

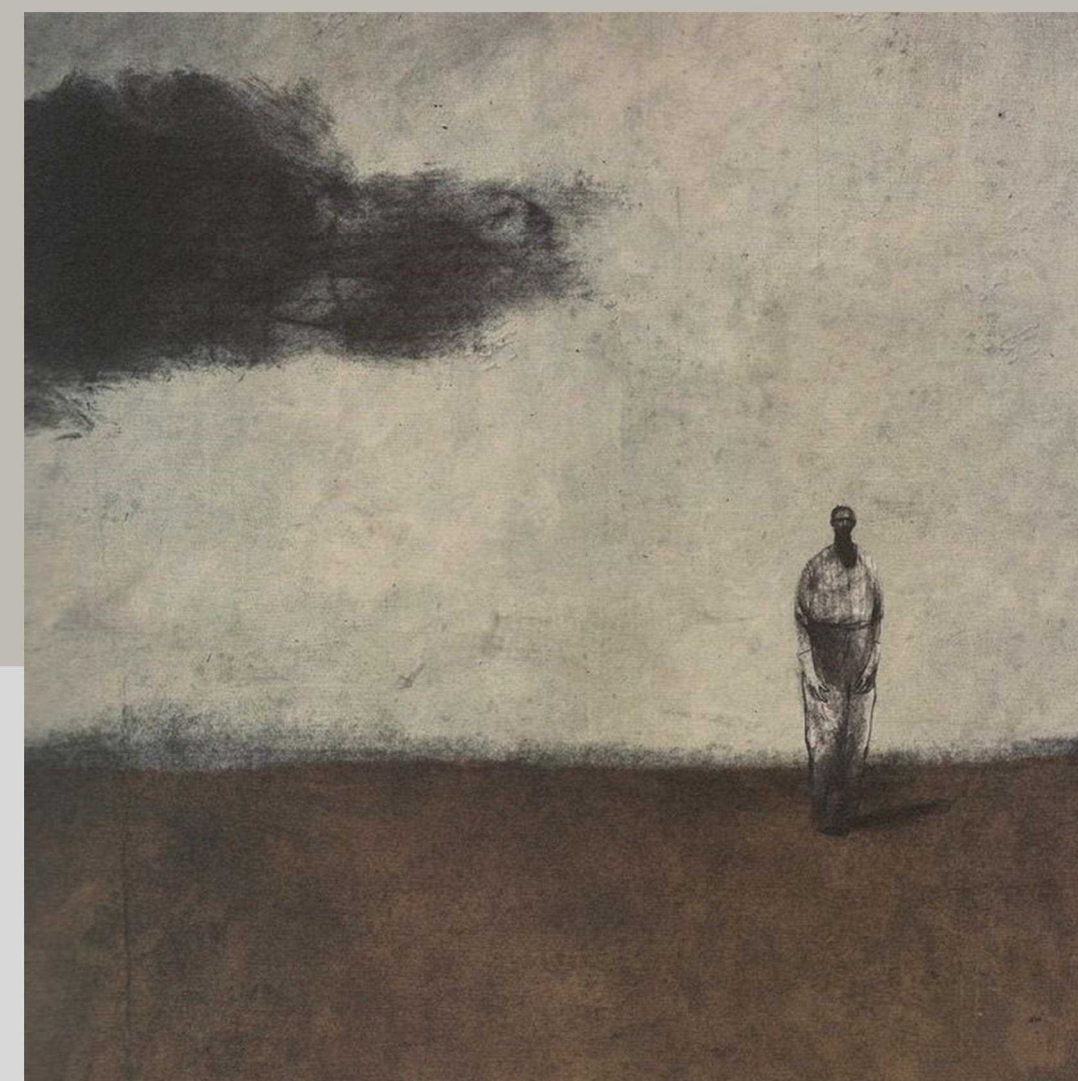
Ellipsis

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Scholarly-Literary English Journal

Ellipsis...

The writer's unwilling omission of words leads to putting three dots at the end of the sentence by hoping the point is conveyed somewhere within the dots. The flow of your thoughts is not limited by sounds or the number of characters. Your voice will be heard even after the sentence has ended since the immortal train of thoughts has no end. Ellipsis is a chance to go beyond sentences, to leave behind hesitation and project your sincere thoughts through creation. Ellipsis is a door to possibilities that only you, as a writer, as a creator of an entire world of your own, can bring to us.



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Within and beyond the dots...

Ellipsis

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Editor's Note

The Ellipsis Journal was born to give a voice to all the scholarly-literary writers. Those who dare to grasp, who can write expressively and have the courage to share their works must have a place to be seen and praised. That was where the initial idea of the Ellipsis Journal sparked. Our tendency to compile and capture the English works of the enthusiasts brought the team closer together to give life to that idea. We started not knowing how challenging it was, every single step of it. However, the opportunity to read and revise every submission received nationwide made us forever grateful for that first step we took. Each submission illustrated the inner world of an individual, as unique as it could be, each one having doors opening to the infinite landscapes of the self. We must show our appreciation for opening the door and welcoming us to your most internal headspace –yet most vulnerable, at times.

There are many whom we are thankful for. The ones without whom Ellipsis would have remained but an idea inside our heads, nothing but an unreachable dream as the words that are afraid to show up within the text and end up giving their place to the three dots of ellipsis. First and foremost is, indeed, our honorable supervisor, Dr. Sayyed Rahim Moosavinia, whose words of encouragement and advice shed light on our way. Moreover, we would like to thank Dr. Mahmood Validi who helped to facilitate the journey of establishing an English journal from scratch. Many other respectable faculty members of SCU's English Department and dear friends of ours also pushed us forward with their unconditional guidance which we are deeply grateful for.

To all the dear readers, we hope you take pleasure in reading Ellipsis Journal and being a member of it. Being the first issue, it certainly is yet to be perfect but your interest in the journal is the best inspiring factor leading us to fix the inconveniences for the spring issue of Ellipsis.

Thank you, indeed.

Narges Nematpour

Managing Director and
Editor-in-Chief

The Uncanny and Identity in Neil Gaiman's Coraline

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the concept of the uncanny in Neil Gaiman's children's novella, *Coraline*. The uncanny is defined as something that is both familiar and unfamiliar which results in uneasiness. The story blurs the line between fantasy and reality, challenging the protagonist's sense of self. The study employs Freud's psyche apparatus to show the effect of the uncanny on Coraline's mind and character development. The uncanny serves as a catalyst for Coraline's personal growth and self-discovery, manifesting in forms of childhood complexes such as castration, womb fantasy, and wish fulfillment. First, the essay will introduce the origin of the uncanny effect, related theories, and its relation to character development and identity. Further, focusing on Freud's view, the uncanny elements of the story and associated childhood complexes will be analyzed. The uncanny effect in the story contributes to Coraline's exploration of identity and self-discovery.

INTRODUCTION

"It was so familiar—that was what made it feel so truly strange" (Gaiman 69). Imagine moving to a new house with a mysterious door in the drawing room that apparently goes nowhere, but little did you know what lies behind that door. At first Encounter, the Other World in the story might appear to be fun and fulfilling, but the uneasiness in its familiarity cannot be overlooked. This is a feeling that Sigmund Freud describes as "The Uncanny."

Coraline is a children's novella written by Neil Gaiman. The story is about a young girl named Coraline Jones. She moves into a new house with her parents, and there she finds a mysterious door leading to a parallel universe. The protagonist's sense of self and reality is challenged through eerie and unsettling experiences in the Other World.

ESSAYS

01

The door is central to the concept of uncanny in *Coraline*. Freud defines that “an uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary” (150). Based on this, we can see how Gaiman skillfully crafts a narrative that blurs “the boundary” between the real and the unreal, inviting readers to question their perceptions of identity and reality.

This Dark Fantasy story explores the concept of uncanny as an element of horror. The uncanny has been a recurring theme in children’s literature; *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carrol is a prime example. Richard Gooding notes in his review of *Coraline* that when adults notice this theme in children’s stories, they begin to doubt whether it is suitable for kids. However, it has been seen that children are most of the time welcoming of the uncanny adventure. Children are mostly indifferent to the uncanny feeling of the story, and their minds are somehow receptive to it. Therefore, a link is made between uncanniness and a child’s psyche.

The uncanny elements in the story serve as a catalyst for Coraline’s personal growth and self-discovery. These elements manifest in forms of childhood complexes such as castration, womb fantasy, and wish fulfillment. Moreover, hints of an Oedipal or Electra complex can be seen throughout the story, which will be examined in more detail.

This essay will explore the uncanny effect and its relation to character development and identity in *Coraline*. First, definitions and theories about the uncanny will be provided,

however, the study will be more focused on Sigmund Freud’s view of the uncanny and related childhood complexes. Afterward, Freud’s psyche apparatus will be defined to show the effect of the uncanny on Coraline’s mind and character development.

