

**A Critical Analysis of Uncanny Characters in Neil
Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book***

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DECLARATION

I, Kamalini Govender (203504205), declare that

- i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- ii) This dissertation/thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- iii) This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Signed: _____ Date: 07 December 2018

Kamalini Govender (203504205)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in English Studies in the School of Arts, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College.

As the candidate's Supervisor I have approved this dissertation/ thesis for submission.

Signed:  _____

Date: 07 December 2018

Dr Jean Rossmann

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“I believe that in the battle between guns and ideas, ideas will, eventually, win. Because the ideas are invisible, and they linger, and, sometimes, they can even be true.” (Gaiman 2016: 8)

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I examine uncanny characters in Neil Gaiman's novels *Coraline* (2002) and *The Graveyard Book* (2008). I explore what constitutes uncanny characters in his narratives and the consequent effects these characters have on protagonists' identities: their self-awareness and acknowledgement of alterity. Both novels have been classified under an experimental genre, Children's Gothic, known for negotiating identity, making use of elements of horror and using allegorical versions of contemporary cultural debates (Jackson 2017). While critics like Richard Gooding (2008) and David Rudd (2008) have explored the uncanny in *Coraline* for its adolescent maturation and identity formation, dependent on traditional psychoanalytic paradigms of separating the child from the mother figure, I rely on contemporary re-readings of Sigmund Freud's "uncanny" (1919) in conjunction with Carl Jung's notion of "the shadow" to reveal how protagonists in Gaiman's two novels gain self-awareness and an acceptance of 'the other'. Through an analysis of the ghost-witch-child, Liza Hempstock in *The Graveyard Book*, and the beldam or Other Mother in *Coraline*, I reveal how their uncanniness (ambivalence, uncertainty and unhomeliness) blurs binarist notions of good/evil as well as hegemonies of gender, race and religion. As a ghost from the Elizabethan era, Liza reveals the presence of the past and forms of persecution and violence that are transhistorical (witch-hunts, child oppression and Antisemitism). Not dissimilar to Liza, I argue that the Other Mother's doubling and ambivalence (good/evil, mothering/malign, human/monster) provides a powerful, transgressive alternative to limiting patriarchal definitions of the feminine. Both the Other Mother and Liza thus challenge oppressive forms of thinking and become catalysts for positive change in the protagonists' sense of self. An understanding of how the uncanny works will assist readers in coming-to-grips with social anxieties involved in living in a multiple society, in which one is constantly confronted by alterity. Gaiman's novels teach lessons in transforming the fear of the other into a moment of possibility. For this reason, I argue that Gaiman's novels are relevant to the South African milieu, and share similarities with certain South African Children's (or Young Adult) Gothic novels, such as Charlie Human's *Apocalypse Now Now* (2013). Through a comparison of uncanny characters in Human's and Gaiman's novels, I argue for a space for Children's Gothic in the South African literary landscape. Through uncanny characters, Gothic has the unique capacity to co-opt young readers into the process of disrupting borders, renegotiating identities and bringing about individual and cultural transformation.

INTRODUCTION

The following dissertation critically examines uncanny characters in Neil Gaiman's novels *Coraline* (2002) and *The Graveyard Book* (2008). The purpose is to understand how Gaiman's characters embody and exemplify the uncanny and what effects these characters have on the protagonists' identities: their self-awareness and acknowledgement of alterity, of gender and cultural diversity. Both Gaiman's texts may be classified under a fairly recent genre in children's literature¹ known as "Children's Gothic," an experimental genre recognised for exploring negotiations of identity, elements of horror and allegorical versions of contemporary cultural debates (Jackson 2017: 1). As an extension of the eighteenth-century Gothic genre, Children's Gothic shares the former's penchant for transgression: "[g]othic terrors activate a sense of the unknown and project an uncontrollable and overwhelming power which threatens not only the loss of sanity, honour, property or social standing but the very order which supports and is regulated by the coherence of those terms" (Botting 1996: 7). Common to the Gothic genre, Children's Gothic *and* Gaiman's novels make use of "transgression" through uncanny characters, ones that subvert traditional stereotypes found in both Gothic and children's literature. Liza Hempstock, the ghost-witch-child, in *The Graveyard Book*, and the doppelgänger Other Mother in *Coraline*, portray ambivalent and hybrid identities that I argue exemplify aspects of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical concept of "the uncanny" or "Das Unheimlich" (1919). My study thus addresses an occlusion in scholarship on these novels by focusing on Gaiman's uncanny characters, rather than his uncanny settings (portal doors and graveyards) (Gooding 2008; Rudd 2008; Stephens 2012). Furthermore, following Chloé Buckley, I argue that Gaiman's protagonists defy "monologising" discourses of childhood that utilize a "limiting psychoanalytic framework" (2018a: 45, 42). Buckley insists that *Coraline* holds up a mirror "to critical discourse and cultural ideas about childhood" (43). In agreement with Buckley, I argue that Gaiman introduces complexity and multiplicity into his representations of childhood. As Buckley notes, the openness of Gaiman's texts precludes a kind of a priori 'paint by numbers' psychoanalytical reading. While Buckley denounces reductive readings, she does not denounce theory, or psychoanalysis entirely. Bearing Buckley's caution in mind, I read Gaiman's novels through the lens of recent studies of the uncanny that focus on the concept's capacity to constantly shift and de-stabilise meaning. I argue that uncanny figures such as Liza and the Other Mother have a destabilising effect on the protagonists, causing them to enter a liminal stage where their identities become more fluid. It is in this liminality, and through facing the duality of these

¹ Children's literature is a genre that encompasses texts made for children, usually to educate and instruct the child on values of good behaviour, the importance of following rules and rejecting vice. Interestingly, it has been argued that the genre was formed as a response to the view that Gothic texts are unsuitable for children. See Dale Townshend, (2008), "The Haunted Nursery 1764-1830".

‘others’ that the protagonists encounter their “shadow,” a repository of repressed ideas, beliefs or projected fears that can prevent self-awareness (Jung 1958). Making the texts my primary focus, but also through engaging with contemporary re-readings of the uncanny and Jungian theory, it is possible to interpret Gaiman’s novels in a new, culturally relevant light (Royle 2003; Bernstein 2003).

The inspiration for my research originates from observing positive effects on students learning English as a foreign language. From 2013 to 2016, I noticed *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* assisted readers in working through anxieties and cultural stereotypes in classroom environments. This sparked my interest in the genre of Children’s Gothic and applications of the uncanny to Gaiman’s novels (predominantly *Coraline*, which is seen as a canonical representation of the Children Gothic genre and uncanny children’s fiction).² In what is now considered to be a seminal text on the subject, *The Gothic in Children’s Literature: Haunting the Borders* by Karen Coats, Anna Jackson and Roderick McGillis, Coats considers the popularity of Children’s Gothic with young readers as a response to “an underlying trauma” in contemporary society (2008: 77). She suggests that trauma is a natural part of a child’s experience and that children are given the opportunity through literary texts like Gaiman’s to work through their traumas on a psychical level. Coats focuses on the trauma of change in *Coraline* (separation from a parent figure or the fear of abandonment) that a young adult must typically overcome to successfully integrate into society.

For Coats, the appeal of Gaiman’s novels lies in the fact that he “does Gothic old-school, that is, the demarcations between good and evil are clear, and even when the evil is within, it is soundly defeated and expelled by a problem-solving hero or heroine” (Coats et al. 2008: 77). From what has been witnessed in foreign language classrooms, Coats’s assertion seems limited in conveying the scope of Gaiman’s impact, especially in environments where such “clear” demarcations no longer exist due to a rise in danger, increased access to mature content online and political instability which has become a world-wide phenomenon (McGillis 2008). Children’s Gothic with its use of uncanny characters is advantageous because it challenges the notions of a “stable” or “knowable” child, typical of children’s literature criticism that fails to see the child protagonist as a multiple, complex being: one with many reactions and exposed to a variety of socio-economic and political experiences (Rose 1984: 1). This study contributes to current scholarship on Gaiman’s texts by relying on scholars such as Buckley, who view “identity as an open-ended process” (2018:

² For a comprehensive study on *Coraline* as a canonical text see Chloé Buckley, (2015), “Psychoanalysis, “Gothic” Children’s Literature, and the Canonization of *Coraline*”.

47). My contribution to studies of Gaiman's novels aims to reveal how Gaiman's protagonists learn, through trial and tribulation, that the 'other' is an extension of themselves. The concept of 'the other' is defined as "[t]he quality or state of existence of being other than or different from established norms and social groups" (Wolfreys 2011: 345). Otherness is thus based in differentiation between the self and another, and is especially problematic when dealing with issues of sexual, racial and ethnic difference. By allowing protagonists to develop a self-aware and open-minded approach to relationships with the self and community, protagonists' understanding of how they perpetuate otherness may be understood and overcome.

Chapter Outline

The following dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter provides information on the author, Neil Gaiman, with brief synopses of *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. In this section I also discuss current critical debates surrounding both novels as is pertinent to my analysis; namely, the use of Gothic tropes, liminality, feminist perspectives and the use of the uncanny.

The second chapter provides detailed explanations regarding theoretical concepts that I use to examine Gaiman's novels; namely, the uncanny, the Jungian shadow and liminal or threshold theories in literature. Freudian understandings of the uncanny posited alongside contemporary notions of the concept allow for a distinct break from traditional sexual or biological interpretations (Royle 2003; Bernstein 2003). Most importantly, contemporary theories on the uncanny disrupt totalising viewpoints within psychoanalytic criticism and scholarship on children's literature. Contemporary revisions of the uncanny also allow Gaiman's texts to be read via a postcolonial lens. As will be discussed, I apply Homi Bhabha's concept of the unhomely (1992) to suggest how Gaiman calls attention to the marginalised, exiled 'other.' Aspects of postcolonialism are inherent in the Children's Gothic genre with its navigation of contested spaces, hybrid identities and recognition of marginalised individuals. In relation to my study, it can be important in assisting self-awareness that leads to culturally inclusive, less prejudiced protagonists and child readers. I hope to prove the applicability of postcolonial readings of the uncanny in my final chapter on the relevance of Gaiman's texts to a South African context.

The Jungian shadow, as applied to current social situations and as a tool in dismantling ideological and political beliefs, will also be foregrounded in this chapter. As the uncanny is the primary focus

of this thesis, the shadow archetype³ will be dealt with to a lesser degree, thus leaving room for further studies on the relationship between the shadow and identity in both texts. I recognise the unlikely pairing of Freudian and Jungian ideas might be considered heretical, due to notorious disagreements between the two psychoanalysts' approaches to the nature of shadows and what comprises the unconscious. Lastly, in this chapter, I discuss theories of liminality, as it applies to YA and children's literature. I advocate the use of "nomadic subjectivity" (Buckley 2018a) to explore ways in which a protagonist transcends demarcated borders, accepts hybrid spaces and turns the negative perception of a wandering existence into one of empowerment and self-realisation.

The third chapter presents a critical analysis of the first of two uncanny characters I will be analysing in Gaiman's novels: Liza Hempstock, the ghost-witch-child. Due to a lack of scholarship on this character, I present what may be perceived as an unorthodox claim that Liza reflects aspects of postcolonial marginalisation and exile as an uncanny figure: as an oppressed/murdered child, a persecuted witch and as a potential Jewish character. I argue that Liza's ambivalence and "unhomeliness" (Bhabha 1992) allow her to trouble and challenge socially constructed boundaries of patriarchy and religion. I examine how Liza may be perceived as a creative and dynamic source of energy that assists the protagonist in encountering important aspects of his shadow that may lead to self-awareness.

The fourth chapter examines the Other Mother, or beldam, in *Coraline*. In this chapter I argue that the Other Mother is an ambivalent, and even, to some extent, relatable character. Through her uncanniness and status as a double, she has the ability to undo binaries inherent in the process of othering. As a powerful and potentially dangerous woman, she subverts patriarchal definitions of the feminine that limit and restrict women. In addition, the Other Mother reveals to Coraline the inseparable dialectic between self and other within each of us. While the Other Mother's intentions are felt to be sinister, as she tries to ease Coraline's acceptance of her, Coraline is also forced to recognise the potential for duality in each person. I argue that the Other Mother is a "nomadic subject" (Buckley 2018a) whose multiple subject positions provide Coraline with a transgressive model of femininity.

³ The archetype is defined as an invisible storehouse of psychic energy or "dynamic nucleus" with the potential to manifest into symbols. See Jolande Jacobi, (1959), *Complex/ Archetype/ Symbol in the Psychology of C.G. Jung*.

The final chapter of my thesis argues for the relevance of Gaiman's novels to the South African milieu. Despite Children's Gothic not being recognised as a genre in South Africa, I argue it can be utilised by young readers in negotiating or transforming identity by comparing Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book* to South African author, Charlie Human's novel *Apocalypse Now Now* (2013). I contend the hybrid nature of Children's Gothic, with its mix of mythology, fairy tales and Gothic elements, is an appropriate genre to express the complexities of current South African postcolonial identities. If Gaiman's novels offer a transformative space for young readers engaging with questions of identity, then what possibilities are there for South African authors who similarly make use of uncanny characters and the Children's Gothic genre?

Chapter One

Literature Review

1.1 On the Author and Novels

Neil Gaiman is a British author, famously recognised for his dark fantasy DC comic book series *The Sandman* (1989 - present). As an avid supporter of human rights,⁴ Gaiman is also a firm believer in writing for unintended audiences, that encompasses variety, hence the popularity of his novels to children, adults and those of different cultures. While originally seen as a fantasy and science fiction writer for an adult target audience, with his novels *American Gods* (2001) and *Stardust* (1999), he has since become popular with his children's or Young Adult⁵ texts such as *Coraline*, *The Graveyard Book*, *Odd and the Frost Giants* (2008) and his more ambiguously categorised *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* (2013). Gaiman has won numerous awards, including the prestigious Newbery (2009) and Carnegie (2010) medals, along with the Nebula (2004) and Hugo (2003) awards for his children's fiction.

Coraline follows the pre-adolescent journey of a bored young girl who moves into a new apartment and subsequently finds a door leading to an eerie replica of her real home. She meets doubles or "other" parents who are extremely loving and attentive in the other world yet possess creepy black buttons for eyes. She eventually learns that her Other Mother⁶ (or beldam) wishes to keep her in the other world forever and she attempts to leave. However, the beldam kidnaps her real parents and Coraline must go on a brave quest amidst trapped ghost children, deformed sac-like versions of her neighbours and a disintegrating world to save her parents and return home before the start of the new school year. *The Graveyard Book*, on the other hand, features a toddler whose family is brutally murdered by a sinister figure at the onset of the novel. Bod, as he is eventually named, is welcomed by the ghostly inhabitants of a nearby graveyard and reared by a mysterious nightwalker (presumably a vampire). He subsequently learns the necessary survival skills (of his supernatural and real worlds) to defeat his enemies and grow into an independent young man. Both novels are known to be inspired by fairy tale motifs and pay homage to popular children's classics: *Coraline* to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*⁷ (1865) and Lucy Clifford's short story "The New Mother" (1882), while *The Graveyard Book* echoes Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894) (Buckley

⁴ Gaiman is a Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency) since 2017.

⁵ Henceforth to be referred to as YA.

⁶ In contrast to the novel, I capitalise the Other Mother's name, to highlight her significance as a character deserving subjectivity. The other father will remain uncapitalised.

⁷ Hereafter to be referred to as *Alice*.

2015; Abbruscato 2014). Gaiman's overt use of intertextual allusions, allowing him to create new worlds from familiar material, has been noted as one of the many reasons his novels appeal to racially and culturally diverse audiences (Burdge and Burke eds 2012; Rodrigues 2012). Indeed, I argue that, *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* are particularly relevant to a South African context, as they assist child readers in coming-to-grips with social anxieties involved in living in a multiple society, in which one is confronted by different modes of being, as well as different belief systems and values.

1.2 Critical Scholarship on *Coraline*

Due to a concern with “the darker side of life” and similarities with the children’s classic, *Alice*, *Coraline* is distinguished from a majority of children’s novels, as reflecting the current “appetite” or popularity of Children’s Gothic fiction in the twenty-first century (Coats 2008: 77; Rudd 2008: 2; Buckley 2015). The novel is noted for its aptness in reflecting the transitions of childhood, and its appeal to younger audiences has thus won it numerous awards (Hugo (2003), Nebula (2004), the Bram Stoker award (2002) and the British Science Fiction award (2003). Gaiman’s novels were originally considered “too scary for children;” however, Gaiman himself comments on the fact that children enjoy the suspense created in his novels, and do not respond the same way as adults (Gaiman 2016: 91). The novel’s popularity and appeal is evident in its adaptation as an animated feature film by Henry Selick (2009), and as a stage musical by Leigh Silverman (2009). Scholarship on *Coraline* is wide-ranging. It has been subject to psychoanalytical readings (Gooding 2008; Rudd 2008; Agnell 2014); readings that investigate its Gothic tropes (Coats 2008; Buckley 2015); feminist interpretations (Parsons et al. 2008; Wilkie-Stibbs 2013); and readings that use theories of liminality (David 2008; Perdigao 2014). Additionally, studies have looked at *Coraline* as a reworking of popular children’s classics from *Alice* to the *Narnia* chronicles by C.S Lewis (Buckley 2010; Godfrey 2015). The novel has also been explored from a translation studies perspective, in terms of its dual readership (Segers 2012); and from the perspective of developmental psychology, using the theory of “cognitive dissonance” (Palkovich 2015).

Of interest to my study, is firstly, how *Coraline* exhibits Coats’s response to the popularity of Children’s Gothic texts as expressing “incongruent stimuli” that assist the protagonist and child reader in their psychological development (Coats 2008: 84). The protagonist deals with “incongruent stimuli” in a variety of ways. In my application of Jungian theory, Danya David’s (2008) link between ambiguous boundaries and *Coraline*’s use of language, art, intuition and dreams will prove useful in the protagonist’s journey of self-growth, as the role of dreams and intuition resonate with

Jung's notions of the archetype, the shadow and journeys of self-discovery. Rudd's observation of the uncanny in *Coraline* is also particularly helpful in rethinking the protagonist's negotiation of identity (2008). According to Rudd, it is the "creepy uneasiness" of the uncanny other world that allows Coraline to come face to face with her deepest desires (1). Rudd also notes *Coraline's* affinity to darker fairy tale narratives, that together with the uncanny, creates a suitable environment for Coraline to explore her identity. However, he goes on to analyse the uncanny through a Lacanian lens, relating the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary⁸ to Coraline's realisation of her true desires and individuality. While useful on many levels, I find the overall impression of the uncanny as inducing fear related to the "fragility of one's existence" unhelpful in my aim to prove the protagonist's self-affirming and positive engagement with the world (15). Therefore, I rely on Jungian theory to counter Rudd's emphasis on existential issues in *Coraline*, and to show how the uncanny can be read with psychological concepts other than Lacan's RSI that focus purely on Coraline's isolation. I argue that the Other Mother need not be "set aside in order to live," instead Coraline learns ways of integrating aspects of the Other Mother that focuses on similarity (15).

Additionally, Richard Gooding's study is insightful in noting how the uncanny is used in *Coraline* via narrative structures that defy traditional fantasy stories for children, in which the protagonist always returns to the safety and comfort of home after expelling a necessary evil. For Gooding, the use of portal narratives that blur reality and fantasy spaces allows the protagonist to embark on a quest of maturation and self-awareness (2008: 400). Instead, I shall apply the uncanny to Gaiman's characters in order to reveal the importance of defying traditional children's tales and why liminal zones assist the protagonist's psychological development. In terms of applications of the Jungian shadow in *Coraline*, there is one marked study that briefly interprets the Other Mother as Coraline's shadow (Garud 2011). I refrain from seeing the Other Mother as a metaphorical shadow; rather, she nurtures and allows the protagonist to realise aspects that lie within the protagonist's shadow self.

Einat Natalie Palkovich's examination of cognitive dissonance, whereby traditional children's literature characters are split into a good mother and bad mother, is valuable in showing how familiar expectations are disrupted in the protagonist, who must find a way to resolve the unknown into the known (2015: 182). Palkovich argues for the importance of separating the protagonist

⁸ Briefly, Jacques Lacan's model of the RSI (Real, Symbolic and Imaginary) is a representation of psychological phenomena. The Real is that which is unsymbolised or imperceptible, yet crucially tied to the development of meaning. The Symbolic reflects the representation of ideas, whilst the Imaginary deals with "sensorial perception" and the ability to conceptualise meanings to their words/ images. See Lionel Bailly, (2009), "Real, Symbolic, Imaginary".

from the evil mother figure, leaving room for an analysis that takes into consideration the impact of including such a character in order to make sense of one's identity. Critics have also looked at the mother-child dyad in the novel as perpetuating standards of a male heteronormative economy, one that prevents the protagonist's emancipation (Wilkie-Stibbs 2013; Parsons et al. 2008). Parsons et al. read the novel as "a journey toward normative and consolidated feminine and heterosexual identities that rely on demonizing women" which follows rather than opposes masculinised psychoanalytic criticism (2008: 371). Critics often ignore the Other Mother as capable of her own subjectivity and as someone that Coraline can learn valuable lessons from. To corroborate this view, Emma Agnell's reading (through the Freudian structure of the psyche and various theories on identity formation) reveals the Other Mother as Coraline's double, and imperative to Coraline's realisation of her own hidden, darker self that assists the protagonist on a path to liberation (2014: 4-5). Agnell's observation is interesting in that she offers an alternative way of looking at the relationship between Gaiman's antagonist and the young Coraline.

My analysis of the Other Mother is primarily motivated by my disagreement with two critical arguments on *Coraline*; the first by Coats (2008) and the other by Parsons et al. (2008). In her analysis of the role of humour and horror in *Coraline*, Coats states that for Coraline to develop her own desires apart from her mother's, she must reject the regressive consuming desire presented by the Other Mother and assert a sense of individuality. Coats maintains that a "firm expulsion" of the Other Mother is necessary in maintaining what she deems as Gaiman's clear "ethical stance in his fiction" where "his villains are truly nasty, and his heroines are steadfast in their work to defeat them" (2008: 90). The Other Mother is posited as evil incarnate and omnipotent in relation to Coraline's innocence and powerlessness, thereby reflecting the notion of a singular, inferior, "knowable" child (Rose 1984: 1). According to Coats, *Coraline* fits neatly into the Children's Gothic genre as it satisfies criteria for "outwardly stable, well-loved children" whose worlds: "do not provide them with circumstances that adequately represent for them the violent, bleeding cut that is psychically necessary for them to learn to be alone in the presence of their parents. Their outer lives give them no actual contexts for the fear that accompanies the inner dramas and psychic losses that are an inevitable legacy of growing up" (2008: 90). However, I contend that it is necessary to take into consideration a state of childhood that encompasses *varied* child realities and situations such as child abuse, murder and exploitation (issues that Gaiman's character Liza calls attention to): and thus consider Children's Gothic from multiple perspectives that are not necessarily safe, "stable" or loving.

Chloé Buckley posits a “playful” and “open” interpretation of Gaiman’s text, revealing a link between the Gothic, psychoanalysis, the uncanny and children’s literature (Buckley 2015: 62). She advocates “a playful space for children to make their own meanings” rather than accepting narrow views of dominant discourses and reads *Coraline* as a text capable of multiple meanings, one seen as intertextually engaging with Freud’s 1919 essay on the uncanny (2015: 75). By focusing on the “surfaces” or intertextual elements of the text, rather than on depth psychology readings, she insists that meaning may be constantly deferred, and resists notions of the child usually perpetuated by psychoanalytic and children’s criticism (Buckley 2015: 62). Although my analysis uses what may be termed “depth psychology” in its focus on unconscious processes, I hope to foreground the possibility of multiple readings of the novel in conjunction with notions of “unhomeliness” and “nomadic subjectivity”: revealing alternate interpretations that may prove useful in current academic scholarship (Buckley 2015: 62). As a whole, the scholarship on *Coraline* affirms the novel’s importance in the developmental processes of young adults⁹ in contemporary society.

