

Good Grief: Changing Attitudes to Childhood Grief in
Children's Literature



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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been submitted, in whole or part, by me or another person, for the purpose of obtaining any other qualification.

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Dedication

For Rosie.

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Abstract

In the modern context, it is understood that childhood grief is a normal response to loss and that bereaved children require support and guidance to navigate their grief. However, less than a century ago it was believed children did not grieve at all. When childhood grief was eventually acknowledged, it was thought best for children to avoid discussing their grief, that they were resilient, and would eventually learn to adapt to their loss. Research into childhood grief was limited, however two studies into childhood grief by Dr Maria Nagy in the 1940's and Dr Elisabeth Kubler Ross in the 1970's resulted in the development of age specific stages of grief. However, it took until the 1990's before any major research was conducted into childhood grief. The Harvard Child Bereavement Study questioned how children mourned when a parent died and if grief in children differed from that of adults. More recent research has discovered longterm implications if a child's grief is not adequately acknowledged and resolved. However, the portrayal of childhood grief in children's literature or whether this portrayal is reflective of the changing attitudes to childhood grief has not been studied.

Therefore, through the lens of literary trauma theory, this thesis examines this under researched area. It utilises critical perspectives from literary trauma theorists Cathy Caruth, a traditional literary trauma theorist, and Michelle Satterlee, a pluralistic literary trauma theorist, and offers a critique of both theoretical approaches and discusses their strengths and weaknesses. This thesis

investigates how changing attitudes to childhood grief are represented in children's literature. It looks at a range of texts from the early twentieth century to the early twenty-first century and considers the influence of beliefs and attitudes surrounding death within the temporal and cultural contexts in which they were set. The primary texts analysed are: *The Secret Garden* (1911) by Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Yearling* (1938) by Marjorie Kinnan Rawling, *Goodnight Mr Tom* (1981) by Michelle Magorian, *A Taste of Blackberries* (1973) by Doris Buchanan Smith, *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977) by Katherine Paterson and *A Monster Calls* (2011) by Patrick Ness. These texts span a century from 1911 to 2011, and were selected to represent a range of childhood losses, including the loss of parents, friends, siblings, and pets. It provides an in-depth analysis of childhood grief in children's literature and analyses how society shapes the treatment of childhood grief. Additionally, it will explore bibliotherapy as a therapeutic approach to help children understand and cope with grief and loss and how literature can facilitate a deeper understanding of their traumatic experiences and the resulting emotional and psychological challenges it can evoke.

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Introduction

As a discipline, trauma has its origins in a diverse range of fields such as 'American studies, history, psychoanalysis, cultural studies, sociology, and anthropology among others' (Radstone, Walter and Shenker, 2013). While initially used as a term to describe a 'wound inflicted on the body', trauma is now also recognised as a 'wound inflicted upon the mind' (Caruth, 1996, p. 3).

Consequently, the term has become much more prevalent in everyday discourse. To illustrate this point, Thomas Laqueur, in the *London Review of Books* (2010), observes that between 1851 and 1960 the term trauma appears in the *New York Times* less than 300 times but appears over 11,000 times since (Kurtz 2018, p.1). Though originally confined to the fields of medicine and psychology, the study of trauma has since become much more prevalent in literary and cultural studies (Schönfelder 2013, p. 28). Therefore, as Ruth Leys states, trauma is now 'one of the signal concepts of our time' (Leys 2000, p.10) and has developed as a new field within the humanities. While the study of trauma dates back to the late 1800's when the connections between trauma, psychiatry and psychology began to emerge, trauma theory itself did not emerge until almost a century later, in the 1980's.

Literature and Trauma Theory

Trauma theory refers to the broad interdisciplinary field that examines the psychological, social and cultural aspects of trauma. It explores the impact of

traumatic experiences on individuals and societies, including the psychological and physiological effects of trauma. It often incorporates insights from trauma survivor's, clinical observations, and scientific studies to develop theoretical frameworks.

While trauma theory did not solely emerge from one source, studies of the Holocaust played a significant role in its development. Indeed, Radstone, Walter and Shenker go so far as to say that 'Holocaust studies, if not the Holocaust itself, has been germinal for trauma theory' (Radstone, Walter and Shenker, 2013). One of the most influential Holocaust/trauma studies texts is that of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub. Felman and Laub's, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992) explored testimony and witnessing of trauma from a dual perspective. This collaboration between literary critic, Felman, and psychoanalyst, Laub, focussed on the Holocaust and it examined the nature and functioning of memory and the act of witnessing. Felman and Laub's trauma studies exposed the paradox of witnessing an event without explicitly knowing the event, which opened up the field of trauma studies to further investigation. For example, Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* also gave voice to the victims of the Holocaust, as well as the victims of the Vietnam War and sexual abuse. Tal distances herself from deconstructionists who she sees as seeking to prove that there is no solid place to stand. Instead, she considers herself a 'cultural critic' and sees her role as one that challenges 'the assumption upon which any communal consensus is based' (Tal 1996, p. 5).

In addition, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* by

Dominick LaCapra is an important collection of essays which examines 'the historiographical and the interpersonal dynamics of representing past traumas, with particular emphasis on examining the transference relationship between scholars and their subjects' (Radstone, Walter and Shenker, 2013). For LaCapra, the psychoanalytic process of "working through" rather than "acting out" serves as the basis for a critical representation of the Holocaust and other traumas (Radstone, Walter and Shenker, 2013). In an interview conducted at Cornell University in 2012, LaCapra explained, '[i]nsofar as one is traumatized by something, the past becomes more real than anything happening around you at the present time. In fact, you see everything in the present terms of the past' (LaCapra, 2012). LaCapra believes then, there is a difference between absence and loss. As he states '[w]hen absence is converted into loss, one increases the likelihood of misplaced nostalgia or utopian politics in quest of a new totality or fully unified community' (LaCapra 1991, p.698). However, '[w]hen loss is converted into absence, one faces the impasse of endless melancholy, impossible mourning, and interminable aporia in which a process of working through the past and its historical losses is foreclosed or prematurely aborted' (LaCapra 1999, p. 698). In *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma* LaCapra claims that a response to trauma that narrowly focuses on 'sympathetic acting out and the repetition compulsion' or even becomes 'compulsively fixated' on the crisis caused by trauma is in danger of 'intentionally or unintentionally...aggravating trauma' (Schönfelder 2013, p. 33). Therefore, the issue for LaCapra is 'when the virtual

experience involved in empathy, gives way to vicarious victimhood and empathy with the victim seems to become an identity' (LaCapra 1999, p. 699).

Literary Trauma Theory

One of the main trauma theorists to emerge from studies of the Holocaust is Cathy Caruth, who drew extensively on the traumatic experiences of Holocaust survivors for her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. In this work, Caruth highlighted the role of language and narrative in the process and expression of trauma. This new field, known as literary trauma theory, developed into a theoretical framework that examines how literature represents and responds to traumatic experiences. Caruth's theoretical approach contends that trauma is unspeakable, that is, that the nature of the trauma suffered is so profound that language alone cannot adequately express it. However, despite this unspeakability, Caruth's theory does allow for trauma to be expressed indirectly in literature. However, she does not believe it can be directly expressed, that it defies our ability to communicate it in a linear manner. Rather it is conveyed through gaps, omission, fragmentation, and omissions. In this light, Flynn and O'Brien contend that:

One of the reasons for the value of the literary in any attempt to cope with forms of loss and trauma is that what we might term normal communication is fraught with the unspoken, the occluded and the areas of experience which have been repressed by the unconscious mind and about which we may not even be aware.' (Flynn and O'Brien 2018, p. 5)

For Caruth then, literature is the ideal medium to allow trauma victims to indirectly convey and express their trauma.

This is of particular importance to trauma survivors who may develop traumatic amnesia due to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).¹ Lisa Diedrich's *PTSD: A New Trauma Paradigm*, which draws on Caruth's literary trauma theory model and focusses on the link between trauma and PTSD. Diedrich maintains that '[t]he new diagnosis category (PTSD) has had a profound impact not just in psychiatry but also in culture at large, with the result that PTSD is a multiple and complex object that is enacted in a variety of discourses, practices, and institutional spaces' (Diedrich 2018, p.83). In addition, for Diedrich, PTSD is 'a symptom and sign of changing politics of trauma in the present', and she is particularly interested in the 'biologizing' of mental illness to reduce the stigma attached to it (Diedrich 2018, p.84). This is particularly important, as, like Caruth, Diedrich is especially interested in how 'the intrusiveness of the past event into the present moment, sometimes to the point that the person dissociates from the present reality and the components of the event are relived and the individual behaves as though experiencing the event at that moment' (Diedrich 2018, p.85).

¹ PTSD is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event, series of events or set of circumstances. An individual may experience this as emotionally or physically harmful or life-threatening and may affect mental, physical, social, and/or spiritual well-being. There are four main symptoms that can vary in severity. Firstly, intrusive thoughts such as repeated, involuntary memories; distressing dreams; or flashbacks of the traumatic event. Flashbacks may be so vivid that people feel they are reliving the traumatic experience or seeing it before their eyes. Secondly, avoidance: Avoiding reminders of the traumatic event may include avoiding people, places, activities, objects, and situations that may trigger distressing memories. People may try to avoid remembering or thinking about the traumatic event. They may resist talking about what happened or how they feel about it. Thirdly, alterations in cognition and mood: Inability to remember important aspects of the traumatic event, negative thoughts and feelings leading to ongoing and distorted beliefs about oneself or others (e.g., "I am bad," "No one can be trusted"); distorted thoughts about the cause or consequences of the event leading to wrongly blaming self or other; ongoing fear, horror, anger, guilt or shame; much less interest in activities previously enjoyed; feeling detached or estranged from others; or being unable to experience positive emotions (a void of happiness or satisfaction) and lastly alterations in arousal and reactivity: Arousal and reactive symptoms may include being irritable and having angry outbursts; behaving recklessly or in a self-destructive way; being overly watchful of one's surroundings in a suspecting way; being easily startled; or having problems concentrating or sleeping. (Taylor-Desir, 2022)

Moreover, she questions how 'PTSD disorders a person's experience of temporality' (Diedrich 2018, p.85). Therefore, as with Caruth, Diedrich believes that the trauma survivor can dissociate and not assimilate the traumatic event into normal memory, instead it is assimilated directly into the subconscious.

Both Diedrich and Caruth's theories are indebted to the work of Freud.

Caruth draws a link between Freud's work and PTSD, which she defines as:

a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts, or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event. (Caruth 1995, p.4)

Caruth further defines PTSD as 'the direct imposition on the mind of the unavoidable reality of horrific events, the taking over of the mind, physically and neurobiologically, by an event that it cannot control' (Caruth, 1996, p. 58). Caruth is particularly interested in this aspect of Freud's work, specifically his work with shell-shocked soldiers and their subsequent nightmares, and she defines these nightmares/flashbacks as 'a series of painful events to which they are subjected, and which seem to be entirely outside their wish or control' (Caruth, 1996, pp.12). Indeed, Caruth turns to other examples of Freud's writings when developing this aspect of her trauma theory. For instance, Caruth notes that, in *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud claimed 'what children have experienced at the age of two and have not understood need never be remembered by them, except in dreams... But at some later time, it will break into their life with obsessional impulses, it will govern their actions' (Caruth 1995, p.167). From this Caruth extrapolates that

there is an inextricable link between trauma and memory, and she builds her definition of trauma around these symptoms. With this in mind, she further builds on her earlier definition of trauma and, in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, defines it as ‘the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena’ (Caruth, 1996, p. 91).

From this definition, Caruth formulates her theory of ‘belatedness’, which resonates with the theorisations of trauma by Freud, Lacan, and Pierre Janet. Caruth defines belatedness as ‘[t]raumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox. That the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness’ (Caruth, 1996, pp. 91-92). Caruth further states ‘[t]he repetitions of the traumatic event – which remain unavailable to consciousness but intrude repeatedly on sight – thus suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing’ (Caruth, 1996, p. 92). However, Caruth believes that these unwanted flashbacks to the traumatic event ‘do not simply serve as testimony’ to that event, but ‘may also, paradoxically enough, bear witness to a past that was never fully experienced as it occurred’ (Caruth 1995, p.151). Therefore, Caruth believes that trauma ‘does not simply serve as a record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully

owned' (Caruth 1995, p.151). Consequently, these flashbacks are not subject to conscious recall and control, and, as a result, the 'ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up, in trauma, with the inability to have access to it' (Caruth 1995, p.151). Furthermore, Caruth believes that the impact of trauma escapes language, and it can never be captured by direct reference, it is only through textual absence, such as gaps in the text, that the impact of trauma can be described. Despite coming to the fore as a discipline in the 1990's, literary trauma theory has its roots in the nineteenth century.

Freud's theories of psychological trauma are most often cited as the foundations for many present-day trauma theorists. However, it should be noted that Freud drew on the work of many other early trauma theorists. For instance, Freud was heavily influenced by Jean-Martin Charcot's studies at the Salpêtrière hospital in France. Freud spent the winter of 1885-1886 working there with Charcot, during which time he developed a specific interest in hysteria (Kurtz 2018, p.97). In addition, Freud was heavily influenced by the work of Charcot's student, Pierre Janet, whose own work on trauma ran alongside Freud's and shared many of his philosophies regarding trauma and memory. For instance, Janet asserted that traumatic events 'left indelible and distressing memories – memories to which the sufferer was continually returning, and by which he was tormented by day and by night' (Janet, 1919-25). Furthermore, it was Janet who 'distinguished narrative memory from the automatic integration of new information without much conscious attention to what was happening' (Caruth 1995, p.160). Janet also stated that 'narrative memory consists of mental constructs, which people use to

make sense out of experience' (Caruth 1995, p.160). Janet believed existing cognitive schemes may not have been capable of integrating traumatic experiences, causing the memory of those experiences to be retained differently and not be retrievable under normal conditions: in other words, it became 'dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control' (Caruth 1995, p.160). Indeed, Joshua Pederson credits Charcot and Janet with being the first to associate trauma with the symptoms of hysteria, and states that the concept of dissociation was proposed by Janet as far back as 1889 (Kurtz 2018, p.97). In fact, though Freud is most often associated with the term subconscious, it was in actuality coined by Janet (Caruth 1995, p. 158). Along with Charcot and Janet, JE Erichsen's *On Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System* (1867) and Herbert Page's *Injuries of the Spine and Spinal Column Without Apparent Mechanical Lesion* (1885) were also highly instrumental in Freud's development of his trauma theories.

Despite Charcot's and Janet's influences on the development of trauma theory, Freud did not acknowledge their input when publishing his theories. Therefore, it is Freud's theories on trauma that are most often cited by many contemporary trauma theorists, with particular interest paid to Freud's studies that consider repression a corollary of trauma. From his earliest texts, such as *Studies in Hysterias* (1893), Freud suggested that hysteria was triggered by traumatic experiences that had not been fully integrated into the psyche. Freud went on to state that due to their deeply distressing nature, these events were repressed, forgotten by the conscious mind, but 'continue however to dwell in the

unconscious where they achieve the status of what Freud calls “foreign bodies” in the psyche’ (Forster, 2007, p. 262). Initially, Freud attributed hysteria to the seduction theory, which hypothesised that adult hysteria had its roots in childhood sexual abuse or fantasies. However, in the aftermath of the First World War with the return of shell-shocked soldiers from the Front displaying similar traumatic symptoms, Freud’s theory of hysteria had to be revised. This was particularly important, as prompt rehabilitation of soldiers was required in order to facilitate their redeployment to the front (Van der Kolk, 2007, p. 241). Consequently, new theories regarding trauma and its links to memory and repression were developed, most notably in Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). In this text Freud noted that patients suffering from traumatic neurosis often experienced a lack of conscious preoccupation with the memories of their accident during their everyday lives. However, they were haunted by unwanted intrusive nightmares about the traumatic event. From these studies, Freud developed his trauma theory, which indicated a link between trauma and memory. Despite some of Freud’s theories on repressed desires and sexual abuse being discredited other aspects of Freud’s work continue to influence modern perspectives and understanding of trauma and its effects.

This is especially evident in Caruth’s work. Caruth believes Freud’s link between the traumatic event and repression to be unquestionable. Consequently, many of her texts such as *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), in addition to her collaborative works with Geoffrey Hartman, popularise the trope of trauma as an

'unrepresentable event' (Satterlee 2014, p. 1). These seminal texts place the concept of "belatedness" at the centre of a theory on trauma, arguing that a traumatic event is accessible only in its return (Caruth, 1996, p. 92). In developing this theory Caruth draws heavily on Freud's work as she believes 'the centrality and complexity of trauma in our century was first most profoundly addressed in two important and controversial works by Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism*' (Caruth, 1996, p. 58). For Caruth, what Freud seems to suggest in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is that mental trauma does not wound like a physical trauma. Rather it impacts as a psychological wound, and it is so traumatic that it is repressed to the subconscious. Caruth rationalises that as a traumatic event it 'is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor (Caruth, 1996, p. 3-4). Therefore, critical to Caruth's literary trauma theory is the belief that a traumatic event 'is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it' (Caruth 1995, p.4). According to Caruth's theory, the person experiencing the traumatic event does not assimilate the memory of the event as it occurs but only has knowledge of the traumatic event belatedly, through intrusive dreams and flashbacks. Consequently, according to Caruth, 'it is at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet' (Caruth, 1996, p. 3).

Therefore, Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is one of the principal texts Caruth draws on to develop her definition of trauma theory. This text opens with Freud's observation of a psychic disorder that appears to reflect the unavoidable and overwhelming imposition of historical events on the psyche (Caruth, 1996, p. 58). In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, which was a departure from Freud's previous hypotheses that all human impulses were based on pleasure principles alone, Freud hypothesised that there were other drives at play in the human psyche also, particularly where trauma was concerned. Further to this work, Freud maintained that traumatic memory was not just assimilated into the conscious mind, but the unconscious mind also. In addition, Freud stated:

Consciousness is not the only distinctive character which we ascribe to the process in that system. On the basis of impressions derived from our psycho-analytic experience we assume that all excitatory processes that occur in the other systems leave permanent traces behind in them which form the foundation of memory. Such memory-traces then, have nothing to do with the fact of becoming conscious; when the process which left them behind was one which never entered consciousness. (Freud, 1969, p.18)

To further explain his hypothesis, Freud defined the difference between a 'trauma neuroses' and a 'war neuroses'. For example, Freud believed that trauma neuroses derived from traumatic events, such as a rail disaster, had a physical impact on the patient so was therefore caused by a 'mechanical force'. However, war neuroses, which had all the same symptoms of trauma neuroses, occurred 'without the intervention of any gross mechanical force' (Freud, 2015, p.6). Most importantly, Freud noted that both trauma neuroses victims and war neuroses victims suffered from intrusive dreams related to the moment the traumatic event occurred. This

link between trauma and memory was not a completely new concept for Freud; as far back as 1893, in conjunction with Josef Breuer, Freud noted that ‘hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences’ (Freud and Breuer 1893). However, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud further observed that even patients suffering from neurosis who were not occupied in their waking lives with memories of their trauma, and may even be trying to forget about it, still suffered from intrusive dreams bringing them back to the time of the traumatic event. Intrusive thoughts that remain inaccessible to controlled recall are widely recognised today as symptoms of PTSD. However, PTSD was not recognised as a psychological condition until many decades after Freud’s studies and only included in the third edition of the American Psychiatric Association Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (APA DSM) in 1980 (DSM-III; APA, 1980).

To further tie this hypothesis to literary trauma theory, Caruth turns to the work of Geoffrey Hartman, a colleague of Caruth’s at Yale, who argues that literature can help with the reading of the wound of trauma (Caruth 1995, p.537). Hartman stresses that words are ‘inadequate or even fail in the face of trauma’, however, he does concede that ‘literacy verbalization still remains a basis for making the wound perceivable and the silence audible’ (Schönfelder 2013 p. 31). In a subsequent interview with Caruth, Hartman questions whether trauma ‘can only be reclaimed by literary knowledge’ (Kurtz 2018, p.97). Hartman’s influence permeates Caruth’s work and is especially evident in Caruth’s analysis of Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

When analysing *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Caruth focuses on Freud's use of a literary text, Tasso's epic *Gerusalemme Liberata*, which she believes both illustrates the role of repression in traumatic theory and makes a connection to literary trauma theory. This epic narrative tells the tale of Tancred who accidentally kills his lover, Clorinda, in a duel when she is masquerading as an enemy knight. Following her death, Tancred enters a magic forest, which terrorises the Crusaders' army. When Tancred lashes out at a tree with his sword, blood streams from the trunk and Clorinda's voice, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, protests he has wounded her again (Caruth, 1996, p. 2). Caruth believes that Freud turns to literature to illustrate his theories about traumatic experiences because both literature and psychoanalysis are interested in the relationship between knowing and not knowing. With this in mind, Caruth states '[i]n the most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena' (Caruth 1996, p. 2).

However, Caruth's analysis fails to consider that Tancred is aware that he has killed Clorinda. Ruth Leys, points out, while initially she was unaware that he had unwittingly killed her while she was in disguise, once the disguise was removed, he immediately recognised Clorinda and felt remorse when he realised who he had killed. Therefore, there is no belatedness to the knowledge of the traumatic event that Caruth claims to be crucial to her trauma theory. In addition, Clorinda is the victim of the piece not Tancred, yet Caruth associates the

perpetrator with victimhood. This is especially difficult for Leys who draws parallels between Caruth's identifying the murderer as a victim and the plight of Jews in the Holocaust. Leys states 'it would turn the executioners of the Jews into victims and the cries of the Jews into testimony to the trauma suffered by the Nazi's (Leys 2000, p. 297). In addition, Freud was using Tasso's epic tale as an example of trauma neurosis not aligning it with war neurosis as Caruth does, which completely confounds her literary trauma theory (Leys 2000, pp. 293-295).

In *Trauma and Memory*, Silke Arnold-de Simine makes the point that '[c]ritics such as Kansteiner or Ruth Leys have pointed out that Caruth's approach to trauma can be traced back to deconstructive literary theories (especially Paul de Man) in which all traces of the past are treated as language that has lost its referent' (Kurtz 2018, p.141). As Leys points out, Caruth's literary trauma theory was heavily influenced by Paul de Man, who developed insights into how language works. Though de Man died in 1983, Caruth does acknowledge his influence on her work, especially *The Resistance to Theory* (1982) and *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (1983). Although Caruth states in *Unclaimed Experience* that 'in the wake of structuralist and poststructuralist developments in literary theory, a good deal of concern has risen that these linguistically orientated theories of reading deny the possibility that language can give us access to history', she felt that de Man's theory differed as it is 'a theory that does not eliminate reference but precisely registers, in language, the impact of the event' (Caruth 1996, p. 73). De Man's influence can be seen throughout Caruth's work, predominantly in her reference to Freud's work, as she is

particularly interested in the return of the accident or traumatic incident to haunt the victim. According to Caruth, the story of the accident refers indirectly to the unexpected reality – the locus of referentiality of the traumatic story. It is this link between narrative and reality that Caruth explores through de Man's notion of referentiality, a notion that associates reference with impact and specifically the experience of trauma. As Caruth sees it, de Man's 'interpretation of reference through trauma... in terms of its indirect relation to reference, does not deny or eliminate the possibility of reference but insists, precisely, on the inescapability of its belated impact' (Caruth 1996, p.7). Therefore, it is through this connection between de Man's theories and Freud's work on the repression of traumatic memories that Caruth develops her theory of the universality of trauma as a delayed experience in which experience itself becomes tied up with trauma.

That said, it should be noted that Caruth was not in full agreement with all of Freud's work. In particular, Caruth criticises Freud's practice of using the terms repression and dissociation interchangeably. Accordingly, Caruth defines what she considers the fundamental difference between the two terms:

Repression reflects a vertically layered model of the mind: what is repressed is pushed downward, into the unconscious. The subject no longer has access to it only symbolic indirect indications would point to its assumed existence. Dissociation reflects a horizontal layered model of the mind: when a subject does not remember a trauma its 'memory' is contained in an alternate stream of consciousness, which may be subconscious or dominate conscious e.g., during traumatic re-enactments. (Caruth 1995, p.167)

Additionally, it should be acknowledged that there is a wide divergence in Freud's and Caruth's trauma theory models regarding how a traumatic event is integrated

into subconscious memory. While Freud believed the memory was repressed into the subconscious mind, Caruth states that the flashback is not a memory that was later repressed, 'but an event that is itself constituted, in part, by its lack of integration into consciousness' (Caruth 1995, p.152). Consequently, it is through this 'lack of proper integration of intense, emotionally arousing experiences into the memory system results in dissociation and the formation of traumatic memories' (Caruth 1995, p.152). As she explains 'trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it is precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on' (Caruth, 1996, p. 4). Therefore, according to Caruth, trauma is not assimilated at the time the traumatic event occurs. Consequently, this knowing and not knowing, as well as the dissociation from the traumatic event and the subsequent inability to assimilate the traumatic event into conscious memory, form the basis for Caruth's literary trauma theory. Caruth remains a dominant force in literary trauma theory and is not alone in linking trauma with memory. The works of Bessel van der Kolk and Judith Herman support Caruth's claims that trauma is mostly, if not totally, unspeakable. Indeed, prior to Caruth's studies, a large number of texts in the area of trauma theory drew direct links between the two, particularly the previously mentioned theorists concerned with the Holocaust.

However, despite many proponents of Caruth's theory it is not without its criticism. The main weakness of Caruth's hypothesis rests on her supposition that the symptoms of trauma are universal. Firstly, this hypothesis requires a very

narrow definition of trauma and the unassimilated nature of traumatic memory, criticism of which will be seen below in Michelle Satterlee's work, who disputes that traumatic symptoms are as universal as Caruth implies. More importantly, it is a very Eurocentric perspective, which does not account for socio-cultural differences beyond the West, so again the universality that Caruth claims is called into question. Therefore, it is evident that despite deriving from such a diverse range of sources, most studies in the field of literary trauma theory almost always associate trauma with repression and memory (Buelan et al., 2014 p.2). However, linking literary trauma theory with the 'trope of the unspeakable' by early theorists such as Felman, Laub, Hartman and Caruth has led to much debate within the field (Stampfl 2014, p.15). Until recently, such was the influence of these theorists that this 'unspeakable void' remained the dominant concept in the field of trauma studies (Kurtz 2018, p.234). However not all trauma theorists concur with the connection between trauma and memory. A new wave of literary trauma theorists, most notably Michelle Satterlee, question whether traditional interpretations that 'trauma refuses representation and causes dissociation' is too narrow (Satterlee 2014, p. 1). Instead, Satterlee emphasises the possibility for both 'indirect and direct knowledge of the traumatic event' and believes 'what remains unspoken in a narrative about trauma can be a result of cultural values and not just neurobiological function' (Richter 2018 p.367). This has led to widespread debate as to whether traumatic memory is a normal response to a traumatic event, or 'whether memory itself possesses traits, such as amnesiac memory, attributed to traumatic memory' (Radstone, Walter and Shenker, 2013).

Consequently, Satterlee has developed a pluralistic model of literary trauma theory which 'moves away the focus on trauma as unrepresentable and toward a focus on the specificity of trauma that locates meaning through a greater consideration of the social and cultural contexts of traumatic experience' (Satterlee 2014, p. 3). In *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* Satterlee's essay, 'Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered' (2014), challenges the accepted conception of trauma as 'unspeakable'. Satterlee begins by pointing out 'trauma's variability in literature and society' (Satterlee 2014, p. 4). By demonstrating that extreme experience is 'influenced by a variety of individual and cultural factors that change over time' Satterlee questions whether strictly following this concept of trauma as a 'universal absence' is too constraining and narrows the exploration of trauma experiences and responses (Satterlee 2014, p. 4). As Satterlee rightly points out, Caruth's traditional literary trauma theory 'only works if the psychological definition of trauma conforms to a particular theoretical recipe that draws from Freud to portray traumatic experience as a pre-linguistic event that universally causes dissociation' (Satterlee 2014, p. 2). Hence, Satterlee's collection of essays moves away from Caruth's traditional approach which sees trauma as unrepresentable. Instead Satterlee attempts to locate meaning 'through a greater consideration of the social and cultural contexts of traumatic experience' (Satterlee 2014, p. 3). By way of contrast to the Caruthian model, Satterlee states that trauma 'refers to a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society' (Satterlee 2008, p.150).

In addition, Satterlee questions Caruth's claims regarding the possible universality of trauma and belatedness and gives a more diverse opinion regarding language and traumatic experience (Satterlee 2014, p. 3), suggesting that 'extreme experience cultivates multiple responses and values' (Satterlee 2014, p. 4). Satterlee especially criticises Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* stating '[a]lthough the book aims to create connections between the traumatised individual, society and the historical past, this position rests upon the sacred assumption that trauma is inherently dissociative' (Satterlee 2014, p. 6). By way of distinction, Satterlee points out that '[p]sychological research indicates that amnesia, dissociation, or repression *may* be responses to trauma, but they are not exclusive responses (Satterlee 2014, p. 6). Moreover, Satterlee questions Caruth's attempt to include everyone as victims of trauma because 'theoretically expanding the identification of action from a direct experience to an indirect experience conflates cause and effect, and thus conceals questions of responsibility and agency' (Satterlee 2014, p. 7). Therefore, as Satterlee explains, contemporary pluralistic approaches in literary trauma theory are more likely to acknowledge both the neurobiological and social contexts of the experience, response, and narratives, as well as the possibilities that language can convey the variable meanings of trauma (Satterlee 2014, p. 7). In addition, 'if the larger social, political, and economic practices that influence violence are the background contexts or threads in the fabric of a traumatic experience in the first place, then trauma's meaning is locatable rather than permanently lost' (Satterlee 2014, p. 8). A single conception of trauma will never fit the numerous representations of trauma in literature because 'texts

cultivate a wide variety of values that reveal individual and cultural understandings of the self, memory and society' (Satterlee 2014, p. 8). Satterlee is not alone in reconsidering traditional trauma theory, as she points out, contemporary critics such as Herman, Rapport and Greg Forster have also developed new semiotic approaches to trauma theory (Satterlee 2014, p. 3). Consequently, this swing in literary trauma theory has created 'a set of critical practices that place more focus on the particular social components and cultural contexts of traumatic experience' (Satterlee 2014, p. 3). In this way, Satterlee's trauma theory moves beyond the Eurocentrism of the Caruthian model.

