

DOORS, HALLWAYS, BASEMENTS, BRIDGES, AND BOOK SHELVES:
PORTALS AND ALTERNATE UNIVERSES AS SYMBOLS OF
IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN NEIL GAIMAN'S
CORALINE AND CHINA MIÉVILLE'S
UN LUN DUN

by

Lee M. Carnes, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
with a Major in Literature
August 2016

Committee Members:

Graeme Wend-Walker, Chair

Susan Morrison

Robert Tally

COPYRIGHT

by

Lee M. Carnes

2016

FAIR USE AND AUTHOR'S PERMISSION STATEMENT

Fair Use

This work is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, section 107). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of this material for financial gain without the author's express written permission is not allowed.

Duplication Permission

As copyright holder of this work I, Lee M. Carnes, authorize duplication of this work, in whole or in part, for educational or scholarly purposes only.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the support of many people. Many thanks to my chair, Graeme Wend-Walker for his invaluable feedback and humor. It was in his class that I became inspired to write this thesis. Also thank you to my other committee members, Susan Morrison, and Robert Tally, whose classes I took were meaningful for my growth as a writer and were fun. Thank you to my parents for their constant encouragement and for reading all of my papers. Finally, to my daughter Chloe, my favorite boundary-crosser, thank you for your patience and hugs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. CHAPTER ONE	6
III. CHAPTER TWO	27
IV. CHAPTER THREE	47
WORKS CITED	60

I. INTRODUCTION

We go through doors everyday. We open windows, cross bridges, and walk down hallways without even thinking about it. These portals provide passage from one place to another, and most of the time, we know what is on the other side. But what if going through a door sent us to another place altogether? What if this other place were a completely different world than our own, or a distorted version of it? Portals are “common motifs often found in children’s literature – including gates, doors, roads, tones of light and dark – that signify thresholds of experience” (May 84). Portals have long been popular in science fiction and fantasy novels, especially for young audiences. Portals into alternate universes is not a new concept in children’s and young adult literature; some of the most beloved classics contain portals. Ever since Alice went down the rabbit hole into Wonderland, and Lucy and her siblings went through the wardrobe into Narnia, the portal has come to signify more than getting from one place to another. Portals are symbols of the characters who go through them. They represent the psychological development, processes, and crises characters experience as they grow up, gain agency, and develop a healthy identity.

Coraline from Neil Gaiman’s novel of the same name, and Deeba from China Miéville’s *Un Lun Dun* make numerous journeys through portals traveling to alternate worlds that seem to be distorted versions of their own. Here these young protagonists face crises that present important experiences in their psychological growth and development of their identities. The portals themselves establish the boundaries the

characters cross through to achieve growth and identity. They symbolize the stages and changes the characters undergo as a result of passing through them.

The examination and discussion of identity I present and argue is primarily grounded in Erik Erikson's psycho-social theories. Erikson explores identity in what he calls the "Eight Ages of Man" which correspond to a set of stages humans undergo during a range of ages (*Childhood* 247). Identity is "a self-structure-an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (Marcia 109). Both the portals Coraline and Deeba travel through respectively and the worlds they travel to are dynamic and adjust with them as they navigate, change, and thereby grow. Navigating the worlds requires skill, which is first developed when they move through the portals. When they return home the first time they are changed by their experiences in the alternate world, and the portals reflect this change by shifting with them. The characters choose to return to the alternate worlds, and in doing so, the portals shift again mirroring the characters' growth. Returning home the final time, the portals shift once again symbolizing identity achievement.

Coraline and Deeba's identities advance within each stage only when facing crises. Erikson suggests that growth occurs when, "vital personality weathers, re-emerging from each crisis with an increased sense of inner unity" (*Identity* 92). However, it takes more than experiencing crises to achieve a healthy identity and move through the stages. One must achieve "meaning-making" which "refers to the process by which individuals make sense out of their turning points" (Tavernier and Willoughby 2). It is when each character attains a positive affect from a negative experience that she

grows psychologically and gains agency. Coraline and Deeba achieve meaning-making through experiencing great difficulties and danger.

In Chapter One, I examine the youngest character, Coraline. She is ten, and is in what Erikson calls the Industry versus Inferiority stage. This stage involves “entrance into life” (*Childhood* 258). This does not mean birth, but school life, “whether school is a jungle or classroom” (*Childhood* 258). In Coraline’s case, school is a house in the alternate world she goes to. It serves as a school because it is where she learns to develop her sense of Industry. This occurs when a child’s imagination is utilized for something other than play. In traditional western schools a child learns science, math, and reading for example. The alternate house is a distorted mirror version of her own house and all its occupants. She enters this other house through a hallway portal. As she journeys to and from the other world and her own, she develops and changes. The hallway changes with her, adjusting to her psychological growth. Objects exist in the alternate world that are used as tools against Coraline by the Other Mother in the alternate world to trap Coraline, thereby keeping her in the Inferior stage. The mirror and the snow globe provide examples of entrapment and control that Coraline must break through to achieve her identity. Once Coraline realizes the real danger she is in, she begins to figure her way out of it by using her wits, signifying the Industry stage. The mirror and snow globe are important symbols of the crisis she faces that get her to the Industry side of the stage.

Next, in Chapter Two, I examine Deeba from *Un Lun Dun*. At at fourteen years old, she is navigating the Identity versus Role Confusion stage. She and her peer group reside in London. Interestingly, she does not appear to be the protagonist at the beginning of the novel. It is her best friend who commands the attention. Deeba is the sidekick who

blends into their peer group. Sometimes in this stage, youths “overidentify, to the apparent loss of identity, with the heroes of cliques and crowds” (*Childhood* 262). This is the impression created with Deeba at the beginning of the book. However, through a series of extremely odd occurrences and a series of portals into the alternate world of UnLondon, Deeba emerges as the protagonist. UnLondon is not so much a mirror image of London as much as it is a place “occupied by ‘broken’ people and objects; the discarded flotsam and jetsam of a city in which all is disposable...” (David 6). In fact, it is built and populated by all things discarded from London, suggesting new ways to discover and shape identity. The portals in this novel are not consistent. The inconsistency reflects the distortion of UnLondon itself and symbolizes Deeba’s lack of a settled identity. She first enters through a city basement by means of a gauge in the shape of a wheel. She returns to London via a bridge, goes back to UnLondon by climbing a seemingly endless shelf of books, and returns home for the last time on the same bridge. Each portal is an important symbol of the uniting of her London and UnLondon identities. However, UnLondon is not without its dangers. Both she and her world are in great peril. The Black Window, an object and portal within UnLondon, tests her skills, and the character Unstable, who is a portal for the sinister Smog, threatens her existence and therefore her identity. She literally battles for her agency.

Lastly, in Chapter Three, I compare and contrast both Coraline and Deeba’s experiences in attaining agency using Erikson’s theories as the base, incorporating other pertinent scholarship, and examining James Marcia’s theories of identity based on personality traits and modes. The modes that apply to Coraline and Deeba at the same time, even though they are in different stages of Erikson’s Eight Ages of Man, are

Identity Achievement and Moratorium. Additionally, the personality traits I discuss also refer to both Coraline and Deeba, though each experiences different degrees of them. They are anxiety, self-esteem, authoritarianism, autonomy, and moral reasoning. I also note how childhood is strikingly varied, and that how youths interpret literature is “suited to their varying degrees of development and to their varied interests” (Storm 503). I suggest a function of literature is to interpret life. Specifically, I look at how the fantasy genre provides symbolic and thematic examples of identity and personality growth in readers since going through portals is “transformative. The encounter may be positive or negative; it may entail risk or reward, loss or gain, but all cases, crossing marks the crosser” (Buck 5). Coraline and Deeba venture through portals to someplace else that results in gaining a new perspective of their own worlds and achieving their identities, providing examples for children and young adults who read about them.

II. CHAPTER ONE

In terms of Erikson's Eight Ages of Man, ten year-old Coraline in Neil Gaiman's novel of the same name navigates through the Industry versus Inferiority stage. She accomplishes this by encountering a series of dangerous turning points. The setting of the novel provides the context of this stage, and "each place embodies a particular developmental stage" (Buck 1). Two worlds are depicted, and each one is a symbol of Industry or Inferiority. Specifically, the first world is the flat inside the large house where she and her parents live that also contains her neighbors' flats, and the grounds surrounding the house. At the beginning of the novel this world is a symbol of Inferiority. The second world is an alternate world that is a distorted version of her own world also containing her flat, neighbors' flats, and the grounds surrounding the house and is a symbol of Industry. However, when the alternate world becomes the "other" world, Coraline's growth begins and the worlds switch as symbols. Her world becomes Industry, and the other world becomes Inferiority. Bridging the two worlds is the corridor portal Coraline travels through to get to and from them. It is a literal and metaphorical threshold she must cross and symbolizes the liminal aspects of this growth. It is the "in-between place...of possibility [where] opposition becomes opportunity" (Buck 1). The corridor changes each time Coraline goes through it, mirroring how she is changing and growing psychologically. The portal accords her the opportunity to see each world for what it really is and thereby appreciate her own world and her family while gaining her agency.

Within each world are other objects that serve as important symbols of her identity as well, such as the door, brick wall, mirror, and snow globe. The setting and

symbols depict specific aspects of the Industry versus Inferior stage as Coraline maneuvers it. The aspects of the stage I examine are that children “learn to win recognition by producing things” since they have mastered the organ and ambulatory modes, how children are ready to apply themselves to given skills and tasks which go beyond playful expression, and lastly, how they develop the fundamentals of technology (*Childhood* 258-259). Coraline takes on important experiences corresponding to each of these aspects, and because so, at the end of the novel she gains competence, a critical virtue of this stage, and thereby healthy intellectual growth and identity.

At the beginning of the novel Coraline and her parents have just moved into a new flat, which is a part of a larger house. The house and the grounds are symbols of the Inferior stage based on how she views her limited surroundings. She is imaginative and curious, yet needs to be entertained, is bored most of the time, and is frustrated by her scatter-brained parents. On one particularly rainy day, she is forced to be inside. Bored, she bounces back and forth between her parents asking them, “What should I do?” (Gaiman 4). Both parents work from home, each with his/her own study and will not stop working to play with her. They give her the space to do what she wants and encourage her love of exploration. Coraline never mentions what exactly their work is, though they model examples of how to use tools and skills that society finds useful. According to Erikson, this is vitally important at this stage. Society, be it home life, religion, school, political and economic systems, etc. becomes important as a means of giving the child access to and examples of the roles that contribute to its economy and technology (*Childhood* 260). Her constant questions of “What shall I do” and “What should I do” take on significance here. She seems to be subconsciously asking this question not just

about play, but as a way to figure out her future place as a contributing member of society. Her parents do not tell her what to do and how to play, but leave her to fend for herself. This autonomy actually promotes healthy growth, though she is frustrated because they will not indulge her boredom. And because she is bored so much, she feels she is trapped in an inferior state of her own making. Being stuck in the flat is a symbol of this state.

While exploring the flat, she discovers the first important symbol of her approaching change, a “big, carved, brown wooden door-at the far end of the drawing room” (Gaiman 6). A door, symbolically, is “passage from one state or world to another; entrance to new life; initiation” (Cooper 54). It is the only door that Coraline has not opened yet. Crossing this threshold will symbolize her first step into Industry. Once her mother gives Coraline the key she sees “it opened onto a brick wall” (Gaiman 7). The wall serves two purposes. It is “both a protection and a limitation” (Cooper 187). It is protecting Coraline from the dangers in the alternate world, but she does not know about these dangers yet. She sees the wall as a limitation because it restricts access to exploration, which Coraline loves. Exploration encourages autonomy, and it keeps her boredom at bay. Moreover, the concept of exploration applies to identity as well. Growing up “represents a period of exploration” and by Coraline exploring the flat, house and its grounds, she is metaphorically exploring her identity (Tavernier and Willoughby 2). The locked door and brick wall symbolize she cannot explore her identity, and lack of exploring identity keeps her inferior.