THE UNCANNY & IDENTITY

In English, the root of “uncanny” can be traced back to Anglo-Saxon *ken* which is defined as “knowledge, understanding, or cognizance; mental perception” on *Dictionary.com*. Moreover, according to *Middle English Compendium*, the Middle English word was *uncōnne* “Unknown” which is equivalent to the combination of the prefix *un-* “not” and *canny* in its late 16th century and originally Scottish meaning “know” (*Etymonline*). Starting from 1773, the concept of the uncanny began to be used in literature. This term describes individuals who are untrustworthy and dangerous to interact with due to their association with supernatural beings. As stated by *Etymonline*, by 1843, the term took on a more general meaning in the English language; it came to refer to anything that possessed a supernatural quality, something that was strange and mysterious in nature.

In 1837, the German philosopher F.W.J. Schelling coined the term “unheimlich” in his work, *Philosophy of Mythology*. When translated into English, this term means “unhomely” or “unfamiliar” in the context of psychology. The concept of “unheimlich” refers to something that is both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time, giving rise to a feeling of cognitive dissonance. Freud delved deeper into the term and traced its evolution, defining it as “hidden,” “concealed,”

“dangerous,” “frightening,” and “disquieting.” Freud’s theory of the “uncanny” is often translated as “unhomely,” which is also done by David McLintock in his 2003 translation of Freud’s work for Penguin.

The word “unheimlich” is translated into English as “uncanny,” which is the term Freud used in his exploration of foreign language equivalents. However, this translation does not convey the complete semantic structure that forms the core of Freud’s analysis of the relationship between the familiar “Heimlich” and the unfamiliar “Unheimlich,” so capturing its full meaning in English is demanding for translators. Freud concludes there is little distinction between the adjectives “Heimlich” and “Unheimlich.” In the introduction to David McLintock’s translation, Haughton explains that “it is the most familiar (Heimlich) childhood fantasies, which lie behind the apparently shockingly unfamiliar (unheimlich) figures, that evoke the feeling of the uncanny” (lii). The term itself holds the essence of a peculiar and inexplicable feeling and shows the unsettling sense of discomfort that arises from the juxtaposition of the known and the unknown. Therefore, it is a feeling that defies easy explanation.

As mentioned earlier, the enigmatic nature of the uncanny defies a simple and general definition. In *The Unconcept: The Freudian Uncanny in Twentieth-Century Theory* (2011), Anneleen Masschelein mentions that “the uncanny affects and haunts everything, it is in constant transformation and cannot be pinned down” (2), so the uncanny cannot be confined and generalized; In order to minimize this abstraction, it is better to understand the concept

in context. Consequently, Ernst Jentsch, the first to have a psychological outlook on the uncanny, focused on Hoffmann’s story “The Sandman” in his 1906 essay to explain the use of the uncanny in fiction.

Dr. Ernst Jentsch, born in 1867, was a German psychiatrist who expressed his various cultural and psychological interests through his published works. His writings covered diverse topics, such as psychology and pathology. One of his most famous essays was *On the Psychology of the Uncanny*, written in 1906. In his preface to the translation of the essay, Roy Sellar says that despite being a frequently referenced essay, it is often treated as familiar and unnecessary to read “The essay had never before been translated into English; inasmuch as it now appears both familiar and unfamiliar, its reappearance here can be called ‘uncanny’” (216).

Jentsch explains the uncanny as unfamiliarity with the environment and uncertainty. Moreover, Jentsch describes one source of the uncanny as being unable to decide whether something is inanimate or animate and explains, “In storytelling, one of the most reliable artistic devices for producing uncanny effects easily is to leave the reader in uncertainty as to whether he has a human person or rather an automaton before him in the case of a particular character” (Jentsch 224). Therefore, Jentsch identifies uncanny as the confusion that happens within an unknown environment or due to inanimate/animate opposition, and believes successful writers are those who can use this effect to their advantage.

Jentsch introduces German writer E.T.A. Hoffmann as someone who uses “psychological artifice with success” (224). In *The Sandman*,

Hoffman perfectly shows the idea of inanimate/animate opposition through robotic woman Olympia. The Sandman is a prototype of the uncanny and Freud also mentions this short story in his essay, however, he believes the uncanniness of this story is way more complicated than just a life-like doll.

In his 1919 essay "The Uncanny", Sigmund Freud elaborates on the concept. His essay both complements and opposes Jentsch's essay; he gives his definition of uncanny and argues that it is about fear and it "belongs to the realm of the frightening" (123), but at the same time defining it as frightening is not quite right. Jentsch believed that uncanny happens when facing the unfamiliar. Moreover, Jentsch argues in "Document: 'On the Psychology of the Uncanny'" (1906) that linguistic and etymology cannot play a role in psychology and that it is a mistake to assume "the spirit of languages is a particularly acute psychologist" (217). However, Freud in "The Uncanny" (1919)



notes that the uncanny is not necessarily equal with unfamiliar and that looking into the definition of "Das Unheimlich" in other languages helps in realizing the fact that "many languages lack a word for this particular species of the frightening" (125).

Furthermore, throughout "The Uncanny" (1919), Freud mentions elements that can create the uncanny effect. He brings the idea of "double" and defines it as "the appearance of persons who have to be regarded as identical because they look alike" (Freud 141). The double creates uncanniness as it can make someone uncertain of their "true self" and the reappearance of oneself results in confusing your duplicate with yourself (Freud 142). This brings about "repetition" which is another factor causing uncanniness. Freud describes it as feeling helpless because you seem to be stuck in a loop; you try to get out, but you end up where you started (143-44). Childhood complexes also play a role in the uncanny effect. He signifies three main childhood complexes which are castration, womb fantasy, and wish-fulfillment.

The castration complex takes place when the child becomes aware of the anatomical difference between the sexes. Freud first explored this concept in 1908 in relation to Oedipus complex. In his essay about the uncanny, Freud relates castration complex with eyes, blindness, and disembodiment. Womb fantasy is the desire to return to womb. Freud explains its uncanniness as it is the place you were once nourished and developed as an infant, but you do not remember being there. It is both familiar and unfamiliar. The concept of wish fulfillment is the basis of the child's mind that stems from pleasure principle. It is a stage where immediate

gratification of desires becomes the ultimate goal. However, as the child grows, they must reject this thinking and develop their ego. Instant fulfillment is not in line with reality and it results in an uncanny feeling; in "The Uncanny" (1919), Freud mentions that "in Schiller's poem *Der Ring des Polykrates* (The Ring of Polykrates) the guest turns away in horror because he sees his friend's every wish instantly fulfilled" (145-46).

Following the concept of double and its uncanny effect on identity, we can refer to Freud's model of the human psyche. Freud broke down this model into three parts which are the id, the ego, and the superego. The id is about instinctual drives fueled by the pleasure principle that wants immediate satisfaction. The ego is the rational part of our mind responsible for dealing with reality. As we grow up, we suppress the id and develop our ego. The superego acts as a protector against the id. It works in line with society and moral standards and helps in judgment (Bressler 127).

The psychological points covered in this part of the essay are going to be used in the psychoanalytic study of *Coraline* in terms of the uncanny and its effect on Coraline's identity. The analysis will focus mainly on Freud's theories.

UNCANNY & IDENTITY IN CORALINE

Based on the points covered about the uncanny, elements that have the purpose of creating this effect can be found in the narration. First of all, the door plays a significant role in adding uncanny effect to the narration. It is like the "boundary" mentioned in Freud's 1919 essay, "The Uncanny" (150). Coraline has to pass through the door to get to the Other World

and the way the corridor is described in the novel reveals another uncanny factor. According to Abitfrank, a content creator about children's stories and their origins, the corridor can be considered as an alive creature ("Coraline's Scariest Monster," 00:01:31-00:02:55). The corridor is repeatedly described as "very old and very slow" as if this tunnel is alive (Gaiman 24, 45). The word "old" is also mentioned a lot. The novel starts by stating "it was a very old house" (Gaiman 1). This house is old, so the door appears to be an ancient creature. So, this corridor is ancient and is even more powerful than the Other Mother:

She knew that if she fell in that corridor she might never get up again. Whatever that corridor was, was older by far than the other mother. It was deep, and slow, and it knew that she was there.... (Gaiman 134).

The Other Mother is just an inhabitant in this corridor creating illusions and there are things that she does not know about the world inside corridor such as "ways in and ways out" (Gaiman 73). Therefore, the barrier made by the door and the personified corridor inside it are one of the major uncanny elements in *Coraline*.