E.A. Kaplan, in *Trauma Culture* (2005), concurs with Satterlee's criticism of Caruth, distancing herself from Caruth's insistence on the unspeakability and unrepresentability of trauma and asserts that 'telling stories about trauma...may partly achieve a certain 'working through' for the victim' (Schönfelder 2013 p. 34). This approach challenges the conventional notion that trauma is unspeakable by acknowledging its 'variability in literature and society' (Satterlee 2014, p. 4). Although the standard conception of trauma as 'a silent haunting or an absolute indecipherable' is beneficial in certain instances, for instance it highlights the harm caused by the trauma, 'the pluralistic approach highlights the ranging values and representations of trauma in literature and society' (Satterlee 2014, p.6). Consequently, it underscores not only the damage caused by a traumatic experience 'but also the many sources that inform the definitions, representations, and consequences of traumatic experience' (Satterlee 2014, p. 6).

Much like Satterlee, Richard J. McNally, in *Remembering Trauma*, refutes Caruth's claims that trauma is unassimilated and unrepresentable. McNally claims that 'we cannot tell the difference between the unavailability of the memory trace and refusal to disclose' and asserts that trauma is 'memorable and describable' (McNally 2005, p.184). Indeed, he goes as far as to question the clinical foundations of Caruth's works, stating that 'one cannot conclude that a person who does not think about something for a long period of time...is suffering from amnesia' (McNally 2005, p.189). However, despite Satterlee's influence on modern literary trauma theory, and a growing push against traditional literary trauma theory, Caruth's model still wields much influence. This is especially evident in *Trauma and Literature*, a collection of essays on the future of trauma theory edited by J. Roger Kurtz. Kurtz believes there to be five precursors to literary trauma theory – Psychoanalysis, Modernism, Deconstruction, the Holocaust, and acceptance of PTSD as a medical category, all of which are addressed in his collection of essays on the future of trauma theory (Kurtz 2018, p. 3). Kurtz believes Freud's definition of trauma to be 'an accretion of excitation in the nervous system, which the latter has been unable to dispose of adequately by motor reaction' (Kurtz 2018, p.3). Therefore, Kurtz sees the psychoanalytic understanding of trauma defined as 'an event so overwhelming that it cannot be processed normally at the time of its occurrence, so that its memory is effectively blocked but returns to haunt the victim until it is appropriately confronted and dealt with' (Kurtz 2018, p.3). Consequently, for Kurtz 'one of the fundamental claims of trauma theory is that literary language, in its very nature, offers a

uniquely effective vehicle for representing the experience of trauma in ways that ordinary language cannot' (Kurtz 2018, p.8). This is borne out by the essays that Kurtz has gathered in this text. While many modern interpretations of trauma theory concur with Satterlee's viewpoint that knowledge of trauma can be both direct and indirect, many still draw heavily on Caruth's traditional trauma theory as the basis for their own.

For example, much like Caruth, Andrew Barnaby's essay 'The Psychoanalytic Origins of Literary Trauma Studies' is based on the work of Freud. In this case, Barnaby utilises Freud's *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* as the basis for his trauma theory stating 'in the experiences which lead to a traumatic neurosis the protective shield against stimuli is broken through and excessive amounts of excitation impinge on the mental apparatus' (Barnaby 2018, p.21). Likewise, in 'Modernity as the Cultural Crucible of Trauma', Karolyn Steffans utilises Freud's work by linking modernity, particularly the advent of railway, with traumatic neurosis. Steffans states that 'nineteenth century medical discourse understood trauma as an organic functional disorder, not the psychological disorder it would become after the war with the aid of psychoanalysis' (Steffans 2018, p.36). However, Steffans believes 'what is uniquely modern about trauma is the shift from corporeal to psychic wound, a transition coinciding with the forces of sociocultural, technological, political, and economic modernity in the nineteenth century through to the First World War' (Steffans 2018, p.37). Where Steffans differs from Caruth and Barnaby is that she does not recognise shell shock as the origin of trauma. Rather she believes 'although literary critics often turn to the

First World War, shell shock marks a culmination not the origin, of the forces of modernity that have been contributing to a marked rise in traumatic neuroses throughout the second half of the nineteenth century' (Steffans 2018, p.37). Furthermore, Steffans maintains that the railway 'was a vivid, rapid, sleek evocative, even intoxicating symbol of progress and cutting-edge technology. Yet the dramatic crashes that captured the public imagination in the second half of the century were visible reminders of modernity's grave effects on the comparatively fragile human body and mind' (Steffans 2018, p.38). Steffans concludes that 'the intersection between railway accidents, modernity and traumatic neurosis would remain a 'forgotten episode' until it was unearthed in the 1990's alongside the birth of trauma studies' (Kurtz 2018, p.36).

However, Tom Toreman in 'Deconstruction: Trauma Inscribed in Literature' takes a different approach from Barnaby and Steffans, again he concurs with Caruth's assertion that trauma and memory are inextricably linked. However, rather than drawing on Freud for the foundation of his model, Toreman instead examines the influence deconstruction has on modern trauma theory. Toreman is particularly interested in the influence Hartman and de Man had on Caruth's development of her literary trauma theory. Toreman concludes that 'Caruth maintains that imaginative literature – or figural, rather than literal language- can speak trauma when normal, discursive language cannot, and fiction helps give a voice to traumatized individuals and populations. Hence, her theory of trauma is a ringing endorsement of the testimonial power of literature' (Toreman 2018,

p.51). Hence, as with Barnaby and Steffans, Toreman's essay concurs with Caruth's traditional literary trauma theory model that trauma eludes verbal representation.

Marinella Rodi-Risberg, in 'Problems in Representing Trauma', also acknowledges Caruth's contribution to the field of literary trauma theory. However, like Satterlee, she questions the theory of the universality of trauma. Rodi-Risberg is most interested in the concept that all victims, perpetrators, and spectators are traumatised alike and asks if trauma 'no longer constitutes a ground for differentiation... how is it possible to discuss other people's trauma?' (RodiRisberg 2018, p.112). In particular, Rodi-Risberg questions LaCapra's view of the historian as a 'secondary witness'. Citing Kansteiner, 'who rejects secondary witness', Rodi-Risberg indicates there is 'an unexplored area between the experience of trauma and its representation, or 'between trauma and entertainment'... this means that while 'we' cannot understand that which 'we' have not experienced, art can offer sensitive readers a unique view of other people's suffering' (Rodi-Risberg 2018, p.114). Therefore, she believes that the role of literary trauma theory 'is to navigate between distance and sensitivity, to avoid the appropriation of the trauma of others' (Rodi-Risberg 2018, p.113).

Caruth's theory is also called into question by Irene Visser in her essay, 'Trauma in Non-Western Contexts'. Visser completely rejects the Caruthian model and questions the Eurocentrism of literary trauma theory, asserting 'the reformation of trauma in literary studies owes much to the findings from

postcolonial and Non-Western scholarship' (Visser 2018, p.124). Visser goes on to state:

Cultural trauma is theorized from the dominant Western diagnostic model which defines trauma as individual, and event based. Due to the influence of critics and trauma therapists reporting on NonWestern perspectives of trauma, this orientation has been redirected and transformed to include a much broader spectrum of agents in trauma with a much clearer emphasis on political, historical, and socioeconomic factors. (Visser 2018, p.124)

Consequently, Visser calls for a more open-minded interpretation of trauma theory stating: '[t]his opening up of trauma theory as a result of non-western scholarship...has been expanded due to non-western perspectives to include a broader understanding of trauma' (Visser 2018, pp.124-25). This broader interpretation of trauma clashes with Caruth's theory regarding the unrepresentability of trauma. Visser argues the 'classical trauma theory's tenet of the 'unsayable' nature of trauma diminished the literary potential of trauma narratives' (Visser 2018, p.128). Non-Western scholarship, in particular, does not identify with the unrepresentability of trauma theory that Caruth advocates. As

Visser states:

The resistance against this tenet has been substantial, particularly in non-western scholarship, in which trauma has been reformulated to allow for a multiplicity of 'saying' trauma, including nonnarrative forms such as dance, song, and sculpture, all expressive of traumatic wounding, and refuting the classic claim of trauma's inaccessibility. (Visser 2018, p.128)

In addition, the unsayable nature of Caruth's literary trauma theory clashes with non-western traditions of restorative healing through the medium of storytelling.

Visser points out that:

Non-Western literatures, in fact, often express indigenous way of healing trauma, as critics have pointed out scholars working with Māori literature, for instance, have emphasized that it is characterized by themes of integration and connectivity after trauma, precisely through storytelling as a major cultural tradition. (Visser 2018, p.128)

Visser cites the works of Edwald Mengel and Michela Borzaga on trauma, memory, and narrative in South African literature as particularly influential in this development. Visser believes that Mengel and Borzaga found Caruth's model 'inadequate to the analysis of trauma in South Africa, arguing the importance of the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation) hearings for trauma theory resides in the recognition that wounding incurred by systemic, political, and long-term traumatization can and should be brought to light by allowing victims to express themselves in oral and written narratives' (Visser 2018, p.129). Visser further states that the collective transgenerational trauma as a result of apartheid 'is neither an unclaimed nor 'unsayable' experience and that it is the ethical responsibility of governments to enable and facilitate such public expressions of trauma' (Visser 2018, p.129). Visser goes on to argue that 'literary studies of trauma texts in non-Western contexts may contribute much that is illuminating to the understanding of culturally specific trauma responses and that non-Western literatures offer a far broader array of responses, often including resilience and healing instead of apathy and enduring stasis' (Visser, pp. 131-132). Specifically, according to Visser, the apathy and negativity of Western trauma theory is of particular concern to non-Western theorists:

During the first decade of the new millennium, the prescriptiveness of early trauma theory was increasingly interrogated scholars from non-Western literatures, and as a result its emphasis on melancholy as the inevitable final stage of the trauma process was one of the first injunctions to be rejected. (Visser 2018, p.132)

In the development of trauma theory this rejection of melancholy as trauma's inevitable outcome has been a transformational factor (Visser 2018, p.133).

Consequently, even Caruth's views as expressed in *Literature of the Ashes of History* (2013) 'are aligned with the views expressed in non-Western trauma studies that literature is of considerable importance in laying bare the workings of processes of recovery and resilience in trauma theory' (Visser 2018, p.133). Therefore, it is evident that trauma theory stands to gain substantially from a broader and deeper engagement with non-Western literary studies (Visser 2018, p.138).

Likewise, in 'Trauma and Memory', Silke Arnold-de Simine concurs with Visser's concerns regarding both the Eurocentric approach and the unrepresentability of trauma in traditional literary trauma theory. Arnold-de Simine is especially critical of the Caruthian model of trauma theory, which he sees as being represented by '[e]lliptic omissions, gaps, and distortions testify to unspeakable trauma and to the response of pathological dissociation. Trauma cannot be contained by verbal exegesis but spills out in uncontrollable images and is part of a fragmented and cyclical temporality' (Arnold-de Simine 2018, p.141). As a result, Arnold-de Simine believes that this narrow definition put forward by traditional trauma theorists, such as Caruth, reduces the experience of victims who

do not conform the assumption that the traumatic experience is so overwhelming that it cannot be mentally processed and therefore becomes dissociated in the mind of the victim. Furthermore, Arnold-de Simone asserts that this universality of the unspeakability of trauma disempowers those who experience violence, it denies them agency over their own reaction to that trauma and stands in the way of their truth and the 'transformative journey offered by their own narratives and potential re-evaluation of former 'truth' (Arnold-de Simone 2018, p.143). Arnold-de Simone supports these claims by referencing Stef Craps 'who points out the hidden imperialism in understanding trauma as a monolithic response to suffering in the context of a specific place and time and according to cultural assumptions, values and beliefs: the range of contextual factors that specify the experience are often ignored' (Arnold-de Simone 2018, p.143).

Stef Craps' essay, 'Beyond Eurocentrism: Trauma Theory in the Global Age', studies the concept that trauma theory 'is an essential apparatus for understanding the real worlds' and 'a means for changing it for the better' (Craps 2014, p. 45). In particular, Craps questions trauma theory's 'promise of crosscultural ethical engagement' (Craps 2014, p. 46). Specifically Craps states:

the founding texts including Caruth's work 'fail on at least three counts: they marginalize or ignore traumatic experience of nonwestern or minority cultures; they tend to take for granted the universal validity of definitions of trauma and recovery that have developed out of the history of Western modernity; and they often favour or even prescribe a modernist aesthetic of fragmentation and aporia as uniquely suited to the task of bearing witness to trauma. (Craps 2014, p. 4)

Therefore, Craps believes that rather than living up to its promise of cross-cultural ethical engagement, in fact, trauma theory does the opposite, perpetuating practices that uphold prevailing injustices and inequalities (Craps 2014, p. 46).

Craps recognises that trauma studies emerged from Holocaust studies. However, he believes that if it is to develop globally, non-Western trauma and that of cultural minorities must be recognised. For instance, Craps uses the example of *Hiroshima mon amour*, a film about a cross-cultural love affair that Caruth uses in her work to demonstrate how her model of trauma theory can act as bridge between cultures. However, as Craps observes, the film only tells the story from the French woman's perspective, and the traumatic history of Hiroshima is largely left untold (Craps 2014, p. 47). In fact, Craps argues that 'the uncritical crosscultural application of psychological concepts developed in the West amounts to a form of cultural imperialism' (Craps 2014, p. 48). Craps cites the example of Western trauma counsellors descending on Sri Lanka following the devastating tsunami of 2004, 'who in their rush to help the victims, inadvertently trampled local expressions of grief, suffering, and healing, thereby actually causing the community more distress', suggesting that this was reminiscent of the colonial era when Western cultures thought their knowledge so advanced that they dismissed the indigenous populations practices as irrelevant (Craps 2014, p. 49). Therefore, Craps concurs with Satterlee's questioning of the universality of traditional literary trauma theory as a delayed experience in which experience itself becomes tied up with trauma.

Likewise, William P. Seeley, in his essay, 'Neuroscience, Narrative, and Emotion Regulation', also questions these inconsistencies regarding the embedding of memory and the dissociation central to Caruth's trauma theory. In particular, Seeley questions the definition of traditional traumatic memory 'as an individual or social memory that cannot be fit to narrative memory and so leads to dissociative behaviors' (Seeley 2018, p.158). To do so, Seeley examines how traumatic memories are embedded neurobiologically, explaining:

Recent findings in an affective and cognitive neuroscience underscore the fact that traumatic memories are embodied and inextricably integrated with the affective dimensions of associated emotional responses. These findings can be used to clarify, and in some cases challenge, traditional claims about the unrepresentability of traumatic experience that have been central to trauma literary studies. (Seeley 2018, p.153)

To further emphasise this point, Seeley explains that a traumatic memory can in fact be represented narratively. Furthermore, literary texts can be a useful tool to aid the understanding of the traumatic experience for the sufferer.

However, Seeley does concede that traumatic memory can shape the way we react in certain situations and 'in more difficult or complicated contexts e.g., frightening or uniquely novel experiences, our subjective assessment of what is happening may make it difficult to easily assimilate a memory into an existing scheme. (Seeley 2018, p.158). While the details of an experience can be

remembered clearly and remain available to conscious recall, in some circumstances, a traumatic memory trace can also resist accommodation.²

Consequently, contrary to Caruth's assertion that traumatic memory is dissociated and, therefore unrepresentable, traumatic memory is represented through unconscious recall though it may not be adapted and overwritten by emotional regulation in the same way as regular memories. However emotional regulation can be disrupted, through cognitive regulation strategies such as CBT. Furthermore, traumatic associations and memories can recontextualise and reshape emotional responses to 'aversive stimulus, experience and memory' (Seeley 2018, p.156), thus contradicting claims that traumatic memory is unavailable to conscious recall. Consequently, Seeley concludes that trauma literature suggests that traumatic memories resist integration into narrative memory because they are unrepresentable, but this cannot be literal as they are already represented and are carried on as an unreconcilable embodied memory (Seeley 2018, p.158-159).

Therefore, contemporary research shows that the structure of memory is adaptable and even traumatic memory, which cannot be integrated into the

² When this occurs, the result is twofold: On the one hand, fragments of the memory may, when triggered by an environmental condition, recur. The vivid particularity of these dissociated memories; In turn, may capture conscious awareness and overtake the current experience of the individual. The individual is thereby destined to experience the particularity of a dissociative emotional memory that he or she is unable to recall, recontextualize or regulate in ordinary contexts (Seeley 2018, p.158).

broader structure of memory, can be explored through devices such as trauma literature. Seeley draws on the work of Laura Vickroy who argues that 'fiction can provide readers with a thick description of the conditions and characters associated with traumatic experience' (Seeley 2018, p.160). By thick descriptions Vickroy means descriptions that provide context to help readers understand the meaning and value of behaviour (Seeley 2018, p.160). Therefore, Vickroy and Seeley agree and believe that trauma literature can enable traumatic memories to be assimilated into narrative memory. While Seeley contends that 'it is still not clear whether trauma literature can serve as a clinical cognitive regulation strategy to recontextualize and reconsolidate traumatic individual and social memories that have emerged from the alienation and oppression of disenfranchised demographic groups', it is providing a new lens into how to engage with literary trauma theory (Seeley 2018, p.160).

Equally, *The Future of Trauma Theory*, a collection of essays edited by Gert Buelens, Sam Durrant and Robert Eaglestone offers new perspectives on potential for literary trauma theory 'to move beyond its current phase' (Buelens et al., 2014, p. 4). As with *Trauma and Literature*, this collection of essays incorporates the traditional elements of trauma theory, along with the pluralistic perspective of the likes of Satterlee, thereby tracing the 'contradictions within the field that might continue to render its turbulence productive' (Buelens et al., 2014, p. 1). As the editors point out, trauma theory has become 'increasingly medicalized' (Buelens et al., 2014, p.1) but not exclusively so:

the concept of trauma is neither fully material or somatic, nor simply psychic, nor fully cultural or easily located in its appropriate or disruptive relation to the symbolic order, nor simply historic or structural, but a point at which all these currents meet. It is precisely because it is a point of intersection, of turbulence, that trauma is such a powerful force. (Buelens et al., 2014, p. 1)

Therefore, the aim of this collection of essays is to provide a wide range of views and encourage debate around the subject of literary trauma theory and its many guises. The collection begins with an essay by Eaglestone, 'Knowledge, 'Afterwardness' and the Future of Trauma Theory, in which is provided an overview of the criticism of trauma theory, particularly that of Wolf Kansteiner, who believes that trauma theory 'conflates the traumatic and non-traumatic' (Eaglestone 2014, p. 13). Eaglestone focusses on three aspects of Kulka's work that he sees as crucial to the future of trauma theory. In particular, he traces Kulka's return to Auschwitz and notes that though Kulka had initially hoped his research would help him come to terms with his childhood experience, instead he found himself unable to communicate the horrors he had experienced there. Secondly, Eaglestone draws on Freud's concept of *Nächtraglichkeit* – a concept whereby the memory of the event rather than the event itself has traumatic significance for the victim. Thirdly, stemming from Kulka's work and the concept of *Nächtraglichkeit* 'is the idea that the questions posed by trauma and investigated by trauma theory are existential questions which are to do with the time of a whole life and so with its relation to ethics' (Eaglestone 2014, p. 12).

Eaglestone concludes that the future of trauma theory needs to incorporate all these elements if it is to attempt to fully reflect the harm trauma causes.

Similarly, Nouri Gana's essay, 'Trauma Ties: Chiasmus and Community in Lebanese Civil War Literature' considers the experience of trauma outside of the Euro-American structure. Gana focuses on the experience of trauma in the Arab world, principally in Lebanon. Gana questions whether trauma theory should include a wider range of narrative that 'bears witness to, protests against, and ultimately helps us gain empathetic access to the devastating effects of war without necessarily proffering us a consolatory reprieve or clear exit strategies' (Gana 2014, p 78).

Likewise, in her essay 'Affect, Body, Place: Trauma Theory in the World,' Ananya Jahanara Kabir questions the future of trauma theory in the wider world. Kabir goes on to state that 'Eurocentric paradigms, even in revisionist forms, prove inadequate for explicating trauma and its memorialization outside European spaces' (Kabir 2014, p 68). In addition, Kabir advocates for the inclusion of the original definition of trauma, which was a bodily wound into trauma theory placing emphasis on affect, body, and mind (Kabir 2014, p 73).

In summary, literary trauma theory as a specialised subset of trauma theory examines how literature depicts and responds to traumatic events. There are two approaches within Literary Trauma Theory – traditional and pluralistic. Traditional trauma theory views the event as unknowable, that it fragments consciousness and prevents direct linguistic representation of trauma. On the other hand,

pluralistic trauma theory displaces the notion that trauma is always unknowable and unrepresentable and allows for both the knowability and unknowability of trauma.

Literary Trauma Theory Uses

In literary trauma theory, as well as the text, the reader and author play crucial roles in understanding how trauma is represented and processed through literature. In literary trauma theory, the reader's response to the text is of particular interest. Traumatic experiences can be emotionally charged and challenging to process, and literary trauma literature often evokes strong reactions from readers. Literary trauma theory examines how readers empathize with characters who have experienced trauma, how they emotionally respond to traumatic events depicted in the text, and how the reading experience may intersect with their own lived experiences of trauma or distress.

Likewise, the author plays a significant role in shaping the representation of trauma in their writing. Literary trauma theory analyses how authors depict traumatic experiences, the language and narrative techniques they employ to convey trauma's impact, and whether the author's own experiences or knowledge of trauma influence their writing. It also analyses how characters respond to traumatic events and how the narrative depicts the consequences of trauma for the character. This is of particular significance for this thesis as many of the texts are pre-date the emergence of literary trauma theory. By retrospectively applying

literary trauma theory to older works, it can enrich the understanding of how trauma was depicted and regarded in different time periods.

Literary Trauma Theory was chosen as the thesis critical framework because it aligned very well with the thesis objective of analysing how attitudes towards trauma and childhood grief is represented in works of children's literature. This thesis will utilise critical perspectives from literary trauma theory as a lens for reading the chosen texts and will do this in several ways. Firstly, the thesis will analyse the texts with a focus on how it represents trauma and grief and examine if the child's grief is acknowledged or not. Secondly, it will look for symbols, themes and narrative techniques that convey the emotional and psychological impact of loss and grief on characters in the texts. Lastly, it will study how the author depicts silence, memory and coping mechanisms within the texts.

This is an original strategy because though numerous critical publications utilise literary trauma as a theoretical framework, this framework has not been utilised to analyse children's literature in terms of childhood grief. As a novel approach to the analysis of children's literature, this project offers new and previously unexplored perspectives on the portrayal of childhood grief in children's literature. Furthermore, by applying both theories to children's literature it allows for the exploration of the tension that exists between the two theorists regarding the unspeakability of trauma. Finally, in the bringing together of literary trauma theory and childhood grief in children's literature, this thesis offers a valuable contribution to children's literature scholarship.

Children's Literature and Trauma – Key Terms

Before analysing the texts, some key terms require definition. When the thesis refers to 'children's literature' it is referring to literary works specifically written for or targeted towards children, typically up to twelve years old. Consequently, it generally addresses age-appropriate themes, experiences and language for the intended child audience. 'YA literature' refers to literature primarily written for teenagers and young adults between the ages of 12 to 18. Typically, the tone and narrative style of YA is more in depth than children's literature, and explores themes and experiences relevant to that age group. Generally, YA employs language and narrative style more complex and mature than that of children's literature. However, there is some overlap in some texts between the two genres' bridging the gap between children and YA literature. Additionally, certain older works of fiction, originally intended for an adult audience in modern times are categorised as children's or YA literature due to the evolution of cultural norms. For instance, over time what was deemed appropriate for adult audiences only may now be considered appropriate for younger readers.

When the thesis refers to 'trauma literature' it is referring to the genre of literary works that explore the themes of trauma, suffering, and its psychological effects on individuals and society. This form of literature explores the emotional and psychological impact of distressing events, such as violence, war, abuse, loss, or other traumatic experiences. Often it reflects the inner struggles, coping

mechanisms, and attempts at healing experienced by characters or individuals portrayed in the text. In addition, the thesis also refers to the analysed texts as 'trauma texts'. Cathy Caruth defines trauma as,

[O]riginally referring to an injury inflicted on a body. In its later usage, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's text, the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but the mind. (Caruth, 1996, p. 3) Therefore, any text detailing a distressing event or series of events that have a long-lasting negative effect on a person's physical or emotional health or any text detailing loss, abuse, violence, the death of loved ones, or witnessing any lifethreatening circumstance can be considered 'trauma texts'. Trauma texts can take many different forms, from non-fictional texts where people share their traumatic experiences to academic research articles to social media posts.

Within the thesis there are also some references to 'trauma novels'.

Michelle Satterlee is credited with coining the term 'trauma novel', which refers to 'literary works that convey intense loss or fear at an individual or collective level.

An important feature then of trauma novel or fiction is the process of transformation that takes place internally as a result of the external terrifying incident that ultimately result in the forming of new perceptions of the self and the world'³ Though sometimes used interchangeably, trauma texts is the broader

term encompassing a wide range of literary forms whereas trauma novels refers to novels that centre around the theme of trauma. The purpose of trauma novels can vary widely. Some aim to inform readers, promote empathy and

understanding, or increase awareness of the long-term repercussions of trauma.

Others have bibliotherapeutic aims to help people who have gone through trauma,

³ Dudihall, S., Kumar, P. (2022) An Estimation of Pluralistic Traumatic Reading in Select Works of Tamsula Ao in Journal of Pharmaceutical Negative Results, Vol. 13, Iss, 10, pp. 5110-5111

and assist them in processing their feelings and connecting with others who have gone through similar things. 'Bibliotherapy' as a term has its origins in ancient Greece where literature was used to treat the mentally ill (Cook et al 2006, p. 92). Cook et al further state that,

The idea of using literature to offer solutions to modern problems and minimize a student's inner turmoil was first explicitly discussed by G. O. Ireland in 1930 (Ouzts, 1991). During the 1930s, librarians began to compile lists of written material that helped people modify their thoughts, feelings, or behaviors for therapeutic purposes, with the assistance of counselors "prescribed" selected literature for patrons experiencing problems. (Cook et al 2006, p. 92)

As such, children and YA literature holds significant value as bibliotherapy as children and young adults can find both character's and themes resonate with their own life experiences. Reading can help them navigate difficult events and challenges, help them gain insight into their own situation, validate the feelings that may arise as a result of these events and provide them with coping strategies. In addition, it can help children to foster empathy towards children in similar circumstances to a character and help them better understand and be more aware of class mates or friend's emotions and experiences. Additionally, bibliotherapy can stimulate conversations around that specific situation and help the child reader be more empathetic to those in such circumstances.

Childhood Grief Studies

Furthermore, before analysing trauma in children's literature it is important to recognise the significant research that contributed to the acknowledgment of

childhood grief and trauma. Childhood grief was not always understood; children were believed to be resilient and would simply bounce back from a loss. While it is difficult now to comprehend that childhood grief was not acknowledged, Patricia Jalland points out that until very recently grief in general was not a subject that was often publicly spoken about, particularly following World War One. According to Jalland, 'it is difficult today to appreciate how widespread and deep-rooted was the ignorance, silence, and embarrassment about grief in the fifty years or so from 1918. It was almost impossible for the bereaved to appeal directly for help in a society where the majority preferred to ignore grief' (Jalland 2013, p. 17).

Indeed, it was not until Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), which built on his 1917 essay *Mourning and Melancholia*, that childhood grief was first studied, and it was acknowledged that the child could be deeply psychologically affected if their grief was not properly recognised and resolved. Further research throughout later decades brought about a recognition of childhood grief as a distinct, separate experience from that of adult grief, and supports began to be put in place for bereaved children.⁴ Firstly Hungarian psychologist Maria Nagy's 1948 study of 378 Hungarian children led to her identifying three stages in conceptions of death among children. Stage 1, age range 3-5 did not view death as a permanent condition, they believed a dead person was less alive than a living person and could come back to life. Stage 2, age range 5-9,

⁴ Research that contributed to the recognition of childhood grief include John Bowlby's Attachment Theory, which recognised that the breaking of a bond between a child and parent could result in grief. Also in 1965 Anna Freud, daughter of Sigmund Freud published a very influential study into childhood grief, *Normality and Pathology in Childhood: Assessment of Developments*, which advocated that the child to be allowed express their grief in their own way and developed therapeutic play to allow children to express their grief in creative play. Freud's work still informs much of the interventions and supports put in place today to help bereaved children.

believed death was something that happened to old people. Other than old people they believed only bad people or people who had accidents died. They viewed moving things as living and non-moving things as dead. For them death was seen as irreversible but not inevitable. The last group Stage 3, were aged 10+, they had a more adult-like view of death, they acknowledged death was inevitable and irreversible and that death applied to everyone (Burns 2010, p. 25). In 1969 Elisabeth Kubler Ross developed the five stages of grief denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, and acknowledged that children were capable of experiencing these stages of loss also stating 'children are old enough to grieve if they are old enough to love: they are the 'forgotten' grievers' (Kubler Ross 2007), p. 160). The next major research into childhood grief did not come until the Harvard Child Bereavement Study in 1996. This study conducted by J. W. Worden and Phyllis R. Silverman found that two years following the death of a parent 'bereaved children showed higher levels of social withdrawal, anxiety and social problems as well as lower self-esteem and self-efficacy' (Worden and Silverman 1996, p. 1). This study offered fresh insights into what might be considered typical experience of grief for a child and what elements indicated a child may be in a vulnerable position as a result of their grief. This study significantly added to the understanding of childhood grief and continues to wield substantial influence in contemporary studies of childhood grief.

Emergence of Children and YA Literature Literary Studies

Within the temporal scope that this thesis encompasses, children's and YA literature importance as genres within the broader field of literature also progressed significantly. Works of children's and Young Adult (YA) literature provides valuable insights into societal and cultural attitudes as they often reflect the opinions, values, and beliefs of the society in which they are written and published. Children's and YA literature address themes and experiences relevant to the child and young adult audience. Consequently, analysis of children's and YA literature can provide a deeper understanding of a range of societal and cultural attitudes such as gender, social class, and identity.⁵ As with literary trauma theory Children's literature studies and trauma has its roots in Holocaust writing. Kenneth B. Kidd notes that writing about childhood trauma as a result of the Holocaust 'ushered in the wider sense that trauma writing can be children's literature' (Kidd, 2005, p.121). Further to this Kidd states,

It's not surprising that the Holocaust has functioned as a sort of primal scene of children's trauma literature, through which a children's literature of atrocity has been authorized within the last decade, asserted around both the power and limitations of narrative. (Kidd 2005, p. 121)

One of the first critics who suggested that Holocaust studies should include representations of trauma in children's literature was Adrienne Kertzer, with much

⁵ See for example, Tsao, Y.-L. (2020) 'Gender Issues in Young Children's Literature', *Reading improvement*, 57(1), 16–21, which analysed depictions of gender in children's picture books, Terrile, V.C. (2022). 'Scenes from the Class Struggle in Picture Books: Depictions of Housing and Home in Books for Young Children' in *Child Lit Educ* 53, 526–546 which looks at the portrayal of social class in children's li

of her work centering on childhood trauma as a result of the Holocaust. Kertzer, in *My Mother's Voice: Children, Literature, and the Holocaust*, Kertzer pushes against what she describes as a resistance to 'ask the right questions about the Holocaust' in terms of the death of children (Kertzer 2000, p. 1). In a selection of essays Kertzer investigates 'the understanding that a child reader gains about the Holocaust through such texts.' Additionally, in other work such as *Like a Fable, Not a Pretty Picture: Holocaust Representation in Robert Benigni and Anita Lobel*, Kertzer also calls into question unrealistic representations of Holocaust survival of young children.

