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Гусаченко Софії Сергіївни
студентки групи МЛа 56-23
факультету германської філології і перекладу
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Спеціальності 035 Філологія

Науковий керівник
кандидат філологічних наук,
доцент Редька І. А.

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Stylistic means of alternative worlds creation: a study of *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman

Sofia Husachenko

Group MLa 56-23

The Faculty of Germanic Philology and Translation

Study by Correspondence

Speciality 035 Philology

Research Adviser

Assoc. Prof. T. D. Redka I. A.

PhD (Linguistics)

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Introduction

Thanks to language, people are able to learn about the world, as well as form their vision of the world. Language is considered to be an important part of culture of any nation, and it is thanks to language that such an art form as fiction appeared.

Literature has become an integral part of modern life. It fulfills various functions, such as cognitive, educational, as well as entertaining: it helps people get away from everyday life. Since each person has his own preferences, there are many different genres of fiction. These genres interact and can overlap in literary works.

In this master's paper, we will analyze the novel *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman, which combines several artistic genres, namely fantasy and horror. N. Gaiman was born in the UK, but then moved to the USA, where he now lives. He discovered his love of books in his childhood, while reading stories of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, E. A. Poe and other well-known writers [31]. He describes himself as “feral child who was raised in libraries” [31]. That is why he decided to dedicate his life to writing. He started his writing career as a journalist in England [31]. Firstly, he wrote biographies of famous people [31], but then decided to write something entirely different, publishing his first graphic novel *Violet Cases* [31]. After that N. Gaiman wrote the series of Sandman that gathered a great number of US awards, becoming the first comic to receive a literary award in 1991 and the World Fantasy Award for Best Short Story. In the English literary tradition, N. Gaiman is considered to be “one of the creators of modern comics” [31].

Neil Gaiman began writing *Coraline* almost [36] years before it was actually published [22]. His family moved to the new city in 1987 where he started writing a story for his 5-year-old daughter Holly [11]. However, he got distracted with other works and stopped working on the story [22]. He came back to writing in 1992 because realized that “*if I didn't, my youngest daughter, Maddy, would be too old for it by the time I was done. I started it for Holly. I finished it for Maddy*” [11].

Coraline was published in 2002 and became a bestseller immediately [22]. The book is a part of a gothic literature, combining fantasy with realism [26]. In some way, adding gothic and horror elements to the narration, Gaiman subverts the fantasy genre [26], as many authors do. *Coraline* is primarily aimed for children, so readers expect

magical, beautiful, bright images, but the novel contains many gothic elements that at the first glance may be too scary for children [26]. The novel is set at the time when the world is undergoing a significant shift towards a technological lifestyle, [22]. *Coraline* deftly addresses contemporary themes such as parental neglect, the temptation of escape, and the search for identity [22]. Themes of courage and self-confidence remain relevant as children navigate an increasingly complex digital environment [22]. Even after so many years, *Coraline* remains popular among the audience with evidence of many adaptations it has, for instance the animated film directed by Tim Burton that was released in 2009.

One of many peculiarities of *Coraline* is the presence of alternative worlds, and this work is focused on the study of the creation of alternative worlds in this novel.

We live in the era where the convergence of reality and fantasy permeates literary discourse, so **the relevance of this work** is the exploration of literary devices that create alternative worlds in the literary text.

The **purpose** of this research is to unravel the stylistic intricacies Gaiman employs to construct and manipulate these alternate worlds, understanding how such choices contribute to the overall thematic resonance of the novel.

The **tasks** of the work are:

- to define the term “alternative world” in literature;
- to delineate the types of alternative worlds created in literary works;
- to identify the main stylistic devices that are used to create alternative worlds in *Coraline*;

The **object** of the research is the alternative worlds in the fictional text, and its **subject-matter** is the role of stylistic means in their creation.

The research **material** is the text of the literary work *Coraline* (210 pages) by Neil Gaiman.

The **structure** of the work: the master’s thesis consists of the introduction, two parts with conclusions to each of them, the general conclusions and list of references.

Chapter 1 Theoretical background of alternative worlds studying in fictional texts

1.1. The concept of alternative worlds in history and literature

The aim of this work is to show how alternative worlds are created in fiction on the example of *Coraline* by Neil Gaimain.

It is important to mention that there are two terms used in literature – parallel world and alternative world. The concept of alternative worlds refers to imaginings shaped by historical events, cultural shifts, or societal norms that differ from our own [33]. In such worlds there may be unique rules, settings or even logic [33]. Moreover, they can serve as a reflection of our own world, when authors explore what it could be like with different circumstances [33]. However, alternative worlds don't usually coexist with the real world but in a completely different dimension, requiring unique gateways or metaphysical shifts to access them [33]. Whereas parallel worlds typically exist alongside the real world, usually on a different dimension but on the same timeline [33]. These worlds serve as a slightly different version of our own, where characters or situations mirror each other but with the addition of slight difference [33]. They usually suggest the existence of multiple versions of realities [33].

Coraline is an example of literature with alternative worlds. To begin with, it is important to understand what the alternative world is more precisely, its characteristics and how it can be created in fiction.

Before that, let us state what the real world is so it would be easier to understand the concept of the alternative one. According to the authors, like L. Delf, E. James, P. Jenkins, with works of whom we worked with, in the literature with the concept of alternative worlds, the real one, ours, is usually shown as characterized by monotony, dullness, and a lack of stimulation or engagement [33]. According to classical philosophical definitions, the real world can be understood in various ways: realists consider it independent of individual perception, existing objectively [33], while idealists argue that the real world is only a construct formed by an individual's mind or consciousness [33]. Furthermore, phenomenology views the world as subjective experience constituted by consciousness [25]. Pragmatists, empiricists, and

metaphysicians all offer unique interpretations of the real world, adding new meanings and emphases to it [25]. In literature with the concept of alternative worlds, the real world is often portrayed as monotonous and boring [33]. People become less interested in this world as they learn more about it, fueling a search for adventure in alternative realities [25].

The concept of alternative worlds has deep roots in human history, storytelling and simply in human imagination, but still it is not clearly stated when people first started to speak about alternative worlds. Nevertheless, one prominent milestone in the development of this concept was the emergence of quantum mechanics in the early 20th century. The development of quantum mechanics led to theories such as the Copenhagen interpretation [3] and later the many-worlds interpretation, proposed by physicist Hugh Everett III in the 1950s. [3] Hugh Everett III was a mathematician, who invented the quantum theory of multiple universes [3]. He suggested that every possible outcome of a quantum event occurs in its own separate universe, thus introducing the idea of alternative worlds into the realm of scientific theory [3].

Over the years this theory was expanded by lots of different scientists, a lot of other concepts and theories were added. Generally, the concept of alternative world lays in belief that there is more than just our world in the universe [45]. Every scientist has their own vision of how alternative worlds work, however, in reality there is no clear confirmation about its existence. Though in literature the explanation is not usually needed.

The idea of alternative reality has been in literature for many centuries already. Fiction took this concept from myths, legends and even religion [3], for example, the concept of Hell and Heaven can be seen as alternative worlds, the realities that are not similar to ours.

In our opinion, this concept was seen most vividly in folklore. According to The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, there are two basic themes in folklore that are connected with the concept of alternative worlds: the first one is where an ordinary person appears somewhere in a fantasy world where they undergo some adventure and may sense the emotions they could never find on Earth [4]; the second one lies in the

idea of someone or something from some other world visiting ours and affecting it thus changing it in any means [33].

There are different types of alternative worlds in folklore. The first and the most obvious one is Fairyland, also known as the Otherworld or Faerie [33]. This is a world with magical creatures, such as fairies, elves, sprites, etc. It exists alongside our own world but remains hidden from mortal eyes [33]. The prominent characteristics of this type are the different flow of time, different laws of nature, and the fact that ordinary people, who come to Fairyland, often returned changed [33]. Sometimes the Fairyland appears as the part of our world [32], for example in Norse folklore, the Elfland was the name of one real province in Sweden [32]. In such stories, it was said that people from a kingdom were more beautiful than from the others, because there were elves or fairies [32].

The other type is the so-called Astral Plane [33]. This is a dimension beyond the physical world. This is where consciousness travels during out-of-body experiences, dreams, and meditation [33]. The distinct features of this type are 1) different time and space dimensions, 2) journey the distant realms, entities of this astral plane may be seen as energy forms [33].

The next type of alternative worlds in folklore is Thresholds [33], which are basically the boundaries that are set between our world and the alternative one [33]. They can be bridges, crossroads or even doorways, anything that can be a barrier.

The concept of alternative worlds was also present in Greek mythology, [23] which portrayed the alternative reality with gods. Moreover, in this reality, there were also different alternative worlds. The Underworld where Persephone, the goddess of agriculture and the wife of Hades, who is the king of the Underworld [7], lived is believed to be the alternative universe separated from the world of living people [23]. Zeus, the chief god of the pantheon [8], was often portrayed with the ability to see different futures, which allowed him to make decisions to change those future [23]. This idea of different futures can be viewed as the concept of alternative realities.

In literature, the concept of alternative worlds began to appear in the 19th century, the representatives were authors like Lewis Carrol or H. G. Wells [43]. Those writers

were exploring the concept of alternative worlds in their works, but they did not name it like that [43], because, as we mentioned earlier, the concept of alternative worlds appeared in 20th century, so the writers simply did not understand that they were analyzing the notion. Undoubtedly, their works laid the ground for modern science fiction. Then, when the concept was presented to the world, modern science fiction appeared [43] and that was when the genre really blossomed.

One of the first examples of science-fiction is *Sidewise in Time* by Murray Leinster, that was published in 1934 [33]. This short story envisions how parts of alternative universes can replace certain geographical regions in our universe [41]. In his work, Leinster “expanded the possibilities by suggesting a vast multiplicity of “histories,” all occurring at the same “time.” [41]. So, the central concept of this story is time travelling and alternative realities, where latitude represented traveling through past, present and future and longitude represented traveling to other realities [41].

With this short story the science-fiction genre began to widen and dwelling into development of alternative universe genre [43]. However, this science-fiction was not the only genre that played an important role in creating alternative universe genre – fantasy also helped in broadening this concept [43]. Writers like J. K. Rowling or J. R. R. Tolkien used this concept to create magical alternative worlds in their works [43]. These fantasy worlds formed the backdrop for magical adventures, allowing writers to explore themes such as the struggle between “good and evil, heroism, and the power of magic” [43]. “The alternative universe in these works often acts as a mirror to our own world, reflecting our hopes, fears and dreams” [43].

Finally, let us consider the characteristics of the alternative worlds’ genre. Indeed, it has a wide range of prominent features, starting with the presence of the alternate reality [43]. This reality can be either similar to the objective reality, or different from it [43], however its nature serves as a “reflection of the themes and ideas being explored in the work” [43].

The other feature is the concept of “world building”, which basically consists of creation of this alternative reality, making it detailed and thus, believable [43]. It

involves making the history of the alternative world, creating its culture and laws of physics [43].

Finally, another important feature of this genre is the possibility to travel between our world and the alternative one [43]. It can be achieved thanks to some portals, technology [43] or thresholds 4 which we mentioned before.

So, our review showed the concept of alternative worlds has deep roots in literature and legends. Starting as the feature of myths and folklore it broadened to the whole genre that was also influenced by scientific discoveries made in the 20th century, like the multiverse theory, that, in its turn, provided scientific basis to the concept [43]. Now this genre, that explores the idea of alternative realities, even has its own sub-genres and wide range of styles and narrative structures, allowing writers to make readers challenge their perception of our own reality [43].

1.2. Types of alternative worlds in literature

As we mentioned before, the presence of alternative worlds in literary works has its roots in science and myths. The typology of alternative worlds is rather extensive: they are present in fantasy and fantastic literature, mystic novels, postapocalyptic ones, etc. [5]. The first important thing to mention here is as soon as the concept of alternative worlds is present in both science-fiction and fantasy literature, the typology for alternative worlds is different depending on the genre of literary piece it is present in. That is why we decided to highlight all of them, tracing their origins, purposes, and themes.

To start with, it is important to clarify the differences between these two genres.

Science fiction often takes place in the future or alternate realities where advanced technology plays an important role [5]. It explores futuristic notions, advances in science and space travelling [5]. The themes of this genre are often connected with the impact of technology on society, exploration of the unknown, and ethical dilemmas [5]. Frank Herbert's *Dune* and William Gibson's *Neuromancer* are some prominent examples of science fiction.

