

DARK FANTASY IN NEIL GAIMAN'S *CORALINE*: AN ANALYSIS OF FORMULAIC STRUCTURE

Fantasi Gelap dalam *Coraline* karya Neil Gaiman: Analisis Struktur Formula

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Abstract: *In the early 21st century, technology paranoia, a negative aspect of technological growth, was prevalent, particularly in the United Kingdom. This social problem coincided with an increase in popular culture toward the consumption of fantasy fiction, with the dark fantasy subgenre being revived by Neil Gaiman's Coraline. This study explores Coraline through the lens of John G. Cawelti's formula theory to reveal the strategies resulting to its significant societal appeal. This study analyzes the novella's intrinsic elements—plot, characters and characterizations, setting, and illustrations—to identify Coraline as a dark fantasy that effectively combines horror and fantasy formulas. The use of dark fantasy aligns with Cawelti's four hypotheses, functioning as a cultural reflection, cultural solution, cultural boundaries, and cultural innovation that addresses technology paranoia.*

Key Words: *popular culture, popular literature, dark fantasy, technology paranoia*

Abstrak: *Pada awal abad ke-21, ketakutan terhadap dampak negatif teknologi yang mencerminkan paranoia atas perkembangan pesatnya banyak terjadi terutama di Britania Raya. Masalah sosial ini bertepatan dengan meningkatnya minat budaya populer terhadap konsumsi fiksi fantasi, di mana subgenre fantasi gelap dihidupkan kembali melalui Coraline karya Neil Gaiman. Studi ini menganalisis Coraline menggunakan teori formula John G. Cawelti untuk mengungkap strategi yang membangun daya tarik sosialnya yang luar biasa. Studi ini menganalisis elemen intrinsik novel—alur cerita, karakter dan penokohan, latar, serta ilustrasi—untuk mengungkap Coraline sebagai karya fantasi gelap yang secara efektif memadukan formula horor dan fantasi. Penggunaan fantasi gelap dalam Coraline sejalan dengan empat hipotesis Cawelti: refleksi budaya, solusi budaya, batasan budaya, dan inovasi budaya, yang secara khusus merespons paranoia terhadap teknologi.*

Kata-Kata Kunci: *budaya populer, sastra populer, fantasi gelap, paranoia teknologi*

INTRODUCTION

In the early 21st century, the world, especially the United Kingdom, experienced not solely the benefits of rapid technology innovation but also its dark side: technological paranoia (Foundation, 2009). This increased societal concern appears to link with many aspects of human existence, notably a cultural shift towards the consumption of popular culture, particularly in literature. Popular culture is characterized by collective experiences rather than singular artistic outcomes, suggesting that these cultural products are heavily reliant on societal influences (Cawelti, 1976). In this early 21st century, society shows a tendency to consume fantasy media due to its renaissance across various platforms, especially in literature and film (Friedman, 2011). This comeback might not be entirely accidental, as it could represent an intense cultural response to the modern technology that is creating cultural fear. Within the diverse subgenres of fantasy, dark fantasy stands out by offering a unique escape from the constraints of realistic portrayals (Killmeier, 2013). This subgenre introduces a fresh idea by combining traditional fantasy and horror themes, as shown in



Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*, a very successful and best-selling novella widely considered as a notable work in this genre. Published by Bloomsbury and HarperCollins, *Coraline* made its release in 2002. This novella was named number 82 on the Guardian's list of the 100 finest books of the twenty-first century, and it has sold over one million copies worldwide (The Guardian, 2019). In the category of Best Novella, it was chosen as the winner of the 2003 Hugo Award, a prestigious literary award for science fiction and fantasy works (World Science Fiction Society, 2007). This novella was also adapted into a graphic novella by P. Craig Russell, which was released in 2008. Given *Coraline*'s widespread popularity in the field of literary fiction, exploring an analysis through the lens of John G. Cawelti's formula theory promises an intriguing and insightful study. An analysis of popular literature uncovers specific formulaic structures and distinctive features that play a role in its success, a hallmark of what is known as formula literature (Cawelti, 1976:8). This work therefore seeks to investigate if this novella fits to accepted typologies by applying John G. Cawelti's formula theory, thereby revealing its narrative approach. In addition to their formulaic structure, formulas are also objects of culture because they become accepted ways of representing specific imagery and underlying concepts (Cawelti, 1976:20). Therefore, this study also seeks to identify these probable cultural influences to validate Cawelti's hypotheses on the relationship between literature and culture, some of which may contain mythological, folkloric, and historical aspects. In the early 21st century, when *Coraline* was released and swiftly received attention, it provides an intriguing cultural background worthy of analysis in this study. The fact that the early 2000s are seen as a period when the fantasy genre experienced a resurgence in popularity could be an important connection to explore (Friedman, 2011). The fantasy genre during this time also highlights a desire for everlasting youth, providing individuals with a chance to escape reality and revisit the past (Billone, 2016). Throughout the study, valuable insights are being developed that could greatly assist creative writers, such as methodically analyzing the strategy behind a novella with noteworthy market success. This study aims to elucidate the complex relationships between literature, society, and reader psychology by revealing the formulaic structure and cultural context of this widely accepted narrative.

