

# The Elements of Fairy Tale and the Atypical Transformation of Protagonists in Diana Wynne Jones's *Howl's Moving Castle*

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Filozofski fakultet

Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i  
pedagogije

Tihana Najdert

**Elementi bajke i atipična transformacija protagonista u romanu**  
***Howl's Moving Castle* Diane Wynne Jones**

Završni rad

Mentorica: izv. prof. dr. sc. Biljana Oklopčić

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## **Abstract**

Works of modern times are no longer limited to one genre, but rather many are fusions of several genres. Diane Wynne Jones's fantasy novel *Howl's Moving Castle* is no exception to this occurrence, its plot structure bearing some evident similarities to that of a fairy tale. The first few pages of the novel reveal the magical land of Ingary whose inhabitants live amongst wizards, witches, and magical items, but also warn us about Sophie Hatter's gloomy fate, her being the eldest of three sisters and most unlikely to succeed in life. The series of events in the novel bear a striking similarity to those of common fairy tales, but the novel introduces a twist. As the story continues, Sophie, the heroine, embarks on a journey paved with challenges that she overcomes superbly, failing to fulfil her initial destiny. This paper will aim to single out the elements of fairy-tale in Jones's fantasy novel and to analyse the protagonists' development according to Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*.

**Keywords:** Diana Wynne Jones, *Howl's Moving Castle*, fantasy, fairy tale, Vladimir Propp



## Introduction

Diana Wynne Jones is a British fantasy author, mostly known for her *Chrestomanci Chronicles*, *Dalemark Quartet*, and *Howl's Moving Castle* series, the last coming to prominence only twenty years after its publishing. The novel's potential was recognized by one of the greatest animation filmmakers Hayao Miyazaki and adapted into an animated film in 2004, gaining worldwide recognition. The plot is light-hearted and filled with diverse characters, ranging from flamboyant wizards to talking fire demons. The fairytalelike atmosphere and fateful cases of mix-ups appeal to children, but the atypical development of characters and the element of surprise when their expectations are not fulfilled keep the adults interested. Despite the characteristics and behaviour that resemble stock characters, the protagonists of the novel are attributed a complex background followed by a hidden meaning left for the readers to discover and interpret. Sophie Hatter, the "victim" of the story, becomes her own hero and Howl Pendragon, the "prince," a mere helper who has an array of issues himself. The characters in Jones's novel are somewhat flawed – Sophie is passive and reluctant to do anything with her life while Howl is an egoistic coward, which makes their lives burdened with modern issues. As the novel reveals a certain hybridity of genres, the opening chapter will give a brief insight into fantasy and fairy-tale genres. It will serve as an introduction to the main topic of the paper – the elements of fairy tale in Jones's novel. The second chapter will provide a brief description of Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* and its importance for the novel as well as list the plot structures that correspond with those of the novel. The third chapter will in greater detail explain the functions of dramatis personae in the novel, providing a better view on its connection to the fairy tale genre. The following chapter will briefly note some additional elements of fairy tale in *Howl's Moving Castle* while the final chapter will analyse the transformation of the main protagonists Sophie Hatter and Howl Jenkins Pendragon, both in the modern social context and the expected fairy tale destiny.

## 1. Fantasy and Fairy Tale

Fantasy is often regarded as “a fun, albeit somewhat shallow, genre” (Cruz and Pollock 3) due to its fantastic elements such as faeries, wizards and magical creatures, but what is often overlooked is that serious “topics such as self-discovery, alienation, ethics, and the environment are found” (Cruz and Pollock 3) in the genre as well. The importance of topics such as self-discovery is recognized by Diana Wynne Jones in her fantasy novel *Howl's Moving Castle*, which uses the elements of classic fairy tale and thus creates a modern kind of fairy tale, appealing to both children and young adults.