1.3 Critical Scholarship on *The Graveyard Book*

The Graveyard Book, like *Coraline*, is accepted as a crossover text that appeals to both child and adult audiences, evident in the indexing of the novel by publishing houses, bookstores and online commerce sites (Hahn 2015). The novel has received a Newbery and Carnegie medal (2009; 2010) as well as a Locus Young Adult award (2009) and the Hugo Best Novel Prize (2009). While a vast amount of literary criticism exists on *Coraline*, few scholars have chosen to address the merits of *The Graveyard Book*. Among the limited studies that exist, the novel is examined; for its use as: a *bildungsroman*, or coming of age story that explores constructions of identity (Abbruscato 2014; Vondráčková 2015); for its subversion of traditional Gothic characters (Schneider 2010; Burke 2012) and; from a cognitive linguistics perspective on the use of horror in the text (Giovannelli 2018).

Eighth-grade English teacher, Dean Schneider usefully looks at the novel as a school text in which he observes how inverted roles of classical monstrous characters may serve as an appealing theme to young audiences (2010). He insinuates a relationship between reading about subverted Gothic characters and students’ ensuing views on friendship and community. By reinterpreting conventionally ‘scary’ characters as familiar and helpful, students are able to contest traditionally ingrained beliefs that tend toward stereotyping. I hope to add to Schneider’s thoughts by proving how Gaiman’s protagonists develop a beneficial relationship with witch figures (*The Graveyard*

⁹ This dissertation makes use of the terms *children* and *young adult* interchangeably.

Book) and relate to supposedly ‘evil’ beldams (*Coraline*). Gaiman is known for challenging stereotypical images of witches, in particular, as deviant or evil in his texts, by displaying both negative and positive qualities of his characters (Burke 2012). I argue that it is the uncanny that allows for such an ambivalent representation of his character Liza in *The Graveyard Book*.

Pertinent to my study, is Joseph Abbruscato’s parallels between the structure of classic fairy tales (where young heroes mature and overcome obstacles) and child readers’ self-development. He uses Gaiman’s texts as an example of how this is achieved, as a contemporary fairy tale. Relying on Bruno Bettelheim’s¹⁰ (1989) psychoanalytical reading of fairy tales as assisting child readers through transitional periods, Abbruscato deduces: “children can place their fears of lacking an identity into the fairy tales, enabling themselves to face life around them as a maturing person” (2014: Loc 155).¹¹ Nevertheless, the question as to how a protagonist or child reader comes to achieve psychological development through reading Gaiman’s novels remains elusive. I plan to fill in this gap with my explanation of uncanny characters, that allow protagonists the necessary experiences they require to confront the realm of the shadow.

Lastly, John Stephens adds a short entry in the *Routledge Companion to Children’s Literature* on the use of the uncanny to renegotiate the graveyard space and the protagonist’s evolving consciousness: “the *unheimlich* site of the graveyard becomes a *heimlich* site in which the orphaned protagonist is nurtured (by ghosts, a vampire and a werewolf) to become a mature, well-balanced young adult” (in Rudd ed 2012: 186). While relevant for the ability of the uncanny to cause psychical change, Stephens refrains from an investigation on the uncanniness of characters that the protagonist encounters on his journey to maturity, leaving a space in the existing research for such an analysis.

¹⁰ Bettelheim has received criticism for plagiarising the work of others in *The Uses of Enchantment* (1976). See Alan Dundes, (1991), “Bruno Bettelheim’s Uses of Enchantment and Abuses of Scholarship”.

¹¹ Loc indicates location for Kindle texts that have not provided page numbers. Alternate copies of all Loc referenced texts in this thesis were unavailable.

Chapter Two

Methodology and Theoretical Concepts

2.1 The Uncanny

In my analysis of Gaiman's novels, I will primarily be using contemporary notions of the psychoanalytical concept of the uncanny. Firstly, it is important to delineate the long history of the term as an aesthetic conceptual tool within the human sciences. Dating back to the German philosopher, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1842), the uncanny is first identified as an eruption of the underlying layer of historical consciousness that remains hidden from an individual: "Uncanny [*unheimlich*] is what one calls everything that should have stayed secret, hidden, latent [...] but has come to the fore" (Schelling in Ffytche 2012: 160). Schelling was concerned with the uncanny's ability to revive "a foundational madness," evident in mythological reflections of history. According to Schelling, this "madness" came to be perceived as "destructive aspects of experience" in culture, which needed to be thrust back into the unconscious in order for a "more formal experience of selfhood to emerge" (Ffytche 2012: 158). In foregrounding an internalization of a "self-negating aspect" within human beings, Schelling's ideas were instrumental in influencing the Austrian psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud, in his formation of the uncanny and the repressed unconscious (Ffytche 2012: 160).

In his 1919 essay, "The 'Uncanny,'" Freud popularised the term also referred to as the *unheimlich* in the original German text, accentuating key ideas that reflected his work in psychoanalysis at the time; namely, ideas on repression, repetition, the unconscious and infantile complexes. Briefly, the "unconscious" represents a repository of dynamic psychic energy within the individual (Frosh 2002: 13). All that is not conscious to the individual is considered to lie in the unconscious and may affect a person's thoughts and actions in day-to-day living without their knowledge. Material considered "repressed" may be unknown to the individual or deliberately forgotten as a means of maintaining one's psyche. Dreams and slips of the tongue allow repressed material to slip into conscious states, thus permitting an awareness of underlying beliefs, desires or fears (Frosh 2002: 23). Repetition, a resurgence of the same thing, occurs when repressed material is not overcome. Freud links this material to biological urges (sexual desires) beginning in childhood that comes to be repressed in adulthood. He explains the child's sexual desire for the mother (a desire based on the mother's gratification, feeding and nurturing, of the child's needs) through the Oedipus myth.¹²

¹² The Oedipus myth is based on the Greek story of Oedipus who unknowingly marries his mother and kills his father. See Website 1.

In the story of Oedipus, he discovers he has committed incest when he unknowingly marries his mother, and gouges out his eyes. In Freud's adaption of the myth, he reads Oedipus's self-inflicted blindness as equal to another form of radical absence and exclusion from the world: castration. Both are seen as punishments for breaking the incest taboo, desiring the mother, and defying the law of the father (patriarchy). The penis, becomes a signifier of the father's power and authority, recognised by the boy-child as something lacking in the mother, making her powerless. Consequently, fear stems from the boy-child's assumption that like the mother, he too might be castrated, and his 'power' taken from him. For the girl-child it is slightly different, in that she sees the mother's lack (associated with inferiority) and her own and resents the mother for leaving her so ill-equipped. She shifts her desire from the mother to the father. She knows the father holds power and desires the mother, so she attempts to emulate the mother, adopting appropriate submissive, feminine behaviour, and postponing fulfilment of her desire until later. This fear of castration, akin to Oedipus and the gouging out of eyes, is read in *Coraline* when the Other Mother threatens her with loss of sight, wishing to dismember Coraline by sewing black buttons onto her real eyes.

Whereas for Schelling, the uncanny represents a resurfacing of the historical beliefs of previous epochs (Ffytche 2012: 160), for Freud it is primarily related to a revival of individually related "infantile complexes which have been repressed," and secondly to the confirmation of "primitive beliefs which have been surmounted" by an individual (Freud [1919] 1997: 226). In his analysis of the uncanny, Freud underlines its central features as "undoubtedly related to what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror" and also to that which "excites fear in general" (Freud [1919] 1997: 193). The uncanny, however, is only felt within the realm of frightening and fearful when one encounters a particular experience that "leads back to what is known of old and long familiar," something he relates to childhood and the individual's past (Freud [1919] 1997: 195). Freud comes closest to Schelling's original conceptualization of the uncanny when he surmises that anything which reveals man's belief in primitive thoughts or "residues of animistic mental activity within us" (Freud [1919] 1997: 217) returns to consciousness, thus evading repression. However, he emphasises the child's infantile fear and dread as associated with castration by "the dreaded father at whose hands castration is expected" (Freud [1919] 1997: 207) and the sexualized power struggles that ensue between child, mother and father during early child development (Freud [1919] 1997: 206-207). For this reason, Freud has been criticised by scholars, such as David Rudd, for relying too strongly on interpreting the uncanny via sexual and biological fears and desires of childhood,

thus failing to see the term's potential to represent the problematics of signification and identity as a result of difference:

The uncanny is therefore less concerned with particular motifs than felt effects. It certainly involves such matters as 'seeing' and 'blindness', but these are not to do with any simplistic notion of castration; rather, they are concerned with the fact that our look is always partial, always distorted by desire and blind to a **gaze** [sic] that seems to emanate from outside our own, limited perspective. (Rudd 2013: 116-117)

Samuel Weber most clearly elaborates on this point, in his article "The Sideshow, or: Remarks on a Canny Moment," in which he stresses that the Freudian notion of castration be perceived, not as a physical threat involving loss of a body part, but as a structuring of identity, marked by an individual's recognition of its difference, lack and desires: "The uncanny is thus bound up with a *crisis* of perception and of phenomenality, but concomitantly with a mortal danger to the subject, to the "integrity" of its body and thus to its very identity" (1973: 1131). Identity is therefore concerned with "representations" and remains both ambiguous and ambivalent when encountered by the uncanny (1132). In his etymological study of the words '*heimlich*' (canny) and '*unheimlich*' (uncanny), Freud discovers an inherent ambiguity that the uncanny possesses. He concludes that the uncanny and its opposite intersect in meaning, so that "among its different shades of meaning the word '*heimlich*' exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, '*unheimlich*' [...] *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*" (Freud [1919] 1997: 199). The canny which indicates familiarity, "homely" and the known, eventually also comes to mean that which is concealed or secret, thus entering the domain of its opposite, which signifies the unfamiliar, unknown and alien (the unhomely). This is significant as it insinuates that the *unheimlich* is a by-product of an already ambivalent term and thus can be read as indicative of a problem of origins and uncertainty: a crisis of identity. The uncanny as foregrounding issues of identity is important in my analysis of Liza and the Other Mother, and in revealing how the uncanny instils change in the protagonists' awareness of self and other.

Philosophical approaches to the term have viewed the uncanny as a reminder of the problematic nature of the past recollected in the present, and the anxiety that stems from an interrogation of origins. Andrew Barnaby presents the idea that in the uncanny's revelation of uncertain origins it reveals "the obsessive revisiting of the past that is itself marked simultaneously by a desire to know, a revulsion at knowing, and the impossibility of knowledge" (2015: 978). The importance of Barnaby's analysis is that it provides an opportunity to explore the unknown or concealed (shadow) aspects of self (protagonist) and other (uncanny character). Two critics that have, additionally,

proved instrumental in redefining Freud's interpretation of the uncanny for literary application are Maria M. Tatar (1981) and Nicholas Royle (2003). Both critics isolate ambiguity and the unsettling nature of the uncanny as important constructs within narrative structures, that produce vital breaks in identity that lead protagonists to self-discovery. Royle outlines the following features as contributing to the unsettling feeling induced by the uncanny:

it disturbs any straightforward sense of what is inside and what is outside. The uncanny has to do with a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality. It may be that the uncanny is a feeling that happens only to oneself, within oneself, but it is never one's 'own': its meaning or significance may have to do, most of all, with what is not oneself, with others, with the world 'itself'. It may thus be construed as a foreign body within oneself. (2003: 2)

Whereas Freud rejected psychologist Ernst Jentsch's (1906) psychological interpretation of the uncanny, as stemming from "intellectual uncertainty" (Freud [1919] 1997: 195), Royle leaves room for the contemporary ways in which the uncanny may lead to an instability (or uncertainty) of self, of others and of the world. Royle's approach to the term is valuable in clarifying the 'unhomeliness' that the uncanny instigates. Jentsch's pre-Freudian interpretation of the term thus becomes more understandable: "Without a doubt, this word appears to express that someone to whom something 'uncanny' happens is not quite 'at home' or 'at ease' in the situation concerned, that the thing is or at least seems to be foreign to him" (Jentsch 1906: 2). The homely/unhomely or familiarity/unfamiliarity that Freud proposes, as essential to understanding the fabric of uncanniness, exists simultaneously in an uncertainty that renders the person experiencing the uncanny structure-less. The uncanny, then, dismantles anything resembling structure, that may be found in typical binary oppositions like good/bad, male/female, and familiar/strange.

By allowing boundaries to collapse, Maria Tatar argues that a "border area" can be found in the uncanny, where "*heimlich* and *unheimlich* merge in meaning to suggest the sinister or treacherous" (1981: 171). She thus goes on to study the effects of uncanniness in characters in popular novels such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1838) and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), wherein she shows that the uncanny (through ghostly portraits or ancestral spectres) can function as "agents of revelation" leading the protagonists to feel *at home* within their identities (Tatar 1981: 173). For Tatar, the absence of knowledge, pertaining to repressed familial information, permits an aura of uncanniness in which characters "are not at home with themselves until the mysteries of their past have been mastered"

(178). Additionally, for Susan Bernstein, uncanniness can evoke anxiety through the onset of non-originality or “the non-presence of self” which is brought about through the appearance of doubles or *doppelgänger*s (2003: 1126). The uncanny effects of repetition or doubling is a reminder of the loss of the original ‘I’ and highlights the experience of dislocation or a split in an individual. The repetitive nature of the ‘double,’ feelings of helplessness or inescapability, castration and a belief in the supernatural, are some of the themes of Freud’s uncanny that Bernstein, in her textual reading of the concept, sees as emerging in narrative structures to destroy “the illusion of a stable subject position, of a final meaning, of a sense separable from language and the body” (1135). Her analysis of the uncanny is therefore helpful in restructuring what may be perceived as ‘limited’ Freudian interpretations of the term.

In my analysis of Gaiman’s uncanny Liza, the ghost-witch-child, I not only rely on Bernstein, but on a postcolonial thinker whose definition of ‘unhomeliness’ draws on Freud’s notion of the uncanny: Homi Bhabha. Bhabha’s use of the term “unhomely” is instrumental in articulating the ambivalence and shattering of binaries that is evident in Gaiman’s character. Bhabha uses the term to express familiar or domestic spaces as sites for “history’s most intricate invasions,” where the border between what is home and world merge, thus exacting a state of disorientation (1992: 141). Unhomeliness is compared to the shock of realising a lack of divisions so that “the world-in-the-home” and the “home-in-the-world” become acknowledged for their divided nature and yet indistinguishable from each other all at once. As Bhabha explains in “The World and the Home,” cultural difference is renegotiated within moments of postcolonial anguish or displacement, yet can also be found in a range of world narratives or fictions that “negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of historical conditions and social contradiction” (1992: 142). Following Bhabha’s own application of the term to texts that aren’t typically postcolonial (such as Henry James’s *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881)), I apply his theories to my analysis of Gaiman’s Liza. Bhabha states: “The unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” (1992: 144). In this statement, the disruption of colonial violence and injury on an individual (the personal or private) is highlighted, so as to express broader moments of historical injustice (the public). This will prove useful when analysing Liza’s persecution as a witch (and, potentially, a Jew). It also applies to her marginal status in society, as a child. Additionally, identity as hybridised, as not fixed, is central to understanding the unhomely which permits “zones of intervention, zones of trauma, where the ambivalence of the boundary between public and private becomes apparent” (Viljoen and van der Merwe 2007: 9). As a “zone of intervention” there are many possibilities, some creative and some reparative, where

identity can be reformed, and I argue that the uncanny achieves this not through physical spaces but through relationships with self and other. In this way, the uncanny proves crucial to protagonists' self-awareness of postcolonial conditions such as alterity found in interactions with Gaiman's uncanny characters.

Within the field of children's literature, critics such as Roberta Seelinger Trites (2002) and David Rudd (2013) have since recognised the value of the uncanny in children's fiction, and the potential it has for allowing young readers to manage fears and pressures related to the experience of growing up. Trites states that children's literature is involved with the process of "making meaning of the human condition" and that there is potential in the uncanny for "determining the form and content of much children's literature" (Trites 2002: 162). Rudd emphasizes how texts that deal with the "more troubling and disturbing shifts out of familiarity," as expressed by the uncanny, need to be included within children's literature (Rudd 2013: 129). In an essay on the use of magic, Gothic and uncanny in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Judith P. Robertson also affirms a space for the uncanny in allowing child readers to encounter:

primitive emissaries from the unconscious configured as goblins, dragons, talking toads, trolls, witches, werewolves, nearly-headless ghosts, and three-headed dogs. But greater than these fantastic characteriological provocations is something structurally formal [...] uncanny thought-experiments that sweep children up into a way of feeling mental uncertainty. (2001: 203)

The usefulness of the uncanny in children's texts, and the impressions it may inculcate on the present-day child is further affirmed by Rosemary Jackson's assertion that certain forms of uncanny fantasy literature can allow "an articulation of taboo subjects which are otherwise silenced" yet instrumental in exposing the need to transgress the norms of society (1981: 72).

However, it is perhaps scholar Chloé Buckley who comes closest to reimagining the unhomely's contemporary relevance in children's literature. In looking at twenty-first century Children's Gothic texts, she notices the theme of "unhomeliness," bound to protagonists' moments of transition and change, that becomes reconfigured as "nomadism"¹³ (Buckley 2018a: 1). Buckley also draws on Rosi Braidotti's use of "nomadic subjectivity" to argue that creative and alternative spaces exist for the child:

¹³ Buckley refers to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) ideas on "line of flight" and "line of becoming" which rejects singular interpretations of 'being' or identity. Thus, positive articulations for a variety of figurations of the child can be achieved.

In Braidotti's work, the nomadic subject is the self in process, a perpetually multiple and dynamic being. The nomad is embodied in concrete power and social relations, but occupies an affirmatory rather than oppressed position. [...] This non-unitary model of subjectivity incorporates postmodern and post-structuralist notions of the subject as fluid and partly determined by social formations and other structures, but rejects a pessimistic structuralism and a tragic image of the fragmented subject found in linguistic and deconstructive theories" (2018a: 8)

The relevance of a nomadic subject, who creatively remaps spaces, is that it allows multiple locations, identities and thus readings of the child that challenge both the parameters of traditional children's literature and the "totalising tendency of psychoanalytic criticism" (Buckley 2018a: 10). Following Buckley, I will explore Coraline's character (and her relationship with the Other Mother) through the lens of nomadism. I argue that the Other Mother's multiplicity and unhomeliness challenge hegemonic structures and empower the protagonist.

These contemporary theories on the uncanny and nomadism are particularly appropriate for my reading of Gaiman's novels, which deals primarily with the understanding of the protagonists' identity during times of transition, tension and change. Contemporary re-interpretations of Freud's essay emphasise the uncanny's association with uncertainty, undecidability and transgression. This is pertinent to my focus on how Gaiman's uncanny characters subvert stereotypical Gothic stock characters (such as the witch or vampire). In breaking free from these fixed formulas, Gaiman's Gothic figures transcend and trouble 'otherness.' For the protagonist and child reader (involved imaginatively in the hero's journey of self-discovery) however, the uncanny alone cannot provide an understanding of self-awareness. For this reason, I will be using the uncanny *in conjunction* with Carl Jung's concept of the shadow to support my textual analysis of uncanny characters in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*.

2.2 The Jungian Shadow

Carl Gustav Jung's concept of the shadow is a helpful tool in understanding how uncanny characters are influential in the self-development and maturation of protagonists in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*. As noted by Henning Viljoen, Jung's view of man is centred on the possibility of individuation or "creative development in striving to achieve a complete self" (1989: 75). In describing the role of the shadow Viljoen explains that for Jung the human psyche is composed of conscious and unconscious processes that are constantly striving towards being whole. The conscious houses man's ego which is responsible for an understanding of our physical and social

worlds, whilst the unconscious contains all those aspects we are not aware of (1989: 78-79). Jung distinguishes between a ‘personal unconscious’ and a ‘collective unconscious’, and that it is in the latter (affected by social concerns) that one finds what he terms archetypes. Archetypes store mythological motifs and are manifested through symbols. The Jungian psychologist, Jolande Jacobi, explains that Jung’s archetypes are felt when:

a distressing situation arises, the corresponding archetype will be constellated in the unconscious. Since this archetype is numinous, i.e., possesses a specific energy, it will attract to itself the contents of consciousness – conscious ideas that render it perceptible and hence capable of conscious realisation. Its passing over into consciousness is felt as an illumination, a revelation, or a ‘saving idea’ (1959: 66).

The most dangerous, yet crucial, archetype is the shadow which holds the possibility of self-realisation. The shadow can be summarized as “the negative side of the personality, the sum of all the unpleasant qualities one wants to hide, the inferior, worthless and primitive side of man’s nature, the ‘other person’ in one, one’s own dark side” (Samuels et al 1987: 138). Jung makes a compelling argument for an area of the personality, or shadow self, that offers resistance to acknowledgment or surfacing of parts of the self that an individual is incapable of reconciling with their socialised self. Through such resistance, projections¹⁴ are formed: “While some traits peculiar to the shadow can be recognized [sic] without too much difficulty as one’s own personal qualities, in this case both insight and good will are unavailing because the cause of the emotion appears to lie, beyond all possibility of doubt, in the *other person*” (1958: 7). To understand more about one’s weaknesses, fears and prejudice then, it is of the utmost importance that individuals confront their shadow, develop awareness of their projections, and in turn, realise what is being hidden from conscious thought.

In “The Influence of Carl Jung’s Archetype of the Shadow on Early 20th Century Literature”, Dana Brook Thurmond acknowledges the prevalence and consistency of archetypes in “fairytales, myths, and artistic representations” (2012: 4). She demonstrates how the shadow, in 20th century literary texts such as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) and Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), expresses the repressed habits of society and darker parts of the individual through Gothic stereotypes (like the vampire and ghost figure). In these works she notices a “return to the primitive to merge with the Shadow and become a fulfilled individual” (Thurmond 2012: 6). Thurmond highlights the necessity of reading Jung’s exploration of the shadow. Jung’s work is often labelled as too reliant

¹⁴ Projections are irreconciled ideas or beliefs that an individual projects or transfers onto another in order to ignore or reject its presence within themselves.

on subjectivism (McGowan 1994), with a use of religion and the occult that is too spiritually inclined. Yet critics have foregrounded the implications of ignoring the shadow by theorizing that an understanding of the Jungian shadow in society allows for a deeper insight into the ideological and political manifestations of human violence and horror in the 20th century (Hennelly 1987; Connolly 2003).

Economic and social development critic, R. Kevin Hennelly, examines the shadow in relation to Nazi occupation (1933-1945) and the rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany. Hennelly expands on the nature of a “personal shadow” and “collective shadow” (1987: 9-10). He confirms, that whilst the personal shadow “is derived from aspects of an individual’s personality that are incompatible with his or her particular conscious attitudes and values,” the collective shadow is a consequence of the “influence of broader social, cultural and religious factors that make certain qualities and characteristics of the personalities of persons belonging to the same group, nation or culture incompatible with a prevailing ethos or world view” (Hennelly 1987: 9). Hennelly’s work suggests that the contents of the shadow are not confined to the individual psyche alone, but that it has social, real-world repercussions. Hennelly observes the relevance and applicability of psychoanalytic terms to representations of terror in contemporary society. Angela Connolly, too, sees both the individual and collective shadow as essential in understanding “the universal tendency to project onto the other our own shadow [...] in which we experience difference and otherness” (2003: 413-414). Both interpretations prove the usefulness of looking at the shadow in relation to self-awareness, thus confirming that an “integration of unconscious contents is an individual act of realisation, of understanding, and moral evaluation. It is a most difficult task, demanding a high degree of ethical responsibility (Jung 1970: 221).

Although not featured in my analyses, it is worth noting that Marie-Louise von Franz bridges psychology and literary studies in her work on fairy tales and the psyche. She frames the personal and collective shadow as vital human structures of psychological behaviour easily reflected in fairy tale narratives (Von Franz 1995: 12). In reading the motif of the Jungian shadow in various fairy tales across the world, Von Franz adds in *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales* how Jungian concepts may be read in literature, and may be interpreted by readers as “abstractions” that indicate “the difficulties and dangers given to us by nature” (2017: Preface). Her analysis demonstrates the function of the shadow and the benefits of psychological interpretations when examining children’s literature. Likewise, in an application of Jungian psychology to the folklore genre, Carlos C. Drake is able to pinpoint the relationship between Jungian interpretations of the unconscious

and folk stories, “In folk beliefs and superstitions, in jests and riddles, in legends and myths, in songs and tales, in stories of the supernatural and the occult, the unconscious is often present. The more we know of unconscious factors, the more easily we can identify their effects in such genres and try to understand them” (1969: 128). Understanding the unconscious thus becomes not just a personal moral obligation, but imperative in understanding society: individual identity and the effects of building self-awareness, thus has the possibility to promote positive future change.