Likewise, Hamida Bosmajian's *Sparing the Child: Grief and the Unspeakable in Youth Culture about Nazism and the Holocaust* (2002) examined texts whose protagonist were either Holocaust survivors or former members of the Hitler Youth. Another critic who was drawing connections between children's literature and the Holocaust was Lydia Kokkola whose book *Representing the Holocaust in Children's Literature* (2003) explored the possibility of literary content presenting historically accurate information and considered how this information might be interpreted by young readers. The text also investigated whether these readers could distinguish between fictional and factual elements, and what factors contributed to their continued engagement with the material.

Kenneth B. Kidd further developed the link between children's literature, trauma and psychoanalysis. In *Freud in Oz: At the Intersections of Psychoanalysis and Children's Literature*, Kidd gives a comprehensive account of the historical and

contemporary relationship between children's literature and psychoanalysis. (Kidd 2011, p. vii). Meanwhile, contemporary critic Karen Coats who has authored three books on literature for young readers, has developed the field further still. Coats' latest work, "Introduction to Children's and Young Adult Literature," gives an overview of the historical aspects, formats, categories, and theoretical aspects of literature intended for young audiences.

Other critics who did not have a focus on trauma in children's literature but who also influenced the development of children's literature studies include Peter Hunt whose *Criticism, Theory and Children's Literature* (1991) covered a range of theoretical topics related to children's literature. Additionally, Roderick McGillis *The Nimble Reader: Literary Theory and Children's Literature* (1996) offered an overview of a range of theoretical approaches in relation to children's literature. Furthermore, Perry Nodelman's *The Pleasure of Children's Literature* published (2003) was also highly influential in developing the field of children's literary studies.

Death and Grief in Children's Literature

As childhood grief became more widely acknowledged societally, more texts about death were written for children, however many could be quite prescriptive. While the goal was to provide the child with information to help them understand and cope with death and grief, authors and publishers began to recognise that it was also important to acknowledge children's emotions as well as providing them with coping strategies. Approaching the topic of death and grief through a fictional

story could often be more effective and relatable for children. Christa Schönfelder believes when information is being presented that this distinction between the non-fiction and fictional text is imperative because 'fictional and literary structures allow authors to experiment with self-reflexivity in ways that non-fictional trauma writing may not permit, thus enabling writers to explore different perspectives on writing trauma and writing the self' (Schönfelder 2015, p. 30). Also, fiction can be a particularly useful tool when discussing trauma as it does not require a trauma victim to relive their trauma and grief through the retelling of their experience. Additionally, it does not add to the trauma of the reader who may find reading true life experiences difficult to cope with in addition to their own grief. Also, as Caruth believes, not all trauma victims have voluntary access to their traumatic memories and are able to fully express it in a narrative. Thus, fiction can give an outside perspective on the trauma and grief the child/adolescent may be experiencing. Schönfelder points out that literary critic, Anne Whitehead, concurs with this assertion. Whitehead writes that 'trauma studies work against medical reductionism by exhorting practitioners to attend to a voice which is not fully known or knowable, and to bear witness' (Whitehead 2004, p.8). Therefore, according to Schönfelder, Whitehead recognises 'that trauma resists being fully remembered, represented, and grasped, but also asserts that writers have, in fact, found the means to represent trauma in fiction in a way that conveys these challenges and, at the same time, facilitates understanding' (Schönfelder 2015, p. 31). Therefore, children's literature is an effective way to help children navigate

grief, and can provide them with a framework to process their emotions. It can also create an opportunity for children to discuss their grief with adults.

Fictional representations of trauma are utilised in this thesis as they demonstrate how literature can serve as a means of coping with and processing childhood grief, and how children's literature that addresses the topic of grief can provide a safe and supportive space for children to explore their emotions and make sense of their loss. This is especially important for the bereaved child, as many turn to literature not only as a means of escaping unwelcome emotions but, more importantly, as a means of coping with them.⁶ As Deirdre Flynn and Eugene O'Brien assert:

In attempting to work through grief, loss and trauma, often the fictional and the aesthetic can be the most accessible form of 'talking cure' that is available. (Flynn and O'Brien 2018, p. 5)

This is important because books can provide a safe platform to help children explore their feelings around grief and help them cope with their loss when other options to process their grief are not available to them. Furthermore, as they explore diverse themes and tackle complex topics and experiences related to childhood grief with a focus on the impact of grief as a result of loss, it can demonstrate to the bereaved child that they are not alone in their experience of grief.

⁶ There are many studies that show reading and literature can have a positive impact on the grieving child for example, the National Literacy Trusts 'Children's Mental Health Week: Why Reading for Pleasure is Vital for Young Mind's, Carol F. Berns, 'Bibliotherapy: Using Books to Help Bereaved Children' and 'Reading Aloud, Play and Social-emotional Development' by Mendelsohn et al.

Accordingly, this thesis examines children's literature and Young Adult (YA) literature that portrays various types of childhood loss such as parental loss, pet loss, sibling loss and the sudden loss of a friend.

Additionally, the thesis looks at grief due to disease, displacement, war, accidents, and cancer.⁷ Furthermore, it discusses different types of grief that a child can experience particularly in cases where the child's grief is not acknowledged.⁸ Lastly, by exploring the opposing theories of the two main theorists, Cathy Caruth and Michelle Satterlee, it will offer a critique of Caruth's traditional literary theory versus Satterlee's contemporary literary theory.⁹

Therefore, this thesis will study a selection of children's literature published over the course of a century, 1911 to 2011, to assess how these changing attitudes to childhood grief were reflected in children's literature. This date range was chosen as the first text, Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* prompted this thesis. Published in 1911, it is pre-World War One and pre-Freud's publications of *Mourning and Melancholia* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and so is the perfect text to reflect attitudes to childhood grief before it was an acknowledged response to loss. Patrick Ness's *A Monster Calls* is the ideal final text, as not only was its publication in 2011 exactly one hundred years after

⁷ While suicide is briefly mentioned in Chapter Three, the thesis does not explore complicated childhood grief i.e., grief as the result of suicide or extreme violence, nor does it address childhood grief as a result of the Holocaust as grief from such deaths demands more consideration than one chapter can offer.

⁸ Fernandez-Alcantara et al. note that 'Scientific literature has identified different trajectories and types of grief (including anticipatory grief, disenfranchised grief, etc.) where the adaption to loss can be difficult to manage, especially if the bereavement process is not acknowledged by the social environment.'

⁹ Satterlee, formerly known as Michelle Balaev, recently changed name, and will be referred to as Satterlee throughout.

The Secret Garden, but, moreover, it was specifically written with childhood grief in mind. The additional texts, Marjorie Kinnan Rawling's *The Yearling*, Michelle Magorian's *Goodnight Mr Tom*, Doris Buchanan Smith's *A Taste of Blackberries* and Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* were carefully chosen to both reflect a variety of childhood losses from a Western perspective as well as a range of publication dates evenly spanning the intervening decades.

The Selected Texts & Chapter Overview

The Secret Garden, published in 1911 is the first text analysed in the thesis, and is also the text that prompted the research. During prior research, it became evident that *The Secret Garden* lacked acknowledgment of childhood grief. Therefore, when selecting texts for this thesis, *The Secret Garden* was chosen to explore the impact of parental loss and highlight the disparity between the recognition of childhood grief and adult grief in the novel.

Firstly, the unspeakability of trauma is very evident in the text. Mary Lennox, the primary protagonist is orphaned early in the book, however, the trauma she suffers as a result of this loss and her consequent displacement from the only home she has known in India is not acknowledged. Therefore, as the principal protagonist's grief goes unacknowledged, this chapter also explores trauma and unconscious memory and draws on the work of traditional literary trauma theorist Cathy Caruth.

In addition, it draws on the work of Marxist literary theorist Fredric

Jameson, in particular his text *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. The political unconscious is a theory devised by Jameson to 'articulate the implicit political dimension of creative works.' (Oxford Dictionary, 2020). Jameson's theory draws on Freud's notion of wish-fulfilment and LéviStrauss's notion of the savage mind ('pensée sauvage') and adapts them to form the hypothesis that:

artistic works can be seen as symbolic solutions to real but unconsciously felt social and cultural problems. The task of the cultural critic is then to find the means of reconstructing the original problem for which the text as symbolic act is a solution. This approach to textual criticism turns not so much on the question of what does a particular text mean as why it exists in the form that it does. (Oxford Dictionary 2020)

Ostensibly a Marxist literary theorist, Jameson believes 'history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious' (Jameson 1981, p.20). Jameson's theory is particularly relevant to analysis of *The Secret Garden* as Hodgson Burnett was regarded by her own biographer as a 'new woman' yet in several of her texts she depicts 'new woman' characters in a negative light. For instance, her story *Robin* has a 'disreputable mother (who) was nothing short of a flapper, with bright makeup, above the knee dresses in loud colours, and a penchant for excitement, (who) met her and in a particularly grisly way when she raced to a rooftop for the thrill of watching a zeppelin dropping bombs on London' (Holbrook Gerzina 2004, p. 299).

Similarly, in *The Secret Garden* Mary Lennox's modern mother suffers an equally premature demise. However, it can be argued that rather than criticising the new woman, Hodgson Burnett was in fact holding a mirror up to society and reflecting back the way these women were treated. Likewise, the silencing of Mary, once she conforms to the stereotypical good English girl, could also be read in this way. Once Mary becomes what society expects of girls at this time, she loses her voice. Additionally, the chapter looks to wider societal attitudes towards gender during the time of publication, and examines how author Frances Hodgson Burnett's own outlook on gender contributed to its depiction. Therefore, the effect of gender on how girls and their grief were perceived forms a critical part of the analysis of *The Secret Garden* and investigates gender's role in how a child's grief is managed. In addition, it analyses the role of gender in the text, drawing on the work of Jennifer Mooney which prompted further exploration of whether gender shaped attitudes towards childhood grief. It explores two distinctive types gendered grief portrayed in the text, instrumental grief and intuitive grief. Instrumental grievers grieve privately and often channel their grief into constructive activities such as establishing charitable organizations or creating memorial garden as a means of navigating their grief whereas intuitive grievers grieve publicly and openly and face their grief head on. Research has found that those who identify as female tend to grieve intuitively and those who identify as male tend to grieve instrumentally. However, the thesis finds that *The Secret Garden* inverts traditional gender grief norms, particularly those regarding the expression of grief, reflecting the text's broader exploration of gender roles and

expectations. For instance, Mary displays characteristics typically associated with males of that time period, such as assertiveness, independence, and resilience while her cousin Colin Craven is portrayed as vulnerable, fragile and overwrought, challenging the notion of male stoicism from this time period. Finally it explores if the lack of acknowledgement of childhood grief is due to the lack of understanding of a child's grief at the time of publication.

Chapter Two, focusing on *The Yearling*, studies the grief of losing a beloved pet, and was selected because this is a common form of loss experienced in childhood. Again, it draws on the work of literary trauma theorists Caruth and Satterlee as well as Geoffrey Hartmann. Additionally, it was chosen because its depiction of trauma challenges Caruth's belatedness theory which states that the trauma only becomes known to the survivor when it returns through flashback or nightmares. This chapter further challenges Caruth's notion of the universality of the unknowability of trauma. It demonstrates that young Jody Baxter very obviously recognises his trauma at killing his pet Flag and brings in to focus the shortcomings of Caruth's theory. In addition, Jody's mother Ora is very aware of her trauma following the loss of several children and recognises that as a result she failed to bond with Jody because she feared losing him also. Therefore, Ora's insight into her own trauma confirms Satterlee's contention that Caruth's traditional interpretation that trauma refuses representation and causes dissociation' is too narrow to allow for analysis of all forms of trauma (Satterlee 2014, p. 1). Rather, it validates Satterlee's argument for the possibility of both 'indirect and direct knowledge of the traumatic event'. Also, , it examines various

forms of grief such as betrayal grief and traumatic grief. Finally, it looks to societal attitudes to death at the time of its setting and how that influenced how +- childhood grief was viewed.

Chapter Three analyses *Goodnight Mr Tom*, which was chosen because it details several childhood losses, in particular, the grief of losing a friend suddenly in a wartime situation, the loss of a sibling, as well as loss as a result of domestic violence. This chapter discusses whether it is possible for the same child to react differently to different types of loss. For example, Will Beech's reaction to the loss of his sister Trudy is very different to the loss of his friend Zach. He feels a sense of personal responsibility and guilt at the death of Trudy, whereas Zach's death impacts him when he is already coping with Trudy's loss, and he emotionally dissociates from reality in order to protect himself emotionally. As a result, it looks at the psychological effects of grief on the bereaved child; looking, in particular, at dissociation as a coping mechanism and draws on the several works including those of Aydin, Altindag and Ozkan, as well as Pynoos and Corr et al. It also explores trauma and the compliant child and how the impact of domestic violence trauma can cause a child to be extra vigilant and compliant around the abusive caregiver. It discusses whether this which is further evidence that the trauma is known to the child as they are actively avoiding situations that trigger their abusers. Lastly, with regard to social and cultural influences on attitudes towards childhood grief, it explores how the prevalence of death in society such as in a wartime setting, influenced society's reaction to grief and death.

Chapter Four examines two texts, *Bridge to Terabithia* and *A Taste of Blackberries* which deal with the similar theme of the grief suffered at the sudden loss of a best friend. For this chapter, two books were chosen to demonstrate the difference age can make to the reaction to death. *A Taste of Blackberries* deals with the reaction to loss by a young boy, his age is never given but you are led to believe he is around eight years old whereas *Bridge to Terabithia* Jesse Aarons is that bit older at ten years old but reacts much differently as the older child has a much better understating of the long-term implications of death. In particular, it looks at the guilt a child griever may feel at the death of their friend, especially if they feel they could have prevented that death. Again, as with *The Secret Garden* gender plays a factor in how they reacted and how their grief was perceived.

Though

Jesse's father displayed very concrete, traditional ideas regarding gender roles for his children, he surprised Jesse when he picked him up to comfort him when he learned of Leslie's death demonstrating that gender did not influence attitudes towards the grieving child. Therefore, , it also looks at the role of gender in the child grieving process, again drawing on Mooney's work. Lastly, both texts demonstrate the importance of the grieving children attending the funeral and taking part in the death rituals of their society is well documented in both texts, something that was not addressed in the previous texts. Non-recognition of a child's grief can lead to disenfranchised grief, that is when a child is not permitted to publicly mourn or be socially supported in their grief can lead to long term emotional and psychological consequences for the bereaved child. So, drawing on

the work of Doka, it explores disenfranchised grief- a form of grief a child can experience if their grief is not publicly acknowledged.

Chapter Five, examines *A Monster Calls*, a text chosen for very specific reasons. Firstly, it was written with childhood grief in mind. It acknowledges to the child reader an awareness of the complex, complicated, confused thoughts and emotions such a horrific experience evokes within them. For the bereaved child, it demonstrates that grief comes in many guises, Secondly, it addresses many big topics such as bullying associated with being the child of a terminally ill parent, and the emotional and psychological effects of witnessing a parent die. Additionally, it studies the dissociative and anticipatory grief suffered as a result, and most importantly the guilt associated with wishing for the death of the terminal parent so that both their suffering can end. Lastly, as it was published exactly one hundred years after *The Secret Garden* it perfectly represents how far attitudes to childhood grief have progressed in that short time frame.

The decision to limit the selection of texts to British and American is grounded in the acknowledgment that traditional literary trauma theory is not universally applicable. Traditional literary trauma theory is derived from Western perspectives and experiences, which can overlook or downplay how trauma is perceived or expressed in other cultural contexts. Therefore, by demonstrating the shortcomings of traditional literary trauma theory within Western cultural contexts the thesis clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of applying a single theory to diverse global experiences of trauma.

Texts Considered but Not Selected

So, as can be seen, the thesis explores a range of childhood losses as well as different types of grief. Therefore, selected texts had to cover both aspects. As a result, some books initially considered for inclusion such as Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Eilis Dillon's *The Islands of Ghosts* were ultimately disregarded for this reason. Another text considered for analysis was E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*. However, this was disregarded because although it depicted grief as a result of loss very well, most of the narrative was centred around animal characters which did not fully align with the thesis objective of analysing attitudes to childhood grief. Another text considered for selection was Roddy Doyle's *A Greyhound of a Girl*, as it was an excellent example of how far attitudes to childhood grief have evolved. However, it was too short to warrant its own chapter and did not align closely enough with any of the other books to be included in their chapter. Lastly, a text seriously contemplated for inclusion was Limerick teenager Sarah Corbett Lynch's *Noodle Loses Dad*, which is a book on grief written from the child's perspective. However, as with Roddy Doyle's text, there was not enough narrative to build a full chapter around, but again it is an excellent example of how far attitudes to childhood grief have evolved when children are publishing books on childhood grief.

Summary

In summary, through a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, and by outlining the research objectives, this introduction establishes the foundation for the research conducted in this thesis. The subsequent chapters build on this introduction and provide a detailed analysis of changing attitudes to childhood grief in children's literature. Additionally, by examining the gaps in the existing literature and outlining the theoretical framework that underpins the research, this thesis aims to make a significant contribution to the field of children's literature. Lastly, by utilising literary trauma theory to analyse the primary texts it represents an innovative approach to the analysis of childhood grief in children's literature.

Chapter 1

The Secret Garden

Published in 1911, Frances Hodgson-Burnett's *The Secret Garden* is renowned for its employment of pastoral imagery to symbolise the 'physical and psychological healing' of child protagonists, Mary Lennox and Colin Craven (Bixler 1991, p.208). Rather than focussing on the healing aspect of the text, this chapter examines the root cause of their ailments, the lack of acknowledgment of childhood grief. It focusses on the trauma suffered by child protagonist Mary Lennox, who has lost both her parents and been uprooted from her home in India. While the grief of her uncle, Archibald Craven,

at the loss of his wife Lillas, a decade prior, is acknowledged throughout the narrative, Mary's grief remains largely unaddressed. Similarly, Colin Craven's grief at the loss of his mother goes completely unacknowledged in the text. This disparity serves as the foundation for exploring the novel's portrayal of childhood grief and its lack of acknowledgment. Drawing on the work of Dr Jennifer Mooney, this chapter explores how gender is reflected in the text. Additionally, it examines if gender informs how grief is expressed and explores if gender influences attitudes towards grief. Furthermore, the chapter examines whether author Frances Hodgson Burnett's personal life experiences influenced her depiction of gender roles in the text. Lastly, the work of literary trauma theorist Cathy Caruth is utilised to explore the characters' individual experiences of trauma and the chapter explores the link between trauma and unconscious memory.

1.1 Displacement, Migrancy and Hybridity

Though published over a century ago, *The Secret Garden* addresses many contemporary societal issues such as grief, migrancy and displacement. However, it should be noted that unlike contemporary child migrants, Mary Lennox is not displaced due to conflict or economics but rather due to conventional colonial customs. Despite being born in India and being more acquainted with Indian customs and values than those of England, because both of her parents are English, colonial practices of this period deem Mary's nationality to be English. Consequently, following her parents' passing she is perceived as not belonging in India, so is expected to return 'home' to England, a place she has never been. The fact that India is the only home she has ever known, that she has been raised by

an Indian Ayah and has had very little contact with her English parents is completely disregarded. Therefore, with her complex cultural background Mary finds herself a product of hybridity, being neither Indian nor English but a blend between the two. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha states that this “‘inbetween space’” carries the burden of culture and also is potentially a traumatic space’ (Chapleau 2004, p. 65). However, no regard is given to the trauma Mary undergoes as a result of finding herself in this liminal space. She is simply taken from her home in India and sent to her other home in England. Therefore, an relevant aspect of *The Secret Garden* is the way in which the two home places are depicted. Ann Alston, suggests that children’s literature of this era created a portrait of the idealised home (Chapleau 2004, p. 55). Alston suggests that this was due, in part, to the huge number of people being forced to leave home during the Industrial Revolution and ‘thus the home often became regarded as a haven from the outside world’ (Chapleau 2004, p. 55). Additionally, Alston believes that ‘the adult then only allows a secure reflection of the way he/she would like the world to appear in children’s literature this world is a familiar, culturally loaded one which places the adult in complete power’ (Chapleau 2004, p. 55). Consequently, adults writing children’s literature created the adult ideal of the perfect home in the books they wrote. Hence, according to Alston: It comes as no surprise then that houses in children’s literature are often overflowing with signs of domesticity and therefore it is worth noting the depictions of homes that appear to fall short of the traditional ideal (Chapleau 2004, p. 55). This is quite evident in *The Secret Garden*, where the description of

home life in India varies widely from the ideal home depicted in England. Deborah Cogan Thacker maintains that at the time of publication 'domestic fiction for girls are a model of femininity, compliant with the values of British Imperialism' (Thacker and Webb, 2002). This is especially apparent in the way Mary's 'return' to England is depicted as the ideal. Jeremy Phillips believes 'Mary Lennox's passage from India to Yorkshire is best understood as a kind of pilgrimage—a homecoming to an ideal space and place of values she has always known but never seen' (Phillips, 1993 p. 170). That is not to say that this was an unusual situation, quite the opposite in fact. Phillips states Mary's relationship to Yorkshire and England was:

[T]ypical of a child whose parents serve the British Empire as colonial settlers, government agents, military personnel, or otherwise. Mary is Anglo-Indian—born in India of English parentage. She grows up accustomed to the reality of India but attuned to the spirit of England, culturally, linguistically, and ethically. Mary identifies with England, but India is all she has known; in other words, she lives in India, but John Bull inhabits her soul. (Phillips, 1993 p. 170)

Therefore, Mary's parents as members of the ex-patriate community living in England during the British colonial period, viewed Mary as British. However, Mary who was mostly raised by her Indian Ayah, her nursemaid, so has absorbed certain cultural influences from India which were deemed inappropriate and frowned upon in England.

Consequently, Mary's upbringing in India is derided and it is inferred that it will take the influence of English ways and rules to mould her into a socially acceptable young girl. Phillips further explains that '[t]he cultural fashioning of

colonial children, to be sure, is beset with ironies, ambiguities, and schizophrenic desires about "the pleasures of exile" and the lure of "back home" (Phillips, 1993 p. 170). So, the parents' birth country, England in this case, 'defines her manners, her values, her social position, and her racial identity, and yet, is still only a partial truth of her day-to-day reality. The glorious garden called England, is near and far, everywhere, and nowhere' (Phillips, 1993 p. 170).

Even the manner in which Mary's Indian home is depicted compared to that in England is unconsciously biased. For example, Mary's home is depicted as slovenly, with dinner being left in the dining room in everyone's haste to escape the cholera outbreak, 'Once she crept into the dining room and found it empty, though a partially finished meal was on the table and chairs and plates looked as if they had been hastily pushed back when the diners rose suddenly for some reason' (Hodgson Burnett 1922 p. 2). On the other hand, the English household is depicted as ideal with a young housemaid on hand to light the fire in the morning and prepare breakfast for Mary and the room itself decorated to represent typical English scenes,

The walls were covered with tapestry with a forest scene embroidered on it. There were fantastically dressed people under the trees, and in the distance there was a glimpse of the turrets of a castle. There were hunters and horses and dogs and ladies. Mary felt as if she were in the forest with them. Out of the window she could see a great climbing stretch of land which seemed to have no trees on it, and to look rather like an endless, purplish sea (Hodgson Burnett 1922, pp. 9-19).

So, from the beginning Misselthwaite Manor is portrayed in much grander terms than Mary's home in India.

Moreover, this portrayal of England as the ideal standard is not confined to the middle classes; even Martha, the servant girl, has a more idyllic home life than Mary. For instance, Martha's mother, Mrs. Sowerby, is described as the traditional mother figure who, despite having twelve children all living in a tiny cottage, provides care and nurture for all of them. Therefore, Mary is allowed to visit the home of Mrs. Sowerby because her guardian, Mrs Medlock, 'knew what a tidy woman Mother is and said how clean she keeps the cottage' (Hodgson Burnett 1922, p. 64). In addition, Martha was the ideal daughter who walked five miles home to her mother's cottage on her only day off to help 'with the washing and do the week's baking' (Hodgson Burnett 1922, p. 47). Even Martha's description of the cottage demonstrates the stark contrast with that of Mary's Indian home: 'th' cottage all smelly o' nice, clean hot bakin on' there was a good fire, an' they just shouted for joy. Our Dickon said our cottage was good enough for a king to live in' (Hodgson Burnett 1922, p. 53). The description of Martha and her mother sitting around the fire in the evening sewing patches on torn clothes and mending stockings further emphasises this point (Hodgson Burnett 1922, p. 52). Hodgson Burnett's personal experience may have unconsciously influenced her depiction of motherhood. Hodgson Burnett was described by biographer Holbrook Gerzina as 'a largely absent mother' who 'was stricken with guilt' after the loss of her son Lionel (Holbrook Gerzina 2004, p. xv) in 1892 at the young age of sixteen. In addition to Hodgson Burnett's personal life experiences influencing the depiction of mothers and homelife in her work, many cultural influences were also at play. Alston states that 'the images of home represented in children's fiction are

powerful and political for they re-assert, re-emphasise and construct identities and ideals that are all based on a myth' (Chapleau 2004, p. 57). So, Mary's homelife in India is representative of colonial attitudes to India, and the idyllic myth of England as the ideal traditional pastoral land is emphasised through the depictions of idealised homes. This is because adult authors have an agenda when writing literature. Alston quotes Zipes stating:

Children's literature...does not belong to children, but to adults, indeed it is something that adults use in order to take 'privileged position in determining the value of literature for young readers. (Zipes 2002, p.40)

Further to this Alston asserts that in discussing the home, 'we are in essence, discussing the family for as John Tosh argues "at a symbolic level the family became indistinguishable from the domestic space it occupied"' (Chapleau 2004, p. 60). Therefore, when Mary is depicted as not missing her parents at all, it can be read that she did not miss home at all, thus perpetuating the idea that the homelife in India was so dreadful that Mary did not grieve for it at all (Chapleau 2004, p. 59). Hence, Mary is portrayed as a contrary little girl, not because of her trauma and loss but because of her upbringing in India.

1.2 Uprooted, Grief and Trauma

Immediately following the death of her parents, Mary is uprooted from her home in India and passed from one reluctant custodian to another on her journey

'back' to England. Because these custodians regard Mary as 'English' they fail to recognise the grief and trauma her displacement from India is causing her. No regard is given to the consequences of losing not just her parents but also her Ayah, her home, her country, and everything else familiar to her. As psychologists, Leon and Rebeca Grinberg point out, the 'wholesale loss of one's most meaningful and valued objects: people, things, places, language, culture, customs, climate, sometimes profession or economic/social milieu ...' causes trauma to the displaced migrant (Dowd 2019, p.208). However, the symptoms of trauma exhibited by children are not always as apparent as sadness or crying. Childhood grief and trauma often manifests itself through angry outbursts. Research into childhood grief has found that:

Losses are so painful and frightening that many young children – able to endure strong emotions for only brief periods – alternatively approach and avoid their feelings in order as to not be overwhelmed. Because these emotions may be expressed as angry outbursts or misbehaviour, rather than as sadness, they may not be recognised as grief-related. (Osterweis et al., 1984)

This is precisely what happens in Mary's situation; the distress of her displacement is expressed through what is perceived to be disobedient behaviour, so is not recognised as grief. For instance, when Mary first learns of that her new home is to be in England 'she looked so stony and stubbornly uninterested that they did not know what to think about her'. However, sudden displacement from a child's home can have a profound effect on a child, and cause grief due to the loss of a stable familiar environment and cause the child to detach from their current reality in order to cope, which is evident in Mary's reaction. Additionally, as the

information is conveyed to her from another child rather than broken to her sensitively by an adult demonstrates the lack of understanding of the trauma Mary has endured.

Prior to embarking on her passage to England, Mary is initially dispatched to the home of a poor English clergyman and his family. Though Mary 'knew she was not going to stay at the English clergyman's house where she was taken at first' (Hodgson-Burnett, 1911), she is distressed by the culture shock of being abruptly thrust into an unfamiliar family dynamic, with different ways and customs. Having previously led a very privileged life, Mary finds the adjustment to living with a much poorer family who 'wore shabby clothes and were always quarrelling and snatching toys from each other' very difficult. Additionally, given that she is accustomed to servants performing all the domestic duties of her former household, Mary finds that the clergyman's 'untidy bungalow' makes her very 'disagreeable'. As previously stated, feeling angry and disagreeable are common signs of grief in children Mary's age however, this is not a recognised symptom of grief at this time. Consequently, she is simply regarded as cantankerous, so much so 'that after the first day or two nobody would play with her' leading them to nickname her 'Mary Mary quite contrary' (Hodgson-Burnett 1911, pp.6-7).

1.3 Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary

There is no sympathy even from the adults in Mary's life, with the clergyman's wife remarking '[t]he children call her "Mistress Mary Quite Contrary"', and though it's naughty of them, one can't help understanding it' (Hodgson-Burnett 1911, p.8). Therefore, when Mary is informed she is to be sent 'home' she is pleased. However, having lost everything and everybody dear to her, Mary now has no sense of identity and belonging, so has to ask, "where is home?" While the other children recognise that 'home' means 'England, of course', because Mary has only ever known India as home, this notion of England as 'home' is meaningless to her (Hodgson-Burnett 1911, p. 7).

More worrying is, as the Grinberg's' research shows, when a migrant loses everything 'they are in danger losing parts of themselves' as a result. This is especially concerning for contemporary society as according to UNICEF:

An estimated 20 million children are currently displaced by armed conflict or human rights violations. These children are forced to flee their homes, often travelling great distances to escape enemy fire, and become the most frequent victims of violence, disease, malnutrition, and death. In the chaos of flight, children may become separated from their parents and families. (UNICEF, 2018)

Though it must be acknowledged that forcible displacement is much more traumatic than Mary's situation where, as a member to the ruling classes, she is being displaced by choice rather than force.