Although a complete distinction between fantasy and fairy tale is “impossible and not always necessary, some basic generic distinction is desirable for theoretical consideration” (Nikolajevna 2). Fantasy is a literary genre best recognised by the existence of a secondary world and the use of magic and supernatural elements. The use of magic is present both in fantasy and fairy tale. Another common trait of fantasy and fairy tale is “the system of characters: hero/subject, princess/object, helper, giver, antagonist” (Nikolajevna 4). Despite the existence of such stock characters, their behaviour in fantasy differs greatly to that of fairy tale characters. A fantasy genre protagonist “often lacks heroic features, can be scared and even reluctant to perform the task” (Nikolajevna 4) while the protagonists of fairy tales are strictly flawless in their heroic endeavours. The protagonist in the fantasy genre is a common character, often flawed and similar to average people while the protagonist of a fairy tale is often of noble ancestry.<sup>1</sup> Nikolajevna also mentions the difference in the spatiotemporal relations of fairy tale and fantasy, the former being set in a world “detached from own both in space and in time” where neither the era nor location is specified, and the latter being “temporarily displaced from modern, linear time” (5). Another trait of fantasy is the existence of a secondary world, with the distinction between “secondary worlds and time traveling or time displacement” (Nikolajevna 7). *Howl's Moving Castle* does not define the location or time, but rather keeps the readers believing that only the primary world exists, only to break the illusion near the ending of the book and revealing a world within a world. Mendlesohn, for example, does not seek to define fantasy as a genre but rather provides a categorisation within the genre, dividing it into “the intrusive, the estranged, the portal, and the immersive fantasy” (4). The immersive fantasy “presents the fantastic without comment as the norm both for the protagonist and for the reader” (Mendlesohn 8), one does not enter the fantasy world but rather is considered a part of it. The characters are so

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<sup>1</sup> Apart from the character structure, fantasy and fairy tale also share a certain plot structure, which was classified in great detail by Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale* and will be discussed further in this paper.

deeply immersed in the world of fantasy that supernatural elements are common to them even if they themselves do not practice magic. The portal fantasy is self-explanatory, its main trait being entrance into the fantasy world through a portal. Mendlesohn stresses that “although individuals may cross both ways, the magic does not” (6) and the portals have a function, which is learning about the fantasy world from another point of view. *Howl’s Moving Castle* is, however, seen as an exception to the rule that an author cannot switch from one category to another because Jones manages to contain “within it a portal fantasy that underlines the differences in language for immersive and portal texts” (Mendlesohn 8). Sophie serves as a bridge between the world of Ingary and the world of modern-day Wales (of which existence both the readers and Sophie were oblivious), her ignorance is passed onto the readers who comprehend the new world as mysterious as she does. The novel is highly metafictional and to a certain degree intertextual. Apart from the elements of traditional fairy tale, Jones refers to several literary works, such as Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and a French folktale *Bluebeard*, which she uses to make a connection to Wizard Howl. Jones uses the parts of John Donne’s “Song” (“Go and Catch a Falling Star”) as a basis for the main mystery of the novel, Howl’s curse, once again relying on the reader’s knowledge of literature. Besides explicitly mentioning real life works, Jones also alludes to them, i.e., Howl’s short monologue with the skull and his reference to William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. The metafictionality of the work is most evident in the character of Sophie, who is aware of her status as the eldest sister as well as the misfortunes that she is bound to experience on her journey. Jones shows that Sophie is even aware of some fairy tale elements, such as trebling: “There’s two encounters, and not a scrap of magical gratitude from either. But I’m surely due to have a third encounter, magical or not” (Jones 41). The intricacies of this very novel and Jones’s endeavour to keep the reader alert and critical-minded show the undeniable importance of the genre.

## 2. Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale*

*Morphology of the Folktale* was written in 1928 by a Russian scholar Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp, marking a breakthrough in the domain of folktale research and serving as a starting point for the majority of folktale researchers to come. *Morphology* only started gaining recognition in the Western world after being translated into English in 1958, leaving a 30-year-gap between its original publication and worldwide access. In his introduction to *Morphology*, Dundes mentions two different types of analyses in folktales, the first being syntagmatic and the other paradigmatic. Propp's *Morphology* is a bona fide example of the syntagmatic analysis, listing and describing the elements of structure while following the order of plot events. The paradigmatic analysis, on the other hand, focuses on the existence of patterns within the text "rather than the elements taken out of the 'given' order and regrouped in one or more analytic schema" ("Introduction" 12). According to Lévi-Strauss, "if there is a meaning to be found in mythology, this cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into the composition of a myth, but only in the way those elements are combined" (Lévi-Strauss 5), justifying his paradigmatic approach to folktale analysis. Alan Dundes in his "Binary Opposition in Myth: The Propp/Lévi-Strauss Debate in Retrospect," which served as "a form of constructive mediation," briefly summarises the conflict between the two paradigms, or rather, between the two most prominent folktale researchers of the time ("Binary Opposition" 11). Propp's analysis takes sequence of functions into consideration, claiming that "the sequence of elements...is strictly uniform" (Propp 22). Lévi-Strauss, on the other hand, chooses to ignore the order of elements and singles them out only to put them back together in a specific pattern that fits his theory. He also calls out Propp for using folktales in his analysis instead of myths, which, according to him, have much stronger binary opposition. Dundes opposes Lévi-Strauss in that "binary oppositions are just as strong in folktales as they are in myth" ("Binary Opposition" 9), adding the undisputable fact that Lévi-Strauss "is no folklorist" ("Binary Opposition" 8) as he incorrectly labels folktales as myths.