Perhaps the most useful critical work on the shadow and its impact on children, is “The Child and the Shadow” by science fiction and fantasy author, Ursula K. Le Guin. In her article which will be returned to in my analyses, Le Guin poses important questions regarding symbolism in children’s fiction, the role of the Jungian shadow and why certain genres are more apt in conveying “the language of the inner self” (1975: 148). In my analysis of Gaiman’s uncanny characters, Le Guin’s short but insightful study on the shadow and the child is particularly pertinent as she describes the shadow as a threshold between the conscious and unconscious. As a threshold, the shadow is both detrimental (if ignored) and reparative (in its creative possibilities): “We can let it bar the way to the creative depths of the unconscious, or we can let it lead us to them. For the shadow is not simply evil. It is inferior, primitive, awkward, animallike [sic], childlike; powerful, vital, spontaneous” (143). The shadow, as a storehouse of both positive and negative potential, is hence implicated as useful in the process towards self-realisation and the transgression of boundaries that confine the hero’s path to a more integrated, cohesive self.

2.3 Liminality and Border Theories in Young Adult Literature

Anthony Eaton identifies a unique trend within contemporary young adult literature that makes use of liminality, thus allowing modern day young adult texts to be seen as “a ‘threshold’ literature” (2013: 6). Traditionally, children’s texts follow a *bildungsroman* or coming-of-age narrative pattern which reflects the transitional nature of physical and emotional development a young person engages with, in order to mature as an individual. In an article on contemporary Canadian literature for young adults, Ingrid Johnston reminds readers that, “[w]riters of young adult fiction almost inevitably focus attention on issues of identity and maturation, considering how their protagonists cross bridges from childhood to maturity and the kinds of experiences that accompany these transitions” (2012: 139). However, for Eaton, referring to young adult literature as transitional takes away the fundamental difference found in modern children’s and young adult texts, that contest the notion of fixed categories like ‘adolescence’ or ‘childhood,’ or that fixed states of transition could possibly exist when changes in social, economic and political conditions have

restructured such meanings for present day youth (2013: 7). Taking this change into consideration, Johnston proposes that a “fluid, uncertain and open-ended” view of child maturation is now being reflected in contemporary children’s texts (2012: 139). She draws on Mikhail Bakhtin’s work on “chronotopes” and “the threshold” to reflect the possibilities inherent in new forms of identity-making through children’s narratives (140). Johnston proposes that if a ‘chronotope’ is a representation of time and space and the subsequent choices one makes in their mode of existence, then the “chronotope of the threshold” is as Bakhtin concludes “connected with the breaking point in life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life” (Bakhtin in Johnston 2012: 140). The threshold itself is linked to a space of liminality, which Johnston summarizes as “a liminal space that refers to a transitory, in-between state or space, characterized by indeterminacy, ambiguity, hybridity, and the potential for subversion and change” (140). Similarly, in her analysis of contemporary young adult fiction, Rachel Falconer acknowledges the “chronotope of the threshold” in relaying identity crises and “the cusp of fundamental change” that ensues for the protagonist and young adult reader alike (2010: 88-89), propounding the need for young adult literature that reflects liminality.

In her work on literature and liminality, Marita Wenzel identifies colonisation and globalisation as two key factors that have led to an influx in transitions within society. To represent the disruptive nature of impinging transitions, she highlights how literature “embodies” the concept of liminality in the sense that it represents and expresses the quest for an ever-elusive sense of identity” (Wenzel 2007: 45). Wenzel links the concept of liminality to the power of the imagination in recreating for the reader spaces that reflect the protagonists’ “rites of passage” thus “enabling characters and readers to finally come to terms with traumatic changes in their lives and cultures” (45-46). However, I will argue that in order for liminality to function as a space for transformation or maturation, the protagonist must first encounter the uncanny. The uncanny, through its uncertainty and fear, stimulates the protagonist’s feeling of existing in a liminal space, thus allowing the protagonist to access their Jungian shadow in this in-between zone. Viljoen and van der Merwe promote “in-between spaces where new identities in relation to the other and to space and place can be formed,” which I argue is reliant on the impact of concepts like the uncanny that challenge dualistic binaries that prevent such spaces (2007: 4).

To strengthen this argument, in his article, “From Transition to Threshold: Redefining ‘Young Adulthood’”, Eaton advocates that the core difference in contemporary young adult fiction is that they function as “liminal texts”:

Liminal texts function not so much by ‘deconstructing’ dichotomies, but rather by bringing them together and re-forming their existence in a space where the dichotomy ceases to have relevance. In doing so, they create and exist in a space open to experimentation, boundary and threshold transgression, and which can at the same time both challenge and re-shape (or re-enforce, through opposing) existing social ‘norms’ (2013: 11).

In order to understand the way in which liminal texts may reflect social practices, I rely on anthropologists Victor Turner’s (1969) and Arnold van Gennep’s (1960) ideas on liminality and thresholds. Turner’s and Van Gennep’s key concepts can be applied to literary texts that deal with states of transition. According to studies on culture and society by Van Gennep (1960), there are three main phases that an individual must go through during what he terms *rites de passage* or initiation: namely, separation, the *limen* or margin phase, and the reincorporation or reintegration phase. The first phase involves a detachment of the individual or group from previous cultural conditions, the second comprises ambiguity or uncertainty in relation to the characteristics of the ritual subject, and the third phase involves a reaching of stability where the subject or group is reincorporated into the social structure, thus achieving a social position or place within society (Turner 1969: 95). I apply Turner’s idea on “liminal *personae*” or “threshold people” who:

are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such; their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. (95)

Liminal beings are thus seen as part of a dialectical relationship between initiand and other, and as an integral part of the developmental process of the initiand. The process is usually one of humbling and destruction where traditional boundaries are effaced in order to reintegrate the initiand positively back into her social space (103).

Reading stories in which protagonists undergo a state of liminality or uncertainty can reflect the reader’s own transitional experiences, thus allowing them to identify with the protagonists’ journey of self-discovery. I argue that in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* liminality as induced by uncanny characters has the power to serve as a transformational space for both protagonist and reader. In speaking on the importance of liminality from a literary perspective, Hein Viljoen and Chris N. van der Merwe substantiate:

The relevance of the idea of liminality for literature is not only that many texts describe and represent liminal states, persons and transformations, but also that the space of the text itself is a symbolically demarcated liminal zone where transformations are allowed to happen—imaginary transformations that model and possibly bring into being new ways of thinking and being. Literature, in this view, does not constitute an autonomous aesthetic sphere, but is regarded as part of society's rituals, albeit a voluntary ritual. (2007: 11)

In addition, Marlies Taljard discusses South African texts that make use of liminal zones, suggesting that “confrontation in the liminal zone” may lead to the necessary insights that allow reconciliation and reparation for protagonists dealing with sensitive issues such as race, class and gender prejudice (2007: 258-259). Liminality in children's fiction is worthy of exploration by focusing on uncanny figures. Liminality may be viewed as sharing certain similarities with the uncanny as both concepts constitute a blurring of boundaries or borders, the unravelling of binary oppositions and the achievement of meanings that are not fixed. Thus, the uncanny, liminality and the Jungian shadow may work together to reflect the possibility of transgressive, hybrid, and self-aware characters in Gaiman's Children's Gothic texts.

Chapter Three

An Uncanny Witch: An Analysis of Liza Hempstock in *The Graveyard Book*

3.1 “They say a witch is buried here.”

The character of Elizabeth ‘Liza’ Hempstock in Neil Gaiman’s *The Graveyard Book* is unmistakably uncanny due to the many guises she adopts within the narrative: namely that of witch, ghost-child, divine being, victim, love interest and malevolent harbinger, among many others. Her fluidity, moral ambiguity and multiple, undecidable roles instil in the protagonist, Bod Owens, a sense of uncertainty. However, her liminality and uncanniness are also a source of dynamic and creative energy (Wenzel 2007: 46). She defies boundaries inculcated by social orders, particularly patriarchy and religion. Liza’s alterity and marginalisation are complicated not only by her sex, age and belief system (or heresy), but also by her status as outsider, ‘foreigner’ and arguably, Jew. Her persecution, dislocation and exile resonate with Bhabha’s reimagining of unhomeliness. Thus, I argue that Liza may be interpreted as an “unhomely” figure or displaced “[site] for history’s most intimate invasions” (Bhabha 1992: 141). Reading Liza through a postcolonial lens subtly and obliquely introduces the child reader to issues of alterity, marginalisation and exile. By examining Liza’s character alongside contemporary notions of the uncanny (Royle 2003), it is possible to see how she troubles the stability of Western hegemonic structures through a merging of past and present, by representing marginalisation within the physical space of the graveyard and the transhistorical space of violent persecution (witch-hunts and child oppression). In addition, I will also clarify how encounters with Liza’s uncanniness promote the protagonist’s liminal experience, thus allowing him to access aspects of his Jungian shadow that result in a deeper self-awareness and leads to the construction of positive identity-formation.

3.1.1 An Introduction to Liza Hempstock

We are introduced to Liza in the fourth chapter of the novel entitled “The Witch’s Headstone,” first as an unnamed foreboding warning from the graveyard inhabitants and then as an ethereal form who helps heal the protagonist when he falls from a tree (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 99). Liza inhabits the unconsecrated grounds of the graveyard where her body is discarded rather than buried due to accusations of witchcraft. She is a ghost-child and a witch (as we come to learn through her confessions) who died on the brink of womanhood (as Bod describes her as neither his age – eight years old – nor an adult). From the information gleaned throughout the novel, Liza

seems to have been born roughly around the end of Queen Elizabeth I's reign (1603) which coincides with the Elizabethan witch persecutions in England at the time (Website 2). The accusations made against her are typical of many witch trials where "milk gone sour and horses gone lame," and the bespelling of young men were often used as proof of a woman's witchery (100). Liza seems to occupy a lower-class status within the village, where she tells Bod "I done laundry," an occupation stereotypically reserved for the poorer class or uneducated (108). Liza's grammar and manner of speaking further communicate a lack of education, and she admits "I did never master my letters" (107).

On a physical level, Bod describes Liza as "grey-eyed" and "pretty," and her physical charm is further confirmed by the story Liza relates of young Solomon Porritt who becomes enamoured with her and "hangs around the washhouse like a wasp about a honeypot" (103, 101). This statement conveys Liza's burgeoning womanhood, implying she is at an age that draws the sexual attention of men. Her free-spiritedness is revealed when she mentions dancing till dawn, emphasising her passion for fun and love of freedom when she "twirled, and kicked, and her bare feet flashed in the moonlight" (101). On an emotional level, Liza is frequently moody and quarrelsome indicative of her conflictual and perpetual (due to her early death) adolescent state. She is often described as "unimpressed," "pert" or talking "with a sniff"; which are also signs of her independence, fierceness and no-nonsense attitude (119, 131, 121). Liza carries a defiant independence even into death, reinforcing a likely suspicion that her 'heresy' may have been attributed to the above characteristics, which often associated strong, bold, sexual women with witches, without requiring confirmation of any actual practice of witchcraft (Bovenschen 1978: 90).

Liza and Bod become friends after she heals his ankle, and she gradually shows signs of affection toward him after he risks the safety of the graveyard to buy her a headstone (something denied to her as a convicted witch). She casts a spell that helps Bod successfully "Fade" (a talent of invisibility used by the graveyard ghosts) and saves him from danger on a number of occasions (alerting his guardian when he is abducted by menacing policemen and assisting him in trapping the band of villainous Jacks who wish to kill him) (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 190, 250). Her affection turns to young love (something Liza possibly never experienced when alive) and she exhibits jealousy when Bod befriends a young, living girl, that leads to long periods of silence and outbursts of frustration which adds to her ambiguity as her adolescent emotions oscillate (224). Whilst Liza affects Bod and alerts him to repressed desires (his sexuality) and beliefs (influenced by binaries of gender and

othering), Bod too leaves a deep impression on Liza, allowing her to feel kindness (the gift of a headstone) and the thrill (falling in love) of humanity. Toward the end of the novel, Liza gives Bod his first kiss thus impacting on the protagonist's identity indefinitely.

3.1.2 “Something girl-like. Something grey-eyed.”: Liza as an Ambivalent Figure

3.1.2.1 Liza as a Ghost-Witch-Child

Nicholas Royle posits that the uncanny does not only deal with that which is “gruesome or terrible” or as Freud intimates “arouses dread and horror” (Freud [1919] 1997: 193) but with “something strangely beautiful, bordering on ecstasy [...] eerily reminding us of something, like *déjà vu*” (Royle 2003: 2). This ambiguity is echoed in the first impression of Liza (as seen through the protagonist's eyes), “She was older than him, but not a grown-up, and she looked neither friendly nor unfriendly. Wary, mostly. She had a face that was intelligent and not even a little bit beautiful”¹⁵ (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 99). The comingling of something frightful and lovely is typical of the ambivalent quality of the uncanny (evident in the etymological intersection of *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, discussed in my methodology section) where both the German words and the English equivalents, canny and uncanny, in their various connotations come eventually to coincide rendering meaning uncertain (Freud [1919] 1997: 195-199). Prior to meeting Liza, Bod wonders “whether the witch would be old and iron-toothed and travel in a house on chicken legs, or whether she would be thin and sharp-nosed and carry a broomstick” (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 98). Liza unsettles and overturns the protagonist's stereotypical image, when she actually appears more beguiling than terrifying. Furthermore, the juxtaposed images of a Western witch (sharp-nosed, broom wielding) with the Slavic Baba Yaga folktale representation (a witch that travels on a house made of chicken legs) asserts the witch's status as something alien across cultures (Ness 2018: n.p.). However, instead of meeting an evil or unscrupulous witch, Bod is faced with an unusual, young girl that is confusingly both familiar and alien to him, both approachable and hostile.

It is not only her appearance that strikes Bod on his first encounter with Liza, but also her age. She is neither the protagonist's age nor an adult, she is somewhere in between child-like innocence and maturity. This interstitial state of being can be understood in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's “chronotope of the threshold”: a turning point, or “moment of crisis,” reflecting “uncertain and open-ended” possibilities in narratives of maturation (Johnston 2012: 139-140). Bod's current

¹⁵ Note “not even a little” as a saying that implies the opposite i.e. a lot, very much. See Website 6 <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/not-a-little>

innocence and inexperience is contrasted against a relatively more mature, disconcerting Liza, who is an important symbolic benchmark of adolescence that anticipates his own coming-of-age. Liza as young woman and witch is both repelling and fascinating to Bod, who is at the onset of understanding his own sexuality and understanding of women. Liza is interpreted ambiguously as both monstrous and appealing, attractive and repelling: “The girl fixed him with her beady ghost-eyes and smiled a lop-sided smile. She still looked like a goblin, but now she looked like a pretty goblin” (Gaiman 2008: 101). The goblin, a mythological and monstrous creature is noted as a cunning and mischievous character thus implying that Liza comes across as playful and sly (Weinstein n.d.). These characteristics mixed with Bod’s assertion that “but now she looked like a pretty goblin” is suggestive of Liza’s sexual allure. Adolescent issues, such as the enigma of sexual attraction, are thus recast onto the supernatural figure of Liza in her “ghost-eyes,” “lop-sided smile” and “goblin” body. Through Bod’s eyes, Liza’s monstrousness becomes something endearing, “pretty.” Her monstrousness and alterity is not negated or undone but notable, neither is her beauty reified. In fact, Bod first describes her face as “intelligent” (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 99). Through Liza, the novel interrogates culturally endorsed definitions of femininity that makes a woman’s appearance (her beauty) her social currency. Instead, Bod’s view of Liza as woman *and* monster not only foregrounds the complexities of a young man’s first encounter with understanding the female body and eroticism, but with the way society places emphasis on appearances.

The “witch” as a site of evil, mostly female and with an insatiable lust is an outcome of the above societal binaries and gendered misogyny that has its roots in religious domination. The prejudicial nature of the term “witch” is can be understood through Evelyn Heinemann’s (2000) psychoanalytical study of witchcraft in Europe in the Early Modern Age (roughly 1500 to 1800). In her research, she highlights the witch as a result of psychical “splitting” into notions of good and bad, a psychoanalytical process better understood through Melanie Klein’s study of the mother-child relationship: “the earliest memories of a small child at the mother’s breast are split as the child cannot yet see the mother as an integral person, but only as separate objects (good and bad breast)” (Heinemann 2000: 45). Heinemann adds how the mechanism of splitting might lead to the creation of a witch “imago,” the image of a bad mother: “The witch is basically the hated, depriving mother, hence the serious accusations of harmful magic, the destruction of the harvest and the theft of milk. It is primarily the oral image of the mother which is divided into the witch, on the one hand, and, on the other, the protective, helpful Virgin Mary” (46-47). The gendered stereotyping of women is evident in the dualistic image of women as either chaste and good

(mother or Mary figure) or evil and depraved (the witch), something that is further reflected in modern society through the Madonna-Whore Dichotomy which “denotes polarized perceptions of women in general as either “good,” chaste, and pure Madonnas or as “bad,” promiscuous, and seductive whores” (Bareket et al 2018).

Since Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 3), the image of woman as temptress, and her alliance with the devil, has been cemented in popular discourse. Gaiman’s novel exposes this false perception, presenting a counternarrative that resists dualism through Liza’s – “monstrous” and human mix of identities. It is also fitting that Bod meets Liza when he greedily reaches for an apple “red and ripe” on the border between consecrated and unconsecrated ground, only to fall to the earth below where he encounters the young witch (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 98). Liza as a ghost-witch is reminiscent of Hecate, Greek Goddess of witchcraft, the dead, as well as liminal spaces, thresholds and transitions (Soar 2016: n.p.). Like the non-human form of Hecate, who was worshipped for her role in the in-between places of good and evil, life and death, and protection and revenge, Liza’s ambivalent monster-human form challenges gendered notions of women through her uncanniness: the familiarity of a human body is rendered unfamiliar by Gothic nuances. Liza exists in an indeterminate zone where categorisations like ‘evil’ or ‘witch’ may be contested, and where cultural alienation that stems from such labels are subverted and renegotiated.

Liza’s first words in the novel, “Hush-a-you-hush-a-boy,” conveys a motherly tone as she soothes Bod’s moaning (after his fall from the tree) and mimics the lullaby, “Hush, Little Baby” (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 99). She continues a motherly approach when inspecting Bod’s leg: “Cool fingers prodded his left leg. ‘Not broken. Twisted, yes, sprained perhaps’” (99). This is the first indication that Liza has medical or healing knowledge, an “indigenous practice” often associated historically with witches or any woman that threatened patriarchal authority and monopolisation of knowledge (Yakushko 2017: 18). After assessing Bod’s leg with her medical knowledge, Liza goes on to heal it with her magic doing her first good deed for the protagonist. In doing this she challenges patriarchal hegemonies that link men primarily with scientific or medical expertise and women with pagan-worshipping and a “perceived lack of intelligence”: Liza is capable of both medical healing and pagan practices (Farrell 2018: n.p.). Furthermore, Liza troubles the Madonna-whore dichotomy by being both nurturing *as well as* sexually alluring. As she confides her life story to Bod he realises that “she [wouldn’t] have needed magic to attract Solomon Porritt, not with a smile like that” (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 101). Liza challenges the dichotomy of being either/or: evil or good,

scientific or magical. As a real Gothic monster (ghost-witch), an othered character (inhabitant of unconsecrated ground), and a woman, Liza's many guises confuse Bod as he battles to categorise her in his mind.

Liza subverts traditional Gothic stereotypes of witches, evident in Bod's reverence of her which makes her more akin to a 'divine' being thus recalling a similarity to Hecate. When contemplating broken stones or stealing statues from the graveyard, as a solution to her lack of gravestone, Bod quickly realises "that would have been entirely the wrong sort of thing to bring to the grey-eyed witch" (103). Later in the novel, as will be discussed, he brings Liza a paperweight as a token, or substitute gravestone that represents her ethereal presence and portends the way in which she eventually grounds Bod. Fittingly, the paperweight expresses the straddling personas of the witch that David Punter highlights in "Figuring the Witch," foregrounding the witch's "plurality," transience and outlawry in literary texts (2017: 67-68). The witch's plurality allows her to transgress boundaries and occupy multiple, hybrid, rather than prescribed, roles dictated by culture. Liza's hybridity is reinforced by the shadowy and ethereal imagery used to describe the setting in which she appears: "there was an extra shadow beneath the hawthorn tree, and, as he approached it, the shadow resolved itself into something pearlescent and translucent in the early morning light. Something girl-like. Something grey-eyed." (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 107).

Liza is simultaneously there and not-there, echoed by her grey eyes: a colour that expresses blending and the in-between, as it is neither black nor white. Her mysteriousness and unpredictability are also seen in her constant disappearing acts: "he turned to wave goodbye (...) but she was already gone" (103) and "when he turned to look, there was no one there" (131). Liza eerily and deliberately masks herself, so that only her voice is heard: "It was Liza Hempstock talking, Bod knew, although the witch-girl was nowhere to be seen" (183). Just like E.T.A Hoffman's Sandman, Liza is heard before she is seen. In his analysis of Hoffman's story, Royle observes that "the sandman is first of all something to be experienced *in the ear*" (2003: 46). It is this temporal delay or disjunction between seeing and hearing, body and voice, that suggests Liza's uncanniness. Her ability to haunt makes her powerful, unsettling and even a little bit frightening. Liza may not be outright evil or malicious, but she is a maverick. She defines herself as such when she tells Bod: "There's rules for those in graveyards, but not for those as was buried in unhallowed ground. Nobody tells *me* what to do, or where to go" (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 116). She is a force to be reckoned with, and despite her status as an exiled figure of the unhallowed ground, she defies her restrictions and enjoys her independence. Silvia Bovenschen highlights such fierce feminist re-

appropriations of the witch image as a symbol of resistance and autonomy (1978: 84,90). Yet it is Madeline Miller that declares a marked persistence between witchcraft fears and racism in contemporary times that casts vulnerable “foreign” or politically strong women as witches (2018: n.p.). The witch becomes emblematic of resistance and retrieving lost power or liberation in a male-dominated society: “witches cannot really be contained by hypes; they leap over boundaries, bursting out of categories as fast we make them [sic]. They are constantly changing as we change, reflecting our ideas about women back to ourselves” (Miller 2018: n.p.). Gaiman’s witch follows in this spirit. Liza is a positive symbol of defiance and independence for Bod (and the child reader) through challenging the status quo, and emboldening Bod to act with independence and bravery.

Liza’s ambivalence, that allows for such transgression and rebellion, is also evident in how easily she can switch between a girl-next-door persona to that of *femme fatale*. At first, her conspiratorial and chatty manner of speaking creates a friendly atmosphere drawing the protagonist into her trusted inner circle via the disclosure of secrets and concealed information: she endearingly calls Bod “young lummoX” when talking to him, and her stories contain talkative additions like “although if you ask me” (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 107,100). She confides in Bod about her harrowing tale of being “drownded and burnded,” the manner in which she is ill-treated by her townspeople through verbal insult and torture, and then finally put to death (100). Her life story, accentuating the unfair treatment of victims of paranoid and prejudiced mobs, has a universal appeal and resonance. She describes her accusers as “pigwiggins scrubbed clean for market day” and there is a clear indication, from her sarcastic tone, of class disparity¹⁶ and the townspeople’s bigotry (100). She thus calls attention to the existence of vice in human beings by describing the townspeople as taking on the pretence of cleanliness and Godliness for the day, despite their own flaws, exposing their hypocrisy for condemning her supposed vice. In describing her painful and personal experiences, sympathy is naturally evoked for Liza who is quite obviously wronged by the townspeople. However, her status as innocent, powerless victim is quickly undercut by her matter-of-fact confession as a witch thus allowing her to reinsert her power :

Of course I was a witch. They learned that when they untied me from the cucking-stool and stretched me on the green, nine-parts dead and all covered with duckweed and stinking pondmuck. I rolled my eyes back in my head, and I cursed each and every one of them there on the village green that morning, that none of them would ever rest easily in a grave. I was surprised at how easily it came, the cursing. (101)

¹⁶Liza’s lower-class status has already been mentioned.

