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The Angels and Monsters of Children's Fantasy Literature

How Female Characters are Portrayed in L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*

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This thesis examines how female characters are portrayed in L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) and Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* (2002). The characters studied are Dorothy and the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, and Coraline and the Other Mother in *Coraline*. The analysis is done through close reading, focusing on the protagonists and the antagonists, and their comparative portrayals. Analyzing these works, this thesis argues that neither the role of the protagonist, or the antagonist, fully allows the female character to evade stereotyped and prejudiced portrayals, communicating to readers a dichotomous image of gender identity.

The characters are examined through feminist literary criticism, using Sandra M. Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's work *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Barbara Creed's study *The Monstrous feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* and Sarah Appleton Aguiar's work *The Bitch is Back: Wicked Women in Literature*. The primary analysis is centered around Gilbert and Gubar's notion of the recurrence of the angel-woman – monster-woman dichotomy of female characters in literature.

The analysis finds, that both novels contain problematic portrayals, though they are used in a more complex manner in *Coraline* than *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. All of the characters that are studied navigate between the poles of Gilbert and Gubar's dichotomy of the angel-woman – monster-woman. Of the protagonists as angel-women, Dorothy's portrayal contains many of the traits of the angel-woman, while Coraline's portrayal combines both traditionally masculine, and feminine attributes, leading to a more multilayered characterization. Regarding the antagonists as monster-women, the Wicked Witch of the West is portrayed as solely evil, while vilifying her using masculine attributes. The Other Mother's vilification happens through her averting both feminine, and masculine traits, leading to a twisted portrayal of gender. This study concludes, that while progress has been made, portrayals of female characters still contain stereotypes and diminishing dichotomies leading to a problematic view of gender expression.

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1 Introduction

How many ways can a woman exist in children's fantasy literature? From fairy tale characters such as L. Frank Baum's Dorothy and the Wicked Witch of the West, to Neil Gaiman's Coraline and the Other Mother, female characters in children's fantasy literature have often been portrayed in one of two ways: as pure, kind, and innocent or assertive, evil, and aggressive. It is usually the innocent protagonists who achieve the happily ever after, but only after the vilified antagonist has been dealt with. This raises the question: What do dichotomies such as this teach about gender identity and self-expression to young readers? By analyzing two works from different eras, this thesis explores how female characters are portrayed in children's fantasy literature, discussing the possible connotations and implications included in those portrayals.

In this study, I examine the characterization in L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900, hereby referred to as *TWWO*) and Neil Gaiman's novel *Coraline* (2002), analyzing how the portrayals of the female characters in the two novels are used as narrative and thematic devices to drive the plot forward, and keep the reader engaged. This study is divided into a discussion of the protagonists of the stories in the second chapter and examination of the antagonists in the third chapter, both primarily through the lens of feminist literary criticism. I conduct my analysis by comparing the differences and similarities in the two novels, in order to examine how the portrayals have changed over time. While a more modern and mature fantasy novel, *Coraline* provides a beneficial contemporary contrast to *TWWO*, as both of the novels operate with structurally similar storylines. In both of the novels, the main protagonist is a young girl who leaves behind a dull home and ends up in a new world, meeting fantastical side characters and facing female antagonists while trying to make her way back home. I argue that, in the two analyzed works, neither the role of the protagonist, or the antagonist allows the female characters to fully escape problematic portrayals that contain stereotypes, and otherwise problematic descriptions. Prejudiced dichotomies are used in both works as narrative and thematic devices, yet they appear in a more complex manner in *Coraline* than in *TWWO*. The reductive characterization of female characters communicates to young readers a one-sided attitude in terms of behavior and expression of gender identity. Research into how gender in children's literature is portrayed is especially important, since literature contributes significantly to conveying society's culture to young readers (Tsao 2). This research shows that male and female characters are not represented as equally active in children's stories, and female characters in general are portrayed less in photos and book titles (3). Studying this kind of enforcement of gender stereotypes and conventional standards exposes patterns of misogyny in

society and culture, which in turn can help to understand how such works can perpetuate the cycle of patriarchy. Examining how gender is portrayed and performed in children's literature increases understanding when it comes to gender norms, and what it means to subvert them.

To examine the dichotomous female characters, I start in chapter two by analyzing the protagonists through the dichotomy of angel-woman – monster-woman and by discussing how that relates to their roles as the story's romantic hero. The third chapter moves on to consider the portrayal of the antagonists of the two novels, and their characterization through stereotypes, power relations, and their role as the monster-women of the dichotomy. In both chapters I also examine how the character roles of the protagonist and the antagonist differ in terms of portrayal of gender in children's literature. Throughout the analysis, I base my discussion on feminist literary analysis. In this, I employ Sandra M. Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's study on 19th century male authors' portrayal of female characters through the angel-woman – monster-woman dichotomy (17-18), Sarah Appleton Aguiar's notions of the "bitch" archetype, and how women are vilified in literature through their aversion of traditional gender roles, and Barbara Creed's study of the "monstrous-feminine". While feminist literary criticism is my main theoretical approach, I also apply children's literature studies, such as Maria Nikolajeva's research on characterization in children's literature. I use Nikolajeva's study to explore how the protagonists are depicted through their roles as the story's romantic heroes, and to examine how that affects the way their gender is characterized. In addition to Nikolajeva's work, I also use Judy Simons' article "Gender roles in children's fiction", which contributes to analyzing the works as part of children's literature. This discussion leads to considering how the portrayals have changed in the hundred years between the novels' publications, and what that might indicate for the future of the characterization of female characters in children's fantasy literature.

1.1 The Primary Materials

The primary materials I chose in the interest of them being acclaimed children's novels, with stories that include both a female antagonist and a female protagonist. This provides the material to study the dichotomy between how female protagonists and antagonists are portrayed, their motives and agency, and the use of stereotypes with other reductive characterization in those portrayals. I also chose these novels specifically for the similarity in their plot structure. In both stories, a young girl in a dull home leaves for another world where she meets fantastical characters but also faces challenges, which she must then face, to defeat the antagonist of the story and to get back home. While *TWWO* reads as more of a fairy tale, *Coraline* functions as a modern children's fantasy

novel, that can be read as almost a contemporary version of *TWWO,* due to the similarities in plot. Thus, the novels also allow comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences between the portrayals of characters. With over a hundred years between their publications, the novels provide a source in examining how the portrayals of female characters in children's literature have evolved, if at all.

1.1.1 *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Published in 1900, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* marks the first of thirteen books in L. Frank Baum's series of Oz books. The book has been adapted into several different forms of media, such as a film *The Wizard of Oz* released in 1939 and a novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* written by Gregory Maguire and published in 1995. Maguire's novel has also gone on to inspire a widely popular Broadway musical *Wicked* which debuted in 2005, which has in turn been adapted into a musical film in 2024 with the same title. ("The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: Publication, reception, and analysis").

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz tells the story of the protagonist Dorothy, when she, her dog Toto, and her house are suddenly whisked away by a cyclone in the middle of the Kansas prairie. After landing in a foreign land, she meets the Munchkins, who inform her that she has killed the Wicked Witch of the East with her house falling on top of her. She is then hailed as the hero and guided to seek out the Great Wizard Oz, the ruler of the Land of Oz and the Emerald City, on her quest to take her and Toto back home. Before Dorothy sets out on her quest, she adopts the silver slippers of the Wicked Witch of the East, as well as the blessing of the Good Witch of the North in form of a kiss on her forehead. Throughout her journey she meets several characters who each lack something, and therefore join her on her quest to seek out the Wizard Oz. Once the group finally reaches the Emerald City, they learn that the Wizard will only grant their wishes if they kill the Wicked Witch of the West (hereby referred to as the Wicked Witch). The group sets out on their task, and after many challenges they end up being captured by the Wicked Witch. In the end, Dorothy accidentally kills the Wicked Witch by pouring water on her, causing her to melt. After being successful with her task and returning to claim her wish, she discovers that the Wizard is in fact a fraud from Omaha, who then escapes the Land of Oz to go back to his home in a balloon. In the end, it is Glinda the Good Witch of the South who fulfills Dorothy's wish by revealing that with the silver slippers, Dorothy in fact had the power to return home all along. As such, Dorothy returns home to Kansas to her aunt and uncle.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz can be considered a rather progressive children's novel for its time, as it features mostly only female characters in positions of power, and as Dorothy's portrayal as the protagonist differs greatly from the typical late 19th century female character. As a protagonist Dorothy is described as a headstrong and willful but kindhearted girl who is not too afraid to oppose the antagonists of the novel in order to protect her friends. Despite of this, feminist studies written on the original novel appear sparse, as Paula Kent observes: "While researching feminist perspectives of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, it became painfully clear not much has been written specifically about L. Frank Baum's Dorothy Gale from a feminist standpoint" (qtd. in Rogers 225). I agree with Kent's statement, as most feminist studies seem to focus on the character of Dorothy Gale in the 1939 movie, or they combine and contrast both the novel and film portrayals of Dorothy. For example, in Sydney Duncan's article "Lost Girl: Diminishing Dorothy of Oz" Duncan argues that all latter portrayals of Dorothy after Baum's novel have worked to diminish Dorothy's power as a "world-strider of prodigious gifts" (65). This analysis, however, downplays the significance of Dorothy's role in relation to the side characters, which portrays a more nurturing role, reflecting her role as a traditional female character. In contrast to Duncan, Todd S. Gilman in his article, " "Aunt Em: Hate You! Hate Kansas! Taking the Dog. Dorothy": Conscious and Unconscious Desire in The Wizard of Oz", uses psychoanalysis to examine the 1939 film version of Dorothy, and her unconscious desires as expressed in the structure of the story happening as Dorothy's dream. While Gilman focuses on the film, and in the novel what happens is not a dream, Gilman's notions are demonstrated in the novel as well, because the themes of emotional unavailability by Dorothy's family, and her nurturing attitude toward her three male companions are still vividly present. Like Sydney Duncan, most scholars seem to agree on Dorothy being an exceptional female character. Keira V. Williams observes how Dorothy in the "matriarchal monarchy" of Oz faces the "fallacy of patriarchal rule" when exposing the Wizard Oz, and as a powerful female character against her obstacles she "always succeeds" (1007-1011). I disagree with Williams' argument on Dorothy succeeding in the face of patriarchal rule, as in my view, Dorothy succumbs to patriarchalism by rescuing the male characters before herself. Continuing on Dorothy's heroism, Paula Kent for example in her chapter "A Feminist Stroll Down the Yellow Brick Road: Dorothy's Heroine's Adventure", compare's Dorothy to Joseph Campbell's "Adventure of the Hero" arguing how Dorothy, by Campbell's theory, proves herself as the hero of her story (Duncan 269). While Kent similarly to my study studies Dorothy as a hero character, I advance the argument by comparing how her hero character relates to her portrayal as a female character. Arguments for Baum's feminist writing are often based on his connections to Matilda Joslyn Gage, Baum's mother-in-law, who was also a known leader in the women's suffrage movement (Williams 1005).

It is also interesting to consider in view of the story of *TWWO*, and especially the character of the Wicked Witch of the West, that Gage also studied witches and their treatment and position in the patriarchal society **(**1008). Baum's witches have also been widely discussed in feminist studies, specifically in relation to their power dynamics. Margaret Atwood throughout her career has often returned to *The Wizard of Oz* series in both its literary and cinematic form to ponder about gendered power relations, and specifically about how in Oz, the witches as female characters, rather than Oz as the male character, hold the magical powers (Gibert 176-178). Atwood is not alone in her consideration of the power relations in Oz focusing on the witches specifically, as in her article Kimberly Frohreich argues how Baum portraying his witches in the story succumbs to reinforcing the gender binary by illustrating a "feminine ideal versus a masculinized "other"" (126). Using Gilbert and Gubar's notion of the angel and monster, Frohreich claims how Baum's portrayal falls in to the gender binary by describing the Good Witches in relation to beauty, light and youth, and the Wicked Witches with disfigurement, old age and malice. The notion of female characters being vilified as witches by portraying them with masculine features, is one I consider through the characters of the Wicked Witch of the West and the Other Mother in chapter three, with the help of Aguiar's and Creed's thoughts on vilified women. Previous studies done on *TWWO* seem to emphasize how Baum depicts the witches of Oz, as well as Dorothy's position as an exceptional character in relation to how she interacts with the other characters in the story, which is a theme I continue in this study. However, in contrast to these studies, I focus my analysis mainly on the juxtaposition, and the dichotomous portrayal of Dorothy and the Wicked Witch, which seems an area that is ignored in previous studies.

