CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

From the valiant journey of Aang in fulfilling his duty as the Avatar in the popular television show *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (2005) to the rising of the dark knight hero of Gotham City in the ground-breaking movie *Batman Begins* (2005), the journey of a character in becoming the 'savior' or the 'hero' of the story seems to be a familiar concept for many modern cinema and literature. Surely, there are some enticing characteristics of this 'heroic journey of a character' that makes it such an important pivotal element that can make or break a story. Interestingly, the concept of 'heroic valor' can also be found in the olden days. The tale of heroism can be found in the Classical Age of Greece (5th and 4th centuries BCE) such as the tales of Greek heroes like Perseus, Heracles, Jason, Achilles, and Odysseus (What makes a Greek hero?, 2016). Even today, the tales of superheroes have always been an essential thread in the rich pop cultural tapestry (Free, 2016).

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, heroism is a heroic conduct especially as exhibited in fulfilling a high purpose or attaining a noble end. One of the reasons this concept is often implemented into a story is that heroism is frequently viewed as an apex of human behavior; therefore, watching or imagining a heroic act is compelling for most people (Franco, Blau, & Zimbardo, 2011). Even though most people would like to be regarded as heroes, a heroic status is a remote possibility that perhaps can only be achieved by certain individuals with special skills or luck (Franco, Blau, & Zimbardo, 2011). Because of this compelling nature, some literary works seem to utilize the tale of heroism as the basic foundation of the story. In most action, adventure, or superhero movies, heroism can be regarded as the main focus of the story, and the audience can observe and pinpoint the journey and development of the hero character (Berryhill, 2018). Usually, in a heroic story, the hero will have to face some challenges and experiences a series of

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events. The hero may also follow a certain path that guides them to their goal (Campbell, 1949).

A heroic story is also a great appeal in children's literature. Stories with rich descriptions of the lives and personalities of inspiring individuals (mythical or real, contemporary or historical) can entertain and also serve as role models for children (Singh & Lu, 2003). Therefore, the writer believes that the journey of Coraline Jones from a children's novella titled *Coraline (2002)* seems to be a great example of a hero's journey in children's literature.

Coraline Jones is the main protagonist of a popular dark fantasy children's novella written by Neil Gaiman titled *Coraline (2002). The Guardian* ranked *Coraline* #82 in its list of 100 Best Books of the 21st Century (The Guardian, 2019). Because of the novella's popularity, in 2009, a stop-motion animated film based on the novella was released and received positive responses from both critics and movie lovers. On Rotten Tomatoes, a popular review-aggregation website for film and television, the film holds an approval rating of 90% based on 267 reviews, with an average rating of 7.8/10 (Rotten Tomatoes, 2009). The novella revolves around the story of Coraline Jones, a young girl who just moves into a new flat with her parents. The novella can be considered as children's literature; however, the settings, plot, and overall ambiance of the story are quite different from most traditional children's books. The story seems to be quite dark and rather disturbing for most children. During an interview with Gavin Grant, Neil Gaiman, the author of the novella, stated that the story is rather disturbing that even adults experienced nightmares from the novella; however, he also stated that children seemed to enjoy the story much more since they depicted the story as an adventure, rather than a survival (Grant, n.d.). As a character, Coraline is also quite unique since, despite her young age, she is able to overcome an almost impossible odd and become victorious at the end of the story. The unconventional atmosphere of the story, the unique characteristics of the main protagonist, and the odds she has to endure have intrigued the writer to analyze Coraline's journey in becoming the hero of the story.

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There are some Hero's Journey theories that can be utilized in order to analyze Coraline's journey; however, the writer will only use one theory. In 1949, Joseph Campbell published a book titled *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* that can be considered as one of the most significant theories regarding the structure of the journey of the archetypal hero found in mythological worlds. In the said book, Campbell utilizes a term called 'Hero's Journey'. He also states that the journey of a hero can be broken down into three acts: Departure, Initiation, and Return (Campbell, 1949). These acts are also broken down into several stages with a cumulative of 17 stages. In 2007, a popular screenwriting textbook written by Christopher Vogler titled *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers* is published. This textbook also discusses the topic of Hero's Journey and takes many inspirations from Campbell's (1949) book. However, many scholars believe that Vogler's theory is more detailed and focused. Therefore, Vogler's (2007) Hero's Journey theory would be a more suitable tool for this research, since Campbell's theory seems to be lacking the support required of scholarly argument and seems to be too abstract (Crespi, 1990).

The Hero's Journey can be considered as a common template of stories that includes a hero who embarks on an adventure, overcomes a crisis, and comes home as a changed or transformed person. Vogler (2007) states that there are many stories that includes an inward journey of a hero. These stories implement the journey of the hero's mind, spirit, and heart. Vogler (2007) also mentions that in any good story, the hero should experience some growth and changes, and make their journey from one way to the next. It is indeed this emotional journey that is able to hook the audiences and make the story far more interesting. Therefore, the writer believes that The Hero's Journey would be a suitable tool to analyze the journey of Coraline Jones since her journey seems to include her physical journey, emotional turmoil, and also character evolution. Not only that, The Hero's Journey also includes the notion of two different worlds, which is also one of the elements of the novella's settings. The novella sets in two different worlds, The Real World and The Other World. Throughout the story, Coraline's journey happens in these two worlds, alternating continuously as the story progresses.