However, although it was through her family's choice, Mary does experience a sense of separation and loss due to her displacement, which echoes

throughout *The Secret Garden*. While very different in context, Jeremy Phillips believes *The Secret Garden*,

asks many difficult questions about a figure who might well be the index of our troubled modernity: the migrant, the refugee, the exile—the displaced person without. In this century of great travels, the fortune of nations—the rise and fall of hegemonic economic powers—has led to an unprecedented cultural mix of ethnicities and races and cultures and religions throughout every continent of the globe. Thus, the displaced person without, the stranger in search of a home, is an awesome reflection on problems of social identity in the contemporary world. A few of these problems can be reached through the principle of the allegorical inference in *The Secret Garden*. (Phillips 1993, p.178)

For instance, following her stay at the clergyman's house, Mary is put in the care of an officer's wife on the boat to England. However, this woman has little time for Mary and is 'very much absorbed in her own little boy and girl' (Hodgson-Burnett 1911, p.8). She is glad to hand Mary over to Mrs. Medlock, the housekeeper at Misselthwaite Manor, who is to accompany Mary on the last leg of her journey. Therefore, the journey Mary has been forced to undertake causes her to question her sense of belonging in the world. In addition, Mary's displacement from her home, and the consequent movement from one guardian to another directly leads to Mary's sense of loneliness once she arrives 'home'. This feeling of loneliness is unfamiliar to Mary and even causes her to question if her parents had wanted her when they were alive:

Since she had been living in other people's houses and had had no Ayah, she had begun to feel lonely and to think queer thoughts, which were new to her. She had begun to wonder why she had never seemed to belong to any one even when her father and mother had been alive. (Hodgson-Burnett 1911, p.8)

Mrs. Medlock, the last of the guardians to accompany Mary on her journey to Misselthwaite Manor has little sympathy for the child, stating, 'A more marred-looking young one I never saw in my life' - marred being a Yorkshire word meaning spoiled and pettish (Hodgson-Burnett 1911, p.10). This may be because Mary is not displaying the typical symptoms of crying and sadness commonly associated with grief. Caruth believes 'traumatic experience...is not fully assimilated as it occurs' (Caruth, 1996, p. 5). Consequently, Mary may not be displaying the usual symptoms of grief, as she has not yet consciously acknowledged the trauma she is suffering. However, the text goes on to suggest that Mary is simply deciding to be bad-tempered and contrary by choice rather than unconsciously reacting to the trauma she has suffered:

So long as Mistress Mary's mind was full of disagreeable thoughts about her dislikes and sour opinions of people and her determination not to be pleased by or interested in anything, she was a yellow-faced, sickly, bored and wretched child. (HodgsonBurnett 1911, p. 220)

The text even goes so far as to suggest that Mary can simply leave her trauma behind by pushing out the bad thoughts and replacing them with good:

When her mind gradually filled itself with robins, and moorland cottages crowded with children, with queer crabbed old gardeners and common little Yorkshire housemaids, with springtime and with secret gardens coming alive day by day, and also with a moor boy and his "creatures," there was no room left for the disagreeable thoughts which affected her liver and her digestion and made her yellow and tired. (Hodgson-Burnett 1911, p. 220)

This suggests that there was little understanding of the deep-rooted psychological effects of trauma and that children could simply wish away negative thoughts, demonstrating a complete lack of acknowledgement of a child's ability to grieve as a result of loss.

1.4 The Cravens Grief and Loss

Likewise, Mary's cousin Colin Craven, shunned by his father Archibald Craven following his mother's death, is shown little sympathy. Archibald Craven is so consumed with grief that he cannot even look at Colin, as he is a constant reminder of the wife he has lost. Craven's reaction to the death of his wife reflects the findings of Freud's writings on the subject of trauma, particularly in *Studies in Hysteria*, which was published shortly before *The Secret Garden* was written. *Studies on Hysteria* recounts the case of a woman grieving the death of her sister, so much so, that when her dead sister's child had been on a visit to her, 'it's likeness to its mother had stirred up her feelings of grief' (Freud 1895, p.112). Likewise, Colin's father is unable to be in his presence due to the feelings of grief it creates. As a result, Colin is an anxious, sickly child who does not understand that his father's rejection of him is a consequence of his overwhelming grief rather than an aversion to him. Consequently, Colin's anxiety and suffering manifest as illness and an unfounded fear that he will die prematurely. In addition, Colin's angry outbursts may be an expression of his grief at the death of his mother as well as the loss of his father in his life. This resonates strongly with Freud's work, who firmly believed in physical manifestations of grief. For instance, in *Studies on*

Hysteria he states that grief can 'reduce the state of nourishment of the whole body' and cause 'the fat to disappear'.

Hodgson Burnett's description of Colin bears this out. For example, when Mary inspects Colin's back for evidence of a possible hunchback it is described as 'a poor thin back to look at when it was bared' (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p. 140). Similarly, when Dickon – a brother of Misselthwaite servant, Martha – helps Colin to the garden, his physical description is that of thin legs and thin feet on the ground, causing Ben Weatherstaff, the gardener at Misselthwaite, to comment: 'Tha's as thin as a lath an as white as a wraith' (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p. 176). Likewise, this is evident with Mary also, who from the very beginning is described as having 'a little thin face and a little thin body, thin little hair and a sour expression' (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.1). On the other hand, Freud believed that 'the influence of joy, of 'happiness', would cause the whole body to blossom out and show 'a renewal of youth'' (Freud 1895, p.112). This is borne out in the text also, as the happier Mary becomes the plumper she appears in the text's descriptions. As Mary shows signs of settling in at Misselthwaite and signs of happiness she is described as getting fatter, with Dickon commenting:

"Tha's beginning to look different, for sure." Mary was glowing with exercise and good spirits. "I'm getting fatter and fatter every day," she said quite exultantly. "Mrs. Medlock will have to get me some bigger dresses. Martha says my hair is growing thicker. It isn't so flat and stringy." (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.131)

In addition, Ben Weatherstaff notes 'Tha's a bit fatter than tha' was and tha's not as yeller. Tha' looked like a young, plucked crow when tha' first came into the

garden' (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.69). Even Mary herself notes the changes in her appearance and associates it with better health, stating 'I'm growing fatter...and I'm growing stronger' (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.81) which is also indicative of Mary's improving mental health, as she is beginning to see things more positively.

However, while psychology was beginning to be appreciated at the time of publication, the power the mind could wield was not yet fully understood. So, Colin's illness is not attributed to an unconscious reaction to the trauma of losing his mother and his own fears that he may die also. Rather, it is suggested that he is simply electing to remain bedbound when all he needs to do is to choose to be up and about:

So long as Colin shut himself up in his room and thought only of his fears and weakness and his detestation of people who looked at him and reflected hourly on humps and early death, he was a hysterical half-crazy little hypochondriac who knew nothing of the sunshine and the spring and also did not know that he could get well and could stand upon his feet if he tried to do it. (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p. 220)

Again this demonstrates the lack of understanding of childhood grief at the time of publication.

Therefore, similar to Mary, there is no consideration given to the fact that Colin is grieving the loss of his mother and, in turn, the loss of his father's presence in his life.

When new beautiful thoughts began to push out the old hideous ones, life began to come back to him, his blood ran healthily through his veins and strength poured into him like a flood. His scientific experiment was quite practical and simple and there was nothing weird about it at all. Much more surprising things can

happen to anyone who, when a disagreeable or discouraged thought comes into his mind, just has the sense to remember in time and push it out by putting in an agreeable determinedly courageous one. (Hodgson-Burnett 1911, p. 220)

As with Mary, it is suggested that Colin simply needs to think good thoughts in order to be happier.

1.5 Trauma and Unconscious Memory

It is not surprising that this association between trauma and unconscious memory is not acknowledged in the text, as it was not until a decade later that Freud drew a correlation between the two in his work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* opens with an observation of a psychic disorder that imposes involuntarily remembrances of historical traumatic events on the psyche (Caruth, 1996, p. 58). As Caruth further observes:

Ever since its emergence at the turn of the century in the work of Freud and Pierre Janet, the notion of trauma has confronted us not only with a simple pathology but also with a fundamental enigma concerning the psyche's relation to reality. In its general definition, trauma is described as the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena. (Caruth, 1996, p. 91)

Therefore, the nuances of the full range of effects of trauma on a victim were not fully known when this text was published. In particular, it was not appreciated that traumatic experience can encompass an undeniable contradiction, '[t]hat the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it'

(Caruth, 1996, p. 91-92). Freud was beginning to recognise that 'what remains unavailable to consciousness may intrude involuntarily, suggesting memory of the event extends beyond what can simple be seen or what can be known' (Caruth, 1996, p. 92). Freud further hypothesised in *Studies in Hysteria* that '[i]n traumatic neurosis the operative cause of the illness is not the trifling physical injury but the 'affect' of the fright – the psychical trauma' and that '[w]e must presume rather that the physical trauma – or more precisely, the memory of the trauma – acts like a foreign body which long after its entry must continue to be regarded as an agent that is still at work' (Freud 1895, p. 4). However, the link between traumatic memory and repression, in addition to the complexity of trauma, repression and memory would not be fully understood until much later in the century. Consequently, the fact that Mary and Colin are not consciously aware that their behaviour is a direct result of the trauma and grief they are suffering was only just beginning to be understood.

For instance, in a contemporary context, Mary's and Colin's behaviour would most likely be attributed to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which Caruth defines as 'the overwhelming events of the past repeatedly possess, in intrusive images and thoughts, the one who has lived through them' Caruth, 1995). Furthermore, according to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5 (APA-DSM-5), diagnostic criteria for symptoms of PTSD include an experience of 'actual or threatened death' in one of the following ways: firstly, directly experiencing the traumatic event, as Mary did with the death of her parents, Ayah, and everyone else in her household, and Colin

did with the death of his mother. Secondly, the event as it occurred to others, again as Mary did during the outbreak of the cholera epidemic. Thirdly, learning that the traumatic event occurred to a close family member or close friend, as Mary did when she awoke in the villa in India to find nobody about (APA 2013, pp. 271-272). This is also evident in the manner in which she was abruptly told that everyone was dead. In fact, when the soldiers arrived at the villa, they were surprised to find Mary alive. When Mary demanded to know why she was forgotten and why nobody has come for her that morning, the officer brusquely replies, 'There is nobody left to come' (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.5).

Likewise, the death of Colin's mother's is spoken of in a very matter of fact manner. Mrs Medlock describes Colin's mother to Mary as:

a sweet, pretty thing and he'd have walked the world over to get her a blade o' grass she wanted. Nobody thought she'd marry him, but she did, and people said she married him for his money. But she didn't— she didn't. (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.11)

Then unexpectedly she adds 'When she died—' causing Mary to give 'a little involuntary jump' at how abruptly the death of Mrs Craven is spoken about. Mrs Medlock does not react to Mary's shock but simply continues 'Yes, she died...And it made him (Archibald Craven) queerer than ever. He cares about nobody' (Hodgson Burnett 1911, pp. 11-12). This disconnection from the distress of Mrs Craven's death may be because a decade has passed since she died. However, Colin's father is still actively grieving the death of his wife and he continues to reject Colin as he reminds him too much of his mother. Therefore, the suffering due to the death of Mrs. Craven is an enduring trauma both in Colin's and his

father's lives. In fact, Colin's father's rejection of him is so traumatic to him, Colin believes he is so ill that he is going to die. When Mary questions how he knows he is going to die, Colin replies, 'Oh, I've heard it ever since I remember...[t]hey are always whispering about it and thinking I don't notice' (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p. 114). Moreover, Colin believes that everyone wants him to die, stating '[t]hey wish I would, too' (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p. 114). Mary questions who he means and Colin replies.

The servants—and of course Dr. Craven because he would get Misselthwaite and be rich instead of poor. He daren't say so, but he always looks cheerful when I am worse. When I had typhoid fever, his face got quite fat. I think my father wishes it, too. (Hodgson Burnett 1911, pp. 114-115)

When Mary later questions the maid, Martha Sowerby, about Colin's true condition she replies:

Nobody knows for sure and certain, said Martha. Mr. Craven went off his head like when he was born. Th' doctors thought he'd have to be put in a 'sylum. It was because Mrs. Craven died like I told you. He wouldn't set eyes on th' baby. He just raved and said it'd be another hunchback like him and it'd better die. (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.110)

Therefore, directly experiencing trauma is still negatively affecting Colin and his father over a decade later.

In addition, according to the APA-DSM-5 another indication of PTSD is 'the presence of intrusion symptoms associated with the traumatic event, beginning after the traumatic event occurred such as recurrent distressing dreams' (APA 2013, pp. 271-272). Dreams also form the basis of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud was prompted to undertake this ground-breaking work following

his engagement with veterans of World War I, 'whose dreams of the battlefield bring them back, repeatedly, to the horrifying scenes of death that they have witnessed' (Caruth 2002). What most astounded Freud about the soldiers' dreams was that up to this point Freud had always hypothesised that dreams served the function of fulfilling wishes. Therefore, the repeated nightmares of the horrors the soldiers had witnessed astounded Freud. However, Freud now concluded the compulsion to repeat also recalls from the past experiences which include no possibility of pleasure, and which can never, even long ago, have brought satisfaction even to instinctual impulses which have since been repressed' (Freud, 1955, p. 20). As these dreams brought no pleasure, they did not adhere to Freud's earlier theory that dreams served the function of wish fulfilment. Rather these nightmares were unfulfilling and undesired. Therefore, in contrast to this earlier research, Freud concluded that these nightmares served the purpose of helping the soldiers cope with the trauma they had suffered:

There is no doubt that the resistance of the conscious and unconscious ego operates under the sway of the pleasure principle: it seeks to avoid the unpleasure which would be produced by the liberation of the repressed. Our efforts, on the other hand, are directed towards procuring the toleration of that unpleasure to repeat- the manifestation of the power of the repressed – related to the pleasure principle. (Freud, 1955, p.20)

So, Freud was instead highlighting the tension between the soldier's natural resistance to facing unpleasurable thoughts and experiences and psychotherapies efforts to raise their intolerance in order to gain insight and alleviate the influence of repressed and unconscious thoughts which was a departure from his earlier wish fulfilment theory.

In 'Parting Words: Trauma, Silence and Survival', Caruth further explains

Freud's supposition, stating:

In the dreams of the returning veterans ... the encounter with death and horror cannot be assimilated to the fulfilment of desire: rather than turning death into a symbol or vehicle of psychic meaning, these traumatic dreams seem to turn the psyche itself into the vehicle for expressing the terrifying literality of a history it does not completely own. (Caruth, 2001)

Therefore, these dreams are attempting to 'master the stimulus "retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic neurosis". However, as Caruth is careful to point out, the 'return of the traumatic experience is not the direct witness of a threat to life' but rather it is the mind's 'attempt to overcome the fact that it was not direct, to master what was never fully grasped in the first place' (Caruth, 2001). The APA concurs stating that '[t]rauma in children, can manifest itself as frightening dreams without recognisable content'. This attempt to unconsciously acknowledge the trauma suffered through dreams, is evident in *The Secret Garden*, particularly the trauma suffered by Archibald and Colin Craven. For instance, when Colin initially meets Mary, he is not quite sure if she is real or a dream, enquiring "You are real, aren't you?" he said. "I have such real dreams very often. You might be one of them" (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.98). Archibald Craven and Mary also suffer intrusive dreams. Archibald Craven's dreams are inevitably of his wife and of being unable to find her:

He did not know when he fell asleep and when he began to dream; his dream was so real that he did not feel as if he were dreaming. He remembered afterward how intensely wide awake and alert he

had thought he was. He thought that as he sat and breathed in the scent of the late roses and listened to the lapping of the water at his feet, he heard a voice calling. It was sweet and clear and happy and far away. It seemed very far, but he heard it as distinctly as if it had been at his very side. "Archie! Archie! Archie!" it said, and then again, sweeter, and clearer than before, "Archie! Archie!". (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.224)

Therefore, this ties in with Freud's theory about repressed trauma resurfacing through dreams, Craven's unresolved trauma at losing his wife is unconsciously re-emerging. As with Freud's First World War veterans, the dream is so tangible to him that even as it continues, he believes he has awoken:

He thought he sprang to his feet not even startled. It was such a real voice and it seemed so natural that he should hear it. "Lilias! Lilias!" he answered. "Lilias! where are you?" "In the garden," it came back like a sound from a golden flute. (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.224)

In fact, once he actually awakens, the dream has such an impact on him that he feels compelled to return to Misselthwaite Manor:

How real that dream had been—how wonderful and clear the voice which called back to him, "In the garden— In the garden!" "I will try to find the key," he said. "I will try to open the door. I must— though I don't know why." (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.224)

Freud believes the dreams are an exploration of the deeper psychic processes, particularly those who strive to not think about their trauma during their waking life. Freud explains:

These dreams are attempts at restoring control of the stimuli by developing apprehension, the pretermission of which caused the traumatic neurosis. (Freud, 1955)

This is especially evident in Archibald Craven's case. Craven is constantly avoiding dealing with the loss of his wife, Lillias, and avoids speaking about her or visiting his son who looks very like her. But the one place he cannot avoid her is in his dreams.

Freud rationalises:

Thus, the function of the dream, viz. to do away with the motives leading to interruption of sleep by presenting wish fulfilments of the disturbing excitations, would not be its original one; the dream could secure control of this function only after the whole psychic life had accepted the domination of the pleasure-principle'. (Freud 1955)

Consequently, though Archibald Craven travels the world to avoid all that reminds him of his deceased wife, unconsciously his mind repeatedly returns to the site of trauma in his dreams. Again, this ties in with Freud's theories on the purpose of dreams. Initially Freud believed 'the dream experience appears as something alien inserted between two sections of life which are perfectly continuous and consistent with each other' (Freud 1895). However, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud had advanced this theory to encompass a broader

range of functions:

[D]reams ... of patients suffering from traumatic neuroses do not permit of classification under the category of wish-fulfilment, nor do the dreams occurring during psycho-analysis that bring back the recollection of the psychic traumata of childhood. They obey rather the repetition-compulsion, which in analysis, it is true, is supported by the (not unconscious) wish to conjure up again what has been forgotten and repressed. (Freud, 1955)

This can be seen when after Archibald Craven awakens from his dream that Lillias is still alive and calling to him, he concludes that he needs to return to the site of the trauma, Misselthwaite Manor. In doing so he finally confronts the death of his

wife; he sees the effect his rejection of Colin is having on the boy, and he can finally accept the loss of his wife.

Freud also believes that dreaming can be a form of escape from trauma. This is very much evident when cholera first strikes Mary's home in India. Mary is ten years old at this time, thus old enough to understand that there is something very wrong. She overhears her mother and the officer discussing that they have left it very late to go to the hills to outrun the cholera outbreak. She is also aware that her Ayah has died, yet Mary chooses to remain in her bedroom and sleep. Even when she awakens, she does not investigate all the wailing and crying she overhears, instead she goes to the dining room and consumes some sweet wine which causes her to fall into a deep sleep. Consequently, she avoids the nightmarish experience occurring in the other rooms in her home:

Many things happened during the hours in which she slept so heavily, but she was not disturbed by the wails and the sound of things being carried in and out of the bungalow. When she awakened, she lay and stared at the wall. The house was perfectly still. She had never known it to be so silent before. She heard neither voices nor footsteps, and wondered if everybody had got well of the cholera and all the trouble was over. She wondered also who would take care of her now her Ayah was dead. (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p. 2)

Therefore, as well as returning to the site of trauma, sleep and dreams can be an avoidance tactic also.

Furthermore, prime markers of PTSD include persistent avoidance of distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about or closely associated with the traumatic event, as well as an avoidance of external reminders (people, places,

conversations, activities, objects, situations). This is especially evident in Mary's case, she refuses to speak of her loss of parents or Ayah, and she retains a persistently negative emotional state (e.g., fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame), which is also a recognised symptom of trauma. What is most notable in Mary's and Colin's cases is their irritable behaviour and angry outbursts (with little or no provocation), typically expressed as verbal or physical aggression toward people. However, PTSD was not officially recognised as a psychological disorder until the 1980's, when it was included in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM. Therefore, their grief as a consequence of their losses was not recognised as such, rather it was seen as bad behaviour and weakness. Indeed, in Freud's own early writings on trauma, 'the possibility of integrating the lost event into a series of associative memories' (Caruth, 1995) was part of the cure for trauma victims.

Therefore, ostensibly the unspeakability of trauma as set out by Caruth does seem to be at play in *The Secret Garden*. Both Mary's and Colin's grief goes unrecognised throughout the text. Neither child nor their adult guardians seem to associate the losses they have endured with their behaviour. Freud's hypotheses on trauma and grief were only just coming to the fore at the time of publication so it is no surprise that the children's grief is not recognised as such. In addition, Hodgson Burnett was a proponent of the New Thought movement at this time, which may have influenced how Mary and Colin are depicted as being healed by the natural world. New Thought was a spiritual movement whose 'basis was the link between spiritualism and the physical world, the power of belief and the

power of the human mind' (Holbrook Gerzina 2004, p. 241). In fact, Hodgson Burnett stated '[a]s long as one has a garden, one has a future; and as long as one has a future one is alive' (Holbrook Gerzina 2004, p. xvi), compounding her belief in the healing effects of the natural world.

However, while the consequences of grief were not a concept fully explored or known at the time of publication, there does appear to be some knowledge of its aftereffects, as shown in the depiction of Archibald Craven following the death of his wife Lillias. Therefore, it cannot be said that grief as a concept was completely ignored, more so the consequences of childhood grief were not acknowledged. In addition, Caruth's hypothesis that trauma remains unknown is not fully supported by this text. Archibald Craven is very much aware that he is suffering trauma as a result of the loss of his wife. Therefore, the unspeakability of trauma is not supported as Craven refers to his loss throughout the text and even has moments of clarity where he acknowledges that he is running from dealing with the consequences of this grief and the acceptance of the loss of his wife. Therefore, this ties in with Satterlee's contemporary literary trauma theory which allows for the knowability of trauma and echoes the viewpoint that what remains unspoken in a narrative about trauma can be a result of cultural values, not just the unspeakability and unknowability of trauma (Richter 2018 p.367). This does indeed seem to be the case here, Archibald Craven is avoiding his home and son in order to hide his grief from everyone. It is a choice he makes. Others are aware that he is grieving and are making allowances for it. Mary, on the other hand, is offered no such allowances. Her grief is not mentioned

once throughout the text, so was this a question of gender or was it because childhood grief was not recognised at this time?

1.6 The New Woman and Motherhood

Certainly, in 1911 there were many questions around what it meant to be a woman how they were expected to behave. However, also during this period many of the old conventions of culture and society were crumbling and falling away, as was the strength of the British Empire. The emergence of the New Woman coincided many of these new changes. The New Woman was a phrase coined against the backdrop of emerging feminism to describe women who were 'radically aggressive in her desire for emancipation from ancient social, domestic, professional, and political sanctions and restrictions' (Bell 2013, p. 79). Parallels were drawn between the appetite for change in the colonies and women's push against patriarchal society at that time.

The transition from empire to commonwealth and, ultimately, independence was marked by anti-colonial challenges from within Britain and in the colonies and threats to empire from international developments post-1918. This era also witnessed a more proactive role for women as both defenders and critics of empire who had an influence on shaping a new discourse of welfare and development, purportedly a 'feminisation' of empire. Continuities existed between female activism pre- and post-1918 but also significant differences as the late imperial era witnessed more nuanced and diverse interventions into empire affairs than the 'maternalist imperial feminism' of the era before the First World War. (Bush 2016, p. 499)

That is not to say all women of that era were anxious for change, in fact, according to Bell, the majority still wanted to 'conform to accepted norms and conditions in their daily lives, and not to flout the patriarchal order.' (Bell 2013, p. 87). As previously stated, children's books are written and purchased by adults and often replicate the ideologies and beliefs of the society they are written in, and they echo many of the anxieties felt by that society. In response to these anxieties about the many changes society was experiencing, Kimberley Reynolds suggests that early twentieth century fiction 'reiterated traditional sexual stereotypes' (Reynolds, 1994, 32). Therefore, the author's own views and beliefs are particularly important because, as John Stephens believes, 'writing for children is usually purposeful, its intention being to foster in the child reader a positive apperception of some socio-cultural values which, it is assumed, are shared by author and audience' (Stephens 1992, p. 3). Children's literature writers frequently attempt to mould readers perceptions and attitudes towards certain socio-cultural values, as Reynolds states:

By the end of the nineteenth century fin de siècle, images of masculinity and femininity in books began to be more exaggerated and books began to be written and marketed with gender very much in mind, due to women agitating for reform and men struggling to rule empire and govern effectively. (Reynolds, 1994, 30)

Therefore, how Hodgson Burnett portrays gender in *The Secret Garden* is important when exploring attitudes to grief as they may have been influenced by gender. As Reynolds points out, traditional children's literature, particularly texts published in the early 1900's as *The Secret Garden* was, depicted many

genderbased societal and cultural expectations about how grief should be expressed: boys were expected to be strong and stoic, while girls were expected to be emotional and sensitive. Therefore, it is not unusual to find a children's literature author 'trying to mould audience attitudes into 'desirable' forms, which can mean an attempt to perpetuate certain values' (Stephens 1992, p. 3).

On the surface, this appears to be the case in *The Secret Garden*, certainly there is a subtle critique of the modern woman through the role of home and motherhood. Mrs. Sowerby, the traditional housewife, is depicted as the ideal mother. On the other hand, Mrs. Lennox, very much a modern woman, living in India, is characterised as neglectful, with the result that Mary is depicted as a contrary and selfish child. As Stephen Roxburgh notes 'Mary, as a product of imperialism, is not a happy bubbly child' (Roxburgh, 1975, 165). So, it seems the New Woman who likes to go partying rather than remaining within the domestic sphere does not cultivate courteous children. In addition to criticisms of Mary's behaviour, Mrs Lennox is also portrayed as putting her child's health at risk from a cholera outbreak in order to attend one more party:

"Is it so very bad? Oh, is it?" Mary heard her say. "Awfully," the young man answered in a trembling voice. "Awfully, Mrs. Lennox. You ought to have gone to the hills two weeks ago." The Mem Sahib wrung her hands. "Oh, I know I ought!" she cried. "I only stayed to go to that silly dinner party. What a fool I was!" (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p. 3).

Additionally, Daniella Petkovic asserts 'Mrs. Lennox failure to adhere to social norms of good mother and wife is punished by death - she's gone native' (Petkovic,

2006, p.90). It is notable that not only does Mary's mother come in for criticism for being neglectful, but so too do the Indian servants, who in their haste to escape the cholera outbreak, leave Mary behind: '...the few native servants who had not died also had left the house as quickly as they could to get out of it, none of them remembering there was a Missie Sahib' (Burnett, 1909, 7). It seems India can neither provide a suitable mother or mother figure to care for Mary:

"Perhaps if her mother had carried her pretty face and her pretty manners oftener into the nursery Mary might have learned some pretty ways too. It is very sad, now the poor child at all. I believe she scarcely ever looked at her," sighed Mrs. Crawford. "When her Ayah was dead there was no one to give a thought to the little thing. Think of the servants running away and leaving her all alone in that deserted bungalow." (Burnett, 1911, p.11)

On the other hand, the traditional housewife, Mrs. Sowerby, despite being from a subordinate class, is depicted as the ideal mother, in touch with nature and caring for her family of fourteen in one little cottage. Certainly, this depiction of the idealised home supports Alston's assertion that 'the house is an important sign in indicating the contentment of the family the 'good' family/home is in fact enhanced by the image of the non-conforming and thus 'bad' family home' (Chapleau 2004, p. 57). It is significant then that Mary's home life in India is depicted as chaotic and falls far short of this 'traditional ideal'. As previously stated, the death and destruction that befalls the Lennox household is blamed on Mary's mother's frivolous ways, delaying going to the hills to escape the cholera outbreak simply because she wanted to stay on a little longer to throw a dinner party. Moreover, in the subsequent cholera outbreak Mary's mother does not think to check on her own child. Instead, she is forgotten and has to resort to eating

leftovers and drinking wine when she is thirsty. Again, the cultural practices in India are portrayed as not conforming to the social norms of England. Stephens believes 'every book has an implicit ideology...usually in the form of assumed social structures and habits of thought' (Chapleau 2004, p. 9) and that every author has a 'passive ideology - that is the implicit presence in the text of the writer's unexamined assumptions' (Chapleau 2004, p. 10). Many times, this passive ideology can reinforce social and cultural norms of the time, particularly if there are perceived threats to these social norms. Often authors devise story lines that hold up the moral values of the society in which it is written, and parents buy such books. Consequently, *The Secret Garden* may be read as a critique of the emergence of the New Woman, given the time of its publication and its policing of traditional gender roles in children's literature, however, the opposite could also hold true.

'New Woman' is a term used to describe a new generation of active women, who believed in women's suffrage, equal educational opportunities for women, sexual independence, and what they called rational dress' (Oxford, 2020). Hodgson Burnett's own biographer, Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, feels Hodgson Burnett falls into the category of the New Woman who she defined as 'a woman who worked within and against the restrictions of Victorian life to develop her own code of spiritual and moral behaviour' (Holbrook Gerzina 2004, p. 184). Holbrook Gerzina justifies this supposition as she explains 'the term 'new woman' came into vogue in the 1890s when describing women who challenged traditional gender roles and claimed more public lives for themselves' (Holbrook Gerzina 2004, p.

184). Indeed, Hodgson Burnett does appear to fall into this category, stating in 1896 that 'we are not to be divided into more men and women; we are human beings who are part of each other' demonstrating that she appeared to be advocating for equality between the sexes (Holbrook Gerzina 2004, p. 187). In addition, Holbrook Gerzina further supports her belief that Hodgson Burnett exhibited the traits of the New Woman by stating that 'in 1909, along with other major writers, she signed a petition by the National American Woman Suffrage Association supporting a constitutional amendment granting woman the right to vote' (Holbrook Gerzina 2004, p. 265). Furthermore in 1910 the Equal Suffrage League received a message from Hodgson Burnett declaring "she was also a suffragist" (Holbrook Gerzina 2004, p. 265). Given this assertion that she was a 'suffragist', why then did she depict the New Woman in an extremely negative light. This seems at odds with Hodgson Burnett's own lifestyle as a working woman who remained financially independent her entire life and fought for women's publishing rights in the early 19th century.