1.1.2 *Coraline*

Neil Gaiman's dark fantasy novel *Coraline* acts as my primary example for contemporary children's fantasy literature. Published in 2002, it is a widely recognized piece of children's literature, having also been adapted into a stop-motion animated movie, *Coraline* (2009). With its gothic theme and strong female characters, *Coraline* provides a point of access to examining the notion of how contemporary female characters are portrayed in positions of power and female rivalry.

The story follows Coraline, an independent and curious girl who has recently moved into a new home with her parents. Coraline is largely ignored by her working parents, which causes her to seek out her own adventures. The three-story house they reside in holds two other apartments, with two other sets of neighbors: the Misses Spink and Forcible in the bottom floor, in addition to a crazy old

man on the top floor. One day Coraline discovers in her home's drawing room a door which seemingly leads nowhere. Nevertheless, in the middle of the night she discovers a tunnel on the other side, which she ends up following, ending up back in her home. However, she soon discovers that it is not the same home that she left. In her "other" home, all is similar but not quite the same. In the other world she meets her "other" parents of this world, the Other Mother and the Other Father who try and convince her to stay with them with delicious food, fun games and their never-ending attention. All she has to do is let them sew black buttons on her eyes, which the other beings of her other home have also done. Coraline soon discovers the sinister nature of the mirror world, and how the Other Mother has created it solely for the purpose for luring her in. With only a black cat from her actual home to guide and help her, she decides to challenge the Other Mother in order to save herself, the ghost children whose souls the Other Mother has stolen, and her parents who the Other Mother has abducted. In the end she bests the Other Mother in a game, uses the cat to defeat her and escapes back to her own home where her parents are waiting for her.

In contrast to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *Coraline* has been studied extensively from a feminist literary criticism point of view, most often focusing on questions of identity and motherhood. Gaiman is generally praised for his tendency to create strong female characters in his novels, a point that is echoed in Tara Prescott's and Aaron Drucker's book *Feminism in the Worlds of Neil Gaiman: Essays on the Comics, Poetry and Prose* (2012). On the topic of *Coraline,* Danielle Russell's chapter "Unmasking M(other)hood: Third-Wave Mothering in Gaiman's *Coraline* and *MirrorMask*" focuses her feminist literary analysis on domestic spaces and motherhood. Russell points out how, in addition to the novel's central tension between mother(s) and daughter, Gaiman also contrasts different kind of mothers utilizing Coraline's real mother and her Other Mother, revealing the complexity of motherhood and the implications of the feminine ideal it contains (174). The purpose of the character of the Other Mother in the story is a theme that populates the previous studies done on *Coraline*, and one that I also focus on in this thesis. With their focus on post feminism and horror, Elizabeth Parsons, Naarah Sawers and Kate Mclnally in their article claim that Gaiman uses the character of the evil Other Mother as a trope, or a "vehicle through which the protagonist[s] resolve questions of identity [and] one's (gendered) place in the world..." (371). Their argument of how the Other Mother as a female character portraying traditional values must be usurped by Coraline for her to return to her "appropriate" place as a loving daughter, supports my view of how the Other Mother exists primarily in the text for Coraline to defeat as the contemporary romantic hero. *Coraline* as a novel and a film is also often examined also from a psychoanalysis point of view, as David Rudd in his article "An Eye for an I: Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* and Questions

of Identity" does. Similarly to my analysis, Rudd considers both Julia Kristeva's notion of the "abject", and Barbara Creed's notion of the "monstrous-feminine". Rudd examines how the Other Mother represents both Kristeva's abject, and Creed's monstrous-feminine, and more specifically its manifestation as the "archaic mother" in connection to Coraline's journey to self-discovery. A point which I also consider in my analysis of the novel. *Coraline* then as a novel is one that is a popular subject of studies of both feminist literary analysis and psychoanalysis. As is the novel's central theme, most studiess focus on the tension between the dichotomous female characters, the antagonist and the protagonist, the mother(s) and the daughter. Similarly, Jade Dillon Craig observes how Gaiman portrays the uncanny by destabilizing the ideology of family by presenting "dangerous parental figures and unhomely domestic spaces" (212), causing Coraline's identity to become fragmented. Of the Other Mother Craig, similar to my study, also considers Creed's notion of the monstrous-feminine and Kristeva's theory of the abject. Craig's analysis of the distorted domesticity of *Coraline*, and the uncanny of the Other Mother, is a theme I continue to study in this thesis through the lens of feminist studies. While the previous studies also examine the relationship between the Other Mother and Coraline, my study focuses specifically on contrasting their portrayals using the notion of Gilbert and Gubar's angel-woman – monster-woman dichotomy. In addition to the angel-woman – monster-woman dichotomy and Aguiar's notion of the "bitch", I also analyze Gaiman's monstrous depiction of the Other Mother through Creed's concept of the monstrous-feminine in both its literal and figurative expressions, and Coraline's role as Nikolajeva's romantic hero. Similarly to *TWWO*, with its female protagonist and antagonist, *Coraline* offers itself to a feminist reading of gender identity.

1.2 The Dichotomy of Female Characters

This thesis examines the effects of portraying female characters in a problematic manner. The two works are analyzed from a feminist literary criticism point of view, with a focus on the binary characterization of the characters. The analysis of the representation of female characters I base on *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979) by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar which provides an overview of the 19th century literary field through the lens of feminist literary criticism with a focus on male authors portraying female characters. In their work, they argue how women writers must break the stereotypical depiction of female characters themselves, or "kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been "killed" into art" (17) as they put it. In their argument, Gilbert and Gubar include the notion of how female characters portrayed by male authors generally follow a dualistic pattern. Their idea of the angel-woman – monster-woman dichotomy conveys how in their view, for

female characters, there exists only two roles: the role of the submissive and pure angel-woman, or the dominant and aggressive monster-woman. The dichotomy of the angel-woman – monster-woman is the central focus of my analysis, as I examine how the dichotomy is used to portray female characters in a diminishing manner. The dichotomy does not solely exist in male-authored literature, as they argue how "the images of "angel" and "monster" have been so ubiquitous throughout literature by men, that they have also pervaded women's writing to such an extent, that few women authors have definitively evaded either stereotype, or "killed" either figure" (17). Therefore, while both of my primary sources are in fact male-authored, my argument of how female characters are generally portrayed in a simplified, dualistic manner, is not restricted only to male-authored literature. While Gilbert and Gubar base their analysis of female characters written by male authors on 19th century literature in general, their notion of the angel-woman – monster-woman dichotomy can be used to discuss children's literature as well. Considering how children's literature is written by adult authors and specifically targeted for young readers, the discussion of the presence of the angel-woman as the idealized protagonist is particularly relevant.

In her work, *Rhetoric of Character in Children's Literature* (2002) Maria Nikolajeva defines the romantic hero of children's literature. The romantic hero is an empowered, indestructible protagonist, possessing magical friends and magical objects (31). Nikolajeva's notion of the romantic hero aids my analysis of the protagonists as angel-women in contrasting their gender role with their character role in the plot, to unveil if their role as the protagonist of the story helps the characters to break free from their portrayal as the stereotypical angel-woman. Continuing with the theme of gender in children's literary criticism, Judy Simons' article "Gender roles in children's fiction" provides a viewpoint to gender in children's literature specifically. In her article, Simons examines how gendered portrayals of characters in children's fiction have changed from the 19th century. Simons' analysis on characters who have defied the narrow gender structures also provides proper framework to my analysis of the protagonists.

The antagonists as the monster-women of the dichotomy are analyzed further with the help of Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993), and Creed's discussion on how female characters who subvert gender norms of patriarchal culture are portrayed as monstrous either literally or figuratively. Although Creed focuses her study of the monstrous-feminine on film, her ideas can be applied to literature as well. Creed's work, together with Sarah Appleton Aguiar's book *The Bitch is Back: Wicked Women in Literature* (2001), and her thoughts on the portrayal of malevolence in female characters as the stereotyped literary "bitch" (and patriarchal control as the root of it) aid my argument of how dominant female characters are often

portrayed as monstrous to convey an image of a "wrong" feminine role that threatens social order. Creed's and Aguiar's books help to illustrate how the portrayal is represented in the two novels as the Wicked Witch as Aguiar's archetypal bitch, and the Other Mother as Creed's female monster.

1.3 Defining Gender

In this thesis, I base the definition of gender on Judith Butler's notions in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Butler defines gender as a performative action, and therefore something one *does* rather than something one *is*. Butler argues against gender as an innate or natural identity, but rather claims that gender is constructed through performative, repeated actions, that portray the dominating societal ideals, which in turn are constructed through previous acts of gender, saying:

> Because there is neither an "essence" that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires, and because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. (178)

Therefore, gender is related to culture much more closely than to biological sex. With reference to this conceptualization, I examine how these performative acts of gender are portrayed in *TWWO* and *Coraline* through the narrative choices of the authors. In the discussion, I also refer to feminine or masculine traits rather than female or male traits in an effort to express a multidimensional view of gender. I also want to express that my intention is in no way, shape or form to express a binary view of gender, rather I think that gender is a spectrum, and femininity and masculinity but constructs of its manifestations.

2 From Harmless Little Girls to Rude Daughters – The Protagonists

The female characters of traditional children's stories are often portrayed in a binary manner: they are either angelic protagonists, or monstrous antagonists. In this section, I analyze the characterization of the protagonists in Baum's and Gaiman's works using the lens of Gilbert and Gubar's definition of the idealized version of a woman in 19th century literature, the angel-woman of stories. Acknowledging the fact that the characterization of the protagonists of my chosen novels reaches beyond the Victorian angel-woman, I also consider their part as the heroes of their stories to examine whether or not framing them as the hero allows them to fully break free from the constraints that the 19th century angel-woman is bound with. To analyze their roles as the heroes of their stories, I turn to Maria Nikolajeva's definition of a specific hero type often found in children's literature: the romantic hero. I also compare the similarities and differences of the portrayals and characterization of Coraline and Dorothy, to discuss the possible reasons for the disparities and the possible meanings and connotations behind them.

Gilbert and Gubar's angel-woman of literature is portrayed as a domestic, nurturing object, a counterpart or an accessory to other characters, her purpose is to devote herself to others, sacrificing her own desires and needs. In her passivity, she becomes a beacon of "contemplative purity" (25), her focus staying on contemplating themes of spirituality, virtue and domesticity, rather than engaging with the world of the story. The angel-woman's identity is defined by her having no story of her own, but existing to facilitate the needs and wishes of others. Commenting on her passivity and alienation of the tangible world, Gilbert and Gubar argue that it makes no difference whether or not the angel-woman is actually alive, or if she is an actual angel in death:

> [I]t is the surrender of her self – of her personal comfort, her personal desires, or both – that is the beautiful angel-woman's key act, while it is precisely this sacrifice which dooms her both to death and to heaven. For to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead. (24-25)

Essentially, they mean that the angel-woman's purpose exists in her passive abilities of guidance and support, therefore leaving her outside of the sphere of action, which then dooms her into her death in self-annihilation by denying her own needs. At the same time, her act of self-annihilation leads her to moral virtue eternalizing her as an actual angel. Therefore, in their view, the Victorian woman's path to feminine virtue requires the woman's symbolic (or literal) death. The angel-woman is celebrated in reaching an ideal that requires her self-erasure. Her reward then for perfect

selflessness is both spiritual transcendence, but also the complete obliteration of self. In her complete self-sacrifice, she reaches saint-like eternity, but only through killing herself (20-27).