Dundes further asserts that although Propp failed to connect the typical (Russian) fairy tale structure with the social circumstances and customs of the time, his "study is only a first step, albeit a giant one," ("Introduction" 14) in the critical analysis of fairy tales. He also tries to shed some light on Propp's nomenclature in *Morphology of the Folktale* as it encompasses only one type of folktale – "fairy tales or Aarne-Thompson tale types 300-749" ("Introduction" 15). In his study, Dundes also poses numerous questions, for example whether Propp's analysis could

be applied to other folktales such as African and American Indian folk narratives or even to another literary genre, specifically to the epic whose structure corresponds to several Propp's functions. Likewise, Propp's analysis may be applicable to fantasy genre, which this paper will aim to prove.

In his *Morphology*, Propp points out the importance of Aarne's index (later known as the Aarne-Thompson-Uther classification of folk tales) as the pioneer classification of folk tales by their theme, thanks to which "a coding of the tale has been made possible" (10). The Aarne-Thompson-Uther classification as we know it today divides tales into seven classes (animal tales, tales of magic, religious tales, realistic tales, tales of the stupid ogre, anecdotes and jokes, and formula tales), which are further divided into their own subclasses and numbered accordingly. Propp focuses on tales of magic (300-749 by Aarne-Thompson-Uther Classification), i.e. on fairy tales, which corresponds to the theme of *Howl's Moving Castle*, justifying the choice of using Propp's classification to analyse the work instead of some other folk tale classification. Propp also devises the functions of dramatis personae and describes them as the "basic components of the tale" (21), which he later breaks down into thirty one functions, each denoting an action.

### 3. The Functions of Dramatis Personae in *Howl's Moving Castle*

Prior to the listing of functions of dramatis personae, Propp mentions an important morphological element of fairy tale, the typical introductory situation in which either “members of a family are enumerated, or the future hero... is simply introduced by mention of his name or indication of his status” (25). This “initial situation” is present at the very beginning of *Howl's Moving Castle* (further *Moving Castle*), in which Sophie Hatter's family members and their history is explained, as is her destiny as “the eldest of three sisters” (Jones 1). Propp breaks down the functions of dramatis personae into a total of thirty one functions, not all of which must be fulfilled to keep the fairy tale plot structure. For each function, Propp devises a sign, which is used to compose a morphological equation of the fairy tale. The initial situation is marked by the *a*. sign.

Propp provides three possible scenarios to the first function (One of the members of a family absents himself from home); absention of parents, death of parents, or absention of a member of the younger generation. In *Moving Castle*, Sophie's father “died suddenly just as Sophie was old enough to leave school for good” (Jones 5) and her sisters Martha and Lettie are sent away by their stepmother Fanny, fulfilling two elements of the absention function. This function is marked by  $\beta^2$ . The second function is an interdiction (marked by  $\gamma$ ) addressed to the hero, usually containing an advice, warning, request, or a condition that is not to be violated. As a rule, the hero violates the interdiction, which leads us to the third function named violation (marked by  $\delta$ ). The villain enters the tale, marking a disruption to the former peace. The main villain, the Witch of the Waste, comes to Sophie's shop and as a part of the fourth function (marked  $\epsilon$ ), reconnaissance, inspects the likes of her in order to get the information of her connection to Wizard Howl. The man accompanying the Witch, being aware of her ill temper and wickedness, tries to “signal [Sophie] warningly” (Jones 34) not to engage in further discussion with her, but Sophie ignores the warning and tells the Witch off, fulfilling the crucial functions of the plot structure. The fifth function in which “the villain receives information about his victim” (Propp 28) is not present in the novel, the reason behind the Witch's visit remaining a mystery until the very end of the novel. Consequently, the sixth (“the villain's attempt to deceive the victim in order to take possession of him or his belongings” (Propp 29)) and seventh function (“the victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy” (Propp 30)) are rendered impossible. The eighth function (marked by A) brings the greatest plot twist and sets direction for the entire plot; it marks “the actual movement of the tale” (Propp 30). “The villain

