult fairy tales like Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont's *Le Magasin des Enfants* (*The Young Misses' Magazine*, 1756) or Grimm's *Kleine Ausgabe* (*Small Edition,* 1825); later the nineteenth century gave birth to some of the well-known literary fairy tales. Both Hans Christian Andersen and Oscar Wilde who were in their time celebrated for their literary fairy tales, their collections were an unprecedented success, are nowadays rarely read by young audience. Andersen wrote four collections *Eventyr, Fortalte For Børn* (*Fairy Tales, Told for Children*, 1835-42), *Nye Eventyr* (*New Fairy Tales*, 1844-8), *Historier* (*Stories*, 1852-5), and *Nye Eventyr Og Historier* (*New Fairy Tales and Stories*, 1858-72). Oscar Wilde's collections of aesthetic tales include *The Happy Prince* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891). Their fairy tales are considered to be more for adults than for children. Apart from their dark atmosphere, elements of mystery and misfortune, they rarely end happily.

Since literary fairy tales cannot be categorized under folktales because of their fixed publication status and unique authorship, it is useful to establish them on the basis of target readership under a broader umbrella of children's literature. Other sub-genres of children's literature that appropriated and expanded the traditional motifs and plots apart from literary fairy tales is fantasy (stories that involve magic and wondrous setting, usually longer and more complex than literary fairy tales e.g. Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland;* Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*), and realistic fiction (adventure driven stories set in the real world like Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer*). Some critics argue against including fantasy in children's literature. Both *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* are examples of cross-writing, texts that appeal equally to children and adults. Fantasy books that appeal to children are written either

exclusively for their audience or at least with them in mind (Gaiman's *Stardust*). A sizeable segment of fantasy, on the other hand, is written for adults and their inclusion in children's literature is unfounded.

In England the Victorian era is regarded as a golden age of children's literature. Initiated by the *Condition of England Debate*–a public inquiry into the effects of the Industrial Revolution on the life in England, writers like Charles Dickens, John Ruskin or Catherine Gallagher began questioning the quality of human life in heavily industrialized urban setting. Literature was employing fairy tale form to emphasize social injustice, and also, the innocence of children: "…the Victorian writers always had two implied ideal readers in mind: the middle-class parent and child — so that they would take a noble and ethical stand against forces of intolerance and authoritarianism" (Zipes, *When Dreams Come True* 147, 150). To name a few examples of influential Victorian writers of literary fairy tales: John Ruskin (*The King of the Golden River*, 1851), William Makepeace Thackeray (*The Rose and the Ring*, 1855), George MacDonald (*The Day Boy and the Night Girl*, 1882), Harriet Childe-Pemberton (*The Fairy Tales of Every Day*, 1882) or aforementioned Oscar Wilde. In terms of contents Victorian fairy tales were full of fairies, goblins and witches. Carole Silver ascribes the use of these traditional characters to the seemingly rigid Victorian society. The symbolic nature of folk motifs in folktales, because of their antiquity, is hard to trace. In literary fairy tales the situation is more favourable to social analysis. Silver attributes their usage to the question of gender (the fairy bride suggests "women's desire for autonomy and equality in marriage, …[and] men's fantasies about capture and power, hence appealing to the culture at large") and race (dwarfs and goblins refer to African Pygmies with "the racializing and remythifying of dwarfs in general … [leading] to the creation of new and frightening monsters for Victorian fantasy and fiction"; 8).

SYNOPSES

CORALINE

   Coraline is a children's book. It combines the adventure of exploring an *other* world, childhood experience with traditional fairy tale elements and plot devices. The heroine, Coraline, much like Lewis Carroll's Alice, follows a long narrow pathway into another reality where everything seems mirrored. The house is the same but somehow better, more colourful but mysterious and uncanny. Her parents are more attentive but have shiny black buttons instead of their eyes. Coraline is asked to stay with her other mother and other father forever. She realizes that her real parents were kidnapped and hidden somewhere inside the other house. As a punishment for Coraline's unwillingness to commit to the other mother's affection she imprisons Coraline inside a mirror for the night. There Coraline is confronted with the ghosts of previous unfortunate children that succumbed to the luring of the other mother. From them she learns that the other mother is fond of games and that she has their souls. Coraline promises to help them and offers a bet to the other mother: if she is able to find the souls of the children, the other mother will release everyone. If she loses she will stay in the other world forever and let the other mother love her. Coraline has nobody to help her except for a cat and a stone talisman given to her by two retired actresses Miss Spink and Miss Forcible. Coraline soon realizes that the other world and everything and everyone in it is a part of the other mother, an evil bug-like being called Beldam. She becomes angry and frustrated when Coraline succeeds in finding the souls of the children with a help of the talismans and the other world starts to collapse. Coraline manages return to the real world. Although everything seems to be back in normal–the real parents are back and the dead children can move on–a part of the other mother, a severed hand managed to crawl into the real world. Looking for the key to the pathway to get back, the hand follows Coraline who

sets up a trap. She places the key on a blanket over a deep well, when the hand crawls in to acquire the key it falls into the well and is lost forever.

