SUBJECTIVITY AND SUBJECT – OBJECT RELATIONS IN NEIL GAIMAN: *CORALINE, THE GRAVEYARD BOOK, ODD AND THE FROST GIANTS AND FORTUNATELY, THE MILK*

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ABSTRACT

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NEIL GAIMAN: *CORALINE, THE GRAVEYARD BOOK, ODD AND THE
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Neil Gaiman's novels for children reveal threshold subjectivities and non-normative subject-object relations as they are about child characters who transgress the limitations of 'the human' by visiting or inhabiting out of the ordinary worlds. This thesis aims to suggest a new roadmap in reading Gaiman's novels for children by discussing and digging into new hermeneutical layers. The thesis claims that Gaiman's children's fiction is enriched by these transgressive threshold subjectivities as they open the norms of mainstream culture into discussion and problematizes the limits between human and non-human, human and matter.

Keywords: Subjectivity, subject object relations, Neil Gaiman, objects with agency, narrative agency.

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ÖZ

NEIL GAIMAN'IN *CORALINE, THE GRAVEYARD BOOK, ODD AND THE FROST GIANTS* VE *FORTUNATELY, THE MILK* BAŞLIKLI ESERLERİNDE ÖZNELLİK VE ÖZNE – NESNE İLİŞKİLERİ

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Neil Gaiman'ın çocuklar için yazdığı romanlar, alışılmışın dışındaki dünyaları ziyaret ederek ya da bu dünyalarda yaşayarak 'insan' kavramını aşan çocuk kahramanlarla ilgili olduğu için eşik öznellikleri ve norm dışı özne-nesne ilişkileri ortaya koymaktadır. Bu tez, Gaiman'ın çocuk kurgularındaki yeni yorum katmanlarını tartışarak ve araştırarak, onun eserlerini okumada yeni bir yol haritası önermeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca ana akım kültürün normlarını tartışmaya açan ve insan ile insan olmayan, insan ile madde arasındaki sınırları sorunsallaştıran öykülere odaklanarak Gaiman'ın çocuk kitaplarının bu sınır aşan eşik öznellikleri ile daha derin bir boyuta taşındığını iddia eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öznellik, özne nesne ilişkileri, Neil Gaiman, eyleyici nesne, anlatı eyleyiciliği.

This paper is dedicated to all the ones who cannot go by with the injustice caused to the natural world daily and immerse themselves in books and papers. The shared struggle of and striving to making the world a better place shall not go unnoticed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In humanist Western literary traditions, the narratives have almost always focused on the human and taken the human as the measure of everything. This anthropocentrism came with a cost: it resulted in the epistemic violence against the non-human and their ontological significance has not found representation in the narratives. In the course of history, humanism which started out as a revolutionary movement itself froze into a totalizing ideology and lost its humanitarian ideals. To make the matter worse, the centering of the human has led to a hierarchically constructed world that does not allow a space of signification for non-humans, which are sometimes used as a tool for comic relief, or abject, or as beings that are to be dominated or controlled by humans. In doing so writers disregarded their true identities by locating them at the base level of the ontological hierarchy. To be more specific, we can refer to Brenda Ayres who confirms this point for the British Victorian society: "They were conscientiously, hegemonically determined to rule those beneath them and the animal within themselves, albeit with varying degrees of success and failure" (i). In this discourse, the standard of humanism creates a plethora of issues, mainly concerning the non-human. Firstly, it dismantles the idea that humans should not be on the same level as the non-humans, who consequently become beings to be dominated. For example, in their practical life, animal domination usually affirms one's class in the society and this serves to reveal the problematic behavior that humanism encapsulates: an exclusionary mode of thinking which separates the human from the non-human by creating hierarchy to prove and perpetuate the superiority of man. In *Beastly Possessions*, Sarah Amato presents this sense of superiority: "As Victorian Britons go about their daily routines, we watch them fuss over their pets and express concern about the arrangement of

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taxidermy" (qtd. in Ayres 10). As stated in Amato's statement, we see the Victorians reducing the ontological status of animals to an object, forcing them to a less-than-human position. Interestingly, this characterizes our modern world in the 21st century too, as hunting still continues to be a sport (Sentient Media).

Humanism disregards the differences of other humans by excluding groups such as people with disabilities, people of ethnic minorities or other disadvantaged groups. In the course of history, it configured and even imposed its own definitions of the human; hence, it constructed a Eurocentric identity for a human that is exemplary to display. This human was based on the image of the Vitruvian Man, that is, a white man who had no disabilities, assumably heterosexual, heralding the example image of humanity; consequently, causing all who did not fit or belong to any of these descriptions to be cast out. As Foucault remarks in "What is Enlightenment?":

> [It] is a fact that, at least, since the seventeenth century what is called humanism has always been obliged to lean on certain conceptions of man borrowed from religion, science, or politics. Humanism serves to color and to justify the conceptions of man to which it is, after all, obliged to take recourse. (10)

Neil Gaiman is one of the writers who challenge this definition of 'the human' suggested by humanism. He is not a posthumanist writer in critical posthumanist sense but posthumanism serves as a useful conceptual backcloth to discuss his challenge to humanism. This thesis aims to borrow concepts from posthumanism to discuss how Gaiman fictionalizes characters that problematize the norms of humanism through his threshold subjectivities and matter with agency. Therefore, a discussion on humanism/posthumanism division might prepare a better ground in exploring Gaiman's characters and treatment of the non-human. His characters are not posthuman but due to their threshold nature and their non-normative conception of the matter, they open themselves up for multiple layers of discussion when one borrows concepts from posthumanism.

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Regarding the effects of humanism, its problematic nature raises concern over the society and its (re)configuration. As Tony Davies explains: "All Humanisms, until now, have been imperial. They speak of the human in the accents and the interests of a class, a sex, a race, a genome. Their embrace suffocates those whom it does not ignore" (qtd. in Braidotti 15). The discourse generated by humanism furthers these accents and causes separation and segments within society by displaying the 'approved' image of the human, which excludes the ethicopolitical ideals of humanitarianism. The issue of society evolving with this separation and segments raises concern about the type of discourse that the individuals are exposed to, either through its content, or its approach to life with its theoretical background.

Whether humanism has justified its goals through its own means, or worked them through exclusionary politics or not, it has provided a problematic and frozen ideology. It was bound to change and turn into something else, and as time went on, in reaction to the ideology of humanism, posthumanism found its place within the humanities, to counter and remedy the damage it caused by shifting the paradigm in a new perspective. Humanism is problematized by posthumanism in certain aspects. Firstly, humanism creates a binary opposition between human and non-human, and excludes the latter's ontological state by prioritizing the human above all else, creating an ontological hierarchy where the human rule. Secondly, it does not allow a space of signification for the human that remains outside the boundaries of its set of ideals, that is, the image of the Vitruvian Man. Braidotti explains:

> Central to this universalistic posture and its binary logic is the notion of "difference" as pejoration. Subjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behavior, whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and specular counterpart. (15)

We can infer that humanism creates an image of man based on an ideology that separates the human from the surrounding world, putting him on a pedestal. Here a binary opposition ensues, man vs other who are "the sexualized, racialized, and

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naturalized others, who are reduced to the less than human status of disposable bodies" (Braidotti 15). This provides an opportunity for the human to exploit and abuse the non-human, as Amato has discussed. To counter this, posthumanism, emerging from a unitary perspective that remains in a more futuristic ideology with sustainable goals, works to create a better world. As Nayar remarks:

> 'Posthumanism' on the one hand merely refers to an ontological condition in which many humans now, and increasingly will, live with chemically, surgically, technologically modified bodies and/or in close conjunction (networked) machines and other organic forms (such as body parts from other life forms through xenotransplantation). (13)

By accepting other life forms to be conjoined with the human, posthumanism creates a co-existence of the human and the non-human, hence shatters anthropomorphic standards and brings peace among the entities. Nayar remarks:

> Critical posthumanism seeks to move beyond the traditional humanist ways of thinking about the autonomous, self-willed individual agent in order to treat the human itself as an assemblage, co-evolving with other forms of life, enmeshed with the environment and technology. It rejects the view of the human as exceptional, separate from other life forms and usually dominant/dominating over these other life forms. (13)

Nayar's statement implies that as humans, we are always in the shadow of the non-human. When we need to create a new technology, the first thing we do is to take a look at nature and take notes. To grasp the concept of co-existence, accepting this idea would be important. The best example of this would be the fact that the world's fastest train, the bullet train in Japan, is actually inspired by a bird, kingfisher, which is a bird that makes no sound when jumping deep into water with its pointed bill, which, at the same time, allows it to dive more quickly. Japanese scientists who studied this bird implemented the shape of its bill in their trains and solved its noise problem upon entering a cave and made it even faster (BBC). This example serves to show us that there are many things that we can learn from nature, the non-human specifically. This is what Haraway talks about when she states we are not being but "becoming with" each other (2016: 34).

The horizontal placement of human and non-human beings in works of fiction allows for worlds that are more connected, and in unison, a concept that remains within posthumanist thought. As Braidotti defends, "Living matter – including the flesh – is intelligent and self-organizing, but it is so precisely because it is not disconnected from the rest of organic life" (60). We as humans continue to create and exist simply because our bodies are connected to each other. This metaphor for connectedness implies posthumanist purpose of creating a connection between the human and the non-human, in which the differences are accepted as branches, and the core remains the same at its center, calling for a new epoch named "Chthulucene" by Donna Haraway.

The tentacular design of many animals in nature reminds us of a metaphor for connectedness. We remain the same at our core, having certain anthropomorphic standards, but we all differ through our "tentacular" design, due to race, gender, age, shape and so on. Haraway makes this remark to remind humanity that it is not very different and cannot be excluded from nature. The human culture must create itself not against it, but within it, thus taking part in a sympoietic world: "The Chthulucene does not close in on itself; it does not round off; its contact zones are ubiquitous and continuously spin out loopy tendrils" (33).

This connectedness is sought by posthumanists and hence named in different forms, such as, "co-assemblage" (Nayar), "co-existence" (Jaques), or "becoming-with" (Haraway). While humanities create the terminology, literature works to demonstrate, to spread their concepts to a wider audience. At this point, one needs to assert the pedagogical significance of Gaiman's threshold characters and his treatment of the matter in the formation of child readers. When the effect of social learning comes into play, literature can have considerable impact, as Geir contends, "the writer acts as an implied adviser. He influences the reader's understanding of the extratextual world by bringing together the structure of the mental model and the reader's own mental background" (115). The full magnitude of this influence can be theorized when combined with the power of social learning theory in children's literature. In her

posthumanist study, Zoe Jaques discusses classical works of children's literature to point out how fictional worlds create themselves to instill a non-normative mode of thinking in younger readers. She points out the metamorphosis of Cartesian philosophy's "Cogito, ergo sum" into "I think, therefore I am whatever I wish" (4). She continues, "Children's fantasy permits just this ontological freedom" (4). This freedom provides infinite number of possibilities, attributes, and aspects to be given to any character in a story, which allows a space of signification for any kind of entity, be it human, inhuman or non-human. Here the breaking point of anthropomorphism becomes evident, for in these fictional worlds the human is described as what it is not, via the non-human, thus making children's literature and posthumanism "a 'natural' pairing" (Jaques, 6). While Jaques's study laid the groundwork for posthumanist theory in children's literature, it did so through classic stories. How posthumanist concepts are fictionalized in children's literature in recent times is a research question that has been addressed only in a few fields of research. This area is still in need of exploration by the scholars.

1.1. Aim of the Study

To respond to the above given research question, Neil Gaiman's novels work as a good departure point. They embody both a non-normative mode of thinking and meta messages to children. Neil Gaiman is a prolific writer who has published a variety of novels for both children and adults. He is known to be one of the most versatile writers to publish not only novels but other pieces of media within his field of work, catered to a diverse audience. Evans remarks, "As a writer, Gaiman is characterized by his versatility as to form and media (novel, short stories, poetry, comics, illustrated books, film, television, and odd forms such as fictional walking tours) and audience (adult, young adult, children)" (65). He is known for combining an array of genres and media in a single work, by the use of intertextuality, to make his stories plausible, entertaining, and more importantly, didactic. His didacticism lies in his texture which reveals the

shortcomings of society; and offers a solution by providing an alternative perspective. Evans explains:

> Almost all his work can be characterized as intertextual: it is constructed out of a web of references derived from folklore, popular culture, literature, film, comics, visual arts, architecture, ethnography, travel writing, and other sources, even advertising. From these sources, Gaiman derives and utilizes a complex lexicon of titles and names, characters, settings, plots and fragments of plots, motifs, writing styles, moral and political messages, and cultural commentary. (65)

He has received many significant awards in literature, such as Hugo, Nebula, and Bram Stoker. The movie and theatre adaptations of his writing, such as *American Gods, The Good Omens* and *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* have become popular worldwide and have received positive reviews from multiple platforms (National Theatre). When an author's style and audience vary to this point, certain scholars dismiss the concept of intended audience, as it "becomes largely irrelevant, as childhood and reading are socially determined" (Bull 329), reminding us of the societal norms of reading. However, to this I would like to add the impact of social learning, as some of these works include content that are not age appropriate, such as the coarse language of *American Gods'* characters. On the other hand, Geoff Bull and Michele Anstey refer to "'the blurring of boundaries between picture books and other genres, and between adult and children's literature' as a basis for disputing the notion that picture books are meant for younger readers only" (qtd. in Dalmaso 30). So, while young readers may not be able to read *American Gods*, and instead read *Coraline*; the adults can read both.

As a result, for young readers, his works include peaceful characters that live in connection with their surroundings; Gaiman creates places where the non-human rule; and objects that do not quite fit the anthropomorphic norms. They transgress the normative doctrines and expectations of humanist ideology. This transgression is where the boundary-blurring nature of fiction emerges: through the power of imagination, works of fiction subvert the anthropomorphic

perception of reality, creating entities that remain outside the Cartesian-humanist experience. A case in point is the crippled boy Odd, from *Odd and the Frost Giants*, cherishing his crutch as integral to his body as he ventures through natural habitats of his country, along with the animals that accompany him. Odd presents a strong argument for embodying an egalitarian mode of thinking, as he presents co-existence with both his surroundings and the objects, which shall be the main foci of this study. As a disabled character Odd uses a crutch, which would be taken for granted in most novels, however, Gaiman describes the relationship between them in such a way that the connectedness between Odd and his crutch creates co-existence. His description at the very beginning of the novel is as follows: "[A] boy with one good leg, one very bad leg, and a wooden crutch" (10). Gaiman includes the crutch whenever Odd is mentioned, a point that would not receive the same attention in traditional literature. As this example illustrates, matter as in the case of the crutch is considered to have its own agency in Gaiman's fiction.

Along with a different approach to matter, Gaiman employs the theme of connectedness through Odd's disposition towards his surroundings. Odd is a helpful character that feels the connection to the non-human entities around him; for example, when he meets the bear, whose paw gets stuck in the hollow of the tree, Odd approaches the animal with caution and rather than attacking him immediately or shouting, he acknowledges his disability, "'I can't run,' he said to the bear. 'So, if you want to eat me, you'll find me easy prey'" (13). Uncertain about whether he is being understood or not, Odd chooses to be vulnerable by stating his disability. This proves that he innately believes helping the animals will not result in damage on his end.

Since Odd accepts to live in harmony with nature around him, he feels connected to his surroundings, which is a threshold quality. His subjectivity goes beyond being solely human, but "favors co-evolution" (Nayar 20). Odd knows that helping these animals will further his innate goodness towards everything, for he

sees the co-evolution of the human and the animal in an existential sense. As Heike Jöns states:

> What we understand as uniquely human, therefore, is the consequence of hybridization and exchange of material and immaterial data, such as in the genetic code – across species, skin and function of animals, plants and humans. The human in this critical posthumanist outlook is a "dynamic hybrid" of "ontologically different elements." (qtd. in Nayar 20)

In this way, all action between the human and the non-human works to better their living experiences in unison, which creates co-existence among them. As Nayar remarks, what we have is "a rethinking of the very idea of subjectivity" or "human subjectivity as an assemblage, co-evolving with machines and animals" (19). The interaction of the human and the non-human creates a unique experience, where both parties affect each other, and in the process an acceptance of the similarities, along with the differences, occurs, and a synthesis ensues. This synthesis connects them and unites them in a singular ontological mode of becoming, which shall be elaborated as the study progresses.

