UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

Representation and roles of monster characters in recent British children's literature: the case of *Stop Those Monsters!* by Steve Cole.

MA thesis

Liidia Varrik

Supervisor: Katiliina Gielen

TARTU

2018

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to provide an overview of monster characters in British children's literature. The literature review is divided into three parts: the first delves into the world of children's literature, offering a short history from the 18th century up to the 21st, possible definitions and key elements that are usually present in the plot and characters of children's literature.

The second part looks to provide a short overview of monsters in literature, speaking briefly of their history and with the help of David Gilmore (2003) detangling definitions into common elements that can be seen in literary monsters, and attaching these properties to both children's and adults' literature in order to draw parallels and describe changes.

The third part of the literature review is dedicated solely to monster characters in children's literature. It involves an explanation of character analysis and discussion of typical characters based on Maria Nikolajeva (2002) and Vladimir Propp (1927) that will be later applied to the case study. In addition, this subchapter provides examples from other British and a couple of times American children's literature to illustrate different elements and how they are used in practice.

The analysis portion of the thesis will concentrate on *Stop Those Monsters!* by Steve Cole (published 2015) – providing a background for the book, a summary of the plot, a short analysis of what makes it a part of children's literature, and character analyses of major monsters in the story.

The conclusion portion discusses the findings and summarises how the theoretical framework compares to the case study at hand.

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INTRODUCTION

According to most scholars in the field, literary fiction written specifically for children has its beginnings in the 18th century (Grenby 2014). Before that, the stories children consumed were mostly educational or pious in their nature, or were folk stories, myths, and legends that were collected and printed for adults, with some stories also read and taught to children (Grenby 2014). Nowadays, the range of consumable stories for children includes picture books, chapter stories, comics, graphic novels, book series, and more, across all genres and types of media.

The broadest possible definition for *children's literature* in critics' words is "any text read by a child" (Hunt in Nel and Paul 2011: 42; Nodelman 2008: 4), and the classical definition of *children's literature* offered by Peter Hunt and many other literary critics is a "general aim to choose good books for children" (Lesnik-Oberstein 2004: 4). Both definitions are rather inadequate and do not offer answers about what a *child* is, nor what a *good book* is, nor do they consider the massive influence adults have on the existence of children's literature.

Legally, one can be considered a child from the moment they are born until they come of age (usually at 18 years of age). The Oxford English Dictionary offers two age-related options in its main definition of a child: "a young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority". In the case of children's literature, the former is more appropriate, taking into account the existence of young adult literature as a separate category. A *good book* is a rather subjective term, but it can be narrowed down with the help of reviews and help from people who work with children or children's books,

such as teachers and editors. As for the third mentioned aspect, the world of children's literature cannot exist or support itself without the aid of adults, which means that the influence of grown-ups is unavoidable.

The range of children's books to choose the case study from was contained to storybooks originally published in English in the United Kingdom that rely significantly more on words than on pictures, and has been recommended by publishers and/or libraries for children between the ages of 6-10. The age group was mainly chosen because at around 6-7 years old, a child reader is more independent and begins to mature morally, especially in seeing that things are not always only good or only bad (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 1999: 17).

The age range was also chosen due to practical reasons – the lower age restriction is set due to content, because books for children younger than six often contain numerous illustrations that are important to the story, but would change and expand the course of this research. The upper age restriction is set to reduce the complexity of the content in order to focus on the characters, and an attempt to limit the age to before puberty as not to cross over to the genre of young adult literature. The latter decision was also influenced by the fact that children often consume literature both above and below their expected reading levels.

For the purpose of this research paper, *children's literature* has been confined to literature that has been deemed as such by publishers, librarians, teachers, and/or reviewers on the basis of content, language use and how appropriate it is for the intended readership. For choosing the subject for the analysis, this range, for the moment, excluded books that were originally written for adults, but have since then gained a child readership or have

been adapted for children. However, the original versions of some such stories could be turned to for comparison of creatures in analysing the case study – the characters in the chosen book either are or make references to monster films (for example Godzilla), creatures from classical mythology (for example gorgons), or well-known legends and stories (for example King Arthur and the wizard Merlin).

Regardless of the fact that the term *children's literature* itself can be controversial and not particularly simple to pin down, the business around it is blooming, and has been since Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was published in 1865. As a field of research, children's literature, although still difficult to define due to the complex nature of its readership, is hugely important for its intercultural and inter-disciplinary value, with possible approaches through for example gender studies, cultural studies, literary studies, and more.

Monsters as creatures of the imagination, as constructs of the unexplained, or as mythical beings have been a part of literature long before children's literature was even conceived to be a possible realm in the publishing world. On account of monsters having appeared in writing since even before *Beowulf* (created between 700 and 1000 AD), it is only natural that they carried over to all genres of literature instead of remaining in the folk tales, myths, and legends (Murgatroyd 2007: 1). A superficial observation of works in the world of fantasy and adventure books suggests that the situation remains the same in the sense that the role of monsters is still important in literature, children's or otherwise.

As critics' opinions on the subject differ, *monsters* have here been defined through their being imaginary rather than their presence having a certain effect on people. In different forms, monsters are present both in fiction and reality. Monsters can be seen or

felt anywhere that fear is present, because the human imagination is very creative, and it is how mankind used to explain phenomena that could not be explained through the practical knowledge they had (Weinstock 2016: 4). That is probably also the reason behind our fascination with everything monstrous in fiction across all media platforms, especially when considering creative outlet. For the purpose of this research, "real" monsters in the form of serial killers, war criminals, etc., will be left aside immediately, as they do not fit into the requirement of 'imaginary' and they are not particularly appropriate for the subject matter of children's literature. Instead, the focus will be on monsters in the sense of horrible, but not actually real.

In the search for definitions, one can begin with turning to available and reputable dictionaries. The Oxford English Dictionary offers the following as a definition for monster:

> Originally: a mythical creature which is part animal and part human, or combines elements of two or more animal forms, and is frequently of great size and ferocious appearance. Later, more generally: any imaginary creature that is large, ugly, and frightening. The centaur, sphinx, and minotaur are examples of 'monsters' encountered by various mythical heroes; the griffin, wyvern, etc., are later heraldic forms (OED online).

The definition in combination with the focus also helps establish that size is important, but merely one aspect, and not everything that is the wrong size or deformed should be considered a monster (for example animals or people who are very large or small, or have visible birth defects), because the definition relies heavily on monsters being imaginary or made up. Other aspects of the definition still seem to apply – monsters tend to be large in size, and they have animal parts, for example claws, fangs, or tentacles.

It is however not only the visual characteristics of monsters that is important, especially when it comes to children's literature. As children's books are usually carried

by their plots, it is important to look at how monsters are portrayed as characters – what they do, why they act the way they do, and how they connect with other characters. Within this paper, the terms 'monster', 'monster character' and 'creature' will be used interchangeably to refer to the same subject, due to the focus being on fictional literary creatures.

The aim of this research paper is to take a deeper look into the presence, nature, and function of monster characters in British children's literature, based mainly on Steven Cole's book *Stop Those Monsters!* (2015). Parallels are drawn from classical mythology, monsters, and other supernatural creatures from previous British children's literature, mythological stories, and fairy tales. As a secondary research topic, due to the nature of the analysis that draws parallels from previous texts, the paper will also consider some changes that monsters in children's literature have gone through as characters.

The theoretical framework is divided into three parts. In the literature review, the chapter on children's literature provides an overview of the history of children's reading and publishing, looks into the different possible definitions of *children's literature*, and discusses some of the key elements found in children's literature and its characterisation. The chapter on monsters questions the nature and characteristics of monsters, provides definitions and possible common features of monsters, and describes some better known monsters in those terms. The third chapter of the literature review – monster characters in children's literature – discusses the elements of children's literature and monsters working together in capturing a child reader's attention through their appearances and personalities, and prevalent types. The analysis of *Stop Those Monsters!* by Steve Cole involves an overview of the book, discussion on its nature and how it fits into the world of children's

literature, possible parallels with previously existing characters, and a narrative analysis of the monster characters in them, based on the points discussed in Maria Nikolajeva's *The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature* (2002).

Steve Cole's *Stop Those Monsters!* became the subject of this study because it was published within the last five years and is thus relatively new, and Steve Cole is a prolific writer of fiction for young readers, who has sold over three million copies of his work and has been published internationally. His extensive background in editing children's books should make up for lack of awards. Although the summary of a boy landing in a world of monsters already implied a suitable amount of material to analyse, the title and cover image of a hairy creature also factored into the final decision.

The reason behind choosing a non award-winning author is that the Garnegie Medal for children's literature, the Blue Peter Book Award, and a few other prizes were originally considered as possible criteria, but as a look into the laureates and shortlists of recent years did not yield appropriate results for this topic of study, a wider approach was chosen in the form of browsing the publications of British children's literature publishers.

The Anglo-centric nature of this research is also related to not letting the research expand into excess, the author's academic background in culture and languages of English-speaking countries, and the fact that previous academic works on the subject largely involve English first-language-speaking sources.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Fiction produced specifically for children allegedly began in the 18th century with John Newbery's *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book Intended for the Instruction and Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly* (c. 1744) (Grenby 2014). Previously, this space in literature was filled with folk tales, myths, and legends that were told between generations, and in almost every culture include giants and dragons (Zipes 2012: 8). The first nursery rhyme collection *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book* was published also in 1744, put together by Mary Cooper (Grenby 2014). Before these publications, children's books were almost always either educational (i.e. school books) or deeply religious stories, for example, of children recounting their sins (Grenby 2014).

