天主教輔仁大學英國語文學系學士班畢業成果

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, FU JEN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
GRADUATION PROJECT 2017

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Projected-Self or Social Others: Filmic Representation of "Others" in Henry Selick's *Coraline*

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Composition and Conversation III—Dr. Kate Liu

RP 4

18 June 2016

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Abstract

While Neil Gaiman's novella Coraline has been a favorite for both critics and its young adult readers because of its vivid description of the namesake girl's process of growth, its 3D stop-motion animation adaptation has not been as lucky. Though a box office success, the film has been seen as a "disgrace" failing to convey the theme of self-growth. In defense of Henry Selick's Coraline, this paper examines the roles of the neighbor characters in both versions, and argues that, while these neighbors support Coraline's self-growth, they function to reflect the protagonist's psychic transition and facilitate her reconstruction of community.

Introduction

Neil Gaiman is a renowned British writer, whose work shows a wide variety of genres ranging from short fiction to film, receiving praises from readers across all age. In recent ten years, Gaiman has been using and expanding the genre of Children's literature with novella such as, to name but a few, *Coraline*, *The Graveyard Book*, and *Odd and the Frost Giant*. Among all his works, *Coraline* would probably be the best known success, being adapted into both graphic fiction and film. Originally, Gaiman's *Coraline* represents a child in a dilemma of identifying herself. The whole narrative thus witnesses the heroine's process of navigating difficulties to finally realize her position in society. Whether it be a self-affirming fantasy or a realistic bildungsroman, *Coraline* contains both Gothic elements and issues of parent-child relations, which are entertaining to child readers and thought-provoking to adult readers as well.

In 2009, the novella was adapted into a 3D stop-motion animated feature by the director Henry Selick. As a "dark, intensely psychological fable or modern fairy tale", the film *Coraline* received both praises and criticisms (Gutierrez 84). One critic regards Selick's adaptation as "anything but an impoverishment of the original text" (Rusnak 148). Another even marks it as "a radically conservative appropriation of the original source" which displays an "unprogressive vision of childhood" (Meyer). In response to these devaluations of Selick's *Coraline*, this paper will examine Coraline's development of the self in terms of her relationship to the "others" by comparing and contrasting the original novella *Coraline* and its filmic adaptation, with a focus on the characterizations of the supportive characters. These neighbor characters in the film, I argue, function as both Coraline's projected-self and her social others. As a whole, they serve to embody and dramatize her rich and complex psychodrama and meanwhile indicate her process of socialization.

Literature Review

Since Gaiman's *Coraline* deals with the theme of self-growth and child empowerment, the majority of scholars and critics tend to look at it in light of psychoanalytical approaches or Gothic readings. Rudd, for instance, identifies the Lacanian motifs in *Coraline* and illustrates how "fears turn on one's existence, strung between the Symbolic and the Real," examining its fairytale tradition of exploring the darker side of life: "the problematic nature of knowing one's place in the world" (167). Keeling and Pollard, on the other hand, discuss the correlation between food and orality presented in the novel, investigating how the protagonist positions her place in the Lacanian Symbolic realm constructed by food

presentation and oral desire. Gooding also draws upon Lacan to explain Coraline's psychic development while arguing that Freudian uncanny effects in the novel reveal the psychological process whereby Coraline redefines her relationship with her parents. Seen from Lacanian or Freudian perspectives, Caroline's psychosexual development is marked by her relationships to others, namely her parents and neighbors, through which Coraline redefines herself and becomes socialized.

Aside from some psychoanalytical approaches, scholar and critics also look at the genres into which *Coraline* falls and examine its significant influences on the character development. Children's Gothic, the genre of which *Coraline* falls into, reflects the symptoms of life and helps children deal with the underlying psychic traumas (Coats). *Coraline*'s use of Gothic tradition, manifested in its uncanny elements, underlies the very theme of self-identity. The essays examining *Coraline*'s Gothic features and the namesake heroine's heroic characteristics probe into her psyche as well. As Pons observes, Coraline is a heroine, who on one hand longs for "family stability, happiness and a normal life in a stable society," and feels "alienated" (308) on the other hand. She also points out the important role of the "other" characters, who are "constantly challenging Coraline' assumption about the world" and showing her "different approaches to individuality and identity" (310). According to Webler, children position themselves as heroes/heroines so as to defeat "interior and exterior obstacles" (128).

While a number of essays center on the individual Coraline and her self-development, some other scholars emphasize the importance of the supportive roles in the film, with both criticisms and approvals. Some scholars indicate that the role of Wybie, a character existing only in the filmic adaptation, intervene Coraline's individual quest, downplaying her self-empowerment (Pons 312; Webler 127). One critic even claims that Selick's alterations seem to present the story as "contemporary anxieties about the breakdown of the family," "trading off the novel's underlying theme of child empowerment for adult fears about child welfare" (Meyer). Nevertheless, Foreman shows her support for Whybie, denying the popular critique that the character Wybie disturbs Coraline's self-actualization. She argues that through the protagonist's interaction with "others," she is able to develop and solidify self. Through her interaction with these characters, Coraline learns to come to terms with her position in society.

