



T.C.

EGE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL
SCIENCES



**Mapping the Fairy Tale: A Proppian Analysis of
Narrative Functions in *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always***

Master Thesis

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İzmir

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE MA PROGRAM
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STATEMENT OF ETHICAL COMPLIANCE

I hereby declare that in the dissertation I present to Ege University's Graduate School of Social Sciences, "Mapping the Fairy Tale: A Proppian Analysis of Narrative Functions in *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always*", all information has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic roles and ethical conduct. I also declare that I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Zlal Őevval ZTRK



PREFACE

Truth be told, I never thought I would be studying fairy tales and children's literature for my master's thesis in the first place. I had been nervous about my thesis statement since my sophomore year. After actively engaging in my classes—where I got to practice my creative faculties and make use of my imagination—I knew I wanted to pursue an academic career. I would be doomed if I were forced into a systematic job built on firm rules that required compliance instead of pouring my soul into my work. Successfully completing my courses satisfied me to some extent during my bachelor's degree just as graduating with honors did, yet I was still afraid and stressed about my MA thesis so early on that I could neither enjoy my years at university nor believe that I was sufficient. Eventually, when it was time to decide what to write in grad school, I was aghast. For a while, I blamed this on my parents who refused my request when I explained to them I needed a break after graduation before applying for master's, so that I could discover my interests and hopefully decide what my master's thesis will be about this time, without further stress of exams, grades, and scholarship. On second thought, maybe they were right. If I took that break, I might have wasted a year in a constant cycle of anxiety, burnout, shutting down, healing through distractions and self-care getting sidetracked by fun and care-free days, then forgetting what my initial plan was, panicking and ending up where I started, exhausted and anxious. Most of the time, it felt like there was no escape from this self-destructive pattern. Even after finally settling on an idea and choosing my two favorite books to work on, I spent my second year paralyzed with fear because I simply could not write my thesis. This made no sense considering I got to choose what to study instead of being handed a topic by my advisor, and I was supposed to be working with books that are dear to me. Alas, it was not until time began running out, when it was late enough to be seriously concerned that I finally took action and started writing.

My initial idea was that my childhood favorites —and still my favorites even as an adult— greatly resembled fairy tales. So I decided to learn more about the relationship between fairy tales and children's fantasy. The more I researched the origin of fairy tales and their relevance in contemporary fiction, the more fascinated I

became by how inspirational and immense the tradition truly is. I realized how inaccurate mainstream assumptions about fairy tales were, and found that adults do a disservice not only to Straparola or Basile, but to themselves by dismissing fairy tales on the basis that they are just “childhood material”. Nonetheless, just because the characters live happily ever after does not mean those tales offer light or unserious adventures. They are, in fact, as political and social as any other literary material if the reader is half as bold as the fairy tale protagonists and brave enough to read the versions not censored and sugar-coated for sensitive audiences by Brothers Grimm. Surely, they are not horror narratives, but they are infused with the real anxieties and troubles of everyday people. They are also motivational works that encourage readers to keep chasing their dreams and stand against injustice in pursuit of personal utopias.

The major inconvenience I faced during the fairy tale part of the thesis was that due to the limitations of the form, fairy tales lacked psychological depth. Although the characters suffered traumatic events, their emotional value was often reduced for the sake of narrative momentum, in other words, action. In that sense, what fairy tales failed to offer thoroughly was complemented by fantasy literature, which follows a similar structure but adds emphasis on the character’s psyche. The sense of “lack” that prompts a hero to leave home in fairy tales seemed very similar to the lack upon which fantasy characters begin their journey. Realizing that Clive Barker and Neil Gaiman reflect the psychological depth I was looking for in such adventures as *Coraline Jones* and *Harvey Swick’s*, I became certain of what I wanted to do with these books: demonstrate their similarity to the fairy tale structure by using Vladimir Propp’s narrative functions, and apply a psychological framework to examine the emotional and developmental impact of their journeys through Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Hopefully, my study will convince or encourage other students overwhelmed by the process much as I was that it is possible to complete your work even if the process terrifies you, as long as you are genuinely passionate about your arduous but worthwhile creation.

İzmir, 2025

Zülal Şevval ÖZTÜRK

ÖZET

Masallar akışkan ve hibrit bir tür olduğundan her daim birçok yaratıcı sanat eserine ilham kaynağı olmuştur. Yalnızca edebiyat ve sinema alanlarında değil, aynı zamanda birçok çeşitli medya formunda (fotoğrafçılık, podcast, tiyatro) ve çalışma alanında (çocuk ve genç yetişkin kurguları, hayvan çalışmaları, kuir çalışmaları) masalların tasviri ve etkileri gözlemlenip analiz edilebilmektedir. Masalın kökeni üzerine yapılan çalışmalar hala tartışma konusu olsa da, hem sözlü hem de yazılı anlatı geleneğiyle karşımıza çıkan masalların yüzyıllar boyunca insanlık tarihinin ve tecrübelerinin bir parçası olduğu düşünülmektedir. Dolayısıyla masallar, tıpkı insanlar ve toplum gibi değişim ve gelişim içinde olan, bilhassa çocuk edebiyatı anlatı türlerinde etki bırakmaya devam eden dinamik ürünlerdir.

Birçok örnekte odağı çocuklar olduğundan, masal geleneği ve yankıları sıklıkla çocuk edebiyatında görülmektedir. Çocuğun evinden ayrılıp uzak, sihirli diyarlara doğru yola çıktığı ve yine evinde, lakin dönüşüme uğramış farklı bir birey olarak sonlandığı yolculuğunu konu alan anlatılar, çocuk ve genç yetişkin edebiyatının da memnuniyetle kucaklayıp günümüzde de keşfetmeye devam ettiği alışlagelmiş masal anlatım teknikleridir. Bu tezin öncelikli hedefi, Neil Gaiman'ın yazmış olduğu *Coraline*'in ve Clive Barker'ın kaleminden *Zaman Hırsızı*'nın (ikincisi yazarının orijinal dildeki başlığında belirtmiş olduğu üzere bir fabl örneğidir) masal motiflerinden yüksek oranda etkilenmiş kurgusal eserler olduğunu Vladimir Propp'un yapısalci yaklaşımıyla ortaya koymaktır. Bu iki eser uyarı niteliğinde eserler olup, sihirli bir geçit ile mükemmel görünen aldatici dünyalara seyahat etmek için ailelerinden ayrılan ve kendilerini tehlikenin tam ortasında bulan çocukları ön plana çıkararak çocuk edebiyatını korku öğeleri ile harmanlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda Gaiman ve Barker'ın eserlerinde kullandıkları ütöpik/distöpik temalar ünlü masal Hansel ve Gretel'de ve ayrıca modern bir masal örneği olarak görülen Alice Harikalar Diyarında'da kullanılmış olanlarla oldukça benzerlik göstermektedir. Bu araştırma Propp'un yapısalci analizini uygulayarak *Coraline* ve *Zaman Hırsızı*'nın masal motiflerini modern kitle için nasıl gözler önüne serip yeniden inşa ettiğine dair ışık tutacaktır. Araştırma ayrıca, bu metinlerin ana karakterlerinin tehlikeli görevlerine başlangıcını ve en nihayetinde çok küçük yaşta yüzleştikleri hayatlarını tehdit eden,

kendilerinden çok daha büyük düşmanlarla karşı karşıya gelmek zorunda kaldıklarından öz-gerçekleşimlerine vesile olan bu tehlikeli yolculukla başa çıkma becerilerini inceleyecektir. Çocukların karakter gelişimleri, daha düşük ihtiyaçlarının - fizyolojik ihtiyaçlar ve güvenlik ihtiyacı gibi- karşılanması veya karşılanmamasının, potansiyellerinin en üst seviyesine ulaşarak kendilerini kuşatan ve hapseden kötülöklere karşı galip gelme yolundaki durumlarına olumlu ve olumsuz yönde katkıları Maslow'un ihtiyaçlar hiyerarşisi teorisiyle açıklanacaktır.

Bu çalışmanın nihai amacı, multidisipliner bir yaklaşım izleyerek masal türünün birçok farklı alanda kendisini gösterdiğinden güncel ve umut vadeden bir çalışma alanı olduğunu vurgulamaktır. Farklı türde çağdaş anlatılarla kesişen ve yalnızca çocukların boş zamanları için bir meşgale değil, aynı zamanda özellikle içindeki çocuğı beslemeye devam eden her yaştan yetişkine de eğlence ve ilham kaynağı olan masal, yorumlamaya ve çalışılmaya hayli açıktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: masal geleneğı, çocuk edebiyatı, fantastik edebiyat, masalın yapısalcı analizi, Proppcu anlatı işlevleri, Maslow'un ihtiyaçlar hiyerarşisi, öz-gerçekleştirim

ABSTRACT

Fairy tales have always inspired other creative works of art as a fluid, hybrid genre. Not only in literature and cinema but also in various media (e.g. photography, podcasts, theater), and other areas of study (e.g. children's and young adult fiction, animal studies, queer studies), fairy tale's representation and its effects can be observed and analyzed. Although the origins of fairy tales are still debated, it is assumed that fairy tales, in both oral and written storytelling tradition, have been a part of human history and experience for ages. Therefore, fairy tales, like humans and society, have been changing and growing as a dynamic product, continuing to influence ways of storytelling, especially children's literature.

Since in many cases fairy tales focus on children, fairy tale tradition and its echoes are commonly manifested in children's literature. Narratives that deal with children's challenging journey from home to a distant, magical land, and return home as a transformed person are consuetudinary ways of storytelling in fairy tales, which children's and young adult's literature happily embrace and explore today. The first objective of this study is to demonstrate the ways in which Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always* (the latter described to be a fable by the author himself in its title) are fiction hugely influenced by fairy tale motifs and elements through the light of Vladimir Propp's narrative functions. As cautionary tales, they blend children's literature with aspects of horror, featuring two children who get separated from their parents to travel through a magical portal and find themselves in a facade of a wonderful world, soon to realize they are in terrible danger. In this regard, the utopian/dystopian themes used in Gaiman and Barker's tales are like the ones used in famous fairy famous fairy tale "Hansel and Gretel", and also to the children's book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which is a modern fairy tale. By applying Propp's structural analysis, this research highlights how *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always* exhibit and reconstruct fairy tale motifs for modern audiences. Moreover, it investigates how the protagonists begin and lead their precarious quests and ultimately achieve self-actualization due to being forced to confront enemies that are bigger than them, facing life-threatening situations at such an early age. Their character development is analyzed within the framework of

Maslow's hierarchy of needs to illustrate how lack and/or fulfillment of Coraline and Harvey's lower needs -such as physiological needs and safety needs- empower and/or deteriorate their ground before outreaching their potential and defeating evils that conquer and imprison them.

Through a multidisciplinary approach, the ultimate goal of this work is to emphasize fairy tale as a genre is a promising field of study that remains relevant in diverse forms and it is open to interpretation and study as it intersects with different types of contemporary narratives, providing entertainment and inspiration not only for the leisure of children but for adults of all ages, especially for those who keep on nurturing their inner child.

Keywords: fairy tale tradition, fairy tales, children's literature, fantasy literature, structuralist fairy tale analysis, Proppian narrative functions, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, self-actualization

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INTRODUCTION

I keep turning over new leaves, and spoiling them, as I used to spoil my copybooks; and I make so many beginnings there never will be an end.

—Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*

When it comes to fairy tales, a common misunderstanding arises for people who are not thoroughly familiar with them. They regard fairy tales as mere devices of entertainment or education aimed at and provided for little children. There is nothing wrong with that, of course, considering how reading sons and daughters bedtime stories at night is a great way for parents to engage and bond with them, allowing kids to gain insight into certain contexts while their faculty of imagination is being nourished as well. Walt Disney Studios may be held responsible for this confusion regarding who fairy tales are for, as they anchored fairy tales in the nursery, reinforcing their perception as entertainment for children through a wide range of animations they have been producing based on fairy tales. However, fairy tales -with their broader, multigenerational roots- contribute to a much larger whole, as they have been a part of human experience and existence for so long. As Maria Tatar intently observes, this misconception is a natural result of its name. While fairies are the first thing that comes to mind, she explains, then how come people can assume they are anything but representations of fantasy that are far beyond real life:

It was the French, more specifically Mme d'Aulnoy, author of many literary fairy tales, who gave us the term *contes de fees* [tales of fairies], leading us to frame the stories as if they turned on the lives of diminutive folk rather than ordinary people—men and women, girls and boys, all of whom are up against monsters of one kind or another. (*The Classic* xi)

Fairy tales, in fact, are closer to the real life and real worries of these ordinary people than they seem to appear; they portray both countless struggles and triumphs of characters in misfortunate situations by chance or wrong decisions they find themselves in or put themselves into. Many adults assume they are too old for fairy

tales since these narratives are traditionally imbued with fantasy elements. However, what is life without fantasy? People do dream and embrace aspirations throughout their lives. Fairy tales serve nothing but manifestations of these human thoughts and emotions: the desire to achieve something and the longing for a happy ending. Steven Swann Jones notes that they “depict magical or marvelous events or phenomena as a valid part of human experience” (9). Apart from the supernatural occurrences and exaggeration in storytelling, there is no denying fairy tales delve into societies and attempt to shed light on humans and not fairies or magical creatures of any kind, which proves them appropriate and suitable for all ages. Attempting to explore the usual by using unusual is the way fairy tales’ wisdom works, encouraging people to hold onto their hopes to navigate and overcome the challenges life brings within.

Regarding the connection between fairy tales and sociological context, Jill Terry Rudy reminds the reader of its universality and comments on the everlasting relevance of fairy tales across the centuries as follows:

Fairy tales move, fully formed, in some superorganic way through a wide variety of cultures. While tales shape-shift, transform, and adapt as they land in new situations, they seem recognizably whole and familiar—sometimes even psychic, as if tapping into some deeply human condition. Yet fairy tales also seem recognizably elemental and strange—sometimes even daft, as if stacking up building blocks of some other world to explain humanity. Either way, fairy tales exemplify that stories themselves are shared in specific times, places, and situations that may be long ago and far away, right now, or next year. (6)

As a dynamic genre repeatedly reconstructed through every retelling, fairy tales have evolved in harmony with humans through centuries, reflecting various cultural backgrounds: “Fairy tale has inspired formal innovation over centuries, from chapbooks and the novel to reality TV formats, generating and moving new genres and new media” (Greenhill et al. xiv). They are relatively early examples of literary narratives and, taking this into account, it does not come as a surprise that they influenced lots of other genres through the centuries, from medieval literature texts to video games in the 21st century: “Fairy tales seem to have a built-in refresh button, inviting us to adapt and repurpose them as they migrate into new scenes of

storytelling and make themselves at home in new media” (Tatar *The Classic* xxii). Looking at the media and how fairy tales are featured in different art fields apart from literature, such as cinema, theater, and music -to name a few- validates fairy tales as quite fluid and interdisciplinary forms of fiction and a subject to study. Being a profound means of guidance rather than simple made-up stories about make-believe, they continue to contribute to understanding the real world and the world of imagination by offering deeper meanings and truths relevant to humanity and what it means to be human. In his discussion of folklore narratives, Elliot Oring endorses that these tales are “reflections of the societies and individuals which create and transmit them; consequently they reflect a wide range of human ideas and emotions” (133). This brings another question to mind: If that is what fairy tales are about, why do fairy tale protagonists meet their happy ending, which is almost a utopic vision that does not seem to correspond to real life and how it functions for ordinary people? In that sense, it is important to examine fairy tale narratives thoroughly to see what perilous situations the hero/heroine typically suffers, from the beginning of their journey to its end, so as to acknowledge only through that suffering can they thrive despite adversities, and only then, earn their prizes, just as people do in real life by putting effort to cope with fears and anxieties within and struggle to meet success. Introduced in *The Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp’s thirty-one narrative functions serve as a good model to examine and map plot structures of fairy tales further to see the ways in which these fears and anxieties of the protagonist demonstrate themselves in the hero’s/heroine’s quest.

In fairy tales and works influenced by fairy tale tradition, dystopian elements are featured alongside the utopian. However, the latter certainly attracts more attention as happily ever after is a commonly used trope. Marina Warner views the utopian vision as a redeeming quality of the genre that contributed to its survival: “The stories face up to the inadmissible facts of reality and promise deliverance. This honest harshness combined with the wishful hoping has helped them to last” (*Once Upon* 295). Not only does her claim make it clear that fairy tales are not so removed from real life, but it also touches on the importance of reassurance they give to people and how they restore their faith to overcome difficulties met in life, just as fairy tale protagonists are contested with. Those heroes/heroines are forced to depart from their homes to set foot in a place that appears to be a dream come true, inhabited by

other(s) who usually welcome guests with hospitality. In many cases, the protagonist is unaware of the dangers and terrors threatening their wellbeing at first glance, while the villain and evil forces are at work to deceive the prey that fell right into the trap with the use of sugar-coated gifts and promises that are nothing but fallacies. The fairy tale realms crafted by the villain to entice the naive characters are great examples of dystopian settings hidden behind a utopian facade. The characters learn new things and reinvent themselves in their journey to this dystopian land. After successfully completing the trials and making the evil meet their demise, they return to their home as mature versions of themselves that are self-aware and self-reliant more than ever, as Carl Lindahl underlines

[f]airy tales tend to feature children who grow into adulthood by leaving home, conquering magical adversaries, and/or passing special tests... The fairy tale is a kind of magic sandwich that begins in a recognizable world and then moves to the margins as the protagonists enter the magic forest or climb to the sky; finally, after meeting magical challenges, the heroes exit that magic world and reincorporate into their society at a new status: no longer helpless children. (13)

The classic versions of fairy tales, especially the ones that seem to have superficially perfect endings, might indeed cause inconveniences in the modern sense of understanding literary texts when more complex interpretations are pursued. Anne Sexton stands among the many literary figures who have reimaged fairy tales, taking them beyond their conventional boundaries. Through her poetry, she reshapes these narratives into profound explorations of psychological depth, cultural dynamics, and feminist perspectives. First published in the early 70s, Sexton's book *Transformations* deconstructs impeccable ideals by challenging the works of the Brothers Grimm. Her retellings in verse expose the polished surface of traditional fairy tale endings, showing the "happily ever after" for what it really is, namely, either an empty illusion hiding deeper problems or an impossible dream that ignores life's ongoing struggles and complexities. There are numerous fairy tale retellings in different literary forms that focus on significant literary, psychological, and political contexts, to name a few. Besides, these retellings are not solely confined to the realm of children's literature, which demonstrates yet another proof of its demand for a general audience. Angela Carter's short stories collection *The Bloody Chamber* (1979)

is a well-known parody of Perrault's *Bluebeard* and other classic fairy tales, while many contemporary works are introduced to the reader day by day, like Louise O'Neill's novel *The Surface Breaks* (2018), a reimagining of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* through a feminist lens. Other new releases in contemporary literature include *A Curse so Dark and Lonely* (2019), a young adult novel by Brigid Kemmerer, which is another experimental take on "Beauty and the Beast", and *The Forest of Vanishing Stars* by Kristin Bjerregaard (2021), a retelling of Brothers Grimm's "Hansel and Gretel". Subversion of traditional fairy-tale narratives is a common practice not only observed in literature but also in other fields of art, depending on the theoretical focus of the framework and storytelling strategy: "The [fairy tale] form survives mutations- in stories, novels, poems, essays, music, and art. It is also adaptable to a diverse range of stylistic narrative modes, as evidenced in the wide array of work" (Bernheimer 13). These mutations bring endless possibilities to work with fairy tale tradition that greets the reader/audience with radical changes and revolutions in various forms of innovative creations without ever losing their essence and power. As fairy tales are dynamic and adaptable, so are their reinterpretations since they are fluid and ready to evolve.

Neil Gaiman and Clive Barker are prominent figures in British literature who experiment on and work with different storytelling mediums. The former, who started his career as a journalist, is now known for his comics and fantasy novels, while the latter is considered a horror master with his wide range of work in art, cinema, and video games. Barker's written pieces include plays, short stories, poems, and novels with his own illustrations. Though *The Thief of Always* is his only children's book (unlike Gaiman, who writes for children often), it is a brilliant take with many fans. In August 2024, Harper Perennial released a new edition of the book, which elevates it as a timeless classic. The secret behind its success and relevance lies in Barker's appreciation and talent in holding up estimations of different audiences through his writing, just as fairy tales do address both adults and children: "'In creating THE THIEF OF ALWAYS the vocabulary had to be simple,'" said Barker. "The structure of the sentences also had to be of a plainer style because I wanted ten-year-olds to be able to read it, but I also wanted to appeal to 40-year-olds in the same way that C. S. Lewis still appeals to me today'" (Beeler 20). Barker's mark on style and how he expresses it to be a demonstration of an easier read corresponds to a narrative that is

action-based rather than depiction-focused, which, as emphasized in Vladimir Propp's *The Morphology of the Folktale*, is a common characteristic seen in classic fairy tales. Apparently, a successful children's writer should be aware of particular distinctions like these without reducing the work to children's leisure only. Likewise, C. S. Lewis in his article called "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" makes it clear that "a children's story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children's story" (2). These remarks cover the topics regarding the audience of stories that seem to be attributed to children at first glance, and they establish firm grounds for the common misconception regarding fairy tales and children's literature. Surely, there are other matters to attend to when studying children's narratives, one of which is carefully examined by Neil Gaiman as follows:

We writers –and especially writers for children, but all writers– have an obligation to our readers: it's the obligation to write true things, especially important when we are creating tales of people who do not exist in places that never were – to understand that truth is not in what happens but what it tells us about who we are. Fiction is the lie that tells the truth, after all.

Gaiman meticulously proposes the radical idea that literary works do more than laying out a chronological story featuring the whereabouts of the imagined characters and the series of events they undergo. They hold a mirror to the reader, making the identification process possible. Besides, he touches on how fiction serves more than a made-up cast going through made-up scenarios; through the product of imagination, the reader is linked to the characters and places they get to associate with their lives and the reality surrounding them. That is what he does in his book *Coraline*, coming up with the story of an imagined girl who is, in his own words, "small for her age, and would find herself in darkest danger"¹, maturing through an adventure that requires lots of effort and dedication. As in fairy tales, it is not so removed from real life except for fantastic occasions, as he believes to be the case for fiction, and applies so in his dark fantasy novella. Thematically, Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always* and Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* are similar British children's fiction, both of which follow fairy

¹ Gaiman's further ideas on *Coraline* and the inspiration behind the book is available in the additional chapter "Why I Wrote *Coraline*", which is an online exclusive for the 10th Anniversary Edition. Gaiman also approves that *Coraline* is indeed a fairy tale in another exclusive chapter "Questions & Answers About *Coraline*" by saying "*Coraline*'s a fairy tale in the same way that "*Hansel and Gretel*" is a fairy tale."

tale tradition and are also crafted with children's horror. By blending the elements of fairy tale tradition and horror in children's literature, the authors contribute to a unique cultural legacy that encourages readers to reflect on their thoughts and imaginations regarding their young and adult selves. Coraline Jones and Harvey Swick, the hero and heroine of the modern tales, set out on peculiar adventures in expectation of exploring better worlds that are far more interesting than their homes. What befalls them is a dystopian disaster like Hansel and Gretel or Alice (in Wonderland) suffers. Unlike in those prior works, however, it is easier to monitor the protagonists' minds, as Gaiman and Barker explore their protagonists' psychological state further, making it possible. The reader does infer what is happening in Coraline and Harvey's heads before they act by the description of their deepest fears and desires, something not apparent in classic fairy tales. Such descriptions portray dynamic characters whose identities shift and change alongside the journey. This transformation they undergo as they become better versions of themselves can be analyzed by examining their needs so as to see how fulfilling or lacking a need dramatically affects the children. Simply put, as children around ten, their needs to sustain themselves are to be met by the caretakers, who, in many cases, are parents. Assuming these needs are met, children also need emotional support and validation, which initially is satisfied within the household, through the attention and effort of mother and father, and then through the environment via other social interactions. Only after these needs are fulfilled can the child work on his/her self-worth and other personal aspirations. Abraham Maslow is an American psychologist known for his studies regarding human needs. He first proposed his hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation". This paper serves as the groundwork for his book *Motivation and Personality* (1954), in which he elaborates on the theory further. Maslow portrays the hierarchy of needs with physiological needs on the bottom line as the starting point. These needs are vital to all human beings, as unless they are met, organisms cannot survive. The most personal and fulfilling need, he states, is striving for self-actualization, which accounts for being true to one's nature and reaching one's potential to the fullest (*Motivation* 46). *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always* are children's fantasies that draw heavily on classic fairy tale structure but reconfigure them through psychologically complex protagonists and themes rooted in contemporary childhood anxieties. By combining Propp's structuralist framework with Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the study reveals how these works

modernize the hero's journey by emphasizing internal, as well as external, struggles. The case study will begin with identifying and comparing both the actions recurrent in classic fairy tales and the seven spheres of action, *dramatis personae* in selected works. Such examination will underlie the strong influence of fairy tales in children's fantasy literature. Furthermore, fantasies are contemporary narratives much longer in page numbers, which helps the writer focus on how characters think or feel while they are taking the action that are recurrent in classic fairy tales. In this regard, after the Proppian analysis is thoroughly covered, the case study will use Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs to complement the structural study. In *Morphology*, Propp suggests he disregards characters' psychological state for he observed the course of action is not altered in the tales by that factor (81). However, his claim speaks for classic fairy tales. Upon further observation, it might be acknowledged that fantasy literature blends the fairy tale action patterns and a more in-depth representation of the psyche of the characters to illuminate the mental challenges along the journey as well as the physical struggle. Besides, Propp emphasizes a classic fairy tale either begins with a lack, or a sort of misfortune befalls the hero, and this lack finds its psychological match in *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always* upon further examination of their needs as indicated by Maslow. Throughout their journey, Coraline and Harvey's partly satisfied needs in the beginning are exploited by the promise of overgratification in a distant, magical land, which is not, in fact, different in context regarding how villains lure the heroes in classic fairy tales. The test of physiological, safety, belonging, and esteem needs results in a heroic closure that ends with the self-actualization of the protagonists, which will be the second theoretical scope of the thesis. The first chapter of this thesis will focus on fairy tales' origins and narrative conventions in order to illustrate the everlasting appeal of fairy tales throughout centuries as human-centered narratives. Furthermore, the connection between fairy tales and fantasy literature will be examined so that it will be more convenient to prove that Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always* are children's fantasy works that are highly influenced by the fairy tale tradition. Chapter two will introduce the theoretical framework the thesis will be based on, the thirty-one-function-based structural fairy tale analysis model and humanistic psychology's holistic view infused hierarchy of needs. Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* and Abraham Maslow's *Motivation and Personality* will be consulted as main theoretical texts that the thesis will draw upon. Chapter three will offer a profound examination of Propp's actions of

dramatis personae and Maslow's hierarchical needs model from physiological needs to self-actualization in *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always*. The thesis will be conducted with the aim and hope that, though relatively old, Propp's model is practical to use not only in examining fairy tales but also fantasy literature. Furthermore, the thesis will echo the compatibility between literature and theories in the field of psychology, long as relevant connections are pursued.



CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY OF FAIRY TALE AND ITS NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS AS A GENRE

As long as the fairy tale continues to awaken our wonderment and enable us to project worlds counter to our present society, it will serve a meaningful social and aesthetic function, not just for compensation but for revelation: for the worlds portrayed by the best of our fairy tales are like magic spells of enchantment that actually free us. Instead of petrifying our minds, fairy tales arouse our imagination and compel us to realize how we can fight terror and cunningly insert ourselves into our daily struggles and turn the course of the world's events in our favor.

—Jack Zipes, *Spells of Enchantment*

As there is no way of locating the exact date when the human species evolved to their current state, so is it the case for pointing at a time stamp on the origin of fairy tales. There are numerous different approaches and arguments presented and contributed to the academic field regarding fairy tales' history. It is widely acknowledged that tracing its roots is a complex matter that is improbable to fully resolve. It is believed and commonly agreed that fairy tales, as highly fluid and transformative subsets of folklore, are ancient social constructs that guided and entertained people for ages, be it for bringing them closer around campfires or to instructing children and warning them against matters of caution. Jack Zipes likens the process of oral tradition spreading and eventually morphing into a literary genre while being a faithful inspiration for many different fields to Richard Dawkins' concept of memes and how they function, being perpetually copied, replicated, and stored in the brain: "Indeed, a good example of a meme is a fairy tale, but not just any fairy tale, an individual fairy tale and its discursive tradition that includes oral and literary tales and other cultural forms of transmission such as radio, film, video and the Internet" (Zipes *Why Fairy* 5). The products of oral storytelling, the earlier sources of fairy tales, which were repeated and transmitted until they became adopted and

reconfigured by the mass media, are as old as language itself. They are considered a complementary mode of communication and sociocultural human experience: “Though there was no such thing as a fairy tale as we understand it today when humans developed the capacity to speak, communicate, and tell tales thousands of years ago there were certainly metaphoric linguistic seeds in their communications that contributed to the gradual formation of oral wonder tales” (Zipes *The Irresistible* xii). Although each and every oral version of tales cannot be documented or thoroughly comprehended by archeologists and folklorists even with today’s technological advancements -due to an incomprehensible amount of data being lost and forgotten-, there are various examples of classical fairy tales that survived alongside humankind as relevant representations of cultural heritage thanks to the preserved collections of fairy tales. However, as many scholars and critics agree, no original or true version of a fairy tale exists, the main reason for such conclusion is the unreliability of transmitting tales orally. When heard and told by people, the details and the core of the narrative are already in the process of being altered significantly depending on individual values and belief systems, not to mention some parts omitted either willingly or due to difficulties remembering the whole thing, or some other parts added, which make them somewhat mystery. Fairy tales as known today are inseparable from the oral tradition in which folktales of prehistoric times were performed rather than recorded. The performance of the past turns precise historical findings on the first emergence and development of oral tales into an unfeasible task. Having studied different versions of “Little Red Riding Hood” across many nations, anthropologist Jamie Tehrani explains that while tales clearly resemble one another, they feature contrasts to the European version, which signifies cultural diversity. Instances include “a tiger” that “replaces the wolf” “in the Chinese version” or “a little boy” since “in Iran, it would be considered odd for a young girl to roam alone” (qtd. in Gray). Tehrani further emphasizes how “over time these folk tales have been subtly changed and have evolved just like a biological organism. Because many of them were not written down until much later, they have been misremembered or reinvented through hundreds of generations” (qtd. in Gray). Not only does his research exemplify and prove the obscurity of oral folklore, but also lay out how stories, as exchanged all around the world through centuries, are eventually altered and transformed. Beside supporting this idea on the oral fairy tale tradition, Jack

Zipes calls this process a “cross-cultural contamination”, yet he attributes positive connotation to it to prevent any further misconceptions:

There is no such thing as a “pure” national folk tale or literary fairy tale, and neither genre, the oral folk tale or the literary fairy tale—if one can call them separate genres—is a “pure breed”; in fact, they are both very much mixed breeds, and it is in the very way that they “contaminated” each other historically through cross-cultural and intercultural exchange that has produced fruitful and multiple variants of similar social and personal experiences. (*Why Fairy* 43)

As Zipes asserts above, folktales and literary fairy tales are interconnected, and by no means a correct version of a tale exists. In such a vast tradition where narratives inspired and influenced one another, one only expects to find a representation of a rich cultural legacy. Perpetual interaction and gradual contribution are what make these stories so compelling and creative. Likewise, Alan Dundes remarks that “any true fairy tale, like all folklore is characterized by the criteria of multiple existence and variation. He continues his discussion explaining what those criteria mean by how “an item must exist in at least two versions in order to qualify as authentic folklore” and the fact that “most items exist in hundreds of versions, no two versions of an oral fairy tale word-for-word the same” (261). Dundes points out that fairy tales are ubiquitous narratives that welcome the listener or reader with endless chain of multifarious adaptations. Though it is impossible to thoroughly examine and catalogue the obscure origins of oral tradition, the evolution of fairy tale and its everlasting influence can be observed in written works that progressively entered and established itself as a genre in literary domain. Correspondingly, Kay F. Stone stresses that “behind each printed text are hundreds of unrecorded tales by hundreds of traditional artists, with no single telling capturing the full potential of any story” (13). Fairy tales of today, even literary work with private ownership are products of cultural accumulation that embody characteristics and essence of centuries old storytelling custom. Last but not least, Jack Zipes points out that “the motifs, characters, topoi, and magical properties of the literary [fairy tale] tradition can be traced back to tale collections from the Orient that predate Christianity” and he further adds “they are apparent in Indian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman myths and in tales that constitute Oriental and Occidental religions” (Zipes *The Great* 851).

One of the earliest recorded examples of fairy tale narratives, as referenced to its thematical aspects by J. R. R. Tolkien in his notable work “On Fairy-studies” and noted by Andrew Teverson in *The Fairy Tale World*, is “The Tale of Two Brothers” (c. 1200 – c. 1194 BCE). Anthropological studies indicate that it is a story written in Ancient Egypt, at the same time as the rule of pharaoh Seti II. Teverson draws attention to fairy tale elements that can be observed in the archaic work as follows:

Though the narrative is applied to the present concerns of its Egyptian scribe and the society in which he worked, however, the scribe also makes use of narrative motifs and patterns that have become familiar in popular narrative traditions from diverse regions and periods. The motifs of the animals that render assistance following good treatment (‘animal helper’), the heart that can be stored outside the body, the serial transformations of a sorcerer, the sign (‘life token’) that magically reveals the peril of a loved one from a distance, and the magical obstruction that prevents a pursuit (‘obstacle flight’), are all recorded as common fairy-tale elements in Stith Thompson’s Motif-Index of Folk-Literature. Likewise, in its broad narrative developments, the Egyptian story appears to belong to a common international tale type catalogued by Antti Aarne, Stith Thompson, and Hans-Jörg Uther as “The Twins or Blood-Brothers”². (2)

Teverson’s analysis supports the idea that fairy tales are greatly influenced by sociocultural aspects of the era they are performed or written, and they endlessly attract people regardless of the time and place they live in. The familiarity he talks about is in the same fashion with what Zipes highlights about the relevance of fairy tales through centuries; that is, while the ones that “became irrelevant and anachronistic forgotten, those continued to have cultural significance were imitated and passed on” (*Why Fairy* 13). It can be said in the light of these views that despite being a primordial source, “The Tale of Two Brothers” stood the test of time thanks to its universal appeal. The plot details of the story represent ideals of prehistoric

² “The Twins or Blood-Brothers” is one of the many tale types contextualized and catalogued by folklorist Antti Aarne, revised by Stith Thompson, and further expanded by Hans-Jörg Uther in *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography* (first published in 2004). Tale types are numbered and written followed by ATU (capitals of each scholar). “The Twins or Blood-Brothers”, for instance, is referenced as “ATU 303” and “The Faithless Wife”, also apparent in both Ancient Egyptian tale and Grimm’s tale, is “ATU 318” The main category both types are included in is “Tales of Magic”, which corresponds to fairy tales (Uther *The Types* 174 183 205).

Egyptian folk, as the tale portrays what is considered morally corrupt by the society along with their certain belief systems, including the Maat principle (cosmic order and justice in Ancient Egypt), gods as protectors and arbiters, kingship as a divine right, sacredness of nature, fraternal bond, and trust in marriage. As these examples illustrate, “oral tales have served to stabilize, conserve, or challenge the common beliefs, laws, values, and norms of a group. The ideology expressed in wonder tales always stemmed from the position that the narrator assumed with regard to the developments in his or her community, and the narrative plot and changes made in a tale depended on the sense of wonder or awe that the narrator wanted to evoke” (Zipes *Spells* xv). Apart from the motifs pointed out by Teverson above, prominent themes used in it include accusation of an indecent affair, talking animals, divine aid by deities, castration, shapeshifting, resurrection and reincarnation. In addition, it can be observed that trees are thought to be holy and associated with life and rebirth as they appear and are illustrated in the story. Overtly, fairies are absent and instead, religious concepts are abundant, which greatly reflects the condition of its period. At times it is challenging to identify fairy tales distinctly as it is an organic genre that borrows from other types of folklore. Hence, it is not uncommon that they overlap with myths, legends, and/or other products of oral storytelling. While “The Tale of Two Brothers” might not be considered a fairy tale by some, it would not be ideal to disregard a separation and reunion story altogether; not because there are no fairies present in it, but because it contains typical motifs and elements associated with fairy tale tradition. Its central characters Anupu, Baïti, Phrâ-Harmakhis are gods as seen in myths, yet there is a talking cow in the story whose warning saves the younger brother from being slain by the hands of his elder brother. Faithless wives as a tale type also have great impact in the story as they trigger separation for brothers. The aftermath of the separation for Baïti is a perilous journey full of magical transformations (a distinct feature of fairy tales), and for Anupu, to find whereabouts of Baïti’s heart to resurrect and reconcile with his brother, which ends happily for both. Brothers Grimm’s *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (*Children’s and Household Tales*, 1812–1815) also features a tale of “The Two Brothers”. Plots of the Ancient Egyptian story and Grimm’s tale are entirely different; however, they fall under the same tale type in ATU index. Some of the themes of the former mentioned above (false infidelity claim, bringing someone back to life) as well as “a number of common motifs – notably, the magical ‘life sign’ that alerts one brother to the danger of the other (the frothing mug of beer and the

knife that is rusted on one side), and animals that have been treated with kindness and render magical assistance” are apparent in both (3). Teverson concludes his discussion on comparison and contrast of two brotherly bond tales as thus:

Such comparisons cannot be seen as evidence of an unbroken line of transmission between the fictions of ancient Egypt and Modern Germany; they do, however, furnish evidence that tales of magic with resemblances to those fictions we now call fairy tales were in circulation in Ancient Egypt three millennia before the genre-defining collections of the modern era. (3)

As can be inferred from Teverson’s insights, fairy tales are recognizable formulaic narratives with old roots. Long before printing machine was invented and fairy tales were institutionalized as a genre, numerous variations of them were already in circulation among people. Just like the magical transformative characters in their narrative, “fairy tales shapeshift their way through folklore and literature, elite and pop cultures, oral and literary traditions, and multiple time periods and regions of the world” (Jorgensen). Likewise, other remarkable folkloric texts that inspire European fairy tale tradition are in circulation in different regions of the world, like *Panchatantra* (200 BCE – 300 CE), an Ancient Indian tale collection written in Sanskrit. *Panchatantra* is a frame narrative divided into five books, each containing fables and animal tales that “illustrate various ethical and moral principles (*nitishastra*, or a code of conduct in Sanskrit)” (Belcher 724). Vishnusharman the Wise is the narrator who tells three princes eighty-six stories to educate them. Taking Stith Thompson’s *The Folktale* into account, Steven Swann Jones suggests the possibility that *Panchatantra*, which “comes to us from Indian tradition” might be “the oldest literary collection that includes some fairy tales” (34). Jones further emphasizes that it includes versions of the tales “The Magician and His Pupil”, “Luck and Intelligence”, and “The Brave Tailor”, noting fairy tale motifs seen in *Panchatantra* such as magical transformations and tricking an ogre/giant. Patrick Olivelle, Sanskrit Literature scholar and the translator of *Pañcatantra: The Book of India's Folk Wisdom*, introduces the popularity and widespread of the Indian tale collection as follows:

If translation is the best compliment paid to a literary work, then, as one of the earliest and certainly the most frequently translated literary product of India,

the *Pañcatantra* has received the ultimate compliment both from within the Indian subcontinent and from the world at large... The migration of the *Pañcatantra* through the rest of the world is even more fascinating. There are over 200 versions in more than 50 languages. Indeed, the *Pañcatantra* spread at an earlier time and more extensively in the world than any other piece of Indian literature. (ix–x)

The literary significance of *Panchatantra* is clearly proven as a text with such extensive translation history and cross-cultural adaptability. Its survival over centuries with hundreds of versions in various languages demonstrates its long-lasting universal appeal and relevance. It is a fascinating work assumed to influence many other well-known collections like *Aesop's Fables* and *One Thousand and One Nights*.