The second half of the 18th and the next century brought about a surge of picture books and illustrated versions of already known stories with the help of technological advancements in the printing industry (for example, improvements in constructing machines and the use of steam in powering them). The first time children's fiction actually flourished began with Lewis Carroll and his story about Alice (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)). With authors like Kenneth Grahame (most popular novel *The Wind in the Willows* (1908)), Beatrix Potter (*The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902)), and A. A. Milne (*Winnie-the-Pooh* (1925) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928)), this period lasted until the early 1900s (Knowles and Malmkjær 1995: 18). However, it was not until later in the 20th century that children's literature truly expanded and acquired its own place in the publishing world (Sutherland and Arbuthnot 1991: 7). Before finding true popularity in

homes, the primary markets for children's literature were schools and public libraries (Sutherland and Arbuthnot 1991: 14).

Before the 1970s, reading for children meant going from age-appropriate easy reading to Charles Dickens and Sir Walter Scott, but in the 70s, the 'teen novel' emerged (Knowles and Malmkjær 1995: 28). This makes wording a more specific definition of *children's literature* difficult due to the fact that the age range of a *child* is very wide, even though the line between *child* and *young adult* has become clearer (Sutherland and Arbuthnot 1991: 5). We must take into account, also, that children often also read above and below their age group, which could, over time change age-related categorisation. The lack of clarity in dividing the two age groups is made more difficult by the fact that children's reading patterns are highly individual, as two children of the same age may have significant variations in their tastes, their ability to comprehend, their reading interests, and their possible response to a text (Sutherland and Arbuthnot 1991: 5). Generally, children's books are categorised by age by those who work closely with either children or the books – such as teachers, librarians, reviewers, and publishers of children's literature (Sutherland and Arbuthnot 1991: 5).

Over time, the most significant changes in children's literature reflect the changes that have been happening socially and politically, especially so since the end of the 20th century (Meek, M. in Hunt, P. 2004: 7). The influences of social and political mindsets and movements are very clearly noticeable in children's books – for example the aforementioned religiousness of the 18th century, or later civil rights and equality movements (Sutherland and Arbuthnot 1991: 15-16).

The study and the contents of children's literature are highly influenced by what we know about children, their needs, and their expectations in both the cultural sense and in the realities of publishing (Sutherland and Arbuthnot 1991: 14). More and more data emerges about these questions, as the primary market for children's books used to be schools and libraries, but there has been a significant increase in bookstore sales (Sutherland and Arbuthnot 1991: 14), which provides a more detailed overview of what children actually like to read. Still, publishing companies are aiming for high book sales, so the manuscripts chosen for publication are more likely ones where at least moderate success can be predicted through either the author's popularity, or the topics that are currently trending for example in games and films.

As stated in the introduction, the broadest possible definition for *children's literature* in critics' words is "any text read by a child" (Hunt in Nel and Paul 2011: 42; Nodelman 2008: 4). The truth behind the matter is that defining children's literature as a genre or type (some critics call it a genre, but in this paper 'type' is preferred because children's literature can also cover multiple genres) of literature is controversial because one might want to define it through its audience, but will have to take into account the fact that it is the authors' ideas about how children perceive the world that has a strong influence on the final product (Nodelman 2008: 148). Knowles and Malmkjær have also previously written about how adults regulate what children read through determining what they read and then producing more (1995: 2). The Library of Congress offers a definition in a similar style as "material written and produced for the information or entertainment of children and young adults. It includes all non-fiction, literary and artistic genres and physical formats." Emer O'Sullivan is another English Literature Professor among many

who emphasises the extensive role that adults play in children's literature from writing to publishing, marketing, reviewing, and promoting (2005: 12). This is not necessarily a negative aspect, because children cannot be independent actors in the world of creating books (O'Sullivan 2005: 12).

Attempting to define *children's literature* through content that children like is also inconclusive, because to do so would be to generalise the different experiences and personalities of all the children in the world into one statistically average child that probably does not exist (Nodelman 2008: 152). Lesnik-Oberstein also agrees that a child is much more complex in their language use and perceptions than the philosophical idea of children as pure and innocent might suggest (2004: 18).

The classical definition of *children's literature* offered by Peter Hunt and many literary critics is a "general aim to choose good books for children" (Lesnik-Oberstein 2004: 4). Karin Lesnik-Oberstein expresses in her introduction to *Children's Literature*: *New Approaches* that regardless of problems with definitions, research directions and criticism, this is a key element that does not really change in researchers' work, nor should it change (2004: 4). *Essentials of Children's Literature* also suggests that "children's literature is good-quality trade books for children from birth to adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interest to children of those ages, through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction" (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 1999: 2). For the purposes of this research, this definition is more comprehensive than the previously mentioned, as it involves a suggested age range. Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson also attempt to define quality, as something that "has to do with originality and importance of ideas, imaginative use of

language, and beauty of literary and artistic style that enable a work to remain fresh, interesting, and meaningful for years and years" (1999: 3).

Children's literature, although difficult to define due to the complex nature of its readership, is hugely important for its intercultural and inter-disciplinary value. The phenomenon of children's literature is also socially and culturally essential when considering, for example, literacy, creativity, and education. Peter Hunt, one of the pioneers of establishing children's literature as an academic study, has also described the subject as "an international, intercultural phenomenon, on the assumption that aspects of childhood and storytelling are common across the world – with clear cultural and political implications" (Hunt 2006 Vol 1: 1). As a field of study, the inter-disciplinary nature of children's literature is somewhat unique in the sense that it draws from, for example, "psychology, language studies, history, bibliography, librarianship, education, childhood studies and many other disciplines" (Hunt 2006 Vol 1: 1).

In general, children's stories tend to be plot-oriented and have a circular journey for the main character, which usually involves being displaced and then finding a way back home (Nikolajeva 1995: 46). A linear storyline is also possible, but an open ending could mean either that the protagonist cannot go home and has to accept a new reality, or that they die (Nikolajeva 1995: 47). Taking this into account, it can be said that children's books are usually in a chronological order and have happy endings, because it is necessary to show hope for the future (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 1999: 2, 27). The importance and function of setting in children's stories tends to be related to the plot, it is more important and created more thoroughly if the story could not happen in any other setting (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 1999: 30). The themes are usually truthful and to some

extent either didactic or have high moral and ethical standards. (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 1999: 30).

Children use stories and the language they learn from their surroundings as tools to help explain the world, including themselves and others, in terms they can understand (Sutherland and Arbuthnot 1991: 17). In addition to describing the environment, it is also necessary to convey abstract meanings through storytelling. The narratives of children's books in most cases touch upon either everyday life or the fantastical. However, such explanations are not the only necessities that children's stories provide – they also help children satisfy their need to know things and to feel like they belong, not to mention that stories are very good at subconsciously guiding children's behaviour in society.

Objective approaches to children's literature would be content analysis and narrative theory, which can be applied through analysing the relationships between characters and studying the cultural and moral values represented (Bekkedal 1973). Relationships between characters are important for this study, as the case study analysis involves characters from different backgrounds. Although appearance may identify the monsters in these cases, their relationships and behaviour are what they are as a character. The simplest way to portray a character is through describing physical appearance and personality, and the events in the story can reveal the emotional and moral traits and their development throughout the tale, whether good or bad (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 1999: 29). In children's literature, the function of characters in the texts is more often than not didactic – they are examples and role models for behaviour (Nikolajeva 2002: x).

The main character or protagonist tends to be an orphan – either literally or functionally (parents are away from home, children have been sent away from home, etc.)

(Nikolajeva 2002: 172). A functional orphan can also be so merely momentarily, the main emphasis here would be that he or she is alone when events start happening (Saravia and Saravia 2014: 83). Some examples of this would be Alice leaving her sister to chase a rabbit (Carroll, Lewis 1895), Harry Potter with his dead parents (Rowling 1997), Coraline with her busy parents who do not pay much attention to her (Gaiman 2002), etc.

The main character/protagonist and other characters that actively move the plot forward should be dynamic and develop or learn something during the journey – story-wise they usually only move upwards, as they rarely need to make permanently life-changing decisions (Nikolajeva 2002: 172). For clarification, Nikolajeva adds that this feature does not include temporary setbacks or failures, because such events are usually followed by success (2002: 172).

In the case of characters, first there are appearance, stance, movement, etc. that give the reader a mental image of the character. Depending on the story itself, these characteristics may be presented through actions or conversations between other characters (direct speech, indirect speech, through the narrator's eyes, or reactions) (Nikolajeva 2002: xi). It is important that the background, appearance, and behaviour of the characters are believable and consistent (Sutherland and Arbuthnot 1991: 40; Nikolajeva 2002: 8), because although suspension of disbelief is a part of reading almost any non-fiction, the characters must be convincing in order to attract readers. If they are not so, especially child readers will have difficulties remembering, recognising or identifying with them (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 1999: 112).

Minor characters are usually described partially, depending on how much the reader needs to know about them. Some of the side characters are as fully developed as the

protagonist, and some are flat – either described very little, or being one-sided (i.e. fully good or evil) (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 1999: 29).

1.2 MONSTERS

When talking about monsters, the main question that comes up is the nature of a monster. What is a monster and what makes something monstrous? As this research is literary and does not include visual media, the presentation of monsters can be narrowed down to the words that are used in creating them. However, the first aspect of a monster that comes to mind is more likely visual than anything else, though words and images are of equal value in generating them (Strickland 2010: 3). Previous research has argued both for and against the importance of visual elements when it comes to monsters (be it a mental or a physical image).

It could be said that a monster is known through its embodiment, location, its actions and its impact (Mittman 2012: 7). To quote Cohen, "The monster is difference made flesh." (1996: 7). One literary purpose of monsters is to portray otherness, to oppose what is 'normal', and to cross boundaries between them (Brenner 2004: 18). It could even be said that a monster can be recognised through it not being anything else. Monsters can also be recognised as something that seems to only exist in liminal time and space (i.e. in nightmares, as shadows in darkness, movement seen from the corner of one's eye) (Nuzum 2004: 210).

