

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the worlds of portal fantasy, a genre featuring travel between different realms, through the analysis of the selected novels. This subgenre of fantasy fiction enables a cultural and societal comparison between the character's world of origin and the newly discovered land. There is a process of habituation with the novel setting and one's self. The essay focuses on the worlds presented in the chosen literature, characters, and the role of the transitions through the universes. It facilitates a course of adjustment that inevitably leads to the development of the hero/heroine and offers an exploration of social issues. The thesis also examines the quest structure of the stories, as it is an element often present in the genre. Each book is summarized and examined within its respective chapter.

The first segment deals with the definitions of the 'fantastic' and subsequently, portal fantasy. Consideration is given to the explanations of terms significant to the analysis as a frame of reference for the following chapters. It also discusses the process of building the Secondary universes. *Neverwhere* by Neil Gaiman is the subject of the second chapter. Gaiman's prominence within the field of fantasy and his genre-bending writing opens up the chapter. The concept behind the mirrored cities is discussed in the second subchapter. Following this, the protagonist's journey within the alternate setting and his consequential revelations are analysed. Ostracization and banishment from one's society is the key topic of the novel.

The third part features Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, which explores the idea of a multiverse. Pullman's relevance to the topic is the opening of this section. The chapter then examines the notion of the alternate realities, their conditions, and their thematic implications. The main character's journey of growth is analysed at the end of the chapter. The trilogy deals with human nature and the acquisition of autonomy through the gain of experience and knowledge.

As a traditional representative of the portal fantasy genre, *Wayward Children* series by Seanan McGuire is at the centre of the fourth chapter. The focus is devoted to the twin sisters featured in the series. The section displays their lives before and after their travel through the magical door and brings out the topic of the trauma of identity suppression. Lastly, this thesis offers a discussion and evaluation of the findings within each book; a juxtaposition between the characters' journeys of advancement, the similarities in the subject matter, and their structural contrast.

Keywords: portal fantasy, parallel worlds, bildungsroman, world-building