causes harm or injury to a member of a family” (Propp 30) by means of abduction, pillaging, plundering, murdering, imprisoning, casting a spell, etc. The Witch of the Waste puts a curse on Sophie, giving her a “face of a gaunt old woman, withered and brownish, surrounded by wispy white hair” (Jones 36). The ninth function (marked by B), where “misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched” (Propp 36), brings the hero into prominence. It is revealed whether the hero is a seeker or a banished boy or girl. Propp describes the seeker type as a boy searching for a kidnapped girl, whereas the banished boy or girl is a hero that has been cast out and the story concentrates on his or her destiny rather than on their previous life. At this point Sophie, the self-banished girl, has accepted her current state of body and soul, and thanks to the misfortune, ventures on a journey to find her new destiny. The tenth function (marked by C), in which “the seeker agrees to or decides upon counteraction” (Propp 38), is intricate due to a somewhat ambiguous type of a hero; Propp indicates that the seeker type is the one that usually coincides with this function, while the banished type typically eludes it. Sophie is not the type to have no “volitional aspiration toward freedom” (Propp 38) and she does begin counteraction, thus the complexity of her character will be discussed further in this paper. “The hero leaves home” (Propp 39) is the eleventh function (marked by ↑), which has different paths depending on the seeker/victim type of hero. A new character, named donor, is presented in the story, making this function of great importance as “it is from him that the hero (both the seeker hero and the victim hero) obtains some agent (usually magical) which permits the eventual liquidation of misfortune” (Propp 39). As Sophie leaves home and finds herself in Wizard Howl’s castle, she meets his fire demon Calcifer who holds the key to her solution. “The hero is tested” (Propp 39) in the twelfth function (marked by D); this function consists of several subelements: the donor greets and interrogates the hero, tests the hero, as well as begs for his freedom. Propp mentions the example of a “spirit within the jug ask[ing] for liberation” (40), which is fairly applicable to Calcifer’s situation of being tied down to a hearth, being a slave to the castle. Upon meeting Calcifer, he and Sophie engage into a conversation of mutual interrogation, he begs her to break the spell he is under, and in exchange he is to break the curse that she is under. Having accepted the bargain, Sophie is faced with a quest of breaking the contract, which entails many trials throughout the novel. In the thirteenth function (marked by E), “the hero reacts to the actions of the future donor” (Propp 42): Sophie answers the greeting instantly and eventually withstands the test and frees Calcifer. The following function (marked by F) where “the hero acquires the use of a magical agent” (Propp 43) is questionable in its order as Sophie has had magical abilities all along, becoming aware of, or rather acknowledging them only near the novel’s ending. The

question of Sophie’s recognition of her magical abilities is closely connected to her complex personality and is to be discussed further in the paper. “The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search” (Propp 50) is the fifteenth function of dramatis personae (marked by G). Propp mentions several ways of object acquisition such as flying through the air, travelling on the water, or making use of stationary means of communication to reach “another or different kingdom” (50). Jones takes the plot to another level by introducing a parallel universe in which Sophie acquires the last missing piece of information needed for her to figure out Calcifer and Howl’s contract. In the following function (marked by H), “the hero and the villain join in direct combat” (Propp 51): Sophie and the Witch of the Waste (and Miss Angorian) engage in combat, “the villain is defeated” (Propp 53) by Howl and “the initial misfortune or lack is liquidated” (marked by K) (Propp 53). Sophie manages to break Howl and Calcifer’s curse by returning Howl’s missing heart, which results in Calcifer finally breaking her curse as well. Propp goes on to describe the remaining functions, the last one being the marriage of the hero, which is implied with Sophie stating that they “ought to live happily ever after” (Jones 427). The morphological formula of dramatis personae’s function for *Howl’s Moving Castle* is thus  $\alpha\beta^2\gamma\delta\varepsilon^1A^6B^3C\uparrow D^{1,2,4}E^{1,2,4}G^5H^1K^1$ .