METHOD

This study attempts to collect detailed and thorough data presented through words or sentences, classifying it as qualitative research (Denscombe, 2007). The data are obtained directly from the novella itself, serving as the source of the data. Neil Gaiman's novella *Coraline*, published by Bloomsbury and HarperCollins in 2002, is used in this study in its first edition. The entire novella serves as a primary source of data to offer a comprehensive understanding, which include dialogues, monologues, narrations, and illustrations within its pages. Additionally, multiple references will be utilized to strengthen the study, especially those that focus on related topics present in diverse formats including books, essays, articles, interviews, and various online sources. The data processing is finished by dividing the data from the source into two categories. The first group is for data about the formulaic structure, and the second group is for data about the cultural sources that shape that structure. This classification simplifies a methodical analysis, guaranteeing a comprehensive examination of its cultural and formulaic components. The data related to the formulaic structure is derived from the essential components of the novella, focusing on plot, characters and characterization, setting, and illustrations. This analysis seeks to unravel the strategy employed in this well-known literature and analyze whether the data source aligns with one of Cawelti's

five genre typologies. The final phase involves analyzing the relationship between the fantasy genre and technology-related paranoia in the early 21st century, along with the impact of these themes on the novella's formulaic structure. This analysis utilizes both the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the novella, proving each of Cawelti's four hypotheses regarding the relationship between formula and culture to support the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

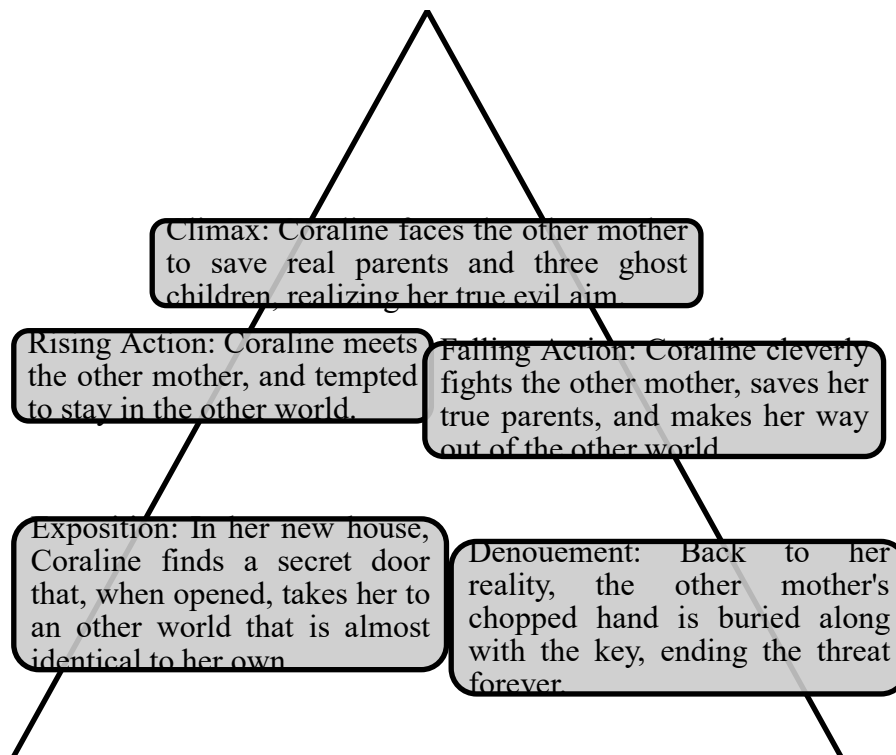
Dark Fantasy in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*

In this sub-chapter, an explanation is provided of the formulaic structure that *Coraline* employs to combine horror and fantasy elements, thereby solidifying its status as a dark fantasy literature. The intrinsic elements, such as plot, setting, character and characterisation, and illustration, are systematically examined in the analysis.