Following the idea of "boundary," another feature of the story that fits this definition is the mist. Upon finding the door, a gray mist surrounds the house. It was like "blindness" (Gaiman 19) and nobody could see through it, so we could assume that there was nothing behind the mist to be seen. Later in the story, as Coraline is exploring the Other World, she walks into the mist and, after a while, she realizes that "The world she was walking through was a pale nothingness, like a blank sheet of

paper or an enormous, empty white room. It had no temperature, no smell, no texture, and no taste.”(Gaiman 71). With that in mind, we could consider the mist another barrier that separates the real and the fantasy (“Coraline: The Monster You Missed,” 00:20:58-00:21:33). The mist in these two worlds leads to nothingness, so which world is the real one? This mist is causing confusion and adds to the uncanniness of the story.

The uncanniness of the Other World is evident from the very moment Coraline arrives there. It is a familiar yet strange place. It is exactly like her own flat but with some differences to make it appealing to her. The Other Mother and the Other Father pay attention to her and she has the family of her dreams. It is all fun and games until The Other Parents tell her that if she wants to stay with them, she needs to let them sew buttons into her eyes. This is the moment she becomes aware of the dangers in this seemingly familiar world. Considering the identical worlds, we can see the idea of double and keep in mind how this can cause uncertainty about reality. If Coraline, like the other children before her, agreed to sew the buttons, this world would become her reality. Moreover, the realization that there is actually a parallel world on the other side of the door, marks its existence as reality. Therefore, the identical qualities of both worlds and the question of reality contribute to the uncanny effect.

The Other Mother’s true form is called Beldam. The use of the name in literature can be traced back to a poem by John Keats named “La Belle Dame sans Merci” which is French for The Beautiful Lady Without Mercy. The poem is about a knight who is enchanted by a beautiful

woman who has a mysterious wildness in her eyes. He is obsessed with her and she provides him food and sings songs to him putting him to sleep and he dreams of pale kings and princes who are previous victims of Le Belle Dame. They warn him about her malicious intentions. Love is leading to the knight's death and that's what both women in Keats' poem and Gaiman's novel have in common; love means death to them and that is the thing that makes Beldam uncanny. The way she shows her emotions to Coraline is a familiar motherly love but there is something weird in her expressions that gets bolder as Coraline becomes aware of The Other Mother's true intentions:

“How do I know you’ll keep your word?” asked Coraline. “I swear it,” said the other mother. “I swear it on my own mother’s grave.”

“Does she have a grave?” asked Coraline. “Oh yes,” said the other mother. “I put her in there myself. And when I found her trying to crawl out, I put her back.” (Gaiman 90-91)

This normal conversation of swearing is something that happens a lot when we need to make sure someone keeps their promise but takes an uncanny turn as the Other Mother talks about it. In his 2008 article “‘Something Very Old and Very Slow’: Coraline , Uncanniness, and Narrative Form”, Richard Gooding notes that the uncanny effects “emerge from arresting, nightmare transformations of mundane conversations” (394).

Buttons and eyes are significant elements that connect the novel with Freud’s essay. Throughout the book, buttons frequently represent the uncanny. They are the most persistent feature of the story and help differentiate the figures in the Other World from their living counterparts. Coraline’s doppelganger mother also desires to replace

Coraline’s eyes with buttons, trapping her in the decaying uncanny cycle as the Other Mother’s illusions wear off. There is a saying that “The eyes are the window to the soul,” so by taking its victim’s eyes, the Other Mother is taking their souls. Moreover, all her creations have button eyes, and these buttons mark them as her belongings. The buttons are the things that distinguish her territory from the real world.

The Other World is a reflection of Coraline's own world. This is a twisted reflection and the Other Mother reveals that as she says mirrors “are never to be trusted.”(Gaiman 75). Moreover, mirrors are known for capturing souls and the story takes that literally as the Other Mother has imprisoned the souls of the children behind the mirror, emphasizing the fact that this mirrored world is a trap.

The uncanny idea of double is also connected with mirror images. There is an uncanny feeling in looking at a mirror since you are looking at an identical mirrored version of yourself and there are times that you do not recognize your own reflection. Ernst Mach, in his book *The Analysis of Sensation* (1914), writes that “people know themselves very poorly” (4) and mentions two experiences to support that idea, one about not recognizing himself as he was passing by a mirror shop and the other seeing a supposedly strange man in an omnibus and judging his “shabby” look only to realize it was actually himself:

Once, when a young man, I noticed in the street the profile of a face that was very displeasing and repulsive to me. I was not a little taken aback when a moment afterwards I found that it was my own face which, in passing by a shop where mirrors were sold, I had perceived reflected from two mirrors that

were inclined at the proper angle to each other. Not long ago, after a trying railway journey by night, when I was very tired, I got into an omnibus, just as another man appeared at the other end. “What a shabby pedagogue that is, that has just entered,” thought I. It was myself: opposite me hung a large mirror. The physiognomy of my class, accordingly, was better known to me than my own. (Mach 4)

So, the uncanniness of mirrors can be linked to the sense of identity. Coraline is developing in her character, but as a child, she loses herself for a moment as she is facing the challenges and cannot recognize herself in the mirror describing her own reflection as “there was nothing in the mirror but a girl who was small for her age” (Gaiman 93).

Childhood Complexes

According to what we discovered about uncanny, we know that it is closely related to childhood and affects the child's growth and development. Three complexes were mentioned in relation to uncanny which will be examined in the context of the story in order to trace Coraline's Character development.

In this story, castration manifests as loss of eyes and limbs. In “The Uncanny” (1919), Freud explains the relation between the uncanny and fears of losing one’s eyes, combining both ideas and presenting a suppressed childhood castration complex (139-40). The button eyes and doubles are the first direct appearances of the uncanny in the novel, indicating the importance of the castration complex and the developing ego. Coraline knows that her eyes are essential parts of her body, so she must not give them away easily. The anxiety of losing her eyes makes her aware that there is

something wrong with this dream world and leads her towards her development. Moreover, the severed hand of the Other Mother can be regarded as castration. This is the right hand she swears on. She has no plan to keep her promise, so not only did she lose the game, but she lost her right hand too since she played unfairly. It is overcoming the right hand that marks the resolution of moving away from the id and developing the ego.

The Other Mother's desire to tempt children by spoiling them and capturing them, reinforces the repressed desire to remain a child and return to the womb. Coraline is offered a chance to remain in her fantasy and reject the real world, where she has to grow up and become an adult. If Coraline had given in to womb fantasy and agreed to sew the button eyes, she would have lost both her eyes and her developing self. In fact, the anxiety she has around losing her eyes is not just about the pain but also about her future and how remaining in childhood would affect her.

The fulfilling quality of *The Other World* is evident from the very moment Coraline arrives there and the uncanniness arises from the fact that it is too good to be true. However, Coraline is a child by nature and is normally driven by the pleasure principle, and enjoys the fulfillment of her wishes in *The Other World*. As a result, the Other World can be considered a dream where Coraline fulfills her suppressed wishes.

The rivalry between mother and daughter in *Coraline* has Oedipal undertones. The overprotective nature of the Other Mother who insists on not letting children grow and stay as kids adds to the Oedipal undertone and signifies her as the Oedipal Mother. In his 1899 book

Interpretation of Dreams, Freud argued that children sometimes show unusual attachment and affection to the parents of the opposite sex and see their same-sex parent as their rivals (216-17). Later in his *The Theory of Psychoanalysis* (1915), Carl Jung developed this theory into his own concept of the Electra complex which is more fitting as we are dealing with female characters (69). Throughout the story, we get to know that Coraline is closer to her father and spends time with him as her mother is usually busy and this is also reflected in *The Other World*, but in a more intimidating way as the Other Mother's control on Coraline's Other Father is more obvious and adds fuel to the fire of mother-daughter rivalry. Emma Samuelsson further explains in her article "A Psychological Approach to the Wicked Women" (2014) that Coraline is able to resolve this Oedipal complex as she "defies the other mother and establishes her own identity by ripping the final button off from the other father. By doing this, she has shown that she is capable of removing the control which her mother has established over her father within her mind" (16).

Identity

The theme of identity resurfaces in the narrative in different ways and it is the most evident through the conversation between Coraline and the cat:

"Cats don't have names," it said.

"No?" said Coraline.