For the next few days, she goes back and forth between her flat and her neighbors’ flats seeking entertainment throughout the house. This back and forth

represents the idea of “seesawing” (*Identity* 189). This occurs when someone is moving towards and away from a state of relative equilibrium (*Identity* 189). Coraline is trying to move away from boredom towards finding something interesting. Coraline receives two warnings from her neighbors that spark her interest. The old man has a message from his mice who say, “*Don’t go through that door*” (Gaiman 14), and Mrs. Spinks tells her “you are in terrible danger” (Gaiman 18). Coraline asks her the same thing she asks her parents when she doesn’t know what to do, “What shall I do then?” (Gaiman 18). Just like her parents, Mrs. Spinks has no concrete reply. However, Mrs. Spinks does give Coraline a stone with a hole in it, which in Coraline’s world is an insignificant object. Yet, in the alternate world, it becomes a tool that aids in Coraline’s development of industry. The thought of danger “sounded exciting. It didn’t sound like a bad thing. Not really” (Gaiman 19). Coraline is now experiencing “inner disequilibrium” because her “rational occupations” of her boring daily life are at odds with her curiosity (*Identity* 189). Once she receives the warnings, though, she “pursues a series of fantasies concerning things which we wish we could do” (*Childhood* 189). The fantasy in this case is concept of danger because it contrasts her constant boredom.

One day soon after, her father leaves town for work, and her mother leaves home to buy them food for lunch. Coraline is alone. She gets the key to the door and enters the drawing room. She unlocks the door, “on to a dark hallway. The bricks had gone as if they had never been there. Coraline went through the door...Coraline walked down the corridor uneasily” (Gaiman 24-25). As she moves through the corridor she notices the wallpaper and carpet as being the same she as in her flat. She thinks she has not left her flat, and she is confused. It is when she really looks at the picture on the wall that she

realizes she is actually somewhere else. In this place, the picture is described as “nasty” and “peculiar” suggesting a warning (Gaiman 25). The portal now becomes the place of “the point of transition marking the boundary between two opposing regions... a powerful place of communication between the opposing worlds that lie on either side of it” (Buck 3). This is the point at which, as Erikson suggests, a child finds entrance into the classroom. The alternate world is her classroom. The opposing regions psychologically are the stages Coraline navigates, Inferior versus Industry.

Coraline walks into the alternate kitchen to find a tall, thin woman whose skin is as white as paper. Her dark red nails are curved, sharp, and her hands are constantly moving. Instead of eyes, she has black buttons. The woman introduces herself as Coraline’s “other mother” (Gaiman 26). She seemed to be expecting Coraline and cooks them lunch. The other mother has prepared “a huge, golden-brown roasted chicken, fried potatoes, tiny green peas” of which Coraline cannot get enough (Gaiman 27). She even goes so far to voice, “[I]t was the best chicken that Coraline had ever eaten” (Gaiman 27). This is a stark contrast to Coraline’s world. She does not appreciate the food her father prepares and is disgusted by his recipes. In one case instead of eating “leek and potato stew with a tarragon garnish and melted Gruyère cheese,” she opts for “some microwave chips and a microwave mini-pizza” (Gaiman 8). Additionally, on this particular day Coraline’s real mother leaves her alone to go to the grocery store because all they had was “a sad little tomato and a piece of cheese with green stuff growing on it. There was only a crust in the bread tin” (Gaiman 23). Food is a means of nourishment, and not just for the physical self. We prepare food for friends and family as a way of nurturing them. Coraline’s other mother is able to nurture her in a way her real mother has not.

Additionally, a kitchen “signifies the place or the moment of psychic transmutation” (Cirlot 153). It’s more than just a place where food is transformed. It is a symbol of the beginning of Coraline’s psychological growth and also serves to contrast the worlds.

After lunch, Coraline is encouraged by the other mother to explore and play. She sees boxes of toys in her alternate room and other wonderful things. As she continues to explore, Coraline notices the differences between this place and her own world, but at first they are highly interesting and fun. Coraline even thinks, “[T]his is more like it” (Gaiman 28). It seems to be the perfect alternative to her experiences at home. In addition to the setting similarities to her own world, replicas of her neighbors exist. An important encounter occurs with a cat that has crossed into this alternate world from Coraline’s world and is able to go back and forth as it pleases. In this world, the cat can talk, but in her world it cannot. It adjusts to the traits of each world. The cat says, “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). He is teaching her a lesson about identity. Throughout the beginning of the book, other characters get her name wrong. This is because Coraline, just like the cat says, does not yet know who she is. She is in a liminal state in which “a person remains uncertain because they have been separated from their own world, but aren’t yet connected to a new one” (Stitt). By becoming separated from Coraline’s boring world, she is being introduced to this interesting alternate one. She feels a sense of Industry here.

Once back in her alternate flat, her other mother and father bring up the idea that Coraline can stay with them forever. But there is a catch. “On a china plate on the kitchen table was a spool of black cotton, and a long silver needle, and beside them, two large

black buttons” (Gaiman 43). This suggests, of course, the idea that Coraline must replace her own eyes with the button eyes in order to remain in this alternate world. Eyes are the primary means through which we discern between boundaries, and not just physical ones. Coraline’s psychological boundaries are at stake. If she stays with her other family in the alternate world, she will never grow up, she will never have an identity. This is the other mother’s way of keeping her in the inferior stage forever, conveying the danger at this stage, which is “estrangement from himself and his tasks – the well known sense of inferiority” (*Identity* 124). By replacing her eyes with buttons, Coraline will cease to discern boundaries and lose her ability to explore, thereby estranging herself to become what the other mother wants her to be.

That Coraline senses this is evidenced by her desire to leave. As she backs away and finds the drawing room, she “pulls open the door in the corner. There was no brick wall there now – just darkness, a night-black, underground darkness that seemed as if things in it might be moving” (Gaiman 44). The portal has shifted. It is no longer just a means of passage between the alternate world and her own world. An important idea presented here is the concept of the corridor as underground. This connects to the Inferior state that Coraline is going to pass through and in which the other mother wishes to keep her. The alternate world seems to be below her own world as an attempt to keep Coraline inferior in the sense of being lower in status. Coraline crosses the threshold and “stepped into the darkness... She closed her eyes against the dark” (Gaiman 45). Closing her eyes is ironic, because it is what the other mother wants to do to Coraline permanently so that she has no way out of discerning boundaries. For Coraline though, closing her eyes is a way of shutting out the symbolic darkness the other mother wishes to keep her in and

gives her an awareness of boundaries. “Eventually, she bumped into something, and opened her eyes, startled. She had bumped into an armchair, in her drawing room. The open doorway behind her was blocked by rough red bricks. She was home” (Gaiman 45). The wall is now protection whereas before it was limitation. It is here that the symbols of the worlds have shifted. The alternate world is now the “other” world and symbolizes inferiority, while her own world now symbolizes industry.

Before long, she notices her parents have not returned. They are still not home the next day. She takes care of herself though, albeit purchasing a chocolate cake and limeade for dinner. She brushes her teeth, writes a somewhat grim story on her father’s computer, takes a bath, makes a mess, cleans it up, and goes to bed. This depicts she can function on her own and provide herself with basic needs. It shows a sense of industry. In fact, according to Erikson children at this age are “psychologically already a rudimentary parent,” yet in this case she is parenting herself (*Childhood* 258). Yes, at ten years old, she still needs to be taken care of in many ways, but this sense of achievement provides a foundation of future productivity. She is a child, though, so, in the middle of the night, all alone, she moves into her parents’ bed, indicating she is scared and misses them, wanting comfort only a parent can provide, and cries herself to sleep. She is awoken by the cat and walks down the hall to the mirror that had been there when they moved in.

In the mirror she sees “the corridor behind her; that was to be expected. But reflected in the mirror were her parents. They stood awkwardly in the reflection of the hall. They seemed sad and alone. As Coraline watched, they waved to her, slowly, with limp hands. Coraline’s father opened his mouth and said something, but she could hear nothing at all. Her mother breathed on the inside of the mirror glass, and quickly, before

the fog faded, she wrote SU PLEH with the tip of her finger” (Gaiman 51). She sees her parents in distress, which is a reflection of her own distress. Also, this image of her real parents literally mirrors the image Coraline saw of her other mother and other father as she was leaving the other world. This is the first time the mirror is mentioned. At this point in the novel, the mirror is a symbol of “a state of discontinuity affected by the laws of change and substitution, it is the agent which projects this quasi-negative, kaleidoscope image of appearance and disappearance reflected in the mirror” (Cirlot 211). Both Coraline and her parents are in a state of discontinuity as her other parents wish to substitute themselves for Coraline’s real parents. Furthermore, the mirror indicates that Coraline’s parents have disappeared from her/their own world and have appeared somewhere in the other world. Coraline realizes just how threatening the other world is compared to the safety of her world. This realization of “honed awareness of boundaries” marks her psychological growth (David 2).

Once she realizes they are not coming back of their own accord a change in Coraline occurs. Before she went to the other world, she was always asking *What should I do?* or *What shall I do?* Now, she says definitively, “Then I suppose there is only one thing left to do” (Gaiman 52). She knows and accepts she needs to save her parents. Now, she is beginning to shape her identity by developing industry. She calls the police and while her story sounds like nonsense to the police officer who tries to placate her, Coraline has figured out what is going on, and more importantly, she “develops the use of voice and word... as a part of a new element of the future identity” (*Identity* 162). No longer are her words interrogative, they are declarative. This is important in developing her skills. She procures supplies – tools she will need such as a candle, apples, and the

stone with the hole in it, and goes to the drawing room. Before she crosses the threshold for the second time, she recalls a memory of a time when she and her father explored a “wasteland” between her home and shops. Her father saved her from getting stung by wasps after stepping on their nest. He goes back to the spot where the wasps were to retrieve his glasses. As Coraline is telling the story, she unlocks the door and sees, “there was no brick wall on the other side of the door: only darkness. A cold wind blew through the passageway” (Gaiman 56). The passageway represents the wasteland of Coraline’s story. This time, she is the one who must go back to save her father instead of her father going back to save her. Just as her father went “back again to get his glasses when he knew the wasps were there, when he was really scared. *That was brave,*” so must Coraline go back to other mother though she is very scared (Gaiman 56-57).

Additionally, by crossing the threshold again she is moving from security to danger in order to find the meaning of her psychological growth. Gathering tools, using her skills – bravery and exploration – declaring what she needs to do, then crossing the boundary is a major step in gaining industry. Everything she needs is in her own world because it is not a construct of anyone else’s. She has begun to develop a “*sense of initiative* as a basis for a realistic sense of ambition and purpose” (*Identity* 115). This does not happen without fear. Yet Coraline feels the fear and proceeds.

