JOURNAL OF ENGLISH STUDIES - VOLUME 13 (2015), 7-18. DOI: 10.18172/jes.2787

I AM NOBODY: FANTASY AND IDENTITY IN NEIL GAIMAN'S *THE GRAVEYARD BOOK*

Tsung Chi Chang
Hong Kong Institute of Education
hawkchang2001@yahoo.com.tw

ABSTRACT. *With the popularity of fantasy literature in recent years, more and more writers of adolescent books shifted their attention to depicting the macabre and the bizarre. While authors of fantasy literature endeavor to show that something that is unreal, strange, whimsical, or magical nevertheless has an internal logic and consistency, at the same time, certain stereotypes typical of the realistic world are destabilized. In the imaginary world in which the events, settings, or characters are outside the realm of possibility, many ideas like love, truth, reality, and identity are constantly destabilized and contested. For example, in Neil Gaiman's* The Graveyard Book *(2008), which garners him the Carnegie Medal and the Newbery Medal, the problem of personal identity is apparent in Nobody Owens, an orphan whose parents are killed by a man called "Jack" and whose survival depends on the mercy of the ghosts living in the graveyard that Nobody runs to and hides in to escape Jack. This paper aims to discuss how the protagonist of* The Graveyard Book *grapples with his bewilderment when confronted with the myth of his identity and how the elements of fantasy are incorporated to help untangle this coming-of-age mythology.*

Keywords: Adolescent literature, fantasy, identity, Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book,* Nobody Owens.

YO NO SOY NADIE: FANTASIA E IDENTIDAD EN *THE GRAVEYARD BOOK* DE NEIL GAIMAN

RESUMEN. *Con el auge de la literatura fantástica en los últimos años, cada vez más autores de literatura juvenil han trasladado su interés a la descripción de lo macabro y lo bizarro. Mientras los autores de literatura fantástica tratan de mostrar que algo que es irreal, extraño, extravagante o mágico tiene, no obstante, cierta consistencia y lógica interna, al mismo tiempo que, ciertos estereotipos propios del mundo real se desestabilizan. En el mundo imaginario en el que los acontecimientos, escenarios y personajes quedan fuera del reino de la posibilidad, muchas ideas, como el amor, la verdad, la realidad y la identidad, son constantemente desestabilizados y discutidos. Por ejemplo, en* The Graveyard Book *(2008), de Neil Gaiman, el problema de la identidad personal se hace aparente en la figura de Nobody Owens, un huérfano cuyos padres son asesinados por un hombre llamado "Jack" y cuya supervivencia depende de los espíritus que habitan en el cementerio en el que Nobody se oculta para escapar de Jack. Este artículo pretende discutir como el protagonista de esta obra lucha contra su desconcierto al enfrentarse al mito de su identidad y como los elementos de la fantasía se incorporan para ayudar a desentrañar esta mitología del paso a la madurez.*

Palabras clave: Literatura juvenil, fantasía, identidad, Neil Gaiman, *The Graveyard Book*, Nobody Owens.

Received 20 May 2015
Revised version accepted 31 August 2015

I am not nobody; I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, King of Ithaca.
—Homer, *Odyssey*

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are You Nobody—Too?
—Dickinson, "I'm Nobody"

1. INTRODUCTION

Naming and identity have been widely explored in the history of western literature. When Odysseus tells Polyphemus that his name is "Nobody," the foresighted Greek hero is managing to hide his own identity so as to shield himself from the attack of the one-eyed monster; whereas for Emily Dickinson, the term "Nobody" demonstrates not so much a pretense of shunning danger as her preference for obscurity and tranquility. With their different intentions, both characters use the

term "nobody" to exert their will power for the benefit of their survival. In both cases, the act of naming themselves "nobody" significantly displays their authority over their own fate and future. However, not everyone in the world is able to claim his or her own identity. Nobody Owens (often called "Bod"), the protagonist of Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*, is a case in point. The book begins with the murder of Bod's family by Jack (often called "the man Jack"), the survival of the toddler (the young Bod) who crawls up a hill to the nearby graveyard, and the protection offered by a ghost couple, Mr. and Mrs. Owens. This family tragedy is followed by Bod growing up in the spooky graveyard, his interactions with people from the world of the living and that of the dead, his education of different skills and knowledge from his ghostly mentors, and his incessant longing to enter the world of the living to investigate his identity.