In contrast to the passive angel-woman, the romantic hero of children's stories leads an existence of action. In her book, Nikolajeva compares the most common child protagonist character found in children's literature to Joseph Campbell's theory of the mythical hero. According to Campbell's theory, the hero's journey follows the mythical pattern of separation – initiation – return (Campbell 28). In Nikolajeva's view, similarly to the mythical hero, the child protagonist often must also follow a pattern of leaving, being away and returning in order for there to be plot (28). After all, it seems to me that if Dorothy never came out of the hole under her house, and if Coraline never stole the key to open the strange door but stayed home and ate her parents' food, what story would there be? This physical act of leaving home, being away and then returning is essential to the plot in both *TWWO* and *Coraline*. The characters are transformed from simply being a female protagonist of their story, to being the story's hero as Dorothy is whisked away by a cyclone to Oz, and Coraline follows a corridor to a mirror world mimicking her own home. Nikolajeva elaborates the hero's pattern, that after the dislocation, the character learns of their task, receives assistance, goes through trials and finally, is transported back to the home they left in the beginning. While these are not all of the stages of Campbell's mythical hero (or Nikolajeva's translation of them to children's literature), nor are all of the stages present in Baum's and Gaiman's novels, enough of the stages are repeated in the plot of the two novels to consider the protagonists as manifestations of Nikolajeva's child hero, and more specifically the romantic hero in such children's fiction. Typically found in fairy tales and fantasy, Nikolajeva defines the romantic hero as a child character who is "empowered by being able to travel through space and time, by possessing magical objects or by being assisted by magical helpers" (30). The protagonists in both novels certainly both travel through space, possess magical objects (Dorothy's silver slippers, and Coraline's stone with a hole in the middle) and are assisted by magical helpers in the form of talking cats, scarecrows, tin woodmen and talking lions. Nikolajeva also discusses how the romantic hero found in fairy tales lacks complexity and is therefore the perfect candidate for delivering the moral lessons included in many stories told to children, however, the contemporary version of the romantic hero is often portrayed as an idealized child character, having a set of ideal character traits allowing them to excel in anything the plot puts them through (31). Both versions of the romantic heroes are found in Dorothy and Coraline: Dorothy as the fairy tale hero lacking complexity and character growth, and Coraline as the contemporary romantic hero presenting an idealized self for the young reader. While

both characters are portrayed as holding agency in their stories, not only is the romantic hero as a character type simplified and predictable, so are the plots in which the heroes operate.

2.1 Dorothy

As the author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Baum seems to have a clear intention of how he wants his protagonist Dorothy to be perceived by the readers, as in the one-hundred-and-sixty pages of the novel, Dorothy is referred to by the narrator as only a "girl" ninety-six times, and a "little girl" thirty-two times. While her character does not fully follow the pattern of the traditional Victorian era literary female character, enough of the essence of Gilbert and Gubar's angel-woman is present to analyze her as a depiction of such, while still considering Baum's effort to conceal his "little" angel-woman as the story's romantic hero. Baum's inclination to create a female protagonist atypical for his time might be attributed to his connections to the women's suffrage movement in the late 19th century, as his mother-in-law was Matilda Cage, one of the leaders of the movement (Williams 1005). As a character in *TWWO*, Dorothy is characterized as a child who ends in the Land of Oz against her will, kills both antagonists' accidentally, and apologizes all the way through: "'I'm very sorry, indeed,' said Dorothy, who was truly frightened to see the Witch actually melting away like brown sugar before her very eyes" (99). This is how the climax of the story happens: in addition to killing the Wicked Witch of the East accidentally by her house landing on top of her, "'Oh dear! Oh dear!' cried Dorothy, clasping her hands together in dismay; 'the house must have fallen on her. What ever shall we do?'" (21), Dorothy also kills the Wicked Witch of the West by accident, this time in a sudden fit of anger. I argue that, even if as the protagonist and the romantic hero of the story Dorothy is portrayed as expressing independence and taking action as a female character, while progressive for her time, Baum's characterization of her, and other female characters in the novel still involves problematic stereotypes and reductive narrative choices. Despite being given the role of the hero in Oz, Dorothy's part as the angel-woman of Kansas is what she essentially is and what she returns to. In her chapter "Lost Girl: Diminishing Dorothy of Oz," Sydney Duncan argues that after Baum's depiction of Dorothy as an "American hero of a different kind," all other representations of her in popular media have diminished her character and reduced her power as a female character and a "female child-hero" (56). While I do not comment on any other representations of Dorothy in popular media, I disagree with Duncan on her notion of Baum's original version of Dorothy as being somehow groundbreaking or, returning to her words I mentioned in 1.1.1, "a world-strider of prodigious gifts" (65). Rather, I argue that Dorothy's character heavily leans on her role in the plot as a predictable romantic hero, who cannot escape the plot's structure, but follows it strictly, making her gender relevant only when Baum uses it as a

narrative device to emphasize her character being small and innocent by portraying her as an "only an ordinary little girl" (*TWWO* 30) or a "helpless little girl" (83). This is done to create tension in her struggle as the Wizard Oz pits the two female characters against each other by demanding Dorothy to kill the Wicked Witch of the West.

As is common for the type of character Nikolajeva defines as the romantic hero of children's literature, Dorothy is a simple character. Following Nikolajeva's definition of the romantic hero, she is first empowered by her traveling to Oz with her dog Toto. By being carried away by the cyclone, she is transformed from an ordinary orphan girl with ordinary origin in dreary grey Kansas, to being the Dorothy of Oz with an extraordinary destiny, who saves the Land of Oz from the Wicked Witches, liberates the Winkies being kept captive by the Wicked Witch of the West, and brings peace to the land. Her second empowerment comes from her obtaining the Wicked Witch of the East's silver shoes and being blessed by the kiss of the Good Witch of the North. The Good Witch's kiss grants Dorothy protection that will later in the story save her from the Winged Monkeys, as well as the Wicked Witch of the West:

> The Wicked Witch was both surprised and worried when she saw the mark on Dorothy's forehead, for she knew well that neither the Winged Monkeys nor she, herself, dare hurt the girl in any way. (*TWWO* 96)

Although Dorothy does not realize it at first, the silver shoes are a powerful magical item which even the story's main antagonist, the Wicked Witch of the West fears, as is evident from her reaction meeting Dorothy: "She looked down at Dorothy's feet, and seeing the silver shoes, began to tremble with fear, for she knew what a powerful charm belong to them" (96). Already in the beginning of the story, Dorothy without having to exert any action of her own, has received both the shoes, and the protection of the Good Witch of the North, elevating her from the ordinary girl from Kansas to the hero of the story, and standing above other normal characters. Her journey as the hero continues when she makes her way to the Emerald City and meets several characters along the way who join her. The Tin Woodman, Scarecrow and Cowardly Lion act as the romantic hero's magical helpers, who help and guide Dorothy on her journey, often saving her life whether it be from deadly poppy fields where the Scarecrow says to the Lion: "Get out of this deadly flower-bed as soon as you can. We will bring the little girl with us" (64), or wild crows: "When the little girl saw them coming she was afraid. But the Scarecrow said, 'This is my battle; so lie down beside me and you will not be harmed'" (92).

While Kent in her study observes Dorothy as "worthy" of the hero's role (Duncan 269), I argue that Dorothy becoming the hero does not elevate Dorothy's character to that of independence but rather it makes her characterization that more predictable and simpler. Even her action of facing her enemy, the antagonist of the story, is her acting out her part as the story's romantic hero. Facing the Wicked Witch is never her choice, but it is forced on her by the Wizard Oz, as a demand in return to helping her return home:

> 'I never killed anything willingly,' she sobbed; 'and even if I wanted to, how could I kill the Wicked Witch? If you, who are Great and Terrible cannot kill her yourself, how do you expect me to do it?' (*TWWO* 84)

When facing the authority figure Wizard Oz, Dorothy crumbles under her insecurity, and in accordance with her self-doubt, she fails to break out of her role as the romantic hero. For even if Dorothy gets captured and seemingly fails at her task, in the end the act of killing the Wicked Witch happens predeterminedly even if as an accident. Reducing her agency further, in the end Dorothy defeating the Wicked Witch happens in unexpected manner, almost as a symbol for her inability to escape her role as the predictable romantic-hero-angel-woman: "'Didn't you know water would be the end of me? asked the Witch, in a wailing, despairing voice. 'Of course not,' answered Dorothy; 'how should I?'" (99). Even without intention behind her actions, her role as the stereotypical romantic hero propels her toward her fate as the savior of Oz. While Dorothy does operate as the romantic hero of *TWWO* she also subverts many of the romantic hero's qualities, such as personal growth and transformation, since after Dorothy's journey in Oz her focus has not shifted from the beginning of the story, she does not conquer nor rule but returns home back to her origin where she wants to be:

> 'and I am glad I was of use to these good friends. But now that each of them has had what he most desired, and each is happy in having a kingdom to rule beside, I think I should like to go back to Kansas.' (157)

With the guidance of Glinda the Good Witch of the South, and her silver shoes, Dorothy is finally on her way home. As Dorothy possesses no extraordinary abilities of her own, but rather the magical help in her story is given to her, her ultimate goal is fulfilled through the help of others, rather than herself. She becomes the romantic hero of Oz accidentally, and in the end, she rejects the land that has claimed her as their savior, choosing the familiar domesticity of home instead, as a typical angel-woman character would.

While the role of the romantic hero does make Dorothy's character exercise some, even if predictable, action in the story, it is not enough to fully break her out from the confinement of the role of the angel-woman, or as Gilbert and Gubar describe the angel-woman's attempt at independence: "[rise] from the glass coffin of the male-authored text" (44). As the angel-woman of the story, Dorothy is a young girl, trapped in a foreign land far away from home, with no apparent way of getting back. She is characterized as a kind, frightened girl, a victim of the Wicked Witch of the West and her own unfortunate situation, but good and selfless toward other side characters she meets. Her uncertainty is present throughout the story by the way she refers to herself when interacting with other characters, for example in the presence of the Wizard Oz she introduces herself with "I am Dorothy, the Small and Meek" (*TWWO* 82) and continues on "Because you are strong and I am weak; because you are a Great Wizard and I am only a helpless little girl" (83). When she meets other characters, whether they be Munchkins, the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, the Cowardly Lion or the Wizard Oz, she shows kindness and sympathy for them: "'I understand how you feel,' said the little girl, who was truly sorry for him. 'If you will come with me I'll ask Oz to do all he can for you'" (32). As is typical for Gilbert and Gubar's angel-woman trope, Dorothy occasionally acts maternal toward her three companions, portrayed almost as a literal angel of heaven in an act of "saving" her male companions, as she offers them emotional support, worries for them, and encourages them on their quests. As is fitting for the angel-woman trope, it is the wishes and needs of her companions and even the Wizard that get fulfilled before Dorothy's. As the angel-woman, Dorothy sacrifices her first real chance of leaving Oz and getting back home by leaving the site of Oz's balloon to go search for her dog Toto (129).

Dorothy as a maternal figure has been discussed by previous scholars. For example, Gilman examining the film version, *The Wizard of Oz*, sees that Dorothy's maternality is caused by her unconscious desire to usurp her own mother figure Aunt Em who has treated her coldly. As such, empowered by the silver shoes and the protection of the Good Witch of the North, Dorothy acts as the "benefactress and charge to the Scarecrow, Tin Man and Lion" (165). However, Gilman seems to solely focus on Dorothy's unconscious desire when it comes to the authority figures in Dorothy's life and largely ignores the meaning behind her nurturing attitude toward the male characters she meets, which is a substantial theme in both the novel, and film. While I agree with Gilman that Dorothy's need to connect to the other characters who have also lost their way seems to stem from her position as an orphan living a joyless life with her aunt and uncle on their farm, in my view, her mothering of her companions reflects more of her internalized social expectations regarding gender expression. In regard to her home, the Land of Oz provides a colorful contrast to the grey Kansas,

where Dorothy's emotional needs are met. In the novel, Dorothy's family situation is never fully elaborated on. She lives as an orphan with her Aunt Em and Uncle Henry who are both portrayed as miserable and "grey" (*TWWO* 16). In fact, in chapter one, when the narrator describes Dorothy's home and her foster parents, the word "grey" is used ten times. Aunt Em is described as "thin and gaunt" and never smiling, whereas Uncle Henry is described not knowing what joy is (16). Based on these descriptions, Dorothy's childhood does not seem especially warm or joyful as every childhood should. In consideration to gender performativity, her maternal features and self-diminishing nature work to portray her character as a female protagonist who is characterized through stereotypes that diminish her agency and solidify her role as the angel-woman. She travels through the Land of Oz by no means of her own, but under the protection of the Good Witch of the North, and with the help of her three companions. Yearning to get back home, she makes her way passively through the story, spending her time helping her male companions to fulfill their wishes, even if she does not ultimately sacrifice her own goal for others, she does not prioritize it either. Out of the one-hundred-and-sixty-page book, only nine lines of the text are dedicated to her fulfilling her goal. Most of the story describes how first her companions get a chance to find their dreams using Dorothy's knowledge of the Wizard Oz, then the Wizard gets his wish when Dorothy kills his opponent the Wicked Witch of the West, after which Dorothy quite literally helps him to fulfill his second wish of returning to Omaha by obeying Oz's command to sew his balloon (128). This act of domesticity especially seems a vivid example of how, if in Williams' words Dorothy with the Wizard faces the "representation of the fallacy of patriarchal rule" (1007), she crumbles in the face of it. Lastly, her three companions all accomplish their goals as well and find their places in the world, crediting it all to Dorothy's help, which they would not have had, if Dorothy would have used the silver shoes right in the beginning of the story to return home:

> 'But then I should not have had my wonderful brains!' cried the Scarecrow.
> I might have passed my whole life in the farmers cornfield.'
> 'And I should not have had my lovely heart,' said the Tin Woodman.
> 'I might have stood and rusted in the forest till the end of the world.'
> 'And I should have lived a coward for ever,' declared the Lion, 'and no beast
> in all the forest would have had a good word to say to me.'
> 'This is all true,' said Dorothy, 'and I am glad I was of *use* to these good friends.
> But now *that each of them has had what he desired*, and each is happy in having a
> kingdom to rule beside, I think I should like to go back to Kansas'. (157, emphasis
> added)

As the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman and the Scaredy Lion all state, without Dorothy's help, their dreams would not have been fulfilled. It is only after "*each of them has had what [they] desired"* does Dorothy finally fulfill her own wish. While Williams argues that, this act of saving her male companions is precisely evidence for Dorothy's matriarchal rule (1007), I disagree, as in my view, by prioritizing the needs of the male characters above her own, her power is diminished and she has alienated herself to a state of otherness. It is exactly this state of otherness through which she has surrendered herself and her personal comfort and desires, that works as a perfect example of the "beautiful angel-woman's key act" that Gilbert and Gubar described that "dooms [the angel-woman] to death and to heaven. For to be selfless is not only to be noble, it is to be dead" (25). While Dorothy does have her own agenda in the story of getting back to her own home, ultimately, she exists to help the other characters to find their own happy endings.

