

Coraline, a children's story?

Dual address and readership in Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*



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Introduction

This thesis will discuss the presence of dual address in Neil Gaiman's children's book *Coraline* and the translation problems that result from this. I will translate two chapters of the book and compare my own translation to that of Henny van Gulik and Ingrid Tóth, who translated the book for Luitingh-Sijthoff.

The reason I chose this topic is because children's literature interests me greatly and from the moment I started brainstorming about possible subjects for my MA thesis, this was what I wished to research the most. After watching and thoroughly enjoying the film *Coraline*, I decided to read the book. From the moment I started reading, I realised that this was the book I wished to translate. Especially the fact that it is a horror story for both adults and children, though in very different manners, made me very curious to explore the book more through writing a thesis about it.

In the first chapter I will place *Coraline* into context, with a description of the author, the work itself, the position of the book within Gaiman's oeuvre and the genre or genres it belongs to. It is classified as a fantasy and horror book, and the first chapter will begin to attempt to explain why. This part is necessary to better understand the following chapters and their relevance.

Chapter two will discuss theoretical problems that are encountered in the book. The most important of these is dual address and this will be explained more fully here, including a discussion of the difference between dual and double address and the difference between dual address and a dual audience/readership. Characteristic aspects of children's literature will be applied to *Coraline* as a test of its status as children's or young adult's book. The book's fantasy and horror elements will receive a more thorough research as well.

The next chapter is a textual analysis which will apply some of the characteristics of the former chapters to *Coraline*, using Nord's question framework and four main categories of translation problems. I will discuss my views on the possible and desired solutions to these problems. Language use will be of high significance, but culture specific elements, song and rhyme and puns – mostly character names – will also be dealt with.

Chapter four consists of a brief analysis of the published translation by Henny van Gulik and Ingrid Tóth. Here I will look at the context of this translation and give my personal opinion about the text, with the help of all the information that has been provided up until that point.

The fifth chapter consists of my own translation and the source text. I have translated chapter three and four of the book and through the use of footnotes I will defend and explain several specific translation choices.

Finally, there will be a conclusion in which I will attempt to answer the following research question:

What are the translation problems that occur while translating Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* due to the presence of dual address, fantasy and horror elements in the story? What are the possible and desirable solutions to these problems?

1. The author and the work

1.1. Neil Gaiman

Neil Gaiman is of British descent and currently resides in the United States of America. He was born in 1960 and started off his career as a journalist, but soon turned to writing graphic novels, of which *Sandman* might be the most famous (Biography, par. 3). His first novel, *Good Omens*, was published in 1990 and was written in collaboration with author Terry Pratchett (Howard 351). Since then he has published many other novels, both for adults and for children. He mainly writes in the sci-fi and fantasy genres, which may have something to do with the authors whose work he read when he was younger, such as C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and G.K. Chesterton, whom he has admitted influenced him and his writing (Howard 352). Apart from novels, he has also written screenplays for TV and cinema, such as *Neverwhere*, *Stardust* and *Beowulf*, and has also written an episode for the British TV series *Doctor Who* (Biography, par. 14). He has won many awards for his work, such as six Locus awards, four Hugos, four Bram Stoker Awards, one International Horror Guild award and one World Fantasy Award (Awards and Honors, par. 1). These are awarded to what are deemed to be the best science fiction, horror or fantasy novels.

Apart from being an author, Gaiman is also an active blogger. He is very active on both Twitter and Tumblr, where he occasionally answers questions from his fans, and writes on the blog of his official website. He uses the internet to be closer to his readers, which appears to be working: on Twitter alone he has over 1.7 million followers. On YouTube is a video of him speaking about piracy and how it affects book sales (Open Rights Group). The view he expresses in that video is that sales can actually go up due to piracy and free books on

the web. In his opinion it is actually one of the best ways to find a new favourite author. As an experiment, *American Gods* was available as a free download for a limited time. As he says in this video, this had a very positive effect: sales went up by 300 percent in the next month. He wants people to read, but does not seem to care too much about how and where they do this. Gaiman is also a patron of the Open Rights Group and the Science Fiction Foundation (Patronage, par. 1). The Open Rights Group is “the UK’s leading voice defending freedom of expression, privacy, innovation, creativity and consumer rights on the net” (About ORG, par. 1). This group attempts to “change public policy whenever your rights are threatened” (par. 1). The Science Fiction Foundation simply wishes to promote science fiction through, among other things, publications and conferences (SFF: About, par. 1-2).

Gaiman has three children, Mike, Holly and Maddy, and sometimes dedicates stories to them or is inspired by them to begin or finish a novel (Howard 353). *Coraline*, for example, was started for Holly, but finished for Maddy (Gaiman 2-3). *The Graveyard Book* was finished thanks to Maddy asking her father about what would happen next when she read the story, and was started due to Mike riding his tricycle in a graveyard near their home, which sparked an idea in Gaiman’s head about a child living in a graveyard (Howard 353). This is in fact how he says he finds his inspiration: daydreaming, asking questions (“What if...?”, “If only...”), and sometimes ideas can simply appear out of nowhere without him actually looking for them (Gaiman 1997, par. 17-20). To put it in his own words: “I make [the stories] up. Out of my head” (Gaiman 1997, par. 41-42).

1.2. Summary of *Coraline*

Coraline is a book about a young girl named Coraline, whose uncommon name is regularly turned into “Caroline” by her neighbours. She has recently moved to a new home with her

parents and her new neighbours are Miss Spink and Miss Forcible below her, two ladies who used to be in the entertainment business and have many dogs, and “a crazy old man” who lives in the attic and trains mice (Gaiman 5). Coraline’s parents are both very busy people with limited time for their daughter, which makes her feel as though they do not care about her. Feeling bored, she explores the house and finds a small door in the drawing room. Upon opening it, she and her mother discover there is only a brick wall on the other side. Yet, that night she sees shadows in her room and when she follows them, the door is open and there is something on the other side. Here she finds the exact same flat as the one she lives in, though with small differences. It also includes her other mother and other father, who look exactly like her real parents, except for the buttons they have instead of eyes. Her neighbours live here too, though with button eyes as well. The rats and dogs can talk and a speaking cat, that manages to go between the two worlds, ends up saving her life.

At first Coraline appears only slightly disturbed by this new world, because her other parents are willing to give her everything she wants, including the affection her own parents seem unable to provide. Soon it turns out her other mother is not as wonderful as she seems: she is a spider, a monster, that can take on different forms and what she wants is to sow buttons in Coraline’s eyes so she can stay with her forever. Coraline escapes, only to find that the other mother has taken her parents captive to ensure her return. Once she crawls through the door once more, she finds out this has happened before, to other children. In order to free their spirits, she must find their eyes and escape. A dangerous hunt follows, but Coraline wins and manages to find her way back to her own world, with her true parents. The story seems to be finished here, if it were not for the fact that the other mother’s hand followed Coraline into this world and is still trying to capture her. Eventually Coraline uses the key to the door in the drawing room as a trap: she throws it into a deep well nearby, which she has disguised to lure

the hand. Once the hand has jumped in after it, she closes the well off, thus ending the story. For now, at least.

1.3. Contextualisation of *Coraline*

Coraline is a book that belongs to the horror and fantasy genres and is classified as a children's book in online book stores such as Amazon. Neil Gaiman says the following on his website regarding the story: "As a general sort of rule, kids seem to read it as an adventure. Adults get nightmares" (Books, Short Stories, and Films, par. 15). In other words: it is read by both. The next chapter will go into this in more detail.

The story is rather typical for Gaiman's work: there is a fantastical world where things are not quite the way they should be and there is some sort of danger for the main character. Something similar occurs in *The Graveyard Book*, another of Gaiman's children's books, although the plot is entirely different. In it, a little boy manages to unknowingly escape from death when he crawls outside while his family is being murdered. He ends up in a graveyard, where the spirits of the deceased decide to take care of him. *Neverwhere*, too, includes a main character that ends up in an alternative world and tries to find his way back to his own London. In a way this is similar to the basic plot of *Coraline*. Other novels written by Gaiman, such as *American Gods* and *Good Omens*, include mythology, which is something that is not present in *Coraline*. However, the book fits in well with his other work and does not particularly stand out when comparing it to Gaiman's other books.

What makes it so different from his other books is not that it is written for a young audience, because as has been pointed out before, he has published other children's books. It is that this particular book was "originally considered too frightening for children" (Biography, par. 9). There is no specification of who believed this to be so, yet this has not

been said about any of his other children's novels. Although it is a fantasy story which has a world with speaking animals and a mother who could make all of Coraline's dreams come true, it is also a horror story where the other mother is an arachnid monster who keeps children captive so she can eat them, and who goes as far as to kidnap Coraline's parents so she will surrender. The main character of *The Graveyard Book* is never in as much danger as Coraline is in, because he could escape fairly easily. Coraline, on the other hand, ends up having to fight for her and her parents' lives. On top of that, the book has an open ending: the other mother has been beaten, but the key lies in a well, along with her arm. Although Coraline covered the well, the possibility of her escape remains. This adds to the idea that it might not be a suitable novel for children, because there is no happy ending. Of course children might see this differently, but this will be discussed in a later chapter.

Coraline has won several awards, namely the British Science Fiction Award, the Hugo award, the Nebula award, the Bram Stoker award and the American Elizabeth Burr/Worzalla award (Biography, par. 9). The first three are awards for science fiction and fantasy, the fourth is for horror and the last one for children's literature. These awards show exactly what the genres of the book are and what *Coraline*'s position in the literary world in general is. For the translation it is important that these elements remain, because they are what made the book receive its status as a crossover and what made it successful. They are part of the reason why it stands out from Gaiman's other books. In 2009 it was turned into a film by the same name, produced by Henry Selick and with the voices of Dakota Fanning and Teri Hatcher (*Coraline*). Its rating is Parental Guidance suggested, which means the film aims at a similar audience as the book: children and adults can safely watch it, yet some scenes could be considered too frightening for young children. The film premiered on 5 February 2009 and by the end of June of that same year it had made over 75 million dollars (Box Office). Its budget was approximately 60 million dollars, so the film could be called a success.

2. Theoretical problems

In order to translate *Coraline*, there are certain theoretical problems that need to be discussed first. In one of the following chapters these problems will be applied to the textual analysis and translation problems, but they will be discussed in a broader framework here. The first, and largest, theoretical problem is that of dual and double address. The difference between these two terms will be explained, as will the problems concerning a translation that uses these forms of address. Several features characteristic to children's literature will be applied to the novel, as far as this is possible. The second problem consists of the presence of the fantasy and horror genres. There will be an explanation of the difference between fantasy and horror for adults and for children, how these two come together in *Coraline* and how these genres can be translated so the original atmosphere does not disappear.

2.1. Dual and double address

Victoria Todd, Helen Day and Debbie Williams investigated which books were considered as crossover – or dual address – fiction and how these can be recognised. Data from a library in Leyland showed that *Coraline* was borrowed by more children than adults and a survey among the book trade illustrated that 63% of the respondents believed this book can be seen as one containing dual address (7-8). The researchers believe that the reasons for this are the existence of the film version and the fact that Gaiman has written fantasy fiction for adults (9). Before delving into this, it is important to explain the term 'dual address' in further detail. After this, the differences between dual, double and single address will be explained. Next, the differences between dual address and dual readership will be clarified and lastly there will be an explanation of how a book receives a dual readership or audience.

Dual address, or crossover, means a text is written for two different types of audiences simultaneously, namely adults and children. This term is credited to T. H. White (Wall 377) and is different from dual readership, which means an author might not have written a novel for two different types of audience, but it is read by both regardless of this fact. Michael Egan uses the term double address in an essay on James Barrie's *Peter Pan*, in which he defines this term by saying that while the author speaks directly to the children, he also occasionally makes comments or jokes which are only meant for adults (Wall 376). In the previous chapter it has already been pointed out that Neil Gaiman himself sees *Coraline* as a novel that can be read by both adults and children, although their reactions to the story may differ entirely. Whether this is a case of dual address or dual readership will be made clear later.

As has been mentioned above, dual address indicates simultaneity, while double address does not. There is also the concept single address, which means a text is only aimed at children (Wall 377). Barbara Wall describes these three forms of address in her essay "Problems of Audience." According to her, single address means the child is spoken to directly and the author does not appear to realise adults may also read the work. It is a relatively new concept and only truly came into being in the twentieth century due to a new view on children's literature (388-389). Double address exists in two forms: the child is addressed "overtly and self-consciously", while the adult can be addressed both overtly and covertly (388). In overt address the author openly directs his or her attention towards the adult audience, while covert address includes jokes and other comments which only adults could understand and enjoy, while the child remains oblivious (388). These two forms may also coexist within the same text. Double address already existed in the nineteenth century, but has grown to be rare in modern days (389). Critics accuse authors who use this type of address of "writing down", which might be the reason authors attempt to avoid it (389). Writing down means authors simplify their style to make it understandable for children instead of writing as

they normally would. Dual address, lastly, assumes there is a dual audience and both adult and child are addressed in the same “tone of seriousness” or in a manner that brings their different interests together (388). The difference with double address is that in dual address the child is never excluded from any jokes or remarks. The story is meant for child and adult to receive equal pleasure, never at the expense of the other addressee.

Dual address “is rare and difficult”, although a dual audience – which is another term for dual readership – is not (Wall 389). Many books are read by adults as well as children, for example by librarians, parents and teachers. This does not, however, necessarily mean there is always a dual audience. Certainly, some books, such as Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* are read by children and adults alike for mere enjoyment, in which case there is a dual audience, but adults also frequently read children’s novels to determine whether they are suitable for the intended audience or not. There are also books which fall into a more difficult category: they were originally written for adults, but over the years they have transformed into children’s books. Examples in this particular category are *Robinson Crusoe*, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *Gulliver’s Travels*. Although these books have enjoyed two sorts of readership over the course of their time, they are part of neither dual nor double address. After all, the author’s intention was often to address adults and the novels were adapted for children at a later point. This phenomenon occurs less often in contemporary times. In the case of a dual audience the author’s intention is not significant; that is only true for dual address. Dual audience, or readership, is often caused by marketing, as the next paragraph will explain.

A survey among library staff, publishers, book buyers and book sellers shows that visual cues, content and marketing are the main reasons a novel may be viewed as a crossover (Todd, Day and Williams 13). Visual cues mainly include book covers, namely the use of dual covers or separate covers for children and adults (13). *Harry Potter* is an example of this last form: when every new book was first published, people had the choice between an adult

and a children's cover. Printed lines from reviews on the cover also form a popular visual cue (13). With regards to content, the top three options are a good plot, interesting characters and a fast pace (14). Todd, Day and Williams point out that many of the adult respondents do not believe the child reader should be protected. However, this is a more difficult category to describe, because whether the reader finds the plot 'good' and the characters 'interesting' is highly subjective and these are not necessarily indicative of a crossover. Books that are primarily read by adults or mainly by children can also fulfil these requirements. Marketing, however, is of great importance. If a book is actively marketed as a crossover, readers will generally agree that it belongs to this genre. Todd, Day and Williams did a survey on this category as well and came to the conclusion that the most important marketing target is to choose books which are similar to successful crossovers, while current trends in fiction come in second place (17). Trends can be, for example, the *Harry Potter* and *Twilight* series, which both gained much popularity in a short time. Apart from being parts of a trend, these particular books are part of other characteristics of crossovers: they are fantasy and teenage books. Another survey by Todd, Day and Williams shows that the fantasy and science fiction genres and books written for teenagers are most popular for crossovers (12). It is important to note here that the author has little to no influence on any of this, which means it is an implied crossover: the books may be advertised or seen as containing dual address, but they receive a dual audience unintentionally.

