

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background Study

The term literature is etymologically derived from the Latin word *litteraturae*, which means 'writing'. In a broad sense, literature can be considered as the entire body of writing, as it was not only used to refer to fictions, such as prose, poetry and drama, but also non-fictions such as philosophy, history, and scientific works (Abrams & Harpham, 2012). John Rowe Townsend, a British literary critic, defines literature as "all works of imagination, which are transmitted primarily by means of the written word or spoken narrative." (Cart, 2010). Since the scope of the term itself is vaguely broad, literary became a part of everyday life that people came to contact with. While everyone has access to literature, there are also age-appropriate literatures that are meant to accommodate people accordingly to their age. There are literatures for young children, adult, and the in-between; the young adults.

Years ago, young adult literature was not a genre. In fact, the term young adult doesn't exist until the World War II. At that time, young adult literatures were not recognized yet, and are categorized as children literature, because children literature is considered to be fit to read by all ages (Cart, 2010; Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 1999). However, in 1991, the Young Adult Services Division (YASD) with the National Center for Education Statistics finally decree that young adults are individuals with age ranging from 12 to 18 years old, and thus the genre was born to better fit people on said age range. Young adult literatures are seen as a

great medium for the readers, which are currently developing their intellectual and emotional powers, to explore all kinds of human relationships and creating a thoughtful analysis (Hunt, 2004). Early on its development, young adult literature has been perceived as realism, covering the problems of adolescence and beyond (Campbell, 2010). However, fantasy young adult literature always drawn young readers, and before long, it dominates the young adult market since 1993. Some of the hugely-known works of said genre are Tolkien's Lord of the Rings and Rowling's Harry Potter.

The Graveyard Book by Neil Gaiman is one of the prime examples of contemporary young adult fiction. It is a fantasy-themed young adult novel, published simultaneously in Britain and America on 2008. Since then, the book has won several awards such as Newbery Medal, Hugo Award for Best Novel and Locus award for Best Young Adult Novel in 2009 and Carnegie Medal in 2010. It made Neil Gaiman acquires his position as the first author to receive both the Carnegie and Newbery Medals for the same work.

Unlike its predecessor, *Coraline* (2002), *The Graveyard Book* takes a more thrilling and terrifying approach to its narrative. Having intended for young adult readers, Gaiman doesn't even hesitate to open the story with a macabre beginning of a whole family being killed by a professional assassin due to an omen which befalls the assassination organization. The surviving member of the family, a young boy at that time, successfully escaped the bloody massacre into an old cemetery where the killer finally lost his track. The ghosts and the mythical creature that lives within the graveyard, then, decided to take care of him, while preparing him for the inevitable fate. Thus, the book's infamous quote is born; "It

is going to take more than just a couple of good-hearted souls to raise this child. It will take a graveyard.”

As a novel intended for young-adult readers, the *Graveyard Book* offers a journey of its main character, Nobody ‘Bod’ Owen, through the life of the living and the undead—how he was raised and lived among the ghosts in the cemetery, his discovery of the world of the living, and his quest to find out who killed his family. Bod is growing up in the cemetery, but in the end, he has to leave, as his purpose was filled and his development in there is finished. Therefore, *The Graveyard Book* can be considered as Bod’s coming-of-age journey. Said type of narrative tells a story of how a character developed and resolved his problems with their development; it is also known as bildungsroman.

The term Bildungsroman is generated from a German term, in which Bildung means ‘formation’ and Roman means ‘novel’. This term was first used by Karl von Morgenstern in 1803 and was popularized by Wilhelm Dilthey in twentieth century (Salmon, 2019). In his surviving remains of a manuscript titled “The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism” written during 1940’s, Mikhail Bakhtin stated that bildungsroman ‘tells the reader ‘the image of man in the process of becoming’ (Boes, 2009). A bildungsroman aims to educate its readers (Nugraheni & Hidayat, 2018), hence why it is targeted to mostly younger readers; children, teenagers and adolescents alike.