Her own agenda of getting back home might be seen as an example of her will, but ultimately it is merely a manifestation of her position as the romantic hero, and the angel-woman, or "angel in the house" (17), that Gilbert and Gubar many times refer to the angel-woman as, to highlight the angel-woman's ultimate place and the sphere she belongs to being the home or house she occupies. As what Gilbert and Gubar describe as the "angel in the house", Dorothy can be expected to want to go back to her home and domestic life. As the angel-woman, she exercises little to no action, she does not confront evil (until she faces another woman), but rather she is saved from danger by her companions. She holds no power other than what is given to her, nor does she ideate or exercise creativity. In fact, the only time she exercises significant action, is when she confronts another woman, and angrily throws the bucket of water on the Wicked Witch of the West and accidentally melts her (*TWWO* 99). While her outburst might be seen as her breaking out from her angel-woman character, she quickly returns back to a meek and submissive character by apologizing to the Wicked Witch and therefore returning the position of power back to her, as seen in the previously discussed example: "'I'm very sorry, indeed," said Dorothy, who was truly frightened to see the Witch actually melting away like brown sugar before her very eyes" (99). Dorothy killing yet another Wicked Witch is how she cements herself as the angel-woman of both a living angel of domesticity and accommodation, and angel in the house, but also as an angel in the death of her self-sacrifice. As Gilbert and Gubar put it: "The Victorian angel in the house was allowed to hold sway over at least one realm beyond her own house-hold: the kingdom of the dead" (26). Dorothy killing the Wicked Witch of the West is the only time in the novel where she breaks out from her angel-woman role and exercises significant action. While the act stays predetermined for the romantic hero, it is also when she steps out of the confinement of her role as the supporter of others

and her need as the angel in the house to get back home. Therefore this is where she might transcend to something else entirely, for the act of killing someone implies that she does hold power, that she does have rage, and that she does act out in anger as her counterpart, the monster-woman would. Dorothy instantly turns away from this fleeting moment of madness and returns to her frightened, apologetic herself. In the end her action of finally fleeing the Land of Oz in the final chapter, is how she eternalizes herself and ascends to the saint-like position of the angel-woman, which she occupies in the eyes of the people of the Land of Oz. Her returning to her home is essentially how after putting herself in danger by delivering death to her enemies and putting her companions' needs above her own, is how Dorothy as the angel-woman steps through the symbolical threshold, leaves her part as the romantic hero, and transforms herself from a person to a saint-like object.

2.2 Coraline

As a female protagonist Dorothy leaves her role as a romantic hero behind and rather takes up the role of a traditional angel-woman, with her "I am an 'innocent, harmless little girl'" (*TWWO* 21) attitude, and her fervent desire to get back home to her life of domesticity as an orphan girl living on a farm in the midst of the Kansas prairie. Some hundred years after Baum penned Dorothy and her friends, Gaiman created Coraline. As a similar character to Dorothy, Coraline is a young girl also escaping her dull home to a more exciting world. In comparison to Dorothy, Coraline is portrayed more as the contemporary version of the romantic hero, rather than belonging to the angel-woman – monster-woman trope as a literary female character. Neither does Coraline's character singularly portray the role of the traditional, formulaic romantic hero, but as a complex character with character growth she operates somewhere in the midst of these character types. The differences between *Coraline* and *TWWO* start from their intended audiences. While *TWWO* is written as a children's fairy tale, *Coraline* with its gothic horror theme, can reach older readers as well, even if the novel follows a somewhat similar fairy tale plot structure as *TWWO*. The differences of the stories are echoed in their characters. Opposed to Dorothy, Coraline's character is more complex. Her character as the protagonist, while containing some of the qualities, is not quite that of the 19th century angel-woman as she is young and innocent, but also headstrong, and at times, rude. Neither is she meek, as she in her boredom defies her parents following the tunnel behind the door that her mother has forbidden her to open. Her story is not one of passive submissiveness either; rather she sets out on an adventure acquired through her own curiosity, saves the ghost children, and defeats the Other Mother to save her parents, which, as Danielle Russell notes, is portrayed as an act of bravery, rather than guilt (163). Even if not quite the angel-woman,

she is not Gilbert and Gubar's monster-woman either. While she does possess many characteristics of the monster-woman, she is not described as inherently malicious or aggressive either.

As a female character Coraline, while still expressing some qualities of the angel-woman, leans more toward her role as a contemporary manifestation of Nikolajeva's romantic hero. In addition to receiving magical objects and magical helpers as any romantic hero will, she possesses many qualities that are traditionally considered positive in contemporary children's literature, such as bravery and curiosity. As the contemporary version of the romantic hero, she is the perfect child, superior to every other character, her significance in the story is to be the anti-venom to the antagonist, her duty is to defeat her and save all of the other victims. While Nikolajeva's definition includes helpers to the romantic hero who are stronger than herself, as she notes in her book, "if fairytale protagonists are semigods, their helpers are gods. Ultimately, this reflects the power relationship between children and adults in society" (30), which is certainly true for *TWWO*, but in *Coraline* it is not quite so. Coraline's magical helper, the talking cat, is not necessarily stronger than Coraline in power, but acts as a guide and a teacher to her, as she explores the mirror world. When Coraline first meets the black cat, she feels instant familiarity:

> Standing on the wall next to her was a large black cat, identical to the large black cat she'd seen in the grounds at home. "Good afternoon," said the cat. Its voice sounded like the voice at the back of Coraline's head, the voice she thought words in, but a man's voice, not a girl's. (Gaiman 33)

The cat speaks with the voice of her subconsciousness, and as such the cat is not a representation of an authority figure of the real world, but rather a part of Coraline herself. Therefore, the cat highlights the capabilities that Coraline already possesses. While not clearly stated in the novel, the cat seems to be Coraline's way of making sense of the terrifying mirror world she has ended up in. The cat seems to appear when Coraline needs him the most, as she conjures up a friend in order to face the hostile environment she is in, not to mention the loneliness that follows her from her real home. It is important to note as well, that the cat speaks in specifically a "man's" voice, and not in her own. Even in a novel that focuses on female agency, and which features a fully matriarchal world, the voice of logic and reason comes from a masculine source, signifying a patriarchal authority, or a "paternal metaphor" (Parsons et al. 381), which Coraline leans heavily on. By paternal metaphor Parsons et al. mean, in psychoanalytic theory terms, that which interrupts the child's attachment to the mother, introduces language, and enables the child to individuate. Therefore suggesting, that the cat as a masculine source of logic is needed in Coraline's journey

toward her defeating the Other Mother and gaining independence in the progress. I disagree on this notion, primarily because the cat more acts as a guide for Coraline, rather than saving, or completing tasks for her. In addition, in the end when Coraline faces off against the Other Mother, it is Coraline who first comforts the cat and then uses it as a weapon against the Other Mother, by throwing it toward her to gain time for escaping through the door. This proves that it is Coraline who uses the cat, not out of need, but out of convenience.

The moments the cat appears is when Coraline needs him the most: when she first finds herself in the mirror world the cat helps her to understand the predicament she is in and assures her of the protection she has brought with her: ""By the by," it said. "It was sensible of you to bring protection. I'd hang on to it, if I were you." "Protection?" "That's what I said," said the cat" (35). The second time the cat appears, is when Coraline is first back from the mirror world and she finds out her parents are missing and cries herself to sleep: "Coraline was woken by cold paws batting her face. She opened her eyes. Big green eyes stared back at her. It was the cat" (49). Important to note is that it is in this moment, when Coraline makes the decision to stand up to the Other Mother and save her parents who are trapped in the mirror world. The third time when the cat appears, is when the Other Mother traps Coraline in the mirror world:

> "Why does she want me?" Coraline asked the cat. "Why does she want me to stay here with her?" "She wants something to love, I think," said the cat. "Something that isn't her". (53)

The cat provides Coraline comfort, but also clarity. When Coraline as a child is understandably scared and confused, the cat acts as her consolation, guiding her from the emotions she feels, to logical thinking that Coraline needs in order to best the Other Mother. When Coraline starts to explore the mirror world to learn more about it and gets lost in the fog, the cat, again, acts as her guide:

> "And what do you think you're doing?" said a shape to one side of her. … "I'm exploring," Coraline told the cat. …"Nothing to find here," said the cat. "This is just the outside, the part of the place she hasn't bothered to create." "She?" "The one who says she's your Other Mother," said the cat. (59)

When the cat appears next, it is to help Coraline to catch the last marble containing the soul of the ghost child, and to confront the Other Mother. In all of these instances, the cat is there to support Coraline, to lend her clarity, wisdom, courage and comfort when she most needs them. Even if the

cat is there to help and guide her, it does not take away from the fact that in the end it is Coraline who makes it out of the mirror world not once but twice and saves the other children as well as her parents. The cat speaking in a male voice seems more an echo of the patriarchal world of Coraline's origin, rather than the cat acting as a male character being there to save Coraline. In contrast to Dorothy's companions in *TWWO*, the cat does not step into harm's way for Coraline, rather it is Coraline who comforts the cat before the final confrontation with the Other Mother: "You'll be fine," said Coraline. "Everything's going to be fine. I'll take you home" (125). As the cat as her spiritual guide, Coraline finds new positive and necessary qualities within herself, creating a contrast to the traditional romantic hero of children's literature, such as Dorothy, who naturally possesses them from the beginning. As the contemporary version of the romantic hero, Coraline has magical objects and magical helpers, but she does not win her challenges solely because of their help but merely uses them as tools to find the power to conquer her obstacles from within herself.

When it comes to Coraline and the Other Mother, in *Coraline* as well, it is the tension between the two female characters that drives the plot forward to portray what seems a cautionary warning against the attributes of selfishness and aggressiveness which the Other Mother represents. In contrast to the Other Mother's superficial desires and illusory world, in the story Coraline represents goodness and the importance of appreciating the real world. Coraline's innocence and goodness does not need to be emphasized in the story, rather it is made clear by the contrast of the Other Mother's evilness. The more of the aggression and evil intentions she displays, the more monstrous the Other Mother quite literally becomes: "Her hair writhed and twined about her head, and her teeth were sharp as knives. . . ." (128). At the end of the novel her transformation is complete as her outer appearance moves further from Coraline's mother's appearance, and closer toward something demonic. This strikes a contrast to Coraline who stays as her childlike self throughout the story. While Dorothy operates as a traditional romantic hero found in fairytales, Coraline as a contemporary version of the romantic hero portrays the romantic hero's attributes of courage and selflessness in a more complex and intricate way. In the mirror world, the Other Mother locks Coraline into a closet behind a mirror in a display of power to reprimand her for rejecting her motherly affection: "You may come out when you've learned some manners, and when you're ready to be a loving daughter" (79). This portrays how Coraline, in contrast to Dorothy, does not turn away from trouble, but rather embraces it in order to intervene and defy evil. Coraline does not care about being perceived as "bad" or "good", she simply does what she sees as right and challenges what she perceives wrong. In the small room behind the mirror Coraline meets the ghost children. The ghost children warn her of the true nature of the Other Mother, or the

"Beldam," saying: "She will take your life and all you are and all you care'st for, and she will leave you with nothing but mist and fog" (86). The ghost children warn Coraline, of how the Other Mother devours her victims, taking their hearts and souls, until they're nothing more than a "memory of something forgotten." (86). This is how Coraline learns the full measure of the Other Mother's plan, and what the cost of giving into the temptation of a seemingly perfect life would be. If the Other Mother or the "Beldam" catches her, she will not die, but lose the essence of herself, her identity and soul. In essence, it seems that the ghost children are warning her to gather courage and to find the strength to be a "bad" child, to defy the Other Mother. Despite the warning of the ghosts, Coraline refuses to flee. Instead, she declares in a calm and determined manner: "I'm not running away, she has my parents. I came to get them back" (85). Coraline's way of deferring fear is by applying logic. She deducts that, since the Other Mother wants to manipulate her, the Other Mother would not leave her locked in the room, and so she will eventually be let out again. Unlike Dorothy, who as a manifestation of Gilbert and Gubar's angel-woman only reacts to things, rather than taking action, Coraline in the novel leads a story of, what Gilbert and Gubar define as, "significant action" (21). Gilbert and Gubar in their work attribute the life of significant action to the male character, who it is the obligation of the angel-woman leading a life of contemplative purity, to take care of. It is interesting then to consider how in *Coraline* masculine attributes become a positive characteristic, while feminine traits such as maternal features are portrayed in a negative light. As I explore in the next chapter, while more ambiguous in *Coraline*, in *TWWO* masculine traits on a female character is precisely how the Wicked Witch is antagonized.