As for fantasy literature, this genre is mainly set in magical worlds with magical elements, such as creatures, wizards or any other magical phenomenon [5]. The common themes for this genre are battles between good and evil, the journey of a hero, and epic quests [5]. Some prominent examples are *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien and the *Harry Potter* series of novels by J.K. Rowling.

The alternative worlds present in texts of the aforementioned genres differ from each other. Since the main idea of them is different – fantasy speaks about magic, while science-fiction, even though it is absolutely made up, tries to make an impression as if the events happening in the text are real and scientific. However also, because these genres seek different main ideas [44] and they have different laws of nature [43], so it may be impossible for them to have the same range of alternative worlds' types.

With this stated clear, let us begin with the typology of alternative world in science-fiction literature.

As stated by The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction, the alternative worlds in science fiction are often grounded in some scientific theory, such as hyperspace, simulated realities, etc. [18] The focus is primarily on extrapolation from our reality, criticizing the current social or political trends [18].

According to The Art and Popular Culture Encyclopedia, one of the most common concepts of alternative worlds in science-fiction is the hyperspace [32]. This type of alternative universes is understood as a “faster-than-light shortcut for interstellar travel” [32]. The main features of this type are: (1) at least one location in the hyperspace universe has to be located in our world, having the “entry” to the alternative one [32]; (2) travelling between these two worlds takes a lot less time than covering the same distance in our world could take [32]. The interesting fact about this type is that although it is one of the most common ones, it is used as “a plot device” and not the source of fiction [32], what makes it of secondary importance in the literature that uses it.

The other type is time-travelling or alternate history [32]. This type is considered to be of the most common use in science-fiction, being the central concept of a lot of books of this genre [32]. This type involves travelling between two (or more) worlds,

one of which is ours, that has two different timelines [44], as well as travelling between alternative futures or simply travelling to the past [32]. Such travelling to the past can create alternative histories, changing our world. However, technically, alternative histories are not alternative universes [32]. So, characters can travel to the past, thus changing the present, but the concept of alternative universes consists in the fact that alternative universes should co-exist together within one history or timeline [32].

The third type is Counter-Earth [32]. That is the idea of existing the other Earth on the opposite side of the Sun [32]. It has the same orbit, size, etc., but with some distinct features.

The fourth type can be called “What if...” [32]. It basically consists in the author’s thinking about what if any event happened in our world [32]. This event may be absolutely hypothetical or, vice versa, historical, for example “what if dinosaurs were still alive?” [32]. Some sources write about it as a part of Alternate history type and do not mark it out separately, but we decided to point out that it can be a distinct type.

The fifth type is called Simulated reality [32]. It states that if we can simulate our world, it means that our world may be a simulation itself [36].

The last type is Portals [36]. The idea of this type is very similar to the Thresholds – the type of alternative worlds in folklore that we mentioned in 1.1. So, the concept is that there is some portal that can lead a character to a different world [36]. I also can be present in other types, for instance, the portal can lead to the different timeline or planet [32].

Now, let us delve into the types of alternative worlds in fantasy genre.

The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature states that fantasy literature usually explores such themes as magic, supernatural, and wonder [19], so the alternative worlds in such literary works are also magical. These worlds may serve as allegories for personal growth, moral conflicts, etc., with the magical elements serving as metaphors for inner or outer struggles [19].

According to The Art and Popular Culture Encyclopedia, there are 6 types of alternative worlds in the fantasy genre novels, they are “Strangers in a strange world”

(1), Between the worlds (2), Fantasy multiverse (3), “meta-fiction” (4), Elfland (5) and Portal fantasy (6) [32].

1. The concept of the first type, “Strangers in a strange land”, is that the character from our reality appears in the created by the author world [32]. According to The Art and Popular Culture Encyclopedia this type was influenced by the science-fiction genre [32]. Sometimes travelling to the other world consists in the mental form, not physical one [32], when the character travels in his/her dream etc.

2. The idea of Between the Worlds type is to move the character from our world into the fantasy one [32]. The important feature of this type is that the focus is not on one of the worlds, but on the interaction between two of them [32]. Thus, adding more alternative universes to the plot only increases the importance of this interaction, so usually in such literary works there is more than one fantasy universe [32]. Often the character needs to choose between all these worlds and this choice is crucial for the plot [32]. Also, the book we chose for the paper belongs to this type of alternative worlds, we will state it more clearly in the Part 2 of the work.

3. Like with science-fiction, the concept of Fantasy multiverse allows authors to create “epic settings and godlike protagonists” [32]. However, the difference is that in fantasy genre this type of alternative worlds can include some mythic settings and creatures.

4. The next type presents the fictional universe as the alternative one [42], that is usually called “meta-fiction” [32]. The idea is that the author creates a universe and makes it as real as our own world [32]. Some fictional approaches make the alternative world independent, when, for example, the world is different than it was described in the book [32], other approaches are to make literary works create or influence the alternative world [32].

5. The fifth type is called Elfland or sometimes Faerie [32]. Once more, this type was inspired by the type of alternative worlds in folklore and the characteristics are, of course, similar – there is the world inhabited with some magical creatures: elves, fairies, goblins, etc. [32]. Like in folklore, there are works of literature where the Elflands are any “ordinary” lands, meaning lands from our reality [32]. Sometimes they

are the lands close to ours, but difficult to get to [32]. Sometimes the Faerie are absolutely different worlds, having the portal as the entry [32]. These boundaries may be very strict or not at all, allowing inhabitants of both worlds to travel freely from one to another [32].

6. The last type is the one we have mentioned in the previous one – Portal fantasy [42]. This one is the same as in the science-fiction typology and the concept is also similar – there should be a certain portal that leads to the fantasy world [42]. This portal may be a door or even a book or talisman [42]. Often in such works is that the protagonist usually needs to find the way from the fantasy world [42] or he/she should save any of the worlds [42].

To summarize, the fundamental difference between the typology of alternative worlds in science-fiction and fantasy genres lies in their core concepts and thematic preoccupations. Science-fiction attempts to justify its stories with scientific principles and reasonable predictions of modern knowledge. This desire for realism often leads to the appearance of alternative worlds with scientific or pseudoscientific foundations, even in speculative contexts. For example, concepts like hyperspace, time travel, and simulated reality are essentially science-fiction, as they explore the limits of our understanding of physics, history, and reality itself. These alternative worlds serve as speculative extensions of our own universe, where scientific ideas are tested and explored in hypothetical scenarios.

Fantasy, on the other hand, takes place in the limitless realms of magic, mythology, and the supernatural. Alternative worlds in fantasy are not limited by the need for scientific plausibility. Rather, they are shaped by imagination and mythology, filled with creatures and phenomena that defy the laws of nature. Whether it is the magical realms of Elfland, the complex multiverses of epic fantasy, or magical realms accessed through portals, fantasy worlds are full of wonder and mystery. The purpose of these worlds is to transport readers to places where the impossible is possible, magic reigns, and the hero's journey unfolds against a backdrop of legendary greatness.

Despite the differences, both genres have similarities in the representation of alternative worlds. Both use portals to travel between worlds, whether they be

wormholes in space or magical doors. This agreement emphasizes a shared passion for breaking boundaries and exploring the unknown.

Both genres are influenced by literature, myths and scientific ideas, and combine elements from different sources to create fascinating worlds. The typologies of both genres, in one way or another, were inspired by the typology of alternative worlds in folklore. The interplay between multiple realities in both genres reflects a shared interest in the multiplicity of existence and the potential for alternative versions of reality.

To sum up, science-fiction and fantasy offer different, but complementary visions of alternative worlds. Based on scientific principles, science-fiction explores future possibilities and the nature of reality. Blending magic and mythology, fantasy provides the foundation for epic tales of heroism and transformation. Together, these genres enrich our understanding of alternative worlds and offer different perspectives on mysteries beyond our universe.

1.3. Stylistic manifestation of alternative worlds in fictional texts

1.3.1. Unconventional narration techniques

The concept of alternative worlds is very deep and many-sided, it allows writers to show their unlimited imagination. To create a world every reader would believe in the words should be vividly depicted, they should be created meticulously since they are not just the settings for such works, they are integral to the narration. They are made to depict some complex topics, influence plot, and shape characters. So, undoubtedly, the creation of the concept should have some nuances.

In modern society, writers can incorporate the endless numbers of different writing techniques to make their alternative worlds look more realistic for the reader – starting with unusual punctuation or capitalization, ending with adding pictures, etc. However, in our opinion, the most important element in conveying the effect of realism in created worlds is stylistic techniques.

The stylistic elements used to construct these alternate worlds are as varied as the worlds themselves, from complex description techniques to innovative narrative

structures. By studying the stylistic manifestations of alternative worlds in literary texts, we examine how writers bring their creations to life, making the impossible believable and the fantastic concrete.

We would like to start with the fact that in order to achieve the effect of realism for their alternative worlds writers often break traditional narrative structures and in return employ some unconventional techniques [20].

The first example of such unconventional narration techniques is Stream of Consciousness [20]. This technique consists in capturing the thought process of a character in a realistic way [6]. It mimics the way our brain works non-linearly [6], so such narration includes “a lot of free association, looping repetitions, sensory observations, and strange (or even nonexistent) punctuation and syntax” [6]. Using stream of consciousness, authors aim to unveil the psychological state of a character [6], their feelings and emotions, thus giving readers the vivid picture of events and worlds that the characters experience.

The other narration technique is fragmented storytelling [20]. This technique basically consists in breaking – fragmentating – narrative structure, plot or characters [40]. This technique can make the story difficult to read, but at the same time it is a powerful tool in creating complex plots and emotions [40]. Making their texts feel like puzzles, writers allow readers to create a picture of their alternative worlds themselves [20].

The last narration technique is nonlinear timeline [20]. With such narration the events in a story do not have a straight chronological order [2]. Writers can jump over eras in their plots, weaving threads of past, present and future [2]. Of course, this technique is widely used in time-travelling type of alternative worlds that we mentioned in 1.2.

1.3.2. Structural techniques

Another interesting stylistic technique that is used to create alternative worlds is worldbuilding [20]. Worldbuilding is the name of the process when a writer creates their fictional world [24]. This technique allows the writer to make “a clear

understanding of what their world looks and feels like” [24]. This technique is important for various reasons – firstly, a well-developed world makes readers feel like they are not just reading the story but become part of it [24]. Also, it provides internal consistency [24]. If magic exists, its rules must remain the same [24]. Coherence is very important for such genre. Moreover, a vivid, thought through world adds depth to plot and characters [24].

The ways authors use worldbuilding are quite obvious. They use descriptive prose to evoke the sense of realism of the worlds, vividly describing landscape, climate or architecture [24]. They also can add some details through exposition [24], adding some details about history or culture of the created world. The interaction between characters and their environment contributes to worldbuilding [24].

Another representative of structural techniques is alternativeism. Alternativeism is a stylistic device that consists in using the same grammatical structure in several sentences [34]. These structures can be phrases, clauses or entire sentences [34]. Such alternative elements are used to create the intense rhythm, balance and pattern in the text [34]. Alternativeism enhances readability and emphasizes ideas [34], in our case the idea of alternative worlds.

To understand alternativeism better, the opening lines in Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* are great example: “*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness...*” [34]. Here, the repetition of the structure emphasizes the contrasts and sets the tone for the novel.

Such usage of contrasting elements corresponds to the structure of alternative worlds in literature, where opposite realities coexist within one narrative system. This contrast often indicates just how other a world could be if circumstances or one choice had been altered, prompting the reader to ponder turn and change in both history and mentality that would have influenced reality [34]. It is these structural oppositions within alternative worlds that bring to the fore what this type of story does best: “what could have been,” and throws you into the texture, color spectrum and depth-defying chiaroscuro of contrasts between different subsections marking divergent progressions [34]. The great example is the alternative world in Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the*

High Castle. [34] The plot of the novel unfolds the alternative version of 1960s the Axis powers won World War II, leading to a world starkly different from our own. Thus, this world is filled with great number of contrasting elements, like the USA being torn into two parts - Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan — each rule their own region of the continent spreading propaganda, also in culture gaps [34]. The East Coast ruled by Nazis and the West coast under Japanese occupation--two distinctly different value systems dominated each, rendering a purgatory in which all of our characters must live, one where victory was far more than just taking home some Saki cans [34].

Alternativeism can be seen through usage of anaphora or epistrophe [34], as well as antithesis. Antithesis is another stylistic device that is widely used in creating alternative worlds [20]. Contrasting ideas are placed side by side to emphasize their differences. This can be used to represent alternative worlds with opposite qualities [20], for example is one world has winter entire year and the other one has summer like in the cartoon *Secret of the Wings* where one part of fairies' world had only warm climate and another one was a pure winter.