Once she begins walking down the corridor, she notices it smells of dust and mustiness, and it is damp. It is as if she is going underground again, though this time it is more pronounced. She thinks to herself, “*wasn’t it a lot shorter walk last time?*” (Gaiman 58). The sense of going underground is stronger than the previous crossing. Now, she seems to be traveling to a lower world. The walk gets longer, the candle goes out and

“there was a scrabbling and a pattering, and Coraline could feel her heart pounding against her ribs. She put out one hand...and felt something wispy, like a spider’s web, brush her hand and face” (Gaiman 58). A web is a symbol of “ a labyrinth as a dangerous journey of the soul,” and the other world itself is a labyrinth, with the other house and grounds symbols of the dangerous journey Coraline contests for her identity (Cooper 190). At the end of the corridor, a light goes on to reveal her other mother, who acts as if nothing has happened. Coraline finds the mirror in this other world and reflected in it she sees “a young girl in her dressing gown and slippers, who looked like she had recently been crying but whose eyes were real eyes, not black buttons, and who was holding tightly to a burned-out candle stick. She looked at the girl in the mirror and the girl in the mirror looked back at her. *I will be brave*, thought Coraline. *No, I am brave*” (Gaiman 59). Again, she is declarative. In this case, the mirror suggests “Truth; self-realization; wisdom” (Cirlot 106). She is seeing herself for who she really is. Interestingly, it is only in the other world that she can see reality. It seems that being “thrown into realms of distortion” is the only place she can “ discern, define, and reclaim borders” (David 2). She has now progressed beyond life being either bored or interesting.

The other mother procures the key, and Coraline learns there is only one key and one way out. The other mother locks the door, closing off the boundary to her own world. Coraline explores again, this time to search for her parents. When she enters her other room, she sees it for what it really is, “a parody” of her real room (Gaiman 64). Coraline falls asleep and when she wakes up, “she was not entirely who she was. It is astonishing just how much of what we are can be tied to the beds we wake up in in the morning, and it is astonishing how fragile that can be” (Gaiman 65). It is important she comes to this

realization in the other world because in her world she did not have awareness of her self. Additionally, at times, she “would forget who she was while she was daydreaming that she was exploring,” but now, “she was Coraline Jones” (Gaiman 65). Taken out of her world she realizes the “inner agency safeguarding our existence by screening and synthesizing, in any series of moments, all the impressions, emotions, memories, and impulses which try to enter our thoughts” (*Identity* 218). In fact, a memory of her father’s bravery helped her have her own courage to walk back through the corridor. By waking up in the other world, she begins to recognize her agency because this world of childish things and everything she wants she could possibly want is not really who she is. After getting dressed, and gathering the apple and the stone, “it was as if her head had cleared a little. As if she had come out of some sort of fog” (Gaiman 67). She had been in a psychological fog symbolized by the actual fog that kept her inside in her real world.

She begins to look for her parents and another way out of the world under the guise of her love of exploring. Now, she is using exploration as a skill versus play. After wandering the grounds, she comes inside where the other mother tries to entice Coraline with games. Coraline has no desire to play, and communicates this by verbally standing up to the other mother. In doing so, the other mother “pulled Coraline back into the hallway and advanced upon the mirror at the end of the hall. Then she pushed the tiny key into the fabric of the mirror, and she twisted it. It opened like a door revealing a dark space behind it” (Gaiman 77). She pushes Coraline inside and locks her in. She is once again trapped. Here, the mirror symbolizes something “ambivalent. It is a surface which reproduces images in a way that contains and absorbs them” (Cirlot 211). The other mother is using the mirror to contain Coraline then absorb her into the other world,

thereby keeping her inferior forever. Coraline stops a sob before she allows it to come out. She will not let herself succumb to the literal fear of being locked in a dark place, and the figurative fear the dark place represents, being trapped in an inferior state. A major danger in this stage is “man’s restriction of himself and constriction” (*Childhood* 260). She must find a way to work through the fear so that she does not feel worthless and, “become the conformist and thoughtless slave...to those who are in a position to exploit” those who feel worthless, i.e., the other mother (*Childhood* 261). She steadies herself emotionally by steadying herself physically and finds three dead children who have been trapped behind the mirror for a very long time. They are the embodiment of the Inferior aspect of the stage since they did not escape the other mother and became the thoughtless slaves as indicated when they say they have “nothing left of ourselves” (Gaiman 83). The other mother has stolen their hearts, symbols of their identities, so they are kept in darkness contained together. They are the metaphorical warning about what happens when a child does not successfully achieve Industry. At last, the other mother allows Coraline out of the mirror.

The other mother has been using childish objects and concepts to bait Coraline into staying with her. Specifically, she’s used food, kind words, clothes, toys, and offers to create infinite worlds for Coraline to explore. These concepts represent Erikson’s fundamentals of technology as they are the “utensils, the tools, and the weapons used by the big people” (*Childhood* 259). None of these tempts her anymore. In fact, using her skills and tools, Coraline now turns the tables on the other mother and challenges her, ironically, to an exploring game, with Coraline as the prize. Coraline tempts the other mother by betting her that Coraline will find the secret hearts of the three children and her

parents, and if she does not, she will stay with the other mother forever. All of the skills she has been building, and all of the tools she has been acquiring, are meant for this turning point disguised as play. Additionally, she has developed “the use of voice and word,” which is an element that in turn “will be related to other element’s of the child’s identity,” i.e., her cleverness, love of exploration, basic self-sufficiency (*Identity* 162). What she is doing without knowing it, is integrating new elements with those already in existence to advance her psychological growth (*Identity* 162). However, she has not defeated the other mother yet. All of her skills and tools are tested, and she battles not only to save the children and her parents, but herself as well.

One of the ways people gain growth is through power. Coraline is now engaged in a power struggle with the other mother. “Power struggles determine the possibility of agency” (Coats 317). Also by using her skills and tools against the other mother, Coraline is exerting her own power. She remains brave, and using the stone given to her by Mrs. Spinks, she finds two the souls of the children hidden in marbles. One of them she finds in a cellar. A cellar or basement is a symbolic place. They can be dark, secret, and scary places whose positions beneath the earth are meant to keep its occupants in a lower position. This concept connects to the concept of inferiority as they are both meant to keep one lower. Coraline fights her way out of the basement. She contends formless monsters, wanders through mists and formless spaces all of which lack concreteness. They are constructs created by the other mother to keep Coraline in a state of confusion. Yet, now, she is moving upwards towards industry. The basement is a literal base upon which she begins to achieve her agency.

Now she must find the third ghost child's soul and her parents. She ventures to the very top of the house where the other crazy old man lives, as it is the last place to search. She has battled her way from the basement to the top of the house. This is symbolic of her psychological growth. Before she physically goes into his flat she declares, "I'm an explorer" (Gaiman 113). This is important because she says it out loud showing confidence and a sense of accomplishment, which is a significant aspect of this stage in terms of developing ambition. This exploration is a search for her identity as well as for her parents. She walks into the apartment, and the old man consistently addresses her as "little girl" in an attempt to patronize her. (Gaiman 115). However, Coraline has figured out this world. She recognizes it for the twisted and distorted place it is. It is an empty place. While her world was safe and did not cater to her every desire, this one is dangerous and encourages every desire. The old man says, "And what if you do everything you swore you would? What then? Nothing's changed. You'll go home. You'll be bored. You'll be ignored. No one will listen to you, not really listen to you. You're too clever and too quiet for them to understand. They don't even get your name right" (Gaiman 117). He is pitting the worlds, metaphors of the stages, against each other. He goes on to describe what her life could be like in the other world. It could be a child's ultimate fantasy world in which she would get and experience everything she could ever possibly want. While there is an element of truth in what he says about her own world, Coraline responds by saying, "I don't want whatever I want. Nobody does. Not really. What kind of fun would it be if I just got everything I ever wanted? Just like that, and it didn't *mean* anything. What then?" (Gaiman 118). This is one of the most important lines in the book. By crossing physical thresholds between worlds and within

the other world's house and grounds, she has crossed a "psychic threshold" which "refers to the place of transition from one belief to another, or the shift of one state of being to another" (Buck 3). Her outlook from the beginning of the novel has completely shifted. After approaching the other neighbor, he turns into a mischief of rats. One has the third marble. Coraline chases the rat to the steps and she begins to notice, "[T]he house itself was continuing to change, becoming less distinct" (Gaiman 119). The house/world and everyone in it are shifting as Coraline's psychological growth shifts.

However, the rat gets away from her and disappears, and after a scary fall in which she injures herself, Coraline experiences a profound sense of failure. She recalls another memory of her scraping her knee after falling off of her bicycle. "But then, back then, in with all the cuts and scrapes... she had had a feeling achievement. She was learning something, doing something she had not known how to do. Now she felt nothing but cold loss... she had failed herself, failed everything" (Gaiman 120). This scene depicts another danger of the Inferior versus Industry stage, which, "lies in a sense of inadequacy and inferiority" (*Childhood* 260). At this point in the novel, Coraline has yet to experience a true sense of failure. It is important that these feelings of inferiority do not lead to what Erikson suggests could occur, which is children that feel "discouraged, "isolated," and "doomed to mediocrity" (*Childhood* 260). The other world is a symbol of these ideals, and because Coraline is close to succeeding, the other mother does everything in her power to discourage her. At this low moment, the cat comes into the other world. It has killed the rat and procures the marble for Coraline. The cat has been a type of ally of Coraline's though it has remained aloof and sarcastic. Interestingly, in the other world, the cat is considered vermin and the rats are not. In Coraline's world the

situation is reversed. Rats are vermin and cats are not. This reversal highlights the parody Gaiman presents the other world to be and the lengths the other mother will go to keep Coraline inferior. Since the cat has decapitated the rat containing the third marble, it is helping Coraline crumble this other world.

After all of these realizations and insights, Coraline figures out where her parents are. They are trapped in a snow globe on the mantel in the other drawing room. She walked by it previously, but did not have the awareness yet to see them. The snow globe, like the marbles, are round in shape, and “the soul is explicitly related to the shape of the sphere” (Cirlot 119). It is another object the other mother uses to trap people, and when they die, she traps their souls as well. Marbles and snow globes are symbols of childhood as well, conveying another attempt to keep occupants of the other world inferior. Back in her other flat in the other drawing room, Coraline engages in her final confrontation with the other mother. Using words again, she manipulates her other mother into unlocking and opening the door to the corridor by suggesting that she must have hid Coraline’s parents in the passageway between the houses. The other mother needed to think she was going to win. “Through her ability to negotiate language” as she has negotiated the other world, “Coraline is ultimately able to manipulate her captor” (David 5). Once the door is open she escapes by throwing the cat at her other mother, grabbing the snow globe and stepping into the corridor. Gaiman writes, “It was colder in the corridor, like stepping down into a cellar on a warm day” (Gaiman 131). Once again, the corridor seems to be in a lower, inferior position. As Coraline begins to pull the door closed, it “was like trying to close the door against a high wind” (Gaiman 131). She struggles with the door, when “suddenly she was aware of other people in the corridor with her” and she says, “help me

please...all of you” (Gaiman 131). The other people in the corridor are the three children and her parents who close their hands around Coraline’s while whispering words of encouragement. When she hears her mother’s voice say, “[W]ell done Coraline,” she becomes strong (Gaiman 132). Coraline has accomplished an aspect of this stage, which is the child “now learns to win recognition by producing things” (*Childhood* 259). The “things” she has produced are twofold. The first are the objects, the marbles and the snow globe, which contain the souls of the children and her parents. The second are the actual children (albeit ghosts) and her parents contained in the objects.