Another early example of a fairy tale that is also set in Ancient Egypt is “Rhodopis”. Studies show Strabo was the first to record the tale of Rhodopis, as it can be observed in his 1st century BC/AD work called [*The*] *Geography*:

They tell the fabulous story that, when she was bathing, an eagle snatched one of her sandals from her maid and carried it to Memphis; and while the king was administering justice in the open air, the eagle, when it arrived above his head, flung the sandal into his lap; and the king, stirred both by the beautiful shape of the sandal and by the strangeness of the occurrence, sent men in all directions into the country in quest of the woman who wore the sandal; and when she was found in the city of Naucratis, she was brought up to Memphis, became the wife of the king, and when she died was honoured with the above-mentioned tomb. (Strabo 93–95)

While some scholars agree that it is an early version of “Cinderella” from oral tradition, others argue against that withstanding how “Rhodopis” lacks very important details present in “Cinderella” in literary tradition associated with Perrault and Brothers Grimm. Consequently, people who refuse to acknowledge “Rhodopis” a version of “Cinderella” consider “Yeh-Hsien” (an Ancient Chinese story written down in 9th century) to be the forerunner of the European Cinderella, as it “concerns a deserving young woman, mistreated and degraded by her stepmother, who is aided by magical forces towards marriage with a king, and whose true identity is revealed following a test to discover whether or not her foot will fit into a shoe she has left

behind at a festival” (Tevereson 3). Nonetheless, it is important to note that each version of a tale is unique with cultural alterations; in the Chinese tale, a fairy godmother does not exist, and instead, the magical helper of the protagonist is a fish. Therefore, rather than determining a single ancestor of a tale, detecting both similarities and differences between tales of different origin is most helpful in fairy tale studies. In his book *Fairytale in the Ancient World*, Graham Anderson presents a chapter in which various examples of Cinderella stories from ancient times and different geographies are studied including “Aspasia of Phocaea” (29), “the tale of Asenath” (33) and more. Beside demonstrating “Rhodopis has the help of an animal, which might also be classed as ‘supernatural intervention’; the operation of the slipper test motif could not be clearer, nor could ‘marriage to the prince’”, he also implies “there are no rivals and no actual sight of the bride before the slipper test” (Anderson 27). However, the rest of the text indicate that Rhodopis was an actual person according to Herodotus’ accounts; a Thracian slave of Aesop the writer of fable eventually freed by Charaxus of Mytilene and spent the rest of her life in Ancient Egypt. Therefore, while fairy tales do not portray real life people, it is believed that Strabo’s tale was inspired by the historical narrative of Herodotus. In this regard, Strabo’s “Rhodopis” represents Ancient Egypt in detail, as it can be seen from the initial lines:

In the last days of Ancient Egypt, not many years before the country was conquered by the Persians, she was ruled by a Pharaoh called Amasis. So as to strengthen his country against the threat of invasion by Cyrus of Persia, who was conquering all the known world, he welcomed as many Greeks as wished to trade with or settle in Egypt, and gave them a city called Naucratis to be entirely their own. In Naucratis, not far from the mouth of the Nile that flows into the sea at Canopus, there lived a wealthy Greek merchant called Charaxos. His true home was in the island of Lesbos, and the famous poetess Sappho was his sister; but he had spent most of his life trading with Egypt, and in his old age he settled at Naucratis. (Green 180)

Just as its characters are fictional, fairy tales are not set in real time and places but instead, in fantastic, imaginary realms with typical landmarks such as castles, forests, meadows, villages, and kingdoms. However, as early examples demonstrate, the conventions of fairy tales as a genre were not clearly identified in oral tradition, as

countless narratives influenced one another in the journey towards institutionalization of fairy tales. That is what folktale scholars mean when they point out the fact that fairy tales overlap with other types of folklore like myths and legends. While similarities between ancient narratives and fairy tales known today can be detected, it is open to debate whether to call them fairy tales. Apart from reflecting the government of Ancient Egypt (theocratic monarchy) and its cultural interactions with Greece as apparent in the quoted section above, Strabo's tale "Rhodopis" starts with slave trade, which was commonplace in the past. Therefore, the text in question is clearly representative of the society in which it was recorded. While this by itself is not satisfactory to support the claim that it is embodied with the characteristics of a fairy tale, skimming the rest of the tale might guide the reader in that quest. When the eagle brings the pair of Rhodopis' sandals to Pharaoh Amasis, he admires "the delicate workmanship and tiny size of it" and feels "the girl for whose foot it was made must indeed be one of the loveliest in the world", so "from whose foot this slipper came shall be the bride of Pharaoh" (Green 182). How pharaoh perceives and imagines the owner of the shoes echo male gaze and assumptions which women are subjected to in terms of beauty standards. Women are expected to be graceful, elegant creatures with small, fragile bodily features, a belief which can be observed not only in ancient tales but also in "the literary appropriation of the oral wonder tales" that "served the hegemonic interests of males within the upper classes of particular communities and societies" (Zipes *Spells* xvi). Fairy tales portray stereotypical characters, and in many cases, the hero and heroine are the opposites; while the hero is brave and active (possessing the traits to save his bride to be), the heroine is beautiful and passive (waiting to be saved by her groom to be). In her article "Some Day My Prince Will Come", Marcia Lieberman explains women's position in fairy tales that draws attention to how they are generally marked with physical attractiveness above anything else:

Beauty [is] a girl's most valuable asset, perhaps her only valuable asset. Good-temper and meekness are so regularly associated with beauty... The most famous example of this associational pattern occurs in Cinderella... Girls win the prize if they are the fairest of them all; boys win if they are bold, active, and lucky. (188)

Correspondingly, the heroine in Strabo's tale is prominently known for elegance and grace in her looks. Furthermore, as prizes to be won, the gain of beautiful girls in fairy tales regardless of their titles or social rank is hand in marriage with a wealthy man. Without a doubt, the fate of Rhodopis is determined by her fairness, as it is narrated in the tale how pharaoh's men in search of Rhodopis are surprised by discovering Charaxos "bought the beautiful Greek girl in the slave market, and how he was lavishing all his wealth upon her as if she had been a princess put in his care by the gods" (Green 182). First, by a Greek merchant who falls for her looks and frees her from slave market, and second, by pharaoh of Ancient Egypt who is mesmerized by her sandals and elevates her social standing to royalty, Rhodopis is saved twice by men without playing an active role in the tale that is about her in its entirety. In short, Strabo's tale stands as an example from oral tradition that contains elements of fairy tale canon, which suggests the circulation of fairy tales long before the literary movement and its institutionalization.

Written by Lucius Apuleius in the 2nd century, *Metamorphoses* (also known as *The Golden Ass*) contains a tale called "Cupid and Psyche", which is "thought to be a forerunner of "Beauty and the Beast"" (Jorgensen) as it shares thematic elements with fairy tale despite being classified as a mythological story. As the title of the novel suggests, the book deals with transformations, a feature that became distinctly associated with fairy tale tradition. Jack Zipes states that "Cupid and Psyche" is "the first appearance of a major literary fairy tale" (*Spells* xvi). Bruno Bettelheim in *The Uses of Enchantment* also emphasizes that "since it influenced many Western tales of the animal-groom cycle" (292) it would not be appropriate to consider it a typical myth. "Cupid and Psyche" falls under the classifications ATU 425 "The Search for the Lost Husband", ATU425A "The Animal as Bridegroom"³, and ATU 425B⁴. The remarkable influence of the Ancient Roman tale on numerous fairy tale related works are discussed in the *Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales* as illustrated in the excerpt below:

³ Animal and beast are used interchangeably. Cupid is neither an animal nor a beast in the tale; however, as she has never seen his face, Psyche is easily deceived by her sisters into thinking that her husband is a beast who waits patiently to devour her.

⁴ "425B Son of the Witch (previously The Disenchanted Husband: The Witch's Tasks). (Cupid and Psyche.)" Exemplified as thus in Hans-Jörg Uther's 2004 study based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson.

The plot of 'Cupid and Psyche' was also well known in 17th-century France and was transformed by La Fontaine into a long story, *Amours de Psyche et de Cupidon* (1669) and made into a tragédie-ballet, *Psyché* (1671), by Corneille and Molière. It served as the basis for numerous fairy tales by Mme d'Aulnoy and inspired the two classical versions of "Beauty and the Beast" by Mme de Villeneuve and Mme Leprince de Beaumont. (Zipes 21–22)

As fairy tales are formulaic narratives, daughters who come in threes among which arise sibling rivalry, three warnings from the husband not to disregard his word, and Psyche's three difficult tasks given to her by Venus after she breaks her promise to her husband are worth mentioning, as they imply a structural parallel with fairy tales. Beside certain repeated numbers, characters of fairy tales are identifiable with ease. For example, Iona and Peter Opie suggest that in fairy tales "the hero is almost invariably a young person, usually the youngest member of a family" (15). Moreover, "the *third* [my italics] and youngest son" is often "oppressed by his brothers and/or father" while the youngest daughter is represented as "beautiful but maltreated" (Zipes *Spells* xiv) by her sisters and/or mother. Likewise in the tale, Psyche is envied both by her sisters who scheme against her for possessing better looks and fortune than theirs, and by goddess Venus who holds grudge against her for she attracts those dwelling on earth with her captivating charm, which causes mortals to neglect their duties towards Goddess of Beauty herself. Although Venus is initially not her mother, she first refers to herself as "the Universal Mother"⁵, and then becomes Psyche's mother-in-law (or stepmother) towards the end of the tale. Her ill manner out of jealousy and pride against the innocent Psyche is impulsive and cruel, just like the mean-spirited Evil Queen who does not hesitate to plot against murdering Snow White, whose beauty appears to surpass hers. However, in the end, things are reconciled between Psyche and Venus, unlike in Brothers Grimm tale. In addition, Apuleius' "Cupid and Psyche" features trickery as a common fairy tale motif (which, after being betrayed by her sisters Psyche also indulges in to punish them), along with talking animals and mother nature (wind, mountain, etc.) that assist the heroine in dire times of need. In sum, "Cupid and Psyche" stands as a combination of a mythical narrative and a fairy tale.

⁵ Apuleius, "Cupid and Psyche", translated by Robert Graves

During the Middle Ages, fairy tale narratives were disseminated throughout Europe via multifarious ways of storytelling such as epic poetry, chivalric romances, novellas, bawdy tales, animal fables and parables. As they believed in the supernatural and magical rituals, tales of miraculous transformations and wonder amazed people in medieval times just as folks of antiquity; however, it is the use of courtly love and religious allegory in medieval literature that marks the distinction and the transition between the two periods. In *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition*, Jack Zipes gives numerous examples of medieval works “contaminated” by fairy tales from different nations, and some of which are as follows:

In Italy fairy tale motifs can be found in the anonymous thirteenth-century *Novellino* (*The Hundred Old Tales*), In France, in Marie de France’s *Lais* (ca. 1189), Chretien de Troyes’s *Yvain, or the Knight of the Lion* (c 1190); in Germany, in the anonymous *König Rother* (ca. 1150), thirteenth-century verse novella *Asinarius*, Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzifal* (ea. 1210), Hartmann von Aue’s *Erek* (1180/85), *Armer Heinrich* (*Poor Henry*, 1195), and *Iwein* (ca. 1205); in England, in *Beowulf* (eighth century), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (fourteenth-century poem), Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* (ca. 1387)... In addition, such works as the thirteenth-century *Gesta Romanorum* (*Deeds of the Romans*) and *Legenda aurea* (*The Golden Legend*) written by Jacobus de Voraigne were used as primers for young children and contained folklore and fairy tale motifs as did many of the sermons and instructional books that were published from the fifteenth century onward. (851–852)

As illustrated in the examples above, fairy tales often overlap with other folktale types of myths and legends that were passed on through the oral tradition of storytelling but were not recorded until the Middle Ages. Chivalry and heroism are pivotal themes in medieval literature, representing the prevailing societal values and ideals of the era. Besides, as the Church grew more powerful and recognized the influence of magical and marvelous tales on people of all classes, it began to adapt and reconstruct these stories to align with religious values, systematizing good deeds and promoting moral teachings. On top of that, to enforce clerical wisdom and warnings against sin, the Church attempted to eliminate competition and diverted attention by declaring fairy tales as blasphemous works of heretics that led people astray. However, even the

authority of the Church “could not prevent these stories from being circulated; it could only stigmatize, censure, or criticize them” (*The Great* 850). Quite the contrary to the Church’s assumptions, rather than disregarding religious doctrine, medieval texts often dealt with religious allegory and combined it with the Church-wise untruthful and dangerous elements of fairy tale. Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* is a great example for this type of experimental writing as it portrays a collection of pilgrim stories that deal with both religious allegory and themes like love, morality, and humor. By combining these elements, Chaucer portrays the medieval society in his work. Beside Church’s influence, non-Christian oriental tales too were circulated around Europe at that time via cultural interactions and translations. According to Ruth Bottigheimer’s account: “Middle Eastern magic tale content gathered in Turkish-governed provinces and eventually found its way to Venice” (“Straparola’s” 285). On growing interest in tales of wonder around the 10th and 12th centuries and their relation to religion, Jan Ziolkowski states that “the first gradations in this growth [of fairy tales] are hesitant and closely tied to religious miracle” (*Fairy Tales* 44). In the same chapter of his book, Ziolkowski proceeds to elaborate “the [Medieval Latin] authors who chose to recount wonder tales were operating without a how-to manual” (44) and they “had to find their own way in figuring out how to bring into literature what we would call folktales, including wonder tales” (45). Hence, it can be said that the medieval authors were fascinated by working with folk and fairy tales partly because they had the freedom to experiment without restraints, as the fairy tale as a genre had not yet been institutionalized but proved its flexibility already in the oral storytelling tradition. In *Fairy Tales from Before Fairy Tales*, Ziolkowski focuses on Medieval Latin poetry which he thinks is mostly ignored by many scholars in discussions related to the origin of fairy tales (2 55) even though classic fairy tales in the widely recognized collections and especially works of Brothers Grimm are - according to his research- hugely influenced by medieval poems (4–6). To demonstrate his point, he studies Latin poetry in meticulous detail and one of his conclusions is that “Little Red Riding Hood” might be older than it was assumed before, as the tale shares resemblances with an 11th century verse in Latin:

The economy of Egbert’s version is perfect: every prop is indispensable and has a meaning. For this reason, if one subscribed to the debatable hypothesis that the original forms of folktales are usually the most logical or coherent,

one could build a plausible case that Egbert's "About a Girl Saved from Wolf Cubs" represents a truly original or more nearly original version of one Little Red Riding Hood story. (121).

The Middle Ages was a significant period regarding the development of fairy tales as many fairy tale writers were educated in early medieval texts. Apart from courtly love and religious allegory, frame narratives gained gradual popularity, and they included tales in the same fashion as fairy tale tradition. Though it was first translated into a European language (Arabic to French) in four volumes by orientalist Antoine Galland in between 1704-1717 under the name *Les mille et une nuits*, *The Thousand and One Nights*, (also known as *Arabian Nights*), is one of the earliest frame story collection examples (with manuscripts in its original language assumed to date back to the 9th century) that reflect fairy tale tradition. It is a rich collection inspired by various cultures and oral storytelling, including "Persian tales that had some Indian elements and had been adapted into Arabic by the 10th century; tales recorded in Baghdad between the 10th and 12th centuries; stories written down in Egypt between the 11th and 14th centuries" (Zipes *The Oxford* 22). Furthermore, it has been stated that *The Thousand and One Nights* "derives from an earlier Persian book named *Hezâr afsân* (*A Thousand Stories*)" (Marzolph 56). Some of the most recognized stories in *Arabian Nights* such as "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp" and "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" along with other 6 tales of no known record were added later to the collection by Galland who heard those tales in Paris from a Syrian storyteller in the beginning of the 18th century. D. L. Ashliman emphasizes that even though tales like Aladdin's and Ali Baba's "are today best known in heavily revised juvenile versions, most tales of the *1,001 Nights* are not for children" as they deal with "earthy humor, sensuality, passion, intolerance, and violence" (*Folk and Fairy* 21). Likewise, the collection portrays a cruel king named Shahryar who has sworn to have sexual intercourses with young ladies only to ruin their maidenhood and murder them in the morning after adulterous affairs of his and his brother's wives, which turns him into a merciless killer who believes women are vile creatures whose sole duty are to satisfy his carnal desires. The vizier's witty daughter, Scheherazade, decides to spend the night with the king willingly for the sake of other women's safety. Thanks to her skill in storytelling, Scheherazade manages to survive and cure the king's malice driven heart by telling captivating tales to the king only to leave him

with a cliffhanger each night, so that he gets curious and spares her for one more night, consecutively adding up to a thousand (*The Arabian Nights*). Maria Tatar points out Scheherazade and Beauty are similar, considering “like the merchant’s daughter in “Beauty and the Beast,” Scheherazade volunteers to sacrifice herself and face the monster menacing the welfare of those she loves” (Tatar *The Classic* 462). Moreover, Ulrich Marzolph emphasizes the major influence of *Arabian Nights* on Western literary fairy tales as follows:

Elements from the frame tale of the *Arabian Nights* were already mirrored in Italian Renaissance literature long before Galland, in Giovanni Sercambi’s *Novella d’Astolfo* (c 1400), and in canto 28 of Ludovico Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* (1516), suggesting the possibility of a transfer by way of **oral tradition** [bold in original]. With the tremendous success of Galland’s translation, hardly a major European writer of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could avoid being in some way or other influenced by *Arabian Nights*. (*The Greenwood* 59)

As clearly stated in the passage above, *Arabian Nights* is an oriental frame story collection whose fairy tales greatly contributed to the Western fairy tale imagination. Through both the oral storytelling and the literary fairy tale tradition, the tales of Scheherazade had been a source of inspiration for the authors all over Europe and following works yet to come.

Written by Giovanni Boccaccio in the fourteenth century, *Decameron* is another frame story collection of short tales in which a hundred different stories are narrated by a group of ten people trying to lift their spirits and pass the time as they take shelter in an isolated place outside of Florence to survive the Black Death. *Decameron* set a great model and inspiration for literary fairy tale that began to form as a distinctive genre in Italy. Jack Zipes underlies, “it was undoubtedly due to Boccaccio’s example and the great interest in the novella that Giovan Francesco Straparola came to publish his collection, *Le piacevoli notti* (*The Pleasant Nights*, 1550/53) in two volumes” (*The Great* 852). Similar to Boccaccio’s novella, *The Pleasant Nights* features an exile (unlike the aftermath of plague as in the prior, it is due to political scheming) from Milan that ends up in an island called Murano for a bishop and his daughter. Upon daughter’s suggestion, the people they met on the

island gather around to share some stories during the carnival, accompanied by songs, dances, and erotic riddles. The thematic fairy tale elements in tales told by turns in Murano include magical helpers, punishment of evil, reversal of power and fortune. Straparola's work is mutually agreed by scholars to be the starting point for the literary fairy tale tradition in Europe. Ruth Bottigheimer highlights the fact that "Straparola borrowed most of the tales in *Piacevoli Notti* from earlier collections" as many other authors working with oral folktale traditions before him did; however, his collection contains "fifteen tales for which no previous European analog exists" ("Straparola's" 285). In the same article, she also mentions Straparola's *Piacevoli Notti* features early versions of some classic fairy tales like "Beauty and the Beast"⁶ and "Puss in Boots"⁷ (283). Besides, regarding the resemblance of Straparola's tales to preexisting stories, W.G. Waters suggests that "four of Straparola's fables are slightly altered versions of four of the stories in the *Thousand and One Nights*" ("The Mysterious" 872). Therefore, Straparola is an important figure as he devised unique fairy tales of his own along with collecting other stories involving magic, satire, and tricksters compiled in his book. A work of major success, *The Pleasant Nights* was reprinted multiple times and later translated to French and German, two other important locations for literary fairy tale to flourish. Through Straparola's influence, many other writers followed him in experimenting on fairy tales and the institutionalization of the genre. Giambattista Basile's collection of fairy tales called *Lo cunto de li cunti* (*The Tale of Tales*, or *The Pentamerone* 1634–36) is another noteworthy example of a frame narrative from Italy containing fifty fairy tales. Basile's writing is characterized by his vast amount of knowledge on folklore and various other works of literature. The tales told in *The Pentamerone* share the same important fairy tale theme, rags to riches; in other words, there is always an elevation in social status for the protagonist of the story. While this is the case for the lucky or good-in-heart character, it is the opposite for the villain or the ill-motivated. Michele Rak elaborates on the reversal of fortune in Basile's work as follows:

⁶ "Il Re Porco", Night 2, Tale 1. The story features an animal groom/beastly husband and a third wife who loves him regardless of his hideous physical appearance unlike the previous two wives. Through this real love the Pig King magically transforms into a decent man as the curse is broken.

⁷ "Constantino Fortunato", Night 11, Tale 1. In the tale, there is a reversal of fortune of a young man from "rags to riches" in Bottigheimer's words. Constantino's only possession after his father's death is a cunning cat who can talk. Through the cat's wits and tricks Constantino ends up marrying a princess.

The change of status of these fairy-tale characters can be read as a metaphor of a much broader change: the acceleration of the time and mode of the cultural process characteristic of this phase of the modern era. In the *Cunto* the most evident signs of this transformation of the cultural regime are registered explicitly: the emergence of symbolical traditions, the opening of new dimensions of communication, the restructuring of the system and hierarchy of family relations, a broader literacy, the amplification and identification of the types of readers who also read the new novel, the client of the literature of celebration, the participant at the feasts and the theatricalization of public life. (qtd. in Zipes *The Great* 857)

Accordingly, the social transition of fairy tale characters presents an image of cultural shift. As society undergoes changes over time, so do the ways of storytelling. The fantastic elements of fairy tales coexist with a certain degree of historical and social facts, as the tales become more and more integrated with life as cultural products that reflect their era. The magical transformations of the poor into a rich happy life are the societal ideal of the lower classes portrayed through fairy tale narratives; therefore, it is not surprising that Basile's *Lo cunto de li cunti* is dominated by the theme rags to riches. According to Jack Zipes, "written in Neapolitan dialect, Basile was the first writer to use an old folk tale motif about laughter to frame an entire collection of fifty fairy tales" (*When Dreams* 9). His frame tale opens with Zoza, a princess who cannot laugh despite the king's desperate attempts. When she finally does laugh, she laughs at the wrong person, as the old woman takes great offense in her act and curses the princess to marry Prince Taddeo, who is under the spell of an eternal slumber. Thankfully three fairies help the princess; they guide her and give her three gifts. Her task of waking the prince fails as she falls asleep, which results in an evil slave finishing what she has started and replacing her by marrying Taddeo herself. One of the magical items given to Zoza makes the pregnant slave crave stories, so Taddeo brings ten storytellers to satisfy his wife. Following the last tale told by Zoza, the slave's lie is exposed, and Taddeo happily marries the princess as foretold. The distinguishing factor of Basile's work is that he "did not merely transcribe the oral materials he most likely heard around Naples" but "re-elaborated them into singular versions, in many cases the first in literary form, of celebrated tale types such as Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel, All Fur, and Hansel and Gretel, all of which

would be included later collections of Charles Perrault's and Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm's" (Canepa "Basile" 100).

Jack Zipes attributes the arise of the literary fairy tales in Italy to several factors, including the influence of the Renaissance, the financial success of Italian commercial centers, and the fact that literacy rate advanced dramatically in an age storytelling tradition was commonplace (*When Dreams* 11). He is among the scholars who suggest both tales of native and foreign origins were spread through oral dissemination and in print traveling around Europe (*Spells* xviii). Ruth Bottigheimer, on the other hand, disagrees with this view. According to her, "we see not a process of oral transmission, but a pattern of dissemination that follows publishing routes and book sales [and] books are the most likely carrier of fairy tales from one geographical location to another" (*Fairy-tale* 217). Taking both views into account, there is no doubt folk stories imbued with fairy tale elements were transmitted orally across cultures and many were not documented along the long historical process from antiquity to medieval times. The invention of printing machine allowed fairy tales to be documented and gave way to their institutionalization process. Although works like Chaucer's, Spenser's, and Shakespeare's represent an interest in fairy tales, the religious oppression, as mentioned above (see page 19), hindered the institutionalization in England. "With its fantastic and sometimes violent and amoral content, the fairy tale was disapproved of by both the upholders of Puritan attitudes and the growing advocates of the more rational outlook exemplified in the philosophy and influential educational theories of John Locke" (Hallett 21). Instead, the fairy tale flourished without limitations in France following Italy. Nancy L. Canepa summarizes the country's eligible conditions for such canonization as follows:

The reasons adduced for the remarkable success of this genre include the primary importance of France as a political power and the emerging role of French as a transnational courtly language, the fact that developments in printing allowed for greater diversity in the types of literature that were published, and the general atmosphere of "cultural creativity and innovation" that characterized the French literary world of this period. (*Out Of* 11)

The prevalence of literary fairy tales in France; therefore, is connected to the country's power along with the fact that French was assumed the most cultivated and

elegant language in Europe. “Bourgeois and aristocratic [French] writers borrowed from the Italian literary tradition” like many other writers who were influenced by the tales written before (Zipes *Fairy Tales* 31). Though the Italian influence in French fairy tales is clear, it was through “growing popularity of the fairy tale among the French upper classes, who often gathered in fashionable “salons” to discuss matters of cultural and artistic interest” (Hallett 18). In France, fairy tales were performed and written for the entertainment of the aristocracy instead of lower and middle classes, yet the audience remained unchanged, and they were still “for adults and young people” (Zipes *Fairy Tales* 30). As salon storytellers were upper class men and women, they converted the tales of folk and peasants into refined, profoundly stylized narratives “by decorating them with gem-studded and flower-bedecked images and by extending them with subplots whose fairyland antagonists threw obstacles in the path traveled by her heroes and heroines as they sought true love and lasting union with their beloveds” (Bottigheimer *Fairy Godfather* 129). Regardless of their class, nonetheless, both Italian and French fairy tale writers were concerned and discontent with social and political issues of their time; therefore, they demonstrated in their tales “how power works for those who are opportunistic and well situated, and propose[d] modes of self-restraint in keeping with the civilizing process”, and they used a great deal of “irony, sarcasm, and farce to make a mockery of the abuse of power and to indicate possibilities for change” (Zipes *Fairy Tales* 22). By doing so, they criticized society’s fallacies through a commentary of a metaphorical sort without penalties. The transition from the oral and literary tales into *contes de fées* mainly involved French women writers of salons who started publishing their work during the 1690s such as Mme d’Aulnoy (who coined the term fairy tale), Marie-Jeanne Lhéritier (*Oeuvres meslées*, 1695), Catherine Bernard (*Inès de Cordoue*, 1695), Charlotte Rose Caumont de La Force (*Les Contes des contes*, 1697), Henriette Julie de Murat (*Contes de fées*, 1698), and other conteuses whose work critiqued the conventional court etiquette from the viewpoint of bourgeois and aristocratic women. As salons hosted more fairy tale tellers, the tales like d’Aulnoy’s “L’Isle de la Félicité⁸” (“The Island of Happiness” or “The Blessed Isle”) that once included in novels found their individual

⁸ In France, the first published literary fairy tale appears in Mme d’Aulnoy’s historical novel *L’histoire d’Hypolite, comte de Douglas* (1690). On the other hand, “Charles Perrault did not in fact publish his first tale until 1693” (Duggan, 80).

place in published collections of magical tales. Women fairy tale writers in France, especially Mme d'Aulnoy “almost single handedly transformed the Italian and Oriental tales as well as oral tales into marvelous fairy tales that were serious commentaries on court life and cultural struggles” (Zipes *Why Fairy* 68). Thus, d'Aulnoy stands out as one of the most distinguished French fairy tale writers. Between 1696-8, she composed her two separate fairy tale collections in frame narratives: *Les contes des fées* (*Tales of the Fairies*) and *Contes nouveaux ou les fées à la mode* (*New Tales, or Fairies in Fashion*). “In d'Aulnoy's corpus there are no rags-to-riches stories, so common in Straparola and Perrault” (Duggan 81); however, her tales involve magical metamorphoses and spiritual growth as a recurrent motif. Glenda K. Mcleod summarizes Mme d'Aulnoy's skill in fairy tales and her work as follows:

The fairy tale was the most sympathetic to her talent. It provided room for the free play of her imagination, a setting in which her heroines could assume active, powerful roles, and an opportunity to utilize her comic and satiric gifts. Most important, it allowed her to critique existing social structures with impunity... In fact, the *contes des fées* can most accurately be characterized as stories of maturation and growth in which the phenomenon of change plays a prominent part. Metamorphosis is a recurrent motif, used to suggest a variety of themes. Outer changes may mirror inner stages in the protagonists' struggles toward maturity, or they may express discordancy — an uncertainty and unease or a doubt about self-identity. (96)

In that sense, not only did she challenge the gender norms recurrent in traditional fairy tale narratives by introducing her capable heroines but also crafted her *contes des fées* with psychological depth. Confusion regarding identity, finding one's place, and overcoming mental obstacles are themes often found in works of fantasy in general and coming of age stories as well.

It was also during that time Charles Perrault published his literary fairy tale collection *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec des moralités* or *Contes de ma mere l'Oye* (*Tales of Time Passed, with Morals* or *Tales of Mother Goose*, 1697) containing famous tales “Little Red Riding Hood,” “Blue Beard,” “Cinderella” and “Sleeping Beauty”. Perrault's other tales “Griselda” (1691), “The Foolish Wishes”

(1693), and “Donkey Skin” (1694) were, on the other hand, written in verse and published separately before his collection. When French fairy tales are in question, Perrault is surely one of the most remembered and praised writers; his tales, according to Jack Zipes, thanks to being brief, charming, and memorable narratives modeled after Basile’s tales, were molded and bloomed as classical fairy tales of today (*Why Fairy* 72). His efforts at reconstructing well-known folk tales in modern framework and directing their focus on moralistic aspects were a tremendous success for his writing career. Marina Warner discusses the literary debates of the time fairy tales gave rise to regarding woman’s authorship and the conflict between the Ancients and the Moderns. She highlights while Perrault’s ideas lingered on both approaches, he openly supported women and the Moderns:

When Perrault began writing fairy tales -the first man in France to do so, and certainly the first *académicien*-, he was interleaving partisanship in the dispute about women with another bitter intellectual wrangle, the Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes. Defending fairy tales, he was not only defending women’s tales but also promoting native ‘modern’ literature against the *Anciens*, who proclaimed the complete superiority of Greek and Latin over all things local, vernacular and of comparatively recent date. To the Moderns, the fairy tale was a living shoot of national culture; to the Ancients, the genre was a bastard child of the vulgar crowd. Perrault was wriggling a little, trying to have it both ways, when he called in the classical comic tradition as forebear, but in the literary politics of the time he was bravely and firmly with the Moderns. (*From Beast* 169)

Although his tales are being read to children now, they are, in fact, revised versions made suitable for children’s education and leisure. Perrault did not write for children as the fairy tale writers of the seventeenth century France devised their tales to share with their peers during the salon gatherings. Perrault’s modern approach gained his tales popularity not only in France but also in various Western countries (Zipes *Why Fairy* 73). In the 18th century, not only France’s but also Europe’s profound enthusiasm for oriental and exotic tales were satisfied through translations of Eastern fairy tale corpus, the notable examples include Antione Galland’s *Les Mille et une nuits* (*The Thousand and One Nights*, 1704-17), and Pétis de La Croix’s *L’Histoire de la Sultane de Perse et des Visirs. Contes turcs* (*The Story of the Sultan of the Persians*

and the *Visirs*. *Turkish Tales*, 1710). Chapbooks became popular for faster circulation of tales at low cost, with the publication of the series *Bibliothèque Bleue* in France, which were also translated to German. *Bibliothèque Bleue* originally distributed “Arthurian romances, lives of saints, and legends” (Zipes *Why Fairy* 74); however, it later included fairy tales of the French salons in abridged and language-wise simpler versions, so that both lower classes and children could enjoy the tales. In 1743, Madame Leprince de Beaumont published *Magasin des enfants*, including the famous animal groom tale “Beauty and the Beast”⁹. Maria Tatar, in her introduction to the story, informs the reader that “Madame de Beaumont’s child-friendly “Beauty and the Beast” reflects a desire to transform fairy tales from adult entertainments into parables of good behavior, vehicles for indoctrinating and enlightening children about the virtues of fine manners and good breeding” (*The Classic* 33). Beaumont’s tales were also captured in frame narrative, in alignment with literary fairy tale predecessors. By the late 18th century, writing fairy tales appropriate for children began to proliferate in Europe, namely, France, Germany, and England. Although the adverse effects of fantastic and magical literary work on children were a matter of debate during that time, dissemination of such tales could not be prevented; instead, “carefully monitored and censored until the 1820s” (Zipes *The Oxford* xxv). With the publication of *Cabinet des fées* (1785–89), the 41-volume anthology containing the most popular fairy tales, many Western writers were engaged in fairy tale discourse and oral folklore regardless of their aimed audience.

The literary fairy tales in Germany were written for the upper class and educated middle class -or to educate middle class- promoting the German historical background and conventions. “For throughout the eighteenth century the upper classes in German were accustomed to have their children educated by French governesses or tutors, who doubtless told the stories to their pupils. The children, in turn, may have told them to the German servants in their household, so that the tales may have spread even among the common people early in the century” (Velten 958). While the oral dissemination granted the illiterate familiarity with the tales, for the aristocracy, the blend of German folklore and French fairy tale was instilled in the

⁹ “In 1740 Madame Gabrielle-Suzanne de Villeneuve published her version of “Beauty and the Beast” in *Les Contes Marins*. It was 362 pages long. In 1756, Madame Leprince de Beaumont published her shorter but similar version in *Magasin de enfans*, which has served as the basis for the numerous popular English translations widely circulated right up to our times.” (Zipes *Breaking the Magic* 10).

literary fairy tales, along with the publication of selected translated tales from *Cabinet des fées* and *Bibliothèque Bleue*. Jack Zipes elaborates on the influence of French writers in German literary fairy tale:

For the literary fairy tale as genre in Germany, one would have to trace its institutionalization first to the French court of Louis XIV, where it fulfilled the function of representing and legitimizing the norms of absolutism while providing *divertissement*. The artistic output and ingenuity of Charles Perrault; Madame D'Aulnoy, and a host of other writers testify to the establishment of an actual mode of fairy tale discourse. It was this mode along with the peasant oral tradition that gave rise to the German literary fairy tale as institution. ("The Grimms" 278)

The difference between French and German tales is that the former "tend to be realistic, earthy, bawdy, and comical" while the latter "veer off toward the supernatural, the poetic, the exotic, and the violent" (qtd. in Haase "Yours, Mine" 439). Besides, some of Perrault's fairy tales were adapted into plays as parodies and tragedies (Zipes *Why Fairy* 80), which exemplifies the German enthusiasm and engagement in experimenting on existing fairy tale narratives. Although German fairy tales evolved in similar fashion with Italy¹⁰ and France; in Germany, their tone and target audience were significantly altered "thanks to the German Romantic movement" (Zipes *Why Fairy* 85) and "collections of stories [written] for children" (Tatar *Sex and Violence* 453). However, the German tales as well were not focused on younger audience until notable contributions of Brothers Grimm. Steven Swann Jones emphasizes the significance of J. K. Musäus' 18th century collection *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* (*Folktales of Germany*), as it, in part, anticipated the masterpiece of the Grimms, and adds how Musäus included a version of Snow White as well as other fairy tales (Jones *The Fairy* 39). In the 19th century, Brothers Grimm started to collect folk and fairy tales by inviting "every social class of people" (Zipes *Why Fairy* 81) to their home and listening to the stories they shared in order to create an authentic German collection; "their principal concern was to uncover the etymological and linguistic truths that bound the German people together and were expressed in their

¹⁰ Brothers Grimm were well educated on the historical evolution of fairy tales in various countries (Zipes *Why Fairy* 82) including Italy as "several of Basile's stories reappear, with variations, in the Grimms' celebrated collection, *Children's and Household Tales*" (Warner *Once Upon* 53).

laws and customs” (Zipes *When Dreams* 73). Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm did not intend to create a corpus of fairy tales for children in the first place when they published their pivotal work *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (*Children’s/Nursery and Household Tales*) in 1812–15. In fact, the reviews on the two-volume collection were overwhelmingly negative. “Critics had complained about their editorial methods, the fragmentary nature of many tales the manner of narration, and the fact that the tales were less than appropriate for children” (Uther *The Greenwood* 537). Upon harsh criticism, Wilhelm

shaped and polished, cadenced and ornamented many of the best-known tales over the course of nearly fifty years; above all, he censored the stories’ frankness about sex, but let the violent reprisals stand. Eventually the brothers created the memorable tales in the form that has travelled the world. (Warner *Once Upon* 60)

The meticulous editing and multiple issues of *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* led the book’s “ultimate achievement linked with the name Grimm” (Neumann 969). Although it was not an immediate success, *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* contributed to the fairy tale tradition immensely as a corpus universally recognized and appreciated. It was “next to the Luther Bible, the most well-known and most widely distributed book worldwide of German cultural history [as] the first systematic compilation and the first scientific documentation of the entire European and Oriental fairy tale tradition” (Tatar *The Hard Facts* xiv). As Grimms paved the way to produce fairy tales aimed at children’s moral education and leisure by adding and altering the tales until 1857 (Zipes “The Grimms” 278), many other European authors followed their steps. Having written and published *Eventyr, fortalte for Børn* (*Fairy Tales Told for Children*, 1837) Hans Christian Andersen was among those writers influenced by Grimms’ corpus of tales:

In northern Europe, the major influence towards their acceptance in educated circles was the collections of Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (1812—1815). Translated into English and Danish in the 1820s, these brought, under the guise of the folk romanticism then becoming popular, a bright new world of witches and fairy godmothers, beasts and frogs and

princesses, to a wide audience of children, and without their influence Andersen could never have written his tales. (Wullschlager 151)

When “the Grimm’s collection and its imitations “had already been of inestimable influence on the rearing of thousands” (Schenda 87), Andersen entered the scene with his “self-invented literary fairy tales many of which have become international children’s classics” (Høyrup 32). Marina Warner is among the scholars who believes “Andersen is the most significant original creator of fairy tales of the Victorian period, when the genre settled as suitable children’s fare” (*Once Upon* 108), and that

unlike the Grimms, Andersen consciously operated as an original author, and altered, expanded, and embroidered his source material, ranging from melodrama to jokiness, and putting and unmistakable stamp of his own: maudlin, even morbid stories like “The Little Mermaid” and “The Little Match Girl”, and thrilling peculiar adventures, like “The Tinder Box” and “The Shadow”, are rightly considered classics. (*Once Upon* 109)

Jack Zipes, on the other hand, finds it “an exaggeration to assert that Andersen’s fairy tales are “original” because all his narratives reveal how much he borrowed from literature and from the folktale tradition” just like Brothers Grimm did; yet he agrees that Andersen “endowed [the tales] with his own original touch and personal experiences that, even today, make them somewhat unique narratives” (*When Dreams* 122). As a matter of fact, “Hans Christian Andersen’s tale of “The Tinder Box” is actually a retelling of the traditional fairy tale “The Spirit in the Blue Box”” (Jones 7). Moreover, in an introduction to one of his tales, Andersen himself wrote that “as a child, it was [his] greatest pleasure to listen to fairy tales, and some of [those were] either very little or not at all known” and he had “retold one of these, and if it [won] approval, [he meant] to retell several, and one day to publish a cycle of ‘Danish Folk Tales’” (qtd. in Wullschlager 90). Maria Tatar explains that “over the years, it dawned on Andersen that he could write his own fairy tales rather than just reproduce the ones he remembered from childhood”, and his letter to a friend demonstrates Andersen’s “excitement about branching out into a form that would appeal to children and adults alike” (*The Classic* xxi), as follows:

I believe that I have now found out how to write fairy tales! The first ones I wrote were, as you know, mostly old ones I had heard as a child and that I

usually retold and recreated in my own fashion; those that were my very own such as “The Little Mermaid,” “The Storks,” and “The Daisy,” received, however, the greatest approval and that has given me inspiration. Now I tell stories of my own accord, seize an idea for adults—and then tell it for the children while still keeping in mind the fact that mother and father are listening too, and they must have a little something for thought! (qtd. in Tatar *The Classic* xxi)

In any case, Andersen’s fairy tales were successful, and they established their place in the history of famous literary fairy tales. “Almost all of [his] early tales [dealt with] lower-class or disenfranchised protagonists who work their way up and into society” (Zipes *Fairy Tales* 95), as narratives in rhyme with rags-to-riches stories. What distinguishes Andersen’s tales from other fairy tales is the autobiographical quality of his work. While the Grimms presented “their tales in the most acceptable form to the German people, Andersen had more personal involvement with his tale” and “in his hands, a tale, whatever its source, became yet another opportunity for self-revelation” (Hallett 20). In addition, Jackie Wullschlager remarks that “his best-known self-portraits, inventive, harsh, spiritually true, are in his fairy tales; he is the triumphant Ugly Duckling and the loyal Little Mermaid, the steadfast Tin Soldier and the king-loving Nightingale, the demonic Shadow, the depressive Fir Tree, the forlorn Little Matchgirl.” (3). Jack Zipes further examines Andersen’s fairy tales, demonstrating that

From 1830 to 1900, the fairy tale came into its own for children. It was exactly during this time, from 1835 onward, to be precise, that Hans Christian Andersen began publishing his tales. Almost all his tales were immediately translated and published in England, Germany, and America. Andersen brilliantly combined humor, Christian sentiments, and fantastic plots to form tales that amused and instructed young and old readers at the same time. (*Why Fairy* 86)

The translation and circulation of European fairy tales after the canonization in Germany and Denmark encouraged British and American writers to create unique works of fantasy highly nourished by fairy tale conventions. “The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the period that is often referred to as the Golden Age of

children's literature. The lines became blurred as to just what constituted a fairy tale, since many of the works published for children were fantasies" (Hallett 22). These children's fantasies, as Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn point out, underwent a "rhetorical shift across the nineteenth century" and upon this change, "the conception of the child from a slate to be written upon" was replaced by child "protagonist bringing to the adventure his or her own understandings and needs" (46). Furthermore, the blend of fairy tales and parodies became popular again; "just as the conventional fairy tale for adults had become subverted at the end of the eighteenth century, there was a major movement to write parodies of fairy tales for children" (Zipes *Why Fairy* 87). Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888)¹¹, and L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz* (1900) and J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1904), are well-known examples of this transition. While "the gently Christian tone of "The Happy Prince" combine[s] the fairy-tale mode with the shattering problems of Victorian poetry, privilege, and art" (Murray 10–11), Carroll and Baum's fiction focus on psyche and dream narrative as stories that demonstrate the mental struggles of the protagonist and his/her journey which leads to maturation from childhood to adulthood. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, "borrowing from traditional legends about fairyland, [Lewis Carroll] describes a fanciful existence parallel to this world, a wonderland of delightful confusion. Furthermore, unlike most children's literature of the Victorian era, Lewis Carroll's books show no hint of didacticism, allowing children the freedom to read for pleasure and not for training" (Ashliman *Folk and Fairy* 162). Similarly, Baum's work portrays a colorful other world where the magic prevails over the ordinary, and a young girl who finds herself in that astonishing place, right in the middle of a challenging adventure. Steven Swann Jones sums up the central themes and narrative conventions in *The Wizard of Oz* as follows:

Baum borrows the fairy tale technique of having his heroine journey into a magical realm that serves as a fantasized representation of her unconscious mind. This is illustrated in part by having exaggeratedly good and evil mother figures dominate this realm. In addition, the presence of color in the world of

¹¹ Oscar Wilde was quite familiar with Hans Christian Andersen's writings and he "[heavily relied] on motifs in Andersen's tales which he often reversed to criticize him" (Zipes *Victorian Fairy* 285). Although not as sentimental as the former, fairy tales of Wilde are likewise recognized for their underlying melancholy and the ethical themes they convey. (Gavin 1028).