THE GRAVEYARD BOOK

The Graveyard Book has an episodic character that allows for the book to be read like a serial story with a central plot connecting the book: A whole family is murdered by a man called Jack Frost who is a member of a secret society called the *Jacks of All Trades*. Only the youngest child, a toddler is able to escape by crawling into a nearby graveyard. While Jack is looking for the baby, the ghost residents of the graveyard adopt the baby by giving him the *Freedom of the Graveyard* and naming him Nobody "Bod" Owens. By this act the living Nobody is granted the same abilities the ghosts have–although not invisible, he is virtually impossible to be seen. His capacity to blend in with the ghosts enables him to live and grow up there. He is looked after by his adoptive parents Mr and Mrs Owens, Silas, a guardian who is nor living nor dead and Miss Lupescu a werewolf teacher. Bod is growing up and in his many adventures throughout the years he meets a girl - Scarlett, visits an ancient tomb, a ghoul city and even goes to school. Meanwhile Jack is still looking for him. He disguises himself as a historian living near the graveyard and befriends Scarlett. He lures both into a trap and with other Jacks tries to kill them both. In the final confrontation Bod manages to outsmart the three Jacks when the last one, Frost, seizes Scarlett. The tomb they are in, however, is occupied by a creature named Sleer who waits for its master to return. Bod tricks Jack into telling Sleer he is his master and it devours him to keep him safe and protected from the outer world. In the meantime Silas and Miss Lupescu destroy Jacks' network of societies which leaves Bod safe and free to wonder the world. The book ends with Nobody Owens growing up into maturity which means losing the Freedom of the Graveyard and departing to live life outside of the graveyard gates.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion contains the analysis of the fairy tale tradition in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. The body is divided according to themes around which each subsection is centred. First is the analysis of plots after which these motifs follow: animals, names, witches, mothers, violence and death.

PLOT

Vladimir Propp's summary of a typical plot conveys the transformation and dynamics of the fairy tale as a genre:

> A wondertale begins with some harm or villainy done to someone ... or with a desire to have something ... and develops through the hero's departure from home and encounters with the donor, who provides him with a magic agent that helps the hero find the object of the search. Further along, the tale includes combat with an adversary ... a return, and a pursuit. (Propp 102)

Propp argues that the characters and basic plot are static whereas the circumstances of the plot are the variables that provide dynamics to the story (82). *The Graveyard Book* and *Coraline* both follow the described plot. In *Coraline*, the heroine wishes for her parents to be more attentive, she crosses to the other world, meets a helper, defeats an adversary with the use of a magic object and embarks on a journey back home. Only the circumstances of the plot and Coraline's personal impulses make the story unique. *The Graveyard Book* begins with a murder and ends with Bod Owens acquiring a magical object and defeating the murderer; but the middle of the story is filled with side stories and elements that at the same time deviate from Propp's plot outline and confirms the dynamics of unique circumstances. In other words, by

following and unfolding the variable elements the core theme emerges (Vaz da Silva, "Transformation" 982).

Recent studies into fairy tale's social history suggest that the typical fairy tale plot, outlined by Propp, is a social device. The hero venturing outside his familiar surroundings and the subsequent magical help he receives is a metaphor for the absurdity of leaving an established social order (Tenèze 28-9). According to a structural analysis by Ténèze, the core theme is a "universal statement about the plight of humanity" (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* 5). Ténèze's point of view is from the view of social history. She applies her theory on folktales, which were made by common people who had little opportunities to improve their social status but who also relied heavily on the community. The strict social hierarchy, emphasis on communal homogeneity, and on the other hand, a struggle for individualism is present throughout human history and is reflected in some way in almost every literary piece. Other, non-universal principles are more difficult to identify. Wondertales are hundreds (some even thousands) of years old, and in the oral tradition underwent changes that make it impossible to trace the social history back further than a few generations of storytellers (Zipes, *When Dreams Come True* 6).