Odd is one of many threshold characters that Gaiman has created for his younger audience, and there are others that convey the posthumanist approach in their unique experience. Another case in point is Coraline, the protagonist of *Coraline*, whose house has a door that leads to an alternate reality, where animals can talk. There is a peculiar situation as its owners are Coraline's other-mother and other-father. In the story Coraline helps the animals of the otherworld, and in return she is helped to find herself through this co-existence. Gaiman takes us on a journey to a non-human domain with a coming-of-age story, thus forces the limits of the normative world. Coraline's other family is aptly named due to the fact that they are quite different. This can be observed in her other-mother's description, as she has the same sound and appearance as her mother, "her eyes were big black buttons" (73). As I argue in this study, these buttons shall be discussed through another concept, called storied matter in the field of new materialism, in the relevant chapter.

Just as Odd and Coraline, another protagonist that shall be included in this study is Bod, from *The Graveyard Book*, a character that constantly transgresses the boundaries of the human with his ontological state, stuck between the human and the spirit worlds. His is another coming of age story that seeks connectedness between the human and the non-human.

Bod takes his name for looking like a Nobody, a name given by the denizens of the graveyard, the ghost of Mrs. Owens specifically. While being unique examples of the afterlife in literature, ghosts of this graveyard have had their names from their ex-lives as a human. Throughout his trials and tribulations, Bod always receives help from the spirits and his vampire mentor Sylas. These fictional characters seemingly occupy space within the non-human world.

Finally, the last story shall be *Fortunately, the Milk,* where subject-object relation is taken to another level by Gaiman, reaching the point of hyperobject. Milk as its focal point, overseeing and always remaining in the background of the story, acts out its agency in its seemingly ominous being, and it represents the concept of hyperobject.

In essence, in this study I argue that Neil Gaiman's novels for young readers present a non-normative approach, and it is done through two key concepts: subjectivity as co-existence and subject-object relations. In this frame of argument, I shall discuss four works by Neil Gaiman in total: *Coraline, The Graveyard Book, Odd and the Frost Giants,* and *Fortunately, the Milk.* As the study progresses, I shall borrow concepts from posthumanism, along with other studies that have been conducted on Gaiman's works and make use of their insight to further my argument. This study differs from previous discussions as I shall discuss Gaiman's works through a posthumanist lens, which shall reveal new insights that will pave the way for new hermeneutical dimensions.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Neil Gaiman has been studied in different perspectives and from different vantage points, however, as the forthcoming paragraphs will illustrate, his children's fiction has not been discussed through posthumanist concepts. This thesis responds to this gap in Gaiman scholarship as this perspective will shed fresh light on his children's fiction, helping us dig up new hermeneutical layers.

Before a textual discussion on his children's novels, a general view of Gaiman's fiction might prepare the ground for fresh layers of argument. Belonging to fantasy literature, his works include certain qualities that could be discussed through several genres. In her article "People Change as Much as Oceans," Jen Harrison discusses Gaiman's creation of "hybrid characters whose experiences both expose and call into question the fear of being ontologically unstable" (65) in *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*. Belonging to the horror genre, the novel portrays the protagonist going through an intense journey in an eerie setting where escape is a must, but it is blocked by horrible creatures along with godlike entities that possess magical powers. As Harrison explains:

> *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* tells the story of a young boy who remains unnamed throughout the narrative; although the tale is told from the perspective of the adult the young boy grows up to be, it is narrated as a memory that invites the reader inside the young child's mind. (66)

By merging the story of an adult with that of a child, who remains unnamed throughout, in a descriptively unknown but unifying setting, Gaiman creates another threshold protagonist who is stuck between the realm of the human and the non-human, who also needs the help of another threshold character, the girl with magical powers, Letty Hempstock, against the creature disguised as a Nanny, Ursula Monkton. Here Gaiman once again transgresses the boundaries of the human by bringing magical realism and posthumanism together, as Harrison clarifies:

> Gaiman's imagination provides hybrid characters – girl/not-girl, nanny/monster, child/adult – whose experiences both expose and call into question the fear of being ontologically unstable, a fear that seems particularly appropriate to childhood but that in Gaiman is shown to be equally applicable to the adult. (67)

With the power of fiction, these characters reveal the purpose of a threshold character, which is to demonstrate the painful process of growing up. As Tara Prescott explains, "*Ocean* is 'semi-autobiographical' in its exploration of intense father-son relationships, and 'blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction, biography and imagination" (qtd. in Harrison 66) due to the fact that Gaiman has written the story "as a means of sharing A sense of – if not the actual facts of – his childhood with [his wife]" (Harrison 66). As this thesis is in line with the points Harrison has made, her article becomes significant for my study. However, as Gaiman mentions, "the novel was not meant for children," (Campbell 244) *Ocean* cannot be considered a children's story due to the horror elements that it includes. This leaves the threshold characters unexplored.

Regarding the shift of reality in *Coraline*, another element that I would like to point out is the gothic in Gaiman's fiction, as discussed by Vargas and Vargas (2014):

> The Gothic elements in *Coraline* make it possible to establish the idea of justice in the text: After her initial fascination with the other world, Coraline must come to terms with the notion of fairness, a principle that she must understand to truly appreciate their flawed real parents as opposed to the misleading perfection of the world that the beldam offers. Therefore, Gothic elements in *Coraline*, far from ruining the story in the novel, contribute to creating the environment needed for making any perceivable didactic purpose resonate in the mind of young readers. (89)

Although Coraline's sense of belonging, a significant part of her identity, changes throughout the story, it does not happen solely because of the gothic shift of reality. Coraline's otherworld, a world where the non-human rule, where animals can talk and humans act oddly, presents a new perspective for Coraline. Since she becomes entangled with the non-human, her disposition towards them shifts, unlike Alice who has not undergone any character development.

Another study that has been conducted on Gaiman's fiction is Hosseinpour's and Moghadam's joint discussion, in which the shift of reality becomes attributed as magical realism. Drawing from Wendy B. Faris's discussion in *Ordinary Enchantment: Magical Realism and the Remystification of Narrative*, they argue the elements regarding narrative of *Coraline*. They begin by quoting Faris: "The act of merging two opposed realms in magical realist tales comes to the authors' aid to demonstrate other possible dimensions of reality" (Faris 23). The demonstration of two different realms, one where the human rule and one where the non-human rule, provides a new perspective:

> Offering a useful rejection of hierarchical separation disavows some of the heady, boundary-breaking distinctiveness of a childhood itself not yet fully inscribed by humanist agendas and more akin to the sorts of flexibilities in which posthumanism finds pleasure. (Jaques 9)

The comparison between them forces the protagonist, along with the reader, to let go of their anthropocentric mode of thinking, hence find an opportunity as to what could happen if humanity renounces its ideals that work to separate these worlds. Gaiman creates a world with talking cats, dogs, ghosts and humans that act as the non-human other, which are all found in the otherworld, and assigns it a non-human ruler, the other mother, or a frost giant in the hope of transgressing the boundaries of the humanist ideals. Rather than looking for differences, this comparison pushes us to find similarities. Therefore, while Gaiman relies on the simplicity of magical realism in his narrative, it cannot prevail on its own, as it inevitably borrows elements from posthumanist mode of thinking to create the non-human that transgresses the boundaries of humanism.

In addition to characters with peculiar subjectivity, another element that shapes Gaiman's fiction is the subject-object relations, as discussed in "I am Nobody" and "An Eye for an I". While the studies on them explore the subject-object relations, they allude to psychoanalytical concepts that discuss the protagonists Coraline and Bod in detail. David Rudd suggests that "*Coraline* is centrally concerned with how one negotiates one's place in the world; how one is

recognized in one's own right rather than being either ignored on the one hand, or stifled on the other" (160). In his study, he emphasizes the identity crisis of teenagers, while consulting the Lacanian concepts of the Real and the Symbolic. Rudd takes Coraline as a figure who relapses to the boundaries of the Real at the beginning of the story, until she needs to make a decision regarding her shift into the otherworld with the power of the black buttons. "We are finely balanced between the Real and the Symbolic. The other mother attempts to shift this relation, removing Coraline from the Symbolic into her own, amorphous realm…" (163). I agree with Rudd to a certain extent, but I have more to add to what he discusses as he fails to acknowledge the significance of black buttons in a multilayered frame. Failing to acknowledge its meaning as a storied matter, he focuses on the shift from one realm to another, and attributes that this shift traces one from the Real into the Symbolic, and takes black buttons as central metaphor of this shift:

> We could say that by the end of the novel Coraline has realigned herself in the Symbolic, no longer feeling oppressed by her status (which hasn't changed – her parents are much the same). She simply sees the world in different terms and celebrates her own artifice. (167)

To support his argument, he refers to the Lacanian ideas of lack and desire, phenomena that belong to the Symbolic. He asserts that Coraline comes to terms with her lack and desire thus positions in the Symbolic in the end, leaving her experiences of the non-human behind. Coraline's decision making process changes her not solely because she chooses to do so, but also because she has been affected by the non-human around her.

With respect to identity again, Chang presents the construction of teenagers' identity, as it becomes a focal point to raise awareness for writers, she contends: "Most coming-of-age stories focus on the development of the protagonist's mind and character into maturity, this process usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world" (11). Similar to Rudd, coming of age stories bear significance according to Chang, and, she problematizes the identity of the

protagonist Bod, short for Nobody, in *The Graveyard Book*, to reveal how the narrative elements of fiction "untangle" his problematic state, as his story is full of entanglements with other entities of fantasy literature, the non-human, more specifically. Nobody (Bod) Owens, whose real name is unknown, finds himself saved from a murderer by the ghosts of a graveyard. In her argument, Chang too, borrows Lacanian terminology to explain Bod's predicament when he meets another human, Liza:

> Bod is striving for his own sought-after identity, which has been denied him since his childhood. Interestingly, in Lacanian terms, Liza serves as "the Other" whose wish mirrors the desire of the subject (Bod). Therefore, she plays an important role in Bod's development and self-actualization. (12)

Bod's story is also important for my argument because it employs a strategy of fantasy literature that I have stated at the beginning of my paper. To that, I would like to add Lucie Armitt's ideas, who holds that "fantasy literature has two salient features: first, it deals with an otherworld; second, it narrates stories beyond our everyday experience" (qtd. in Chang 10). Once again, this is demonstrated in the story with the real world and the graveyard, including Bod's out-of-this-world experience perpetrated by Gaiman as he becomes hybridized between them. As Chang would attest, "The uniqueness of this work of fiction lies in the fact that the main character co-exists in the worlds of both the living and the dead" (9).

So far, I have referred to the former discussions that have been conducted on Gaiman's works (which are rather limited in number) and how I depart from each of them. In this study I would also like to include certain discussions regarding the narrative, for it will provide better insight in my argument. Firstly, I would like to point out the importance of passing into adolescence in narrative texts as explained by Ostry: "[Y]oung adult texts that tackle posthuman themes have the potential to inform teens about these issues and their potential implications" (qtd. in Kimberley 125). To Ostry's comment Kimberley adds:

> Furthermore, the adolescent body is at the interface of boundaries (human/animal, human/machine) that as humans we find uncomfortable to cross. This is because the process of becoming an adolescent – experiencing the changing body during puberty – is an uncomfortable one and thus the posthuman, in examining bodies that are altered to be other than human, provides a space for young adults to examine themselves in the process of transformation. (125)

Due to their entry into adolescence, the psychoanalytical discussion of Gaiman's characters in the studies above gains another dimension. I claim that providing only a psychoanalytical reading would imply missing the author's main aim of writing these works, that is, the pragmatic motive behind his act of writing. By revealing the character's inner world through his words and actions, Gaiman creates characters that are in connection with their surroundings as they become the link between the human and the non-human. I am not saying the human and the animal, as there are many characters that cannot be referred to as an animal. In doing so, Gaiman's protagonists become representations of the threshold subjectivity as they acknowledge the non-human and proceed to live in harmony with them in line with a non-normative mode of thinking. Thus, they blur the boundaries of humanness and refer to the transcorporeality and interconnectedness in life. They also acknowledge the agency of other than, less or more than, human phenomena.

These characters are self-sufficient in their trials; whether they search for identity, or bring peace to the world, they are innately employed with the necessary disposition to prove themselves for the task. This, as I will argue, remains within a non-normative mode of thinking. Whether inward or outward, these characters display a connection, as Kimberley explains: "Connectedness to self, whether that be the multiple self [or] individual self, is the key to the characters' ability to live successfully as a posthuman other" (Kimberley 129). The posthuman other refers to defining the human through which it is not, hence breaking humanistic binary of consciousness and otherness, as Braidotti mentions (15).

To sum up, Neil Gaiman's works for young readers have not been discussed in a posthumanist perspective and regarding the threshold subjectivities and subject object relations. As Gaiman's works employ a different mode of thinking through its themes, motifs and characters, they transgress the boundaries of humanism. They lead us also to another hermeneutical attempt in a non-normative perspective.

As indicated previously, the studies that have been conducted on children's literature in a posthumanist perspective remains scarce, except for Zoe Jaques, who focuses on classical stories that have had a major impact. However, since these classical stories, the social paradigm has changed drastically due to technological advances, altering the human experience. As Nayar remarks: "The human has co-evolved with both technology and other organisms, and even human perceptions and consciousness are structural changes wrought in the biological system as a response to the neighborhood" (53).

Gaiman's novels include characters that are connected/self-connected, they co-exist with their surroundings, they present different subject-object relations that transgress the boundaries of Cartesian humanism. Regarding the studies that have discussed Gaiman, certain discussions come to the fore. One of them is Rudd's "An Eye for an I" (2008), a study where subject-object relations have been discussed and, as I shall include in the next chapter, it is a psychoanalytic study about the character's emerging identity, which is a point that Chang also discusses in "I am Nobody" (2015). Other discussions are as follows: Vargas's categorizing the shift of the perception of reality in *Coraline* as an element of gothic literature (2014); and Hosseinpour's joint discussion with Moghadam, where they suggest that Gaiman's works should be read as magical realism (2016).

I argue that Gaiman's novels incorporate subjectivities as co-existence and the subject-object relations are shifted in such a way that when they are discussed through the concepts borrowed from posthumanism, a new reading emerges. A

discussion of Gaiman's novels through posthumanist concepts earns significance in its argument to ascertain how works of fiction consult and utilize posthumanist key concepts and how they would function for the benefit of young readers. The significance of ways of learning and texts for children comes to the fore at this point as the discourse of humanism can be dismantled through a conscious attack on it through children's literature. Albert Bandura, who is the founder of social learning theory, "emphasizes the importance of observing, modelling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others" (in McLeod). We learn from what we observe, from what we are exposed to, and the learning process begins as early as infancy:

> Social learning theory emphasizes the prominent roles played by vicarious, symbolic, and self-regulatory processes in psychological functioning. … Acknowledgment that human thought, affect and behavior can be markedly influenced by observation, as well as by direct experience, fostered development of observational paradigms for studying the power of socially mediated experience. (Bandura vii)

The vicarious and symbolic processes here refer to both the visual media such as television, video; and written media such as newspapers, magazines, and more importantly, novels and novellas. These processes have changed learning principles and strategies drastically, as Bandura remarks:

> The advent of television has greatly expanded the range of models available to children and adults alike. Unlike their predecessors, who were limited largely to familial and subcultural sources of modeling, people today can observe and learn diverse styles of conduct within the comfort of their homes through the abundant symbolic modeling provided by the mass media. (25)

This applies to the 21st century, and it becomes apparent without doubt that the process of learning has changed. Apart from the presence of a person telling and explaining all that we need to know about a situation, we also require an example, a modeled situation for us. This observation may be made through television, which presents characters in a conundrum and the solution they find teaches us a lesson. It could also be done through a fairy tale, a fable, where the moral of the story is implicitly and explicitly stated: Appearances can be

deceptive (Aesop); beauty is on the inside (Villeneuve); having courage and believing in oneself is important (Perrault). These serve as structuring observations and modeled behavior to a child who would become both a witness and a learner in the process.