Coming back to alternativeism, it helps in reflecting some cultural norms within alternative worlds [34]. For example, in the novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula K. Le Guin, the author uses alternativeism to contrast the cultural norms of two different societies on the planet Gethen: “*In Karhide, one is respected for one lineage and personal honor. In Orgoreyn, one is respected for one’s position and political influence.*” [34]

Also, if the alternative world is a magical one and if magic works according to certain rules, alternative explanations of spells or incantations reinforce those rules. Alternative character arcs or repeated actions reveal underlying themes [20]. For example, two characters whose destinies are alternative.

1.3.3. Descriptive techniques

Now we would like to delve into some descriptive techniques. We find it logical to start with imagery. Imagery is a descriptive language that binds human senses – sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell [16]. So even though the word imagery has the word

“image” in it, it does not refer only to sense of sight [16]. While imagery often benefits from using figurative language such as metaphors and similes, it can be also written without any figurative language at all [16].

Imagery can be literal and figurative. Literal imagery provides straightforward descriptions of sensory experiences [16], while figurative one uses language creatively and involves symbolism, metaphors and similes [16]. Describing alternative worlds literally might involve vivid details of alien landscapes, futuristic technology, or magical creatures. Figurative imagery transports readers to alternative dimensions by suggesting hidden meanings, emotions, and alternate realities.

Imagery serves as a bridge to alternative universes in literature. When authors use vivid, sensory details, they transport readers beyond reality and deep into the imagination. Descriptive imagery involves readers to an unfamiliar environment [16], such as an enchanted forest, a futuristic city, or another dimension. Imagery also reflects emotions and atmosphere [16]. It helps in describing clothes and surroundings of the characters [16], which make the alternative worlds seem more realistic to a reader. Imagery evokes emotions [16] and allows readers to relive an alternative experience. Through imagery authors can add symbolism to objects and settings [16]. The difference between these two can be easily seen with one sentence that is described differently.

The sky was a deep blue, dotted with fluffy white clouds – this is the example of literal imagery, whose aim is to create a clear and a direct picture in a reader’s head [16].

The sky was as blue as the ocean, and the clouds sailed across it like white boats – the sentence is almost the same, but here we can see the usage of descriptive language that helps in creating a deeper and more imaginative picture [16].

The next stylistic device we would like to mention is metaphor. Metaphors are described as the “direct comparison” [13], since they are used to describe two unrelated things as the same one [13]. They can create a powerful description for some notion, for example unknown to the reader. The example can be found in C. S. Lewis’s *The Chronicles of Narnia* [13]. The character of lion, Aslan, serves as a metaphor for

courage and sacrifice [13]. Aslan represents a concept of good fighting against evil, thus providing a relatable image that has complex spiritual and moral values within the world of Narnia [13].

Simile is also a device that is used to compare things that are different but have some similar qualities [13], and to compare them the words such “like” or “as” are used [13], while in metaphors such words are not used. Similes are often called “indirect comparison” [13]. Like, for instance, in this sentence - *Exploring alternative worlds is like diving into a kaleidoscope, where every turn reveals a new and vibrant pattern of existence* [13]

Metaphors and similes serve as “doors” to alternative worlds in literature [13], or, in our opinion, rather like keys to those doors. Combining different elements, the authors build bridges between everyday experience and extraordinary dimensions. These figurative techniques allow us to explore emotions, concepts, and landscapes in new and unexpected ways. For example, the rabbit hole in *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carrol serves as a metaphorical bridge between the real world and Wonderland [13].

It is said that metaphors can make gold out of ordinary words [13], so they can create a more vivid picture of the alternative world in literary work. They allow readers to inhabit multiple worlds simultaneously [13]. Like in this line of Emily Dickinson’s poem - *Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul* [30]. Here, the author envisioned hope as a bird, encouraging readers to explore hope’s fragility and endurance as though interacting with a living creature.

Similes, in turn, are somewhat like architects building bridges between two, or more, alternative worlds [13]. They take us to alternative dimensions where the ordinary becomes extraordinary [13]. So, similes and metaphors help readers to “unlock” alternative words [13].

The last descriptive device that writers use in creating alternative worlds is personification [20]. Personification consists in assigning human traits to nonhuman things [4], those can be parts of world of nature, for example, or household [4].

Personifying objects, animals, or abstract concepts to give them human characteristics, behaviors, and emotions in alternative universes, writers allow readers to connect with the unknown, bringing normally inanimate objects to life [4]. As can be seen in *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, where flowers and animals can speak.

Personification often contributes to the development of vivid images [4]. This makes the explanation more interesting and easier to understand [4] – and in our opinion, those vivid pictures are crucial in creating a concept of alternative dimensions.

When non-human objects acquire human traits, readers empathize with them [4]. They become interested in how they perceive their existence [4]. So, personification in an alternative world invites readers to explore alternative perspectives.

Additionally, personification blurs the line between animate and inanimate objects and expands our understanding of reality [4]. In alternative worlds literature such blurring is very important.

Moreover, personified objects usually have some symbolism [4]. They can hold broader concepts [4]. Such symbols can resonate in alternative worlds.

1.3.4. Meaning and representation techniques

When it comes to meaning techniques, we would like to highlight two of them: realism and symbolism [20]. Being two contrasting devices, these two both help in representing alternative worlds more accurately.

We want to start with realism. Realism is used to highlight the concept of “reality” in literature [37]. It helps in achieving more realistic picture of the world [37], ~~the~~ real or alternative one. So, it can add some realistic backdrop to the territories that were made up by the author. Like with the settings, it also helps to make characters more “alive” [37], which is important because in works with alternative worlds, as we mentioned before, there are often a lot of magic or unreal creatures. Basically, the usage of realism provides a foundation for alternative world.

Techniques of creating realism draw the reader into the narrative [37], it means that when alternative worlds are combined with some realistic context, readers become

more engaged in the plot, since they find something similar for them within extraordinary settings. Via placing alternative worlds into realistic settings helps writers in creating metaphors that can resonate with readers [37]. Furthermore, realism allows authors to explore alternative outcomes [37]. Since there are cases when alternative worlds offer scenarios of hypothetical turnout of our world, adding realism to such stories expands the possibilities of storytelling [37].

Examples of realism within the alternative world can be seen in G. Orwell's 1949 [37]. Orwell creates an alternate world in which a totalitarian reign rules over every part of life in this dystopian book. Without a basis in reality and written from the perspective of someone with lived knowledge, fiction can twist farther away as it pleases while still maintaining believability [37]; descriptions of London — its dirty streets, wrecked buildings teetering like gaudy toys for natural disaster to knock over at will or perhaps even better stilts underneath that lives too many justifiable fictions feeding into since we watched how flesh loses feeling under a microscope kinesis are parables without having yet been made real [37]. This realistic approach of G. Orwell to creating characters and oppressive environment makes this world feel extremely real [37].

Now we will discuss the usage of symbolism in literary works with alternative worlds. Symbolism is the usage of descriptive images with deep meaning to show abstract and complex ideas [12]. Symbolism in literature uses a concrete image (such as an object, character, or event) to represent an abstract idea [12]. For example, the heart often symbolizes love, although the concept of love is more complex than a physical organ [12]. Symbolism adds depth and meaning to the text [12]. This allows authors to convey complex themes, emotions or social commentary indirectly [12].

Unlike metaphors and similes, symbolism uses symbolic images repeatedly within a text [12]. Symbols can have multiple meanings [12]. For example, fire can symbolize both destruction and restoration.

Speaking of literature with the concept of alternative worlds, the great example of the usage of symbolism can be J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, where the One Ring is an important symbol throughout the plot [12]. While being a physical

object, the ring represents more abstract ideas like temptation and power [12]. The symbolism of the Ring adds depth to the narration since being central object both to the plot and characters [12]. For example, for Frodo this ring is a burden, while for Gollum it represents obsession.

1.3.5. Rhetorical techniques

Rhetorical questions can have an essential role in creating alternative worlds in literature [20]. Such questions are asked not to get a certain answer, but rather to make some point [38]. On top of their literal meaning they have another layer, sometimes not that obvious [38]. They tend to evoke a sense of doubt in a reader [38]. Moreover, they are used in order to enhance emotions of the characters like sadness, anger or frustration [38]. They are also used to reflect uncertainty or confusion the characters are going through [38] or, as well, to mock or criticize other characters [38].

In terms of creating alternative worlds, rhetorical questions have several purposes. First of all, there is a whole type of alternative worlds created with rhetorical question "What if...?" that we mentioned in 1.2. So, rhetorical questions stimulate world-building [38] and encourage writers to explore uncharted or even made-up territory. They inspire creative leaps in stories about alternative worlds. For example, the question "What if humans evolved from aquatic creatures?" can give an impetus for creating the concept of a story.

Besides, the choice of rhetorical questions forms the general atmosphere of the literary work [38]. They can cause curiosity, surprise, and even anxiety [38]. Authors choose to use rhetorical questions in creating alternative worlds to set the tone [38]. "What if dreams were doors to other dimensions?" – it creates a supernatural and mysterious atmosphere.

As well, rhetorical questions challenge conventional thinking and assumptions [38]. They destroy our understanding of reality in alternative worlds [38]. For instance, "What if flowers had voices?" – such assumption forces us to consider sensory experience in an alternative dimension.

Additionally, rhetorical questions act as a means of persuasion by influencing the reader's point of view [38]. Writers can use this to their advantage in alternative world literature. "What if the rebels win the interdimensional war?" – this prompts us to sympathize with the defeated group.

1.3.6. Fantasy genre aspects

As we mentioned already, *Coraline* is a fantasy novel, so to create alternative worlds the author used many fantasy elements. Undoubtedly, they play a crucial role in creating alternative worlds in works of literature [21]. Writers use fantasy elements as powerful tools that allow readers to be transported beyond the mundane to alternative worlds where imagination knows no boundaries [21]. However, fantasy elements are much more than just escapism.

Often those fantasy elements involve magic [4]. Magic in fantasy involves supernatural powers, esoteric knowledge, and unusual abilities [4]. Speaking about alternative worlds, magic fills them with wonder, secrets, and endless possibilities [20]. It defies the laws of physics and allows characters to wield wands, cast spells, and bend reality [20].

Fantasy elements add more descriptiveness to the work [4], they make alternative worlds more detailed and help in worldbuilding. For example, writers can create a fantasy language, name or even a new race of creatures, thus making the alternate world seem more real and authentic.

Those magical creatures, invented by the author or taken from folklore and myths, can hold some symbolism [4], they can be metaphors or allegories for the real-life issues [4] – dragons can symbolize inner demons or fears, unicorns – pureness, etc.

Alternative worlds allow writers to challenge traditional norms and expectations [20]. They can alter reality by altering natural laws, summoning magical creatures, and changing society [4].

Fantasy elements often create conflicts and quests [4]. Magical relics, prophecies or hidden kingdoms form the basis of the characters' journeys [4]. These elements create tension, develop the plot, and captivate the reader.

In addition, fantasy elements in alternative worlds evoke a sense of wonder and beauty [20]. For instance, in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by J.K. Rowling, the author added many awe-inspiring details to enhance the magic atmosphere, like magical creatures, spellbinding landscapes and Hogwarts castle. By presenting vivid images, the author was able to transport the reader to places they have never seen before [4].

So, the concept of alternative worlds in literature allows writers to go beyond reality and explore the limitless realms of imagination. In order for these worlds to resonate with the reader, the author carefully creates an environment that is important to the story.

Conclusions to Part 1

One of the key aspects in literature with alternative worlds is to break traditional narrative structures. Techniques such as stream of consciousness, fragmented storytelling, and non-linear timelines interrupt traditional storytelling and draw readers into the minds of complex characters and plots. Stream of Consciousness reveals psychological depth, and the fragmented narrative encourages readers to piece together the story. Non-linear timelines intertwine the past, present and future, creating a richer world that transcends linear time.

Detailed and consistent world building is key. The author uses descriptive prose to vividly describe the landscape, climate, and architecture, allowing the reader to visualize and feel part of these spaces. The coherence of the internal logic of a world, whether magical or technological, allows disbelief to be suspended and the reader to be completely immersed.

Realism supports these fantasy worlds by combining familiar contexts with realistic elements. This allows you to associate symbols with settings and explore what-if scenarios. Metaphors, similes, and images transform ordinary descriptions into vivid sensory experiences that transport readers to another dimension.