"No," said the cat. "Now, you people have 'Now, you people have names. That's because you don't know who you are. We know who we are, so we don't need names.'" (Gaiman 35)

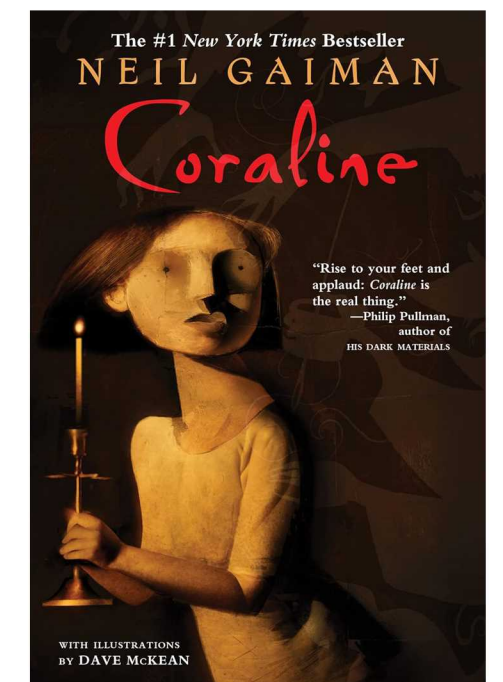
Something we are sure to realize is that Coraline is very lonely and overlooked. No one listens to her and they repeatedly mispronounce her name, a significant part of her identity and uniqueness. Coraline's name is uncanny on its own since it is a mispronunciation of Caroline. However, Coraline is the normalized version of our protagonist and being addressed as Caroline is irritating for her. As a result, she has a desire to stand out and establish her identity and perhaps that is the thing that starts her journey.

In her journey of self-discovery and development, first of all, she has to overcome the id which is identified as the Other Mother. Coraline, as a child, is at first tricked by the immediate pleasures that the id (Other Mother) provides for her. In order to stay in this world of fantasy and pleasures, she must surrender to the Other Mother and sew the button eyes. David Rudd further elaborates on this idea in his article "An Eye for an I." (2008) He argues that independence comes from separating oneself from the caregiver, in this case mother, so if Coraline agrees to stay with the Other Mother, she is instead separated from her developing self and is forever attached to her mother (Rudd 166). Fortunately, she was able to suppress her id and develop her ego.

Moreover, Coraline is not alone in this journey as her superego, personified as the cat, keeps her company and provides guidance and awareness. The cat can be the voice of her consciousness since it is described as "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 knows a lot about this world and helps Coraline defeat the Other Mother (the id).

CONCLUSION

Neil Gaiman's *Coraline* is a captivating masterpiece that explores the concept of the uncanny, and each element in the story contributes to its rich texture. The door and the corridor, the mist, the Other Mother, the Other World, buttons, and mirrors are all critical elements that represent the uncanniness and are also intricately linked with the theme of identity. A deep dive into the narrative reveals that the uncanny effect plays a significant role in a child's psyche by employing repressed childhood complexes. As the story progresses, we see Coraline's character development as she gradually moves past these complexes and comes to terms with her identity. Overall, by considering *Coraline* as an interpretation of Freud's uncanny, we can conclude that the uncanny is rooted in a child's psyche development. The story's intricate portrayal of the uncanny effect highlights the importance of resolving repressed childhood complexes and its role in shaping a child's personality and identity. With its rich themes and intricate storytelling, *Coraline* is a must-read for anyone looking to explore the depths of the human psyche.



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“The poet’s mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.”

T. S. Eliot

A Love-Letter to Sulla

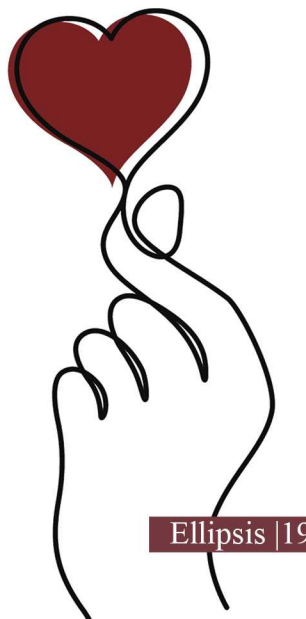
Mohammad Inamdar

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When Sulla burst, the skies did not shatter
The Nile did not overflow, mount Sinai not torn to tatters
The seat of god, the cherubs banquet,
Remained adorned with a shifting feast
With holy tremors, both burden and beast.
When Sulla burst, no Roman gate flew asunder
The slithering of worms; the slow hiss, replaced booming thunder.
From the nonplussed prescient purveyor came a question:
'Which worms shall burst forth from me?'
And the earth clamored and paid to see

Some fates are born, others bred
Must we all lay in the beds we've made?

When the mouth of Daia filled with vile earth,
When bane flew into his eyes' housing; repelled since birth.
When the walls of some long-forgotten house,
Bore the imprint of divinity's forehead,
When even hemlock abandoned from root to seed
The rulers' ill-fed, ill-strained cells
We must ask if every dagger makes flesh bleed



Perhaps the Nile shall one day
 Overflow. Mount Sinai glows with furious envy
 Perhaps hemlock shall grow
 From mouths, stomachs, eyes. One day
 Perhaps for another Sulla, a wrong Daia, the other Henry.
 Perhaps fate shall untwine, perhaps ships shall emerge
 From so long-forgotten waters, long-eschewed lands
 Perhaps we too shall call forth heaven's envy, Bathsheba's urge.
 Or Sulla shall die; consumed. Daia; wishing
 Perhaps you and I shall march forth
 Through fate's legion, its uncaring hordes
 Perhaps the prey shall lead the prey; fishermen for fishermen fishing

Some fates are born, some bred
 Must we all lay in the beds we've made?

When Commodus lay aside
 His lion's mane, his pride's pride.
 When they stripped his back from the ruler's hide.
 When the poison screeched 'Habet Fidem'
 Perhaps that day fate was too blind to keep on titem
 (Perhaps the serpentine had slithered too far
 Perhaps the feet of fate were muddied with fortune's tar
 Perhaps his hands were nailed, his ankles bruised and scarred
 Perhaps another man had washed his hands, lava manus meas)
 'Do I dare
 Disturb the universe?
 In a minute there is time
 For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse'



You have seen them, each one, with eyes closed
 The drunkard, the poisoned, the infested
 (Each one seated within you, tied to thine bed)
 Fate is us, or perhaps the Nile
 It is the dampened poison, the raging bile
 It is all the nothings of the born, the bred, the vile
 Or perhaps I digress?
 Or perhaps the matter's already begun?

Some fates are born, some others aborted
 Some folds are too tight to ever be unfolded

Tonight, I shall dine as Daia
 Tomorrow perhaps adorn my mane
 In peace I shall lay. In pieces torn and lain
 I can now see the fabric so long wanton
 I can see the tablets named and numbered
 I can see the covenant so long encumbered
 I see the men at Sinai, I feed on what they ate
 I see the fruits of the Nile grow the same.
 I am no prophet- my hands though are maimed
 With the same blood, lava manus meas
 I too sit and eat of the same fate, the same fruit, the same covenant
 I too am, the same Fisherman's bait

Three Guys

M. Reza Izadi

BA student of English Literature
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

Three guys lived in a small room
All peaceful and friendly.
But the lack of space was a problem
That couldn't be handled easily.

One day, the first guy came
And tired of this way of life,
Tried his hand at the second guy,
In his heart, put a knife.

So the third guy found him
Standing with blood on his hand.
He thought the guy should be punished,
But indeed, he could understand.

So the third guy knocked him down.
Put him in his place in the room,
And put on fences and chains around him.
So, he built a sort of prison room.

Then he lived beside him as before.
Only he had to feed him and keep him in.
They both had more space now,
With metal rods in between.

From Sea to Moon

Mohammad Reza Hallajian Mofrad Kashani

MA student of English literature
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To you oh late nights' confidant I sing
Whose bountiful face at night a fiery ring
Your pretty sound, your charm proved to be
A reason to pass the obscene days for me
Nothing as strong as your eyes to rule
A totalitarian queen, your eyes are so cruel
I am wavy when you draw close to my side
When far, liveliness is devoured, so are my tide
Oh Queen of Sheba all but you are with flaw
Your taste in everything is from now on our Law
Dark sky is your black hair, long and fair
Sisyphus' stone is the beauty with us you share
No one has seen; no one will ever see
Someone fairer, no one will like you be.



A Love Reborn

Zeynab Farhanian

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Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

In a tangled past, a love betrayed,
Seven years gone, forgiveness delayed.
Resolved to guard my heart's fragile core,
Love's trust shattered, forevermore.

But fate intervened in a cafe's embrace,
A curly-haired boy, beauty and grace.
With eyes of brown, like the morning sun,
Love's spark ignited, a battle was won.

Each morning, a coffee adorned with art,
A heart drawn gently, a precious part.
His gaze upon me, a belief rekindled,
Love's existence affirmed, my tears bridled.

With each passing moment, love's power revealed,
Transforming sorrow, my tears now congealed.
From depths of despair, pearls now arise,
Love's luminescent might, a glorious prize.

In this unforeseen communion, we've found,
A sanctuary of love, where hearts abound.
The wrongs of yesterday, recede from view,
As love's sweet melody, rings loud and true.