The uniqueness of this work of fiction lies in the fact that the main character co-exists in the worlds of both the living and the dead. Stories about coming-of-age experiences are abundant; however, setting such a component against the backdrop of a graveyard is unusual in the history of adolescent literature. To date, this novel has sparked critical discussions from a range of perspectives. Referring to the philosophical theories proposed by Aristotle and Kierkegaard, Wayne Yuen maintains that Bod's virtues, such as bravery, temperance, charity, truthfulness, friendliness, and authenticity, help create his moral and virtuous life despite the terrible tragedy that befell his family (2012: 138-143). From an existentialist perspective, Robert T. Tally Jr. accentuates Bod's success in creating meaning and purpose, though the creation is more complicated because it is situated not only in the real world, but also in an otherworldly realm (2012: 172). In addition, Wade Newhouse suggests that the book can be read either as a typical coming-of-age story with some spooks thrust in for frightening effect or as a traditional ghost story with coming-of-age elements included for structure and moral effect (2012: 113). These discussions are illuminating in opening up the different dimensions for readers. However, with all their insights, they generally fail to assess how Bod's search for identity is associated with the fantastic elements. This paper aims to fill this research gap by discussing the inter-dependence of fantasy and identity construction in *The Graveyard Book* and its literary and cultural implications.

2. WHAT A FANTASTIC WORLD

Neil Gaiman, credited as one of the best writers of children's and young adult literature in today's world, is prolific and versatile. His work includes genres that range from science fiction, to fantasy literature, comics, fairy tale rewritings, audio plays, and graphic novels (Klapcsik 2009: 193). Gaiman's great achievements are

evident in his host of honors and literary awards—the Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel runner-up for *Good Omens* (1991), the Bram Stoker Award for Best Novel for *American Gods* (2001), the Hugo Award for Best Novel for *American Gods* (2002), the Hugo Award for Best Novella for *Coraline* (2003), the British Science Fiction Association Award for *Coraline* (2003), the British Fantasy Award for Best Novel for *Anansi Boys* (2006), the Newbery Medal for *The Graveyard Book* (2009), and the Carnegie Medal in Literature for *The Graveyard Book* (2010)—, to name but a few. In fact, Gaiman started out writing for adults, and many years later began writing for children. Some of his works are not intended for children but for adults, or for both. The critically acclaimed novels of *American Gods* (2001) and *Anansi Boys* (2005) are cases in point. Overall, Gaiman is good at depicting supernatural and fanciful stories set in imaginary worlds. His mastery of fantasy writing is concisely illustrated in the comment in 2009 when the American Library Association awarded him the Newbery Medal for *The Graveyard Book*, proclaiming the book as "a delicious mix of murder, fantasy, humor, and human longing" (Nilsen 2009: 79).

In general, fantasy literature is defined as works that use the supernatural elements (eg. depiction of dream worlds or incredible worlds) to construct a plausible story (Childs and Fowler 2006: 82). According to Lucie Armitt, fantasy literature has two salient features: first, it deals with an otherworld; second, it narrates stories beyond our everyday experience (2005: 8). Such eerie elements are conspicuous in *The Graveyard Book*: the plot has been overshadowed by murder, killing, revenge, and adventure in an unfamiliar world, not to mention the supernatural abilities Bod learns, such as Fading, Sliding, Haunting, and Dreamwalking (37, 217). The setting itself, the intimidating graveyard, betrays much about Gaiman's intention in constructing a harrowing atmosphere, though many of the ghosts in the graveyard prove to be milder than what most readers might anticipate. Plot and setting aside, characterization in *The Graveyard Book* contributes to its uncanny effects. The main characters in the story are either ghostly figures or people whose lives have much to do with the supernatural world. Bod's life depends a lot on the mercy of the ghosts. Silas, Bod's guardian and mentor, is a vampire whose life straddles the world of the living and that of the dead. Miss Lupescu, another mentor and protector of Bod when Silas is away, is a werewolf that teaches him through the rote memorization of lists. Ghouls and Night-Gaunts are also introduced. Moreover, characters like the ancient Indigo Man and the Sleer, both underground treasure-guardians, add fear to the already appalling atmosphere. While they play different roles in Bod's development, these fantastic characters are employed to keep readers in suspense and maximize the mystification and horror simultaneously.