Oz, in contrast to its absence in Kansas, reflects the emotional warmth, vitality, and energy of her unconscious mind, which is contrasted with the already documented emotional stasis and barrenness of her conscious and quotidian existence. In the film version Dorothy's adventures in Oz are ultimately represented as a dream she has, much like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. (94)

Looking at *The Wizard of Oz* and other fantasy literature of 20th century onward provides the reader works of fiction that focus on the journey of the young protagonist and the individual struggles and mental strains he/she must suffer to progress, grow, and be satisfied. These stories continue the legacy of fairy tale tradition, as the “modern fantasy is rooted in ancient myth, mysticism, folklore, fairy tale and romance” (Jackson 4). Certain narrative structures and fairy tale motifs such as the reversal of fortune and magical helpers are present in the works of children's/young adult's fantasy literature. The magical transformations -demonstrated visually by alterations in the physical form of beings and things in fairy tales- are supplemented by the growth and transition of the person who is not the same compared to before the beginning and end of the adventures, as is the case in popular fantasy series like C. S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956) and J. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), both of which have numerous adaptations and dedicated fanbase still in 2025. The major contrasts between classic fairy tales and children's fantasy include the length, the depth, and the dynamics. While fairy tales are short narratives, fantasies are longer tales usually told in multiple novel titles. The fantasy writer has a chance to explore the characters and their psyche freely, which is not the case in fairy tales that often have flat, stereotypical characters. The fairy tale consists of actions and binary oppositions that are set firmly and unsusceptible to change:

Folktales place little emphasis upon character development. Characters, be they animal or human, are generally known through their actions or by their physical attributes. No attention is paid to internal conflict or complex motivation. Folktale figures are two-dimensional characters rather than three-dimensional personalities... That is to say, the figures of folktale are depicted in terms of extreme contrast: the wise versus the foolish, the strong versus the weak, the rich versus the poor. (Oring 127–128)

By tracing the development of fairy tales through centuries, it might be observed that children's literature and fantasies are strongly influenced by fairy tale tradition, making use of its conventional themes, motifs, and patterns. Thereby, the first aim of this thesis is to use Vladimir Propp's structural study of narrative functions proposed in *Morphology of Folktale* as a theoretical framework to break down the two children's fantasies, Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always* and Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*. This analysis will illustrate and support the relevance and applicability of Propp's study not only to traditional folk narratives, but also to modern storytelling examples that employ elements of folktale and fantasy, typically abundant in children's literature and hero's journey. The second goal of the thesis is to focus on the psychological depth in Gaiman and Barker's fiction by demonstrating the significance of the protagonists' lack and fulfillment of needs following Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs as the second theoretical foundation. As mentioned above, fantasies delve deeper into the minds of the protagonists and by doing so they put emphasis on the transformation and growth of the individual rather than merely narrating the sequence of actions as seen in classic fairy tales. Coraline and Harvey's journeys pose supernatural threats and magical agents and require them both to be bold, active, and cunning like fairy tale heroes. Besides, just as "the entire cycle of family life [regarding] childhood, coming of age, coping with old age, and dealing with one's own mortality is represented" in fairy tales (Ashliman *The Greenwood* 327), so is the case in fantasy tales like *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always*. Moreover, both works illustrate how being deprived of certain needs usually provided by caretakers is challenging for the child. Being forced not only to survive but also to save their own parents affects Coraline and Harvey mentally, eventually leading to their self-actualization. Therefore, applying Maslow's theory next will provide an elaborate glimpse of children's profound psychological transformation.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FOUNDATIONS OF VLADIMIR PROPP'S STRUCTURAL NARRATIVE AND ABRAHAM MASLOW'S HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

You can call it wishful thinking, son... but life is built on wishing.
You've got to just keep plugging away at them. You can't give up...
and you can't let the mistakes jeopardize the dream.

—John Frankenheimer, *Seconds*

2.1 VLADIMIR PROPP AND STRUCTURAL APPROACHES TO NARRATIVE

2.1.1 Russian Formalism and the Roots of Structuralism

A precursor to structuralism, Russian Formalism was “a school in Russian literary scholarship which originated in the second decade of the twentieth century, flourished in the 1920's and forcibly suppressed in 1930” (Erlich “Russian Formalism” 627). The young scholars of this “group had two centers: the Moscow Linguistic Circle and OPOYAZ (the Society for the Study of Poetic Language) in St. Petersburg” (Margolin 815). These groups were “led by Roman Jakobson and Victor Shklovsky” (Drabble 374). Thanks to notable contributions of the leading scholars and other key figures such as Boris Eichenbaum, Yuri Tynianov, “the first modern attempt at systematic, comprehensive, and scientifically oriented literary theorizing” was achieved (Margolin 819). Russian formalists rejected previous methods of textual analysis; namely, “nineteenth-century assumptions, especially the belief that a work of literature was the expression of the author's worldview and [dismissed] psychological and biographical criticism as being irrelevant to interpretation” (Bressler 49). Being against the “quasi-mystical symbolist doctrines, [they emphasized] “the material reality of the literary text itself” (Eagleton 2). The key principles of Russian Formalism, summed up by Jonathan Culler, are as follows:

The Russian Formalists of the early years of the twentieth century stressed that critics should concern themselves with the literariness of literature: the verbal

strategies that make it literary, the foregrounding of language itself, and the making strange of experience that they accomplish. Redirecting attention from authors to verbal ‘devices’, they claimed that the device is the only hero of literature. (120)

To conclude, the structure, function, language, form, and devices were primary concerns within the scope of formalist approach. For his systematic analysis of folktales, Vladimir Propp was among the representatives of the movement. Not only “Propp’s *Morphology*” is considered one of “the most important Formalist publication[s] on narrative” (Gorman 42) but also “one of the most valid Formalist contributions to the theory of fiction” (Erich *Russian Formalism* 249).

2.1.2 Propp’s Morphology of Folktale and Narrative Functions

This chapter will explain and demonstrate the significance of Vladimir Propp’s groundbreaking theory “dedicated to the study of fairy tales” (Propp 19). A Russian formalist, Propp lays the foundation of his systematic breakdown of folktale form in his most renowned book *The Morphology of Folktale*. As Alan Dundes highlights in his introduction to the second edition, “Propp’s *Morphology* provides an invaluable tool for the investigation of the acquisition of folklore” (xv). When it was first published in 1928, folktale structure had not been studied properly; and instead, the focus of the studies so far was on common folktale themes, as Propp states to be “The History of the Problem” in the first chapter of *The Morphology of Folktale*. He illustrates the previous research regarding the classification of folktales and emphasizes the fault in prior methodology, saying “the division of fairy tales according to themes is, in general, impossible” (Propp 7). For instance, Aarne index is criticized by Propp simply because

[i]t suggests notions which are essentially incorrect. Clear-cut division into types does not actually exist; very often it is a fiction. If types do exist, they exist not on the level indicated by Aarne, but on the level of the structural features of similar tales. The proximity of plots, one to another, and the impossibility of a completely objective delimitation leads to the fact that, when assigning a text to one or another type, one often does not know what number to choose... On the other hand, since types are defined according to the presence of one or another striking incident in them, and not on the basis

of the construction of the tales, and since one tale is capable of containing several such incidents, then one tale can sometimes be related to several types at once. (Propp 11)

In *Feed Me! Insatiable Children and the Monsters Who Want to Devour Them: Fairy Tales and Consumption in Clive Barker's The Thief of Always and Neil Gaiman's Coraline*, Brandi J. Venable argues "the specific tale type that [both *The Thief of Always* and *Coraline*] align most closely with is type 327: *The Children and the Ogre*" (33), the tale type Grimm's famous "Hansel and Gretel" is identified with (Uther *The Types* 212). While Clive Barker and Neil Gaiman's fiction indeed share a few thematic resemblances with "Hansel and Gretel", Venable's claim that "both books include other child characters who Harvey and Coraline meet upon *Arrival at Ogre's House*" is partly implausible, as it is not the case for Coraline who proceeds her entire journey by herself. In fact, Gaiman builds the story in such design on purpose in order to stress two main ideas. The first one is Coraline's alienation as a child surrounded by adults who she does not think understand her, and the latter, her self-sufficiency, a skill she shall master lest falling prey to the villain's grasp. It is possible Venable means "the souls of the children behind the mirror" (Gaiman *Coraline* 90); however, they are the villain's earlier victims, already dead, whom she fed on and trapped long ago; and therefore, not active child characters the protagonist meets at the monster's territory. This confusion arises from the attempt to classify tales based on common themes in storylines and echoes Propp's criticism that "the only conclusion that can be drawn from this is that similar tales resemble each other—a conclusion which is completely noncommittal and leads nowhere" (Propp 15). Hence, this thesis will elaborate on Propp's method focusing on "identical actions" in tales while analyzing Barker and Gaiman's children's fantasy, namely, "*the functions of dramatis personae* [author's emphasis]" (Propp 20), and exclude applications of prior studies like Aarne index or other studies based on themes and motifs. According to Propp, "characters of a tale, however varied they may be, often perform the same actions" (Propp 20) and outlining these actions provide the "basic components of the tale" (Propp 21). An important point he makes while laying out the functions is that "by no means do all tales give evidence of all functions [and] the absence of certain functions does not change the order of the rest" (Propp 22). Hence, Propp's functions do not require the tales to follow an exact schema. It is more practical to work with

his limited yet variable structural patterns than attempting to apply the given sequential events and subevents that define a specific tale type. To exemplify, one might say that it is sensible to determine the actions possibly in a different order or perhaps while some absent in modern children's fantasy works influenced by the fairy tale tradition like *The Thief of Always* and *Coraline* rather than following a thematical framing called *The Children and the Ogre*. To demonstrate the point further, a close examination of the tale type in question is necessary. The formula of the tale type is composed by Aarne and Thompson as follows:

327 *The Children and the Ogre*.

I. *Arrival at Ogre's House*. (a) Children are abandoned by poor parents in a wood (b) but they find their way back by cloth shreds or pebbles that they have dropped; (c) the third time birds eat their breadcrumbs, or grain clue and (d) they wander until they come to a gingerbread house which belongs to a witch; or (e) a very small hero (thumbling) and his brothers stay at night at the ogre's house; or (f) the ogre carries the child home in a sack; (g) the child substitutes a stone in the sack twice but is finally captured.

II. *The Ogre Deceived*. The ogre smells human flesh and has the children imprisoned and fattened, (b) When his finger is to be cut to test his fatness the hero sticks out a bone or piece of wood, (c) The exchange of caps, (d) the ogre's wife or child burned in his own oven (Type 1121), or (e) the hero by singing induces the ogre to free them, or (f) the hero to be hanged feigns ignorance and has ogre show him how, or (g) hero feigns inability to sleep until ogre brings certain objects and escapes while ogre hunts the object.

III. *Escape*. (a) The children are carried across the water by ducks (or angels), or (b) they throw back magic objects which become obstacles in the ogre's path, or (c) they transform themselves, or (d) the ogre (ogress) tries to drink the pond empty and bursts, or (e) the ogre is misdirected and loses them. (116)

Without a doubt, this formula mirrors the classic fairy tales such as "Hansel and Gretel". As a matter of fact, people unfamiliar with ATU index may find it fascinating that the tale of Hansel and Gretel is the epitome of the tale type 327 *The Children and the Ogre*. In other words, the index represents "Hansel and Gretel" as 327A, the first subtype of *The Children and the Ogre*. The following subtypes include "327B *The*

Brothers and the Ogre (previously *The Dwarf and the Giant*), 327C *The Devil (Witch) Carries the Hero Home in a Sack*, 327D *The Kiddelkaddelkar*, 327F *The Witch and the Fisher Boy*, and 327G *The Brothers at the Witch's House* (previously *The Boy at the Devil's [Witch's] House*)” (Uther *The Types* 212-216). As the variants illustrate, the villain of this type welcomes the reader in different forms. In both *The Thief of Always* and *Coraline* there is dark magic, or witchcraft involved, and it is the way the villain engages with the hero/heroine of the tales. While the Other Mother in *Coraline* clearly is the combination of the evil stepmother and witch archetypes, Mr. Hood in *The Thief of Always* appears to be an abstract entity, though they both control the artificial worlds they have built using spells. However, that is a surface level similarity. If the sequential events described in the index regarding *The Children and the Ogre* were to be compared with the sequential events in *Coraline* and Harvey's journey, the results would not provide enough parallels to state that these modern tales are embodiments of tale type 327. Quite the contrary, such an endeavor would reveal distinct deviations from the traditional narrative pattern. The ATU index, as Propp criticizes, depends on theme-based, quite strict classifications. In this regard, it is not surprising that tale types are not often compatible with fluid structures of children's fantasy literature. Studying parodies or retellings of certain fairy tales like Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* would allow the researcher to align their material with ATU tale types, yet it is not practical to work with such classifications and original contemporary narratives sharing looser ties to folklore. Thus, applying Proppian structural analysis to Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always* stands out as a more appropriate and fruitful study than using a classification that rely on themes and/or motifs.

In *The Morphology of the Folktale*, Propp lays out the thirty-one functions of dramatis personae which serve as a core model for the structure of Russian fairy tales¹². The dramatis personae are seven-character roles recurrent in folklore: the villain, the donor, the helper, the princess (or a sought-for person) and her father, the dispatcher, the hero, and the false hero (Propp 79-80). Propp highlights that they are not fixed to individual characters by saying “one character is involved in several

¹² Although Propp studies 100 tales from Afanás'ev's collection, not only does he suggest his structural analysis can be used on other European fairy tales, but also “non-fairy tales may be constructed according to the scheme cited” as “quite a large number of legends, individual tales about animals, and isolated novellas display the same structure” (Propp 99).

spheres of action” (Propp 80). Furthermore, he points out the relationship between *dramatis personae* and functions as follows:

The will of personages, their intentions, cannot be considered as an essential motif for their definition. The important thing is not what they want to do, nor how they feel, but their deeds as such, evaluated and defined from the viewpoint of their meaning for the hero and for the course of the action. Here we obtain the same picture as that in analyzing motivations: the feelings of a dispatcher (be they hostile, neutral or friendly) do not influence the course of action. (Propp 81)

Clearly, Propp is concerned with the actions of the characters more than the motivations, thoughts, and emotions. “For Propp, the plot of the fairy tale is nothing but an actualization of the fairy tale’s composition—the narrative flux itself” (Steiner 94). In that sense, his study lacks psychological depth, which Victor Erlich justifies as follows:

Actually, there is nothing surprising about this. For one thing, in spite of its apparent ‘simplicity’, the fairy tale, with its migratory stock situations and its indispensable *loci communes*, is one of the most thoroughly formalized literary genres. For another, it is one of the least psychology-minded types of fiction. While in many modern novels action serves as a means of revealing or unfolding character, in the fairy tale, not unlike the adventure story, character is usually the tool of the plot. Thus, in dealing with the fairy tale, the orthodox Formalist’s supreme disregard of ‘motivations’ was no more a handicap than it proved in examining the whimsical art of O. Henry or Sterne. (*Russian Formalism* 249)

Given the nature of fairy tales and fundamentals of Propp’s method, Abraham Maslow’s concept hierarchy of needs is an appropriate complementary theory to follow the structural analysis of *The Thief of Always* and *Coraline* as a means of establishing the very psychological depth characterized in fantasy literature. As modern narratives with more flexible design, fantasies portray the psyches of characters often, which is not a possibility in folktale examples with limited length and simpler storytelling. Nevertheless, fantasy’s being a genre influenced by fairy tales makes such works eligible for a Proppian narrative function analysis. Propp

reminds the reader not many tales host each function and no single tale is required to do so (as underlined in the previous section); in fact, what is important is that “the actions characters in a tale perform occur in a stable sequence” (Jorgensen “Propp” 774), and they do appear “interlocked in a configuration” (Steiner 84). Thus, a Proppian analysis ensures much less restrained research than with ATU tale type schemas. The full list of the functions include absention, interdiction, violation (of interdiction), reconnaissance, delivery, trickery, complicity, villainy or lack (on condition that only one present in a tale as the function eight), mediation, beginning counteraction, departure, the first function of the donor, the hero’s reaction, provision, guidance, struggle, branding, victory, liquidation, return, pursuit, rescue, unrecognized arrival, unfounded claims, difficult task, solution, recognition, exposure, transfiguration, punishment, and wedding (Propp 26-65). All functions will be thoroughly examined in the chapter dedicated to the application of Proppian analysis on *The Thief of Always* and *Coraline*. For the sake of a concise summary, the functions can be grouped into larger structural phases under three main headings:

- I. Initial Situation and Departure (0-11)
- II. Struggle and Victory (15-19)
- III. Return and Recognition (20-31)

Propp mentions the initial situation is not a function, albeit a significant element as it introduces background information or the future hero (Propp 25). The tale, according to Propp, begins with a family member leaving home, which often triggers vulnerability for the hero who, later on, is warned against or “in a weakened form, [given advice to]” (Propp 26). Without an exception, the hero breaks the rule or does not pay attention and is, therefore, victimized. Meanwhile, the villain enters the story, seeks and gathers information about the hero/victim. Next, the villain tricks the victim. The trickery puts the villain in an advantageous position. Upon this advantage, “the actual movement of the tale is created” (Propp 30) and villain commits an evil deed. Propp notes in cases a tale omits villainy; it begins with a lack instead (Propp 35). Depending on which, the hero either realizes this lack or the misfortune that befalls him/her after the villain’s act and sets out on a journey to recover what has been lost. It might be observed that this sequence resembles the beginning of Joseph Campbell’s monomyth, as the hero reacts after a certain call and travels into the

foreign places. Campbell describes “the first stage of the mythological adventure” or in other words “call to adventure signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown” (Campbell 53). The second phase introduces and focuses on a donor, whose role in the story is to test and/or bestow magical aid to the hero if the hero successfully proves his/her worth. Right after being guided in the path to follow, the hero confronts the villain and might receive a mark or an item in battle as a constant reminder of their excellence. In the battle the villain is defeated, which resolves the previous lack or misfortune of the hero. Overall, the second phase represents the hero’s spiritual growth. The final phase is characterized by the hero’s trip back home as a better version of himself/herself. The hero is pursued by the villain once more and by utilizing wits or magical aid, survives this incident as well. By the time the hero returns home, his/her transformation is not yet recognized by others. A false hero appears in attempts to claim the title of the hero. After the hero completes the final task, he/she is recognized by their mark, and the false hero is punished. The tale ends with hero being rewarded either by marriage, wealth, status, or all three.

Propp’s thirty-one functions of *dramatis personae* consolidate the hero’s reintegration into society, refined thanks to overcoming multiple trials. This structural framework encompassing both Propp’s sequence of functions and mapping of *dramatis personae* is going to form the analytical basis for examining *The Thief of Always* and *Coraline*. It is true that contemporary narratives might not replicate each function or strictly follow traditional character roles, notable compatibility regarding the recurring actions, or in other words, character functions, manifest a morphological affinity with the folktale tradition, specifically, when fantastic tales are in question. In the case studies that follow, these roles and functions will be mapped onto the protagonists and their narrative worlds, illustrating their alignment with and departure from classic fairy tale structure, within the scope of the instances in which children’s fantasy complicates or subverts fixed character types.

2.2 ABRAHAM MASLOW AND HOLISTIC VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE

2.2.1 Origins and Principles of Humanistic Psychology

Unlike Russian Formalism, which was not rooted in any philosophical thought, humanistic psychology “is related to ideas that have deep roots and origins in the history of Western philosophical thinking”, namely, humanism (as the name clearly suggests), phenomenology, and existentialism (Buhler 378). In addition to these 20th century currents, “the other sources of inspiration in humanistic psychology [include] Kurt Goldstein, the neo-Freudians, Gestalt and personality psychologies” all of which “were also of European origin” (Decarvalho 2). Out of the synthesis of these ideas and “discontentment with behavioral and psychoanalytic determinism and their all too comfortable alliance with medical-model diagnostics, this humanistic third force in psychology did emerge” thanks to the contributions of influential figures such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Gordon Allport, James Bugental, and Rollo May (Stern xi). Behaviorism was criticized for promoting the idea that a human being is an empty, passive organism who cannot be responsible for how they behave as all he/she does is respond to stimuli (Decarvalho 43). Besides, humanistic psychologists “believed that psychoanalysis was too pessimistic about human nature, and they wanted to stress the importance of enabling people to attain their human potential” (Benjafield 364). “The self as the central core of the person is a generally accepted concept of humanistic psychologists, different from the psychoanalytic concept of the self as object, that is, as being built up and representing a whole only in the reflecting person’s mind” (Buhler 380). Although born out of a reaction against Freud and Skinner’s reductionist explanations regarding human nature, humanistic psychology “did not deny the psychoanalytical and behavioristic orientations but rather aimed to incorporate these views within a broader phenomenological orientation that would emphasize validity of human experience and meaning” (Decarvalho 11). Likewise, Maslow stresses that his theory of motivation aims to “build upon the classical psychologies available rather than to repudiate them or establish another rival psychology”, and he endeavors to “enlarge our conception of the human personality by reaching into the higher levels of human nature” (*Motivation* ix). In addition, while criticizing Freud’s model for leaving out aspirations, hopes, and capable qualities, he does not reject the fact that Freud supplied the “most comprehensive systems of psychopathology and psychotherapy” (“Existential” 56). Therefore, it might be

observed that by means of cultivating a humanistic approach in psychology, previous psychoanalytic theories and behaviorism are complemented by the broader appreciation and care for human nature as a whole. On philosophical context, a similar case of gratitude and disapproval among the scholars of humanistic psychology reside in existentialist views. In essence, European existentialism deals with the aspirations and limitations of human beings and values individuality above anything else, which are parallel with the principles of humanistic psychology. Kirk J. Schneider brilliantly sums up the connection between the representations of the individual in arts and literature, and romantic psychology as follows:

The literary and artistic legacy of 18th century thinkers such as Lord Byron and Goethe stress individual depth and experience. This lineage was then extended and elaborated on by European and American thinkers, such as Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Emerson, and Thoreau, and subsequently by the phenomenological and existential philosophers, such as Husserl, Sartre, and Camus. The individualist lineage culminated, finally, in the humanistic and existential psychology movements of Europe and America. (280)

As humanistic psychology is “characterized by a positive view of human functioning, commitment to phenomenology, [and] a belief in the capacity for self-determination” (Meneses and Scuka 353), the scholars of the third force were opposed to the pessimistic trends regarding existentialism such as Nietzsche’s nihilism. Although believing in the possibility that “existentialism will enrich psychology [with the concept of] authentic self and its ways of being”, Maslow asserts that “the European existentialists’ harping on dread, on anguish, on despair” is not to be taken too seriously, and describes such act as “high-I.Q. whimpering on a cosmic scale” (“Existential” 59–60). In addition, Roy José Decarvalho points out Sartre was among the pessimistic existentialists criticized by humanistic psychologists, and cites Sartre’s statements as follows:

The most persistent critique was of Sartre’s statement that “freedom is existence, and in it existence precedes essence.” Sartre had argued that there are no essences in human nature. There is no inner structure of reality that defines human nature. Human existence is a “nothingness,” a “non-substantial absolute” or “being-for-itself,” which exists merely by virtue of its relation to

“being-in-itself.” In this sense, argued Sartre, human existence was defined primarily by its freedom and was the result of our “project” in life. The humanistic psychologists agreed with Sartre that “man is his own project.” It is commitment and determination, one’s will and responsibility that make oneself. All five humanistic psychologists wrote extensively on these themes. But they equally [rejected] assuming that we are a “nothingness” and the process of becoming has no biological basis. (qtd. in Decarvalho 67–68)

Although general existential ideas relate to the principles of humanistic psychology, “humanistic psychology was more positive in its view of human nature and [in that regard] closer to Kierkegaard and Buber than to the radical French existentialism” (Decarvalho 69). According to Maslow, one cannot overlook the fact that humans, by instinct, have the potential to progress, and grow into their best version through experience and satisfaction of a set of sequential needs; therefore, though the actualization is not promised for each person, the journey towards it is promising, not doomed. Despite what pessimist existentialists think, “the holistic way of thinking and seeing”, Maslow asserts, “seems to come quite naturally and automatically to healthier, self-actualizing people, and seems to be extraordinarily difficult for less evolved, less mature, less healthy people” (*Motivation* xi).

In “Preface to Motivation Theory”, Abraham Maslow highlights his disagreement with how human behavior is attempted to be classified in reductionist psychology through a list of drives and symptoms, mainly because: a) even though being “a wanting animal”, the goals and motivation of human beings are dynamic, and subjective by nature, b) “a particular desire may actually be a channel through which several other desires express themselves” (87–88). Therefore, the main goal of his study is to shed light on two things ignored or overlooked by other motivation theorists, namely, “that the human being is never satisfied except in a relative or one-step-along-the-path fashion, and secondly, that wants seem to arrange themselves in some sort of hierarchy of prepotency” (88). Following the publication of its preface, Maslow introduced his hierarchy of needs for the first time¹³ in his article “A Theory of Human Motivation”. His major works that further develop his humanistic

¹³ At the end of the paper, Maslow provides a summary of the five hierarchical needs as “A Theory of Human Motivation” was still in press when the preface appeared in *Psychosomatic Medicine*.

psychological studies (each building upon the last) include *Motivation and Personality* (1954), *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1962), and *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971)¹⁴. In the latter studies Maslow expanded his ideas on self-actualization and added self-transcendence on top of the pyramid. In this thesis, the analysis of Coraline Jones and Harvey Swick's self-actualization journey will primarily be based on *Motivation and Personality* for a couple of reasons. Firstly, *Motivation and Personality* is an immersive and elaborate source by itself, as Maslow outlined the foundation of his framework in greater detail compared to his previous article. Second, the rationale for such focus lies in the developmental stage of the characters to be studied. The examination of the psychological trajectories of characters aged 10–11 is more accurately aligned with the foundational hierarchy of needs model with five stages than transcendent experiences he later discussed. Especially the transcendence pertains to adults with a more secure, autonomous sense of self, unlike to children, as Maslow points out:

The child has not been reduced to the concrete; he hasn't even grown up to the abstract yet. He is innocent because he is ignorant. This is very, very different from the "second innocence" or the "second naivete," as I have called it, of the wise, self-actualizing old adult who knows the whole of the D-realm, the whole of the world. all its vices, its contentions, poverties, quarrels, and tears, and yet is able to rise above them, and to have the unitive consciousness in which he is able to see the B-realm, to see the beauty of the whole cosmos, in the midst of all the vices, contentions, tears, and quarrels. (*Farther* 245)

Furthermore, in *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow explains that self-actualization too is rare in youth, considering they are still caught in the process of establishing their identity and freedom, and they lack required experience for developing intrinsic values, as follows:

Self-actualization does not occur in young people. In our culture at least, youngsters have not yet achieved identity, or autonomy. Nor have they worked out their *own* system of values; nor have they had experience enough

¹⁴ A posthumous work edited and published a year after Maslow's passing. In the preface, his wife Bertha G. Maslow informs the reader that "editing has been limited to the necessary technical corrections, deletions of occasional repetitive statements, and the combination of two articles to form Chapter 13" as originally planned by Maslow himself (xi).

(responsibility for others, tragedy, failure, achievement, success) to shed perfectionistic illusions and become realistic; nor have they generally made their peace with death; nor have they learned how to be patient; nor have they learned enough about evil in themselves and others to be compassionate; nor have they had time to become post-ambivalent about parents, etc... Healthy young men and women tend to be still growing, likeable, and even loveable, free of malice, secretly kind and altruistic (but very shy about it), privately affectionate of those of their elders who deserve it. Young people are unsure of themselves, not yet formed, uneasy. (xx)

While Maslow emphasizes that self-actualization generally is not observed during the childhood of the individuals under ordinary circumstances provided by a healthy environment, the extraordinary conditions faced by Coraline Jones and Harvey Swick catalyze early forms of psychological maturity. Confronted with challenges that are life-threatening (not only for them but also for their parents) along with mental struggles such as alienation and betrayal trigger their need for autonomous, self-sufficient action. Facing their greatest fears, they are propelled into accelerated self-actualization processes. After all, Maslow himself claims to have found that having people “*act as if* they were bold, or affectionate, or angry could finally make it easier for them to *be* bold, affectionate, or angry, [as already] there but suppressed” (*Motivation* 148). Furthermore, by compressing and dramatizing psychological experiences of the protagonists, fantasy, combined with the elements of horror, enables Coraline and Harvey’s development to unfold more visibly and rapidly compared to real life. The secondary worlds they are lured into are built by villains who twist reality and natural order. After navigating the illusion of false paradise whose creators are responsible for a series of temptation, deprivation, and serious emotional distress for them, they start resisting and fighting with these warped realities. Not only do they survive and successfully save their parents but also have sharpened insight, stronger identities (that Maslow often observed in mature people), and a higher degree of autonomy. Hence, the thesis will illustrate how extreme transformative circumstances within imagined narrative worlds in children’s literature foster the early emergence of self-actualizing behaviors.

2.2.2 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and the Psychology of Motivation

In his book *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow expands his study of hierarchical human needs he proposed in a 1943 paper called "A Theory of Human Motivation". Based on humanistic psychology, his model emphasizes integration and growth as vital to mental health, as opposed to deficit-oriented views of pathology. Maslow's ideas are centered on the fact that the behavior of humans are motivated through the fulfillment of a set of five levels of needs, namely, physiological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem, and finally, self-actualization. This framework is useful for understanding the inner motivations and spiritual growth of fantasy characters. The challenging journeys of Coraline Jones and Harvey Swick can be read as manifestations of psychological development. In rhyme with traditional fairy tale storytelling (adapted by children's fantasy literature as seen in *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always*), the journeys of the young protagonists start and continue with multiple conflicts. The conflicts in question arise when lower needs of children are thwarted often by villainy, and at times, due to the consequences of Coraline and Harvey's own reckless actions. The striving for higher needs marks the resolutions which bring happiness and satisfaction. Therefore, to analyze the struggles, victories, and transformations of Neil Gaiman and Clive Barker's protagonists, Maslow's theory provides a psychological lens for the thesis. Using it alongside a Proppian structural analysis enables a more enhanced insight and understanding of character motivation and growth.

In the first two chapters of *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow proposes a science-oriented background to his study of hierarchy of needs. He emphasizes science is the creation of human; therefore, it is unnatural for psychologist to study abstractions while it is people that need thorough examination ("Motivation" 1). After discussing the nature of science, scientists, and truth-seeking, he underlines the difference between means centering and problem centering to show that "many weaknesses of orthodox science and particularly of psychology are consequences of a means or technique-centered approach" which is not ideal for creativity of the work. (*Motivation* 11). Besides, he critiques means centering approach in science for the fact that it "tends strongly to create a hierarchy of sciences, in which, quite perniciously, physics is considered to be more scientific than biology, biology than psychology, and psychology than sociology" (*Motivation* 13). It is a clever analogy Maslow uses in

order to remind his audience how the “scientific” behaviorism and over-pathologizing Freudian psychoanalysis dismissed subjective, deeper human desires, goals, and needs, all of which lies at Maslow’s humanistic psychological approach to hierarchy of needs that is based on problem-centering science.

Chapter 4 is where Maslow marks the five stages of needs that dominate the organism, physiological needs, the safety needs, the belongingness and love needs, the esteem needs, and finally, the need for self-actualization (*Motivation* 35–47). Maslow stresses these needs are prepotent. Each need must be satisfied to some extent if not relatively well so that the next need emerges and dominates the organism (*Motivation* 38). The five categories of essential needs are typically visualized as a pyramid (see fig. 1.).



Fig. 1. The Pyramid of Five Set of Hierarchical Needs

The physiological needs form the base of the pyramid since “all capacities are put into the service of hunger-satisfaction” and “a person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than anything else” (Maslow *Motivation* 37). This explains why the villains in both *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always* choose hosting feasts to lure children easily, as “for [the] chronically and extremely hungry [person] Utopia [author’s capitals] can be defined simply as a place where there is plenty of food” (Maslow *Motivation* 37). Apart from food, anything related to homeostasis, namely, “body’s automatic efforts to maintain a constant, normal state of the blood stream” such as being hydrated, and regular body temperature are vital for survival (Maslow *Motivation* 36). After the physiological

needs are satisfied, safety needs are to be fulfilled. Safety needs refer not only to physical security (e.g. having shelter and a secure home) but also to emotional stability. Maslow emphasizes “the whole organism is a safety-seeking mechanism”; therefore, “practically everything looks less important than safety and protection (even sometimes the physiological needs, which, being satisfied, are now underestimated)” (*Motivation* 39). Consequently, the moment Coraline Jones and Harvey Swick realize their lives are at stake, they focus on survival and returning home without further damage, forgetting about the wonderful meals they have had in the other world. As the individual feels safe enough, they begin to seek to belong, to love and be loved, and connection with profound intimacy. Maslow illustrates the need in question as follows:

If both the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well gratified, there will emerge the love and affection and belongingness needs, and the whole cycle already described will repeat itself with this new center. Now the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children. He will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his group or family, and he will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal. He will want to attain such a place more than anything else in the world. He will feel sharply the pangs of loneliness, of ostracism, of rejection, of friendlessness, of rootlessness. (*Motivation* 43)

The fourth level, self-esteem needs are highly personal (the more human beings reach closer to self-actualization, the more subjective their motivation and goals are); it involves self-respect, self-confidence, and self-recognition (all those needs are aligned with identity) from others. The individual will strive for “strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery, and competence, for confidence in the face of the world”; and when he/she fulfills that need, “feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, of being useful and necessary” will come to him/her (*Motivation* 45). Eventually, at the top of the pyramid of hierarchical needs resides self-actualization, which in Maslow’s terminology translates to the desire “for self-fulfillment, namely, [the] tendency to become more and more what one idiosyncratically is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming” (*Motivation* 46). By overcoming extreme obstacles in unnatural environments, Coraline Jones and Harvey Swick undergo an exceptional transformation that is not typically seen in children in such early stages.

The following chapter will closely examine and analyze the self-actualization journey of young protagonists in children's fantasy imbued with horror elements after using Propp's structural framework to demonstrate Clive Barker and Neil Gaiman's modern narratives are inspired by the fairy tale tradition.



CHAPTER III

FANTASTICAL STRUGGLES, REAL TRANSFORMATIONS: PROPPIAN TRIALS AND MASLOW'S GROWTH IN FAIRY TALE INSPIRED MODERN NARRATIVES

I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration. I will face my fear. I will permit it to pass over me and through me. And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path. Where the fear has gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain.

—Frank Herbert, *Dune*

3.1 Mapping the Tale: Analysis of Propp's Narrative Functions in *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always*

In this section, Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* will be used as the first theoretical framework of the thesis and applied to Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always* and Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*, using dramatis personae and thirty-one narrative functions. Both children's fantasy works echo the structural elements of classic fairy tales (such as enchanted worlds, villainy, magical helpers, and young protagonists taking a transformational journey) even though Barker and Gaiman's stories are dark contemporary narratives by design. Applying Proppian analysis will offer a deeper understanding regarding how these modern children's fantasies inherit and reconfigure the long-lasting magical storytelling tradition. Before mapping the narrative functions, a brief overview of *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always* will provide the necessary context of each story.

Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* depicts the journey of a young girl who discovers a secret portal door which leads to another world suspiciously similar to the new flat she and her family have just moved into. This seemingly alike other realm hosts exact copies of her parents just like the house and its surroundings, except these button-eyed other parents are more attentive to her wishes and more affectionate towards Coraline. Although she is initially fascinated by this scenery, the illusion fades for Coraline

upon realization that her Other Mother's real intention is to sew buttons on her eyes, feed on her soul, and trap her in the realm she has built to lure children. When she returns to her world in shock to seek comfort from her real parents and finds out the Other Mother kidnapped them too, she has no choice but to step back to the dangerous territory in order to save them. Thanks to her newly discovered courage, wit, a magical object she collected from her neighbors, and the help of a cat that can talk in the other world, she manages to outsmart the villain by finding a way to free both the souls of the ghost children imprisoned there and her parents. Ultimately, Coraline returns home with her parents and a more self-actualized mindset, having matured and learned to appreciate the value of her own reality.

Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always* centers another young protagonist, Harvey Swick, who, out of boredom, is easily convinced by a mysterious stranger to be dragged into a place called Holiday House under false premises. Holiday House is a magical retreat where seasons change as the days go by and every wish of children is granted. Like Coraline, Harvey is mesmerized by everything Holiday House has to offer. However, he soon uncovers the secrets of the place. The pleasures are mere illusions, the house's magic is a means to trap children there forever, and the master of the house, Mr. Hood, like a vampire, drains the life out of kids by stealing their time. Though Harvey and his friend manage to escape, they realize that their parents aged beyond recognition while they spent their days playing in Holiday House. Thus, Harvey decides to go back to free other children trapped there and steal his parents' time back. His intelligence, moral clarity, and boldness help Harvey to break the illusions and destroy Holiday House. His journey marks his early step into self-actualization as he becomes more mature and wiser, especially towards the deceptive allure of escapism and valuing his time with parents. These summaries set the stage for closer structural readings through the lens of Vladimir Propp's morphology, beginning with the identification of the sequence of thirty-one narrative functions, and then, *dramatis personae*.