Although some hold that Selick's alterations to the original undermine the very theme of self-affirmation, especially with the added role of Wybie and alteration of the epilogue, the director disagrees. For him, adding "Wybie," a sidekick boy of Coraline's age, for Coraline to have conversation with is a filmic presentation of her inner world. The author also concurs

and finds Wybie's existence inevitable since narrative and film use different media and take different approaches to present a story (Webler 127; Rusnak 141). Inspired by this idea of seeing Wybie as a role in Coraline' psychodrama in the film, I have examined and found that the neighbors could also reflect Coraline's psychic activities and serve as her psychodrama.

In response to the controversies raised over the filmic adaptation of *Coraline*, I analyze in this paper the roles of the neighbors in Selick's *Coraline* and argue that their actions and relations with the child protagonist form an emotional and psychic landscape for her growth and socialization. In this text analysis, I have divided my findings into four sections. The first part covers the general discussion of the differences between the original narrative and the filmic adaptation, which shall shed light on Coraline's current difficulties, both psychological and social. To further support my argument, I continue to examine the characterization of the supportive characters from both versions. Focusing mainly on the filmic adaptation and its script, I have utilized Melanie Klein's theory of manic-depressive states as a prelude to finding out the correlation between Coraline's psychic presentation and the role of the neighbors. I have proven that these supportive characters, in both versions, not only support Coraline's psychonarration/drama but also indicate her social transition. At the end, to defend the filmic presentation, I conclude that the filmic alterations do not detract from its original motif of self-actualization, but rather present this psychic transition in a social context.

Primary Differences between Narrative and Film

There are, indeed, some fundamental differences between the narrative and the film, in terms of their plot structure and characterization along with setting. In both versions, the protagonist is caught up in boredom and anxieties due to her lack of parental attention, which serves as the most prominent motivation for her exploration into the other realm. Boredom seems to govern the plot and threatens Coraline's sense of identity, since boredom has two implications: "there is something I desire, and there is nothing I desire" (Phillips 80). Lacking a means to express the self, Coraline looks forward to something "dangerous" and "exciting" (Gaiman 21). Even though her desire is later fulfilled by the Other mother, she is bored with its "meaningless[ness]" and thus wants to escape from it (Phillips 80-81).

Boredom and parental ignorance (and lack of peer companionship in the film) lead Coraline into the Other world, which is presented differently in the two versions. While Coraline's navigation between the two worlds is simple in the narrative, the "home-away-home" scheme is more complicated in the film. Film Coraline's frequent navigation aims to roll out a sharp comparison and contrast between the two worlds. The Other world in the film

is rendered a physical manifestation of realizing her wishes and desires, serving as "a dream come true" which adapts eagerly to her needs. Moreover, the fantastical elements are exaggerated in the film, as is evidenced by the Other mother's three "wonders" for Coraline (see figs.1-3): the Other father's magical garden (in the shape of Coraline's face) and the breathtaking and impossible performances of the Other neighbors. To a certain degree, the Other realm in the film can be regarded as her phantasy[1], the psychic reality in which she constructs and develops the self. On the other hand, lacking the magical components shown in the film, the narrative Other world serves more as a stage for Coraline to play out her heroism and outwit the villain (the Other mother as the embodiment of her fears.)