2.1.1. Aspects of children's literature

To understand dual address and dual readership better, it is important to understand some of the defining characteristics of children's literature first. However, it is relevant to consider some of the most important and common aspects of children's literature and to identify how

these interact with a dual or double audience. Jan van Coillie mentions several features authors for children use in his book *Leesbeesten en boekenfeesten*. These will be combined with Maria Nikalojeva's article "Exit Children's Literature?", which goes beyond the basic characteristics. The first feature that will be discussed is the design and layout of the book. What will follow are the plot, the narrative techniques – such as point of view – and the style. All these aspects will be applied to *Coraline* to help determine the intended audience.

Design and layout

Coillie mentions the design and layout of the book as an indication of its audience. Authors of children's books might use a title or subtitle which mentions the target audience, and sometimes the publisher posts the age group on the cover (Coillie 1999, 26). The foreword and blurb may address the child directly and the font size, type and distribution of the text are often adjusted to the reading level of the implied reader, while the cover, size and form of the book itself aim at a younger crowd (26). It is important to note here that most of these features are often out of control of the author, because it is usually the publisher who determines the design of the book. Covers that are aimed at children generally make use of single address and the adult is not considered as a possible reader at all. However, as has been said earlier, dual and separate covers may be used as well and can be an indication of a crossover.

There are multiple covers for *Coraline*, as a quick look on Amazon shows, but the covers appear to be mostly intended for children and there are no separate covers for adults. The size of the book is relatively small: the copy used for this thesis only contains 96 pages. There are many other aspects to consider as well, though, and these will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Plot

The plot of a story includes the characters and the plot itself. In most children's and young adult literature, the main character is a child or teenager (Coillie 1999, 27). Other signs that a book is written for children are extensive descriptions of what the characters look like and them remaining one-dimensional, everyone either being good or evil, and dialogue being simpler (often even condescending or childish) than in adult literature (27). Nodelman agrees, though not entirely, by saying that the language and story are often "simple, but not necessarily simplistic" (Nikolajeva 221). He adds to this that children's literature is "repetitious in diction and structure" (221). This is especially the case in literature for young children, though less so in teenage fiction and young adult literature. The older the readers are, the less repetition is needed. Furthermore, Nodelman believes children's fiction is often "action-oriented rather than character-oriented" (Nikolajeva 221). Children often appear more interested in an exciting story than an in-depth character study and authors attempt to meet their wishes. Nikolajeva disagrees and discusses a recent development in children's literature that is called polyphony (225). This means that plot is not important, yet introspection is. An important addition she makes is that "North American children's literature is generally more plot-oriented" (225). European children's literature, on the other hand, focuses more on the characters and their growth.

Subject matter is strongly related to the plot and is mentioned by Coillie as a separate category (Coillie 1999, 28). An author may choose subjects children are assumed to be interested in and leave other topics out, themes should be adjusted to the level of the reader and children's literature is usually more light-hearted than adult literature. Children's literature frequently includes a happy ending, for example (Coillie 1999, 26-27, Nikolajeva 221). Maria Nikolajeva does not seem to share these feelings. She is of the opinion that optimistic tones are used less frequently while open endings are becoming more common

(226). In her essay she describes genre eclecticism, which is still a relatively new phenomenon: although most children's fiction falls under one genre, postmodern literature is more likely to contain stories which cannot be placed under simply one (224). This is certainly the case in *Coraline*, with its two major themes of horror and fantasy. It is both scary and fantastical, yet at no point in the story is it merely one of these. The two genres are always interwoven, which makes it nearly impossible to turn it into a happy children's story.

The main character in *Coraline* is a child. This is often characteristic of children's literature. However, the fact that a child is going through all these horrors may make the novel more terrifying for adults, especially when they have children of their own. Coillie claims that fantasy characters and speaking animals are also more common in literature for a young audience (Coillie 1999, 27). This can also be seen in Gaiman's novel. The cat, the rats and the dogs in the other world can all speak and the other mother, father and neighbours are all creatures, not human beings. Even though her age is never explicitly mentioned, there is reason to believe Coraline is in primary school: she still plays with her toys and goes shopping for school with her mother. Her appearance is not described in detail: for the most part, the reader is free to decide what Coraline and the other characters look like. Some of them remain one-dimensional, but Coraline grows more mature throughout the book and some of the people in the other mother's world change as well. Her other father, for example, actually wishes to help her (Gaiman 61). The other mother, however, is purely evil. The combination of these different aspects leads to a story that could be difficult to comprehend for some younger children, although children of approximately Coraline's age and older would have less problems in understanding. Nevertheless, *Coraline* is a relatively light-hearted book when compared to adult literature. However, it contains death, evil disguised as a parent and threats to the main character's life. The 'happy ending' that Nobelman and Coillie mention is merely an illusion: although the child may believe this exists, the adult will

understand that the arm in the well could escape one day and capture another child. The other mother has not been beaten yet, but this is a realisation only adults and older children would probably come to. Nodelman is of the opinion that children's stories are generally optimistic, yet for the most part, *Coraline* is the opposite.

Narrative techniques

The narrative techniques Coillie mentions are the point of view of the story, the structure and the amount of different spaces and leaps in time (Coillie 1999, 26). The younger the audience is, the more it will be addressed directly and guided in what the author believes is the correct interpretation. Perry Nodelman, author of *The Pleasures of Children's Literature*, similarly believes children's literature is "presented from the viewpoint of innocence" and that it has a didactic quality (Nikolajeva 221). If the author wishes to address an older child, a teenager or if he or she wants to include adults, it is more likely that a third- or first-person perspective is used and that the readers are left to draw their own conclusions about the characters and events in the text (Coillie 1999, 26). Morals are much less likely to appear in stories aimed at this age group.

The more complex the narrative structure is, the higher the age of the audience. Maria Nikolajeva explains in her essay that having multiple plots within one story is an aspect of contemporary children's literature and that this is most common in fantasy (225). However, she also emphasises how dialogue, free indirect discourse and third-person perspective play a smaller role in recent children's literature. Instead, first-person perspective is used and the author distances him- or herself from the story (228). Focalisation is another topic Nikolajeva covers in her essay. According to her, contemporary children's fiction is not aimed at identification with the focalising character. Indeed, this character could be someone unpleasant or "alien in some way" (229). Because this is once again connected to a character-

oriented novel, in which a child will learn about people completely different from himself or herself, this could be different for the more plot-oriented North America.

Different spaces and leaps in time can add to the complexity of the narrative, as Coillie explains (Coillie 1999, 26). Books that are written for young children usually take place in one space and events are described as they are happening (26). There are no leaps in time, because it would be confusing for them. Older children and adults, however, do not face these problems. This is the reason why teenage and adult literature may include many different spaces, such as characters' homes, work, school, pubs, places of travel, etc. They also include more flashbacks and flash-forwards, time leaps and other complex narrative techniques.

Coraline is written in third-person and Gaiman never lectures the reader concerning Coraline's actions. He could have been condescending towards her when she disobeyed her mother and crawled through the little door, or towards her parents whenever they did not have time for her, but he allows the readers to form their own opinions. It is not his goal to lecture anyone and a moral can only be found by looking very carefully: Coraline has learned to appreciate her parents, because the other mother has shown her that getting everything she wants is not necessarily a good thing. It is not an obvious moral lesson, though, and should not be considered too seriously. The novel contains two main story lines: Coraline's adventure with the other mother and her problems with her own parents. Then there are the story lines concerning the other characters, who each have a different life, and the stories of the children who had already been taken by the other mother in the past. This leads to a fairly complex novel, which makes it more suitable for teenage readers and adults. Something that supports the idea that *Coraline* is a children's book is that it mostly takes place within the house, although that house has three different flats, a garden and the world with the other mother, which has the same lay-out. There are not many shifts in time and the largest problem can be found right after Coraline has escaped from the other mother and her parents have

somehow returned (Gaiman 75). Coraline greets her parents with hugs and kisses, saying she has missed them, because they had disappeared for two days. Her parents, however, appear to be confused: to them, no time has passed since they last left the house and they cannot remember ever being kidnapped by the other mother. This could even be confusing to older children, though not to teenagers and adults. On top of that, the time that is told is far more than the time that it takes to read the story. At least several days are described in the novel, while it would take a few hours for a child to read it in its entirety.

Style

Style is the last feature of a dual readership – or not. In children’s books the sentences are often short and simple, with many repetitions and summaries, while the choice of words (short and easy to understand, usually sound sweet) and lack of metaphors and irony – deemed too difficult for children to understand – are other indications whether a book was written for children, adults, or both (Coillie 1999, 27-28). The longer and more complicated the sentences and sentence structures are, the higher the reader’s age will be. This will be explained with examples in the next paragraph.

The dialogue in *Coraline* can rarely be called simple. An example is the following line: “‘And now,’ Miss Spink said, ‘Miriam and I proudly present a new and exciting addendum to our theatrical exposition’ (Gaiman 25).” An adult will understand what this means, but most children, and even most young teenagers, will not. What is an addendum and what does it have to do with a theatrical exposition? These two characters are the adults who use complex language more frequently in the book, without any explanation of what they mean to say. Coraline herself, however, uses fairly simple language, although it never becomes belittling. The language is befitting for a girl her age. Another example is something the cat says to Coraline in the other world: “‘We *could* be rare specimens of an exotic breed

of African dancing elephants,’ said the cat” (Gaiman 23). His choice of words here is rather difficult. Young children will probably not know the meaning of the words ‘specimens’, ‘exotic’ and ‘breed’. Later on in the text, on page 43, the cat speaks again, using a long sentence with a complex structure:

“There are those,” it said with a sigh, in tones as smooth as oiled silk, “who have suggested that the tendency of a cat to play with its prey is a merciful one – after all, it permits the occasional funny little running snack to escape, from time to time.”

Another example is the following sentence:

The final week of the holidays, the weather was magnificent, as if the summer itself were trying to make up for the miserable weather they had been having by giving them some bright and glorious days before it ended. (81)

These examples are not typical of children’s literature. Amazon lists the book as aimed at young adults, which seems more likely when looking at the language. Neil Gaiman does not “write down” to the audience at any point and adults can read this novel without feeling like they are reading a children’s book. However, there are also short and simple sentences in the book with words which are easy to understand: “Coraline had watched all the videos. She was bored with her toys, and she’d read all her books” (Gaiman 6). The question remains whether *Coraline* is a case of address or readership. Gaiman does not intend to exclude the child reader, which can be concluded from the fact that Coraline herself is a child. The child reader is most likely assumed to understand as much as she does. At the same time, he does not

appear to have done this consciously, judging by the many contradictions in style, characters and the other aspects mentioned in this chapter.

When all the characteristics mentioned by Coillie, Nodelman and Nikolajeva are added up, it can be concluded that *Coraline* is indeed a crossover, though not through double or dual address. Although several characteristics of (traditional) children's literature apply to the story, others do not or only partially, and instead features of literature for adults can be retrieved from the novel. Perhaps Gaiman simplified certain matters compared to the adult literature he writes, but not to the extent that he appears to have intentionally included or excluded any readers. He finds the book suitable for children, but he himself does not know the intended audience of the novel. Instead, *Coraline* appears to be a case of a book that has been classified as a crossover by others, such as publishers, librarians and the readers. The next chapter will investigate how to maintain this status in the translation, which mostly includes language use, such as grammar, syntax and vocabulary.

2.2. Fantasy and horror

Fantasy and horror are the two main genres of Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*. Fantasy can be seen in the speaking animals, the existence of a parallel dimension and the people in that dimension and their actions. The horror aspect is most prominent in the character of the other mother: she is an arachnid which murders children. Arachnids are often seen as frightening, and because of what the other mother does to children who end up in her world, she is a true object of terror. There are, however, differences in fantasy and horror for adults and for children, which will be discussed in this part. Dual address is also present, so it is important to

take a look at these genres and see how they may cause an adult audience to view the story differently from a younger audience.

Coraline is an example of domestic fantasy, more specifically of domestic fantasy “where children discover a magic being or thing which has the power to change their lives, but which parents fail to notice” (Smith 293). It is not high fantasy, because, as Wolfe says, that is “set in a secondary world...as opposed to Low Fantasy which contains supernatural intrusions into the ‘real’ world” (Sullivan 301). *Coraline* is able to enter the other world, meet the other mother who eventually follows her into reality, yet her parents do not know this. Although they have been kidnapped by the other mother, they forget about this entirely and have no recollection of her. The story is not set entirely in the other world and there is continually an interplay between reality and fantasy. According to Peter Hunt fantasy has “a restricted number of recurrent motifs and elements” (Hunt 2). These consist of “young, questing heroes, wise controlling sages, irredeemably evil monsters and (although, mercifully fewer these days) damsels in distress” (2). *Coraline* contains most of these elements: *Coraline* herself is young, on a quest to find her parents and the souls of the murdered children she encounters, while the cat is wise and continually provides advice or information about the other mother and the world she has created. An example is this passage:

“Why does she want me?” *Coraline* asked the cat. “Why does she want me to stay here with her?”

“She wants something to love, I think,” said the cat. “Something that isn’t her. She might want something to eat as well. It’s hard to tell with creatures like that.”

“Do you have any advice?” asked *Coraline*.

The cat looked as if it were about to say something else sarcastic. Then it flicked its whiskers and said, “Challenge her. There’s no guarantee she’ll play fair, but her kind of thing loves games and challenges.” (Gaiman 38)

Meanwhile, the other mother is an example of an “irredeemably evil monster”.

Another aspect of fantasy Hunt mentions, is the treatment of gender (3). Usually the male is the hero, while the female is either insignificant or evil. *Coraline* is different, though only slightly. Although Coraline is the heroine, the wise cat is male and the other mother is evil. Despite this, gender does not appear to be an issue in the novel.