So, if Hodgson Burnett is embodying the New Woman, then why critique her in *The Secret Garden*, could it be an unconscious bias held by the author? Certainly, Fredric Jameson believes authors bring with them an unconscious bias that is present in their writing, stating that:

...if interpretation in terms of expressive causality or of allegorical master narratives remains a constant temptation, this is because such master narratives have inscribed themselves in the texts as well as in our thinking about them; such allegorical narrative signified are a persistent dimension of literary and cultural texts precisely because they reflect a fundamental dimension of our

collective thinking and our collective fantasies about history and reality. (Jameson 1981, pg. 33)

Much of Jameson's theory is based around the work of Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser and '[t]he fullest form of what Althusser calls "expressive causality" (and of which he calls "historicism") will thus prove to be a vast interpretive allegory in which a sequence of historical events or texts and artefacts is rewritten in terms of some deeper, underlying, and more "fundamental" narrative, of a hidden master narrative which is the allegorical key or figural content of the first sequence of empirical materials' (Jameson 1981, pg. 28). While essentially a Marxist reading, Jameson believes his theoretical interpretation 'is here construed as an essentially allegorical act, which consists in rewriting a given text in terms of a particular interpretative master code' (Jameson 1981, Preface). Jameson further believes that his theoretical interpretation allows for a broader analysis than traditional literary theories:

It projects a rival hermeneutic to those already enumerated: but it does so, as we shall see, not so much by repudiating their findings as by arguing its ultimate philosophical and methodological priority over more specialized interpretative codes whose insights are strategically limited as much by their own situational origins as by the narrow or local ways in which they construe their objects of study. (Jameson 1981, pg. 20)

Overall, Jameson is suggesting that there are new more comprehensive methodologies offering broader perspectives than existing approaches.

In addition, Jameson's belief that texts are unconsciously political is equally pertinent to *The Secret Garden's* many references to England's superiority over her colony India and its native people. Jameson believes 'Our readings of the past are

vitality dependent on our experience of the present' (Jameson, 1981, p. 20). This is particularly relevant to Hodgson Burnett's depiction of traditional and modern gender roles. However, Jameson also states 'There is nothing that is not social and historical – indeed, that everything is in the last analysis political' (Jameson, 1981 pg. 20). Furthermore, Jameson believes 'It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity' (Jameson 1981, pg. 19). However, given that Hodgson Burnett was very much the embodiment of a New Woman herself, it seems unlikely that she held an unconscious bias towards the modern woman. Of course, one argument is that it was a conscious decision to give the projected readership the type of book they wanted. Indeed, Hodgson Burnett admits that early on in her career, once she 'learned she could make money by her pen, the aim for the next decade was to keep the wolf from the door, sometimes turning a deliberately blind eye to quality in an effort to churn out quantity' (Holbrook Gerzina 2004, p.31). Even her biographer agrees that many of her early works were 'knocked off for their financial rather than literary value', however she is careful to point out the Hodgson Burnett would later regret this 'as critics looked back on them with disdain' (Holbrook Gerzina 2004, p.31).

However, Hodgson Burnett was almost sixty by the time she wrote *The Secret Garden*, so she was well established and financially secure by this time. Therefore, it is more likely that Hodgson Burnett was forwarding a political agenda through her depiction of motherhood in *The Secret Garden*. Rather than unconsciously

critiquing the modern woman, Hodgson Burnett in fact was consciously critiquing the way society viewed girls and women.

The Secret Garden was published in a time that saw great change in women's perception of their role in society. Women were finding their voice and advocating for their rights. Therefore, it is likely that Hodgson Burnett was holding a mirror up to society and reflecting back to them their treatment of women and girls. Jennifer Mooney points out that YA literature often reflects feminist Simone de Beauvoir's claim that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Mooney 2023, p. 57). That is very true of the depiction of Mary Lennox. When Mary first comes to England she is described as a defiant rebellious child who stands her ground, '[s]he knew she felt contrary again, and obstinate, and she did not care at all. She was imperious and Indian (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p.128). However, once she spends time in England and is indoctrinated in the ways of how English girls are expected to behave, Mary conforms to the stereotypical good English girl. Mooney in her analysis of YA literature authors, Louise O'Neill, and Isabel Quintero, points out that 'compliance with value structures to do with being a "good girl" (Mooney 2023, p. 129). This also rings true of Hodgson Burnett's depiction of Mary. In particular, Mooney's point that 'such normative social paradigms can restrict the way young girls operate in society by maintaining an inequality that discriminates against them' (Mooney 2023, p. 129) very much applies to how Mary is depicted once she conforms to English societal expectations of her as a girl. Once Mary conforms to normative social paradigms, she does not

utter another word, the rest of the text is given over to the male characters of Colin and Archibald Craven.

Furthermore, Mrs Lennox was in many ways a reflection of Hodgson Burnett herself, who was criticised in the press for partying and travelling and neglecting her children. Hodgson Burnett was not the stereotypical woman of her time. She had come from a wealthy background, but the family fortune was lost when her father died suddenly at a young age and the family had to emigrate to America. A couple of years after arriving her mother also died and Hodgson Burnett financially provided for her siblings with her writing. At 20 years old when she was proposed to by a young medical student, Swan Moses Burnett, it was expected that she immediately accept, as this was a very good prospect for a girl in her position. However, she refused him on several occasions, choosing instead to travel the world unchaperoned and maintain her financial independence with her writing. She did eventually accept his proposal but remained the main bread winner. Hodgson Burnett went on to have two children with Swan but was very publicly criticised for not conforming to the traditional mother role when she did have them, which is reflected in the depiction of Mary Lennox's mother. When Burnett made the decision to divorce Swan, she was heavily criticised by the press, with the *Washington Post* writing that the divorce was caused by Burnett's "advanced ideas regarding the duties of a wife and the rights of women" (Washington Post 1898, p.1).

Furthermore, the contrast in language when describing Mary Lennox and Colin Craven is important. One child is described as disagreeable, sour, selfish, angry, self-absorbed, unsympathetic, stiff, silent, sly, wicked, while the other is described as hysterical, crying, delicate, ill, tired, cross, weak, unhappy, whining, sick, frightened. Given that this is a book written in the Victorian era, most would expect the first list to be describing Mary and the second Colin but what is interesting about *The Secret Garden* is that Hodgson Burnett has inverted the stereotypical traits attributed to genders at this time. So, it is Mary who is angry, stiff, and silent, and Colin who is hysterical, weak, and crying. When describing Mary's reaction to the death of her nurse it is said that: 'She did not cry because her nurse had died. She was not an affectionate child' and had never been (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p. 2). While of Colin it is said that '[h]ysterics and temper were half of what ailed him' (Hodgson Burnett 1911, p. 92) challenging conventional gender portrayals of that time period

What is relevant here is how the two children's approach to grief is depicted. When it comes to grief many factors shape how people process and express emotions. Although generalisations are not true for everyone, grief responses can vary among individuals, and these differences can be influenced by the gender they identify with. At the forefront of gendered grief research are psychologists, Terry Martin and Kenneth Doka, whose research has identified two main grieving styles, intuitive grief and instrumental grief. Like gender expression, intuitive grief and instrumental grief lie on a spectrum, on one end is intuitive grief

and most people who identify as female lie on that side of the spectrum, and on the other side are instrumental grievers who predominantly identify as male. But as with all spectrums, some may lie more to the middle rather than one side or the other.

Instrumental grievers tend to put their feelings into action, experiencing their grief physically, rather than emotionally. They deal with loss by focusing on goal-oriented activities that activate thinking and doing. Rather than talking about or crying about the person who died, they throw themselves into time limited tasks such as writing the eulogy or planting a memorial garden. These activities give them a focus as they enter their grief, but also provide a means of escaping it when the task is done. Although they may let themselves cry in their grief, usually they will do so privately, which may lead some to conclude that they must not be grieving at all (Doka and Martin 2000, p. 51). This very much aligns with Mary's approach; she focuses on the garden and eventually works through her anger and grief.

Colin's approach to grief, on the other hand, identifies much more with intuitive grievers. As with intuitive grievers Colin expresses a greater need to talk with others who are comfortable with strong emotions and willing to listen without judgment. They speak openly about how the loss has affected them and cry publicly when processing their grief. Doka and Martin could not determine why most females grieved intuitively but they suggest it may be because they have been socialised to be more open with their feelings (Doka and Martin 2000, p. 51).

This is at odds with how male and females were portrayed and viewed when the text was published. Nowadays, there is a recognition that such rigid expectations along gender lines are unhelpful because a lot of the time they don't fit everybody. The way we grieve is as individual as we are, some females may be instrumental in pattern and style, and grieve in traditionally "masculine" ways, and some males may be more intuitive by nature, and therefore, will grieve in traditionally "feminine" ways, and some may identify with elements of both. It makes it all the more remarkable that Hodgson Burnett was demonstrating this as far back as 1911.

In conclusion, through an examination of *The Secret Garden* this chapter sought to analyse how childhood grief was portrayed in children's texts in the early 20th century. Firstly, the grief of children Mary and Colin and that of adult Archibald Craven were analysed, revealing that adult and childhood grief were treated differently in the text. While Archibald Craven's grief was recognised and acknowledged, the children were given no such allowances. Instead, they were left to process their loss on their own without any support offered to either child. In addition, this chapter highlighted how imperialistic attitudes towards India and the view of England as 'home' added to Mary's trauma. Along with the loss of her parents and Ayah, Mary was uprooted from India to 'return home' to England, somewhere she had never been but was expected to fully embrace right away. Much like Mary's grief at the loss of her parents, the trauma of displacement and loss of her cultural identity went unacknowledged, as did the psychological and emotional impact. This resonates with Amanda Dowd's assertion that 'our

developing sense of both identity and cultural identity becomes implicitly interwoven with the environmental surround in which experience happens. If all goes well, this confers a sense of legitimacy in the human and social order, a place to stand, and a felt sense of having a right to be. Such a developmental achievement confers the blessing of both recognition and belonging' (Dowd 2019, p.253). Therefore, this chapter underlined how a lack of recognition of the trauma of displacement and the sense of loss and grief that this can elicit can have long standing implications for a child's sense of belonging, their sense of continuity and their sense of home as a safe place.

In addition to the consequences of unacknowledged grief and trauma, this chapter also sought to focus on the role gender plays in the portrayal of loss in the text. Initially, it seemed the children reacted along expected gender lines for the time of publication. For example, Mary made emotional connections with Martha, Dickon and Ben and expressed her loneliness to them while Colin on the other hand withdrew from contact with the outside world and isolated himself in his room. However, this chapter established Mary's method of coping and healing from grief aligns much more with the 'masculine traits' of instrumental grievers while Colin's align much more with the 'female traits' of intuitive grievers, very much challenging traditional gender grieving styles. Moreover, Mary's portrayal overall as an assertive, strong, independent girl challenges societal expectation for girls at that time and is reflective of the shift away from traditional concepts of women's role in society. Also highlighted is that both Mary's depiction and that of

her non-conformist mother was very much reflective of the emerging New Woman, among which Hodgson Burnett was counted. Moreover, it has shown that only through Mary's strong will and determination was Colin compelled to confront his fears and begin to heal from his trauma and grief. Yet another example of how the text challenged expected gender norms for that time, in particular those around loss, trauma and grief.

Therefore, this chapter determined that while grief and its consequences were recognised at the time of publication, childhood grief remained largely unacknowledged. However, the trauma suffered was not unspoken due to the unknowability of trauma, as the Caruthian literary trauma model contends, but rather due to cultural and societal norms at the time of publication.

Chapter 2

The Yearling

This chapter examines Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Yearling*. This coming-of-age novel tells the tale of young boy, Jody Baxter, who adopts an orphaned fawn named Flag. This chapter explores Jody's grief when he is forced to put down Flag. Firstly, it looks at the knowability of trauma and questions whether Caruth's theory around the unspeakability and unknowability of trauma are reflected in the text. Further drawing on the work of Caruth as well

as Freud it explores the concept of paralysis and trauma in relation to the death of Jody's friend Fodder-wing. This chapter also examines the guilt a grieving child may experience and also explores two distinct types of grief: betrayal grief and traumatic grief. Jody's parents force him to put down Flag. guilt and grief

Though set in the 1870's, *The Yearling* was published in 1938, a full twentyseven years after *The Secret Garden*. However, Rawlings' narrative provides a much more nuanced portrayal of childhood grief than *The Secret Garden*. This is in part because it was written before the concept of YA fiction therefore the implied reader was an adult, the concept of YA fiction, however with changing social conventions today it is typically included in young adult reading lists.

Jody Baxter is the only surviving offspring of Ezra 'Penny' Baxter and his wife, Ora., None of Jody's six older siblings survived beyond three months old:

The babies were frail, and almost as fat as they came, they sickened and died. Penny had buried them one by one in a cleared place among the black-jack oaks, where the poor loose soil made the digging easier. The plot grew in size until he was compelled to fence it in against the vandalism of hogs and pole cats. Some of them had names: Ezra Jr, Little Ora, William T., and others bore only such legends as Baby Baxter, aged 3 mos 6 days. (Kinnan Rawlings 1938, p.19)

As the headstone epitaphs signify, the joy of their first child named for its father and their second named for its mother eventually gave way to a baby who by the time of its death, at three months and 6 days old, had not yet been named. Undoubtedly, having suffered the trauma of the loss of so many children before, Ora and Penny elected not to name the baby for fear of growing too attached.

Therefore, as with Mary Lennox and Colin Craven in *The Secret Garden*, Jody Baxter finds himself in the care of adults who are struggling to cope with their own grief. As a result, when Jody unexpectedly does survive into childhood, Ora Baxter, in particular, finds it difficult to develop a maternal bond with her son. Even though Jody survives, Ora has lost so many children before him that she 'accepted her youngest with something of detachment as though she had given all she had of love and care and interest to the others' (Kinnan Rawlings 1938, p.20). This is not an uncommon response and is well recognised today with Flach et al. stating 'under the effect of perinatal grief anxieties, it becomes even more complex for some mothers to bond with a new baby, i.e., their availability to offer the necessary emotional care to the surviving child would be impaired, which can generate both emotional difficulties for the child and the mother-child interaction' (Flach et al. 2022). However, back in the 1870's when this novel is set there was not much support for bereaved parents, most likely because childhood loss was a common occurrence with two in every ten children dying before they reached their fifth birthday and 59% of those under five deaths being infants (Preston & Haines 1991, p. 3). Therefore, as Preston and Haines point out it is not unusual then that a mother who experienced previous loss of a child feared 'repeating the rupture of bonds' with a subsequent child and so remained somewhat emotionally detached from them to protect themselves from further heartache (Preston & Haines 1991, p. 3).

2.1 Knowability of Trauma

As previously stated, according to Satterlee, this sense of detachment occurs because 'a traumatic event can disrupt attachment between self and others' (Satterlee 2008, pp. 149-150)). Today, miscarriage and the loss of a child are linked to 'pronounced emotional responses such as anxiety, depression, denial, anger, marital disruption and a sense of loss and inadequacy with subsequent losses being significantly associated with baseline depressive symptoms' (Raj and Ryan 2006, p.80). In addition, hardship and loss were a regular occurrence for many families, particularly those in rural areas, so women like Ora were expected to carry on through their loss and resulting grief. Therefore, her sense of detachment from her surviving son is not to be completely unexpected. If Caruth's theory of unknowability held true, then Ora should be unaware of the trauma she suffered at the loss of her six children and, consequently, should not recognise it as the source of her detachment and disconnection with her surviving son. However, this does not hold true in the narrative, as can be seen when Jody's friend, Fodder-wing dies, Ora immediately recognises that her hardened attitude to the loss his family experiences is due to the losses she and Penny have suffered. Therefore, as it does not adhere to the unknowability of Caruth's theory, Ora's recognition of the trauma she has suffered requires a trauma theory with a broader scope. For this reason, Satterlee's trauma theory lends itself more comfortably to an analysis of Rawlings' text. Ora's insight into her own trauma perfectly demonstrates Satterlee's contention that Caruth's traditional

interpretation that 'trauma refuses representation and causes dissociation' is too narrow to allow for analysis of all forms of trauma (Satterlee 2014, p. 1). Rather, it confirms Satterlee's argument for the possibility of both 'indirect and direct knowledge of the traumatic event' (Richter 2018 p.367). Moreover, as previously discussed, it emphasises Satterlee's belief that '[t]rauma refers to a person's emotional response to an overwhelming event that disrupts previous ideas of an individual's sense of self and the standards by which one evaluates society' (Satterlee 2008). Equally, where the Caruthian model focuses on the unrepresentability of the trauma suffered by the Baxter's, it perfectly reflects Satterlee's model that supposes that the traumatised can recognise the effect of the trauma suffered and so, consequently, it is not always unassimilated (Satterlee, 2008).

This latter distinction is particularly true of Penny Baxter, who knows he should be tougher on his son, but as a result of the trauma Penny has suffered at the loss of so many children, he adores Jody and is far less harsh on him than he would be otherwise. This also concurs with Satterlee's belief that a 'traumatic experience disrupts the previous framework of reality, and the protagonist must reorganise the self in relation to this new view of reality' (Satterlee 2008). This is very evident in Penny's relationship with Jody, as having hoped and planned for a large family to help him into the future as he and Ora grow older, now realises that it all falls on young Jody's shoulders. As a consequence, Penny invests all of his hopes, promises and future prospects in Jody. Like Ora, Penny is self-aware enough to realise that these high hopes for Jody are a direct result of losing so many

children before him. For instance, when Penny is in town shopping for supplies with Jody, Boyles, the shopkeeper, comments "[y]our boy's mannerly, Mr. Baxter." To which Penny replies "He's right smart of a comfort ... [w]e lost so many young uns, I think sometimes I set too much store by him." (Kinnan Rawlings 1938, p.104). Again, Penny's awareness that his unrealistic hopes for Jody are the result of the trauma of losing so many children before him completely confounds Caruth's theory regarding the unspeakability of trauma. As Satterlee observes 'according to Caruth's model once trauma is spoken it no longer remains unspeakable so therefore is no longer traumatic' (Satterlee 2008).

Yet despite his acknowledgement that the trauma has affected his relationship with Jody, Penny continues to be affected by the trauma and grief he has experienced and recognises that he is very soft on young Jody because he is so grateful that a son has survived into childhood. This softness even extends to Penny permitting Jody to neglect his chores, , when he knows Jody is gone off rambling in the woods. Therefore, it is evident that the trauma suffered by the Baxter's has not only affected their relationship with their only surviving child but also with each other. Hence, not only is the trauma known to Penny Baxter, but the consequences of the effect of the trauma on the parental relationship is known to him also and is very well described throughout the text. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that Caruth's Freudian informed unspeakability of trauma cannot account for Penny Baxter's direct knowledge of the traumatic event and his awareness of the effect it has on the relationship with his surviving son. Consequently, as Satterlee points out, more than one literary trauma theory is

required when analysing the effects of trauma as: “[a] discursive dependence upon a single psychological theory of trauma produces a homogenous interpretation of the diverse representations in the trauma novel and the interplay that occurs between language, experience, memory and place” (Satterlee 2008).

Their trauma is acknowledged in the narrative, not only by the author but also by the character’s themselves. Ora in particular is very self-aware and very clearly articulates how the effect of losing so many children has led to a strained relationship with Jody. However, their reaction to grief is depicted very differently, in particular in the way they treat Jody, with Ora’s treatment of Jody being the total inverse of Penny’s. Ora Baxter constantly criticises Jody; no matter what he does, his mother finds fault with it. Significantly, since Satterlee believes that a traumatised person ‘exists in relation to a coherent view of reality that is necessarily reorganized through a painful process of reorientation induced by the traumatic event’, Ora’s behaviour can be viewed as a symptom of the trauma she has suffered as a result of losing six of her infants (Satterlee, 2008). As a result, Ora’s criticism of Jody can be viewed as a consequence of the detachment she feels towards her son. With this in mind, these behaviours can be understood to be a direct result of the traumatic events that shaped her reality. It is important to note that while some examples of the unspeakability of trauma are evident in Ora Baxter’s reaction to her loss, according to Satterlee, this is not necessarily the result of neurobiological function or lack of assimilation of the traumatic event to conscious memory, as Caruth believes. Rather, Satterlee hypothesises that it can

be as a result of the cultural and social conditions in which the trauma occurred (Satterlee, 2008).

In the 1870's, Florida child mortality rates were particularly high (316.5 per 1000 births) due in part to a cholera pandemic, smallpox, and yellow fever outbreaks (O'Neill 2019). In addition, 'the southern states of America experienced rapid and disruptive changes in land, labor and the economy in the decades following the civil war and also suffered a fairly serious economic decline that lasted throughout the 1870's and 1880's (O'Neill 2019). Therefore, socially, and culturally, childhood loss was quite prevalent in the environment in which the Baxter's were living and there was an expectation that loss be quietly borne. This is particularly relevant as, according to Satterlee, the silence that can occur around trauma in literature, in particular, is influenced by the time and environment in which the text is authored. She states that the: 'traumatic experience is conditioned by social standards and narrative conventions available to the writer at the time of composition which suggest other reasons for the silence (rather than speechless terror, unspeakability etc)' (Satterlee 2008).

Thus, the historical setting of the 1870's, with its harsh social environment that demanded of people that they deal with what comes their way, serves to create a situation whereby the trauma may not be verbally acknowledged. In addition, at the time of authorship in the 1930's there was little research available regarding the impact of grief on a person. What little was available was from a generalised perspective and gives no regard to how grief had been dealt with locally and culturally. The text is set in the 1870's, just five years after the end of

the American Civil War, which saw a lot of death and hardship. Sharon Talley believes that the American Civil War 'created a national trauma that solicited volatile responses of anger, fear, and uncertainty from citizens on both sides of the conflict' and that 'the traumatic response of the war stretched far beyond the four-year period of armed hostilities' (Talley 2014, p. x). Therefore, the unspeakability of the trauma that Ora displays may be a consequence of when and where the trauma occurred, and when and where the text itself was authored and not necessarily as a result of neurobiological factors as the dominant Caruthian literary theory espouses.

Despite Ora's trauma and lack of bond with Jody, like Penny and Jody she does have a bond with her animals, which is highlighted early on in the text when Jody speaks lovingly of her favourite hen: 'His mother's favorite hen clucked to her biddies from the slat coop. He scooped up a small ball of yellow down and held it against his cheek, its cheepings shrill in his ear. He released it and it scurried for shelter under the fat hen's wings.' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.73). This is important because despite her harshness Ora Dit demonstrates the respectful relationship between the Baxter's and animals.

This love for animals is an important trait that has been passed to Jody who, as a result of the physical and social environment, and the dysfunctional relationship with his parents and the lack of surviving siblings, finds himself very lonely. As a result, Jody longs for a pet for companionship, and to love and be loved, by stating '[h]e would like anything that was his own, that licked his face and followed him as old Julia followed his father' (Kinnan Rawlings 1938, p.2). As

a consequence of this loneliness, like Mary Lennox and Colin Craven, Jody spends much of his time alone in nature. But rather than tending to a garden, as Mary and Colin do, Jody rambles through the forest tracking wild animals. Jody has an affinity for deer in particular, so much so that he can tell by their tracks whether they are male or female, young or mature, or even with fawn: '[a] deer had come to the spring while he was sleeping. The fresh tracks came down to the east bank and stopped at the water edge. They sank deeply into the sand, perhaps she was heavy with fawn' (Kinnan Rawlings 1938, p.7) Notably, this marks the first reference in the text to the fawn that Jody will come to love and view as a friend, and that he will intensely grieve for when he is forced to kill him. Given that the text revolves around Jody's extreme grief at the death of the fawn, it is critical to note the differing attitudes to the killing of animals in the text. Penny Baxter's love and respect for nature is evident throughout the text and is also evident in Jody's reactions to all the animals he encounters.

However, it is Penny Baxter who carefully instils in Jody a sense of respect for the animal world. An illustration of this is Penny's reaction when Jody comes across a small pool of water that held some small fish: 'I'm feered the fish has died outen here," he said. 'These leetle ol' ponds in the middle o' no-where has allus been a puzzlement to me. I cain't see how the fish lives here, year on year.' He caught another grasshopper and hurled it without result. 'The pore fish,' he said. 'Heylpless in a world o' their own. 'Stead o' fishin' for 'em, I'd ought to come out here and feed 'em' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.84) Penny's regard for wildlife even extends to animals killed by other animals: 'He recalled a wild-cat that the dogs

had torn to pieces. Wild-cats deserved what they got. Yet at one moment, when the snarling mouth had gaped wide in agony, and the evil eyes had filmed in dying, he had been stabbed with pity. He had cried out, longing to help the creature in its torture. Too much pain was unjust. Too many against one were unjust' (Kinnan Rawling 1938 p.127). Of course, where an animal poses a threat to the Baxter family itself there is little room for sentiment. For instance, when an old bear nicknamed Slew-foot attacks the Baxter farm, they are left with little choice but to endeavour to kill it. Due to the danger and hardship the bear brings on the Baxter family, Penny Baxter justifies the killing of Slew-foot to Jody: 'A creetur that kills and eats what he needs, why, he's jest like the rest of us, makin out the best he kin. But an animal, or a person either, that'll do harm, jest to be a-doin- you look in a bear's face and you'll see he's got no remorse' (Kinnan Rawlings 1938, p.24). However, hunting Slewfoot may have had more benefit than simply reducing the imminent threat it posed. Research suggests that distraction is often a coping mechanism employed by men who feel it socially unacceptable to express their grief publicly. Even today research shows that many young men believe expressing grief publicly is unacceptable¹⁰, Creighton et al. state that 'most men spoke of the act of crying, particularly in a public outpouring of grief, as a feminine activity that would be seen as unacceptable or as signifying weakness to their friends' (Creighton et al. 2013, p. 42). As a result, much like Penny Baxter their 'restricted options for processing and expressing grief led men to engage in activities in an

¹⁰ This is well supported in the literature, see Archer, 1999; Doka & Martin, 2000; Versalle & McDowell, 2004–2005.

attempt to mask feelings or make them go away' (Creighton et al. 2013, p. 42), much like the instrumental grievors discussed in the previous chapter.

On the other hand, despite his love for nature and respect for animals, Jody simply feels excited by the prospect of a bear hunt: 'Jody knew that he should feel badly about old Betsy (their dog), but all that he could feel was excitement. The unwarranted kill, inside the sanctuary of the Baxter acres, had made a personal enemy of the big bear that had evaded all the stock owners for five years. He was wild to begin the hunt' (Kinnan Rawlings 1938, p.24). However, even in the face of the hunt for this dangerous bear, the respect for nature remains. For instance, during the hunt, Slew-foot badly injures one of the Baxter's dogs. Jody finds the sight of his father carrying the injured dog very difficult to tolerate, stating he 'could not endure the sight of the limp bundle in front of him. There were trickling's of blood down his father's thin back' (Kinnan Rawlings 1938, p.36). However, despite his dog being grievously injured by Slew-foot, and the threat the bear poses to his family's lives and livelihood, Penny Baxter still expresses pity for the bear that they must slay, declaring:

Hit's sickenin', the dog's gitten bloodied and sick as that. And son, you ain't never seen a bear kilt. But mean as they be, hit's someway piteeful when they do go down and the dog's tear their throats and they cry out jest like a person and lay down and die before you.
(Kinnan Rawlings 1938, p.40)

Despite the warning regarding the trauma of watching a bear die, it does little to dampen Jody's enthusiasm for the hunt, so much so that Ora Baxter feels the necessity to comment on it: '[I]ook at him move' his mother said, 'To see him hoe, you'd think he was a snail. Say huntin' and he's quick as an otter' (Kinnan Rawlings

1938, p.27). However, Jody does not pay much heed to his mother's words, as this criticism of Jody by Ora Baxter is not unusual. Despite his mother's constant criticism, and especially her disapproval of his excitement for the hunt, Jody's main aim in killing Slew-foot is to avenge the slaughter of his mother's favourite sow by the old bear. This is especially poignant given that Ora Baxter, who shows her son little or no affection, grieves the loss of a sow so emotionally and intensely: '[o]h dear goodness, oh dear goodness – my sow, my sow she threw her arms towards the sky. Penny and Jody passed through the gate and back of the house, she followed, wailing ...Ma Baxter sat, swaying her body in distress and did not eat' (Kinnan Rawlings 1938, pp.25 -26).

While it is difficult to tell if she is grieving for the loss of the sow because she loves it or sees it as a source of sustenance for the winter months, her emotional outburst does demonstrate that she is still capable of expressing emotion, just not where Jody is concerned. Satterlee's theory accounts for this by suggesting that 'the talking cure does not always provide a remedy for the traumatized protagonist by demonstrating that healing is achieved through various behaviours not tied to language such as direct contact with the natural world' (Satterlee 2008). Ostensibly grieving the loss of her sow, Ora Baxter may in fact be expressing grief at the loss of her children also, while not articulating or acknowledging that this is the case. Despite Ora's obvious distress at losing the sow, and the bears threat to their survival during winter, Penny is still careful to reiterate his warning to Jody that he does not want him growing up like their neighbours, the Forrester's, who he believes kill animals unnecessarily. Penny

cautions him that 'killin' meat you got no use for, for the fun of it. That's evil as the bears' (Kinnan Rawlings 1938, p.32). This dichotomy between killing of animals out of necessity and killing them for fun is a constant theme throughout the book. This is important as children can struggle to understand the justification of intentionally killing an animal for pleasure particularly children like Jody who have a strong sense of empathy and compassion for animals. This can lead to a sense of moral injury or grief, which is defined as the psychosocial and spiritual burden caused by an act that goes against one's own or shared morals and values' (UCSF 2023). This is particularly evident when it comes to the grief Jody expresses later in the text when he is forced to kill his pet deer, Flag, particularly given the fact that they hunt deer on a regular basis throughout the novel. When Jody initially describes the killing of a deer, it is in very unemotional terms: 'I cracked down and he dropped. Right in the road, handy as a sack o' meal. I h'isted him over old Cesar's rump and away we goed. Tell you what come to me' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.66). The text goes on to describe Jody kneeling down to examine the animal's 'fine frame', however his admiration for the animal soon gives way to regret as 'a sickness came over him at the sight of the glazed eyes and the bleeding throat. When Jody states, 'I wisht we could git our meat without killin' it. Penny agrees but is more practical in his approach stating "Hit's a pity, a'right. But we got to eat' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.101). Consequently, Jody's dilemma between not wanting to kill animals but also enjoying eating them is well addressed in the text. A further example is when Jody and Penny slay a deer on their way home from the Forrester's, Jody ruminates on the excitement of the hunt, the sorrow and grief he feels when he

sees the deer dead 'The game seemed for him to be two different animals. On the chase, it was the quarry. He wanted only to see it fall. When it lay dead and bleeding, he was sickened and sorry. His heart ached over the mangled death' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 66). However, once the deer has been portioned into meat, Jody can only think of the taste which made him question himself 'He wondered by what alchemy it was changed, so that what sickened him one hour, maddened him with hunger, the next. It seemed as though there were either two different animals or two different boys' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 67)

At one time Jody is portrayed as thinking about the consequences of killing animals but also exhibits a maturity that it is necessary if he is to survive in this harsh environment. While he regrets having to kill the animal, he does not grieve killing him, rather there is a sense of resignation and regret yet acceptance as the deer's meat will provide sustenance throughout the winter. However, Rawling does distinguish between killing animals out of necessity and the unnecessary death of wildlife. This is especially evident when they accidentally catch an albino racoon in a trap:

They crouched in the sand and examined the 'coon. 'Were it in the trap, Pa? In the trap. Bad hurted but not dead. I'll declare, I hated a-killin' of it. Jody felt a sense of loss, that he had not known the albino 'coon alive. "Leave me tote him, Pa." He cradled the dead animal in his arms. The pale fur seemed softer than the ordinary. The belly fur was as soft as the fluff of new-hatched biddies. He stroked it. "I'd of loved to of ketched him leetle, Pa, and raised him." "He'd of been a purty pet, a'right, but likely jest as mean as ary other 'coon." (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.71)

However, again, there is no question that Jody grieves the death of the racoon, rather there is a certain acceptance that this is a way of life and with an attitude of not wasting any animal kill, Jody takes the racoon skin and has Ora make a backpack from it. Therefore, it is well illustrated in the text that it is rare for the Baxter's to kill any animal unless it is for its meat or hide. This is an important distinction as later in the text when Jody is forced to kill his yearling Flag the marked difference in his reaction to hunting the deer or trapping the racoon is especially evident.