In Coraline's case, she wished her parents away. Broadly speaking Coraline's parents left her because she wanted them to be different. She desired to experience something different: "Coraline was bored" all the time and her parents did not have the time to entertain her (Gaiman, *Coraline* 19). Although the familiarity she left behind was substituted by something very close to the original: "She knew where she was: she was in her own home. She hadn't left...[but] no, it wasn't exactly the same" (Gaiman, *Coraline* 20). There was something peculiar and uncanny–the picture on the wall was "nasty" and Coraline's other mother had black buttons instead of her eyes. Coraline's

story is an example of transforming the adult theme of being expelled from society into a more intimate moral tale for children. The fear of being alone and the danger of wishing one's parents away are designed to evoke obedience, respect and affection towards their parents.

Bod Owens's ventures into the world outside the graveyard gate were also framed with misfortunes. In comparison with Coraline, his life was confided even more. Coraline had the misconceptions of a know-it-all child. With her wild imagination, she believed she knows everything there is to know, as the cat observed sarcastically: "'Well, you're the expert on these things,' said the cat drily. 'After all, what would I know? I'm only a cat'" (Gaiman, *Coraline* 27). Whereas Bod is more simple and appreciative. One of his outings is for the purpose of obtaining a headstone for a deceased witch that was buried in an unconsecrated land. His purpose was noble but his means were not. He stole an artefact hoping to sell it for the amount needed to buy the headstone and was punished by being imprisoned in the pawn shop. In comparison with Coraline who experienced a negative outcome of her actions–she is reintegrated to the society she had left. The effect of Bod's action is different–he is given a permission to go to school. Even though his action was framed with misfortune and immediate punishment, he proved a strength of character which was rewarded by the society by adopting a new set of values.

ANIMALS

The cat is a common motif in fairy tales. It can serve several purposes. In ancient Egypt the cat was a representation of a god and his power. European tradition took the "godly" characteristics and ascribes two seemingly contradictory characteristics to the cat–good and evil. Cats are seen as clever and loyal but also independent and cunning. They are often associated with witches as their helpers and incarnations (Nikolajeva

168). In *Coraline* the cat is the only true helper the heroine has, but the ambiguity is present. At first it appears that the cat is in fact the other mother/witch's accomplice because the cat is black (the colour associated with evil) and elusive. As the story progresses the cat is revealed to be the only creature able to travel through the door to the other reality and back as it pleases without having a doppelgänger. It knows what the other mother truly is and how to stop her: It gives advice to Coraline and disappears much like the Cheshire cat in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. The cat is the link between the two realities which is in concordance with Nikolajeva's view on the role of the cat in modern fairy tales and fantasy as a magic helper and transportation between "the everyday and the magical realms" (169). However, the cat does not communicate with Coraline after returning home anymore because: "Cats don't talk at home" (Gaiman, *Coraline* 27). The cat verifies Coraline's experience but at the same undermines it by staying silent. It leaves her to assume her victory and to realize the special meaning of her adventure.

Feline character is often depicted in opposition to canines. Dogs are devoted to their owners, they are trustworthy, loyal and have no ulterior motives in serving people. In *The Graveyard Books* the canine helper is Miss Lupescu (from Lat. *lupus* meaning *wolf*) who is a woman-werewolf character. She is strict but caring and affectionate in both her human and wolf/dog form. She is completely in control of her transformation. The transformation itself alludes to the genre of fairy tales and the transformation narrative they are based on (Vaz da Silva, "Transformation" 981). In fairy tales, every character and object can be transformed. The protagonist often changes his/her social status, the arrogant become humble and the unworthy are punished. Folktales following the traditional wondertale plot rarely end unhappily. They carry a message of hope for the "common folk" who in real life have little chance to climb the social ladder. In

children's literature happy ending represent very much the same–hope and faith in what the future will bring. Although the werewolf is traditionally a negative portrayal of uncontrollable animosity (symbols of sexuality; until 12th century *wolf* meant *prostitute*, then shift in meaning towards symbol of male lust), Gaiman removes the negative connotation by making the werewolf the child's helper ("Wolf" n.pag). Also rather than a "wolf" Miss Lupescu's animal form is referred to as a "dog": "The dog spoke in Miss Lupescu's voice" (Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book* 85). The official name, far more noble, is "Hounds of God": "Those that men call Werewolves or Lycanthropes call themselves the Hounds of God, as they claim their transformation is a gift from their creator, and they repay the gift with their tenacity, for they will pursue an evil-doer to the very gates of Hell" (88).