Hunt and Louisa Smith write about fantasy in connection to children. Fantasy is often criticised for being childish (Hunt 3). In Hunt’s opinion this criticism is unjust: he does not believe children have any natural connection to fantasy and quotes J.R.R. Tolkien: “Children as a class neither like fairy-stories more nor understand them better than adults do” (Hunt 4). Although Tolkien refers to fairy tales, the same can be said for fantasy stories. In fact, as Hunt explains, adult writers are quite often more interested in the idea of a different, fantastical world than children, who have no need for such a thing (4). Children do not have to escape the real world yet, for they do not understand it as well as adults do. Neil Gaiman himself is an adult and he has written many fantasy novels, many of which not intended for children at all, yet including more fantastical elements than *Coraline* does. According to Hunt, adult criticism wants invented worlds to have a moral meaning in order to be significant (5). This goes against the idea that fantasy often includes what Hunt refers to as “‘child-like’ talents”, both for adults and for children (4). These talents include “the joy of invention and discovery, the wonder at variety and ingenuity” (4). *Coraline* includes some of these: Coraline happily discovers that she is able to enter the other flat and is at first impressed by all she has never seen before. She meets speaking animals, sees toys that appear to be alive and eats food she

actually enjoys. Other aspects of fantasy are the division of good and evil and the lack of sexuality. This, too, is represented in *Coraline*: while everything in reality is good, everything in the other world is evil – or, if it is not, it is turned evil by the other mother. Coraline’s other father is a primary example of this. Once Coraline is on her quest to free the souls of the other children and to find her parents, she ends up in a cellar with her other father. He then says to her:

“Run, child. Leave this place. She wants me to hurt you, to keep you here forever, so that you can never finish the game and she will win. She is pushing me so hard to hurt you. I cannot fight her.” (Gaiman 61)

Coraline insists that he can, although she is searching for an escape route as she does. Then this happens: “The thing twisted bonelessly until its one eye was again facing her. It seemed to be getting bigger, now, and more awake. ‘Alas,’ it said, ‘I cannot’” (Gaiman 61). A grey area is impossible in the other mother’s world, everything is black or white, good or evil. The other father is punished and forced to be evil when, for a brief moment, he shows Coraline some sympathy. It is an example of “high drama”, to use Smith’s term (292). High drama means “battles between the powers of lightness and darkness” (Smith 292). In *Coraline* this battle is a small one, but of high significance. There is no mention of sexuality in *Coraline*. Coraline’s parents barely interact in the novel, Miss Spink and Miss Forcible are unmarried women and Mr. Bobo from upstairs is completely alone, with only his mice to keep him company. Oddly enough, this is an aspect of all fantasy stories, be they for children or for adults, and it applies to many other themes as well. For example, love is turned into friendship, achievement into magic, etcetera (Hunt 2003, 6). Hunt adds:

If some things are left out of children's fantasy because they are not relevant to children, or because authors wish to preserve the innocence/ignorance of childhood, and these are much the same things as are left out of adult genre fantasy, then it is not surprising that there has been confusion. (6)

The confusion he addresses is related to the confusion about whether fantasy is a genre for children or adults. This thesis, however, assumes it can be both, either separately or simultaneously. This does not mean there are no differences between the two: "fantasy – things as they cannot be – is very often a very direct critique of things as they are, even if not directly intended to be so" (Hunt 2003, 8). Although it is not impossible to apply this to children's fantasy, it is much more likely that this is the case in adult fantasy. After all, children would not understand the dual meaning of the story. *Coraline* does not appear to contain a critique, but as the quote above says "very often" and not "always", this does not mean it is a children's novel. It fulfils certain characteristics of children's fantasy, though, the first being that Coraline's parents disappear. Being free of parents is what makes it possible for children to explore other worlds (Smith 292). However, Coraline is not happy with the disappearance of her parents and she desperately attempts to get them back. Instead of feeling free, she feels sad and lonely, as the following excerpt shows:

Coraline woke up in the night. She went into her parents' bedroom, but the bed was made and empty. The glowing green numbers on the digital clock glowed 3:12 A.M. All alone, in the middle of the night, Coraline began to cry. There was no other sound in the empty flat.

She climbed into her parents' bed, and, after a while, she went to sleep. (Gaiman 31)

For Coraline, being alone is far from an exciting adventure. Smith also claims that parents – though more frequently step-parents – are often the cause of a certain type of magic entering the world (292). It could be argued that this is true for *Coraline*: had her parents paid her more attention from the start, she might not have wanted to go through the door in the drawing room to enter the fantastical world. Coraline appears to be an adventurous child, though, and the novel begins with her exploring the house and its surroundings. It is safe to say she probably would have gone through the door regardless of her parents. Smith says the following concerning fantasy: “Rather than being a means of imaginative liberation for the child, it can be, and frequently is, the vehicle for moral teaching, made all the more relevant by fantasy’s proximity to reality” (293). Fantasy and reality do, in fact, overlap in *Coraline*, but as has been pointed out earlier, the moral lesson is not very obvious and plays only a small part in the novel. It is true that Coraline learns that getting everything she wants is not necessarily good, as this quote illustrates:

“Frogs, ducks, rhinos, octopuses – whatever you desire. The world will be built new for you every morning. If you stay here, you can have whatever you want.”

Coraline sighed. “You really don’t understand, do you?” she said. “I don’t *want* whatever I want. Nobody does. Not really. What kind of fun would it be if I just got everything I ever wanted? Just like that, and it didn’t *mean* anything. What then?”

(Gaiman 65)

This conversation between Coraline and the other man upstairs shows character growth, because Coraline no longer wishes to have everything she asks for and at the end of the novel she stops complaining about her parents’ lack of attention for her, instead realising that they love her in their own manner. The question is whether this is truly a moral lesson or

not. After all, the main reason she realised this is because she knows the other mother wants to kill and eat her. Any child would start appreciating their parents if that were the alternative. This proves that, although the novel is part of the fantasy genre, it is not part of children's fantasy, despite it appearing to on the surface.

Fantasy is not the only genre *Coraline* is classified as, though. Horror is another part of it. It is not horror in the same sense as novels by Stephen King, Dean Koontz and Anne Rice, which include gore and are not intended to be read by children, yet certain characteristics of horror can be applied to *Coraline*. "Horror is located in both the real and the nightmarish imaginary," says Gina Wisker (2). The latter is the case in *Coraline*, although the horror eventually travels into reality as well. It is not 'real', though, because creatures such as the other mother do not actually exist. Wisker adds that often horror embodies our "deep-seated longings and terrors" which are then acted out and managed (2). "Order is restored (if only temporarily" (Wisker 2). This is an interesting sentence for *Coraline*, because at the end of the novel order is indeed restored. The key to the other mother's world has been thrown down a deep well, along with the other mother's hand, and Coraline has covered the well up with wooden boards. However, there is no certainty that this is an eternal solution. Someone could easily uncover the well and free the other mother's hand, along with the key, and then the story will repeat itself. She only lost her hand, not her life. *Coraline* may be a novel that is read by children (as well as teenagers and adults), but as Clive Barker says: "Horror is everywhere. It's in fairy tales and the evening headlines, it's in street corner gossip and the incontrovertible facts of history. It's in playground ditties [...]" (Wisker 4). In other words, it can certainly occur in a children's novel. Quite often, horror is about pain and death (Wisker 2). This is a theme in *Coraline* as well. The following passage is from the scene when Coraline first meet the spirits of the trapped children:

“What happened to you all?” asked Coraline. “How did you come here?”

“She left us here,” said one of the voices. “She stole our hearts, and she stole our souls, and she took our lives away, and she left us here, and she forgot about us in the dark.”

“You poor things,” said Coraline. “How long have you been here?”

“So very long a time,” said a voice. (Gaiman 48)

The following passage is perhaps even more disturbing, and takes place after the children ask her to find their souls: “That is why we could not leave here, when we died. She kept us, and she fed on us, until now we’ve nothing left of ourselves, only snakeskins and spider husks” (Gaiman 49). The last example is the following:

“It doth not hurt,” whispered one faint voice.

“She will take your life and all you are and all you care’st for, and she will leave you with nothing but mist and fog. She’ll take your joy. And one day you’ll awake and your heart and your soul will have gone. A husk you’ll be, a wisp you’ll be, and a thing no more than a dream on waking, or a memory of something forgotten.”

“Hollow,” whispered the third voice. “Hollow, hollow, hollow, hollow, hollow.”

(Gaiman 49)

What makes it even scarier is that these are all children, all of approximately Coraline’s age or perhaps even younger. Younger readers might not be affected by this, but adults, especially parents, would find the fact that children have died and are in such great danger a good reason to class *Coraline* as a horror novel. After all, children are supposed to be safe. What makes things even worse is that all the events take place at home, a place where children should not have to worry about such things. For children horror might come from the

ghosts, until they realise they are there to help Coraline, but mostly from the other mother and the fear of never seeing one's parents again. The aspect of death might affect them less. The teenage and young adult readers will view the book as horror for mostly the same reason as the adults, including the realisation that the end of the novel might not be the end of the other mother.

The audience of the translation will be largely the same as that of the audience in the source culture, which means there is no need to enhance or diminish the fantasy and horror elements. The main translation problem regarding fantasy and horror is attempting to maintain the correct atmosphere in the translation.

3. Textual analysis

A textual analysis is an important part of a translation, because it reveals translation problems in the text and can lead to solutions. In the case of *Coraline*, the analysis will mostly be aimed at dual readership. In order to analyse the text, the translation assignment will be stated first: *Coraline* will be translated for publishing company Lemniscaat. Although it will be classified as Young Adult fiction, the publisher would like to maintain the possibility of dual readership. Therefore, the target public is near enough the same as the source public. The focus of the analysis will be on chapters three and four, which have been translated for this thesis. The translation itself, which will appear later on, includes footnotes to justify more specific translation choices. Before beginning the analysis, it is important to look at Christiane Nord's question framework: "Who writes with what goal to whom through what medium where when why a text with which function? What does (or doesn't) he say something about in what order, with the usage of which nonverbal elements, with what kinds of words, in what sentences in which tone with what effect?" (Nord 146) Nord also distinguishes between the following four categories of translation problems: "1) pragmatic translation problems which follow from the differences in the communicative situations in which the source text and target text are imbedded [...]; 2) translation problems which are specific to two cultures and follow from the differences in norms and conventions of the source and the target culture [...]; 3) translation problems which are specific for a language pair and which follow from the differences in structures of the source language and the target language [...]; 4) text-specific translation problems which occur in the translation of an individual text and of which the solution cannot simply be applied to other translation assignments" (Nord 147). The questions will be answered first, then the translation problems will be regarded separately.

First of all, Nord's question framework will be applied to *Coraline*. The 'who' is Neil Gaiman, who wrote *Coraline* aiming to entertain readers through a fantasy novel. The novel is set in England, even though Gaiman currently lives in the United States of America, and takes place around the time of the publication date, which is 2002. Therefore, it can be said that it is set in the present. The 'why' and the function are both similar to the goal: Gaiman wrote this novel because he is an author. He dedicated the novel to his daughters and published it so others could enjoy it as well. After all, that is what authors do; they (attempt to) publish their novels. In this novel he says something about Coraline, her parents and neighbours, about the fantasy world the other mother inhabits and Coraline's adventures, but he does not say whether the other mother has been defeated for eternity or what will happen to her world now that the door has been locked. He also does not inform the reader about Coraline's future or whether her relationship with her parents will remain mended. *Coraline* is written in chronological order: it begins shortly after the family has moved into their new home and ends when Coraline has defeated the other mother in her own world, with no flashbacks, flash-forwards or other leaps in time throughout. Because the publisher has aimed at a dual audience, illustrations are included in the version that has been used for this thesis. These illustrations serve mostly to show what the characters look like according to illustrator Dave McKean and to enhance the enjoyment of the younger readers. The usage of words and sentences have already briefly been discussed in the previous chapter and will be explained in further detail later. Simply put, Gaiman uses both very simple and very complex words and sentences, depending on the character and the situation. The tone also differs per character: the cat is sarcastic, Coraline is innocent and the other mother has a dangerous or deceptive tone of voice. The narrative tone is one of innocence and objectivity, telling the story yet never passing judgement. Its effect is that the novel becomes more terrifying, because the

darkest moments are described through the eyes of someone who might not fully understand the danger of the situation.

Second of all, this thesis will discuss the pragmatic translation problems in *Coraline*. Although there are no problems concerning the time, because there is no significant difference between the time setting of the source text and the target text, there are several cultural differences due to culture specific elements. According to Diederik Grit, culture specific elements are “the concrete unique phenomena or categorical concepts which are specific for a certain country or cultural area and which have no or at the most a partial equivalent elsewhere” and “the terms used for these phenomena/concepts” (189). Gaiman does not use many of these elements in *Coraline* and in chapters three and four there are few examples to be found. The reason for this is that most of the story takes place in Coraline’s house, which means there is no place for much culture. There are a few, namely “Day-Glo green gloves” (16), “Wellington boots” (16), “the drawing room” (17), the use of “Miss” and two Shakespeare quotes in Miss Spink and Miss Forcible’s performance. DayGlo Color Corp. is a company that designs many fluorescent products in bright and enhanced colours (Who We Are, par. 1). The Netherlands does not know or have this brand, so it is best to simply translate this as “fluorescerende groene handschoenen”. The image remains the same and the “Day-Glo” (spelling is Gaiman’s) aspect of it is not significant. “Wellington boots” are relatively well-known in the Netherlands and most people will probably understand what is meant if this were to be translated as “Wellington-laarzen”. However, “rubberlaarzen” is what would be a more obvious choice in Dutch and this would be a better translation. From the description in *Coraline*, the drawing room is a fancy room which people do not use very often. The *Van Dale* provides a few translations for this term, of which the two best choices are “salon” and “zitkamer”. “Salon” perhaps sounds too fancy. It also has a different connotation, namely of a ‘haarsalon’ (hair salon) or a ‘schoonheidssalon’ (beauty salon). Therefore, it is

better to use “zitkamer”. This is not the same as a “woonkamer” (living room), which is used regularly, so it still contains the fancy aspect. Then there is the matter of “Miss”. Miss Spink and Miss Forcible are continually referred to as such. A literal translation of this would be “juffrouw”, but this is not used very often in Dutch, except for female teachers in primary school. Because the book is not aimed at very young children, it might be possible – and better – to leave “Miss” as it is. The target audience would be old enough to understand this, but “Miss” fits better than “juffrouw” or “mevrouw” do. “Mevrouw” implies marriage and neither of the women are married. As has already been said, “juffrouw” has a different connotation, which leaves “Miss” as the best option. The last culture specific elements are the Shakespeare quotes: “‘What’s in a name?’ asked Miss Forcible. ‘That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet’” and “‘I know not how to tell thee who I am,’ said Miss Spink to Miss Forcible” (Gaiman 26). These quotes come from *Romeo and Juliet* and in order to translate this, the translator should seek out how they have been translated in published translations. In this case, the translation that has been chosen is by Jan Jonk. He translated these lines as follows: “‘Wat zegt een naam?’ vroeg Miss Forcible. ‘Een roos blijft zoet van geur, al geven wij haar nog zo’n vreemde naam’” and “‘Ik weet niet hoe ik zeggen moet hoe ik heet,’ zei Miss Spink tegen Miss Forcible.” These translations will be used in the translation of *Coraline*.