One thing that has often been neglected in the discussion of fantasy literature is the deployment of the real world. In reality, many characters in

fantasy literature move around two worlds—the existing world and the other-world. The integration of everyday events in the supernatural world makes the story more plausible and renders the supernatural world more "homely and comprehensible" (Childs and Fowler 2006: 83). The incorporation of scenes from the real world also helps create a fantastic world with "the inner consistency of reality" (Tolkien 2013: 5). In *The Graveyard Book*, although the otherworld setting in the graveyard foregrounds the macabre atmosphere significantly, it is through the interaction with the real world that Bod's self-awareness and maturity are made possible. Without Scarlet Perkins, a girl about his age, Bod would never know how brave he could be until he takes the little girl underground to look for treasure (48-58), nor would he be able to encounter Jack and untangle the mystery of his own identity in the last two chapters. In addition, were it not for Nick and Mo, the two bullies he meets at school, Bod would never have figured out his own sense of justice and the great pity he has for the underprivileged. Furthermore, it is precisely his co-existence in the two worlds that aggravates his sense of insecurity, prompting his attempt to fathom his own identity. Whereas the otherworld nurtures and protects him from danger, the real world initiates him into a wide range of trials, frustrations, and failures when confronted with the harsh reality of humanity. The experiences in the real world are indispensable in urging him to look into his past, examine his present, and explore his future.

3. IDENTITY FORMATION AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

The Graveyard Book generally follows the conventions of coming-of-age fiction. As M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham contend, most coming-of-age stories focus on "the development of the protagonist's mind and character... into maturity; this process usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world" (2012: 255). In brief, the main characters in coming-of-age stories generally have a better understanding of themselves and their connection with the outside world after a series of events. Nevertheless, a person's identity is not merely determined by his or her inner qualities but also by some outside factors, such as education, religion, work experience, and social environment. In other words, one's identity is, to a certain extent, socially constructed. Identity is perceived as "the interface between a private sense of self... and those factors that constitute the social context in which we experience those feelings and motivations" (Giles and Middleton 2008: 34). In *The Graveyard Book*, Bod's identity is a mystery early in the story. The private sense of self that determines his inner qualities has been indefinite throughout most of the novel. His personality and identity are formulated through his interactions with people around him, be they from the real world or the underworld. Mr. and Mrs.

Owens introduce him to life in the graveyard, while Silas and Miss Lupescu teach him plenty of knowledge and useful skills for his survival in the menacing human world. Moreover, Bod's encounter with Scarlet and their later adventure together help him understand his own personality. Before meeting Scarlet, he is constantly under the protection of adults. It is the first time in his life that Bod perceives his own ability to go on an adventure and protect others. In a sense, Scarlet helps him re-affirm his existence and importance.

In addition, Bod's decision to risk his life for Liza, the girl who was killed and buried as a witch without being given a headstone in the graveyard, testifies to his empathy for the marginalized character and his strong desire to have an identity at the same time. As the narrator says, "He would find Liza Hempstock a headstone, with her name upon it. He would make her smile" (113). On the surface, Bod is trying to help Liza find a gravestone upon which to inscribe her name and thus declare her identity. But, as a matter of fact, his enthusiasm for helping Liza stands for his identification with someone who is not recognized by society and therefore lacks an identity. In other words, while helping Liza to be identified in the graveyard, Bod is striving for his own sought-after identity, which has been denied him since his early childhood. Interestingly, in Lacanian terms, Liza serves as "the Other" whose wish mirrors the desire of the subject (Bod). Therefore, she plays an important role in Bod's development and self-actualization.