Other animals or animal-like characters in the stories assume more traditional roles. The Ghouls in *The Graveyard Book* (from Arabic *ghul,* "an evil spirit that robs graves and feeds on corpses") fall under Ogres: G20 Ghouls in Thompson's *Motif-index* and they really are cannibals ("Ghoul" n.pag). An ogre is a malicious monster and in the case of a *ghoul,* inclines towards cannibalism. Bod's encounter with the ghouls resemble a moral tale: a child is told not to go with strangers but disobeys and has to be rescued because the stranger wants to do harm. Bod is lured by the ghouls by false promises: "What you need is to go somewhere the people would appreciate you" (Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book* 69). Then he is being forced into becoming a ghoul: "He is going to become one of us" (72). The prospect of becoming a ghoul is repulsive not only because of the open cannibalism but because he would lose himself. The ghouls were once great people (for the demonstration Gaiman uses the Thirty-Third President of the United States, Emperor of China, Duke of Westminster, Bishop of Bath and

Wells and Victor Hugo) but except for their names (or titles) they have no recollection of their human past.

NAMES

In European fairy tale tradition the protagonists tend to have signifying names (Aurora, Cinderella, Jack, Red Riding Hood). Their names reveal their character, physical or mental trait or even faith (as opposed to supporting characters which are known only by their function in the story: stepmother, witch, brother etc.). With this in mind, Gaiman used the name "Nobody Owens" to convey ambiguity in the story. The substitute mother gave Bod his name because: "He looks like nobody but himself...He looks like nobody" (19). In her eyes the name signifies Bod's uniqueness, in his environment is signifies the ability to be invisible, not to be noticed and in the ghoul-episode it suggests the possibility of his existence being erased. Since "A fairy-tale ending, almost by definition, is an outcome that rewards the virtuous while punishing the wicked", Bod is punished for his disobedience by the scare the ghouls give him and in a more obvious sense by a broken leg (Ashliman 786). The topic is again revisited later in the book when Bod fights Jack. He is given an objective, a reason for fighting: "THEN FIND YOUR NAME" (Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book* 234). His name, the name given to him by his biological parents, links him to the past and gives him a place in the world of the living. What he discovers however, is that he himself is the link, not his name, his own flesh and blood:

> 'You want to know your name, boy, before I spill your blood on the
> stone?' Bod felt the cold of the knife at his neck. And in that moment,
> Bod understood. Everything slowed. Everything came into focus. 'I
> know my name,' he said. 'I'm Nobody Owens. That's who I am.' (264)

Bod's identity is already set. His blood lineage has nothing to offer him Bod does not already possess–he knows who he is, what he wants from life, he has his family and friends. His rejection of his birth heritage rewrites the traditional view of the family in folktales where the stepmother is cruel and orphans are deserted to find their own way in life (Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel).

The theme of a forgotten name/identity as a punishment is also present in *Coraline*. The three dead children whose ghosts Coraline meets all forgot their names: "Names, names, names...The names are the first things to go, after the breath has gone, and the beating of the heart. We keep our memories longer than our names" (Gaiman, *Coraline* 57). For Coraline, who is very sensitive about her name: "It's Coraline. Not Caroline. Coraline" the prospect of losing her identity is a push towards resistance which results in facing the villain who stands between the protagonist and happiness (Gaiman, *Coraline* 3).

Another allusion to names Gaiman uses is *Jack* in *The Graveyard Book.* "Jack Frost", "The Jacks of All Trades", "Every Man Jack" is a reference to the so-called *Jack tales*. The first occurrence of a *Jack* is in the tale *Jack and the Gyants* (1711) that appeared in a now lost chapbook. Since then the character frequently appears in tales with a consistent personality–"good-hearted, courageous, resourceful and lucky" (McCarthy 509). Although *Jack* is a relatively new character, it quickly got incorporated into existing folktale tradition and made novelty appearances in established tales. Most commonly Jack defeats a giant which according to Lindahl is not a direct allusion to the Biblical narrative but rather to the Arthurian legends where also the violent aspect of *Jack* originates (XV). *Jack tales* are based on a slaying of a giant and even though "...Jack tales were rewritten for refined sensibilities later in the 18th and 19th centuries, the crudity of their gory killings disappeared, King Arthur faded

away [and] Jack became an earthly Everyboy...", *Jack* always needs to resort to violence, explicit in his coarseness or implicit in his slyness, to overcome the giant (Zipes, "Jack Tales" 267-8). Gaiman took the crude, vulgar and violent *Jack* and refined him during the suggested centuries ("My order goes back before Babylon") into a cunning killer whose influence lies in the highest of places: "We're the Jacks of all Trades. We're everywhere" (Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book* 260, 256). The transgression of the contemporary *Jack* archetype serves as a link to the past, mainly to the use of violence as an instrument of entertainment.