When social learning theory comes into play, the doctrines and the morals that children are exposed to become important. A writer must pay attention to what the purpose of the story is, and what morals it has to teach. As Geir Farner explains in *The Ways We Read Literature*, "Instead of telling the reader directly what he thinks about the world and life in general, the author presents a package of concrete examples that the reader must interpret himself" (112). The "concrete examples" enhance the importance of social learning through literature. Even though the received message varies from reader to reader, a topic that is still debated today, it bears significance that must be underlined. As G.K. Chesterton expresses, "Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten" (qtd. in Rudd 160).

As critics such as Tess Cosslett and Zoe Jaques would agree, children's literature offers "different ways of representing animals and their relation to human beings … are of great relevance to current debates about animal rights, ecology and anthropomorphism" (Cosslett 4), which would provide good examples for a posthumanist mode of thinking. Moreover, with the impact of social learning, making a discussion on children's novels would add another dimension to current literature. I would like to clarify this dimension further: As posthumanism strives to be a mode of thinking with sustainable goals in its horizon for the future, the theorists of the field incorporate "ecology and environmentalism. They rest on an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' others" (Braidotti 48). This connection with oneself and one's surroundings could lead to the solution of the problems that arise in the 21st century, either regarding environmental issues such as deforestation, pollution; or hominal ones, such as racism, homophobia, misogyny and so on. Or as McGurl states in "The Posthuman Comedy":

To see the world through the eyes of a child can be refreshing in some contexts, but from the eighteenth-century forward artistic seriousness in fictional narrative has been strongly associated with realism and realism, in turn, with a reasonable-seeming correspondence between representation and ordinary adult perceptual experience. Even when works of science fiction, fantasy, and horror are clearly intended for an adult readership, an air of adolescent irrelevance hovers about them all the same. (543)

I would like to draw attention to a writer that has created works in line with posthumanist mode of thinking: Ursula K. Le Guin, a prominent writer of the 21st century that "establishes a continuum that plots points on the line for humans, animals, aliens, and dragons and then examines the spaces between those points" (Cadden 2) and urgess humanity to recognize those spaces. Where humanism interprets the line between the human and the non-human as a border, posthumanism sees it as a bond. Le Guin emphasizes:

If you deny any affinity with another person or kind of person, if you declare it to be wholly different from yourself – as men have done to women, and class has done to class, and nation has done to nation – you may hate it or deify it; but in either case, you have denied it spiritual equality and its human reality. (1989: 95)

To counter humanist ideology, a new paradigm must emerge, and as the field of posthumanities grow, the path to that paradigm becomes easier to see. With a non-normative mode of thinking, all entities become united, and it demands the end of the domination of humanism to make space for all entities, hence creating a more habitable world.

With the power of social learning, this paradigm shift draws closer, and becomes possible, which justifies my choice to discuss Gaiman's works for young readers through posthumanist concepts. Like Piaget and Bandura, this study acknowledges the impact that works of fiction have on society and considers a non-normative mode of thinking to possess a certain level of magnitude that can cause disruption, thus, can create a new space of signification for all denizens of the world. After all, as Ursula K. Le Guin says, "I don't know how to make a fishhook or a pair of shoes, either. I could learn. We all can learn. That's the neat

thing about technologies. They're what we can learn to do" (*Ursula K. Le Guin Archives*).

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAME

2.1.Subjectivity

Concerning subjectivity, fantasy literature for children widely employs certain techniques that are ultimately posthuman. These techniques include creating alternate worlds that change the concept of reality, co-existence of the human and the non-human, shifting anthropomorphic shape of the human, and the removal of names for the non-human. On the concept of subjectivity, posthumanism remains ramified, and all these ramifications are accepted due to the diffractive methodology that it suggests: "[A] diffractive methodology is respectful of the entanglement of ideas and other materials in ways that reflexive methodologies are not," as Barad explains (29). I will briefly explain posthumanist views on subjectivity, and the specific ones that I chose to argue, along with my reasoning.

As posthumanism is a field that revolves around the boundaries of the human and the non-human, it rejects norms that have been configured by humanism, such as centering the human in its orbit, disregarding what the human is not, specifically, the non-human. Consequently, humanism configures characters that are in line with the ideal man, and his conflict with life. It hails the mind but does not exceed its limits. When we read about Moll Flanders, for example, we witness a human experience, in her own world that is centered around her. It does not question what this human experience could be, or what is 'human' for that matter, it simply narrates a chain of events that eventually leads to the story's ending, for this is the humanist idea of a teleological self. Regarding posthumanist conception of subjectivity, Nayar explains: "Posthumanism as a

philosophical approach involves a rethinking of the very idea of subjectivity because it sees human subjectivity as an assemblage, co-evolving with machines and animals" (19). Although there may be countless examples of this case, one of the most crucial people to understand the posthuman condition is Temple Grandin, who has autism which apparently unites her with the non-human world in different ways than us, allowing her to discover systems that are more friendly towards the non-human; all the while presenting a posthuman condition where the human and the non-human coalesce. Acknowledging her significance, Cary Wolfe dedicates a chapter in her name in his book and explains:

> Grandin … insists that her experience with autism and its specific characteristics has given her a special understanding of how nonhuman animals experience the world, one that has enabled her to design animal holding and processing facilities that are far more humane for the animals involved. (128)

Grandin, being a woman with autism, behaves outside the anthropomorphic norms, for the way she thinks and experiences life does not correlate to the human condition. She says in *Animals in Translation* that "being a visual thinker was the start of my career with animals … because animals are visual creatures too … I actually think in pictures. During my thinking process I have no words in my head at all" (qtd. in Wolfe 130). If thinking can be different as in this example, we may be bold to assume that Cartesian thinking is jeopardized. She points out a different ontology with a different space of signification, where the frame of humanism cannot function. Grandin's experience may not be posthuman, however, as Cary Wolfe remarks, "it is anything but 'human'" (131). The examples that Grandin provides in her book, essentially regarding autism, continue to link the human and the non-human together and make ground for the posthuman. A case in point is:

> [She] notes that cattle have 'supersensitive' hearing and are especially sensitive to high-pitched noises such as the hissing of pneumatic brakes on a truck or a bus. In fact, she suggests that 'the sounds that upset cattle are the same kinds of sounds that are unbearable to many autistic children'. (qtd. in Wolfe 134)

Only by looking at this it would be safe to assume that the human and the non-human have found something in common, and a link has been established between them. As the study advances, it shall reveal that this link is of utmost importance for a posthumanist endeavor and what it means for children's literature. Firstly, in traditional novels, the ontological attributes of the humans work in dualism, as in self and other, as stated by Braidotti (2013: 15), which counteracts the change in works of fiction. By pointing out that this is the greatest flaw of humanism, Braidotti suggests the posthuman turn to be its solution. To observe how this can be achieved we must take literature into account, and this will be the key contribution of this study.

In order to change the perception of reality, fantasy works usually create a world that does not conform to the ideals of humanism and the concepts that it embodies, anthropomorphism being the most important one. As Colum refers to a classical work of children's literature, *Gulliver's Travels*: "In 'Gulliver' the little beings are hurtful, the giants have more insight than men, the beasts rule, and humanity is shown, not as triumphant, but as degraded and enslaved" (qtd. in Jaques 42). In this shifted reality the human has no agency as it becomes subjected to the rule of the non-human, time and space lose meaning and hence another perspective ensues: one where the norms of humanism become problematized.

Another technique that brings a non-normtaive mode of thinking to fiction is changing the anthropomorphic form of the human. Farhangi argues that:

> Within the dualistic structure of humanism, ability can only be defined against what it is not, that is disability. The normative subject of humanism cannot lay claim on his ability and normalcy unless he creates a disabled abnormal other to be excluded from the realm of full human subjectivity. Critical posthumanism unsettles this hierarchal dualism between ability and disability, neurotypicality and human beingness and non-human beingness, thus revealing the empty interiority of what humanism has called the human nature. (23)

Being unsettling, posthumanism blurs the boundaries and a status of "betwixt-and-betweens" emerges (Jaques 6). As Farhangi would affirm, this status would

apply to people with disabilities. This might be Gaiman's starting point to portray the character Odd, from *Odd and the Frost Giants*. As I will reveal in my discussion, Gaiman depicts the character Odd with disability, however, he does not follow the norms of humanism and through his narrative technique, he aims to make Odd transgress the lines between the human and the non-human.

Upon exploring different aspects in Gaiman's works, we realize that his characters "require us to reconcile the physical body as part of desirability" (Wheaton 171). They reach a point where all differences are accepted for the purpose of a unison to achieve a posthumanist mode of thinking which dictates the subjectivity of human not as singularity, but as multiplicity with the non-human others around it. The constant interaction of the human characters with the non-human others in such an embracing manner makes Gaiman's characters co-existent in their subjectivity, which emerges as co-assemblages, as Nayar points out. This leads to circumstances that gives way to threshold characters, as this thesis holds.

Consequently, subjectivity for posthumanism becomes hybrid, the human fuses with its other, the non-human, and its relation to it has accents based on their environment. Neither is more important than the other, as MacCormack remarks:

> Sacrificing human subjectivity loses or adds nothing except potentials of alterity, and encounters with other rhythms can catalyze these, relations of love with that which seduces the leftovers and in splitting forms with us a mesh of mucosal interstitial passage. (110)

When we look at Gaiman's works we see this unison taking place, which shall be revealed in the coming chapters. His characters make use of non-human tools, to such an extent that these tools make the characters function, empowering them. Thus, the deliberate focus on the co-existent subjectivities of the human and the non-human, creating co-assemblages, is one of the main themes in Gaiman's works, which will be the main focus of this study as it provides a non-normative frame to explore Gaiman's children's fiction in a new light.

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2.2. Subject – Object Relations

For humanism the term object "refers to solid inanimate objects as opposed to humans, animals, concepts, or events" (Harman 2018: 401). The effect of this has turned objects into a dualistic entity, where its meaning is reduced to its physical manifestation. If we are to take a look at the apple in *Snow White* through this perspective, it gives us a solid example. Such objects prove to be the inanimate objects that they had been intended to be, however, against the background of posthumanist views like the object-oriented ontology and storied matter, they gain new meanings and representations in a new hermeneutical frame. These could include theological representations, the fall of Eve, or something even bigger than that by framing the apple its own story: When was it grown? When was it poisoned? By whom?

In a humanist mode of thinking, considering animals as objects makes them vulnerable. John Berger explains in "Why Look At Animals", "[a]nimals required for food are processed like manufactured commodities" (23), which rips them of their status as a 'being' and obfuscate their ontological position. As another example to defend the ontological place of animals, Carol J. Adams states in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*:

> Since objects are possessions, they cannot have possessions; thus, we say "leg of lamb" not a "lamb's leg," "chicken wings" not a "chicken's wings." We opt for less disquieting referent points not only by changing names from animals to meat, but also by cooking, seasoning, and covering the animals with sauces, disguising their original nature. (59)

Being considered an object, the animals cannot have the right to own their bodies. Their body parts must emerge with an alternative referent point, a word, in order to be consumed by the human. This has been problematized in the past, as Jaques explains by quoting Carroll, "[t]he transformation of the Duchess's baby into a pig comically literalizes human-animal hybridity, with Alice

reflecting that 'it would have made a dreadfully ugly child: but it makes rather a handsome pig, I think'" (qtd. in Jaques 47).

Here we see the dualism of human/animal becoming hybrid, where both parties can co-exist, once again transgressing their respective boundaries. This requires a non-normative mode of thinking, in this section, I will explain the subject-object relationship in posthumanism through the suggestions of object-oriented ontology and storied matter. A simple way to dissect the importance of object in posthumanism would be worth mentioning, and once again it is about co-existence. Anita Tarr quotes Nayar:

> (Because of co-evolution, of humans evolving along with and because of our symbiosis with animals, plants, and even bacteria,) [w]hat we understand as uniquely human, … is the consequence of hybridization and exchange of material and immaterial – data, such as in the genetic code – across species, skin and function of animals, plants and humans. Therefore, … "[t]he human body is a congeries, or assemblage, of multiple species, machines and organic forms." (qtd. in Tarr 69)

As mentioned above, the co-existence of the human and the non-human is the focal point of this study. In this study, the first part includes the concept of co-existence, the second part will discuss subject-object relations to highlight the posthumanist elements. Thus, being aware of the significance of the object is crucial. For posthumanism, the frame of 'object' changes, it becomes "'objects' in a wide sense, including human beings as well as dragons, stones, and the Dutch East India Company. Anything that cannot be fully reduced either downward to its components or upward to its effects counts as an object, whether it be human, immaterial, durable or fleeting" (Harman 2018: 402). Through this, we may tag anything and everything as an object, and since works of fantasy employ a plethora of tools and methods to engage the reader in different worlds with a variety of agencies, the need for understanding these tools emerges. For this reason, Graham Harman puts forward object-oriented ontology, or OOO, which is in line with posthumanist mode of thinking, as it "is often viewed as a 'flat ontology' that treats all objects equally" (402). From the start, Harman

introduces the word dragon, a being of fantasy world. But it is such a being that in fantasy novels it is treated like a king, a being of magnitude that is to be scared. this is the flat ontology that Harman talks about, a king and a dragon remaining on the same ontological ground, also referred to as the "diagonal plane" by Ağın (24). In line with Harman, a dragon having authority and power, and being as fearful as a king, can be explained through object-oriented ontology in literature. As it will provide better insight for the purposes of this study, in my argument I will refer to Harman's object-oriented ontology, along with *hyperobjects* coined by Timothy Morton.

Harman views that in order to recognize an object's ontology there is a need for an observer, to proclaim the content of the object is subject to its appearance or consciousness. This may seem phenomenological, as Harman agrees with Husserl, he establishes his claim by challenging it, working to make space out of the duality that phenomenology poses: "[O]bject/content distinction only by imploding both terms into the realm of consciousness, while discarding all claims of an inaccessible thing-in-itself" (2018: 402). In this regard, object-oriented ontology explains that "object and content must both be inside consciousness, since otherwise we could never link the contents of our mind with any reality, and knowledge would be impossible" (402).

The object-oriented ontology does not solely refer to an object that we interact with our senses, but, it is also about what emerges when we consciously think of them. Hyperobjects, as Timothy Morton calls them, referring to Harman, "are viscous, which means that they 'stick' to beings that are involved with them. They are nonlocal; in other words, any 'local manifestation' of a hyperobject is not directly the hyperobjects" (Morton 7). Many works of fiction implement objects that stick to an entity, hence creating co-existence, such as the wands in stories of wizardry which attribute the power of magic to their wielders, turning them into wizards. They construct a becoming that lasts so long as they bear the object all the while transgressing the boundaries of the human. Although the relationship between the wand and the wizard is inconsequential, in our minds

the wand creates an immediate image of wizardry, manifesting its story and representation, which is enough evidence to prove its existence as a hyperobject. To clarify the term hyperobject, Morton provides a basic but all-encompassing example:

> Consider raindrops: you can feel them on your head – but you can't perceive the actual raindrop in itself. You only perceive your anthropomorphic translation of the raindrops. Isn't this similar to the rift between weather, which I can feel falling on my head, and global climate … I can think and compute climate in this sense, but I can't directly see or touch it. (18)

With this in mind, it can be concluded that object of the object-oriented ontology cannot solely be an object that we interact with our senses, but one that can emerge even when we consciously think of them. In this regard, global warming becomes an example for Morton: "Global warming cannot be directly seen, but it can be thought and computed…" (10). A hyperobject does not need to be recognized by our sensory abilities, for it is beyond their capabilities, as explained by Harman, it "transcend[s] the immediate experience, which [inanimate] matter is never allowed to do … it elevates the structure of human thought to the ontological pinnacle" (qtd. in Morton 25).

The reason why this study agrees with Morton on calling them viscous is that it is not the human that affects the object, it is vice versa: "When I listen to My Bloody Valentine, I do not reach out toward the sound – instead, I am assaulted from the inside by a pulsation that is also sound, a physical force that almost lifts me off the floor" (33). Compared to the humanist vision of objects, it is always the human who decides to be affected by an object: while listening to music it is the human that has made the decision in the first place and being an intangible entity, he considers the agency of music to be non-existent, hence not important. This idea will prove beneficial for the argument in this study as the subject-object relations in literature help establishing a posthumanist ground, where the focus becomes the non-human, rather than the human.