In most of the story, Bod is seldom allowed a clear-cut identity; instead, what he has is closer to being in limbo with two identities. Bod's migration between the world of the dead and that of the living marks his ambiguous identity. This also justifies the choice of Silas, who also shuttles between the living and the dead, as his guardian and mentor. The *Danse Macabre* in Chapter Five, in which the living and the dead dance together as a ritual, showcases the nebulous distinction between the two worlds. By depicting the opacity and indeterminacy of Bod's identity demonstrated in the dance, Gaiman further blurs and even deconstructs the two incongruous worlds. As a consequence, the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, and life and death is discredited and destabilized due to the collapse of a clear-cut division between the real world and the supernatural world. Moreover, the duality of Bod's identity is apparent in his behaviors. In the graveyard, Bod is both submissive and rebellious. While obeying most of the rules in the underworld, he questions Silas's command to stay at the graveyard many times. In Chapter Two, when warned by Silas that, to be safe and sound, he is not permitted to leave the graveyard, Bod retorts that he should be safe and be allowed to leave the graveyard because Silas does that, too (37). In Chapter Four, although warned against approaching the unfairly executed witch, Bod cannot quench his curiosity and tries hard, even at his own risk, to help her. According to the narrator,

Bod is "obedient, but curious" (106). In addition, Bod's double identity consists in the fact that he is both a victim and a killer. The family tragedy at the beginning forces him to adjust to a totally new world in the graveyard, but in the later part of the story, he is never lenient toward people in the living world. His punishment of the two bullies at school betrays a certain barbarism inherent in human beings, and his killing of the man Jack is ruthless, insomuch as to engender Scarlet's repulsion and condemnation. Scarlet just cannot understand why Bod has to kill the man Jack, thereby reprimanding him vehemently: "You aren't a person. People don't behave like you. You're as bad as he was. You're a monster" (286).

The tension of staying in or leaving the graveyard also helps explain the conflicts and compromise of Bod's development from an innocent child to a more mature adolescent. Bod is constantly told by Silas not to leave the graveyard for the sake of safety. However, early in the story, Bod is cautioned by Scarlet that he cannot stay in the graveyard for good and that one day he will grow up and have to experience life in the outside world (60). Bod is admonished by Silas and severely penalized by his foster parents after he left the graveyard to help Liza (141). But Bod's drive to go on adventures outside the graveyard hardly ever stops. As a consequence, he insists on learning more about the real world, which spurs Silas' decision to have Bod educated at school (181-182). Nevertheless, instead of keeping a low profile, as suggested by Silas, Bod uses supernatural tricks to discipline the bullies at school, which serves to spotlight his existence and enrages Silas (193). This conflict between Bod and Silas does not find its compromise until later in the story, when it dawns on Silas that he should not stop Bod from leaving the graveyard to learn more about life in the real world. As he tells Bod in Chapter Six, "We should do our best to satisfy your interest in stories and books and the world. There are libraries. There are other ways. And there are many situations in which there might be other, living people around you" (210). Evidently, as most parents have to learn about parenting, Silas comes to realize that overprotection is by no means the best way for Bod; instead, Bod has to experience the world head-on for himself. This departure from parental shelter is usually coupled with frustration and danger, but it is the only way to one's development and maturation.