WITCHES

Witches are one of the motifs where social changes reflected in folktales are most visible. There is an obvious transit from matriarchal to patriarchal values when comparing fairy tales recorded before, during and after the Middle Ages: the goddesses turned into evil witches and stepmothers (Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion 7*). Women sexuality was seen as something devilish, witch-like, all women were potential witches and fairy tales sustain the image–"anyone old and a bit eccentric could be called a witch" (Bovenschen 85). Witches represent the Pandora/Eve motif–women craving the forbidden fruit bringing destruction unto the world in their misusage of knowledge and delegated power thus linking women's sexuality with power (Lee, "Witch" 1032). In fairy tales witches play either the role of a helper–a magic donor, or an obstacle–a villain. Gaiman draws four witch-like characters: Miss Spink and Forcible and the other mother in *Coraline* and Liza Hempstock in *The Graveyard Book.* Each of those characters fills a unique role within the respective plots.

Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* lists witches as a subcategory of ogres and Liza Hempstock is described in terms of having goblin features: "...there was something of the goblin in her face–a sideways hint of a smile that seemed to linger, no

matter what the rest of her face was doing" (Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book* 100). Liza links the traditional superstitions about witches and the issue of women's sexuality. She was not drowned and burned just because the "milk gone sour and horses gone lame" but because she was accused of bewitching a young man. His sudden interest in Liza at the expense of another woman is a sign of him being bespelled. There is an ambiguity about her–she was condemned without proper evidence and went through trial by ordeal: "So they strap me to the cucking-stool and forces it under the water of the duckpond, saying if I'm a witch I'll neither drown nor care, but if I'm not a witch I'll feel it" (101). She dies in the process but with her last breath she curses everyone around. She says to Bod she is a witch but the only confirmation seems to be the fact that the villagers all got the plague and died, which may or may not have been the result of Liza's curse. Liza does not posses any special powers other than those that other ghosts have as well thus her assumption of a witch identity is a reaction on the violent death and loneliness she is forced to endure on the unconsecrated patch of the graveyard. As a plot device she is a magical donor who helps the protagonist on his quest. She teaches Bod the *Fading* ability which is instrumental during his fight with the Jacks.

    Coraline meets both the opposing witch properties: Miss Spink and Miss Forcible are helpers while the other mother is an obstacle. Miss Spink and Miss Forcible are an elderly ladies living together in an apartment. The usage of "Miss" rather than "Ms" before their names alludes to the sexual threat witches encompass: the independence on men and lesbianism. They are not referred to as witches in the story but they have magical properties based on trivial superstition rather than wonders: "The tea leaves, dear. I'll read your future" (Gaiman, *Coraline* 14). In comparison with Liza Hempstock whose powers are *anaphoric*, her abilities are measured in context with the

curse she laid on the village, in which her later actions seem inferior; Miss Spink's and Miss Forcible's powers were *cataphoric*, their abilities are discovered in the course of the plot and are much more important than their initial reference suggests: "She passed the stone with a hole in it...'It might help...They're good for bad things, sometimes'" (15).

MOTHERS

Coraline's mother is an example of a postfeminist empowerment and the right to choose a path in life: she has a career that is not subdued by child rearing and shares her household responsibilities with the father (Parson, Sawers, McInally 372). These choices however, lead to Coraline's alienation and the appearance of the other mother which embodies the fears and power anxieties surrounding the mother's persona. Although the gender equality does not make the mother or the daughter happy, the journey Coraline undergoes is a spiritual one and reconciles Coraline with her mother and her role in life. The other mother's homely affection smothers Coraline and emphasizes the other mother's lack of independence which Coraline and her mother have in abundance. The other mother is an obstacle in Coraline's self-affirming journey and thus as a plot device functions as a witch and a reversed evil stepmother who instead of neglect tortures Coraline with suffocating attention.

Mothers are often the centre of the conflict in fairy tales. The motif of the evil and jealous stepmother is not only a matter of female demonization into sexually charged selfish surrogate but also the challenge of blood ties. The fact that the wickedness is done by a surrogate softens the impact of the infliction but some of the infamous stepmothers were originally the biological mothers of the protagonists (Snow White, Hansel and Gretel). The problem of innate affection towards one's own blood is diminished and only the monstrosity remains. Similarly to the witch archetype, the evil

(step)mother is based on a supposed potential of any woman to be evil unless she is controlled by the father figure (e.g. Cinderella where the father is present but inactive). Children's literature often uses the evil stepmother to highlight the good mother and to reinforce the affection of the child towards the mother suppressing the wish for "better" parents many children have. This cautionary principle is used in *Coraline* as her discontent with her mother draws her to the other mother until she learns that is not what she wants and needs. *The Graveyard Book* alludes to another circumstance of the absentee birth mother. In Bod's case his mother was murdered but historically speaking death in childbirth was a frequent occurrence well into the twentieth century and a substitute mother was a necessity rather than intentional plot device (Lee, "Mother" 640).