Plot

Freytag's Pyramid, a model developed by Gustav Freytag, is an academically and practically useful approach to examine the plot structure of a narrative. This model is often pictured as a triangle or tower structure, representing the rise and fall of intensity throughout the story (Freytag, 1900). It breaks the story down into five distinct parts: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement. This study also implements Freytag's Pyramid to evaluate the plot of the novella, and thereby demonstrating the practical application of this model to provide a methodical explanation of the whole plot. The plot analysis utilizing the pyramid structure concludes as follows:

Diagram 1
Plot in *Coraline* through Freytag's Pyramid



In Freytag's Pyramid, the exposition is crucial part since it builds the foundation for the story by offering an introduction to the characters, the initial setting, and the starting atmosphere (Freytag, 1900). The exposition opens with Coraline moving into a big, ancient house with her parents, who typically too busy with their jobs and technology to pay her any attention. Everything appears normal until Coraline finds a door to another world, which awakens her wish to escape into it. This fits in with horror formula, which are classified as falling under the alien beings or states typology, that depend on the ability to create a sense of fear between fantasy and reality throughout the narrative (Cawelti, 1976: 48). Starting with a normal setting, this part of the story helps readers get used to their surroundings before slowly shocking them with otherworldly details, making them wonder which one is real.

It opened on to a dark hallway. The bricks had gone as if they'd never been there. There was a cold, musty smell coming through the open doorway: it smelled like something very old and very slow. Coraline went through the door. (Gaiman, 2002, pp. 26).

Rising Action

The rising action, in Freytag's view, is a progression of conflicts and events that, one after another, heighten the tension and develop until the story reaches its climax (Freytag, 1900). In the novella *Coraline*, this stage unfolds when the heroine meets a woman who is an exact duplicate of her mother after entering a mysterious door that leads to a parallel realm that mirrors her own reality. The heroine's encounters with talking animals, altered versions of people she knows, and an eccentric parallel realm is typical of fantasy narrative. This is consistent with fantasy formula under the category of alien beings or a state in which a world exists that is drastically different from our everyday reality in terms of its physical features (Cawelti, 1976). Readers can appreciate the fantastical aspects of the other world through the rising action, but it takes a sinister turn when Coraline is ordered to sew buttons onto her eyes by the other mother, which causes her to flee back to reality.

"If you want to stay," said her other father, "there's only one little thing we'll have to do, so you can stay here forever and always." They went into the kitchen. On a china plate on the kitchen table was a spool of black cotton, and a long silver needle, and, beside them, two large black buttons. "I don't think so," said Coraline. "Oh, but we want you to," said her other mother. "We want you to stay. And it's just a little thing." "It won't hurt," said her other father. (Gaiman, 2002, pp. 45).

Climax

The climax is the highest peak of Freytag's Pyramid and signifies the moment at which the story takes a major turning point (Freytag, 1900). The climax comes when the other mother kidnaps Coraline's parents, forcing her to journey back to the other world in order to permanently end the threat. In order to reach her goal, Coraline makes a risky bet with the other mother, putting her own safety at risk in a game that serves as the peak of tension readers. Now readers can only experience dread when they read about the other world, which was once fantastic despite hidden dangers. The main character also finds a secret room where the spirits of dead children are being held captive during her journey. At the end of the climax, there is a tense moment when readers think Coraline is slowly getting better, but just as she tries to leave, the other mother blocks the door to reality. In this phase, the other mother undergoes such a major change during this phase that she no longer looks like a human. This marks a

significant turning point in horror stories, as a supernatural entity is fully revealed, resulting in the most intense level of terror (Cawelti, 1976: 49).

"What exactly are you offering?" "Me," said Coraline, and she gripped her knees under the table, to stop them from shaking. "If I lose I'll stay here with you forever and I'll let you love me. I'll be a most dutiful daughter. I'll eat your food and play Happy Families. And I'll let you sew your buttons into my eyes." Her other mother stared at her, black buttons unblinking. "That sounds very fine," she said. "And if you do not lose?" "Then you let me go. You let everyone go — my real father and mother, the dead children, everyone you've trapped here." (Gaiman, 2002, pp. 91).