Returning back to *Coraline*, Gaiman establishes Coraline as an active female character, with both a set goal of her own and the strength of will and way to reach it, which gives Coraline the ability to mostly avert the classic angel-woman – monster-woman dichotomy. While Coraline does portray some of the angel-woman's attributes, she also expresses the masculinity of the monster-woman, simultaneously subverting both character roles. Coraline as an active female character is evident through the contrasting differences between the two novels: while Dorothy ends up in Oz as an accident, Coraline goes to the mirror world willingly following her own curiosity. Dorothy does not have to make an effort on behalf of her companions, more so she bargains their protection, as she invites them to visit the Wizard Oz with her "If you will come with me I'll ask Oz to do all he can for you" (*TWWO* 32). In comparison, Coraline makes the decision to rescue the ghost children, despite the fact it means she has to put herself in harm's way she makes a demand to the Other Mother: "Then you let me go. You let everyone go – my real father and mother, the dead children, everyone you've trapped here" (*Coraline* 91). From the angel-woman's common attributes of

gracefulness, purity, nurturing and otherness Coraline possesses almost none. While she does portray innocence, it is more present in her childlike need of her parents when they go missing, and the sense of helplessness when she realizes they're not coming back: "All alone, in the middle of the night, Coraline began to cry. There was no other sound in the empty flat. She climbed into her parents' bed, and, after a while, she went to sleep" (45). In addition to her innocence, of the angel-woman archetype, Coraline does embrace values like family and domesticity. While she does rebel against her parents by stealing the key to the locked door, it is merely a symptom of feeling ignored by her parents. In the end domestic harmony through parental love is what Coraline gravitates towards. Of the monster-woman's qualities Coraline portrays independence and active resistance. She finds a way to refuse simple passive victimhood, as she confronts and defeats the Other Mother:

> "You're sick," said Coraline. "Sick and evil and weird."
> "Is that any way to talk to your mother?" her other mother asked, with her mouth full of blackbeetles.
> "You aren't my mother," said Coraline. (63)

In a passage such as this, Coraline expresses assertiveness toward the Other Mother which Gilbert and Gubar define as traditionally a masculine trait of a life of significant action, and therefore, it is also vilified in a female character because it is viewed as "unfeminine" (28). While qualities of assertiveness and aggressiveness were used to vilify female characters as monstrous in the 19th century literature, it is those same attributes that mark Coraline's agency and self-determination, and how her character is liberated from being trapped in simply one end of the dichotomy. By simultaneously expressing qualities of both ends of the dichotomy, and committing to neither roles fully, Coraline subverts the dichotomy and creates a third space of feminine identity, not entirely pure and innocent nor evil and monstrous. Coraline's power stems from her bravery and curiosity and not relying on help but utilizing it to find a strategic way out of her predicament. As a female protagonist she is not restricted by her gender since she finds agency of her own independently, as she faces a battle of wits against the Other Mother. It is the lack of resorting to definitively feminine or masculine attributes but rather building her character through her actions and goals, that makes Coraline break out from both the dichotomy of angel-woman – monster-woman, and the role of a romantic hero of formulaic fiction. By being characterized through qualities seen as monstrous in the monster-woman, Coraline actively resists the passive feminine archetype, and embraces psychological complexity, while simultaneously being portrayed as a child innocently missing her

parents. Embracing attributes of multiple different character roles is how she creates a new contemporary feminine archetype, while challenging patriarchal narratives about feminine behavior.

As I have previously stated, female characters in children's literature are often portrayed either as passive angels, or active and demonic monsters. Sometimes these two roles are mixed together to portray a new feminine role, a female character characterized with traditionally masculine traits, but rather than portrayed as an antagonist, she is presented in a positive light. "The literary tomboy", as Judy Simons names the character role in her chapter "Gender roles in children's fiction", "fought against the confines of her feminine role" (147) as a female character yearning for the adventure traditionally saved only for her masculine counterparts. The literary tomboy is not afraid of getting herself dirty, or acting out of her traditional gender role, and strives to defy, or even transgress, the divide between gender roles in children's literature. Therefore, the 20th century literary tomboy might be seen to operate as an act of rebellion from a female character toward the narrow confines of the traditional role of women in society and culture. As an example of such a literary tomboy Simons mentions George of Enid Blyton's Famous Five books, who is "determined to dodge the female role in which biology has cast her" (143). The popularity of the destabilization of traditional gender roles in literature Simons defines "fantasies of female autonomy" (152) and as entertainment for young readers allowing them to "experiment with gender without the need to destabilise their real-life identities" (157). Another manifestation of the literary tomboy can be seen in Coraline. Although clearly depicted as a female character, Coraline as a protagonist subverts her traditional gender role, and instead embraces the traditionally masculine attributes of bravery, curiosity and adventure. It is her curious nature and yearn to escape the boredom of her home that pushes her to begin her adventure, as she stumbles into the mirror world hidden in the drawing room of her home. In contrast to Enid Blyton's George, who openly defies the societal expectations directed toward her, Coraline embraces her masculine traits and her feminine side in a more innocent and indirect way. For example, she pays attention to what she wears, not through how the clothing makes her look, but by the colors she likes, as seen when she gets dressed, "Coraline put on her blue coat with a hood, her red scarf, and her yellow Wellington boots" (*Coraline* 10), and when she is shopping with her mother, "Coraline saw some Day-Glo green gloves she liked a lot. Her mother refused to buy them for her preferring to buy white socks, navy blue school underpants, four gray bloused, and a dark gray skirt" (16). Coraline displays interest in traditionally feminine interests like clothing, but rather than being concerned about looks, she pays attention to colors, focusing on bright colors in an attempt to rebel against the grayness that represents her dull home, and the boredom and lack of attention she experiences. Coraline speaks of herself as a girl, but is more focused on being a child,

than worried over her looks or expectations laid upon her. Rather, Gaiman has built Coraline's character as a female protagonist with both feminine and masculine attributes. She is scared when her parents disappear, but brave when facing the Other Mother, transgressing her traditional gender role, she openly defies her real parents, and the other parents, but is polite towards her neighbors. As the contemporary female character the literary tomboy, Coraline yearns for adventure and is not afraid to work hard or get her hands dirty:

> She found the planks on the edge of the meadow. They were astonishingly heavy—almost too heavy for a girl to lift, even using all her strength, but she managed. She didn't have any choice. She pulled the planks out of the way, one by one, grunting and sweating with the effort, revealing a deep, round, brick-lined hole in the ground. (114)

This is one of the many examples where Coraline acts as the literary tomboy, as she works hard for herself. She does not think of herself as weak, even if she acknowledges that the planks of the well might be too heavy for her, she is determined to get the work done and succeed by her own means. She exercises independence and uses her agency to help her fulfill her goals rejecting the traditional feminine passivity and creating her own path. Differing from Dorothy, rather than a polite and innocent little girl, Coraline is depicted simply as a young child possessing a colorful personality. The clear depiction of her as an individual person with agency and authority over herself, rather than a passive object, is what makes Coraline a relatable character in a complex story.

2.3 Closing Remarks: From Angel-Woman to Tomboy with Agency

With the ever-evolving literature genre of fantasy and children's stories, the portrayal of female protagonists has also evolved. The evidence is made clear by contrasting a hundred-year-old classic *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and its portrayal of Dorothy with *Coraline* a modern children's fantasy story, following the same plot structure as *TWWO*, and its protagonist Coraline. In comparison to Dorothy, Coraline's agency is not simply a narrative device, rather it is part of her characterization and personality. Coraline does not simply act heroic because she is the contemporary version of the romantic hero of the story, rather she reasons her choices with logic, follows her own instincts, and in the end makes her own choices through the means of her intelligence and cleverness. While Dorothy's characterization falls rather flat by leaning heavily on Dorothy being good and innocent simply for being good because she is the protagonist (not to mention, "an innocent, harmless little girl" (*TWWO* 21)), Coraline's character evolves and grows throughout the story. She starts the story

as a bored and neglected youngster looking for bit of an adventure and her story concludes with her facing her fears head on – by choice – and saving her family and the ghost children. While *TWWO* is a fairy tale, and *Coraline* a fantasy story, both are important to analyze in terms of their feminine representation, as both are written as children's literature.

In the novels, Dorothy and Coraline navigate between the poles of angel-woman and the romantic hero, seemingly failing to fully break free from either cast. The tension between the two concepts is what brings depth to the characterizations, while the protagonists navigate between the two roles. Dorothy, for example, might in the beginning lean toward being portrayed more as the angel-woman, but in the end she steps out from that role to manifest herself as the romantic hero, only to return to her part as the angel-woman and thus failing to break free from it. While Dorothy fails to break the walls of her confinement, Coraline operates as the contemporary version of the romantic hero of her story, only intermittently portraying sides of the angel-woman. She might carry some of the qualities of the angel-woman such as selflessness and the want to help others, but in the end her desire to help others does not stem from a need to conform to a set moral ideal such as in Dorothy's case, but from the courage of not only knowing right from wrong, but willingness to stand against injustice to the benefit of those less fortunate.

The duality of romantic hero and angel-woman echoes tensions experienced by women in the real world. While the angel-woman represents the external expectations and pressure felt from the patriarchal world, the romantic hero represents authentic self and self-expression. Both Dorothy and Coraline, while navigating both roles, demonstrate the complexity of the formation of identity. While the romantic hero as the role of the protagonist celebrates empowerment and agency, the female antagonist expressing the same traits is condemned for it. Therefore, it is important to consider, what it is that constitutes the monster-woman's vilification.

3 The Witch of Oz and The Bitch of Mirror World – The Antagonists

In the previous chapter I focused on the characterization of the protagonists, Dorothy and Coraline, and the multiple character roles they occupy, and how, if at all, those other character roles help them to break out of their roles as angel-woman of their story. In this chapter I continue on to analyze the protagonists' counterparts, the antagonists the Wicked Witch of the West (referred to as the Wicked Witch) and the Other Mother. I examine what, if any, purpose do the characters of the antagonists serve in the novels. I examine if they are integral to the plot, or do they exist to create tension in the plot, and to emphasize the goodness of the protagonists to highlight societal expectations of gender expression. I focus my analysis primarily on the antagonists' portrayals through the notion of Gilbert and Gubar's monster-women, and secondly using contemporary feminist criticism, to see how the antagonists are vilified further. I utilize Barbara Creeds notion of the monstrous-feminine, and Sarah Appleton Aguiar's female character archetype of the "bitch" for my examination of the antagonists. Although antagonists and monster-women in literature exist in plenty, they are often ignored in the field of children's literature as there are not many studies done on specifically female antagonists. While Gilbert and Gubar's work discusses the monster-women of the 19th century literature more generally, rarely do the monster-women as antagonists in children's literature get discussed in the literary field.