The translation problems specific for two cultures are less relevant to *Coraline*. Politeness, however, is rather significant. In English “you” can be translated both as “u” and as “jij”. This choice is an essential one. Nobody will refer to Coraline as “u”, because she is a child; more important is how Coraline would refer to the other characters. She has been raised by modern parents and, although she is polite, she sees the neighbours as her friends. Coraline’s parents might be seen as careless, perhaps, especially with regards to their daughter, and she is certainly not allowed to do whatever she wishes, but they do not seem to

be the kinds of people who would ask their child to call them “u”. Therefore it is very likely that she will address the other characters in the novel with “jij”, although she might use “u” if she were to meet a new character who was much older than her. The second possible translation problem is that of genre, yet the fantasy and horror genres are similar in the Netherlands, England and the United States of America, which means that the only translation problems relating to genre are the problems in trying to maintain the correct atmosphere. The fantasy and horror aspects will not be weakened or emphasised in the translation. The story is fantastical and slightly terrifying, and because the translation is neither aimed at a younger nor an older audience than that of the original, this should remain the same. The only problem that can arise is how to use language that will make the target text as frightening and imaginative as the source text. This, however, includes individual translation choices and these can be read in the footnotes of the translation.

The third problem consists of translation problems that are specific to a language pair. English and Dutch have much in common, both being Germanic languages. There are, however, two very important differences which are relevant to *Coraline*, namely punctuation and the use of present participles. Gaiman uses these to be able to write longer sentences, often combining the two. This can lead to sentences with a length of several lines. The first example is a quote from chapter three, before Coraline first makes her way into the other world:

She flipped through a book her mother was reading about native people in a distant country; how every day they would take pieces of white silk and draw on them in wax, then dip the silks in dye, then draw on them more in wax and dye them some more, then boil the wax out in hot water, and then finally, throw the now-beautiful cloths on a fire and burn them to ashes. (Gaiman 17)

This one sentence includes many commas and a semi-colon in order to make it as long as possible. The translation could either keep this exact punctuation, or could alter it to suit the Dutch language better. Semi-colons are rare in Dutch and in this case its usage would actually be seen as grammatically incorrect. Commas are not used as frequently in Dutch as in English either. Gaiman uses many of these even by the standards of his own language, although the translation should not use them exactly as he does. There should, however, be more commas than in a regular Dutch text. The sentence could also be separated into several short sentences, yet this is not recommended. After all, part of Gaiman's style is the alternation between long, complex sentences and short, simple ones. This leads to the following as being the best translation:

Ze bladerde door een boek over inheemse mensen in een ver land dat haar moeder een het lezen was: hoe ze elke dag stukken wit zijde namen en er in was op tekenden, dan het zijde in verf dompelden, er dan meer op tekenden met was en hen wat meer verfdn, dan de was in heet water uitwasten en dan uiteindelijk de nu prachtige stukken stof in het vuur gooiden en ze dan tot as verbrandden.

The only thing that has been changed here is that the semi-colon has become a colon, because a colon would be more likely in Dutch, and the last comma before 'en' ('and' in the source text) has been removed, because commas generally do not occur before 'en'. The next example comes from a few pages later on, when Coraline visits her other bedroom:

There were all sorts of remarkable things in there she'd never seen before: windup angels that fluttered around the bedroom like startled sparrows; books with pictures

that writhed and crawled and shimmered; little dinosaur skulls that chattered their teeth as she passed. (Gaiman 19)

This part consists mostly of a summary and is therefore not too difficult to translate. What has to be changed is the punctuation, because in Dutch commas are used instead of semi-colons when summarising. This leads to the following translation:

Er waren allerlei merkwaardige dingen die ze nog nooit eerder had gezien: opwindengeltjes die door de slaapkamer fladderden als geschrokken mussen, boeken met foto's die kronkelden en kropen en glommen, kleine dinosaurusschedels die met hun tanden klapperden als ze voorbij kwam.

The last example is more difficult than the others because of its grammatical construction: "Far away, at the edge of the room, was a high wooden stage, empty and bare, a dim spotlight shining onto it from high above" (Gaiman 24). Because of the many descriptions, which are divided by commas, this sentence is quite complex. The present participle "shining" does not make things any simpler. Present participles are difficult to translate into Dutch. Possible translations are "schijnende" or "terwijl er een zwakke spotlight op scheen", yet the first is mostly seen as old-fashioned and the second would only make the sentence even longer than it already is. Therefore, the translation should be "Ver weg, aan de rand van de kamer, bevond zich een hoog houten podium, leeg en kaal, met een zwakke spotlight erop gericht vanaf hoog erboven."

Apart from these problems, diminutives and pragmatic particles are very common in Dutch and the translation should include these wherever possible and acceptable. An example

that includes both of these is the following quote, which comes from a conversation in the theatre Miss Spink and Miss Forcible are performing in:

“This bit finishes soon,” whispered the dog. “Then they start folk dancing.”

“How long does this go on for?” asked Coraline. “The theater?”

“All the time,” said the dog. “For ever and always.”

“Here,” said Coraline. “Keep the chocolates.”

“Thank you,” said the dog. Coraline stood up.

“See you soon,” said the dog.

“Bye,” said Coraline. (Gaiman 26)

“Dog” occurs very often in the text, yet unless Dutch people speak about a big dog, they will frequently use the word “hondje”. In this case the dogs are Scotties, which are quite small, so “hondje” would be appropriate here. “Bit” is something small, and in Dutch it would naturally turn into a diminutive. Some, or at least one, pragmatic particle should occur in the translation as well, for example “toch” or “maar”. All these rules lead to the following translation:

“Dit stukje is zo afgelopen,” fluisterde het hondje. “Dan gaan ze volksdansen.”

“Hoe lang gaat dit door?” vroeg Coraline. “Het theater?”

“De hele tijd,” zei het hondje. “Voor eeuwig en altijd.”

“Hier,” zei Coraline. “Hou de chocola maar.”

“Dank je,” zei het hondje. Coraline stond op.

“Tot snel,” zei het hondje.

“Dag,” zei Coraline.

“Hondje” and “stukje” are the diminutives, while “maar” has been added after “hou de chocola”. All these adjustments serve to ensure that the translation sounds natural in Dutch and less like a translation.

Lastly, there are text-specific translation problems. *Coraline* contains puns and song and rhyme, which can lead to problems in the translation. In the translated chapters the puns include character names and certain word choices. The puns relating to character names are limited to Miss Spink and Miss Forcible. “Forcible” means powerful or impressive, which suits the character’s personality. “Spink” is more difficult and the definition that seems to appear most often is that it has to do with birds (OED). Miss Spink is described as being small: “Miss Spink was bundled up in pullovers and cardigans, so she seemed more small and circular than ever” (Gaiman 10). The similarities between Miss Spink and birds, however, seem to end there. In his essay on character names in translation, Jan van Coillie says that “names in books serve particular purposes or functions” (Coillie 2006, 123). “Names [...] can also have a number of concomitant functions such as amusing the reader, imparting knowledge or evoking emotions” (123). However, although Miss Forcible has a forcible personality, Miss Spink does as well, so whether Gaiman gave them such names to evoke emotions or impart knowledge is debatable. Translations could be “Miss Krachtig” and “Miss Vink”, but it is better not to translate the names at all. Coillie says the following about this:

If the name refers to a character trait or the profession of the person in question (as is often the case in children’s books), the image called up in the reader’s mind is different and the name may not have the same emotional or divertive effect. If the connotation is more implicit (based on a play of words, for instance), the effect will be

lost on the reader who does not know the language, as will the intellectual pleasure of identifying the joke in the first place. (Coillie 2006, 125)

Although this is certainly true, there are several reasons why this does not necessarily count for *Coraline*. First of all, *Coraline* is not merely a children's book. In fact, its theme and some of the language and grammar in the novel suggest its readers are, at the youngest, approximately ten years old. Second of all, the connotations are very small ones and only exist for two of the characters in the book. Lastly, because the choice has been made to leave "Miss" as it is, it would sound quite odd to follow this by a Dutch name or word. Therefore, it is better to leave the names in English. The readers will not miss anything and if they happen to understand what the names mean, they can draw their own conclusions about the characters.

Other puns consist of certain words: the cat speaks "cattily" (Gaiman 23) and the little dogs "woofed" during other Miss Spink and Miss Forcible's performance (25). "Cattily" can easily be translated as "kattig", while "woofed" needs more thought. The *Van Dale* provides two translations: "waffen" and "blaffen". However, "waffen" cannot be found in the Dutch part of the dictionary or anywhere else, for that matter. This makes "blaffen" the best choice. "Bark" is used on page 24, which will have to be translated differently from "woofed". "Keffen" is an option, although this is a slightly different form of barking. However, because they "barked enthusiastically", "keffen", which means "to yap", is not a bad option.

Song and rhyme are more difficult to translate. Clifford E. Landers claims that in poetry, sonority is most important (100). Rhyme is less important in his opinion, because verse and rhyme do not always go together (99). However, in this case the rats are singing a song, so there should be rhyme in the translation. The meaning is also of importance, as is the

double meaning of “rise”, which refers both to rising to power and to the opposite of “fell” in the line before. One possible translation is this:

We hebben tanden en staarten

We hebben staarten en dromen

We waren hier al voor jij viel

Jij bent nog hier als wij opkomen.

Although the rhythm is not perfect, it is possible to sing this. “Eyes”, which means “ogen”, has been changed to “dromen” in order to rhyme and to emphasise that the rats have certain plans. This has been done because “opkomen” does mean “rise” in both the meanings intended, but it is not immediately entirely clear what is meant by it. “Dromen” makes this a little clearer. In this case, however, there are more good translations, depending on what the translator prefers to bring across to the reader.

4. Discussion of published translation

There is only one published translation of *Coraline* in Dutch, although there are two editions of it. The first edition was translated in 2003, one year after *Coraline* was published, the second in 2009, the year the film was released. In this thesis only the 2003 version will be discussed. The novel has been translated by Henny van Gulik and Ingrid Tóth for Uitgeverij Luitingh-Sijthoff. This publishing company consists of five publishers, but it is unclear which of these published *Coraline*. Most likely it was either Luitingh or Luitingh Fantasy, both of which are aimed at – amongst others – fantasy (Over Luitingh-Sijthoff, par. 2-3). Henny van Gulik has translated more fantasy novels, for instance by Michael Scott and Jean Marie Auel, horror and thrillers, for example by Dean Koontz, and several others. Fantasy appears to be his main genre. Ingrid Tóth has translated Anne Rice and other horror stories. Together they have translated several novels, all in the fantasy and horror genres. The title of this translation is *Coraline*, the same as the original. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the translation choices Van Gulik and Tóth have made concerning language, genre, culture specific elements, song and rhyme and puns and these will be compared to the choices that have been made in the former chapter.

What was discussed first in the textual analysis were the culture specific elements. The culture specific elements have not always been translated in the same manner as the desirable translations, although “Wellington boots” (Gaiman 16) and the two Shakespeare quotes have been. “Wellington boots” has been translated as “rubberlaarzen” (Van Gulik and Tóth 30), and although the two translators have used a different Shakespeare translation, they have looked for an existing translation. They have chosen a translation by Leendert Burgersdijk from the nineteenth century (Stutterheim 312) and this has led to the following solutions: “‘Wat doet een naam ertoe?’ vroeg juffrouw Forcible. ‘Het ding dat roos nu heet, geurde,

als 't een and'ren naam had, even lieflijk'" and "'Hoe zal 'k u zeggen wie ik ben?' zei juffrouw Spink tegen juffrouw Forcible" (Van Gulik and Tóth 50). "Day-Glo green gloves" (Gaiman 16), however, has been translated as "lichtgevende felgroene handschoenen" (Van Gulik and Tóth 29). Nowhere in the text does it say they gave off any kind of light, which makes this translation a topic of debate. Perhaps the translators thought "glo" stood for "glow". The "drawing room" is consistently translated with "mooie kamer". This could be confusing for the readers, because a drawing does not have to be pretty. This choice is rather odd, because there are several translations which would suit the text better. "Miss" has been changed into "juffrouw" everywhere. This could depend on their given target audience, however, and therefore it is possible that for their assignment this was the best – and perhaps only – option.

Secondly, the problems of politeness and genre were examined. Although genre has not been altered, the level of politeness in this translation is different from that mentioned in the previous chapter. Coraline addresses all the adults with "u", which is not consistent with her character. Hardly any children say "u" to their parents, yet Coraline does in this translation. The reason for this is unclear. Perhaps the translators wished to emphasise the detached relationship between Coraline and everybody else, though this does not make it any more likely that she would use "u" when speaking to her parents, or even her other parents.

The third set of translation problems relates to problems specific to the language pair. For *Coraline* this means the existence of present participles, punctuation, diminutives and pragmatic particles. The first example was the long sentence describing the book Coraline's mother was reading, which has been translated as follows:

Ze bladerde door een boek dat haar moeder aan het lezen was. Het ging over mensen in een ver land, die elke dag op lapjes witte zijde tekeningen maakten met was, waarna

ze de lapjes zijde in verf dompelden, dan weer erop tekenden met was en de lapjes dan weer in verf dompelden. Daarna kookten ze in heet water de was uit de lapjes en ten slotte gooiden ze de prachtige lapjes in een vuur, waar ze in as veranderden. (Van Gulik and Tóth 31)

In the source text, this is one long sentence. The desirable translation has maintained this length, but Van Gulik and Tóth have decided to cut it into smaller segments. Although this makes it easier to read, it is not Gaiman's style. After all, even in the source text this sentence is much longer than the average English sentence. The book is advertised as being intended for children of the ages nine to twelve on bol.com's website, so perhaps the translators wished to simplify certain parts for the younger readers. However, the desirable translation can be understood by that age group as well and it does pay attention to Gaiman's style, which is why this particular translation could be improved. However, there is also a long sentence which might have a slightly better translation than the desirable one: "Ver weg, aan het uiteinde van de kamer, was een hoog, houten toneel, leeg en kaal, verlicht door een zwak spotje dat hoog boven het toneel hing" (Van Gulik and Tóth 45). This flows quite nicely and is easy to read and understand.

Diminutives do not appear to be as significant to Van Gulik and Tóth as they should be, as the following translation proves:

"Dit deel is zo afgelopen," fluisterde de hond. "Daarna gaan ze volksdansen."

"Hoe lang duurt het eigenlijk?" vroeg Coraline. "De hele voorstelling, bedoel ik?"

"De hele tijd," zei de hond. "Voor eeuwig en altijd."

"Hier," zei Coraline. "Je mag de bonbons allemaal hebben."

"Dank je wel," zei de hond. Coraline stond op.

“Tot gauw,” zei de hond.

“Dag,” zei Coraline. (Van Gulik and Tóth 50)

Instead of “hondje” the translators have used “hond”, and instead of “stukje” they have used “deel”. Neither of these translations are inherently wrong, yet they are not the best choices either. Apart from that, the sentences are longer than in the source text. Coraline asks “The theater?”, yet Van Gulik and Tóth have turned this into a full sentence. “Je mag de bonbons allemaal hebben” is also far too long as a translation for “Keep the chocolates” and both of these sentences could and should have been shorter. Coraline’s character does not use many words unless she wants attention or attempts to stretch the time, neither of which is the case here. She wishes to get away, hence the use of as few words as possible. The translators do not appear to have realised this and have made the dialogue sound slightly unnatural.

Lastly, the previous chapter discussed puns and song and rhyme. Especially the puns have not always been translated according to the suggestions in the analysis. The character names have not been altered in any way, which was desirable. However, “cattily” has disappeared from the translation entirely, and for “woofed” and “barked” the translators have used “blaften”, while it was suggested and desired that these two verbs would have two different translations. Here, the translators have most likely not realised that there were puns, which means they might have missed out on humour in other chapters as well. Further research could prove or disprove this.