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When Morton's and Harman's arguments are combined, it leads to a shift in the specular conception of an object, and transfers its ontology at its very core, its consciousness. Certain objects are usually left to human imagination, which become "entities" (21), according to Morton. While creating these entities, the objects are attributed with such energy that they constantly change, it is not the same object as it was seconds ago.

Both Harman and Morton refer to movies to further their argument of the forever-shifting object. Morton puts forward Alfred Hitchcock's techniques, "By simultaneously zooming and pulling away, we appear to be in the same place, yet the place seems to distort beyond our control" (25). The object seemingly remains the same in an ocular sense, however, through the constant shifts, it enters an ontological process of becoming, through which external viewpoints are disregarded while a revelation of the bundles of qualities from a specific perspective comes into focus (Harman 2018: 406). These objects "are not autonomous from [the human] gaze, but [depend] on it always" (407), and Harman holds that "cinematic images tend to be *viewpoints* on objects rather than objects themselves" (407).

As explained in the previous section of this study, the dualism of humanistic thinking gives way to the binary opposition of subject/object ("Mapping Posthumanism", 1345), and as Kimberley has mentioned, in this binarism the object becomes an 'other', which is in fact, the posthuman other in posthumanist mode of thinking (129). When we take the object as a posthuman other, along with its mucosal power to stick to entities, it gains agency to create new meanings and becomings, and consequently it becomes vibrant. Using its agency, the object creates stories through imagination, a power that is so far thought to be exclusive to humans.

Başak Ağın suggests a counter argument by referring to the importance of matter in posthumanism: "Posthumanist mode of thinking, on the other hand, follows a model that includes body and mind together in the process of imagination, not

forgetting the magnitude of matter" (122, translated by me). In this way, posthumanism brings a wholistic approach to matter, and, believing that it has the agency to create, bestows it the power of imagination. Matter becomes "endowed with meanings and is thick with stories, manifesting as 'storied matter'" (Oppermann 55), as suggested in material ecocriticism.

As it can be seen, the togetherness of body and mind is a concept which is paid great attention in posthumanist thinking, once again as a unifying frame. Margaret Price explains it as "a socio-politically constituted and material entity that emerges through both structural (power-and-violence-laden) contexts and also individual (specific) experience" (271). We can infer that while posthumanism discusses the human in relation to the non-human, it also analyzes the human within itself, to investigate how the workings of societal norms affect individual behavior and reaction, ultimately leading up to the creation of an individual's identity. This stems from the posthumanist idea that the environment (non-human) and the individual (human) must be unified, hence create a co-assemblage. As Price remarks, "the claim that identity emerges interactionally is incomplete if one overlooks the fact that not everyone can access interactions equally" (271). Therefore, if we are to discuss characters on a posthumanist ground, we must take their respective environment into consideration, thus including both their body and mind.

Going back to Oppermann, she quotes her study with Serenella Iovino to briefly explain what material ecocriticism stands for: "the new dimension of ecocriticism 'examines matter both in texts and as a text trying to shed light on the way bodily natures and discursive forces express their interaction whether in representations or in their concrete reality'" (qtd. in Oppermann 56). Thus, seeking a space of signification for the non-human by acknowledging its agency through its own discourse, posthumanism includes a "material-discursive practice" (Barad 25), with material ecocriticism. It defends that the human and the non-human are in constant interaction, which can "interpenetrate each other. Bodies, texts, machines, human and non-human entities continually interact in

complex relationships" (Hekman 14-15). Oppermann refers to Bennett and says that: "Jane Bennett considers the real-life effects of matter with such vivid examples as the electrical power grid, foodstuffs, metal, stem cells, and even trash. Bennett acknowledges their 'ability to make something happen' … when these elements form assemblages with the human dimension" (56).

Here we witness another breaking point in the humanistic binarism of subject/object, hence vexing, transgressing the boundaries between them. Both Bennett and Morton believe that anything can be an object, even inanimate matter, so long as they possess agency, which remains already within, emerging innately, to create and actualize itself. However, while hyperobject and storied matter might seem to be correlated, their methodology and results differ. A significant aspect of material ecocriticism is that "it analyses 'the interlacements of matter and discourses not only as they are re-created by literature and other cultural forms, but also as they emerge in material expressions'" (qtd. in Oppermann 56). This gives birth to narrative agency of matter; hyperobject, on the other hand, emerges as an object to be felt, but not to be figured out. It is as ominous as Morton's examples, as he suggests global warming to be one, pointing out that climate is something we can conceptualize but not something we can see or touch (18). It is always there with or without human contact.

To sum up, in works of fiction we see different forms of subject-object relations, and in posthumanism they become twofold: the hyperobject of object-oriented ontology, and storied matter. In the coming chapter Gaiman's works for young readers will be discussed through these concepts to demonstrate the non-normative elements in his fiction.

CHAPTER III

THRESHOLD CHARACTERS IN NEIL GAIMAN'S WORKS FOR YOUNG READERS

In Neil Gaiman's works, we see the link between the human and the non-human, be it animals or plants, the non-human is always in interaction with the human. In this chapter, I will discuss Gaiman's non-human characters through posthumanist ideas, and how they function as a co-assemblage. Discussing his characters within this frame prepares a better ground of discussion to reveal the potential of his characters as post-anthropocentric entities. As it has been discussed before in this study, the posthuman is an assemblage, a co-existence of the human and the non-human, a blurred line where the posthumanist subjectivity emerges.

As far as posthumanist subjectivity is concerned, the concept of names plays a pivotal role. Derrida questions their implication in the non-human world in "The Animal That Therefore I Am," "whether an animal … ever replies in its own name" (379). Gaiman's cat character in *Coraline* seems to respond to Derrida's question. In *Coraline*, Coraline's house has a door that leads to an alternate reality, which embodies non-human characters, also called the other world. Right in the beginning we see a rather moody cat that is quite sure of its feelings and has no shame in 'telling' them. When Coraline meets the cat, she asks its name:

> "Cats don't have names," it said.
> "No?" said Coraline.
> "No," said the cat. 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." (74)

For humans, the act of naming inspires power to control the non-human, to hail them whenever they want, hence it becomes power exclusive to human use.

Coraline becomes shocked, irritated even, when she hears the cat talking. "There was something irritatingly self-centered about the cat, Coraline decided" (74). Gaiman respects the boundaries of the non-human and by not providing a name for the cat he embodies Derrida's question, and it is revealed that they have no meaning in their world, no matter how daunting this situation is for the human. "'Names, names, names,' said another voice, all faraway and lost" (96). For the non-human cannot be named, and because it does not conform to the boundaries of humanism, it cannot be described as such. Coraline's interaction with the cat in the other world becomes a good example for a transgressive human – non-human encounter.

While this cat seems to be unfriendly at first, later it assists Coraline as she goes through trouble in the alternate reality that she has unleashed. When she is threatened by her other mother of the other world, the cat saves Coraline and shows that it has changed its behavioral pattern, which proves that the human, Coraline, has affected the non-human, the cat, and/or vice versa. Through their trials, they both develop new identities. This is discussed in Rudd's study in psychoanalytic terms:

> The cat, which I have largely neglected, is significantly 'not the other anything' and does not need a name, either, unlike – so it informs Coraline – "*you* people … because you don't know who you are" (47-48). Similar to the Cheshire Cat in Carroll's *Alice,* it acts like a Lacanian therapist, refusing to support anyone's fantasies. (167)

Rudd draws attention to the already established parallel between Alice and Coraline, young heroines who find cats as companions. Unlike Alice, Coraline appreciates the cat's wisdom. While this is explained to be a psychoanalytical outcome, I argue that Coraline moves from her humanist attitude saying, "Cats don't talk at home (74)," to becoming more curious: "She also wondered whether cats could all talk where she came from and just chose not to, or whether they could only talk when they were here – wherever *here* was" (77). This uncertainty inspires that she is moving into a posthumanist frame of

thinking as she starts to become aware that subjectivity is not particular to the human only. Braidotti asserts:

> The idea of subjectivity as an assemblage that includes non-human agents has a number of consequences. Firstly, it implies that subjectivity is not an exclusive prerogative of a*35nthropos*; secondly, that it is not linked to transcendental reason; thirdly, that it is unhinged from the dialectics of recognition; and lastly, that it is based on the immanence of relations. (82)

In *Coraline*, we witness Braidotti's argument being objectified, as Coraline teams up with the non-human entities of the other world, which already break the exclusivity of anthropos by possessing human abilities, entering a state of becoming. Thus, her rejection of "cats don't talk" turns into questioning of "whether cats could talk where she came from" (74) and ultimately becoming affected by it, "Coraline barely noticed that she had wriggled down and curled *catlike* on her grandmother's uncomfortable armchair, nor did she notice when she fell into a deep and dreamless sleep" (122. Italics added).

Including the word 'catlike' (Gaiman) puts emphasis on how Coraline was affected by the cat, as she follows a type of behavior that she has recently learned, which is usually attributed to animals. Petros Panaou explains this as "'informed resistance': learning more about herself and her environment, and using this knowledge to resist oppression and acquire agency" (72). She gains identity while becoming able to empathize with her surroundings, and in her attitude towards the non-human at the end of the story, she resists the oppression of humanistic dictates. Coraline's experience constitutes a co-assemblage, rejecting "humanism's exclusionary strategy" (Nayar 19), and implementing a lifelong process of, to quote Donna Haraway, "becoming-with" each other (2016).

Another example of co-existence would be Odd, the character from *Odd and the Frost Giants*. When the bear, the fox and the eagle lose their human forms due to the frost giant's curse, Odd, a crippled boy with a troubling family, wants to help them. During their journey they face many obstacles and the constant interaction

between the talking animals and Odd becomes intense. As mentioned before, in their first encounter, despite being not strong enough, Odd tries all he can do to help the bear. Then they go on an adventure together to remove the curse of the Frost Giant. Because Odd accepts to live in harmony with nature around him, his subjectivity involves not being solely human, but "favors co-evolution" (Nayar 20). Odd intuitively feels that helping these animals will further his innate goodness towards everything and acts accordingly.

In his adventures Odd encounters extraordinary beings or, just as his name suggests, oddities. He drinks from a spring, and he sees visions of his family in it, and to make it even odder, the spring asks "What do you need to see?" (28) and initiates a conversation, demanding an answer from him with, "You have drunk from my spring" (28). Odd is not amazed by this at all, as if it were only natural for the water spring to engage in conversation with him. He calmly answers "Did I do something wrong?" (28) Not only is he unfazed, but, accepting his union with nature, he also assumes responsibility for the possibility that he might be the one at fault. He knows that he has not demonstrated an act of malice. He shows only acceptance and embraces others, rather than asserting dominance as a humanist standing would suggest. He does not position himself as the center of all, he respects his boundaries with nature, as in bioethics, which runs parallel with posthumanism. As Nayar explains:

> The human is constituted by difference, with different species, forms of life and systems incorporated into itself. Our empathy toward others, founded in imitation but also perhaps in biology and conditioning suggests that our very consciousness is *embedded* in the social, our minds a part of the social brain. (48)

The posthuman elements in bioethics are performed through Odd's actions, who is innately aware of these qualities. By attributing the power of speech to the non-human spring, Gaiman transgresses the boundaries of humanism and creates an extraordinary encounter. In doing so an ethical standing is conveyed: being at peace with nature. The spring talks back to Odd, and shows him his memories.

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What is interesting here is that while some of them have happened, some have not been experienced yet:

> On the water's surface he saw reflections. His father, in the winter, playing with him and his mother – a silly game of blindman's buff that left them all giggling and helpless on the ground … He saw a huge creature, with icicles   in   its beard and hair like the pattern the frost makes on the leaves and on the ice early in the morning, sitting beside a huge wall, scanning the horizon restlessly. (Gaiman 28-29)

Here we see the agentic power of the spring, it can reveal your memories of the past, present and the future. Once again human culture is enmeshed with a non-human agency (Bennett 108): nature reflecting the lives of the human is something that would bring out its agency and creativity, thus becoming a storied matter. Oppermann contends: "[T]hese variously agentic material formations as narrative agencies create meaningful 'choreographies of becoming'" (qtd. in Coole and Frost 59). Due to the memories that the non-human spring reflects, Odd learns more about his human self, and a posthuman becoming occurs: The spring becomes affected to show only Odd's memories, and Odd learns more about his life: "He saw his father … he began to carve, a strange, distant smile on his face. Odd knew that smile…" (Gaiman 29). Here the non-human makes the human think with a reflection, hence creating itself through its agency, ultimately emerging as a storied matter. This furthers the story's posthumanist implication that every entity has a story to tell; a lump of wood, a spring, or all kinds of animals.

Odd acts in harmony with nature. He demonstrates acceptance and connectedness even when he faces the horrible frost giant who has cursed the gods of Asgard, forcing them to permanently shapeshift into an animal, he remains calm and collected: "'WHO ARE YOU?' the voice tumbled across the plain like an avalanche. 'I'm called Odd,' shouted Odd, and he smiled" (32). He does not tremble in fear upon seeing a giant towering so high above him. His attitude to the giant affects him and Odd is rewarded in such a way that he achieves creating intersubjectivity with the giant:

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> It was the smile that did it. If Odd had not smiled, the giant would simply have picked him up and crushed the life from him, or squashed him against the boulder, or bitten his head off and kept him to snack on later. But that smile, a smile that said that Odd knew more than he was saying… .(32)

It is conclusive that Odd's empathy and co-existence with nature, rather than asserting dominance as "the humanistic emphasis on Man [as] the measure of all things and the domination and exploitation of nature" (Braidotti 48), leads him to a new space of signification. Odd further demonstrates his care for nature as he negotiates with the frost giant to cease the endless season of winter he has unleashed: "[If] the winter continues, then everyone will die. People. Animals. Plants. … You should care because you care about beauty. And there won't be any. There will just be dead things" (35). Once again, being sensitive about his surroundings, Odd believes in co-existence of the human and the non-human, and if his surroundings were to be dead, there would be nothing to support his life.

Odd remains as the smartest character throughout the story; considering he is but a child, the intelligence he pours on to his words can only stem from, I argue, an innate posthuman understanding. Odd mediates the "nature-culture continuum" (Braidotti 61), through his child subjectivity, which brings me to another aspect of Odd as a posthuman. On this issue, Tess Cosslett, the writer of *Talking Animals in British Children's fiction, 1786-1914* holds:

> The belief, differently expressed by Rousseau, the Romantics and Darwin, that children are somehow 'nearer' to nature and to animals than adults, means that these children's stories can explore the anima-human divide with more freedom and playfulness than literature directed at adults. (2)

By having the agency of a child, Odd is brought nearer to nature, becoming more attuned, and connected to it. Hence his "betwixt and between" (Jaques 6) status emerges. This quality of Odd becomes important in relation to Nayar's question: "[H]ow do we live with others on Earth?" (48), he puts emphasis on Roelvink's answer: "If our species does not survive the ecological crisis, it will probably be due to our failure … to work out new ways to live with the earth, to rework

ourselves … We will go onwards in a different mode of humanity, or not at all" (qtd. in Nayar 48).

Another example in my argument of Gaiman's non-normative protagonists, from a different story, would be the character Bod, from *The Graveyard Book,* a boy whose family is disturbingly murdered by a man called Jack. Bod the toddler remains the sole survivor owing to his quick crawling skills as he crawls to the graveyard next door. The murderer becomes stalled by the caretaker of the graveyard and departs, not returning until years later when Bod is a teenager. Bod presents another example of co-existence, his surroundings are not populated with animals, but ghosts, which remain as a representative of the end of human, a concept of afterlife, ultimately leading to another non-human figure. These figures such as cyborgs, zombies and ghosts serve to decenter the human subjectivity, revealing a different conception of reality. But in the case of ghosts specifically, their existence lies upon an absent presence, which further problematizes the human condition. Gaiman describes the ghosts at the beginning of the story as "[A] raw, flickering, startling shape the grey color of television static, all panic and naked emotion" (151), which furthers the idea of absent presence. For the decentering of the human even further, Gaiman provides them with the ability to speak, and rationalize, just as their specular limits could do, blurring the boundaries of the human once again. In fact, these ghosts prove to be more humanitarian than the humans due to their norms and living practice. While the toddler is in grave danger among the humans, either due to their cruelty or their indifference, he finds a protective and affectionate shelter among the ghosts. In such a context, the text problematizes the definition of the human.