The word *monster* comes from the Latin *monstrum*, the meanings of which are 'divine omen, portent, sign; abnormal shape; monster, monstrosity' and figuratively 'repulsive character, object of dread, awful deed, abomination' (Murgatroyd 2007: 1). The OED offers similar standards: "a mythical creature which is part animal and part human, or combines elements of two or more animal forms, and is frequently of great size and ferocious appearance; any imaginary creature that is large, ugly, and frightening". Picart and Browning summarise that in simple Aristotelian terms, "monstrosity represents a defect of nature, either of excess or lack" (2012: 9). Maja Brzozowska-Brywczynska writes about *freak* in the same terms as well:

> *Freak* - an embodiment of monstrosity - is usually recognized by his unusual physiology that transcends the norms of the body, and is referred to as *lusus naturae*. In bodily terms, general attributes of freaks are: too few (or none) or two many limbs growing out of most inappropriate parts of the body; the absence or distortion of body proportion leading to monstrous forms and abnormal size; contradictive (or unspecified, multiple) genders, and strange colour of skin, eyes, hair (in Scott 2007: 217).

This definition also describes the importance of deviating from the 'normal' or 'natural'. Leaving out real life people who could be referred to as 'monsters', the term covers creatures of myth and imagination, who often have too many or too few body parts (i.e. the Cerberus has three heads, a Cyclops has only one eye), combine elements of different animals, or can shape-shift (Murgatroyd 2007: 1). Monsters might perhaps be categorised in terms of size, form, or habitat, etc, but these would be problematic, as it could be said that the purpose of monsters is to push and cross boundaries (Murgatroyd 2007: 1, Cohen 1996: 7, 12). Barbara Strickland also emphasises the fact that a monster is resistant to classification and categorisation (2010: 4). Simply put, to quote Michael Camille: "the monster, being unstable, crosses boundaries between human and non-human, mingling the appropriate and the inappropriate, *showing* itself in constantly novel and unexpected ways" (1996: 200). In literature written for adults, monsters are there to raise questions, to

conflict the reader and the protagonist, or to reflect the readers and the traits they either wish to possess or cast away (Mittman 2012: 1).

The etymological origins and definitions of the words *monster* and *freak* suggest that the meaning of *monster* is a negative one, but in history, it has also meant 'something wondrous and stupefying' and not necessarily ugly or repulsive (Brenner 2004: 18). Boon adds the second etymological approach from the base *monere* (to warn), and writes that the roots of *monster* mean a space between human and non-human, between being and non-being (Boon in Scott 2007: 33). He also describes certain perceptions about the *monstrous* that exist in the unconscious mind – for example, that there is a clear distinction between natural and unnatural, and that the human form is the natural dominant design (2007: 33). In the introduction of their *Speaking of Monsters* (2012), Picart and Browning also bring out that the horror genre classically requires the monster to be slain, because otherwise things cannot return to normal (2012: 11). This would be true in the case of horrific monsters, the kind that needs to be threatening and dangerous, either physically or mentally (Carroll, Noël 1990: 42-43).

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has voiced an observation in his 1996 *Monster Theory* that applies well to literature and seems especially appropriate in the case of children's literature: "a cultural fascination with monsters—a fixation that is born of the twin desire to name that which is difficult to apprehend and to domesticate (and therefore disempower) that which threatens." In the case of child readers, a fascination in these terms can help relieve fears or make it easier to approach some difficult subjects.

Mittman has offered that monsters are recognised by the impact they have, rather than observation (2012: 6). He argues this due to the fact that monstrosity does not

necessarily translate between cultures and thus a 'monster' is a cognitive threat rather than a recognisable creature (2012: 8). Mittman and Dendle (2012), and Gilmore's (2003) works also suggest that monsters are also time and culture specific, and that their importance relies on the emotional impact they make. Even if monsters are specific to their cultures, some commonalities can still be observed between them, as most cultures have their own versions of shape-shifters (shamanic journeys versus skin-walkers and werewolves) or dragons (eastern versus western dragons) or sea monsters (Scylla, the Kraken), etc.

It can be said for certain though, that not all monsters are evil or villainous in all contexts – for example, dragons are beloved in China, Frankenstein's monster was forced into malevolence, golems are almost too obedient and do not have an agency of their own other than protecting their people (Asma 2009: 11-12). All the mentioned monsters do have the elements of what makes a monster – none of them are real, they all make a statement with their sizes, the creature and golems are made and not born, dragons have claws, big teeth and breathe fire. This claim implies a possibility of classifying monsters into 'good' and 'bad'. However, that would be oversimplifying the entire concept of monsters as it is difficult for someone or something to be inherently good or evil. In addition, such categories are too basic for any real information (Levina and Bui 2013: 5), and they have boundaries that are easily crossed, something that monsters are known for. As crossing boundaries is such a significant part of monstrosity, this paper will instead of attempting to categorise, simply analyse some common features and traits that can be seen in the case of monsters.

As observed in the book chosen for the case study and generally in bookstores, monsters in children's literature do come in all shapes and sizes, and are less about intentionally evoking fear. And even though classification and categorisation possibilities come with their own set of issues, there are some aspects of them that can be seen again and again in how they are portrayed. Drastic changes in character can be seen in this century, as monsters have become fully-fledged characters with inner conflicts and emotionally motivated impulses (Goss 2012).

David Gilmore suggests that a cursory glance at monster lore suggests common features that indeed attest to shared fantasies (2003: 12). For example:

> They often live in lairs deep underground, in an unseen dimension as it were, or in watery places like marshes, fens, or swamps. Or else they infest distant wildernesses of which people are afraid, like mountain tops, oceans, glaciers, or jungles. They emerge from these fastnesses at night or during abnormal cosmological events to shake humans from their complacency, appearing in darkness or during storms, earthquakes, famines, or other times of disturbance. (2003: 12-13)

 The environment in which a monster is presented affects how fearsome it is perceived as. For this reason, monsters whose purpose is to cause fear usually appear in a setting that increases their aesthetic. For example, dragons tend to reside in caves or near/in castles (sometimes abandoned) - Smaug in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) lives in an enormous cave; the dragon in Sarah Courtauld's *Buckle and Squash and the Monstrous Moat-Dragon* (2014) lives around a castle where the villain resides, etc.

When considering that monsters can come in all shapes and sizes; the first description of monsters that Gilmore brings out is their size: "monsters are vastly, grotesquely oversized. Looming intimidatingly; they pose a special challenge" (2003: 174). However, size should be considered in its relativity to other objects and what is considered 'natural' (Ng 2004: 5). For example, an elephant is not a monster to a human, because although big compared to humans, it is its normal size and a naturally occurring

species. On the other hand, a dog-sized mouse or a hamster would be considered a monster in this category, because albeit being an actually existing species, it is not a 'natural' size for it.

Another aspect that Gilmore brings out that can often be seen regardless of other anatomical features is a large mouth as something that can consume and destroy, usually including big and sharp teeth (2003: 176). He writes that a general perception of monsters includes a predatory mouth as a monster's main weapon against humans, especially because stereotypically, eating humans is what a monster does (2003: 180). Size also covers other exaggerated features – usually a part of the creature is enormous, rather than exaggeratedly small.

According to Gilmore, monsters can also be composites: made up of different parts of different creatures, sometimes combining animal with another animal, mix living with the dead, or even combine human and animal elements (2003: 189), for example the griffin (a lion with the head and wings of an eagle), manticore (a lion with a human head and the tail of a scorpion), the cockatrice (a dragon with a rooster's head), the chimera (a lion with the tail of a snake and the head of a goat), the echidna (half woman, half serpent), and the siren (half woman, half bird or fish), etc. Even if not noticeably combined of different creatures, monsters also often feature smaller elements of animals that people find dangerous in real life, such as sharp teeth, fangs, claws, talons, etc.

Some monstrous creatures become so through transformation or metamorphosis, most popularly zombies, werewolves, and vampires. Here an example of monsters crossing boundaries can be found: according to Noël Carroll, some of these transformed monsters would belong into a category of *fusion* – creatures that are combinations, but not really one

or the other, like vampires and zombies being both living and dead (Carroll, Noël 1990: 43). A different *fusion* example would be a character that is possessed, as it involves having two sentient beings in one body (Carroll, Noël 1990: 44). Werewolves, however, he would categorise as *fission* monsters, because the two creatures "inhabit the same body, but not at the same time" – therefore, fission can be time-related. (Carroll, Noël 1990: 46). In these terms, creatures made out of different pieces would categorise under *fusion*.

Transformation into animal form is common in legends of many cultures, and people who could do that were considered very powerful. However, shape-shifting was not always considered monstrous, as it was usually done in order to move undetected, or to go into hiding or a resting place for healing (Eason 2007: xi-xii). On the other hand, werewolf stories have not had amicable beginnings, as the legends may have come to life due to attacks by large wolves or people wearing wolfskins (Eason 2007: xv).

Involuntary metamorphosis is usually an uncomfortable or a painful process and can be used to make the transforming character/child feel powerless in a personal crisis and its effect on a young reader might be moral improvement (Lassen-Seger 2006: 59-60). Involuntary metamorphosis is indeed usually a punishment as well (Lassen-Seger 2006: 60) – in *Beauty and the Beast* (1740) the prince is turned into a giant hairy monster so he could ponder his wrongdoings. A transformation can also help a child to find a sense of self or a true self (Lassen-Seger 2006: 65), like happened to Eustace in C. S. Lewis's *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1950) when he turned into a dragon and realised that his behaviour and greed would cut him off from everyone else if he did not start behaving more agreeably.

On the other hand, metamorphosis can also be voluntary and enjoyable – it can have the effect of empowerment, and it can be playful in trying to feel what it is like to be

someone else (Lassen-Seger 2006: 99). As such, a transformation can give any character the power or strength to vanquish their opponents. Lassen-Seger also elaborates that such metamorphosis "primarily involves a bodily change, which enables them to enjoy both the advantages of human intelligence and human communication skills, in combination with animal strength" (2006: 109), which is why voluntary transformation into monster tends to happen in situations where a child understands that they are too small or weak to conquer a hardship. In short, metamorphosis can be used to either affirm or challenge power relations between characters (Lassen-Seger 2006: 263).