Falling Action

In Freytag's Pyramid, the falling action takes place after the climax, which is the point in the story where the plot reaches its emotional highest representation (Freytag, 1900). During the falling action, Coraline successfully returns to reality, guided by the comforting warmth of the ghost children and the protective presence of the black cat, as she moves through the dimly lit corridor towards the daylight. In spite of the fact that it was cut by the heroine when she closed the door, the hand of the other mother continues to move as it makes its way out of the room and attempts to collect the key. This falling action phase maintains the magical aspects of the ghost children and the disturbing atmosphere of the other mother's remaining threat, preserving a sense of both fantasy and horror formula.

"We're going to go home," said Coraline. "We are. Help me." She ducked the snatching fingers. They moved through her, then: ghost hands lent her strength that she no longer possessed. There was a final moment of resistance, as if something were caught in the door, and then, with a crash, the wooden door banged closed. Something dropped from Coraline's head height to the floor. It landed with a sort of a scuttling thump. (Gaiman, 2002, pp. 134).

Denouement

The denouement is the final phase of Freytag's Pyramid, which has the purpose of ensuring that the story comes to a satisfying conclusion for the readers (Freytag, 1900). In this phase, the final act brings an end to the influence that the antagonist has over the protagonist, as well as to the entire horror and fantasy formula that the readers have been following. The story comes to an end with the heroine severing her mother's power by throwing the severed hand into the well, ensuring it can never harm her or anyone else again.

The white fingers closed around the black key....And then the weight and the momentum of the hand sent the plastic dolls' cups flying, and the paper tablecloth, the key, and the other mother's right hand went tumbling down into the darkness of the well. (Gaiman, 2002, pp. 158).

Setting

Within the context of a literary work, the term setting refers to the overall location, particular moment or period, and atmosphere in which the action takes place (Abrams & Harpham, 2011). The world is divided into two realms in the novella *Coraline*, which are the real world and the other world. The two worlds are entirely different since one relies on reality and truth, whereas the other is based on false illusion and imagination. In stark contrast to the other world, the reality boosts the impact of the main character's decision and the thematic conflicts within the narrative, which is why it acts more as a grounding aspect instead of following to a certain typologies. These two realms are connected by the mysterious door, which represents

the small gap between safety and danger. The other world also has two distinct phases, each of which mirrors the protagonist's growing understanding of its underlying nature.

The initial phase of the other world is in line with the fantasy formula, which is characterized by the construction of a fantastical realm that contradicts the laws of reality. The genre of fantasy is characterized by the existence of worlds that are greatly distinct from our own (Cawelti, 1976). The second phase of the alternate universe occurs as the protagonist recognizes that the fantasy surroundings she enjoys increasingly transforms into horror. This matches with key elements of the horror setting that include the objectification of terror through particular places, the creation of non-human entity, the contrast between order and chaos, as well as the symbolization of deeper fears (Cawelti, 1976: 48). Terror is objectified in this world by the presence of terrifying settings, such as the house where the other mother unveils her truly monstrous form and makes an effort to forever trap the protagonist. Other horrifying settings include the basement where the protagonist meets the ghostly children, the garden which goes from being the most beautiful spot to something horrible, and the trap mirror where she is completely isolated. The fact that it is always night time during this phase of the other world further emphasizes the tension and terror, proving that the setting of time is essential in horror tales.

Character and Characterization

In literary works, a character is a person or entity with personality traits that appears in a plot, and characterization is a way by which an author constructs and develops these characters (Abrams & Harpham, 2011). This sub-chapter is going to explore every single character in the novella *Coraline*, as well as provide an analysis of their characterizations. The novella *Coraline* centers on the main character, which goes by the name of Coraline Jones. Coraline, despite her ordinary appearance and typical characteristics, is capable of experiencing extraordinary and illogical events during her journey to the other world. The other mother, who is also referred to as the Beldam, is the main antagonist who plays a role for constructing the mirror world and plans to trap the protagonist within it. In the same way as the Beldam symbolizes the existence of otherworldly beings, the storylines of horror stories are significantly impacted by the presence of these non-human individuals (Cawelti, 1976). Additionally, the black cat and three ghost children are characters who are companions to the main character and possess evident supernatural abilities.