4. NAMING AND IDENTITY CONTESTED

> Tao can be talked about, but not the Eternal Tao.
> Names can be named, but not the Eternal Name.
> —Lao Tzu, *Tao Teh Ching*

In Lao Tzu's *Tao Teh Ching*, one of the greatest philosophical works in Chinese literature, the complexities of naming and existence are elaborated on in the

beginning chapter (2006: 3). According to Lao Tzu, the Eternal Name, along with the Eternal Tao (universal reality), is something that encompasses all, but whose quality cannot be pinned down. Names are convenient for specifying certain people, yet they are never all-inclusive in identifying the true quality of the name-possessors. This smacks of the aesthetic theory of ideas proposed by Plato (2000: 40-56). In Platonic terms, names are just like the Idea, which is often materialized and distorted by different perceivers, and thus removed from reality in different degrees. To sum up, names at best serve as a means of communication. They are never meant to provide holistic criteria for determining one's elements. In fact, naming connotes certain power relationships, as it is always the men in power (eg. parents to children) that are endowed with the authority of naming. In this regard, Slavoj Žižek even suggests that language, as the symbolization of things, can be associated with violence because it "simplifies the designated things, reduces them to a single feature" and "dismembers the thing, destroying its organic unity, treating its parts and properties as autonomous" (2008: 61). For Žižek, while language is used to convey a certain meaning of an object, it excludes other possibilities of meaning, thereby leading to some sort of linguistic hegemony or violence. In the same vein, naming is paradoxically used to define an object at the expense of losing its authentic meaning at the same time.

Names are not only incapable of showcasing one's genuine identity but may mislead and limit people's perceptions of their own characters. Such a misunderstanding arises many times when Bod introduces himself as "Nobody" to others. When Scarlet is told by Bod in their first meeting that his name is Bod, short for Nobody, she laughs and says that the name sounds funny (41). When he tells Miss Lupescu that his name is Bod rather than "boy," she insists on calling him "boy" because to her, the name Bod seems to be nothing more than a pet name or a nickname (67). Actually, the word "bod" is an informal expression that refers to "a person," "someone's body," or "a strange person" when used in the phrase, "an odd bod" (Bullon: 155). Whatever it alludes to, the name "Bod" is used appropriately in presenting the young protagonist, an inexperienced, fledgling "nobody" (someone who is not important and has no influence) that is left alone in-between the living and the dead trying to grope for his true identity. When Bod was a nameless toddler, he was given the name "Nobody" by his foster parents to signify his identity. In fact, the reason for his being called Nobody is absurd. Different ghosts in the graveyard gave him different names. For Caius Pompeius, the little boy looked like Marcus, his proconsul, and had to be called Marcus. Josiah Worthington suggested that he be called Stebbins because he looked like his head gardener called Stebbins. However, for Mother Slaughter, Bod should be called Harry because he looked like her nephew Harry. Finally, as his foster mother

proposed, they decided to call him Nobody because "he looks like nobody" (25). But ironically, once Bod uses the name to relate to other people, this seemingly identifiable signifier is not recognized and fails to be matched with a corresponding one. This naming malfunction contrasts starkly with the conventional perception of equating one's name with a self-autonomous identity. To sum up, names are but names. They can never be that powerful in defining one's true identity.

Bod is both nameable and nameless. He is nameable because, undeniably, the name "Nobody" is an identifiable entity. However, he is nameless because this name cannot mark his identity as a normal human being effectively. This problem materializes in his being regarded as an "imaginary" (60) friend by Scarlet and her parents. On the other hand, he is not entirely affiliated with the otherworld. That is why when Bod tells Josiah Worthington, another ghostly teacher in the graveyard, that he belongs to the dead party, he is told: "Not yet, boy. Not for a lifetime" (163). Therefore, as Nobody Owens, Bod is characterized by existence and non-existence at the same time. This duality of existence is in line with his double identities in both the real world and the otherworld. This questioning of names is also suggested in Chapter Five. When Bod asks the lady in the cobweb about her identity in the Danse Macabre, the lady asserts that "names aren't important" (161). The idea of naming is also caricatured by the man Jack when Bod asks the killer about his true identity: "Jack said, 'Let me see. Was it Peter? Or Paul? Or Roderick—you look like a Roderick. Maybe you were a Stephen'" (280). What Jack's remark alludes to is the elusiveness of names and the absurdity of trying to locate a definite identity by grasping at a name. In other words, whatever your name is, you are always who you are.