VIOLENCE

Aggression and violence is a common feature in folktales. It is a deeply rooted human trait. It represents the power struggles–interclass conflicts and personal vendettas, sexual tensions and demonstrations of worthiness–depending on the social context of the tale and the storyteller. With increasing pedagogical demand on fairy tales violence was gradually tuned down. Unmotivated violence that carried no moral lesson was eradicated completely. For example the Grimms removed gratuitous violence but for pedagogical reasons left and even intensified that which fit as a punishment (Martin 1014). In the second edition of *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* Cinderella's sisters get their eyes pecked out by doves as a consequence of their treacherous behaviour whereas in the first edition their sight is spared (Tatar 5-6). Contemporary attitude towards violence is somewhat contradictory. While violence is present in every type of media accessible to children (television, video games, internet) the trend is to remove all violence from children's literature. Some authors reclaimed

violence as a valid pedagogical tool in a modified capacity: Roald Dahl in the child's "gruesome glee in anything disgusting", J.K. Rowling in construction of evil and Neil Gaiman in "reappropriating the dark side of psyche" (Martin 1015).

In comparison with the Grimms, Gaiman's violence is very much tuned down but in the context of present children's writing it is shockingly ostentatious. *The Graveyard Book* begins with:

> There was a hand in the darkness, and it held a knife. The knife had a handle of polished black bone, and a blade finer and sharper than any razor. If it sliced you, you might not even know you had been cut, not immediately. The knife had done almost everything it was brought to that house to do, and both the blade and the handle were wet. (Gaiman 3)

A killing is not pronounced but it is vividly implied. There are elements of mystery and horror which are Gaiman's central themes in many of his writings, including *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book.* The choice of the word "slice" provokes a graphic visualization of a fatal crime which is affirmed by the bloody wetness of the knife. The murderer, Jack Frost who for the most part retains his mysteriousness is constructed to portray pure evil–he kills for pleasure, he is greedy and merciless. The use of violent means is not limited to his character. Animal-like aggression is incorporated into Miss Lupescu: "Miss Lupescu's hackles were rising...she was ready for them, and it was only by an effort of will that she did not throw back her head and howl" (223). Silas confesses to once being a monster: "I did worse things than Jack" (285). Violence is also a means to an end. An unchristian message but a one that is present in every folktale: evil can only be defeated through its own means. There is no reasoning with the Jacks, the only way Bod can be safe is to eradicate them. Gaiman avoided a deus ex machina intervention, the punishment of the Jacks is purely in the hands the

protagonists. Even the fourteen year old Bod has his hands stained with blood as Jack

Frost is dismembered by the Sleer. The Sleer does not act on his own will. Bod lures

Jack into the tomb knowing what it would do to him. Despite the overall unravelling

which acknowledges Bod's actions as inevitable and thus right, his virtuousness is put

into question by Scarlett. She finds herself in the middle of Bod's plan. By sending her

to the tomb Bod uses her as a bait. Her life is in danger and she witnesses Jack's

horrible death. She was not relieved afterwards and had to have her memory erased by

Silas, she said to Bod: "You aren't a person. People don't behave like you. You're as

bad as he was. You're a monster" (269). Two moral standings are contrasted here.

Scarlett is pure, good and righteous in every step it takes to solve the puzzle of life. She

does not fight not even in self-defence and when confronted with a dubious situation

she cannot solve within her set of values, she ignores it. Bod is more active and decisive

in his beliefs. He knows right from wrong but is willing to compromise his standing on

behalf of "the greater good." From Scarlett's point of view the tale's outcome was

negative because the journey involved wrongdoings. From Bod's point of view the

outcome was a happy ending even though he had to compromise himself in the process.

    Coraline is obscured by mystery and darkness which builds up and eventually

ruptures into one violent scene: "The cat made a deep, ululating yowl and sank its teeth

into the other mother's cheek. She was flailing at it. Blood ran from the cuts on her

white face–not red blood but a deep, tarry black stuff" (Gaiman *Coraline* 91). The cat

creates a diversion and Coraline can escape the other mother. The situation concludes

with an enigmatic sentence about something dropping to the floor as she and the cat

locks the pathway to the other world. This is revealed to be the other mother's hand:

"She had seen it too many times in the last few days, reaching and clutching and

snatching and popping blackbeetles obediently into the other mother's mouth. Five-

footed, crimson-nailed, the color of bone. It was the other mother's right hand" (100). The motif of a severed hand or finger is richly featured in folktales. Corporal punishment, torture and harsh sentences were historically speaking common practices. In Britain judicial corporal punishment as well as corporal punishment of children was abolished as late as the twentieth century. It is no surprise then that cutting off a finger was an acceptable punishment for a child sucking its thumb, at least in fairy tales. The other mother's severed hand is in part a punishment for her and a warning for Coraline, a reminder of her own initial missteps.