The rats’ song has also been translated quite differently from what has been suggested:

We hebben tanden en we hebben staarten

We hebben staarten en ogen, dat is geen bedrog.

We waren hier voordat jij viel

Als wij straks de baas zijn, dan zit jij hier nog. (Van Gulik and Tóth 37)

Although the addition of “bedrog” is actually very positive, the lack of ambiguity in the verb “rise” could be an objection. On the other hand the translators have made clear what the most important meaning of “rise” is in this context. What is objectionable, however, is the third line, where the rhythm is broken up. Adding an extra syllable, for example the word “al” after “hier”, would improve the song.

What can be concluded about the published translation is that, although it sounds better than the suggested translation in some parts, overall it contains various problems. Puns have been forgotten, the style has been altered in certain places and the word choice does not always suit the novel. Had the translators analysed the text before or even while translating it, this could have been avoided. Admittedly, how a text is translated depends largely on the assignment that has been given, but this is not an excuse for every problem that has been found in this translation. Using “zitkamer” instead of “mooie kamer” or adding in the word “kattig” will not influence the readership of the novel. Therefore, this translation needs improvement. Perhaps the second edition has changed these things, which could be a topic for a future research.

5. Translation

III

De volgende dag scheen de zon en Coralines moeder nam haar mee naar de dichtstbijzijnde grote stad om kleren te kopen voor school. Ze zetten haar vader af bij het station. Hij ging vandaag naar Londen om wat mensen te ontmoeten.

Coraline zwaaide naar hem.¹

Ze gingen naar het warenhuis om de schoolkleren te kopen.

Coraline zag wat fluorescerende groene handschoenen die ze erg leuk vond. Haar moeder weigerde ze voor haar te kopen en kocht liever witte sokken, marineblauw schoolondergoed, vier grijze bloezen en een donkergrijze rok.

“Maar mam, iederéén² op school heeft grijze bloezen en zo. Niemand heeft groene handschoenen. Ik zou de enige kunnen zijn.”

Haar moeder negeerde haar; ze was met de winkelassistente aan het praten. Ze waren aan het praten over wat voor trui voor Coraline gekocht moest worden en waren het erover eens dat de beste keuze was om er eentje te kopen die beschamend groot en flodderig was, in de hoop dat ze er op een dag in zou groeien.

Coraline wandelde weg en keek naar een uitstalling van rubberlaarzen die vormen van kikkers en eendjes en konijntjes hadden.

Toen wandelde ze weer terug.

“Coraline? O, daar ben je. Waar was je in hemelsnaam?”

¹ The source text says here that she “waved goodbye”, but “to wave someone goodbye” is a set expression in English, while in Dutch we are more likely to simply say “zwaaien.” Admittedly, Gaiman could have left out the goodbye, but it is fairly common to add it.

² The source text has placed this text in italics, which is how emphasis is shown in English. Dutch, on the other hand, generally uses marks of emphasis such as these.

“Ik was ontvoerd door buitenaardse wezens,” zei Coraline. “Ze kwamen uit de ruimte met straalwapens, maar ik hield ze voor de gek door een pruik te dragen en in een buitenlands accent te lachen, en ik wist te ontsnappen.”

“Natuurlijk, lieverd. Nou, ik denk dat je wel wat meer haarclipjes kunt gebruiken, niet dan?”

“Nee.”

“Nou, laten we er zes³ nemen, voor de zekerheid,” zei haar moeder.

Coraline zei niets.

In de auto op de weg terug zei Coraline: “Wat is er in het lege appartement?”

“Geen idee. Niets, denk ik. Het ziet er waarschijnlijk net zo uit als ons appartement voor we er introkken. Lege kamers.”

“Denk je dat je er vanuit ons appartement in kunt komen?”

“Alleen als je door bakstenen kunt lopen, lieverd.”

“O.”

Ze waren rond lunchtijd thuis. De zon scheen, maar het was een koude dag. Coralines moeder keek in de koelkast en vond een zelig tomaatje en een stuk kaas waar groen spul op groeide.

In de broodtrommel lag alleen nog een korst.

“Ik kan maar beter snel naar de winkel gaan en wat vissticks kopen of zo,” zei haar moeder.

“Wil je mee?”

“Nee,” zei Coraline.

“Dan niet,” zei haar moeder, en vertrok. Toen kwam ze terug en pakte haar portemonnee en autosleutels en ging weer weg.

Coraline verveelde zich.

Ze bladerde door een boek over inheemse mensen in een ver land dat haar moeder een het lezen was: hoe ze elke dag stukken wit zijde namen en er in was op tekenden, dan het zijde in

³ “Half a dozen” has been translated as “zes”. This has been done because in Dutch “een half dozijn” is rarely used when referring to such items. It is used for eggs, for example, not for hair clips.

verf dompelden, er dan meer op tekenden met was en hen wat meer verfd, dan de was in heet water uitwasten en dan uiteindelijk de nu prachtige stukken stof in het vuur gooiden en ze dan tot as verbrandden.

Het leek Coraline bijzonder nutteloos, maar ze hoopte dat de mensen er plezier aan beleefden. Ze verveelde zich nog steeds en haar moeder was nog niet thuis.

Coraline pakte een stoel en duwde hem naar de keukendeur. Ze klom op de stoel en reikte omhoog. Ze klom omlaag en pakte toen een bezem uit de bezemkast. Ze klom weer terug op de stoel en reikte omhoog met de bezem.⁴

*Kling.*⁵

Ze klom omlaag van de stoel en raapte de sleutels op. Ze glimlachte triomfantelijk. Toen zette ze de bezem tegen de muur en ging de zitkamer in.

Het gezin gebruikte de zitkamer niet. Ze hadden de meubels geërfd van Coralines grootmoeder, samen met een houten koffietafel, een bijzettafeltje, een zware glazen asbak en het olieverfschilderij van een fruitschaal. Coraline kon er nooit achter komen waarom iemand een fruitschaal zou willen schilderen. Behalve dat was de kamer leeg: er stonden geen prulletjes op de schoorsteenmantel, geen beeldjes of klokken; niets dat het gezellig of bewoond deed aanvoelen.

De oude zwarte sleutel voelde kouder aan dan de rest. Ze duwde hem in het sleutelgat. Hij draaide soepel om, met een bevredigende *klik*.

⁴ '[C]hair', 'broom', 'climbed', 'got' and 'reached up' are each used more than once in these few lines, perhaps to slow the events down and as a preparation for how fast everything will happen afterwards. It is therefore important to keep these repetitions in place. The only difference is that the second 'got' has been translated by 'klom', which has already been used twice. However, because 'got' is used three times in the source text and cannot be used as many times in the translation – not without sounding like a fabricated word choice – it is also possible, and allowed, to remove one of them. Instead, 'klom', which is a more obvious choice in all the cases it has been used in, occurs three times in the target text. The repetition has shifted, but is still present in the same number.

⁵ Here italics do not indicate emphasis, but merely a sound. Therefore, the italics can be transferred to the translation

Coraline stond stil en luisterde. Ze wist dat ze iets verkeerd aan het doen was en ze probeerde te luisteren of haar moeder terugkwam, maar ze hoorde niets. Toen legde Coraline haar hand op de deurknop en draaide hem om,⁶ en, eindelijk, opende ze de deur.

Hij opende naar een donkere gang. De bakstenen waren verdwenen alsof ze er nooit geweest waren. Er kwam een koude, mufte geur door de open deuropening: het rook als iets erg ouds en erg langzaams.

Coraline stapte door de deur.

Ze vroeg zich af hoe het lege appartement zou zijn – als dat inderdaad was waar de gang naartoe leidde.

Coraline liep ongemakkelijk door de gang. Er was iets erg bekends aan.

Het tapijt onder haar voeten was hetzelfde tapijt dat ze in haar appartement hadden. Het behang was hetzelfde behang dat zij hadden. Het schilderij dat in de gang hing was hetzelfde dat ze thuis in hun gang hadden hangen.

Ze wist waar ze was: ze was in haar eigen huis. Ze was niet vertrokken.

Ze schudde haar hoofd, verward.

Ze tuurde naar het schilderij aan de muur: nee, het was niet precies hetzelfde. Het schilderij dat in hun eigen gang hing, liet een jongetje in ouderwetse kleding zien dat naar wat zeepbellen staaarde. Maar nu was de uitdrukking op zijn gezicht anders – hij keek naar de zeepbellen alsof hij van plan was iets heel akeligs met ze te doen. En er was iets eigenaardigs aan zijn ogen.

Coraline tuurde naar zijn ogen en probeerde erachter te komen wat er precies anders aan was.

Ze wist het bijna toen iemand zei: “Coraline?”

⁶ Here the semi-colon has been turned into a comma. As has been explained earlier, semi-colons are not used very frequently in Dutch. Therefore, it is better to turn them into commas when translating. A comma before “en” is seen as ungrammatical in Dutch, but it is important to note that commas before “and”, although more common in English, are not used nearly as often as Gaiman uses them. When it appears as though the comma has been placed there for a certain effect, namely to slow down the time, they have been copied to the translation. In that case it is part of Gaiman’s style.

Het klonk als haar moeder. Coraline liep de keuken in, waar de stem vandaan was gekomen. Er stond een vrouw in de keuken met haar rug naar Coraline. Ze leek een beetje op Coralines moeder.

Alleen...

Alleen was haar huid wit als papier.

Alleen was ze groter en dunner.

Alleen waren haar vingers te lang, en ze hielden maar niet op met bewegen, en haar donkerrode vingernagels waren krom en scherp.

“Coraline?” zei de vrouw. “Ben jij het?”

En toen draaide ze zich om. Haar ogen waren grote zwarte knopen.

“Lunchtijd, Coraline,” zei de vrouw.

“Wie ben jij⁷?” vroeg Coraline.

“Ik ben je andere moeder,” zei de vrouw. “Ga je andere vader maar vertellen dat de lunch klaar is.” Ze deed de oven deur open. Opeens realiseerde Coraline zich wat een honger ze had.

Het rook heerlijk. “Nou, schiet op.”

Coraline liep door de gang naar waar haar vaders studeerkamer was. Ze opende de deur. Er was daar een man die aan het toetsenbord zat, met zijn rug naar haar toe. “Hallo,” zei Coraline.

“Ik- Ik bedoel, ze zei dat ik moest zeggen dat de lunch klaar is.”

De man draaide zich om.

Zijn ogen waren knopen, groot en zwart en glanzend.

“Hallo Coraline,” zei hij. “Ik heb erg veel honger.”

Hij stond op en liep met haar de keuken in. Ze zaten aan de keukentafel en Coralines andere moeder bracht hen lunch. Een gigantische, goudbruine gegrilde kip, gebakken aardappels, kleine groene erwten. Coraline propte het eten in haar mond. Het smaakte geweldig.

⁷ Coraline appears to be a polite girl, but she also feels at home rather easily and quickly becomes friends with her far older neighbours. Therefore it is unlikely that she would use “u” to address someone whom she believes is her mother’s age.

“We hebben lang op je gewacht,” zei Coralines andere vader.

“Op mij?”

“Ja,” zei de andere moeder. “Het was hier niet hetzelfde zonder jou. Maar we wisten dat je op een dag zou komen en dan zouden we een echt gezin kunnen zijn. Wil je nog wat meer kip?”

Het was de beste kip die Coraline ooit had gegeten. Haar moeder maakte soms kip, maar die kwam altijd uit pakjes of was bevroren,⁸ en was erg droog, en smaakte nooit ergens naar. Als Coralines vader kip bakte kocht hij een echte kip, maar hij deed er vreemde dingen mee, zoals hem smoren in wijn, of hem volproppen met gedroogde pruimen, of bakken in deeg, en Coraline weigerde het altijd uit principe aan te raken.

Ze nam wat meer kip.

“Ik wist niet dat ik een andere moeder had,” zei Coraline voorzichtig.

“Natuurlijk heb je die. Iedereen heeft er eentje,” zei de andere moeder, met een glans in haar zwarte knoopogen. “Na de lunch dacht ik dat je het misschien leuk zou vinden om in je kamer te spelen met de ratten.”

“De ratten?”

“Van hierboven.”

Coraline had nog nooit een rat gezien, behalve op televisie. Ze keek er best naar uit. Dit bleek toch nog een erg interessante dag te worden.

Na de lunch wisten haar andere ouders af en Coraline liep door de gang naar haar andere kamer.

Hij was anders dan haar slaapkamer thuis. Ten eerste was hij geverfd in een afstotelijke kleur groen en een eigenaardige kleur roze.

Coraline besloot dat ze daar niet zou willen slapen, maar dat de kleuren heel wat interessanter waren dan die van haar eigen slaapkamer.

⁸ Although Gaiman does not slow down time here, it is striking that he uses “and” twice, with commas before them both times. Here, too, it appears to be a matter of style and therefore the commas appear in the translation as well.

Er waren allerlei merkwaardige dingen die ze nog nooit eerder had gezien: opwindengeltjes die door de slaapkamer fladderden als geschrokken mussen, boeken met plaatjes die kronkelden en kropen en glommen, kleine dinosaurusschedels die met hun tanden klapperden als ze voorbij kwam. Een hele speelgoeddoos vol prachtig speelgoed.

Dit is beter, dacht Coraline. Ze keek uit het raam. Buiten was het uitzicht hetzelfde als wat ze vanuit haar eigen slaapkamer zag: bomen, velden, en daar voorbij, aan de horizon, verre paarse heuvels.

Iets zwarts dribbelde over de vloer en verdween onder het bed. Coraline ging op haar knieën zitten en keek onder het bed. Vijftig kleine zwarte oogjes tuurden naar haar terug.

“Hallo,” zei Coraline. “Zijn jullie de ratten?”

Ze kwamen onder het bed vandaan en knepen hun oogjes dicht tegen het licht. Ze hadden een korte, roetzwarte vacht, kleine rode oogjes, roze pootjes als kleine handjes, en roze, haarloze staarten als lange, gladde wormen.

“Kunnen jullie praten?” vroeg ze.

De grootste, zwartste rat schudde zijn hoofd. Hij had een onaangename glimlach, vond Coraline.

“Nou,” vroeg Coraline, “wat doen jullie dan wel?”

De ratten vormden een cirkel.

Toen begonnen ze op elkaar te klimmen, voorzichtig maar snel, totdat ze een piramide hadden gevormd met de grootste rat bovenop.

De ratten begonnen te zingen, in hoge, fluisterende stemmetjes,

We hebben tanden en staarten

We hebben staarten en dromen

We waren hier al voor jij viel

Jij bent nog hier als wij opkomen.

Het was geen mooi liedje. Coraline wist zeker dat ze het eerder had gehoord, of iets wat erop leek, al herinnerde ze zich niet meer precies waar.

Toen viel de piramide uit elkaar en de ratten renden, snel en zwart, naar de deur.

De andere gekke oude man van boven stond in de deuropening en hield een hoge zwarte hoed in zijn handen. De ratten renden langs hem omhoog, zich wroetend in zijn zakken, in zijn shirt, langs zijn broekspijp omhoog, in zijn nek.