Another important property of monsters is their colour, because colours can affect the emotions of readers and convey connotations (Darrodi 2012: 16). In the case of literature, colour is often used to influence the reader psychologically through socio-economic and cultural perspectives – for example purple is a colour of wealth because purple dye was more expensive than silver or gold, or how blue and pink are considered boy and girl colours (Darrodi 2012: 17). In this sense, in the West black is usually associated with death and powerful evils (Darrodi 2012: 17), which is why dark hues are considerably more often used to portray monsters and evil characters. Red is associated with blood, fire, danger and love; green with envy and nature, etc. These examples are described with Western culture in mind (because for example in China, red is the colour of good luck) (Darrodi 2012: 69).

In addition to physical features, a monster might have inhuman powers like strength, the ability to fly, superhuman speed, fire-breathing skills, regeneration abilities, etc. There are also parasitic monsters that have an ability to take away its host's free will or to kill them. Vampires could also in some terms be considered parasites, but as biologically a parasite would need to live in or on another organism and vampires do not

require this in order to survive, this particular species of monster seemed better suited to describe through its transformation process. As stated, biologically, parasitic monsters or parasitoids are in a symbiotic relationship with another organism. The parasite increases its own well-being through decreasing the other organism's, but sometimes the relationship is advantageous to both (Frelik in Weinstock 2016: 455-466). Usually parasites have a negative description, especially when portrayed as worms or larvae (Frelik 2016: 458).

Monsters can be unpredictable, because they are creatures who are allowed to cross boundaries. Unpredictability can also be recognised in the fact that while humans have signals in their behaviour that hint at what they might do next, but it is not a requirement in monsters. In addition, humans like to have control over situations, but monsters are usually uncontrollable, and they are capable of shifting humans from the dominant predatory position into prey (Masterson 2014). For children, control is not such a prominent value, which means that similar emotions in children are created through the fact that they are unsuspecting and monsters are unexpected (Masterson 2014).

1.3 CHARACTER TYPES AND MONSTER CHARACTERS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

It is a normal part of childhood for a child to become interested in supernatural creatures, mainly because cultural interest in monsters is strong in adults as well (Asma 2009: 279; Cohen 1996: viii), and literature is an excellent source of stories to consume in order to satisfy that curiosity. One possible reason behind why monsters are so fascinating

is that they get to break all the rules and do things that are inappropriate for humans (Warner 1998 in Gilmore 2003: 12). In other words, they go where we cannot go (Kearney 2002: 117). Similarly to children's literature that represents the socio-political situation of its time of publishing, monsters can also be seen to represent the anxieties and fears of the times they are created (Levina and Bui 2013: 1).

There are always adults who are concerned that such content could hurt children, but fear is also a normal part of life, and should, perhaps, be understood early. C. S. Lewis has written an explanation of why people think such writing should be kept from children:

> Those who say that children must not be frightened may mean two things. They may mean (1) that we must not do anything likely to give the child those haunting, disabling, pathological fears against which ordinary courage is helpless: in fact, *phobias*. His mind must, if possible, be kept clear of things he can't bear to think of. Or they may mean (2) that we must try to keep out of his mind the knowledge that he is born into a world of death, violence, wounds, adventure, heroism and cowardice, good and evil (C. S. Lewis in Hunt, 2006 Vol 1: 23).

The reasoning behind not frightening children has even led to localised attempts to ban some books from schools and libraries. There is an element in the perception of writing children's literature that a level of innocence should be retained, even to the extent of lying to children by including and/or amending events into positive ones, for example happy endings (Nodelman 2008: 217). Some worry over reading monster stories comes from the fact that monsters tend to be associated with negatives and knowledge that is inappropriate for children (Reynolds, Brennan and McCarron 2001: 2).

It is also true that children's literature and monster stories have something in common – monster stories have elements of Gothic fiction, one of those being high morality and didacticism is also common in children's literature, as it is usually supposed to teach the reader something (Saravia and Saravia 2014: 77). The difference lies in the

fact that Gothic fiction also questions human morality (Saravia and Saravia 2014: 79). It can be argued that the narratives of Gothic fiction are too dark and heavy for children, but they have been united in stories before – one example might be Neil Gaiman's very successful *Coraline* (2002), in which a girl travels to an alternative world of button-eyed doppelgangers, where everything seems amazing at first, but soon a dark underlying secret reveals itself.

Monster literature can be considered a subgenre of horror, and traditionally, the horror genre, and therefore monsters, have been used to cause fear and uncertainty in readers, but in the case of children's literature now, the stories tend to provide a sense of security as well (Reynolds, Brennan and McCarron 2001: 3-4). Some examples of this sense of security would be when monsters turn out to be ordinary animals or objects, or when the monsters are actually friendly.

In the case of literature for adults, monsters can be representations of self (Cohen 1996: 20), some sort of 'otherness', or a representation of a political situation. In children's literature, they are a source of curiosity and difference, and sometimes also fear. Even though monstrous and "cute" seem to be at the opposite ends of reality (Brzozowska-Brywczynska in Scott 2007: 213), monsters can appear in both fearsome and harmless forms, or as Cohen writes "the monster appears simultaneously as the demonic disemboweler of slasher films and as a wide-eyed, sickeningly cute plush toy for children" (1996: viii), bringing as examples velociraptors from *Jurassic Park* (1990) and Barney the dinosaur from the television show *Barney and Friends* (1992-2009). More on the side of British children's literature, good examples of this could be the Jabberwock from *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (Carroll, Lewis 1871) and Cressida

Cowell's Toothless from the *How to Train Your Dragon* (2003). The bigger question in combining monstrous and harmless is how harmless can a character become without losing its monstrosity (Brzozowska-Brywczynska in Scott 2007: 2015)? One appropriate answer turns us back to the original definitions that required 'unnatural' features and non-existence. Toothless looks friendly and harmless, but is nevertheless a dragon, which means the definition still applies.

The common elements of monster appearance described in the previous subchapter also common in children's literature: monster characters are usually large in relation to either humans or their 'natural' equivalents, for example trolls in either *The Hobbit* (Tolkien 1937) or *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling 1997), or the giants from either *The BFG* (Dahl 1982) or the fairy tale *Jack and the Beanstalk*, who are enormous versions of humans. An emphasis on the mouth can be seen in any story with large creatures, for example dragons – *How to Train Your Dragon* (Cowell 2003), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Rowling 2000), *The Hobbit* (Tolkien 1937) etc. Some monsters are made out of pieces of animals, humans, and other creatures – such hybrids can be found for example in the form of mermaids (mermaid Minnow in *The Mermaid and the Shoe* by K. G. Campbell, published in 2014).

Characters are one of the main tools of any narrative, especially because the plot does not go forward without any agency (Chatman 1993: 58). Across different types of media, characters are usually defined as fictive beings in the mind of the reader (Eder, Jannidis, Schneider 2010: 7). This definition is more easily acceptable in the case of adult readers, because they can easily separate fiction from real life. Children however are more likely to interpret and judge a character as if they were real (Nikolajeva 2002: x, 24). In

children's literature, characters can be a bit less complex, but even if they are not, children still need to understand them (Nikolajeva 2002: x). This can be a problem area for authors who are less familiar than they think with how children's minds work, and that is the main issue with previously mentioned adult influence over the realm of children's fiction (Nikolajeva 2002: xi).

Nodelman remarks that adults require an educational element to children's books (2008: 170), and Nikolajeva also emphasises a didactic aspect in all elements of a book (2002: x). Thus the question arises, what can a child reader learn from a monster? The simple answer to that question is anything. The way Nikolajeva has described a common aspect of children's literature being a human protagonist (2002: 21) means that children's fantasy or an adventure tale does not necessitate all-human characters, and as such, a well-written monster character can do and say most things that a human character would (in accordance to the definition of *monster*, they can do and say even more than human characters). Maria Nikolajeva also writes that characters in children's literature are more often animals or inanimate objects rather than other humans (2002: 21). This is especially true in the case of monster stories, where usually only the main character (and their family) is human.

Monsters in children's literature do come in various shapes and sizes. Some of them are already established creatures from folklore and mythology (i.e. dragons, changelings, boggarts, minotaurs, gorgons, etc). While adult readers may be familiar with mythologies of several areas, children tend to bring very little knowledge to the table – an adult may know the stories surrounding how Medusa came to be, but a child's knowledge probably does not exceed the facts that she has snakes for hair and she can turn people into

stone by looking at them. Indeed, sexuality/rape and decapitation are inappropriate topics for a children's book, thus Medusa's story of transformation into a monster is presented as an involuntary permanent punishment for vanity. References to other texts are usually contained to versions of well-known myths and legends, or texts that are easily accessible to children who become curious, but it is more successful if allusions are made appropriately regarding age and culture (Epstein 2011: 5).

A character is presented to the reader via a description of physical appearance, but external representation is not enough to portray a round character (Nikolajeva 2002: 182). An author adding this description to the text would be the simplest way to get an image started (Nikolajeva 2002: 182). However, sometimes this description is conveyed through the eyes of other characters (Chatman 1993: 61), especially when it comes to everyone who is not the narrator or protagonist. An actual separate description of a character is more common in plot-driven texts, because the characters cannot take time out of the events they are experiencing in order to describe how they feel about or react to what they see – the characters instead present their personalities through their actions and attitudes (Nikolajeva 2002: 182) and the reader learns about them as the plot unrolls. When it comes to children's literature, external characterisation is important, because it makes a character easier for children to understand (Nikolajeva 2002: 183).