Through doubts and fears, we shall rise above,
Bound by a love that blossoms and thrives.
For in this journey, hand in hand we went,
From forgiveness, a new chapter begins.

So let the world witness, our love's embrace,
A testament to the beauty and grace,
That love, indeed, is a force divine,
Healing wounds, turning tears to pure shine.

Brain Fog

Sahand Mirshahi

Islamic Azad University of Mashhad

In my head, there's something sour that does tread,
A saccharine fog of numbness in its wake,
It embraces my thoughts and leaves them for dead,
As clouds of silence their sound doth forsake.

The raw odor of blood within my mind,
Blends its heat with the breeze of sorrow's breath,
A moister of anguish, a vine that's entwined,
Numbing the senses and sapping belief.

Woe to the damps of memory that once
Licked my sanity and hurled it to wrath,
Of dreads and regrets that now do ensconce
My mind in numbness, a stony aftermath.

The casket of my mind is nailed and waits,
For the undertaker to carry its weight.



By the Sword

Zarrindokht Karimi Baba Ahmadi

BA student of English Literature
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz



The wind blows at grains of sand
Stained rusty across the barren land
Sucking the heat from his gasp,
Leaving behind a shrinking rasp.
His fingers curl to seize the dust
But none can catch the racing gust.
His friends are gone, his wounds are deep,
He's not quite ready to sleep.
And now that the stares of a thousand yards,
Are skidding past his milky eyes
All that's left is the eyeless witness
Heading for the tunnel dimness.
Hearing the echo of a faulty epic,
Bouncing off the charred relics.
The fight is gone, husks clad in hoar,
For only death is the end of war.



House of the Ashes

Yasmina Bajelani

BA Graduate in English Literature
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

Yearning to feel
Burning to heal
With a heart on hand to seal
I set it on fire
To kill all the desire

Of me
Remains a home ravaged by wars, haunted by
the silent cries
Bathed in sadness that you cost
And of you
Memories that get so cruelly lost

Troubled by the reality
I chase all that's burnt
And pick up the ashes of a distant hope to paint the dark, violet

Tangled in words I never get to set free you will see
Only if you turn around
How I smother without a sound

I will pass my secret to the water
To the wind
They carry it somewhere you wouldn't hear but
If you knew my pain and fear
Would you still disappear?



Bub Believes Burst!

Negin Khosh Eghbal

MA Student of Shiraz University
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There was this bubble called Bub
And his daily routine was to sob.
Well, Bub was not like this from birth,
It happened to him after a while on Earth.
Before, he cherished a dew on a clover;
Now, “What’s gonna happen
when everything’s over?”
Bub pondered and became curious,
So, he went to his father, the furious.
“How an immortal element like me can surmise
Where does a globule go when he dies?
You can find me even in mortal breath!
Ask your mother; she loves tattling about death.”
This encounter left him perplexed;
With the guilt of his father feeling vexed.
So, he listened to his father’s word
And happily, his mom was bored.
“What is it, my dear son?”

You seem sick. Oh, damn that burning sun!”
“First, I wanted to know about afterburst,
But now I wonder my origin was erst.”
“You’re on your self-discovery journey
And you have your own reasons to worry.
Bear in mind what you do defines your glory.
However, you’re not alone in this story.”
Bub listened thoroughly yet not convinced.
With many questions in his head, he was dismissed.
Bub knew what was his solution.
So, he went to the forbidden location
With its notorious thorns and sharp objects.
The answer lay behind a kiss of the spikelet.
This was how far I could chip in
From what Bub had done or seen.
Regardless of what Bub did,
He saved his mind from turbid.

The Woman Who Fell to Earth

Maryam Askary

BA student of English Literature
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

Deadly shadow shot my chest,
My sorrow came back to greet
I can’t trust the reflection
Or the figure that I meet
The beating machine of my ribs,
Always eager to fleet.
My limbs freeze in terror,
I'm foreseeing my defeat
I'm the soldier, the enemy,
And the food that they eat.
There's no escape from this hell,
These bones are my only seat
I am me, glued to my bones
It is me I have to beat.

An alien who fell to earth
And stripped her soul in mania
People's concern will only be,
“Are you from Lithuania?”



Phantom of Words

Atousa Samadifar

BA student of English Literature
Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz

SHORT STORIES 03

Edgar, seated in his solitary rocking chair with an air of empathetic grace, often spoke of the delicate pursuit: the journey to reclaim the scattered fragments of one's essence. Lost pieces, a noble pursuit indeed, though in the face of life's trials, the concept seemed more like a distant aspiration. As he wove his poetic narratives about exploring the depths of one's being, I couldn't help but contrast his romantic musings with the banal reality of his life, confined to a desk, not of his choosing.

I would frequently bring him his tea, accompanied by freshly baked cookies, to our humble garden retreat or the cozy drawing room, if the weather proved unfriendly. Setting the delicate porcelain cup on the table, I eagerly anticipated Edgar's next discourse, hoping for a topic that might offer solace or intellectual connection. I longed for discussions about the happenings in town: perhaps the bold strokes of a rebellious painter or the haunting melodies from the Far East that had captured the critics' attention. Yet, despite nine years of marriage, such conversations remained elusive. Instead, Edgar's disappointment seemed to deepen with each passing day, his frustration isolating him in the confines of his study.

The crux of our predicament lay in the impenetrable fortress of Edgar's mind. My attempts to breach its walls proved fruitless, leaving me without solutions or comfort. The wealth of knowledge I had acquired over the years, once my arsenal, now lay impotent against the barriers of his inner world. Between us, language faltered, a frail bridge unable to span the gap separating our thoughts and desires. Our words, once vessels of meaning, now lay discarded and hollow, like aimless embers flickering in the fading glow of the hearth. In our silence, the fire burned on, consuming everything until only ashes remained. We had stumbled in our ability to communicate, leaving our souls adrift in a sea of unspoken yearning.

One day I found ourselves seated in an oddly tranquil dining room, ensnared by the stillness that hung heavy in the air. In that hushed atmosphere, a silent accord was reached—a silent embrace of the frigid, desolate space that beckoned us toward a new chapter of life. Neither of us possessed the fortitude to utter our final farewells aloud. Instead,



out of reverence for the years spent together, it was left to our eyes alone to bid adieu. I watched as he departed, his back receding into the distance, his shoulders rigid and held high. I remained fixed in my seat, watching until he vanished from view. With the closing of the door, time, which had seemed suspended, resumed its steady march forward.

The following day, I found myself seated by the window in the drawing room, sipping my evening tea in solitude. Beyond the glass, willow leaves glistened a dark green, veiled in delicate layers of ice. The steam from my tea rose gently, a swirling, dancing veil of cloudy velvet that caressed the impassive glass. It enveloped the trees in a misty embrace, warming each rigid branch as it descended. I witnessed the elegant descent of a droplet of melted ice from the leaf's tip to the frozen ground below.

Soon, the scent of freshly moistened earth permeated the room, carried in on playful breezes that flickered the flame of the candle placed upon the table, my solitary companion. I clasped my trembling hands around it, warding off the threat of its extinguishment. It was the sole beacon in that somber afternoon, guiding my path to the bedroom amidst the encroaching darkness. The wax melted faster, and my pallid fingers blushed crimson with warmth as the sensation returned. Entranced by the bold hues of orange and yellow, I entertained the notion of waiting until dawn for light. Yet, a nagging voice urged me to action, warning that even this flickering flame would soon succumb.

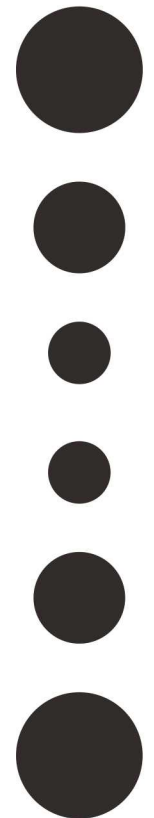
As the candle dwindled, a pool of liquid wax

formed beneath it. Despite the persistent voice of departure, I found myself captivated by the spectacle unfolding before me—the gradual transformation of solid substance into radiant light.

It was then the edges, ceiling, and doors of the vast house became visible to my eyes. The sharp absent sound of Edgar's fingers relentlessly tapping on the typewriter was still echoing in the empty space. I felt its black ink of definite shapes contaminating the pure paper, coding the simplicity of existence with sophisticated man-made expectations of meaning.