The uncanny interaction of the ghosts with the human can be observed as the ghosts of the graveyard discuss whether to take the baby Bod in or not, and one of them who wishes to adopt him remarks, "'I can look after him,' she said, 'as well as his own mama. She already gave him to me. Look: I'm holding him, aren't I? I'm touching him" (154). A ghost, a figure of the afterlife, carrying a

living baby in the most humanist sense serves to show the disturbance, the vexing (Jaques 27) that Gaiman has created, for it is a non-human body that integrates and interacts with the human. This interaction can be referred to as uncanny, and cannot be explained through anthropomorphic terminology. As Braidotti proposes, "The posthuman recomposition of human interaction that I propose is not the same as the reactive bond of vulnerability, but is an affirmative bond that locates the subject in the flow of relations with multiple others" (50). This bond, the aura of connectedness, could be observed in this ghost, along with the characters Odd, Bod, and Coraline; and their relations with the multiple others like gods in shapeshifted animal forms, ghosts and talking cats, respectively.

Even though he is named and raised by non-human entities, Bod still retains a kind of humanitarianism within, empowering himself with the virtues of both the human and the non-human. He still has more in him to help, and to connect with people, compared to his peers at school. For Scarlett, a girl who becomes his friend later on, he takes on great risks to show her around, to help her satisfy her curiosity:

> "I've found things out," said Scarlett.
> "Me too," said Bod. "Oh. Right," said Bod. "That explains it. Do you want to come and see one?"
> "You're telling the truth?"
> He nodded, a pleased smile dancing at the corners of his lips. "Come on," he said. (Gaiman 171)

Bod wanting to connect with and help humans reveals that he retains humanitarian values within him, and the fact that he learns them from his teachers, the non-human denizens of the graveyard, labels him as a posthuman assemblage. Unlike his days at school of the human world where he is constantly ignored and forgotten, Bod makes his mark only when his hybridity emerges, which is along the borderlines of the graveyard.

Throughout the story, Bod moves back and forth between these two worlds, which could be interpreted as the human world and the non-human world, the graveyard. As in the story of *Coraline*, Gaiman once again seeks to transgress the boundaries of both. Being another coming-of-age story, it focuses on "the development of the protagonist's mind and character… into maturity; this process usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world", as explained in Abrams and Harpham's joint discussion (255). Since his infancy, Bod learns to live with the ghosts, along with multiple non-human entities that belong to the world of fiction: "Silas, Bod's guardian, and mentor, is a vampire whose life straddles the world of the living and that of the dead. Miss Lupescu, another mentor, and protector of Bod when Silas is away, is a werewolf that teaches him through the rote memorization of lists" (Chang 10). Moreover, Bod takes his name for "looking like a Nobody", a name given by the denizens of the graveyard, the ghost of Mrs. Owens specifically. This bears significance in two ways: first one being the fact that the non-human remains incapable of naming, as I have discussed in the beginning; second one serves to remind us of the hybrid status of Bod due to his co-existence within two worlds, being a denizen of both the graveyard (the otherworld) and the real world. Their difference and purpose are discussed by Chang:

> Whereas the otherworld nurtures and protects him from danger, the real world initiates him into a wide range of trials, frustrations and failures when confronted with the harsh reality of humanity. The experiences in the real world are indispensable in urging him to look into his past, examine his present, and explore his future. (11)

Here a similarity between *Coraline* and *The Graveyard Book* emerges; due to the differences between their respective worlds, both Bod and Coraline come to terms with their co-existent identity. They both need to explore and discover. This is apparent when Bod says: "'I want to see life. I want to hold it in my hands. I want to leave a footprint on the sand of a desert island. I want to play football with people. I want,' he said, and then he paused, and he thought. 'I want everything'" (294). Having been half his life in an "betwixt and in-

between" status, Bod wants to seek out the world, the greater portion that he was unable to see.

Until he gets to that point, however, he needs to discover himself as a person, and because of the fact that Bod serves as a threshold figure, his sense of connectedness with his surroundings remains high, just like the other protagonists of Gaiman. So much so that he can talk to ghosts, vampires and werewolves with ease. He even says "I want to be like you" (163), to his vampire mentor Silas. When that person happens to be a vampire who is "infinitely older" than him (162), his acceptance and connectedness assume ironic resonances.

As Bod lives among the graveyard spirits, he attains "Freedom of the Graveyard," which allows him to have ghost-like abilities, such as fading invisible or walking through closed gates. Thus, he transgresses his human limits and he himself as an embodiment of the physical merging with the non-physical challenges Lockean notions of the human in humanism. Lockean human functions through the senses, particularly through the specular experience. By being invisible to the human eye and at the same time existing, he becomes the undefinable potential in humanist terms. By situating Bod between the two worlds, Gaiman creates him as a co-assemblage of the human and the non-human. To point out his threshold potential, I would like to turn to Nayar, as he remarks: "[T]hese texts emphasize the blurring of bodily borders, identities (gender, species, race), and even consciousness, in which isolating the 'human' from a human-machine assemblage, cadavers or another form of life is impossible" (11). Bod materializes this "another form of life" through his in-betweenness. He is both visible and invisible, he becomes hungry but is fed by a vampire; he is human but is in danger among humans; he is human but is raised by non-humans; he goes to school and proves to be better than the other students, but he does not appear on the official documents. His teachers both know and do not know him. He is at school but also absent at school. His status becomes a threat to all taken for granted notions.

To Nayar's statement I can certainly add "human-animal assemblage," as it is another becoming included under the label of the non-human. Through Bod, Gaiman constructs a human-animal assemblage. Bod's non-human mentors would help with his questions, as "adults would do their best to answer his questions, but their answers were often vague, or confusing, or contradictory" (162). The teachings of the ghosts follow Bod through his school life. He remains as 'faded' as possible, thus, "No one noticed the boy, not at first. No one even noticed that they hadn't noticed him … his answers were short and forgettable, colorless: he faded: in mind and in memory" (233). He becomes a ghost-like presence in the school, keeping his non-normative status intact.

His social relationships are just as humanitarian as in real life, he becomes an exemplary boy who protects his peers from bullies: "You two need to stop this. Stop behaving like other people don't matter. Stop hurting people" (241). Bod's empathy for his peers forces him to reveal himself to the bullies, a risk that he is willing to take for the sake of others, and he uses his powers to scare them:

> "That was good, dear," said someone behind him, a tall woman in white.
> "A nice Fade, first. Then the Fear."
> "Thank you," said Bod. "I hadn't even tried the Fear out on living people. I mean, I knew the theory, but. Well." (237)

As Anita Tarr remarks, he "has begun to appreciate his posthuman hybridity" (251). Bod must acknowledge his hybridity in order to reach his full potential in discovering himself, a process where he questions: "Where are my boundaries? Where does my body end and the world begin? What can I do, what should I do with this newfound power?" (Tarr 250).

Problematization of boundaries is integral to the children's novels by Gaiman, where characters communicate with cats, ghosts, frost giants to discover the boundaries of their worlds, along with their own. These boundaries are ontological as well as epistemological: cognitive boundaries, corporeal boundaries, linguistic boundaries, normative boundaries, moral boundaries etc.

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The non-human communicates back and guides these characters to their desired result, ultimately constructing a posthumanist co-assemblage, along with a state of co-existence where the differences and similarities of the human and the non-human are established and accepted.

To sum up, Gaiman's characters Odd, Coraline and Bod "require us to reconcile the physical body as part of desirability" (Wheaton 171) and reach a point where all differences are accepted for the purpose of a unison; whether inward or outward, the characters display a sense of connectedness which manifests itself as co-assemblage, due to their constant interaction with the non-human. The characters are innately equipped with the necessary cognitive tools to discover themselves, and come to terms with their threshold status as their lives depend on it. The constant interaction of the human characters with the non-human others in such an accepting manner indicates that Gaiman's characters are co-existent in their subjectivity, which is fundamentally a posthumanist concept, and hence, it creates a new narrative dimension for coming-of-age stories. This co-existence seems to empower Gaiman's pragmatic reason behind writing these stories. His between-the-lines meta messages to the children in these stories point out a posthumanist alternative to the dictated forms of the mainstream discourse. Children are introduced to the idea of co-existence without fear, and they inspire to be on both sides of the above given boundaries. This inspiration also leads to an alternative to the Vitruvian Man of humanism whose ideals are shattered in this welcoming of co-existence.

3.1. Objects with Agency in Neil Gaiman's Works for Young Readers

In Gaiman's *Fortunately, the Milk*, we witness the story of a father who goes to get milk, as they have run out of it and his children would like to eat cereal for breakfast. After "Ages and ages" (Gaiman 314), he arrives home bearing a bottle, and he narrates his story of what has happened, all the trials and tribulations he has had to endure, from aliens that are ambitious to conquer planets, to pirates who are fond of walking the plank, and to a stegosaurus with a

time machine. The Dad reminds us of the milk throughout the story, and it becomes the focus.

Having an unconventional title with a focus on the object, the milk, Gaiman sets the stage that the story will have a myriad of objects that are represented through their consciousness. As the Dad narrates his story to get the milk safely back home, the setting always shifts, depending on what he sees in the kitchen where he recites his story, as it is revealed at the end. This form of narrative inspires a departure from the linear flow of humanist mode of thinking. Jumping from object to object that shapes his narrative, he acknowledges and objectifies the agential power of these objects.

His first story is about an alien spaceship, the name of which is only referred to as a disc: "I looked up and saw a huge silver disc hovering in the air above Marshall Road. … And the next thing I knew, I was being sucked up into the disc. Fortunately, I had put the milk into my coat pocket" (Gaiman 315). While we may not know the type of spaceship referred to here, or if there is a spaceship to begin with, through the hyperobject "disc", Gaiman reminds us that aliens shall ensue, for it is the consciousness of the object that has left its imprint on our minds.

A more significant example would be the milk itself. Throughout the story, the reader becomes confounded by the status of milk, as it gets kidnapped by aliens, pirates, wumpires (vampires who name themselves that way) along with the Dad and joins a dangerous time-space adventure with an inventor stegosaurus, leaving the reader more concerned. However, as the Dad leaves the troubling antagonists safely, so does the milk as it finds him each time and the phrase "fortunately, the milk…" becomes retold, marking an end for each incident.

As I mentioned in the first chapter, hyperobjects keep shifting, and here the milk goes through an infinite number of shifts. I call the milk a hyperobject as it metamorphoses from one context to another through shifting implications. No

visible shift or change about the milk that can be explained through the human senses has occurred during the venture. The bottle has not been broken, nor damaged, but has seen several evils, been to a "hole in space" (354) through the stegosaurus's time-machine, and somehow, fortunately, made it back home safely with him; all the while shifting the viewpoint, as well as acting in uncanny form.

Under no circumstances would the bottle of milk have survived such a chain of incidents, and here I argue the milk's ontological significance as a hyperobject, for it seems to be transcending the human experience and its material conditions due to the reasons I have mentioned above. We as the readers are led to believe that the milk does not stand for a bottle of milk only, rather, its significance as a hyperobject points to its consciousness as a bottle of milk. Gaiman narrates a story within the story while keeping the focus on the milk throughout, and in this way the milk emerges as a hyperobject, rather than a bottle of milk, for it becomes a thought. Hyperobject emerging as thought becomes a focal point as Morton quotes Harman, "This is only possible because thought is given a unique ability to negate and transcend immediate experience, which inanimate matter is never allowed to do…" (25). The implications of the milk become contextual as they shift, and those implications point out different cognition and consciousness dimensions in experiential reality whose borders defy the borders of humanism. When we arrive at the end of the story, we realize that all the characters in it have been inspired by the objects around the Dad:

> Then we both looked around the kitchen. At the calendar on the wall with the hot air balloons on it. At my dinosaur models and my sister's ponies, at my sister's vampire books, at the picture of a volcano I had painted when I was little, last year, and which is still up on the wall by the fridge. (378)

There are two points that I would like to argue here in terms of hyperobject and posthumanism. Firstly, if we are to look at these objects as non-human entities, we realize that Gaiman positions them in a flat ontology, and in attributing each of them a shared story, he successfully produces their bundle of qualities

emerging at their own expense, a phenomenon known as withdrawal[1]. As Morton remarks:

> [N]o other entity can fully account for them. These entities must exist in a relatively flat ontology in which there is hardly any difference between a person and a pincushion. And relationships between them, including causal ones, must be vicarious and hence aesthetic in nature. (21)

Due to 'withdrawal', the ontological significance of the characters, objects and even settings remain on the same ground. Especially in *Fortunately, the Milk*, the characters are turned into objects in that they have no difference from each other. He allows us to deduce their withdrawal through the casual conversations of the characters, even when they include conceptual implications:

> "The human is holding the milk in order to make these evil redecorating snot-bubbles go away and stop menacing this planet and us," said Professor Steg.
> The Diplodocus in a police cap opened its mouth and didn't say anything.
> The Tyrannosaurus, who had handcuffed all of the green globby people together… .(Gaiman 369)

When all these characters come together, they only show acceptance and a sense of connectedness to each other. They co-exist on a much more different plane than the human world, thus they develop into viscous becomings, creating their stories all the while actualizing themselves, for that is their agentic power they extract from being an object in the posthumanist mode of thinking, called

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[1] According to Harman, withdrawal occurs when the objects limit direct access to them, such as global warming as it becomes an ominous entity that can be felt, but not computed. He admits that the usual objection to this would be considered as a complaint, however, he states that "this objection assumes that there are only two alternatives: clear prose statements of truth on one side and vague poetic gesticulations on the other" (9), for it confuses the perception of the human. Morton exemplifies through Heideggerian terms that when a tool executes its function (*Vollzung*), "it withdraws from access (*Entzug*); … only when a tool is broken that it seems to become present-at-hand (vorhanden)" (21). He adds that their "primordial reality is withdrawn from humans" (21), meaning that what we experience with them becomes our "human translation" (80), and not its ontological significance. Thus, the ontological significance of the object relies not on its physical manifestation, but on a more complicated, unfathomable power. He refers to Harman by saying that "because objects withdraw irreducibly, you can't even get closer to objects. This becomes clearer as we enter the ecological crisis— 'Has it started yet? How far in are we?' This anxiety is a symptom of the emergence of hyperobjects" (qtd. in Morton 60). Therefore, the hyperobject can only exist within thought and cannot be computed due to their complexity.

"ecological interconnectedness" (Morton 35). Even though the characters have different backgrounds like aliens and dinosaurs, they are ontologically situated on the same plane where no one can dominate one another. In a posthumanist mode of thinking, objects earn their agentic power to affect anything and everything around them, for they are viscous. In this regard Morton explains:

> While hyperobjects are near, they are also very uncanny. Some days, global warming fails to heat me up. It is strangely cool or violently stormy. My intimate sensation of prickling heat at the back of my neck is only a distorted print of the hot hand of global warming. (32)

As we see in *Fortunately, the Milk*, the bottle of milk becomes a hyperobject due to the countless times it appears in the story. Throughout the story, it remains in the Dad's pocket, it acts as an uncanny element that constantly reminds itself in his mind:

> Fortunately, the milk was pushed deep into the pocket of my coat. (324)
> Fortunately, the milk had fallen into a small drift of volcanic ash, and was unharmed. (348)
> Fortunately, the milk struck me in the stomach, and in clutching my hands to my belly I caught the milk. (353)
> Fortunately, the milk floated at a crucial moment and it all ended for the best. (362)

I have mentioned earlier that hyperobjects can be computed, but cannot be directly seen, or felt. Here, the milk is portrayed in such a way that it leaves its concrete manifestation, its image in our world, and aligns itself with its intangible quality, which remains at its core, to be revealed by its own accord, to indicate its agency. We see a different ontological blurring here from what Bod experiences. Bod was a human baby who was raised by the ghosts. He could speak and employ human semiotic system in his experiential and cognitive reality. In this book, however, we have a different ontological ground. It is the ground occupied by the milk which creates its own semiotic system in the flow of the narrative. Milk is like a fluent signifier that creates its own semiotic references in the changing contexts. Milk like the signifier is neither stabilized

nor kept in a concrete form. It defies the taken for granted human norms and sensual experiences in its own way.