De grootste rat klom op de schouders van de oude man, slingerde zich op de lange grijze snor, langs de grote zwarte knoopogen en bovenop zijn hoofd.

Seconden later waren de rusteloze knobbels onder de kleding van de man het enige bewijs dat de ratten er überhaupt nog waren, steeds over hem bewegend van de ene plek naar de andere; en er was nog steeds de grootste rat, die omlaag keek, met glinsterende rode oogjes, naar Coraline vanaf het hoofd van de man.⁹

De oude man zette zijn hoed op en de laatste rat was weg.

“Hallo, Coraline,” zei de andere oude man van boven. “Ik hoorde dat je er was. Het is tijd voor de ratten om te eten. Maar je kunt met me meegaan, als je wilt, en ze zien voeden.”

Er was iets hongerigs aan de knoopogen van de oude man dat Coraline ongemakkelijk deed voelen. “Nee, bedankt,” zei ze. “Ik ga naar buiten om te verkennen.”

De oude man knikte, zeer langzaam. Coraline kon de ratten tegen elkaar horen fluisteren, al kon ze niet verstaan wat ze zeiden.

Ze wist niet zeker of ze eigenlijk wel wilde weten wat ze zeiden.

Haar andere ouders stonden in de deuropening van de keuken toen ze door de gang liep, glimlachten identieke glimlachen en zwaaiden langzaam. “Veel plezier buiten,” zei haar andere moeder.

⁹ It might seem odd to break up “keek” and “naar”. Perhaps not even simply odd, but ungrammatical, because they are part of one verb. However, in the source text it says “[...] stared down, with glittering red eyes, at Coraline [...]” (Gaiman 20). “[S]tared down” and “at” should not be separated either, yet Gaiman has chosen to do so regardless of this fact. This again appears to be a style choice and is not wrong in the translation.

“Wij wachten hier wel tot je terugkomt,” zei haar andere vader.

Toen Coraline bij de voordeur kwam, draaide ze zich om en keek naar hen. Ze keken nog steeds naar haar, en zwaaiden, en glimlachten.

Coraline liep naar buiten en het trapje af.

IV

Het huis zag er van buiten precies hetzelfde uit. Nou ja, bijna precies hetzelfde: rond Miss Spink en Miss Forcibles deur hingen blauwe en rode lampen die aan en uit flitsten en woorden spelden, waarbij de lichtjes elkaar achtervolgden rond de deur. Aan en uit, rond en rond. verbazingwekkend! werd gevolgd door een theatraal en dan triomf!!!¹⁰

Het was een zonnige, koude dag, precies als de dag waar ze vandaan kwam.

Er kwam een beleefd geluid van achter haar vandaan.

Ze draaide zich om. Op de muur naast haar stond een grote zwarte kat, identiek aan de grote zwarte kat die ze thuis op het land had gezien.

“Goedemiddag,” zei de kat.

Zijn stem klonk als de stem achterin Coralines hoofd, de stem waarin ze woorden dacht, maar een mannenstem, niet die van een meisje.

“Hallo,” zei Coraline. “Ik zag een kat net als jij in de tuin thuis. Jij moet de andere kat zijn.”

De kat schudde zijn hoofd. “Nee,” zei hij. “Ik ben niet het andere wat dan ook. Ik ben ik.” Hij leunde zijn hoofd naar één kant; zijn groene ogen glinsterden.¹¹ “Jullie mensen zijn overal verspreid. Katten, daarentegen, houden zichzelf bijeen. Als je begrijpt wat ik bedoel.”

¹⁰ There is no indication anywhere that these are quotes, or which parts of the sentences are supposed to be quotes. However, the source text has done the same: “astounding! was followed by a theatrical and then triumph!!!” (Gaiman 22). This could be another stylistic choice – perhaps to show the confusion Coraline is feeling – and should not be altered.

¹¹ The semi-colon from the source text has been transferred to the target text. In this case the two parts are two different sentences, though they are also connected. Actually breaking up the sentence would have gone against

“Ik denk het. Maar als je dezelfde kat ben die ik thuis zag, hoe komt het dan dat je kunt praten?”

Katten hebben geen schouders, niet zoals mensen die hebben. Maar de kat haalde zijn schouders op, in één soepele beweging die begon aan het puntje van zijn staart en eindigde in een ophalende beweging van zijn snorharen. “Ik kan praten.”

“Thuis praten katten niet.”

“Nee?” zei de kat.

“Nee,” zei Coraline.

De kat sprong soepel van de muur op het gras bij Coralines voeten. Hij keek naar haar omhoog.

“Nou, jij bent de expert op dit gebied,” zei de kat droogjes. “Wat zou ik tenslotte weten? Ik ben slechts een kat.”

Hij begon weg te lopen, hoofd en staart hoog en trots omhoog gehouden.

“Kom terug,” zei Coraline. “Alsjeblieft. Het spijt me. Echt waar.”

De kat stopte, ging op de grond zitten en begon zichzelf zorgzaam te wassen, zich schijnbaar niet bewust van Coralines bestaan.

“We... we zouden vrienden kunnen zijn, weet je,” zei Coraline.

“We zouden zeldzame exemplaren van een exotisch ras van Afrikaanse dansende olifanten kunnen zijn,” zei de kat.¹² “Maar dat zijn we niet. Tenminste,” zei hij kattig, na een korte blik op Coraline geworpen te hebben, “ik niet.”

Coraline zuchtte.

“Alsjeblieft. Wat is je naam?” vroeg Coraline aan de kat. “Luister, ik ben Coraline. Oké?”

the analysis about short versus long sentences. “En” could have been placed after “kant”, but this word has been used so often already. The same goes for “and” in the source text. If Neil Gaiman had wanted to say “and”, he would have done.

¹² Although ‘exemplaren’ could be easier to understand than ‘specimens’, it is a more likely translation than the Dutch word ‘specimen’, which does not usually occur in this context. What is most important is to capture the cat’s personality, who appears to feel superior to human beings and certainly to Coraline. This attitude also means that his choice of words is fairly difficult.

De kat gaapte langzaam, voorzichtig, en liet een mond en tong van verbazingwekkend roze zien. “Katten hebben geen naam,” zei hij.

“Nee?” zei Coraline.

“Nee,” zei de kat. “Kijk, jullie hebben namen. Dat is omdat jullie niet weten wie jullie zijn. Wij weten wie we zijn, dus we hebben geen naam nodig.”

Er was iets irritant zelfingenomen aan de kat, besloot Coraline. Alsof hij, naar zijn mening, het enige in een wereld of plek was dat mogelijk van enig belang kon zijn.

De helft van haar wilde erg brutaal tegen hem zijn; de andere helft wilde beleefd en respectvol zijn. De beleefde helft won.

“Alsjeblieft, wat is deze plek?”

De kat keek even rond. “Het is hier,” zei de kat.

“Dat zie ik. Nou, hoe ben je hier dan gekomen?”

“Net als jij. Ik heb gelopen,” zei de kat. “Zo.”

Coraline keek toe hoe de kat langzaam over het gras liep. Hij liep achter een boom, maar kwam niet tevoorschijn aan de andere kant. Coraline ging naar de boom en keek erachter. De kat was weg.

Ze liep terug naar het huis. Er was weer een beleefd geluidje achter haar. Het was de kat.

“Trouwens,” zei hij. “Het was erg slim van je om bescherming mee te brengen. Ik zou het maar goed bij me houden als ik jou was.”

“Bescherming?”

“Dat zei ik,” zei de kat. “En hoe dan ook-”

Hij aarzelde, en keek gespannen naar iets dat er niet was.

Toen dook hij laag neer en bewoog zich langzaam vooruit, twee of drie stappen. Hij leek een onzichtbare muis te achtervolgen. Plotseling draaide hij om en rende naar het bos.

Hij verdween tussen de bomen.

Coraline vroeg zich af wat de kat bedoeld had.

Ze vroeg zich ook af of katten allemaal konden praten waar zij vandaan kwam en er gewoon voor kozen dat niet te doen, of dat ze alleen konden praten wanneer ze hier waren – waar *hier*¹³ dan ook was.

Ze liep het stenen trapje af naar de voordeur van Miss Spink en Miss Forcible. De blauwe en rode lichtjes flitsten aan en uit.

De deur stond een tikkeltje open. Ze klopte erop, maar haar eerste klop deed de deur openzwaaien, en Coraline ging naar binnen.

Ze was in een donkere kamer die naar stof en fluweel rook. De deur sloeg achter haar dicht en de kamer was zwart. Coraline bewoog zich voorzichtig naar voren, een kleine voorkamer in. Haar gezicht streek tegen iets zachts. Het was een doek. Ze reikte omhoog met haar hand en duwde tegen de doek. Die ging uit elkaar.

Ze stond aan de andere kant van de fluwelen gordijnen met haar ogen te knippen, in een slecht verlicht theater. Ver weg, aan de rand van de kamer, bevond zich een hoog houten podium, leeg en kaal, met een zwakke spotlight erop gericht vanaf hoog erboven.

Er stonden stoelen tussen Coraline en het podium. Rijen en rijen met stoelen. Ze hoorde een schuifelend geluid en een licht kwam naar haar toe, zwaaiend van links naar rechts. Toen het dichterbij was, zag ze dat het licht van een zaklamp kwam die in de mond van een grote zwarte Schotse terriër werd gedragen, zijn snuit grijs van de leeftijd.

“Hallo,” zei Coraline.

De hond zette de zaklamp neer op de vloer en keek naar haar omhoog. “Juist. Laat je kaartje maar eens zien,” zei hij knorrig.

“Kaartje?”

¹³ “Hier” is not a sound and is not an emphasis in the same sense as “iederéén” and “niemand” in the translation of chapter three. It emphasises the idea of “hier”, or “here”, but it is not said with the same kind of emphasis those words would be spoken in. Quotation marks are an option, though not a very good one: they could confuse the reader into thinking there is a random quote in the text. Therefore, it is better to leave the italics in place.

“Dat zei ik. Kaartje. Ik heb niet de hele dag de tijd, hoor. Je kunt de show niet zien zonder een kaartje.”

Coraline zuchtte. “Ik heb geen kaartje,” gaf ze toe.

“Alweer eentje,” zei de hond somber. “Dat komt hier binnen, heel brutaal. ‘Waar is je kaartje?’ ‘Heb ik niet,’ Ik weet het niet...” Hij schudde zijn hoofd, haalde toen zijn schouders op. “Kom maar mee dan.”

Hij pakte zijn zaklamp op in zijn mond en trippelde weg de donkerte in. Coraline volgde hem. Toen hij vlakbij de voorkant van het podium kwam, stopte hij en scheen de zaklamp op een lege stoel. Coraline ging zitten en de hond wandelde weg.

Toen haar ogen gewend raakte aan de duisternis realiseerde ze zich dat de andere bewoners van de stoelen ook honden waren.

Er kwam plots een sissend geluid vanachter het podium. Coraline besloot dat ’t het geluid was van een bekraste oude plaat die op een platenspeler werd gelegd. Het sissen werd het geluid van trompetten en Miss Spink en Miss Forcible kwamen het podium op.

Miss Spink reed op een fiets met één wiel en jongleerde met ballen. Miss Forcible huppelde achter haar, een mand met bloemen in haar handen. Ze strooide ondertussen de bloemblaadjes over het podium. Ze bereikten de voorkant van het podium en Miss Spink sprong lichtvoetig van de eenwieler, en de twee oude vrouwen bogen diep.

Alle honden sloegen met hun staart en keften enthousiast. Coraline klapte beleefd.

Toen maakten ze hun donzige ronde jassen los en openden ze. Maar hun jassen waren niet het enige dat open ging: hun gezichten openden zich ook, als lege omhulsels, en uit de oude lege donzige ronde lichamen¹⁴ stapten twee jonge vrouwen. Ze waren dun, en bleek, en best mooi, en hadden zwarte knoopogen.

¹⁴ Gaiman uses fairly little words, except when it comes to adjectives. The translation has attempted to keep the sentence as brief as possible, yet the adjectives have all been translated and placed behind each other as one long description. This is, after all, what Gaiman does as well.

De nieuwe Miss Spink droeg groene panty's en hoge bruine laarzen die bijna haar hele benen bedekten. De nieuwe Miss Forcible droeg een witte jurk en had bloemen in haar lange gele haren.

Coraline duwde zich terug in haar stoel.

Miss Spink verliet het podium, en het geluid van trompetten krijste toen de grammofoonnaald zijn weg over de plaat groef, en eraf werd getrokken.

“Dit is mijn favoriete stukje,” fluisterde het kleine hondje in de stoel naast haar.

De andere Miss Forcible koos een mes uit een doos in de hoek van het podium. “Is dit een dolk die ik voor me zie?” vroeg ze.

“Ja!” riepen alle kleine hondjes. “Dat is het!”

Miss Forcible maakte een buiging en alle honden applaudisseerden opnieuw. Coraline deed deze keer geen moeite om te klappen. Miss Spink kwam terug het podium op. Ze sloeg tegen haar dij en alle kleine hondjes blaften.

“En nu,” zei Miss Spink, “introduceren Miriam en ik met trots een nieuw en spannend addendum aan onze theatrale expositie.¹⁵ Is er een vrijwilliger?”

Het kleine hondje naast Coraline stootte haar aan met zijn voorpoot. “Ze bedoelt jou,” siste hij.

Coraline stond op en liep de houten treden op naar het podium.

“Mag ik een groot applaus voor de jonge vrijwilliger?” vroeg Miss Spink. De honden blaften en piepten en sloegen met hun staart op de fluwelen stoelen.

“Nou, Coraline,” zei Miss Spink, “wat is je naam?”

“Coraline,” zei Coraline.

“En we kennen elkaar niet, toch?”

¹⁵ This is addressed mainly to Coraline, yet it is unlikely that a girl her age will understand what an ‘addendum’ is, or a ‘theatrical exposition’. The translation should retain such complexities. Although ‘addendum’ might appear to be a very literal translation of the English text, it best captures the difficulty and meaning of the original. Its use in Dutch is approximately the same as in English in this context: it is rare. Therefore, using it does not form an issue.

Coraline keek naar de dunne jonge vrouw met zwarte knoopogen en schudde langzaam haar hoofd.

“Nou,” zei de andere Miss Spink, “ga hier staan.” Ze leidde Coraline naar een plank aan de zijkant van het podium en legde een ballon bovenop Coralines hoofd.

Miss Spink liep naar Miss Forcible. Ze blinddoekte Miss Forcibles knoopogen met een zwarte sjaal en duwde het mes in haar handen. Toen draaide ze haar drie of vier keer rond en richtte haar op Coraline. Coraline hield haar adem in en kneep haar vingers in twee stevige vuisten. Miss Forcible gooide een mes naar de ballon. Hij klapte luid uit elkaar en het mes bleef steken in de plank net boven Coralines hoofd en ploinkte daar. Coraline ademde uit.

De honden gingen uit hun dak.

Miss Spink gaf Coraline een heel klein doosje bonbons en bedankte haar dat ze zo goed had meegedaan. Coraline ging terug naar haar stoel.