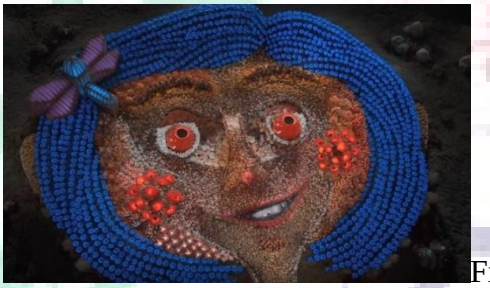
Fig.1

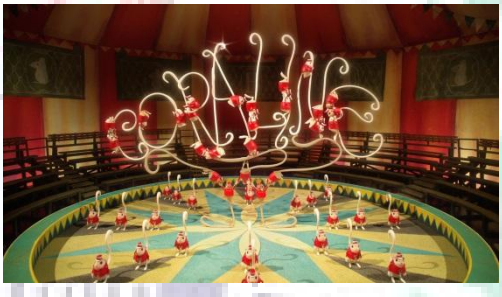
Fig.2

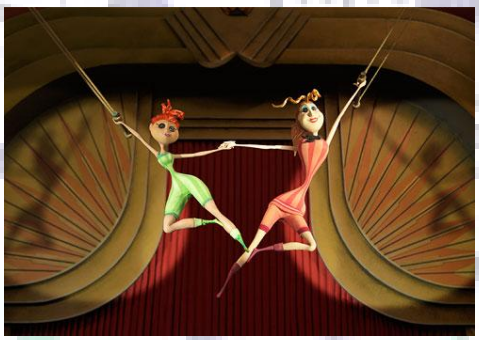
Fig.3

Other significant differences are the alterations in the background setting and the characterization of neighbors, which puts the story in a completely new social context. As an American director, Selick moves the whole cultural background form Britain to Ashland, Oregon. The flats the Joneses move into is named *Pink Palace Apartments*, which is shared with other three neighbors: Misses Spink and Forcible, two former British actresses (see Fig. 4); Mr. Bobinsky, a Russian circus performer (see Fig. 5), whose cultural identities become entirely "foreign" in this altered setting. Misses Spink and Forcible is depicted as "old and round" in the narrative, whereas they appear more "exaggerated and comic" in the film (Foreman7). The film stresses the two sisters' Brutishness: "their theatrical past and their obsession with tea, tea-reading, and 'hand-pull taffy'" (Foreman 8). Originally called "Mr.

[1] "Phantasy" is different from "fantasy." The former presents all the unconscious activities in the early stages of a child's psychic development, serving as an approach for the infant to "test out" the reality or "its experiences of inside and outside." However, the later presents merely one's "daydream" or "imagined unreality" about certain "future possibilities" ("Phantasy vs. Fantasy").

Bobo" with a long mustache in the narrative whose origin may be "Romanian, Slovenian, or Livonian," Mr. Bobinsky is portrayed as a "blue skinned man with remarkably long legs . . . under a large paunch" often interjecting Russian (Gaiman 155, Foreman 9). These changes or emphases in characterization fortify these neighbors' "otherness," presenting them as social misfits whom Coraline may identify herself with.

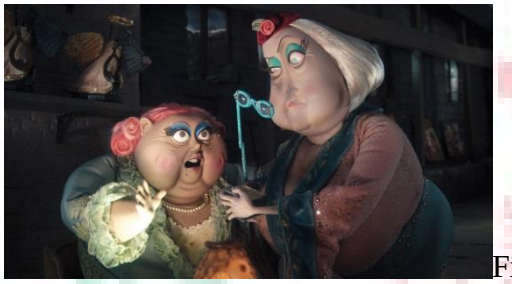

Fig. 4

Fig.5

Psychonarration in the Narrative

Despite their differences, both versions use the neighbors to project Coraline' psychic transition and to facilitate her final re-entrance into society. In the narrative, Coraline converses little and shows her emotions mostly through "physical manifestations" (Gooding 395). Yet, her psychonarration can be observed and interpreted through her neighbors' actions. Narrative Coraline is concerned with the issue of threatened identity and individuality, which can be captured in her drawing of the "mist" (26):

M T

S

I

It is clearly that the letter lonely "I" represents the ego, Coraline herself. The graphic illustrates "the fragility of one's existence" (Rudd 167). The ego is caught up in the dilemma of both "refusing to be contained by the mist" and being "a part of it" (Rudd 160). The dropped "I" either longs to be differentiated and separated from the other letters, or wishes to ascend and join the others. This dropping of letters also hints at the disintegration of the meaningful word "mist," implying the potential dissolution of the ego or its disintegration from society, which manifests itself in Coraline's earlier encounter with Misses Spink and Forcible on this foggy day. Miss Spink is out walking her dog alone without the company of Miss Forcible. When she comes across Coraline, Miss Forcible shows her concern for Miss Spink: "I hope she doesn't get lost, it'll bring her shingles if she does, you'll see." Miss Forcible's worrying indicates the very fear of losing one's identity and the horrible consequences it may bring about. Also, in the Other world, "there is no individual essence" in the relationship between the Other Misses Spink and Forcible (Pons 310). Upon leaving the

theater during the show of the Other Misses Spink and Forcible, Coraline inquires how long the show will last. One of the dog audience replies, "All the time . . . Forever and always" (56). This projects the fear of losing one's individuality in a social performance for a child as Coraline, who wishes for a pair of "Day-Glo green gloves" to express her uniqueness: "*Nobody's* got green gloves. I could be the only one" (23).