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Pertaining to other studies of characters, numerous character analysis using The Hero's Journey theory has been conducted on various genres of literature. Several of the said analysis are Ortiz (2009) and Priyansyah (2018). Ortiz (2009) analyzed the journey of Batman in becoming a hero of Gotham city is observed by utilizing Campbell's theory. Ortiz stated that the movie *Batman Begins* (2005) is a prime example of a hero's journey since it is able to illustrate the three major steps in Campbell's theory namely: departure, initiation, and return. In conclusion, Ortiz also claimed that *Batman Begins* (2005) is an amazing film because the storyteller used the elements of the hero's journey as described by Campbell. He also stated that by combining and mixing the steps of Campbell's Hero's Journey, the film seems to be more engaging and immersive. Priyansyah (2018) utilized the Hero's Journey (Vogler, 2007) theory and character arc (Sicoe, 2013) theory to analyze one of the main characters from *Tokyo Ghoul,* Kaneki Ken. The research discovered that Kaneki Ken's development throughout the story can be considered as a hero's journey since it fits well with the structure of Vogler's (2007) theory. Kaneki Ken also experiences a fall arc during his development. From these studies, it can be concluded that The Hero's Journey theory can be used as a tool to analyze the development and evolution of a character from zero to hero.

1.2 Research Question(s)

This study reaches its purposes and goals by answering the following research question(s):

What stages does Coraline go through as a hero of a dark fantasy children's novella?

1.3 Purpose of The Study

This research aims to describe the stages that Coraline takes on as a hero of a dark fantasy children's novella. Thus, this research will uncover the events and circumstances that mark the Hero's Journey of the character Coraline, before categorizing the kind of hero Coraline is and finding out the significance of her status to the darker elements of the story. This study also aims to determine whether the journey of Coraline Jones is a hero's journey or not.

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1.4 Scope of The Study

The study is limited to the verbal texts of the events, occurrences, decisions, dialogues, and monologues that are significant in the journey or the transformation of Coraline Jones. This study focuses on how the events in the novella fit in the twelve stages of Hero's Journey by Vogler (2007). Even though there are some visual illustrations in the novella, this research only focuses on verbal texts since they are more crucial for the progress of the story. Therefore, these visual illustrations are not the main concern for this research.

1.5 Significance of The Study

This study is projected to give a contribution to the study of literature in uncovering and describing the journey of a character in becoming a hero of a story. Many of the previous researches seem to employ the Hero's Journey theory to analyze the main characters of literary works that are designated for teenagers or adults. It seems that there is not enough study or research that utilizes Hero's Journey theory in children's literature. Since a tale of heroism can motivate others to mimic it (Franco, Blau, & Zimbardo, 2011), heroism can also be considered as a positive trait that can be employed in children (Lothian, 2019). Therefore, this research will try to utilize Vogler's (2007) Hero's Journey theory on a children's novella to determine whether a tale of heroism is present inside the story or not. Lastly, it is expected that this study can give a better awareness and understanding that the journey of a character in becoming a hero can be a reflection of real-life occurrences.

1.6 Research Method

This study employed descriptive qualitative design in analyzing and describing The Hero's Journey of Coraline throughout the story. The main reason why descriptive qualitative design is selected for this study is that the design put its focuses on interpretation, description, and data, which would be difficult to express by using quantitative research design (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 2007). This study is conducted by collecting, categorizing, and making meaning of textual

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evidence that contains the events that are signifying Coraline Jones's heroic journey. This research will focus on the events concerning Coraline Jones in a detailed manner. Therefore, the story is divided into segments, which will be referred to as "events". According to Genette (1980), as cited by Meister (2011), the definition of an event in narrative is a change in narrative elements of the story, such as character, conflict, setting, and resolution. After being segmented, the events are then fitted into each of the 12 stages of Hero's Journey (Vogler, 2007) theory to see if the journey of Coraline can be considered as a hero's journey or not.

1.6.1 Data Collection

The data for this study are collected from a novella titled *Coraline (2002)* written by Neil Gaiman, a famous English author. In order to obtain the data, the digital copy of the novella is downloaded from the internet in the form of a PDF document. The writer then conducted an intense close reading of the novella multiple times. The primary focus of the close reading is the events that have a significant impact on Coraline's journey in becoming the hero and how those events fit into the 12 stages of Hero's Journey (Vogler, 2007).

Afterward, the description of each event, alongside the textual evidence, will be categorized into the 12 stages of Hero's Journey (Vogler, 2007).

1.6.2 Data Analysis

The data are analyzed by using The Hero's Journey theory by Vogler (2007) in order to describe the journey and transformation of Coraline Jones in becoming the hero of the story. Every phase of The Hero's Journey will be used to define each of the segmented events that have significance in Coraline's journey. The findings then will be interpreted and described to see whether the journey of Coraline can be considered as a heroic story or not. Furthermore, the findings will also be used to determine the kind of hero Coraline is.

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1.7 Organization of The Paper

This research paper is organized in the following structure:

1. CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION. This chapter is the gate that introduces the basic concept of the research. In this chapter, the background and the importance of the research are explained. This chapter consists of the background of the research, the research questions, the purposes of the research, the significance of the research, the scope of the research, the research methodology, and the organization of the research paper.

2. CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK. This chapter discusses the theories that are used in this research. The Hero's Journey theory, the main theory for this research, is explained thoroughly in this chapter.

3. CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY. This chapter consists of explanations regarding the method of the research. It consists of the research design, the data collection method, the data analysis method, and the presentation of the research data.

4. CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS. This chapter contains the findings and discussions of the study. This chapter also provides the answers to the proposed research questions. This chapter discusses the journey of Coraline Jones in becoming the hero of the story and how her status can be regarded as 'the unwilling hero'.

5. CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS. The rolling curtain of the research. This chapter provides the conclusions based on the findings and discussions of the research. This chapter also provides suggestions for future studies.

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