Considering the agentic power of hyperobjects, it emerges by its own volition, and in the Dad's case, the moment becomes tense whenever the milk is in danger, or saved right when it is about to be destroyed. By doing so, it foregrounds its ontological significance and affects the characters, along with the world around it. As it can be observed, the milk provides a pause in the story: forcing itself to be acknowledged, it turns into something that can be thought rather than felt. In addition, the constant re-occurrence of this throughout the story serves to attribute the milk an uncanny nature, acting out its agency. These become the milk's bundle of qualities which ultimately make it a hyperobject.

Secondly, the other entities can be perceived through "anthropomorphic translation" (Morton 18), despite the difficulty to perceive them in their stories, as their names and descriptions change. For example, the hot air balloon becomes a "floaty-ball-person-carrier," to which the Dad replies "I call it a balloon" (327). The thought of balloon comes to the Dad's mind while transcending its immediate experience, as it is a more advanced invention. Here I argue that the balloon becomes a hyperobject as it leaves, it is devoid of anthropomorphic translation, and turns into an image already established in the Dad's mind with the agency that it carries out. In this process, its ontological implication does not suffer a lack, on the contrary, it adds, as Harman (2019) explains: "These objects can only be differentiated through their respective stories, but their ontology remains as 'objects themselves'" (1). The balloon as an object operates to carry people, so does a "floaty-ball-person-carrier," however, the latter acts out its agency through the story, rather than operating physically, which evokes the ideas of a balloon in the Dad's mind, once again turning into a hyperobject to be thought, rather than felt.

Upon the revelation of where the Dad's stories truly emerge from, we realize that they all interacted with each other, in many different ways, through the

opposition between human and non-human, material, discursive (and even inhuman). In this regard it would be safe to assume Gaiman's ethico-political purposes through which object-object interactions fit the frame of object-oriented ontology, making space for their mutual interplay. Barad calls this "intra-action," which "signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies … The notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through their intra-action" (33). An important example of intra-action appears when an argument between the Dad, a volcano god and an alien ensues:

> "If two things that are the same thing touch," proclaimed the volcano god, "then the whole Universe shall end. Thus sayeth the great unutterable Splod."
> "How does a volcano know so much about transtemporal meta-science?" asked one of the pale green aliens.
> "Being a geological formation gives you a lot of time to think," said Splod.
> "Also, I subscribe to a number of learned journals." (367)

There is plethora of discursive references in these lines, all of which intra-act with each other and our world simultaneously. If we focus on the volcano god here, its power provides a different story; inclining towards a disaster, after all, its power remains unimaginable for the human mind. For Morton, "cosmic phenomena such as meteors and blood-red Moons, tsunamis, tornadoes, and earthquakes have terrified humans in the past. Meteors and comets were known as *disasters*" (22). These disasters prominently become hyperobjects, as their agency can only be computed but their consequences remain unfathomable. For this reason, humanity finds their "relatively coherent ways of explaining catastrophes. In Japanese Shinto, a tsunami is the vengeance of a *Kami* who has been angered in some way" (Morton 22).

When we consider the power of a volcano god and the Japanese Kami (Kami means God in Japanese), a parallel is drawn between them, as they both turn into hyperobjects, the magnitude of which cannot be fathomed with such destructive powers. A talking volcano god, already a hyperobject, teaching aliens about "transtemporal meta-science," an Earthly human experience or scientific field,

can be discussed through diffractive methods. Despite their intra-action, they remain distinct from one another; as hyperobjects, their ontological sites remain on the same ground where no one dominates the other. Furthermore, their viscosity becomes apparent through this intra-action, as they affect each other through certain events, and they consequently become affected in return:

> "What we did to Rigel Four was art!" argued a globby alien.
> "Art? There are people on Rigel Four," said an Ankylosaurus, "who have to look up, every night, at a moon with three huge plaster ducks   flying across it" (369).

The multiple non-human entities in this discourse exhibit their hyperobject qualities along with their actions being stuck to other entities, their viscous quality. The effects that the Dad and professor stegosaurus, along with the aliens, had ultimately lead up to their encounter with the galactic police, who says "You have committed crimes against the inhabitants of eighteen planets, and crimes against good taste" (369).

To conclude, Gaiman employs elements of object-oriented ontology and hyperobject in his stories to unite his characters and create a bond between the human and the non-human while presenting how trivial this bond may seem at times, and at other times how it is of utmost importance for our lives. He achieves it through the withdrawal of the hyperobject, its viscosity, and its incomprehensibility for the human mind, as it is there to be felt but cannot be ciphered.

3.2. Storied Matter in Neil Gaiman's Works for Young Readers

The concept of "becoming with" takes its most ambitious stride in material ecocriticism, which, following posthumanism, makes space for a new understanding that matter as we know it is "endowed with meanings and is thick with stories, manifesting as 'storied matter'" (Oppermann 55). For this, literature would be a fitting ground to provide examples from as the objects having

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narrative agency is a common point of reference in it. In this chapter I will discuss the concept of storied matter in Neil Gaiman's children's novels to argue how these novels go beyond the humanist norms. In my discussion of these novels, I will consult Opperman's concept of storied matter.

In a posthumanist mode of thinking, the non-human is anything that the human is not, hence it applies a dualist episteme while disregarding the specifics, and does not construct an applicable subject, as this "inadvertently [puts] a rift between nature and culture" (Oppermann 55). While many studies have proven that the interaction of the human and the non-human has been in effect since the premodern times, the Middle Ages in particular, the qualities and aspects that construct the non-human for itself were not defined on a clear ground. Regarding those studies, a notable one would be Myra Seaman's on how the Middle Ages conceptualized scenarios with human-Other hybrids:

> [T]hey, too, examined and extended their selfhood through a blend of the embodied self with something seemingly external to it – not the products of scientific discovery, but Christ, as well as the promised embodiment after death his sacrifice ensured. … [T]he posthuman is not a distinct 'other', an entirely new species; instead, the posthuman is a hybrid that is a more developed, more advanced, or more powerful version of the existing self. (Seaman 250)

As mentioned above, posthumanism has sought a space of signification for the non-human since it acknowledges the non-human agency through its own discourse. This was also the departure point for new materialism, a "material-discursive practice" (Barad 25), holding that the human and the non-human are in constant interaction, which can "interpenetrate each other. Bodies, texts, machines, human and non-human entities continually interact in complex relationships" (Hekman 14-15). The significant aspect of these relationships is that they both add to the co-existent assemblage of posthumanism, which I have presented through Gaiman's characters. Moving on now to discuss how matter in Gaiman's novels becomes storied matter, by focusing on the non-human objects and others, I will argue that Gaiman fictionalizes and emphasizes the significance of storied matter in a posthumanist mode of thinking.

In this context a disabled character, Odd, from *Odd and the Frost Giants* becomes significant. His disability remains physical, as he is "a boy with one good leg, one very bad leg, and a wooden crutch" (Gaiman 10), which is with Odd wherever he goes. Odd's use of a wooden crutch provides an already instilled transhuman in him, but, as I argue, it shall reveal itself as a posthuman concept in the grand scheme of things.

Although posthumanism seems to be the umbrella term containing transhuman within itself, the two concludes on different ends. While transhumanism remains humanist in that it is "an intensification of humanism" (Wolfe xv), which focuses on perfecting the human body through technology; posthumanism seeks to achieve a unison between the human, the animal, the plants and others while expecting the human not to dominate them but to learn from and become with them.

When discussed through ecocritical concepts, the wooden crutch would reveal another aspect of posthumanism. Within the frame of new materialism, we can deduce the innate ability of matter's agency, actively making its existence or that of the humans' more meaningful. The wooden crutch that Odd uses makes their lives easier, all the while providing a meaningful experience for both. I am saying meaningful to indicate that one cannot have meaning without the other, something that Oppermann refers to as "co-constitutive materiality" (Opperman 56), where the human and the nonhuman become entangled. This meaningful existence is one that remains outside logocentrism, which posthumanism strongly opposes.

Another significant aspect of material ecocriticism is that it analyses "the interlacements of matter and discourses not only as they are re-created by literature and other cultural forms, but also as they emerge in material expressions" (Oppermann 56), which empowers narrative agency of matter, more specifically called storied matter. In this line of thinking we can take Odd's crutch as a storied matter due to its co-constitutive materiality. My motif behind

choosing Odd's crutch as a storied matter mainly stems from the fact that whenever Odd commits a drastic action his crutch follows: "[H]e stumbled on a patch of ice, and his crutch went flying" (Gaiman 13). Gaiman makes sure that it remains a companion to Odd: "He walked over to the straw mattress and climbed onto it, placing the crutch carefully against the wall, to pull himself up with when he woke" (15). The co-constitutive materiality becomes evident here, the crutch allows Odd to fit in the criteria of the anthropomorphic human, which attains both itself and Odd a story, creativity, and agency. Odd cares deeply for his crutch as it would be impossible for him to even wake up without it, and without Odd, the crutch would have been a piece of wood. Storied matter precisely underlines this relationship, "through [their] interplay of natural-cultural forces" (Opperman 59), Odd and his crutch form meaning and unity.

In this way, it is the crutch (the non-human to be more specific) that ties Odd to his surroundings, and he would be in grave danger had he lost it. When the Frost Giant puts him "on the top of the wall around Asgard … Odd leaned into his crutch, scared that a gust of wind would blow him away and down to his death" (35). Through the crutch's aid Odd can become more aware, noticing its importance as it is the link that ties him to his world. For this reason, I argue that Odd leaves the boundaries of transhuman; by keeping the nature-culture continuum intact, he achieves to move onto a posthuman space.

Another posthuman element in Gaiman's text emerges when Odd talks about wood carving, a ritualistic tradition of the old times, "My father used to say that the carving was in the wood already. You just had to find out what the wood wanted it to be, and then take your knife and remove everything that wasn't that" (Gaiman 21). Gaiman refers to two major concepts of posthumanism here, the first one is recognizing the wood's agency as a creative storied matter that allows it to become individuated; the second one is attaining the non-human matter with revered intelligence, so much so that it guides the human to individuate itself, once again maintaining nature-culture continuum and reinforcing the co-existent posthuman assemblage in a flat ontology.

Like Odd's crutch, the button eyes of the other family in *Coraline* would be another example of storied matter. Buttons as eyes, before *Coraline*, were solely used to provide an ocular organ for ragdolls, to emanate the likeness of a human as a comely feature. However, when the characters of the other world have buttons for eyes, Gaiman reveals his twist, as these characters are of evil origin, the buttons symbolize the evil becoming, an element of the other world. Rudd explains this as a metaphor: "Coraline's button replacements have the related association of giving up one's soul, the eyes being its windows" (163), and to complete his argument I will argue the posthumanist mode of thinking behind it.

When used on ragdolls, buttons would actualize only one of their purposes. As storied matter holds, there are countless ways for matter to represent itself, depending on its surroundings and its creativity. Here Gaiman creates an uneasy image by attributing buttons for eyes to the other mother. This is reinforced by the narrative as Coraline converses with her other parents: "There was something hungry in the old man's button eyes that made Coraline feel uncomfortable" (Gaiman 71). Buttons in her own world would not have any effect on Coraline to make her feel uncomfortable, however, in the other world where the conception of reality is distorted, they affect her as they become a shifted discursive material (Barad 34). The significance of buttons in the other world for Coraline is revealed when her other parents offer her a permanent place of residency:

> "If you want to stay," said her other father, "there's only one little thing we'll have to do, so you can stay here forever and always."
> They went into the kitchen. On a china plate on the kitchen table was a spool of black cotton, and a long silver needle, and beside them, two large black buttons. (78)

A quite horrifying process for a child, the process of losing her 'self' becomes another focus as explained by Saeede Hosseinpour, in their collaborated exploration of magical realism in *Coraline* with Nahid Shahbazi Moghadam: "She threatens Coraline to trap her forever in the other world and steal her identity by replacing her eyes with black buttons as she has similarly preyed on other children, heretofore" (98). However, as this study argues the other world as

non-human, I would like to point out that when the other mother asks her to commit the change, Coraline is inclined to become a non-human herself.

In *Coraline*, from her point of view, this innocent everyday object becomes a pass into the non-human and thus symbolizes a matter that is equipped with "intrinsic vitality and productive agency" (Oppermann 62). Though we do not know whether the buttons provide vision, like the human eye, it is apparent that they turn into an interconnection with the human body, taking the idea of trans-corporeality by Stacy Alaimo to a new ground. While Alaimo remarks "human agency is always an assemblage of microbes, animals, plants, metals, chemicals" (qtd. in Oppermann 61), pointing out the common relationship between man and matter, Gaiman changes this idea for a broader and deeper result. Thus, Gaiman achieves a new materialistic turn, proving that matter cannot be viewed as inert or inanimate.

Additionally, according to new materialism, matter forms heterogenous patterns, and thus creates agentic assemblages (Oppermann 62). Here the buttons in *Coraline* are thought to provide a process of becoming in a different conception of reality which "is now defined as a site of various layers of materiality, cognition, meaning, and as 'matter-energy'" as Oppermann quotes De Landa (63). Through its matter-energy, buttons create an agentic assemblage by interacting with a human.

Thus far I have discussed that subject-object relationship in a posthumanist mode of thinking relies on co-existence, which reveals an unstable, transgressive subjectivity. As Bennett argues, there emerges "an incalculable nonidentity – none of these are passive objects or stable entities (though neither are they intentional subjects). They allude instead to vibrant materials" (20). Emphasizing the agency of matter, Bennett argues the co-dependence of matter, "an actant never really acts alone. Its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces" (21). So, in line with Bennett, Gaiman couples his characters with matter, with

the purpose of creating a co-assemblage. Due to the agency of storied matter, a co-existent story emerges with Odd's crutch, along with the buttons in *Coraline*, where one acquires agency due to the other.

To conclude this chapter, I discuss subject-object relationship in Gaiman's fictional works through two concepts: hyperobject of the object-oriented ontology and storied matter. They earn their significance as they become the main concepts in the stories. Storied matter creates its own meaning, as Oppermann quotes Barad, "meaning is 'an ongoing performance of the world in its differential intelligibility" (64), indicating that language is not needed for their vibrance. The shift from the need for language for story writing to becoming part of a "narrativity produced by social, cultural, geological, and biological forces" (66), occurs. Coraline's buttons, Odd's piece of wood and crutch, all these inanimate objects are turned into a storied matter by Gaiman bringing their inherently powerful narrative agency to the fore, while being paired with the anthropocentric human figures.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Neil Gaiman's characters in his fiction for children go beyond the 'human' boundaries. They are either non-humans (ghosts in *The Graveyard Book*, cats and animals in *Coraline*) or threshold figures between two ontological sites (Bod, Odd, Coraline). His treatment of the matter and the intricacies between the human and matter also deserves attention as it points out a non/post-anthropomorphic space. I argue that all these elements can be discussed borrowing concepts from posthumanism, and this attempt might pave the way for fresh roadmaps to read Gaiman's fiction for children.

By discussing Neil Gaiman's works for young readers taking posthumanism as its conceptual backcloth, this thesis also argues how modern works of fiction for children can employ a posthumanist mode of thinking by creating co-assemblages and new subject-object relationships. Children's literature has been discussed within a posthumanist frame of thinking in recent years, but these discussions have usually addressed the classical texts. This thesis aimed to fill in this gap in literary scholarship. Posthumanist mode of thinking can also be taken as an ethical corrective to humanism and its frozen ideology. The most radical way to offer this corrective might be through children's literature as it reconfigures and acculturates the future generations on more solid ethical grounds.

I opted for Neil Gaiman as his works provided adequate material to prove my claim about literature and posthumanism. The thesis has underlined that Gaiman indeed employed posthumanist concepts to encourage a conception of unity between the human and the non-human entities. Disregarding the

anthropocentric conception of reality, he suggests new ways of becoming through the co-assemblages he creates with his characters, his use of hyperobjects, and employment of storied matter.

He achieves his aim by creating human characters that are reliant on non-human entities, hence becoming a co-assemblage, and by shifting their subjectivity, as we have seen through the characters Odd, Bod and Coraline. They all need the agency of the non-human around them to let them witness their world with fresh eyes, and learn about the bonds between the human and the non-human, and discover themselves as a non-human or threshold figure. Another suggestion would be the alternate worlds of these characters where the conception of reality is shifted. The result is transgressing the boundaries of Cartesian thinking, along with anthropomorphism, creating a new space of signification for the non-human others, such as Coraline's otherworld, Bod's graveyard, and Odd's Asgard. Since they are places specifically for the existence of the non-human, they dismiss the human from their borders, and only via their means can humans achieve entrance to them. The entrance to the non-human realm in these stories requires an act that highlights another key concept of posthumanism: storied matter. The objects in question become agents acting out the needs of the non-human other, such as the buttons in *Coraline*, the ghosts in *The Graveyard Book*, and the lake in *Odd and the Frost Giants*. They work for the ends of the non-human and ultimately create their story through their agency.