Aside from the two sisters, Mr. Bobo shares some of psychic plights which Coraline faces as well: deprivation of identity and ignorance. The idea of name as one's identity proceeds throughout the narrative, which is demonstrated in the Cat's theory of naming during its encounter with Coraline in the Other world. This wise and cunning creature suggests that naming is essential to human beings, for they are unable to identify with themselves: "Now, *you* people have names. That's because you don't know who you are" (37). The deprivation of name hints at the impending loss of identity and existence, as further evidenced in the three child ghosts' forgetting of who they were in life: "The names are the first things to go" (83). Coraline is constantly misnamed as "Caroline" by the three neighbors. The only one neighbor who ever actually articulates her right time is Mr. Bobo, who in the meantime displays doubt about its authenticity: "They [Mr. Bobo's circus mice] got your name wrong . . . They kept saying Coraline. Not Caroline. Not Caroline at all" (16). Yet, one should not ignore the fact that Mr. Bobo is not properly named as well. His name is untold and often referred to as "the crazy old man upstairs" (4). Mr. Bobo does not have his name identified by both the protagonist and the readers until the very end. Mr. Bobo reflects another plight Coraline is in, namely lack of listeners. Bored Coraline is constantly ignored by the adults around her; they either do not pay attention to what she says or stay doubtful about it. One episode shows Mrs. Jones complete ignorance to her daughter (24):

> *"Coraline? Oh, there you are. Where on earth were you?"*
>
> *"I was kidnapped by aliens," said Coraline. "They came down from outer space with ray guns, but I fooled them by wearing a wig and laughing in a foreign accent, and I escaped."*
>
> *"Yes, dear. Now, I think you could do with some more hair clips, don't you?"*

In another episode, Coraline calls the police to report her parents' kidnapping by the Other mother. Yet after listening to her story, the policeman does not take it seriously and responds with "a smile in his voice," which reveals his disbelief in her child nonsense (54). Interestingly, Mr. Bobo and his mouse circus are considered nonsensical by Coraline as well: "Coraline didn't think there really was a mouse circus. She thought the old man was probably making it up" (4). Both Coraline and Mr. Bobo lack an audience to speak to or listen to them.

Psychodrama in the Film

As the neighbors (be them their normal or other selves) project Coraline's certain psychic issues in the narrative, Selick's refined and added neighbor characters also present her psychic plights. My intention to introduce Melanie Klein's theory in the following paragraphs is to utilize a few of her terms to identify and analyze which psychic plight Coraline is projecting onto her neighbors. In her essay "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States," Klein discusses depressive states in relation to paranoia and mania, identifying the function of "introjection" in the paranoiac, the depressive and the manic. According to Klein, the infant will undergo several anxiety situations, and the mechanisms of "projection and introjection" govern its development (40).Upon experiencing fear of losing the mother as the loved object, the ego suffers from fear of persecution and thus "introjects" into its psyche both fears and internalize them as both "good" and "bad" objects, "prototyped by the mother's breast" (Klein 40). As the infant projects onto the loved object not only its fear of loss but also its own aggression and desire to consume (Klein 40), this loved object is fragmented into the good and the bad, the good being the one that offers nourishment, and the bad, as "persecutors who it fears will devour it . . . compassing its destruction by all the means which sadism can devise" (Klein 40).

This position of splitting the love object then leads to paranoia, where the persecution-anxieties are dominantly felt on behalf of the ego, and the defence mechanism is built through "annihilation and expulsion of the object" (Klein 43). Yet, the more the ego is "fully organized," the more it becomes identified with the good objects, and the more their survival correlates with its own (Klein 42). This is when the infant develops its depressive position of wanting to protect the mother as the good object. As the ego's introjection of the "good" objects increases to better guard them within itself, the paranoiac mechanism of expulsing and projecting the dangers outside the external world becomes paralyzed (Klein 43). The introjection of the "good object" also accumulates to its maximum, while the ego develops a fear of endangering the object within itself and a doubt about its incapacity to secure the object, resulting "the loss of the loved object" in Klein's term (43). This gives rise to the depressive mechanism of "making reparation of the object"; the ego is "impelled" by its identification with the good object to "make restitution for all the sadistic attacks" (Klein 44). In depression, the persecution anxiety is predominated by the "preservation of the internalized good object" (Klein 48). The subject dreads either that along with itself, the good objects should be destroyed or that they altogether are in a state of "disintegration" (Klein 48).

In mania, the subject struggles between its inability to "renounce its good and internal objects" and its endeavor to escape from "the perils of dependence" on them (Klein 57). The subject in this state utilizes "the sense of omnipotence" to control and master objects.

Based on Klein's theory, I argue that the Other three neighbors and Other Wybie serve as Coraline's internalized objects, both good and bad. Just like narrative Coraline, film Coraline is facing issues regarding identity, individuality and self-autonomy. She wishes to separate from her parents, yet she longs for their attention as well. According to Klein, desire for perfection is "rooted in the depressive anxiety of disintegration" (49). She has her own standard of a "perfect" life, including her parents and neighbors. She wants "stuff growing" in their barren garden when her friends pay visits. She questions her mother's maternal role when her dad serves a table of eccentric dishes: "Why don't you ever cook, Mom?" Also, she wants Wybie and other adults to listen to her: "You're just like them. I mean my parents; they don't listen to me either." In the Other realm, namely her phantasy, Coraline introjects her parents and neighbors to express their/her fear of losing their good qualities, rendering everything perfect according to her picture. There, the mother is presented as an all-powerful figure who dominates the family and whose maternity is aggressive and devouring. On the other hand, the father figure is presented as a manipulated puppet by the mother to amuse Coraline. For lack of space, suffice it to say that the Other parents relatively reflect her fear of internalizing persecutors and of becoming the controlled. As mentioned earlier, my focus is mainly on the role of Coraline's three neighbors and her sidekick Wybie.