Symbolism adds depth and meaning. Concrete images represent abstract ideas and enrich stories with complex themes and emotions. Repetitive symbols emphasize

the essence of the story and help to deepen its understanding. When symbolism is combined with imagery, a rich tapestry emerges that resonates on many levels.

Alternativeism and rhetorical questions increase thematic and structural coherence. Alternative processing emphasizes central ideas and cultural norms through repetition of grammatical structures. Rhetorical questions spark curiosity, challenge perceptions, and encourage deeper thinking. These devices improve readability and encourage readers to reflect on fictional realities.

Elements of personification and fantasy further enrich the story. Personification assigns human characteristics to non-human beings, making environments and objects identifiable and emotionally attractive. Fantasy elements, such as magic and mythical creatures, push the boundaries of what is possible, creating complex conflicts, quests, and enchanting kingdoms. These elements often have symbolic meaning and metaphorically reflect real-life issues.

In conclusion, the creation of believable alternative worlds in literature is based on the combination of style and storytelling techniques. The author creates an immersive and imaginative world by subverting traditional structures, providing detailed world-building, incorporating realism, and using metaphors, symbolism, alternativeism, rhetorical questions, personification, and elements of fantasy. Create an imaginary space that resonates. These techniques make things very concrete, engage the reader on an emotional and intellectual level, and turn reading into a journey through an endless creative landscape.

Chapter 2. Networks of stylistic means in alternative worlds formation in "Coraline" by Neil Gaiman

2.1. Typology of alternative worlds in "Coraline" by Neil Gaiman

Coraline is a novel which plot is based on the presence of alternative worlds – The Real World and the Other World. However, these two are not the only ones in the novel. In this part we would like to delve into them. Stating their characteristics and prominent features.

2.1.1. The primary alternative worlds in the novel

Coraline is the main character of the analyzed novel. Together with her parents she moved to another town into a large old house that has been converted into an apartment building. The house seems really strange to Coraline as well as the habitants – the old man who trains mice for the circus and two old ladies who were actresses in their youth.

With her parents permanently being busy, Coraline tries to find ways to entertain herself, so she starts to explore this peculiar house. However, nothing interesting appears in her way – the house in the text is mostly described as “*dull*”, “*boring*”, “*gray*”, “*rainy*” and “*cold*”. These are the main characteristics of the Real World in the story.

While imagining herself as an explorer she comes across a locked door in her flat. No matter how many times she asked her parents about the door, she had no clear answer. Accidentally having opened the door, she discovered that it opened to the brick wall. Thus, the only interesting thing about the house appeared to be so boring.

The next day she tried once more and this time the door opened to the dark hallway. That is the way to the Other World.

Neil Gaiman managed to divide his novel into two very contradictive parts [17] so, basically, there are two main alternative worlds in the novel – the Real one and the Other one – and the plot revolves around two of them. So, let us discuss why and how they are so distinctive.

The real world in the novel is mainly characterized by its ordinariness and boringness [35]. Coraline constantly seeks the attention of her parents who seem to work all the time, because of it she feels neglected. In the novel, the Other Mother particularly points it out to Coraline to remind her how bad the Real World is:

“Nothing’s changed. You’ll go home. You’ll be bored. You’ll be ignored. No one will listen to you, really listen to you. You’re too clever and too quiet for them to understand. They don’t even get your name right.” [10].

Moreover, moving into the new house makes her feel worse. Although the old house with a unique gothic structure attracts her attention, causing her going around

and exploring it, it appears to be really dull and empty – some rooms were not used for many years and are covered with dust, a lot of things in the house are old and useless, etc. [1] This constructs a lack of belonging to the new place in Coraline [1].

The Real World is described as dull and uneventful, which is reflected in the everyday interactions Coraline has [35]. For instance, the garden near the house is lifeless and devoid of any life that she aspires to:

“It was a very old house—it had an attic under the roof and a cellar under the ground and an overgrown garden with huge old trees in it.” [10].

Her neighbors, two retired actresses, Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, are strange yet disconnected from her world; in fact, their lives as past performers were more exciting than their present ones. Another neighbor, Mr. Bobo, is occupied with his hobby of training mice, which makes Coraline feel further disconnected from the adults surrounding her life.

Yet, under this obviously mundane surface, the Real World is safe [1]. Despite the behavior of Coraline’s parents, they provide her with all the needs and the world outside the house, although being dull, has no threats [1]. For example, in this dialogue we can see that even though the parents are constantly busy they do care about Coraline’s wellbeing:

“It’s just raining. Can I go outside?”

“What does your mother say?”

“She says you’re not going out in weather like that, Coraline Jones.” [10].

The fact becomes even more apparent once Coraline finds the Other World, the world that appeals to the girl yet gradually reveals its dangerous underpinnings.

So firstly, the Other World seems to be a reflection of Coraline’s actual life [1], but an improved one, with some benefits for the girl:

“They sat at the kitchen table, and Coraline’s other mother brought them lunch. A huge, golden-brown roasted chicken, fried potatoes, tiny green peas. Coraline shoveled the food into her mouth. It tasted wonderful” [10].

The Other World is bright, fascinating, and fantastical in ways the real world is not [1]. Here, her Other Mother and Other Father are attentive, showering her with the

love and attention she desires in her real life. The food is tastier, the toys are more fun, and the atmosphere of the whole setting seems like a dream come true.

At first sight, the Other World is utopia for Coraline [1]. The Other Mother is particularly attractive, a warped version of Coraline's own mother with exaggerated kindness [1]. She is the ideal parent: present, nurturing, and seemingly willing to give Coraline whatever she wants [1]. This world also has talking animals, magical gardens, and an aura of mystery that captivates Coraline.

However, the sinister tones of this Other World slowly rise to the surface. It is not constrained by the same realism as the real world [17]. While promising freedom and excitement, it is a prison of manipulation and deceit [1]. Its most salient feature is that everyone has buttons for eyes, a fact Coraline initially dismisses, but later realizes signals deeper malevolence [1].

The Other Mother, or the “Beldam,” is the main antagonist. She wants to trap Coraline in her world and sew buttons on her eyes, symbolizing the loss of humanity and individuality [9]. The longer Coraline stays, the more she realizes everything is a facade. The Beldam's kindness is merely a lure to keep Coraline there permanently [1]. Coraline discovers the Beldam has trapped other children, making the Other World a dangerous illusion that feeds on desires and emotions.

As we already mentioned, Neil Gaiman made great work dividing the novel into these two worlds. Gaiman contrasts the real world and the Other World to show how the latter, though seemingly more exciting, is full of dangers [35]. The real world is imperfect but genuine [35]. Coraline's parents may not be as attentive as she would like, but they lovingly provide stability. The Other World feeds on Coraline's discontent by offering her a faultless version of life, but the cost is her freedom and identity.

These worlds represent different aspects of Coraline's journey: the real world teaches resilience and self-dependence, while the Other World offers an easy escape from problems. Coraline learns happiness is earned through understanding and hard work.

Coraline's journey between the worlds marks her growth. She starts as a passive child seeking adventure but becomes brave and resourceful. Confronting the Other

Mother, Coraline learns to appreciate the stability of her real life. When she returns, she values her family more and realizes love comes from consistency and care. Her adventures gave her strength to face challenges, and wisdom to understand that reality, despite its imperfections, is better than illusions.

2.1.2. The secondary alternative worlds

Although the Real World and the Other World appear in the text most of the time and plot mostly revolves around two of them, these are not the only alternative worlds in the novel. In our opinion, there are two more alternative worlds in the plot, which basically exist inside the Other World.

In the text of the analyzed novel, we can see that these two secondary worlds are described with darker and more limited words, like “*prison*”, “*darkness*”, “*empty*”, etc., while describing the Real World or the Other World the author used more vivid lexical units, like we already mentioned before.

The first one is the world inside the mirror in the other house, we will call it the Mirror World.

Mirror World is a small space behind the mirror in the other house:

“It was the size of a broom closet: tall enough to stand in or to sit in, not wide or deep enough to lie down in” [10].

Despite being physically small it plays an important role in the plot. The Other Mother created it as a prison for the kids’ souls who rejected her, so from now on let us call this small space a prison. The mirror serves as a portal between the main house and a prison that does not let anyone go in or out without the Other Mother’s permission [1]. Because of that the souls could not escape and remained there for many years.

The Mirror World is not some other place one can physically enter, but rather a shadowy dimension hidden behind reflective surfaces. In the Other World, mirrors serve not only as portals, but as cages.

One prominent feature of this world is that time passes unnoticeably there – there is nothing to track time, we can understand it through this dialogue between Coralina and one of the kids’ souls:

“How long have you been here?”

“So very long a time,” said a voice.

“Aye. Time beyond reckoning,” said another voice” [10].

When the souls are trapped there, no matter for how long, it feels as if it was there forever. This creates the feeling of solitude [1].

Another feature that helps in creating this feeling is the darkness [1]. In the novel, when Coraline found herself in this world, there is such a description:

“She went around the tiny room a second time, running her hands over every surface that she could reach, feeling for doorknobs or switches or concealed catches—some kind of way out—and found nothing” [10].

With phrases like *“running her fingers”* or *“feeling the surface”* the author showed that one can see nothing in this world, the only thing Coraline could do is to feel with her hands everything around her. The prison has no windows, no doors or anything that could let any light, making this space even more secluded.

The trapped children represent both literal and metaphorical victims of the Other Mother's wishes to have everything under control [1]. They have been squeezed out of their identities and left to rot in this dark place, their spirits captive, isolated, and alone. In such incidents, Coraline slowly understands that the attentive and affectionate nature of the Other Mother is just a manipulative trap to draw her into life-long slavery. It is in the world of mirrors that the true horror of Other Mother's power unfolds: she does not consume only physically, but also metaphysically, leaving victims as shell-like, hollowed-out reflections of themselves.

So, being thrown away by the Other Mother into the Mirror World the kids feel overwhelming despair, this world is full of it and with it the author shows what the Other Mother is capable of with her powers.

The significance of the Mirror World extends more than being a prison or a way to show the Other Mother's powers. It symbolizes the dangers of giving in to illusion and losing one's sense of self [1]. One of the souls mentioned that they do not remember their gender or the names of everyday things:

“Are you a girl?” asked Coraline. “Or a boy?”

There was a pause. "When I was small I wore skirts and my hair was long and curled," it said, doubtfully. "But now that you ask, it does seem to me that one day they took my skirts and gave me britches and cut my hair" [10].

Just as the souls of the children are imprisoned behind the mirror, Coraline risks becoming trapped in the Other World, unable to escape once her identity is compromised by the Other Mother's influence. Mirrors, in literature, often serve as symbols of reflection and self-awareness. In Coraline, however, they represent distortion and entrapment. The Mirror World distorts reality, making it difficult for Coraline to find her way out, forcing her to confront the truth about her predicament and the true nature of the Other Mother.

In the process of analysis, we also managed to single out one more world which we would like to call the Outer World, since it is the space in which the Other Mother created the Other House, so it is the space *outside* the Other World. It consists of thick white fog, there are no people, no animals, no nature, so naturally, there is nothing but white fog there:

"Nothing to find here," said the cat. "This is just the outside, the part of the place she hasn't bothered to create" [10].

However, it is also like canvas for the Other Mother to create her different dimensions for different children.

The Outer World is an incomplete, featureless void. Trees, landscape, and distant features all blur and fade away to nothingness, as if they had never been finished:

"And then the mist began. It was not damp, like a normal fog or mist. It was not cold and it was not warm. It felt to Coraline like she was walking into nothing" [10].

This discovery reveals for the first time the limitations of the Other Mother's powers of crafting a convincing substitute reality. While she is able to manipulate Coraline's feelings and actions when the latter is within the house or its immediate surroundings, the more Coraline explores, the more the facade crumbles.

This Outer World serves to reinforce the illusion versus reality theme that permeates the novel. The Other Mother has built the Other World to seduce Coraline

with everything she wants: attention, comfort, and excitement. The great example of it may be the moment when Coraline was served with dinner in the Other World:

“The food was delicious. Coraline had never eaten anything so good. She was still eating when the other mother came back into the room, bringing with her a huge, tiered cake, topped with thick, spun sugar icing that gleamed as if it were covered in tiny diamonds” [10].

However, her creation is circumscribed and imperfect. The further Coraline goes, the more incomplete this world turns out to be and even basically false:

“The world she was walking through was a pale nothingness, like a blank sheet of paper or an enormous, empty white room. It had no temperature, no smell, no texture, and no taste” [10].