Bod's venture into the world of the dead may sound unfamiliar at first glance, but a retrospective view of the traditions of world literature helps shed light on the necessity of such an undertaking. In classical literature, prestigious predecessors such as Theseus, Odysseus, and Aeneas have gone on similar adventures to the underworld for different purposes, but what they have in common is using the knowledge of the dead to deepen their knowledge about themselves and find out how they can thrive in the real world. The returning of these mythological heroes from the underworld prefigures Bod's fate—after all, he has to go back to the real world, where his sense of belonging comes from. The life in the graveyard, with all the supernatural trappings and intimidating characters, paves the way for Bod's adaptation to the living world. As Catherine Butler proclaims, contemporary children's fantasies "usually ensure that encounters with the fantastic precipitate significant emotional growth" in the protagonists (2012: 225). Near the end of the story, Bod has become more experienced and knows his own identity. He shows great confidence in response to the man Jack's questioning of his identity: "'I know

my names', he said. 'I'm Nobody Owens. That's who I am'" (282). He is no longer the innocent boy that hesitates to be called "Nobody." Instead, the sadder and wiser adolescent comes to realize that, regardless of the name given to him, he is who he is. As Mrs. Owens comments earlier in the story, "He looks like nobody but himself" (25). This hard-won realization testifies to Bod's better understanding of his own identity and the role he plays in the world. He can finally get rid of the confusion caused by his name, take on the challenge of experiencing a whole new world, and look forward to a better tomorrow. When he bids farewell to Mother Slaughter, an elderly ghost in the graveyard, the wise lady reminds Bod about the heart of identity: "You're always you, and that don't change, and you're always changing, and there's nothing you can do about it" (298). In this sense, identity is composed of two elements: one's inner quality and the transformation brought about by experience. Bod's name and origin signify his nature, while his experiences in the dead and the living worlds offer him the necessary change awaiting most adolescents as they grow up. Whereas his name represents who he is to a certain extent, his identity undergoes changes all the time. That is, paradoxically, identity is both stationary and dynamic, both established and becoming.

The transformation of Bod's identity, motivated by his strong desire to explore the real world, is obvious in the last two chapters. He is eager for knowledge and wisdom unavailable in the graveyard. Even Scarlet 's friendship (or love) initiates him into a brand new experience of security and sweetness, teaching him "how fine it would be to walk safely in the lands beyond the graveyard, and how good it was to be master of his own small world" (237). This universally acknowledged principle of mutability is reiterated as the narrator remarks, before Bod's departure from the graveyard: "Things that had been immutable were changing" (302). Near the end of the story, with a passport and suitcase prepared by Silas in hand, Bod is anxious to see life and learn about everything in the real world (304).

> There was a passport in his bag, money in his pocket. There was a smile dancing on his lips, although it was a wary smile, for the world is a bigger place than a little graveyard on a hill; and there would be dangers in it and mysteries, new friends to make, old friends to rediscover, mistakes to be made and many paths to be walked before he would, finally, return to the graveyard or ride with the Lady on the broad back of her great grey stallion (307).

This concluding paragraph highlights Bod's destiny. Both the passport and the money are important symbols that signify Bod's transition from adolescence to adulthood. While the passport suggests his transporting from the otherworld to the real world, the use of money, as a means of exchange in society, alludes to his socialization and initiation into the secular world. Despite the dangers, mysteries,

and mistakes ahead, Bod is not intimidated, but overjoyed with the promising future. With all the challenges and uncertainties in the coming days, Bod has determined to savor life to the fullest "with his eyes and his heart wide open" (307). Bod's development echoes Gaiman's personal experience. As Gaiman recalls in a lecture on writing children's literature, many things he read as a boy troubled him a lot, but that bewilderment never stopped him from reading stories (2012: 14). His epiphany from that reading experience foreshadows the fate of Bod: "I understood that we discovered what our limits were by going beyond them, and then nervously retreating to our places of comfort once more, and growing, and changing, and becoming someone else. Becoming, eventually, adult" (14). In other words, however troublesome confusion and conflicts may seem, they are crucial for people to recognize their limitations, have a better understanding of themselves, and look at people and the world anew. Bod's story exemplifies this process of becoming from a child to an adult through perplexity, recognition, reflection, and maturation.