To start with, I term Misses Spink and Forcible as "the sisters of paranoia" who express Coraline's fear of persecutors inside herself and burgeoning desire for permanent integration. As the ego continues to develop and modify its relationships with the objects, it develops not only the capability of differentiating the good and bad objects and also a desire to preserve the good objects within itself (Klein 42-43). The sisters represent non-individuality, as evidenced in their persistent companionship ever since their career as theater actresses. They live together and never seem apart in the film. The desire for permanent integration, however, is rather exaggerated in their preservation of their dogs' remains (see fig. 6):

> *"She [Coraline] looks to the sides and sees a towering bookcase filled with stuffed Scotty dogs in knitted swears with angel wings"* (Selick).

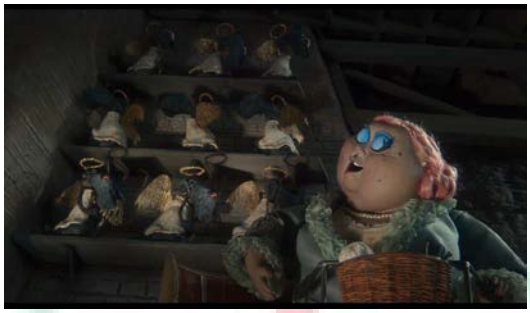
Fig. 6

Coraline asks if the dogs are real, and Miss Spink replies: “Our sweet departed angels. Couldn’t bear to part with them . . . so we had them stuffed” (Selick). Their act of stuffing the Scotties reflects Coraline’s desire to incorporate objects within her for the purpose of securing them. When the sisters, introjected by Coraline into her phantasy realm, become their Other selves, they return to their “young beautiful selves” performing static trapeze on stage (Selick). The Other Misses Spink and Forcible’s flat is turned into a theater, with “rows and rows of button-eyed Scotties” as their audience (Selick). In Coraline’s phantasy realm, all the stuffed Scotty dogs come to life, which outlives the sisters wish for their permanent companionship (see fig. 7).


Fig. 7

While these talking Other Scotties also suggest Coraline’s depressive fear of disintegration with the good objects, they also reflect her paranoiac dread of persecutors, just as all the “fantasies” in the Other World express and satisfy her desire first, only to turn into images of persecution and destroyed objects. Later in her journey to the Other realm, Coraline needs to find her missing parents and the eyes of the three child ghosts (the Other mother’s past victims) in the three “wonders” the Other mother arranges for her. In the episode where Coraline returns to the Other sisters’ theater, she confronts a “huge, wrapped saltwater taffy” which contains the Other two sisters in it, two figures “sticky and cold and inhuman” (Selcik). When Coraline attempts to take away the pearl (one ghost’s soul) from the clutched hands of the taffy monster, the hands grab her. To escape, Coraline aims her flashlights at the dog-bats above her. They fly down attacking the monster, and altogether they somehow turn into “grey ash” (Selick). Originally introjected as the good objects, the

Other sisters and the talking Scotties now are turning into dreadful creatures which attempt to endanger Coraline or do harm to each other (see fig. 8). Coraline unfolding the clutched hands of the two sisters symbolizes disintegration of the object. Her defensive act of alluring the dog-bats to attack the taffy monster serves as the paranoiac anxiety to protect the ego itself from the persecutors. The Other sisters' turning into persecuting monster and the Scotties' turning from winged angels to bat-like demons, all corresponds to Klein's observation that in paranoia, "the disintegrated object is mainly a multitude of persecutors, since each piece is growing again into a persecutor" (51).

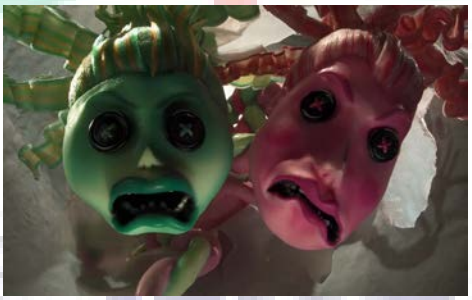

Fig. 8

Aside from the sisters of paranoia, there is "the manic old man" who projects Coraline's desire to control and master the objects. Originally addressed as "crazy old man upstairs" in the narrative, Mr. Bobinsky displays his extraordinary physical mastery during his first encounter with Coraline: "Suddenly a huge blue man swings down behind her" (Selick). Moreover, he is able to swing "like a spider monkey," to cartwheel on the balcony, and even to land from the balcony to the ground (Selick). The Other mother is able to fulfil Coraline's every wish which her real parents and neighbors cannot realize for her, which revealing her desire to get the people around her under control to listen to her. Though those wishes are carried out in the Other world, this dream come true ends up being a nightmare she can hardly escape from. Although Mr. B is shown to master his own body, he is not able to fully control his jumping mice:

> *"Ha! You see, Caroline, the problem is my new songs go oompah oompah. But the jumping mice play only toodle toot, like that" (Selick).*

In the Other realm, however, the button-eyed jumping mice seem very organized and well-trained, presenting an "amazing" Russian circus march (see fig. 9). At the end of the performance, the jumping mice band "disappears" into the Other Mr. Bobinsky's sleeves and hat. The Other Mr. Bobinsky's realization of mastering the jumping mice hints at Coraline's desire to control and master her objects.

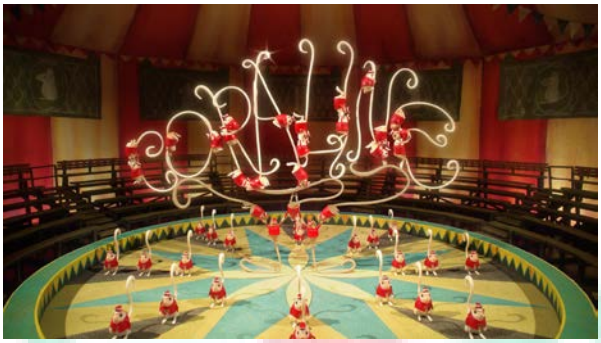
Fig. 9

As the ego moves among the positions of destructive paranoia, self-repressive depression, and that of mania, it gradually develops a more integral sense of self. Through the attempts at destroying and preserving the other, and at asserting the self, in other words, there emerges a super ego which is capable of repairing the harms and developing a social self. This super ego is based on "the sense of omnipotence" in mania, which facilitates the process of "making reparation to the object" and to prevent the objects from "injuring" the ego and from "being a danger to one another" (58). In the position of mania, however, omnipotence comes hand in hand with fear of dependence, as the subject is haunted by its dependence on the objects and longs for "freedom" (Klein 56). When Coraline returns to the Other Mr. B's flat to retrieve the eye of one child ghost, he delivers a speech to persuade her to stay: "Stay here vis us; vee vill listen to you and laugh vis you," which reveals her dependence on the objects (Selick). However in the process of mastery and control of the objects, the subject depreciates and denies "the existence of this internal world" (Klein 58). Such depreciation and denial of psychic reality is manifest in Coraline's realization that the Other Mr. B is just a "copy she [the Other mother] made of the real Mr. B" (Selick).

While all the desired objects in the Other World can later become persecutors or objects of persecution, it is Wybie in both Worlds that ultimately rescues Coraline from the world of paranoia. Different from the other apparently happy and active characters in the Other World, Wybie alone represents the depressive state of psyche. The character Wybie reflects Coraline's depressive desire to secure/repair the objects and dread of being in the state of disintegration with them. When introjected into Coraline's phantasy realm, Wybie is literally "silenced" by the Other mother to fulfill Coraline's wish for a quieter friend: "I [the Other mother] thought you'd like him more if he spokes a little less. So I fixed him" (Selick). The Other Wybie qualifies as one of Coraline's good objects. He is presented as an "awful cheerful" playmate for Coraline, constantly smiling and accompanying her along her journey in the Other realm (Selick). Though a puppet created by the Other mother to please Coraline, the Other Wybie displays his absolute benevolence toward Coraline. When Coraline meets

the Cat in the Other realm, it reveals to Coraline: “You probably think this world is a dream come true, but you’re wrong. The Other Wybie told me so” (Selick). According to Klein, in regard to disintegration, the feelings of sorrow, guilt and anxiety are characteristic of the depressive, which results from the subject’s dread of losing the loved object (Klein 45). From the Cat’s revelation, the Other Wybie demonstrates his concern about Coraline’s safety, as evidenced in his physical manifestations (see fig.): “Wybie, at the bottom of the steps, looks guilty and sad. Other Mother glares at him, makes a huge, false smile then points to him. He just lowers his head” (Selick). Accompanied with the realization of the love for the object, there also comes a great “sense of responsibility for preserving it intact against persecutors,” which manifests itself in the Other Wybies every attempt to save Coraline (Klein 49). Furthermore, the Other Wybie animates Coraline’s fear for disintegration, as Klein points out: “The ego then finds itself confronted with the physical fact that its loved objects are in a state of dissolution—in bits” (48). After managing to help Coraline escape, the Other Wybie literally dissolves into dust. His remained coat is hung like a flag to serve as the Other mother’s warning to Coraline. One can perceives in Coraline’s face and her exclamation “oh, Wybie” a sense of remorse and guilt. Interestingly, the Other Wybie’s fear of the Other mother echoes with real Wybie’s uneasiness and anxiety when hearing his grandmother yelling his name. Mrs. Lovat is portrayed as overprotective of her grandson, which once again proves that Wybie shares Coraline’s subconscious fear of excessive maternity.