## 4. Other Elements of Fairy Tale in *Howl's Moving Castle*

### 4.1 The Auxiliaries

Propp continues his analysis outside the functions of *dramatis personae* by mentioning other auxiliary elements such as *trebling* and *motivations*, which are not of great importance to the plot itself but rather serve as an embellishment to the tale. Trebling, or the use of number three, is a common element in fairy tales. It may be present in tale's title, number of siblings, number of encounters with the villain, etc. Propp indicates that trebling is an auxiliary element and cannot be placed amongst the thirty one functions since the three encounters with the villain, e.g., serve as a connection between several functions, hence being spread across the entire plot structure. The first example of trebling in *Moving Castle* is evident in the existence of three sisters: Sophie, Lettie, and Martha Hatter. Sophie encounters the villain three times, first when the Witch of the Waste puts a curse on Sophie, next during the visit to the King's palace, and the third being the final confrontation between the two.

Another auxiliary element is *motivations*, meaning "both the reasons and the aims of personages which cause them to commit various acts" (Propp 75). Propp states that it is usually the villains of the story who require a motivation for their wicked acts while the protagonists act in a reaction to the plot itself and are "motivated by the course of the action" (Propp 75). Sophie's departure is prompted by the Witch's malevolent act whose main motivation was getting back at Howl by putting a curse on Sophie. Initially, Sophie's motivations are merely her response to the state somebody else has put her into, which changes throughout the story and Sophie gains motivations of her own.

### 4.2. The Distribution of Functions among *Dramatis Personae*

Despite the focus of *Morphology* being on the functions of *dramatis personae*, Propp also examines the manner of their distribution amongst the *dramatis personae*. He classifies them into seven spheres of action: spheres of action of villain, donor, helper, princess, dispatcher, hero, and false hero. These spheres of action can be distributed in three ways: the sphere can correspond entirely to the character, one character can operate in more than one sphere, or one sphere can be

shared amongst several characters. The plot structure of *Moving Castle* shows four spheres of action and their corresponding characters. The Witch of the Waste falls into the category of villain, exhibiting all three functions of villain, those being villainy, the fight or struggle with the hero, and the pursuit. The donor sphere of action corresponds with Calcifer, in that he prepares the hero for and ultimately provides her with a magical agent, which is the removal of the curse, making him a dual character who acts in both the donor sphere and the sphere of helper. The helper sphere of action includes both Howl and Calcifer: Calcifer is the one who resolves the hero's misfortune while Howl rescues Sophie from the pursuit. According to Propp, three categories of helpers exist; the universal, the specific, and the partial helper. The specific helper can only manage to fulfil one function, while the universal manages to fulfil all of them. Howl and Calcifer belong to the category of partial helpers due to their capability of fulfilling only two functions. The hero sphere is constituted by two functions, departure and wedding. Sophie fulfils only the first function of departure and search for a better future while the wedding function is only fulfilled in the novel sequel.