5. CONCLUSION

The question "Who am I" reverberates in this story, but it is not easy for Bod to find the answer. Bod's identity-finding efforts are complicated by his moving between the real world and the supernatural world in the graveyard, as this in-betweenness significantly reinforces his anxiety and sense of isolation. As Bod grows from an infant to an adolescent, the name given to him undergoes momentous changes. Unlike the innocent boy that is confounded by his own name and in desperate need of an identity, in his adolescence Bod learns to get rid of the manipulation of naming and further identify with his position after a wide range of trials and frustrations dealing with hordes of ghosts and humans, from ancient and modern times alike. One of the most interesting tensions in the novel is that while most characters in fantasy literature are finally brought back to their real world innocent and unaffected (Nikolajeva 2012: 59), Bod, as the protagonist of this coming-of-age story, has no choice but to grow and explore. His decision to leave the graveyard underscores a new sense of self. Through what he learns in the graveyard and his interactions with people in the real world, Bod has realigned himself with his own identity and is ready to explore the ways of the world further.

REFERENCES

Abrams, M. H. and G. G. Harpham. 2012. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 10th ed. Boston: Wadsworth.

Armitt, L. 2005. *Fantasy Fiction: An Introduction*. New York: Continuum.

Bullon, S. *et al*., eds. 2005. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. Harlow: Pearson.

Butler, C. 2012. "Modern Children's Fantasy". *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Eds. E. James and F. Mendlesohn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Childs, P. and R. Fowler, eds. 2006. *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*. London: Routledge.

Gaiman, N. 2008. *The Graveyard Book*. New York: Harper.

Gaiman, N. 2012. "What the Very Bad Swearword Is a Children's Book Anyway?". *The Horn Book Magazine*. Nov.-Dec. 10-14.

Giles, T. and T. Middleton. 2008. *Studying Culture: A Practical Introduction*. 2nd ed. Malden: Blackwell.

Klapcsik, S. 2009. "The Double-edged Nature of Neil Gaiman's Ironical Perspectives and Liminal Fantasies". *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 20 (2): 193-209.

Lao, T. 2006. *Tao Teh Ching*. Trans. John C. H. Wu. Boston: Shambhala.

Newhouse, W. 2012. "Coming of Age with the Ageless". *Neil Gaiman and Philosophy. Gods Gone Wild*. Eds. T. L. Bealer, R. Luria, and W. Yuen. Chicago: Open Court. 113-126.

Nikolajeva, M. 2012. "The Development of Children's Fantasy." *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*. Eds. E. James and F. Mendlesohn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 50-61.

Nilsen, D. L. F. 2009. "Rev. of *The Graveyard Book*, by Neil Gaiman". *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 53 (1): 79-80.

Plato. 2000. "Ion". *Classical Literary Criticism*. Trans. P. Murray and T. S. Dorsch. London: Penguin. 40-56.

Tally, R. T. Jr. 2012. "Nobody's Home". *Neil Gaiman and Philosophy. Gods Gone Wild*. Eds. T. L. Bealer, R. Luria, and W. Yuen. Chicago: Open Court. 169-182.

Tolkien, J. R. R. "On Fairy Tales." <public.callutheran.edu~brint/Arts/Tolkien.pdf>. (Accessed 18 Oct. 2011).

Yuen, W. 2012. "The Dead Teach Us How to Live". *Neil Gaiman and Philosophy. Gods Gone Wild*. Eds. T. L. Bealer, R. Luria, and W. Yuen. Chicago: Open Court. 135-143.

Žižek, S. 2008. *Violence*. New York: Picador.