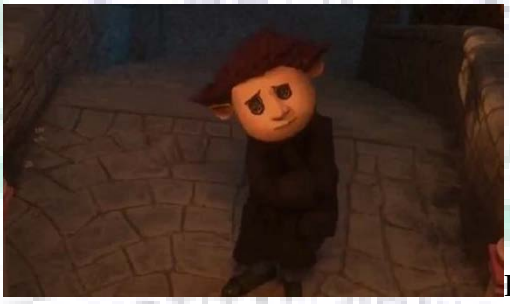

Fig. 10

Socialization/Community Reconstruction in Coraline

As the role of neighbors functions as Coraline’s projection of her psychonarration and psychodrama respectively in the novel and the film, it is crucial to examine and acknowledge their significant role in Coraline’s socialization/social conformity in both versions as well. In the original narrative, Coraline’s self-actualized heroism is realized through her winning the “finding-things game” and her outsmarting the Other mother’s hand. Through these two important “games,” she is able to complete her transition of the self. With the help of the parents and the three child ghosts, Coraline finally escapes the Other world, which in Gooding’s opinion hints at “the resolution of Coraline’s conflicts with her parents and her

successful integration into a web of social relationships" (399). Yet, her story does not end there. The Other mother's hand somehow escapes the portal, which leads to the picnic scene where Coraline tries to trick it into a deep well. She puts on her "color protection," disguising herself as a small children playing tea party with her dolls. After the triumph, the narrative ends with Coraline becoming "more emotionally and physically demonstrative, and more engaged with the world" (Gooding 399). She is shown to engage more in conversation with her neighbors. Not only does she get properly named "Coraline," but she also gains some approval by being addressed as "an extraordinary child" (161). Her self-conviction toward going to school further suggests the upcoming socialization: "But, she realized, there was nothing left about school that could scare her anymore" (161).

As for the filmic adaptation, although Selick's eliminates the epic picnic scene and changes it into an episode of a knight saving a damsel in distress, he does not exclude the theme of socialization. Rather, the filmic presentation of the final scene, I figure, reconstructs the social structure and confirms Coraline's regained social roles in a more specific way. Overall, Coraline, in both the narrative and the film, strikes to navigate between the two worlds and finally realizes that she "cannot be all to her parents", attaining a better relationship to the others and the society (Rudd 9). In relation to socialization, the formation of sense of identity is closely fraught with the "dialogue with others and with the discourses constituting the society and culture s/he inhabits" (qtd. in Pons 311). Coraline's neighbors not only manifest her psychic transition but symbolizes her social transition, as evidenced in McCallum's notion that "the idea of a unique, singular and essential self is an assumption which underlies a person's own sense of, or more specifically desire for, a single and stable personal identity within, and in relation to, the world and others" (qtd. in Pons 312).

Therefore, Selick's arrangement of the garden party has manifested its significance as the party itself symbolizes a place for Coraline to interact with "others" and to situate her position in this patriarchal social context. The role of "others," namely the neighbors, thus functions to integrate Coraline into the society. The garden party serves as a witness of Coraline's successful reconstruction of the community; there, she displays better and refined relationships to the others and retains her social roles as a daughter, neighbor and friend. Coraline governs the party as she is distributing lemonade to those who attends the party. The tension of the parent-child relationship now eases. On one hand, Mr. and Mrs. Jones now have more time to be with their daughter and more patience to listen to her, as they fulfill her wishes by sending her the gloves she wants and do gardening for her. On the other hand, Coraline is shown to be a loving daughter who serves her fatigue parents lemonade with

appreciation of their gardening (see fig. 11). Mrs. Jones even makes compromise and agrees with what Coraline says about her, “Yu were right, Coraline. I really hate dirt! But the tulips look nice.” Also, Coraline behaves like a good neighbor child, displaying her polite concern for Misses Spink and Forcible’s Scottie Angus and for Mr. B’s “mooshkas [mice]” (see figs. 12 and 13). The idea of integrating the foreign culture is manifest in the scene where Mr. B is plugging out the tulips and planting his beetroots, which are the symbol of his Russian heritage.