“Je was erg goed,” zei het kleine hondje.

“Dank je,” zei Coraline.

Miss Forcible en Miss Spink begonnen met gigantische houten knuppels te jongleren.

Coraline opende de doos bonbons. Het hondje keek er verlangend naar.

“Wil je er eentje?” vroeg ze aan het kleine hondje.

“Ja, graag,” fluisterde het hondje. “Maar niet die met toffee. Die maken me aan het kwijlen.”

“Ik dacht dat chocola niet echt goed was voor honden,” zei ze, terwijl ze zich iets herinnerde dat Miss Forcible haar ooit had verteld.

“Misschien waar jij vandaan komt,” fluisterde het hondje. “Hier is ’t het enige dat we eten.”

Coraline kon in het donker niet zien wat de bonbons waren. Ze nam een experimenteel hapje van eentje die kokosnoot bleek te zijn. Coraline hield niet van kokosnoot. Ze gaf het aan het hondje.

“Dank je,” zei het hondje.

“Geen dank,” zei Coraline.

Miss Forcible en Miss Spink waren wat aan het acteren. Miss Forcible zat op een trapleer en Miss Spink stond onderaan.

“Wat zegt een naam?” vroeg Miss Forcible. “Een roos blijft zoet van geur, al geven wij haar nog zo’n vreemde naam.”

“Heb je nog meer bonbons?” zei het hondje.

Coraline gaf het hondje nog wat chocola.

“Ik weet niet hoe ik zeggen moet hoe ik heet,” zei Miss Spink tegen Miss Forcible.

“Dit stukje is zo afgelopen,” fluisterde het hondje. “Dan gaan ze volksdansen.”

“Hoe lang gaat dit door?” vroeg Coraline. “Het theater?”

“De hele tijd,” zei het hondje. “Voor eeuwig en altijd.”

“Hier,” zei Coraline. “Hou de chocola maar.”

“Dank je,” zei het hondje. Coraline stond op.

“Tot snel,” zei het hondje.

“Dag,” zei Coraline. Ze liep het theater uit en terug de tuin in. Ze moest met haar ogen knipperen tegen het daglicht.

Haar andere ouders stonden op haar te wachten in de tuin, zij aan zij. Ze glimlachten.

“Heb je het leuk gehad?” vroeg haar andere moeder.

“Het was interessant,” zei Coraline.

De drie liepen samen terug naar Coralines andere huis. Coralines andere moeder streek Coralines haar met haar lange witte vingers. Coraline schudde haar hoofd. “Niet doen,” zei Coraline.

Haar andere moeder nam haar hand weg.

“Dus,” zei haar andere vader. “Heb je het hier naar je zin?”

“Ik denk ‘t,” zei Coraline. “Het is veel interessanter dan thuis.”

Ze gingen naar binnen.

“Ik ben blij dat je het leuk vindt,” zei Coralines moeder. “Want we zouden graag vinden dat dit jouw thuis is. Je kunt hier voor eeuwig en altijd blijven. Als je dat wilt.”

“Hmm,” zei Coraline. Ze deed haar hand in haar zakken en dacht erover na. Haar hand raakte de steen die de echte Miss Spink en Miss Forcible haar de dag ervoor hadden gegeven, de steen met het gat erin.

“Als je wilt blijven,” zei haar andere vader, “is er maar één klein dingetje dat we zullen moeten doen, zodat je hier voor eeuwig en altijd kunt blijven.”

Ze gingen de keuken in. Op een porseleinen bord op de keukentafel lag een klos van zwart katoen, en een lange zilveren naald en, daarnaast, twee grote zwarte knopen.

“Ik dacht ’t niet, zei Coraline.

“O, maar dat willen we graag,” zei haar andere moeder. “We willen dat je blijft. En het is maar iets kleins.”

“Het doet geen pijn,” zei haar andere vader.

Coraline wist dat wanneer volwassenen zeiden dat iets geen pijn zou doen, het dat bijna altijd wel deed. Ze schudde haar hoofd.

Haar andere moeder glimlachte opgewerkt en de haren op haar hoofd dreven als planten in de zee. “We willen alleen wat het beste voor je is,” zei ze.

Ze legde haar hand op Coralines schouder. Coraline liep achteruit.

“Ik ga nu weg,” zei Coraline. Ze deed haar handen in haar zakken. Haar vingers sloten zich om de steen met het gat erin.

De hand van haar andere moeder haastte zich over Coralines schouder als een angstige spin.

“Als dat is wat je wilt,” zei ze.

“Ja,” zei Coraline.

“Maar we zullen je snel weer zien,” zei haar andere vader. “Wanneer je weer terugkomt.”

“Hm,” zei Coraline.

“En dan zullen we allemaal samen zijn als één grote gelukkige familie,” zei haar andere moeder. “Voor eeuwig en altijd.”

Coraline liep achteruit. Ze draaide zich om en haastte zich de zitkamer in en trok het deurtje in de hoek open. Er was daar nu geen stenen muur – alleen duisternis, een nachtzwarte ondergrondse duisternis waarin het leek alsof dingen zich bewogen.

Coraline aarzelde. Ze draaide zich om. Haar andere moeder en haar andere vader liepen naar haar toe, terwijl ze elkaars handen vasthielden. Ze keken naar haar met hun zwarte knoopogen. Tenminste, ze dácht dat ze naar haar keken. Ze wist het niet zeker.

Haar andere moeder reikte naar haar met haar lege hand en wenkte, zachtjes, met één witte vinger. Haar bleke lippen vormden de woorden “Kom snel terug”, al zei ze niets hardop.

Coraline nam diep adem en stapte de duisternis in, waar vreemde stemmen fluisterden en verre winden huilden. Ze werd er zeker van dat zich iets achter haar in het donker bevond: iets heel ouds en heel langzaams. Haar hart sloeg zo snel en zo hard dat ze bang was dat het uit haar borstkas zou breken. Ze sloot haar ogen tegen de duisternis.

Uiteindelijk stootte ze ergens tegenaan, en ze deed haar ogen open, geschrokken. Ze was tegen een leunstoel gestoten, in haar zitkamer.

De open deuropening achter haar werd geblokkeerd door ruwe rode bakstenen.

Ze was thuis.

6. Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, the following question was posed:

What are the translation problems that occur while translating Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* due to the presence of dual address, fantasy and horror elements in the story? What are the possible and desirable solutions to these problems?

These questions have been answered in great detail throughout the four chapters. The expectation was that there would be virtually no problems concerning the translation of the fantasy and horror elements and that dual address mostly included language. The latter became truth, but the first expectation certainly did not. Fantasy and horror is much more than a creepy or imaginative idea: it is putting that idea into words.

To conclude, the translation problems that occur due to the presence of those three elements mostly have to do with the style of the story. Concerning dual address, the translation problems that occur are mostly the language use, namely grammatical constructions, the complexity of syntax, vocabulary and repetition. Gaiman frequently alternates between short, simple sentences and longer, more complex ones. The translation should attempt to retain this alternation, because it is part of what makes the novel have a dual audience. The longer sentences might not always be understood very easily, but as they are part of the style they should not be cut up into smaller parts, unless the target audience consists mainly of young children, younger than the audience that has been chosen for the translation in this thesis. Gaiman also uses difficult or uncommon words sometimes, such as

“addendum” and “exposition”, which are easy to understand for adults, but not for the younger readers. It is important to make the translation as simple or complex as the original text is. Coraline herself is still rather young, yet the cat and the other Miss Spink and Miss Forcible do not see this as a reason to simplify their speech. To do so in the translation would be to change their characters. Repetition, which occurs several times, is another part of Gaiman’s style and should therefore also remain.

Concerning the fantasy and horror elements it is mostly important for the translation to transfer the atmosphere to the target audience. The novel should be as terrifying and as fantastical as the original. Certain descriptions must therefore be carefully contemplated, especially if Gaiman uses an uncommon manner of description. As has been shown, he occasionally uses long, laborious descriptions which could be made more compact in translation. However, they could also have been shorter in the original text. This means Gaiman did this intentionally, with the purpose of creating a unique atmosphere that shows both the wonder and the fear that Coraline experiences in the other world. To change these descriptions into shorter and simpler ones would make the novel lose some of its effect.

It is important to note once again that *Coraline* is a case of crossover due to it having a dual audience, or readership. Neither dual nor double address appear to have been consciously used by Gaiman and the novel is not a crossover because he intended it to be. Instead, others, such as publishers, book sellers, librarians and perhaps even his fans, have turned it into one, probably partly because the main character is a child. The genres relate to this as well: fantasy is often seen as suitable for young readers, and while horror is not, this genre is not too obviously present here. Whether Neil Gaiman wanted it or not, *Coraline* is a crossover, and the translation should aim at receiving the same status.

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8. Appendix – Source text

III.

The next day the sun shone, and Coraline's mother took her into the nearest large town to buy clothes for school. They dropped her father off at the railway station. He was going into London for the day to see some people.

Coraline waved him good-bye.

They went to the department store to buy the school clothes.

Coraline saw some Day-Glo green gloves she liked a lot. Her mother refused to buy them for her, preferring instead to buy white socks, navy blue school underpants, four gray blouses, and a dark gray skirt.

"But Mum, *everybody* at school's got gray blouses and everything. *Nobody's* got green gloves. I could be the only one."

Her mother ignored her; she was talking to the shop assistant. They were talking about which kind of sweater to get for Coraline, and were agreeing that the best thing to do would be to get one that was embarrassingly large and baggy, in the hopes that one day she might grow into it. Coraline wandered off and looked at a display of Wellington boots shaped like frogs and ducks and rabbits.

Then she wandered back.

"Coraline? Oh, there you are. Where on earth were you?"

"I was kidnapped by aliens," said Coraline. "They came down from outer space with ray guns, but I fooled them by wearing a wig and laughing in a foreign accent, and I escaped."

"Yes, dear. Now, I think you could do with some more hair clips, don't you?"

"No."

"Well, let's say half a dozen, to be on the safe side," said her mother.

Coraline didn't say anything.

In the car on the way back home, Coraline said, "What's in the empty flat?"

"I don't know. Nothing, I expect. It probably looks like our flat before we moved in. Empty rooms."

"Do you think you could get into it from our flat?"

"Not unless you can walk through bricks, dear."

"Oh."

They got home around lunchtime. The sun was shining, although the day was cold. Coraline's mother looked in the fridge and found a sad little tomato and a piece of cheese with green stuff growing on it. There was only a crust in the bread bin.

"I'd better dash down to the shops and get some fish fingers or something," said her mother.

"Do you want to come?"

"No," said Coraline.

"Suit yourself," said her mother, and left. Then she came back and got her purse and car keys and went out again.

Coraline was bored.

She flipped through a book her mother was reading about native people in a distant country; how every day they would take pieces of white silk and draw on them in wax, then dip the silks in dye, then draw on them more in wax and dye them some more, then boil the wax out in hot water, and then finally, throw the now-beautiful cloths on a fire and burn them to ashes. It seemed particularly pointless to Coraline, but she hoped that the people enjoyed it.

She was still bored, and her mother wasn't yet home.

Coraline got a chair and pushed it over to the kitchen door. She climbed onto the chair and reached up. She got down, then got a broom from the broom cupboard. She climbed back on the chair again and reached up with the broom.

Chink.

She climbed down from the chair and picked up the keys. She smiled triumphantly. Then she leaned the broom against the wall and went into the drawing room.

The family did not use the drawing room. They had inherited the furniture from Coraline's grandmother, along with a wooden coffee table, a side table, a heavy glass ashtray, and the oil painting of a bowl of fruit. Coraline could never work out why anyone would want to paint a bowl of fruit. Other than that, the room was empty: there were no knickknacks on the mantelpiece, no statues or clocks; nothing that made it feel comfortable or lived-in.

The old black key felt colder than any of the others. She pushed it into the keyhole. It turned smoothly, with a satisfying *clunk*.

Coraline stopped and listened. She knew she was doing something wrong, and she was trying to listen for her mother coming back, but she heard nothing. Then Coraline put her hand on the doorknob and turned it; and, finally, she opened the door.

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

Coraline went through the door.

She wondered what the empty flat would be like—if that was where the corridor led.

Coraline walked down the corridor uneasily. There was something very familiar about it.

The carpet beneath her feet was the same carpet they had in her flat. The wallpaper was the same wallpaper they had. The picture hanging in the hall was the same that they had hanging in their hallway at home.

She knew where she was: she was in her own home. She hadn't left.

She shook her head, confused.

She stared at the picture hanging on the wall: no, it wasn't exactly the same. The picture they had in their own hallway showed a boy in old-fashioned clothes staring at some bubbles. But now the expression on his face was different—he was looking at the bubbles as if he was planning to do something very nasty indeed to them. And there was something peculiar about his eyes.

Coraline stared at his eyes, trying to figure out what exactly was different.

She almost had it when somebody said, “Coraline?”

It sounded like her mother. Coraline went into the kitchen, where the voice had come from. A woman stood in the kitchen with her back to Coraline. She looked a little like Coraline's mother. Only . . .

Only her skin was white as paper.

Only she was taller and thinner.

Only her fingers were too long, and they never stopped moving, and her dark red fingernails were curved and sharp.

“Coraline?” the woman said. “Is that you?”

And then she turned around. Her eyes were big black buttons.

“Lunchtime, Coraline,” said the woman.

“Who are you?” asked Coraline.

“I'm your other mother,” said the woman. “Go and tell your other father that lunch is ready,”

She opened the door of the oven. Suddenly Coraline realized how hungry she was. It smelled wonderful. “Well, go on.”

Coraline went down the hall, to where her father's study was. She opened the door. There was a man in there, sitting at the keyboard, with his back to her. “Hello,” said Coraline. “I—I mean, she said to say that lunch is ready.”

The man turned around.

His eyes were buttons, big and black and shiny.

“Hello Coraline,” he said. “I’m starving.”

He got up and went with her into the kitchen. They sat at the kitchen table, and Coraline’s other mother brought them lunch. A huge, golden-brown roasted chicken, fried potatoes, tiny green peas. Coraline shoveled the food into her mouth. It tasted wonderful.

“We’ve been waiting for you for a long time,” said Coraline’s other father.

“For me?”

“Yes,” said the other mother. “It wasn’t the same here without you. But we knew you’d arrive one day, and then we could be a proper family. Would you like some more chicken?”

It was the best chicken that Coraline had ever eaten. Her mother sometimes made chicken, but it was always out of packets or frozen, and was very dry, and it never tasted of anything.

When Coraline’s father cooked chicken he bought real chicken, but he did strange things to it, like stewing it in wine, or stuffing it with prunes, or baking it in pastry, and Coraline would always refuse to touch it on principle.

She took some more chicken.

“I didn’t know I had another mother,” said Coraline, cautiously.

“Of course you do. Everyone does,” said the other mother, her black button eyes gleaming.

“After lunch I thought you might like to play in your room with the rats.”

“The rats?”

“From upstairs.”

Coraline had never seen a rat, except on television. She was quite looking forward to it. This was turning out to be a very interesting day after all.

After lunch her other parents did the washing up, and Coraline went down the hall to her other bedroom.