Lastly, all the objects that Gaiman utilizes to achieve the non-human space may as well be read in another line of thinking, that is, object-oriented ontology, whose description remains ominous, an all-seeing-all-becoming entity that exhibits itself as a multiplicity of matter and thought. Hyperobject is ominous as in Morton's examples: He suggests, for example, global warming is an indicator pointing out that climate is something we can conceptualize but not something we can see or touch (18), regardless of the fact that it is always there with or without human contact.

In a similar line of thinking, Gaiman's treatment of the ever-so-protected presence of the milk throughout the story in *Fortunately, the Milk*, allows him to render it as a hyperobject. It remains a constant in the story, occupying the reader to such an extent that it acts as an uncanny element, an ominous becoming that makes itself heard, and seen throughout, turning the title into a concept itself. Moreover, the characters of *Fortunately, the Milk* are chosen to have uncanny significance in the story, such as a volcano god, a stegosaurus and aliens, whose power can be just as ominous as a hyperobject, compared to "a human father" (Gaiman 372). As the Dad travels through alien spaceships, ships of the pirates, planets in the galaxy, "wumpires" (Gaiman 355) of eerie settings and descriptions, his journey becomes tied together at the end when the galactic police dinosaurs demand the aliens' arrest. All the characters come together on the same ontological ground, referring to the flat ontology of a hyperobject. When it is revealed to us that the Dad is 'inspired' by the toys around him, the discussion regarding the hyperobject becomes solidified. We witness the physical manifestations of the objects in these stories, leaving an imprint in our minds, proving that their ontological significance remains, along with their stories, inconsequential to the human existence; they are objects themselves.

Through the unison of human and non-human entities in his works, Gaiman promises to keep peace between binary oppositions, at the cost of the humanist categories. Odd lives content with his crutch, a storied matter that takes him out of the anthropocentric definition of man, around the animals, lakes and frost giants that can communicate, constructing a co-assemblage subjectivity throughout; Coraline learns the importance of her family through their non-human versions with buttons for eyes having different agencies in an "otherworld" where the conception of reality is shifted; Bod continues to live with ghosts in the graveyard, a non-human space that normally would not allow acknowledgement to him; and lastly the milk of the Dad acts as a hyperobject to regulate the story and tie all the characters together at the end, extracting its power from the physical manifestations of objects around it.

One of the results that I draw from the discussions in previous chapters is, as the stories' messages follow and contain a humanitarian attitude, Gaiman also emphasizes the difference between humanism and humanitarianism. Even though humanism loses its meaning as a frozen ideology, humanitarianism continues to be an important part of the stories. This is exemplified through the environment: what Bod goes through at his school, the human world, revolves around humanism, which contradicts what he has learned in the graveyard, the non-human world, regarding certain norms like courtesy and valuing all lives. The biggest irony in the book is when the ghosts take a toddler into their graveyard to protect him from a suspicious man. The ghosts empower Bod by giving him a name and prepare him to lead an exemplary life based on humanitarianism, which allows him to make a connection between the human and the non-human, transforming him into a posthuman during the process.

Odd's crutch or Coraline's buttons, both act as a subsidiary to their respective owners, and compliment them in order to be functional, earning agentic power through their vibrancy and creating co-assemblages by suggesting new meanings for both themselves and their owners.

The discussions of this study aimed to provide a new hermeneutical frame for Neil Gaiman's works for young readers, *Coraline, The Graveyard Book, Odd and the Frost Giants* and *Fortunately, the Milk.* It is evident that Gaiman consults concepts of posthumanism in two ways: the co-existence of the human and the non-human; along with subject-object relations through hyperobjects and storied matter. For the time being this study is a pioneer for a posthumanist discussion of Gaiman's works and as such, it opens the way for further studies. This study also underlines that Gaiman's texts underline the differences between humanism and humanitarianism. Through posthumanist concepts, Gaiman proves the importance of humanitarianism over humanism, as evident in his writings, he leaves the frozen ideology of humanism and instead resorts to posthumanism to construct the ethical backbone of his works.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Modern kurgu örnekleri, özellikle realizm akımına ait örnekler, okuyucularını yarattıkları dünyalar, karakterler, temalar ve motifler ile büyülüyor gibi görünseler de, yazarların çoğu karakterin çevreleriyle bir bütünlük içinde olmasını göz ardı ettiği gözlemlenmiştir. Karakterlerin insanların üstünlüğünü tanıyan bir hiyerarşi içerisinde yaşaması buna bir neden olarak gösterilebilir.

Doğanın ve insan-dışı varlıkların insanların hükmünde bulunduğunu savunan hümanizme karşı ortaya çıkan posthümanizm alanı, insanın bu hiyerarşideki tanımlamasını eşleştirerek kendi alanını oluşturmaya başlamıştır.

15.yüzyılda Leonardo da Vinci'nin "Vitruvius Adamı" portresini baz alarak bir insan biçimi oluşturan antropomorfizm anlayışını savunan hümanizm, bu biçimin dışında kalan bireyler için büyük problemleri beraberinde getirmiştir. Özellikle Kraliçe Victoria döneminde başlangıç gösteren ve hayvanlara zarar veren hayvan dövüşleri, avcılık gibi aktiviteler ile kurulan insan hakimiyeti birçok insan dışı varlığa eziyet etmiştir.

İnsan dışı bireyleri ve insanları bir araya getiren posthümanizm, insan biçimciliğin dışlayıcı tavrını sorunsallaştırarak daha birlikçi ve birleştirici bir düşünceyi savunmakla beraber, insanı olmadığı şeyler üzerinden, yani insan-dışı varlıklar üzerinden tanımlayıp insanı merkezleştirmekten kaçınarak onun çevresiyle eşit bir düzlemde yaşaması gerektiğini anlatmayı amaç edinmiştir. Bu bağlamda bu düşünme tavrının odak noktası insandan daha çok insan-dışı varlıklar ve bu varlıkların nasıl meydana geldikleri olmuştur.

Şüphesiz ki posthümanizm oluşturduğu kuramı topluma aktarmada yalnız kalmamış, edebiyat en büyük yardımcısı olmuştur. Fakat, edebiyatın sadece belirli türlerinin posthümanist felsefeye uygun olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Başak Ağın'ın *Posthümanizm* kitabında da anlattığı üzere, "[B]ilim-kurgu, fantastik edebiyat, çizgi film gibi edebi türlerin … insan ve insan-dışı varlıkların hiyerarşik biçimde değil, yatay bir düzlemde konumlandıklarını ifade eden düz bir ontoloji, posthümanizmdeki 'posthuman' tanımını algılamamıza yardımcı olabilir..." (24). Az önce bahsedilen insan ve insan-dışı varlıkların bir arada uyum içerisinde gözlemlendiği ortam sadece bu türlerde örneklenmiştir. Çünkü bu türlerde anlatılan karakterler hikayeleriyle hiyerarşik bir düzende değil, yatay bir düzlemde konumlandırılırlar. Böylece hümanizmdeki insan üstünlüğü gibi domine edici anlayışlar ortadan kalkmış olur. Yaratılan bu yatay düzlem insan çevresi ve insan-dışı varlıklar için daha geniş bir temsil boyutu oluşturmuştur. Bu sayede posthümanizm için örnekleme, yorum ve gelişim alanları ortaya çıkmıştır.

Dünyamızdaki süregelen insan üstünlüğünden dolayı mağdur bırakılan hayvanlar, ağaçlar yalnızca kurgu edebiyatında seslerini duyurabilmiş ve yalnızca bu medyada kendilerini savunabilmişlerdir. Bu eserlerin çoğu insanı kendi içerisinde değil, olmadığı şeyler ile tanımlamayı kendine misyon edinmiştir. Ağın'ın da kitabında yazdığı üzere:

> [P]osthümanizm, insan yerine 'posthuman' kavramı altında tüm insan ve insan-dışı varlıkları toplar; eyleyicilik olarak Türkçeleştirilen 'agency' kavramını yeniden sorgulayarak, insanı, olması gerektiği yerde, dünyanın diğer tüm bileşenleri ile aynı düzlemde, yatay olarak konumlandırılır. (Ağın 29)

Bu öğelerden ötürü de Zoe Jaques gibi eleştirmenler çocuk edebiyatını posthümanizm kuramına daha yakın olduğunu öne sürmüştür. Posthümanizm kuramı incelendiğinde kurgusal edebiyatta ve özellikle genç okuyucular için olan eserlerde göze çarpan belirli temalar tespit edilmiştir. İnsan karakterlerin sürekli etkileşimde bulunduğu insan-dışı varlıkların dönüşümlü olarak birbirlerini etkilemeleri; yaratılan dünyaların değiştirilmiş bir gerçekliğe sahip olmalarıyla

nesnelerin kendi ontolojilerini duyurmaları ve aynı zamanda kendi hikayelerini yaratmaları bu çalışmada odak noktası kazanacak olan noktalardır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmada esas olarak kullanılacak olan öğeler "öznellik" ve "özne-nesne ilişkileri" olacaktır.

Çocuk romanlarında sıradışı olayların ve karakterlerin hiç yargılanmadan kabul görmesi aslında bize farklı bir doğaları olduğunu gösterir. Karakter veya bitkilerin gerçek hayattaki suretlerine aykırı bir şekilde konuşması, farklı şekilde yürümesi hatta diğer karakterlere karşı komplo kurması kimse için şaşırtıcı olmaz. Böylece insan-dışı varlıkların kendilerini özgürce ifade edebildiği, Kartezyen düşünce sisteminin problematize edildiği bir ortama adım atılmış olunur.

Bazı çalışmalar oluşturulan bu ortamları kurgunun büyüsüne, "büyülü gerçekçilik" şeklinde adlandırılan türe ithaf etmiş olsa da (Hosseinpour, Moghadam), yapılan gözlemler sonuncunda bu ortam ve temaların posthümanist bir okuma ile daha farklı yorum katmanlarına ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca karakterlerin yaşadıklarını reşit olma süreci açısından inceleyerek psikanalitik alanı takip eden Chang ve Rudd'ın anlatıları da yeterince kapsamlı değildir. Daha önce Gaiman'ın yetişkin kitapları üzerine yapılan posthümanist tartışmalar bulunsa da (Harrison), bu çalışma kendi amacından ötürü çocuk kitaplarına odaklanmayı tercih ederek onlardan ayrılmıştır.

Özetlemek gerekirse, kurgu edebiyatındaki karakterlerin birden fazla evrende arada kalmışlığını, özne-nesne ilişkilerini ve maddenin eyleyiciliğini tartışmak üzerine yazılan bu çalışmadaki argümana en iyi örnek ve ortamı sağlayan yazar ve eserlerinin Neil Gaiman'ın genç okuyucular için yazdığı eserleri olduğuna karar verilmiştir. Bu eserler *Odd and the Frost Giants, Coraline, The Graveyard Book,* ve *Fortunately, the Milk* olup fantastik kurgunun kaynağında posthümanist kavramların bulunduğunu ve bu kavramları sırasıyla "öznellik" ve "özne-nesne ilişkileri" olarak tartışmamda büyük ölçüde yardımcı olmuşlardır.

Neil Richard Gaiman fantastik kurgu edebiyatında yarattığı etkiyle 21.yüzyılın öne çıkan yazarlarından biri olmuştur. Yazdığı popüler seriler olan *The Sandman, American Gods* ve *Stardust* sayesinde Hugo, Nebula, Bram Stoker gibi birçok önemli ödülü kazanma hakkını elde etmiştir. National Theatre'ın incelemelerinde de bahsettiği üzere, yazdığı *American Gods, The Good Omens* ve *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* gibi eserlerin film ve tiyatro uyarlamaları birçok platform tarafından şaşırtıcı derecede iyi yorumlar almıştır.

Gaiman'ın eserlerinde insan ve insan-dışı varlıkların sürekli etkileşiminin ve bu etkileşimden doğan olayların sık kullanılan bir motif olduğu saptanmıştır. Ayrıca bu etkileşimlerin sonucunda ortaya çıkan karakterler iki farklı evrenin eşiğinde kalarak bir ortada-kalmışlık deneyimlemektedir. İnsan ve insan-dışı karakterler tarafların etkileşimleriyle birbirlerinden öğrenir ve bir arada yaşamalarının önemi vurgulanır. Bunun yanında eserlerde özne-nesne ilişkisi sorunsallaştırılırken nesnelerin kendi eyleyicilikleri de mevcuttur. Bu örnekler posthümanizmin öznellik, ve özne-nesne ilişkileri gibi kavramlarla tartışıldığında yeni bir okuma katmanına götürmektedir. Bu bağlamda Neil Gaiman'ın genç okuyucular için yazdığı romanlar üzerinden eşikte kalmış karakterler, özne-nesne ilişkileri ve öyküsel madde tartışılacaktır. Bu tartışma sayesinde Gaiman'ın çocuk eserlerinin posthümanizmden ödünç alınan kavramlar bulunduğu ortaya çıkacaktır.

Posthümanizm'in öncülerinden biri olan Cary Wolfe yazdığı *What is Posthumanism?* adlı kitabında insanlık/hayvanlık arasındaki çizgiyi Balibar'dan alıntılayarak şöyle açıklamıştır: "'İnsan'a sadece doğadaki hayvan kökenini baskılayarak değil, biyolojik, evrimsel, ama genel olarak materyallik ve cisimleştirmeyi tümüyle beraber aştığı zaman ulaşılır" (xv. Çev. M. Gültekin). Braidotti'nin söylediklerini yankılamakta olan bu açıklama bir ikilik oluşturup aynanın diğer tarafında kalarak insanı insan-dışı üzerinden tanımlamayı tercih etmiştir.

Posthümanist romanlar, hümanist romanların aksine, insan-dışı varlıkları kabul ederek onların dünyasında insana bir yer bulur, burada insan odak noktasından çıkarılır ve öznelliğini insan-dışı varlıklar ile oluşturduğu birlik üzerinden yaratır. Pramod Nayar'ın da açıkladığı üzere "Bir felsefi yaklaşım olarak posthümanizm öznellik üzerinde bir yeniden düşünme ortaya çıkarır çünkü insan öznelliğini hayvanlar ve makinelerle sürekli evrimleşen bir bütün olarak görür" (19. Çev. M. Gültekin). Bu açıklamadan yola çıkarak günümüzde her zaman birlikte yaşadığımız makineler ve hayvanlar etkileşime girdiğimiz ilk andan beri bizi insan tanımının dışına götürür.

Kurgu romanları incelendiğinde ilk olarak gerçeklik algısının değiştirilmesiyle hümanizmden farklı bir öznellik kavramı ortaya çıkar. Hümanist gerçeklikte ortaya öznellik ve ötekilik, bilinç ve bilinç-dışı gibi karşıtlıklar ortaya çıkarken (Braidotti 15. Çev. M. Gültekin), posthümanizm bu ikiliğin arasındaki bağı ve bu bağda bulunan varlıkları açığa vurarak çözmeye çalışır. İkinci olarak değişen gerçeklik algısında kurgu romanları hümanist ideallere, özellikle insan merkezli değerlere uymayı reddeder. Bunun için insan ve insan-dışı arasındaki çizgiyi aşmayı kendine amaç edinir.

Bu çizgiyi aşan ama aynı zamanda çizgide kalan karakterler Wendy B. Faris'in büyülü realizm türü üzerine yaptığı açıklamalarda olduğu gibi (Hosseinpour 88), genel olarak birbiri arasında geçen veya çarpışan evrenler üzerinde kurulur: biri insan evreni ve diğeri de gerçek dışı öğelerin bulunduğu insan dışı evrendir. Karakterler bu iki evren arasında geçişler yaparak yaşadıkları olaylar sayesinde kendileri ve yaşam hakkında önemli bilgilere sahip olurlar, özellikle genç romanlarında bu sayede bir tür reşit olma töreni tamamlanmış olur. Yani öznellikleri evrenler arasında kalmaktan doğmaktadır, bu da bu çalışmanın analiz bölümünde görülecek olan önemli bir öğedir. Çünkü Gaiman'ın çocuk romanlarında bu öğe oldukça sık görülmüş, Harrison, Moghadam, Rudd, Chang gibi eleştirmenler bu öğelerin üzerine tartışmışlardır.