SUMMARY

In his writings Neil Gaiman relies on fairy tale legacy. He uses universally recognizable motifs and devices and incorporates them into unique circumstances of his plots. Some of these elements retain their original form like the narrative function of witches, the core plot or the presence of violence; others are significantly altered but in their modification the allusion to tradition lingers–the animosity of werewolves or the transformation of the Jack tales. These adjustments are based on social changes, shifts in morals but also on artistic demands and postmodern intertextuality. The influence of traditional folk fairy tales and a tradition of literary fairy tales is amply featured in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. Gaiman centres fairy tale and through transformation and transgression revives its dynamic element thus mimicking their original orality.

The discussed motifs reveal Gaiman's referential ambitions. The animals and animal-like characters in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* are cats and dogs. Two most popular pets are portrayed as independent wildlife beasts rather than obedient domesticated animals. The cat in *Coraline* plays with the fairy tale ambiguity surrounding its function: initially believed to be the witch's assistant, it is revealed to be

the magical helper. *The Graveyard Book* features a canine character. Miss Lupescu the werewolf is referred to as a dog and a beast. These names bear the different traits Gaiman alludes to. *Beast* represents sexual animosity traditionally connected to werewolf characters. Using the word *dog* Gaiman's points out the wild, wolf origins of dogs. Miss Lupescu is in control of her animal side. She is able to distinguish friends from foes, and just as dogs, she is violently protective of her loved ones and harmless to her friends.

Ghouls retain their folktale roles in *The Graveyard Book.* They are cannibals and kidnappers but they also introduce another traditional theme. They represent the lost of personal identity. Fairy tales are concerned with collective identity where deviations from moral and social norms are harshly punished. However, glimpses of personal identity are projected when the protagonist manages to positively transform his/her social circumstance.

Hero's differentiation from the mass is achieved through a signifying name. Names like Cinderella or Little Red Riding Hood expose protagonist's potential. Similarly the bravery and independence is communicated through Coraline's unique name. Nobody Owens refers to Bod's struggle to constitute himself as a living boy among the dead. Finally, through the usage of the name *Jack,* a reference to Jack tales, Gaiman introduces the theme of violence.

The presence of violence is in the centre of debates about the suitability of fairy tales for children ever since their appropriation into children's literature in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Gaiman uses violence in attempt to unearth dark human urges and as a didactic tool in constituting evil.

Witches and stepmothers are examples of postfeminist rewriting of recognizable fairy tale archetypes. *Coraline* seizes patriarchal ideal of the domestic other mother and

contrasts it to the empowered mother to show Coraline's own journey for empowerment and mature independence. The witches directly address the problem of sexual identity and female wickedness. On one hand they confirm sexual predation (Miss Spink and Miss Forcible are lesbians), and on the other they question gender stereotypes (Liza Hempstock did not bespell the young man).

The aforementioned fairy tale motifs are composed into a universal plot as described by Vladimir Propp. The quest-driven stories follow Propp's wondertale outline and contain the necessary plot devices.

Coraline and The Graveyard Book shows Gaiman's ability to take fairy tale motifs and plot devices and use them in modern context of children's literature. Gaiman not only pays tribute to fairy tales by using the traditional motifs, he brings fairy tale into the twenty first century. He alludes to tradition but at the same time transgresses its didactic, social and artistic boundaries.

ABOUT NEIL GAIMAN

"Born and raised in England, Neil Gaiman now lives near Minneapolis, Minnesota. He has somehow reached his forties and still tends to need a haircut" ("Biography").

Neil Gaiman is a best-selling writer and among others a Nebula, Hugo and Bram Stoker Award winner. Probably best known for his graphic novel series *Sandman*, Gaiman writes prose, poetry, film scripts, lyrics and even drama. His postmodernist texts overflow with metafiction, intertextuality and allusions with references to both classical literature and pop culture, folktale elements and fantasy imagery. Because of Gaiman's dark humour and rich intertextuality, his writings tend to appeal to intellectual audience (Zipes, "Neil Gaiman" 192). In his most successful novel to date, *American Gods,* Gaiman created a new American mythology with a league of half-forgotten ancient gods struggling to survive in the New World.