The door slams shut and they run “as fast as was practical, through the dark corridor, running her hand along the wall to make sure she didn’t bump into anything or get turned around in the darkness. It was an uphill run, and it seemed to her that it went on for a longer distance than anything go possibly go. The wall she was touching “felt warm and yielding now” (Gaiman 133). By running her hand along the wall, she is symbolically steadying her identity just as she did in the darkness when trapped behind the mirror. Additionally, the corridor is no longer cold like it was previously. It is warm, comforting. Going uphill is favorable, because it suggests her agency is increasing as she advances towards her own world. She is transitioning from a position that was below, i.e. inferior, to industry, symbolized by the corridor moving upwards. The darkness, at this point, “is not essentially evil since it is the ground of light, which emerges from it” (Cirlot 50). The portal is actually shifting in Corline’s favor by moving upwards with her towards her own world. Finally, she does see daylight, and “panting for breath, she staggered through the door, and slammed it shut behind her with the loudest, most

satisfying bang you can imagine” (Gaiman 134). She is metaphorically shutting and locking the door on inferiority.

However, It is not enough to face and get through a crisis, or turning point; one must achieve meaning-making. Coraline has achieved this as evidenced by the way she sees her world differently now. At the beginning of the book, she described her surroundings in negatives terms such as “holes,” “rotted,” “stunted,” “flyblown,” “squidgy brown toadstools,” and “smelled dreadful” (Gaiman 2-3). Here at the end of the book, she sees the world as “golden,” “robin’s egg blue,” “green hills,” and “purple and grays” (Gaiman 135). Before, she could only see the grounds of the house; now, she looks beyond them. She sees the world as a place of beauty and possibility. She finally sees her own world in such a way that “nothing, she thought, had ever been so *interesting*” and she is “caught up in the interestingness of the world” (Gaiman 135). Coraline falls asleep in the drawing room and is woken up by her parents, who do not seem to remember they were ever in peril. Coraline goes to her own room and changes her clothes. She pulls out the marbles and the snow globe which she notices is “an empty world” symbolizing the other world for what it really is (Gaiman 138). More evidence that she has grown psychologically occurs in the kitchen. “Dinner that night was pizza, and even though it was homemade by her father... and even though he had put slices of green pepper on it along with little meatballs and, of all things, pineapple chunks, Coraline ate the entire slice she had been given” (Gaiman 139). Whereas before she looked at her parents’ cooking with disgust and judgment, now she is willing to try the food they prepare with appreciation. This is an example of meaning-making as well

because the scene conveys she has “a higher level of psychological functioning than prior to the experience of a traumatic event” (Tavernier and Willoughby 9).

To show that she really can handle herself and that she really did achieve industry, she has one more battle with the other mother whose spider-like hand sneaks into Coraline’s world to steal back the black key. Coraline uses play and sets up a tea party with her dolls since the hand, a part of the other mother, still thinks Coraline needs to play. She defeats the hand easily, tricking the other mother yet again, because they are in Coraline’s world now, a symbol of Industry, not in the control of the other mother. The hand ends up falling down a well, and when Coraline closes the lid on it, her agency is acquired. Moreover, the neighbors finally get her name correct, illustrating this as well.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Erikson primarily characterizes this stage as the entrance to school life. At the very end of the book, Coraline will be starting school the next day. “Normally, on the night before the first day of the term, Coraline was apprehensive and nervous. But, she realized, there was nothing left about school that could scare her anymore” (Gaiman 159). This is because she has mastered important aspects of the Inferior versus Industry stage. Specifically, she was able to “produce” the souls of the children and her parents, earning her recognition from her neighbors who mysteriously knew about the other world. Also, she applied her skill of exploration and used the tools available to her such as the stone and the cat to accomplish the task of searching for the children’s souls and her parents. Lastly, she grasped the fundamentals of the technology of the other world, i.e., it being a construct of the other mother who used play to trap children, leading to Coraline’s realization that no one should have and get everything he/she wants. Because of all of this, she is more than equipped to handle

school. She has accomplished the virtue of competence by successfully navigating the stage. According to Erikson, “competence – that is, the free exercise of dexterity and intelligence in the completion of serious tasks unimpaired by an infantile sense of inferiority... is the lasting basis of co-operative participation in productive adult life” (*Identity* 126). With the other mother defeated and no threat of another other world, Coraline will settle into what Freud calls a latency period. This is a stage of relative calm before the onset of puberty. This will give Coraline time to process the growth she achieved. Each time a person successfully moves through one of Erikson’s stages, it provides a foundation for the next stage. Each stage affords us the knowledge gained through lessons learned, and we come out of with a better understanding of ourselves, our society, and our world. We must learn how to manage difficulties during each stage in order to be better prepared us for consequent challenges we will face and the experience of moving through each psychological stage. By escaping the other world and defeating the other mother, both very serious challenges, Coraline’s foundation for her future growth is well established.

III. CHAPTER TWO

Picture a market place where a tailor is wearing an impeccably crafted suit made out of book pages, and he has straight pins stuck all over his head though he does not seem to mind. In this same market, a woman wearing an equally outrageous costume sells bouquets made out of tools. In another area of town, the residents are ghosts. “For me, setting is absolutely crucial,” says China Miéville of writing science fiction and fantasy novels (Gordon and Miéville 368). Deeba, the protagonist in Miéville’s novel *Un Lun Dun*, participates in these scenes as she navigates Erikson’s Identity versus Role Confusion stage, a time when “childhood proper comes to an end. Youth begins” (*Childhood* 261). Two worlds containing two different sets of characters are illustrated in the novel, and each contributes to Deeba’s identity and agency. The first world is London proper, where she is the archetypal sidekick. The second world is UnLondon, a weird place, where Deeba faces an array of bizarre, fantastical, and dangerous experiences that will eventually transform her into the heroine. The worlds of London and UnLondon are not so much symbols of the Identity versus Role Confusion stage as much as they provide the testing grounds to navigate the stage. Objects in both worlds are symbols of elements and aspects of this stage. They exist in each world yet have different uses and purposes. Objects such as umbrellas, windows, books, and shelves, and how they are used, allow for the shift from Role Confusion to Identity to occur. Both places are vital for Deeba’s growth.

The virtue gained by successfully navigating this stage is what Erikson refers to as fidelity, which “encompasses sincerity, genuineness, and a sense of duty in our

relationships with other people” (Schultz 216). Deeba more than achieves this virtue. The aspects of the stage that allow Deeba to achieve fidelity are that youths are concerned with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared to what they feel they are; learn to cultivate skills to apply to future occupations; search for a sense of continuity and sameness; are ever ready to install ideals as guardians of a final identity (*Childhood* 261). Deeba experiences these aspects culminating in a final battle with a danger that threatens both worlds. By defeating this threat and achieving her agency in UnLondon, she is able to actualize her identity in London. Joining the worlds are three different portals Deeba crosses to get to and from UnLondon a total of four times and that each symbolize a youth’s “difficult and demanding journey on the road to self” (Buck 2). At the beginning of the novel, the portals represent psychological thresholds Deeba crosses to navigate the stage. A basement, a bridge, and a library with a seemingly endless shelf of books provide this journey, and each are symbols of the Identity versus Role Confusion stage. The basement is the last place she is the sidekick, the bridge represents her shift from sidekick to hero, and the library, books, and shelves represent her climb towards agency.

At the beginning of the novel, Deeba is sidekick to Zanna, the pretty girl of the group. Yet being identified as a sidekick has its downfalls in a peer group, especially when issues arise. Where Zanna is, “Deeba tended to be too,” and “Deeba, [was] as usual, by her side” (Miéville 4). Other examples highlighting Deeba’s identity as the sidekick are a series of odd occurrences directed towards Zanna. Deeba is there for every encounter. These oddities lead up to a terrifying car accident that occurs because a dark cloud of smoke surrounds their peer group one day obscuring a driver’s view, and he hits one of their friends. Though she is hospitalized and recovers, it affects Zanna and

Deeba's statuses in the group. During the adolescent period, when someone is seen as "other" in some regard, "young people can become remarkably...intolerant and cruel in their exclusion of others who are 'different'" (*Identity* 132). Zanna, and Deeba by proxy, are seen as "other" because their friends isolate them and blame them for the accident and the strange occurrences. Being denied by one's group has an effect on identity, because for adolescents their peer group is meaningful, and when their identities are questioned by their friends adolescents experience anxiety, which, worse case scenario, can lead to a breakdown. Youths who have felt shunned by their peers for a variety of reasons understand this feeling of isolation.

This is when Deeba takes the first step towards her identity. This cannot occur by remaining static in London. The shift begins when Deeba enters the portal, which a symbol of transformation. She and Zanna find the first portal by following an umbrella through the maze of their estate. It seems to be moving on its own. At the base of a large building, "the girls saw a door. It was ajar. On its threshold" Deeba notices the gritty surroundings, which cause her to feel uneasy (Miéville 21). The word "threshold" "stands for the threshold of a doorway" symbolizing "a 'threshold' period. This is a time of transition and transformation" (Stitt). Once crossing a threshold, transition begins. It is the boundary from what was to what can or will be. Zanna seems eager to go through the doorway, but Deeba is hesitant. Before crossing a boundary, Stitt suggests, "there is a point of decision between each of the persons who meet at the threshold." It takes courage to cross a boundary, especially not knowing where it will lead or where it will end. Zanna steps inside, much to the protests of Deeba who, as her sidekick, nonetheless loyally crosses after her. Once inside, they walk down a corridor beneath the ground

level. This corridor can be seen as “the stable center that mediates between and holds the tension” between two different spaces (Buck 3). Literally, the spaces are London and UnLondon. Psychologically, the spaces are Identity versus Role Confusion. Deeba has a set identity in London, and by crossing the boundary and moving through the corridor, that identity is changing. The basement is the first portal that takes the girls to UnLondon. It is a symbolic basis for Deeba’s growth. In the middle of the room is a wheel, and Zanna turns it causing the lights and sounds to change. According to Cirlot, wheels can represent “the splitting up of the world-order into two essentially different factors” (371). Turning the wheel is splitting the threshold between London and UnLondon as well as the threshold of Deeba’s identity. She is moving away from continuity into instability, away from her London identity into the strangeness of UnLondon. When they stumble out of the basement and shove open the door they originally went through, confusion ensues because in this place there is just enough of the familiar to be recognizable, but enough of the abnormal to be scary. At first glance, the scene is simply a busy day at the market. But then Deeba and Zanna start to notice details such as clothing that “looked like dressing-up costumes. They were too neat, and somehow a bit too simple,” and also, “here and there were the strangest figures. People whose skins were no colors skins should ever be, or who seemed to have a limb too many, or peculiar extrusions or concavities in their faces” (Miéville 34). According to Miéville, he likes to “create a type of culture shock for readers” and at this point in the novel, before identity development has taken place, Deeba and Zanna experience this shock as well (Gordon and Miéville 368).

For an individual's identity to grow, he/she must face a crisis, or turning point. A youth meets the turning point with a set identity in place gained from a previous psychological stage. Going through a crisis during the Identity versus Role Confusion stage becomes "the search for a new and yet reliable identity [that] can perhaps best be seen in the persistent adolescent endeavor to define, overdefine, and redefine themselves" (*Identity* 87). UnLondon itself is a symbol of this process. Perceiving the girls' confusion, a character named Fing says to Zanna, "No wonder you are confused. You're not from here at all. You're the Shwazzy... and you brought a friend" (Miéville 41). Neither Zanna nor Deeba actually know what being the "Shwazzy" means, though it clearly holds importance. Fing tells Zanna she is "Chosen" and has an enemy in UnLondon called Smog, an anthro-personified entity. He suggests they get answers from a group of people called Propheseers, a sort of governing body of UnLondon. Because Smog is dangerous, Fing encourages Zanna and Deeba to make their way quickly to the Propheseers. As they move forward, Deeba in particular notices details of a neighborhood of houses built from trash and other discarded things such as "a house-sized fist carved out of stone," a "building [of] mortared-together rubbish," windows that were "fronts of washing machines," and "a windmill made of a helicopter on its side" (Miéville 49). While this is bizarre and unnerving, it is also a clever and creative use of materials. What Miéville is establishing is that nothing in UnLondon is meaningless. It is a place where things find uses, where objects that are identified as one thing are redesigned and repurposed then utilized as something else. This concept applies to identities during the Identity versus Role Confusion stage as well, as Deeba discovers throughout her time in UnLondon.