One of the few feminist works analyzing the female villains of popular media is Barbara Creed's book *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis.* By coining the term "monstrous-feminine", Creed gave a name to the many depictions of female characters that subvert traditional gender roles, and that are therefore portrayed as literal or figurative monsters. Analyzing what it is that makes the female character appear as "shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject" (14), Creed notes that the female character's abjection is "almost always in relation to her mothering ... " (21). Using Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject, Creed argues that for abjection to form, the concept of a border is crucial (26). This concept is useful in my analysis, as I examine the Other Mother and how her character is vilified as monstrous as she frequently crosses the border between a loving parent, and a horrifying monster. Creed's work proves useful in discussing the significance behind portraying the antagonists as female characters who subvert traditional gender norms and who therefore are described as monstrous. The concept of the monstrous-feminine works well together with Gilbert and Gubar's notions of the 19th century monster-woman, a similar manifestation of a feminine role subverting gender roles. While Creed examines the female characters using psychoanalysis and focusing on how the characters are demonized as both literal and figurative monsters in the horror

genre, Gilbert and Gubar focus on how the female characters are vilified by them subverting set gender ideals. Gilbert and Gubar's monster-woman acts as the mirror image of the angel-woman, a female character embracing significant action and female autonomy, challenging her angelic counterpart she threatens the patriarchal expectations directed toward her gender (28). Gilbert and Gubar describe of the monster-woman:

> Emblems of filthy materiality, committed only to their own private ends, these women are accidents of nature, deformities meant to repel, but in their very freakishness they possess unhealthy energies, powerful and dangerous arts. (29)

As such, it seems that monster-women are created to portray a cautionary narrative that seeks to suppress a life of feminine power and agency by utilizing the characterization to express a nonconforming position that is a threat to social order. If the angel-woman is the ideal woman of patriarchy, monster-woman is its worst nightmare. I argue that, as the monster-women, the Other Mother and the Wicked Witch threaten the position of the angel-women or the protagonists as the power holders of their stories, as both Dorothy, and Coraline hold the power to destroy the antagonists. The authors then vilify the monster-women by condemning their characteristics, such as assertiveness and independence, which threaten the patriarchal order and the ideal of the angel-woman. This is more clearly depicted in *TWWO* where the Wicked Witch's ambitiousness quite literally threatens, not only the Wizard Oz's rule, but also Dorothy. Having said this, it is present in *Coraline* as well, by Gaiman portraying the matriarchal world that the Other Mother has created as unnerving and frightening, with its distorted depiction of the real world.

Continuing with vilified women in literature, in her book, *The Bitch is Back: Wicked Women in Literature*, Sarah Appleton Aguiar discusses another contemporary manifestation of the monster-woman, the archetype of the "bitch". She defines the bitch as the female character portrayed through traditionally masculine traits, which causes her to be antagonized for adopting the same traits that a male hero might be celebrated for: intellect, assertiveness, persistence, ambition, command and self-preservation instincts (8). Aguiar argues, that since the female character refuses the patriarchal construction of the feminine, she is a threat to patriarchy and must then be labelled as the bitch to undermine any power she might hold (32), which follows along the footsteps of Creed's and Gilbert and Gubar's similar arguments. What is most interesting about Aguiar's notion, however, is that she dismisses the bitch's tangible manifestations, and rather focuses on the bitch's essence as a woman. Of why she chooses to name her feminine archetype a word that so long has been used to condemn women she says: "The rhetorical power of the word suggests a woman who

is incapable of the "desirous" traits of "true" womanhood" (9). As such, calling the dominant female character a bitch reclaims the bitch from being demonized over to being empowered for her identity. She argues that the bitch functions as a cautionary tale against female transgression, but also as a subversive role that challenges gender limitations. Essentially, the bitch operates both to reinforce and undermine patriarchal structures. Aguiar's notion of the bitch becomes relevant in my work while examining the vilifying characterization of the antagonists, and the primary reasons behind those portrayals.

3.1 The Wicked Witch of the West

While there exists two Wicked Witches in the Land of Oz, I focus my analysis on the Wicked Witch of the West as the Wicked Witch of the East is only briefly present in the beginning of the novel. As Baum's antagonist to Dorothy as the protagonist and as the Wicked Witch to her "harmless little girl" (*TWWO* 21) the Wicked Witch of the West operates as the monster-woman end of the dichotomy in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. In contrast to Dorothy, the Wicked Witch of the West is portrayed by combining both feminine and masculine attributes, as she is a female character who is dominating, independent and feared by all). In the story, she is described as the selfish and malevolent ruler of the Winkie country in the western parts of Oz. Where Dorothy is portrayed as modest and polite, the Wicked Witch of the West depicts aggression in her determined effort to destroy Dorothy and her friends to reach her goal of ruling over the Land of Oz. As Dorothy's character as the angel-woman echoes the late 19th century ideals of kindness and meekness in feminine behavior, the Wicked Witch's vilification happens through her aversion of those ideals. Essentially, her character embodies all that Dorothy, as the protagonist, resists. Therefore, the Wicked Witch's wicked, supernatural state cements her place as an example of a character portraying Gilbert and Gubar's monster-woman that they call an "antithetical mirror image of an angel" and a "representative of otherness" (28). The Wicked Witch is vilified for being unable to conform to the patriarchal ideals, which she is then physically exiled for.

It seems that in *TWWO* it is patriarchy that both demonizes the Wicked Witch, and creates the conflict between her and Dorothy, as in the story Dorothy would not have gone West to face the Wicked Witch, had not the Wizard Oz told her to do so. The Wicked Witch's status as a Gilbert and Gubar's monster-woman of the 19th century literature is further reinforced by Baum's portrayal of her as a deformed witch, "Now the Wicked Witch of the West had but one eye" (90), the hate that is expressed toward her throughout the story, as demonstrated by the Wizard Oz: "Remember the Witch is wicked – tremendously wicked – and ought to be killed" (84), and by her living outside of

the society's sphere and being avoided by all, as the Guardian of the Emerald City's gates states: "No one ever wishes to go that way" (89). The story pits Dorothy and the Wicked Witch against each other, by the Wizard Oz declaring the Wicked Witch as something that should be killed. This is how Baum essentially signifies that the angel-woman must destroy the monster-woman, and her harmful attributes of significant action and power, which defy the patriarchal ideals of the Land of Oz. The characters of the angel-woman and monster-woman are usually pitted against each other by their authors, as Gilbert and Gubar explain using the story of Snow White as an example: "Female bonding is extraordinarily difficult in patriarchy: women almost inevitably turn against women because the voice of the looking glass sets them against each other" (38). While in Snow White it is the voice of the looking glass that sets the two female characters against each other, in the Land of Oz it is similarly the patriarchal voice of the Wizard Oz that does the same: "There is now but one Wicked Witch left in all this land, and when you can tell me she is dead I will send you back to Kansas – but not before" (83). It is important to note, that the aversion of the Wicked Witch does not start here, as she is already mentioned in earlier chapters: "…now that you have killed one of them, there is but one Wicked Witch in all the Land of Oz – the one who lives in the West" (22). With Oz's command the true conflict begins, as female character is turned against female character by the masculine voice patriarchy.

In the conflict, Dorothy, as the angel-woman represents not only a life of passivity but an ideal of contemplative purity, which directly threatens the monster-woman's desire to live a life of significant action. In my view, if the angel-woman represents the ideal female character, the monster-woman as her antithetical mirror cannot exist, as the monster-woman threatens the ideals represented by the angel-woman, therefore suggesting an alternative way of existing as a woman. It is the same with Dorothy and the Wicked Witch. While Dorothy is in Oz threatening the existence of the Wicked Witch and expressing her angel-woman-like traits of purity and passivity, the Wicked Witch's life of significant action cannot exist. If Dorothy, who directly contrasts her is the ideal, the Wicked Witch's life of significant action will always be held against that ideal and therefore vilified. Therefore, it seems that the confrontation of the two female characters is already set before they ever meet. The conflict between the two female characters finally crystalizes in a symbol of vanity, the silver slippers that the two female characters end up fighting over is how Baum weaponizes femininity and pits the two female characters against each other:

> Now the Wicked Witch had a great longing to have for her own the silver shoes which the girl always wore. … She watched Dorothy carefully … thinking she

> might steal them. But the child was so proud of her pretty shoes that she never took them off … (98)

Material possession is then central to the conflict. As a feminine symbol, the silver shoes represent not only the power they hold in the story, but also the animosity the story holds for the Wicked Witch, suggesting that only Dorothy is deserving of having the shoes, and the charm they possess. By placing the focus on a material possession such as shoes, both of the female characters' power is diminished, as they are reduced to bickering over a pair of silver slippers. Using the story of the Snow White as an example, on the fate of the monster-woman Gilbert and Gubar note:

> Renouncing [the angel-woman's] "contemplative purity," [the monster-woman] must now embark on that life of "significant action" which, for a woman, is defined as a witch's life because it is so monstrous, so unnatural. … she will practice false arts in her secret, lonely room … Finally, in fiery shoes that parody the costumes of femininity … she will do a silent terrible death-dance out of the story, … Her only deed, … can be a deed of … of self-destruction. (42)

In the Wicked Witch we see the subversive female character's act of death. The Wicked Witch has renounced contemplative purity, attacked against Dorothy, and embarked on a life of significant action and claimed a part of the Land of Oz as her own, going directly against the Wizard Oz. For these actions she is vilified in the text as monstrous. With her one eye and a non-human body that can melt "like brown sugar" (99), the Wicked Witch's portrayal is framed as "abject to the human race itself" (Frohreich 129). She is cast outside of her world's sphere, feared and shunned for her otherness she is talked of in a fearful manner by the people of the Land of Oz as the Munchkin's demonstrate: "… he Wicked Witch of the West who would make you her slave if you passed her way" (*TWWO* 23). The Wicked Witch as the monster-woman of the story goes against the angel-woman and the protagonist by practicing her magic, but she is unsuccessful and finally, as the only act left for her, she completes her "death-dance" out of the story, not in fiery shoes but in a silver one. Her final deed is that of death as she self-destructs by agitating Dorothy further: "'I shall keep [the silver shoe], just the same,' said the Witch, laughing at her, 'and someday I shall get the other one from you, too'" (99). And so, her final deed is done, as she fails against the angel-woman, and finally deforms fully: Tthe Witch fell down in a brown, melted, shapeless mass and began the spread over the clean boards of the kitchen floor" (99). As such, the portrayal of her deformity as the monster-woman-antagonist is complete.

If, even at the end, as the monster-woman the Wicked Witch must do her death-dance and die, before that as Aguiar's "bitch" character she has been liberated. In her book Aguiar writes:

> The bitch ... determines her own value. Because of her repudiation of the traditional, patriarchally defined feminine role, ... the bitch is exiled from the patriarchal playground. Yet, in that denouncement, the bitch has found a space of her own ... where she might be empress, untouchable by the male powers. (32)

As the bitch, the Wicked Witch has found a space of her own in the Winkie country, where she is not ruled by the Wizard Oz and is therefore untouched by his patriarchal power. While the Land of Oz is often studied as a matriarchal society (Williams), I remark the Land of Oz as a patriarchal society since, even if the Witches hold some degree of power due to their supernatural abilities, the Wizard Oz is still viewed in Oz as the most powerful of all, as the Good Witch of the North explains, "He is more powerful than all the rest of us together" (23), and his deception is never revealed to the other residents of the Land of Oz. In contrast to William's stating how "the gender politics [of matriarchism] of Matilda Gage are written all over the [*The Wizard of Oz* series]" (1007), it would seem to me that, Baum's mother-in-law's, Matilda Gage's argument on the historical treatment of witches, and how the accused witches posed a threat to the patriarchal society (1008) appears far more accurate in Baum's depiction of the Wicked Witch's social position in the Land of Oz. Supporting my view of the Land of Oz as a patriarchal society, is the fact that, even after the Wizard Oz leaves the Land of Oz, it is the male character of the Scarecrow who takes over as the ruler of Oz, not one of the two remaining Witches. From this patriarchal society, the Wicked Witch is exiled due to her claiming her own power and going against the Wizard. As the Wicked Witch is a threat to the patriarchal social order of Oz, she is therefore portrayed as evil, in an attempt to diminish the power she might hold over the patriarchal world. Her refusal to conform, and her autonomy as an independent female character, is why she must be exiled, as her character does not only pose a threat to the Wizard, but also to Dorothy. The Wicked Witch expresses a different feminine role to Dorothy's, as she represents a choice to the traditional female character of the angel-woman. After examining how Baum vilifies the Wicked Witch, it seems that the Wicked Witch's subversion of traditional feminine attributes is far more dangerous than the physical threat she poses in the story. Of the twin roles of female character's Aguiar writes:

> ... [T]he bitch transgresses against the female heroine, both to comparatively highlight the virtuous woman's goodness and to act as an insidious emissary of

> patriarchy; doing the dirtiest of "dirty work," she is a double agent in the gender battles. (34)

By refusing to conform to the traditional gender role of female characters that Dorothy and the Good Witches represent, the Wicked Witch in the story seems to operate as an example, to which the Good Witches and Dorothy's feminine roles can then be compared to. By portraying the Wicked Witch as deformed and evil, her qualities can be highlighted as "wrong" for the female characters, while simultaneously emphasizing the other female character's goodness. The differences in the novels are highlighted clearly: "'Oh gracious!' Cried Dorothy; 'are you a real witch?' 'Yes, indeed,' answered the little woman. 'But I am a good witch, and the people love me'" (22). In the scene where Dorothy meets the Good Witch of the North for the first time, both Dorothy's fright and general distaste toward the notion of witches in general is revealed, as the Good Witch's quick explanation to set herself different from the Wicked Witches highlights the negativity and discrimination expressed toward the Wicked Witches.