The “cucking stool” (or ducking stool) is significant as a potent symbol of male dominance over females, in that it was used to ridicule and shame housewives, gossips and any woman who needed reprimanding during the Medieval period (Yard n.d.). Women were placed in chairs (consisting of chamber pots) and plunged into dirty water for long periods of time as a means of torture and rectifying female deviance. Additionally, it was used to gain confessions from witches (many were even killed in this manner) and to remind the public of the dire consequences of breaking socially constructed rules. Liza intimates the humiliation and indecency connected to the experience by emphasising the filth of the “duckweed” and “stinking pondmuck,” (a mixture of faeces and town rubbish that usually covered a woman when dunked). Liza’s curse, then, is a welcome form of her retribution. Not only does Liza turn her victimisation into her triumph, but she avenges innocent women and children that may have been similarly accused, violated and murdered in her town. The moment of her cursing is also the moment that Liza reclaims her sense of power, by turning the patriarchal label of witch into a concrete harbinger of justice that brings about the death of her accusers.

Up until her drowning, she seems incognisant of her gifts and therefore surprised at how easy it is to perform magic. When she issues her curse, she is at the brink of death and eerily presented as a corpse being brought back to life. This is reminiscent of Ernst Jentsch’s argument that the uncanny is related to “doubt as to whether an apparently living being really is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate” (Jentsch [1906] 1995: 8) There is most certainly an uncanny quality to Liza’s seemingly dead body returning to deliver a final blow. In the sudden possession that Liza undergoes in her “nine-parts” inanimate state, the uncanny effect is produced in the unsettling intimation of something alive and dead existing together: a return of something ancient and diabolical. Through the demonic and possessed imagery of her ‘eyes rolling back’ in her head, she is also a disturbing reminder of historic forms of child violence that exploited children for a belief in their dual association with purity and sin.

Liza is also not a traditional representation of a child because she is an adolescent, a witch and a ghost. She is a mix of opposites, of animate and inanimate, early death and eternal youth, adored for her innocence by men and violated for her supposed guilt. As a ghost-child, Liza is able to offer a poignant encounter with an “in-betweenness” that “centres on the co-existence and connectedness of the living and the (un)dead” according to Dominik Becher who expounds on the use of ghost-child motifs in novels like *The Graveyard Book* (2016: 103). However, as a witch-child Liza represents the possibility for destabilising marginalised constructions of “the child”

(Buckley 2014). The witch-child's ambivalence takes on uncanny nuances and resists historical notions of what it means to be a "child" thus denying labels altogether and allowing for a reconstruction or "recuperation" of the term that leads to "greater diversity and complexity" which encompasses varied child groups and experiences (Buckley 2014: 106). Liza's reanimation recalls the historically macabre fascination in Victorian art and literature of the ghost-child or teraph: "the decapitated head of a child, placed on a pillar and compelled by magic to reply to the questions of the sorcerer" (Shuttleworth 2015: 92,106). The fascination with teraphs relies on preconceived notions of the "child" as a gateway to heaven and hell, as connected to an infinite source of life and self-knowledge through purity or sin, or the innocent "child" as oracle. Liza re-enacts the teraph's association with prophesising in her final moment when she provocatively curses her condemners, but by doing so utilises both witch and child personae to reclaim her power and challenge the violence done to her as both witch and child.

Liza's curse goes on to verify her access to the supernatural world and the existence of something ominous and fateful. When the townspeople receive carpets containing the Black Death her uncanniness is truly revealed:

But it turned out there was more in that carpet than strong wool and good weaving, for it carried the plague in its pattern, and by Monday five of them were coughing blood, and their skins were gone as black as mine when they hauled me from the fire. A week later and it had taken most of the village, and they threw the bodies all promiscuous in a plague pit they dug outside of the town, that they filled in after. (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 102)

The "coughing blood" and blackened skins convey the misery the townspeople endure before having their dead bodies thrown (as was customary of the time) into a pit. Ironically, they too do not receive proper burial, and are "hauled" and thrown to their graves, reminiscent of the violence done to Liza. Unlike Liza however they are also rejected from the unconsecrated grounds. The victimisation and prejudice that ruled their living days are thus returned to them as a fated reckoning in the form of Liza's curse. Liza's uncanny nature is here most evident in her ability to control or predict future outcomes, her access to secret knowledge or "omnipotence of thoughts" (Freud [1919] 1997: 219). As Rosemary Jackson contends, if the canny or *das Heimlich* signifies things that are concealed or obscured from others, then its negative *das Unheimlich* or the uncanny "functions to dis-cover, reveal, expose areas normally kept out of sight" (1981: 65). There is an acknowledgement that Liza's near-death experience "dis-covers" unseen forces and unearths her inner courage, strength and astuteness in a slow awakening to her magical talents. Liza's curse is

very much the fulfilment and ‘magical’ realisation of an infantile wish to punish those who have unfairly condemned her. Children tend to believe in the all-powerfulness of their thoughts. In reality, children have very little power in an adult world but through the Gothic mode Gaiman makes the child reader’s wish come true. Notably, it is in this passage that Liza finds her voice and is able to speak out against her persecutors, when in reality children’s voices are marginalised or silenced. Liza shows the child reader the power of words that transforms her minority status and rejection by society into something powerful. As a bridge to the unknown or primal origins of humanity, Liza reveals a “shamanic” access to primal and wild supernatural landscapes in her ability to exist between worlds (Burke 2012: Loc 2466). Liza *is* uncanny because she attests to “something fateful and inescapable” (Freud [1919] 1997: 213). By slipping between states, boundaries and identities, Liza’s uncanniness blurs the stereotypical categorisation that promotes negative representations of witches and reveals an uncanny complexity which further disentangles power relations by reconfiguring the “other” of gender persecution and child oppression.

3.1.3 “Got no headstone...Might be anybody. Mightn’t I?”: Liza as an Unhomely Figure

Liza as a marginalised child, monster and female character is much easier to interpret in *The Graveyard Book* than postcolonial representations of her as an “unhomely” figure, however I argue that she is a perfect example of unhomeliness in Gaiman’s text. Homi Bhabha in *The World and the Home* (1992) outlines unhomeliness as a displaced or estranged existence between borders where a confusion in the uncanny merging of public and private spaces can be found. The result of intermingled binaries creates what he terms “an unhallowed place” which resonates beyond traditional postcolonial experiences and may be read in “fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of historical conditions and social contradicting” (1992: 141-142). Using this as a starting point, I argue that Liza’s uncanniness is bound in such notions of unhomeliness as she is forced to physically occupy the “unhallowed” wastelands and as a result a marginalised area between life and death, but most importantly a hovering between revenge and reconciliation. Suitable to Postcolonial Gothic which celebrates the transhistorical as well as socio-historical specificity (Gaylard 2008), Liza’s uncanniness provokes a renegotiation of borders and space that physically as well as mentally resists subjugation. References to class and race bias (as will be explained in her possible Jewish origins) compound Liza as an exiled or foreign being, which add to the already apparent child and gender oppression in the novel to further disturb personal and historical narratives of the past and present. This leaves room to explore how Liza

as an uncanny character interferes with Western hegemonic structures, and how she may serve possible reconciliatory purposes in her space amidst ambivalence and re-location.

It is significant that the graveyard society is divided into two domains: those who live on consecrated ground and those who do not. The latter are relegated to the margins, referred to as the wastelands or unconsecrated grounds. These areas of belonging and non-belonging are marked distinctly by “a fence of rust-brown iron railings, each topped with a small, rusting spearhead” (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 93). The corroding iron with its sharp, pointed spearheads intensifies the idea of people kept in and conversely kept out, underscoring the segregated nature of the graveyard. As a forgotten and abandoned “mass of nettles and weeds, of brambles and autumnal rubbish” (93) the wastelands are shown as neglected and given an inferior position in the graveyard as a dumping site for unwanted waste. It is also a wild, untamed space that is seen as dangerous and decrepit, accentuated by the warnings of “You’ll catch your death” and “It’s not a good place” (93) that the protagonist is repeatedly given. Liza as an occupant of this unfamiliar and uncultivated land, maps the already segregated graveyard as a postcolonial landscape when she first meets Bod and remarks “[w]e’ve heard of you, even over here” (99). Stories of the “live boy” (99) have circulated to her part of the cemetery and that “even” is a significant reminder that she is part of an exiled space where news and common daily practices are usually withheld from those unlucky enough to inhabit unhallowed places.

Miss Burrows, Bod’s teacher, expresses her (and the community’s) class bias when she cautions Bod against engaging with those who live in the wastelands, telling him, “[t]hey aren’t our sort of people” (97). Alongside issues of class, there is also an underlying commentary on racial exclusion in Liza’s “goblin” features. It is significant that the 16th century witch hunts in England coincided with a rise in anti-Semitism (Shapiro 2016: n.p.). Since Jesus’s crucifixion Jews have been cast as agents of Satan and consequently demonised. Caricatures of the Jew depict him/her as devilish or goblin-like, with long noses and short, bestial, slightly humanoid bodies. Liza’s goblin-like features thus make it difficult for Bod to categorise her as good or evil. The reference is used on another occasion, thus over-emphasising her association with this particular supernatural creature: “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 2008: 100). The image evoked is grotesque, deformed and cunning, features that Rayne Weinstein affirms “are recognizable as features of anti-semitic caricatures today” (The Goblin Problem n.d.). Liza’s gobliness characteristics take on darker implications when considering accusations made against Fantasy authors such as J.R.R.

Tolkien (*The Lord of the Rings* trilogy) and J.K. Rowling (*Harry Potter* series) for equating goblins and dwarves with Jewish communities in their construction of displaced, deformed and sly characters (Weinstein n.d.; Richer 2011). Interestingly, Gaiman is born of a Jewish family but politics and race are discourses that are implied rather than voiced in his writing. Liza may very well have been a Jewish girl, who would have been forced, as was customary of the Elizabethan aversion to Jews, to keep her religious affinity secret. The townspeople's fear and disdain may have housed more than mere witch anxieties, easily allowing for her condemnation. However, it is the lack of racial and religious information about Liza that allows her to truly evoke the unhomely. By purposely evading such categorisation, Liza represents multiple forms of marginalisation rather than representing any one specific group. This is part of her uncanny charm and how she resists the graveyard's territorialisation of land and hegemonic practices, predicated on rigid binaries, to adopt "the imagery of postcolonial diasporic hybrid identity" found in Postcolonial Gothic texts (Gaylard 2008:6).

In the novel it also becomes clear that gravestones are symbols of home and belonging. They afford the ghosts a concrete sense of identity and permanence that their ethereality denies. They also give the deceased a sense of comfort and security through affirming their place in the world. The control and division of physical space are represented by the lack of familiar and domestic comfort integral to the symbolism of gravestones for the deceased. The gravestones as physical objects are instrumental in Bod's navigation of his graveyard home. They serve as addresses that mark the homes of the inhabitants, and are useful as ancient primers in teaching him his ABC's: "[e]very day Bod would take his paper and crayons into the graveyard and he would copy names and words and numbers as best he could" (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 33). They are personal, private and comforting objects that create equally familiar and domestic spaces for Bod within a location (a cemetery) that is usually considered lonely and strange. The lack of a gravestone then is a form of exclusion and rejection, which transforms Liza (with her lack of gravestone) into what Bhabha refers to as "unhomed," a particular type of uncanniness that represents displacement, disorientation and disrupts borders between "home and world" and "the private and the public" (1992: 141). Liza, as a wandering spirit, is exiled to the wastelands. She indicates the disorientating effect of this displacement when she tells Bod that she was: "buried here without as much as a stone to mark the spot" (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 100). Without a specific marker (her gravestone), Liza cannot be tethered or rooted to any concrete sense of identity and place, leaving her in a metaphysical, as well as psychic and geographic limbo.

Without a gravestone, or domestic comfort (home), Liza is also denied her private peace, her public sanctuary and the basic respect afforded to the deceased. When she sadly tells Bod, “[i]t’s not that much to ask, is it? Something to mark my grave. I’m just down there, see? With nothing but nettles to show where I rest” (103), she points to the eeriness of her unseen body lying haphazardly unlocated and unremembered somewhere in the overgrown wastelands. This is a moment when she speaks on behalf of marginalised groups, for all those in unhallowed land that were condemned, killed and then denied proper burial. It is a stark reminder of those forcefully pushed into unfamiliar and foreign lands where they are made to feel alterity and are forgotten. If a canny space is “homey,” as Gordon C.F Bearn proposes, and one where you “know your way about,” then contrariwise the uncanny being unhomey, is a place that “unsettles our attempt to find our way about” (1993: 33-34). This indicates that the unhomey should be unsettling because our sense of security and domesticated familiarity is marred by a lack of rootedness, which Liza further reflects in her elusive coming and goings (as previously mentioned) as well as in her lack of a marked home. Yet, Liza shows her cunning and resourcefulness as she turns a disadvantage into an advantage. Not being bound by a fixed marker of identity and place allows her liberties not afforded to others. This is evident when Bod asks her for her name and she replies: “ ‘Got no headstone,’ she said, turning down the corners of her mouth. ‘Might be anybody. Mightn’t I?’” (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 103). Indeed, she could be anyone, from any place – her identity is free as she playfully and pertly states. It is a freedom that comes from having no marker of identity, no home: of being unhomey. Liza reconstitutes the idea of a restless spirit into an empowering one, where freedom and autonomy is possible. The in-between space is thus reconfigured allowing for “new articulations of difference” that coincide with Bhabha’s notion of unhomeliness and create “zones of intervention” where creative possibilities or solutions abound (Viljoen and Van der Merwe 2007: 8-9).

When Bod eventually presents Liza with a makeshift headstone, consisting of a “large glass paperweight” with her initials E.H and the words “WE DON’T FORGET” painted on it, he chooses an object that reflects the above stated independence (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 130). He also displays thoughtfulness and respect by taking the time to clear the nettle of her burial site: “he had taken a small hand-scythe from the wall where it hung, and with it he attacked the nettle patch in the potter’s field, sending the nettles flying, slashing and gutting them till there was nothing but stinging stubble on the ground” (130). By granting Liza a “home,” his gesture is an act of reconciliation. The hard work and effort he undergoes in transforming an alien space into a domesticated one remedies Bod’s part (as a man and as a possible descendant of the people who

were responsible for Liza's wrongful and untimely death) making it a powerful scene of retribution and acknowledgement toward marginalised people. Ironically, Bod finds a paperweight as an equivalent for Liza's headstone. The contradiction of 'paper' as something light and transient (Liza as spectre) and 'weight' as a burden (the injustice Liza bears witness to) reinforces Liza's paradoxical unhomeliness. Like Liza's uncanny form, Bod acknowledges that injustice as well as retribution can exist together. This will later affect Bod's own need for revenge concerning his family's murder¹⁷, when he realises that killing the perpetrators will not bring him satisfaction or peace.

Bhabha's noting of the political responsibility behind unhomely texts is seen in Bod's act of reparation, and may be interpreted as his taking "responsibility for, the un-spoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present" (1992: 147). The attempt at amends for the violence done to Liza indicates an awareness of individual and collective aspects of the shadow that induce prejudice and a projection of fears onto others. Bod becomes aware of the historical progression of prejudice against women, the poor and the exiled, from his interaction with Liza, and this leads to an understanding of his Jungian shadow (which will be addressed in the following section). Herein lies the uncanny's potential to lead to parallel discussions on marginal and liminal spaces of otherness on a broader level. Liza gives us pause to renegotiate borders, what makes us strange, alien or foreign to others and ourselves, thus demonstrating Julia Kristeva's supposition that the uncanny may "teach us how to detect foreignness in ourselves" (Royle 2003: 7). Liza, with her cultural and ethical implications, is an effective representation of how the uncanny destabilises Western hegemonic structures and renegotiates identities.

3.1.4 "One of us is too foolish to live, and it is not I." : Liza's Effect on Bod's Shadow

Jung defines the encounter with the shadow as a "moral problem" because it "challenges the whole ego personality," a fixed and stable sense of the self as wholly good (1958: 7). For Jung, "the self is a union of opposites *par excellence*": it is good and evil, young and old, powerful and helpless ([1968] 1995: 27). These paradoxical characteristics can be seen in the shifting representations of Liza. Facing one's shadow and integrating opposites is the "essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge" (7). This quest for self-knowledge does not come without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognising the dark aspects of the personality as present and

¹⁷ See Chapter One (1) for plot summary.

real. This act, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance. The shadow is entangled with issues of morality (personal and collective), and one's morality is also culturally determined. In order for self-knowledge to be attained, the shadow must be made conscious to the individual. Liza is not Bod's shadow, rather she initiates his awareness of his shadow through her uncanniness and thus represents parts of him that he is not willing to recognise or admit to. Her duality and uncanniness serve as a catalyst for him recognising and facing his own shadow. In this way, boundaries are reinterpreted as indistinguishable and "the illusion of a stable subject position, of a final meaning, of a sense separable from language and the body" is rendered useless as is typical of uncanny effects (Bernstein 2003: 1135). In becoming aware of his dual nature and complex subject position, Bod faces his shadow and begins the process of self-transformation. Liza's uncanny presence thereby marks an important threshold in Bod's life at a time when he is "eight years old, wide-eyed and inquisitive" (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 95), and therefore starting to question family, friends and deeper aspects of self. This is most obvious when his guardian, Silas, tries to explain the meaning of "unconsecrated ground" to Bod, and the reason people (suicides, criminals and those not of the faith) are buried in different areas. Fixed concepts of right and wrong immediately start to disintegrate as soon as Bod conjectures "[s]o the people buried in the ground on the other side of the fence are bad people?" (94) and Silas cannot provide adequate answers concerning who is good and who is evil to the young child. This is also the first indication that Bod is battling with issues of morality, of his shadow.

Instead of reducing Bod's confusion, his guardian attempts explanations for why certain people were buried in unconsecrated ground: "Remember, in days gone by you could be hanged for stealing a shilling. And there are always people who find their lives have become so unsupportable they believe the best thing they could do would be to hasten their transition to another plane of existence." Bod's response to this is: "They kill themselves, you mean?" (94) Bod's uneasiness in accepting Silas's watered-down explanations of truth and his directness at exposing sugar-coated versions of reality are an indicator that he is developing an awareness of the instability of social categories, his own maturity and how beliefs (negative or positive) are nurtured within communities. His curiosity about the forbidden wastelands and the witch it harbours signals the beginning of an important period of development, and a need for expanding the parameters of his safe, known world. Intuitively, Bod surmises there are important things being concealed or hidden from him, things to be found beyond his familiar environment. It is at this point too, that the accuracy of historical narratives comes into question, as the past exposes itself for wrongly damning good, confused and often innocent people. Notions of race, class and gender persecution

can be read in the form of the poor and desperate, trying to make ends meet and having to steal to survive. Bod's simple questioning of his elders thus develops into an inquiry on the very nature of truth itself and begins his confrontation with aspects of his personal and collective shadow, aspects that delineate absolutes like good or evil, right or wrong.

The shadow, as I argue, is made conscious to the protagonist through his entry into the 'shadow realm' of the wastelands and through his encounter with the uncanny witch. Together Liza and her uncanny setting create a liminal psychic space that allows the boundaries between the conscious and unconscious self to be effaced. This is the beginning of his quest toward individuation, and greater self-awareness – a continuous, lifelong process. This encounter with the unconscious shadow is vital as it counterbalances and compensates for “the biases, the partial or even defective attitudes, of the conscious,” all traits that are repressed or neglected (Vannoy Adams 1997: 107). Bod can be likened to the young initiand of Van Gennep's “rites of passage,” who, feeling excluded from his community must endure an important “transitional” phase known as the *limen* or “threshold” stage (Turner 1969: 359). In this phase, Bod interacts with Liza, who through her ambivalence and unhomeliness induces a liminal environment that is conducive to an awareness of the shadow. It is in this liminal zone that Bod has a chance to encounter new, disturbing and unknown aspects of his personality, particularly aspects that are resistant to awareness and may lead to “cruel prejudices and persecutions” in the form of “projections” (Samuels et al 1987: 139). The shadow, then, is important in revealing threats or doubts that hinder the protagonist's personal journey, and in illuminating negative beliefs collected as part of religion, culture or society. Hennelly points to the imperative function the shadow and its projections play in exposing ideological constructs within society when he states:

The individual is thus usually unconscious not only of the contents of his shadow but also of their projection onto persons, objects and events in the world around him. This is a critical point in understanding and dealing with psychological projection in general because it means that the withdrawal of projections is almost never accomplished solely by an act of will [...] but rather by means of becoming aware of the repressed or unrecognised contents of the psyche (1987: 12)

Bod begins to recognise how he has projected his fears of strangers, as well as his class and gender prejudice onto Liza. He is also made aware of his repressed beliefs, fears and desires as Liza becomes a mirror that reflects his sexual awakening and longing, his lust for revenge against his family's murderers, his rebellious nature, and his lack of an identity.

Bod's fears and insecurities also have their origin in his obscure genealogical and biological identity, before meeting Liza. It is possible to see how he confronts darker issues of insecurity and failure. Firstly, he has repressed the knowledge of his biological family who were murdered when he was a toddler. Secondly, he has adopted a first name that indicates body-lessness (No-body) and a last name (Owens) that, in belonging to a barren ghost couple, propels him further into an incorporeal identity. An inversion of Bod's first and last name recalls the mantra "Nobody owes you nothing" which is a reminder that in order to achieve success in life, he must relinquish feeling sorry for himself and rely on his own strength and skill. He is hindered by his repression of personal trauma (separation from his parents) which may be perceived as abandonment at this stage in the novel (as Bod is unaware of their murder). The uncertainty of his origins (his lack of a real name, his unknown family history and the forgotten location of his family home), and the dislocated sense of self that ensues, means that Bod is unable to connect to his roots. Parents play a primary and fundamental role in identity formation. Without these fixed referents of identity – mother and father, siblings, a family home – the question of who one is remains elusive. Ironically, Bod's lost sense of self, becomes most evident in his failure to master the supernatural skill of "fading": "He closed his eyes and imagined himself fading into the stained stonework of the mausoleum wall, becoming a shadow of the night and nothing more. He sneezed. 'Dreadful,' said Mr Pennyworth with a sigh" (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 96). Bod's intent is unfortunately not synchronised with his body, thus preventing him from successfully "Fading". Interestingly, Bod's 'dreadfulness' at this skill derives from the fact that he is too "obvious" (96), too visible, the opposite of what most young children seeking an identity in the world experience during transitional periods of identity formation. Physically he is too obvious, but psychically his sense of self remains indistinct – at this stage in the novel, who and what he is remains obscure or invisible to himself.

