

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This thesis discusses the portrayal of alienation as experienced by the protagonist, Pavla, in Marisa Silver's *Little Nothing*. *Little Nothing* is a surreal, fable-like novel that tells the story of Pavla, a girl born with dwarfism in a rural Eastern European village. As she grows, Pavla is subjected to painful medical procedures in an attempt to "fix" her body, but instead, her form begins to change in inexplicable ways. Over time, she transforms into a wolf-like being, embarking on an isolating journey filled with self-discovery. The novel explores themes of identity, transformation, societal rejection, and the search for meaning. Through Pavla's physical and emotional metamorphosis, Silver presents a portrayal of how marginalized individuals are treated by society, and how alienation shapes their understanding of themselves and the world.

This thesis has examined the portrayal of alienation as experienced by Pavla using an analysis of intrinsic literary elements, including character, characterization, conflict, and setting. Based on the intrinsic literary analysis, Pavla emerges as a central figure whose life is shaped by her physical deformities, societal rejection, and emotional vulnerability. Despite her deformity and wolf-like appearance, Pavla is portrayed as intelligent and resilient, though deeply affected by isolation and a lack of self-worth. Her characterization reflects a complex struggle between internal strength and external invalidation. Pavla's internal conflict stems from the clash between her

need for dignity and the degrading roles she is forced to accept, particularly as a circus performer. Simultaneously, her external conflicts with Danilo, Smetanka, and her parents reveal the failure of those around her to offer protection or acceptance. The novel's shifting settings, from her village to the carnival and finally the forest, mirror Pavla's psychological journey toward alienation and self-erasure, emphasizing how both environment and social dynamics contribute to her descent into isolation.

Based on the theoretical framework, this thesis covers the causes of Pavla's alienation and her efforts to fight it in order to achieve existential freedom throughout the novel. Her journey aligns with Jean-Paul Sartre's theories of alienation, particularly through her encounters with bad faith, the gaze, and a lack of existential freedom, which causes her to fall into alienation. Pavla attempts to break free from her alienation in two significant ways, which are being-for others, as she internalizes how others perceive her while conforming to the roles that other people place her in; and being-for-itself, as she withdraws from all human interaction to embrace a non-human identity, which symbolizes her gateway towards her own existential freedom. Through Pavla's transformation and existential struggle, *Little Nothing* offers a reflection on how societal rejection and physical difference can deeply impact an individual's identity, relationships, and sense of belonging in the world.