The Other World—that earlier had seemed boundless and resplendent with magic—proved little more than an elaborately contrived trap, bereft of weight and dimension.

The Outer Worlds serves at the same time as a metaphor for the boundaries of escapism. Coraline, like many children—and even adults—desires an escape from the dullness and unpleasantness of life. The Other World offers her a temporary distraction but is ultimately hollow. For example, when Coraline finds the other version of two of her neighbors Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, retired actresses. In the Other World they act with a lot of exaggeration, yet they lack depth since they perform the same act many times:

“The audience clapped and cheered. Then the two women came out of the shadows, hand in hand, and took a bow... Coraline’s neighbors in the real world might have seemed eccentric, but they were alive, full of quirks and surprises. Here, in the Other World, even the excitement was rehearsed” [10].

The unfinished quality of the Outer World reflects the reality that fantasy worlds can never hope to replace the real one—as long as they are artificially constructed and controlled—with no potentially explosive richness of their own.

The Mirror World and the Outer World each carry a figurative weight in Coraline. The Mirror World, with themes of incarceration and loss of identity, brings a

sense of precipitating danger from total surrender to an all-powerful figure's deceitful promises, which is the case with the Other Mother. Interactions of Coraline with the lost souls within the mirrored world starkly warn one of what actually happens when one loses her free will and surrenders herself to illusion. On the other hand, the Outer World shows created realities to be fragile and false. As Coraline steps out of the safe haven of the Other House, she realizes that the Other Mother's world is 'bounded', bereft of any real, organic essence. This incomplete world is not only a physical manifestation of the Other Mother, but also a metaphor for the incomplete satisfaction Coraline would find if she chose to stay in this artificial reality.

To conclude, although the Real World and the Other world are central for the narration, they are not the only ones in the plot. Our analysis showed two more alternative worlds, which are not as prominent, but anyway important to the plot.

The Mirror World, the space behind the other house's mirror, functions as a prison for the souls of the children who rejected the Other Mother and the Outer World which is a vast foggy area highlight the other mother's manipulative nature and her ability to trap and create an environment for her victims. These worlds enrich the novel's exploration of alternative realities and deepen our understanding of the harmful influence of the other mother.

2.2. Stylistic means of different language levels in alternative worlds creation in *Coraline*

In *Coraline*, Neil Gaiman was able to create intricately layered alternative worlds, which both sharply diverge from the Real World yet mirror it enough to captivate. To create them, the author used stylistic means of different language levels that range from phonographical one to lexical one. In this part we would like to analyze all of them.

2.2.1. Phonographical level

In *Coraline*, Neil Gaiman created alternative worlds using various stylistic means, so we would like to delve into them one by one, starting with the stylistic means at the phonographical level.

Although there are not many examples of phonographical language level, those present in the text play a huge role in the plot structuring, setting the tone of the novel.

To start with, one of the key features of phonographical style in *Coraline* is sound symbolism [35]. The phonological structure of a word reflects their meaning or tone, influencing the readers' perception of the alternative worlds. Thus, in the Real World characters use stylistically unmarked units on the phonological level [27], reflecting the normalcy and safety of it. Whereas in the Other World the author used more sharp and hissing sounds [27], emphasizing the feeling of danger.

For example, the speech of the Other Mother is full of hissing consonants, like s, sh, ch and z, which mimic the sounds of snake, pointing out that she is the representation of evil. As an example, we chose this line of hers:

“Nobody sensible believes in ghosts anyway. That’s because they’re all such liars.” [10].

The particular choice of the words with these sounds makes it obvious that Gaiman wanted to represent the Other Mother as sinister creature even on a phonetic level.

Another technique of the phonological level is the rhythm [35]. The rhythm of the dialogues and narration helps in contrasting the two main alternative worlds. In the Real World, sentences are often shorter and regular, what creates a predictable cadence [35]. While in the Other World the rhythm is less predictable due to the usage of longer sentences with abrupt stops and starts.

Let us compare the fragments from the analyzed text. This is the dialogue between Coraline and her father soon after they moved to the new house:

“Hello Coraline,” he said when she came in, without turning round.

“Mmph,” said Coraline. “It’s raining.”

“Yup,” said her father. “It’s bucketing down.”

“No,” said Coraline. “It’s just raining. Can I go outside?”

“What does your mother say?”

“She says you’re not going out in weather like that, Coraline Jones.” [10].

So, as we mentioned, the sentences are short here - in our opinion, it was done this way to highlight once more how mundane the Real World is.

To contrast, this is the conversation between Coraline and her other parents:

“We’ve been waiting for you for a long time,” said Coraline’s other father.

“For me?”

“Yes,” said the other mother. “It wasn’t the same here without you. But we knew you’d arrive one day, and then we could be a proper family. Would you like some more chicken?” [10].

Clearly, in this passage her parents use way longer sentences, using unpredictable phrases, like offering chicken right after meeting Coraline.

Moreover, the use of rhyme is also present in the novel. Although the novel is written in prose, the occasional rhymes add to the atmosphere since the rhymes are told by the circus mice:

“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” [10].

By adding rhyme to the novel, Gaiman evokes, on the one hand, a sense of the childish atmosphere, contrasting with the darker theme of the plot [35]. On the other hand, the moments when the rhymes are presented and the way they are told add to the sense of unease, as the rhythm of rhymes feels at odd with the tension and danger of the Other World.

Thus, phonographically, Gaiman’s usage of sounds significantly helps in the creation of the atmosphere and contrast between the two main alternative worlds. The phonographical techniques we mentioned shape the perception of the worlds, contrasting the safe and predictable Real World and eerie, unpredictable Other World.

2.2.2. Graphical level

In *Coraline* there are not many graphical stylistic means, however the author used them effectively in order to reinforce the boundaries between the two main alternative worlds.

Neil Gaiman used unusual placement and spelling of some words and phrases to show the oddness of the events.

For instance, some time before Coraline got into the Mirror World, when she looked in that mirror/door into it she saw the writing on the surface, which was written from left to right:

HELLO

This way, the author started the eerie atmosphere of the distortion long before it started to happen in the plot.

Another tool Gaiman used on the graphical level is graphemics. Graphemic belongs to the branch of graphic linguistics that studies the structural and functional units of writing [27]. The great example of graphemic in the novel is the ghost girl's description of the dance she once experienced:

“We swore we would stay together, as brothers and sisters do, and as we grew up we danced around the tiny, close world of the attic, we danced like dust motes in the light. I don't remember our names, but I remember the way we danced” [10].

This fragment illustrates the joy and freedom she had in her past that contrasts the sharp opposite darkness and oppressiveness she is experiencing in the Other World. Using graphemic elements, the author emphasized the emotional weight of the ghost's memories, thus pointing out how lost she feels under the Other Mother's control.

So, the combination of graphemics and unconventional writing helps in elevating the novel beyond a simple children's story, adding eerie and horrific atmosphere.

2.2.3. Morphological level

On the morphological level, Neil Gaiman used various techniques to enhance the contrast between not only two main alternative worlds, but the secondary ones as well.

The most evident example of morphological elements in the novel are the names of the characters [28]. Let us take the name of the main character – it is a subtle

morphological twist. It looks a lot like a common name Coraline, but with a slight change of vowels and this change reflects how Coraline feels different in the Real World [28]. This unusual name sets her apart from the normalcy of her world [35]. This also can be a hint to the possibility of something special about her.

As well as with the protagonist's name, elements of stylistic morphology are present in the name of the main antagonist [35]. Neil Gaiman's usage of "other" with some common nouns like "mother", "father" or "house" adds to the distortion of familiar things:

"The Other Father was a little bit like her own father, but he was not really like him at all. He was different" [10].

By attaching the word "other" to a traditionally comforting figure of mother, the author provides a subtle morphing of language that reflects the twisted nature of the characters in the alternative universe [35]. With this morphological twist he seems to say that these notions are familiar and yet something is wrong with them.

Another morphological tool presented in the novel is diminutives and augmentatives [28]. For example, in the Real World, all the objects, like mice, cats and buttons, are of the standard size. However, in the Other World, even these ordinary things become bizarrely grotesque, and this is seen from the use of language in describing objects. For instance, the Other Mother's hands are 'long', 'white and twisted', which in themselves are light morphosyntactic terms with augmentation that imply an unnatural growth of an ordinary human feature [28].

"Coraline's other mother stroked Coraline's hair with her long white fingers" [10].

"Only her fingers were too long, and they never stopped moving, <...> were curved and sharp" [10].

They effectively use diminutives and augmentatives at times when she comes across the rats and the button eyes in the Other World [28]. A button, normally a little non-threatening object, turns into something one dreads once it is affixed on the Other World's beings [28]. This association of buttons with eyes turns the commonplace monstrous, where the button signifies de-characterization of the Other World

characters. Here Gaiman deploys morphological hyperbole, changing language used to portray commonplace objects to mean fearsome things [28].

So, we can clearly see that usage of morphological means are used to establish the mysterious and double-sided nature of alternative worlds in *Coraline*.

2.2.4. Lexical level

Concerning lexical means, Gaiman used a bunch of vocabulary contrasting the Real and the Other Worlds. Thanks to them, the author managed to create a vivid image of an alternative universe with the familiar objects and notions being distorted and frightening.

The contrast between two main alternative worlds in *Coraline* is greatly rendered through divergent lexical fields that Gaiman used [28]. In the Real World the language is somewhat straightforward, and as mundane as the world itself [28]. To describe the every-day objects that are around the main character the author used concrete words like “rain,” “house,” “garden,” and “door.” The used vocabulary is very simple, reflecting the ordinariness of the world. However, when Coraline crossed to the Other World, the vocabulary changed drastically [28]. The Other World is marked by strange, sinister, and unsettling vocabulary choices which denote the distortion of that world [28].

For instance, ordinary words now have darker connotations. The “garden” is now described not only as an “overgrown,” but also “twisted” place filled with “black” roses and “dead” plants, reflecting the decayed beauty of the alternative universe.

Let us compare the fragments of the text. Here is the description of the trees in the garden in the Real World (1):

(1) “It was a very old house—it had an attic under the roof and a cellar under the ground and an overgrown garden with huge old trees in it” [10].

A pretty minor mention of the trees, just “huge” and “old”, that is it. The sentence is very simple, the author didn’t use any extraordinary word choices.

Here is the trees description in the Other World (2):

(2) “*Pretty soon they seemed very approximate, like the idea of trees: a grayish-brown trunk below, a greenish splotch of something that might have been leaves above*” [10].

In our opinion, these two descriptions are very different. In the second description, the simplicity of vocabulary is gone – the author uses very vivid adjectives to describe the eerie atmosphere of the garden.

Another example can be the description of the Coraline’s room. There is no description of her room in the Real World, but thanks to the one from the Other World we can understand the difference:

“It was different from her bedroom at home. For a start it was painted in an off-putting shade of green and a peculiar shade of pink. <...> ... the color scheme was an awful lot more interesting than her own bedroom. <...> There were all sorts of remarkable things in there she’d never seen before: windup angels that fluttered around the bedroom like startled sparrows; books with pictures that writhed and crawled and shimmered; little dinosaur skulls that chattered their teeth as she passed. A whole toy box filled with wonderful toys” [10].

This time Gaiman pointed out how the Other World was more interesting than the Real one, but if we read such words as “*startled*”, “*crawled*” or “*chatter*” more carefully we can understand that there is something odd here. So, even when describing the unusuality and exactingness of the place, the author managed to hint to the readers about the upcoming atmosphere change.

Moreover, the repetition of such words like “*dark*”, “*empty*”, “*cold*” and “*silent*” throughout the description of the Other World in the end of the novel shows the isolation and danger of it [28]. These words lexically create the eerie atmosphere that was needed for the finale.

Gaiman also uses lexical repetition for the purpose of enhancing suspense atmosphere [28]. One of the most vivid lexical motifs in *Coraline* is the repetition of the word “*buttons*”. The inhabitants of the Other World have buttons instead of eyes, this image serves as a literal or symbolic marker of the grotesque nature of the Other World. [29] Something that is already quite eerie is made even more unnerving with

the repetition of the word "button" in descriptions of the Other Mother and how the inhabitants of the Other World resemble her. The button motif operates on several levels. First, lexically it underscores the unnatural, fabricated quality of the Other World's inhabitants [29]. Buttons are lifeless; using them for eyes—arguably the window to the soul, Gaiman desiccates the Other Mother and her creations of their humanity. The reiteration of "button" echoes this discussion of dehumanization and control, where the Other Mother seeks to stitch buttons onto Coraline's eyes, thereby nullifying her individuality and agency [29].