Bu çalışmada yer alan eşikte kalan öznelliğin insan ve insan-dışı varlıkların beraber evrimleşen bir bütüne dahil olduğunu Gaiman'ın *Coraline* adlı kitabında örnekleyebiliriz. Coraline ortaokula giden bir kızın evlerindeki bir kapı aracılığıyla farklı bir evrene gitmesini ve orada yaşadıklarını anlatır. Coraline'ın gittiği evrende hayvanlar konuşabilir, gözleri yerine düğmeler olan ebeveynler bulunur ve ruhlar bile görülebilir.

Coraline'ın yaşadığı insan ve insan-dışı iki farklı evren arasında gidip gelmesi, her ikisinde de farklı olaylar yaşayarak kendi karakterini bulmaya çalışması Jaques'ın da bahsettiği üzere kurgu eserlerinin "arada kalmışlık" hissini veren en önemli örneğidir. Ailesinin ilgisizliğiyle insan dünyasında yeterince şeyi keşfedemeyip öğrenemeyen Coraline, insan-dışı dünyada deneyimlediği olaylar sayesinde hayata dair farklı bir bakış açısı kazanır: Hikayenin başında fikirlerinde oldukça inatçı, okula, insanlara ve hayvanlara karşı bir tutum sergileyen Coraline, yaşadıkları sayesinde çevresiyle birlik olmanın önemini öğrenmiş, artık "Okuldan korkmasını gerektirecek bir şeyin kalmadığının farkına varmıştır" (Gaiman 134. Çev. M. Gültekin).

Gaiman'ın öznelliğe dair bir başka örneği *Odd and the Frost Giants* kitabında bulunur. Ana karakter olan Odd birçok engelle karşılaşır ama her zaman ilk önceliği doğaya ve hayvanlara verdiği önem olur. Hikâyenin başında ne kadar korksa da kolunu ağaç kovuğuna sıkıştıran ayıya yardım eder ve bu yardımının ardından karşılaştığı ayı, tilki ve kartalın konuşabildiğini öğrenmesiyle macerası başlar.

Hikâye boyunca Odd antropomorfik idealleri bozan insan-dışı varlıklar ile karşılaşır. Konuşan hayvanların yanı sıra suyunu içtiği zaman konuşan bir memba ile karşılaşır, memba Odd'a "Neyi görmen lazım?" (28. Çev. M. Gültekin) diye sorar. Bu durum normalde kaygı verici bir durum olması gerekirken bu Odd'u hiç şaşırtmaz ve sakinliğini korur. Membanın bir cevap istemesi üzerine "Yanlış bir şey mi yaptım?" (28. Çev. M.Gültekin) diyerek sorumluluk alıp hümanist doktrinden ayrılarak kendini membadan üstün görmez.

Kendisini membanın ona gösterdiği görülere bırakır ve ondan öğrendiği görüleri kabul eder. Görülerin birinde babasını bir tahta parçasını oyduğunu görmesi üzerine kendi cebinden bir tahta parçası çıkararak oymaya başlar.

Burada insan-dışı öznelliği çalışmamın amacını en uygun şekilde gösterdiği için "öğrendiği" sözcüğüne vurgu yapmak isterim. İnsan Odd ile insan-dışı memba arasında geçen etkileşim sayesinde Odd "tan vaktine kadar [tahta] oydu" (31. Çev. M.Gültekin) ve böylece Odd ve memba beraber evrimleşme adına posthümanist bir öznellik algısı ortaya çıkarmış oldular. Ayrıca bu örnekle insan dışı bir varlık olan membanın eyleyiciliği de gösterilmiştir, Odd'un yanına yaklaşmasıyla memba ona sadece Odd hakkında görüler göstermektedir, yani memba kendi eyleyiciliğini kullanarak kendi isteğiyle ve amacıyla hem kendine hem de Odd için anlamlar yaratmaktadır. Bu sayede kendi amacını yaratarak hikayesini ortaya çıkarmış, öyküsel madde olarak sayılmasına önemli bir özellik göstermiştir.

İnsan ve insan-dışı geçişinde arada kalan son karakter ise Gaiman'ın *The Graveyard Book* eserindeki Bod olur. Bir mezarlıkta hayaletler tarafından evlat edinilen ve büyütülen Bod, mezarlıktaki yaşamını gençliğine kadar sürdürdükten sonra dış dünyaya geçmek ister. Bod'un iki dünyada da yaşadığı maceraları anlatan kitap, iki dünyadan da ne kadar fazla şey öğrendiğini ortaya çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Mezarlıktaki hayatında hayaletlerden öğrendiği nezaket ve saygıyı insanların bulunduğu dünyada göremez. Böylece iki dünyada da farklı kişilikler göstermeye başlar ve hangisini kendisi için seçmesi gerektiğinde zorlanır. Bod'un mezarlıktaki öğretmenleri vampir Sylas ve Miss Lupescu ona hayatta kalması için gereken tüm yetenekleri öğretir, bu yetenekler arasında sadece hayaletlerin yapabildiği gizlenme, başkalarının rüyalarına girme gibi güçler vardır. İki dünyanın arasında kalan Bod bu özellikleriyle kitaptaki birçok karakter gibi insan ve insan dışı varlık arasındaki çizgide kalan bir öznellik göstermiş olur.

Karakterlerin arada kalmışlıklarının yanı sıra, Gaiman'ın romanlarında nesnelerin farklı çeşitlerde bulunan tasvirleri ayrı bir okuma gerektirmektedir. Burada posthümanist kuramda yer alan obje yönelimli ontoloji ve öyküsel madde kavramları ön plana çıkmaktadır.

Obje yönelimli ontoloji incelendiğinde bu kavramı ortaya çıkaran Timothy Morton ve Graham Harman göze çarpmaktadır. Bu kavrama göre obje terimi en geniş kapsamında kullanılmaktadır, içerisine insanlar kadar ejderhaları ve şirketleri barındırır (Harman 402. Çev. M.Gültekin).

Obje yönelimli ontolojinin posthümanist kuramda tartışılmasını sağlayan özelliği objeleri içeriğine veya etkilerine indirgemeden, ampirik bir şekli olup olmadığına bakılmaksızın her birini eşit gören düz bir ontolojide yer almalarıdır. Bahsedilen bu düz ontoloji Ağın'ın belirttiği yatay düzlem ile paralellik göstermektedir. Ayrıca, bu ontolojide objeler sürekli değişim halinde olduğu savunulmaktadır ve bu, posthümanist kuram çalışan Donna Haraway'in "becoming with (birlikte oluşma)" teorisiyle benzerlik göstermektedir. Bu yüzden obje yönelimli ontoloji posthümanist kuramda tartışılmakta olup kendine en iyi alanı kurgusal romanlarda bulmuştur.

Bu objeler gözlemlendiğinde, duyularımızla algılayamadığımız öğeleri de içeren objelerin bu sayede kendilerinden daha çok anlamları veya yarattıkları çağrışımlarla ontolojik varlıklarını ortaya çıkardıkları görülmektedir. Bu bağlamda obje yönelimli ontolojide objeler soyuttur. Hissedilen ama etkilerinin tamamının hesaplanamadığı küresel ısınmadan; sadece görülen Jüpiter gezegenine kadar örneklenebilir.

Gaiman'ın yazdığı *Fortunately, the Milk* hikayesinde süt almak için evinden dışarı çıkan bir babanın yaşadıkları anlatılmaktadır. Babanın sütü aldıktan sonra yaşadığı maceralar geniş kapsamda anlatılmış olup hikâyenin çeşitli ortamlarıyla yarattığı değişimler görülmektedir.

Geleneksel olmayan başlığından da anlaşılacağı üzere, hikâyenin odak noktası bir şişe süt olmuştur. Mekândan mekâna geçen baba ne olursa olsun sütü bırakamaz ve hikâyede her zaman hatırlatılmış olur. Sütün bu şekilde arka planda kalmış gibi görünen ama her zaman çağrışımıyla kendini sıklıkla hatırlatan bir obje olması onu tartışmamda onun bir hipernesne olmasını sağlamıştır. Çünkü bu süt gezegenden gezegene geçmiş, zaman yolculuğu yapmış, korsanlar tarafından denize atılmış olmasına rağmen hiç zarar görmemiş ve bir şekilde kendini Baba'ya geri getirmiştir. Böylece insan deneyiminin dışına çıkmıştır ve okuyucunun dikkati, görülen ve hissedilen süt şişesi yerine, düşüncede var olan bilincini göstererek hipernesne olan önemine çekilmiştir. Harman'ın da bahsettiği üzere, hipernesnenin düşüncede ortaya çıkması onun en önemli özelliğidir "çünkü düşünce anlık deneyimi reddeden ve aşan özel bir yeteneğe sahiptir ve bu cansız maddelerin hiçbir zaman yapabileceği bir şey değildir" (25. Çev. M. Gültekin).

Hikâyenin sonuna gelindiğinde ise anlatılan tüm karakter ve evrenlerin Baba'nın etrafında olan objelerden 'ilham alınarak' ortaya çıktığı anlaşılmıştır. Burada ilk göze çarpan şey tüm objelerin materyal halleriyle Gaiman'ın her birine birer hikâye atamasıyla onları düz bir ontolojide bulundurmasıdır. Bu şekilde hipernesnenin kendi özellik yığını gösterilerek "geriçekilme" adlı olağanüstü hali ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu sayede objeler sadece içlerinde anlatıldığı hikayeleri ile farklılaştırılabilirken, materyal ontolojileri obje olarak kalmıştır (Harman 1).

İkinci olarak Morton'ın da açıkladığı üzere, hipernesneler isimleri değişmesine ve tanımları değişmesine rağmen antropomorfik çeviri sayesinde anlaşılabilmektedir (Morton 18). Örnek olarak bu hikâyede bulunan sıcak hava balonu "süzülen-top-insan-taşıyıcısı" (Çev. M.Gültekin) şeklinde tanımlandığında ana karakter Baba hemen tanır ve "Ben ona balon diyorum" (327. Çev. M.Gültekin) cevabını verir. Buradaki olay balon düşüncesinin akla gelmesiyle obje anlık deneyimi aşar ve hipernesne olarak anlaşılır.

Ayrıca tüm bu hipernesnelerin birbiriyle etkileşim içinde olmaları posthümanist kuramda Karen Barad tarafından adlandırılan iç-ilişkisel edim (*intra-action*) içerisinde oldukları söylenebilir. Hikâyede Baba, bir volkan tanrısı ve bir uzaylı arasında çıkan bir tartışma ile bu iç-ilişkisel edim gözlemlenebilir: bir hipernesne olan volkan tanrısının uzaylılara insanlara ait bir bilim dalından bahsetmesi insan ve insan-dışının, nesne ve nesne-dışı şeklinde bir etkileşime dönüşmesiyle tekrar obje yönelimli ontolojiye hizmet eder.

Öznellik ve obje yönelimli ontolojinin yanında nesne üzerine yapılan çalışmalarda başka bir önemli kavram ise öyküsel maddedir. Serenella Iovino ve Serpil Oppermann'ın çalışmalarıyla bu kavramın üzerine yapılan çalışmalar yakın zamanda olmuştur. Maddesel ekoeleştiriye bağlı olan öyküsel maddeye göre madde anlamlarla ve hikayelerle donatılmıştır (Oppermann 55. Çev. M.Gültekin). Çalışmaya göre bu, kurgusal romanlarda oldukça sık görülen ve vurgulanan bir kavramdır.

Oppermann ve Iovino'ya göre ekoeleştiri maddeyi metin içinde ve metin olarak incelemektedir. Maddenin eyleyiciliği sayesinde oluşturduğu hikayeler bulunduğunu, böylece yaratıcı bir varlık olduğunu savunmaktadırlar. Gaiman'ın hikayelerinde bunun örnekleri görülmektedir.

Jane Bennett'ın belirttiği üzere öyküsel maddenin bir şey yapma yetisi vardır (Oppermann 56. Çev. M. Gültekin). Bu bağlamda Odd'un kullandığı destek kendi içinde bir eyleyicilik bulundurmaktadır ve bu eyleyicilik bir yaşamı kolaylaştırmak olurken, aynı zamanda iki tarafın da hayatına anlam katan bir deneyim oluşturmaktadır. Buradaki deneyim biri olmadan diğerinin aynı şekilde ontolojisini koruyamayacağını ifade etmektedir: Odd desteği olmadan yürüyemez, Odd olmadan da desteği tahta bir çubuğa dönüşür.

Ayrıca Odd'un oymakta olduğu odun parçası da buna bir başka örnek olarak gösterilebilir. Ayı ona ne oyduğunu sorduğunda Odd'un "Babam oymanın zaten odunun içinde olduğunu söylerdi. Sana kalan tek şey ne olmak istediğini bulup

bıçağını kullanarak olmadığı her şeyi çıkarmaktı" (21. Çev. M. Gültekin) demesi odun parçasının eyleyiciliğini ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Burada öyküsel madde olan odun parçasının içinde bulunan yaratıcı eyleyicilik gücü sayesinde kendini gerçekleştirmek istemesi gözlemlenmektedir.

Aynı zamanda *Coraline*'da bulunan ve Öteki Anne tarafından sunulan siyah düğmeler de bir amaca ve böylece öyküsel eyleyiciliğe sahiptir. Öteki Anne'nin gözleri yerine bulunan bu siyah düğmeler okuyucuya Coraline'ın alternatif dünyaya nasıl geçebileceğini göstermektedir. İnsan dünyasından çıkıp insan dışı bir dünyaya giriş yapmayı sağlayan bu madde kendi eyleyiciliğini ortaya çıkararak bir hikaye edinir ve öyküsel maddeye dönüşür.

Sonuç olarak, Neil Gaiman'ın çocuk romanları geçiş karakterleri ve obje-nesne ilişkileri üzerinden tartışıldığında yeni bir okuma alanı ortaya çıkmıştır. Daha önce böyle bir çalışma yapılmamış olup yapılan diğer çalışmalar gerek gotik, gerek psikanaliz, gerekse kültürel öğelerle yapıldığından ötürü tamamlanması gereken alanlar saptanmıştır. Çeşitli eleştirmenlerin de katıldığı üzere kurgusal çocuk edebiyatının bu çalışmaya daha fazla materyal vereceği düşünülerek Gaiman'ın genç okuyucular için yazdığı romanları seçilmiştir.

Bu konu üzerine yapılan tartışmalar sonucunda Neil Gaiman'ın posthümanist kuramdan konseptlere başvurduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu konseptler "öznellik" ve "özne-nesne ilişkileri" şeklinde iki ana alanda toplanmış olup Gaiman'ın *Coraline, The Graveyard Book, Odd and the Frost Giants* ve *Fortunately, the Milk* romanları üzerinden tartışılmıştır.

Bu çalışma sayesinde ortaya çıkan bir sentez ise Gaiman'ın posthümanizmi kullanarak insancıllık kavramının altını çizmesidir. Gaiman arada kalmış insan karakterler yaratarak onların insan-dışı dünyalardan ve bu dünyalardaki maddelerin eyleyiciliğinden çeşitli temalar öğrenmelerini sağlamış; bu temalar sayesinde insancıllığa dair bir öğreti amacı bulundurduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Böylece Gaiman hümanizm ve insancıllık kavramlarının farkını ortaya

koymuştur: Hümanizm artık gelişemeyen donuk bir ideolojiyken, insancıllık posthümanizmin etik iskeletini oluşturmada önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Hikayelerde de görüldüğü üzere, posthümanizm etkisinde olan karakterlerin daha insancıl (Bod, Coraline, Odd); hümanizm etkisinde olanların ise daha otorite odaklı ve etrafındakileri domine etme uğruna herkesi kötü şekilde etkiledikleri (Jack, Öteki Anne) ortaya çıkmıştır. Karakterlerin insancıllığı insan-dışı varlıklardan ve ortamlardan öğrenmeleri de onları geçiş karakteri yapan en önemli özellikleri olmuştur.

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