As outlined in the previous chapter, Propp's analysis of fairy tales are constituted by thirty-one narrative functions, namely, actions that follow one another in a consistent sequence, which form the foundation of his structuralist method. Over the course of tales certain functions are performed by certain characters that can be categorized into spheres of action "many functions logically join together into"

(Propp 79). These spheres are called *dramatis personae* and they serve specific structural functions in the narrative. In both Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always*, Proppian character roles are observed as a blend of traditional archetypes and subversive modern characters. The following analysis first identifies the key narrative functions evident in each story and then determines the *dramatis personae* based on the roles the characters fulfill through their actions within the narrative.

Vladimir Propp defines the first narrative function "absentation" as "one of the members of a family absent[ing] himself from home" and gives three different conditions for it, namely, either the younger generation absent themselves, the older generation absent themselves, or parents die as an "intensified form of absentation" (26). In children's tales, absentation involves physical or emotional detachment from the safety of home or the ordinary. The condition that involves the death of parents does not correspond to *Coraline*, and the parents clearly do not take a literal leave as "both of her parents worked, doing things on computers, which meant that they were home a lot of the time" (*Coraline* 5). However, as they are often busy with work, they are neglectful towards their only child, which is clearly hinted through the dialogues she has with her mother and father. When it is raining outside and Coraline cannot go out to explore she attempts to communicate her frustration despite her mother's disinterest, as follows:

"What should I do?" asked Coraline.

"Read a book," said her mother. "Watch a video. Play with your toys. Go and pester Miss Spink or Miss Forcible, or the crazy old man upstairs."

"No," said Coraline. "I don't want to do those things. I want to explore."

"I don't really mind what you do," said Coraline's mother, "as long as you don't make a mess." (*Coraline* 4)

As can be seen, Coraline's attempts to ask for alternative suggestions and compromise with her mother is interpreted by the mother as "pestering". Instead of having a break and taking care of her daughter's needs by engaging in a fun activity together or trying to suggest to her to do something that she might actually enjoy, she quickly dismisses her. What matters more to the mother at that moment is her own peace of

mind. The fact that she says out loud to her that she does not care what Coraline engages in on condition that she does not leave things in disarray creates an emotional detachment between one another, accounting for the absention in the story, though on the metaphorical level. Her father also does not take his time to spend some time with his daughter and prioritizes brushing her off like the mother:

“Hello Coraline,” he said when she came in, without turning round.

“Mmph,” said Coraline. “It’s raining... Can I go outside?”

“What does your mother say?”

“She says you’re not going out in weather like that, Coraline Jones.”

“Then, no.”

“But I want to carry on exploring.”

“Then explore the flat,” suggested her father. “Count all the doors and windows. List everything blue. Mount an expedition to discover the hot water tank. And leave me alone to work.” (*Coraline* 5)

Although her father’s suggestion seems more tailored to Coraline’s understanding of fun, the fact that he does not even bother to face her while talking proves he is an emotionally unavailable workaholic like the mother. He too avoids spending time with his daughter and tells her to stop pestering him. These interactions emphasize even though they do not literally leave Coraline’s side, the parents are absenting themselves from the child’s emotional reach in the beginning of the tale, causing her alienation and detachment.

As in *Coraline*, neither the parents die, nor do they depart in *The Thief of Always*¹⁵. It seems Harvey, as the younger generation, is the one who absents himself from reality as a symptom of discontent and boredom. There is a strong emphasis on ennui in the young boy’s life, as the book opens with his imagined scenarios fueled by exaggerated figure of speech as follows:

The great gray beast February had eaten Harvey Swick alive. Here he was, buried in the belly of that smothering month, wondering if he would ever find

¹⁵ Throughout the case study, Clive Barker’s *The Thief of Always* will be referred to as *ToA*.

his way out through the cold coils that lay between here and Easter... More than likely he'd become so bored as the hours crawled by that one day he'd simply forget to breathe... He knew that long before the sun came to save him he would have withered away in the belly of the beast. (*ToA* 1–3)

Harvey Swick feels frustrated with the mundanity of his life and it serves as his psychological absention. The month itself is personified as a monster that consumes, which evokes the sense of being trapped. His heightened imagination, though commonly seen in children at his age, creates a distance between him and reality to the point of thinking he would die swallowed by that month doomed with stasis. He assumes his chances to have fun has already been eliminated before he even leaves home physically. This imagery echoes the stage “belly of a whale” in Joseph Campbell’s monomyth as well:

The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale. The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died. (83)

The emotional estrangement from everyday life becomes the catalyst for such irrational fantasies to seduce Harvey Swick. His vulnerability and yearning for escape from his dull world precede his departure for adventure. Propp’s absention comes into play by demonstration of how disconnected the young boy is from time, pleasure, and vitality. Symbolically, he is already removed from his home and the ordinary world by alienation and hopelessness, not so different from how Coraline feels. Harvey’s normal timeline (marked by holidays, rituals, and change) is disrupted with the arrival of February, due to which he is stuck in a liminal void that imagination turns into his reality.

The second function “interdiction”, according to Propp, generally follows absention while it does not have to be directly connected to it (26). Propp’s examples indicate that it is a warning or prohibition directed at the hero. The other condition for interdiction is “an order or a suggestion”, namely, “an inverted form of interdiction” (27). Interdictions are given in hopes to prevent the misfortune that is about to befall on fairy tale heroes. They foreshadow the upcoming danger that will most likely be ignored by the protagonist, so that the story can advance. Coraline is

warned by two of her neighbors before she finds herself in danger. “On the first day Coraline’s family moved in” Miss Spink and Miss Forcible tell her about a dangerous well from which she must stay away and from which she does not: She sets off to explore the well “so that she knew where it was, to keep away from it properly” (*Coraline* 3). The other warning comes from Mr. Bobinsky’s circus mice, and it is implied by Mr. Bobinsky himself:

“The mice have a message for you,” he whispered. “*Don’t go through the door*. Does that mean anything to you?”

“No,” said Coraline.

The old man shrugged. “They are funny, the mice. They get things wrong. They got your name wrong, you know. They kept saying Coraline. Not Caroline. Not Caroline at all.” (*Coraline* 14)

In this major scene, interdiction functions through an indirect, surreal warning. Physical closeness adds a conspiratorial, eerie intimacy embedded in the message of circus mice, making it seem like a private whisper from the blurred margins of reality. The fact that the message comes from mice creates ambivalence. In folklore, animals generally represent omens or messengers. Here in this context, their mystical message appears as a subconscious warning. Delivering the message turns Mr. Bobinsky into a threshold figure, a gatekeeper of hidden knowledge, which is common in fairy tales. The door Coraline is warned not to enter signifies transition to danger. Like Bluebeard’s chamber or Pandora’s box, this forbidden area is central to the tale. The fact that the mice are familiar with her name means they perceive Coraline more accurately than adults (which reaffirms her identity as the true protagonist); therefore, the misnaming motif adds a layer of credibility to the message of the mice, regardless of how absurd the situation seems. Yet, neither does Coraline understand the significance of the warning, nor does she heed it, as she is simply unaware of the dangers lurking behind that door in the beginning, as an inexperienced, innocent youth. Besides, as it comes through animals, it is easier to dismiss it as nonsense. It might be said that the interdiction is issued in a fantastic, peculiar manner that is improbable to believe. This sets the rest of the story’s functions in motion.

On the other hand, interdiction seems more abstract in *ToA*, mostly because Rictus, having observed Harvey for long enough to know he is dissociated from his

environment, abducts him easily on his way to school before someone could witness or interfere with the situation. Having been discouraged by Rictus that he is “too inquisitive for [his] own good” (*ToA* 7) and been warned not to ask further questions as “*questions rot the mind [so he should keep his] mouth shut [to] see what comes [his] way*” is the part in the narrative interdiction takes place (*ToA* 8). Instead of trusting his senses and despite getting suspicious for he is not allowed to interrogate the stranger properly, Harvey fails to resist his temptation to pay a visit to the Holiday House “where the days are always sunny and the nights are full of wonders”, as he feels he cannot tolerate his boredom no more, especially when such rare opportunity is at his door (*ToA* 7). Interdiction is used playfully as a way of increasing the chances of luring the child to Holiday House by Rictus. Rictus is fully aware that if he keeps poking at Harvey’s curiosity without being obliged to answer rational questions that indicate his worries, he will manage to convince the child to leave his family and boring life behind. The departure, in such circumstances, is unavoidable.

The third function “violation” is paired with the second function, as the previously given interdiction is violated. Propp explains that in this stage “villain enters the tale; the villain(s) can be a dragon, a devil, bandits, a witch, or a stepmother” whose sole intention is “to disturb the peace of a happy family, to cause some form of misfortune, damage, or harm” (27). *Coraline*, as expected, is drawn to the mysterious door that once “opened onto a brick wall” when she investigated it with her mother (*Coraline* 7). She encounters one last vague omen during her visit to Miss Spink and Miss Forcibe when they read her tea leaves to see her future and tell her that she is “in terrible danger”, Coraline is more confused than convinced (*Coraline* 18). The moment she is alone, she unlocks the door again, which, to her surprise “open[s] on to a dark hallway” as if the bricks had “never been there” (*Coraline* 24). Her going through the door is where she violates the interdiction. Like Coraline who “walk[s] down the corridor uneasily” as deep down, she knows she is “doing something wrong” (*Coraline* 24–25), Harvey is anxious traveling without letting his parents know. However, due to Rictus’ manipulation (seeing Harvey is having second thoughts, he pretends to leave), he also falls right into the trap, thinking it would not get him into much trouble “if he miss[es] all of the morning at school as long as he was back home by three, or four, certainly before dark” (*ToA* 11). In fact, these excuses are his strategy to silence his conscience for he violated an interdiction.

Though it is not voiced out loud in the narrative, it is hinted with Harvey's suspicions regarding the trip to the Holiday House. He is naturally unsure due to his right to question is forcefully taken away from him in exchange for the fun he desperately seeks.

The fourth function as Propp defines involves "the villain[']s attempt at reconnaissance" (28), for which he gives three variants as follows:

1. *The reconnaissance has the aim of finding out the location of children, or sometimes of precious objects, etc.*
2. *An inverted form of reconnaissance is evidenced when the intended victim questions the villain.*
3. *In separate instances one encounters forms of reconnaissance by means of other personages. (28)*

In both *Coraline* and *ToA*, it is the first variant of reconnaissance. The villain, namely, the Other Mother in *Coraline* appears to have begun observing Coraline's life before she even went through the door. At the end of the first chapter, it is implied that the villain attempts to gain information about the child through her spies, "little black shapes with little red eyes and sharp yellow teeth" (*Coraline* 9). These creatures are the replica of circus mice through whose reports the Other Mother learns the details regarding Coraline's life, that she is dissatisfied with her real parents being distant, and she does not like her father's cooking (*Coraline* 8). Mr. Hood in *ToA*, like the Other Mother in *Coraline*, uses Rictus as an agent to collect children from their homes and lure them to Holiday House. It is obvious from Harvey's first encounter that Rictus has been watching him just as the replica mice spied on Coraline, as follows:

"Who are you?" Harvey demanded, wondering how he could get past this interloper to the door.

"Don't be nervous," the man replied, taking Harvey's hand and shaking it. "My name's Rictus. You are Harvey Swick, aren't you? I thought for a moment I'd got the wrong house." (*ToA* 5)



Fig. 2. Rictus Flying Towards Harvey's Window, illustrated by Clive Barker

Harvey's instinctual suspicion regarding the intruder is carefully neutralized by Rictus who manages to deceive the child with a charming first impression. Distracted by tactile gestures and polite speech, Harvey does not realize Rictus already knows him even if he pretends to have just met. Even though he frames it as a question, the fact that he knows Harvey by his full name indicates he has been keeping an eye on him in pursuit of finding new victims to lure into the Holiday House. His natural demeanor implies a harmless encounter under false pretenses.

The fifth function, "delivery", is paired with the prior function, as it refers to villain's receiving the desired information regarding the hero (Propp 28). Propp suggests that in this stage, the villain either "directly receives an answer" or "an inverted form of information-gathering evokes a corresponding answer" (28–29). Neither Coraline nor Harvey provides the information themselves. It is through the agents that spy on children that villains learn about the victim, as underlined above. In *Coraline*, the Other World is designed by the villain with attention to young girl's weaknesses and what would please her best. Attentive and overly affectionate parenting with Other Father, delicious meals she cooks for Coraline, granting freedom for her to go outside to explore whenever she pleases are her strategies to deceive the child disguised as kindness. In *ToA*, however, the Holiday House is already there and

not reconstructed with each child's arrival as the concept is more generic yet still attractive to lure multiple children. After introducing himself to Harvey and gaining his trust, Rictus claims to "inquire on [Harvey's] behalf, see if they've got room for another guest" in the Holiday House (*ToA* 8). Through this lie, Rictus keeps Harvey interested in the offer, and meanwhile; delivers the information to the villain.

The sixth function, "trickery", works through the villain's "attempts to deceive victim in order to take possession of the hero" (Propp 29). The three variants for trickery include the villain's a) using persuasion, b) using magic or a magical object, c) employing "other means of deception or coercion" (Propp 29–30). Both villains in *Coraline* and *ToA* seem to use magic to trick children; however, the Other Mother is more actively engaging with Coraline and endeavors to persuade her directly while Mr. Hood is nowhere near until Harvey confronts him through the end of the tale. The Other Mother and her creations act with the sole intention of pleasing Coraline so that the villain manages to trick her into staying there. The Other Father turns around when Coraline speaks to him unlike her real father who is too busy to take his eyes off the computer (*Coraline* 26). Knowing Coraline hates the meals his father prepares, the Other Mother sets the table with delicious dishes Coraline would find appetizing, and tries to trick her to stay as follows:

"We've been waiting for you for a long time," said Coraline's other father.

"Yes," said the other mother. "It wasn't the same here without you. Would you like some more chicken?"

It was the best chicken that Coraline had ever eaten... When Coraline's father cooked chicken 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. (*Coraline* 27).

The Other Mother's trickery begins with attention, comfort, and food. She presents herself not as the malevolent predator she is, but as the answer to Coraline's all dissatisfactions regarding her real life. By means of subtle seduction and disguising her wicked intentions, the Other Mother begins to ensnare Coraline. Both the villain and the Other Father choose their words carefully, creating a contrast between the discontent with her real parents and offering an idealized, utopian version of her life. Here in the Other World, not only is the food tasty but also meticulously tailored to

Coraline's preferences, unlike the disappointing meals her real father cooks in her real home. Hence, it might be said that the Other World is an emotional and sensory paradise constructed by the villain to win Coraline's trust. Through the deceitful warmth, the Other Mother fulfills the function trickery. Similarly, in *ToA*, lavishing banquets are used to lure and trick children to stay in the Holiday House. Rictus informs Harvey on the way that "there is a woman waiting for [him] in the House called Mrs. Griffin; the greatest cook in all of Americaland who can cook anything [Harvey] can dream of eating" (*ToA* 14). The comically grand, almost fairy tale like exaggeration evokes a magical realm, a blend of real and unreal. Though "Americaland" is a nonsensical fantasy term, it operates to dissolve boundaries between the regular world and a wondrous one. Like the Other Mother's savory chicken, Rictus' promise is bait which invites Harvey to suspend his disbelief and suspicions while he is about to step into a world where his desires and appetite are to be fulfilled. As can be seen in both Gaiman and Barker's tales, food works as a symbol of misleading comfort and enchantment, a common motif observed in classic fairy tales such as "Hansel and Gretel". When Harvey enters the Holiday House, he meets Mrs. Griffin, and realizes that Rictus was right about the food being abundant, as his interaction with her demonstrates:

"You came to enjoy yourself, didn't you?"

"I guess I did," Harvey said.

"So let me tempt you with some treats."

Harvey sat down at the kitchen table, and within sixty seconds Mrs. Griffin had set a dozen plates of food in front of him: hamburgers, hot dogs and fried chicken; mounds of buttered potatoes; apple, cherry and mud pies, ice cream and whipped cream; grapes, tangerines and a plate of fruits he couldn't even name. (*ToA* 19–20)

Although it seems like a harmless, friendly conversation, Mrs. Griffin's wording reframes Harvey's arrival as if it was his choice based on pleasure. In fact, he is there for being manipulated by Rictus into visiting the Holiday House. He is not held there by force but gently ushered into consent. Harvey's noncommittal answer represents his hesitation; however, like the Other Father in *Coraline*, all agents of Mr. Hood play a role in tricking Harvey and making it easier for the villain to seize him. Offering

numerous mouth-watering dishes, Mrs. Griffin, just like the Other Mother in *Coraline*, masks the manipulation behind hospitality. For “a woman who made his grandmother (the oldest person he knew) look young”, Mrs. Griffin serves the food in an overwhelming speed (*ToA* 17). No regular old person could prepare a feast so quickly, which indicates an abnormality shadowed by Harvey’s sensory overload that distracts and dazzles him. Apart from typical child cravings, the exotic fruits Harvey sees for the first time suggest infinite satisfaction is being promised him in the Holiday House, unlike anything the real world has to offer. In both *Coraline* and *ToA*, the fulfillment of the children’s appetites is a gateway to loss of Coraline and Harvey’s freedom.

There is another significant act of trickery which signals the shift to the following function, namely, “complicity” in *ToA*. Upon meeting the other children, Harvey announces he will not be staying for his “mom and dad don’t even know [he’s there]” (*ToA* 21). However, his new friend Lulu suggests he should dial home and see for himself that they know about his visit. To Harvey’s surprise, the phone call proves Lulu right:

“Before you start yelling—” he began.

“Oh, honey,” his mom cooed. “Did you arrive? You *are* at the Holiday House, I hope. Do you like it there?”

“You knew I was coming?” Harvey said, catching Lulu’s eye. *I told you*, she mouthed.

“Of *course* we knew. We invited Mr. Rictus to show you the place. We just want you to enjoy yourself. So you stay just as long as you want.”

“What about school?” he said.

“You deserve a little time off. Just have a good time.” (*ToA* 21–22).

The textual details in the dialogue hint the reader the phone call is another illusion to convince Harvey to stay. Taking Harvey’s expectations regarding the conversation suggests that his mother speaks on the phone in a manner unusually indulgent and gentle. It is absurd that his mother who advised him he should do something useful instead of wasting his time sitting doing nothing is now wishing her child fun, lifting

all his responsibilities such as school, and rules (*ToA* 3). Even though Harvey knows his mother would be angry and disapproving of his reckless act, he is easily swayed by the exploitation of his initial dissatisfaction, which was not his mother's concern before. Mr. Hood pretends to speak in his mother's voice (or impersonates it through magic), rewriting Harvey's reality. The illusion is accepted because it corresponds to Harvey's emotional needs.

The seventh function, "complicity" involves "the victim submit[ing] to deception and thereby unwittingly help[ing] the enemy" (Propp 30). The two variants of this function include "the hero agree[ing] to all of the villain's persuasions" and "the hero mechanically react[ing] to the employment of magical or other means" (Propp 30). As stated in the previous section, the phone call leads to the second variant of complicity in *ToA*, through Harvey's belief that his visit to the Holiday House was lovingly prearranged and approved by his parents. Disarmed by the illusion, he accepts the Holiday House as a safe and desirable place. Succeeding in convincing the child, the villain ensures his continued stay, not as a prisoner but a willing participant in his own entrapment. In *Coraline*, Coraline's fascination with the Other World helps the villain to focus on her next move. While Coraline is distracted by the savory food, comfort, and attention her suspicions are subdued. Just like Harvey, she surrenders to the pleasures offered to her, "shovel[ing] the food into her mouth, play[ing] with the rats in [her] room, [admiring] a whole toy box filled with wonderful toys" (*Coraline* 26–28). Besides, she leaves the house to explore and experience the theater performances of the Other Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, who are much livelier and more energetic in the Other World (*Coraline* 38–42). She is completely unaware of the Other Mother's intention to imprison her as she cooperates with the villain's plan by embracing the illusion.

The eighth function, "villainy" is "especially important" according to Propp, "since by means of it the actual movement of the tale is created" (30). He further explains that "the first seven functions may be regarded as the *preparatory part* of the tale, whereas the complication is begun by an act of villainy" (31). If villainy is absent, the tale "very often begins directly with a lack", a condition in which "one member of a family either lacks something or desires to have something" (Propp 35). By definition, villainy takes place when "the villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family" (30), and it appears in tales in various forms, as follows:

1. *The villain abducts a person.*
2. *The villain seizes or takes away a magical agent.*
3. *The villain pillages or spoils the crops.*
4. *The villain seizes the daylight.*
5. *The villain plunders in other forms.*
6. *The villain causes bodily injury.*
7. *The villain causes a sudden disappearance.*
8. *The villain demands or entices a victim.*
9. *The villain expels someone.*
10. *The villain orders someone to be thrown into the sea.*
11. *The villain casts a spell upon someone or something.*
12. *The villain effects a substitution.*
13. *The villain orders a murder to be committed.*
14. *The villain commits murder.*
15. *The villain imprisons or detains someone.*
16. *The villain threatens forced matrimony.*
17. *The villain makes a threat of cannibalism.*
18. *The villain torments at night.*
19. *The villain declares war.* (Propp 31–34)

In *Coraline* and *ToA*, the function villainy can be clearly observed in villains' causing harm both to the protagonists and to their parents. Coraline, who finds the Other World "much more interesting than at home" (*Coraline* 43), is terrified upon the revelation that the villain demands her to give up her eyes as a price of enjoying her stay:

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 stay. And it's just a little thing."

"I'm going now," said Coraline. Her other mother's hand scuttled off Coraline's shoulder like a frightened spider...

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

“And then we’ll all be together as one big happy family,” said her other mother. “For ever and always.” (*Coraline* 43–44)

As in the previous instances, gentle phrasing is a careful strategy to mask the alarming danger, an attempt to minimize the act of gruesome violence. Gaiman portrays the villain’s coercion as casual negotiation, which enhances horror. What the Other Mother presents as a gesture of hospitality is not only a bodily threat but also control through transformation and erasure of identity. Sewing buttons over her eyes would remove Coraline’s ability to see or perceive things on her own terms, which symbolically aligns with loss of autonomy, subjugation, and objectification. The spider imagery foreshadows the Other Mother as a predator, trapping Coraline in her web of illusions and lies. The form of villainy is insidious; it is not delivered through brute force, but under the guise of nurturing love, making it even more terrifying. The overt threat brings Coraline back to her senses and prompts her to escape. However, as Coraline travels back home, it is revealed that villainy in the tale is multilayered. Spending her days at home alone, waiting for her parents to come back, she soon realizes that the villain abducted her parents while she was away:

In the mirror Coraline’s mother and father stared at her. Her father opened his mouth and said something, but she could hear nothing at all. Her mother breathed on the inside of the mirror glass, and quickly, before the fog faded, she wrote

HELP US

with the tip of her forefinger. The fog on the inside of the mirror faded, and so did her parents, and now the mirror reflected only the corridor, and Coraline, and the cat. (*Coraline* 51)

Taking her real parents away from Coraline is the Other Mother’s way of ensuring Coraline’s return and submission. The backwards writing in the foggy mirror symbolizes the inversion of the real world, emphasizing that Coraline is trapped in a reality in which things are distorted and twisted, just like the Other Mother’s way of showing affection through means of damage and control. Villainy here is not merely in the act of kidnapping but in the emotional isolation, the distortion of hope, and the use of illusion as a weapon. The Other Mother does not just hurt Coraline’s family; she clearly drops hints to Coraline regarding the captivity of her helpless parents,

allows her to see the harm, and then denies her any comfort as the illusion quickly fades. The villain's cruelty demonstrates itself as she forces Coraline to witness the consequences of her actions. Coraline's desire for ideal parents leads to the loss of real ones. The case is similar for Harvey in *ToA*. Although he keeps questioning whatever he finds inconvenient in the Holiday House, he, like Coraline, is too distracted to notice the cues early, or contemplate on them further. Just like Rictus, the cook of the house, Mrs. Griffin advises Harvey to stop questioning as "the ever inquisitive Clue-Cat jump[s] up onto the counter" and burns himself to death despite Harvey asks him to get down (*ToA* 31–32). This is a strong symbolic demonstration of what happens to the curious dwellers of the Holiday House, a warning from Mr. Hood to the hero. However, Mr. Hood's villainy goes beyond murdering animals. Soon, Harvey discovers the lake he was discouraged from exploring, and he does not like the sight of it, though he cannot tell why:

There, moving just below the coating of scum, he saw the fish. They were almost as large as he was, their gray scales stained and encrusted, their bulbous eyes turned up toward the surface like the eyes of prisoners in a watery pit... What a life, he thought. No sun to warm them; no flowers to sniff at or games to play. Just the deep, dark waters to circle in; and circle, and circle, and circle... "Why would Mr. Hood have fish like that? Everything else is so beautiful..." (*ToA* 37–38)



Fig. 3. The Fish, illustrated by Clive Barker

Harvey, who has experienced the Holiday House as somewhere joyful, bright, and magical until this point is shaken by the contrast between the repulsive lake and the vibrant, whimsical world that signals an error in the illusion. The house that once appeared to be a paradise now reveals to Harvey a hidden, rotting underbelly. The lake serves as a symbolic threshold, foreshadowing Harvey's realization that Mr. Hood's kindness and magic is a trap. The repetition in "circle, and circle, and circle..." mimics the monotony and futility of their existence. There's no progress or escape for the fish, only stagnation, passivity, and hopelessness Harvey dreaded in the first place. Nature, which around the other side of the house is lush and fertile, is diseased and foul when it comes to the lake. This imagery of decay subtly unmasks Mr. Hood's villainy. Everything that resides in his magic seems beautiful above the surface while sustained by corruption below. After seeing how hideous the lake is, Harvey's doubts about the place intensify. Before he could even process Wendell's informing him that "there's no way out" and Mrs. Griffin's confession that they are all "locked up in [t]here" (*ToA* 84–87), one of his questions is finally answered as he witnesses the terrible fate of Lulu:

All that Harvey had feared was true, and more. A fin grew from her bent and scaly back, and her legs had almost fused together... Her mouth had lost its lips and her blue eyes turned to swivelling silver balls, lidless and lashless. And yet, despite their freakishness, there was human feeling in those eyes: a terrible sadness that he knew would never leave his heart if he lived to be a thousand. (*ToA* 97)



Fig. 4. Lulu's Metamorphosis, illustrated by Clive Barker

Lulu's grotesque metamorphosis steals away all traces of her childhood vitality and freedom, replacing them with deformity and constraint. This transformation is not just monstrous, but it is tragic, signaling that Lulu has been unmade by Mr. Hood's false paradise. The villainy here is not dramatic violence, rather, sinister dehumanization. While her body is nearly unrecognizable, the last fragments of her soul and suffering remain visible in her expression. Hauntingly, Lulu is still in there, conscious, unable to fight back. The "silver balls" of fish eyes resemble the buttons in *Coraline*, artificial and lifeless. Besides, this scene reveals both to Harvey and the reader that children's time is not the only thing Mr. Hood steals, he steals their identity as well, like the Other Mother in *Coraline* who imprisons the children and devour their souls by sewing buttons on their eyes. Watching Lulu's "tumb[ing] into the water where he couldn't follow" shatters the illusion Harvey had of harmless fantasy (*ToA* 97–98). Like Coraline who witnessed the suffering of her parents through the mirror when she came back, he cannot do anything but behold the atrocity. The villain in *ToA* does not literally abduct Harvey's parents, but he indirectly causes damage to them, as during Harvey's *holiday*, his parents have aged beyond recognition:

[I]t wasn't his father. This was a much older man, his hair almost white, his face thin... [His] wife appeared behind him, and Harvey's legs almost folded up beneath him at the sight of her... The moment he'd set eyes on his mother—so changed, so sorrowful—it was instantly clear what a terrible trick Hood's House had played upon them all. For every day he'd spent there a year had gone by in the real world. (*ToA* 109–112)

Mr. Hood's manipulation is not just the theft of joy or freedom, but of life itself. The villainy is not only deception or entrapment; it is the unnoticed theft of time. What seemed like a brief, couple of weeks of adventure was, in truth, a profound loss for Harvey. Unlike traditional fairy-tale villains who use fear or force, Mr. Hood's evil is masked in pleasure and forgetfulness, making it more dangerous. His parents' aged, grief-stricken appearances function as a mirror, showing him the magnitude of what has been stolen from him. Like Coraline's parents, what Mr. Hood has taken cannot be restored by Harvey's escape. His freedom from the Holiday House, like Coraline's freedom from the Other World, is not enough to rewind the real-world consequences.

The ninth function, “mediation” corresponds to when “misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; is allowed to go or dispatched” (Propp 36). Propp distinguishes the seeker heroes from victimized heroes and suggests seven variants for mediation whose first “four forms refer to seeker heroes” (Propp 37), as follows:

1. *A call for help is given, with the resultant dispatch of the hero.*
2. *The hero is dispatched directly.*
3. *The hero is allowed to depart from home.*
4. *Misfortune is announced.*
5. *The banished hero is transported away from home.*
6. *The hero condemned to death is secretly freed.*
7. *A lament is sung.* (Propp 37–38)

At first glance, both Coraline and Harvey appear to be victimized heroes/heroines due to being lured to another place and imprisoned there by villains. However, they undertake a quest to save their parents and other children, which makes them function as seeker heroes/heroines. Coraline is not banished or abducted, it is her choice to enter the Other World. Finding out her parents are missing and most likely abducted by the villain is when the misfortune is made known to her in the story. Likewise, Harvey visits the Holiday House voluntarily. His realization that the fish are the previous children imprisoned and dehumanized by Mr. Hood, and his parents unnaturally grew “*thirty-one years*” older while he spent a month having fun there marks the moment the misfortune is announced for Harvey (*ToA* 111).

The tenth function “beginning counteraction” is defined by Propp as “the seeker agree[ing] to or decid[ing] upon counteraction” (38). Coraline reminisces the time her father saved her from being stung by bees, and announces she is “going back for them because they are [her] parents [a]nd if they noticed [she] was gone they would do the same” (*Coraline* 57). Harvey, like Coraline, assumes a quest to rescue others, fulfilling beginning counteraction, as follows:

“I don’t think any of those grown-ups are ever going to find the House. If we want all those years back, we have to get them for ourselves. We don’t have any choice.”

“So when do we start?”

“Now!” said Harvey grimly. “We’ve lost too much time already.” (*ToA* 122)

Harvey is fully aware of the fact that adults will not be able to help him. He identifies the misfortune and takes responsibility for his actions. His friend Wendell’s reluctance and fear contrast with Harvey’s resolve, highlighting Harvey’s transformation into a determined seeker. He even thinks of leaving a note so his parents won’t think it was a dream, which hints at concealed or private motivation beyond what others might understand. This moment is the connective incident that triggers the second, active phase of Harvey’s journey. He, like Coraline, decides to act on his own initiative despite being scared since the misfortune calls for heroic action that nobody else, but the protagonists are entitled to manage in both tales.

The eleventh function, “departure” refers to “the hero leav[ing] home”, and “departure of [seeker heroes] have search as their goal, while [victim heroes] mark the beginning of the journey without searches” (Propp 39). Propp also highlights that following this function, the donor, “or more precisely, the provider” enters the tale, usually “encountered accidentally— in the forest, along the roadway, etc.” (39). As mentioned above, both Coraline and Harvey are seeker heroes/heroines whose return to the dangerous realm once they escaped are designated for restoring what has been stolen from them. Coraline’s taking “her first step down the dark corridor” marks her departure (*Coraline* 57). For Harvey, it is when he “step[s] into the wall, snatch[ing] hold of his friend [Wendell’s] sleeve, so that they entered as they had exited: together” (*ToA* 125–126). Though Wendell is convinced to accompany Harvey and enters beside him, it is Harvey who truly departs— crossing the threshold not as a child lured by fantasy, but as a determined seeker reentering enemy territory with purpose. His resolve, like Coraline’s, is sharpened by loss and insight.

The twelfth function, “the first function of the donor” operates when “the hero is tested, interrogated, or attacked, which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper” (Propp 39). This function appears in tales in various forms as follows:

1. *The donor tests the hero.*
2. *The donor greets and interrogates the hero.*
3. *A dying or deceased person requests the rendering of a service.*
4. *A prisoner begs for freedom.*
5. *The hero is approached with a request for mercy.*
6. *Disputants request a division of property.*

7. *Other requests.*
8. *A hostile creature attempts to destroy the hero.*
9. *A hostile creature engages the hero in combat.*
10. *The hero is shown a magical agent offered for exchange.* (Propp 39–42)

When the Other Mother traps Coraline behind a mirror for disrespecting her, Coraline meets the souls of other ghost children. They inform her that the Other Mother tricked them and stole their souls and advise Coraline to run away. However, realizing Coraline is resolved to find her kidnapped parents, they ask her to find their hidden souls as well:

“[I]f you could win your mamma and your papa back from the beldam, you could also win free our souls.”

“Has she taken them?” asked Coraline, shocked.

“Aye. And hidden them.”

“That is why we could not leave here, when we died. She kept us, fed on us, until nothing left of ourselves. Find our secret hearts, young mistress.”
(*Coraline* 81–83)



Fig. 5. The Ghost Children, illustrated by Chris Riddell

This scene marks the first function of the donor in *Coraline*, where the souls of the ghost children take on the donor role. They are not typical wise old men or magical

figures as in classic fairy tales. Like the fish in *ToA*, they are dehumanized children, lost remnants of forgotten souls whose conscience is still intact, but identity erased. Upon learning Coraline is determined not to leave without retrieving what has been stolen from her, they issue a test of bravery, compassion, and commitment by asking her to liberate their imprisoned souls, creating yet another moral, altruistic trial. Their request aligns with the third form of function twelve. In *ToA*, the line between the donor and magical agent are blurred. There is no clear sign of a donor, or a distinct encounter after the misfortune is unfolded; however, Mrs. Griffin and her cats might be considered as a combination of donor and magical aid. Mrs. Griffin is “the first child who ever came to Hood's House” and the “three cats Rictus gave her the day [she] arrived” are no ordinary cats but part of Mr. Hood’s magical creations (*ToA* 139). As mentioned above (see page 73), the Clue-cat burning himself out of curiosity is a haunting, symbolic warning that tests Harvey’s suspicions and emotional awareness. Though no magical object is exchanged in the tale, Harvey is shown the way out of the Holiday House by Blue-Cat, who has “good sense of direction” (*ToA* 103). Through the aid of Mrs. Griffin, the Blue-Cat operates as magical guidance for Harvey and Wendell as they are trying to escape, chased by one of Mr. Hood’s agents, Carna. When Harvey returns to the Holiday House, the Stew-Cat, like the Blue-Cat, fulfills magical guidance and escorts him to the hidden cellar where Mrs. Griffin is imprisoned in a coffin as a punishment:

[T]he cat led Harvey down a narrow passage to a door he had never even noticed before. The Stew-Cat rub[ed] her arched back against the leg of a small table set nearby. On the table was a carved wooden box. In the box was a key... [Inside the cellar, he saw] a crude coffin: an apron string left hanging out of the box.

“Mrs. Griffin!” he whispered, digging his fingernails under the lid. “Mrs. Griffin? Are you in there?”

There was a muffled thump from inside.

“I’m going to get you out,” he promised. (*ToA* 134–136)

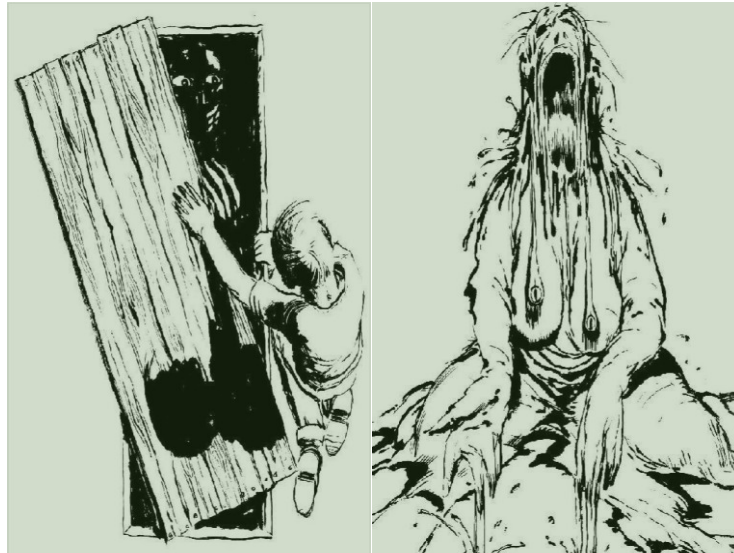


Fig. 6. Mrs. Griffin's Terrible State, illustrated by Clive Barker

Stew-Cat here becomes a guide, fulfilling the role of a magical helper (a role that often overlaps with the donor in Propp's schema). Unlike traditional donors who test the hero overtly, Stew-Cat tests Harvey's attentiveness and moral instinct. The fact that Harvey never even noticed the door before suggests that Stew-Cat is granting access to hidden knowledge. This moment aligns with the tenth variant of the first function of the donor; but in this case, the "agent" is access itself: a hidden space, a key, and the chance to free someone who holds crucial moral knowledge about the House. Not only does the Stew-Cat show the door but also draw attention to a specific object of power, namely, the key. This is a literalization of the donor's gift: a magical (or at least narrative functioning) agent that enables Harvey to unravel the truth.

The thirteenth function, "the hero's reaction" refers to "the hero react[ing] to the actions of the future donor" (Propp 42). Propp suggests that "in the majority of instances, the reaction is either positive or negative" (42), and lays out the variants of the function as follows:

1. *The hero withstands (or does not withstand).*
2. *The hero answers (or does not answer) a greeting.*
3. *He renders (or does not render) a service to a dead person.*
4. *He frees a captive.*
5. *He shows mercy to a suppliant.*
6. *He completes an appointment and reconciles the disputants.*

7. *The hero performs some other service.*
8. *The hero saves himself from an attempt on his life by employing the same tactics used by his adversary.*
9. *The hero vanquishes (or does not vanquish).*
10. *The hero agrees to an exchange, but immediately employs the magic power of the object exchanged against the barterer.* (Propp 42–43)

Coraline is willing to help the ghost children, and she inquires “what will happen to [them] if [she does find the mutilated parts]” (*Coraline* 84). They do not know the answer to that; however, they hint at Coraline how she might use the magical object in her possession:

She closed her eyes, [a]nd as she fell asleep she thought she felt a ghost kiss her cheek, tenderly, and a small voice whisper into her ear, a voice so faint it was barely there at all, a gentle wispy nothing of a voice so hushed that Coraline could almost believe she was imagining it. “Look through the stone,” it said to her. (*Coraline* 85)

Even though she is terrified and the fate of the ghost children is ambivalent, she does not turn down their plea for help. By responding with empathy rather than insolence, or disinterest, Coraline earns the trust of the donor, and thus, she is provided with the cryptic clue to make use of the stone she obtained earlier in her journey. They do not offer the magical agent themselves like the traditional donor, but they reveal how to use it. As the aid is provided in *ToA* often without the donor testing the hero first, pointing out Harvey’s reaction is particularly challenging. Since he trusts Mrs. Griffin’s sincere concern for the well-being of the children, and the Blue-Cat’s sense of direction, he is able to go beyond the mist that once proved impossible to pass through when he and Wendell tried (*ToA* 84). During his interaction with the Stew-Cat, he is open to the mysterious guidance of the cat. Besides, he does not force his way forward blindly, he actively looks for a sign that requests meaning or aid. This openness to being shown the truth while it might as well have been a trap proves Harvey’s worthiness and readiness to learn more about the secrets lurking in the House. Specifically, he discovers that Mrs. Griffin first met Mr. Hood when she heard him “[i]n the attic at the top of the house” (*ToA* 140). The way he is tested by the donor is atypical, it operates not by combat or riddles, but through Harvey’s

willingness to observe and follow even though he is afraid, like Coraline. Lastly, attempting to free Mrs. Griffin without considering the possible negative consequences of this action for his well-being is another sign that Harvey withstands the test by freeing a captive in need (form 4). Not only do the donors help the hero but also catalyze the hero's resolve.