A flying bus arrives to take them to the Propheseers. They are greeted by a normal man wearing scorched yet clean clothes, who is identified as the conductor, and he is an example of someone who has accomplished healthy psychological growth after experiencing a turning point. Also perceiving Deeba and Zanna's confusion he says, "I know that look. 'Astonished, bewildered, excited, frightened...awed. That's the taste of the first few days in UnLondon. It takes one who's swigged it to recognize it'" (Miéville 53). His name is Joe Jones, and he is from London. He reveals when he came to UnLondon and how he has adjusted his identity to make a life for himself. Joe explains, "throw something away and you declare it obsolete. You've seen an old computer, or a broken radio or whatever, left on the streets? It's there for a few days, and then it is just gone...but often as not it ends up here, where people find other uses for it" (Miéville 57). Joe himself is a prime example. An aspect of his identity became obsolete in London. He "worked on buses back in London...I'd take the money and give the tickets...it was quicker...and it was safer...but they decided they could save money if they got rid of half of us" (Miéville 58). He considered his job sacred, and taking it away took a facet of his identity. By working as a conductor in UnLondon, he has re-established his identity. He has gained Identity Achievement status by "pursuing [a] self-chosen occupation and ideological goals" (Marcia 111). His ideology is better suited to UnLondon based on the turning point he faced ten years ago when he was laid off from his occupation in London. He is a significant character because he serves as someone Deeba can relate to and he is a role model for facing turning points resulting in healthy identity growth.

They finally reach their destination, the "Pons Absconditus," a suspension bridge that "rose out of back streets, from nowhere in particular, went over the roofs, and came

down several streets away, in a different nowhere in particular” (Miéville 88). The bridge is another symbol. It is one of the portals Deeba crosses twice in the novel to get home. Each time she crosses it, she changes, because it represents “both place and process. As place, it is the point of transition marking the boundary between two opposing regions; as process, [it is the] threshold [that] holds together the tension” in navigating the Role Confusion versus Identity stage (Buck 3). At this point in the novel it is the transitional place of the opposing parts of the stage. It is on the bridge where her identity as the sidekick begins to shift. It becomes the process once Deeba crosses it for the final time resulting in the reconciling of her identity. Literally, it holds the office of Propheseers.

Adolescents must venture away from the safety of family and the familiar and into danger to learn about their societies and their potential places in them. Miéville’s societies are not “consistent, bounded, and essentially safe. They are fractured and dangerous” and in facing danger, Deeba experiences her first turning point (Gordon and Miéville 373). Zanna and Deeba communicate their frustrations and confusions, demanding to go home. Despite listening to Zanna and Deeba’s protests and insistence on returning home, one of the Propheseers named Mortar is primary concerned with keeping them in UnLondon so Zanna can fight Smog. Zanna, it seems, is prophesized to be there to defend UnLonon. But they are attacked by agents of Smog called “stink-junkies.” Up until now, UnLondon has presented odd-looking people, strange combinations of objects, and bizarre architecture, none of which have been dangerous. When the stink-junkies attack, all of this changes. Zanna gets smacked on the back of the head by a stink-junkie, rendering her unconscious and demonstrating that the prophecy about her is incorrect. She certainly tried to take on the Shwazzy identity by attacking a stink-junkie first, but

because it knocked her out, it literally knocked out that identity as well. Her unconscious state is a metaphor for the disconnect between her identities. This causes a shift in Deeba. She is not the sidekick if Zanna is not the Shwazzy, an identity that was “forced on [her] by an inexorable standard” (*Identity* 132). A youth must be able to choose an identity for herself and not be restricted by a society’s criterion. Since Zanna’s identity as the Shwazzy is now disputed, Deeba needs to return to familiar territory to figure out who she is.

The Pons Absconditus bridge, thus, is a place of “a transition from one state to another” symbolizing Deeba’s transition from becoming the sidekick to the hero. (Cirlot 33). In order for the bridge to take Deeba and Zanna back to London, Mortar must use his energy to turn the wheel. When Zanna turned the wheel it represented her identity as the “Shwazzy.” Since this identity is in question, the wheel now represents both “movement and immobility” as symbolized by Deeba and Zanna respectively (Cooper 191). Deeba’s identity is in motion, while the unconscious Zanna is in a moratoria state, the period in which an adolescent’s identity is delayed until the adolescent finds her niche (*Identity* 156, 157). Their time in UnLondon was irrational and perilous, yet meaningful for Deeba’s identity growth. Fing tears a page from a book and makes a beautiful glove, and Deeba accepts it as a token of her venture in UnLondon and her connection to her new friends there. Additionally, it is a tangible symbol of identity in that objects and people can be transformed and redefined to become something other than what they appear to be.

The bridge does not just separate one world from the other. It “bridges the inescapable discontinuities between different levels of personality development” and

symbolizes how Deeba's personality is developing by becoming independent of her sidekick identity (*Identity* 162). By crossing the bridge with an unconscious Zanna in tow, Deeba develops "dependence on [herself] which makes [her], in turn, dependable" (*Identity* 75). Ever since Zanna was knocked out, Deeba has proven her mettle. Other characters picked up on her strength. Right before leaving UnLondon, a character named Brokkenbroll says to her, "It says a lot about you that you came with your friend. You must have been very afraid. It says you're something to be reckoned with" (Miéville 129). UnLondon is the place where she proves just how capable she is, more than just a sidekick. This is further evidenced when Deeba takes charge of Zanna by moving her "off the end of the bridge - and into her estate. Onto the walkway on the first floor, next to her front door. In London"(Miéville 136). They arrive home safely because of Deeba.

Zanna recovers a few days later, but does not remember any of her experiences in UnLondon. In contrast, Deeba cannot seem to let UnLondon go. There is a disconnect between how her friends see her and how she feels she is because of her experiences in UnLondon. Once back in school, "the slow patching-up of relations between the friends continued. Within a couple of weeks, things between them were all good again," but Deeba does not feel settled because while her peer relationships are repaired, she has psychologically grown, and being the sidekick does not fit her anymore (Miéville 147). While she is happy to be home and for life to be normal, experiencing a turning point "alters the normal flow and direction of one's life" (Tavernier and Willoughby 9). Because of this she decides to research information about UnLondon, and stumbles upon a critical misunderstanding. A character named Unstable is lying about a concoction he created to use as a weapon against Smog. In fact, after doing a bit more research, she

figures out the man cannot be Unstable at all. She realizes the people of UnLondon are in danger.

After her encounter in UnLondon and the new knowledge of its potential peril, Deeba undergoes what Erikson calls a “normative crisis, i.e., a normal phase of increased conflict characterized by a seeming fluctuation in ego strength as well as by a high growth potential” (*Identity* 163). She is conflicted because she does not want to leave UnLondon in danger, but does not know how to get back here. Her strength and growth potential happens when she does figure it out and makes the decision to go back. She takes action by searching for portals. She returns to the basement, but to no avail. She crosses bridges, but nothing happens. She goes so far as to write the Environmental Minister whom she has determined has been to UnLondon. But it is from the words on the glove that she gleans a way back. On the glove it reads, “ENTER BY BOOKSTEPS, ON STORYLADDERS” which she has figured out refers to her school’s library (Miéville 147). After logically considering all of the reasons she should not go back, she realizes she cannot stop worrying about her friends there. It would be easy for Deeba to leave UnLondon to itself. But by returning, Deeba is going back to a dangerous place by choice, exhibiting agency and fidelity by leaving her friends, family, and safety in London in order to help them. She journeys to UnLondon to be with her new friends in order to help them as well. She does this out of a self-delegated sense of duty to both cities and their people.

At school the next day, she avoids her friends, and at lunchtime goes to the library. She looked around to make sure no one is watching, and she “stepped up carefully and put a foot onto the edge of a shelf... she began to climb the bookshelves

like a ladder” (Miéville 163). The act of moving upwards suggests she is moving towards her agency and identity. Whereas before she entered a portal, disoriented, through a basement at Zanna’s prompting, then crossed another portal with Zanna unconscious, now Deeba enters clear-headed, of her own accord, and alone. Additionally, she displays perseverance and steadfastness because as she keeps climbing “she was definitely beyond where the ceiling had been... and climbed for a very long time” (Miéville 163, 167). The higher she climbs, the more disconcerting it is. She climbs so high that “only darkness surrounds her” (Miéville 168). Climbing through the darkness is scary, but it gives her the space for her identity to transform. Her journey through the portal ends when she emerges into a library in UnLondon at the top of a tower. Looking down, she can see all of the shelves she climbed. She has literally climbed closer to her agency by arriving at the tower.

In order to warn the citizens of UnLondon about Unstible, her goal is to get to the Pons Absconditus and plead her case to the Propheseers. This puts her in a peculiar situation. She is not from UnLondon, and therefore not known by anyone, so she does not have any influence. Additionally, since she is from London but not the Shwazzy, so she does not have any authority. She is not the sidekick anymore but has not yet become the hero and accomplished the Identity versus Role Confusion stage. Youths who do not belong in any group in society are what Stitt defines as, “marginal, liminal, simultaneously members of two or more social groups whose social definitions and cultural norms are distinct from, and often even opposed to, on another.” On her way, she meets up with Hemi a character who is half-ghost, half-living boy. He represents a marginal character as well. Hemi is about her age, so he is someone to whom she can

relate. His mother was from London who died and came to Wraithtown. His father is from UnLondon, who also came to Wraithtown out of curiosity. Once together though, “his family didn’t like it, and her friends thought she was sick. They managed to make everyone angry” (Miéville 190). Hemi does not fit in with the living or the dead. He is a part of both worlds but does not belong to fit into either group. Therefore, he is an outcast of UnLondon. His dual identity is used against him. This connects him to Deeba. She is not outcast in London or UnLondon, but her identity in each place is not yet settled. Both are in a type of identity crisis. Because of their identity formations, Hemi and Joe Jones are characters she can connect with and who serve as peers in UnLondon.

Deeba faces her first turning point after coming back to UnLondon once she finds her proof that Unstible is not who he says he is. After the turning point, she takes a considerable step to becoming the hero by reconciling two important concepts of identity, distantiation and repudiation. Benjamin Unstible died by smoke inhalation and poisoning, and his physical body is being used as a portal for Smog itself. After being betrayed by a character named Murgatroyd who is from London and works for the Elizabeth Rawley, the Environmental Minister, Deeba finds herself face-to-face with Unstible-Smog. He tells her his plan is to burn everything in UnLondon by being fed literal smog from London. Minister Rawley is helping him. He then tells Deeba he is going to burn her alive. Hemi rescues her, and when they are safe, she comes to the conclusion that “we have got to stop it ourselves” (Miéville 244). This declaration characterizes her growing agency. She is not without fear and frustration, but she takes initiative to defeat Smog herself. An adolescent who is not sure of her point of view cannot repudiate when it is necessary and therefore has an incomplete identity (*Identity* 168). This is not Deeba.