Similarly, the word "key" is recurrent in this novel, a symbol of access and control [29]. The key that opens the door into the Other World is central to the plot of the entire novel [29]. One finds its repetition throughout the novel and underlines both the real and figurative usage of this implement of power. Lexical repetition of the key underlines Coraline's path of self-discovery, manifesting control over her fate and finally locking up the threatening Other World [29].

Gaiman also uses some lexical fields in order to give the story symbolic layers. One of the most active lexical fields in *Coraline* is that of lightness and darkness, usually a marker of border crossings between the real world and the Other World [29]. Light, warmth, and clarity are often associated with Coraline's experiences in her real world [35]. The language being forthright, with no ambiguity, there is an element of normalcy and safety. On the other hand, however, the Other World Coraline enters is of eternal twilight and gloom with shadowy figures; the language is more abstract and perturbing [35].

The author constantly applied terms of darkness to the Other World: a place of deceptiveness and threat [35]. Words like "gloom," "shadow," "dim," and "black" correspond to the oppressive effect and suggest that the Other World is a place where clarity and truth are clouded [35].

The words here form a part of a lexical field closely associated with the idea of illusion since the Other Mother creates an image of warmth and security that Coraline later learns to be full of darkness [28]. Indeed, the frequency of words related to darkness shows how this Other World comes as a distorted mirror of Coraline's real

world where nothing can be taken at face value [28]. Along with light and darkness, Gaiman develops a lexical field of entrapment in focusing attention on Coraline's struggle for freedom. The lexical field includes such words as "trap," "snare," "web," and "cage" [35]. These words are scattered throughout the novel, reflecting Coraline's developing awareness of the manipulative nature of the Other Mother [28]. The Other World is full of traps, physical and metaphorical; the language tells the reader how Coraline navigates through the dangers.

The repetition of all these words adds to the sense of tension and urgency when Coraline fights for her freedom and the souls of children trapped by the Other Mother.

Equally crucial to the novel's lexical texture, however, is the language of the characters themselves [28]. The matter of how a character speaks tends to be indicative of their role within the larger narrative and to which world they belong, the human world or that of the Other [28]. For example, the Other Mother speaks in honeyed tones of sweetness and insincerity, revealed in her repeatedly using stock phrases, which works to underscore her controlling nature. She often speaks to Coraline with words like "dear" and "sweet," but all these words of affection are empty, designed to cloak the real evil intentions of hers:

“Coraline, my darling,” she said. “I thought we could play some games together this morning, now you’re back from your walk. Hopscotch? Happy Families? Monopoly?” [10].

In this example, the Other Mother does not want to play with Coraline, she just wants to distract her from finding out how she put the children’s souls in the mirror.

The repetitions of all these deceptively kind words construct a chilling contrast between her outer appearance and her inner malice.

Another interesting lexical tool in *Coraline* is archaisms [35]. They were only used describing the Mirror World. As we mentioned already, time flows differently there and some of the children’s souls have been there for many years if not centuries. To highlight the period of imprisonment Gaiman used some old words and phrases in the speech of the kids. These lines can be the great examples:

“Tain’t something we give a mind to” [10].

“It doth not hurt” [10].

So, on the lexical level, Neil Gaiman, artistically uses word choices to create this vivid picture of contrast between the two worlds, and to highlight the deceptive atmosphere in the Other World.

2.2.5. Syntactic level

In *Coraline*, syntax serves for several purposes: to unveil the character’s inner worlds and to build a tension between the alternative worlds [35].

One of the most important syntactical techniques used in the text is the variation of the lengths of the sentences [35]. We already mentioned it in 2.2.1. that in the Real World the sentences are usually short and more direct, whereas in the Other World they are long and more complex. Syntactically this feature is shown also during the moments of tension in the plot. When describing such scenes, Gaiman often abruptly shifts to shorter sentences, breaking the flow of the narrative and creating a jarring effect. This contrast in sentence length is especially evident during confrontations with the Other Mother.

For example, the Chapter 10 of *Coraline* starts like this:

“Once inside, in her flat, or rather, in the flat that was not hers, Coraline was pleased to see that it had not transformed into the empty drawing that the rest of the house seemed to have become. It had depth, and shadows, and someone who stood in the shadows waiting for Coraline to return” [10].

We can see long complex sentences with a lot of vivid descriptions. Once Coraline has a fight with the Other Mother, the length of the sentences change:

“The other mother stood very still, giving nothing away, lips tightly closed. She might have been a wax statue. Even her hair had stopped moving” [10].

The sudden shift to short sentences mimics the sharpness of Coraline’s fear or realization, bringing immediacy to the scene [35]. For example, in moments where Coraline is running from danger or making quick decisions, the syntax becomes fragmented, which increases the urgency and pace, pulling the reader directly into Coraline’s tense state of mind.

Using the same technique, Gaiman also achieves another effect. The author used the length of the sentences in order to show Coraline's mental state [28]. When the girl first entered the Other World, her thoughts and the text describing her emotions are mostly full of long sentences, which are mostly questions and doubts:

"Coraline took a deep breath and stepped into the darkness, where strange voices whispered and distant winds howled. She became certain that there was something in the dark behind her: something very old and very slow" [10].

Gaiman used longer sentences to show how Coraline was processing what was going on around her [28]. So, closer to the end of the book, when Coraline understands the danger of the alternative world, the sentences describing her thoughts are shorter and more certain to show that she is now more certain in her own actions:

"This was it, Coraline knew. The moment of truth. The unraveling time" [10].

Another important syntactical tool that the author used is syntactical repetition. The repetition of certain sentence structures or phrases helps reinforce key themes and ideas, while also creating a rhythmic tension that pulls the reader into the story. For example, the word "the door" is frequently repeated at critical points in the narrative, reflecting its importance as the threshold between the real world and the Other World. Each time Coraline finds the door, the repeated syntax of its description, "the door was small," "the door was there again", creates a sense of foreboding, as the simple structure of the sentence belies the deep significance of what lies beyond it.

Alternativeism in sentence structure is also used in the novel. In the Real World, sentences describing mundane actions are simple and direct: "*Coraline opened the door*" [10]. However, in the Other World, similar actions take on more weight, and Gaiman uses alternative sentence structures to reflect the mirrored nature of the two worlds. The sentence "Coraline opened the door" might be mirrored by "*Coraline opened the door again,*" by adding words like "again" or "this time" showing that while the action is the same, the environment and consequences are vastly different. This alternativeism subtly reinforces the theme of duality that pervades the novel.

Alternativeism is also seen in the rhyme that we mentioned before. This rhyme gradually becomes distorted during the plot. Thus, in the beginning of the novel it looks like this:

*“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”* [10].

But with sometime in the narration, it becomes this:

*“We have teeth and we have tails
We have tails we have eyes
We were here before you fell
You will be here when we rise”* [10].

Obviously Gaiman used alternativeism in these two versions of the song to show how the Other World started to be more of a danger for the main character.

So, the syntactical techniques present in the novel were used mostly to depict the mental state of the characters, to show the emotional journey of Coraline and to illustrate the changes in the Other World state and Coraline’s perception of it.

2.2.6. Semantic level

One of the major semantic tools Gaiman used in *Coraline* is the shift in meaning between the Real World and the Other one [28]. In the Real World, the words understandably have the literal meanings [28]. Coraline interactions with anything or anyone are grounded in reality, and the understanding of used language reflects her familiarity with this world [28]. However, in the Other World, the same words can have twisted or even dual meanings, thus reflecting the surreality of the world [28].

As an example, let us take the concept of “mother”. Naturally, it is semantically the concept of care and love and even though Coraline faces some difficulties in the Real World with communicating with her mother, anyway they still feel this traditional understanding of the concept [28]. Yet, when Coraline meets the Other Mother, this concept is crushed. Though the Other Mother tries to fulfill the concept, being the

“perfect parent”, semantically her title is corrupted [28]. For example, when she offered Coraline to replace her eyes with the buttons, she said it like this:

“We only want what’s best for you” [10].

The Other Mother's version of "motherhood" becomes a prison, where control and manipulation replace love and care [28]. This semantic inversion challenges Coraline's understanding of family and trust, forcing her to redefine true parental love [28].

Gaiman also uses wordplay and semantic ambiguity to disorient the reader and Coraline, especially in the dialogue with the characters of the Other World [35]. The language that the Other Mother and the other inhabitants use is often ambiguous, filled with promises that seem too good to be true, just like, once more, they asked Coraline to stay and live happily together, but with the condition of losing her eyes [35]. This creates semantic tension where the surface meaning of words contradicts their underlying implications [35]. For instance, the Other Mother's constant insistence that she "loves" Coraline and wants what is best for her creates semantic unease, as her actions suggest the opposite.

This semantic play extends to the cat, a character that exists in both worlds, but speaks only in the Other World [28]. The cat talks in riddles, metaphors, and ambiguous phrases, forcing Coraline along with the readers to question his words. For example, when the cat says:

"We could be friends, you know. We could be rare specimens of an exotic breed of African dancing elephants" [10].

This line initially appears nonsensical, but introduces a moment of semantic playfulness, highlighting the cat's enigmatic nature [28].

This leads us to another very important semantic tool – symbolism. The cat that we mentioned in the previous passage is a very symbolic figure in the plot [29]. Primarily, it represents wisdom and independence, since, unlike other inhabitants of the Other World, it can freely move between the alternative worlds of the novel.

The cat also refuses to have a name, which is a symbol of resistance to being controlled by the Other Mother [29] unlike all the other inhabitants of the Other World.

The cat serves as a guide for Coraline throughout the story, it constantly offers her some advice, helping her deal with the dangers of the Other World. This way, its role as a guide represents inner wisdom and intuition [29].

The cat also represents freedom of thought [29], it does not obey any rules of the Other Mother or any natural human rules like having a name.

As well, the cat's behavior symbolizes self-reliance, since it comes and goes whenever it wants, not even between the worlds, but also while helping Coraline.

The cat is not the only creature that has symbolic meaning in the novel. The Other Mother as well is a key symbol of the book [29]. Clearly, she represents control and manipulation. Moreover, she is a symbol of false perfection, since she offers Coraline everything the girl wanted just to trap her in her world [29].

Talking about her monstrous form, the one she turned into when Coraline became rebellious with her, represents her role as a weaver of webs or traps, since through the description we can understand that she looks like a beast:

“The other mother was huge—her head almost brushed the ceiling—and very pale, the color of a spider’s belly. Her hair writhed and twined about her head, and her teeth were sharp as knives...” [10].

Furthermore, the door between the Real World and the Other World is a symbol of choice [29]. Through much of the novel, it is desirable and a symbol of control over the threshold from one world to the other. To the Other Mother, the key has been a means of trapping Coraline and others in this world, never returning to the safety of the real world. In Coraline's case, a key is a symbol of choice: to remain in the Other World or to get out of it.

Then, the key that opens that door is a symbol of power [29]. Throughout much of the novel, it is desirable and a symbol of control over the threshold from one world to the other [29]. For the Other Mother, the key has been a means of trapping Coraline and others in this world, never returning to the safety of the real world. In Coraline's case, a key is a symbol of choice: to remain in the Other World or to get out of it [29].

One of the most imposing symbols in *Coraline* is the button eyes [29] used by the Other World's inhabitants including the Other Mother and the Other Father. These

buttons simply are a strong representative of power, de-individualization and loss of individuality [29]. Eyes have for long been viewed as the mirror to the soul hence a depiction of identity, view and life [29]. Thus, this act from the Other Mother is aimed at equating her preys to robots or zombies devoid of humanity or free will. The idea behind the fact that she wants to convert Coraline and others into mere objects via button eyes strips them off their vision, comprehension or resistance [29].

What actually strikes her about the Other Mother is not so much the fact that she wants Coraline to sow buttons on her eyes as the notion of ultimate sacrifice [28].

As Coraline's journey unfolds, her understanding of the world around her undergoes a semantic shift [28]. Words that in the beginning had simple, straightforward meanings take on deeper significance during the plot [28]. The word "home," for example, initially represents boredom and neglect for Coraline [28]. She feels disconnected from her parents, unsatisfied with her environment, and longs for something more exciting. However, after encountering the dangers of the Other World, the meaning of "home" changes [28]. It comes to symbolize safety, belonging, and love—qualities Coraline realizes she had overlooked [28]. This evolving meaning of "home" mirrors Coraline's emotional and psychological growth as she comes to value the stability and love present in her real-world relationships [28].