The fourteenth function, "provision" takes place in the tale when "the hero acquires the use of a magical agent" (Propp 43). Propp explains that the magical agents can be "animals (a horse, an eagle, etc.), objects out of which magical helpers appear (a flintstone containing a steed, a ring containing young men), (3) objects possessing a magical property, such as cudgels, swords, guslas, balls, [or] qualities or capacities which are directly given, such as the power of transformation into animals" and "the forms by which they are transmitted are the following" (43–44):

1. *The agent is directly transferred.*
2. *The agent is pointed out.*
3. *The agent is prepared.*
4. *The agent is sold and purchased.*
5. *The agent falls into the hands of the hero by chance (is found by him).*
6. *The agent suddenly appears of its own accord.*
7. *The agent is eaten or drunk.*
8. *The agent is seized.*
9. *Various characters place themselves at the disposal of the hero.* (Propp 44–45)

While there is no magical agent in *ToA*, the ghost children perform the second form of provision by hinting at Coraline to use the stone. The stone in question is offered to Coraline by Miss Spink and Miss Forcible long before her visit to the Other World, right after the interdiction takes place (see page 62). After reading her tea leaves and being convinced that the terrible misfortunes are about to befall Coraline, they offer her the stone whose purpose is not revealed to Coraline until her encounter with the ghost children:

Miss Spink passed Coraline the stone with a hole in it.

"What's it for?" asked Coraline. The hole went all the way through the middle of the stone. She held it up to the window and looked through it.

“It might help,” said Miss Spink. “They’re good for bad things, sometimes.”
(*Coraline* 19)



Fig. 7. Coraline Receiving the Stone with a Hole, illustrated by Chris Riddell

This scene introduces the only magical agent Coraline receives in the novel. Like the instances in which the help is provided to Harvey without a direct test or a demand for something in exchange, she is given the stone out of selfless concern and kindness. Though ambiguous, the delivery of the object is humble, and it serves as an essential aid in Coraline’s later journey of locating what the ghost children lack. The magical agent is a tool that comes in handy through the heroine’s further experiences, not a solution or a trinket of protection by itself. Coraline’s looking through it without a clue foreshadows her searching for the hidden souls of the children.

The fifteenth function, “transference” operates when “the hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search” (Propp 50). Propp notes that “[g]enerally the object of search is located in another or different kingdom” and in instances the function “delivery” is absent, “the hero simply walks to the place (50–51). The variants of this function are as follows:

1. *The hero flies through the air.*
2. *He travels on the ground or on water.*
3. *He is led.*

4. *The route is shown to him.*
5. *He makes use of stationary means of communication.*
6. *He follows bloody tracks.* (Propp 51)

Transference is notably absent in both *Coraline* and *ToA*. Coraline and Harvey undertake their quests without being carried or led into a certain location in the traditional folkloric sense; they are already occupying the required territory for the tales to advance. As mentioned above, there is no object of search Harvey seeks in *ToA*, and Coraline's search for the ghost children's souls does not necessitate such transference. Quite the contrary, she seeks and finds them along with her parents within the Other World, to which she already has access. Besides, Harvey has already located Mrs. Griffin, and instead of a magical object, he aims to confront the villain. He does not need to search for the whereabouts of Mr. Hood, as Mrs. Griffin has already informed him about that matter. He climbs to the roof of the house "to meet the power that lay waiting in the darkness of the attic" (*ToA* 152). With no spatial relocation toward a quest object, and with the search grounded in already-known settings, transference is bypassed in *ToA* as well as in *Coraline*.

The sixteenth function, "struggle" refers to "the hero and the villain[']s] join[ing] in direct combat" (Propp 51). Propp examines three variants of this function; they either "fight in an open field", "engage in a competition, or "play cards" (52). After the Other Mother lets Coraline out of the mirror, Coraline challenges her, as follows:

"You like games," she said. "That's what I've been told." The other mother's black eyes flashed. "Everybody likes games... [W]hat kind of game shall it be?"

"A finding things game [for] my parents," said Coraline. "And the souls of the children behind the mirror."

"A deal," said the other mother.

"How do I know you'll keep your word?" asked Coraline.

"I swear it on my right hand." (*Coraline* 89–91)



Fig. 8. A Deal with the Other Mother, illustrated by Chris Riddell

This scene exemplifies the function struggle in *Coraline* through a verbal confrontation that establishes the rules for a psychological and magical battle. Rather than engaging in physical combat, Coraline and the villain enter a game-based conflict. Coraline initiates the terms of the challenge, offering herself in full submission should she lose, which raises the stakes and mirrors the life-or-death tension found in traditional fairy tale duels. Her cleverness in disguising a rescue mission as a “game” signals the idea brains over brawn. Likewise, Harvey relies on his wit rather than force when confronting Mr. Hood in the attic of the house. In this instance, it is the villain who tries to make a deal by asking Harvey to be his accomplice. As Harvey denies the offer, Mr. Hood demands Carna to kill him, which does not go according to plan:

“*Devour him...*” the Vampire King growled.

The beast lowered its head, in expectation of punishment from above. But it was Harvey who laid his hand upon it; a gentle touch that sent a shudder through its body. It raised its snout to press itself against Harvey's palm, and as it did so, let out along, low moan of gratitude, and its body suddenly flew into a thousand pieces. (*ToA* 162)



Fig. 9. Mr. Hood Reveals his Grotesque Face, illustrated by Clive Barker

Like in *Coraline*, Harvey and the villain enter not into physical battle but competition of authority. Mr. Hood promises Harvey eternal pleasure, attempting to seduce him with power; however, Harvey rejects the temptation outright, preserving his moral clarity. Instead of fighting back, Harvey shows compassion towards the suffering creature, and just as he has broken the curse on Mrs. Griffin by making her cry for the first time since her visit to the Holiday House (*ToA* 139), he breaks Mr. Hood's enchantment on Carna by an act of kindness. The clever refusal to respond violence with violence disrupts the villain's control over his creations. Harvey's touch reverses the spell and shatters the beast into a thousand pieces, not through brute force or threats but through empathy with which Mr. Hood's agents are unfamiliar. That is how Harvey has eliminated the others, Marr and Jive as well, by forcing Marr to imagine things beyond her capacity (*ToA* 143–145), and by tricking Jive into trying the very food he claims to be poisonous (*ToA* 149–150). Harvey triumphs in the face of adversaries by reading the situation astutely and by acting with insight, which helps him outwit his enemies or the obstacles that stand in his way to recover the time stolen from him by the villain.

The seventeenth function, “branding” takes place either when “a brand is applied to the body” of the hero, or “the hero receives a ring or a towel” (Propp 52). Since they do not engage in physical combat with the villain, neither Coraline nor

Harvey are wounded or tainted in battle against the villain. However, Coraline injures herself chasing after the “large black rat holding a marble”, the last soul she desperately needs (*Coraline* 119). Running too fast, she falls and as a result, “her knee [is] scraped and skinned... blood trickling down her ripped pajama” (*Coraline* 120). While the incident does not entirely align with Propp’s definition, Coraline is branded with a scar during her journey on her own accord.

The eighteenth function, “victory” marks the defeat of the villain, and according to Propp, its variations are as follows:

1. *The villain is beaten in open combat.*
2. *He is defeated in a contest.*
3. *He loses at cards.*
4. *He loses on being weighed.*
5. *He is killed without a preliminary fight.*
6. *He is banished directly.* (53)

Despite cheating, the Other Mother is defeated in the competition, as illustrated in the second form. However, Coraline is prepared for such betrayal as the ghost children has warned her “[s]he lied [and] will never give [her] up or give any[one] up” even though Coraline fulfilled her part of the deal (*Coraline* 121). In order to save herself and everyone else, she, like the villain, does not abide by the rules, and manages to deceive the Other Mother. Successfully tricking the villain into thinking she knows her parents are hidden in the passageway, she gains enough time to save her parents and run away:

[H]er only way home depended on the other mother’s needing to gloat, needing not only to win but to show that she had won. “You’re wrong! They aren’t there. No you’re going to stay here for ever and always.”

“No,” said Coraline. “I’m not.” And, hard as she could, she threw the black cat toward the other mother... Without waiting to see what would happen, Coraline closed her hand around the snow globe [and] ran for the door. (*Coraline* 128–129)



Fig. 10. The Cat Attacking the Other Mother, illustrated by Dave McKean

The climactic last encounter between Coraline and the villain represents the function victory in the tale, achieved through cunning strategy. By closely observing her enemy's weakness, Coraline manages to exploit her arrogance which precedes her caution. Having learned how to manipulate the rules of the game from its master marks Coraline's triumph over the villainy. Her ability to think fast under pressure by using the cat as an improvised weapon against the deceitful creature works as a diversion that grants her enough time to take her parents trapped in the snow globe. Not only does Coraline outsmart the Other Mother but also reclaims what has been taken from her. The confrontation ends with Coraline escaping the Other World in her own terms, thanks to her bravery and intelligence. Like in *Coraline*, Harvey knows he has no power against Mr. Hood's magic, that "he couldn't soften Hood's heart with weeping, and he couldn't bring down the House with blows" (*ToA* 170). Therefore, he comes up with a brilliant idea to weaken the villain's enchantment capacities by wishing for extravagant things for him to conjure up. First, he wishes for a new ark with "flesh and blood, perfect little animals", unlike the toy ark Mr. Hood has given him before (*ToA* 173). Then he asks for flowers "everywhere, [not] two alike"; and though confused about "[w]hat for", Mr. Hood grants that wish as well (*ToA* 174). When Harvey starts to invent ridiculous dishes after "exhaust[ing] his menu of real meals", Mr. Hood notices the trickery. Upon that, Harvey utters his last wish, as follows:

“I want the seasons,” Harvey said. “All the seasons at once.”

“*That’s nonsensical!*”

“It’s what I want.”

“*Stupid! Imbecilic!*”

“It’s what I want! You said one more wish and that’s it!”

“*Very well,*” said the House. “*I will give it to you. And when you have it, little thief, your soul is mine!*” (*ToA* 179)

As in the final confrontation in *Coraline*, Harvey’s victory is won by outwitting an entity whose entire power lies in illusions and control. Harvey’s paradoxical wish is meticulous enough to exploit the limits of the villain’s power and force it to fall. Like the Other Mother, who is so sure of herself, Mr. Hood is conceited and so desperate to win the fight that he abandons his reason and lets his guard down. Consequently, his power is waned to the point that he cannot stop the chaotic scene, and the house collapses “like a tower of cards”, upon which “the children’s souls are freed” and Mrs. Griffin disappears into thin air (*ToA* 182–185). The ruin of the house marks Harvey’s victory over the villain.

The nineteenth function, “liquidation”, as its name suggests, stands for “the initial misfortune or lack[‘s] liquidat[ion]” (Propp 53). Propp lists numerous variations of this function, as follows:

1. *The object of a search is seized by the use of force or cleverness.*
2. *The object of search is obtained by several personages at once, through a rapid interchange of their actions.*
3. *The object of search is obtained with the help of enticements.*
4. *The object of a quest is obtained as the direct result of preceding actions.*
5. *The object of search is obtained instantly through the use of a magical agent.*
6. *The use of a magical agent overcomes poverty.*
7. *The object of search is caught.*
8. *The spell on a person is broken.*
9. *A slain person is revived.*
10. *A captive is freed.* (Propp 53–55)

As mentioned above, both Coraline and Harvey are bright heroes/heroines who outsmart the villain and restore what has been stolen from them. Coraline is able to release the trapped souls of the ghost children and bring her parents back to the real world. Harvey's trick to wear the house out works and as the house is destroyed, Mr. Hood's spell on fish children is broken, the lake's "once placid waters becom[ing] a whirlpool, a raging spiral" (*ToA* 188). In both tales, villains' hostages are freed; and thus, the misfortune is liquidated thanks to Coraline and Harvey's courage, cleverness, and determination.

The twentieth function marks the hero's "return" (Propp 55). Coraline calls out to the cat hesitantly, "and they both step into the dark corridor" (*Coraline* 131). With the help of "three children, two adults", she manages to close the door and return home (*Coraline* 131). However, the return does not take place so soon for Harvey following the downfall of the house, as Rictus survives even after the "Hood [and] his magic [are] gone" (*ToA* 188). Harvey is smart enough not to retreat during the conflict that arises between Rictus and Mr. Hood (whose presence still lingers around) as "if he fled now, he knew, his business with Hood would never be finished" (*ToA* 191).

The function twenty-one, "pursuit", takes place when "the hero is pursued" (Propp 56). Propp states the multiple forms of pursuit as follows:

1. *The pursuer flies after the hero.*
2. *He demands the guilty person.*
3. *He pursues the hero, rapidly transforming himself into various animals.*
4. *Pursuers turn into alluring objects and place themselves in the path of the hero.*
5. *The pursuer tries to devour the hero.*
6. *The pursuer attempts to kill the hero.*
7. *He tries to gnaw through a tree in which the hero is taking refuge.* (Propp 56–57)

Coraline is pursued after the Other Mother's right hand with which she promised to keep her word while making a deal (see page 89). The hand is severed as the villain reaches for Coraline and tries to grab her as she closes the door. While Coraline is unaware that the hand passed through the door and is after her, the ghost children warn Coraline one last time in her dream, saying "[i]t is over and done with for [them]" (*Coraline* 142). As Coraline is confused since she "got [them] three back

[along with] Mum and Dad”, they subtly give the clue that “[t]he beldam swore by her good right hand but she lied” (*Coraline* 142–143). Soon, she fully acknowledges the presence of the sneaky mutilated figure that pursues her:

Coraline’s mouth dropped open in horror and she stepped out of the way as the thing clicked and scuttled past her and out of the house, running crablike on its too many tapping, clicking, scurrying feet.

She knew what it was...

Five-footed crimson-nailed, the color of bone. It was the other mother’s right hand. It wanted the black key. (*Coraline* 145)



Fig. 11. The Other Mother’s Dismembered Hand, illustrated by Dave McKean

In *ToA*, since Harvey has not left yet, the villain does not pursue him, but he attempts to kill the hero, as he is naturally furious at Harvey for bringing down his perfectly functioning empire and restoring the souls of the children he stole and consumed. While Rictus reveals he “did some plannin’ ahead [and] stole a little piece of the old man’s magic” to sustain himself, “a hand with foot-long fingers reache[s] up from the rubble and snatche[s] hold of his throat”, forcing him to pour the magic from the snow globe to the debris (*ToA* 189–190).

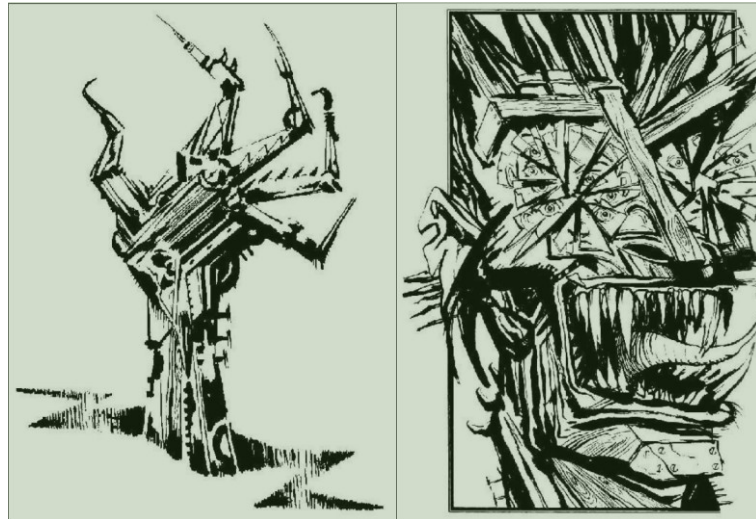


Fig. 12. Mr. Hood Rises Once More, illustrated by Clive Barker

After murdering Rictus for his treachery, Mr. Hood tries to end Harvey's life as well, fulfilling the sixth form of function twenty-one, as follows:

"Do you give up?" Hood said, driving Harvey back onto the rocks beside Lulu. *"Surely you would not choose the vortex over me? If you choose the flood you will die horribly, [i]t will spin you apart. Whereas I—"* He extended an inviting hand to Harvey, stepping up onto the rock as he did so. *"— I offer you an easy death, rocked to sleep on a bed of illusions."* (*ToA* 196–197)

Mr. Hood refuses to let Harvey escape and corners him at the lake's edge where there is no ordinary path to safety due to vortex's fatal force. Just as the Other Mother's honeyed words during her attempt to convince Coraline to sew buttons on her eyes, Mr. Hood's rhetoric is manipulative under the illusion of gentleness. His so-called affectionate speech contrasts with his genuine intention of devouring the hero. Like the villain in *Coraline*, he offers a twisted bargain, if Harvey submits, he will be devoured unaware or leap into chaos by his own will. Mr. Hood's act of mercy, however, is mere pretense, a final chase that masks slaughter as seduction. In his final effort, the villain attempts to reclaim power and authority through coercion, not by the use of claws or fangs, but by evoking illusion and fear. Thus, Mr. Hood's last attempt to ensnare Harvey, offering doom dressed in comfort, fulfills the function pursuit in the tale.

The function twenty-two, “rescue” takes place in the tale during the “rescue of the hero from pursuit” (Propp 57). Propp demonstrates that the multiple variants of this function are as follows:

1. *He is carried away through the air.*
2. *The hero flees, placing obstacles in the path of his pursuer.*
3. *The hero, while in flight, changes into objects which make him unrecognizable.*
4. *The hero hides himself during his flight.*
5. *The hero is hidden by blacksmiths.*
6. *The hero saves himself while in flight by means of rapid transformations into animals, stones, etc.*
7. *He avoids the temptations of transformed she-dragons.*
8. *He does not allow himself to be devoured.*
9. *He is saved from an attempt on his life.*
10. *He jumps to another tree. (57–58)*

As she is aware the hand is pursuing her in the real world, Coraline devises a final plan to stop the Other Mother once and for all. She pretends to have an outdoor picnic with her dolls and uses the key as bait to imprison the hand inside the old well. In both *Coraline* and *ToA*, rescue takes place as a result of the hero’s/heroine’s own accord. Coraline rescues herself through strategic entrapment of the Other Mother’s hand. Unlike the traditional fairy tale hero who are generally carried off by magical helpers or transformed to escape pursuit, Coraline does clever planning to turn the tide in her favor. She does not literally hide herself as in form four but conceals her real intention by pretending to play innocently with dolls. By doing so, Coraline subverts the predator-prey dynamic. She knows the hand is watching and constructs a false scene to lure it into vulnerability, much like classic fairy tale trickster heroes. The trap itself which leads the hand’s fall into the well is the final act of self-initiated salvation, aligning with the ninth variant of the function as well. Thus, Coraline’s rescue is not external or magical, but cognitive and performative, showcasing her growth as a hero: one who wins not with brawn, but with bravery, strategy, and poise. Similarly, Harvey deceives the villain into thinking that he submits, only to bring his villainy to an end with the help of Lulu. He first pretends to embrace the so-called peaceful death Hood was talking about, then pulls his coat. Harvey escapes from Mr. Hood’s final grasp

through both lying just as the villain did, and his friend Lulu's intervention on time which saves Harvey enough time to free himself from Mr. Hood's clutch. Like Coraline who misinforms the villain that she has won the bet, Harvey pretends to surrender, lulling the villain into a false triumph. As Harvey resists Hood's illusion of comfort and safety, he avoids the temptations of the villain in time of despair. As Lulu joins his struggle and helps Harvey in order to defeat the enemy, her intervention marks a rare moment in the tale in which Harvey is not fighting alone against evil. Thanks to Lulu, he is saved from a crucial threat (form nine). Harvey does not literally place an obstacle in the enemy's way (form two); however, he uses Mr. Hood's coat as bait to lure him into the vortex, after which the villain lunges to hide his weak vessel. By doing so, his obsession with appearances and illusions brings Hood's very end. Thus, Harvey triumphs over the villain thanks to his intellect, misdirection, and last-minute assistance, showing how even in the absence of magical helpers or transformations, a hero can outwit villain's final pursuit.

As Propp remarks, "[a] great many tales end on the note of rescue from pursuit" (58). Likewise, upon further examination, both *Coraline* and *ToA* do not align with the majority of the following functions except the one which marks "the hero's unrecognized, arrival at home" (Propp 60). When Coraline returns, her parents do not seem "to remember anything about their time in the snow globe" (*Coraline* 147). Hence, they are unaware of the perils Coraline endured in her adventure and how she saved all of them. In *ToA*, however, "the hero is recognized", not "by a mark, a brand, or by a thing given to him" like Propp suggests, but "by his accomplishment of a difficult task, [which is] almost always preceded by an unrecognized arrival" (62). Harvey does not intend to retell the events to his parents due to remembering "how difficult it had been to explain everything last time" (*ToA* 207). Nevertheless, his parents declare that he "owe[s] both of [them] the truth [and they] want to know everything" (*ToA* 208). Even though "the way back to the House was not concealed by magic", Harvey is unable to find the ruins of the house (*ToA* 209). Regardless, his heroic deeds are recognized by his parents when an older stranger, who turns out to be Lulu's husband, supports Harvey's claims, as follows:

"You should trust your boy," the man said. "I have it on the best authority that he's a hero."

Harvey's dad stared at his son with a twitch of a smile on his face. "Really?" he said. "Were you one of Hood's prisoners?"

"Not me," the man said glanc[ing] over his shoulder, and there at the bottom of the slope stood a woman in a white dress.

"Lulu..." Harvey murmured. (*ToA* 210–211)

As Harvey meets the survivors of the journey, his accomplishments are finally confirmed by others, affirming his status as a hero for his parents who have difficulty believing the fantastic story Harvey narrated in the first place. Recognition does not come through material proof but through social validation. Not until an adult figure of authority vouches for Harvey's story does Harvey's arrival is recognized in the Proppian sense. His friend Lulu serves as an indirect witness, a living testament, for Harvey's heroic actions. Harvey is no longer just a boy who outwitted a monster; he is a friend remembered and a hero whose actions echo into others' futures.

Following hero's arrival at home, neither in *Coraline* nor in *ToA* are there "a false hero [who] presents unfounded claims" as in the function twenty-four (Propp 60). Therefore, "a difficult task is" not "proposed to the hero" upon such claims (Propp 60). "The false hero or villain" are not "exposed" and "punished" (Propp 62–63). Besides, "the hero is" not "given a new appearance", as in function twenty-nine, "transfiguration" (Propp 62). The last function "wedding" is defined by Propp as "the hero is married and ascends the throne" (Propp 63). Since they are both children and no kingdom is involved in the tales, this function is absent in *Coraline* and Harvey's journeys as well. Their victories are not marked by a wedding or an ascension but by rejoicing in reclaiming of their parents and life that once had been stolen from them. In sum, from the function twenty-four to the function thirty, none of the attributed fairy tale structure qualities are observable in children's fantasy tales *Coraline* and *ToA*. The only difference between the resolution of *Coraline* and Harvey's journeys is that while *Coraline*'s arrival is unrecognized, Harvey's parents are informed on the matter, which marks Harvey's recognition.

To conclude the Proppian structural analysis of Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always*, it is necessary to identify dramatis personae in the tales. Propp points out that "many functions logically join together into certain

spheres” (Propp 79), forming what he calls *dramatis personae*, which are identified as follows:

1. The sphere of action of the *villain*. Constituents: villainy; a fight or other forms of struggle with the hero; pursuit.
2. The sphere of action of the *donor* (provider). Constituents: the preparation for the transmission of a magical agent; provision of the hero with a magical agent.
3. The sphere of action of the *helper*. Constituents: the spatial transference of the hero; liquidation of misfortune or lack; rescue from pursuit; the solution of difficult tasks; transfiguration of the hero.
4. The sphere of action of a *princess* (a sought-for person) and of *her father*. Constituents: the assignment of difficult tasks; branding; exposure; recognition; punishment of a second villain; marriage. The princess and her father cannot be exactly delineated from each other according to functions. Most often it is the father who assigns difficult tasks due to hostile feeling toward the suitor. He also frequently punishes (or orders punished) the false hero.
5. The sphere of action of the *dispatcher*. Constituent: dispatch (connective incident, [mediation]).
6. The sphere of action of the hero. Constituents: departure on a search ([beginning counteraction + departure]); reaction to the demands of the donor ([hero’s reaction]); wedding. The first function ([beginning counteraction]) is characteristic of the seeker-hero; the victim-hero performs only the remaining functions.
7. The sphere of action of the *false hero* also includes ([counteraction + departure]), followed by [the hero’s reaction] and, as a specific function, [unfounded claims] (Propp 79–80).

Propp further demonstrates that in the cases “the sphere of action” does not “exactly corresponds to the character”, either “one character is involved in several spheres of action” or “a single sphere of action is distributed among several characters” (80–81). The villain is obvious in both tales, the Other Mother and Mr. Hood, both of which correspond to the spheres of action designated by Propp. The donors are the Miss Spink and Miss Forcible in *Coraline* as they lend the magical agent to the heroine,

and the ghost children as they offer guidance to Coraline regarding how to use the magical agent. In *ToA*, no magical item is given to Harvey by Mrs. Griffin and her cats but guidance; however, they still serve as donors as Propp signifies “both magical helpers and magical agents function in exactly the same manner” (82). Although Coraline and Harvey progress mainly depending on their own faculties, the sphere of helpers might be observed in both tales. Coraline does not meet friends her age along the way, but she occasionally meets “a haughty black cat” who follows Coraline around the way he pleases (*Coraline* 3). The cat is the only thing that is, according to his own description “not the other anything”, namely, the only character the Other Mother does not create its replica (*Coraline* 33–34). Coraline soon realizes that it is the same cat, but it can speak in the Other World. The cat is not as direct as the ghost children in hinting things at Coraline, however, he gives a clue about the magical agent to Coraline, also hinting at the dangerous aspect of the place, long before Coraline meets the ghost children. He functions more like a somewhat omniscient helper than a donor, as he mentions “it is sensible of [her] to bring protection [and he would] hang on to it if [he] were [her]” (*Coraline* 36). When Coraline interrogates further, though, the cat does not answer her question, remaining a mysterious, ambivalent helper. The cat further helps Coraline by guiding her towards the mirror in the real world which shows Coraline her imprisoned parents (see page 71). Besides, when Coraline asks for advice (again, earlier than her encounter with the ghost children), the cat says she must “challenge her” though “there’s no guarantee she’ll play fair, her kind of thing loves games and challenges”, leaving Coraline wondering “what the cat could have meant by a *challenge* (*Coraline* 63–64). The most crucial help comes from the cat not in words but in action. The cat helps Coraline obtain the last marble chasing after which she falls and injures herself (see page 90). Coraline fails to catch the rat that runs out of sight with the last object Coraline needs to win the bargain she made with the Other Mother. To her surprise, the cat appears out of nowhere, with the item she desperately seeks for, as follows:

She had failed the ghost children. She had failed her parents. She had failed herself, failed everything. She closed her eyes and wished that the earth would swallow her up.

There was a cough.

She opened her eyes and saw the rat... A collar of wet blood glistened at its neck.

Beside the decapitated rat, a smug expression on its face, was the black cat. It rested one paw on the gray glass marble. (*Coraline* 120–121)

In this scene, the black cat aids the heroine in time so that she would not fail her exploring game. The cat's assistance enables the completion of Coraline's quest and restores Coraline's somewhat lost belief and agency, reminding her she is still capable of defeating the villain. Unlike the cat's help here that is given by its own accord, Coraline uses its help one more time when she throws it to the Other Mother's face (see page 92). Many of these instances with the cat as the helper do not align with the actions associated with the helper by Propp. As there is no spatial transference in *Coraline*, the cat does not help with that, nor with the rescue from pursuit. However, the cat helps Coraline subtly by his own ambiguous style of speech and takes part in Coraline's reversal of misfortune by hunting the rat down, which distinguishably marks it as the helper in the tale. In *ToA*, on the other hand, the helper's presence is not as strongly felt as in *Coraline*. Harvey expects assistance from his friend Wendell when they return to the Holiday House as they exited together, yet Wendell seems to be enchanted the moment he enters through the mist, proving useless in Harvey's quest:

"I'd forgotten about the tree house," Wendell said dreamily, staring up into the canopy. "We had such fun up there, remember? I'm going up to see how it looks."

"We've got work to do!" Harvey told him.

"Who cares?" Wendell replied...

"This place has stolen time that belonged to us, Wendell."

"How did it do that?" said Wendell, still frowning deeply. "It's just . . . just . . ." Again he faltered, searching for the words. "... just such a perfect day... Let's just enjoy ourselves." (*ToA* 127–129)

In this dialogue exchanged between Harvey and Wendell, Wendell serves as a foil rather than a helper despite Harvey's expectations. Although he cooperates with

Harvey before they revisit the house, his resolve quickly fades by the Hood's spells. As Harvey attempts to resist Hood's illusion and confront the truth of their situation, Wendell drifts back into complacency, seduced by the surface pleasures of the Holiday House. His dreamy, detached tone and amnesia sharply contrast with Harvey's clarity and urgency. Even the mention of their shared trauma fails to bring Wendell into his senses, signaling his unsuitability for the helper role in the tale. Unlike traditional helpers in fairy tales who support the hero's quest, provide tools, guidance, or emotional reinforcement, Wendell becomes an obstacle. His passivity and susceptibility to illusion hinder Harvey's progress, forcing Harvey to bear the burden of resistance and action alone. This moment also reinforces a recurring theme in both tales, the isolating nature of the hero's journey. Just as Coraline must act alone despite the presence of others, Harvey cannot rely on his companion when it matters most. Thus, despite being a potential ally, Wendell ultimately fails to meet the Proppian criteria for the helper. His forgetfulness, apathy, and tendency into submission by the Holiday House's magic exclude him from this archetypal role. Apart from Wendell, the only other candidate for helper in the tale is Lulu, as mentioned above (see page 102). Harvey is largely left to fend for himself and Lulu's role as helper is ultimately limited in scope and delayed in timing. Nonetheless, she helps Harvey in his final confrontation with the villain by striking Hood from behind, enabling Harvey's final escape. Her action is meaningful and brave, but it is reactive, not strategic as the hero's careful and smart actions up to that point in narrative. Her only help corresponds to none of the actions listed in the relevant section by Propp, in this regard, Lulu functions more like a momentary ally than a sustained helper figure like the cat in *Coraline*. The dramatis personae princess and her father is clearly absent in *Coraline* and *ToA*, since in both, the sought-for person aligns with Coraline's parents and Harvey's stolen time. As Mr. and Mrs. Jones are abducted and victimized, they are passive throughout Coraline's journey, neither do they assign difficult tasks for the heroine nor punish a villain. For Harvey, what is sought for is an abstract concept, however, upon managing to steal back the time, his parents whose time had been stolen recognize his heroic deeds. Neither of the tales feature a dispatcher. As mentioned above (see page 77), Coraline and Harvey decide to go back to recover what has been stolen from them on their own accord upon witnessing the misfortune, not by a character's announcement. Like the villain, the hero/heroine is clearly identifiable in the tales, namely, Coraline Jones and Harvey Swick, who successfully

complete their journeys. Except for fulfilling the function wedding, they undertake the functions required for hero/heroine to complete. Last of all, there is no false hero/heroine in both tales. The only notable action slightly resembles such dramatis personae is when Mr. Hood's agent Rictus in *ToA* attempts to claim the title of the villain by possessing a stolen magical snow globe, which symbolically turns him into a false villain rather than a false hero, though only for a short amount of time since Mr. Hood rips his head apart from his body upon hearing about his scheme (*ToA* 194).



Fig. 13. Rictus' Short-term Victory, illustrated by Clive Barker

3.2 Discovering the Self: Analysis of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always*

In this section, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs will be used as the second theoretical framework of the thesis and applied to Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always* and Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*, in order to delve deeper into the psyche of fantasy characters, which is not probable examining classic fairy tales that prioritize action as Propp demonstrated. Following the traditional fairy tale storytelling while being free from its limitations (longer narratives with a foremost focus on character's feelings rather than actions or events that take place), *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always* represent two young protagonists who are lured into a dangerous trap that puts their lives at stake by villains' strategic exploitation of their unsatisfied needs.

Although their needs are granted to a certain extent, as inexperienced children in the beginning of the tales, they are displeased with their lives. Maslow points out that

[w]e tend to take for granted the blessings we already have, especially if we don't have to work or struggle for them. The food, the security, the love, the admiration, the freedom that have always been there, that have never been lacking or yearned for tends not only to be unnoticed but also even to be devalued or mocked or destroyed. In most instances it is cured very easily, simply by experiencing the appropriate deprivation or lack, e.g., pain, hunger, poverty, loneliness, rejection, injustice. (*Motivation* 61)

Correspondingly, minor inconveniences frustrate Coraline and Harvey to their core until they start realizing they were in a better position before they desired to have a life in which all their needs would be overly gratified, with the discovery that everything offered to them has its price. Having forced to overcome the obstacles along the way, mostly relying on their own proficiency, teaches them the value of things they possessed but overlooked in the first place. By managing to defeat the villain despite adversities, they reach an exceptional stage of maturity and spiritual growth, namely, self-actualization. Their magical journey is especially challenging due to the weight of the psychological strains, and fruitful for leading their maturity at such an early age. As Maslow suggests, “the organism is most unified in its integration when it is successfully facing either a great joy or creative moment or else a major problem or a threat or emergency” (*Motivation* 29). Likewise, Coraline and Harvey experience the latter, which helps them overcome the difficulties they would not be able to should they continue their lives without having the dangerous but enlightening adventure they have had in fantastic worlds. In the following passages, within the focus of how the protagonists and their journeys are shaped and transformed, the lack and satisfaction of Coraline and Harvey’s needs will be closely read and analyzed, following Maslow’s hierarchical order of the needs.

3.2.1 The Physiological Needs

According to Maslow’s hierarchy, “the needs that are usually taken as the starting point for motivation theory are the so-called physiological drives”, which include necessities such as food, warmth, and rest which are vital to maintain a stable functioning organism (*Motivation* 35). The physiological needs, therefore, are the

most prepotent compared to the others, due to the urgency of their satisfaction in survival. When these needs are not met or less gratified than the body requires, all higher-level motivations to follow “may become simply nonexistent or be pushed into the background” until the hunger of the organism is satisfied (*Motivation* 37). The person who is very hungry might even feel that “if only he is guaranteed food for the rest of his life, he will be perfectly happy and will never want anything more” (*Motivation* 37). Thus, hunger drive is felt strongly than other needs for the individual. In this regard, it does not come as a surprise that food is popularly used in fairy tale narratives as a means to attract children, who are usually picky eaters compared to adults or more easily lured towards meals they find delicious. Maslow observes “where there is plenty of food” is basically a paradise for those who are extremely hungry (*Motivation* 37). In *Coraline* and *ToA*, food constitutes an important part of deceiving children that they may possess the pleasures they never get to experience in their reality long as they let the villain entrap them in the seemingly utopic realm. They already have shelter to rest, and food provided for them by their parents; therefore, the villains attempt to lure the children by promising a fun, care-free, and luxurious life they lack at home. Irresistibly rich feasts are a good strategy to stimulate the senses of children. The moment they enter the Other World and the Holiday House, both Coraline and Harvey are fascinated by and spoiled with delicious dishes. While there is not enough textual evidence regarding Harvey’s life at home with his parents and satisfaction of his physiological needs, Gaiman provides context regarding why the food at home does not satisfy Coraline, as follows:

Coraline was disgusted. “Daddy,” she said, “you’ve made a recipe again.”

“It’s leek and potato stew with a tarragon garnish and melted Gruyère cheese,” he admitted.

Coraline sighed. Then she went to the freezer and got out some microwave chips and a microwave minipizza. “You know I don’t like recipes,” she told her father, while her dinner went around and around and the little red numbers on the microwave oven counted down to zero.

“If you tried it, maybe you’d like it,” said Coraline’s father, but she shook her head. (*Coraline* 7–8)

The sophisticated adult meal Coraline's father prepares for the family does not correspond to Coraline's understanding of a satisfactory meal. While her caretakers gratify her need for food, Coraline strictly refuses to eat even a bite or two to fulfill her physiological needs enough to survive. Instead, she prefers to warm up frozen food for herself. Her act at first seems like a typical childhood stubbornness; however, it also signifies the lack of emotional connection between her and her caretakers. There is no alternative meal offered for Coraline's appetite which would satisfy her hunger relatively more effectively. This reflects a form of unmet physiological need: the body is being offered sustenance, but the emotional aspect of feeding such as comfort, attention, affection, is lacking. The father's gourmet cooking is presented as a self-absorbed act, not something Coraline asked for or finds nourishing, which means though the parents are responsible for Coraline's satisfaction of physiological needs, they fulfill this duty without real consideration of her desires. Her basic needs are not neglected in a material sense, nevertheless, are emotionally ungratifying, echoing Maslow's view that true fulfillment also requires attuned care. Her father's meal may be nutritious, but it is not nourishing in the sense Coraline craves. On the other hand, the Other Mother's world offers the opposite, personalized, excessive attention, including food that Coraline likes. The fantasy world provides a counterfeit version of what Coraline longs for at home. Thus, the family dinner scene subtly sets the stage for Coraline's vulnerability to the Other Mother's temptations, making the illusion all the more enticing:

"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...

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... Her mother sometimes made chicken, but it was always out of packets or frozen, and was very dry, and it never tasted of anything. (*Coraline* 26–27)

As the Other Mother expected, Coraline is impressed and overwhelmed by both smell and taste of the meal. The fantastic replica of her home meets her physiological needs in an idealized, almost dream-like fashion. The food is not only delicious but also

prepared specifically for her, based on what she likes, and served with attentive hospitality. In contrast to her real mother's bland or his father's fancy dishes, the Other Mother's meal offers sensory pleasure and emotional validation, satisfying both body and ego. This dynamic demonstrates that Coraline's susceptibility to the Other World begins at the very base of Maslow's pyramid. Her dissatisfaction with real-world comfort, even in its most basic form, creates a psychological lack that the Other Mother exploits. By providing not just food but idealized care, the Other World seduces Coraline through an illusion of completeness at the lowest and most essential level. The case is similar in *ToA* since Harvey is likewise enticed by the promise of endless comfort and sensory gratification, only to discover that the satisfaction of his basic needs is part of a larger scheme designed to pacify and trap him. As he steps inside the house, a table with "dozen plates of food" welcomes him, full of

hamburgers, hot dogs and fried chicken; mounds of buttered potatoes; apple, cherry and mud pies, ice cream and whipped cream; grapes, tangerines and a plate of fruits he couldn't even name, [which Harvey starts] eating with gusto, devouring his second slice of pie (*ToA* 20).

His experience is not different from Coraline's, as Harvey's physiological needs are not just met but excessively gratified the moment he arrives at the Holiday House. His eagerness to consume the food in haste signals how easily bodily satisfaction can suppress awareness of danger. As Maslow highlights, "[f]or the man who is extremely and dangerously hungry, no other interests exist but food. He dreams food, he remembers food, he perceives only food, and he wants only food" (*Motivation* 37). While Harvey's physiological needs are immediately fulfilled, this fulfillment is inauthentic and manipulative, it is a mechanism of control rather than care. Unlike Coraline's seduction through personalized meals, Harvey is overwhelmed with quantity over quality, reflecting the Holiday House's strategy of overfeeding to dull resistance. There is another incident in *ToA* that shows Harvey's physiological needs are manipulated, as follows:

"You look tired, my sweet," Mrs. Griffin said. "Maybe you should lie down for a little while."

Harvey usually hated to sleep in the afternoon; it reminded him too much of having the flu, or the measles. But the pillow looked very cool and

comfortable, and when Mrs. Griffin had taken her leave he decided to lie down, just for a few minutes.

Either he was more tired than he'd thought, or the calm and comfort of the House rocked him into a slumber. Whichever, his eyes closed almost as soon as he put his head on the pillow, and they did not open again until morning. (*ToA* 23–24).