Hence Bod's meeting with Liza, at a moment when he is mindful of his 'lacks' and failures, makes her with her secret knowledge and magical gifts, all the more alluring. Feeling excluded from his community, who find it easier to wield the powers of the dead, for obvious reasons, his difference as an outsider is more pronounced: he is not truly a part of his community as he is not dead, and he is not directly related by blood to any of the members he calls family. It is Liza who startles Bod's ego into realising these unrealised aspects of the unconscious, when he is trapped in the seedy Abanazer Bolger's antique shop, after trying to sell an ancient relic to buy Liza a headstone. Liza is moved by Bod's kind gesture and goes as far as to admit: " 'It's the first nice thing anyone's done for me in five hundred years'" (120). As an act of gratitude, she uses her spells (part of her

uncanny gifts) to assist Bod in escaping by reminding him that “Fading” is a skill that requires finding one’s centre, the root of one’s essence or being aware of unconscious elements:

And with that, she began to mutter to herself, mumbling words that Bod could not make out. Then she said, clear and loud:
 ‘Be hole, be dust, be dream, be wind
 Be night, be dark, be wish, be mind,
 Now slip, now slide, now move unseen,
 Above, beneath, betwixt, between.’
 Something huge touched him, brushed him from head to feet, and he shivered. His hair prickled, and his skin was all gooseflesh. Something had changed. (121)

Liza’s reference to “dust,” “dreams” and “wind” are suggestive of things that are ethereal, inconsistent and fluid – constantly changing and moving. Things that are stable and fixed are seen as slippery and shifting in the process of turning intent into reality. The importance of the unconscious is highlighted by the words “night” and “dark,” often associated with a time of sleep and dreams when the unconscious has the best chance of relaying important information. Contrasted against words that denote intent and conscious thinking, like “wish” and “mind,” Liza indicates a need for the merging of conscious and unconscious, body and spirit, reality and the imagination. In order to fully understand his identity, it is imperative that Bod realise the inconsistency and elusiveness of fixed meanings. Bod houses something special within himself that is only alluded to in the novel by the fact that a secret society wants him dead¹⁸. His quick acceptance by the world of the dead is therefore telling of more than their charity but suggests his possible importance and as yet unrevealed talents. Liza’s spell leaves Bod shivering, “hair prickled” with “gooseflesh” which is akin to a state of fright and excitement which seems to possess him. The effect of her uncanniness upon him reveals Bod’s “[simultaneous] desire to know, [...] a revulsion at knowing, and the impossibility of knowledge” (Barnaby 2015: 978). It is in this moment that Bod first glimpses his real identity: a complex composition of opposing, shifting impulses and aspects held in balance.

Liza helps Bod connect with a primal source that ignites his talents, one that thereafter reveals the secrets to learning other ghostly skills such as “dreamwalking” and “visitation”¹⁹ (Gaiman [2008]

¹⁸ At the beginning of the novel a man murders Bod’s family and it is indicated that he also needs to murder Bod. Later in the novel, we learn that the murderer belongs to a society of Jacks whose sole purpose is to kill Bod for unrevealed reasons (Gaiman 2008: 242).

¹⁹ Dreamwalking involves entering a person’s dream, whilst visitation involves projecting an image of the self and visiting another when they are awake.

2009: 176). Not only does he learn to supernaturally “Fade” through her (literally), but he eventually learns to rely on his own human wisdom too:

And he took a thin paintbrush from the top of the desk, and pushed the brushless end into the lock, jiggled it and pushed some more. There was a muffled clunk as the key was pushed out, as it dropped from the lock on to the newspaper. Bod pulled the paper back under the door, now with the key sitting on it. Liza laughed, delighted. ‘That’s wit, young man,’ she said. ‘That’s wisdom.’ (125)

The awareness that comes through Bod’s confrontation with his shadow is seen in its positive form as a “source of vitality, spontaneity and creativity” that once integrated with the ego allows the individual “who achieves such integration [to show] effective and appropriate behaviour in a crisis” (Viljoen 1989: 82). Bod uses his intelligence to escape the locked room and avert further danger. He even impresses Liza and reveals himself as resourceful, capable and talented. Through her uncanny nature, Liza thus offers Bod a hybridity that rejects stagnant or fixed identities. She prompts creativity, independence and discovery of one’s natural talents in a mixing of the rational with irrational, magic with wisdom, and conscious with unconscious, to show that they are not mutually exclusive but dependant on each other. In this way, the limits and the limitlessness of identity are explored. As a mediator between meanings Liza’s power resonates with Schelling’s original metaphysical understanding of the unconscious forces of the uncanny as evocative of “concealed foundations – a veiled omnipotence – which sometimes permeates the present with intimations of a submerged horror” (in Ffytche 2012: 156). Liza is more than an uncanny, hybrid character, she manifests the vital and transformative power of the shadow archetype – the “*sine qua non* of individuation” (Hart 2008: 98). It is through Liza that the protagonist comes to test, possess and demarcate the boundaries of his own identity.

Bod’s first statement as an awakened young man is illustrated in his act of reparation of giving Liza a gravestone. In his resolution to bring Liza peace, Bod steals a treasure from an ancient spirit, defies the rules bestowed upon him by his family and leaves the confinements of the graveyard for the first time since entering it, displaying a rebellious side to himself that has hitherto been absent in the novel. Even though he gets into trouble and fails to buy Liza a headstone, through his failure Bod learns that the absence of familiarity and comfort is a necessary path to an understanding of home within one’s self. This idea is best expressed by Julie Hakim Azzam’s conviction that “the unheimlich is bound up with homelessness because at its core, it is triggered by the revelation that at the heart of what we call home is not comfortable domesticity, but an estranging, foreign place” (2008: 15). The recognition of home as an estranged place is not new to Bod, who himself has

borrowed the graveyard, as an orphan, and so is also an unhomed figure. He realises the power that unhomeliness may have in liberating an individual. In acknowledging and transforming the “in-between space” that Liza represents, where “new identities” can be formed (Viljoen and van der Merwe 2007: 4), Bod also transforms himself. Bod’s revelatory apotheosis – his understanding of himself in relation to existence – is not achieved through male dominance, as typical of hero narratives. Traditionally the hero must kill or obliterate the witch, in order to “escape actual or spiritual death at her hands,” and male superiority is seen as the necessary component to the hero’s self-awareness and positive self-development (Hourihan 1997: 188). Gaiman’s tale rewrites the typically misogynistic monomyth by emphasising friendship and camaraderie between the sexes.

Jack Zipes observes that children’s stories are a form of social ritual through which shared social values and norms of a community are conveyed (Zipes 1987: 108). The typical fairy tales perpetuate patriarchal hegemonies with the damsel in distress seeking rescue by the brave knight or hero. The perpetuation of these cultural stereotypes and prejudices preserve patriarchal practices, however, Gaiman presents a counternarrative that makes the witch not only a sympathetic character, but also an essential aid and guide to the hero, without whom Bod would never have found his heroism. Eileen Donaldson argues that archetypes, such as the shadow, possess “gender fluidity” proving that the hero archetype need not depend on whether the hero is female or male, but on the hero balancing characteristics of both sexes to be successful (2017: n.p.). When Liza kisses Bod, she breaks the typical fairy tale plot line, which has the active and bold hero kiss the innocent and passive maiden. In this case, the magical kiss is initiated by the witch, taking the bashful hero by surprise. When he is about to enter the next phase of his life, and leave the graveyard for good, Liza introduces him to the wiles and charm of a woman:

‘Too stupid,’ whispered Liza Hempstock’s voice, and he could feel the touch of her hand on his hand. ‘Too stupid to live.’ The touch of her lips against his cheek, against the corner of his lips. She kissed him gently and he was too perplexed, too utterly wrong-footed, to know what to do. Her voice said, ‘I will miss you too. Always.’ A breath of wind ruffled his hair, if it was not the touch of her hand, and then he was, he knew, alone on the bench. (Gaiman [2008] 2009: 282)

Liza states that Bod is “too stupid to live” implying that he is blind to the gift of life, of getting to grow and experience the world, but most notably she pinpoints his inability to take in the world around him, to observe and notice both the good and bad in life. She uses a different sort of enchantment to awaken him to this understanding, namely love and sensuality. The erotic undertones are foregrounded in the way that Liza awakens Bod’s body. She calls attention to the

beauty of touch, and new sensory, somatic knowledge. The whispering and gentleness further confound Bod, resulting in her kiss (appealing to taste perception), and then she disappears emphasising the loss of sight in heightening the senses. Up until this point, Bod has never experienced such physical intimacy or such complete wholeness in the use of his senses. Once again Liza has the power to “perplex” Bod, to overturn all he thought he knew about the world. It is through this disorientation, through becoming “utterly wrong-footed” that Bod is roused to the beauty of what it means to be alive. Liza not only awakens Bod to a complex sense of self through her spell and to sexual impulses in her enchanting kiss, but here awakens him to something new, something exciting, yet confusing: life. The novel ends on a sad and wistful note, evocative of romantic narratives of longing and unrequited love. Notably, such a doomed or forbidden relationship with someone considered “[not his] sort of people” alludes to cultural and sexual exclusion based on ingrained societal ideologies (97). It also echoes her pain and exclusion, that Bod will continue to grow and live a life she as a ghost can never lead. However, Liza’s effect on Bod’s present and future self is unmistakable. The kiss itself emboldens him to engage with the world (beyond the graveyard) more fully as he takes up his bag and passport to leave the only home he has known. He does so with “a smile dancing on his lips” indicating the after effects of Liza’s kiss, and his smile is a “wary” one alluding to his first impression of the ghost-witch in which he noted her in-between child and grown-up age and her “wary” disposition (99). Bod recognises this wariness as a marker of uncertainty about what the future holds, but he has no reason to be scared for Liza has shown him that uncertainty can be liberating. Bod can now face the “dangers” and “mysteries” of life, a life given a capital “L” reminiscent of Liza’s name: “between now and then, there was Life; and Bod walked into it with his eyes and his heart wide open” (289). Not only is the word “Life” associated with Liza, but it is indicated as something that exists in an intermediary zone much like the witch. Bod embraces this new life, equipped by all the lessons that Liza has taught him, so that now he may see and feel, and be open to experiencing the world. Bod has been transformed, and he now understands the contradictions and complexities inherent in himself and life. This is best revealed in the song his mother, Mrs Owens, sings to him as he leaves the graveyard:

*Kiss a lover
Dance a measure,
Find your name
And buried treasure...*

*Face your life
It’s pain, it’s pleasure,
Leave no path untaken’* (288)

As the first part of the song has predicted, Bod has kissed a lover, danced with her in the Danse Macabre (148), found his identity (name) and uncovered “buried treasure” (his shadow). All the above have prepared him for the life to come that will consist of many dualisms (pain and pleasure among them) but the song also predicts that Bod is equipped to discover multiple paths, something he could only learn from the multiple, uncanny figure of Liza.

One of the paradoxes of uncanniness is that it is rooted in binary perceptions but simultaneously allows for a disturbance of dualism (Jackson 1981). The uncanny, through Liza, breaks down binarist thinking to create liminal zones that penetrate the protagonist’s conscious, troubling accepted beliefs, so that he faces aspects of the shadow: “all we don’t want to, can’t, admit into our conscious self, all the qualities and tendencies within us which have been repressed, denied, or not used” (Le Guin 1975: 143). It is not the prince that bestows the kiss of life (such as in the fairy tales *Sleeping Beauty* and *Snow White*),²⁰ but the witch. It is not the man, but the woman; it is not the living, but the dead: who brings about an awakening. This also supports the idea that ‘othered’ characters (like Gothic monsters) may be perceived as equal to, and coterminous with humanity, rather than in opposition to it. The allegorical implications for Western readers that perceive the ‘other’ to be anyone who is not Western (and vice versa) means that child readers, experiencing Bod’s journey and feeling the impact of Liza’s encounters through the reading experience, are able to acknowledge aspects of the individual Jungian shadow (concerning personal projections and insecurities) and to reassess the collective Jungian shadow where prejudice and hegemonic ideals of a culture may be found. Through a character like Liza, the ghost-witch-child, we may thus come to know the uncanny as providing “ways of beginning to think in less dogmatic terms about the nature of the world, ourselves and a politics of the future” (Royle 2003: 3).

²⁰ In both fairy tales, the prince is responsible for kissing and awakening the princess to life.

Chapter Four

An Uncanny Beldam: An Analysis of the Other

Mother in *Coraline*

4.1 “Her eyes were big black buttons.”

The Other Mother in *Coraline* (2002) reflects many aspects of the uncanny found in Freud’s 1919 essay, from eerie repetition in the form of doubles to the threat of blindness (and its association with castration anxiety).²¹ For this reason, it is easy to read the relationship between the young Coraline and her Other Mother as a psychoanalytic reflection of repressed desires and fears (Gooding 2008: 403; Rudd 2008: 15), or situate Coraline in the middle of a typically Freudian Oedipal family complex (Wilkie-Stibbs 2013: 50; Parsons et al. 2008: 387). These readings emphasise Coraline’s separation from parental figures (like the Other Mother) on her journey toward gaining greater independence and self-awareness. Instead, I will be relying on Royle’s (2003) and Bernstein’s (2003) contemporary re-readings of the uncanny to challenge common interpretations of the Other Mother, such as the above, which render her a stereotypically evil character, or one that must be vanquished if the protagonist is to reach maturation. Contrary to these interpretations, I argue that the Other Mother is an ambivalent, and to some extent relatable character: suggesting her ability to undo binaries inherent in the process of othering, and in this way contest hegemonic beliefs on gender stereotyping and heteronormativity. As Coraline begins to identify with aspects of the Other Mother, through her uncanny doubling, ambivalence and ‘castration’ (that is, her undecidability and dislocation), an awareness of oppressive constructions of gender, the beastly and the marginalised begin to surface. Thus, the Other Mother challenges oppressive forms of thinking and is a catalyst for positive change in the protagonist’s sense of self, and leads her to toward greater self-awareness. Consequently, I argue that the Other Mother plays a critical role in aiding Coraline’s process of self-development. Through the relationship between Coraline and the Other Mother, the novel exposes “the continuing effects of oppressive discourses and uneven power relations” found in current scholarship of traditional children’s literature and psychoanalytic criticism (Buckley 2018: 6). Following Chloé Buckley, I argue that Coraline contests such discourses by adopting a “nomadic subjectivity” initiated by the Other Mother’s uncanniness (2018: 8). In this way, the protagonist becomes aware of aspects of her shadow that would remain denied and repressed, qualities such as cunning and resourcefulness, that enable her to adapt to

²¹ See methodology section.

her new environment(s) (the other world, and the real world). These traits are crucial to her development.

4.1.1 A Description of the Other Mother: Basic Character and Plot Summary

The Other Mother initially appears in the third chapter of *Coraline* and is the first representative Coraline meets from the alternative other world. She strangely resembles Coraline's real mother²² but is tall and thin with white skin and "big black buttons" as eyes (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 34). While the button eyes are the most obvious marker of her difference and monstrosity, there are other physical distortions that create an uncanny and grotesque effect. Coraline observes that "her fingers were too long, and they never stopped moving, and her dark-red fingernails were curved and sharp"(34). Her long, spidery fingers with the blade-like nails suggest that unlike Coraline's real mother, the Other Mother may have a dangerous and predatory nature. Despite these tell-tale indications that should arouse caution, Coraline's overriding first impression of the Other Mother is that she is the ideal image of kind, nurturing, motherly devotion. The Other Mother adds to this wholesome image by providing the primal symbol of motherly love: food. When Coraline arrives in the other world, she instantly prepares her a "huge, golden-brown roasted chicken, fried potatoes, tiny green peas" that Coraline insists "was the best chicken that [she] had ever eaten" (35). For a child, food is not only the primary or original source of love, it is also a source of pleasure. In contrast to the Other Mother, Coraline recalls that her real mother "sometimes made chicken, but it was always out of packets, or frozen, and was very dry, and it never tasted of anything"(35). In making this comparison and being beguiled by the tastiness of the Other Mother's bounty, Coraline reads her gastronomical pleasure as an indicator of a mother's love and care. Like the witch in *Hansel and Gretel*,²³ the Other Mother cleverly uses food (notably nutritious food, not candy) as a lure, and as a marker of maternal care and affection.

In keeping with her creepy, picture-perfect image of motherhood, the Other Mother's speech is peppered with clichéd saccharine expressions such as, "for ever and always" and "one big happy family," which in addition to her doll-like appearance (emphasised through her button eyes) intimate her artificiality and insincerity (53, 54). Coraline confirms the Other Mother's inability to be original or create new things by stating: "She could only transform, and twist, and change"

²² The Other Mother's resemblance to Coraline's real mother is assumed in the novel through Coraline's immediate association mentioned upon entering the other world. No information is given regarding the real mother's physical appearance in the novel.

²³ In the Brothers Grimm fairy tale *Hansel and Gretel* (1812), a pair of siblings are lured into a trap by a cannibalistic witch who offers copious amounts of candy and confectionary to the lost, hungry children. See Grimm, Brothers.

(147). Her ability to “transform” conveys the Other Mother as a puppeteer of the other world (her stage), who controls each person (her puppets) and every detail, but alas can only operate that which is confined to the duplicated world. Despite the negative connotations implied in the analogy to puppetry, the Other Mother displays creativity in her ability to style worlds and people. The transformation of Coraline’s other room demonstrates her imagination: “There were all sorts of remarkable things in there she’d never seen before: wind-up angels that fluttered around the bedroom like startled sparrows; books with pictures that writhed and crawled and shimmered” (36-37). Similarly, the unique attire found in Coraline’s bedroom cupboard are “clothes she would love to have hanging in her own wardrobe at home: there was a raggedy witch costume; a patched scarecrow costume; a future-warrior costume with little digital lights on it that glittered and blinked” (82). In this way, the Other Mother reveals her flair for recreating fantastical spaces, ones that children may love and enjoy. However, she also reveals an ability to manipulate mental and physical spaces negatively when she kidnaps Coraline’s real parents and shows her a fake mirage in which they are happy and relieved to be rid of their daughter. The Other Mother also tells Coraline that “[i]f they have left you, Coraline, it must be because they became bored with you, or tired. Now, I will never become bored with you, and I will never abandon you,” adding to her doubts and fears of abandonment and using the child’s anxiety to lull her into staying in the other world (72). The Other Mother may be perceived as cunning as she tries to obtain Coraline’s love with promises, or she may be genuine in her intentions: “We’re ready to love you and play with you and feed you and make your life interesting” (71). The promises, however, take on a foreboding turn since Coraline must also adopt the black button eyes of the other world if she is to stay with the Other Mother for all eternity (53).

The well-known adage “the eyes are windows to the soul,” is a disconcerting reminder that the Other Mother’s buttons mark her distinct lack of a soul. It is also noted that she has no reflection, when Coraline does not see her in the mirror (90). There is nothing tangible to portray the Other Mother as a subjective entity, or set her apart from stereotypical notions of her as a replica or copy of someone else. Readers may interpret the possible absence of a soul, and other demonic qualities, such as when she dines on “large shiny black beetles,” enjoying picking off their legs and popping them into her mouth whilst they are still alive, as an indicator of her evil character (91). The black cat, however, notes her ambiguity when he warns Coraline that the Other Mother’s cannibalistic tendencies may suggest that she either wants something to love or something to eat (76). The black cat’s warning is a prescient insight into the Other Mother’s duality as both nurturing *and* devouring mother. She exemplifies the two faces of the Jungian “Great Mother” archetype: loving and kind,

but also terrible, punishing and nightmarish (McFarland Solomon 2008: 131). The Other Mother's possessive, all-consuming love is literalised in her voracious non-discriminate appetite – eating bugs, or children. She is portrayed as a kind of maternal succubus, feeding on the souls of innocent children (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 100).

The Other Mother is the Great or Supreme Mother of the other world. Her desire for absolute sovereignty is revealed when she gaily tells Coraline of her repeated matricide: “I put [my mother] in [her grave] myself. And when I found her trying to crawl out, I put her back” (111). Her resolve to keep her mother in her grave and her light-hearted tone in confessing cold-blooded murder makes one question her capacity to love anyone. Her relationship with the other father too, reveals her controlling personality. The other father plays a secondary role, where he is mostly hushed by his wife for revealing information he shouldn't. He confirms his fear of her when he tells Coraline, “[y]ou've put her quite out of sorts. And when she gets out of sorts, she takes it out on everybody else. It's her way” (132). This statement is not only ominous for its allusions to the Other Mother's vengeful personality, but it also points to her role as the supreme ruler of the other world, replacing a relatively benign patriarchy with a malevolent matriarchy. As a mother she also troubles definitions of feminine domesticity, by refusing to be bound to the private sphere of hearth and home. Instead, she makes her domain the whole other world. Her feral femininity is further evident in her choice of companion animal: rats. These cunning carnivores bring terror to housewives: they are harbingers of disease and death that threaten the safety of the home. She appears to have an unexplained aversion to cats (who are somewhat domesticated), but instead favours the nocturnal denizens of the home. Her fierce distaste for the nameless black cat, whom she refers to disdainfully as “vermin,” suggests her contrariness and underlying fear of him as she obsessively “fix[es] all the gates and the doors” to shut him out of the other world (153, 88).

The Other Mother's need to be in control of situations and people is further apparent when she dutifully locks Coraline in a cupboard to teach her manners (93). Coraline finds that there are husks of three ghost children also trapped in the cupboard, children from what later appears to be three separate eras in the past, as their manner of dress suggests (170-171). The ghost children use an archaic term, “the beldam” to refer to the Other Mother suggesting that despite her appearance she may be centuries old (101, 116). Interestingly, the beldam is a term for an old woman, a hag or witch that seeks to consume. However, she may adopt the guise of a beautiful or beguiling woman as in John Keats's “La Belle Dame Sans Merci” (“The Beautiful Lady Without Mercy”)

(1819), where a man is entranced and turned into a spirit after being manipulated by a beautiful, enticing woman with magical qualities.

The trope of the devouring mother or witch figure is evident in a climactic moment in the narrative when Coraline challenges the Other Mother to a game. In this game, Coraline proposes an expedition in which she has to locate the souls of all the husk children and find her parents. She wagers herself as the Other Mother's prize should she lose the game (110). As Coraline utters these words, the Other Mother, who until now has remained composed, suddenly reveals her ravenous hunger: "her fingers twitched and drummed and she licked her lips with her scarlet tongue" (109). The thought of winning Coraline's love "fair and square" makes the Other Mother hungry and greedy (109). Her ruthlessness, as she tries to ensure Coraline does not win, is displayed on numerous occasions: she commands the other father to stop Coraline and inflict harm if need be (132); she gets rats to steal one of the ghost souls Coraline is searching for (144); and she hides one of the souls amidst a scary sac-like creature that resembles the deformed bodies of Coraline's real neighbours, Miss Spink and Miss Forcible (119). Despite the Other Mother's attempts to sabotage or thwart Coraline's success, Coraline wins at the game which angers her Other Mother, and this anger is reflected in the sudden disintegration of the other world into "formless, swirling mist with no shapes or shadows behind it" (125). As the Other Mother's control over Coraline dissipates, so too does the existence of the other world which becomes childish two-dimensional sketches, whilst the maternal form of the Other Mother turns into an arachnid monster: "The other mother was huge – her head almost brushed the ceiling of the room – and very pale, the colour of a spider's belly. Her hair writhed and twined about her head, and her teeth were sharp as knives" (155). Her new form resembles the mythic Medusa (with snake hair, sharp teeth and the power to bestow death) that lends to a monstrous feminine image of the Other Mother. Eventually Coraline outwits the Other Mother, finds her parents and steals the only key that opens and closes the door to the other world (161). However, despite her escape, the Other Mother's severed, claw-like right hand follows Coraline back to the real world and taunts her, until Coraline deviously traps her and the key in the depths of an abandoned dark well (189).

