Centuries of the Narratological Construction of Gender: Seven Little Australians and The Graveyard Book

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Abstract

Turner’s Seven Little Australians (Turner, 1894) was written more than one hundred years prior to Gaiman’s The Graveyard Book (Gaiman, 2008) and their settings are separated by more than 15000km. Despite these vast disparities in time and location, they share a surprising level of commonality founded in gender-based power constructs generated through their narration. As popular children’s novels, each narrative has played a role in perpetuating the patriarchal norms including the silencing of strong women and the forgiveness of flawed men. The impact of these literary voices in the shaping of children’s understanding of gender norms cannot be understated. In 2018, a decade on from the release of The Graveyard Book (Gaiman, 2008) and 124 years since the publication of Seven Little Australians (Turner, 1894) children’s literature still places the narratological power firmly in the hands of the male protagonists. CYoung readers are well overdue for a shift in narratological power.

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