All of a character's personality traits are not always described in the text; instead the reader can observe a trait, or a lack of one through the behaviour and attitudes of a character (Webber 2006: 95). Webber also discusses how traits such as honesty or dishonesty are not something that people have, but rather they are properties that are motivated through external forces (2006: 97). In analysing characters in children's

literature, this could be applied to points where characters are created by the plot – without particular descriptions, the reader gets to know the characters through their actions, as events are happening. For example, the reader would not know a character is physically weak until they are needed to move something heavy, or that they are fearless before confronted with something scary.

Nikolajeva categorises characters into main characters, supporting characters, satellite characters and backdrop characters (2002: 112). The main character is the protagonist and the rest of the major characters who contribute to moving the plot forward are supporting characters. The usually human protagonist of a children's book may often be either a literal or a functional orphan, but he or she does not remain alone for long, because a plot needs agents to move it forward (Nikolajeva 2002: 111). A protagonist can also be viewed as the hero of the story, as long as he or she is portrayed as 'good' in words and actions (Chatman 1993: 60), and might end up sacrificing his or her own well-being for others or a greater cause. The hero is the catalyst of the story – he or she is the one that sets out on a journey, faces the obstacles, and usually saves the day. However, 'hero' and 'protagonist' are not interchangeable terms, as a hero is almost always the protagonist, but the protagonist does not need to be a hero (Chatman 1993: 60). In children's fantasy they are usually one and the same though. The first example of a hero character that comes into mind is Harry Potter from the series by J. K. Rowling (1997-2007) – he honourably faces more dangers that he should and wants justice and goodness to prevail, even if comes with the cost of personal sacrifice (he repeatedly puts his own life at risk to save the people he cares about: saving Ginny Weasley from the basilisk in the Chamber of Secrets, saving Buckbeak the hippogriff and his godfather Sirius Black from execution, making sure he

returns fellow student Cedric Diggory's dead body to the school from essentially being kidnapped from the Triwizard tournament, and so on). Additional example from legends and mythology could be King Arthur and Robin Hood.

Another character type that is important to children's literature and is described by both Nikolajeva (2002: 123) and Propp (1927) is the villain/antagonist. The villain is a character that is in direct opposition with the hero and therefore easily recognisable. By definition, an antagonist is a character who sets the plot in motion (Nikolajeva 2002: 113). However, an antagonist is not a compulsory character type to be included in children's fantasy, because a plot can also be something like searching for treasure, which does not require opposition or conflict between characters in terms of hero versus villain (Nikolajeva 2002: 123). A villain usually contrasts the hero, being the bad or evil one that emphasises the hero's goodness. The main goals of an antagonist can be personal gain (in wealth, power, etc), seeking to prevent the hero from achieving a goal or completing a quest, or offering temptation to corrupt the hero into turning bad too (Propp 1927). Villains or villainous monsters can also be working for the overarching antagonist, as is the case for the hybrid creatures that are the flying monkeys in Frank L. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900). Monster antagonists are also usually the type of monsters that are slain or defeated in a children's novel, because an evil monster disturbs the natural order of things and balance needs to be restored (Picart and Browning 2012: 11).

Another character type often featured in children's literature is the helper, who would belong to the category of supporting characters as an integral part to the plot (Nikolajeva 2002: 112). The helper is also a character type described in Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*, as a part of his *dramatis personae* – broad character types that

can be observed in texts (1927). The helper is either a mentor, often in the shape of a wise old man, or in a support role, helping however or whenever they can. In literature that features monsters, examples of the old wise man type could be Gandalf from *The Hobbit* (Tolkien 1937) and Albus Dumbledore from the Harry Potter series (J. K. Rowling 1997-2007). An example for a helping character, although not as openly enthusiastic as a helper might be, can be Silas from *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman 2008). Silas is most likely a vampire, although not definitively named as such, who takes care of Nobody Owens – a boy who lives in the graveyard – providing him with necessities and helping him through life on the outside when the boy goes to school. Considering the fact that he is not always around nor does he help Nobody with everything, Silas could also be categorised as the old wise man type. Another helper type monster characters are daemons in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series (1995-2000). Daemons are companions to characters as a representation of the inner self, and children's daemons can change form voluntarily into any shape, be it a real or an imaginary creature (Pullman 1995-2000). Daemons have to follow certain rules in order to exist (must not go too far from their human) and they disappear when their human dies, which puts them outside any 'natural' spectrum and thus can be considered monster characters.

The fourth common character in children's literature is the donor/sender (Propp 1927). This type of character tends to be an adult – someone who sets the protagonist out on a quest and provides information or helpful items for it (Nikolajeva 2002: 117). The sender can be a parent or a parental figure (The girl in *Little Red Riding Hood* is sent to the woods by her mother); in fantasy, it may overlap with the mentor type (Gandalf in *The Hobbit* (1937) implores Bilbo Baggins to join the dwarves' quest).

The Trickster is also a common character type in children's literature (Propp 1927). Traditionally in folklore, tricksters in animal forms have been foxes or coyotes, or fairies and pucks and the stories can involve deception to some extent (Nikolajeva 1995: 157). In children's literature it is a character that can openly question or make fun of authority, encourages impulsive behaviour and spontaneity and is enthusiastic about chaotic events. As characters, tricksters improve their standing and power position as the story develops (Nikolajeva 2002: 172). Tricksters can be both negative and positive characters, depending if they use their skills with malicious or benevolent intent, this means that among other things they could be pranksters or thieves. In addition to being a hero character, Robin Hood is also a trickster – he gives away what he steals, is against authority, and finds himself in a relationship with a girl from a noble background. The Chesire cat from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, Lewis 1895) is also a trickster – he is what could be called an agent of chaos as he is around and somewhat helpful, but providing near to none info on how to reach success even though he probably has the knowledge. He is not mean-spirited, but does seem to enjoy either getting Alice into trouble, or irritating the Red Queen.

Satellite characters are frequently mentioned and constantly present throughout the events of the story, but they do almost nothing to propel events forward (Nikolajeva 2002: 113). Satellite characters are not as well-constructed and round as the main characters and regardless of being dispensable, the reader can learn some things about them as the events unravel.

Backdrop characters can come and go throughout the narrative without leaving much trace – they provide variation and realism to the story in the forms of people or

creatures the reader could meet or see in everyday situations (Nikolajeva 2002: 114). Background characters are usually completely flat characters – the reader is presented with either noticeable features of their appearance, voice, or maybe profession. These characters are in the story for merely moments and do not have any agency in propelling the plot. As such, they are not developed in the story and tend to be built out of stereotypes, like helpful neighbour, evil teacher, etc (Nikolajeva 2002: 115).

2. ANALYSIS

2.1 SUMMARY

The specific book chosen for the case study is *Stop Those Monsters!* by Steve Cole, published in 2015 by Simon and Schuster UK. Steve Cole, born in 1971, is a best-selling English children's author, who has worked both in writing and editing children's magazines for the BBC and as an editor for publishing houses such as Ladybird Books, and Simon and Schuster Children's books. Although he does not boast any literary prizes, he is a prolific young fiction series writer, who has sold over three million copies of his work and has been published internationally. *Stop Those Monsters!* is one of his few stand-alone novels, and with such a title, and a hairy creature on the cover, seemingly quite appropriate for this study.

The book is illustrated by Jim Field, who has done illustrations for Cole before. However visually captivating the pictures might be, visually the book seems to rely more on fonts – the text is larger or in bold when there are loud sounds or screaming (for example a *WHAMMMMMM!* In larger and bold capital letters (Cole, 2015: 4) or confusion and anxiety (Cole, 2015: 20-21) -, and making the background colour of the text black to convey the atmosphere of the story – for example, when the characters find themselves in a dark cave (Cole, 2015: 46-47). Changing the font throughout events or for emphasis is used in other children's books as well, for example in Neil Gaiman's *Fortunately*, *the Milk* (2013).

The story itself is a *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Frank L. Baum, 1900) type of tale about a boy named Bob Bee, whose house gets picked up by a hurricane and crashes into the underground world of Terra Monstra, which was created by the wizard Merlin himself, and where all the monsters now reside. It turns out that the average monster in this land is just as scared of humans, as humans would be when seeing a monster, but that does not mean Bob and some of the friends he finds along the way do not get scared by other monsters they meet along the way.

In order to get back home, Bob and his companions, a giant hamster named Verity and a gorgon named Zola who cannot turn anything into stone, and aspiring stand-up comedian Alfie Crudzilla, are set on a quest to find the Humamon Star Jewel that grants its holder his or her heart's desire, and as such is the only means of getting back to the human world for Bob. To retrieve the Jewel, Bob must travel to the deepest level of Terra Monstra, where it is hidden, using a map provided by an elderly professor of Humanology. During their trip they are chased by the Monster Army, they meet numerous other friendly and hostile monsters, escape tight situations, and finally come upon Bob's surprisingly still intact house, right beside a pedestal that holds the coveted Humamon Star Jewel.

Just as everyone's dreams are about to come true, they discover that Verity has been controlled an invisible brain parasite called a zooloob, who informs them that the Jewel does not work for monsters, only humans. The zooloob itself is controlled by a massive monster named Bosstradamus, whose plan is to get to the human world hidden in Bob's house as it is being wished back to its place by Bob. The problem is solved with the help of Zola, whose unpredictable powers of turning others into anything but stone statues turns Bob into an even bigger monster than Bosstradamus. Now unable to use the Jewel,

Bob fights Bosstradamus and throws her back into the pit that Merlin had first banished her into. The story ends with Bob wishing himself and his house back into the human world, having first taken on board his new friends, who could make their own dreams also come true there.

The setting of Terra Monstra in terms of location and atmosphere has many elements in common with horror fiction, which relies heavily on the dark and dreary in order to evoke emotion, and the setting is detailed if the story takes place in one location (Writer's Digest). Writer's Digest also explains that the setting in horror fiction "may contain elements of the supernatural or include magical or occult systems of belief, systems which have their own "rules." Granted, they may be rules you make up, but once established, they must be rigorously adhered to".