Furthermore, Coraline becomes a trustworthy friend in the end. She gains trust and friendship from Wybie, who used to doubt the authenticity of her story about the Other mother. It is at this very garden scene that Mrs. Lovat (Wybie’s grandmother) officially makes appearance in the Pink Place Apartments (see fig. 14). When the Lovats arrive at the garden party, Coraline “steps in for him [Wybie] and takes over their family’s history” (Foreman 11). She is ready to fulfil her promise that she will explain what happens to Mrs. Lovat’s twin sister (one of the three child ghosts), who is, as a child, allured into the Other realm and later devoured by the Other mother. According to Foreman, in this episode, Wybie “abdicates” the power of speech to Coraline to “allow the pathway for Coraline to find herself and her function” (11). Nevertheless, I regard it more as her attempt to reintroduce the Lovats to the community. Not only do these neighbors help Coraline rebuild the social structure, but to some extent she also helps repairing the once disintegrated community, bringing its members all together in the end.

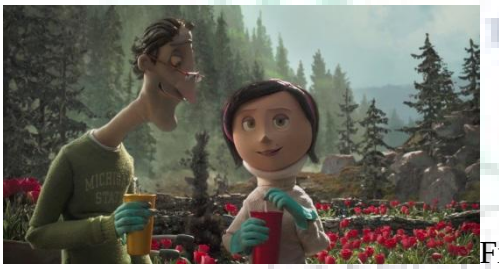

Fig. 11

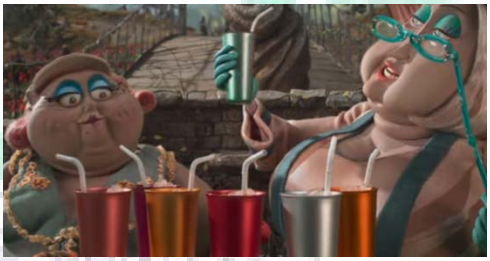

Fig. 12

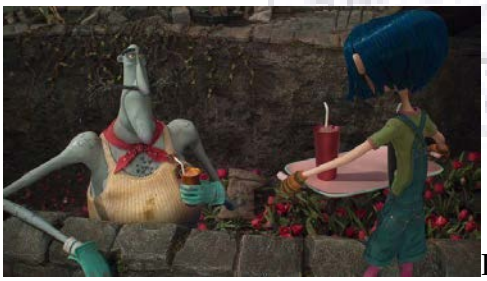

Fig. 13

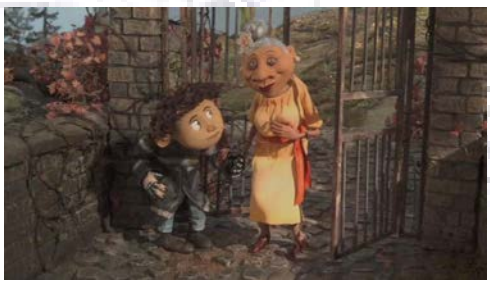

Fig. 14

Conclusion

Though Selick presents his own version of Gaiman’s *Coraline* in certain different ways, his adaptation is neither an impoverishment nor an unprogressive version of the

original as some critics suggest. It utilizes the neighbor characters and beautifully captures the protagonist psychic transition, articulating her development of identity as Gaiman's original narrative does. As the narrative neighbors each share Coraline's issues with identity formation, the film counterparts elaborate on this concept even further. In light of Klein's terms, I define the three neighbors and Wybie as Coraline's self-projection respectively in the paranoiac, manic, and depressive positions. These neighbors also connect Coraline to the society, helping her positioning her place in the world and reuniting the whole community. In this paper, I have left out the significant role of the antagonist the Other mother in both film Coraline's identity formation and her socialization. As I have brought up earlier, the Other mother is presented as an all-powerful mother figure, an embodiment of excessive maternity which threatens to devour the child, just as the Cat suggests that the Other mother affection for Coraline is either out of the desire to "love" or to "eat" (Selick). To some extent, the Other mother could be seen as the projection of Coraline's own desire to love/devour the mother, which coheres with Klein's observation that "loving an object and devouring it are very closely connected" when the subject is fully identified with the object (45). The Other mother's realm displays a world where the maternal is surpassing the paternal influence, as attested to by the Other father's submission to the Other mother in the other realm. Coraline enters this matriarchal world in which our patriarchal society is reversed and from which she needs to escape in the end so as to re-establish the social structure and to re-enter the patriarchal society. This returns to the aforementioned controversy over the film character Wybie, whose timely rescue is doubted as an intervention in self-actualization. As a projection of her great attempt to secure her loved objects (people around her in whom she finds potentially good to introject within herself,) Wybie also functions as her very entrance to return to the patriarchal society. The Other Wybie sacrifices himself to help Coraline to escape the Other world, while the real Wybie saves Coraline from the Other mother's hand (a remaining/leaked force of excessive maternity), pulling her up from sinking into the matriarchal quicksand again. The character Wybie does not disturb Coraline's realization of self-empowerment; instead, he helps facilitate the reentrance to or the reconstruction of the patriarchal society.

Word count: 6075

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