Likewise, the concept of courage transforms for Coraline as she navigates the Other World [28]. At the beginning of her journey, Coraline equates courage with physical actions, such as confronting monsters or facing danger directly. However, by the novel's end, her understanding of courage deepens to include mental and emotional resilience [28]. She realizes that true bravery is not only about defeating physical threats, but also about resisting manipulation, choosing love over fear, and outwitting those who seek to control her. This expanded meaning of courage reflects the novel's broader themes, where Coraline's journey is as much about self-discovery as it is about facing external challenges [28].

So, Gaiman employs a lot of semantic tools, which, together with ambiguity and symbolism, contrasts the real world with the Other World. Language also has many layers, and even such concepts as, for instance, 'mother', 'home', and 'courage' change

with the girl due to her experiences. Thus, playing with the semantics of the language not only Gaiman strengthens the element of horror and threat that fills the Other World, but also constructs a plot that raises issues of identity, choice, and becoming in the context of the character's transformation.

2.2.7. Tropes

At last, we came to the usage of tropes. In *Coraline*, Neil Gaiman offers an array of tropes that is complex and multivalent, from which he builds the dark, fantastic world through which Coraline must negotiate. The tropes heighten the themes of control and freedom, identity, and distorted reality. In this way, Gaiman affords layers of meaning which dramatize with much greater intensity both the dark atmosphere in the novel and the psychological weightiness within Coraline's journey.

We would like to start with imagery. This tool works really effectively in terms of deepening the contrast between the Real World and the Other World [14]. Gaiman reveals visual and sensory details through highly vivid descriptions in order to create a strong sense of place and to convey danger, safety, and deception [39].

So, in the Real World life is described as plain, mundane and boring:

“She was bored with her toys, and she'd read all her books” [10].

This way, the author set the stage for the more unsettling elements to come.

Coraline's home is described as dull and cold, as the reflection of Coraline's feelings in the new place [39]. In fact, Gaiman intentionally repeated words like “gray” and “cold” describing her house. Moreover, the events described in the Real World were all happening during the rain:

“It wasn't the kind of rain you could go out in—it was the other kind, the kind that threw itself down from the sky and splashed where it landed” [10].

Her parents were much more occupied with their work rather than their daughter:

“I don't really mind what you do,” said Coraline's mother, “as long as you don't make a mess” [10].

The world that has been drained of color and warmth, and it is obvious that Coraline was yearning for adventure and attention [39]. Her parents are so distanced

from her, much preoccupied with their work, and the grey outside strengthens the feeling of her being isolated.

It serves multiple purposes for Coraline's real world to be visually uninspiring [39]. First, it takes the reader to a plain world, so that the sudden transition to the Other World can be more noticeable [39]. Secondly, this normal, almost depressive life helps illustrate Coraline's dream to leave since she wants to explore more thrilling, more vivid and attentive areas [39]. Consequently, her real life's pictures greatly contribute to creating psychological and emotional basis for the first appeal to the different world [39].

When Coraline transfers to the Other World, the imagery takes on a much more vivid and somewhat exaggerated quality to be perfect, a reflection of what this alternative universe is like [14]. The Other World is first shown as a better and richer version of Coraline's world. The hues have become more pronounced, and the details that are appealing to the senses more enhanced:

“The house looked exactly the same from the outside. Or almost exactly the same: around Miss Spink and Miss Forcible's door were blue and red lightbulbs that flashed on and off spelling out words, the lights chasing each other around the door” [10].

The food looked and tasted more appetizing, the rooms felt and appeared warmer and inviting, and every element in this environment appeared to be intentional in catering to Coraline's every need. Let us compare Coraline's reaction to her real parents' cooking:

“Her mother sometimes made chicken, but it was always out of packets or frozen, and was very dry, and it never tasted of anything. When Coraline's father cooked chicken <...> ... he did strange things to it<...> ...and Coraline would always refuse to touch it on principle” [10].

To the dinner the Other Mother made Coraline reacted like this:

“Coraline shoveled the food into her mouth. It tasted wonderful.” [10].

Gaiman possesses moments of beauty and imprints a sense of unrest that perfection is not as perfect [39]. Some descriptions are exaggerated, hinting the unreality of the world:

“There was a sudden hissing noise from behind the stage. Coraline decided it was the sound of a scratchy old record being put onto a record player. The hissing became the noise of trumpets, and Miss Spink and Miss Forcible came onto the stage” [10].

As Coraline spends more time in the Other World, the imagery becomes darker and eviler, reflecting the gradation of the Other World and the Coraline’s realization of the real nature of the place [14]. The colors that initially captured her senses in every way possible start disappearing before her very eyes, as everything turned gloomier with no elaborate detail defined but a tight space surrounding her [39]. It can be clearly seen in the description of the other house closer to the end of the novel:

“Coraline had time to observe that the house itself was continuing to change, becoming less distinct and flattening out, even as she raced down the stairs. It reminded her of a photograph of a house, now, not the thing itself” [10].

The same happens with everything: the garden, the inhabitants of the Other World. Coraline resists the Other Mother's control turning the world around her into a more nightmarish scene [14]. This is important imagery that lets Coraline know that the other world is not a paradise, rather it is a cage [39]. Through his use of sense imagery Gaiman does well letting readers know how Coraline feels: the world around her grows darker, along with Coraline’s fear and suspicion rising [39].

The next trope we would like to discuss is metaphors. They, indeed, are crucial to the plot and its development.

Among the most striking metaphors of the novel is the button eyes of the Other World inhabitants [39]. Black buttons are sewn over the eyes of the Other Mother, as well as other characters from her world, which is a metaphor for control and the elimination of individuality [39]. This metaphor according to the novel, strips characters in the Other World of their agency and humanity through the replacement of

eyes with buttons [39]. They are not living beings, but rather stone-cold figurines controlled by the Other Mother.

For example, the button eyes of the Other Mother serve to underline her actions as being the person who controls others – a puppet-master wanting to reign over those in her vicinity. The fact that the Other Mother suggests Coraline should have buttons sewn onto her eyes is an offer by which she is lured into belongingness and motherly love at the expense of self-determination [39]. As such, this imagery suggests that one will be dehumanized and lose their individuality if they accept these terms.

The door between the Real World and the Other World is another metaphor in the novel [39]. It can represent several meanings. Firstly, the door is a metaphor of Coraline's shift from the innocence childhood into adulthood with its complexity and life's scariness [39]. This way, the door is a symbolic transition for Coraline into some kind of maturity [39]. While at first Coraline seeks to achieve thrill and enjoyment, she does not know the forthcoming risks. Initially, the Other World looks more interesting and alive than her routine life, but as Coraline penetrates further, she finds this world enveloped in deceit, control and threats to her personality.

Secondly, the door is a metaphor for Coraline's passage into becoming brave and independent [39]. This way, the door is a symbolic threshold between familiar and mundane to the unknown and dangerous.

The key to the door has metaphorical meaning as well, which is very connected to the door meaning, obviously [39]. It is a metaphor of power and control [39]. In the novel, the key is a desired object since it holds the control over the boundary between the Real World and the Other World. The Other Mother wants the key in order to control not only the Other World but the Real one as well, while Carolie looks for it to release her world and her real parents.

The key comes to be a metaphor of the ability to control one's own life as well [39]. Coraline realizes that she must develop the power to impose her desires, while also ensuring her safety and making the right decisions [39]. In effect the owner of the key controls the individuals allowed into different realms and in having this key, Coraline acquires power over herself. By locking the door and choosing to keep it at

the end, she indicates her comprehension concerning how vital it is for anyone who desires order to set limits and oversee personal affairs [39].

Additionally, the key is also a metaphor of empowerment when facing oppression [39]. It is a tool with which the Other Mother plans to confine Coraline in her realm, just as she did with other kids' spirits. In taking back the key, Coraline gets her liberty and at the same time stops the other mother from using her devious ways on other children again and again [39]. This shows Coraline's evolution from being a passive but curious girl to someone who has their own strengths enough to fight against strong enemies and overcome them.

The Other World itself is one of the main metaphors of *Coraline* [39]. It serves as a metaphor for deception and the dangers of idealization [39].

The concept of the Other World conveys the message about the fact that appearances that are beautiful but unbelievable always tend to be deceiving [39]. To Coraline, it is an alluring prospect of being able to evade reality and indulge oneself in fantasy, but in doing so she would have to pay the price of giving up on liberty and self. This metaphor warns people of false allurements because first of all in its ideal state it seems perfect while in reality it aims to have her destroyed [39].

Moreover, metaphorically, the Other World could be seen as the dangers of excessive reliance on outside approval in Other World [39]. The other mother's relentless wish for Coraline to remain in her realm indicates her desire for domination and ownership of other beings [39]. She pretends to cover her with love and care but only when she feels like it. Therefore, The Other World stands as a stern metaphor to emphasize the need to have individuality as you do not let outside pressures dictate who you are including people around us, different environments or situational contexts [39].

The cat who serves as Coraline's helper throughout the story is another also serves metaphorical senses of wisdom and independence [39].

Without having a name and with the ability of transferring between the worlds, the cat is embodiment of liberty [39]. While other characters are tied up with the rules

the Other Mother created, that cat operates beyond them, offering Coraline help, but never controlling her.

It is symbolic that the cat stands for autonomy and doubt [39]. It doubts the Other Mother as well as her world which seems perfect; thus, Coraline is advised to be logical minded and listen to what she feels. As she grows older, it represents her increasing knowledge about life while showing how intricate situations can be solved. Thus, its existence suggests that true freedom requires engagement [39].

It is also important to mention that the characters tend to express their feelings with metaphors. The Other Mother usually uses metaphors in her speech, for example here:

“I will be a shadow and a whisper, and I will be waiting for you” [10].

Additionally, the children’s souls from the Mirror World also used metaphors when telling Coraline how scared they are of the Other Mother:

“Ah, but she’ll keep you here while the days turn to dust and the leaves fall and the years pass one after the next like the tick-tick-ticking of a clock” [10].

Also, the cat used a lot of metaphors in dialogues with Coraline:

“Cats don’t have names,” the cat said.

“No?” said Coraline.

“No,” said the cat. «Now, you people have names. That’s because you don’t know who you are. We know who we are, so we don’t need names” [10].

Along with metaphors, there are also similes in the novel [39].

One of the most effective similes was used to describe the Other Mother when Coraline senses her eerie presence:

“The hair on the back of her neck prickled like the whiskers of a cat” [10].

This simile is especially strong as it likens Coraline’s response to a cat, which is alert and cautious by nature [14]. Often, cats are described as animals that are very sensitive in their environments due to their whiskers that help them locate and sense danger. Gaiman highlights Coraline’s intuitive response to the danger she senses within the Other World even before she knows what it is by comparing her to a cat [14].

The simile also shows that Coraline is connected to the actual cat in the story, an animal that can be found in both worlds and serves as a guide [14]. Coraline must use quick thinking and critical instinct like the cat to race through perils of the Other World [14]. Thus, the simile communicates Coraline's trepidation while it implicitly equates her to the attributes of the cat namely, independence, freedom and mystery [14]. Coraline too realizes she must seek inner strength within herself and be able to handle her challenges starting like that cat moving between worlds.

Another simile describing Coraline's feelings being near the Other Mother is this one:

"There was a tiny doubt inside her, like a maggot in an apple core" [10].

This simile shows the relationship that exists between Coraline and the Other Mother [15]. The apple is a symbol of hunger and mother's love in the book [15]. In the simile, the maggot is used to represent the Other Mother [15]. She invades and spoils the lives of innocent and good children.

Another vivid simile comes as Coraline walks through the dim, oppressive passageways of the other world:

"It was as dark as inside a closed box" [10].

This simile represents the oppressive atmosphere that is suffocating and induces claustrophobia in the other world where Coraline often feels trapped, either physically or mentally [39]. The use of a closed box adds emphasis on captivity, which is also supported by the aspect of there being no way to escape according to the recurring theme in entrapment used throughout the novel [39].

Yet one more important simile describing a place is the one about the Outer World:

"It was not damp, like a normal fog or mist. It was not cold, and it was not warm. It felt to Coraline like she was walking into nothing" [10].

This simile here represents how empty in reality it was the Other World even though the Other Mother tried so hard to make an illusion of a perfect place.

Gaiman also uses similes to convey the feelings of the characters, in particular Coraline's emotional discomfort [39], especially in the beginning of the story when she

first started realizing how weird things were. For instance, when Coraline sees the Other Father when the Other World just started distorting, she starts feeling a lot of disturbance:

“There was something slightly vague about his face—like bread dough that had begun to rise, smoothing out the bumps and cracks and depressions” [10].