In the reality to which Coraline belongs, there are characters such as her actual parents, including her mother and father, and her real neighbors, including Mr. Bobo, Miss Spink, and Miss Forcible. In the mirror world, a dark reflection of reality, the protagonist encounters dangerous doppelgangers of familiar individuals, adding to the creepy atmosphere and emphasizing the topic of how appearances can be deceiving. The other Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, the other Mr. Bobo, and the other father are these alternate inhabitants from the mirror world. The early portrayal of the other world's non-human creatures is consistent with the fantasy archetype, as they try to enchant the heroine with magical talents and imagined interpretations of reality. However, as the story progresses, the true natures of these characters emerge, transforming them into horror stereotypes.

Illustration

The illustrations used in the novella seamlessly combine realistic and familiar things with surreal twists, that includes animals showing human-like behaviors and

humans adorned with button eyes (Harris-Fain, 2015). This blend amplifies the feeling of the uncanny for readers, resulting in psychological discomfort by twisting the familiar. This thoughtful decision creates a feeling of excitement as well as discomfort, as it merges the lines between imagination and truth. The visual narrative is tightly linked to the psychological tension of the story, enhancing its dark fantasy themes and encouraging society to reflect on its own issues through *Coraline*.

As portrayed in *picture 1*, the creepy black silhouette of the black animal symbolizes the hidden harm that the protagonist faces. However, the gigantic form of the black rat creature appears not only terrifying but also dreamlike, inviting readers to read further to uncover the answer. This image leaves viewers uncertain as to whether the world beyond the door is magical or dangerous, as it merges elements of fear and fantasy.

Picture 1
(Gaiman, 2002, pp. 2)



Picture 2 illustrates the Other Mother from *Coraline*, characterized by long dark hair and a frightening look, highlighted by button eyes—an iconic trait that suggests her concealed identity. In contrast to the creepy tension suggested by her button eyes, the background seems to be a kitchen with dishes prepared for the protagonist, suggesting a loving and welcoming situation. The button eyes represent her artificiality and control, foreshadowing her evil role as a villain while also highlighting themes of deception within the mirror world.

Picture 2
(Gaiman, 2002, pp. 22)



Picture 3 is the portrayal of the other mother expresses horror through her inhuman appearance, particularly the eerie black buttons tied to her eyes. The absence of human eyes signifies emotional emptiness, triggering an uncanny sensation—where a familiar being, such as a loving mother figure, turns into something frighteningly alien. This antagonist also resonates with concepts from British folklore and the stereotypical witch archetype.

Picture 3
(Gaiman, 2002, pp. 68)



As illustrated in *picture 4*, it portrays three ghost children whose spirits become trapped in another world. Every ghost exhibits a melancholic mood and is captured in a dimly lit environment, evoking a feeling of hopelessness and lost innocence. The distortion also indicates how the deadly mirror world impacts and ruins even the most innocent beings.

Picture 4
(Gaiman, 2002, pp. 82)



As shown in *picture 5*, the antagonist's portrayal as significantly larger than the home serves as a representation of her immense power and dominance within her constructed domain. The picture of her eating the key also ties in with ideas of consumption and predators. Beldam's urge to eat the key represents her intention to consume Coraline's freedom and imprison her in the other realm. The Other Mother not only wants Coraline to be physically present in her world, but she also wants to take away her will and soul, making this novella even scarier.

Picture 5
(Gaiman, 2002, pp. 82)



Picture 6 depicts a tense confrontation between the black cat, the protagonist's ally, and the other mother, the protagonist's enemy. The cat can be seen coming onto the other mother's face and clawing at one of her button eyes, an effective representation of her loss of control. The other mother's expression, which is characterized by bared teeth and outstretched hands, emphasizes her breaking power and conveys a sense of weakness.

Picture 6
(Gaiman, 2002, pp. 132)



Picture 7 illustrates Mr. Bobo's performing mouse band from *Coraline*, portrayed in a playful yet surreal representation. The mice are dressed in human attire and perform musical instruments, which add an extra layer of peculiarity to the story's magical setting. The idea of a trained mouse group singing for entertainment blurs the line between logical and illogical, symbolizing the fantasy atmosphere through its playful nature.