Harvey's need for rest is gently and subtly exploited by Mrs. Griffin, whose maternal tone evokes comfort and familiarity. While the suggestion seems innocent, the passage quickly reveals how the environment coaxes Harvey into passive compliance. He normally hates napping, associating it with idle illness the way he does not like the gray beast February, yet the cool and comfortable pillow and the quiet of the house override his instincts. The House provides not only food but a manufactured atmosphere of ease, sedating Harvey into vulnerability. Maslow identified sleep as one of the most basic physiological needs; when unmet, it impairs judgment and agency. Here, the House offers rest not to restore Harvey's autonomy, but to further diminish it. The speed and depth of his sleep suggests an unnatural stillness, echoing the passivity imposed on the other children trapped in the House. The comfort is thus weaponized: instead of empowering Harvey, it numbs him, mirroring how toxic environments can mimic care while actually enforcing control. When he wakes up, he sits up "with a start, wondering for a moment what bed this was, what room, what house" and digs "into his second meal at the Holiday House with even more appetite than he had the first" (*ToA* 25–27). His initial confusion as he opens his eyes the next day signals disorientation and a brief loss of self. This confusion echoes how Maslow emphasized that basic needs must be met in a stable and meaningful way to support psychological growth. When comfort is imposed rather than chosen, it risks creating dependency instead of real security. Consequently, Harvey's heightened desire to have breakfast demonstrates how Mr. Hood aims to stimulate neediness, not satisfaction. Rather than replenished, he wakes up more eager, hungrier, which points to a cycle of sedation and indulgence that dulls his awareness. Harvey's bodily needs are met in ways that encourage regression, turning physical comfort into a mechanism of entrapment. However, once the illusion of comfort is distorted, both Harvey and Coraline begin to experience the very deprivation of those same bodily needs they once took for granted. As Maslow notes, "even physiological needs... are now

underestimated” when survival and protection become paramount (*Motivation* 39). In both texts, the characters’ growing awareness of danger redirects their focus from pleasure to preservation. Even when food or rest are still available, both characters begin to ignore or avoid them because they no longer trust their surroundings and staying safe becomes more important than satisfying their hunger or fatigue. This shift in perspective and motivation illustrates how the hierarchy is not fixed by availability alone, but by perceived urgency. The body’s cravings are muted as the mind locks onto survival. Coraline abandons the Other World’s comforts the moment she realizes the cost of remaining there. After discovering the truth about the buttons and the Other Mother’s intentions, Coraline returns to an empty home, no longer lured by pleasure, but driven by a growing sense of fear and urgency. In her parents’ absence, she takes care of her physiological needs as usual:

She went back into the kitchen and climbed onto a chair... Her mother still hadn’t returned from her shopping expedition. Coraline went to the freezer and took out the spare loaf of frozen bread in the bottom compartment. She made herself some toast, with jam and peanut butter. She drank a glass of water. She waited for her parents to come back. When it began to get dark, Coraline microwaved herself a frozen pizza. (*Coraline* 47)

This quiet, domestic moment captures Coraline’s return to reality, where comfort is no longer magical, but mundane, and significantly, entirely her own responsibility. With her parents still missing, she no longer expects to be pampered or served. Unlike the mouth-watering meal in the Other World, here the food is plain, repetitive, and utilitarian. She is no longer being seduced by excess; instead, she is feeding herself just enough to keep going. There is a mechanical, almost numb rhythm to it, “she made herself... she drank... she waited... she microwaved...”, emphasizing the absence of care, both external (her parents) and emotional (her detachment). Food becomes background maintenance, no longer a symbol of love or comfort, but simply fuel. The lonely days in which she gratifies her own basic needs continue as follows:

[S]he undressed, brushed her teeth, and put herself to bed. In the morning, she ate canned spaghetti for breakfast. For lunch she had a block of cooking chocolate and an apple. The apple was yellow and slightly shriveled, but it tasted sweet and good.

For tea she went down to see Misses Spink and Forcible. She had a glass of limeade [that] tasted bright green and vaguely chemical. Coraline liked it enormously... She opened her money box and walked down to the supermarket. She bought two large bottles of limeade, a chocolate cake, and a new bag of apples, and ate them for dinner... She ran herself a bath, dried herself and the floor as best she could, and went to bed. (*Coraline* 48–49)

Coraline's routine at home by herself presents a striking contrast between independence and emotional absence. Coraline is able to sustain for herself while coping with isolation, loss, and adaptation under stress. At the surface level, Coraline is taking care of her basic needs: brushing her teeth, eating, bathing. However, the quality of these actions matters far more than their existence. Her meals -canned spaghetti, shriveled apples, cooking chocolate- are improvised and lack real care. She's not starving, but her diet speaks to a child's attempt to cobble together comfort from scraps, with no guiding adult presence to structure or enrich it. Her enjoyment of the limeade that is "bright green and vaguely chemical" is especially telling. It's not natural or nourishing in the traditional sense, but artificial, eccentric, and oddly satisfying, much like the world Coraline is trying to make sense of. Unlike the seductive meals of the Other World, this is offered without ulterior motive, by eccentric but ultimately harmless caretakers. The limeade's artificiality subtly echoes the surreal comfort of the Other World, but in this context, it's benign and quirky rather than manipulative. What makes this moment notable is Coraline's open acceptance towards something strange but real, she "likes it enormously" despite its odd taste. This reflects how she's beginning to adapt to reality, even when it's imperfect or bizarre. The fact that she later goes out of her way to buy it herself, along with apples and chocolate cake, signals a shift toward autonomy. While preparing to return to the Other World, she "put[s] an apple into each pocket" and tries to resist the temptation of having another feast there (*Coraline* 54), as follows:

"I don't need a snack," she said. "I have an apple. See?" And she took an apple from her dressing-gown pocket, then bit into it with relish and an enthusiasm that she did not really feel. The other father looked disappointed. The other mother smiled, showing a full set of teeth, and each of the teeth was a tiny bit too long...

She tried to get comfortable, twisting and bending herself to fit the cramped space behind the mirror. Her stomach rumbled. She ate her last apple, taking the tiniest bites, making it last as long as she could. When she had finished she was still hungry. (*Coraline* 59–85)

This scene marks Coraline's last grasp at autonomy before her physiological needs are fully depleted. When she claims she does not need the food the Other Mother is to provide for her, it is an attempt at performance which is not convincing. Still, she asserts control over her own body and choices in front of a clearly threatening presence. Her action is not solely about nourishment anymore; it is about resistance. The fact that the other father looks disappointed, and the other mother smiles with disturbingly sharp teeth underscores the power struggle at play. The food Coraline rejects is a tool of control, a lure she refuses. Her apple becomes a small but potent symbol of self-sufficiency in the face of entrapment. During her lockdown behind the mirror, she eats her final apple as slowly as she can, trying to make it last. She chooses to face deprivation on her own terms rather than surrender to the false comfort offered by the Other World, until her last resistance towards starvation is broken following the deal she makes with the Other Mother:

"Smell the lovely breakfast I'm making for you." She poured the yellow mixture into the pan. "Cheese omelette. Your favorite."

Coraline's mouth watered. The bacon was sizzling and spitting under the grill. It smelled wonderful... [She] hat[ed] herself for giving in so easily, but she was starving...

She ate the breakfast, trying not to wolf it down. As she ate, her other mother stared at her. It was hard to read expressions into those black button eyes, but Coraline thought that her other mother looked hungry, too. Even though she knew she would like it she could not bring herself to taste the hot chocolate. (*Coraline* 88–91)

Coraline's reluctant acceptance of the breakfast reveals the powerful pull of unmet physiological needs. Her body betrays her intentions: "she was starving", and the sensory detail of the "bacon sizzling and spitting" intensifies the struggle between instinct and will. Importantly, Coraline does not eat with joy or gratitude, but with self-directed frustration: "hating herself for giving in so easily." The moment is not

about comfort; it is about survival. Even in that, she withholds part of herself, choosing not to drink the hot chocolate despite knowing she would enjoy it. That small act of resistance signals her refusal to fully surrender. The Other Mother's piercing stare reinforces the underlying tension. Coraline's consumption is not just physical, but symbolic. She feeds herself, but feeds the Other Mother's control as well, an uneasy transaction that heightens the stakes of her later rebellion. In contrast to Coraline, who sustains herself through improvised self-care and resourcefulness before her return to the Other World, Harvey remains reliant on the Holiday House to meet his physiological needs, making his resistance far more difficult when those same comforts are revealed to be instruments of control. Regardless, he manages to stay sharp and turns down consuming the seemingly delicious but poisonous food, as follows:

"I don't mind going in, I'm hungry. Wait for me!" Wendell hollered. "Can you smell that pie?" Harvey could, and wished he'd put some food in his belly before he'd started out on this adventure, his mouth watering and his stomach grumbling...

"Go on," said Jive. "You deserve a treat."

"No thanks," Harvey told him. "I know what it's made of."

"You think it's poisoned?" Jive said. "Well, it's not! And I'll prove it!" He plunged his fingers into the pie and ice cream. The food went down in one gulp. An instant later... a cloud of dust issued from between his teeth. The dying creature reached up with an almost fingerless hand, still hoping -even as its life drifted away- that its creator would come to save it. Then it sank down upon the stairs, and its last pitiful fragments crumbled. (*ToA* 128–151)



Fig. 14. More Than He Could Chew, illustrated by Clive Barker

Harvey's second visit to the Holiday House marks a turning point in his relationship with food and physical comfort. Where once he devoured its offerings with gusto, he now attempts to resist them consciously, even as his body protests. The sensory lure (the smell of pie, his grumbling stomach, his watering mouth) highlights the tension between bodily need and cognitive awareness. He is, quite literally, hungry for something he knows is dangerous. Unlike Coraline, who prepares for deprivation and chooses it to retain autonomy, Harvey is caught in a battle between temptation and willpower. Wendell's cheerful surrender reinforces the trap, that the Holiday House thrives on uncritical indulgence. Harvey's decision to abstain, then, becomes a moment of resistance, not just to the food itself, but to the entire illusion. When Jive questions him, Harvey's answer cuts through the enchantment: "I know what it's really made of." This line signals the shift from physical gratification to moral clarity. What once sustained him now repels him, because the need for safety and truth has displaced the urgency of hunger. In Maslow's terms, Harvey is actively suppressing lower-level physiological urges in favor of higher-level psychological awareness, an inversion that reflects both maturation and urgency in the face of real danger. The passage that follows, in which Jive insists on proving the food's harmlessness, becomes a grotesque reinforcement of Harvey's intuition. Jive's impulsive act of eating the pie (an attempt to reassert the fantasy's appeal) backfires catastrophically. Jive, despite being part of the illusion, is himself trapped within it: "still hoping (even as its life drifted away) that its creator would come to save it." This image of a crumbling servant abandoned by his master indicates the totalizing exploitation of

Hood's world, where not even the agents of deception are safe. Although Harvey does not actively destroy Jive, his refusal to eat triggers stubbornness, which brings about death just like curiosity in the case of the cat that burns to death. This marks a significant moment in Harvey's development: he is learning that sometimes resistance itself is an act of power, and that illusions can collapse under the weight of being seen too clearly. His decision not to eat becomes an unintentional but potent act revealing that the fantasy is not only empty, but it is decaying from the inside out. It is a key moment in Harvey's psychological resistance, wherein restraint becomes a form of rebellion. A parallel instance of subtle resistance can be found in *Coraline*, where the protagonist likewise begins to recognize the Other Mother's hunger for her dependence, and refuses to comply:

A voice whispered in her mind, "Indeed, lady, you must hurry. There are two of us still to find, and the beldam is already angry with you for uncovering me."

If I'm going to do this, thought Coraline, I'm not going to do it in her clothes. She changed back into her pajamas and her dressing gown and her slippers, leaving the gray sweater and the black jeans neatly folded up on the bed, the orange boots on the floor by the toy box. (*Coraline* 95–96)

Coraline's choice to remove the clothes given to her in the Other World and dress again in her pajamas and dressing gown signals an act of bodily autonomy that reflects her deeper rejection of the illusion of care. Though subtle, the moment marks a return to comfort, familiarity, and control over her own body, basic elements within Maslow's category of physiological needs. The gray sweater and black jeans, symbolic of the Other Mother's imposed identity, are rejected in favor of garments associated with Coraline's authentic self. By choosing what to wear and dressing herself as she embarks on the final part of her journey, Coraline reclaims her physical self, grounding her identity in the tangible world of her own preferences and habits. In this way, she reasserts agency over her most basic needs, even if the more fatal threats remain ahead. On the contrary, Harvey's encounter with clothing in *ToA* evokes not empowerment but dread. Where Coraline asserts her independence through what she wears, Harvey is forced to realize that the garments provided to him are not just manipulative but also connected to the previous victims of the Holiday House:

“We’re not the first, you know. What about all the clothes upstairs? All the coats and shoes and hats. They belonged to kids like us.”

Harvey shuddered.

Had he played trick-or-treat in a murdered boy’s shoes? (*ToA* 84)

This moment exposes the sinister truth beneath the illusion of comfort, that the Holiday House’s offerings are not simply deceptive but built upon the erasure of others’ identities. Even the fulfillment of basic needs in this space comes at a deeply disturbing cost. What initially seemed like harmless dress-up for a Halloween evening (masks and costumes offered for fun) gains a morbid dimension once Harvey discovers the clothing belonged to lost children: “Though he’d always hated history lessons, he knew some of the jackets and shoes and shirts and belts had been out of fashion for many, many years. Where were their owners now? Dead, he presumed, or so old it made no difference” (*ToA* 44–45). His earlier indifference, even amusement, turns into dread as he realizes that the house recycles remnants of its victims. This detail parallels Coraline’s discomfort about sleeping in the Other World’s imitation bedroom, which gradually escalates to fear once she uncovers the true nature of her situation. Unlike Coraline, who asserts agency over her body and surroundings, Harvey is haunted by the thought that he may have literally stepped into the roles, or remains, of children who never escaped.

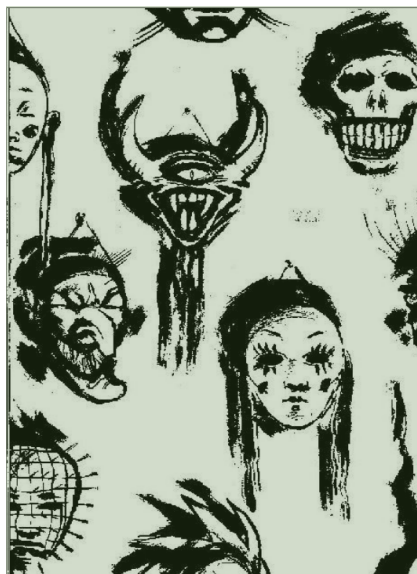


Fig. 15. The Masks, illustrated by Clive Barker

3.2.2 The Safety Needs

Maslow suggests that “[i]f the physiological needs are relatively well gratified, there then emerges a new set of needs, which we may categorize roughly as the safety needs (security; stability; dependency; protection; freedom from fear, from anxiety and chaos; need for structure, order, law, limits; strength in the protector; and so on)” (*Motivation* 39). As he makes clear, the need for safety encompasses not only physical security and protection from harm, but also stability, predictability, and a sense of control over one’s environment. However, Maslow also demonstrates that “psychologically healthy people are, as a defining characteristic, attracted to the mysterious, to the unknown, to the chaotic, unorganized, and unexplained. This seems to be a per se attractiveness; these areas are in themselves and of their own right interesting. The contrasting reaction to the well known is one of boredom” (*Motivation* 49). This spoken of attraction to novelty often competes with the need for safety, particularly in children, whose environments may feel stifling, predictable, or emotionally lacking. Coraline and Harvey are both drawn into fantastic other worlds not specifically because they are naive to danger, but because the thrill of something new momentarily outweighs their instinct for self-preservation. Harvey’s silencing his suspicions about the place and agreeing to visit the Holiday House with the stranger called Rictus is a great example of this phenomenon. Besides, Coraline reflects after Miss Spink and Miss Forcible ominously read her tea leaves, and thinks to herself: “In danger?... It sounded exciting. It didn’t sound like a bad thing. Not really.” (*Coraline* 19). Her response represents the emotional emptiness of her everyday life, where neglect and routine leave her craving stimulation, even if it comes in the form of vague threat. In both *Coraline* and *ToA*, this initial curiosity sets the stage for a deeper confrontation with the loss of safety, as wonder gives way to entrapment. Furthermore, in both texts, initial perceptions of safety are carefully constructed illusions, fabricated to lull the protagonists into a false sense of security. However, as the sinister truths of the Other World and the Holiday House gradually surface, these illusions crumble, and the protagonists are driven into a state of vulnerability and fear. What follows is not simply a reaction to danger, but a psychological recalibration: Coraline and Harvey must navigate unfamiliar and threatening environments without guidance or protection, developing resilience in the process. This shift in narrative, from comfort to survival, marks a significant moment in their respective journeys

toward independence and self-actualization. The first time Coraline acknowledges the dangerous trap she has in fact found herself in is, as follows:

“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.”

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. “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. “We only want what’s best for you,” she said. She put her hand on Coraline’s shoulder. Coraline backed away. (*Coraline* 43–44)

Through the revelation of button eyes, the fantasy shifts from appealing to threatening, and Coraline’s instinctual response marks her recognition that the Other World is no longer a source of comfort but a danger to her bodily autonomy and psychological freedom. Coraline, in fact, adapts to the Other World remarkably quickly, drawn to it for its uncanny familiarity. The house is an almost perfect replica of her own, yet the parents inhabiting it, distinguished by their unsettling button eyes, are subtly alien. This blurring of the familiar and unfamiliar creates an initial sense of security, aligning with Maslow’s observation that individuals often seek safety in “familiar rather than unfamiliar things, or for the known rather than the unknown.” (*Motivation* 41). The Other World offers precisely that, a recognizable environment, only more vibrant and attentive. However, this illusion is quickly shattered. What begins as a pleasant conversation about comfort and belonging quickly transforms into a horrible demand disguised as affection. The very figures who seemed to provide safety now threaten her with irreversible violation. Symbolically, the buttons represent both control and erasure, a way to remove Coraline’s capacity to see, to resist. That the needle and thread are laid out on a kitchen table, which was once a site of nurturing and nourishment, deepens the horror. The tools of domestic comfort have now become instruments of harm. The Other Mother’s final line mimics the language

of protection, even as her touch causes Coraline to recoil. This contrast between what is said and what is felt reflects the precise moment when her safety needs are violated, when care becomes conditional, and security is dependent on obedience. This moment powerfully illustrates Maslow's claim that when safety is threatened, even previously alluring experiences (like the enchantment of the Other World) are instantly recontextualized as dangerous. Coraline no longer feels drawn to the place as a solution for boredom; instead, she begins to perceive it as a prison cloaked in sugar, like the house in Hansel and Gretel. Upon her forced return to claim her parents back, her sense of threat has become so alarming that "[s]he d[oes] not want to sleep under the same roof as her other mother." (*Coraline* 62). The Other World, once appealing in its vividness and attention, now feels hostile and predatory. This moment contrasts sharply with her earlier impression of her other bedroom, when she first notes that "she wouldn't want to have to sleep in there, although the color scheme was an awful lot more interesting than her own bedroom." (*Coraline* 28). At that stage, Coraline's judgment is superficial, focused on visual appeal rather than the subtle emotional risk of which she is unaware. The room is unfamiliar but not frightening. It is only later, after the button-eyes proposal and the growing realization of the Other Mother's true nature, that Coraline's response becomes fear and rejection. What was once more interesting is now a space she refuses to inhabit, regardless of comfort or color. Her physiological needs (like rest) are now subordinated to the more urgent need for safety and distance, as Maslow's theory predicts. Maslow also emphasizes "[s]ecrecy, censorship, dishonesty, blocking of communication threaten all the basic needs" (*Motivation* 47). Likewise, Coraline's intensifying vulnerability is not limited to physical danger. She experiences such psychological unease when the Other Mother begins withholding information, turning silence into a tool of manipulation as Coraline asks for a hint regarding the whereabouts of the ghost children's souls, as follows:

"Where should I start looking?" asked Coraline.

"Where you wish," said her other mother. [As Coraline] looked around the kitchen, [she] followed her about with a smirk always hovering at the edge of her lips.

“How big are souls anyway?” asked Coraline. The other mother tapped the finger, gently, tap-tap-tap against the polished black surface of her black button eyes.

“Fine,” said Coraline. “Don’t tell me. I don’t care. It doesn’t matter if you help me or not.” And then, she was alone in the room. Coraline shivered. She preferred the other mother to have a location: if she were nowhere, then she could be anywhere. It is always easier to be afraid of something you cannot see... (*Coraline* 91–92)

As Coraline begins her quest to recover the ghost children’s souls, her vulnerability is intensified by the Other Mother’s refusal to offer any help, or even clarity. When Coraline asks, “Where should I start looking?”, the Other Mother answers with indifference, making it clear that Coraline is completely on her own. She then follows Coraline around the kitchen, “with a smirk always hovering at the edge of her lips,” turning the search into a performance of control, where every move Coraline makes is silently watched and subtly ridiculed. Later, Coraline attempts to mask her need for information with playful misdirection, hoping to provoke a response. But the Other Mother responds not with words, but with a gesture of threat: “tap-tap-tapping” her crimson fingernails as if to say time is ticking. The absence of verbal communication becomes increasingly sinister. And when Coraline finally realizes she is alone, she shivers not just from fear, but from the psychological disorientation of being watched one moment and abandoned the next. As she notes, “It is always easier to be afraid of something you cannot see.” Coraline is denied both guidance and predictability, two pillars of emotional safety. The Other Mother’s silence is a tool of domination used to deprive Coraline of autonomy. What begins as a game quickly becomes a psychological labyrinth, where fear stems less from what the Other Mother might do, and more from the fact that Coraline cannot tell what comes next. This mounting uncertainty gradually damages Coraline’s sense of control, until the atmosphere of tension finally gives way to open confrontation. When Coraline harshly defies the Other Mother’s authority, she loses her temper and locks Coraline down, as follows:

“This is for your own good. Because I love you. You may come out when you’ve learned some manners. And when you’re ready to be a loving daughter.”

She pulled Coraline back into the hallway and advanced upon the mirror at the end of the hall. Then she picked Coraline up and pushed her into the dim space behind the mirror, [leaving her] in darkness...

Coraline stopped [the] huge sob welling up before it came out. She took a deep breath and let it go. [Where she was imprisoned was] tall enough to stand in or to sit in, not wide or deep enough to lie down in. (*Coraline* 76–79)

The illusion of care is violently shattered when Coraline refuses to perform the role of the obedient daughter, causing the Other Mother to imprison her behind the hallway mirror. In a grotesque parody of maternal affection, the Other Mother offers Coraline embroidery, rats, and bedtime stories, acts that should provide security and routine, but now read as ominous tools of psychological manipulation. In response to Coraline's resistance with clarity, the Other Mother coldly asserts, "This is for your own good... You may come out when you've learned some manners." This moment echoes Coraline's loss of freedom and safety; her rejection of the Other Mother's false comfort is punished with complete isolation. Once locked inside the narrow, dark space, Coraline instinctively suppresses her fear. Even as she is deprived of basic spatial and emotional security, she maintains a core of self-control and awareness. According to Maslow, when safety needs are utterly unmet, individuals may enter states of helplessness, but Coraline's response is to resist showing vulnerability and reclaim psychological agency, even in the absence of physical protection. Her imprisonment thus marks both the lowest point in her safety and the beginning of her active rebellion. The sense of imminent danger intensifies once again when the Other Father, once a comforting presence, appears during Coraline's search for the remaining ghost children's souls. His features are now grotesquely distorted, and he is in a miserable state. Holding onto the last remaining worry he has left for her, he pleads with Coraline to flee lest he hurts her as well:

"Poor thing," she said. "I bet she made you come down here as a punishment for telling me too much." The thing hesitated, then it nodded. "Run, child. Leave this place. She is pushing me so hard to hurt you. I cannot fight her." And it lunged across the cellar toward her.

Coraline had a single heartbeat in which to react. As the thing reached her, [she] put closed her hand around the thing's remaining button eye, and tugged

as hard as she knew how... Coraline turned and ran without pausing. [S]he pulled the heavy trapdoor and let go of it. It crashed down with a thump just as something large banged against it. Coraline took a deep breath. (*Coraline* 109–112)

The poor creature's confession reveals the Other Mother's dominance as an external force that robs the free-will and agency of the other father. Like Coraline, he is abused by the villain, and on top of it, weaponized against her, which illustrates how safety is temporary on environmental control. Its inability to resist indicates that oppression compels complicity, denying both the oppressed and their targets a secure existence. This aligns with Maslow's assertion that safety requires predictability and freedom from harm, conditions absent in the Other Mother's realm. The initial warning Coraline receives introduces a paradox. It is a threat which comes from a reluctant messenger, further destabilizing Coraline's trust in her environment. In Maslow's framework, psychological safety relies on consistency, yet here, even warnings come from hostile sources. This duality reflects the manipulative gaslighting of abusive environments, where danger is framed as inevitable, corrupting the victim's sense of stability. Coraline's split-second decision demonstrates a critical assertion of agency amid danger. When safety is threatened, humans engage in fight-or-flight responses. Coraline's choice to fight is not merely physical defense but a symbolic rejection of the Other Mother's control. By disabling the creature's sight, she temporarily destabilizes its predatory function, reclaiming a semblance of security. However, her flight shows the instability of this safety once more. It is reactive, not guaranteed. The cellar itself (a dark, claustrophobic space) serves as a metaphor for entrapment, contrasting sharply with how the idealized "home" the Other Mother built looks at first glance. Though everything in the Other World is a mere illusion, what Coraline suffers there mirrors real-world trauma, where safety is often a fleeting state. Her confrontation with the other father does not merely depict physical peril but the pillars of safety, autonomy, environmental security, and trust. Coraline's struggle is not just against a monster but against a system designed to negate her safety needs entirely. The creature, a puppet of the Other Mother, embodies how coercive environments pervert relationships into instruments of harm. Yet Coraline's defiance and her momentary victories suggest that safety, though fragile, can be achieved through resistance and quick agency, even in the face of the omnipresent threat. Coraline's

safety need is threatened one last time in real world when the Other Mother's hand follows her there in pursuit of stealing the key back and abduct Coraline all over again. However, Coraline devises a brilliant plan to trap the hand, and she manages to eliminate the threat once and for all:

Coraline woke [up] early, convinced she heard something moving, but unsure what it was, perhaps a rat with an extra leg... "It isn't over, is it?" she said to herself...

The hand made one triumphant, nail-clacking leap onto the [key], and [all] went tumbling down into the darkness of the well. Coraline counted slowly under her breath. She got up to forty before she heard a muffled splash.

She hauled the heavy planks back onto the well, covering it as carefully as she could. She didn't want anything to fall in. She didn't want anything ever to get out. (*Coraline* 144–157)

This passage depicts Coraline's final struggle for safety, as she confronts and ultimately eliminates the last remnant of the Other Mother's domain, the dismembered hand. The scene opens with Coraline waking up by an ambiguous sound, which immediately reactivates her safety anxiety, in alignment with Maslow's statement that "[a]pprehensiveness, fear, dread and anxiety, tension, nervousness and jitteriness are all consequences of safety-need frustration" (*Motivation* 66). The description of the sound as "a rat with an extra leg" introduces bodily distortion, reinforcing the uncanny violation of her safe space. The hand (previously severed yet still animated) represents the residue of Coraline's traumatic experience. Coraline knows that her and her family's safety cannot be fully secured until the threat is eliminated. Coraline's doll party trick is a performance of safety, a staged day out meant to lure the hand (see page 92). The hand's "triumphant leap" onto the tablecloth momentarily inverts power dynamics, making it seem as though the hand has outsmarted her. This fleeting reversal highlights how safety is provisional until the threat is fully neutralized. The well, a recurring symbol of buried secrets and forgotten horrors, becomes the hand's final prison. Its descent into darkness symbolizes the psychological repression of trauma, a literal burying of the past. Coraline's careful covering of the well signifies her active enforcement of safety, a refusal to let the past resurface. As Maslow suggests, "[a]nother indication of the child's need for safety is

his preference for some kind of uninterrupted routine or rhythm. He seems to want a predictable, lawful, orderly world” (*Motivation* 40). Taking this view into account, Coraline’s act of counting to forty, a childlike yet methodical gesture, serves as a coping mechanism, a way to reassert order after chaos. The delayed splash confirms the threat’s elimination, but her deliberate pacing underscores that safety must be verified, not assumed. By hauling the planks back onto the well, Coraline physically reclaims her environment. This action contrasts with earlier moments when she was pursued or cornered. Now, she controls the boundaries of her world. Unlike Coraline, who ultimately regains full agency over her world, Harvey’s confrontation with the disruption of safety is slower and more disorienting. His journey toward recognition begins not with overt violence or confinement, but with a creeping sense of entrapment that gradually gives way to panic. The first time Harvey can tell for sure (as his questions so far have been avoided) they are not safe in the territory of the Holiday House is through Wendell’s mental breakdown, as follows:

“I want to leave, Harvey, but there’s no way out! I’ve been trying for hours and hours and I tell you the mist keeps sending me back the way I came.”

Harvey interrupted him. “We should talk about this quietly. In private.”

“Like where?” said Wendell, wild-eyed. “The whole place is watching us and listening to us. Don’t you feel it?”

“If there’s a way in there must be a way out,” Harvey reasoned. “We’ll go to the wall.” With that he marched off, Wendell in tow... But by some trick or other he was turned around, the House in front of him. (*ToA* 82–84)

Harvey’s first realization regarding the illusion of safety arrives not through his own experience, but through Wendell’s frantic revelation. His inability to escape, paired with his fear that the environment itself is “watching and listening,” echoes Maslow’s idea that safety is not simply physical security but also psychological predictability. The mist-wall’s disorienting and returning them to the front lawn destabilizes Harvey’s trust in reality itself. This trickery signals a direct violation of what Maslow defines as the “predictable, lawful, orderly world” necessary for a sense of security (*Motivation* 40). Wendell’s desperation gives voice to the suppressed fears Harvey has not yet allowed himself to feel. Harvey’s calmer demeanor suggests he is still adjusting himself to the situation, trying to impose logic on an environment that defies

the laws of the real world. This cognitive dissonance between what he believes and what surprises and horrors the environment unleash marks the beginning of Harvey's psychological displacement, setting the stage for the full realization that the Holiday House functions through predatory illusion that threatens children's safety. From the moment Harvey steps "into the House," he wonders when he will finally "see the face of its owner."; however, his first inquiry about Mr. Hood is deflected by Mrs. Griffin, who offers only that "he's a very private man" (*ToA* 23). In fact, none of his questions receive clear answers, and the adult figures in the House continuously obscure the truth. This concealment, like the manipulative silence Coraline faces at a critical moment (see page 115), reflects yet again what Maslow calls a direct threat to psychological security: "Secrecy, censorship, dishonesty, [and] blocking of communication threaten all the basic needs" (*Motivation* 47). While Coraline encounters such manipulation in a single moment in the narrative, Harvey's experience is more prolonged and systemic; the denial of information is sustained as a mechanism to subdue suspicion and encourage passive compliance. Even Wendell, Harvey's companion, is unable to explain the inconsistencies. When Harvey observes that beyond the mist "[i]t's just gray out there," and "there's no sign of the town at all" (*ToA* 28), Wendell brushes it off, not with malice but with ignorance. This veil of confusion reinforces Harvey's disorientation and sets the stage for the next moment of realization, the disturbing truth about the lake. His innocent question about where to swim followed by his suggestion that Mrs. Griffin could cook some fish for them brings about the false information that the lake harbors poisonous fish, and its depths are incomprehensible. Though starting as a casual conversation, the scene's focus quickly shifts from curiosity to hidden knowledge:

"Now I really have to see those fish," Harvey said.

As he spoke, the ever inquisitive Clue-Cat jumped up onto the counter beside the stove, tipped over the pan, a wave of boiling water washing him. He hit the floor dead...

"Foolish thing. Foolish thing," was all Mrs. Griffin seemed able to say. She sank down onto her knees, and stared at the sad little sack of burned fur. "No more questions from you," she finally murmured. (*ToA* 30–32)

Harvey's comment that he must see the fish may seem rebellious, but it is also a rebellious reaction against the Holiday House that refuses to respect his autonomy and attempts to silence him. The burned body of Clue-Cat becomes symbolic of the cost of curiosity, and Mrs. Griffin's whispering "no more questions from you" reinforces the House's hostility toward independent thought. Investigating the lake leaves Harvey more suspicious than ever, prompting him to question the mystery behind how the house functions more. His attempt to locate Lulu, the only child who did not seem to enjoy her stay, brings his suspicions about the Holiday House into surface once more, but this time, they all reveal to be true:

"Have you seen Lulu?" he asked Mrs. Griffin when he got downstairs...

"Please, child!" she said. "Be content with what you know. You're here to enjoy yourself for a little time. And child, it's such a little time."

"What is this place, Mrs. Griffin? Is it some kind of prison?" She shook her head.

"Don't tell me lies," he said. "It's stupid. We're locked up in here, aren't we?"

Now, though she was shaking with fear from head to foot, she dared to make a tiny nod of her head. (*ToA* 86–87)

Harvey's search for Lulu becomes the turning point in his understanding that the House is a prison masquerading as a paradise. When he inquires about her, Mrs. Griffin first avoids the question and then warns him. Her visible fear, paired with elusive replies, reflects how secrecy functions as both a shield and a weapon within the House. As Maslow argues, an environment that represses inquiry and discourages open communication "threatens all basic needs" (*Motivation* 47). Thus, Harvey insists on pressing the issue until Mrs. Griffin confesses the truth and confirms Harvey's suspicions. Unlike Coraline's swift imprisonment behind a mirror, Harvey's realization builds gradually through his own insistence on uncovering the truth and stripping away any remaining illusion of safety. That the Holiday House is not only deceptive but actively predatory is revealed through Carna, one of Hood's monstrous creations, chasing down Harvey and Wendell through the mist upon their attempt to escape. What began as psychological tension leaves its place into physical danger.

However, Carna cannot capture the children as its flesh is revealed to be bound to the Holiday House:

“We did it!” Wendell yelled. “We did it!”

“So did Carna!” Harvey said, pointing up at the beast... [S]uddenly holes [were] opening in its wings as though a horde of invisible moths [were] eating at their fabric... “It can’t survive out here...” Wendell realized aloud, “...it’s dying.”

If it had not wanted their flesh so badly, [Harvey] thought, it wouldn’t have come after them at such speed, and brought this pain and humiliation upon itself. There was a lesson there, if he could only remember it. Evil, however powerful it seemed, could be undone by its own appetite. (*ToA* 104–105)

Facing the attack, Harvey begins to act not as a passive child, but as someone capable of facing danger head-on. His ability to recognize Carna’s weakness marks a shift from fear to strategic thinking. The House’s minions, like the illusions they create, are shown to be unsustainable outside the Holiday House. Harvey’s observation that evil can be “undone by its own appetite” signals a crucial development in his psychological resilience: he begins to see malevolence not just as terrifying, but as vulnerable. Carna’s defeat might be also read as symbolic in that it cannot exist where truth and freedom reign, and its decay reflects the weakening of Hood’s entire system of control. Harvey, once just a guest, is turning into a worthy opponent for Mr. Hood the more he nurtures his agency. Now that Harvey has seen what Hood’s creations truly are, he begins to confront them not only with physical resistance but also with psychological insight whenever they happen to threaten his safety. This newfound understanding empowers Harvey to face Marr, another of Hood’s twisted agents. Unlike Carna, Marr threatens not just Harvey’s body but his identity, and her power lies in symbolic annihilation, the stripping away of selfhood:

“Maybe I won’t turn you into a worm after all. What would you like to be? Tell me what’s in your heart...”

“Never mind *my* heart,” Harvey said, reaching out toward Marr. “If you can change me into a worm, or a bat, what could you do for *yourself*? Have your dreams.”

"I don't want them!" she yelled, struggling more than ever. "Oh..." she sobbed, "...you damnable child..."

"What *do* you dream about?"

"I dream of *nothing*..." Marr replied, her eyes sinking back into her disintegrating skull, "...and that's...what...I've...become..." Then she was gone, devoured by her own magic. (*ToA* 142–145)

Marr's threat to transform Harvey into a worm is emblematic of the Holiday House's attempt to erase identity in favor of submission. However, Harvey does not recoil. Instead, he counters her manipulation with a question that strikes at her hollow core. By refusing to answer her question about his desires and instead challenging her with one of his own, Harvey inverts the dynamic of control. He recognizes that Marr, like the others, is a puppet of Hood's world, one who has surrendered so completely that even her dreams have been emptied. Likewise, her response amounts to existential loss which turns into a literal one as she Marr's disintegrates. She is undone not by violence, but by the return of what she had forsaken, that is, the ability to long for something real which is against her nature. By forcing the agents of the House to confront their own hollowness, Harvey affirms his growing power and reclaims his safety not through submission, but through active defiance. Harvey's confrontation with Marr marks the last transitional step before he faces the ultimate embodiment of the House's oppressive control, Mr. Hood himself. The threat is no longer veiled or metaphorical, it becomes direct, violent, and personal, as the villain is dying to get his revenge:

"Now, thief, come closer," he roared, opening his arms. *"Or must I come for you?"*

Harvey didn't waste his breath and ran as a blast of soul-freezing air struck him...

"Got you, little thief." [Hood dragged] Harvey into his splintery embrace... But Harvey grabbed hold of the creature's coat and pulled. The scraps came away with a wet tearing sound, and Hood let out a howl of rage as he was uncovered.

"Give me my coat, thief!" he howled.

“It’s all yours!” Harvey yelled, and tossed the stolen rags toward the waters. Hood lunged after them, and as he did so [he] pitch[ed] headfirst into the frenzied waters. (*ToA* 195–199)

Mr. Hood asserts himself as a grotesque, power-obsessed figure. His “mane of splinters,” “tunnel” mouth, and “soul-freezing air” evoke not just physical menace but a force intent on annihilating Harvey’s sense of self. But Harvey does not flinch the way Hood expects him to react, in fear, and powerless. Instead, he continues the strategy he used with Carna and Marr. He studies the monster’s nature to dismantle its magic. Even as Hood drags him into a “splintery embrace,” a violation of both bodily autonomy and safety, Harvey resists by using Hood’s own attachment to power and illusion against him. By ripping away the coat, Harvey exposes Hood’s vulnerability by physically unmasking the predator. His final move is to throw the coat into the “frenzied waters,” luring Hood to his own downfall. In giving Hood back what he desires, Harvey seals his defeat. This resolution is consistent with Maslow’s suggestion that true safety is not restored by avoiding danger, but by confronting and overcoming the forces that distort reality and suppress agency. In reclaiming his environment through action, Harvey establishes control not just over the House, but over his own agency.

3.2.3 The Belongingness and Love Needs

According to Maslow, once physiological and safety needs are relatively secured, the individual’s attention turns toward the need for belongingness and love, the desire to form meaningful relationships and to feel accepted, valued, and emotionally connected. As Maslow emphasizes, “love needs involve both giving and receiving love,” highlighting the reciprocal nature of this psychological drive (*Motivation* 45). This category encompasses friendships, familial bonds, and the sense of being part of a community. In *Coraline* and *ToA*, both protagonists are children navigating emotionally neglected environments, which makes them especially susceptible to illusions of love and companionship. Their respective journeys through the Other World and the Holiday House not only test their physical and psychological limits but also exploit their longing for affection and attention. By examining the ways in which Coraline and Harvey are offered (and eventually reject) counterfeit forms of love, this section explores how the need to belong can both empower and

endanger the individual when weaponized by manipulative forces. Before the Other Mother's perverse mimicry of affection enters the narrative, Coraline deep down feels that her real-world need for love and connection is not entirely met. Although her parents are preoccupied with work and emotionally distant, the text provides moments that suggest genuine, though understated, care, particularly from her mother. When Coraline announces her intention to go for a walk, her mother responds, "Don't go too far... And dress up warmly," signaling a baseline of concern for Coraline's safety and well-being (*Coraline* 11). Later, she invites Coraline to join her for a mundane shopping errand, a small but telling gesture of maternal bonding:

"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. (*Coraline* 23)

Though Coraline refuses, her mother's offer represents a desire to include her daughter in everyday routines, as she is often busy with work and cannot get to spend a lot of time with her. While this interaction lacks overt affection, it is regardless of an expression of love in a subtle, domestic form. Coraline is not moved as she probably finds the activity uninteresting, craving more overt, and personal attention. A similar mundane expression of care appears early in *ToA*, when Harvey's mother finds him listlessly watching the rain and gently urges him toward action, as follows:

"You shouldn't waste your time sitting up here," his mom said...

"I've got nothing better to do," Harvey said, without looking around.

"Well then, you can start by tidying up this room" his mom said.

"But—"

"Don't sit wishing the days away, honey. Life's too short."