2.2 Flag

One exception to killing for meat or hide is made by the Baxter's and that is when Penny shoots a deer for its medicinal value. When Penny and Jody are returning from a visit to the neighbouring farm, Penny is bitten on the arm by a rattlesnake. Being so far from town, Penny knowing he has little chance of survival shoots a doe and uses its liver to draw out the poison from his arm. Neither Penny nor Jody expresses any grief at the killing of the doe, as it is seen as necessary to saving Penny's life. However, after killing the doe, Penny and Jody realise it has a fawn. Only when they get back home, and Penny is being cared for by both the doctor and Ora, do Jody's thoughts return to the orphaned fawn:

He remembered the fawn. He sat upright. The fawn was alone in the night, as he had been alone. The catastrophe that might take his father had made it motherless. It had lain hungry and bewildered through the thunder and rain and lightning, close to the devastated body of its dam, waiting for the stiff form to arise and give it warmth and food and comfort. He pressed his face into the hanging

covers of the bed and cried bitterly. He was torn with hate for all death and pity for all aloneness. (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.150) Due to Penny's insistence that they do not cause harm to any animal unnecessarily, Jody cannot rest easy thinking about the fawn left out in the elements to fend for itself. Using a combination of guilt and guile, and taking advantage of Penny's poorly condition, Jody appeals to Penny to allow him search for the fawn and bring it home to be cared for, pleading 'We takened its mammy, and it wa'n't no-ways to blame' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.157)

What is interesting is that there appears to be no trauma suffered by Jody at the potential loss of his father. While he does express worry for him, his primary concern is for the orphaned fawn. This may be due to the context and culture in which the text is set, where risk to life is a common feature of life in this area and era. Satterlee believes the 'primacy of place in representations of trauma anchors the individual experience within a large cultural context, and, in fact, organizes the memory and meaning of trauma' (Satterlee, 2008). Therefore, Jody's lack of distress once Penny is out of danger can be seen as a reflection of Satterlee's assertion that a person's reaction to trauma is not universal, as Caruth's model indicates, but is culturally and socially based.

However, there is another possibility. While Satterlee advocates for a pluralistic approach to trauma theory, she does not disregard the possibility for an indirect knowledge of the trauma suffered. Therefore, what Hartman refers to as the 'disjunction' between experiencing and understanding trauma may be at play here (Hartman 1995, p.540). Jody's concern for the welfare of the fawn may also be read as a projection of the concern he has about Penny's brush with death. Unable to acknowledge the trauma of almost losing a parent, Jody focuses instead

on the fawn who has actually lost a parent. Consequently, when Jody searches and finds the fawn, he instantly connects with him, seeing in the fawn a reflection of the fate so nearly meted out to him. As a result of his concern and care for the young fawn it seems that Jody has found in him the companion he has longed for throughout his lonely existence: 'He lay down beside the fawn. He put one arm across its neck. It did not seem to him that he could ever be lonely again' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.170). What is pertinent is how quickly a bond can develop between a child and a pet, particularly a childlike Jody that may be lonely. Schmidt et al. believe that people often feel more connected to their animal than to other humans, with pets holding the role of a companion, best friend, or sibling. Pets also contribute positively to the emotional development of children (Schmidt et al. 2020, p. 278). This connection between child and pet is borne out in the text, when there is a suggestion that Flag may not be a good fit with the family, Jody is extremely defensive of him and unwilling to let him go.

From the outset, the fawn causes division within the Baxter household. Initially the main concern was how much milk and food caring for the fawn would require: 'It was so good to have the fawn, to be relieved of the dull lonely ache that had overtaken him so often, that he was filled with gratitude for his mother's tolerance of its presence. There was no question but that it did require a great deal of milk' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 386) However, soon it was not only the extra food that the fawn required that was causing disagreement. As the fawn is being cared for initially in the house, its presence interferes with the daily running of the Baxter homestead, irking Ora, in particular, entering the house and getting in her way, so

much so that '[i]t had to be shut in the shed when the Baxter's ate. It butted and bleated and knocked dishes out of their hands (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.186).

For Jody this is only the beginning of the trouble that caring for Flag brings. It is not just Ora's running of the home that is negatively affected by the presence of Flag. When Penny has recovered and is back running the farm, Flag also interferes with Penny's running of the farm. Jody and the fawn become so attached that the fawn tries to follow him everywhere even when they are hunting, causing Penny to become frustrated with both Jody and Flag: '[h]e started across the yard with Jody beside him. The fawn was close behind. "You want your blasted baby to git stung to death? Then shut him up." Jody led the fawn reluctantly to the shed and closed the door. He hated to be separated from it, even for honey-hunting' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.174). However, as the fawn grows, he proves to be more than a mere nuisance, he becomes a threat to the Baxter's very livelihood galloping through 'the sweet potato beds, trampling the vines, and knocking down the edges of the beds' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.185). Though annoyed with Flag, initially Penny Baxter is willing to forgive the fawn, particularly as it coincides with news that the youngest of the Forrester's, Fodder-wing, is not well.

Despite Penny's obvious disdain for the Forrester's habit of hunting for sport, he does have a soft spot for young Fodder-wing, who is the closest thing Jody has to a real friend. Young Fodder-wing is depicted as having a physical disability, but it never overtly states exactly what condition he is living with. Rather, the text describes how it physically affects Fodder-wing's ability to walk; '...Jody saw Fodder-wing hurrying toward him. The humped and twisted body moved in a

series of contortions, like a wounded ape. Fodder-wing lifted his walking stick and waved it' (Kinnan Rawlings 1938, p.46). Penny is careful to warn Jody not to over-exert the boy: 'Now don't you torment Fodder-wing. Jody replies 'I don't ever torment him. He's my friend' (Kinnan Rawlings, p.45). However, the subject of Fodder-wing's physical limitations is of its time, in that the text constantly portrays Fodder-wing as wishing to be able bodied: 'He had, himself, often thought of kites, very large kites. And some secret understanding was his of the crippled boy's longing for flight; for lightness; for a moment's freedom from his body, earth-bound and bent and stumbling' (Kinnan Rawlings 1938 p. 47). But the narrative never gives an actual insight into Fodder-wing's own thoughts on the matter. Also, the text never reveals that Fodder-wing's condition is potentially life threatening, certainly Jody seems completely unaware.

The first indication that Fodder-wing's ailment may be more severe than Jody appreciates is Penny Baxter's reaction: 'He paused and stared into the sunset. He added in a low voice, "And I'm right smart fretted about Fodder-wing. I got a feelin' here—" he thumped his hairy chest—"he ain't doin' good' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.177). Nothing is overtly stated, this is as much of an indication that Jody gets that there is something serious wrong with Fodder-wing. It may be that they were trying to shield Jody from the truth however it is now known that this can have serious future implications for the bereaved child. Bugge et al. research indicates that parents helping children cope with the imminent death of a friend should involve 'understanding the child's genuine concerns following the death and an intricately holistic balance between shielding and including, between

informing and frightening, and between creating a new life while cherishing the old' (Bugge et al. 1024, p. 42). However, as acknowledgement of Fodder-wing's death is not directly communicated to Jody, when Penny's inclination proves true, and the young boy dies Jody is not at all prepared. Both Jody and the Forrester family react intensely to Fodder-wing's loss. In particular, the intense grief displayed by the Forrester men, who until the death of Fodder-wing have been portrayed as hard working, hard partying men with little time for sentiment or emotion, is surprising. When Penny arrives at their home following Fodder-wing's death, he finds the Forrester men all sat together, '[t]here was a oneness about them, sitting so, motionless, and heavy. They were pieces of one great dark rock, broken into separate men' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 194). Therefore, it demonstrates how profound the impact of the untimely death of the youngest family member has on everybody.

2.3 Grief, Paralysis and Belatedness

Fodder-wing's death has a profound effect on Jody, particularly as not only was his death unexpected but Jody was informed of Fodder-wing's death in such a blunt manner: 'Buck said, "He's dead." The words had no meaning. They were only two brown leaves that blew past him into the air. But a coldness followed their passing, and a numbness took him. He was confused' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.193). Both Freud and Caruth believe that a sudden traumatic event such as this cannot be integrated into normal memory. Freud speaks of how an absence of preparedness for a shocking traumatic event by previous anxiety can affect how a

traumatic event is integrated by the traumatised personal psyche. Similarly, Caruth describes it as belatedness, a type of paralysis when assimilating the trauma and dealing with the consequences (Caruth 1996 pp 91-95). Initially it seems that this is what is at play here, Jody is completely unprepared for Fodderwing's death and, as a consequence, he is having trouble assimilating that he has died. In fact, Kinnan Rawling describes Jody's reaction as sort of paralysis: 'Jody stared at Buck and Buck stared back at him. The numbness grew into a paralysis. He felt no sorrow, only a coldness and a faintness. Fodder-wing was neither dead nor alive. He was, simply, nowhere at all' (Kinnan Rawling 1911, p.194). However, rather than a delayed reaction to the trauma of hearing of Fodder-wing's death, Jody's paralysis appears to be as a result of the shock at seeing the grief of adults, particularly Fodder-wing's mother: 'Jody was frightened. Ma Forrester sat by the side of the bed. She held her apron over her head and rocked herself back and forth. She flung down the apron. She said, "I've lost my boy. My pore crookedy boy." She covered herself again and swayed from side to side' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 194). However, once Jody overcomes the shock of seeing such raw grief, and acknowledges that Fodder-wing has died, this sense of paralysis dissipates, and he realises that this form of paralysis was a natural reaction to loss. In fact, once all the Forrester men begin to talk of Fodder-wing and of their grief at his untimely loss, it acts as a catharsis for Jody's own pent-up grief and it enables him to put words on the anguish and angst he was suffering at Fodder-wing's loss:

The talk broke over Penny in a torrent. The relief of words washed and cleansed a hurt that had been in-growing. He listened gravely, nodding his head from time to time. He was a small staunch rock

against which their grief might beat. When they finished and fell quiet, he talked of his own losses. It was a reminder that no man was spared. What all had borne, each could bear. He shared their sorrow, and they became a part of his, and the sharing spread their grief a little, by thinning it. (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.201)

Jody's ability to overcome the shock of the trauma, have knowledge of it and the ability to verbally acknowledge the trauma he has experienced completely contradicts Caruth's theory of the non-assimilation and unspeakability of trauma. Instead, it ties in with Satterlee's theory that direct knowledge of trauma is possible because Jody recognises the grief he is suffering as a result of Fodderwing's unexpected death. That is not to say that Jody could fully verbally express his grief, as a young boy he struggles to fully articulate exactly what it is he is feeling: '[h]e tried to tell his father the thing that he had felt that day. Penny listened gravely, and nodded, but Jody could not make the words fit his feeling and could not quite make his father understand' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 209). But this inability to express his grief does not mean that he has not assimilated the trauma of losing Fodder-wing, as Caruth's theory suggests.

Like Mary Lennox and Colin Craven in *The Secret Garden*, it is in nature that he finds his ability to express and process his trauma and grief. In the first instance, he turns to Fodder-wing's menagerie of pets, stating: '[h]e could have laughed aloud if he were not so heavy with sadness. But it relieved him to care for the animals, to give them, for the time, the comfort that their master could never offer them again' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.196). In addition, while Jody is very aware that he cannot find the words to express his sense of loss at the death of Fodderwing, he does believe that the spirit of Fodder-wing lives on in the natural

world 'A part of him had been always outside his twisted body. It had come and gone like the wind. It came to Jody that he need not be lonely for his friend again. He could endure his going (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 209). It is significant that a text from this era expounds the importance of continuing bonds with the deceased friend as Stroebe et al. state that 'Contemporary theories of grief and bereavement suggest the importance of continuing bonds in coping and adapting to the death of a loved one. (Stroebe et al. 1992). Stroebe and Schut further define a continuing bond as 'the presence of an ongoing inner relationship with the deceased person by the bereaved individual' (Stroebe and Schut 2005). *The Yearling* clearly demonstrates the emotional connections and attachments between Jody and Fodder-wing persist long after Fodder-wings loss. This concept of continuing bonds is much more commonly associated with modern attitudes towards loss and grief, Fodderwings loss yet this text was published in 1938 long before this concept emerged. Therefore, *The Yearling's* forward-thinking portrayal of enduring emotional bonds with a deceased friend makes it a very important text when exploring attitudes towards childhood grief. Furthermore, the text holds significance for analysis of childhood grief in the way it depicts the emotional support Jody find's in pet Flag, is which is even appreciated by the hardened Forrester men, "Would it be all right, did Flag come, too?" They agreed that it was seemly, and the fawn was brought to join him (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 201). Moreover, here it can be seen that the men are capable of compassion therefore it is societal expectations that does not allow them to publicly demonstrate the depth of their grief. It is unusual that a young boy would be so open about his

feelings to other males in the community as often they were viewed as emotionally weak. E. Anthony Rotundo author of

American Manhood states that during this time period,

Peer pressure also forced them to control those “weak” feelings, as the fear of being labelled a “crybaby” restrained the impulse to seek comfort in times of stress. As boys learned to master pain, fear, and the need for emotional comfort, they were encouraged to suppress other expressions of vulnerability, such as grief and tender affection. Boy culture, then, was teaching a selective form of impulse control – it was training boys to master those emotions that would make them vulnerable to predatory rivals. (Rotundo 1993, p. 58)

This attitude towards men’s expected lack of emotion is very evident in Ora Baxter’s reaction to learning about the Forrester’s men severe reaction to Fodder-wing’s loss.

2.4 Ora Baxter and Grief

Despite losing so many children herself or, perhaps as a result, Ora Baxter has trouble believing Penny when he tells her he ‘never seed a family take a thing so hard,’ replying, “Don’t tell me them big rough somebodies took on” (Kinnan Rawling `1938, p. 204). Ora’s lack of compassion for the Forrester family at the unexpected death of Fodder-wing, exposes how hardened Ora Baxter has become to the trauma of loss. Joanne O’Leary’s research indicates that children of women such as Ora who had no support following the death of a child often suffer the consequences of their unresolved grief rather than help the mother and give her space to grieve, often ‘[t]he message was to “buck up,” get pregnant again,

frequently living a lifetime in the shadow of the experience (O'Leary 2015). Parents' unresolved grief and tendency to not share what happened often became an emotional burden carried by siblings into adulthood, '[t]he is paralysing feelings of grief after perinatal loss can cause an overwhelming feeling of being abandoned, creating confusion, disorientation and hopelessness, altering future pregnancies for parents, children alive at the time and those that follow' (O'Leary 2015). This is most evident in Ora's lack of compassion for her own son's grief. With the loss of Fodder-wing, Jody is even more reliant on Flag for company and comfort. Kinnan Rawling writes even after some passing of time following Fodderwing's death: 'Jody was conscious always of Fodder-wing's absence. Living, Fodder-wing had been with him, in the back of his mind, a friendly presence to which he might turn in his thoughts, if not in reality. But Flag grew miraculously, day by day, and that was comfort enough' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.206). So, Flag was the only living being that Jody considered a friend. However as expected, Ora Baxter demonstrates little understanding for Jody's reliance on Flag declaring, 'How you men kin take on over a dumb creetur, I cain't see. Callin' a dog by your own name--And that fawn, sleepin' right in the bed with Jody.' However, Jody expresses how much Flag means to him especially now that Fodder-wing is gone saying, Jody said, "He don't seem like a creetur to me, Ma. He seems jest like another boy' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.216). Again, this concurs with the literature that shows some people consider their pet to be their child or best friend (Lagoni, Butler, & Hetts, 1994; Ross & Baron-Sorensen, 1998).

Penny recognises that Ora's lack of empathy is a coping skill that she has developed but he is still careful to emphasise to her that while he accepts it is her way of managing, it is not everyone's way. Penny is particularly concerned about Ora's lack of empathy for her own son's grief at the loss of Fodder-wing, stressing that she should be mindful that her way of coping with trauma is negatively affecting her relationship with Jody: 'Ora, the day may come when you'll know the human heart is allus the same. Sorrer strikes the same all over. Hit makes a different kind o' mark in different places. Seems to me, times, hit ain't done nothin' to you but sharpen your tongue'. Ora, chastened by his words, sits down 'abruptly', and admits, 'Seems like bein' hard is the only way I kin stand it.' Penny recognises that this is a difficult admission for Ora, immediately changes tack and attempts to placate her: '[h]e left his breakfast and went to her and stroked her hair. 'I know. Jest be a leetle mite easy on t'other feller' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.204). Therefore, Penny is acknowledging the trauma Ora suffered due to the loss of their children, and Ora recognises that it has impacted her relationship with Jody. However, despite this recognition that her trauma has negatively impacted her relationship with her son, with Flag's food becoming more of a burden on the Baxter family, Jody and Ora's relationship comes under even more strain. At the outset, there is no issue as it looks like there will be an abundance of crops that year.

A bad flood adversely affects the wildlife that the Baxter's rely on to get them through the Winter. With few animals available to hunt they are even more reliant

on crops than normal; however, the crops are also badly affected. Therefore, there is little by way of rations for the family and, in turn, even less for the young fawn: 'Flag was showing the effect of short rations. His ribs and backbone were visible. He bleated often. Penny had given up all attempt to milk the cow, for the sake of the calf' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.226). Penny spends two weeks salvaging what he can of the ruined crops and Ora does what she can to cure it.

To Jody's dismay, Flag chose this time to escape from his enclosure, due to his hunger he made straight for what little of the Baxter's crop that was left, 'He tramped on the potatoes with his sharp hooves. The odor enticed him, and he nibbled one. The taste pleased him, and he went from one to another, nibbling. Ma Baxter discovered him too late. Grave damage had been done' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.263). Regrettably for Jody it is not Ora who is annoyed with Flag this time, but his only ally Penny is also deeply upset at the loss of the potato crop to the fawn. Jody knows without Penny's backing the fate of the fawn is at risk: particularly as this is not Flag's last indiscretion, in fact it is just the start. What are initially considered minor transgressions become much more impactful on the Baxter's' chances of surviving the coming Winter.

Once the flood waters recede, Penny and Jody decide to go hunting to supplement the crops that the flood and Flag have destroyed. The more Penny and Jody investigate, the more dead and dying animals they encounter, leading Penny to conclude that the flood has caused a plague among the wildlife. When they come across a deer slowly dying Penny puts it out of their misery and this small act brings the death of Flag's mother to Jody's mind. Jody cannot help but think what

may have happened to Flag had he not found him, '[h]e pictured him lost and hungry and followed by a panther. He was lonely without him. He wondered if his mother had ever been so concerned about him, her only son, and doubted it. He went with some mournfulness to sleep' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.328). Once again Jody is comparing himself to Flag and seeing him as his equal rather than a pet. Sife believes this is because people believe pets to be

truer friends than others of our own species. They are never critical, and therefore allow us to blossom emotionally in ways that would not be possible with fellow humans, who tend to be competitive and judgmental. We make our companion animals our secret sharers, often with greater intimacy and trust than that which is often given to the people who are closest to us. (Sife 2005, p. 15)

For Jody, Flag is a substitute sibling and friend who alleviates his loneliness. This especially resonates with Jody when he observes a lone wolf playing with his dog Rip. Jody reflects how the wolf's loneliness, having lost all his family to the flood and following plague, compares to his relationship with Flag, and how such companionship lessens the loneliness within him.

However, though Jody values his relationship with Flag and sees him as a companion, not everyone views Flag in that way. Now that the Baxter's cannot hunt to supplement their Winter diet what is left of their crops become even more vital to their survival. Any of Flag's previous indiscretions regarding food and breaking free become even more heightened now, particularly as Flag is becoming bigger and more difficult to manage within the home: 'Flag had lost his fawn's willingness to sleep long hours and had been increasingly restless at night. Ma

Baxter had complained that she had heard him tripping about in Jody's room or the front room several times' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.364). Ora eventually loses patience with him and banishes Flag from the house: "Now that ends it," she raged. "The creetur gives me no peace, day or night. Now he cain't come in this house, no time, never no more'" (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 364). But once Flag is outside of the house, other issues arise. On his morning rounds, Penny discovers Flag has broken free of the shed and done even more damage, trampling the tobacco seed bed which was a source of income for Penny who sold it to the storekeeper Boyles at Volusia.

It appears that Jody does not fully appreciate the seriousness of Flag's actions. For Jody's sake Penny is trying not to react too severely to the situation, but it is obvious that Penny is coming to the end of his patience with Flag. The only thing that is preventing him from acting is his knowledge that Flag means so much to Jody, much more than just a pet, "You think a heap of him, don't you, boy?" "Why, shore." He stared at his father. Penny said, "Well, we'll wait and see" (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.370). Jody is old enough to know the serious consequences of Flag's actions but is not acknowledging what Penny is implying. Because Jody cannot cope with the possibility of Flag not being around anymore, he blocks any insinuation of it from Penny, who appears to be as much in denial as Jody.

Rather than confront the issue of Flag, Penny instead puts all of his effort into rectifying the issues Flag has caused, getting up early, working 'mercilessly' to

replant all the crops Flag has destroyed (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.371). However, when Flag undoes all of Penny's hard work, Jody knows he is in trouble, this time there is no keeping Penny on side. Despite Jody begging Penny not to tell Ora, Penny replies "She's got to know, Jody. Now go on. I aim to do the best I kin for you." (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.375). While Jody knew there is no coming back from Flag's transgression, he was not prepared for what Penny told him, "Jody, all's been done was possible. I'm sorry. I cain't never tell you, how sorry. But we cain't have our year's crops destroyed. We cain't all go hongry. Take the yearlin' out in the woods and tie him and shoot him" (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 383).

Despite the seriousness of Flag's actions and the consequences it has for the Baxter family, Jody is not willing to carry out his parents' instructions. Instead, he decides to sleep outside with Flag, who once Jody falls asleep makes the most of it and feeds on what Penny had managed to save of the crop. To Jody's dismay, it is Ora who discovers it, and she does not hesitate in carrying out her retribution: 'He heard a shot. He ran from the room to the open kitchen door. His mother stood on the stoop with the shotgun smoking in her hands. Flag lay floundering beside the fence' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.390). Jody cannot hold back his rage at his mother's callous actions: "He screamed, "You done it o' purpose. You allus hated him." He turned on his father. "You went back on me. You told her to do it." He screeched so that his throat felt torn. "I hate you. I hope you die. I hope I never see you agin" (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 390). Regrettably, for Flag and Jody, Ora had not made a clean shot of it and the young yearling ran injured into the swamp with Jody following.

Flag thrashed to his feet and was off again. Blood flowed in a steady stream. The yearling made the edge of the sinkhole. He wavered an instant and toppled. He rolled down the side. Jody ran after him. Flag lay beside the pool. He opened great liquid eyes and turned them on the boy with a glazed look of wonder. Jody pressed the muzzle of the gun barrel at the back of the smooth neck and pulled the trigger. Flag quivered a moment and then lay still. Jody threw the gun aside and dropped flat on his stomach. He retched and vomited and retched again. He clawed into the earth with his finger-nails. He beat it with his fists. The sink-hole rocked around him. A far roaring became a thin humming. He sank into blackness as into a dark pool. (Kinnan Rawling 1938, pp 390-391)

The impact of such a death would have caused a myriad of issues for a child. Even today, as Durkin states people 'wrestle with the decision' to euthanise their pet, but for a child of Jody's age to have to physically kill his own pet would have untold psychological consequences (Durkin 2009, p. 27). Nowadays, the awareness of the effect of the death of a pet on a child is recognised much more. Crawford et al. state that:

Pet death may be traumatic for children and that children who have pets may show signs of mental health difficulties if their pet dies. Especially when pets feel like members of the family and children are attached to their pets, parents and other caregivers may find it beneficial to recognize children's short- and long-term psychological reactions, which may mimic responses to the loss of other important human attachments. The death of a pet should be treated as the loss of other strong emotional attachments, and parents and physicians should be prepared to treat it as such. (Crawford et al. 2020, p. 1555)

However, this knowledge of the long-term psychological effects on the child was not known during the period of publication, therefore no allowances were made for the effect shooting Flag would have on Jody. However, Jody himself was very much aware of the sorrow and grief and trauma he was experiencing.

So, once again, in direct contrast to Caruth's theory of unknowability, Jody's trauma and grief is immediately evident to him. For instance, when he eats grass out of hunger, tearing at the tough stalks with his teeth, it immediately brings to mind thoughts of animals' teeth ripping Flag's flesh. In turn, this leads Jody to imagine creatures creeping into Flag's carcass, causing Jody to vomit the grass (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 396). Such is his grief that he is not even scared to sleep outside with the wild animals. In fact, so raw and visceral is Jody's grief that he feels the animal kingdom will understand it on a primal level: 'He was not afraid. It seemed to him that if a bear came, or a panther, he might touch it and stroke it and it would understand his grief...He was not afraid. He was only desolate. He pulled the moss over him and cried himself to sleep' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 396). While the killing of Flag is an extreme example of the loss of a pet, it is important to note that the death of a pet can have a profound impact on a child, particularly a childlike Jody who has no siblings and few friends. Crawford et al. found that the 'experience of pet death is often associated with elevated mental health symptoms in children, and that parents and physicians need to recognize and take those symptoms seriously, not simply brush them off' (Crawford et al. 2020, p. 1555).

Jody does not have the resilience to cope with the trauma he has endured, and his parents' betrayal on top of Flag's death is too much for him to bear: 'He had left the dead yearling without daring to look at him. Nothing mattered but getting away. There was no place to go. That did not matter, either' (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.392). Initially he displays the paralysis and numbness of the

Caruthian model of trauma theory, but as the day progresses the trauma of what he has witnessed comes back to haunt him:

Numbness had held off his thoughts all day. Now they poured in on him, as the wolves had poured into the calf-pen. They tore him, so that it seemed to him that he must, invisibly, be bleeding, as Flag had bled. Flag was dead. He would never run to him again. He tortured himself with saying the words. "Flag's dead." They were as bitter as alum-root tea. He had not yet probed the deepest pain. He said aloud, "Pa went back on me." (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 395)

Not only has he the grief of the loss of Flag to cope with but in addition he bears the burden of the resentment he feels towards Penny's perceived betrayal:

Fodder-wing had died, and he was able to bear it. Betrayal was intolerable. If Flag had died, if bear or wolf or panther had slipped in on him, he would have grieved with a great grief, but he could have endured it. He would have turned to his father, and his father would have comforted him. Without Penny, there was no comfort anywhere. The solid earth had dissolved under him. His bitterness absorbed his sorrow, and they were one. (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 395)

Therefore, worse than the death of Flag, is the perceived betrayal by his father, Penny.

2.5 Betrayal Grief

What Jody is experiencing here is what Jennifer J. Freyd describes as betrayal trauma. Freud states that betrayal trauma occurs when the people or institutions on which a person depends for survival significantly violate that person's trust or well-being. According to betrayal trauma theory (Freyd, 1996;

Freyd, DePrince, & Gleaves, 2007), traumas vary in the degree to which they involve betrayal stemming from the victim–perpetrator relationship. For example, abuse perpetrated by someone on whom a child depends, or is close to, involves a higher degree of betrayal than an assault by a stranger. So, for Jody, the shooting of Flag by Ora and the betrayal by Penny are even more difficult to contend with because of their familial ties. As a result of his loss the loneliness that Flag had kept at bay now overwhelms Jody: ‘[a] fresh wave of loneliness swept over him. He had lost Flag and he had lost his father, too’ (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p. 396). Such is the depth of the sense of betrayal, Jody questions whether his parents, who could do such a terrible thing to Flag, would even want him back if he decided to return home: ‘He trudged on. He wondered if he dared go home. Probably they would not want him. He had caused them a great deal of trouble... Flag had destroyed the better part of the year's living. Almost certainly, they would feel they were better off without him, and he would not be welcome’ (Kinnan Rawling 1938, pp 402-403).