I watched them bending the elastic rubber band to its limits before releasing it into the void, where it careened wildly toward an unknown destination. The poor object unconscious of its fate just keeps going, surrendering itself to the already decided fate. The bystander, whether observing its descent to the ground or snatching it from the air, became a silent witness to its journey, cradling it within the warmth of a weary palm, recently revived by the unspoken caresses of flickering flames. In such moments, one might yearn for a touch of humanity, a gesture of compassion akin to the rescue and adoption of thousands of orphaned words lost within this strange house—words rendered breathless by their wanderings amidst heartless walls, seeking solace in the embrace of understanding after enduring a harsh odyssey too burdensome for their abstract bodies to bear.

Truly, I realized, I had never experienced such profound joy as in that moment—a moment suffused with the tender warmth of connection and the promise of belonging.



«گوریل، عشق من»

اثر: تونی کید بامبرا / مترجم: اهورا نصرالهی
دانشجوی کارشناسی زبان و ادبیات انگلیسی
دانشگاه شهید چمران اهواز

آن همان سالی بود که هانکا بوبا اسمش را عوض کرده بود. چون اسمش از همان اول جفرسون وینستون ویل بود، این تغییر جدیدی به حساب نمی‌آمد، بلکه بازگشتی به اسم واقعی‌اش بود. برایم تازگی داشت چون از آنجایی که در دایی خطاب کردنش اصلاً خوب نبودم، او همیشه هانکا بوبای من بود. تغییر برای من، حسی مثل حالت جغرافیایی-هواشناسی داشت، همانطوری که در سالنامه‌ها پیدا می‌شود. یا شبیه به وقتی که روی صندلی شاگرد نشسته‌اید و با انگشتی خیس مسیر روی نقشه مجاله‌شده را دنبال می‌کنید و حواستان به جاده‌ها و علامت‌هاست. وقتی هم که بابابزرگ ویل می‌پرسد: «اسکات، کدوم مسیر؟»، حستان می‌گوید که باید از خروجی بعدی به چپ پیچید یا هر سمت دیگری. نه اینکه اسم من اسکات باشد، این اسمی است که بابابزرگ به هر کس که روی صندلی شاگرد نشسته‌باشد می‌دهد. از قضا آن شخص معمولاً خود من است چون دوست ندارم روی صندلی عقب کنار گردوها بنشینم. شاید به نظر شما نشستن کنار کیسه گردوها مشکلی نداشته‌باشد. اگر چنین نظری دارید، به هر حال احترام به نظرتان واجب است. ولی گاهی پر از گرد و خاک‌اند و شما را به سرفه می‌اندازند. یک جوری هم این طرف آن طرف تکان می‌خورند و یکهو پایین می‌افتند که انگار موشی در کیسه گیر کرده‌است. پس اگر مثل من ترسو هستید، شما هم شب‌ها با چراغ روشن می‌خواهید و جیسون کوچولو را مقصر می‌دانید و برای اینکه برق را بیخودی هدر ندهید، مجبورید وظیفه نقشه‌خوانی را گردن بگیرید. اینطوری شد که من بیشتر اوقات روی صندلی شاگرد می‌نشستم و مرا اسکات صدا می‌زدند.

هانکا بوبای عاشق کنار گردوها و جیسون کوچولو روی صندلی عقب نشسته‌است. ما هم مجبوریم به هر حرفی که مربوط به عشقش می‌شود گوش بدهیم. اما حتی این هم نتوانست سرمان را گرم کند. جیسون کوچولو به قدری نمی‌فهمد که تمام تمرکزش را صرف چسبیدن به عکس زنی لاغری کرده‌است که لباسی روستایی به تن دارد و مثل خجالتی‌ها صورتش را با دست پوشانده‌است. اما سینمایی در پس‌زمینه بود که سوالاتی در ذهنم ایجاد کرد. من دیوانه‌ی سینما هستم، با اینکه چند باری برایم دردسر شده بود. مثلاً عید پاک قبلی وقتی من و برود بزرگه و جیسون کوچولو به حال خودمان بودیم، بابت دیدن سه کله پوک نتوانستیم به دورست برویم. آن شب آر. کی. او همیلتون به خاطر آماده‌سازی برای مراسم عید پاک تعطیل بود. وست‌اند، ری‌گان و سانست هم خیلی دور بودند و هیچ بزرگتری همراهمان نبود. بنابراین کوچه آمستردام تا واشنگتن را قدم زدیم. گفتند که «گوریل، عشق من» در حال پخش است؛ من مشکلی نداشتم، هرچند برود بزرگه از «عشق من» خوش نمی‌آمد. جیسون کوچولو هم، همانطور که بابابزرگ

TRANSLATIONS

04

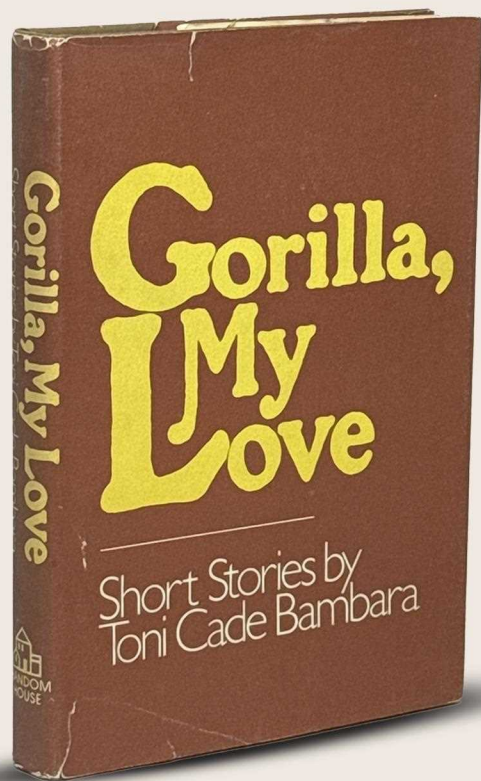
فیلم بیشتر از آنکه مسخره باشد، احمقانه بود. به خاطر اینکه فهمیدم هر کسی از خانواده من از این قدرت الهی که همیشه از او حرف می‌زنند بهتر است. اگر کسی ما را تهدید کند بابا بی تفاوت یک جا نمی‌ایستد؛ مامان هم همینطور. همه‌ی این تصویرها برایم واضح می‌شود؛ برود بزرگه به صلیب کشیده شده است و می‌گوید: «پدر، اونا را ببخش! نمی‌دونن دارن چیکار می‌کنن.» مامان به او می‌گوید: «احمق از اونجا بیا پایین! این کارها بچه‌بازی نیست.» بابا سر بابابزرگ داد می‌زند که برایش نردبان بیاورد چون برود بزرگه به سیم آخر زده است. بعد هم فامیل‌های مادری وارد ماجرا می‌شوند. مامان و خاله دیزی، به رومی‌ها حمله می‌کنند و با کیف سنگینشان تا جان دارند آن‌ها را می‌زنند. هانکا بوبا به آنهایی که زانو زده‌اند می‌گوید که بهتر است بروند کمک بیاورند و گرنه زیر پا له می‌شوند. بابابزرگ ویل می‌گوید: «دست از سر این پسر بردارید! اگر این کاریه که می‌خواد با زندگیش بکنه به ما مربوط نیست.» سپس خاله دیزی کمی از طعم کیف پر از پولش به او می‌چشاند، سرش داد می‌زند که بابابزرگ چه پیر خرفتی است. بعد همه او را بغل می‌کنند، مثل آن موقع که عمو کلیتون به ارتش رفت و تنها با یک پا برگشت و بابابزرگ چیزی احمقانه درباره‌ی اینکه «این رسم زندگیت» گفت. حالا دیگر برود بزرگه از صلیب رها شده و در پارک مشغول هندبال یا لی‌لی یا چنین چیزی بود. خانواده در آشپزخانه مشغول پرت‌کردن بشقاب‌ها به سمت یکدیگر بودند و سر هم جیغ می‌کشیدند که اگر تو فلان نمی‌کردی، من مجبور نبودم فلان کنم. من هم در سالن پذیرایی در حالی که تلاش می‌کردم تکالیف حسابانم را انجام بدهم، داد می‌زدم بسه دیگه سرم رو بردید!