4.1.2 "Something to love...something to eat.": The Other Mother's Ambivalence and Castration

Karen Coats, following David Rudd (2008) and Richard Gooding (2008), reads the Other Mother as an unambiguously evil version of Coraline's real mother. Similarly, Meera Garud reads the Other Mother as Coraline's shadow – a monstrous reservoir of dark impulses (2011: 7). However, a

careful reading of certain key passages reveals that the Other Mother repeatedly rejects such binarisms through an uncanny ambivalence that creates doubt as to whether she wants to harm Coraline or love her, albeit a jealous and covetous love: “It was true: the other mother loved her. But she loved Coraline as a miser loves money, or a dragon loves its gold” (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 126). To love Coraline would imply that the Other Mother has the capacity for human emotion – she has a subjectivity of her own and is not simply an affectless doll, copy or double. It is possible that in seeking a child to love, she may suffer from loneliness. Some may argue the point that she has already harmed three children (that we are aware of), seen in the sad husks in the cupboard who declare: “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” (100). Yet, it is possible to perceive the Other Mother as yearning for a child with whom she may perform the duties of motherhood: “Perhaps this afternoon we could do a little embroidery together, or some watercolour painting [...] And I shall read you a story and tuck you in, and kiss you goodnight” (92). In this way, the Other Mother interrupts the notion of “splitting the mother figure into good and bad aspects” as she exhibits both good and bad qualities simultaneously (Palkovich 2015: 187). She is both loving and murderous. She loves so much that she consumes. Her nature is indeterminate – part human, part creature – and it is difficult to discern her motives. The enigma of the Other Mother is made apparent in Coraline’s conversation with the black cat when she asks:

‘Why does she want me?’ Coraline asked the cat.
 ‘Why does she want me to stay here with her?’
 ‘She wants something to love, I think,’ said the cat.
 ‘Something that isn’t her. She might want something to eat as well.
 It’s hard to tell with creatures like that.’ (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 76)

Firstly, the cat makes it clear that the Other Mother is part of a non-human, supernatural world by referring to her as “creatures like that,” thus making a subtle allusion to fairy tale narratives where barren creatures or hags have ominous intentions and steal children that they themselves cannot produce (See *Rapunzel*).²⁴ The cat alludes to the possibility that the Other Mother is something more than a replicated mother figure, through a suggestion of her own, unique, personal motives, wants and needs. This promotes the idea that she is deserving of her own subjectivity rather than being interpreted as simply a bad copy or “splitting” of Coraline’s real mother.

²⁴ *Rapunzel* (1812) is a Brothers Grimm fairy tale in which an evil witch takes a couple’s new born child, to love as her own. See Grimm, Brothers.

The cat's revelation of the Other Mother as a supernatural being is consistent with her association to an ancient or primal world that foregrounds the origins of her uncanny ambivalence. When Coraline is in the passage between worlds, we gain a little insight regarding the Other Mother's history: "Whatever that corridor was was [sic] older by far than the other mother. It was deep, and slow, and it knew that she was there..." (161). The use of an ellipsis at the end of the sentence is indicative of an inability to comprehend the overall magnitude and horror of a primal energy, that the Other Mother belongs to. Gooding reads the passage between worlds as an uncanny encounter "with the hidden currents of sexuality" (2008: 402), or the confusion Coraline feels in the corridor as representing her repressed drives, with its overtly sexual intimations: "This time what she touched felt hot and wet, as if she had put her hand in somebody's mouth, and she pulled it back with a small wail" (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 161). However, I argue that the real dread in this scene is linked to the Other Mother's origins, a story that is never divulged. There is a sense that the Other Mother is trapped within this world by a force greater than herself: some kind of archaic mother. The Other Mother may have succeeded in keeping her biological mother buried, but in this passage, it is clear that she is still subject to a primal mother, or *Ur-mutter*. The corridor depths and darkness, its primordial and intuitive nature, and its status as a gateway between worlds makes it particularly yonic – a creative-destructive womb-like space. If this is the source of life, it is also an abyss that has the power to consume and reincorporate her (Creed 1993: 27). This corridor seems to invoke fear in the Other Mother, suggesting her vulnerability, and causing one to question her omnipotence. Her craving for companionship, her preoccupation with playing "Happy Families" and mimicking family experiences may be better understood as a cursed existence: as being sentenced or indentured, to this archaic corridor (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 90). At one point, Coraline takes notice of the Other Mother's sad existence and is even moved with pity for the Other Mother's yearning whilst Coraline happily enjoys her food: "It was hard to read expressions into those black-button eyes, but Coraline thought that her other mother looked hungry, too"(111). While the reader is led to believe that the Other Mother's appetite is for Coraline, Coraline's pity may not be naively misplaced. Whether the Other Mother is human or creature remains undecided; however, her envy of Coraline's enjoyment may indicate that she was once fully human or aspires to humanness, and nostalgically longs for the *simple* human pleasures of enjoying a meal. Her desires, in contrast, are therefore more complex and less easily satisfied.

It is also clear, yet often overlooked by critics, that the Other Mother is capable of genuine love in her maternal treatment of the sleeping Coraline: "She picked [her] up, just as [her] real mother had when Coraline was much younger, cradling the half-sleeping child as if she were a baby" (107).

There are intimations of a loving nature in the gentle, motherly way in which the Other Mother “cradles” Coraline like a precious infant. While the difference between the Other Mother (as bad) and the real mother (as good) is emphasised by many critics, this passage draws attention to their similarity. The Other Mother fulfils Coraline’s unconscious desire to have her real mother’s all-consuming love and attention. However, she is at an age that requires greater independence from her mother, and she is therefore caught ambivalently between wanting to be a child (wanting to be cared for) and being free to do as she pleases. The Other Mother’s maternal act realises Coraline’s deepest, impractical desires - to be held and treasured, to be part of a community of unabashed love and attention (desires that I return to later when I argue against Rudd and Gooding’s interpretation of the uncanniness of the button eyes). Despite Coraline’s comparison of the Other Mother to a dragon whose love is rooted in miserly “possession,” there is an indication that the problem may actually lie in the Other Mother’s inability to comprehend what it takes to love another being (126). The Other Mother is therefore not incapable of love, just guilty of not understanding the dynamics involved in loving another: the necessity of having balance (not too consuming) and respect. Taking into consideration her creatureliness, love may be an emotion that she can only learn through a human child who is able to “[c]hallenge her” and defy her omnipotence: a brave child such as Coraline (76). Studies of the Other Mother tend to emphasise the one side of her uncanniness: her terrifying alterity. However, her uncanniness is very much tied to her potential not only to induce fear, but to destabilise polarised perceptions of the feminine and maternal through a reminder that within the uncanny there also lies an inherent canniness.

In a more recent re-assessment of the uncanny, Bernstein emphasises that the concept functions primarily as a “critique of identity” (2003: 1112) which is similar to Royle’s presupposition that the uncanny allows us to think about our reality, the familiar and ordinariness of everyday life, in new and thoughtful ways (2003: 6). Bernstein urges for the “ambulatory” nature of the uncanny, its capacity to disrupt or destabilise all that is assumed as fixed or natural (2003: 1119). This destabilisation occurs when the uncanny emerges from the spoken word into existence, thus confusing symbolisation or meaning through a merging of the symbol and symbolised (1130). Bernstein explains that the: “uncanny effect takes place when language is seen to produce what it speaks of” (1130). In other words, the uncanny has the strange capacity “to engender itself” (1130). This occurs as “it steps across from the level of the told to that of the telling” (1130). The Other Mother embodies the “ambulatory” uncanny when her severed right hand (the one she swears an oath to play fair by) follows Coraline into her real world. As a result, the Other Mother becomes a figure that disrupts understanding, dis-members or ‘castrates’ naturalised beliefs or ideas (1112).

The resulting confusion, between reality and imagination, or the hypothetical and the performed, results in dislocation and terror. The uncanny effects are most evident when Coraline realises that the Other Mother has followed her into the real world:

Coraline's mouth dropped open in horror and she stepped out of the way as the thing clicked and scuttled past her and out of the house, running crab-like on its too-many tapping, clicking, scurrying feet. She knew what it was, and she knew what it was after. She had seen it too many times in the last few days, reaching and clutching and snatching and popping black beetles obediently into the other mother's mouth. Five-footed, crimson-nailed, the colour of bone. It was the other mother's right hand. (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 175)

The hand evokes a mix of spider and crustacean-like imagery in its scuttling and scurrying movements. The revelation that it is “running crab-like” (crabs are known for running side-ways) on “too many” feet (hindering its movement) suggests the Other Mother's disorientation: from being severed, being only a part of a whole, and being in a world that is not of her own making. The movements themselves are fretful and indicative of anxiety signifying a combination of desperation and desire, as the Other Mother makes her last horrific attempt to obtain Coraline. The hand's ability to exist without the body of the Other Mother is reminiscent of Freud's supposition that uncanny effects are produced through an association with the “castration complex”: “[d]ismembered limbs, a severed head, a hand cut off at the wrist” that are “capable of independent activity” are a return to infantile fears and desires (Freud [1919] 1997: 220). However, as a thing that invokes fear, the Other Mother's right hand is a ghastly reminder that the real, present world is not as secure or stable as one would believe it to be. The Other Mother (in severed hand form) forces an unveiling of the world with its differing shades, the good and the bad, the safe and the dangerous, and a host of in-between possibilities that negate oppositions altogether. In this way, the Other Mother's uncanny ambivalence interrupts notions of a single reading or interpretation, permitting the possibility of many or multiple perspectives.

According to Rudd's assessment of the Other Mother, the Freudian theme of castration is most evident in the Other Mother's intention to replace Coraline's eyes with big, black buttons (the removal of eyes serving as a substitute for the castration complex). He proffers that “the other mother offers to replace Coraline's eye with her own I: an eye for an I” (2008: 6). The pun on eye/I suggests that she seeks to obtain the child's individuality and keep the child forever attached (non-castrated) in blissful union with the mother (6,7). In this way, Rudd, who although relying on a Lacanian alternative to traditional Freudian readings of the uncanny, still makes use of

conventional, androcentric psychoanalytical ideas that see the child's individuality as predicated upon an emotional separation from the mother. It is important to take into consideration that the Other Mother offers to replace Coraline's eyes (plural) not an I (singular) and it is *both* of Coraline's other parents who are involved in the request that she replace her eyes:

‘If you want to stay,’ said her other father. ‘There’s only one little thing we’ll have to do, so you can stay here for ever and always.’ They went into the kitchen. On a china plate on the kitchen table were a spool of black cotton and a long silver needle and, beside them, two large black buttons. (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 53)

Rudd's proposal that the Other Mother wants “to deprive Coraline of her individuality” by making her adopt the uniform eyes of the other world is problematic (2008: 9). His analysis does not take into consideration that the eyes denote a *maintaining* of individuality through an *inclusion* of both similarity and difference (found in the possession of button eyes in the other world), and an embrace of the maternal and feminine. It is true that having the button eyes would imply an integration or affinity with the Other Mother which can be equated to the loss of individuality. However, Coraline chooses a middle way between acceptance and rejection. She does not take the button eyes (and thus lose all individuality), but she does learn to see *through* the eyes of the Other Mother. She sees her independence, power, creativity and cunning. These ‘dangerous’ feminine traits are censured in the patriarchal economy, and relegated to the shadow. The encounter with the Other Mother forces Coraline (and the child reader) to re-discover alternative modes of being girl/woman, feminine/maternal. The button eyes may represent the eye/I of a defiant, subversive feminine, one which Coraline gradually comes to embrace. They may also represent seeing and being ‘other-wise’ – a dangerous feminine wisdom.

In the opening chapter of the novel Coraline is represented as lonely and misunderstood – her parents work from home, swap domestic duties (the father cooks instead of the mother) and, her parents often tell her to leave them “alone to work” (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 8). Richard Gooding argues that it is only through “closing the door” of the other world and rejecting the othered universe of the Other Mother, that Coraline becomes aware of her real mother's otherness in relation to herself. In doing this, she learns “successful integration” with her parents that resolves her loneliness and desire for the all-consuming love of her parents (2008: 399). This brings me back to Coraline's desire for an all-consuming love and community where all her desires are actualised. The Other Mother grants her these wishes. Whilst Rudd acknowledges this as the “prospect of being sutured to the mother forever,” I argue that the Other Mother need not be “set

aside” in order for Coraline to find her individuality (2008: 7,130). Coraline must take in what the Other Mother has to offer, choose what suits her as an individual, and reject that which does not. However, there is a sense of inclusion or ‘incorporating’ of parts of the Other Mother’s personality and her lessons in order to achieve this. Therefore, the Other Mother offers Coraline the possibility of an ‘integrated’ sense of self: integration of the other, of a powerful, subversive feminine image. The Other Mother’s offer of community, acceptance, and similarity of an alien culture resonates with Coraline’s inner desire for difference and the lack of awareness regarding variety in her real world: components that are necessary to her understanding of others and herself.

The Other Mother’s request, that Coraline adopt the button eyes, has also been interpreted by Gooding as a form of “self-mutilation” (2008: 397), by Carole Godfrey as an indistinguishable merging of truth and lies (2015: 102), and by Chloé Buckley as the “blankness” that is imposed upon Coraline, who is robbed of agency through traditional psychoanalytical interpretations of her character (2018a: 65). Danya David, however, best expresses the uncanny effects inherent in adopting button eyes by considering how it relates to Coraline’s perception (seeing and understanding of the world and herself) and ability to discern boundaries between good and bad, dreams and reality (2008: n.p.). David states: “[b]ecause [Coraline] understands that the Other Mother is deceptive and that her realm is a distorted version of [her] own, Coraline understands well that the sewing of button eyes would mean the stripping of her ability to perceive, and therein her ability to discern boundaries” (2008: n.p.). While David interprets the Other Mother as trying to strip Coraline of perception (a way of perceiving or seeing the world), conversely, it can be read that she wishes to bestow a gift of insight, to the protagonist. Most helpful in my reading of the button eyes, is Royle’s argument that Freud’s repeated return to the idea of darkness, involved in the concept of the uncanny, can be seen as the importance of the dark and of blindness in bringing to light what “ought to have remained secret and hidden” (Freud [1919] 1997: 200). Blindness becomes “an especially powerful kind of seeing” and takes on revelatory insinuations in *Coraline* via the ability to uncover truth (Royle 2003: 108). It is possible that the Other Mother’s wish to blind Coraline and give her button eyes is her way of asking Coraline to access another (perhaps even greater) way of understanding, one that deforms, obscures and then transforms reality: she is calling her attention to the power of the unseen, the hidden aspects of Coraline’s shadow that is important for her self-awareness. This is akin to the darkness of death that empowers the witch, Liza Hempstock, when she dis(covers) her gifts and accesses a primal force under an enforced, veiled blindness (see previous analysis).

Interestingly, Coraline also has witch-like powers and characteristics. She has prophetic dreams, obtains a witch companion (or familiar) in the form of a black cat, and can move between worlds, evocative of shamanistic practices (David 2008: n.p.). She also has a witch stone, given to her by her eccentric neighbours after they read her tea leaves and foresee the protagonist's imminent danger. Although never actually referred to by its proper name in the novel, the witch stone, or "stone with a hole in it" (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 24) is also known as an adder stone or hag stone in British mythology. It is most useful in preventing diseases of the eye, seeing through the disguise of a witch and of protecting against evil or charms (Adamah 2017: n.p.). The witch stone's link with "special" sight and safety is in opposition to the doll-like black button eyes that are at first glance associated with a loss of sight and danger. The reversal of concepts that now associates *witch* (stone) with positivity or insight, and *doll* (button eyes) with negativity or loss of sight, is an ironic twist to gendered stereotyping that maintains witches as 'dangerous' and dolls as 'safe'. The Other Mother as a witch figure with doll eyes is therefore a terrifying play on the shattering of the constructions of assigned feminine roles in a predominantly patriarchal society. Is the Other Mother offering Coraline blindness or a way of interpreting an enhanced sight? Is she motherly or witch-like? Does she want to make Coraline unnatural or is she calling her to interrogate the limitations of what is assumed to be natural, especially in terms of gender roles? Does she wish to exclude Coraline from her real world or include Coraline in a better world (albeit the Other Mother's world)? The Other Mother's ineradicable ambivalence means that the reader must hold all her possible intentions in suspension – all exist at once.

Scholars, like Rudd, assume the Other Mother's intentions are malign and that she wants to deprive Coraline "of her individuality" (2008: 9); however, I argue that, the black button eyes are an important signifier of difference in the other world, and difference is something to be valued. They mark the people that inhabit the other world as different from their real-world representatives. The Other Mother points to a commonality between people in Coraline's world by implying that all selves are defined and created in relation to an 'other' (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 36). The idea that everyone has an other mother resonates with the poststructuralist notion that self and other are mutually defining, alterity is thus inherent to the self. Jung's notion of the self as composed of a complex of oppositions (good/bad, masculine/feminine) anticipates poststructuralists theories on subjectivity. The Other Mother highlights the inseparable dialect between self and other within each of us. While the Other Mother's intentions are felt to be sinister, as she tries to ease Coraline's acceptance of her, Coraline is also forced to recognise the potential for duality in each person (to realise the existence of opposites or aspects that are contrary to the known self – part of the

shadow). As Barnaby states “the experience of the uncanny resides in this disorienting duality: what is at once insufficiently and too secretive, insufficiently and too concealed, insufficiently and too familiar” (2015: 985), which is felt in the commingling of opposites that the Other Mother exhibits and teaches Coraline the importance of. The Other Mother’s ambivalence creates a complex mother figure that encompasses both good and bad images, dissolving Gothic stereotypes of the evil mother, witch or demonic woman as a figure that patriarchy must vanquish in order for a hero to be successful on her journey. By signifying both uncertainty and familiarity, the Other Mother reveals that good and bad may exist simultaneously in each person, and in order for Coraline to attain a self-aware identity she must find a way to continuously traverse both her safe, familiar, ‘good’ side and her dangerous, unfamiliar, ‘bad’ side. By revealing how familiarity and unfamiliarity are perpetually shifting between signification, the Other Mother thus destabilises fixed structures and questions the construction of oppressive forms of femininity, marginality, and power. The uncanny effect of collapsed binaries results in what Royle refers to as a “crisis of the natural,” that disturbs “one’s own nature, human nature, the nature of reality and the world” (2003: 1). In her ‘duplicity,’ the Other Mother offers honesty on the nature of humanity, of the dualism within each person, and a possibility of viewing the world distinctly, not with real eyes but with her plastic buttons.

4.1.3 “Like a tired butterfly.”: Doubles and Subjectivity

In a postfeminist interrogation of *Coraline*, Elizabeth Parsons et al. argue that Coraline must overthrow or usurp the Other Mother’s power and agency to renegotiate her own identity. They suggest that the novel follows patriarchal patterns of discourse and presents “normative and consolidated feminine and heterosexual identities which rely on demonizing women” (2008: 371). In doing so, Coraline conforms to what Parsons et al. believe is a “normative” position for Gaiman’s female protagonists, that of perpetuating feminine roles reliant on patriarchal assumptions of the powerful female as degenerate or destructive (371,377). A little more concerning, is Parsons et al.’s interpretation of *Coraline* as a “condemnation of female-female bonds” that promotes a “heterosexual trajectory” (379, 380). In reading the Other Mother in such terms, I contend that Parsons et al. are in fact repeating the “masculinist tradition of psychoanalytic theory” that they argue against (372). They do not see how the Other Mother’s ambivalence and doubling may offer Coraline alternatives to the status quo. In contradistinction, I rely on Dimitris Vardoulakis’s (2006) affirmation of positive articulations of the *doppelgänger* to

re-read the Other Mother as a figure that does not reinstate heteronormative norms but *challenges* them.

In view of Vardoulaki's theory, I argue that the Other Mother exhibits human subjectivity and calls attention to heterosexual stigmatising through the use of the double or *doppelgänger* figure. The double is interpreted as an "uncanny harbinger of death," and a reminder of the human "compulsion to repeat"; but what of the double's capacity to engender self-reflection, to prompt creativity and originality (Freud [1919] 1997: 211,215)? The Other Mother is at first a representation of the typical heteronormative family. As a copy or double, she buys into the traditions or uniformity of an ideal patriarchal family, cooking the best food and playing "Happy Families" (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 35, 90). While scholars (Wilkie-Stibbs 2013; Parsons et al. 2008) have called attention to the novel's missed opportunities to destabilise imperialistic Oedipal family dramas (that reinforce patriarchy and heteronormativity) through her *doppelgänger* persona, and (initial) exaggerated performance of the feminine domestic ideal, the Other Mother forces Coraline to question notions of normalcy. The double or *doppelgänger* is a figure established in German Romanticism and Gothic literature with negative associations of "evil and the demonic," or with a "defective, disjunct, split, threatening, spectral" subjectivity (2006: 100): for this reason, the double is rarely perceived outside negative conceptualisations of the term. The Other Mother, read through what Vardoulakis terms a lens of positive articulations of the double, reveals alternatives to the patriarchal construct of heteronormativity and of the binaries found in literary uses of the *doppelgänger* character.

The Other Mother's "double" persona challenges purely negative perceptions of misunderstood, or contrary, societal figures. This is revealed through a mix of her as *threatening*, evil *doppelgänger* and as *threatened*, humane character capable of subjectivity. Her uncanniness manifests in her fear and dislike of the black cat, a domestic animal that should hypothetically fit into the idea of a happy home with its happy children and happy pets. She goes to great lengths to keep the "vermin" out, preferring instead to align herself with rats (as mentioned previously) and thus indicating a flaw in her idea of a perfect family (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 83). The cat as an animal that eats rats, threatens the Other Mother's carefully illustrated illusion of familiarity. The cat is a reminder of everything that the Other Mother could lose, but also, as I shall argue, a reminder of herself. By showing a resemblance between the cat and Other Mother, it is possible to see her beastly yet domesticated nature: this uncanniness prompts an understanding of the Other Mother as more than just a copy of Coraline's real mother, but as what Freud refers to as "a creation dating back to a very early

mental stage, long since surmounted” ([1919] 1997: 212). In this way, the Other Mother is noted as something primal, familiar and part of the unconscious, which will later prove important in discussions of Coraline’s shadow.

The black cat also reveals human prejudice against cats, made obvious by their “alleged connection with evil” and witchcraft (Nikolajeva 2009: 256). The black cat is particularly feared in contrast to other members of its species for its association with bad luck and the evil eye: like the Other Mother it is a stereotyped creature. In the novel, certain similarities are drawn between the other Mother and the black cat. The link between the Other Mother and the black cat is made palpable in the novel when the cat toys with its prey before eating it and Coraline admonishes him for his cruelty:

The cat dropped the rat between its two front paws. ‘There are those,’ it said with a sigh, in tones as smooth as oiled silk, ‘who have suggested that the tendency of a cat to play with its prey is a merciful one – after all, it permits the occasional funny little running snack to escape, from time to time. How often does your dinner get to escape?’ (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 89)

Like the Other Mother, the cat enjoys a good challenge. This seemingly tangential little anecdote serves a purpose. The cat, as Coraline’s mentor and guide on her quest, helps her understand the hidden ‘rules’ of playing ‘cat and mouse’. This explanation is for Coraline’s benefit, as this is the game that the Other Mother is playing with her. He points out that there is mercy in levelling out the odds between predator and prey. While the cat may derive pleasure from ‘toying’ with his prey, he is not simply a sadist, there is a hidden code of ethics in the game. Unlike humans, who never give their prey a chance to live, animals, like cats, do. The cat’s insight into the game reveals an uncanny reversal: the beast is *humane*, and the human beastly. Although the cat and the Other Mother do not see eye to eye, it seems the cat understands their shared ‘animal’ nature, and their shared ethics. Through the cat’s astute postulation, the reader is prompted to situate Coraline as the “funny little running snack” and to see the Other Mother in a similarly objective manner as the wise “merciful” cat. The Other Mother and the black cat are othered creatures, but in rejecting the cat, the Other Mother can conceal those aspects of herself that may render her vulnerable. It is what the Other Mother conceals that is of interest to my argument on her uncanny nature. If the above passage points to the cat’s morality – his capacity to be humane – it also points to the Other Mother’s (concealed) morality and humanity. The cat subtly points to her ambiguity and uncanniness as both monster and human.

In this way, the Other Mother's uncanniness, much like Liza in *The Graveyard Book*, may question absolutes of good and evil in the personal and collective unconscious of individuals. Coraline, similar to Bod, must confront her Jungian shadow, where the personal and collective unconscious aspects exist, in order to make sense of her personal values and beliefs. She must find the cultural inconsistencies that may have been unknowingly adopted, and amend her prejudices against women with agency (as will be addressed in the following section). As Coraline's idealisations of motherhood, femininity and what it means to be a girl/woman are called into question, her capacity to think independently also grows. It is this growing independence and critical thinking that allows Coraline to return home. However, as Coraline changes so too does her concept of home. Home (prior to entering the other world) was a place where she felt she didn't quite belong. It was also a place where she was bored. After her encounter with the Other Mother, home becomes more homely, yet also more interesting; with the Other Mother's hand following her, its homeliness and safety is also troubled by potential danger. The familiar thus refuses to be boring, as it is spiced by the foreign.