2.6 Traumatic Grief

In addition to feeling betrayed by his father, Jody also feels guilty at not preventing Flag’s death. He thinks he could have prevented it if he had taken better care of him and prevented him from getting to the crops. This type of grief is often seen in children and is known as traumatic grief. However, childhood traumatic

grief has not been clearly or consistently differentiated in the literature from adult complicated grief, normal (uncomplicated) childhood bereavement, or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the context of bereavement (Cohen et al. 2002, P. 307). However, there is ongoing research on this topic and ‘the concept of childhood traumatic grief (also called “traumatic bereavement” or “traumatic loss”) has been fairly uniformly described in the literature as the encroachment of trauma symptoms on the child’s ability to grieve’ (Elder & Knowles, 2002; Layne et al., 2001; Nader, 1997; Pynoos, 1992; Rando, 1993; Webb, 2002 p.311). Cohen et al. believe: ‘[c]hildren with traumatic grief may also experience unrealistic selfblame for not preventing the death’ (Cohen et al. 2002, p. 312). This is evident in Jody’s reaction to Flag’s death, he feels guilty and thinks he should have tried harder to prevent the situation, even though his mother’s actions were beyond his control. What is worse for Jody is that Ora merely injured Flag with her shot and it is left to him to complete the killing of Flag. Unsurprisingly, it has a lasting effect on him. However, it should be noted that a child can develop traumatic grief in circumstances where the child does not directly witness the death. Cohen et al. explain:

Our current concept of childhood traumatic grief does not require the child to witness the death or discover the body; learning second hand about the traumatic nature of the loved one’s death (such as hearing that a parent was shot to death or killed in a motor vehicle accident) may be sufficiently traumatic to result in traumatic grief. (Cohen et al., 2000, p.316)

However, generally a bereaved child that develops traumatic grief will display some PTSD symptoms prior to developing traumatic grief. An example of such

symptoms, as in Jody's case, can be irritability and angry outbursts and intense ongoing fear and sadness. Rollins in Cohen et al.'s article asserts that 'the presence of PTSD symptoms (but not necessarily full PTSD diagnostic criteria) are necessary but not sufficient for the development of childhood traumatic grief. The PTSD symptoms must not only be present but must impinge on the child's ability to successfully complete the mourning process affected by several factors, including the child's past history of trauma or loss; the specific circumstances surrounding the trauma; or the reactions of significant adults in the child's life' (Cohen et al. 2000, pp.316-317). Jody certainly fulfils these criteria. That is not to say that every child suffering from PTSD will develop traumatic grief. Cohen et al. are careful to note that:

Childhood traumatic grief is experienced by many children following loss of a loved one in circumstances that are either objectively or subjectively perceived to be traumatic circumstances. Although it encompasses elements of uncomplicated child bereavement, adult complicated bereavement, and childhood PTSD, our current concept of traumatic grief suggests that it is distinct from these conditions and may require specialized interventions for optimal recovery. (Cohen et al., 2000 p .324)

Furthermore, Kaplow et al. state that 'the circumstances of the loss and the child's perception of the death as well as the impact on the child's life need to be considered when classifying a loss as traumatic' (Kaplow 2012). If a child does develop traumatic grief, texts such as *The Yearling* are a useful guide for caregivers to demonstrate that the child is not alone in experiencing these feelings and reactions.

As a result of his grief, trauma and the sense of betrayal Jody feels, he decides to leave home. Jody attempts to make it to Boston, but it proves a lot tougher than the young boy anticipates, especially trying to find food and water but he perseveres, stealing a dug-out, a small boat, and attempting to get there by river. However, the acute hunger, lack of water and sunstroke ultimately lead to Jody losing his bearings. Eventually he is picked up by a mail boat, half-starved who deposit him on shore where he makes the tough decision to return home. Once back at the homestead and unsure of the reception he will receive, he hesitates for a moment, peering through the window at his father hunched over the fire. When finally, he musters the courage to open the door, Penny turns his head and stares at him, reaching out for him, "Boy- I near about give you out". As Ora is not home it affords the pair the opportunity to talk their differences through, Penny explains:

"I've wanted life to be easy for you. Easier'n 'twas for me. A man's heart aches, seein' his young uns face the world. Knowin' they got to git their guts tore out, the way his was tore. I wanted to spare you, long as I could. I wanted you to frolic with your yearlin'. I knowed the lonesomeness he eased for you. But ever' man's lonesome. What's he to do then? What's he to do when he gits knocked down? Why, take it for his share and go on." (Kinnan Rawling 1938, p.407)

Once Jody has listened to Penny, and Penny has seen things from Jody's perspective, a new-found respect develops between the two. Penny recognises Jody 'aint a yearlin' no longer' and as Jody goes to bed that evening, he comes to the same realisation himself.

In conclusion, this chapter sought to focus on childhood grief following the death of a pet and whether or not that grief was acknowledged in the text. In

addition, it analysed societal attitudes to death particularly following the death of a child. This text, though published in 1938 was set in the 1870's and as such reflects attitudes and death practices from that era. For example, when Fodderwing dies the funeral is held at home with Penny Baxter conducting the ceremony, which was typical of rural practices for this time. While urban areas were turning more and more to funeral homes during this period, the transition from home funerals to funeral directors 'occurred more slowly in the South and in rural areas in general' (Laderman 2003, p. 3) which was reflected in the text. Analysis of the text also depicted attitudes to grief at the time, for instance Ora Baxter's shock at the Forrester men's display of grief at the death of Fodder-wing, suggests that it was not typical of societal expectations of masculinity during this period.

When it comes to attitudes towards childhood grief, very much like *The Secret Garden*, this chapter determined that there is no acknowledgement of childhood grief in the text. There were some allowances made to Jody after Fodder-wing dies when the Forrester boys allow him to bring Flag inside, however, that is attributed to Fodder-wing's affinity with animals rather than an acknowledgment that Jody is grieving and needs Flag as support. Certainly, when it came to the death of Flag, there were no concessions made to Jody whatsoever. There was simply no understanding of his relationship with Flag and the grief Jody suffered at his loss. Contemporary research such as that of Anne Durkin acknowledges 'Losing a companion animal can be a devastating experience. People experiencing this kind of loss need to know others understand and

appreciate the depth of their grief.' (Durkin 2009, p. 7). However, this chapter has established that there is little understanding of grief as a result of losing a pet and that childhood grief in general was neither acknowledged nor recognised in the text.

Chapter 3

Goodnight Mr. Tom

This chapter explores childhood trauma stemming from two distinct situations: war and domestic violence. Set during WWII, child protagonist Will Beech is evacuated from his London home to the rural village Little Weirworld to avoid the bombing raids during the Blitz. Once Will arrives in Little Weirworld it becomes clear that he has been physically and emotionally abused, he is severely malnourished, covered in bruises, cowers whenever a voice is raised and wets the bed. Consequently, this chapter explores the trauma related to domestic violence. It questions whether Will's silence around his trauma is due to fear and shame rather than the unspeakability of trauma as Caruth asserts. As a result, it also explores trauma and memory and trauma and the compliant child. With regard to evolving attitudes to childhood grief it explores the psychiatric response to Will's trauma and grief and questions whether this reflects changing societal attitudes to grief. Lastly, this chapter also explores how a grieving caregiver affects a grieving child.

When it comes to childhood bereavement, there are many variances in a child's expression of grief. While Mary Lennox expressed her grief through anger, and Jody Baxter expressed his by running away from the issue, other children do not outwardly express their feelings. Instead, they internalize their grief and do not wish to communicate it to the outside world. This can be particularly true of children who come from a background in which they have experienced domestic

violence. What is especially important to note is that children who suffer physically and emotionally at the hand of a parent or guardian experience grief at the loss of that parent in a similar way to a child from a loving family. That is because even though they may have suffered at the hands of the parent, they still must deal with the void that the loss of this person from their lives and the consequent changes that the loss of the parent brings (Clark, Pynoos, & Goebel, 1994). Clark, Pynoos and Gobel further state: 'Bereaved young people are forced to grapple with existential issues related to the permanency of death in a way that is challenging to their emerging cognitive abilities to comprehend such a notion' (Clark, Pynoos, & Goebel, 1994). Further to this, they also may now be expected to move house or live with different relatives or go into the care system which brings a lot of instability into their lives. Confirming this point, Krupnik and Solomon argue: 'At a time where adolescents benefit from a stable basis upon which to experiment with identity-related issues, the loss of a significant family member or friend can shake their foundations' (Krupnick & Solomon, 1987). Therefore, it is important to recognise that a child who has endured domestic abuse may grieve the loss of a parent as much as a child from a loving stable background. A good example of this is William Beech in *Goodnight Mister Tom*.

3.1 Domestic Violence and Trauma

Set in England in 1939, *Goodnight Mr. Tom* tells the tale of eight-year-old war-time evacuee, William Beech, who is sent to live with widower, Thomas

Oakley (Mr. Tom), in the rural village of Little Weirworld. Though known as Willie, back home in London, he is called Will by Thomas Oakley but feels too shy to correct him. In turn he refers to Thomas Oakley as Mr. Tom, 'Mister' initially out of politeness which soon becomes Mr. Tom. Soon after Will arrives Mr. Tom notices a large bruise on the boy's shin and a swollen red sore beside it. As with many children from a domestic abuse background, when Tom addresses the issue, the boy is very hesitant to explain where the bruises came from. Tom senses that he is not ready to speak but when he opens a letter from the boy's mother, all becomes clear. Mr. Tom realises that Will's life has been one of brutality and neglect, and he makes it his mission to turn Will's life around. He enrolls him in the local school where Will makes firm friends with local children, George, twins Carrie and Ginnie, and fellow evacuee, Zach.

Just as Will's life seems to be turning around, he is sent back to London at his mother's behest. Once again, Will endures his mother's wrath, but this time there is the added worry of his baby sister, born while Will was in Little Weirworld. When Will's mother has a final breakdown, she ties both children up in a downstairs bathroom and takes her own life. By the time Mr. Tom discovers them, the baby has died, and Will is at death's door. Mr. Tom nurses Will back to health once more but just as he seems to be recovering from the trauma and guilt at the deaths of his sister and mother, tragedy strikes once more. Best friend and fellow evacuee, Zach, on a rare weekend at home, is killed during an air raid. The added trauma of Zach's death almost breaks Will, but with the support of Mr. Tom, Will deals with the grief he has suffered, and in the process, Mr. Tom heals his own

long-term grief and trauma stemming from the loss of his wife and baby son to scarlet fever many years before.

We have previously discussed Caruth's 'psychoanalytic post structural approach that suggests trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language' (Satterlee 2014, p. 1), but this is not always the case as we shall see when we consider Will's expression of his trauma. Here again, as seen with Jody Baxter before, the trauma resulting from the abuse Will suffers at the hands of his mother is known to him. As soon as Will arrives at Mr. Tom's door it is evident that he is not a well child. He is 'thin and sickly-looking, pale with limp sandy hair and dull grey eyes' (Magorian 1983, p. 10). Mr. Tom soon realises that it is much worse than a simple lack of nourishment when Will's sock slips down, and he notices the boy is covered in bruises and sores. Not one to hold back, Mr. Tom immediately addresses the issue '[t]hat's a nasty ole thing,' Tom said, pointing to it, '[w]hat gave you that?' However, when Will pales and pulls the sock up quickly, Tom discerns 'that the subject needed to be changed', even when he notices another bruise on the boy's thigh, he says nothing (Magorian 1983, p. 13). Therefore, rather than persisting as a subconscious lack of awareness of the trauma he has suffered, as Caruth suggests, Will is actively choosing not to speak of it. Which aligns with Satterlee's hypotheses that 'challenge the classic models governing principle that defines trauma in terms of universal characteristics and effects' (Satterlee 2014, p. 2). Rather than a subconscious effect of trauma preventing the child speaking of the

abuse suffered, instead the child's lack of willingness to discuss their trauma is a result of a breakdown in their trust in adult caregivers.

In addition, social and cultural pressures not to speak up about domestic violence, and the shame associated with it, can also be a factor in why a child remains silent on the abuse suffered. As previously discussed, Satterlee's pluralistic model of trauma allows for this reaction to trauma as it 'moves away from the focus on trauma as unrepresentative and toward a focus on the specificity of trauma that locates meaning through a greater consideration of the social and cultural contexts of traumatic experience' (Satterlee 2014, p. 3). Walter Prather and Jeannie A. Golden concur, as they have found it is not unusual for children suffering the trauma of domestic abuse to be reluctant to talk about it, finding it difficult to trust figures of authority, particularly new caregivers (Prather and Golen, 2009 p. 57). Additionally, they found that '[t]he major challenges reported in parenting maltreated children include their profound lack of trust and a distorted sense of security often reflected in the child's poor interpersonal relationships across the lifespan' (Prather and Golen, 2009 p. 57). This can occur even when the child is removed from the abusive house and in the care of a nonabusive caregiver because '[t]hey have an anticipatory (withdrawal) and emotional response (i.e., guilt) that makes them dread the negative response of the caregiver' (Prather, Golden 2009 p. 60). Will's reaction to Mr. Tom's comment on his bruises bears this out:

He hugged himself tightly and rocked backwards and forwards on the stool. I must be good,' he whispered urgently, 'I must be good'

and he rubbed a sore spot on his arm. He was such a bad boy, he knew that. Mum said she was kinder to him than most mothers. She only gave him soft beatings. He shuddered. He was dreading the moment when Mr. Oakley would discover how wicked he was. He was stronger looking than Mum. (Magorian, 1983, p.13)

In addition, Prather and Golden's research focuses on 'mediating the long-term sequela of repetitive, intrafamilial abuse and neglect that have repeatedly argued that a history of pathogenic care can interfere with secure attachment and disrupt healthy development in children.' They found this to be 'especially true in foster and adoptive families in which children have been abused or neglected as part of their early experiences' (Prather and Golden 2009 p. 56). This lack of attachment and fear that the same abuse will be repeated in the foster or adoptive family is very evident in *Goodnight Mr. Tom*.

When Mr. Tom first meets Will he is holding a stick for his dog in his hand, however, Will automatically assumes he is in for a beating. It is significant that Will does not mention what he believes he has done to bring the wrath of Mr. Tom down on him. This suggests that he has previously been subjected to beatings for no discernible reason. Consequently, Will has a visceral reaction to seeing the stick in the hands of Mr. Tom:

Sweat broke out from under his armpits and across his forehead. Now he was for it. He was bound to get a beating now. Tom came towards him and took the branch firmly from his hand and lifted it up. Will automatically flung his arm across his face and gave out a cry but the blow he was expecting never came. (Magorian 1983, p. 17)

Mr. Tom is unaware of Will's distress as he ushers him in the door. Will does as he is told even though his fear is so great, he feels as though he is having an out of body experience and it seems to him that it is moving 'of its own accord. Tom's voice grew more distant. It reverberated as if it was being thrown back at him from the walls of a cave. He sat down on the stool feeling numb' (Magorian 1983, p. 18).

3.2 Unspeakability of Trauma

Therefore, the initial arguments of Caruth's trauma theory that popularised the idea of trauma as an unrepresentable event again do not hold true here (Satterlee 2014, p. 1). Whereas Satterlee's theory that 'challenges the traditional concept of trauma as unspeakable' by establishing a position that acknowledges 'trauma's variability in literature and society' (Satterlee 2014, p. 3) is more plausible in this context. This can be clearly seen in Will's responses to situations that previously triggered his mother's wrath, demonstrating that Will is very aware of the trauma he has suffered at the hands of his mother.

While he may not verbalise it, he is consciously aware of the abuse he has suffered and is alert to any potential attack from caregivers in his life. However, Will's reaction is not outwardly visible, so Mr. Tom is unaware of Will's distress. When Mr. Tom picks up a poker to stoke the fire, Will, who is accustomed to being beaten, immediately fears the worst: '...now he was going to get it he thought and clutched tightly the edge of the stool. The tip was red, almost white in places. He was certain that he was going to be branded with it' (Magorian 1983, p.18).

Gradually, Mr. Tom notices something is amiss with Will but does not conflate the change in Will's demeanour with his brandishing of the poker. It is not until Will provides Mr. Tom with a letter from his mother that all becomes clear. The note states that the boy is 'full of sin' (Magorian 1983, p.26), so his mother has included a belt 'for when he's bad and I've sewn him in for the winter' (Magorian 1983, p.26), meaning she has sewn his underwear and vest together and therefore he will be in the same undergarments for the entire Winter. The book's author, Michelle Magorian states that this latter idea was derived from a true account told to her by her mother, a nurse during the Blitz, about a young, injured boy who came to hospital sewn in for Winter.

When Mr. Tom realises that Will's mother is the cause of Will's bruises and his subsequent strange behaviour, he is extremely angry. Immediately, he rushes to assure Will that he will not be exposed to that manner of mistreatment while under his roof, clarifying that: '[w]hile in my house,' he said in a choked voice, 'you'll live by my rules. I 'ent never hit a child and if I ever do it'll be with the skin of my hand.'(Magorian 1983, p.30). However, despite Mr. Tom's repeated reassurances, the trauma Will has suffered is never far from the surface. Therefore, Caruth's belief in a universal dissociation as a result of trauma, does not prove true in Will's case. Satterlee explains that rather than there being a universal reaction to trauma, cultural and social factors must be considered when analysing diverse reactions to trauma:

Understanding trauma, by situating it within a larger conceptual framework of social psychology theories in addition to neurobiological theories will produce a particular psychologically

informed concept of trauma that acknowledges the range of contextual factors that specify the value of the experience. This stance might therefore consider dubious the assertion of trauma's intrinsic dissociation. (Satterlee 2014, p. 2)

However, that is not to say that there are no unconscious consequences resulting from trauma. For Will this manifests itself in a physical way. Like many people affected by trauma, Will wets the bed: '[i]n the morning Tom found him huddled under the bed. The sheets were drenched with urine' (Magorian 1983, p.37).

Aware that Will is ashamed of this, Mr. Tom makes light of the situation and carries on as though it is a natural occurrence, stripping the bed and washing the sheets. Once Mr. Tom has sorted the bed, he then runs a bath for Will. Only then does Mr. Tom become aware of the true extent of Will's abuse, realising that 'Will's arms and legs were covered in bruises, weals and sores' (Magorian 1983, p.30). It could be argued that the bedwetting supports Caruth's theory of an unconscious reaction to trauma. However, Satterlee's theory does not disallow indirect knowledge but argues that Caruth's theory leaves no room for direct knowledge. Satterlee states that Caruth's theory: '[c]rafts a concept of trauma as a recurring sense of absence that sunders knowledge of the extreme experience, thus preventing linguistic value other than a referential expression...[t]he unspeakable void becomes the dominant concept in criticism for imagining trauma's function in literature' (Satterlee 2014, p. 1). Therefore, Satterlee 'establishes a psychological framework apart from the classic model [and] thus produces different conclusions regarding trauma's influence upon language, perception and society' (Satterlee 2014, p. 1). This is reflected in Will's reaction to the trauma of the brutality he

suffers at the hands of his mother, which extends beyond the subconscious fear of caregivers and bed wetting. Will is also racked with guilt and shame and does not want anyone at school to see the bruises and sores: '[m]y legs he whispered. He didn't want everyone to see the marks of his sins' (Magorian 1983, p. 3). Therefore, as Satterlee suggests, the traumatised may be aware of their trauma and that certainly is the case for Will. Will is not afforded any of the respite that repression of trauma can bring to some victims, instead he lives with the marks both physical and psychological every minute of every day. As well as the physical effect of trauma, Will's fear of doing wrong and taking yet another beating makes him withdrawn and affects his self-esteem.

Therefore, when he meets fellow evacuee Zach, Will is shocked that Zach takes an instant liking to him, particularly when Zach states, '[a]s soon as I see someone I like, I talk to them' (Magorian 1983 p.76). This lack of belief that anyone could like him is a direct result of the trauma Will has been subjected to by his mother: 'Will almost dropped the clod of earth he was holding. No one had ever said they liked him. He's always accepted that no one did. Even his mum said she only liked him when he was quiet and still. For her to like him he had to make himself invisible' (Magorian 1983, p. 77). As the son of two actors, Zach is the polar opposite of Will, he is a loud, gregarious extrovert who loves to be the centre of attention. This suits Will's traumatised personality, allowing him to stand at the side-lines without excluding himself socially.

3.3 Grieving Caregiver

It is significant that Mr. Tom, who lost his wife and son to scarlet fever many years before, has also sought refuge from his trauma by socially excluding himself: 'Since his wife, Rachel's, death he hadn't joined in any of the social activities in Little Weirworld. In his grief he had cut himself off from people and when he had recovered, he had lost the habit of socializing' (Magorian 1983, p.79). This demonstrates Mr. Tom's attitudes towards grief whereby it is ignored and not acknowledged. Additionally, much like Mary Lennox and Jody Baxter, Will is also being cared for by a grieving adult. However, in Will's case, by helping him recover from the trauma he has endured, Mr. Tom is also healing his own trauma. This is particularly evident when Mr. Tom gives Will paints as a birthday present:

Since her death he had never wanted to touch anything that might remind him of her. Trust a strange boy to soften him up. The odd thing was that, after he had entered the paint shop, he had felt as if a heavy wave of sadness had suddenly been lifted from out of him. Memories of her didn't seem as painful as he imagined. (Magorian 1983, p.110)

As with Will, Mr. Tom deals with his grief through a deliberate silencing of the traumatic memory, which means he has not spoken of the death of his wife Rachel to Will until his birthday, which occurs a few months into his evacuation to Little Weirworld. This concurs with Satterlee's theory that the traumatised person can control the memory of the traumatic event. Satterlee is not suggesting there is no silencing around the traumatic event but rather that this silencing can be a

conscious decision as in Mr. Tom's case or as a combination of socio-cultural factors:

Paying attention to the specificity of trauma does not exclude the fact that social, semantic, political, and economic factors are present in the experience and recollection of trauma. The knowledge that social practices are part of the context of even the most private violence differs from the claim that everyone is implicated in each other's (absent) trauma because the former position accepts the multiple contextual factors of trauma while also indicating that trauma is a lived experience, one that is identifiable to a greater or lesser degree. (Satterlee 2014, p. 7)

Therefore, when Mr. Tom mentions Rachel to Will he does not know who Mr. Tom is referring to and asks, 'Who's Rachel?,' to which Mr. Tom replies: '[a] gentle hearted wild young girl I once loved' (Magorian 1983, p. 155). Once Mr. Tom opens up about Rachel to Will, he opens up the grief that still bubbles beneath the surface. And this is evident to Will when Mr. Tom offers to play a favourite tune of Rachel's, which he had not played in years. Even to Will's young ears the 'notes were long and lingering. Will had never heard anything so beautiful' (Magorian 1983, p.161) M.S Skâniand believes 'music affords immediate opportunities to regulate mood, access emotions, adjust energy levels, and create boundaries around oneself in public places' (Skâniand, 2010). This appears to be the case here with Mr Tom and Will who bond over music, and it creates a greater understanding for Will of the grief Mr. Tom is still experiencing. As a text dealing with an adult griever, it is important for the child reader to see that it is normal for grief to still be experienced many years after the loss of a loved one, while simultaneously carrying on as normal in other areas of their life.

Additionally, it is important for the child griever to see adults grieving as it normalises what can be a very traumatic and confusing time for them. It is also important for a child who may not feel able to express their grief to see adults openly grieving especially a child such as Will who has come from a troubled background into a much safer, more stable home. This is important as Matinson and Campos point out that: '[s]ome studies have revealed an inclination for adolescents to "suspend" their grief until such time that a safe and loving relationship is established in the future where they will have opportunity to process their response' (Martinson & Campos, 1991; Worden, 1996 as cited in Mc Ferran 2011, p. 19). Consequently, by sharing his grief at the loss of his wife and child, Mr. Tom opens a channel for Will to express his grief at the terrible losses he has endured. However, as Dowdney states '[I]ogic dictates that the death of a parent or sibling presents a challenge for young people, and that extended negative reactions will result for some but not all' (Dowdney, 2000). Therefore, through Mr. Tom's support and Zach's influence, Will slowly begins to question whether his mother was right when she told him, 'if he made himself invisible people would like him, and he wanted that very much' (Magorian 193, p. 94). In fact, he is beginning to believe the opposite to be true. However, the memory of the abuse he endured when he disobeyed his mother runs so deep that when he starts to feel excitement and joy, he is unsure how to cope with these new feelings. As a result, he tries to repress them:

A sudden burst of energy rose up inside him. It excited and frightened him. He had always been good at keeping still. It was wicked not to, he knew that, but now he felt a desperate desire to

leap and jump. He pressed his lips together and, clenching his fists and frowning, he tried to numb the strange new feelings away. (Magorian 1983, p. 87)

Hester et al. state that modification of behaviour, such as being quiet is a common tactic that child victims of domestic violence develop in order to protect themselves (Hester et al. 2007, p. 81). So, Will's restraint in repressing his excitement serves as an illustration of coping and survival strategies developed by a child as a result of being a victim of domestic violence.

3.4 Trauma and Memory

As has been already established, traditional literary trauma theory states that memory is affected by trauma, however, it is clear here that Will believes the consequence of behaving 'wickedly' to be violence. Once more the idea that trauma affects memory and that the traumatic event can only be accessed through belatedness does not fit Will's experience. Will's reaction to the trauma he has suffered concurs with Satterlee's assertion that '[a] single conceptualization of trauma will likely never fit the multiple and often contradictory depictions of trauma in literature because texts cultivate a wide variety of values that reveal individual and cultural understandings of the self, memory, and society' (Satterlee 2014, p.8). Moreover, Satterlee's theory supports Will's reactions to the trauma he has suffered at his mother's hands. For Will it is a lived experience, and he actively avoids behaviour that he believes may lead to that trauma happening again. As Satterlee points out: '[i]f the larger social, political, and economic practices that influence violence are the background contexts or threads in the

fabric of a traumatic experience in the first place, then trauma's meaning is locatable rather than permanently lost' (Satterlee 2014, p. 8).

This is certainly true of Will's life experience, given that the text is set during the Second World War. Society in general is living through a very traumatic and violent time, so as well as a violent home, Will also endures the threat of violence in his everyday life outside of the home. Therefore, it is not unexpected that Will is aware of the trauma he has endured and the threat of future violence, which explains his hesitancy to trust authority figures. In addition, while Little Weirworld offers respite from all threats of violence in his young life, Will is aware that he will eventually have to go back. However, this happened much sooner than was expected. Just as Will is beginning to heal from the abuse he endured at his mother's hands, another blow is dealt to the young boy: 'Will looked up and noticed that Tom was holding a letter. 'What's the matter?' 'It's from your mother,' he said, indicating the paper. 'She's ill. She wants you to go back for a while' (Magorian 1983, p.174). Knowing what likely lies in store for Will when he goes back to London, Mr. Tom tries to persuade Mrs. Beech to come to Little

Weirworld instead, but to no avail. She insists it must be Will who comes to her. With a heavy heart and against his better judgement, Mr. Tom sends Will home: '[t]hey hadn't exchanged many words on the journey. They had both felt too numb' (Magorian 1983 p. 175). Knowing what he is likely to face, Will seeks reassurance from Mr. Tom that he will not be left back into the hands of his abuser with no possibility of escape: "I will come back," he added earnestly, touching

Tom's hand, "I will won't I?" (Magorian 1983, p.176). Not certain that he will ever see Will again, Mr. Tom does his best to reassure him as he puts him on the train back to London. Here we can see that the traumatised child is fully aware of the abuse that lies in store for him. He is desperate for reassurance that what has gone on before will not be allowed to happen again.

Will is not just fearful of the physical abuse but the emotional abuse also.

Teicher and Samson define emotional maltreatment as:

verbal abuse, manipulation (e.g., placing the child in situations intended to elicit shame, guilt, or fear in order to serve the emotional needs of the perpetrator or to persuade the child to perform actions against his or her will), denigrating or destroying things of value to the child, or placing the child in situations that are harmful, such as witnessing domestic violence. Maltreatment also includes parental neglect, which can be physical neglect (failure to provide for the child's basic needs such as food, clothing, physical safety, adequate supervision, medical and dental health) or emotional neglect (failure to provide for the child's basic emotional needs). (Teicher & Samson, 2013, p.242)

Furthermore, domestic violence is defined as 'any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse, (even if all or any of those incidents, when viewed in isolation, may appear to be minor or trivial), inflicted against an applicant or a dependent person by the respondent and includes all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence' (Women's Aid 2021). Therefore, in Will's case it can be seen that his treatment by his mother falls into both of these categories. However, not only is his mother physically mistreating him, she is also intimidating and humiliating Will to control him, which also comes under the umbrella of domestic violence, specifically coercive control.

Women's Aid defines this as an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the applicant or a dependent person by the respondent (Women's Aid 2021). As a result of these pattern of behaviours Women's Aid believe the victim can suffer psychological trauma. In Will's case this when he returns to London and meets his mother for the first time since going to Little Weirworld.

When Mrs. Beech first meets Will at the railway station, she does not recognise the happy content boy he has become in the care of Mr. Tom. When Will smiles at her as she approaches him in the station, she steps back horrified, as '[t]he smile frightened her. It threatened her authority' (Magorian 1983, p. 182). This is because the type of emotional psychological and physical abuse that she inflicts on Will is a form of control for the abuser and the loss of this form of control is a threat to the abuser. This perceived loss of control is magnified by the air of confidence now exuded by Will: 'he was talking an awful lot, she thought. She'd never seen him like that before. Too cheeky by far. She'd soon discipline it out of him' (Magorian 1983, p. 183). Once back in London, as with many victims of domestic abuse related trauma, Will strives to behave in a manner that will not irritate his mother. Immediately he reverts to being Willie, walking on eggshells around his mother, attempting to appease her and endeavouring not to aggravate her. He tries not to be too loud, or proud, and is confused when everything he says is met with suspicion and negativity.

3.5 Trauma and the Compliant Child

Willie displays the typical characteristics of what Donald Winnicott terms, the compliant child. Winnicott believes all children are born with spontaneous desires and needs, but if the caregiver cannot respond to these desires and needs through lack of ability or depression or any other factor, then the child will become 'compliant' (Winnicott 1965, p. 146). That is, the child will unconsciously adjust their behaviour to their environment. The child does this to protect themselves, but in doing so they are suppressing their true selves. Will typifies this behaviour by trying to suppress his natural childlike exuberance that has come to the fore in the care of Mr. Tom. However, his true self still bubbles beneath the surface and when his mother unexpectedly tells him there is a surprise waiting for him at home, he allows himself to feel a little excited. When he eventually gets home, he excitedly questions his mother about the surprise asking if it is a puppy, but his mother dampens down his spirited chatter. Will eagerly approaches the box on the chair, and nothing can prepare him for the 'surprise' inside. Willie opens the box and inside finds a small baby with its mouth taped shut to muffle its crying. Willie is not allowed to comfort the baby, as his mother says she is teaching it discipline. When he tries to argue, she threatens him with the belt. As a survivor of trauma, Will has learnt that it is best to attempt to placate his mother in order to be allowed to comfort the baby. Thinking she would like a present in return, he gives her the gifts from Little Weirworld that his friends and neighbours have sent. However,

not believing the boy capable of making friends, she accuses Willie of begging for or stealing them.