## 5. The Atypical Character Development

The aforementioned *initial situation* is brought into being in the novel by informing the reader that he or she is about to enter a world in which “seven-league boots and cloaks of invisibility really exist” (Jones 1) and then by describing the unfortunate situation that has befallen the Hatter family – the death of the pater familias. The similar pattern of three daughters and a stepmother can “be found in traditional stories like *Cinderella*” (Yavaş 2); however the familial ties are the only thing that resembles the classical fairy tale, their characters deviating quite a bit. It is expected that the half-sister will be ugly and evil, just like the stepmother, “but in fact all three girls grew up pretty” and Fanny, the stepmother, “treated all three girls with the same kindness” (Jones 2). Lettie was meant to “meet a young apprentice and live happily ever after” while Martha, being the youngest, was to become an apprentice of witchcraft (Jones 7). Jones is straightforward in letting the reader know that this will not be a typical fairy tale; “unlike in traditional fairy tales, Sophie’s sisters take charge of their own lives” (Yavaş 3) by switching their identities and escaping the future their stepmother had destined for them. Jones keeps the traditional form of the fairy tale but alters it so that the will of the characters comes into prominence. By making Martha and Lettie the agents of their own destiny, Jones introduces “a didactic impulse to the forefront of her writing” (Lucyk 25). Rather than aiming to make a feminist statement, Jones stresses the importance of choice for the youth and the acceptance of their “multiple, contrapuntal identities in order to become heroes in their own lives” (Lucyk 25). On the note on feminism, Rudd mentions that “the dominance of the male gaze” is disrupted, so “that Sophie can view patriarchy and its machinations with relative impunity” (4). Women in *Moving Castle* are not depicted through a reversal of fairy tale roles; rather they “operate within patriarchy, but are also shown to have agency” (Rudd 4). Furthermore, Jones challenges “orthodoxies old and new to show us how the world, how reality itself, can always be perceived otherwise” (Rudd 4). This is most evident in the character of Wizard Howl, who is described as a heartless man who devours hearts of innocent girls and “an ineffectual, narcissistic dandy for much of the time” (Rudd 5), but proves to be completely different when Sophie’s (and reader’s) point of view changes. Eastwood compares the novel to a fairy tale classic, *Beauty and the Beast*, comparing the characters of Sophie and Howl to those of Beauty and the Beast. At first, Eastwood equates Sophie to Beauty since they share the characteristics of being well read, motherless and they are both imprisoned, Sophie in her own body and Beauty in the Beast’s castle. Howl corresponds to the character of the Beast, for “like the Beast, Howl was not born the

way he is for most of the story” (Eastwood 48). The previous analysis corresponds with the typical character development of fairy tales but Jones rises above ordinary and introduces a twist to her characters, which Eastwood notices expertly: both Howl and Sophie can be interpreted as either Beauty or the Beast. Howl is described as a “young fellow in a flamboyant blue-and-silver suit” (Jones 73), fitting the character of a Prince Charming, or Beauty, as Eastwood remarks while Sophie, with her appearance of a ninety-year-old woman, gives off a beastly aura. Howl is the one who saves Sophie from the Witch, as Beauty saves the Beast (Eastwood 47-51). The complexity and intricacy of the protagonists is what makes the story fresh and gripping, despite the well-known fairy tale plot structure.

### 5.1 Sophie Hatter’s Unfulfilled Fate

Introduced through a foreshadowing, Sophie Hatter is “the one who will fail first” as it is “quite a misfortune to be born the eldest of three” (Jones 1). With her sisters being reassigned to new locations, Sophie remains isolated in the shop, with only her hats to keep her company, like Cinderella being ordered to clean, while her stepsisters have a chance of making better future. She is being exploited by her stepmother and seems to be ignoring the matter wittingly. Despite being fed up with the stagnant life, “she wanted to do something – she was not sure what” (Jones 15). Her young self is a mere observer of life, noticing that “interesting things did seem to happen, but always to somebody else” (Jones 17). Her appearance reflects her passive personality in all its dullness and greyness and she seems to recognise that “sitting and sewing had turned her into an old woman or semi-invalid” (Jones 17). Her fatalistic approach to life has led to a self-fulfilling prophecy, with Sophie becoming a wretched dull person she thinks herself of. The fear of being the eldest has taken control over her life and turned her into a completely passive character who even at the thought of seeking her fortune turns back as she reminds herself there is no point since no good awaits the eldest of the three. She rejects the idea that she has magical abilities until the very end, not allowing herself to be something more than just *the eldest*. Her *young* personality does not match her age at the least. Only after the misfortune of turning into a ninety-year-old woman, Sophie’s exterior matches her inner state of mind. She accepts her new physique calmly and remains unfazed about the situation the Witch of the Waste caused. Having anticipated great misfortune, she is finally able to let go of the fear and set off to seek her fortune, believing it cannot get worse than it had been at the time. Sophie gains a sense of anonymity in old age “as an old woman, she did not mind what she did or said” (Jones 83). It