Picture 7
(Gaiman, 2002, pp. 163)



Relation between Dark Fantasy and Technology Paranoia in the 21st Century

The success of a literary work is not without any reason, and it is highly interesting to determine whether or not *Coraline* is tied to Cawelti's four hypotheses, which suggest that formulas are connected to the cultural issues that lie behind them. With regard to popular formulaic work, Cawelti offers use of the combination of three critical analyses: genre analysis, mythology symbol and culture research, and practical guidance for writers (Cawelti, 1976). This part discusses the reasons that contributed to the novella's popularity in the literary domain, highlighting the interconnections among literature, culture, and societal psychological demands. The hypothesis regarding the close relationship between literature and formulaic literature will be proven in the following, one by one:

Cultural Reflection

Cawelti's first hypothesis is popular formulas presented in literature and media are a reflection of a cultural perception of reality (Cawelti, 1976: 35). In spite of the fact that literature is often seen as nothing more than entertainment, formulaic works can represent problem that society was struggling with at the time of its creation, thereby incorporating a mimetic element. In the early 2000s, the world, specifically the United Kingdom, saw a global increase in technological advancements as well as its downside, known as technology paranoia—a growing fear of constant surveillance and loss of privacy (Foundation, 2009). Modern technological challenges, including urbanization, social alienation, distrust of authority, and media harm, are driving society in the early 21st century to become extremely paranoid, according to the British Journal of Psychiatry (Freeman & Freeman, 2008). These rapid technological advancements and the potential downsides they could have on society have consequently given rise to social fears regarding the future (Hand, 2021). Thus, society has started to reconsider their connection with technology, as well as their nostalgia for the simplicity of past times, which can only be given by fantasy fiction (Friedman, 2011). As a result, the beginning of the 21st century saw a major comeback of fantasy media, particularly in the realm of literature.

Coraline, a magically-infused novella, was written during this time when people were dealing with huge shifts brought about by technology. The story echoes present concerns about modern family relations, specifically the way kids neglected due to their parent's work regarding technology attachments. Thus, the main character of this novella is portrayed as a young girl who has difficulty regarding her existence and ultimately manages to escape from her existing reality into the other world. Also, the risk of losing real human ties in the face of technology's capacity to produce artificial ones can be seen by the existence of the other mother in the mirror world, who appears to be loving but is actually trying to capture the heroine. In light of this, the novella is able to effectively demonstrate the modern anxiety and skepticism that society has towards rapid modernization. The novella provides evidence that Cawelti's first theory is correct by reflecting and validating the fears that are prevalent in society, particularly those that are associated with being monitored, feeling alienated, and not having real relationships as a result of technology. The desires of readers who crave for nostalgia of days gone by, which are portrayed in fantasy tales, are validated by this novella as well.

Cultural Solution

Cawelti's second hypothesis proposes that formulaic stories are able to overcome ambiguities that arise as a result of cultural views that are in contradiction (Cawelti, 1976: 35). *Coraline* is an excellent illustration of the strategy that employs escapism enjoyment as an answer of cultural problem. Through this book, author Neil Gaiman presents escapism as a therapeutic cure for society, asserting that literature serves as a potent means of fulfilling humanity's intrinsic desire for escape. It is the strong desire as well as basic instinct of every human being to escape fears and frustrations they encounter in life (Cawelti, 1976: 16). This novella combines horror and fantasy, two genres known for their strong escapist effects. Although horror is frequently depicted as a source of anxiety, it can also offer a thrilling and enjoyable experience within the protective walls of literature.

In accordance with the second hypothesis, Neil Gaiman integrates British cultural elements into this, allowing readers to immerse themselves in sentimental nostalgia for the past. In doing so, Gaiman offers people a chance to escape their

anxieties and resolves the cultural tension that arises from wanting to live in the past while missing the present. This is conveyed through the characters in the novella, who speak British English, while spectral characters communicate in an ancient English dialect. Furthermore, the narrative integrates components of ancient culture, including the practice of tea reading and the use of a wizard's stone. In addition, *Coraline* is reminiscent of British classics such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The story's escapist quality increases by the combination of all of these elements, which also highlight the significance of preserving tradition in the face of technological change, thereby overcoming contemporary societal anxieties as well as reaffirming traditional values.