4.1.4 The Other Mother's Effect on Coraline's Shadow

Through her uncanniness, the Other Mother reconfigures the domestic, familiar space of home as dangerous, corruptible, and deceiving, thus contesting the borders that keep children safely contained, and implying a necessity for the child to learn to navigate such spaces for self-awareness. The Other Mother's duality serves as a catalyst for Coraline facing her shadow. She plays a vital role in Coraline's journey toward discovering her fears, prejudice and desires that help in the above navigation. Hennelly states that "the more deeply the shadow contents are repressed or despised, the more sinister and threatening will they appear in their projected forms in the external world," indicating how hostile environments and characters, like the Other Mother, may assist protagonists in realising and thus overcoming obstacles to self-awareness (1987: 14).

Firstly, it is important to note that Coraline's family have just relocated to a new home in a new area. As a stranger in an unknown environment she is constantly having to re-assert her identity. Coraline thus experiences a divided sense of self, reflected in the repeated inability for people to remember her name: "It's Coraline. Not Caroline. Coraline" (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 4), which she continuously has to contest. A definition of the name Cora from the Italian word "coraggio"²⁵ translates to courage, bravery or heart in Italian, and it also alludes to a Spanish variant of the word

²⁵ See Daniele O. Arati and Jonathan J. Griffith, (2006), *Penguin Pocket Italian Dictionary*.

“corazón”²⁶ which means heart. Consequently, by the seemingly insignificant alteration of vowels in her name, people are metaphorically weakening (taking the heart out of) and rendering Coraline’s identity displaced on both a psychic and outer level. The Other Mother, in her castrated and dis-membered form (severed hand) echoes Coraline’s dislocated or divided sense of self at the beginning of the novel. Coraline’s divided sense of self, I argue, is tied to her inability to encounter the important and sometimes contradictory impulses of her shadow, most notably, her desire for adventure and excitement, but her fear of the foreign and unknown.

While Coraline’s first name is a decidedly unique deviation from the norm (i.e. Caroline), her surname is very common. Indeed, the familiar expression “keeping up with the Joneses” implies that Coraline’s family, just like every other Euro-American family, is bound to a capitalist economy and its aspirations for acquiring material wealth. Both parents are dedicated to their work, so much so that they have very little time for their daughter. Thus, her name is a commingling of commonality and difference, ordinariness and extraordinariness. Yet, while her family name might suggest conformity, Coraline’s first name harkens back to Greek mythology and unabashed defiance. Cora derives from the Greek Korë or Corinna, with Kore being another name for the Greek Goddess Persephone. Briefly, in the Greek myth, Persephone, the daughter of the Goddess Demeter is abducted by Hades, the God of the Underworld, when (in some versions) she wanders too far from her mother (Hard 2004: 128-129). In her grief, Demeter causes the soil and land to become barren, whilst Persephone in her curiosity mistakenly eats a pomegranate that ensures she can never leave the Underworld. Striking a bargain, Persephone convinces Hades to allow her to visit her mother every few months (which corresponds to the Spring and Summer, seasons of growth) and to return to the Underworld for the remaining months (Autumn and Winter, associated with barren earth).

The choice of Coraline’s name therefore, is significant when looked at from an intertextual perspective as the protagonist re-enacts the female journey and archetypal symbolism of the Persephone myth when she voyages into the dark other world and learns the consequences of maternal attachment/detachment. Coats explains the relation between the Persephone myth and Coraline as follows: “Persephone is caught in the ambivalences that plague all young girls: a desire to remain in a dyadic relationship with their mothers, which is the variant of the incest plot [...] and a desire to break away and explore things on their own” (Coats 2008: 85). She emphasises the need for Coraline as a young adolescent, like Persephone, to disentangle herself from her mother’s

²⁶ See Juan Kattán- Ibarra et al., (2004), *Sueños World Spanish 2: New Edition*.

desires and assert an individual identity. For Coats though, *Coraline* is a story of the need to exact “a firm expulsion” and escape the absorbing desire of the mother, to avoid “regressing into an infantile state of undifferentiation” (88,90). Contrary to critics who read *Coraline* as an allegory for the severance of the mother-daughter bond (Coats 2008; Rudd 2008; Parsons et al 2008), I contend that the Other Mother must be included or incorporated²⁷ into Coraline’s identity in order for her to acknowledge her own complex self. She must integrate the seemingly contradictory impulses that make a ‘whole’ self (from the Jungian perspective): her desire for independence, alongside her desire for nurturance and human connection; her desire to be different, alongside her fear of the unknown and unfamiliar; her compassion, alongside her desire for self-preservation; her sincerity and goodness, but also her guile and cunning. Through her encounter with the Other Mother, Coraline is able to recognise “the ‘other person’ in [herself], [her] own dark side” or shadow (Samuels et al 1987: 138).

The first intimation of Coraline’s struggle with unrealised aspects of herself, can be found in the ominous nightmare she has prior to entering the other world:

She dreamed of black shapes that slid from place to place, avoiding the light, until they were all gathered together under the moon. Little black shapes with little red eyes and sharp yellow teeth. They started to sing:

We are small but we are many
We are many, we are small
We were here before you rose
We will be here when you fall. (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 12)

Coraline’s rational world is rendered split forcing her to recognise the blurred boundaries between the conscious and unconscious. This scene is indicative of something primal, ancient and demonic. The “black shapes,” “red eyes” and “sharp yellow teeth” infer danger, a lurking monstrosity and inescapable darkness. Gooding acknowledges the intertextual link that is suggestive of Legion, the collective name of the multiple demons Jesus exorcises in Mark 5:9 (2008: 394). I argue that the scene can be interpreted as the shadow struggling for awareness, trying to make its way to the surface. The dream can be read metaphorically through Jung’s definition of the shadow as “an unconscious factor which spins the illusions that veil [a person’s] world. And what is being spun is a cocoon, which in the end will completely envelop [the person]” (Jung 1958: 8). The dream

²⁷ I use incorporate to suggest an assimilation of traits, ideas or lessons that Coraline adds to her personality as a result of interacting with ‘others’.

reveals an unacknowledged world under the veil of Coraline's consciousness, one that she is not at present aware of. More specifically, in the above passage, the strange creatures' avoidance of light not only emphasises the darkness they inhabit but alludes to the protagonist's shadow that refuses to be seen or brought to light. The shifting movement echoed in the sliding from "place to place," and the appearance of said creatures only when the moon is in view is suggestive of the unconscious shadow revealing itself at night in the dreamwork of individuals when the conscious veil is at its thinnest. The repetition of the words "small" and "many," together with the emphasised pronoun "we" expresses a consuming collective brainwashing that is reminiscent of the "mass mind" of the Jungian collective unconscious associated with received beliefs, advertising and conventions (Le Guin 1975: 141). Interestingly, Coraline's nightmare is immediately replaced with mundane dreams of commercials, an apt symbol for conveying mass-mindedness and the ways in which her awareness is influenced. The nightmare prophesies Coraline's uncanny encounter with the Other Mother, which will permit the necessary state of *limen* (Turner 1969) required for a confrontation with the shadow. The encounter with the Other Mother interrogates Coraline's divided sense of self (expressed through her name and nightmare) revealing the need for a union of opposites (conscious/unconscious, good/bad, ordinary/interesting) in eventually developing an identity that may dispel obstacles predicated on maintaining dualisms, such as stereotyping or othering.

Since Coraline's age is never mentioned in the novel, we are led to assume that she is perhaps 9 or 10 years old from the way she is treated by adults. Her poor spelling, the fact that she is quite short and cannot reach the key rack, and her neighbours' reference to her as "child" support this theory (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 61,32,186). It is presumed however, that mentally Coraline is quite advanced for her age when she produces a mature, existential drawing to her mother, who is too busy to play with her on a rainy afternoon:

Coraline tried drawing the mist. After ten minutes of drawing she still had a white sheet of paper with

M ST
I

written on it in one corner, in slightly wiggly letters. She grunted and passed it to her mother.

'Mm. Very Modern, dear,' said Coraline's mother. (21)

Coraline's ability to link the blankness of the white paper to the mist outside, and to separate the "I" in the word "mist" is an existential and artistic revelation of the need to recognise or include one's "I" into the surroundings. The "I" hovers beneath the rest of the word, waiting for a union to achieve a sense of balance. The "I" must strive to reach the surface much like aspects of the shadow that can only be interrogated, merged or overcome once reaching the surface of consciousness. When pronounced, the word "m st/ mist" enunciates the similar sounding "missed"; the dislocation of the "I" with the use of a verb that implies "to be overlooked"²⁸ intimates that what is required to make Coraline's identity whole is just beneath the surface waiting to make its appearance. Interestingly, an archaic definition of "overlooked" is to be bewitched with the evil eye,²⁹ which resonates with Coraline's impending journey into the bewitching other world where truth is veiled from her eyes. It has already been discussed that Coraline uses a talisman (witch stone) to access this truth, her intuition, or what can be interpreted as her unconscious where secrets are revealed. Thus, the drawing anticipates Coraline's imminent encounter with her shadow, and the various projections and disjuncture's that keep her from attaining self-realisation.

Coraline's drawing has been analysed exhaustively by critics as an expression of her "boredom and loneliness" and for its portrayal of her need to negotiate her position in the world based on a search for her "I" (Rudd 2008: 2-3). Critics like Rudd privilege a Lacanian reading that advocates a sense of stability that the supposedly unanchored, identity-seeking Coraline reaches only once she has separated herself from the love and need of her parents. However, Coraline already proves to be adept at being separate from her parents and taking care of herself, evident in her ability to respond independently to the recurring reactions her parents have toward her, such as "go away," "don't make a mess," "draw something" (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 21,8,20). This indicates that she already has a space to grow in isolation. Yet, her space is stagnant and unable to provide the vital lessons necessary for her self-awareness: "Coraline had watched all the videos. She was bored with her toys, and she'd read all her books" (7). The usual child-activities have become tedious and are unable to challenge her indicating a disconnected-ness from her mundane world.

It can be argued that Coraline's boredom is perhaps rooted in a failure to move past her own egotistical thinking and an inability to consider the desires and feelings of others. Aptly, Coats has noted in her study of *Coraline*, that boredom is an important marker of development in young adolescents. She states "[w]hen a child develops the capacity to be bored, it is a signal that he or

²⁸ See Website 7 definition of *overlook* as available from: <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/overlooked>

²⁹ See Website 8 <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/overlooked>

she is in a transitional state, a state where he or she is developing a separate sense of self” (2008: 86). It would be more apposite to rethink Coraline’s development in terms of a progression of self that is based on inclusion rather than separation. An expulsion / inclusion dichotomy is introduced early in the novel through Coraline’s admitted role of “explorer” (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 18). Her need to discover and master her new surroundings is in conflict with her distaste of “exotic things” or people (5,6,140). Firstly, she stubbornly refuses the exotic in her father’s experimental “recipes” of herbs and wine preferring microwave pizza instead (10). Secondly, when reading her mother’s book about “native people in a distant country” she shows a lack of cultural understanding that implicates a sense of superiority, finding their customs and habits “pointless” (31). Thirdly, she harrows the neighbour upstairs for getting her name wrong but never considers that he may have a name of his own or be a person in his own right, not just the “crazy man upstairs” as she refers to him throughout much of the novel (4). It is also stated in the novel that ‘said neighbour,’ Mr Bobo, is in fact a foreigner. Miss Spink tells Coraline: “Mister Bobo. Fine old circus family I believe. Romanian or Slovenian or Livonian, or one of those countries. Bless me, I can never remember them any more [sic],” revealing his status as an ‘other’ within the apartment community (185). Yet, it is Coraline’s memory of her first visit to Mr Bobo’s apartment that insinuates her fear of the foreign or exotic: “They had stood in the open doorway, waiting for the crazy old man with the big moustache to find the envelope that Coraline’s mother had left, and the flat had smelled of strange foods and pipe tobacco and odd, sharp, cheesy-smelling things which Coraline could not name. She had not wanted to go any further inside than that” (139). In light of the examples above, I find it justified to claim that Coraline exposes an inability to consider other nationalities, foods and customs. The apparent prejudice exhibits a lack of awareness in how she interprets the world and other people. The Other Mother reveals Coraline’s disjuncture between calling herself an explorer and being one. It is only with the introduction of the Other Mother and her other world that this begins to change.

At first, the other world is an eerie replica of Coraline’s real world: “The carpet beneath her feet was the same carpet they had in their flat. The wallpaper was the same wallpaper they had. The picture hanging in the hall was the same that they had hanging in their hallway at home”(33). The other world seems familiar and therefore should be easy for Coraline to find her way about, yet this is proven false when she tries to explore the environment beyond her ‘familiar’ house: “The world she was walking through was a pale nothingness, like a blank sheet of paper or an enormous, white room. It had no temperature, no smell, not texture and no taste” (86). If we are to recall Coraline’s blank piece of paper with the word “mist,” the sudden appearance of the other world

is like an uncanny or synchronous response to her need to face her fear of difference, and begin a journey of self-discovery. As she sympathises with the Other Mother she discovers that difference is not necessarily a bad thing but required to navigate the world(s). Aptly, this part of the other world has no smell or taste which means Coraline is unable to formulate a response. The exotic, foreign and different that colour and add meaning to the world has been stripped from this part of the other world, leaving Coraline unable to make a judgment (positive or negative), thus calling her attention to the importance of difference in defining her world.

Yet, Coraline's curiosity to understand difference is noted in her favouring a natural history programme that she watches on "protective coloration" (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 7). Fascinated with a biological tendency that allows animals to disguise themselves, by pretending to be something else or feigning non-existence to escape consumption or death, Coraline shows a genuine interest in inclusion and difference. Additionally, whilst shopping for school attire with her mother, Coraline wanders off, only to return to a preoccupied mother who disinterestedly questions her whereabouts and receives Coraline's rather matter – of – fact response: "I was kidnapped by aliens.'[...] 'They came down from outer space with ray guns, but I fooled them by wearing a wig and laughing in a foreign accent, and I escaped.'" (30) Her mother, unimpressed with Coraline's tale of espionage, simply ignores the colourful response as part of Coraline's quirky personality. Yet, it displays an attempt at reconciling what she has learnt about "protective coloration" and the other, represented in her adopting a "foreign" personality (30). The ability for a child to think outside the limitations of her present environment, or ego, is an important stage of development psychologically and socially, as she transitions into a community. It is therefore evident that Coraline is at a pivotal stage of development where she is beginning to consider the world as more complex and potentially threatening.

Coraline's inability to chart the other world highlights her destabilised position, and the collapse of safe borders or structures, geographically and mentally, that she has relied upon up until this point. Of importance to my argument, Buckley views *Coraline* as a "nomadic text" in which "Coraline is a nomad located in an intertextual network that challenges dominant conceptions of subjectivity and instead offers a figuration of identity as an open-ended process" (2018a: 40, 47). By un-homing Coraline and exposing herself as an un-homed or nomadic figure, the Other Mother recreates spaces where subjectivity and identity may be explored. She unravels Coraline's stability and self-assuredness by replicating the postmodern disjuncture of her artwork and forcing her into an unknowable, un-homed existence. Coraline confirms her uncertainty upon waking in her other

room: “She did not know where she was; she was not entirely sure *who* she was. It is astonishing just how much of what we are can be tied to the beds we wake up in in the morning, and it is astonishing how fragile that can be” (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 81). She questions her personal identity and position in the world through an acknowledgment of how identity is tied to locations or familiar spaces, such as rooms or beds. This fractured sense of self seems to be a recurring anxiety in Coraline’s life, not just something she experiences in the other world, as is made clear when she explains this is not the first time that she had to remember “what her name was, and that she was even there at all” (81). It is thus evident that the Other Mother uses Coraline’s already existent anxieties by making her feel even more fragmented in the other world.

Samuel Weber interprets the uncanny effect of dislocation as an “articulation of difference, which is equally a dis-articulation, dis-locating and even dis-membering” of a subject (1973: 1114). In contrast to Freud’s more biological, sexual emphasis in describing castration anxiety, Weber sees the uncanniness of castration as symbolic (in line with Lacan) and capable of restructuring a child’s experience so that “perception, desire and consciousness” become an awareness of threat and absence (1113). The Other Mother’s uncanniness that instigates Coraline’s nomadic wandering uses absence and threat to empower the protagonist. By inhabiting a space in-between the known and unknown, the Other Mother exposes Coraline’s self-proclaimed “explorer” identity as a charade (18). To explore means to investigate and make the unknown known or the unfamiliar familiar. The Other Mother highlights this discrepancy between claiming to be open to the world’s wonders and being narrow-minded by showing Coraline spaces she can never master as a self-proclaimed explorer. The strange, unstable other world that the Other Mother produces, in addition to the unknown landscape of the Other Mother’s personal history interferes with Coraline’s ability to map people and worlds as she does in her real world. As a result of straddling borders, Coraline is not tied to any fixed hegemonic decree and can therefore challenge structures at will. This is reminiscent of Liza Hempstock (in the previous analysis) who finds freedom in unhomeliness. For Coraline, navigating contested spaces becomes conceivable through a mastery and control she learns through her forced nomadism. Thus, Coraline learns that you need not ‘master’ the world, merely learn to navigate it accordingly by outwitting opponents and learning from them in equal measure (things the Other Mother teaches her). The implied indictment against colonial expansion, found in many hero adventure narratives, is also foregrounded in the rejection of mastering or killing the other in order to succeed. Coraline traps the Other Mother’s hand, at the end of the novel, she does not kill her: the future is left uncertain as the Other Mother can

always return. Thus, Coraline's real world is equally restructured as a result of the Other Mother and the possible future challenges she may provide.

In her "transitional state," it is the Other Mother who finally challenges Coraline's boredom and ignites a renewed zest for everyday activities. After the terrifying game with the Other Mother, Coraline learns to manipulate her environment (much like the Other Mother) but equally comes to appreciate her life in contrast to her previous boredom: "Coraline stared at the leaves on the trees and at the patterns of light and shadow on the cracked bark of the trunk of the beech tree outside the window, then she looked down at her lap, at the way that the rich sunlight brushed every hair on the cat's head [...] Nothing, she thought, had ever been so *interesting*" (162-163). She begins to notice each detail of her environment outside, which affects how she responds inside, indicative of a union between her conscious and unconscious self. The imagery of "light and shadow" (that which is revealed by light and that which is hidden in darkness) signifies her renewed interest in the world. The focus on a "cracked" every day object like a tree stresses the acknowledgment of a split in the self that is essential to the structure of identity. The Other Mother's use of darkness as insight (already discussed) prompts Coraline's intuition and objective reasoning when she locks Coraline in the mirror-cupboard with the husks of the ghost children. Despite feeling "a huge sob welling up," Coraline stops it by reasonably taking a deep breath and letting it go (97), unusual for children her age who are stereotypically known for outbursts and uncontrollable emotions. She also maintains her composure whilst the husks feed her stories of the Other Mother's malevolence and relies on her objectivity in what should be felt as a traumatic experience (a child being locked in a closed space with ghosts): "She sat down. She took off her sweater and rolled it up and put it behind her head, as a pillow. 'She won't keep me in the dark for ever'" (102). It is here that Coraline learns to control her overwhelming emotions and remain objective (97), and where "a voice" (one of the ghost children or her intuition) reveals the key to winning her future challenge (103). Coraline, who has previously exhibited rationality and objectivity in her ability to fend for herself whilst her parents are "busy" (21), now discovers the potential for a deeper emotional awareness and wisdom within herself. This recalls Le Guin's observation that "to attain real community" and understand oneself, one needs to turn "away from the crowd, to the source: [one] must identify with [one's] own deeper regions, the great unexplored regions of the self": the shadow (1975: 143). Coraline thus becomes cognisant of aspects of her shadow and that the 'monsters' that lurk there are integral to the formation of her identity.

Therefore, it is easy to see how the Other Mother is not a split of Coraline's real mother, nor is she Coraline's shadow per se, but she is a projection of *some* of Coraline's deepest fears and desires. The Other Mother has a distinct subjectivity that should not be ignored, and adopts the guise of a mother to necessitate her inclusion in Coraline's journey of self-awareness and identity formation. Whereas scholars like Emma Agnell (2014) interpret Coraline's attainment of identity through paternal internalisation and separation, I contend that such traditional Oedipal-oriented readings buy into binarist thinking that does not take into consideration the complexity of Coraline's character, her inner conflict, or her relationship with other key characters. However, noting a contradiction within her analysis, Agnell briefly mentions the possibility that "Coraline takes on the castrating maternal role in the oedipal complex. Ultimately, she becomes a representation of her real (castrating) mother" (2014: 31). When Coraline removes the other father's eye and also when she closes the door on the Other Mother's hand, Coraline exhibits her role as a castrating figure, thus becoming the monster she accuses the Other Mother of being (Gaiman [2002] 2013: 133). In this way, she confronts power and control, and shows she can be ruthless when her life is at stake. At the end of the novel, Coraline stages a picnic/tea-party with her dolls, in order to trap the Other Mother's castrated hand in the abandoned well (184). Wilkie-Stibbs criticizes Coraline's return to "the role of domesticated, nurturing female" when she uses dolls and tea-parties (symbolic of feminine prescribed roles), seeing it as confirmation that Coraline must play out her socially induced female responsibility (2013: 50). I argue that Coraline is not *adopting* feminine roles but *adapting* them, she is using what she has learnt from the Other Mother, who likewise a) does not abide by the rules and pretends to play fair with Coraline's previous challenge, and b) uses domesticated roles as a ruse. Buckley asserts that Coraline's "trap works because Coraline plays an artificial role" (2018a: 65), as absorbed from her time learning about "protective colouration," but we are left to wonder just how "artificial" this role is to the young protagonist. This is a defining moment that proves Coraline has assimilated aspects of her shadow, sparked by the Other Mother, and recognises her own potential for darkness.

In this way, the Other Mother challenges traditional psychoanalytic readings of *Coraline* that fail to account for the assimilation of varied subject positions, perspectives and interpretations. Whereas analyses single out the Other Mother as the only castrating figure (Rudd 2008, Gooding 2008), my study reveals that Coraline is, herself, authoritative and threatening. Coraline learns from the Other Mother that power, duplicity, and ambiguity can be beneficial. She mimics the Other Mother's penchant for treachery and ambivalence on various other occasions, confirming that the Other Mother has made her aware of her own deceptive nature and the importance of assimilation and

trickery for survival. These survival strategies are found in the darkest regions of Coraline's self, through the Other Mother. As a "cultural symptom," that Coats links the popularity of Children's Gothic texts to (2008: 77), the novel's value lies in how the protagonist navigates uncanniness and liminality through acknowledging her shadow. She progresses, not from immature child to worldly adolescent (as argued by Gooding and Rudd), but from "nomadic wanderer" with limited knowledge to nomad with increased knowledge, and from a place of perceived passivity to one of embraced agency (Buckley 2018a). The complex character Coraline becomes – compassionate, resourceful, brazen and cunning – demonstrates "the heterogeneity of children" and the multiple (strategic) ways of performing gender (Buckley 2018a: 54). Coraline's emotional and psychological growth is possible due to the encounters Coraline has with the uncanny Other Mother, who not only forces Coraline to accept herself and others in all their complexity, but also makes her aware of her talents, and everything that has been preventing her from claiming her empowered status as child.

Chapter Five

Uncanny Connections from North to South: Gaiman and Human's Children's Gothic

5.1 A Space for Uncanny Characters and Children's Gothic in South Africa

Through my analyses of *Liza and the Other Mother*, it is possible to see how Gaiman uses these uncanny characters to subtly conscientise child readers about issues of unfair discrimination based on appearance, age, gender, and religious/cultural difference. Fantasy, and specifically Gaiman's unique adaptation of the Gothic mode relies on "imaginative understanding" to create empathy for 'the other,' and thus counter stereotyping and prejudice (Brink 1996: 23). As previously stated, Anna Jackson highlights the "erosion of borders" and the creation of new identities as characteristic of the Children's Gothic genre (2017: 3-4). In this section, I argue that this transformative potential Jackson points to, is not only found in the genre's reliance on liminal spaces and threshold imagery, but is also in its use of uncanny characters. These uncanny characters, I argue, induce the necessary disruption of borders pivotal in exploring identity. The genre's propensity for bringing about individual and, potentially, cultural transformation, makes it particularly suited to the South African context. Uncanny characters, liminal zones and confrontations with the shadow (found in Children's Gothic texts) appeal to many young South Africans currently struggling to make sense of fractured historical identities as a result of European colonisation, racial oppression and political instability.³⁰ In this penultimate chapter, I advocate for a space for Children's Gothic in the South African literary landscape, based on the relevance of Gaiman's uncanny characters to the contemporary socio-political milieu. As is evident in my analyses of the protagonists (Coraline and Bod) and their relationships with uncanny others. Children's Gothic novels provide a model to young readers of self-aware and hybrid expressions of identity. Furthermore, I argue that through identifying with the characters in Gothic fiction – the protagonists and their uncanny foils – and sharing in their trials and tribulations child readers can confront and repair their own conflicts and traumas.