"But—"

"That's a good boy." (*ToA* 3)

Though the moment is framed by a slight domestic tension, Harvey feels annoyed and cornered. His mother's tone, however, is ultimately one of concern. Her advice

reflects a desire to see him engaged with the world rather than being withdrawn from. Harvey, as a typical adolescent, resists responsibility, and misinterprets care as imposition. Still, his mother's addressing him with positive reinforcement, using phrases like "honey" and "that's a good boy" tempers the scolding and frames her reminder as a form of everyday affection. In contrast to the fantasy-world caregivers who lavish children with false praise to manipulate them, Harvey's mother demonstrates her love by encouraging purpose, structure, and agency. Her care may come wrapped in chores and gentle nagging, but it is authentic and rooted in a desire for his well-being, a sentiment similar to Coraline's real mother telling her to "dress up warmly" before going outside (*Coraline* 11). Neither parent is overly affectionate, but both express a subdued and realistic kind of love that subtly reinforces "discipline and limits [which are] also needed by the child" (Maslow *Motivation* 71). As she is not really disciplined into eating her father's dishes whether she likes them or not, but rather, left with her own judgement, Coraline is easily fascinated with the allure of the dishes prepared for her by the Other Mother upon her arrival at the Other World. Unlike her own mother who does not cook, in an ideal world her Other Mother cooks her tasty meals, which is part of the seduction:

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. (*Coraline* 26–27)

Coraline eats the dishes with enthusiasm as they are nothing like cold, unappetizing or ready-to-eat meals at home. The other parents frame her arrival as long-awaited and deeply meaningful. Physical comfort is paired with emotional recognition. The fantasy of being longed for flatters Coraline and initiates a sense of belonging. The Other Mother constructs a scene in which Coraline seems to be both the recipient of unconditional affection and the missing piece in an incomplete family unit. Instead of a relationship built on mutual care, this love is performative, unsettling in its intensity,

and eventually demanding. A similar performative expression care finds its fantasy counterpart in the first moment Harvey enters the Holiday House, just as Coraline's being warmly welcomed by her other parents. Harvey is welcomed at the threshold by a woman whose appearance is unsettling, yet words are disarmingly hospitable:

"Harvey Swick, as I live and breathe."

He looked down, the weathervane's white silhouette still behind his eyes, and there on the porch stood a woman who had a face like a rolled-up ball of cobwebs, her hands gnarled. Her voice, however, was melodious, and its words welcoming.

"I thought maybe you'd decided not to come, which would have been a pity. Come on in! There's food on the table. You must be famished." (*ToA* 17)

Mrs. Griffin's ghastly appearance and grandmother-like affectionate welcoming in a melodious voice create a striking juxtaposition as if to uncanniness of the place. Harvey is being offered care, sustenance, and recognition by someone who already knows his name and has been expecting him. The fulfillment of his social-emotional needs is staged immediately upon his arrival, he is seen, welcomed, and tended to. But as with Coraline, the pleasure of being noticed and wanted is complicated by the underlying falsehood of this affection. The woman's readiness, the flowers on the porch, the prepared meal, all are performative acts designed to simulate belonging. The rapid gratification of Harvey's unspoken need for recognition is precisely what makes the fantasy so effective. As Maslow suggests, individuals deprived of belonging are especially vulnerable to deceptive forms of love (*Motivation* 43). The House, like the Other World, does not simply trap children with threats but seduces them with comfort and attention, the very things often not overly gratified in the real world. Yet this affection, while initially soothing, quickly reveals its artificial and performative quality, a facade that Coraline begins to see through. Her other parents' obsessive attentiveness, though framed as warmth and care, quickly becomes invasive and unsettling:

"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...

“Did you have a nice time?” asked her other mother, strok[ing] Coraline’s hair with her long white fingers. Coraline shook her head. “Don’t do that.”
(*Coraline* 30–42)

The gestures of intimacy (the waving, the smiling, the hair-stroking) imitate real parental love, but they are exaggerated, scripted, and offered to gild the pill. Coraline’s rejection of an alien physical contact points out an early boundary-setting. She gets quickly irritated by possessive mimicry that seeks to take control of her. As Maslow notes, the need for love includes both giving and receiving, but what the Other Mother offers is not reciprocal affection, it is surveillance disguised as care. The manufactured affection, offered through scripted gestures and compulsive surveillance, creates an uncanny environment where the illusion of love is weaponized. Coraline begins to feel the psychological consequences of this manipulation more intensely when she flees the Other World upon learning that her eyes must be replaced with buttons if she wishes to stay. Her return to the real world offers no relief, however. She discovers her parents have vanished (abducted by the Other Mother) and her once safe home becomes a site of absence and dread. What follows is not simply loneliness but despair, rooted in the dawning realization that her parents may never return:

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. [A]fter a while, she went to sleep. (*Coraline* 50)

This scene marks a shift from childish irritation at lack of parental attention to aching grief over their disappearance. Coraline’s tears reveal an emotional breakdown that no longer stems from boredom or neglect, but from loss. Her instinct to seek comfort in their empty bed demonstrates a deep yearning for emotional security, not mere

company, but the felt presence of reciprocal care. It is a moment of regression, but also one that affirms how central familiar connection is to her psychological well-being. Without it, even her own world becomes alien and unbearable. The Other Mother strategically makes her move during such vulnerable longing, upon Coraline's return to the Other World to rescue her parents. Upon Coraline's return, she parodies maternal comfort, tricking her as if she is her real mother, which results in Coraline's mistaking her as her mother and hugging her (*Coraline* 58). What Coraline is given is not real affection, but a performance designed to exploit her lack. The Other Mother mimics motherly affection Coraline lacks with near-perfection, her voice almost indistinguishable from Coraline's real mother's. She pulls away from the embrace the moment she realizes it is not her own mother that she happily embraced but the Other Mother playing tricks on her. Her body, nevertheless, reacts before her words do, as it is a reflex that pulls her towards her desire. The tricks in the Other Mother's sleeve, however, do not end there. She attempts to convince Coraline her parents are happier in Coraline's absence by showing an illusion through a mirror as follows:

"They weren't bored of me," said Coraline. "You're lying. You stole them."

"I'll prove it," said the other mother, and brushed the surface of the mirror with her long white fingers... In the mirror Coraline's mother and father walked inside.

"How nice it is, not to have Coraline any more," said her mother with a happy smile...

"And," said her father, "I take great comfort in knowing that her other mother will take better care of her than we ever could."

"See?" said her other mother.

"No," said Coraline. "I don't see. And I don't believe it either." (*Coraline* 58–61)

The Other Mother openly demonstrates her own cruel ways to claim her, like a predator playing with their pray. The mirror illusion that follows through which Coraline's real parents are shown to return from a holiday and rejoice in her absence is a cruel psychological attack on her sense of belonging. The test evokes Coraline's latent insecurities that involve the fear of being unloved, and worse, forgotten. Despite

the emotional manipulation, Coraline rejects the projection right away without letting her guard down; however, the narrative reveals her lingering doubt “like a maggot in an apple core” (*Coraline* 61). What subdues her doubts is observing the Other Mother’s anger reflected on her face, which allows her to be “sure in her heart what she had seen in the mirror was no more than an illusion” (*Coraline* 61). Her small but defiant act towards the enemy reveals her growing capacity to evaluate emotional manipulations. This magical illusion in *Coraline*, through which the Other Mother attempts to convince Coraline she is not needed by her real parents, finds a close parallel in *ToA*. Both villains weaponize the child’s need for love and belonging, replacing truth with lies. Just as Coraline is shown an illusion of her parents happily abandoning her, Harvey is subjected to a phony phone call through which Harvey is tricked into believing that his real mother arranged his stay at the Holiday House (see page 68). Like Coraline, he begins to suspect something is wrong. When he expresses concern that his parents do not know where he is, Lulu assures him otherwise. To confirm, Harvey calls home. To his surprise, his mother picks up and warmly corrects everything he has been told to, that she knows where he is, and she has invited Mr. Rictus herself to escort Harvey to the Holiday House so that he can relax and rest a little. Though his mother’s voice on the phone is comforting in tone, it is unconvincing in context, especially given how his mother advises Harvey to be useful in the first place instead of being lazy. Unlike Coraline, Harvey does not immediately resist. He ends the call “shaking his head in amazement,” still unsure what to believe (*ToA* 22). This moment illustrates how the fantasy’s power lies not only in pleasure but in emotional gaslighting, a rewriting of reality in which the very people Harvey relies on for protection seem to be subtly contributing to his entrapment. Harvey’s longing for reassurance makes him hesitate. Maslow’s assertion that love needs involve both giving and receiving love becomes twisted here. The villains simulate emotional exchange, but it is one-sided, meant only to pacify the protagonist. Harvey’s confusion reinforces how vulnerable children are when the need for belonging is weaponized against them. As time passes and the Holiday House continues attracting Harvey with illusions, this manipulation becomes more powerful. Harvey’s emotional priorities are controlled seemingly by making him genuinely happier, but in fact, by nullifying his attachment to what he has left behind. When questioned later by one of Hood’s agents regarding the issue, Harvey’s answer reflects a distorted sense of detachment that is partly true, as follows:

“I hope you call your family now and then.”

“Yep” said Harvey. “I called them yesterday.”

“Are they missin’ you?”

“Didn’t sound like it.”

“Are you missin’ them?”

Harvey shrugged. “Not really,” he said.

This wasn’t strictly true — he had his homesick days —but he knew if he went back home he’d be in school the day after, and wishing he’d stayed in the Holiday House a while longer. (*ToA* 66–67)

By this point, the House’s comfort and artificial attention have begun to dull Harvey’s real memories of connection. Even though he does miss his parents, he represses this truth, opting instead for the fleeting pleasures as an escapism from responsibilities. This subtle self-deception mirrors how the Other Mother in *Coraline* expects Coraline to act, severing her ties with her real parents. In both cases, the fantastic realm functions as emotional sedative, not just to distract the child, but to reshape what they think they need in the first place. Despite the Other Mother’s attempts to stage emotional intimacy and fabricate a sense of belonging, Coraline’s internal clarity begins to sharpen. Her grief and longing do not weaken her autonomy; instead, they add fuel to her resistance. When the Other Mother continues to mask control as affection, Coraline answers the performance with her refusal to engage, as follows:

Coraline, my darling I thought we could play some games together this morning. Hopscotch? Happy Families? Monopoly?”

Coraline shook her head. “I don’t want to play with you,” she said. “I want to go home and be with my real parents. I want you to let them go. To let us all go.”

“Sharper than a serpent’s tooth,” she said, “is a daughter’s ingratitude. Still, the proudest spirit can be broken, with love.”

“I have no plans to love you,” said Coraline. “No matter what. You can’t make me love you.” (*Coraline* 75)

As this scene makes clear, love is no longer a need to be fulfilled but a site of conflict, a weapon the Other Mother attempts to wield against boundaries Coraline fiercely defends. Her rejection of the games and acts of bonding illustrates her refusal to perform the role of an obedient daughter for a predator that is dishonest in her intentions. While Maslow identifies love and belonging as central psychological needs, this scene illustrates that their authenticity is crucial. Love expressed through the absence of freedom becomes a violation, not a fulfillment. Coraline's insistence on returning to her real parents affirms that true belonging cannot be mimicked through manipulation, it must be freely chosen and mutually given. As Coraline's defiance increases, so does the Other Mother's desperation to reassert dominance, which results in her locking Coraline up behind the mirror. However, when she decides to let her out, there is no sign of her previous overt aggression. Instead, she reverts to a performative tenderness again, mimicking maternal affection to blur Coraline's emotional clarity. This unsettling dynamic is rendered powerfully in the aftermath of Coraline's forced confinement behind the mirror:

Coraline struggled to wake herself up, conscious only for the moment of having been cuddled and loved, and wanting more of it, then realizing where she was and who she was with.

"There, my sweet Coraline," said her other mother. "I came and fetched you out of the cupboard. You needed to be taught a lesson, but we temper our justice with mercy here; we love the sinner and we hate the sin. Now, if you will be a good child who loves her mother, be compliant and fair-spoken, you and I shall understand and love each other perfectly as well." (*Coraline* 87–88)

As demonstrated in the previous instances, the love offered to Coraline by the Other Mother is performative and manipulative. The Other Mother's phrase "we love the sinner and hate the sin" feigns moral superiority while reinforcing a power hierarchy in which Coraline's independence is "sinful," and her obedience is framed as virtue. The act of fetching Coraline from the mirror is an assertion of control under the guise of mercy, decided upon one party's call. When the Other Mother lifts her gently and cradles her like a baby, Coraline responds not with immediate fear, but with an involuntary longing for warmth and affection. The line, "Coraline struggled to wake

herself up, conscious only for the moment of having been cuddled and loved, and wanting more of it, then realizing where she was and who she was with”, captures the conflict at the center of her psychological struggle. It is a subconscious craving for the very thing the Other Mother weaponizes: comfort and emotional intimacy. Coraline is only a human after all, a simple physical gesture triggers the primal need she desperately lacks for maternal affection. That brief desire “for more of it” highlights how the need to be loved and nurtured runs deep, and how even false affection can momentarily seduce the psyche when one is deprived of real connection. This aligns precisely with Maslow’s emphasis on the fundamental nature of belonging and love needs, that they are persistent, powerful, and can become urgent in the absence of stable, mutual bonds. However, Coraline’s awakening, her sudden awareness of “where she was and who she was with” is just as critical. It underscores her growing psychological resilience: despite being lured into a vulnerable state, she quickly reasserts her sense of reality. This reflexive rejection of the illusion indicates not just suspicion but a maturing emotional intelligence. Coraline recognizes that affection given in exchange for submission is not real love, but manipulation disguised as care. Ultimately, this passage emphasizes the novella’s critique of false love and conditional belonging. Coraline must distinguish not just between real and other parents, but between real and simulated affection, learning that love without freedom is not elevation, but entrapment. That lesson reaches its clearest articulation in a later exchange of repetitive verbal affection of the Other Mother:

“You know that I love you.”

And, despite herself, Coraline nodded. It was true: the other mother loved her. But she loved Coraline as a miser loves money, or a dragon loves its gold. Coraline knew that she was a possession, nothing more. A tolerated pet, whose behavior was no longer amusing.

“I don’t want your love,” said Coraline. “I don’t want anything from you.”

...

“You know I love you,” said the other mother flatly.

“You have a very funny way of showing it,” said Coraline. (*Coraline* 104–125)

Due to increased emotional awareness, Coraline now understands the nature of the love being offered to her and is able to reject it on her own terms. The metaphors of a miser and a dragon frame the Other Mother's affection as possessive and ultimately manipulative. Love, in this context, is not reciprocal or nourishing, it is controlling and one-sided. By refusing that love, Coraline claims her right not only to freedom but to love that respects her individuality and agency. Thus, she confronts her and utters confidently that she does not desire her other mother's love. Her clarity here sharply contrasts with Harvey's earlier emotional disorientation in *ToA*, underlining how belonging can only flourish when love is given freely, not wielded as leverage. Coraline's clarity and emotional maturation are further affirmed upon her return home. After rescuing the ghost children's souls and escaping the Other World with her parents, she wakes up to find herself back in the safety of her own home (falling asleep on her grandmother's armchair), not just physically, but also emotionally:

"Darling, what a funny place to fall asleep. And really, this room is only for best. We looked all over the house for you. And wherever did the cat come from? He was waiting by the front door when I came in. Shot out like a bullet as I opened it."

"Probably had things to do," said Coraline. Then she hugged her mother so tightly that her arms began to ache. Her mother hugged Coraline back.

"Dinner in fifteen minutes," said her mother. "Don't forget to wash your hands. And just look at those pajama bottoms. What did you do to your poor knee?" (*Coraline* 137)

There is no dramatic reunion speech, no tears or apologies from the parents as they are unaware of what happened over the past few days. Yet, in the hug that "began to ache," Coraline communicates every emotion that piled up during the journey nonverbally, her fear, her longing, and above all, her love. Her mother's fussing over dinner and pajamas may seem ordinary, but it represents a return to the familiar, the mundane, and most importantly, the unconditional care Coraline has fought to reclaim. Unlike the Other Mother's suffocating affection, this love is casual, imperfect, but authentic. It is not performative. Her mother's concern is expressed not in a shared hug, and a reminder to wash up, precisely the kind of love that does not ask for proof in return. In *ToA*, on the other hand, Harvey is reunited with his parents

when he escapes the Holiday House for the first time and returns home. But where Coraline's return is marked by calm recognition and the end of her labors to reclaim what she has lost, Harvey's is full of disbelief, guilt, and emotional wreck, as he is only realizing now that what he has lost while spending his days having fun:

Harvey's legs almost folded up beneath him at the sight of her. Harvey knew that face better than any on earth. It was the first face he'd ever loved. It was his mother...

Harvey couldn't speak. There were too many tears in his throat, and in his nose and in his eyes. All he could do was stumble into his mother's arms. It was wonderful to feel her hands stroke his hair and her fingers wipe his cheeks.

"Oh Harvey, Harvey, Harvey," she sobbed. "We thought we'd never see you again." She kissed him over and over. "We thought you'd gone forever." (*ToA* 110–112)

The Swick family's reunion is emotionally intense, but unlike Coraline, Harvey is not in full control of his emotional state yet. He is disoriented, overwhelmed by both the significant amount of time passed and the perpetual pain his parents suffered in his absence. The joy of reunion is marred with guilt and disbelief. His mother, visibly aged and devastated, offers him unconditional forgiveness and love regardless, but Harvey, knowing he is fully responsible for such devastation, cannot forgive himself as easily. There is no silent clarity felt as in Coraline's embrace of her mother; instead, there is a flood of negative emotions he cannot digest. This sharp contrast between the two scenes underlines how Coraline, through repeated trials and her firm grasp of emotional boundaries, arrives at her resolution with clear-headed strength. Harvey, on the other hand, still has emotional reckoning ahead, particularly the guilt he will soon voice to his mother, which she meets with continued understanding. These two reunions, occurring at different narrative and emotional stages, reveal that while both children have been changed by their experiences, Coraline's clarity allows her to return not only to her home, but to herself, something Harvey must still learn to do. His first return is not a resolution, but an awakening: the cost of his escape is now fully visible in the toll it has taken on his parents. In the days after his return, Harvey

and his parents try in vain to locate the Holiday House again, but their efforts lead only to frustration, as the House has no intention of being discovered by the adults:

“Are you going to the police?” his wife asked him.

“They won’t believe me,” Harvey said.

“That’s why I’m going to talk to them first,” his father said. “I’ll, find somebody who’ll listen.”

“This is all my fault,” Harvey said to his mom. “We lost all that time together, just because I was bored.”

“Don’t blame yourself,” she said. “We’re all tempted to do things we regret once in a while. Sometimes we choose badly and make mistake.” (*ToA* 120)

This exchange captures the emotional support Harvey receives from both of his parents. His father may not be as openly affectionate, but his willingness to reassure Harvey to “find somebody who’ll listen” reflects deep paternal care. Meanwhile, his mother comforts him not by dismissing his guilt or arguing, but by explaining simply that it is a shared human experience: “Sometimes we choose badly.” Unlike the facade of comfort the Holiday House provides, this is a compassionate and honest model of parenting and belonging, one that accepts failure as part of growth. Harvey’s apology for letting their time together go to waste signals accountability. He begins to understand the value of connection, not just as a source of comfort, but as a responsibility. Where the Holiday House asked nothing of him but passivity and submission, his real family offers unconditional love in return. This dialogue marks an early step in Harvey’s path toward re-earning the sense of belonging he once falsely took for granted, which prepares him for the eventual confrontation with the House and the restoration of both his and others’ stolen time. While Harvey’s father expresses concern more through action than affection, Coraline’s father, upon Coraline’s final return, openly shows his love, though once Coraline initiates the exchange:

Coraline walked down the hallway to her father’s study and kissed him on the back of his balding head.

“Hullo, Coraline,” he said. Then he looked around and smiled at her. “What was that for?”

“Nothing,” said Coraline. “I just miss you sometimes. That’s all.”

“Oh good,” he said. He put the computer to sleep and picked Coraline up, which he had not done for a long time, not since he had started pointing out she was too old to be carried, and he carried her into the kitchen. (*Coraline* 138–139)

The intimate moment is initiated through Coraline’s unexpected physical closeness, her expressing that she misses him, her willingness to reach out emotionally. Her father, who once Coraline regarded as emotionally neglectful, responds with actions that represent his affection and care for his daughter. Putting the computer to sleep shows the shift in focus, from work to family, from distraction to presence. And his spontaneous decision to carry Coraline, despite previously insisting she was “too old,” restores a physical closeness that had quietly faded. This moment of renewed affection demonstrates she returns home not just to safety but to reawakened emotional intimacy. The contrast with Harvey’s father is not one of better or worse parenting, but of expression. Harvey’s father acts in ways that protect and support his son, reaching out to the police, listening attentively, but remains emotionally reserved. Coraline’s father, by contrast, meets her emotional gesture with physical warmth and acceptance. Both fathers are ultimately responsive, but Coraline’s father reveals the tenderness of their bond more openly, reinforcing the theme that love, once strained or obscured, can still be restored when it is genuine. While parental love plays a foundational role in the emotional development of both protagonists, Gaiman also illustrates that meaningful connection and belonging extend beyond the nuclear family. As Coraline’s journey draws to a close, her emotional growth becomes evident in the way she now seeks out and reciprocates affection from others in her community. This is particularly striking given the story’s beginning, where Coraline struggles to relate to her neighbors and regards them as eccentric and disconnected from her reality. In a significant moment of closure, however, she initiates contact and expresses genuine gratitude, as follows:

She knocked at Miss Spink and Miss Forcible’s door. Then she pulled out the stone with the hole in it.

“I don’t need it anymore. I’m very grateful. I think it may have saved my life, and saved some other people’s death.”

She gave them both tight hugs and went out.

“What an extraordinary child,” said Miss Spink. No one had hugged her like that since she had retired from the theater. (*Coraline* 158–159)

This wholesome scene indicates Coraline’s transformation. Returning the stone given to her in no special feelings attached turns into a moment of genuine intimacy. Her hug is not simply a sign of manners or obligation, but an expression of gratitude and affection toward women she once regarded as strange and emotionally distant. This is a moment of social belonging not based on shared age or familiarity, but on care and recognition Coraline offers out of gratitude regarding the gift that turned out to be extremely useful, though the old women are totally unaware. The fact that Miss Spink is visibly moved in a way she has not been “since she had retired from the theater” reinforces that Coraline’s emotional maturity is now something that affects others around her. She has transformed from a child seeking safety and affection to a mature individual capable of offering it to others towards the completion of the journey. This kind of love regarding friendship and emotional connection among peers is represented in *ToA* more often while in *Coraline*, the focus is more on parental bonds, specifically maternal love. Unlike Coraline, who must navigate the Other World largely in isolation, Harvey is not alone. Throughout her journey, Coraline lacks the warmth and comfort of a human friend, relying instead on an enigmatic companion that is reluctant to share a bond in the first place, the black cat. Though their bond is marked by sarcasm and emotional distance, the cat becomes a rare source of inspiration between the real and other worlds. Its presence helps Coraline recollect her thoughts, develop her sense of identity further, and endure moments of fear and confusion. Even though she finds the cat’s attitude unusual and occasionally frustrating, she seeks connection, a telling sign of her emotional lack. In one early exchange, Coraline attempts to fulfill her sense of connection through initiating a direct conversation, as follows:

“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 I’m not.”

Coraline sighed. "Please. What's your name? Look, I'm Coraline. Okay?"

"Cats don't have names," it said. "[Y]ou people have names. That's because you don't know who you are. We know who we are, so we don't need names."
(*Coraline* 34–35)

Coraline's desperate offer for friendship is met with deflection and irony, a defense mechanism of sorts from a creature that exists on the margins of both worlds. The cat's refusal to be named reflects not only its independence within the scope of identity and belonging. In contrast to Coraline, who is actively navigating questions of selfhood and relational ties, the cat claims to already possess self-knowledge without requiring labeling. Yet Coraline still needs to connect in a foreign environment, continuing the conversation despite her slight disappointment. Though the cat is not as touchy-feely as she expected, it becomes an ally, proving that even ambivalent relationships can carry emotional weight. This change becomes more apparent in a later scene where Coraline is startled by the cat's presence but responds with visible relief when she realizes it is the cat and nothing unknown:

Something furry pushed itself against her side in one smooth, insinuating motion. Coraline jumped, then breathed a sigh of relief when she saw what it was. "Oh. It's you," she said to the black cat.

"It wasn't so hard recognizing me, was it? Even without names."

"Well, what if I wanted to call you [for] dinnertime?" asked Coraline.

"[A] simple cry of 'dinner!' would do. No need for names." (*Coraline* 62–63)

The cat's physical closeness is the most intimate gesture it has offered so far, suggesting reassurance that is not voiced aloud but demonstrated through action. Coraline's startled reaction followed by "a sigh of relief" reveals how much she has come to depend on the cat's companionship, even if she is not fully aware of it yet. It is a presence she can count on and feel safe around. They discuss the earlier debate about names again, but Coraline is not as defiant and biased as before, she inquires about the issue further out of pure curiosity within the boundaries of respect. The cat's comment about calling a whirlwind keeps its snobbish charm intact, but its comment that "a simple cry of 'dinner!' would do" shows it is not as indifferent as it pretends to be. Apparently, this is no longer just a reluctant alliance; it is the formation of trust on its own peculiar terms. Coraline's attempts to connect are met with less resistance.

The cat, although it is too arrogant by nature to admit that it cares about Coraline's well-being, shows his care through actions and willingness to engage rather than meeting solely by coincidence. As her journey grows darker and lonelier, their bond serves not just as comic relief or plot device, but as a reassuring counterpart of the journey. It is nothing like the manipulative affection of the Other Mother who overdoes it and scares Coraline away, offering a companionship that, while imperfect and often nonverbal, is free of pressure or obligation. Perhaps that is the reason why the Other Mother hates its presence immensely as she sees it as a competition to win Coraline over and calls it "vermin" (*Coraline* 125). The Other Mother's hostility towards the cat reflects how deeply it threatens her territory and illusion of control. It is the one being she cannot manipulate. One of Coraline's final interactions with the cat, apologizing for using it against its own will to escape, represents their increased familiarity and intimacy, forged not through obligation but with mutual respect and shared struggle:

"I'm sorry I threw you at her. But it was the only way to distract her enough to get us all out. She would never have kept her word, would she?"

The cat looked up at her, then rested its head on her hand, licking her fingers with its sandpapery tongue. It began to purr.

"Then we're friends?" said Coraline. (*Coraline* 134)



Fig. 16. Coraline and the Cat, illustrated by Dave McKean

Coraline's apology, sincere and compassionate, marks one of the few moments in the story where she takes responsibility for hurting someone she cares about. The act of throwing the cat has been indeed a desperate move, but her recognition of its sacrifice and her readiness to compensate signal her accountability and emotional maturity. She asks for forgiveness, not affection as she begged for before, and in doing so, acknowledges the cat as a being with autonomy and value. The cat's response, resting its head on her hand, licking her fingers, purring, communicates forgiveness not through words, but through action. It is a moment of silent reconciliation which shows that even relationships initially marked by distance can evolve into intimacy. When Coraline asks, "Then we're friends?" it is a genuine proposal for mutual recognition. Their bond stems from shared trauma, mutual trust, and emotional honesty. Her need for belonging, at last, is met, not through manipulation or begging, but through connection she receives unconditionally. While Coraline's bond with the cat remains her sole close friendship in a world otherwise stripped of peers and empathy, Harvey's experience in *ToA* offers a contrasting dynamic. He is not entirely alone throughout his journey, with other children in sight. Though the Holiday House is designed to trap its visitors, Harvey finds companionship and moral support in his environment through Wendell and Lulu. These friendships, imperfect, unbalanced, but sincere, offer Harvey small but meaningful gratifications of belonging that strengthen his resolve for the trials ahead. One of the most moving examples of the nurturing bonds Harvey forms in the Holiday House comes through his tender exchanges with Mrs. Griffin, a character who, despite being an agent of the Hood, offers Harvey a kind of surrogate emotional care that is absent elsewhere. Their shared sorrow constitutes a form of solidarity, allowing Harvey to experience comfort not through illusion, but through genuine empathy, as follows:

"You've got tears on your cheeks." Harvey blushed and wiped them away.

"Don't be ashamed to weep," Mrs. Griffin said. "I wish I could shed a tear or two."

"You're sad," Harvey said. "I can see that."

"What I feel is not quite sadness," Mrs. Griffin replied. "And it's not much solace, either, I'm afraid." She reached out and touched Harvey's cheek. "Except these tears of yours. They comfort me." (*ToA* 33)

In this scene, Harvey offers comfort to an adult, even though it is the other way around when it comes to children approximately his age who often depend on emotional validation from parental figures. Mrs. Griffin's inability to cry signals her limited agency under the spell of Hood. Quite the contrary, Harvey's tears are not a sign of weakness but proof that he is still emotionally intact and responsive to suffering. It is a revealing scene on how emotional authenticity, even in moments of pain, can become a source of connection and comfort. Mrs. Griffin functions here almost like a grieving parent or elder, someone who recognizes Harvey's sensitivity as something rare and precious in a world designed to erase memory, feeling, and pain. It also highlights how Harvey's empathy deepens throughout the story, though his crying is not initiated out of care for others, it leads to a touching moment between two victims who suffer from the same cause. In Maslow's framework, this moment reflects a strengthening sense of esteem rooted not in pride, but in emotional intelligence. He learns that compassion itself is valuable not because it is rewarded, but because it allows others to feel seen. A more profound expression follows later in the narrative, one that affirms not only the bond between Harvey and Mrs. Griffin, but the healing power of being recognized and remembered by someone else:

"Look at us," Mrs. Griffin said, with a smile upon her weary face. "It feels so wonderful."

"But you're disappearing."

"I've lingered here far too long," she said [with] tears of joy, not of sadness...

"You are the brightest soul I ever met, Harvey Swick, [k]eep shining, won't you?"

Harvey wished [she stayed] a little longer, but he knew it would [be] selfish [to ask]. Mrs. Griffin had another life to go to, where every soul shone.

"Good-bye, child, [w]herever I go, I will speak of you with love." (*ToA* 184–185)

The farewell between Harvey and Mrs. Griffin represents the power of the emotional bond they had shared together. Her disintegration is not a horrifying experience but a peaceful ascension. It provides a release from the long-lasting suffering the Holiday House had imposed on her. Mrs. Griffin's fading, described with imagery of joy rather

than tragedy, reinforces the idea that Harvey's compassion has helped to set her spirit free. Her final words are more than a simple goodbye; they offer gratitude and approval. Declaring Harvey is "the brightest soul [she] ever met" serves as a proof of Harvey's spiritual growth along the journey. Their exchange also reverses a familiar trope. Rather than the adult saving the child, it is the child who liberates the adult. Harvey's presence gives her the "solace" she once said she lacked. In Maslow's terms, the scene fulfills Harvey's esteem needs in that his selfless acts reverse the misfortunes around him. Besides, he recognizes that love sometimes means letting go, even when the desire to hold on is strong. Harvey's connection with Mrs. Griffin provides not just an exceptional generational friendship but also a maternal type of comfort in the absence of his mother's care. His bond with Lulu is also rooted in mutual recognition, vulnerability, and emotional transparency. In contrast to Wendell's obliviousness, Lulu responds to Harvey with honesty and gentleness. Through their interactions, Harvey is reminded that friendship, even in a false paradise, can still be sincere:

"It'll be Christmas soon. You should wish for something. I've been here so long I've got everything I ever wanted. Would you like to see?"

Harvey said yes, and she led him to her room filled with treasures... They enjoyed the company of each other for a long while...

She smiled at him. "I like you, Harvey Swick," she said.

Her honesty made him honest. "I like you too... I wouldn't want anything to happen to you... I saw you at the lake... You should be careful." (*ToA* 53–56)

The exchange between Harvey and Lulu captures the innocence and depth of childlike friendship under extraordinary circumstances. While the Holiday House seems a dream come true, Lulu's remark that "[she] got everything [she] ever wanted" conveys the retreat there is a false paradise that brings entrapment. Her "treasures" represent the emotional stagnation that comes with having all desires met without effort or change, as Maslow emphasizes: "What, after all, is boredom but overgratification?" (*Motivation* 69). In this place where nothing grows or evolves, friendship becomes a rare and precious form of connection, perhaps the only thing still authentically hers. Lulu's vulnerability, paired with Harvey's protective instinct, deepens their bond. His comment about seeing her by the lake suggests Harvey's

beginning to see past the House's illusions and glimpse the cost of the harmless holiday. Their time together reinforces the development of trust and care between them, a genuine emotional alliance that contrasts with the Holiday House's artificial pleasures. Without having a chance to spend more time with her, however, Harvey soon finds Lulu at the lake as he feared so, diminished and dissolving. While their previous moment hinted at what had been taken from her, this scene exposes the dramatic resolution of her entrapment, a fate she has already accepted but Harvey now understands more clearly:

"Harr . . . vwey . . ."

"Lulu?" he murmured.

"Yesss ..." said the voice... "I don't want you to look at me. Please ... just ... keep your distance."

"I only want to help," he said.

"You can't help me," she replied, pained. "It's too late. You just have . . . to go . . . while you still can. You were my friend, [t]hank you." (*ToA* 92–97)

This scene depicts Harvey's first experience of losing someone dear to him. Lulu's voice, slurred and resigned, reflects how far gone she is, as a victim of the House's slow erasure. Her refusal to let Harvey see her up close stems from her shame and suffering. She no longer hopes to escape; she is simply saying goodbye. Her declaration, "You were my friend," is a pained expression of gratitude. In the Holiday House where everything is artificial and offered for manipulative means, this line affirms the emotional truth of their bond. Unlike Mrs. Griffin's peaceful departure, Lulu's is imbued with agony, making it even more haunting. She is a casualty of delayed resistance, someone who stayed too long, wished too much, and lost herself in the process. Harvey's sorrow here is not just for her, but also for what she represents, the cost of forgetting the real world, the real people, and the real feelings that once mattered. His friendships, with both the living and the fading, become the emotional compass that guides him out of Hood's illusions. Harvey's emotional journey is shaped by the relationships he builds, and through many of those connections, he feels loss, hope, warmth, and truth that guides him closer to his victory. After Hood's defeat, what remains is not just freedom, but the memory of

those who stood beside him and suffered similar casualties as he. The final exchange between Harvey and Lulu depicts both the joy and the sorrow of a friendship forged with sincerity in a place where everything else is crafted by illusions:

“I’d like to grow up with you, and be your friend, but I also want to go home. And I think in the year that’s waiting for me on the other side of that wall, you haven’t even been born.”

Harvey nodded sadly, glancing back toward the ruins. “I guess we do have one thing to thank Hood for.”

“What’s that?”

“We were children together,” he said, taking hold of her hand. “At least for a little while.” (*ToA* 204)

The bittersweet farewell carries the emotional strength of Harvey and Lulu’s bond. The acknowledgment that they cannot continue being friends together, that time itself will separate them through the re-establishment of natural order, transforms the cherished moment into a mourning scene. Lulu’s wish to grow up together with Harvey, paired with her need to return to her rightful place in time, echoes the theme that true love or friendship does not always last forever, which, regardless, does not diminish its value. Harvey’s final affirms that their shared experience, though fabricated by the Holiday House through villainy, produced real emotional ties Mr. Hood could not injure. This echoes a core theme of the novel, that genuine connection can emerge even within deception, and that intimacy shared with one another can be fleeting but still influential. Where once Harvey longed for escapism, he now values the beauty of real moments, no matter how short-lived. By holding Lulu’s hand for the first time, Harvey cherishes their bond, while being aware of the necessity of letting go, the final test of love and belonging.

3.2.4 The Esteem Needs

After belonging is gratified, whether through family, friendships, or other profound connections, the next step in Maslow’s hierarchy is the pursuit of self-esteem. This category encompasses both internal dimensions (such as self-respect, confidence,

autonomy, and mastery) and external recognition (respect from others, acknowledgment of one's worth, and meaningful accomplishment). For children like Coraline and Harvey, whose primary conflicts revolve around identity and resistance to external control, the formation of esteem is closely tied to moments of moral courage and decision-making. These stories do not depict esteem as a reward given by adults or institutions; rather, it emerges as something the protagonists must build in defiance of forces that would diminish or infantilize them. Through magical trials that isolate them and tempt them with comfort, both characters confront the question of who they are and whether they can live with the answer. Eventually, Coraline and Harvey achieve a sense of self-worth not by being told they are special, but by earning that status through independent thought, emotional resilience, and determined action. Coraline's persistent attempts to correct her name reflect more than simple, childish irritation. They signal resistance in the light of her growing desire for self-definition, especially in a world where adults so often ignore or mishear her:

"You see, Caroline," Miss Spink said, getting Coraline's name wrong, "both myself and Miss Forcible were famous actresses, in our time. We trod the boards, luvvy."

"It's Coraline. Not Caroline. Coraline," said Coraline.

In the flat above Coraline's was a crazy old man with a big mustache...

"One day, little Caroline, everyone will see the wonders of my mouse circus. You ask me why you cannot see it now. Is that what you asked me?"

"No," said Coraline quietly, "I asked you not to call me Caroline. It's Coraline." (*Coraline* 1-2)

From the beginning, Coraline is denied full recognition by the adults around her, even her very name is frequently mistaken. The misnaming is more than a humorous quirk. It symbolically stands for disrespect for her individuality. In correcting them repeatedly, Coraline resists passive acceptance of how she is seen, and begins asserting her identity. The fact that the eccentric neighbors dismiss her corrections reinforces the emotional distance between child and adult and sets the stage for Coraline's journey toward self-assertion. Her desire to be seen and named properly aligns with the basic need for acknowledgment and respect, a crucial aspect of self-

esteem. Besides, Coraline's assertion that she is "an explorer" is a recurring motif. By identifying as one, not only does she resist misidentification but also begins to actively define herself on her own terms at such early age:

"Have you seen Miss Spink, Caroline? I do hope she doesn't get lost." said Miss Forcible. "You'd have to be an explorer to find your way around in this fog."

"I'm an explorer," said Coraline.

"Of course you are, luvvy. Don't get lost, now." (*Coraline* 13)

When Coraline boldly declares herself to be "an explorer," she makes a symbolic claim to a strong agency. The declaration is responded with the discouraging, unconvinced tone of Miss Forcible's remark, which reinforces the disconnection and lack of mutual respect between them. Coraline's journey becomes, in this light, a metaphorical destination into psychological and emotional selfhood. Her role as an "explorer" is emblematic of a child carving out her own identity within adult-imposed order. This misalignment between Coraline's evolving self-perception and the adults' obliviousness becomes even more apparent during her awkward visit to Miss Spink and Miss Forcible. After pouring Coraline's tea, the old women start gossiping as if Coraline is not even there, which triggers her boredom and makes her leave early:

They weren't making much sense; she decided they were having an argument as old and comfortable as an armchair, the kind of argument that no one ever really wins or loses but which can go on forever, if both parties are willing...

Coraline wondered why so few of the adults she had met made any sense. She sometimes wondered who they thought they were talking to... (*Coraline* 17–18)

Listening to their conversation, Coraline observes her neighbors are locked in an endless, self-absorbed dialogue, yearning for the past, unable to live in today. While they offer Coraline care by serving tea and biscuits, they remain emotionally and intellectually unavailable. Her realization that they are not likely to address her while they are too invested in themselves reveals that loneliness does not have to stem from physical isolation, rather it can be felt due to being unheard, unnoticed, disregarded. This moment builds upon Coraline's growing self-awareness and highlights her need

to be treated as a thinking, feeling person, which is another core component of self-esteem. When Coraline later approaches the same women with a sincere cry for help, their inability to assist her confirms how little they truly understand her and take her seriously, as follows:

“How are your dear mother and father?” asked Miss Spink.

“Missing,” said Coraline... “I think I’ve probably become a single child family.”

“Tell your mother that we found the Glasgow Empire press clippings.”

“She’s vanished under mysterious circumstances,” said Coraline, “and I believe my father has as well.”