Considering that even without the Wicked Witches the plot of the story would not considerably change, as the goal of the plot is for Dorothy to return home, and as there is nothing to imply in the text that the Wicked Witch of the West is the reason for Dorothy ending up in Oz, the Wicked Witch's character's purpose in the plot seems to be to act as the antagonist for Dorothy to shine against. This reinforces the idea that her role as the opposite of Dorothy as the good, is to be the "bad", the worst female character imaginable to the author, and thus her portrayal reflects both the monster-woman, as well as the bitch. In that way, the Wicked Witch is created to operate as the author's tool to set a binary view of which kind of a female character is right, and which is wrong. In my view this points out that for a female character to operate independently within her own power as the Wicked Witch does, is unimaginable, so she must be condemned as a deformity and cast outside the society's sphere, to be punished for acting out of her designated gender role. Baum's separation of his witches into wicked or good highlights the simplification of the female characters in the novel. The "good" characters are celebrated for their power and benevolence: "We are so grateful to you for having killed the Wicked Witch of the East" (20). As the Good Witch of the North and the Munchkins praise Dorothy for killing the Wicked Witch of the East, and as Dorothy in turn thanks Glinda the Good Witch of the South for her kindness in helping her get back home (158). As such, the Good Witches are celebrated and Wicked Witches are despised. The Good Witch of the North's maternal protection in the form of a kiss protects Dorothy from the Winged Monkeys, as well as the Wicked Witch of the West killing her: "We dare not harm this little girl, for she is protected by the Power of Good, and that is greater than the Power of Evil" (95). The kiss

then seems to operate as a symbol of acceptance for Dorothy's goodness, as she is accepted by other "good" characters in the story.

In the novel, the power imbalance works in the benefit of the patriarchal society of the Land of Oz. Both Baum's portrayal of the good and the bad female characters in *TWWO* further supports this view, as the name of the novel itself. Even if the story's protagonist and main focal point is a female character, it is the Wizard Oz who as a side character is featured in the title *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz.* Baum has created his female characters in an oversimplifying manner. In her article, Kimberly Frohreich argues that even if Baum might appear to depict the four witches in a way that challenges the patriarchy, his depiction is "more conventional than it seems initially" (126). Frohreich's argument on the fallacy of Baum's portrayal of his seemingly progressive female character supports my analysis of how the Wicked Witch's portrayal is constructed in a stereotyped way. Frohreich observes how as the "bad" characters, the Wicked Witches are old, deformed and mad and in contrast as the "good" characters, the Good Witches are maternal, young, and beautiful (126-128). As such, traditional binary images of female characters reign free in Oz. The reader is told that the Wicked Witch of the East that Dorothy kills on arrival "... was so old" that she "... dried up quickly in the sun" (23). The Wicked Witch of the West's deformity and inhumanity are made clear by the portrayal of her with only one eye and how "… she was so wicked that the blood in her had dried up many years before" (97). As Frohreich argues, by vilifying the Wicked Witch with attributes that subvert the traditional gender portrayal of femininity and harnessing the Good Witches with a traditional portrayal of femininity, gender binaries and harmful stereotypes are reinforced in the story (124) . Baum's pitting of female characters against each other by using stereotypical portrayals of the angel-woman and the monster-woman, to grossly highlight what is good and desirable and what is bad and detestable contributes to the diminishing view of a traditional gender role for women, and to what is proper behavior in terms of gender expression. Considering *TWWO*'s success as a children's book, despite trying to create a modern children's story with a female hero to act as a role model for children, Baum ends up teaching his readers that there exists only two types of women: well-behaved ones, or extremely badly-behaved ones. In the end, it is the male-authored angel-woman of patriarchy who destroys the undesirably unfeminine monster-woman, and thus saves the Land of Oz.

3.2 The Other Mother

Transition In Neil Gaiman's *Coraline*, the Other Mother is portrayed as the deceitful mother figure who lures Coraline into a mirror world that the Other Mother has created, to try and seduce Coraline

to stay so that "[they'll] all be together as one big happy family" (46). In truth, the Other Mother wants to consume Coraline, like she has three other children before her. While Coraline calls her the other mother as she takes on a form mimicking Coraline's real mother, the Other Mother's previous victims reveal that her true name is "Beldam", meaning an "old woman" or "witch" ("Beldam"). To Coraline the Other Mother poses as somewhat of an authority figure, as she takes on the form of her parent and tries to act accordingly. As soon as she realizes that Coraline will not succumb to her that easily, she drops her act of maternal love and reveals the horrors of the mirror world in forms of control and fear. In contrast to the Land of Oz, the mirror world as the Other Mother's creation is inherently matriarchal, as she as both the creator and the ruler holds all power there. All other characters, except for the powerless ghost children, Coraline and the cat, are created by the Other Mother and are hers to control. Therefore, she is also the driving force of the plot of the story. Without her, there would not be the mirror world, and therefore Coraline would have never traveled through the tunnel to end up there. Her character as such transcends that of a simple antagonist such as the Wicked Witch and ends up as both Creed's archaic mother, Aguiar's bitch, and an active part of the story.

The Other Mother is portrayed as an old, evil entity and a spider-like monstrosity through her physical descriptions. Her teeth are "sharp as knives" (*Coraline* 128), her long fingers are "clawlike" with "crimson varnished fingernails" (93), her skin is pale with "the color of a spider's belly" (128), and her eyes are black buttons (28). The Other Mother's long hair, long and painted fingernails, and her role as a mother figure are all feminine markers that are utilized to vilify her character by emphasizing her monstrosity, as she physically transforms to more and more monstrous as the story progresses. As the monster-woman of Gilbert and Gubar's dichotomy, the Other Mother is vilified through embracing her masculine features and being portrayed as "unfeminine", such as the Wicked Witch is. Differing from the Wicked Witch however, it is the femininity that her character exudes that emphasizes her evilness. In her work *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis,* Barbara Creed points out the lack and therefore the need to study the female monster of popular media specifically and coins the term "monstrous-feminine" for the need to emphasize "the importance of gender in the construction of her monstrosity" (16). The monstrous-feminine represents social anxieties and taboos surrounding femininity, sexuality and the female body. According to Creed, the horror that the monstrous-feminine exudes comes from what Julia Kristeva defines as the "abject". The abject is defined as that which fails to respect borders, positions and rules, which in Creed's work is then used to analyze the portrayal of female characters who fail to conform to traditional gender roles.

Of the many facets of the monstrous-feminine and the abject, the Other Mother can be analyzed through the facet of the archaic mother most fittingly. The archaic mother Creed describes is the "primordial abyss, the point of origin and the end" (33), as such she represents a symbolic, age-old creator. Rather than a specific character role, the archaic mother is a maternal figure predating the patriarchal world, and even civilization. She represents a primal force outside of cultural control. As the archaic mother, the Other Mother simply exists as the maternal figure, her origin remains mysterious making her appear primordial and ancient, which simultaneously idealizes her as a maternal figure and links her to death due to her desire to consume her lured children. The horror linked to her character originates from her suffocating portrayal of the archaic mother combined with her masculine attributes inducing a sense of abjection for both Coraline and the reader (Rudd 166). She both exists as Coraline's mother by depicting her appearance, voice and manners, and as Coraline's *Other Mother*, the horrifying, monstrous, false mother. She is the mysterious, primordial creator of her world and all that exists inside that world, and as the archaic mother, she seeks to control and possess her "children" (Rudd 166). Of the Other Mother's origin or the world she comes from, nothing is conveyed in the story: " "Nothing to find here," said the cat. "This is just the outside, the part of the place she has not bothered to create" "(*Coraline* 74). Aside from the cat referring to it as the "outside" the outside of the mirror world is simply nothingness. As Coraline gathers the souls of the ghost children, the Other Mother's generative power and thus the world she has created begins to falter: "Outside the world had become a formless, swirling mist with no shapes or shadows behind it, while the house itself seemed to have twisted and stretched" (105). It seems that Coraline, as the protagonist, outwitting the Other Mother and forcing her world to start fraying at the edges does not only defeat the Other Mother in the story, but also works to reduce her agency from an active female character of the story, a driving force of the narrative, to that of an objectified antagonist simply existing for Coraline to defeat.

Returning to the Other Mother as an active female character, as the antagonist, she is a typical example of the monster-woman's contemporary counterpart, the bitch. The Other Mother is the bitch most often found in traditional male-authored fiction, as Aguiar notes the bitch is:

> ... [A]n insatiably voracious figure. Devouring the souls of her victims, she seduces, betrays, murders, castrates, and mercilessly abuses those whose gentler and "finer" natures allow her to trample them. (34)

Described as a literal monster, she seeks to dominate her victims in order to, as Aguiar put it, devour their souls. Her display of warm motherhood, in the end, is constructed for her own goals in

order to lure and trap her child victims. As the antagonist, Gaiman builds the Other Mother's character as the bitch as a literal monster. In addition to being portrayed as a literal monster, she possesses the typical attributes of the bitch: she is aggressive, autonomous, and utterly "unfeminine" in her effort to assert power and force the victims she lures into her world into submission. The Other Mother similarly to Coraline displays both feminine, and masculine attributes. While she is portrayed as a maternal figure with feminine physical attributes such as long hair and painted nails, she also expresses traditionally masculine attributes of independence, power and aggression. What makes the Other Mother's character different from all the other characters I have examined previously in this study, is that she does not simply portray her gendered traits but uses the traditionally feminine attributes to her advantage in a manipulative and calculating manner. This can be seen in how she first tries to lure Coraline to her world through her maternal act. In such a way she expresses the abject both through her false maternal act, but also by averting and depicting both traditionally feminine and masculine attributes.

While the Other Mother combining both traditionally masculine and feminine attributes creates a layer of complexity for her character, in the end, her character's purpose in the story seems to simply be to operate as a tool for Coraline to build her self-discovery and identity with (Parsons et al.). This supports my own interpretation of how the Other Mother as the antagonist exists for Coraline to gain independence from her parents and to strengthen her own identity through, as Coraline battles the Other Mother and ultimately as the romantic hero, wins. In addition to her character in the narrative structure, the Other Mother is portrayed as a literal monster, both through her actions as "she stole our hearts, and she stole our souls, and she took our lives away" (*Coraline* 84), her appearance as "her head almost brushed the ceiling – and [her skin was] very pale, the color of a spider's belly. Her hair writhed and twined about her head, and her teeth were sharp as knives…" (128). Gaiman's effort to build frightening atmosphere in the story seems to also emphasize the Other Mother's physical self and "otherness", in addition to her actions. Her otherness as a clone of Coraline's actual mother is clearly signified in the beginning of the novel by her black button eyes marking the two women as physically different. Despite appearing progressively more horrifying as the story gets closer to its climax, as Coraline describes, "The other mother did not look anything at all like her own mother. [Coraline] wondered how she had ever been deceived into imagining a resemblance" (128), her character stays without change throughout the story. In the novel's beginning, she starts focused on luring Coraline into her world to devour her, and her goal stays the same throughout the story. In addition, Gaiman's characterization of her as the antagonist, seems almost caricaturized through her demonically

exaggerated female body, and her performative mothering. As Russell argues: “Female agency is not the problem in *Coraline* ... the real problem is the limited and limiting vision of motherhood the other mother ... represent[s] and, by extension, the limited and limiting vision of femininity [she] impose[s] on [her] “daughter” (164). What Russell means by this, is that by portraying the Other Mother either as a demon or a stereotyped mother reduces the complexity of her character and contributes to the dichotomous idea of femininity. It seems that the Other Mother’s power is further diminished and her role as a satirized antagonist further embellished by her ironic statements of love and affection, that are veiled with threats against Coraline:

> Now, if you will be a good child who loves her mother, be compliant and fair-spoken, you and I shall understand each other perfectly and we shall love each perfectly as well. (*Coraline* 90)

Yet, even as monstrous as she is in all of her disfigured self, the true horror of her portrayal stems from the duality of her character, her demonism only enhanced by her feminine qualities. This is worth examining, as in contrast with the Wicked Witch, her masculine features are how she is vilified. With the Other Mother however, even as she possesses masculine attributes as well, so does Coraline in the story, and as such the Other Mother’s masculine features are not enough to vilify the Other Mother with. In this way, *Coraline* is a much more complex and multilayered work when it comes to the depictions of the female characters. While the Other Mother possesses masculine attributes of for example, aggressiveness and independence, it is the utilizing of her feminine attributes to lure, deceit and betray, that builds her role as the antagonist as truly evil. As explained before, the Other Mother uses her feminine features to her advantage, as she tries to trick Coraline by portraying herself as her mother and appearing as more caring and nurturing than Coraline’s real mother would: “We’re here. We’re ready to love you and play with you and feed you and make your life interesting” (60). Despite of this, the Other Mother is depicted as truly loving Coraline: “It was true: the other mother loved her. But she loved Coraline as a miser loves money, or a dragon loves its gold (106). Therefore, the Other Mother’s love is portrayed more as the desire to control Coraline, rather than as actual parental love.