It was different from her bedroom at home. For a start it was painted in an off-putting shade of green and a peculiar shade of pink.

Coraline decided that she wouldn't want to have to sleep in there, but that the color scheme was an awful lot more interesting than her own bedroom.

There were all sorts of remarkable things in there she'd never seen before: windup angels that fluttered around the bedroom like startled sparrows; books with pictures that writhed and crawled and shimmered; little dinosaur skulls that chattered their teeth as she passed. A whole toy box filled with wonderful toys.

This is more like it, thought Coraline. She looked out of the window. Outside, the view was the same one she saw from her own bedroom: trees, fields, and beyond them, on the horizon, distant purple hills.

Something black scurried across the floor and vanished under the bed. Coraline got down on her knees and looked under the bed. Fifty little red eyes stared back at her.

"Hello," said Coraline. "Are you the rats?"

They came out from under the bed, blinking their eyes in the light. They had short, soot-black fur, little red eyes, pink paws like tiny hands, and pink, hairless tails like long, smooth worms.

"Can you talk?" she asked.

The largest, blackest of the rats shook its head. It had an unpleasant sort of smile, Coraline thought.

"Well," asked Coraline, "what *do* you do?"

The rats formed a circle.

Then they began to climb on top of each other, carefully but swiftly, until they had formed a pyramid with the largest rat at the top.

The rats began to sing, in high, whispery voices,

We have teeth and we have tails

We have tails we have eyes

We were here before you fell

You will be here when we rise.

It wasn't a pretty song. Coraline was sure she'd heard it before, or something like it, although she was unable to remember exactly where.

Then the pyramid fell apart, and the rats scampered, fast and black, toward the door.

The other crazy old man upstairs was standing in the doorway, holding a tall black hat in his hands. The rats scampered up him, burrowing into his pockets, into his shirt, up his trouser legs, down his neck.

The largest rat climbed onto the old man's shoulders, swung up on the long gray mustache, past the big black button eyes, and onto the top of the man's head.

In seconds the only evidence that the rats were there at all were the restless lumps under the man's clothes, forever sliding from place to place across him; and there was still the largest rat, who stared down, with glittering red eyes, at Coraline from the man's head.

The old man put his hat on, and the last rat was gone.

"Hello Coraline," said the other old man upstairs. "I heard you were here. It is time for the rats to have their dinner. But you can come up with me, if you like, and watch them feed."

There was something hungry in the old man's button eyes that made Coraline feel uncomfortable. "No, thank you," she said. "I'm going outside to explore."

The old man nodded, very slowly. Coraline could hear the rats whispering to each other, although she could not tell what they were saying.

She was not certain that she wanted to know what they were saying.

Her other parents stood in the kitchen doorway as she walked down the corridor, smiling identical smiles, and waving slowly. "Have a nice time outside," said her other mother.

"We'll just wait here for you to come back," said her other father.

When Coraline got to the front door, she turned back and looked at them. They were still watching her, and waving, and smiling.

Coraline walked outside, and down the steps.

IV.

The house looked exactly the same from the outside. Or almost exactly the same: around Miss Spink and Miss Forcible's door were blue and red lightbulbs that flashed on and off spelling out words, the lights chasing each other around the door. On and off, around and around. astounding! was followed by a theatrical and then triumph!!!

It was a sunny, cold day, exactly like the one she'd left.

There was a polite noise from behind her.

She turned around. Standing on the wall next to her was a large black cat, identical to the large black cat she'd seen in the grounds at home.

"Good afternoon," said the cat.

Its voice sounded like the voice at the back of Coraline's head, the voice she thought words in, but a man's voice, not a girl's.

"Hello," said Coraline. "I saw a cat like you in the garden at home. You must be the other cat."

The cat shook its head. "No," it said. "I'm not the other anything. I'm me." It tipped its head to one side; green eyes glinted. "You people are spread all over the place. Cats, on the other hand, keep ourselves together. If you see what I mean."

"I suppose. But if you're the same cat I saw at home, how can you talk?"

Cats don't have shoulders, not like people do. But the cat shrugged, in one smooth movement that started at the tip of its tail and ended in a raised movement of its whiskers. "I can talk."

"Cats don't talk at home."

“No?” said the cat.

“No,” said Coraline.

The cat leaped smoothly from the wall to the grass near Coraline’s feet. It stared up at her.

“Well, you’re the expert on these things,” said the cat dryly. “After all, what would I know? I’m only a cat.”

It began to walk away, head and tail held high and proud.

“Come back,” said Coraline. “Please. I’m sorry. I really am.”

The cat stopped walking, sat down, and began to wash itself thoughtfully, apparently unaware of Coraline’s existence.

“We . . . we could be friends, you know,” said Coraline.

“We *could* be rare specimens of an exotic breed of African dancing elephants,” said the cat.

“But we’re not. At least,” it added cattily, after darting a brief look at Coraline, “*I’m* not.”

Coraline sighed.

“Please. What’s your name?” Coraline asked the cat. “Look, I’m Coraline. Okay?”

The cat yawned slowly, carefully, revealing a mouth and tongue of astounding pinkness.

“Cats don’t have names,” it said.

“No?” said Coraline.

“No,” said the cat. “Now, *you* people have names. That’s because you don’t know who you are. We know who we are, so we don’t need names.”

There was something irritatingly self-centered about the cat, Coraline decided. As if it were, in its opinion, the only thing in any world or place that could possibly be of any importance.

Half of her wanted to be very rude to it; the other half of her wanted to be polite and deferential. The polite half won.

“Please, what is this place?”

The cat glanced around briefly. “It’s here,” said the cat.

“I can see that. Well, how did you get here?”

“Like you did. I walked,” said the cat. “Like this.”

Coraline watched as the cat walked slowly across the lawn. It walked behind a tree, but didn’t come out the other side. Coraline went over to the tree and looked behind it. The cat was gone. She walked back toward the house. There was another polite noise from behind her. It was the cat.

“By the by,” it said. “It was sensible of you to bring protection. I’d hang on to it, if I were you.”

“Protection?”

“That’s what I said,” said the cat. “And anyway—”

It paused, and stared intently at something that wasn’t there.

Then it went down into a low crouch and moved slowly forward, two or three steps. It seemed to be stalking an invisible mouse. Abruptly, it turned tail and dashed for the woods.

It vanished among the trees.

Coraline wondered what the cat had meant.

She also wondered whether cats could all talk where she came from and just chose not to, or whether they could only talk when they were here—wherever *here* was.

She walked down the brick steps to the Misses Spink and Forcible’s front door. The blue and red lights flashed on and off.

The door was open, just slightly. She knocked on it, but her first knock made the door swing open, and Coraline went in.

She was in a dark room that smelled of dust and velvet. The door swung shut behind her, and the room was black. Coraline edged forward into a small anteroom. Her face brushed against something soft. It was cloth. She reached up her hand and pushed at the cloth. It parted.

She stood blinking on the other side of the velvet curtains, in a poorly lit theater. Far away, at the edge of the room, was a high wooden stage, empty and bare, a dim spotlight shining onto it from high above.

There were seats between Coraline and the stage. Rows and rows of seats. She heard a shuffling noise, and a light came toward her, swinging from side to side. When it was closer she saw the light was coming from a flashlight being carried in the mouth of a large black Scottie dog, its muzzle gray with age.

“Hello,” said Coraline.

The dog put the flashlight down on the floor, and looked up at her. “Right. Let’s see your ticket,” he said gruffly.

“Ticket?”

“That’s what I said. Ticket. I haven’t got all day, you know. You can’t watch the show without a ticket.”

Coraline sighed. “I don’t have a ticket,” she admitted.

“Another one,” said the dog gloomily. “Come in here, bold as anything. ‘Where’s your ticket?’ ‘Haven’t got one,’ I don’t know . . .” It shook its head, then shrugged. “Come on, then.”

He picked up the flashlight in his mouth and trotted off into the dark. Coraline followed him.

When he got near the front of the stage he stopped and shone the flashlight onto an empty seat.

Coraline sat down, and the dog wandered off.

As her eyes got used to the darkness she realized that the other inhabitants of the seats were also dogs.

There was a sudden hissing noise from behind the stage. Coraline decided it was the sound of a scratchy old record being put onto a record player. The hissing became the noise of trumpets, and Miss Spink and Miss Forcible came onto the stage.

Miss Spink was riding a one-wheeled bicycle and juggling balls. Miss Forcible skipped behind her, holding a basket of flowers. She scattered the flower petals across the stage as she went. They reached the front of the stage, and Miss Spink leaped nimbly off the unicycle, and the two old women bowed low.

All the dogs thumped their tails and barked enthusiastically. Coraline clapped politely. Then they unbuttoned their fluffy round coats and opened them. But their coats weren't all that opened: their faces opened, too, like empty shells, and out of the old empty fluffy round bodies stepped two young women. They were thin, and pale, and quite pretty, and had black button eyes.

The new Miss Spink was wearing green tights, and high brown boots that went most of the way up her legs. The new Miss Forcible wore a white dress and had flowers in her long yellow hair.

Coraline pressed back against her seat.

Miss Spink went off the stage, and the noise of trumpets squealed as the gramophone needle dug its way across the record, and was pulled off.

"This is my favorite bit," whispered the little dog in the seat next to her.

The other Miss Forcible picked a knife out of a box on the corner of the stage. "Is this a dagger that I see before me?" she asked.

"Yes!" shouted all the little dogs. "It is!"

Miss Forcible curtsied, and all the dogs applauded again. Coraline didn't bother clapping this time.

Miss Spink came back on. She slapped her thigh, and all the little dogs woofed.

"And now," Miss Spink said, "Miriam and I proudly present a new and exciting addendum to our theatrical exposition. Do I see a volunteer?"

The little dog next to Coraline nudged her with its front paw. "That's you," it hissed.

Coraline stood up, and walked up the wooden steps to the stage.

“Can I have big round of applause for the young volunteer?” asked Miss Spink. The dogs woofed and squealed and thumped their tails on the velvet seats.

“Now Coraline,” said Miss Spink, “what’s your name?”

“Coraline,” said Coraline.

“And we don’t know each other, do we?”

Coraline looked at the thin young woman with black button eyes and shook her head slowly.

“Now,” said the other Miss Spink, “stand over here.” She led Coraline over to a board by the side of the stage, and put a balloon on top of Coraline’s head.

Miss Spink walked over to Miss Forcible. She blindfolded Miss Forcible’s button eyes with a black scarf, and put the knife into her hands. Then she turned her round three or four times and pointed her at Coraline. Coraline held her breath and squeezed her fingers into two tight fists.

Miss Forcible threw the knife at the balloon. It popped loudly, and the knife stuck into the board just above Coraline’s head and twanged there. Coraline breathed out.

The dogs went wild.

Miss Spink gave Coraline a very small box of chocolates and thanked her for being such a good sport. Coraline went back to her seat.

“You were very good,” said the little dog.

“Thank you,” said Coraline.

Miss Forcible and Miss Spink began juggling with huge wooden clubs. Coraline opened the box of chocolates. The dog looked at them longingly.

“Would you like one?” she asked the little dog.

“Yes, please,” whispered the dog. “Only not toffee ones. They make me drool.”

“I thought chocolates weren’t very good for dogs,” she said, remembering something Miss Forcible had once told her.

“Maybe where you come from,” whispered the little dog. “Here, it’s all we eat.”

Coraline couldn’t see what the chocolates were, in the dark. She took an experimental bite of one which turned out to be coconut. Coraline didn’t like coconut. She gave it to the dog.

“Thank you,” said the dog.

“You’re welcome,” said Coraline.

Miss Forcible and Miss Spink were doing some acting. Miss Forcible was sitting on a stepladder, and Miss Spink was standing at the bottom.

“What’s in a name?” asked Miss Forcible. “That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

“Have you got any more chocolates?” said the dog.

Coraline gave the dog another chocolate.

“I know not how to tell thee who I am,” said Miss Spink to Miss Forcible.

“This bit finishes soon,” whispered the dog. “Then they start folk dancing.”

“How long does this go on for?” asked Coraline. “The theater?”

“All the time,” said the dog. “For ever and always.”

“Here,” said Coraline. “Keep the chocolates.”

“Thank you,” said the dog. Coraline stood up.

“See you soon,” said the dog.

“Bye,” said Coraline. She walked out of the theater and back into the garden. She had to blink her eyes at the daylight.

Her other parents were waiting for her in the garden, standing side by side. They were smiling.

“Did you have a nice time?” asked her other mother.

“It was interesting,” said Coraline.

The three of them walked back up to Coraline's other house together. Coraline's other mother stroked Coraline's hair with her long white fingers. Coraline shook her head. "Don't do that," said Coraline.

Her other mother took her hand away.

"So," said her other father. "Do you like it here?"

"I suppose," said Coraline. "It's much more interesting than at home."

They went inside.

"I'm glad you like it," said Coraline's mother. "Because we'd like to think that this is your home. You can stay here for ever and always. If you want to."

"Hmm," said Coraline. She put her hand in her pockets, and thought about it. Her hand touched the stone that the real Misses Spink and Forcible had given her the day before, the stone with the hole in it.

"If you want to stay," said her other father, "there's only one little thing we'll have to do, so you can stay here for ever and always."

They went into the kitchen. On a china plate on the kitchen table was a spool of black cotton, and a long silver needle, and, beside them, two large black buttons.

"I don't think so," said Coraline.

"Oh, but we want you to," said her other mother. "We want you to stay. And it's just a little thing."

"It won't hurt," said her other father.

Coraline knew that when grown-ups told you something wouldn't hurt it almost always did.

She shook her head.

Her other mother smiled brightly and the hair on her head drifted like plants under the sea.

"We only want what's best for you," she said.

She put her hand on Coraline's shoulder. Coraline backed away.

“I’m going now,” said Coraline. She put her hands in her pockets. Her fingers closed around the stone with the hole in it.

Her other mother’s hand scuttled off Coraline’s shoulder like a frightened spider.

“If that’s what you want,” she said.

“Yes,” said Coraline.

“We’ll see you soon, though,” said her other father. “When you come back.”

“Um,” said Coraline.

“And then we’ll all be together as one big happy family,” said her other mother. “For ever and always.”

Coraline backed away. She turned and hurried into the drawing room and pulled open the door in the corner. There was no brick wall there now—just darkness, a night-black underground darkness that seemed as if things in it might be moving.

Coraline hesitated. She turned back. Her other mother and her other father were walking toward her, holding hands. They were looking at her with their black button eyes. Or at least she *thought* they were looking at her. She couldn’t be sure.

Her other mother reached out her free hand and beckoned, gently, with one white finger. Her pale lips mouthed, “Come back soon,” although she said nothing aloud.

Coraline took a deep breath and stepped into the darkness, where strange voices whispered and distant winds howled. She became certain that there was something in the dark behind her: something very old and very slow. Her heart beat so hard and so loudly she was scared it would burst out of her chest. She closed her eyes against the dark.

Eventually she bumped into something, and opened her eyes, startled. She had bumped into an armchair, in her drawing room.

The open doorway behind her was blocked by rough red bricks.

She was home.