Because of her readiness to fight Smog, she has a healthy balance of “distantiation, i.e., the readiness to repudiate, ignore, or destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one’s own” (*Identity* 168). Even more so, she is willing to fight to save two cities leading the mission. The first mission is to get the only weapon that can defeat Smog, called the UnGun..

Adolescents, at some point, are worried about the future and what role they will occupy in their society. Deeba feels this worry when she realizes her future in London is at stake if she does not find the UnGun in time. This connects to what Erikson terms “time confusion” which means “every adolescent, I would believe, knows at least fleeting moments of thus being at odds with time itself (*Identity* 181). Deeba experiences time confusion because finding the UnGun will take time that Deeba does not have. One of the side effects of being in UnLondon for more than nine days is being entirely forgotten in London. This is called the “phlegm effect.” This means her identity and agency are at stake. If she does not find the UnGun within nine days her choices are remaining in UnLondon indefinitely or living a life in London unknown to her friends and family. It could be that she saves both cities but her identity is erased back home. If she is forgotten, it means she has no agency in London. There is a future for her in UnLondon since “most people who cross have no intention of going back,” and seek a new identity and are not worried about their friends, or families where they came from (Miéville 250). This is exemplified by Joe Jones. But Deeba has a life in London with friends and family she cares about, so it is not just the cities she is seeking to save, it is also her literal identity.

On their way to find the UnGun, Deeba experiences two turning points in which her psychological growth evolves further, as does her agency. During the first turning point, she stands up to an overbearing man who controls words and their meanings, and during the second, she finds a key, an object to help lead her to the UnGun. The key is in a house overcome by a perilous forest. Both turning points offer different challenges, and in each scene, she gains confidence by remaining mentally steady, allowing her to “readjust [herself] and [her] environments according to [her] own inventions...who has evolved...and this can only mean the potential of an ever-renewed vital adaptation” (*Identity* 233). The territories of UnLondon are never the same, and she adjusts to every bizarre occurrence by using cleverness, courage, and common sense as skills. The first turning point occurs with a character named Mr. Speaker, who in addition to controlling words, wants to control Deeba too. She stands up to his control by making an astute observation: “‘the thing is,’ Deeba said, eyeing Mr. Speaker, ‘you could only make words do what you want if it was just you deciding what they mean. But it isn’t. It’s everyone else, too. Which means you might *want* to give them orders, but you aren’t in control. No one is’” (Miéville 268). This applies to people as well, especially to adolescents. Giving orders is akin to telling people what or who they should be, just like Zanna was told she was the Shwazzy without her choice. By “restricting a youth’s further choice of identity,” Erikson suggests the adolescent loses the ability to adapt and readjust which results in a loss of agency (*Identity* 160). By Deeba standing up to Mr. Speaker, she ensures this does not happen to her. The second turning point is procuring the key in a maze of a forest-house. Each room contains a different element associated with a forest, such as vines, moss, animals, and a river, some of which are dangerous, another example of the

changing environments of UnLondon. Deeba journeys through each room diligently searching for the key, and after spending the night in the house, she finally finds it on a parrot whose crest is the key. Deeba takes it. These two scenes are nonsensical, yet Deeba readjusts as needed and moves forward as her identity evolves.

However, an evolving identity does not come without numerous risks. Deeba faces her most dangerous turning point when acquiring the UnGun. She has already overcome more than one crisis, and each time gains a greater sense of who she is. More than just developing agency, “the vital personality weathers re-emerging from each crisis with an increased sense of inner unity” (*Identity* 92). This powerful inner test begins when she learns the UnGun resides in “one of the most deeply feared creatures in UnLondon...the Black Window” which “doesn’t just kill you... ‘It takes you right out of the world. No body left, no clothes, no trace. Swallows up whatever comes close. It’s the perfect predator’” (Miéville 304, 305). The portals Deeba has traveled through to get to UnLondon at least led somewhere. This portal takes people out of all worlds and leaves nothing behind. While the Smog consumes one’s identity, the Black Window erases one’s existence altogether. It will take skill and fortitude to re-emerge from the Black Window.

To accomplish this task she will have to rebel against the Propheseers’ notion of the Shwazzy as their defender and become her own version of a hero based on her own standards and ideals. She is almost a hero as noted by Joe when he says, “[Y]ou’re noticeable, girl, been making an impact” (Miéville 308). People have stopped mentioning the Shwazzy and are beginning to take notice of Deeba. She is now fighting for UnLondon because it is the right thing to do, not because of a prophecy. This is seen

as rebellion by the Propheseers who still do not believe her, but sometimes the emerging of a new identity occurs when the adolescent “rebel[s] significantly” (*Identity* 92). Her friends choose to rebel with Deeba because she “has an increase in capacity ‘to do well’ according to [her] own standards and to the standards of those who are significant to [her]” (*Identity* 92). When she first came to UnLondon with Zanna, all she wanted to do was go home and go back to being the sidekick. Now, even with her identity at home in jeopardy, she is prepared to defend UnLondon, which is also an example of developing fidelity. After another run-in with and escape from Murgatroyd, who is Rawley’s assistant, and Brokkenbroll, who is actually in league with Smog, she is accompanied on her journey by Fing, his friend Skool who is another odd resident of UnLondon, Hemi, Joe, and Joe’s friend Rosa. Deeba’s UnLondon peer group is by her side and ready to accomplish this dangerous task. Now she has her own sidekicks. By remaining loyal to the cause even in the face of immense adversity both to herself and to both worlds, Deeba takes another step closer to gaining her identity.

Getting the UnGun is her most jeopardous turning point, because once she finds the Black Window, she deliberately enters into it. Crossing the threshold into the window marks her crossing into her agency because she goes into the window “mindful of the dangers that await within” (Buck 5). This is one of the most alarming scenes in the book because feasibly, she could be trapped in the window indefinitely. This is symbolic of one of the dangers of the Identity versus Role Confusion stage. Not successfully overcoming a crisis has serious effects psychologically. Erikson notes, “development must move one way or the other” (*Identity* 14), and if an adolescent’s identity development does not progress after a crisis, she is in danger of “suffering psychotic

episodes, temporarily over-identifying, and withdrawl” (*Childhood* 262). In an Abbey, where the Black Window is located, Deeba realizes finding it will be problematic because there is more than just one window. In fact, she sees “tens, twenties, untold numbers of them. Crawling into view were heavy, painted wooden window frames filled with thick, molted old glass, through which Deeba glimpsed strange lights” (Miéville 332). In each of the windows Deeba sees different things such as darkness, water, mannequins, and most frighteningly dead bodies of people who got trapped inside them. Because the windows clamber in and out of each other, the chances of finding one’s way out are remote. Each window is a different portal, and portals within portals are formidable to navigate because without knowing which way to go, getting lost is perilously easy. Soon, a Black Window “ran with its unnerving many-legged motion, leaving the gloom...it raced towards them...through its glass, Deeba could see a weak electric bulb, the gray of a little room, and attached to a wall opposite, a huge, antique revolver” (Miéville 336). Deeba and her peers capture the window and run to safety but have difficulty grabbing the UnGun. Just as the window is about to close itself thereby cutting off access to the UnGun, in response, Deeba “sighed and stepped into the open window” much to the horror of the rest of the group (Miéville 338). She does get the gun, and saves herself by hurling it at the pane thereby breaking it. Deeba runs back through the broken glass, and the Black Window runs back into the abbey as if defeated. Deeba’s identity is more than just tested in this scene of the novel. She put herself deliberately in danger of not progressing healthily through the Identity versus Role Confusion stage.

Soon after, the battle with Smog begins, and Deeba faces her final turning point in UnLondon. It is in this scene that Deeba accomplishes her identity, with her umbrella

serving as a metaphor for this achievement. Deeba and the group plan to confront the Smog and not wait for it to attack. They go back to Unstible's laboratory where Deeba is attacked by Brokkenbroll. He takes her umbrella and turns it into one of his unbrellas by tearing it then using it to shackle her. She is able to repair it and get it back and comes to the realization that *"when it was an umbrella, it was completely for one thing. When it was broken, it didn't do that anymore, so it was something else, and that's when it was Brokkenbroll's... It's something new. It's not an umbrella, and it's not an unbrella. It's a...rebrella...it's its own thing now"* (Miéville 425-426). Her identity undergoes the same process. She comes to realize that in London, she was identified one way, the sidekick, and during her journey through UnLondon she had another identity, the hero. After her final battle, she will re-emerge with an identity of her choosing once home. Deeba enters the room to find what used to be Unstible is not recognizable. She sees the UnGun lying on a table, and with help from more rebrellas, she is able to grab it and point it at Smog. Deeba fires, and the Ungun inhales Smog. She shoots five more times *"until the last of the Smog disappeared down the barrel, and the sky was clean"* (Miéville 449). Deeba has saved UnLondon and London, their residents, and herself, cementing her identity and agency. Her agency is established from a culmination of all of her experiences. Becoming the heroine took hard work. Her skills and experiences in UnLondon will provide the foundation as she grows into adulthood in London. Deeba stays in UnLondon for a short while to make sure the Propheseers and citizens have all of the information they need about the unbrellas, and for UnLondon to settle into its new ideology.

Soon it is time for Deeba to return home, where her identities will settle. The Pons Absconditus bridge is now a symbol of reconciling the “meaningful combinations of the oldest and newest ideals,” with the oldest representing Role Confusion, and the newest representing Identity (*Identity* 189). As the portal moves to take her home, “there was a strain, an effort, a whining in the air, and Deeba felt a membrane split somewhere in reality. The bridge dipped across the Odd. She ran towards the walkway by her front door, which she could see beyond the girders” (Miéville 463). The membrane splitting is her actually her identities coming together forming one complete personality. “A cat yowled somewhere. Deeba glanced in its direction. When she looked back, the Pons Absconditus was gone. Deeba stood along on the concrete walkway, in the dark. In London” (Miéville 464). Once home she immediately visits her family and Zanna. Her parents and brother have not forgotten her, and Zanna is completely cured of Smog. Her parents address her as they normally would though Zanna notices Deeba has changed, saying “[Y]ou look *happy*” (Miéville 467). Later that night, Deeba begins to process what has happened. It is not that she sees each world differently now. It is the way she feels that has changed. This feeling connects to Erikson’s conclusion that “self-identity emerges from experiences in which temporarily confused selves are successfully integrated in an ensemble of roles which also secure social recognition” (*Identity* 211). This recognition occurs with more than her peer groups. At the very end of the novel, assisted by her UnLondon friends, she has a brief confrontation with Rawley, serving as a warning to ensure that another issue will not arise. Interestingly, neither London nor UnLondon are cut off from the other. In fact, Hemi invites Deeba to visit more alternate worlds suggesting further adventures await her.

Miéville believes in “the transformative agency in humans,” and he portrays this in his fiction by the construction of alternate worlds and the characters who experience growth in them (Gordon and Miéville 367). Erikson’s elements of the Identity versus Role Confusion stage apply well to Deeba and how she achieves agency. She now has balance between how she sees herself compared to how her friends see her in both worlds. Additionally, she has developed the skills needed in adulthood to figure out the roles she will occupy as an adult. With her wit, perseverance, and humor, Deeba will have no shortage of occupational choices. She achieved all of this by taking considerable risks not because she wanted to become the hero, but out of a strong sense of wanting to keep those she is close to safe. Like Hemi says, “[W]here’s the skill in being a hero if you were always destined to do it?” (Miéville 459). Finding her way to and through the portals bolstered Deeba’s identity growth as well. They are symbols of the process of her psychological growth. In the basement, is the last time she is the sidekick. Zanna is the one who finds the door, goes through it first, and turns the wheel. This takes Deeba out of her comfort zone. Going back home the first time on the Pons Absconditus illustrates a shift because she takes charge to get Zanna home. She grows even more by seeking out a way back and making the arduous journey of climbing the bookshelves. Finally, she crosses the bridge the final time as the heroine of UnLondon. She is not a hero in London, because she does not need to be. She has reconciled who she is.

