

## **The Fairy Tale and Stephen King's *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon***

The uses and misuses of fairy tales in childhood forms the backbone of fairy tale studies. Bruno Bettelheim has argued for the benefits of fairy tales in helping children deal with psychological trauma (5). Maria Tartar has taken this argument further, and she argues that fairy tales have transformative effects on their readers beyond therapy (57). Neil Gaiman, paraphrasing G. K. Chesterton, states "Fairy tales are more than true---not because they tell us dragons exist, but because they tell us dragons can be beaten" (Gaiman). In Stephen King's novel *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon*, he presents the act of creating fairy tales both as a necessary coping mechanism in the face of trauma, but he also shows this act as a literal tool for defeating a tangible foe.

Throughout the novel, Trisha must face the realistic hardships of being lost in the woods as well as the supernatural horrors that lurk in the corner of her perception. To survive these horrors, Trisha creates her own folklore out of her memories and her experiences. She names her own pantheon of three gods, the God of Lost Things, the Subaudible, and Tom Gordon, her favorite baseball player. These three figures serve different roles in the story. The Subaudible serves as an underlying force guiding the universe. Normally, the Subaudible goes unnoticed, but it comes through in her wonder at nature during scattered moments throughout her journey. The God of Lost Things serves as a watcher keeping Trisha safe and as her ultimate foe who she must defeat in order to return home. Her imagined version of Tom Gordon keeps her connected with the world outside the woods and gives her the tools to survive her final encounter with the God of Lost Things. Thus, I argue that in *The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon*, the act of creation itself, not just the reading of fairy tales, can transform a child and help them survive trauma, whether it is the mundane trauma of parental divorce or extreme trauma like being lost alone in the woods facing supernatural foes.