As it was stated before, the *Graveyard Book* can be considered as a bildungsroman, as stated by Margaret Atwood, a literary critic, in her introduction for the book—“*The Graveyard Book is a bildungsroman – a novel about a*

protagonist's education – in which Nobody's unusual tutors are a collection of ghosts, a vampire and a female werewolf, and the strange powers are supernatural abilities granted by the dead people who live (as it were) in the graveyard'. A bildungsroman narrative is focused on its main character's education, focusing on their maturation process and ending in the formation of the main character.

Gothic elements are also presented throughout the story, becoming one of the core elements of the narrative, making it possible for the Graveyard Book to be classified as a gothic literature. Some of the apparent gothic elements that can be seen from a brief reading of the Graveyard Book are the appearance of the ghosts that took care of Bod, the setting which takes place at an old graveyard, and the opening scene, that is, the murder of Bod's family. Such uncanny elements are considered as gothic themes and topics.

Gothic, as a genre, emerges as a result of changes in cultural emphasis in the eighteenth century (Punter & Byron, 2004). Gothic itself used to be a term referring to more or less unknown features of the Dark Ages, before the meaning is broadened into description of anything medieval; anything that happened in the middle of the seventeenth century. It can also be seen as the structural opposition to 'classical'; gothic was the archaic, the pagan, that resisted the establishment of civilized values and a well-regulated society (Punter & Byron, 2004). Gothic literature brings about the terror; the darkness which is presented in literature, such as the monsters in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, blood-sucking creature in Bram Stoker's Dracula and the castle in Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto. There are certain topics that cannot be separated from the genre itself, such as the

haunted house, the vampire, and the monstrous or uncanny characters—it presents horrors to its reader, introducing the fear with varying purposes.

Neil Gaiman as an author is known for his uses of gothic elements in his works. *Coraline*, the predecessor of *The Graveyard Book*, is much appraised notably on its thrilling, horror elements that blend within the story perfectly, despite the fact that it was intended for all age. In *The Graveyard Book*, once again, Gaiman had brought the horrific twist within a bildungsroman for young adult readers.

The unusual juxtaposition of two genres presented in the *Graveyard Book* makes an interesting combination of narrative. The presence of the gothic elements in the book became a core element for the main character's growth gradually—and it became a way to resolve the problem that threatens the main character's life.

Several researches have been made regarding the gothic elements presented in the narrative and the main character's identity search. Dominik Becher (2016) has studied the use of ghost child motif in Neil Gaiman's works in his article titled 'Neil Gaiman's Ghost Children'. Tsu Chi Chang (2015) had made a study regarding the main character's identity-search and the elements of fantasy titled 'I Am Nobody: Fantasy and Identity in Neil Gaiman's the *Graveyard Book*'. A study focused on the gothic elements in Neil Gaiman's work also done by Vargas (2014). However, there's yet a research analyzing those from a narrative perspective. Thus, this study aims to find out how *The Graveyard Book* is portrayed as a gothic bildungsroman from the narrative's perspective.

1.2. Research Question

According to the title of this study, “A Narratology Analysis of Neil Gaiman’s The Graveyard Book as a Gothic Bildungsroman” and the background study outlined above, the research question can be formulated as follows:

- 1.2.1 How does the narrative structured in Neil Gaiman’s The Graveyard Book?
- 1.2.2 How does the gothic bildungsroman portrayed in Neil Gaiman’s The Graveyard Book?

1.3. Research Objectives

Based on the research question proposed above, this study aims to:

- 1.3.1 Find the narrative structure in Neil Gaiman’s *the Graveyard Book* using Monika Fludernik’s concept of narrative structure.
- 1.3.2 Discover the gothic bildungsroman portrayed in Neil Gaiman’s the Graveyard Book.

1.4. Scope of the Study

This study examines the narrative structure in Neil Gaiman’s the Graveyard book using the theory of narratology to find out how the Graveyard Book is considered as a Gothic Bildungsroman.

1.5. Significance of the Study

In general, this research is expected to enrich the knowledge of those who are interested in analyzing a literary work using narratology theory.