IV. CHAPTER THREE

James Marcia notes, “Identity formation does not happen neatly (110). Indeed. Psychological growth can feel like one crisis after another, especially during the tumult of youth. Average girls, Coraline and Deeba face numerous different crises as they navigate extraordinary worlds that test their own boundaries. Even though they are in different stages of Erikson’s Eight Ages of Man, they highlight youth and childhood “as a ubiquitous and fundamental category of human life [that has proved] remarkably resilient” (Sanchez-Eppler 35). Five of Erikson’s Eight Ages of Man concern themselves with childhood. This suggests that the foundation of our identity comes from infancy, childhood, and youth combined. How incredibly significant, then, are the experiences in all stages of youth in regards to healthy identity formation into adulthood. As Coats notes, the fact that “identity parameters are deeply influenced by childhood experience remains unchallenged” (110). This is one of the reasons children’s and young adult literature resonates with readers. One of the ways to learn about childhood, youth, and its culture is through fiction. Real child readers connect to fictional child characters for just these reasons. Novels may contain events that would be impossible for a real child to experience, such as those in *Coraline* and *Un Lun Dun*. These alternate worlds do not exist, and neither do the characters in them; obviously, they are creations. Children and young adult readers will not confront a woman with button eyes or battle against personified Smog, but they will face serious challenges that test their identity growth. Yet, even in such fantastic scenarios as these, “the realm of children’s literature will draw upon life in all its ramifications” (Storm 510). *Coraline* and *Un Lun Dun* provide

examples of some of the varied experiences of childhood and adolescent psychological development. Within these varied experiences, youths share common modes and characteristics of personality development that build within the stages that result in identity formation. With Erikson's theories as the base, and along with other relevant scholarship, in this chapter I examine two of James Marcia's modes of identity statuses, Identity Achievement and Moratorium, in regards to both Coraline and Deeba. Additionally, I explore Marcia's idea concerning personality characteristics such as anxiety, self-esteem, authoritarianism, autonomy, and moral reasoning, and how they shape Coraline and Deeba's identity growth within their respective stages. Lastly I consider the connection between identity growth and literature, noting how literature has the "ability to shape, define, expand, and alter experience," particularly in the fantasy genre (Talley 232).

The Identity Achievement mode is characterized by "individuals who have experienced a decision-making period and are pursuing self-chosen occupational and ideological goals" (Marcia 111). Occupational goals do not necessarily mean a vocation. It refers to acquiring what Marcia calls "a set of specific skills and confidences in one's capacity for worthwhile work" (110). Both Coraline and Deeba attain this mode after navigating the alternate worlds successfully and by making meaning from the turning points they face. Additionally, their personalities are further developed and provide the foundation for healthy psychological growth into adulthood. The personality traits associated with Identity Achievement mode are self-esteem, autonomy, and moral reasoning. With Erikson's stages, Coraline and Deeba acquire Industry and Identity, respectively. However, before this can occur, they both experience the Moratorium mode

which consists of “individuals who are struggling with occupational and/or ideological issues: they are in an identity crisis” (Marcia 111). Coraline and Deeba are in this mode while they are navigating the alternate worlds and going through the portals. They are in crisis while experiencing turning points. Personality traits associated with Moratorium mode are anxiety and authoritarianism, and in terms of Erikson’s stages, they are in the Inferior and Role Confusion aspects of the stage, respectively.

Coraline and Deeba share five of the same personality characteristics that help define identity growth and achievement. The first characteristic is anxiety, and Coraline and Deeba experience this while in the Moratorium mode. How one copes with anxiety can determine healthy identity growth. Experiencing anxiety is common because growing up is marked by “constant change, and negotiation with the change that is adolescence” and youth” (Campbell 185). Coraline and Deeba experience constant change throughout the novels. There seems to be no cessation of turning points to face for either of them. Travel through the portals provides examples of the constant change they negotiate, since the portals change with them. This causes each character anxiety, especially when going through the portals back to the alternate worlds the second time, knowing the dangers they will face. For Coraline, the hallway is dark, damp, and has a feeling of being underground. She feels spider webs and hears scuttling. Climbing the bookshelves is arduous for Deeba because it takes a long time, and she is in the dark as well, swatting at things around her. In addition to the portals, the girls experience anxiety and fear in the alternate worlds, too. Miéville has said there should not be a “Get-Out-of Plot-Difficulty-Free-Card” for characters in science fiction and fantasy novels, something these genres have been accused of relying on (Gordon and Miéville 368). Identity Achievement would

not happen otherwise, in novels or in real life. Both *Coraline* and *Un Lun Dun* contain alarming and unnerving scenes, full of great risk and potential loss of life. Both authors place their protagonists in peril. But children need to understand and know the dangers that exist in the world. Experiencing anxiety and coping with fear is a vital part of growth. Gaiman's purpose for putting Coraline in danger is that he "wanted to write a story for my daughters that told them something I wished I'd known when I was a boy: that being brave didn't mean you weren't scared. Being brave mean you were scared, really scared, badly scared, and you did the right thing anyway" (Gaiman xvii). Both Coraline and Deeba have bouts of near-crippling fear, but they each cope and move forward. This is a lesson for real readers as well. The real world contains dangers, and the alternate worlds are themes of those dangers such as standing up to someone, suffering failure, isolation, and physical and emotional stress. One of the reasons each character transforms from the Moratorium mode into the Identity Achievement mode is because of coping with and facing the significant dangers.

Coping with anxiety in a health manner leads to another personality characteristic fundamental to identity growth, which is self-esteem. In the Introduction, I noted that Marcia defines identity as "a self-structure – an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history (Marcia 109). Both Coraline and Deeba achieve identity by transforming from static to dynamic characters throughout the course of the novels based on the abilities and skills they develop along the way. Self-esteem is a component of this idea of a self-structure. "The better developed the self-structure is, the more aware individuals appear to be of their... strengths and weaknesses in making their way in the world" (109). The Other Mother and

Smog attempt to thwart Coraline and Deeba's self-esteem by preying on their weaknesses in order to inhibit their development and keep them in the Moratorium mode. The danger with this in terms of identity is what Marcia calls "low-identity attainment," which means a youth is "[willing] to accept a personality description of [herself] given to [her] by a stranger" (113). Coraline's weaknesses at the beginning of the novel are her boredom and her need to be entertained. Once she figures out that the other world is a construct meant to keep her Inferior, and that her boredom and need for entertainment are part of inferiority, she "develops the power to act as her own agent," and not only escape the Other Mother and other world, but find meaning in her own world (Tatar 63). This signifies her self-esteem. In Deeba's case, her weakness is evident in being a sidekick. While in UnLondon, she is underestimated by Brokkenbroll and Smog because she is not the "Shwazzy," meaning "Chosen." But she does not want to be the hero, and is pleased when a character calls her "Not-the-Shwazzy." She still has the capability to save UnLondon, and when she does she is able to "morph into [a] new version of [herself]" that suits her best and connotes her self-esteem (Tatar 56). Neither character allows an authoritative figure/stranger dictate her identity.

In this way, encounters with authority figures are an integral part of identity formation. Moreover, as youths move through the Eight Ages of Man, they become more aware of the authoritarianism of the adult world and their eventual place in it. Relationships with adults shift as children grow up, and a difficult but necessary lesson to learn about adults occurs when an adult disappoints a youth. Not all adults' authorities should be respected just because they are adults, but this depends on developing a capacity to distinguish. Two types of authority figures are conveyed in the novels. One

type promotes the Identity Achievement mode, while the other seeks to augment the Moratorium mode. The first type of adults is Coraline and Deeba's parents. Both sets of parents depict the balance of how "the need for care is...an essential aspect of children's lives, as is children's growing self-reliance" (Sanchez-Eppler 36). They are kind to their daughters, yet not over solicitous of their whereabouts, and allow them the space to seek, to question, and to figure out predicaments for themselves. Granted, seeking gets them in trouble, but through trouble they grow. Parents play key roles in Coraline and Deeba's growth when there is a possibility of losing them. Coraline's parents are taken by the Other Mother. She must rescue them before she can rescue herself. In Deeba's case, her parents could lose her because of the "phlegm effect" of UnLondon. She must save UnLondon before she can save her self in London. Each girl succeeds, and by allowing Coraline and Deeba space, their parents have used their authorities as parents to contribute to Coraline and Deeba's successful navigation of their identity formation stages. Rousseau advised parents "to leave childhood to ripen your child," urging parents to neither coddle nor punish their children (qtd. in Sanchez-Eppler 39). Coraline and Deeba's parents provide this balance.

Once Coraline and Deeba are in the alternate worlds, adults do take on roles that seek to punish them, attempting to hinder their personalities in order to keep them in the Inferior and Role Confusion stages indefinitely, respectively. In this case, the adult's authority should be questioned and/or undermined for the safety of the youth and her community. The Other Mother sees Coraline as a play-thing and uses Coraline's childhood against her. She does so under the guise of giving Coraline everything she wants. She offers Coraline the chance to explore indefinitely and play with whatever toys

she could ever desire. But the Other Mother just wants to control Coraline, thereby portraying the jeopardy children encounter when “adults’ ideas about childhood inform children’s experiences” (Sanchez-Eppler 37). The Other Mother attempts to use Coraline’s love of exploration and creativity against her. When Coraline stands up to the Other Mother, she punishes Coraline by locking her behind the mirror. The Other Mother uses her authority to scare Coraline. While it does cause Coraline anxiety, in the end, by escaping, she preserves her personality and growth.

Deeba is duped by seemingly well-meaning adults who seek to punish her by using confusion to stymie her personality and keep her in the Role Confusion stage. Brokkenbroll seems to be helping the citizens fight against Smog. But he just pretends to be on their side, and betrays them and Deeba and threatens her with physical harm. Minister Rawley, Deeba learns, has been in league with Smog for no other reason than to further her career. Both Brokkenbroll and Rawley are officials in their respective worlds; as Erikson notes “in order not to become cynically or apathetically lost, young people must somehow be able to convince themselves that those who succeed in their anticipated adult world thereby shoulder the obligation of being the best” (*Childhood* 263). But Deeba realizes Rawley’s position in the government has been achieved by greed, having nothing to do with being the best. Brokkenbroll, like the Other Mother, is motivated by a need for control. Deeba confronts Rawley while Brokkenbroll remains a fugitive in UnLondon. Instead of being lost, Deeba takes action. Both of these adults depict the danger of authoritarian figures who cause harm to young people who do not follow their ideology or support their interests, and that not all leaders are to be trusted. Additionally,

as Deeba's father supported Rawley, Miéville conveys that adults are not always the best judges of character.