While Gaiman's novels may be dismissed as belonging to a Western children's literature canon, and therefore considered 'limited' in conveying diverse child experiences of race and class, an equivalent may be found in South African writer, Charlie Human's, YA novel *Apocalypse Now Now*

³⁰ For a detailed account of South African socio-political history and its effect on South African identity see Rebecca Duncan's *South African Gothic: Anxiety and Creative Dissent in the Post-apartheid Imagination and Beyond* (2018).

(2013). Human's novel is recognised and criticised for a dark existentialism, schizophrenic writing and the use of material not conducive to young audiences (pornography, demonic sex palaces and violence among them) (Khaw 2014). Countering these accusations, I contend that Human's novel exemplifies Children's Gothic, a genre not yet identified in South Africa, and addresses the child/adult dilemma (what constitutes child, young adult, adult) within children's literature in a unique and useful manner: as it expresses the instability of categorising children in countries in transition.³¹ Due to political, social and economic inequalities, children in South Africa have been forced into maturing at much younger ages than would be considered 'appropriate' or standard in other countries (Moses 2008: 332). Human, like Gaiman, makes use of uncanny characters thus challenging traditional Western notions of 'the child' and what subject matter is appropriate and suitable for children. Human's characters, like Gaiman's, may be helpful in empowering child readers using fiction to make sense of a society in flux.

5.1.1 A Short Comparison of Human and Gaiman's Use of Uncanny Characters

In comparison to Gaiman's *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book*, Human's *Apocalypse Now Now* is more explicit and adult in content. It centres on a sixteen-year-old Afrikaans male protagonist, Baxter Zevcenko, as he learns to navigate porn-peddling high school syndicates, the disappearance of his girlfriend, his possible psychopathy and an acceptance of ancestral visions. As he incorporates the existence of a supernatural world, one that he himself belongs to, Baxter must also face his mixed-race heritage. As human and supernatural worlds blend together, the borders that usually separate reality and madness begin to blur, creating a new identity along with new possibilities for the future. The uncanny is exhibited in the novel by the character of the mysterious Siener (a seer or one who sees the future). The Siener meets the protagonist at turning points in the plot when Baxter is faced with various emotional crises and moments of transition, for instance, when Baxter faces the possible death of his girlfriend, and is visited by strange visions of ancestral pasts. The Siener parallels Gaiman's figure of the ancient Sleer in *The Graveyard Book* (a character not explored in my previous analyses). The Sleer is an invisible force that guards the depths of the cemetery hills over the centuries, awaiting the return of its beloved master. It represents a reminder of the past, of memory and a sense of belonging in the narrative, as it searches for its master in each person that enters its lair. As the Sleer questions Bod's unknown identity, Bod is urged to face his past and seek the truth about who he is, much like Baxter in his interaction with the Siener.

³¹ For a study on South African adolescents and insight into the effects of socio-political transition see J.A., Inggs, (2007), "Effacing differences? The Multiple Images of South African Adolescents".

Baxter, like Bod, must recognise darker, unknown origins that lead to the formation of a hybridised identity. Baxter must face his mixed-race origins and the implications it has on his identity as a white, South African male. He must also bridge the gap between his opposing and conflicting markers of identity: English/Afrikaans, white/black, human/monster. It may be argued that a collective shadow of the community (or country) (Jung 1970: 219) can be found in Human's text, one that reminds South African ethnic groups about the futility of understanding nationality/identity without the inclusion of those considered 'other': 'different,' 'wrong,' 'unacceptable' or 'inferior'. Interestingly, Human reveals the protagonist's secrets of mixed ancestry by incorporating traditional mythology and beliefs of the African people into his writing. By including an indigenous, African ontological outlook (once thought 'primitive' and childlike) Human challenges the privileging and dominance of white Christianity and Western rationalism. This defiance of Western hegemonies is demonstrated through the hybrid characterisation of the Siener. His many titles highlight the multiple African and world myths he draws on in constructing his identity: "Van Hunks³² who still smokes with the Devil"; or as "Hoerikwaggo the mountain in the sea" (the Khoi Khoi name for the South African landmark known as Table Mountain); Adamastor³³ the spirit of the Mother City (indicative of Greek myth and Portuguese settlers in the Cape); and finally as the Singer of Souls (Human 2013: 220). The last persona is reminiscent of Kharon (or Charon)³⁴ the ferryman of dead souls in Greek mythology, who thus reminds us that eventually, despite our perceived differences, we are the same and have one final destination: death. The Siener is both terrible and worthy of veneration and comes to represent plurality, as he exhibits many South African identities, but also ambivalence as it is not certain whether he is good or bad. It is only through a collapse of the borders that separate reality/magic, rational/superstitious, and white/black, that Baxter (similar to Bod in Gaiman's novel) is prompted toward an understanding of difference. Through acknowledging and embracing the potential for duality in others, Baxter begins a process of self-discovery, and becomes aware of his own duality.

5.1.2 A South African Gothic

³² Jan Van Hunks was a Dutch pirate who settled in the Cape, and is said to have had a pipe smoking contest with the Devil, which led to the clouds billowing over Table Mountain. See Website 3.

³³ Adamastor was a Greek Titan who coveted a nymph and was therefore expelled to the southernmost mountain at the tip of Africa i.e. the Cape Peninsula. Writer, Luíz Vaz de Camões tells a story, in his epic poem *The Lusiads* (1572), of how Adamastor tormented the Portuguese settlers that landed at the Cape. See Website 4.

³⁴ In Greek mythology, Charon ferries the souls of the dead across a river to the underworld. To cross to the other side, each soul must be buried with a coin or, they are unable to pay for the ferry ride and must wander the world as ghosts. See Website 5.

Whereas Olivier Moreillon and Alan Muller read *Apocalypse Now Now* as a renegotiation of “South African whiteness” capable of expressing “shifting political and racial identities” through the genre of speculative fiction, I argue for its notable *Gothic* characteristics that have largely gone unnoticed (2016: 79). Scholar, Rebecca Duncan, in a rare and comprehensive book entitled, *South African Gothic: Anxiety and Creative Dissent in the Post-apartheid Imagination and Beyond* (2018), calls attention to the ignored presence of the Gothic genre in South African literature from the *fin de siècle* to the current moment. She distinguishes Gothic forms and themes in South Africa’s segregated bodies, violence and obsession with ghosts of the past, found in texts as diverse as Nadine Gordimer’s *The Conservationist* (1974) to Lauren Beukes’s *Zoo City* (2010). She positions the Gothic as an appropriate response to moments of transitional change, where it “encodes the disorientation and unease that breeds under conditions of transformation, and does so in ways that register both an impulse to order the world, and the failure of that impulse before a reality that exceeds ordering” (Duncan 2018: 40). As a result, South African critics have had to rethink the relationship between Gothic aesthetics and South Africa’s complicated history in literature pre and post-apartheid, visibly reflected in literary themes such as dispossession, incest and hauntings.

5.1.3 The Current State of YA Literature in South Africa

The impact of socio-political disorientation that Duncan refers to can also be found in current YA literature in South Africa. In a recent study on YA South African (English) literature, Inggs clarifies the past and current status of children’s fiction in the country. She explains that in order to understand South African YA and children’s literature, one needs to be aware of the problematic and segregated history of the country first. She states:

As the history of South Africa has been shaped by the policies of apartheid, issues of race and identity are central, especially in relation to how young adults of different races are constructed by the writers in the narrative. The literature itself gives rise to questions concerning the place of YA fiction in post-apartheid South Africa and within critical debates taking place both before and after 1994³⁵. (2015: 5)

Inggs examines children’s literature according to the country’s three pivotal historical stages: the period when apartheid began to dissolve (1980s), the transition period leading to a democratic society (1990s), and present-day South Africa (1). She notes that South African children’s literature

³⁵ This date is significant in South African history as it marks the official dissolution of the apartheid regime, the first democratic election held in South Africa, and the inauguration of the first black president of the country.

is often concerned with: the “representation of memory and identity”; the construction and reconstruction of identities to reflect transitions; realist texts that reflect contemporary social issues; and most relevant to my research, the incorporation of fantasy or horror genres (6-7). While Inggs does not specifically name Gothic fiction, it can be implied in her reference to a blend of fantasy and horror. Inggs’s study proves a space exists for writers to experiment with notions of identity and re-construct both past and present using a Gothic mode. The need for modes not usually relied upon in South Africa is promoted by a new, contemporary voice in the South African literary scene, Mohale Mashigo, who calls for a uniquely South African genre that can truthfully depict South African needs, beliefs and hopes: more specifically one that heralds “Africa’s future ‘postcolonialism’”(2018: n.p.). Mashigo emphasises the need to imagine new futures in fiction that “[deal] with issues that are unique to us” (2018: n.p.). By returning to folklore and urban legends, Mashigo declares that South African identity may be truthfully depicted through storytelling, thus echoing Michael Chapman’s argument of the story, in South Africa, as “important not only to identity-making in the nation or the society, but to the interpretation of the culture in literary history” (2002: 226).

5.1.4 Gothic as Solution to “Spiritual Insecurity” in South Africa

The idea that the politics of contemporary, millennial South African identity is best expressed through a non-realist fiction tradition of storytelling,³⁶ indicates that there is a place for a genre like Children’s Gothic in South Africa. If we are to contemplate a positive future that expresses our unique culture, then what is required is a South African storytelling that blends fantasy, fairy tale and hero quests. These fictional modes foreground fears, uncertainties and horrors that are universally human, but they can also be used to reflect the anxieties endemic to transitional societies, where the politics of culture and identity are still in flux. In a unique and rather controversial study, Adam Ashforth reveals elements of the supernatural as real constituents of everyday life in South African communities such as Soweto (the primary area of focus in his study). In *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa*, Ashforth outlines a problem of “spiritual insecurity” entrenched in a discourse of witchcraft, one that provides a number of problems for South African people, including challenges to identity and the functioning of a democratic government (2005: 1-2). He outlines the long history of British colonialism and its impact on traditional cultures in Africa, resulting in the influx of Western science and philosophy with its

³⁶ The twenty-first century South African literary landscape may be seeing a turn away from realism; however, in the realm of non-fiction or journalism writers such as Antje Krog, Jonny Steinberg and Rian Malan (amongst others) have turned to realism to make their ‘journalism’ more compelling and engaging. See Claire Scott, (2018), *At The Faultline: Writing White in South African Literary Journalism*.

emphasis on “modernity” and “rationalisation,” denouncing traditional beliefs as ‘immature,’ ‘heathen’ superstitions (Ashforth 2005: 111-112). As a result, many traditional South African cultures have had to make sense of their realities and cultural beliefs under the guise of “African science” in opposition to ‘factual’ contemporary Western science (Ashforth 2005: 153). Children’s Gothic responds to the need for mixing ‘rational’ (science) with ‘the fantastical’ (what may be termed ‘superstitious’ beliefs), with its origins in the fairy tale, that draws on African parables and myths, to reflect a uniquely (South) African ontology, and assists in reconciling identity in the context of a plural society.

Addressing the viability of discussing such topics in academia, I turn to critics who have examined the need for rethinking perspectives on traditional beliefs. Preliminary studies on the cultural belief of witches in African communities focuses on differing approaches to standard models of empirical reasoning and traditional beliefs in the supernatural (Evans-Pritchard 1937: 73). Jean Comaroff conveys how Edward Evans-Pritchard’s study of the Azande people³⁷ indicates how they “reasoned from evidence in a fully empirical manner [...] by a process of ‘secondary elaboration’ that discounted evidence which undermined their entrenched assumptions” (2009: 34) offering an alternative reading of Ashforth’s study through a non-judgmental lens. Ashforth also describes “spiritual insecurity” in South Africa as part of a socio-political chaos: “Education policy, health policy, AIDS policy, economic development policies, and more shape the distribution of social jealousy, the distribution of misfortunes, and the resources available for people to interpret the forces shaping their lives and mediate the conflicts that arise in the course of living them” (2005: 315). If we are to understand spiritual insecurity in South Africa, then we also need to acknowledge that many African cultures subscribe to a belief in ancestors: kin that have passed on to the spirit realm and may govern or influence a person’s life in the real-world (Ashforth 2005: 221). The acceptance and use of traditional healers is also widespread, often consulted during times of ill health, misfortune or personal problems. Due to socio-economic and political conflict, experienced daily in South Africa, *sangomas* or *inyangas* (healers) are relied upon to ease the sense of injustice that ‘powerless’ citizens may feel within unstable societies (Ashforth 2005: 237). In light of the knowledge that traditional beliefs inform an important aspect of identity for many South Africans, the legitimacy of European “epistemological and social authorities” as a relevant narrative framework is questioned (Brown 2012: 69). According to critic Duncan Brown, African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and African Cosmology are now validly entering academic

³⁷ The Azande community is an ethnic group belonging to a region comprising of southern Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

debate as “constitutive aspects of identity, citizenship and agency, especially in the postcolony” (2012: 63).

The turn to spiritual/non-realist considerations in matters of identity is crucial to my argument for the acceptance of a Children’s Gothic genre in South Africa. To illustrate the change between matters of spirituality and academic criticism, an article entitled “ “Why are we suddenly talking about god?” A Spiritual Turn in Recent Critical Thinking” by Ileana Dimitriu highlights a current shift in critical scholarship that recognises the spiritual as a valid category of enquiry. She observes that examining “subjective expressions of faith” may prove useful to literary criticism, thus moving away from issues of race, class and gender alone. Applying this shift within South African academia, Dimitriu further explicates that within postcolonial studies “[w]hat is beginning to command attention are the silenced alternative knowledge systems, including silenced spiritual knowledge” (Dimitriu 2010: 129). Similarly, Brown makes a plea for writers and scholars to embrace “‘new’ genres which write across the boundaries of the imaginative and the empirical, the symbolic and the referential, the metaphorical and the measurable” (2012: 66). He calls for the exploration of difference and identity, the need for new perspectives, new genres and potentially unorthodox (but relevant) criticism (Brown 2012: 66). The African/spiritual turn, noted by Dimitriu and Brown, is reiterated a decade later by Mashigo’s call for new genres in South African literature to express South African concerns.

Among examples of critics that vouch for the Gothic genre’s use in postcolonial nations, Gerald Gaylard reveals a shared postcolonial Gothic between the “Southern Gothic” of the United States and southern African texts that use the Gothic to make sense of a violent past. This is useful in my comparison of Gaiman and Human, who both utilise ‘child’ protagonists to reinterpret the past and renegotiate the future. As a universally applicable genre, Gaiman’s use of Gothic is equally suited to child readers in South Africa exploring notions of identity, othering and hybridity. Gaylard reinforces the Gothic’s merge with postcolonial countries, and in expressing trauma or dealing with injustice: “the postcolonial Gothic is an aesthetic that links the psychological to the socio-historical and political in a peculiarly direct manner: art’s catharsis is both personal and political because the ghosts of history are linked to self and other” (2008: 6). Both *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* subtly hint at postcolonial Gothic (as is evident in my analysis), and Human’s novel explicitly comments on aspects of postcolonial guilt together with the effects of inter-racial relationships on the hybrid post-apartheid child.

Adding to the Gothic's relevance to postcolonial nations, Julie Hakim Azzam, in her dissertation on the politics of postcolonial Gothic, advocates for a "gothic historical sensibility" that overcomes specific "political, historical, and social conflicts" through the repetition of uncanny reminders of the past and present (2007: 7). This is evident in Gaiman and Human's novels as each protagonist attempts to repair and reconcile differences with uncanny characters. They thus realise the importance of inclusion, acceptance and equality: necessary in bridging barriers found in postcolonies. Whilst Gaiman's novels are not set in 'traditional' postcolonial environments, he emphasises postcolonial effects through his unhomed characters. Gaylard and Azzam's discussions on postcolonial Gothic are also valid for contemporary Children's Gothic. As the Gothic genre responds to South African fiction's repetitive attempts at self-reflexivity, of making sense of the past and the present moment, and of healing the fractures of unstable identities amidst haunted conditions, so too does Children's Gothic. I am particularly interested in how South African Children's Gothic may respond to current concerns of alterity in the future. I have illustrated in my analyses of Gaiman's novels how the shadow may be confronted as a result of the uncanny and that it is in the shadow that alterity has a chance to be realised and overcome. Jung reveals that it is in the individual recognising the other that an understanding of oneself may be found: "to the degree that he does not admit the validity of the other person, he denies the 'other' within himself the right to exist—and vice versa. The capacity for inner dialogue is a touchstone for outer objectivity" (Jung in Connolly 2003: 414). Like Gaiman's novels, future South African texts using elements of Children's Gothic can perform outward change by making child readers aware of the ways in which they harbour negative shadow elements.

Evident in Ashforth's study, is an existence of literary Gothic elements in everyday South African life: in the return of ghostly family members, 'black magic' and revenge that feature in the daily narratives of a significant portion of communities. However, important to my argument, he discloses:

Something like a public secret hangs over every discussion of these matters in turn-of-the-millennium South Africa. Moreover, public discourse about witchcraft, especially between black people and white, is so perverted by the history of racism and oppression in these parts that some will do their best to prevent any talk about it at all. Yet the matters of which people speak when they talk of witchcraft are of the first importance for their sense of security in every day life [sic]. (2005: 69)

A denial, as well as silencing of Gothic elements, in day-to-day life is visible. The appeal of studies like Ashforth's lies in the potential use of *open* discussion on the occult, traditional beliefs and

particular Gothic subjects (such as malevolent beings) in South Africa: Children's Gothic fulfils this space. Not only does this allow for a renegotiation of fears and an understanding of uncertainty in the country, but it overthrows a "legacy of colonialism, racism, and apartheid" that denotes such beliefs as 'inferior' or 'heathen' (2005: 19). In South African classrooms it is pointless to eradicate superstition, so entrenched in daily cultural practices, with Western forms of rationalisation or Realism. Instead, Ashforth suggests the focus should centre on how "education creates new possibilities for shaping structures of plausibility within which the dangers contributing to spiritual insecurity are interpreted" (2005: 19). Whereas Duncan interprets the resistance to embracing Gothic narratives in South Africa as tied to writers' possible political avoidance in the "reducing of unspeakable pain to the flimsy language of pulp fiction" (Duncan 2013), I argue, it may be a lack of acknowledgement of the present realities (the silences and rejections) of important aspects that constitute daily South African life (that Gothic narratives mimic) which South Africans need to renegotiate for a better understanding of their identities.

Taking Ashforth's suggestion into consideration with Sarah Hughes-Hassell's article, which indicates hegemonic constructs may be challenged in children's literature through "nonconfrontational" dialogue amongst youth or "counter-storytelling" (2013: 221), it is possible to conclude that Children's Gothic can be beneficial in the negotiations of South African identities, which are complicated by the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and religion. With its use of uncanny 'monstrous' characters, the genre cleverly and subtly foregrounds racial bigotry and hybridity via monsters, demons and 'othered' supernatural characters. In this way, child readers may approach discourses of race, gender and sexual orientation in a more non-confrontational manner, through literary engagement, allowing young adults freedom in coming to terms with their own realisations regarding othering and how it may be dismantled. Thus, Children's Gothic texts (like Human's and Gaiman's) can be extremely advantageous and useful as a way of exploring identity and garnering self-awareness in youth when utilised in the South African school curricula.

5.1.5 Moving Forward with Uncanny Characters in Children's Gothic Fiction

Buckley, in a paper entitled "Reading 'Fundamental British Values' Through Children's Gothic: Imperialism, History, Pedagogy" outlines the use of "cosmopolitan Gothic" in Children's Gothic texts, which she emphasises has "the importance of intercultural dialogue in constructing national identity and civic values" (2018b: n.p.). Such texts, used in classroom settings, are valuable in reconstructing identities of people of colour and colonial others, by allowing the other to tell their version of history and conquest. While Buckley challenges the implementation of "fundamental

British values” in the United Kingdom, the idea of “cosmopolitan Gothic” may equally be applied to a South African study that examines issues relevant to South Africa. Children’s Gothic, as is evident, is a more appropriate genre for expressing cultural estrangement and reconstruction of identity post-apartheid. Buckley’s argument resonates with Chapman’s call for alternative forms of children’s literature that “could be a valuable educational means of cultivating a future generation of South Africans less racist, less sexist, generally less intolerant of others, than previous generations” (2003: 421,423). I propose room for a study that not only focuses on a textual analysis of novels, but also includes a survey of child readers and their response to Gaiman’s and Human’s novels. This may be achieved by using the texts in conjunction with interactive learning environments, like Virtual Reality (VR) and Live Action Roleplay (LARP), in South African classrooms. The goal of such a study would take into consideration the effects the uncanny has on protagonists, and analyse the similarities or differences in effects on actual child readers/participants in creating self-awareness and assisting identity formation.

To conclude, a comparison of Gaiman and Human’s novels reveal similarities and differences between local and global examples of Children’s Gothic. Using uncanny characters, both Gaiman and Human address the violence and monstrosity found within individuals, and the need to develop self-awareness by resolving aspects found in the shadow. If the act of reading literature allows for “exploring interiority” and making sense of improbable situations, then Children’s Gothic becomes an apt method for dealing with cultural reparation and readdressing indistinguishable categories of ‘child’ or ‘young adult’ in countries such as South Africa (Nikolajeva 2014: 93). This leaves room for exploring the effects of Children’s Gothic on child readers in interactive learning environments. In a country where the “rebuilding” of national identity is still being attempted and young readers are growing increasingly frustrated with open, direct reminders of past racial oppressions, Children’s Gothic offers an allegorical solution to exploring deeply personal and delicate issues (Inggs 2014: 423). Expressing diversity in hybrid genres like Children’s Gothic, therefore, successfully gives young adults a chance to resist current issues surrounding race or class, or what it means to be South African in a cosmopolitan country.

CONCLUSION

Neil Gaiman's novels *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* both reveal uncanny characters that subvert moral dualisms found within hegemonies of gender, race and religion. Through a use of uncanny characteristics such as ambivalence, uncertainty, fear of castration and unhomeliness, Gaiman's characters Liza, the ghost-witch-child, and the Other Mother highlight and interrupt the foundations that alterity is predicated upon. As a result of encounters with these uncanny characters, each protagonist, Bod and Coraline, face an array of fears, desires and beliefs that emanate from the realm of the shadow. Through these encounters, the protagonists become emboldened, creative thinkers who are more willing to confront their fears and embrace alterity. The protagonists become more self-aware, are able to integrate what is initially rejected as foreign, and learn how to live in a multiple society. By adapting a Gothic mode, that makes use of transgressive characters initially perceived as monsters, Gaiman proves how illusory the notion of borders and stereotypes can be. Gaiman's uncanny characters also emphasise the positive ways in which contemporary re-readings of psychoanalytical concepts have on literary analysis. By pairing Freud and Jung with modern concepts of postcolonial "unhomeliness" and "nomadic subjectivity," I have illustrated the potential less traditional analyses may have when dealing with children's literature and contemporary cultural debates. By examining the uncanny benefits in YA or Children's Gothic novels, such as Neil Gaiman's and Charlie Human's, I argue that the genre affords a space for exploring and renegotiating identity, both locally and internationally. In light of such possibilities, it is evident that Gaiman's uncanny characters in *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* have the unique capacity to co-opt young readers into the process of disrupting borders and bringing about individual and cultural transformation.

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