is disputable whether this new-found courage sprouts from her exterior finally matching her interior, or from the belief that she has escaped her destiny as the third daughter. Rudd, on the other hand, states that “it is precisely because Sophie is prematurely aged that she is freed from the standard patriarchal plot that enslaves most young females” (3). Sophie, who is the supposed princess of the story, is in fact the hero and the one who eventually saves herself by saving Calcifer and Howl rather than being saved by the prince. Despite being put in the background and with the focus being on Howl’s troubles, Sophie is by far the most important character of the story. Whenever any kind of misfortune occurs, Sophie is the one who resolves it; she is the chief of the castle and kind of a motherly figure of the story. As Rudd observes, “Sophie clearly subverts the traditional fairy tale stereotype of meek and servile domesticity (as represented by Cinderella or Snow White, the latter’s behaviour being particularly emphasized in Disney’s version with her housekeeping for the Seven Dwarfs)” (7). Following her transformation into an old lady, Sophie is no longer the kind to sit idly, waiting to be rescued by the prince; she becomes an agent of her life rather than a mere observer.

When compared to Propp’s seeker or banished boy/girl type of a hero, Sophie seems to exhibit behaviour of a mixed type. The seeker type is usually a boy who is searching for a kidnapped girl, which evidently, does not fit the *Moving Castle* plot, meaning that Sophie should be classified as a banished girl. Yet, continuing to the tenth function of dramatis personae, the seeker type is the one who decides to act and bring a change to his/her life, while the banished hero lacks such aspirations. Although Sophie is not kidnapped but banished, she longs for a change, thus, she takes matters in her own hands and sets off to find her own destiny. Propp recognises this problem in the eleventh function of dramatis personae stating that if “a girl is driven out and there is no seeker, then the narrative is developed along the route of the victim hero” (Propp 39). Sophie is both victim and seeker: she had sought for a dynamic and independent life, but lacked courage to make a change. Becoming a victim (suffering from the effects of the curse) had enabled her to become a seeker.

## **5.2 Wizard Howl as Helper/Hero**

According to Propp’s distribution of functions amongst dramatis personae, Wizard Howl falls into the category of a helper character. Howl and Calcifer share the role of helper as they are both responsible for the liquidation of the initial misfortune (Sophie’s curse). Howl is a

partial helper as he does not fulfil one of the functions of the helper role, the transfiguration of the hero. The lines between character functions seem to be blurred, especially if one takes in the bigger picture, by putting Howl in the position of hero. Upon revealing the world within a world, the reader finds out about Howl's past and his departure from Wales to the magical land of Ingary, which fulfils the first constituent of hero's sphere of action. Following his departure, Howl meets the donor, Calcifer, who strikes a deal with him, the remaining being a reaction to the demands of the donor, which is the second constituent of the hero's sphere of action. In these terms, Howl can be seen as both the hero and the helper of the story. The creations of characters that contain the secondary element of hero within the primary role of helper add up to the metafictional structure of the work, once again proving the complexity of the genre.

In the beginning of the novel, Howl is represented as an antagonist who only brings evil to the town of Market Chipping by kidnapping young girls and eating their hearts away. The reader is misled into believing that he will be the main villain of the story, only to find out that he is more of a Prince Charming. Howl is described as a "dashing specimen" (Jones 19) who always pays attention to his appearance, thus attracting an abundance of girls, the Witch of the Waste included. Even though he is not a hero, but rather a helper, Howl is put into the centre of the story. San Juan García states that "Wizard Howl is an indispensable character because he plays the role of a foil within the story" (15). Once Sophie arrives at the castle, her misfortune becomes secondary and everything starts to revolve around Howl. Due to Howl's misbehaviours, Sophie's qualities come to light, with Howl serving as the perfect foil character. Even though he shares the function of helper of the story with Calcifer, Howl desperately needs guidance in life, which Sophie's motherly figure provides on more than one occasion. With his curse being put into the limelight, Sophie, as the hero, does all the work in the castle as well as deals with the resolution of his curse. Even though breaking her own curse means breaking Howl's contract, Sophie has accepted her current state and only seems to be concerned with their misfortune. All the while Sophie is struggling to break the curse, Howl is gadding around and flirting, seemingly indifferent about the curse and the aftermath that follows its fulfilment. Although his appearance and demeanour are that of Prince Charming, he is deeply flawed. San Juan García draws a connection between his real name, Howell, which means eminent or prominent, and the fact that he "is someone who loves being conspicuous and the centre of attention" (15). Comparing the novel to Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Howl is like an amalgam of Tin Man, who lacked a heart, and the Cowardly Lion, who was in need of courage. He is both emotionless (unable to fall in love), and a coward. He is fickle-hearted in his endeavours with women, only being