This in combination with the "usual locations of lairs deep underground, in an unseen dimension as it were, or in watery places like marshes, fens, or swamps" (Gilmore 2003: 12-13) mentioned in the chapter on monsters suggests that an underground world is an appropriate setting for monster fiction. The different levels and locations of Terra Monstra are indeed described in detail and are appropriate for the 'dark' aesthetic that is expected of horror literature. A good example of this in *Stop Those Monsters!* is a description of Level Four: "It was dank and chilly down here. As my eyes got used to the gloom, I saw a barren, sinister wasteland covered in spongy, sticky mushrooms […] The air smelled like burnt rubber. […] The whole place seemed mouldy, smelly and falling apart" (pages 46-47). Other descriptions of scenery include "unhealthy maggot white trees" (page 6); "trees were bare and dark and gnarly, like mutant skeletons clawing at the

black-mud sky above. The ground was covered in clumps of spiky grass, like enormous house spiders turned on their backs, glowing sickly yellow" (page 99).

2.2 *STOP THOSE MONSTERS!* AS CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

The different elements of the novel all belong to the realm of children's literature – it is plot-oriented, the events happen in a chronological order, there is a happy ending, the characters are mostly anthropomorphic, magic is involved, the setting is detailed and connected to the plot, and it contains moral lessons (foremost about prejudice and stereotypes).

Stop Those Monsters! can be classified as a modern fantasy for children, as the events, settings, and characters are considered 'unnatural' and not in the possible realm of the 'natural' world (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 1999: 112). The circular plot of displacement and finding a way home is very common in children's stories, especially in the adventure genre, where the safe journey home is the main goal (Nikolajeva 1995: 46). Nikolajeva adds that a linear journey is uncommon in children's literature because it is highly unlikely for a child to remain alone, thus a straight line from the beginning to the end usually involves the death of the protagonist (1995: 47). Bob sets out on the quest of getting back home right from the start, but in a linear plot he would either lose the final fight, or there would be a reason he would have to stay in Terra Monstra. Both such endings would not bode well, because the former would mean death or eternal suffering in

the same pit he threw Bosstradamus in, and the latter might mean a life in fear of monsters who would want to probe and examine him.

The story also has an implied reader, although not narrowed down to any specific audience, as it begins with the main character addressing the reader with "Er, sorry, I know you've just started reading this book and everything, but this isn't really the easiest time for me to write." (page 1). As such, the implied reader is a part of the book, assessing the characters and actions from afar (Nikolajeva 2002: 6), partly joining in on the adventure as it is happening. An implied reader suggests that the author is more aware of the audience and possibly more deliberate about what is being said and done in the story and when (Nikolajeva 2002: 16). In the case of this monster story, the protagonist tells us who they do or do not fear, but if we take into account the author behind the narrator, the reader is being told who to fear even up to a point of deception (the Monster Army is not actually primarily after Bob and Verity, but are trying to catch the invisible parasite that is controlling Verity).

2.3 CHARACTERS

The story and all its events and characters are presented to the reader in first person from the point of view of Bob Bee, who is a self-proclaimed monster expert, because he has been a fan of monsters since his grandfather introduced him to 'creaky old monster movies' (page 14). Considering that Bob says he is a Year Eight pupil, he is around 12-13 years old. The narrator's voice and speech do not raise a question, which means the author

has rather successfully adopted the child's level in his writing. Maria Nikolajeva expresses that children usually like to read about children their own age, but emphasises that plot is also an important factor (2002: 7), especially since children's literature is usually driven by the plot and children tend to be more interested in the events rather than the characters (Nikolajeva 2002: 12). She adds that causality is more important to children than to adults, which is why the particular manners of combining events and actions are significant when it comes to children's literature (2002: 175).

For the character analysis, this research takes a somewhat mimetic approach (in the sense that the reader could attach their existing knowledge to characters that are based on previously existing characters), because of the research questions about parallels with other texts and possible changes. The book itself, however, does not allow much space for different approaches either, due to there being several references to other media both in the text and the story itself, as Bob repeatedly draws parallels from monster movies he has previously seen. A mimetic approach may cause some worry, but while in other texts it could be dangerous to apply traits from real life to characters, because it could lead to unwanted stereotyping (Nikolajeva 2002: 9), in this case there is not much concern, as references are based on already established characters (i.e Medusa and Merlin), and stereotyping is also handled within the story (i.e. not all gorgons are evil, and even Godzilla's family can have a black sheep).

As brought out in the literature review, the protagonist/narrator/main character in children's literature tends to be orphans in at least some sense (Nikolajeva 2002: 172). In the case of Bob Bee, it is also somewhat true, as his parents are at work and he has been left home with a babysitter who disappears during the hurricane (Bob hopes she managed

to leave the house before it took off). Functionally, he is an orphan as he starts out alone in the new world that he finds. The events of the book are set off by displacement of the main character and he needs to find his way back home. This remains his motivation throughout the story. In terms of character type, Bob is the hero – he wishes to fulfil his quest without hurting anyone or getting any of his friends hurt and in the end he saves the day by defeating the enemy.

It is important to consider the story of Bob as a human child who successfully makes it home, because Bob himself undergoes a transformation into a monster during the story. When Zola is looking at him, she tells him to imagine the biggest and scariest monsters he knows, and then to think even bigger, thus turning Bob into what he describes as "20% King Kong, giant-sized, hairy and tough… 22% The Blob, squelching and sucking up all who come near. 6% Dracula, for fangtastic chills… 10% Creature from the Black Lagoon, cos it's so flippin' creepy… 24% DinoBeast, tipping the scales with jaws and claws and a terrible tail. 12% bug-eyed monster from this one movie I saw in glorious, goriest Technicolor, because that thing was just sooo weird…" (Pages 230-231). Transformation or shape-shifting, although in this case with the help of someone else and not through a potion/using magic (i.e. skin-walkers), a congenital condition, or a contagion (i.e. werewolves, zombies), is a type of monster that could be narrowed down more into ones that stay in their new form and ones that can turn back into looking 'normal'. Bob Bee belongs to the latter category, as the effects of Zola's power last only long enough to defeat the enemy.

In his metamorphic form, Bob has the most common feature of being exaggeratedly large in size. He also covers two types of previously mentioned monsters – a creature

going through transformation, and a creature made up from parts of other creatures. Bob is the one to choose the parts of the creatures, which makes the ordeal a pleasurable voluntary metamorphosis that ends with empowering him as a child – he is now bigger and stronger than the main enemy and Bob can easily banish her from Terra Monstra. The empowerment is shown to the reader through Bob's thoughts: "Strength hummed through me […] I had never felt so powerful" (page 231); "the monster masses below – they looked so small, suddenly, like ants beneath my feet" (page 234); "suddenly I wasn't a victim any more. Suddenly, I was fighting back. And as the realisation struck me it felt as strong and intoxicating as the power Zola had poured into me" (page 234). Bob's is a case of body transformation only, which means it would in some terms belong to Noël Carroll's category of *fusion*, but not *fission*, as Bob keeps his human intelligence and is the only one inhabiting the body that now looks vastly different – he is at the same time human *and* monster (1990: 43-44).

The first monster character that Bob meets is a giant toga-wearing hamster named Verity. Verity is described as "it looked more like someone had inflated a hamster to the size of a sheepdog, dressed it in a toga and taught it to walk on its back legs. It was plump and fluffy, with bright black eyes open as wide as its mouth" (page 15). While rodents, excluding rats but especially mice, have a reputation of being helping characters, and usually positive characteristics. Although described with *fluffy*, a word that normally has positive connotations, Verity first makes an effect with size, as that is the first aspect that Bob notices. According to the definitions and the categories of David Gilmore (2003: 176, 180), Verity's monstrosity is denoted by size, including the size of mouth, teeth, and eyes. As a giant hamster, Verity walks the line of monstrous cute, having characteristics of both

monster (size, big mouth) and harmless (being a hamster, fluffiness). Verity is an example of how a monster does not need to be terrifying in order to be considered one; she makes herself know through being 'unnatural'.

Plot-wise, Verity is the character type of a helper, offering possible solutions, even without know-how – she suggested that she and Bob take a bus to get away from Killgrotty, and with the help of Bob managed to flag one down, but neither could drive. This, however did not stop her from trying and somewhat succeeding (pages 31-34). On the other hand, Verity expresses prejudice towards other monsters, especially gorgons. She is distrustful of Zola when they meet her, and later also worries about the outcome of things because of what Zola is.

Verity's name, however, is deceptive on the level of the author. While she is indeed honest when she is herself, she is being controlled by an invisible (can be seen when wet) brain parasite that can make her say and do things she is not aware of. By the end of the book the reader learns that not all of the info collected about Verity is true. However, the misinformation can be disregarded rather easily, because every time Verity's actions were not her own, her eyes were glowing – for example it now becomes known that Verity does not actually have violent tendencies towards authority figures, and she has no martial arts skills.

The brain parasites are called zooloobs, and they attach themselves to the back of their victims' heads, push in their tentacles and feed on brainpower, working the host's mind and body by remote control (page 154). They are "something like a pink, pulsating veiny brain, clinging [there] with tendrils and tentacles" (page 153). Bob brings a parallel

with the film *Fiends Without a Face* (1958), where he saw "monsters that looked like brains-with-wiggly-spinal-cords-for-tails creepily jumping about the place" (page 85). Controlled by Bosstradamus, the main motivation behind the zooloobs' actions in this story is making sure Bob gets to the Humamon Jewel. The parasites do not seem to have an agency of their own, and Bosstradamus does brag that she controls them all (page 207).

The second companion that Bob meets is a gorgon named Zola. She is described as follows: "The person before me was wearing enormous dark glasses with round lenses, a paint-splodged apron over a white blouse with puffy sleeves. She looked human enough, besides her green-tinged skin and the hooked claws on her fingers and thumbs. Oh, and the forked tail snaking out of the back of her black leggings. Oh (again), and the wild array of snakes growing out of her head" (page 63). The snakes also wear combinations of berets, sunglasses, and/or scarves. Bob and Zola meet in a bar fight that Zola needs to calm down before it gets too bad. Zola is a disgrace to her family because she cannot turn anyone into stone forever, instead she turns them into varying substances and the effects last only five minutes – for example in the bar fight she turns everyone into ice statues (page 61).