بخاطر همین بود که من به تنهایی مشغول داد زدن بودم و به طعم‌های برای کیل غرنبه تبدیل شدم. اما وقتی که داد می‌زدم ما پولمان را می‌خواهیم، همه با من همراه شدند. فیلم هم داشت با این موسیقی آسمانی غمگینش به پایان می‌رسید و آن عقل کل داخل سوراخ دیوار دوباره صدا را زیاد کرد تا ما را ساکت کند. بعد باگز بانی روی صفحه آمد و ما فهمیدیم که دیگر فیلم تمام شده‌است. هیچ خبری از گوریل فلان من نبود. برود بزرگه گفت: «آاه گندش بزنی! باید بریم مدیر رو ببینیم و پولمون رو پس بگیریم.» آن موقع فهمیدم که تازه اول ماجراست. چیپس‌هایی را که جیسون کوچولو روی موهایم ریخته بود کنار زدم و به سمت اتاق مدیر رفتم تا با او سر و کله بزدم. او همان کسی بود که از همان اول به ما راجب پخش کردن گوریل دروغ گفته بود. هیچوقت از این آدم خوشم نمی‌آمد. مثل آدم بدهای سریال‌ها بود که رنگ پریده و نچسباند. مثل کسی که پشت کتابخانه متحرک قائم شده و دستکش به دست، مونلابت سوناتا را می‌نوازد. با عصبانیت در اتاقش را زدم. کسی هم کنارم نبود. با اینکه مامان گفته بود از آن دستشویی‌های کثیف استفاده نکنیم، برود بزرگه مجبور شد خیلی سریع به دستشویی برود. صدای آه مدیر را شنیدم. انگار زیاد از دیدن یک بچه پشت در خوشحال نبود. حالا دیگر خیلی خیلی عصبانی بودم؛ از دست بزرگترها خسته شده بودم که به خاطر کوچک‌بودن بچه‌ها، فکر می‌کنند می‌توانند سر به سرشان بگذارند و بابتش جواب پس ندهند. مدیر پرسید: «چی شده؟» صدایش طوری بود انگار که راهم را گم کرده‌ام، خودم را خیس کرده‌ام و شاید هم بچه‌ای عقب مانده‌ام. در واقع، در تاریخ مدرسه پی‌اس ۱۸۶ من باهوش‌ترین‌ام. این را از هرکس که دلتان می‌خواهد بپرسید. حتی معلم‌هایی که بخاطر نخواندن آهنگ‌های جنوبی و یا سوال‌های مثلاً بی‌بطم از من خوششان نمی‌آید. وقتی هم که آن معلم‌ها مخفیانه به مردم رنگین‌پوست توهین می‌کنند، مامان در یک چشم به هم زدن ظاهر می‌شود. با آرامش و اطمینان، با کلاهی که رو به پایین است و کت بره‌ی ایرانی‌اش که فقط یک سمت کمرش را پوشانده و دستش را به کمرش زده، وارد می‌شود تا بتواند حرفش را بزند، از آن حرف‌هایی که همه را هیپنوتیزم می‌کند و معلم، از آن جایی که می‌داند این شغل همه چیزش است

می‌گوید آگه بهش بگویم بدو بیا، تا ته جهنم‌دره هم دنبالت می‌آید. به هر حال، رفتیم آنجا و سه بسته چیپس هافمور خریدیم که نه تنها بهترین چیپس بازار است، بلکه بهترین بسته‌بندی را برای باد کردن و ترکاندن با صدای بلند را دارند. طوری که خانم نگهبان با آن هیکل خیکی بدو بدو راهروی سینما را طی کند، چراغ‌قوه را مستقیم در چشمانتان بگیرد و سوژه‌ای برای خنده پیدا کنید. اگر هم چیزی گفت مهم نیست و دلیلی برای خلاص کردن خودت از آن فیلم خسته کننده پیدا می‌کنی. دروغ چرا، من عاشق این کارم. جیسون کوچولو با ضربه زدن به صندلی جلویی، من را برای شر به پا کردن وسوسه می‌کند و برود بزرگه زیربلی درباره بازیگوشی‌هایی که قرار است انجام بدهیم نقشه می‌کشد. من کسی هستم که نقشه را عملی می‌کند. مثل وقتی که پسرهای گنده به سمت ما می‌آیند و می‌گویند: «جیباتون رو خالی کنین، سریع!» کسی که پول‌ها رو قائم کرده، منم. یا مثل وقتی که پسرهای شر داخل پارک، توپ برود بزرگه را به زور از او گرفتند، این منم که می‌پرسم وسط و درگیر می‌شوم. اگر خانم نگهبان زیادی بداخلاق شود، این منم که نظم سینما را بر هم می‌زنم.

خیلی از شروع فیلم نگذشته بود که فهمیدیم یک موزیکال کلیسایی است و مشخصاً درباره‌ی گوریل نیست. دوباره همان موضوعات خسته‌کننده و تکراری! خیلی عصبانی شده‌بودم. نه برای موضوع فیلم، بلکه بخاطر اینکه وقتی قرار است فیلمی درباره گوریل ببینید، مسلماً نمی‌خواهید فیلمی که هزار بار دیدید را از نو تماشا کنید. برای همین به شدت عصبانی بودم. علاوه بر این، ما هر سال بارها و بارها فیلم عهد دقیانوسی شاه شاهان را دیده و آن را از بر بودیم. بزرگ‌ترها یاد گرفته‌اند هرچور که دلشان می‌خواهد با ما رفتار کنند. همین موضوع اعصابم را به هم می‌ریزد. پاهایم را بالا گذاشتم و چیپس شور و ترد و دو آبنبات در بغلم انداختم و پول‌ها را از دست پسرهای قلدر در کفش‌هایم قائم کردم. این فیلم هم که شروع شد دیگر همه‌مان به سیم آخر زدیم. داد می‌زدیم، هو می‌کشیدیم، پاهایمان را می‌کوبیدیم و ادا اطوار در می‌آوردیم تا مسئول

باجه را از خواب بیدار کنیم به خیال اینکه فیلم اشتباهی را پخش کرده‌است. اما نه، فریادهایمان فایده‌ای نداشت. در عوض تا حدی صدا را بلند کرد که مجبور شدیم دوباره مثل دیوانه‌ها داد بزنیم و ساختمان را روی سرمان بگذاریم. خانم نگهبان، بخش کودکان را با طناب جدا کرد و نور چراغش را روی ما انداخت. ما هم بلندتر داد زدیم. چندتا از بچه‌ها از زیر طناب در رفتند و شروع به دویدن در راهرو کردند. برای ساکت کردن اینها به چیزی بیشتر از طنابی پوسیده و قدیمی مخملی لازم بود. من هم در حالی که پاپ کورن می‌خوردم، به بچه ای که جلویم نشسته بود لگد می‌زدم. جیسون کوچولو به صندلی‌ها ضربه می‌زد. واقعاً لحظه ای خاص بود. بعد خانم نگهبان گنده‌بگ آمد؛ کسی که فقط در مواقع اضطراری وارد قضیه می‌شود. خانم نگهبان جوری چراغ قوه را گرفته بود انگار که می‌خواست حال کسی را با آن بگیرد. پشت سر آن‌ها خانم نگهبان رنگین پوستی به اسم برندی آمد. دوستانش کیل غرنبه صدایش می‌زدند. او با کسی شوخی نداشت و هیچ‌کس هم خنده‌اش را ندیده‌بود. به خاطر همین، ما خفه خون گرفتیم و فیلم مسخره‌ی کوفتی را نگاه کردیم.



و به اونا بگی اول از همه بیان من رو ببینن.» من این شکلی بزرگ شدم.

روی صندلی شاگرد کامل چرخیدم و گفتم: «هانکا بوبا یا جفرسون ویندسانگ ویل یا هر چیزی که اسمته، اینجا رو ببین! می‌خوای با این دختره ازدواج کنی؟»

با نیش‌های تا بناگوش باز شده‌اش گفت: «بله که می‌خوام!»

در جوابش گفتم: «یادت هست وقتی بچه بودم و در خیابان چهارصد و نه زندگی می‌کردیم و بخاطر برف شدید مامان و بابا توی روستا گیر کرده بودن، مجبور شدی دو روز از من مراقبت کنی؟»

گفت: «معلومه که یادمه.» دوباره پرسیدم: «خب، یادت هست که گفتمی من بامزه‌ترین موجودی هستم که تا حالا دیدی؟»

گفت: «اوه، وقتی که کوچولو بودی خیلی بامزه بودی.» این حرفش را طوری ادا کرد که انگار قرار بود بامزه باشد، ولی من نخندیدم.

ادامه دادم: «خب، یادت هست چی گفتمی؟» بابابزرگ ویل که داشت با دقت رانندگی می‌کرد پرسید: «اسکات، کدوم مسیر؟» اما اسکات سرش شلوغ بود و براش اهمیتی نداشت اگر چند روز هم گم می‌شدیم.