Cultural Boundaries

Cawelti's third hypothesis states that formulaic stories enable viewers to explore the limits between what is acceptable and what is prohibited (Cawelti, 1976: 35). This theory is illustrated most vividly in this work, as the story delves into forbidden actions and fears through dark fantasy concepts. This novella offers readers the chance to independently explore the line separating what is allowed and not allowed in a safe place by the use of supernaturally infused metaphors. When reading literary fiction, the personal resonance of the story affects the human brain's default network, which includes areas such as the posterior cingulate cortex (PCC) and the anterior medial prefrontal cortex (amPFC) (Abraham & Von Cramon, 2009). This ability of literary fiction to have a major impact on the feelings and actions of readers makes it a powerful weapon for coping with cultural anxieties while encouraging good shifts in both beliefs and decisions (Mar et al., 2011). As a result, this novella supports the third hypothesis because it allows readers to study the line between what is and is not allowed, and it also allows readers to confront their anxieties about the future and technology. In line with the last hypothesis, Neil Gaiman also explores adult problems and fears, especially those related to modern day technology by incorporating new levels of darkness into *Coraline*, which was originally intended for children. Thus, adults seek out magical literature with deeper relevance, a trend that Neil Gaiman skillfully takes advantage of in *Coraline*. It was also claimed by this author that his work enjoyed in different ways: children viewed it as an adventure, while adults thought about it to be a nightmare.

Cultural Innovation

Cawelti's fourth and last hypothesis suggests that formulaic stories can bring fresh perspectives inside established frameworks, which in turn can lead to cultural innovation (Cawelti, 1976: 35). In the early 2000s, the fantasy genre experienced a significant resurgence, which was started by the success of *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Game of Thrones* in both novel and film adaptation (Friedman, 2011). This made fantasy a big part of popular culture, and it caught the hearts and minds of people all over the world through many different types of media. Despite the fact that fantasy has become widespread in popular culture, many of its aspects are becoming widely used that they face the risk of being cliché (Zimmerman, 2020). In reaction to this issue, author Neil Gaiman reworked the fantasy cliché in *Coraline*, bringing new themes and taking an alternative method that reintroduced the less popular subgenre of dark fantasy. The works of dark fantasy writers, notably Neil Gaiman, have helped boost the genre into the public eye, and its popularity has risen dramatically in the 21st century (Fabrizi, 2018).

In addition of offering readers with a brief relaxation, this novella is filled with complex ideas and ethical dilemmas, such as the significance of confronting one's own reality and the meaning of self-identity. The illustrations in *Coraline* blend realism with fantasy, enhancing both believability and psychological tension (Harris-Fain, 2015). In the same way that the heroine herself does, this book encourages readers to ponder deeper philosophical concepts about perception by posing questions about what is real and what is an illusion. In this way, Gaiman is able to expand the bounds of typical storytelling, which ultimately results in the creation of popular novella that combine both modern and traditional themes in an efficient way across a wide range of age groups.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study is to analyze *Coraline* using a systematic formulaic approach in order to identify the underlying tactics that contribute to its high level of public attention. Based on Cawelti's five genre typologies, this study examines the novella's formulaic structure, focusing on the four main intrinsic elements: plot, characters and characterizations, setting, and illustrations. The study also examines the correlation between the formula and cultural fears at the time of its publication, supporting Cawelti's hypotheses on the link between formula and culture. By analyzing intrinsic and extrinsic elements, it connects *Coraline* to early 21st-century United Kingdom fears of technological paranoia. The results point out the novella effectively integrates formulas of both horror and fantasy as a strategy, thereby classifying it as a dark fantasy work. The findings also show a strong connection to technology-related fears felt worldwide, particularly in the UK in the early 21st century. The importance of dark fantasy in *Coraline* proves in its relationship to Cawelti's four hypotheses of formula and culture, as illustrated through each of these frameworks. *Coraline* affirms societal anxieties while providing an answer through escapism, enabling readers to examine limitations and question their understanding of escape, while also bringing fresh ideas by presenting a fantasy for children and a horror for adults.

While this study focuses primarily on one novella, future research could apply formulaic analysis to explore multiple modern novels that tackle more current cultural challenges. The more different works are examined, the more society realizes that stories may be used as an effective tool to address complex cultural issues rather than just as entertainment. This research has major implications for the art of story writing, especially in relation to culture and societal psychological expectations. Writers can use societal fears or cultural issues as narrative tools to help society face its challenges rather than just taking advantage of them. By combining logical and illogical factors, writers can effectively question societal norms and encourage introspection about society's deeper problems.

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