Bob recognises gorgons through the legends of Medusa and her sisters who could turn people into stone with a single look. The gorgons he has read about live down on Level Six of Terra Monstra, also known as Gorgonopolis. As for gorgons in ancient Greece, the depictions go back as far as their art (Wilk 2000: 31). Wilk divides the depictions of gorgons into three developmental states and describes the first stage gorgons as having "wide-open, staring eyes and a broad grinning or snarling mouth filled with prominent teeth, usually with both upper and lower fangs. […] The hair is usually shown as a series of tight, curled rings above the forehead." (2000: 31-32). The second stage

gorgons are toned down in wildness and appearance (2000: 33). The third stage of portraying gorgons, especially Medusa, has some major changes, especially in that Medusa is now depicted as beautiful – she no longer has fangs and her facial expression is softer (2000: 34-35). In one of the versions of the original myth, the gorgons are described as having "scaly heads, boar's tusks, brazen hands, and wings. They had protruding tongues, glaring eyes, and serpents wrapped around their waists as belts" (Wilk 2000: 21). In art and literature classical mythology, and gorgons with it, has been reintroduced and revamped several times over, starting with Dante's *Inferno* (1320); the 18th century brought about an image of an angered woman, without fangs or bulging eyes, but now with snakes instead of hair (Wilk 2000: 196). Wilk narrows down the modern Medusa as "muse and as symbol of female rage. If I can be forgiven a trite generalization, the difference between the sexes is revealed in the way each looks at Medusa. To girls, she is a symbol of the power of their anger and the source of their inspiration. But to boys, she's just a real cool monster" (2000: 224).

When comparing Medusa and Zola, one major similarity can be observed, especially when it comes to the modern concept of Medusa – namely that they are both independent and headstrong, and could inspire the reader to follow their own desires. As a character, Zola is energetic, positive, and helpful, albeit a little insecure about her powers. In her actions, she repeatedly saves the others (for example she grabs Bob while the boy almost falls out of a helicopter (page 127) and turns an attacking zooloob into a balloon (page 154); in words she is supportive, complimenting others on their successes, and witty as she gives names to her 'still life' artworks.

As far as appearance, Zola as a new gorgon still sports snakes as hair, and the bulging eyes are replaced with large round sunglasses, but she no longer has fangs or

scales. However, she is now green in colour and has two tails instead of wings. Personality-wise, Zola is not angry the way Medusa would be, considering the version of the myth where she is turned into a gorgon as punishment by Athena. Zola instead wishes to become a world-renowned artist. The desire probably originates in the fact that gorgons turn others into stone statues and classically stone statues are art. In Zola's home that is too ordinary, so she wants to use her uncommon power of turning others into anything but stone as a creative outlet. At first, Verity still considers Zola a threat for being a gorgon, because the rest of them in Gorgonpolis are the scary type. Alfie also makes jokes based on stereotypes about gorgons (page 150).

Gorgonpolis also has rawks, who are "big birds made out of stone" and who live there because "they are immune to [the gorgons'] glares" (page 158). The rawks are described as having "wings like gravestones, beaks like cones of concrete and glittering gravel for eyes" (page 158-159). The noise they make is a "nerve-jangling sound like metal scraping granite" (page 159). Bob compares them to gargoyles, which is something that a child reader might not know about, but would maybe recognise from the animated film *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996).

The other gorgons are not described much in the book, because as luck would have it for Bob and his friends, they have been paralysed by the zooloobs. The gorgons are fixed as figures in a canyon with "green skin protruding from robes and capes, with hair like nests of vipers…or anacondas…or even boa constrictors…" (page 151). Due to the reputation of the gorgons, Zola is quite possibly the ultimate portrayal of being misunderstood – she has all the features of a scary monster, but wants to focus on something productive. Another character like this in children's literature is in Kenneth

Grahame's *The Reluctant Dragon* (1898), where a village is scared of a dragon residing near them, but it turns out that the dragon does not want to hurt anyone, but only wishes to read, write, and recite poetry. In this case, it takes the authoritative figure of St George the dragon slayer proclaiming the beast a peaceful and reformed character for the townsfolk to accept him. Zola, on the other hand wins over her new friends by being herself and through her actions that help and support the companions on their journey. As a character type, Zola is the trickster – she is enthusiastic, spontaneous and creative in problem solving, and has no problem making fun of authority. Her attitude is mostly a 'why not?', she rebels against the expectations of her family even after she has been banished and wants to use the Jewel to rise in the world. The effects of a gorgon's stare can also be considered magical powers in that world. An example of her attitude towards authority is when she turns the Monster Army into grilled steaks and used them to make an escape path when she "pushed over her toasted soldiers and piled them into a heap beneath Voshto's window. "Come on, you two – it's not only art, it's a soft landing!"" (page 88-89).

The third monster companion that Bob meets is an aspiring stand-up comedian Alfie Crudzilla. Alfie is described looking like "a yellow dinosaur onesie had collided with a giant prawn: there were two floppy tails, two spiky claw-things, one much larger than the other, while the head of the 'monster' was lolling to one side. A big eye and a small eye – both orange – fixed on me" (page 113). "The figure's rubbery jaws, complete with rubbery teeth, began to flap open and closed" (page 114). Alfie's family are "huge, prehistoric dinosaur types" (page 124), who work as debt-collectors, and Alfie pilots a helicopter with a banner that reminds everyone of their existence. They are proud and powerful creatures who scare and bully other creatures into paying them. The companions use Alfie's family

to help get rid of the Monster Army chasing them by agitating them with lies on how the army called the Crudzillas "a bunch of wimps" (page 125).

Alfie and his family are most likely based on Godzilla – a creature of Japanese origin featured in a franchise by the same name. The character first appeared in 1954 and can be described as "an upright-walking, vaguely mammalian, dinosaur-like creature with a thick body, long tail, maple-leaf dorsal spikes running down his spine and a menacing stare emanating from big, expressive eyes" (Ryfle 1998: 14), and its original motivation for action is destruction. However, even though Godzilla does not like humans, it is willing to fight alongside them against common threats. As it lacks any regard toward possible casualties and property, it does not possess any heroic characteristics. William Tsutsui emphasises that Godzilla is a monster that defies classification (Tsutsui and Ito 2006: 18).

One major difference between the Crudzillas and Godzilla is in colour. While Godzilla was dark-coloured, Alfie is yellow and at least one of his sisters is orange (page 131). Bright colours in children's world may represent harmless features, for example Alfie is a cheerful and funny creature, and yellow is the colour of sunshine and other nice things. Orange, however, being close to red, could represent something a little more dangerous.

Another big difference is the rubbery anatomy of the Crudzillas, versus the scaly and spiky Godzilla. Rubbery mouths and teeth are more reminiscent of toys, rather than monsters, and flopping body parts tend to be funny for children. This aspect might be a way to add harmless features to monsters in order to make them more acceptable to children as possible friends. Alfie is not a completely watered-down version of Godzilla though, even by Gilmore's standards – he still has claws and at least one big eye.

Personality-wise, Alfie is loud and cheerful and barely threatening. The monstrosity in this case also pertains mostly to appearance as he is a familiar monster movie creature to Bob in the forms of Godzilla and DinoBeast. When the story is ending and the friends are planning to go to the human world together, Bob worries about how appropriate Alfie's looks would be there by claiming he "looks like a boy wearing a monster-suit" (page 247). This comment summarises rather aptly how Alfie's monstrous features are more harmless than threatening. Compared to the others, Alfie is more of a satellite character – he has a catchphrase (I'm down with the boom!), barely shows any initiative (one of the few times something is actually his idea is when he lies and makes his sisters angry at the Monster Army), and is easily rendered unable to fight ("Alfie whumped the guard with his big pincer, but another greenie took his little claw and twisted hard. Alfie was out of action." (page 218)).

The first seemingly malevolent monster character that Bob interacts with is Captain Malevolent P Killgrotty of the Monster Army. He is described as "a huge, powerful looking figure", "green, with four red eyes blazing in his face, two holes for a nose and a snarling mouth", "his arms were bulging with balloon-like muscles", and "he had three legs. THREE LEGS." (page 24). Even his name is of the variety that makes him sound unpleasant. Appearance-wise we see that Killgrotty is threatening and seen as such by the protagonist. Of the common elements Gilmore (2003) describes, Killgrotty has the size, the extra anatomy (four eyes, three legs), and an emphasised mouth. Killgrotty is the leader of the Monster Army soldiers that are chasing the four friends; he is straightforward and disciplined and of few words, which is why the friends and the reader do not find out until the end of the story that they were not actually the ones being chased. He is falsely seen as

the antagonist for the story, because he acts hostile from the first meeting and scares everyone.

The main antagonist of the story is Bosstradamus, who in stories is described as "worst of all" (page 79). When she is actually present, she is described as something "huge and powerful – a mound of dark flesh, shining with veins, rippling with muscles. A face pushed out from the hunched shoulders – a mask of hate and brutality that sent goosebumps racing round my flesh – with three fierce shining slits for eyes and a jagged chasm for a mouth" (page 205). She speaks with a low, groaning voice and is several times referred to as 'revolting'. Her name could be inspired by Nostradamus because it turns out Merlin has prophesised these events; and the other half of the name might come from video games, where battle with the main villain at the end is called a 'boss' fight'. Child readers are quite likely to understand at least the 'boss' part of the reference. As an antagonist, she set the plot in motion by pulling Bob's house down to Terra Monstra in order to escape into the human world in the house when Bob inevitably wishes it back to its place using the Humamon Star Jewel. To get her wish, Bosstradamus even helps Bob and his friends a bit by setting he zooloobs on the gorgons, so that the group could easily pass through Gorgonpolis. As the results of this help are for personal gain, her attitude towards everyone else could be described with 'the end justifies the means'. In a classic hero versus villain ending, the antagonist is defeated.