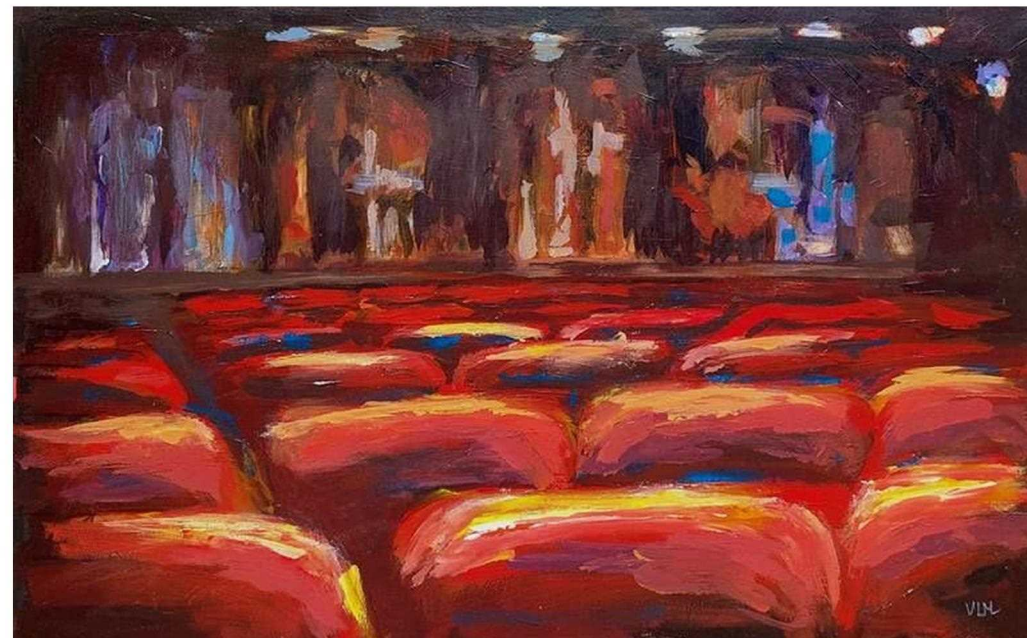
گفت: «منظورت چیه هلو؟»

در جوابش گفتم: «اسم من هیزله. منظورم اینه که گفتمی وقتی بزرگ شدم با من ازدواج می‌کنی. قرار بود صبر کنی. منظورم اینه دایی جفرسون عزیز.» چیزی نگفتم و در سکوت نگاه عجیبی به من انداخت، انگار که تا حالا من را در زندگیش ندیده بود. مثل اینکه نصف شب در شهری غریب و خالی از سکنه گم شده باشد. انگار که من نقشه ذهنش را به هم ریخته و همه مسیر جاده‌ها را عوض کرده بودم. دوباره پرسیدم: «خب تو همچین چیزی گفتمی، مگه نه؟» جیسون کوچولو طوری پشت سر هم سرش را عقب و جلو می‌کرد که فکر کردم دارد پینگ پونگ بازی می‌کند. حال خوب نبود و جیغ می‌کشیدم. بابابزرگ ویل هم زیر لبی می‌گفت که

اگر به خودم نیایم و وظیفه راهنمایی‌ام را به درستی انجام ندهم هیچوقت به مقصد نمی‌رسیم.

گفت: «محض رضای خدا هیزل، تو فقط یک دختر کوچولو بودی. داشتم سر به سرت می‌گذاشتم.» برای اینکه بفهمد چه حرف وحشتناکی زده است، مقلدانه گفتم: «داشتم سر به سرت می‌گذاشتم!» بعد دیگر چیزی نگفتم. او هم چیزی نگفت. جیسون کوچولو هم چیزی برای گفتن نداشت. سپس بابابزرگ ویل شروع به حرف زدن کرد: «خوشگله، دقت کن. اون هانکا بوبا بود که این چیزها را به تو گفت. این که اینجاست جفرسون وینستون ویله.» هانکا بوبا گفت: «درسته. اون یکی دیگه بود. من یه آدم جدیدم.»

گفتم: «تویه سگ دروغگویی.» در حالی که می‌خواستم بگویم سگ خائن، اما نتوانستم به موقع کلمه را تلفظ کنم. از زیر زانم در رفت. گریه می‌کردم و روی صندلی ولو شده بودم. هیچ چیزی برایم مهم نبود. بابابزرگ گفت ساکت باشم و پایش را



تا ته روی گاز گذاشت. اشک جلوی چشمانم را گرفته بود و نمی‌توانستم نقشه را به خوبی ببینم.

جیسون کوچولو هم گریه می‌کرد. چون برادر خونی من است و می‌دانست که یا باید کنار هم بمانیم و یا تا ابد از هم جدا شویم. همان چیزی که آدم بزرگ‌ها نمی‌توانند راجع بهش تصمیم بگیرند و هر بار با روشی جدید باعث سردرگمی‌ات می‌شوند. بعد حتی یک عذرخواهی ساده هم نمی‌کنند.

دست‌پاچه می‌شود، چون مامان می‌تواند هر جور که دلش خواست با هر کس رفتار کند و کار خودش را انجام دهد.

در را محکم بالگد باز کردم، مستقیم به سمتش رفتم، نشستم و درباره خودش حرف زدم؛ اینکه می‌خواهم پولم و همین‌طور پول برود بزرگه و جیسون کوچولو را پس بگیرم. با اینکه تازه نشسته بودم سعی می‌کردم از اتاق بیرونم کند؛ این نشان می‌داد که چه آدم احمقی است. درست مثل وقتی که معلم‌ها می‌فهمند مامان مثل کوه ایستاده‌است و هیچ عقب‌نشینی‌ای در کار نیست. آخر هم پولم را پس نداد. من هم وقتی داشت از اتاق بیرونم می‌کرد کبریت را از کنار زیر سیگاری‌اش برداشتم. همان کبریت را زیر دکه‌ی شیرینی فروشی روشن کردم که باعث شد کوچوی واشنگتن قدیمی رنگ و رو رفته را برای یک هفته ببندند... به خاطر دهان لق برود بزرگه، بابا به من مشکوک شد. اما من همه چیز را صریح و واضح برایش توضیح دادم. باید انتقامم را می‌گرفتم.

چون وقتی که می‌گویی قرار است «گوریل، عشق من» پخش شود، نباید زیر قولت بزنی. مثل وقتی که به من می‌گویی قرار است برایم جشن تولد بگیری، باید همان کار را انجام بدهی. وقتی هم که به من و جیسون کوچولو اجازه می‌دهی همراه بابابزرگ ویل گردوها را به جنوب ببریم، بهتر است با حرف‌هایی مثل اینکه هوا چرا این شکلی است، یا اینکه به

دستشویی‌های بین راهی نروید و فلان کار را نکنید، حالمان را خراب نکنی. منظورم این است که حتی گنگسترهای داخل فیلم‌ها هم شعارشان این است که «اگه سرم بره قولم نمی‌ره». به خاطر همین تا آنجایی که می‌دانم، هیچکس نمی‌تواند از بلایی که حقتش است قسر در برود. بعد بابا دوباره کمر بندش را می‌بندد. من همین‌جوری بزرگ شدم. مثل وقتی که مامان در موقعیت‌هایی که از عقب‌نشینی من ناامید می‌شود می‌گوید: «باشه پرنده‌ی بد، تو راست می‌گی. حرفت رو کامل به کرسی نشوندی.» نه اینکه اسمم پرنده‌ی بد باشد! فقط وقتی حوصله‌ی بحث کردن ندارد و حق با من است اینطوری صدایم می‌کند.

خاله جو، سرسخت‌ترین عضو فامیل، حتی از خاله دیزی هم بدتر است. به من گفت: «کاملاً حق با شماست خانم مافین.» که البته این هم اسم واقعی‌ام نیست و چون یک بار که چند تا آمپول به من زدند و بی‌دلیل از روی بالش‌ت بلند نشدم، این اسم را رویم گذاشت. حتی بابابزرگ ویل که حافظه‌ای ندارد و هر چه دروغ ضایعی که دوست داشتی می‌توانی برایش بگویی، می‌گوید: «خب، اگر این همون چیزیه که گفتم، پس همونه دیگه!» اما آن‌ها می‌گویند قضیه‌ی لقب‌دادن فرق دارد. مثل قضیه‌ی هانکا بوبا نیست که به همان اسم اولیه‌اش یا چیزی شبیهش برگشت. فقط بخاطر فکر ازدواج بود که حالا از اسم واقعی‌اش استفاده می‌کرد. که من چنین دیدی به این قضیه ندارم.

روی صندلی شاگرد نشستم. به سمتش برگشتم و مثل قدیم رک و راست از او سوالی پرسیدم. منظورم این است که خیلی واضح نشان دادم چه می‌خواهم. هیچ خبری از کاه کوه ساختن مثل آدم بزرگ‌ها نبود. همونطور که مامان مرا در مواقع جدی با اسم واقعی‌م صدا می‌زند و می‌گوید: «هیزل اگه چیزی ذهنت را درگیر کرده به ما بگو؛ هرچه بادا باد! اگر کسی هم خوشش نیومد بگو یه سری به من بزن.» بابا سرش را از روزنامه بیرون آورد و گفت: «بهتره به حرف مامان خوب گوش کنی هیزل»