“I’m afraid we’ll be out all day tomorrow, Caroline, luvvy,” said Miss Forcible. “We’ll be staying over with April’s niece.” (*Coraline* 48–49)

Despite Coraline’s attempt to communicate the urgency of her misfortune, Miss Spink and Miss Forcible do not take her seriously. The irony of Coraline’s mature phrasing, that they “vanished under mysterious circumstances” is lost on them, as they are preoccupied with social visits and old theatre gossip. As a result, Coraline is once again alienated within the adult world. Self-worth, for her, must come from internal validation rather than from her environment. Their failure to recognize the danger she is in while they make a fuss about reading tea leaves is an ironic touch in the narrative, which positions adults in the same gullible individuals category they regard imaginative children to occupy. When the adults around her continually fail to see her as capable or truthful, she is forced to navigate her fears alone, an experience resonates deeply once again through her attempt to contact the police:

“My name is Coraline Jones. I am ringing to report [k]idnapping. My parents have been stolen away into a world on the other side of the mirror in our hall.”

“And do you know who stole them?” asked the police officer. Coraline could hear the smile in his voice, and she tried extra hard to sound like an adult might sound.

“I think my other mother has them both in her clutches. She may want to keep them and sew their eyes with black buttons...”

“Mm. You know what I suggest, Miss Jones? You ask your mother to make you a mug of hot chocolate, and give you a big hug for making the nightmares go away.”

“When I see her, I shall tell her that.” She put down the phone. (*Coraline* 52–53)

Coraline’s phone call to the police is a climactic moment in her psychological journey. She approaches the task with self-confidence, introducing herself by full name and stating her purpose directly, that she has called to report a kidnapping. Her determination to speak “like an adult might sound” shows how deeply she yearns to be taken seriously. However, the officer’s mocking tone discourages her. The policeman, as a representative of the adult authority, dismisses her concerns as mere fantasy. Gaiman uses this interaction to highlight an important trope of miscommunication, that adults often hear children without truly listening to them due to not respecting their autonomy. Coraline’s agency is undermined not by her own fear, but by the world’s unwillingness to value her voice. Yet, she manages not to crumble under pressure, calmly ending the call. Her being unable to get help from the real-world acts as a reminder that she needs to be self-reliant. Thus, she is prepared to act on her own, because no one else will. Having been dismissed by external authority figures, Coraline now draws strength not from external validation, but from a particular memory of her father’s selfless act, which she must take an example in order to save her parents (*Coraline* 54–57). Sharing her core memory with the cat, Coraline pieces together a personal anecdote for understanding what true courage is like. Her father’s action, getting stung by dozens of wasps to protect her, was not what he considered bravery because he was not afraid, but it was a necessary risk to take in any case for the well-being of the people that are dear to him. But knowing the danger, and returning anyway, that was bravery. Coraline acknowledges this lesson and uses it to strengthen her own motivation to return to the Other World for her parents. Her moral compass is not based on fearlessness, but on a sense of responsibility and loyalty. Bravery, for Coraline is fragile and unstable but grounded in love. She re-establishes her identity by the light of her own values and for the people she loves. Her sense of self, and her esteem, are getting stronger through each decision to shape her fate. This evolving clarity in Coraline’s sense of self is contested

with a mirror in the Other World which reflects not just appearance, but her identity and fear, as follows:

Coraline walked back into the house... At the far end of the hall was the mirror. She could see herself walking toward the mirror, braver than she actually felt...

A hand touched her shoulder... "You weren't in the mirror," said Coraline.

The other mother smiled. "Mirrors," she said, "are never to be trusted..."

She glanced at the mirror at the end of the hall. For a moment faces swam in the glass, indistinct and shapeless, and there was nothing in the mirror but a girl who was small for her age. (*Coraline* 74–93)

Gaiman's use of the mirror here emphasizes Coraline's developing but fragile self-image. The reflection she sees, "braver than she actually felt" is rooted in truth, and a projection of her potential. It marks the vital stage in which Coraline begins to act braver than she feels, stepping into the persona she must become to survive the horrors. The Other Mother's evasive touch is a symbolic representation of how she belittles Coraline while she is battling with such thoughts. Besides, her ominous reply, "mirrors are never to be trusted" is full of irony. Her power relies on illusions, distortions, and false projections of love, mirroring what is real. But Coraline sees through this now. The final image of Coraline "small for her age" reflects how she is still growing into a bigger person, not yet fully transformed. Besides, how she perceives herself in the mirror in a slightly more negative connotation upon the Other Mother's cruel remark illustrates how the villain successfully affects her belief in herself unfavorably, as she starts doubting herself yet again. This encounter with the mirror and evaluation of the psychological conflicts she has is hard to digest for Coraline. She is left with a sense of how far she still has to go. This momentary clarity is soon tested once more as she confronts herself in solitude during her continuing quest to find all the ghost children's souls, as follows:

Coraline took a deep breath. "I'm not afraid," she told herself. "I'm not." She did not believe herself...

Coraline wanted to go home.

She hugged herself, and told herself that she was brave, and she almost believed herself (*Coraline* 98–112)

In this scene Coraline is desperately self-coaching, which is a coping mechanism. Through verbal validation, she tries to overcome her fear. Her internal conflict illustrates the gap between her motivation and her deteriorating emotional state. Coraline is learning in practice that bravery does not always feel like bravery facing hopeless situations. The fact that she “almost believed herself” suggests her transformation is still in progress through discomfort and self-doubt. The hug she gives herself is a cry for surrogating the absence of external comfort. With that, Coraline becomes her own emotional supporter, nourishing her self-esteem. Though her fear remains, Coraline begins to move with more agency. When she claims the title of “explorer,” it is no longer a childhood game, but a declaration of identity re-constructed to be stronger through hardships:

“I’m an explorer,” said Coraline out loud. She had made it out of the cellar hadn’t she?..

“Little girl,” said [the] rustling voice [of the Other Mr. Bobinsky] in a far room.

“Yes,” said Coraline. I’m not frightened, she told herself, and it was true. These were illusions, things made by the other mother in a ghastly parody of real people and things on the other end of the corridor. She could not truly make anything. She could only twist, copy and distort things that already existed. (*Coraline* 113–116)

This is a key moment of empowerment that breaks Coraline free from the Other Mother’s enchantments. Earlier in the novella, Coraline’s claim to being an “explorer” had been dismissed by the adults. Here, she internalizes the title with full seriousness. The physical atmosphere, foul and distorted compared to its real compartment, mirrors her internal transformation. She is in hostile territory, yet she is no longer emotionally paralyzed. Her realization that the Other Mother cannot “truly make anything” is a crucial psychological insight which makes her fear truly disappear as she intended to suppress her paralyzing fear, not wanting to have disadvantage against the enemy throughout her adventure. The villain’s power, which once was terrifying, is now demystified. Coraline understands that evil in this world stems from corrupted

copies that hold no power against a real child. This epiphany reinforces Coraline's growing self-esteem. Not only is she brave, but also perceptive. Her identity as an "explorer" is now verified by action, not a child-like pretense, making a key step in her journey toward self-actualization. Now invigorated by the inner clarity that she is no longer afraid, Coraline's emerging sense of identity is tested in one of the story's most climactic scenes, namely, her final confrontation with the Other Mother's world and its hold on her. But this time, she does not face it in total isolation, as the kidnapped souls help her close the door to the Other World, as follows:

Shut! she thought. Then she said, out loud, "Come on, *please*."

Suddenly she was aware of other people in the corridor with her. She knew them without having to look. "Help me, please," she said. "All of you."

"Never let up, Miss! Hold strong! Hold strong!" whispered a voice in her mind.

"Pull, girl, pull!" whispered another.

And then a voice that sounded like her real mother said, "Well done, Coraline," and that was enough... [T]he wooden door banged closed.
(*Coraline* 131–132)

Coraline's once solitary journey is now participated by the collective strength of those she saved. The ghost children and her parents' support help her overpowering the Other Mother's penetration from the other side of the door. The voices urge her to be strong, acting like the inner voice of Coraline's conscience. The isolation once strongly felt leaves its place to a fulfilling sense of belonging and union. The echo of her real mother's voice, encouraging her, is what pleases Coraline the most, granting her the power to resist the Other Mother for good. Coraline wins the fight through a combination of courage and emotional connection she deeply feels of her beloved companions that fulfill both her love and esteem needs enormously. Having closed the door to the predator's realm, Coraline meets the ghost children once more in a dream where all of them are having a party. Those she saved offer her not just thanks, but recognition of her heroism, an emotional reward as valuable as restoring her physical safety:

"Thank you for coming to my party," said Coraline. "If it is mine."

“The pleasure is ours, Coraline Jones,” said the winged girl. “If there were but something we could do for you, to thank you and to reward you.”

“Aye,” said the boy with the red velvet britches and the dirty face. He put out his hand and held Coraline’s hand with his own. It was warm now.

“It’s a very fine thing you did for us, Miss,” said the tall girl. (*Coraline* 141–142)

This scene functions as a coronation like in fairy tales, but it finds its counterpart in a dream narrative. Though framed as a dream, it offers Coraline meaningful fulfillment. The ghost children, formerly voiceless and trapped souls, now speak freely thanks to Coraline. Her service is celebrated by her full name, emphasizing Coraline’s utmost agency. The boy’s hand, once cold in previous encounters, is now “warm,” signaling healing and spiritual ascension. Coraline’s esteem here stems from altruism. Not only is she praised for surviving, but also for putting others’ well-being first, and saving them. The dream thus indicates her spiritual transformation, offering a moment of closure that is satisfying and well deserved. Lastly, Coraline’s heroic actions, though not literally known by her acquaintances, begin changing how others see her. She finally hears her name pronounced correctly which restores her hold on identity. The final dialogue of Coraline and Mr. Bobinsky, also known as Mr. Bobo as Coraline learns from Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, demonstrates such affirmation, as follows:

Coraline went back to the house. Mr. Bobo was waiting for her in the driveway...

“The mice tell me that all is good. They say that you are our savior, Caroline.”

“It’s Coraline, Mister Bobo,” said Coraline. “Not Caroline. Coraline.”

“Coraline,” said Mr. Bobo, repeating her name to himself with wonderment and respect. “Very good, Coraline. The mice say as soon as they are ready to perform in public, you will come up and watch them as the first audience of all.”

“I would like that very much,” said Coraline. “When they’re ready.” (*Coraline* 158)

Throughout the novel, Coraline has been repeatedly misnamed, as adults dismissed or overlooked her. But here, as can be seen in the example above, her correction is not brushed aside this time. Instead, it is received and internalized by her neighbor. Upon Coraline's changing how she addresses him, Mr. Bobo does the same, which echoes the time Coraline is the first to show love and her father reciprocates. His repetition of her name, "with wonderment and respect," signals unlike in the previous interactions, she is now seen, not just spoken to. He delivers the mice's message of gratitude, another form of earned esteem. Coraline's reward after completing her journey is recognition, autonomy, and the promise of future connection on her terms. Her social environment has started reshaping itself around the girl she has become. Not very different from Coraline, whose esteem is earned through hard-won recognition, Harvey's journey begins in a space where praise is often used as a tool of manipulation. Mr. Hood's agent flatters him, not to empower him, but to pacify and convince him to follow his lead. Rictus' early compliments reveal the dangerous allure of esteem granted too easily, as follows:

"It looks like a wall," Harvey said, "but it's not a wall."

"You're very observant," Rictus replied admiringly. "Most people just see a dead end, so they turn around and take another street."

"But not us... Because the Holiday House is on the other side?"

"What a mir-ac-u-lous kid you are!" Rictus replied. "That's exactly right."
(*ToA* 13–14)

Rictus' exaggerated praises in the beginning of the book are uttered in insincerity. He does not respond to Harvey with genuine interest but with a manipulative exuberance motivated to lure him into complicity. The esteem needs sneakily satisfied here is conditional, as the admiration is not based on Harvey's solid accomplishment. What Rictus does is being agreeable for the sake of moving the child the trap. This moment reflects how false validation can feel empowering but ultimately corrupts autonomy. Harvey is being deceived into believing he is exceptional, which is the starting point of his struggle to distinguish between real and artificial self-worth. As Harvey begins to question the House's illusions, the emptiness of the whole premise becomes clear. Harvey's doubts are dismissed even by other children, reflecting how the esteem needs can be undermined not just by villains or adults, but by careless friends:

“Why would Mr. Hood have fish like that? I mean, everything else is so beautiful. The lawns, the House, the orchard...”

“Who cares?” said Wendell.

“I do,” said Harvey. “I want to know everything there is to know about this place.” Is there some kind of machine making the seasons change?”

“Don’t be a dope, Harvey. This is all real. It’s magic, but it’s real... Now sit down and shut up.” (*ToA* 38–39)

This interaction might seem like a simple disagreement between one child and another; however, it wounds Harvey’s sense of self. Wendell discourages Harvey’s curiosity, which is an important aspect related to autonomy and esteem, with a bullying command. Wendell is not evil, but he is complacent, and in that complacency, he reinforces the House’s stifling illusion: that critical thinking is not necessary in a space where pleasure is constant. Harvey’s desire “to know everything” signals his awakening, but Wendell’s response reminds the reader that esteem can be fragile when one’s environment discourages inquiry. The contrast with Coraline’s journey is clear, Harvey has no cat to parry wits with him; instead, he faces peer indifference. This dissonance continues when Harvey turns to an adult for clarity and comfort. But instead of being affirmed, he is being gaslighted, being told he imagined what he clearly witnessed. The people around Harvey do not just fail to validate his perceptions but also, they actively deny them:

“The thing in the sky. What was it? A kite?”

“I don’t know,” Wendell said, his smile disappearing. “Better not to ask, eh?”

“But I want to know,” Harvey insisted, turning to Mrs. Griffin...

“You imagined it... Why don’t you just sit down and eat?” Mrs. Griffin replied...

Harvey shook his head. His appetite had disappeared. He was angry, though he wasn’t quite sure at whom. Maybe at Wendell, for his shrugs; or at Mrs. Griffin, for not believing him; or at himself, for being afraid of illusions. (*ToA* 51–53)

Harvey's esteem is shaken by Mrs. Griffin's dismissal of his experience, pushing Harvey into feeling what Coraline as well often felt, unseen and unheard. But Harvey's reaction is different. He becomes angry, and that anger signifies his inner refusal to accept others' doubts concerning him. The mixture of blame he directs toward Wendell, Mrs. Griffin, and himself shows how esteem loss affects the individual dramatically. It also brings him to the part in his life where he will either accept others' version of reality or fight for his own, no matter how much discouraged he is on the battlefield. His desire to be free of other people's judgement becomes central to his journey toward self-trust and esteem. Eventually, Harvey's perseverance is rewarded. By the time they return to the real world, Wendell, who once dismissed him for asking too much, recognizes how he would not make it to the other side if it were not for him. The esteem Harvey once was denied is naturally gratified later thanks to his selfless action that speak louder than words:

"I know what you did back there," Wendell said just before they parted. "You saved my life."

"You would have done the same thing for me," Harvey said.

Wendell looked doubtful. "I might have wanted to," he said, somewhat abashed, "but I've never been very brave."

"We escaped together," Harvey said. "I couldn't have done it without you."

Wendell brightened at this. "Yeah," he said. "I guess that's right. (*ToA* 106–107)

According to the passage above, Harvey no longer seeks external validation but offers it to someone who once denied him the same. His reassuring Wendell is humble but not exactly true considering Wendell's manner so far. Regardless, Harvey does not claim sole credit (putting his friend's feelings first) but subtly claims his agency. Wendell is now deeply moved by Harvey's agency. And Harvey's leadership becomes self-evident. His esteem is no longer manipulated or ignored by the remnants and illusions of the house, but it is now a part of mutual recognition between him and Wendell born out of survival. This moment mirrors Coraline's dream about three ghost children. Harvey too is being thanked for saving not only himself but also others. Harvey's confidence continues to grow, and his self-worth motivates him to

take responsibility. Mrs. Griffin, who once dismissed his claims about what they saw out there was real, now respects his word and action, witnessing the boy's achieving what no other child has ever been able to by eliminating one of Hood's servants:

"You did it!" Mrs. Griffin said. "Child, you did it!"

"One down, three to go," Harvey said.

"You're forgetting Carna... [A]live [and] wants revenge."

"And I want my life back... I'm going to get it, Mrs. Griffin. Whatever it takes.

"Maybe you can" she said, with astonishment in her voice. "Of all the children who've come here, maybe you're the one who can beat Hood at his own game." (*ToA* 145–146)

Through Mrs. Griffin's announcement signals the reader that Harvey fully claims his agency. His speech is assertive, determined, and free from boasting. The contrast with Rictus' flattery is plain. Mrs. Griffin's recognition now arises from her own observations and natural development of Harvey, not manipulation. The phrase "Maybe you're the one..." positions Harvey from passive visitor to active rival in the Holiday House. Like Coraline, whose self-assurance becomes mirrored in how others address her, Harvey gains respect due to his growing spirit. His esteem is rooted not in others' approval, but in his readiness to act, even when the stakes are terrifyingly high. Harvey's journey reaches the stage where esteem and self-worth are no longer gratified externally but internally. He faces Hood not with confusion or dependence but with righteous anger and clarity. He has become someone who not only understands his own worth but will defend it, which, even his enemy appreciates, as follows:

"You stole thirty years of time with my mom and dad from me!"

"I only took the days you didn't want," Hood protested... *"Gone is gone."*

"No!" Harvey said. "What you stole I can steal back."

At this, a gleam ignited in the twin pits of Hood's eyes.

“You burn bright, Harvey Swick!” he said. “I’ve never known a soul that burned as bright as yours.” (ToA 159–160)

This scene between the confrontation of Harvey with Mr. Hood is the climax of Harvey’s esteem arc. Unlike Rictus who manipulated him with insincere praises from the beginning, Hood acknowledges Harvey’s inner strength with awe, but only after Harvey has asserted his own sense of justice and value. Harvey’s furious claim that he can steal back what belongs to him in the first place is not just defiant but also rightful. He no longer waits for adults or peers to affirm him and takes direct action in pursuit of what he deserves. He knows the value of what was taken from him and actively chooses to resist Hood’s temptations, even if he is still scared. The fire Mr. Hood repeats to be burning in Harvey is not about his ego but about his bravery and moral clarity. And ironically, Hood, who has tried to extinguish children’s vitality for his own gain, is the one who names and affirms the strength Harvey now wields. Harvey’s esteem is further acknowledged through the sincere praise of those he set free. Unlike the deceptive admiration of Rictus or the skepticism of Mrs. Griffin and Wendell earlier on, these affirmations come from people who have witnessed, and been saved by, his courage:

“Lulu? You’re free!” he said, running to her and hugging her hard.

“We’re all free,” she said, and planted a kiss on his cheek.

Wendell stepped into view, beaming from ear to ear. “What did you do, Harvey? Pull the place down brick by brick?”

“Something like that,” said Harvey, unable to conceal his pride...

“Even if we don’t get the stolen years back,” Lulu said, “we’re free because of you, Harvey.” There were murmurs of thanks from the little crowd, and a few grateful tears...

“Because you’re a hero,” [Wendell added]. (ToA 186–201)

Harvey, the once-passive curious boy lured into a danger, unsure of himself and dismissed by peers and adults alike, is now called a “hero” by those who watched him dismantle the illusion that trapped all of them in the Holiday House. Lulu’s kiss and Wendell’s teasing yet sincere goading confirm that Harvey’s actions have earned him

real esteem, not for superficial cleverness or obedience, but for bravery, perseverance, and compassion. The exchange between Harvey and Wendell signals Harvey's humility. He does not expect praise. But he accepts it not because he needs it to validate himself, but because it reflects a truth he has come to accept, that he matters, and he achieved something tremendous that no other children could. In the end, Harvey's transformation is acknowledged in the real world by his father. While Harvey no longer seeks external approval to define himself, the recognition from a parent offers a final, profound form of esteem: being seen and believed by those closest to him:

“Well...” said Harvey's dad, “...it seems your Mr. Hood existed after all.”

“So you believe me?” Harvey asked.

“Something happened here,” came the reply, “and you were a hero. I believe that.” (*ToA* 212)

The emotional moment shared between father and son carries enormous weight for Harvey. He has returned home not just physically, but as a changed person. His father, who had been extremely doubtful regarding Harvey's story, thinking Harvey's explanation that it was magic was “a child's answer and [he was] not a child anymore”, is now believes him (*ToA* 115) only after he managed to steal what Hood has stolen from him back. The father's response is more than an everyday affirmation, he chooses to trust something even though he cannot conceptualize what it actually is. After all Harvey has faced (disbelief, dismissal, manipulation), this sentence grants him the one thing he lacked at the start: adult recognition without condescension. Harvey no longer needs approval from outside, but the fact that he receives it from his father confirms that his journey has not only made him stronger, but it has made him seen like Coraline.

3.2.5 The Need for Self-Actualization

Self-actualization is the highest point of Maslow's hierarchy an individual can ever reach. It represents the realization of one's full potential. It is not merely about achieving success but about becoming who one truly is destined for by embracing individuality, values, and capabilities. As Maslow makes clear, “[t]he specific form

that these needs will take vary greatly from person to person” and it involves personal growth, moral insight, creativity, autonomy, and a deep understanding of the self in relation to the world (*Motivation* 46). In *Coraline*, self-actualization often manifests through trials that strip away illusions, affirm inner strength, and clarify identity. What begins as a fantastic adventure transforms into a process of psychological journey, where the child thrives as more attuned to reality and more accepting of its imperfections. One of the earliest signs of Coraline’s emerging self-actualization is her realization that there is no idealized or “better” version of herself to strive toward, only the self she already is: “Was there an other Coraline? No, she realized, there wasn’t. There was just her” (*Coraline* 67). Coraline’s realization that she is a unique individual reflects her rejection of external illusions and symbolic doubles. The Other World has presented her with numerous distorted mirror images, better parents, better neighbors, a better version of her life, but this epiphany re-locates her identity. She no longer seeks meaning in idealized fantasies. She internalizes her selfhood, an essential step in actualization. The simplicity of “there was just her” shows recognition of self-sufficiency and authenticity. Her newly grounded sense of identity is immediately tested when she is offered a utopia tailored to her desires, one that she boldly rejects, revealing a deeper understanding of human fulfillment:

“You’ll go home. You’ll be bored [and] ignored. No one will listen to you, not really listen to you. You’re too clever and too quiet for them to understand. They don’t even get your name right... If you stay here, you can have whatever you want.”

Coraline sighed. “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? What then?”

“I don’t understand,” said the whispery voice.

“Of course you don’t understand... You’re just a bad copy she made of the crazy old man upstairs.” (*Coraline* 116–118)

This is one of the most philosophically significant moments in the novella. Coraline articulates the paradox of desire and the emptiness of possessing everything in such fashion that it is exceptionally mature for a child, echoing Maslow’s own claim that “what, after all, is boredom but overgratification?” (*Motivation* 69). Her rhetorical

questions dismantle the fantasy offered to her, which promises unending joy, attention, and tailor-made pleasures. Coraline, who once was lured to the promise of having a better life now understands that authentic joy comes from unpredictability, challenge, and growth, not from omnipotent satisfaction. Her dismissal of “everything [she] ever wanted” captures her development. She no longer seeks to escape life’s mundane realities but to embrace them. In terms of self-actualization, she relies on her autonomy, moral insight, and capacity to find meaning in imperfection. Having rejected fantasy, Coraline also dismantles the illusion of the Other Mother’s resemblance in looks to her real mother, realizing just how sharply it contrasts in that she tries to impersonate someone else:

It was funny, Coraline thought. The other mother did not look anything at all like her own mother. She wondered how she had ever been deceived into imagining a resemblance. (*Coraline* 126)

Her change in perception regarding the Other Mother contrasts her earlier openness to the deceptive emotional manipulation she had once found alluring. It is not just that she sees the Other Mother for what she is, a hideous monster who mimics other people, but that she also sees herself differently, less naïve, more insightful. Self-actualization involves accepting and correcting one’s earlier mistakes, and here Coraline corrects her own misperception. The fact that she “wondered how she had ever been deceived” demonstrates how far she progressed as a person with a stronger sense of self. This breaking free from illusions also gains her an ability to appreciate things the way they are. Coraline begins to see her ordinary world through new eyes with deep appreciation, as follows:

She sat down on one of her grandmother’s uncomfortable armchairs... The light that came through the picture window was real golden late-afternoon daylight... The sky had never seemed so *sky*, the world had never seemed so *world*.

Coraline stared at the leaves on the trees and at the patterns of light and shadow outside the window. Then she looked down at her lap, at the way the rich sunlight brushed every hair on the cat’s head, turning each white whisker to gold.

Nothing, she thought, had ever been so *interesting*. (*Coraline* 134–135)

This scene represents Coraline's altered set of mind and perspective. Where she once was bored and felt confined, which chimed the urgency to constantly heading out to explore, she now finds profound beauty. The things she observes are ordinary, sunlight, trees, a cat's fur, yet they gratify her inner peace, which proves that she no longer needs fantasy to feel alive. This is perhaps the purest expression of Maslow's idea of "peak experiences" moments of deep connection, awe, and presence which "do not last, and *cannot* last [since] [i]ntense happiness is episodic, not continuous" (*Motivation* xv). As her journey makes Coraline spiritually grow, now the "world" feels more world, and she feels more herself. This newly embraced acceptance also extends to the imperfections of daily life, especially those she viewed with frustration or disdain earlier, as follows:

Dinner that night was pizza, and even though it was homemade by her father, and even though he had put slices of green pepper on it, along with little meatballs and pineapple chunks, Coraline ate the entire slice she had been given.

Well, she ate everything except for the pineapple chunks. (*Coraline* 139)

Coraline decides to try her father's unappetizing meal as even though it does not align with her taste, it is nevertheless an act of love and shared experience. She does not complain or endeavors to prepare her own meal as she used to before. Instead, she accepts the flawed but real life she returns to. That she eats "everything except the pineapple chunks" shows she embraces it while remaining faithful to her personal preferences. This balance between acceptance and autonomy is key to self-actualization. She now approaches life's challenges with the confidence of someone who has faced extremely challenging trials and succeeded, as follows:

Normally, on the night before the first day of term, Coraline was apprehensive and nervous. But, she realized, there was nothing left about school that could scare her anymore. (*Coraline* 159)

Compared to before, the everyday trivialities do not bother Coraline as she is a mature individual now. She has outlived the Other World and the monster behind it, overcame disarming illusions, and returned with a stronger sense of self. The world is still the same and she is still the ordinary girl who needs to attend school after the break, but she has changed inside. Her confidence, following how much she has achieved in her

journey, reflects the core of her self-actualization. Having traced Coraline's evolution into a self-actualized and reflective individual, the remaining passages will turn to Harvey Swick, whose journey through the Holiday House and its illusions likewise allow Harvey to undergo spiritual growth. As Coraline's self-actualization is the outcome of her rejection of false pleasures and her reconnection with the real world, Harvey's is shaped through similar ways. As he begins to desire more than immediate gratification, he, upon Lulu's reminder, wishes a gift for Christmas that cannot simply be recreated: an irreplaceable sign of the mutual love and perils and joys of creative work shared between father and son, as follows:

He'd wish for a present he'd been given (and lost) a long time ago; a present that his father had made for him. "The ark," he murmured...

"There's something under there for you," Mrs. Griffin said...

It was a perfect copy of the one his father had made. "How did he know?" Harvey murmured. "It's the same. It's exactly the same."

"Does it please you then?" Mrs. Griffin asked.

Harvey said it did, but that wasn't the truth. It was eerie to have the ark back as though time had been turned on its heels, and he was a little kid again. (*ToA* 56–59)

The scene above marks a turning point in Harvey's reaching toward self-actualization. He attempts to wish for something impossible to recreate, as it is something deeply personal. The toy ark was built by his father, which is stored in Harvey's memory as something treasured symbolizing his father's creativity and their bond together, signals Harvey is no longer moved by empty illusions, but he misses the meaningful days passed. Even though it cannot be distinguished from the real inspiration behind it, the resemblance of something newly made with something long gone creates anxiety. As the Other Mother who cannot create but twist and transform, Hood's magic cannot reproduce the memories of past time and the love shared between one another, all it can offer is simulations that distract poor children long enough for their souls to be snatched from them before they know it. That having it back though he knows it is a counterfeit of its real life still makes him feel pleased, yet also uncomfortable, reveals his increasing recognition of what truly matters. Thinking of

Lulu who earlier admitted she had already wished for everything she could ever wanted, Harvey begins to understand that fulfillment is not about abundance but about authenticity. His uneasiness that comes with such an epiphany gives way to his utmost rejection of the House and its deceptions, as he now knows even the most cherished object loses meaning when reproduced through an unnatural power. That is why when he escapes and makes his way to his house, though the villain has stolen everything from him, what matters now is not how his room looked earlier, but that it evokes a sense of belonging as a remaining proof of something he once had but did not value deeply:

“Come on, sweetie,” his mother said. “I’m afraid your room’s changed a bit, but it’s still comfortable. I kept it just as you’d left it for years and years, hoping you’d find your way home. Then I realized if you ever did come back you’d be a grown man, and you wouldn’t want it decorated with rocket ships and parrots.”

“I don’t mind,” Harvey said. “It’s home, and that’s all I care about.” (*ToA* 115–116)

Harvey’s response shows that his concept of home is no longer linked to the childish spirit of his room in which he once wished his days away. Holding onto what’s left of his parents and emotional safety gives an adult room to familiar nuance. His mother’s concern about the room’s changes reflects a parental fear that their child’s inner world might no longer align with the past, but Harvey’s calm reassurance shows he has moved beyond superficial longing. He has grown. This willingness to embrace change while still valuing connection is a key marker of self-actualization: he neither clings to the past nor demands fantasy. He accepts the present, with all its imperfections, as enough. Just like Coraline learns that abundance without meaning is hollow, Harvey also becomes impervious to the dazzling distractions of the Holiday House. Once susceptible to its wonders, he now sees through Hood’s strategies with increasing clarity. This sets the stage for one of his most powerful rejections of illusion, when Rictus tries to flood him with temptation and luxury in a final attempt to divert him from truth and freedom. From motorcycles to books, numerous pets to states, Rictus claims to offer whatever he can wish for on condition that he stays in the Holiday House, but Harvey is determined to end Hood’s grand design (*ToA* 166–168). Facing

Rictus' absurd performance, sweating to cast illusions to enchant Harvey as he was in the beginning, Harvey's response is of frustration instead of fascination. Each temptation is a parody of desire, exaggerated to the point of emptiness. Harvey's final declaration that "They're all *fakes*" is not just about the objects; it is a condemnation of the entire constructed world, the entire foundation of Hood's illusion (*ToA* 168). His rejection echoes his self-actualization. The transformed Harvey values authenticity over fantasy, meaning over pleasure, and self-possession over manipulation. In turning his back on abundant riches, he chooses reality, however dull it seems. Harvey's awareness continues to deepen after escaping the Holiday House. Like Coraline, who returns to the mundane with renewed appreciation, Harvey does not want to disregard his painful recollections in the Holiday House, even if it fades in time. As the fragility of memory is unsettling him, he insists on passing the meaningful stories of what was endured and learned:

"[W]e'll probably all forget about being here in a little while..." A few of the children said: no me won't; or, we'll always remember you. But Harvey insisted: "We will grow up and we'll forget. Unless we remind ourselves every morning. Or make a story of it, and tell everyone we meet."

"They won't believe us," said one of the children.

"That doesn't matter," said Harvey. "We'll know it's true, and that's what counts." (*ToA* 202)

Harvey is now more than a passive protagonist, he is a hero who has a story to tell, like all the victimized children. He reassures the others that meaning does not rely on public validation, as they all know their shared traumatic experience is true. However, constantly retelling it acts as reclaiming power. No longer is the naive child lured by the idea of illusions and false promises, he is able to tell storytelling shapes the identity. The trials of the Holiday House has blessed him with wisdom and virtue that must be nurtured, not forgotten. This is what makes him truly free, not just from Hood, but from child-like ignorance and passivity. As Harvey returns to his regular life, he brings something back with him, not a souvenir, not a spell, but a mindset. His experience has transformed him, and this final reflection reveals how a child's confrontation with darkness helps him to live a fuller life for the rest of his life:

The days that followed were unlike any Harvey had ever known... Time would be precious from now on. It would tick by, of course, as it always had, but Harvey was determined he wouldn't waste it with sighs and complaints. He'd fill every moment with the seasons he'd found in his heart: hopes like birds on a spring branch; happiness like a warm summer sun; magic like the rising mists of autumn. And best of all, love; love enough for a thousand Christmases. (*ToA* 213)

Hood's memory no longer disturbs Harvey as he stole his stolen years back from the actual thief. Through this lack and suffering, Harvey learns to be hopeful, grateful, imaginative, and loving as a self-actualized individual. In the end he realizes wishing for an unrealistic ideal robs the joy of the experience. Instead, he aims to create meaningful memories with the limited time he has with his parents. This thoughtful shift in perspective indicates self-determination, deep emotions, and the true essence of being present right here and now. He has moved on from daydreams, not with bitterness but with newfound wisdom, and that wisdom promises he will cherish his time going forward.

CONCLUSION

Everything in life is writable about if you have the outgoing guts to do it, and the imagination to improvise. The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.

—Sylvia Plath, *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*

Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always* are modern children's horror fantasies that follow and reinvent fairy tale tradition. As the research illustrated in the first chapter regarding its origins and historical development suggests, fairy tales, just like human beings, have continued to evolve and have become an indispensable part of popular culture and multiple art and media forms today. Fairy tales are richly integrated in our lives in social, political, and moral contexts, as narratives that offer more than mere children's entertainment for bright minds that can see beyond the simple magical stories with happy endings. Having been the epitome of the human imagination and creativity for ages, fairy tales welcome us in retellings, art, cinema, and more. Experimenting on fairy tales with different genres increases the value of the works and allows the artist to bypass limitations such as the length and the depth of classic examples. Likewise, Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always* are children's fantasies that follow classic fairy tale structure and tradition but also imbued with psychological development arcs for the protagonists through undergoing and completion of their magical yet life-threatening adventures. As Vladimir Propp stated, classic fairy tales are action-focused narratives that do not delve deeper into the minds of the characters. Upon an elaborate examination of *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always* through Vladimir Propp's structural mapping of classic fairy tales featured in *Morphology of the Folktale*, the study has demonstrated how parallel plot designs of children's fantasy tales are with those of classic fairy tales that align with the Proppian schema of thirty-one functions of dramatis personae. Propp's theoretical framework, though relatively old, is still practical to use and to apply to the narratives that follow a magical, heroic journey of the protagonist, as of the focus of this thesis, children's fantasy in particular. The reason for this relevance lies in the fact that classic fairy tale structure indicated by Propp is quite well-established even though he merely worked

with a hundred Russian tales written by Alexander Afanasyev. While the thirty-one functions cover the actions in such tales that are majorly influenced by fairy tale tradition, the case study of *Coraline* and *The Thief of Always* have shown that although the classic fairy tale structure is applicable to hybrid works of art and literature that make use of the tradition, the contexts of the stories have dramatically altered. This change does not only stem from the genre in question that shifted from a thousands of years of old storytelling tradition to fantasy. It is also the result of the way the needs of the children as individuals and the environment they were born into and raised in have been changed significantly compared to the earlier ages in which classic fairy tales were written. As children born in modern times, Coraline and Harvey are alien to essential classic fairy tale concepts such as monarchy and class consciousness. They are not the youngest children of the poor farmer family of six other siblings. Instead, both are the single child of a nuclear family in which isolation and boredom are often strongly felt at their age. Protagonists of children's fantasy, both Harvey and Coraline strike the reader as distinguished modern fairy tale heroes/heroines that are more bold and intuitive individuals. Also, the domestic environment offers absent parents in a different context than of classic fairy tales in that they do not abandon their children willingly or by natural causes (e.g. war, sickness, or evil forces ending the life of the morally good but misfortunate parent) but they sometimes do neglect their children due to hectic routines in life or self-absorption unwillingly. Fantasy, by representing such contemporary issues and the thoughts and feelings of the characters, which is not typically seen in classic fairy tales due to being action-based, allows readers to identify with the characters and calamities easily, witnessing the psychological effects of perilous journeys and their effects on the protagonists. Inherited from classic fairy tales, journeys in fantasy also often begin with a lack or misfortune the protagonist must resolve. At first, Coraline and Harvey are easily fascinated with the promise of fun, utmost care just as the typical fairy tale youngsters, but they also long for being seen and heard as complex characters, which makes the trap of illusions so effective. However, during this pursuit, they are manipulated through depletion and overgratification of their needs, which is not so removed from the traditional storylines. In order to analyze it further and to highlight what fantasy adds to the classic fairy tale representation of hero's journey, the thesis has consulted to Abraham Maslow's still relevant study of hierarchy of needs, illustrating each stage of fulfillment that is to be met sequentially by the protagonists throughout the adventure. Physiological needs in both *Coraline*

and *The Thief of Always* are the starting point to lure the children towards a world where mouth-watering dishes are offered to them, echoing the witch's house made out of sugar built for the same pursuit in Brothers Grimm's renowned fairy tale "Hansel and Gretel." Coraline, who is dissatisfied with the meals provided to her at home as his father cooks sophisticated dishes is fascinated with the Other Mother's meals which are prepared according to how she prefers to eat. The Other Mother blends basic act of feeding with attention and care, which is how she manages to lure the child so easily, exploiting not only her physiological, but also love and esteem needs by respecting her autonomy. Harvey is welcomed in similar fashion to the Holiday House, overwhelmed by the variety and abundance of the dishes prepared for him, which are revealed to be enchanted to sedate children into staying there. In addition, though Harvey hates taking naps during the day, the house again exploits his need to rest in order to force him into passivity, feeding on his energy and vitality. Their lack of basic needs is further weaponized against them through villains and their creations' being overly attentive and gratifying to the wishes of the protagonists. Harvey is gifted an exact copy of a highly personal and endearing toy ark his father once built for him, which, due to its uncanniness, disturbs him more than it pleases him. Coraline, on the other hand, receives the respect and attention she lacks from the replica of the grown-ups she is familiar with, namely, her neighbors whose sole purpose in the Other World is to entertain Coraline. Though it flatters Coraline at first, she realizes those copies are devoid of identity and the overly granted attention is suffocating, which usually is not seen as a problem children in classic fairy tales have to deal with as they, as a crowded family, barely have enough to survive. Upon the realization that the heavenly other realm is in fact a trap where their lives are under vital threat, safety need becomes a priority for both protagonists to secure. While Coraline faces the threat of her eyes being replaced by buttons, Harvey discovers the children who stay for so long in the Holiday House are transformed by the villain's magic into fish. They undergo a psychological battle not only for their own safety, but also their parents' well-being and safety, which is crucially threatened by the forces of the villains. Such circumstances in which the child or damsel in distress seek and rescue others is a rare task to assume in classic fairy tales unless the protagonist in question receives plentiful magical help and guidance. Coraline and Harvey, though, complete their task mostly by relying on their own sources, wits, and bravery throughout their journey which they successfully complete in the end. In Coraline's case, her parents are abducted, and in Harvey's case, as his time on earth is stolen

from him in his absence from there during the Holiday House stay, they lose their thirty years to spend together. Before this theft is noticed, both Coraline and Harvey are treated with care and attention. While the maternal attention Coraline receives from the Other Mother is manipulative and insincere in attempts to steal her soul, Harvey's intimate connections between friends he makes along the way are genuine. Navigating their escape from the trap, not only do Coraline and Harvey survive but they also rescue their parents along with other residents of the other worlds, which contribute to their self-esteem as they realize they are more brave, intelligent, and overall, potent than they initially assumed. By overcoming serious threats against their safety, autonomy, and identity, they reach spiritual growth as children at such an early age under unnatural conditions and hostile environments as the thesis have demonstrated. Successfully overcoming increasingly challenging trials allow them to realize conditionally met needs eventually pose a threat against all needs, especially safety. Upon her return, Coraline is not the dissatisfied girl with her monotonous life and with a changed perspective, she starts to see beauty in ordinary things and connect with people with whom she once was reluctant to engage actively. Harvey, on the other hand, realizes the great gray beast of February is not to be slain through spending each day rejoicing in fun but through spontaneous experiences shared with loved ones which lead the individual towards long-lasting happiness and satisfaction. Maslow's theory helped the thesis to trace the emotional depth, motivations, and character evolution in stories, complementing the lack of psychological depth that is observed in the structure of classic fairy tales.

In the end, both Coraline and Harvey return home transformed, able to see both themselves and their world with new perspective. Their journeys remind us that fantasy does not merely offer escape; it offers confrontation, reflection, and, ultimately, the tools for becoming whole.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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