Her characterization as a maternal figure in the story clearly portrays a troubled image of motherhood. The Other Mother’s picture-perfect family image starts out blissfully in the story, as Coraline is promised everything she lacks in her own life: “We will listen to you and play with you and laugh with you. Your other mother will build whole worlds for you to explore and tear them down every night when you are done” (119). The price for these promises is Coraline adopting the

black button eyes and becoming the Other Mother's possession. As Craig in his article points out, the Other Mother representing herself as a caring maternal image and then gruesomely stepping out of that role to demand Coraline's sacrifice is how she crosses the border Kristeva mentions and becomes the abject (221). In my view, it seems that the femininity linked to motherhood is in that way turned against the Other Mother, to be used to vilify her with the characteristics of maternality. The feminine power of the Other Mother as the archaic mother existing in her own matriarchal world of the mirror world outside of the patriarchal world of the real world is therefore stripped from her. Her maternal, and feminine power are then vilified and diminished, in a patriarchal attempt to take back her power that subverts the traditional gender roles of woman and mother.

3.3 Closing Remarks: From The Witch to The Bitch

In this chapter I have analyzed the other end of the dichotomy, the antagonists as monster-women, to discuss what purpose, if any, their characters hold in their respective stories. Similar comparisons as with the protagonists can be drawn between the Wicked Witch of the West and the Other Mother as the monster-women of the dichotomy. As Dorothy's antagonist, the Wicked Witch of the West is a classic villain. Her main goal in the story, is to rule over the Land of Oz, and to defeat the Wizard Oz and the Good Witches of the North and the South. Her hate toward Dorothy is then predetermined, as the monster-woman-antagonist of the story, she hates Dorothy immediately. Her character does not change outside of her display of anger and the desire to enslave and destroy, and as such, her character's portrayal stays simplified and shallow. Baum portrays the Wicked Witch as an old woman blinded by rage and dehumanized through her deformity and satirical representation of her behavior. Ultimately she is brought down by water, which seems a symbolical punishment for her transgression of gender boundaries. The character of the Wicked Witch of the West is not only vilified through her actions, but Baum further diminishes her power by portraying her to perform outside of the society's norms and portraying her as troubled and out of control. The separation of witches into Wicked or Good by Baum highlights the theme of dichotomies in the novel. Good is celebrated as something to aspire towards as Good Witches are celebrated and Wicked Witches are despised.

Gaiman creates a layer of depth to the Other Mother's character, as in comparison to the Wicked Witch, her portrayal as an antagonist is not limited to simply expressing masculine features of being violent, ambitious and aggressive. Rather, as a more contemporary portrayal of evil, the horror her character exudes is built by combining her monstrous depiction with a distorted portrayal of motherhood, to create an unsettling portrayal of traditional gender roles. In that way, her character

challenges stereotypes by branching out of her assigned gender role in a way that is disturbing. Even as such, her character fails to break out from her traditional character role. While she expresses femininity through her mothering act and then steps out of it when she deems it unsuccessful, only to end back as both the monstrous-feminine and the bitch, both roles failing to break her out of her cast as the monster-woman of the story.

4 Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined how female characters are portrayed in children's fantasy literature to begin addressing the gap in research concerning the significance of the dichotomous portrayal of female protagonists and female antagonists. Focusing on the protagonists and the antagonists in prominent children's fantasy novels has proven useful in examining the dichotomies of female characters used both in more traditional children's literary works such as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz,* as in contemporary literary works like *Coraline*. In both novels, the dichotomy of the characters that embody traits of angel-women and monster-women works as a central theme contributing to the plot of the story and adding to the stereotypical image of idealized gender behavior.

Analyzing the portrayals of the protagonists, Dorothy and Coraline through Gilbert and Gubar's notion of the angel-woman, and Nikolajeva's notion of the romantic hero of children's literature, it becomes apparent that the angel-woman archetype is present in the portrayals of the protagonists to a varying degree, and their roles as the romantic heroes of children's stories can work to liberate the protagonists from the narrow confines of their roles as the angel-women. Throughout the analysis I discovered that while Dorothy's character does exercise some action in the story, it seems to be caused by her role as the romantic hero, and therefore she cannot be thoroughly accounted for being a truly active female character. Dorothy in the story does momentarily step out from her angel-woman role, but ultimately that is the role she represents. As a late 19th century angel-woman, she ventures through the story by focusing on fixing the problems of the male characters, which contributes to the image of angel-woman as a caretaker prioritizing the needs of others above her own. She faces off against the monster-woman of the story, the Wicked Witch of the West, emerges victorious, and in the end returns to her life of domesticity with her aunt and uncle (and Toto) in Kansas. Coraline on the other hand does not implicitly operate as either character role but mixes together both characteristics of the angel-woman, romantic hero and even the monster-woman to portray a new female character role, that of the tomboy. Coraline in the novel, similarly to Dorothy, longs to get back to her domestic home life, not because that is her fate, but simply because that is what is familiar to her as a child. As the defiant, independent daughter she expresses characteristics of the monster-woman as well but is not vilified for it. As such, she represents a modern, more complex female character of children's literature who is not characterized through one singular role but can liberate herself by adopting and mixing together traits as she sees fit. She is not exclusively masculine or feminine, but simply herself.

Studying the antagonists, the Wicked Witch of the West and the Other Mother as Gilbert and Gubar's monster-women, the cultural attitudes toward gender behavior expectations become increasingly clear, as both of the antagonists are vilified as the monster-woman through them being depicted as powerful, independent and driven female characters. In *TWWO* the Wicked Witch of the West is characterized as a traditional portrayal of the witch. In the story she is old, deformed and mad with rage. Her singular goal is to destroy Dorothy and rule over the Land of Oz. The Wicked Witch is portrayed through almost singularly traditionally masculine attributes of independence, aggression and violence. Throughout the story she expresses primarily a single emotion of rage. Baum's portrayal seems almost satirical, as the Wicked Witch completes her incantations to kill Dorothy, and in the end is brought down by a single bucket of water. As the monster-woman her characterization remains stereotypical, thus diminishing her power in the story. Through contemporary eyes, as the archetype of the bitch, she holds power as an independent and powerful female character, but through closer inspection her power is revealed to be non-existent. This is evident by how she only exists in the story to operate as the antagonist for Dorothy's protagonist, and as she meets her end in a conflict turned against her. In contrast to the Wicked Witch, the Other Mother as the contemporary antagonist is vilified through descriptions of her physical monstrous-feminine self, as well as her use of traditionally feminine attributes for manipulation. While as the manifestation of the bitch character the Other Mother does subvert feminine traits and hold power in the matriarchal world she has created, she simultaneously uses the feminine trait of mothering to her advantage to achieve her goals. As such, she expresses a more complex version of the monster-woman attribute, both subverting and embracing her femininity in accordance with her own needs. Even if her character is somewhat elevated from that of the Wicked Witch, the Other Mother is still problematically portrayed as a monster through her role as an independent and powerful female character. The vilification then seems to stem from her embracing the abject and going against the protagonist. Both female characters exercise destructive power and reflect fears about women who hold power outside the patriarchal society. As the antagonists their portrayal seems to reflect cultural anxieties about gender roles and feminine power.

In conclusion, in *TWWO*, Dorothy's character operates as the protagonist as the story describes her journey through the Land of Oz with the friends she meets along the way. By being a part of Dorothy's quest of getting back home, they all reach their goals and find purpose primarily to Dorothy. While Dorothy also eventually reaches her goal and gets back home, she does so after first helping others around her. As the female protagonist, her story is entwined to the stories of others, to help the male characters of the story to reach their own happy endings. Dorothy's happy ending

turns out to be her return to her home, to the life of domesticity. As a protagonist, she does not dream of adventure or brave journeys, she is frightened by the world around her and relies on stronger characters than her to help her on her quest. In turn, she helps them find their purpose in life. As a female character, she is fragile, helpless, and exists to bring the other characters around her toward their own happy endings. It seems that the only character that Dorothy does not help in some way, is the antagonist of the story, the Wicked Witch of the West. Dorothy and the Wicked Witch express the duality of femininity: Dorothy, as the humble angel-woman on her quest to get back home, and the Wicked Witch as the independent and evil monster-woman, as she tries to take over the Land of Oz. It is the pitting of these female characters against each other which highlights the options of gender identity Baum offers for his young readers: the meek and humble Dorothy as the "good" character, or the aggressive and selfish Wicked Witch as the "bad" one. All the while the male characters seem to portray idealized images of masculinity, from the Wizard Oz as a ruler of the land, to the Cowardly Lion, the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman as characters on a brave and courageous adventure facing dangers and in the end fulfilling their goals. As such, it appears that the *TWWO* has achieved the goal of any late 19th century children's book: teaching boys to be boys and girls to be girls.

While the angel-woman – monster-woman dichotomy operates as a storyline in both stories, *Coraline* executes the narrative in a much more complex manner. While a straight line in *TWWO* with the angelic Dorothy and the monstrous Wicked Witch, the dichotomy is not quite as direct in *Coraline*. Coraline expresses both traditionally feminine and masculine qualities but is not defined by either. Rather, she is portrayed as a much more realistic image of a young person struggling with inattentive parents, and the boredom that exists occasionally in any child's life. As the Wicked Witch is depicted as monstrous and masculine, the Other Mother can also present herself through a feminine lense as a caretaker, proving that *Coraline* demonstrates a much more multilayered view of the dichotomy. Coraline and the Other Mother in that sense somewhat resemble each other, as they both express both feminine and masculine attributes. Only their character roles as the protagonist, and the antagonist are different, which seems to be the primary reason why the other is lifted up, while the other is put down.

I started this study by asking the question of how many ways can a female character exist in children's literature, and after conducting my analysis on the two novels it seems the answer is far from simple. While harmful dichotomies still exist and using the pitting of two female characters against each other as a plot device is certainly not unproblematic, progress has been made. The contrast between a late 19th century children's fairytale such as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and a

20th century modern children's novel like *Coraline* in terms of how female characters are depicted is vast, but how the female characters are used in the plot remains similar. While *Coraline* does make progress by portraying the female characters in multilayered ways, the dichotomy and tension of the two female characters remains a major part of the plot. The Other Mother as an antagonist retains some complexity in contrast to the Wicked Witch who is portrayed as a mad and a deformed witch, and similarly, Coraline in contrast to Dorothy expresses a more multidimensional view of a female protagonist. While these two novels have been studied from a feminist literary criticism point of view before, examination of the dichotomy of the two female character archetypes remains scarce when it comes to *TWWO*, but plentiful in connection to *Coraline*. While scholars emphasize Dorothy's and Coraline's positions as feminist literary characters, I do not fully agree on this notion on Dorothy's part, but with Coraline it appears correct. Gaiman manages to create a multilayered female character with Coraline, helping her to break out from the character roles of simply two choices of the dichotomy. As such, Coraline seems to prove a much more diverse role model for the young readers of children's literature when it comes to gender identity. This is especially important considering children's literature, since strong, positive gender representation is fundamental for the development of positive gender identity for all children. Further studies on not only how female characters are portrayed, but what that means in terms of gender representation especially in children's literature, are needed to understand the significance of the cultural understanding of gender.

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