Coping with anxiety, building self-esteem and combatting authoritarianism leads to autonomy in these novels. Once Coraline and Deeba embrace their autonomy, they achieve their identities. One of the ways Coraline and Deeba gain autonomy is by standing up to an authoritarian figure by “question[ing] [the adult’s] power structure,” requiring her to healthily “rebel” which allows her to “embrace [her] individuality” (Talley 232). Both the Other Mother and Smog have created power structures rendering people dependent on them, which is the opposite of autonomy. Coraline and Deeba become aware of this while back in their own worlds, and each rebels by choosing to go back and face the danger. Coraline and Deeba destroy the supporting structures, then destroy the Other Mother and Smog respectively. Neither the Other Mother nor Smog had anyone stand up to them before, which is another example of the girls’ rebelling. Once the structures are taken down, the Other Mother and Smog are easily defeated. This displays their weaknesses, and sends Coraline and Deeba on a “general trajectory from dependency toward autonomy” (Sanchez-Eppler 36). Taking down the power structures was the difficult part of the battle. While Coraline and Deeba were dependent on other characters to help with this, it was up to the two of them to defeat their respective foes. Their newfound autonomy “becomes an instrument for understanding themselves” and the recognition of their strengths (Campbell 184). Their autonomy comes when they acquire the virtue with which each psychological stage is associated – competence for Coraline, and fidelity for Deeba. This also marks the end of the Moratorium mode as Identity Achievement is acquired.

Marcia notes, “The development of moral reasoning seems to accompany the development of identity” (113). Moral reasoning occurs when Coraline and Deeba admonish two minor adult characters conveying using logic and intellectual prowess to advance their identities and agency. Part of the intellectual component of identity involves what is “ineluctably bound up with a sense of moral possibilities” (Talley 231). Coraline speaks to the replica of the crazy old man who is an agent of the Other Mother. He tries to convince her to stay by telling her she can have everything she wants. Coraline’s response to this is astute. She tells him that no one really wants everything they want, because then nothing would mean anything. This is a significant example of Coraline attaining Industry through moral reasoning. A child in the Inferior stage would agree with the old man and stay in the alternate world. Deeba has a similar exchange with Mr. Speaker in terms of the use of wisdom. He thinks he should be in control of the meaning of words. Deeba argues that meanings of words cannot be controlled by just one person and that he is not the only one who decides what words mean. Her reasoning is keen and valid. Everyone has a stake in language, just as youths have a stake in their own identities. Both girls argue valid and sound points that convey strong reasoning skills. They stand up for themselves and for their emerging ideals.

What this means for Coraline and Deeba’s personalities is the complete achievement of a “personal identity, the sameness of a person or thing at all times and in all circumstance; the condition or fact that person or thing is itself and not something else” (Coats 109). In both novels, other people or beings try to turn Coraline and Deeba into something else, but it is the beings themselves who are not what they appear to be. The Other Mother was spider-like and papery with creepy button eyes; she was not a

mother, but something else. Smog used Unstible's body as a portal for itself in order to appear human. Both beings morph into what they really are when Coraline and Deeba refuse to become what the Other Mother and Smog want Coraline and Deeba to be. The beings are terrifying, so by not allowing these beings to take away Coraline and Deeba's identities, the protagonists cross a psychological "boundary between being a child" who is moving into adolescence, and an adolescent moving towards adulthood (qtd. in Rudd 21). They learn greatly from their experiences in the alternate worlds, and these experiences change them, but they are still the same girls with the same personality traits they exhibited before entering the alternate worlds. These traits have been strengthened because they have agency now.

Consider the idea that books themselves are "portals to wonder worlds, to sites that combine danger and beauty in ways so alluring that they inspire the desire to wander in to new imaginative domains" (Tatar 62). Crossing boundaries and going through metaphorical portals is a necessary part of growing. Children need to be able to push boundaries and learn to create meaning for themselves. Creating meaning creates possibilities, and possibilities create growth. Books are a dynamic medium of possibility, because to go someplace different, to cross a border, to push a boundary in order to develop and grow are all elements books provide. Miéville notes that "any text is already interactive," suggesting that, because "reading is not a passive activity," by opening a book and reading a fantastical tale, young readers see how characters gain their agency and identity (Miéville and Weinstock 232). Books and their characters are powerful examples of life's events, albeit sometimes symbolic. Commendable fiction contains plots rife with conflict, characters, settings, symbols, and themes. It is complex, yet so is

childhood. Two young people can read the same novel and glean different meanings based on a myriad of reasons. Personality traits and identity stages are two such reasons. Adolescents who are in the Identity versus Role Confusion stage and children in the Industry versus Inferior stage may have differing calibers of self-esteem or moral reasoning while navigating the stages. This can affect connection to and interpretation of a novel.

For example, when Coraline first goes to the alternate world, it is a place of fun and it is interesting. It caters to her every whim. A real child reading this scene might feel the same sense of intrigue as Coraline, even more so if the child reader is an only child of parents who work from home. When Coraline is disciplined by the Other Mother for talking back and is locked behind the mirror, it might connect with a reader who is also disciplined by a parent and sent to his or her room feeling a sense of fear. The extent of the punishment might not be the same, but the general event and emotion is, allowing for the reader to connect with Coraline's character as she feels anxiety. In addition, just like Deeba has difficulties with her peer group, what fourteen year-old has not? Perhaps an adolescent does not feel she fits into a group and struggles with self-esteem. She can connect to Deeba and Zanna when they are isolated from their peers. When Deeba comes home after defeating Smog feeling happy, a teen reader might connect to her autonomy after completing her own difficult task. Reading about and connecting to characters can be transformative, and as Coats notes, "literature is one avenue through which we learn what we know" (112). Young readers can relate to Coraline and Deeba's constant trials, and even though the other world and UnLondon are so outlandish, sometimes real

conflicts appear outlandish too. Even the humor in both novels provides a means of relating to the characters and their experiences.

In terms of personality, there is another way to look at it. Is Coraline disrespectful for sassing the Other Mother? Is Deeba selfish for keeping the glove that was meant for Zanna? This perspective brings up the idea that “childhood is so differently experienced and understood. Is the mewling infant darling or bestial, the roaming youth a crusader or truant, the laboring child valued or abused, the child reader virtuous, imaginative, or indolent?” (Sanchez-Eppler 36). This depends on who is defining and observing childhood, and who is reading the novels. Are Coraline’s neighbors crazy or just eccentric? Are some of the other characters in *UnLondon* grotesque or just strange? The perspectives matter based on what experiences readers have had when connecting to and/or interpreting literature. But that is the attraction of a good story, particularly fantasy, because “childhood has become a locus of memory and imagination, a ‘secret garden’ whose characteristics are in many ways shared with those of fiction itself” (Sanchez-Eppler 41). Childhood development falls under the stages presented by Erikson, but the experiences within the stages are vastly different for the child experiencing them. Marcia suggests, “what is important about identity” – particularly in youths and adolescents – “is that this is the first time that physical development, cognitive skills, and social expectations coincide to enable young persons to sort through and synthesize their childhood identifications in order to construct a viable path toward their adulthood” (110). Literature provides a means of interpreting these different aspects and allows for children and young adults to broaden their interests and perspectives about themselves and the worlds they will grow into.

Lois Lowry says that, “Each time a child opens a book... he pushes open the gate that separates him from Elsewhere. It gives him choices. It gives him freedom. Those are magnificent, wonderfully unsafe things” (qtd. in Tatar 56). The use of portals and alternate worlds in *Coraline* and *Un Lun Dun* provide Coraline and Deeba the freedom to grow. Leaving the safety of home and struggling through crises shape their personalities and identities. Their Identity Achievement provides a new perspective on their worlds and themselves. The fantasy genre lends itself to the analysis of identity growth in its characters and readers by portraying the “life that lies beyond the narrow confines of our existence” (Storm 503). Sharing the awe with Dorothy as she first encounters Oz, fearing for Harvey as he stands up to Mr. Hood, adventuring with Mowgli as he finds his place among the animals, cheering for Coraline as she runs down the hallway for the last time, and witnessing Deeba become a hero, allow children and young adults the benefit of gaining a broader perspective of their own existence. In *Coraline* and *Un Lun Dun*, Gaiman and Miéville, respectively, utilize the fantasy genre by “present[ing] the world as it should be...if we listen carefully, it may tell us what we someday may be capable of achieving” when developing our personalities and establishing our identities (Harms 942).

WORKS CITED

- Buck, Stephanie. "Home, Hearth, and Grave: The Archetypal Symbol of the Threshold on the Road to Self." 2004 International Conference. Burlington, VT, Newport. *Jungian Society for Scholarly Studies*. Web. 21 Mar. 2016.
- Campbell, Lori M. *Portals of Power: Magical Agency and Transformation in Literary Fantasy*. Jefferson: McFarland &, 2010. Print. *Critical Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy*, 19.
- Cirlot, J.E. *A Dictionary of Symbols*. Second ed. New York: Welcome Rain, 2014. Print.
- Coats, Karen. "Identity." *Keywords for Children's Literature*. Eds. Philip Nel and Lissa Paul. New York: New York University Press, 2011.109-112. Print.
- Coats, Karen. "Young Adult Literature: Growing Up, In Theory." *Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature*. Eds. Karen Coates, Patricia Encisco, Christine A. Jenkins and Shelby A. Wolf. New York: Routledge, 2011. 315-329. Print.
- Cooper, J.C. *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1978. Print.
- David, Dayna. "Extraordinary Navigators: An Examination of Three Heroines in Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean's *Coraline*, *The Wolves in the Walls*, and *Mirror Mask*." *Children's Literature Review* 177 (2013): n. pag. *Literature Resource Center [Gale]*. Web. 01 Oct. 2015.
- Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society*. New York: Norton, 1964. Print.
- . *Identity Youth and Crisis*. New York: Norton, 1968. Print.
- Gaiman, Neil, and Dave McKean. *Coraline*. New York: HarperCollins, 2002. Print.

- Gordon, Joan, and China Miéville. "Reveling in Genre: An Interview with China Miéville." *Science Fiction Studies* 30.3 (2003): 355-73. Web.
- May, Jill P. "Theory and Textual Interpretation: Children's Literature and Literary Criticism." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 1/2 30.1 (1997): 81-96. *JSTOR*. Web. 22 Oct. 2015.
- Marcia, James E. "Identity in Adolescence." *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*. By Joseph Adelson. New York: Wiley, 1980. 109-37. Print.
- Miéville, China. *Un Lun Dun*. New York: Ballantine, 2007. Print.
- Rudd, David. "Theorising and theories: how does children's literature exist?." *Understanding Children's Literature*. Ed. Peter Hunt. New York: Routledge, 2005. 15-29. Print.
- Sanchez-Eppler, Karen. "Childhood." *Keywords for Children's Literature*. Eds. Philip Nel and Lissa Paul. New York: New York University Press, 2011. 35-41. Print.
- Schultz, D., and S. Schultz. *Theories of Personality*. 9th ed. New York: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009. Print.
- Stitt, J. Michael. "Tolkien and Fantasy Literature." *Thresholds and Liminality*. University of Las Vegas, 2009. Web. Jan. 2016.
- Storm, Grace E. "Areas of Children's Literature." *The Elementary School Journal* 45.9 (1945): 503-11. Web. May 2016.
- Talley, Lee A. "Young Adult." *Keywords for Children's Literature*. Eds. Philip Nel and Lissa Paul. New York: New York University Press, 2011. 228-232. Print.
- Tatar, Maria. "Why Fairy Tales Matter: The Performative and the Transformative." *Western Folklore* Winter 69.1 (2010): 55-64. Web. Dec. 2015.

Tavernier, Royette, and Teena Willoughby. "Adolescent Turning Points: The Association between Meaning-making and Psychological Well-being." *Developmental Psychology* 48.4 (2012): 1058-068. *EBSCO*. Web. 10 Oct. 2015.

Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew, and Carl H. Sederholm. "Afterword." *The Age of Lovecraft*.

By China Miéville. N.p.: U of Minnesota, 2016. 232-39. Print.