Describing his face as a loaf of bread, Coraline brings back the theme of food and its importance in the entire text [15]. The girl was able to see something human in him, what made her sympathetic to him [15].

To describe the Other Mother, the author also used similes. These similes add to the illustrations provided in the novel and help in visualization of her terrifying appearance [15]:

“She looked a little like Coraline’s mother. Only . . .

Only her skin was white as paper. Only she was taller and thinner. Only her fingers were too long, and they never stopped moving, and her dark red fingernails were curved and sharp” [10].

Coraline's determination and courage are also underscored by similes [39]. At one moment of the story, when Coraline is being ready to confront the Other Mother, the author describes her concentration and determination by using a simple but meaningful simile:

“Coraline stood as still as a rock, not moving a muscle” [10].

The comparison with the rock shows how Coraline maintains the image of an immovable object that is impressed firmly with resolve to avoid succumbing to the manipulations by the Other Mother [39]. It underscores her increased bravery and self-reliance, both of which played significantly towards her victory in the end [39]. Hence the expression becomes significant because it depicts the main point where the heroine has to be stable-minded and goal-oriented for her undertaking to succeed [39]. Thus, she develops from a little kid who is easily carried away by things happening around her into a mature girl with strength capable of facing any big challenge.

Additionally, Gaiman used similes to enhance the eerie atmosphere throughout the plot. One of such comparisons happens when the main character first realizes that the Other World is not as nice as it seemed to be:

“It felt like the world was covered in a thin sheet of plastic” [10].

Comparing the place to “plastic”, a material that is usually associated with replicas and imitation, Coraline suggested that the place has no real essence whatsoever, thus reiterating the idea that the world was made up [39].

Another case when Gaiman used similes was to show Coraline’s fear when she feels that the Other Mother is nearby:

“It felt like a thousand tiny eyes were staring at her all at once” [10].

This simile captures the unbearable sense of always being watched and chased on [39]. Thus, adding to the tension and stress that Coraline was feeling in attempts to outwit the Other Mother.

The comparison to "a thousand tiny eyes" enhances the feeling of being watched from every direction, giving the impression that there is no escape or privacy [14]. It also highlights the pervasive control the Other Mother exerts over her world, constantly monitoring every move Coraline makes [14]. This simile increases Coraline’s rising worry over time making it seem like she is paranoid, thus drawing the reader more into her experience.

The last trope we would like to discuss is personification. In *Coraline*, personification is used to make the eerie atmosphere more realistic and threatening [39].

The Other House is an example of inanimate objects that were given some human characteristics, adding to the idea of the Other House working against Coraline [39]. Gaiman describes the house as the one being aware of Coraline's movements; doors and windows seem to "watch" the girl, the walls seem to "breathe". This personification turns the house into a living trap that repels waves of hunger [39]. This corresponds to the idea that the other world is the work of the will and power of the other mother, with deadly traps to trap Coraline [14]. All in all, this house in its altered

state is truly disturbing and shows how unstable and dangerous this world Coraline has entered is [14].

One more great example of personification is the Other Mother's hands [39], as throughout the plot they start to develop a life of their own. The hands were "twitching hungrily" [10] and then they even were able to move on their own, "scrabbling" after Coraline:

"The hand, running high on its fingertips, scrabbled through the tall grass and up onto a tree stump" [10].

Such a version of hands acts as an agent of the Other Mother's power and continues to search for Coraline even after the Other Mother is gone. The hand becomes a symbol of the ruthless control of the Other Mother and the persistent threat she represents.

Finally, one of the most prominent examples of personification in the novel is the cat [39]. While the other things we mentioned are inanimate, the cat is a living being. Gaiman gives this character a unique, almost human personality [39]. The cat is not just any animal friend. Instead, he is a frank and thoughtful character who seems to understand both the real world and the other world [39]. The cat, who refuses to have a name, speaks in riddles and has a mystical and distant attitude towards Coraline:

"We ...we could be friends, you know," said Coraline.

"We could be rare specimens of an exotic breed of African dancing elephants," said the cat. «But we're not. At least," it added cattily, after darting a brief look at Coraline, "I'm not" [10].

Throughout the novel, the cat is a guide, but he is not a cat who gives easy answers; acts as both an ally and a critic [39].

The cat is personified to be an independent and free creature [39]. Unlike the other inhabitants of the Other World, the cat is not being controlled by the Other Mother – it constantly reminds of its ability to transfer between the worlds whenever it pleases.

So, through personification the author like added the live to the Other World, show that everything, no matter alive or not, can have human like traits.

Conclusions to Part 2

In *Coraline*, Neil Gaiman masterfully used different levels of language – phonographical, morphological, graphical, lexical, syntactical, semantic, and symbolic. All of them become a great tool in establishing the eerie atmosphere of the novel and in highlighting the contrast between the Real World and the Other World.

On a phonographical level, used sounds that helped carry the mood and tension of the novel. The sound symbolism echoes the contrast between the real world and the Other World: the Other Mother's hissing, guttural tones of speech introduce a note of immediate danger. Such differentiation between the real, safe, predictable world of Coraline and the disturbingly alien atmosphere of the Other World is enabled through alliteration, onomatopoeia, and rhythmic shifts. These phonetic devices create a soundscape through which Gaiman reflects Coraline's emotional journey: curiosity, growing fear, and determination.

The morphological level in the novel concerns the grammatical structure of words, especially by manipulating names and ordinary objects. Coraline becomes distinct by the very slight renaming from the common "Coraline"; on the other hand, the addition of the term "*other*" onto usual "*mother*" and "*father*" changes these apparent ordinary figures into deformed versions that scare their counterparts. This sinister mood about the Other World evident in this book derives so much from playing around with terms as it does from altering reality thus making it look more like deformation than something familiar becoming unrecognizable in depth.

The graphical level greatly helped in achieving the eerie atmosphere of the novel through illustrations and unusual spelling of some words and phrases. Via pictures the author showed the gradation and the distortion of the Other World and its inhabitants, thus helping readers to understand the power of the Other Mother.

At the lexical level, Gaiman's selection of words complemented and made the main theme clearer for the readers. In ordinary vocabulary we can notice some words that refer to real life while Other World descriptions are made up with threatful words like "*trap*", "*twisted*", or "*shadow*". The use of certain words such as "*button*", "*dark*"

and “*key*” shows that they carry symbolic meanings representing the broader thematic issues of control and freedom within the story. In the book, nonetheless, the most frequent occurrence of the word ‘*button*’ functions as a symbol for dehumanization and loss of identity, hallmarks of The Other Mother’s wish to turn Coraline into an unthinking puppet. By adding some lexical fields, like darkness and lightness, the author enriched the atmosphere and the tension of the alternative worlds.

The author’s usage of syntax widened the psychological depth in *Coraline*. Short, factual sentences, in fact, express Coraline’s safe transparent world. However, when in the Other World, they start becoming longer and more complex and sometimes disjointed; this reflects the character’s growing confusion and fear. The shift in sentence length is sudden after Coraline realizes she is in danger, making it both suspenseful and immediate in how it immerses the readers into Coraline’s feelings. By using alternative structures and ideas along with repeating certain important themes Gaiman made the structure of the book solid. The use of alternativeism and the repetition of key topical phrases, such as “*the door*” serve to solidify the structure of the novel, further homing in on the liminal existence between the Real and Other Worlds.

The semantic level of the novel shows evidently how the meanings of words change according to their context. When Coraline switches between the two realities, the words like “*home*”, “*mother*”, “*freedom*” have different interpretations. The use of love and safety in the Other Mother’s talking is a good example demonstrating the ambiguity in the meaning of love and safety. As Coraline becomes more self-reliant she redefines terms such as What courage is and what home is, and she relates them with their intrinsic worth.

Symbolism in *Coraline* adds to the most central themes of the novel. Such things as keys, doors, and button eyes become embodiments of control, choice, and autonomy. While an Other Mother stands for dangerous perfection, the cat has always been associated with guiding Coraline to self-awareness by being wise and keeping to itself. The hole in the stone makes everything clear for Coraline so she should not be deceived by these elements in another world. After she had passed through the door, Coraline

found herself in a dark place. Throughout the story, these symbols are maintained in order to provide us with an important vista on such issues as personal choice versus comfort-induced surrender to oneself.

Finally, the usage of tropes had the greatest influence on making characters and the setting more realistic to the reader. The usage of imagery helped Gaiman in capturing the peculiarities of all the alternative worlds in the book, while the similes added to the characters appearances and inner worlds. Metaphor helped with giving more sense to the plot and make characters deeper, and personalization made the Other World seem more realistic and threatening.

Conclusion

Neil Gaiman is an English writer who is famous for his creative storytelling and ability to combine such genres like fantasy, horror and mythology. His novel *Coraline* was published in 2002 and immediately became a bestseller, as there he showed his great talent in combining those genres on a high level.

The novel tells us about the girl Coraline who encounters the alternative to her real one world, where she faces lots of adventures.

The idea of alternative worlds has been the interest of both writers and readers for a long period now and has proved to be a strong tool in examining the unknown.

Having analyzed the alternative worlds in science fiction in fantasy literary genres we considered how two very different genres approach the idea of alternative worlds, how science fiction and fantasy reveal deep-seated differences and yet surprising similarities. This investigation across works from both genres has now enabled us to consider central themes like autonomy, identity, illusion, and the limits of reality. While both genres resorted to alternative worlds for entertainment, above all, in reflecting on basic questions about human existence and its possibilities, the foundation of this analysis lies in how science fiction attributes more scientific strength in its creations, while fantasy is more mythically creative.

Thus, science fiction is formed from plausible situations combined with speculative techniques, thus encouraging the reader to consider an alternative reality formed by scientific principles. The reason this genre is so loved is the concepts of hyperspace, time travel, and reality simulation. These alternative scientific worlds serve to cover hypothetical scenarios to examine the moral, social and philosophical implications of technological advances or historical changes in development. These worlds challenge readers to think critically about their current world by exploring possible futures or realities that, even if imagined, are subject to the logic of science.

Fantasy, on the other hand, surrenders to the surreal and magical and thus becomes free in worlds free from the laws of science. The origins of all these alternative worlds are often found in myths, legends and supernatural events; These worlds are often inhabited by extraordinary creatures, and their landscapes are shaped by magic. Unlike science fiction, alternative fantasy worlds operate more figuratively on timeless themes: good and evil, personal transformation and the hero's journey. In these worlds, the impossible becomes possible, providing an ever-open canvas to test the limits of human nature and imagination. Fantasy narrative guides characters in a quest for self-discovery and moral choice through the multiverse, symbolic landscapes, and mythical creatures.

Despite their apparent differences, the two genres come together under a common banner of interest: the concept of multiple realities. They often use plot devices like technological or magical portals that connect the real world with some

other dimension. Because of the mechanism of crossing boundaries, literally or figuratively, this commitment of character and deception of character is possible. In both types of fiction, alternative worlds act as mirrors of our own reality; challenging characters, and therefore readers, to face their fears, desires and opinions about the world.

Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* is a particularly insightful example of how language shapes our perception of these other worlds on many levels. Through his play of phonetic, morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic techniques, Gaiman creates a graphic distinction between the real world of Coraline and the haunted world. The sound choices create a dark atmosphere, like the other mother's whistle, while the lexical and syntactic changes reinforce the difference between the two worlds. In *Coraline*, Gaiman presents alternative worlds not only as physical places but also as products of deeper psychological realms: independence, identity, and illusion. For Coraline, the other world, although attractive, becomes a trap, a mirror woven into her desires and her magic.

Gaiman uses buttons, switches, and doors as objects to express his thoughts on a symbolic level about broader themes such as control, choice, and self-discovery. These signs seem to add to the atmosphere of the novel, reinforcing the tension between Coraline's desire to escape and her eventual realization that true freedom comes from facing reality. This dichotomy between the real world and other worlds reflects a broader interpretation of danger and the illusion of personal agency. The complexity of the language reflects Coraline's emotional journey that will lead her to empowerment and self-actualization.

Concluding our analysis of both alternative worlds in fantasy and science fiction and in the novel *Coraline*, we can state that alternative worlds, either scientifically or fantastically based, are powerful narrative devices for exploring some of humanity's most complex themes. The speculative worlds of science fiction force us to think about our future, the consequences of our choices, and the limits of human knowledge. On the other hand, the magical world of fantasy allows for moral questioning, transformation, and the discovery of universal truth. Both genres, in their own ways,

occupy alternative worlds, expanding our own understanding of reality and the infinite possibilities beyond.

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