interested “until the girl falls in love with him” (Jones 112), which sets him nowhere near the Prince Charming type of a character. Here we have to mention Lucyk who brings into discussion the question of good versus evil, comparing Howl to the Witch of the Waste. Both Howl and the Witch of the Waste have given their hearts to their fire demons and are trapped in the contract, the only thing preventing Howl from turning evil being “their distinct attitudes toward the contracts” (Lucyk 82). Howl and Calcifer comprehend the wrongness of their contract while “the Witch of the Waste and her fire demon never show an interest in breaking the contract” (Lucyk 83) but rather search for ways of gaining even more power. Howl is inherently good, which is seen on numerous accounts and expresses sympathy for every vagabond that strays his or her way by giving them a place in the castle. Out of pure kindness, Howl felt sorry for Calcifer when he was about to die as a falling star and struck a contract to save his life – even if it meant giving away his heart. His narcissistic behaviour is merely a distraction from the real issue of his identity – his cowardice and unwillingness to take responsibility for his actions, which have spout from his literal heartlessness. Howl Pendragon is completely uncharacteristic and his behaviour cannot be predicted, whether it is throwing a tantrum over ruined hair or undercharging people for spells. Although he may not be the primary hero of the story, without his help, the real hero would not have come to prominence.

## Conclusion

In her fantasy novel *Howl's Moving Castle*, Diana Wynne Jones creates a world that is appealing to both children and young adults. With magical items such as seven-league boots and characters that radiate with magic, she successfully brings into being an atmosphere of a fairy tale. She combines the elements of fairy tale with the main principles of fantasy, creating a superb blend of genres.

Using Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* as a main reference point for the analysis of the elements of fairy tale in Jones's novel, it is to be concluded that his morphology can indeed be applied to other genres, such as fantasy. Propp categorises the functions of *dramatis personae* into thirty-one functions, out of which fourteen correspond to the plot structure of *Moving Castle*. Despite the fact that only nearly half of the functions correspond to Propp's morphology, not all of them need to be fulfilled to maintain the structure of a fairy tale. The main protagonist, Sophie, follows the main idea of a fairy tale plotline by violating an interdiction, thus bringing misfortune on her and departing on a journey to find better future. Sophie proves to be a real hero of the story by fulfilling two out of three Propp's elements: departure for a search and reaction to the demands of the donor. She is surrounded by other characters, which are the donor, embodied in the friendly fire demon Calcifer, the helper, Wizard Howl, and the villain, which are both the Witch of the Waste and her own fire demon Miss Angorian. Some other elements of fairy tale are present in the structure, such as initial situation, trebling, and motivation. The initial situation, which is the tell-tale sign of fairy tale, is present in *Moving Castle*, with Jones describing the members of Hatter family, their past and destinies as well as the vague setting. Trebling is evident in the use of three sisters and three magical encounters. Motivations are reserved for the villain of the story since the villain is the main instigator of action, thus being responsible for the hero's initial movement: Sophie and the Witch of the Waste correspond completely with the element. It can thus be concluded that Propp's *Morphology* serves as an efficient tool for analysis of fantasy as well as the fairy tale.

Jones's irony towards the typical fairy tale endings is evident throughout the novel, the best example being Sophie's sisters whose destinies were planned by their stepmother, but in the end they made their own happily ever after by switching places. Despite sharing characteristics with Propp's model of hero, Sophie Hatter is not the typical fairy tale character; she relies on herself and manages to resolve her misfortune by helping Howl and Calcifer break their vicious contract. Had it not been for Sophie's tenacity and persistence, Calcifer would not have been able to take the curse off her. It is expected of fairy tale that a female character will be rescued



by a prince, but, neither is Sophie the princess of the story, nor is Howl the prince. He is a mere helper to Sophie's hero and serves as a foil character that brings out her qualities. Jones's characters have multiple layers, seesawing from passive to active in Sophie's case and from being a coward, to becoming a respectable person in Howl's. The characters in *Moving Castle* undergo grand transformations, which Jones uses to remind the reader that nothing is one-sided and that one must look deeply into oneself to find the courage and change. With this novel, Jones sends a powerful message of not giving up and always listening to one's heart, proving once again that fantasy is not a less valuable genre.

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