The character that would classify as a sender is uncle Voshto, who "looks like a benign blue eel, wrinkly and well worn, with three-lensed specs for his three eyes, rearing up on a whole load of legs" (page 69). Voshto is portrayed as an adult character, who has the knowledge needed for the quest that he tells Bob and Verity to go on. He also not anly

an adult, but a parental figure, because Verity calls him 'uncle'. Whether they actually are related by blood is not discussed.

The minor characters in the book are often referred to as some sort of 'things', for example „a dragon-thing" (page 61), "green, slimy octopus thing" (page 59), "a squid-like thing" (page 66). Sometimes size is described through creative similes - for example "something that looked like giant pink horse with the head of a doughnut" (page 37), "looked like a rat who'd been inflated with a bike pump" (page 92) -, and sometimes through emphasising the enormity of the creature: "big purple monster with three arms, waving three enormous fists" (page 52), or "a thick tail of an even thicker-looking monster" (page 59). Size is important, as it "relates in a generic sense to all animals; not only to humans; for large size means superior strength; which translates into the power advantage in confrontations" (Gilmore, 2003: 174). In the case of these examples, it definitely applies, as the monsters described are in a bar fight scene, where overpowering the others is necessary (pages 59-62). One minor character is present in the story for a little longer than the others. His name is Chopper, and all that the readers can learn about him is that his vocabulary consists of variations of the word 'chop', he has a "weird, high-pitched voice" and an axe (page 102), and the physical features mentioned are 'enormous', 'boss-eyed', scary face that looked like it had been soaked in yellow goo' (page 102). Verity identifies him as a 'jollywobble', but the friends conclude that he does not look very jolly.

Because monsters in *Stop Those Monsters!* tend to recognised as such through physical features, especially size, which is referred to the most with words like 'giant', 'huge', 'enormous', 'burly', 'thick', incredibly big', 'massive', 'imposing height', etc.

Among the other common features mentioned earlier (claws, fangs, scales, extra anatomy etc.), some monsters in this book have claws (page 61), mouthsfull of teeth (page 12), three arms (page 52), wide eyes (page 59), spikes (page 61), scales (page 100), and more.

2.4 OTHER REFERENCES

Now that most major monstrous characters have been discussed, there are a few other references that should be mentioned to emphasise the intertextuality of children's literature, in this case pertaining to the source and inspiration for the monsters themselves. First, the dichotomy and opposition between the human world and Terra Monstra means that the monsters living there consider humans 'unnatural', even if they are aware of the existence of humans "on the topside". The monsters have similar scary stories about humans – for example, they believe that all humans want to "start a war, or pollute the environment, or make a species extinct, or start an evil bank that will cripple the monster economy" (page 18) or "infect innocent monsters with hideous human diseases" (page 70). The monsters also believe that humans can spew toxic waste through their noses (a sneeze) in a similar manner that humans believe dragons to breathe fire (page 32). This specific feature comes up on several accounts, nearly every time Bob meets a new monster. Bob is also told about how the Sphinx and the Minotaur and the Cyclops were real, living alongside humans in Ancient Egypt and Greece, or rather "Eejit and Greasy" (page 49), and how the monsters know the tale of Odysseus as a "serial monster-killer" (page 49).

Bob also tackles the topic of humans liking monsters by affirming that humans like to make up stories about monsters, but being scared is only good when they know it is not real (pages 146-147).

3. CONCLUSION

In the span of three centuries, children's fiction as a type of literature has gone through a lot of changes, mainly due to the changing political situations and attitudes in the world. The main commonality with horror fiction is that it has changed in a similar manner, as monsters are created to portray the anxieties and fears they have related to the changing situation – for example, the advancement of technology has brought on a lot of stories of AI-s turning bad, especially in the movie industry (*Tron* (1982), *Resident Evil* (2002), *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)). However, monsters seem to have become more personal and evolved more as characters, as there tends to be more multi-sided monster characters in literature, especially in cases where in narratives they have been given their own agencies and motivations. As monsters develop and change, they still have an great cultural importance, because people are fascinated by what they cannot understand, and the thrill of fear when they know the threat is not real.

Children's literature and monsters also have in common the fact, that they are either difficult to define or classify – children's literature has issues with appropriate content, language and the concept of *child*, and monsters to not follow any categorisation, because they are created as able to cross most boundaries set for categories. A child also crosses boundaries as they read books above or below their intended age ranges.

When it comes to monsters in children's literature, it can be seen that monsters take a softer and more harmless forms, because in terms of othering, it is important to show that not everything that is different should be viewed as a threat or something disgusting.

Therefore, monsters can help children understand the world better, their function as such both didactic and entertaining. Adults should not fear monsters in children's literature, because authors do seem to have a decent idea of what is appropriate for a child, and therefore they do not use, for example, excessive gore or sexually-fuelled elements in their writings. Most things that adults could read into a text are also based on their life experiences, and it must be taken into account that children do not understand things the way adults do.

The characterisations in children's books seem to include a lot of stereotypes – it is easier for a child reader to recognise such characters and make connections to people in real life or texts/media they have consumed before. As a child matures, so does the literature for that particular age range – characters and plots become more complex. At six to ten years old, a child is most interested in fantasy and adventure stories that are plot driven, as they are more interested in events and action than a character's feelings and emotions – it is also easier to show a child reader someone being afraid to do something, rather than simply stating that the character is a coward.

The case study *Stop Those Monsters!* is a children's novel that definitely matches the key elements of children's literature with its circular plot and easily read characters. The monsters in the book are mainly monsters because of physical appearance as most of them are either based on monster characters from earlier texts (gorgons, Godzilla), or they have at least some of the common features listed in David Gilmore's *Monsters*: *evil beings, mythical beasts, and all manner of imaginary terrors* (2003). Many of the monster's in Steve Cole's novel are enormous in size and feature elements of other mentioned commonalities. Monsters in the novel have claws, sharp teeth, scales, spikes, etc. There is

even a metamorphic monster involved in the form of Bob turning into the biggest and scariest monster in all of Terra Monstra for five minutes.

The parallels to other texts that are present in this novel are drawn to characters that have been adapted for children before or taught in schools as well (i.e. Godzilla, creatures from Greek mythology), but some references may not be understandable for children due to their very specific nature (i.e. creatures from old monster movies might not be available or of interest to many children).

The monster characters also match character traits and types offered in Maria Nikolajeva's *The Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature* (2002) and by Vladimir Propp (1927). The character types are easily recognisable in the monster companions through their actions and attitudes. In a typical monster fashion, the gorgon Zola even manages to cross these boundaries, by being mainly a trickster, but she could also be read as the helper. While more character types exist, the mentioned five (the protagonist, the antagonist, the helper, the trickster, the sender) are the most common in children's fantasy. *Stop Those Monsters!* is also a novel which shows monsters in almost all the roles presented in it because Bob is the only human character the reader meets throughout the whole story, but the rest of the characters are varied in their appearance and nature.

All in all, the case study is a good example of the provided theoretical framework in practice. The application of theory was not obstructed by possible aspects of a book that might suggest a need to reclassify the story in any sense – mainly meaning that it conforms to the definitions of *children's literature* and *monster characters* without issues.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Liidia Varrik

"Representation and roles of monster characters in recent British children's literature: the case of *Stop Those Monsters!* by Steve Cole.".

Koletiste kujutamine ja rollid uuemas Briti lastekirjanduses: Steve Cole'i „Stop Those Monsters!"

Magistritöö

2018

Lehekülgede arv: 62

Annotatsioon:

Uurimistöö eesmärk on esitada ülevaade koletistegelaskujudest Briti lastekirjanduses. Kirjandusülevaade on jagatud kolme ossa: esimene osa vaatleb lastekirjanduse maailma, esitades lühikokkuvõtte lastekirjanduse ajaloost vahemikus 18.-21. sajand. Lisaks sisaldab see peatükk lastekirjanduse võimalikke definitsioone ja olulisi elemente.

Teises osas on lühidalt kirjeldatud koletisi ja nende ajalugu kirjanduses ning David Gilmore'i (2003) abiga püütud lahti harutada koletiste definitsioone ja ühiseid tunnuseid, mida on kirjanduses märgata. Välja toodud omadusi on paralleelide tõmbamiseks ja muutuste kirjeldamiseks illustreeritud nii täiskasvanute kui lastekirjanduse põhjal.

Kirjandusülevaate kolmas osa keskendub koletistegelaste kujutamisele lastekirjanduses. Peatükk sisaldab Maria Nikolajeval (2002) põhinevat tegelasloome analüüsi kirjeldust, mida on hiljem raamatuanalüüsis kasutatud. See alapeatükk sisaldab ka näiteid Briti ja väikses osas ka Ameerika lastekirjanduse näiteid, et illustreerida koletistegelaste erinevaid tunnuseid ning nende kasutamist praktikas.

Töö empiiriline osa ehk raamatuanalüüs põhineb Steve Cole'i lasteraamatul „Stop Those Monsters!" (2015). Peatükk sisaldab raamatu tausta kirjeldust, sisukokkuvõtet, lühikest arutelu selles sisalduvate lastekirjanduse tunnuste kohta ning olulisemate koletistegelaste karakteriloome analüüsi.

Uurimustöö leidis, et „Stop Those Monsters!" on hea näide antud teoreetilisest raamistikust praktikas, omades peaaegu kõiki olulisi lastekirjanduse ja koletiste tunnusjooni, ühendades need lastele sobivaks tervikuks.

Märksõnad: children's literature, monsters, literary characters

Terminoloogia; inglise kirjandus, lastekirjandus, koletised, koletistegelased