Gaiman was born 10 November 1960 in Portchester, England but he permanently relocated to the USA and now lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. After finishing school he began working as a freelance journalist before committing himself to writing comics and scripts. In this medium he gained cult fan following as well as critical acclaim with *The Sandman* series. With the help of the main protagonist, Sandman (Dream, Morpheus, Lord of Dreams) who is the sovereign of human unconsciousness and with his siblings–Destiny, Desire, Delirium, Despair, Destruction and Death - all "personifications of elemental entities that inhabit and shape human consciousness" Gaiman explores humanity across time (Allen 228). The "patterns of inevitability and predestination" is Gaiman's central theme in most of his prose (Tiffin 396). He plays with mythology, higher power and superstition across cultures in most notably in *American Gods, Sandman, Anansi Boys* (re-imagination of a Caribbean

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legend of Anancy, the spider) and *Neverwhere,* in which he creates an other world beneath London, but traits of this theme can be found in every of his works.

Gaiman is a cross-writer, he often "addresses more than one age of reader in the same text" which is certainly the case of *Stardust* and *Coraline* (Falconer 558). The ambiguity and appeal to both children and adults is again a tribute to fairy tales, legends and myths. Gaiman's own words in response to a question whether *Coraline* is for adults or children:

> Hmm. Good question ... if it has to be put into a box that's the sort of stuff you'd find in the box it goes into: books with young protagonists, with stories that children enjoy and that adults enjoy and they seem to be enjoying different things...As a general sort of rule, kids seem to read it as an adventure. Adults get nightmares. Does that help? ("FAQ")

Selected titles from his prolific published body of works:

Comics and graphic novels:

The Sandman no. 1-75 (1989 - 1996), *Death: The High Cost of Living* (1994), *Death: The Time of Your Life* (1997)

Novels:

Good Omens (1990), *Neverwhere* (1996), *Stardust* (1999), *American Gods* (2001)

Anansi Boys (2005), *The Graveyard Book* (2008),

Short Fiction:

Smoke and Mirrors (1998), *Coraline* (2002)

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RESUMÉ

This bachelor thesis focuses on a fairy tale tradition in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book.* The objective is to demonstrate the legacy of fairy tale motifs, plot devices and imagery in contemporary children's literature of Neil Gaiman.

In the introduction, the paper establishes context upon which the final analysis in the conclusion relies. The fairy tale genre is established with the use of structural criteria and historical development pinpointing the differences between folk wondertale, literary fairy tale and children's books in general. A didactic exploration and a historical overview follow.

The middle section is devoted to synopses of the analysed books and the conclusion carries the body of the analysis. The subchapters conform to the motifs and themes ascribed to them. Vladimir Propp's *Theory and History of Folklore* is used to identify a universal core plot in the books in *Plot*. *Animals* include the different animals that occur in the books and the clarification of their purpose and origins. Subchapter *Names* deals with the identity crisis of losing one's name. *Witches* describe the characters of witches and the gender and power issues connected to them. *Mothers* is devoted mainly to *Coraline* and the presence of an evil step-mother motif in fairy tales. *Violence* profiles the use of violent means and the moral lessons and standings on the issue. The chapter is concluded with *Summary* that sums up the analysis and briefly reviews the thesis of the paper.

The paper also includes biographical notes on the author in *About Neil Gaiman* and *Works Cited* page with the reference material used in compiling the thesis.

RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá rozborem pohádkové tradice v dílech *Koralina* a *Kniha hřbitova* spisovatele Neila Gaimana. Cílem práce je demonstrovat odkaz pohádkových motivů, dějových prvků a obraznosti v současné dětské literatuře tohoto autora.

V úvodu je zaveden obecný rámec studovaného problému a kontext jednotlivých prvků, kterým se věnuje výsledná analýza. Rozbor žánru je založen na strukturální analýze a historickém vývoji a poukazuje na rozdíly mezi lidovou slovesností, literární pohádkou a dětskou literaturou obecně. Následuje didaktický rozbor a historický přehled.

Prostřední část je věnována synopsím daných knih. Výsledná analýza je obsažena v závěru práce, kde podkapitoly obsahem odpovídají svým názvům: V sekci *Plot* je zavedena teorie univerzálního pohádkového děje podle *Teorie a historie folklóru* Vladimíra Proppa. *Animals* popisuje jednotlivá zvířata, která se v knihách vyskytují, a vysvětluje jejich účel a původ. Podkapitola *Names* se zabývá krizí identity při ztrátě vlastního jména. *Witches* popisuje postavy čarodějnic a genderovou a mocenskou problematiku s nimi spojenou. Sekce *Mothers* se týká především Koraliny a rozebírá motiv zlé macechy v pohádkách. *Violence* dokumentuje použití násilí a morální poučení a názory s tím spojené. Kapitola je uzavřena shrnutím jednotlivých analýz v návaznosti na tezi práce.

Práce rovněž obsahuje biografické poznámky k autorovi v sekci *About Neil Gaiman* a použitou bibliografii.