While Willie explains about the friends he has made, he makes an innocent remark about Zach not going to Church in Little Weirworld because it does not have a synagogue. Zach's Jewish background is the opening his mother needs to exercise the wrath of her physical violence on Will once more: '[h]is mother let out a frightened scream ... she rose and hit him savagely across the face' (Magorian 1983, p.191). Not content with that, his mother then hits him with something heavy 'across the head and he sank into a coldness' (Magorian 1983, p. 192). This was the final straw for Will, he could hear her screaming and knew she was hitting him but he 'felt numb and separated from himself. He has become two people and one of his selves was hovering above him watching what was happening to his body and eventually passes out' (Magorian 1983, p.192). While with Mr. Tom he had developed a new persona and a new name to match this new improved version of himself. While his mother had always called him Willie, in Little Weirworld he went by Will. Now lying under the stairs in the dark he knew that he was no longer two boys, Little Weirworld, with Mr. Tom and his new friends had changed him: '[h]e was no longer Willie. It was as if he had said good-bye to that old part of himself. Neither was he two separate people. He was Will inside and out' (Magorian 1983, p. 192).

What is pertinent here is that, in a way, Will grieves the loss of Willie, which functions as an acknowledgement of the ways, and the extent to which, his mother has mistreated him. Prior to going to Little Weirworld he believed his mother loved

him and that the abuse he suffered at her hands was an expression of that love: '[f]or an instant he wished he had never gone to Little Weirworld. Then he would have thought his Mum was kind and loving. He wouldn't have known any different' (Magorian 1983, p. 193). Therefore, Will grieves not only the loss of the childhood he should have had but also the insight that living in Little Weirworld has given him, and '[a] wave of despair swept through him and he cursed his new awareness. He hadn't been used to this pain for a long time. He has softened' (Magorian 1983, p. 193). This can be read in terms of the physical pain he has suffered but also reflects his psychological suffering. Lying on the cold floor under the stairs, Will has no escape from the realisation that the life he had with his mother was not love and that he had lost much of his childhood experiences to an abusive parent.

While contemplating how his mother has mistreated him, Will feels entirely alone, abandoned and forgotten. But this is not the complete picture. In Little Weirworld Mr. Tom still misses Will and compares his sense of loss to the grief he felt when he lost his wife and son: '[h]e felt the old familiar emptiness that he had experienced at the sudden loss of Rachel' (Magorian 1983, p.194). Therefore, as Satterlee points out '[t]he claim that trauma "is not known in the first instance" and that trauma "returns to haunt the survivor later on" narrowly conceptualizes the psychological dimensions of trauma and the range of traumatic experience and responses' (Satterlee 2014, p. 6). As Mr. Tom's experience here shows, he recognises the emptiness he feels at the loss of Will from his life is the same feeling of loss he felt at the loss of his wife and child many years before. Consequently, Satterlee's statement that '[p]sychological research indicates that amnesia,

dissociation, or repression may be responses to trauma, but they are not exclusive responses' is borne out here (Satterlee 2014, p. 6).

Another issue with the traditional model's reliance on the deferred knowledge of trauma is that this 'traumatic formulation removes determinate value from the experience' (Satterlee 2014, p. 6). As we note, Mr. Tom recognises that the feelings he is experiencing at the absence of Will from his life are similar to those endured at the loss of his wife and child. Therefore, he is much more emotionally aware and willing to act when he suspects that something is amiss with Will, and this coheres with Satterlee's contention that the inability to know trauma:

disallows a specific determinacy of trauma on rhetorical, psychological, and social levels, while at the same time embraces an undying pathological influence on consciousness. One result of trauma's classic conundrum accordingly removes agency from the survivor by disregarding a survivor's knowledge of the experience and the self, which restricts trauma's variability and ignores the diverse values that change over time. (Satterlee 2014, p.6)

Consequently, after Mr. Tom 'waited patiently for a letter' from Will once he returned to London, when none arrived 'by the third week he began to feel anxious' (Magorian 1983, p. 198). Therefore, as previously discussed, in contrast to Caruth's model, Satterlee's model 'allows determinate value and social specificity' and 'acknowledges the variability of trauma in its definition and representations and may emphasize the active potential for meaning in the moment of harm' (Satterlee 2014, p.6).

Due to his awareness of his previous traumatic experience, Mr. Tom immediately acts on the anxiety and unease he felt about Will's lack of communication. Mr. Tom decides that rather than continue to wait he would take matters into his own hands and go check that Will had returned home safely. Once in Deptford, Mr. Tom finds himself in the midst of an airstrike and is directed to the local bomb shelter by the local warden. While there, Mr. Tom makes inquiries as to the location of Will's house and is taken there by the warden once the danger has passed. After calling and receiving no answer, Mr. Tom and the warden make the decision to call a policeman to break into the house. Once inside the stench draws them to the toilet under the stairs:

The small alcove stank of stale urine and vomit. A thin emaciated boy with matted hair and skin like parchment was tied to a length of copper piping. He held a small bundle in his arms. His scrawny limbs were covered in sores and bruises, and he sat in his own excrement. (Magorian 1983, p.206)

As Mr. Tom unties Will he notices the small bundle. With great reluctance Will hands it over to Mr. Tom who gently draws back the folds. Nobody is prepared for what he finds inside, a small baby, who 'had been dead for some time. It was thin and tinged with a greyish hue' (Magorian 1983, p. 208).

Will does not or cannot recognise that the baby has died. He is unable to vocalise the horror and trauma of what he has experienced at his mother's hands. Ostensibly this appears to confirm Caruth's argument on the unspeakability of the traumatic experience, which does, in fact, prove to be the case here. Again, what must be acknowledged is that while Satterlee is adamant that there can be a direct

knowledge of trauma, she does recognise that there are instances when there can be an indirect knowledge of trauma also. Where she differs from Caruth is that she does not believe this unspeakability to be universal, as her work allows for factors other than purely neurobiological factors to influence the traumatised inability to vocalise the trauma they have experienced:

Contemporary pluralistic approaches in literary trauma theory are more likely to acknowledge both the neurobiological and social contexts of the experience, response, and narratives, as well as the possibilities that language can convey the variable meanings of trauma. Paying attention to the specificity of trauma does not exclude the fact that social, semantic, political, and economic factors are present in the experience and recollection of trauma. (Satterlee 2014, p. 7)

3.6 Psychiatric Response to Will's Grief

This is evident in Will's case, whose psychiatrist Mr. Stelton diagnoses him as being 'under deep psychological shock. He keeps suddenly screaming out for no apparent reason' (Magorian 1983, p.213). Seemingly, unable to verbalise the horror of the experience, Will instead expresses his trauma through screaming. While initially this may seem to confirm Caruth's hypothesis that language fails to represent trauma, Satterlee's pluralistic approach considers linguistic relationships but not at the expense of forgetting that trauma occurs to actual people (Satterlee 2014, p. 7). Therefore, it supports the hypothesis that Will is choosing not to vocalise the trauma he has suffered because he is not yet ready to process what has happened to him and his sister, Trudy, at his mother's hands.

However, he appears to be subconsciously processing the trauma through his dreams. But rather than allowing Will to work through his trauma, instead the hospital choose to sedate Will, “‘I git nightmares,” he whispered. “And when I wakes up, they stick a needle in me and then I can’t move or speak”” (Magorian 1983 p.214). This is clearly not how such traumatic experiences would be treated today, yet there does appear to be an attempt to analyse the cause of Will’s night terrors. The hospital psychiatrist tells Tom that they ‘feel he would benefit from treatment... psychiatric treatment. Analysis. We want to encourage him to talk about his background and find out why he is the way he is’ (Magorian 1983, p.218). Unlike *The Secret Garden* and *The Yearling*, which were published in 1911 and 1938 respectively, as *Goodnight Mr. Tom* is published in 1981, it is more sensitive to the concept of childhood grief and as a result it does attempt to understand and treat the grief and trauma of the child. However, as Mr. Tom’s reaction demonstrates, society at the time is still not ready for intervention in the case of childhood grief, certainly not psychological analysis anyway. While the hospital’s answer is to sedate Will, Mr. Tom strongly believes it is simply a case of allowing will to face his trauma at his own pace and not to talk about it if that is his preference. Consequently, against the advice and knowledge of the medical staff, Mr. Tom takes Will from his hospital bed: ‘Tom whipped back the sheets, lifted Will out and wrapped the blanket he was carrying around him’ (Magorian 1983, p. 220). Mr. Tom takes him back to Little Weirworld so he can nurse him back to health in the ways he believes to be right. He takes medical advice on his return and asks the local physician, Doctor Little, to check him over. The latter concludes to Mr. Tom

that: 'The sores will heal. They healed before. It's the wounds on the inside that will take the longest to heal' (Magorian 1983, p.225).

However, despite Mr. Tom's reassurances and best efforts, Will continues to display symptoms of PTSD: 'Will felt himself being shaken violently into consciousness. (Thinks the walls and ceiling are closing in on him) he was trapped. He pressed himself against the walls to prevent them moving any closer, but they only pushed him backwards. (Thought nurses were trying to sedate him again) (Magorian 1983, pp 227-8). Mr. Tom does his best to comfort Will, he sits on his bed and tells him to 'scream as much as you likes' (Magorian 1983, p. 228). The nightmares continue relentlessly throughout the night, with Mr. Tom noting that 'it was the fifth time that he had changed the sheets and had soothed Will after a horrific nightmare (Magorian 1983, p. 229) As morning approaches, Will is relieved because added to his trauma he now 'dreaded the terrors of the night' (Magorian 1983, p. 229). Will's night terrors continue with Mr. Tom there by his side to provide security, however he is limited in what he could do for Will: '[t]here was nothing he could do except stay with Will and go with what was happening. He hugged him when he woke and encouraged him to talk about his nightmares as much as possible' (Magorian 1983, p. 229). From a theoretical perspective, Cohen et al. stress that: 'recurrent distressing dreams' are a symptom of traumatic childhood grief and of the resulting childhood PTSD. While normal bereavement-related dreams generally provide the bereaved child with comfort 'because they remind the child with uncomplicated bereavement of the deceased's loving presence in the past. In contrast, children with traumatic grief

often have dreams that emphasize the traumatic nature of the death, leading to intense horror or fear for their own safety' (Cohen et al. 2002, p. 312). As more than 50 percent of young people experience traumatic events during childhood and adolescence (Landolt et al., 2013), it is imperative that the impact of loss on children is acknowledged, and the type of loss recognised both in real life but also in children's literature. Bibliotherapy is a recognised method of guiding children through the grieving process, and is a 'proven means of helping clients understand the issues they are experiencing, normalises those experiences and offers hope for positive change' (Gallagher 2020, p. 15). This is particularly important as, while many children who experience loss can navigate the subsequent grief that follows, there are some children who develop traumatic grief.

However, the novel quickly moves to 'resolve' the trauma endured by Will. One evening, many nights after Will's return to Mr. Tom, he is, once more, immersed in a nightmare, when he lets out 'the wildest and most terrifying scream Tom had ever heard. It shook him to his bowels. He couldn't remember how long it lasted. It sounded like a baby crying in despair, an old forgotten scream that must have been swallowed down years before' (Magorian 1983, p. 230). Magorian goes on to write that, '[i]t was after this incident that he began to sleep more easily. He had reached the climax of his nightmares and they no longer haunted him' (Magorian 1983, p. 231). While this is perhaps done to tie up that part of the novel neatly, it was also a belief at the time when the novel was written and published that PTSD could be simply be cured. Magorian's authorial needs do not appear to be sympathetic to the possibility that PTSD is a condition that the traumatised

learn to live with and control through psychotherapy and techniques that manage their condition.

Once Will seems over the worst of the nightmares, Mr. Tom broaches the subject of Will's baby sister, Trudy. Even before Mr. Tom has uttered the words, Will knows what is coming: 'It's about Trudy.' 'She's dead ent she?' He nodded. 'My fault,' he choked out. 'My fault. I killed her. I made her die.' 'I shouldn't have waited' (Magorian 1983, p. 237). Will's guilt at what he perceives as his responsibility for Trudy's death is another typical symptom of a child suffering from traumatic childhood grief. This may be because children with PTSD frequently exhibit an exaggeration of self-blame and guilt, which may be caused by the violent or horrifying nature of traumatic death (Pynoos & Nader, 1990). However even children without PTSD frequently question why this occurred to their loved one and not to themselves when they are trying to make sense of a tragic death. Survivor guilt, which is defined by a sense of guilt for being alive and safe when others have died, might result from this, Furthermore, Cohen et al. believe 'children with traumatic grief may also experience unrealistic self-blame for not being alive and safe when others have died' (Cohen et al., 2002, p. 312). But the text does not fully explore the guilt Will associates with the death of his sister, and, again, glosses over the impact this has on him. For example, Mrs. Fletchers, whose husband Michael has been killed, and the schoolteacher, Mrs. Hartridge, whose husband is missing in action, both attempt to heal Will's pain by making him face up to the trauma he has suffered even when they are unsure if they are doing the correct thing

When Will first returned to Little Weirworld after the death of his mother and baby sister, Mrs. Hartridge had just given birth to a baby girl. Aware that she would have had the baby by now, Will knows that he needs to visit but is reluctant to do so. When he finally does so, he waits outside the door for an hour before finding the courage to knock. Mrs. Hartridge knows about Trudy's death, so brings Will around to the back garden where the baby is in its pram. However, rather than discuss the impact of the death of his sister, Mrs Hartridge '[i]nstantively ... wanted Will to know what it was like to hold a warm, live child' (Magorian 1983, p. 242). Mrs. Hartridge chooses to leave him alone with her new baby: 'he stared numbly at it not wanting to breathe for fear he might disturb whatever lay there. ...he moved closer until he was standing beside it' (Magorian 1983, p. 242). Neither feel able to discuss the other's loss so '[h]e didn't mention Mr. Hartridge and she didn't talk about his mother or Trudy. Sometimes in the middle of a conversation they would stop suddenly and look at each other understanding' (Magorian 1983 p. 241).

When a knock comes to the door, she makes the decision to hand Will the baby to hold, unsure if it's the right thing to do, '[s]he walked briskly away not daring to glance back at him' (Magorian 1983 p. 243). She had no idea whether she was doing the right thing. Will has to face his worst fear alone. However, the text again fails to fully explore the trauma of holding a living newborn so soon after the death of his sister. Instead, the text elides the grief Will is suffering by stating suddenly he felt lighter, 'he couldn't have given Trudy what she needed it wasn't

his fault she had died. He was still saddened by her death but the awful responsibility that had weighed so heavily on him had now lifted' (Magorian 1983 p. 243). This moment reveals an outdated understanding at the time of the book's publication that childhood grief is something that can easily be shrugged off. It does not show that grief can be carried by a child for a prolonged period, take many different forms and still affect the child many months or years later as Cohen et al. determine. Instead, it conveys an unrealistic message that childhood grief can easily be resolved, that by simply holding a living breathing baby. Will 'suddenly felt lighter' and was absolved of the burden of grief and guilt he felt because of Trudy's death (Magorian 1983, p. 243).

Following this there is little reference to the grief that Will experiences at the loss of his sister. Furthermore, the way in which the book deals with the grief Will suffers following news of his mother's death also fails to ring true. Not long after Will returns home to Mr. Tom's, he finds the warden from Deptford, a policeman and a woman waiting for him. Will is told in very blunt terms that his mother has died: 'William,' she hesitated. 'I'm afraid your mother is dead. She committed suicide' (Magorian 1983, p. 269). Will does not comprehend what it is the woman is telling him, he looks at her blankly and she explains that his mother has killed herself. Will finds this very difficult to take in: 'killed herself? But...but why how could anyone not want to live, thought Will, when there were so many things to live f'r?' (Magorian 1983, pp 269-70). Again, as with the way the text fails to comprehensively contend with the guilt associated with the death of Trudy, likewise it fails to fully explore the impact of a parent's suicide on a young child:

Tom sat in the armchair. 'I'm sorry about your mother.' Will forgot his anger for a moment and caught Tom's eye. 'I dunno why she did it,' he said, feeling totally bewildered. 'Was it because of Trudy and me?' Partly said Tom, picking up his pipe and stuffing it with tobacco. 'But it weren't your fault. She was ill. She couldn't cope, see. (Magorian 1983, p.272)

What is more shocking is the lack of comment on the death of his mother after this conversation. Will is simply told that Mr. Tom will now be adopting him and that is an end to the discussion of his mother's death. Though a victim of horrific abuse at the hands of his mother, it is well documented that children of Will's age still grieve the loss of an abusive parent. It is important to acknowledge that childhood grief is complex and that a child may be grieving a parent even when it seems to the adults that the child is in a much better position without that person in their life. It appears the manner of his mother's death, she has taken her own life, seems to be the only reason that she is not mentioned again, as the subsequent death of Zach and its effect on Will is widely discussed, which reflects societal attitudes to suicide during this time period.

While Will's mother's death is glossed over, the narrative deals with childhood grief in a much more comprehensive way when detailing the impact on Will of the death of his friend, Zach, in an airstrike. Zach is a fellow evacuee sent to Little Weirworld to avoid the Blitz in London. Despite Will's mother's anti-Semitic views, Will sees beyond their differences and finds commonalities. Zach, as the son of two actors, is quite an extrovert child who encourages Will to come out of his shell. He persuades Will to help in the school play and join the choir. He is also a particularly good friend to Will when he returns to Little Weirworld after Trudy and

Mrs. Beecham's death, so much so that when Mr. Tom decides to go on a week's break to the seaside, he takes Zach along with them. While there, Zach sneaks out of bed to listen to the news on the radio where he hears that there has been a very severe series of bombings in London. Zach is extremely worried for his parents' safety as '[b]eside his mother being an ambulance driver his father was also with the Auxiliary Fire Service (Magorian 1983, p. 255). Mr. Tom realises the extent of Zach's concern for his parents, so he contacts the parents and reassures Zach that they are safe. However, upon their return to Little Weirworld, Zach is so concerned for his parents' safety that he wants to visit them. Initially his parents refuse, however, when Zach's father is injured in a bombing he persuades his mother to allow him to return to see his father, as he 'fears father will die, and he will miss his chance to see him one last time, so mother agrees' (Magorian 1983, p 278). His mother relents but tells him no matter what the outcome he can only stay in London for the weekend. Once Zach returns to London the radio reports that 'flares had been dropped all over London...It was one of the longest massed raids that London was experiencing' (Magorian 1983, p. 279).

Just as Zach was anxious about his parents living in London under the constant threat of bombing, Will frets over Zach, and grows steadily more anxious as the days pass, especially as Zach's guardians, the Littles, hadn't heard from Zach, or his mother. What is important here is that the anxiety Will experiences for Zach's safety triggers the return of his nightmares: '[h]e woke in the early hours of Monday morning from a nightmare of amputation units, people with their heads blown off, vans with 'Dead Only' written on them, and disfigured bloodstained

people wandering and screaming through dense rubble' (Magorian 1983, p. 280). Certain triggers, such as anxiety in the grieving child, can occur for many months after the traumatic event, and even some events, which seem unrelated to the traumatic event, such as the worry about a friend, may elicit a response like the return of nightmares. This is the result of the child's coping mechanism being overwhelmed by anxiety, which restarts another cycle of symptoms, as seen here with Will. However, when Will wakes the following morning, his worst fears are realised, downstairs he hears voices, when he goes down, he sees that 'Dr Little looked grave 'and Aunt Nance had been crying. They didn't need to say anything, he immediately knew Zach was dead' (Magorian 1983, p. 280). Unable to cope with this further trauma 'he felt his legs buckling up underneath him and he collapsed into unconsciousness' (Magorian 1983, pp 280-1).

This final blow is enough to break Will: '[i]n the weeks that followed the news of Zach's death, Will survived each day in a zombie-like daze' (Magorian 1983, p. 282). On this occasion Will has little of the resilience that he had when faced with the death of Trudy and his mother. Rather than confront the void Zach leaves behind, Will does everything he can to avoid it: '[h]e avoided the Little's cottage as much as possible... at school, finding it painful to sit next to an empty chair, he would scatter papers untidily over the two desks in an effort to hide Zach's absence' (Magorian 1983, p.282). Cohen et al. believe this drive to sidestep thinking about or acknowledging the traumatic event is a coping mechanism designed to avoid the symptoms of trauma and PTSD:

To not have to experience these unpleasant feelings, the child may either purposely or automatically develop avoidance and numbing strategies. Avoidance allows the child to decrease the frequency or intensity of exposure to trauma, loss, and change reminders, whereas emotional numbing allows the child to minimize the pain and other negative feelings when exposure to such reminders inadvertently occurs. (Cohen et al., 2002, pp 311-12)

Not only was he physically avoiding any reminders of Zach, but he had shut down emotionally as well; he '[c]ouldn't feel emotion singing in choir and felt he couldn't even paint ...the same dead feeling sunk into him, and all his activities seemed meaningless' (Magorian 1983, p. 282-3). Will was aware that it was not right to feel this way, but it was the only way he had of coping.

Knowing that Will was suffering and unable to cope with the loss of Zach, Mr. Tom does his best to help by keeping him occupied with other tasks. As it is coming up to Christmas, Mr. Tom decides to have Will help him make toys for less well-off children who will not otherwise receive a present:

Will welcomed the opportunity of doing anything that would take his mind off Zach. He still tended not to talk very much and, apart from when he was rehearsing, he would withdraw into his numb little shell. Tom carried on as normal, waiting for the moment when Will would finally accept and mourn his friend's death. (Magorian 1983, p. 283)

Again, this is a further example of the inaccurate belief that a child just needs to be left to get on with grieving. Medical intervention is not sought, rather Mr. Tom is simply waiting for Will to get better. Having done the same thing with his own grief, Mr. Tom does not perceive that avoiding reminders of the people they have lost is not helping the grieving process, rather it is stunting it. This belief that

people needed to be left to get on with the grieving process may reflect society's opinion on grief at that time. Patricia Jalland believes the effect of two world wars affected the way people in England grieved during this period:

Ignorance and silence about death and loss were widespread in the fifty years after 1914: cultural norms were transformed by two world wars, the decline of religion, and demographic change. In the inter-war years responses to bereavement varied widely, according to class, gender, region and religion. The two world wars had a profound and cumulative impact on the prolonged process of change in the attitudes and behaviour relating to death and bereavement. The Second World War created a greater break with the past as a pervasive culture of avoidance, minimal ritual and suppressed grieving became entrenched in the English psyche. (Jalland 2013, p. 16)

This is evident in the text, which is set during the Second World War, when it briefly mentions the returning shell-shocked soldiers journeying through the village on their return home. Many of the villagers appear completely oblivious to the impact of war on these young soldiers which was apparent in their treatment of them as they pass through the village:

One weekend, several truckloads of vacant-eyed, wounded young men in uniform rumbled their way through the village. The villagers cheered and threw garlands of flowers at them and handed them home-made cakes, bread and eggs as they passed. Some of the youths managed a numb smile, but most of them were too dazed to know what was happening. (Magorian 1983 p. 239)

Therefore, Mr. Tom's belief that the impact of grief on Will was not so severe could possibly be attributed to the novel's historical context.

In fact, we can read the significance of the returning, and clearly traumatised, soldiers in relation to the action of the novel. Firstly, Will's experience

may not seem so severe when compared to that of the soldiers returning from the frontlines of war. Secondly, with so much death in society as a result of the war, it is arguable that a type of desensitisation to death can occur. Diana Concannon addresses this point when she states that:

Whether the threat is an enemy combatant during wartime, climate change and its many repercussions, or – as now – a relentless virus – we become accustomed to its effects. This is a survival mechanism, the way our brains adapt to an onslaught – no matter how horrific -- that is constant and persistent. It allows us to continue to function amidst adversity. (Concannon 2021)

Given the everyday horrors to which society is exposed during this period of time, Mr. Tom may not realise the full impact on Will of the death of his mother and sister. What nowadays may be perceived as a lack of empathy may simply reflect wider beliefs around trauma and grief at that time. Jalland observes that:

It is difficult today to appreciate how widespread and deep-rooted was the ignorance, silence, and embarrassment about grief in the fifty years or so from 1918. It was almost impossible for the bereaved to appeal directly for help in a society where the majority preferred to ignore grief. Bereavement could be an isolating and frightening experience up to the 1960s, with society offering minimal emotional and social support, and little advice. Harold Orlans observed in 1957 that the growing literature of modern psychology had thus far conspicuously failed to deal with the fundamental human problems of death and grief. (Jalland 2013, p.16)

That said, the severe effect of grief on Will at the loss of his best friend, Zach, is comprehensively addressed. Geoffrey Sanderton is determined to have Will face the reality of Zach's death and to accept that he is gone. Having himself faced the trauma of the Second World War, Sanderton recognizes that to heal, Will needs to confront the loss of Zach. Geoffrey had met Will, Zach and the twins shortly before

Zach's death, therefore realises the impact of Zach's loss on Will. In order to help Will come to terms with Zach's untimely loss, Sanderton, a skilled artist, insists Will resumes the art lessons he had begun with him prior to Zach's death.

Will agrees to continue with the classes; however, he feels completely empty inside: 'I ent got anythin' left inside me,' he would say repeatedly, for he felt that half of himself had been cut away, that life without Zach was only half a life and even that half was empty' (Magorian 1982, p. 282). This type of dissociation is a common reaction to grief and the inability to address it. The highly regarded Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV-TR), which is a publication by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) for the classification of mental disorders is the main reference book for the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders, and it defines dissociation as a 'disruption of normally integrated function of consciousness, memory, identity or perception of environment or the body' (DSM-IV-TR, 1994).

Traumatic experiences and dissociative symptoms seem to be intrinsically related.

Additionally, Aydin, Altindag and Ozkan state that:

dissociation arises because severe stress can interfere with normal integrative mental processes, notably when the individual's integrative capacity is limited because of factors such as immaturity of the brain and prior stress exposure. (Aydin et al., 2009)

Will's tendency to dissociate is not untypical in traumatised children. In fact, Aydin et al. suggest that dissociative ability seems to emerge as a typical psychological process linked to fantasy and creativity, but some children use their enhanced

dissociative ability as the basis for a psychological coping mechanism. Generally dissociative processes are accepted as an adaptive reaction to trauma because they keep the rest of the personality distinct from the many traumatic memories and the effects connected with them. Aydin et al. further state that:

The author (Irwin, 1994a) recently has considered affects associated with childhood trauma and the possible role of these affects in promoting and maintaining a dissociative coping style. He found that unresolved grief is a strong predictor of dissociative tendencies, suggesting that this affective consequence of childhood trauma might be one of the mediators between traumatic experiences and the reliance on a dissociative coping style. Data reported by Norton, Ross, and Novotny (1990) also might be interpreted to indicate that feelings of anxiety and anger could work in a similar fashion. (Aydin et al., 2009)

Therefore, as a common response to childhood grief it is important that is depicted in children's texts such as *Goodnight Mr Tom*, particularly for the bereaved child reader who may be experiencing similar feelings. Along with these feelings of dissociation, the text also depicts other mechanisms Will employs to cope with the pain of losing Zach. For instance, he perseveres with the Sanderton's art lessons, who initially sets Will still-life pieces to draw, 'so that for several hours Will could forget the dull pain that gnawed his insides... but always, when he left Spooky Cottage, the same dead feeling sunk into him, and all his activities seemed meaningless' (Magorian 1983, pp.282-3).

Another pertinent aspect of the text is that it shows that after a period of allowing Will to ignore the loss of Zach, eventually, after several lessons Sanderton decides that the time has come for Will to confront the loss. Sanderton tells him: '[b]etter to accept, than pretend that he never existed' (Magorian 1983, p. 287).

However, Will is not ready to listen:

His eyes blurred and his body hurt all over. He stumbled in the darkness and instead of leaving through the gap in the hedge he found himself free of it and headed blindly in the direction of the woods and river...At last he finally reached the river. He stood by its staring at its glassy surface, his chest and shoulders pounding, his gut aching. He felt again Zach's presence next to him, felt him staring up at the starry night and coming out with some strange fragment of poetry. (Magorian 1983, p. 287)

Here again, is an example of how grief was treated during this time period. It was assumed that once a particular time period had elapsed that Will should simply accept Zach's loss and move past it. Julie-Marie Strange also believes there was a class element to expression of grief during this period stating, '[b]ritish workingclass culture of grief was often expressed through symbolic rituals rather than more overt emotion and formal language. The working classes were all too familiar with death, but they tended to be resigned and pragmatic in managing their emotions, even on the deaths of babies and children' (Jalland 2013, p. 17). Will has a tough time facing the fact that Zach is dead, unlike the guilt he felt at the death of Trudy, his reaction to the loss of Zach is one of anger:

'No, no,' he whispered, shaking his head wildly. 'No, no. you're not here. You will *never* be here,' With one angry sob he picked up a dead branch and struck it against a tree trunk until it shattered. Wildly he picked up any other branches he could find and smashed them, hurling the broken bits into the river not caring if he hurt any of the animals that might be hibernating nearby for he felt so racked with pain that he no longer cared about anything else but the tight knot that seemed to pierce the very centre of him. He was angry that Zach had died. Angry with him for going away and leaving him. (Magorian 1983, p.288)

The burden of grief that a boy as young as Will has had to face is too much for him to bear. Consequently, instead of accepting that Zach is gone for good he creates an alternate reality where he converses with Zach. When Will borrows Zach's bike he suddenly feels he can identify with the boy Zach was:

He understood now why Zach loved riding so much. There was a marvelous feeling of freedom once you'd got the hang of it. As he rode, his coat flapping behind him, the crisp wind cooling his face, he suddenly felt that Zach was no longer beside him, he was inside him and very much alive. The numbness in his body had dissolved in exhilaration...He breathed in deeply. 'Zach isn't dead,' he murmured. 'Not really. Not the inside of Zach,' and he gazed happily down the fields. 'No one can take memories away and I can talk to him whenever I want.' (Magorian 1983 p. 292)

Attachment research suggests that anger (Klohn & John, 1998) and dissociation (Lyons-Ruth & Jacobovitz, 1999) are commonly associated with abused children (Lawson 2009, p.206), which is very evident when one considers Will's reaction to Zach's death. Deblinger and Heflin argue that this type of trauma integration 'helps survivors control intrusive and upsetting trauma-related imagery, reduce avoidance of cues, situations and feelings associated with trauma exposure and recognise, anticipate and prepare for reminders of the trauma' (Lawson 2009, p. 209). Furthermore, by conversing with the imaginary Zach, and carrying out the actions of 'Zach', Will gains an air of confidence to behave in a manner not usual for his introverted personality. Accordingly, it permits Will to behave in a manner not typical for him because the imaginary Zach is giving Will permission to act in particular ways.

For example, Will asks aloud: '[n]ow, Zach, what shall I do?' and then proceeds to respond to himself through the guise of Zach: 'I should return slowly and leisurely back,' he replied to himself, and pop in to see Annie Hartridge.' Will knows that Annie Hartridge will have had her baby by now but rather than acknowledge that this is the reason that he wants to visit her, he visits under the pretext that Zach has suggested the visit: 'I'll knock,' said 'Zach' and he took hold of the brass knocker and banged it vigorously against the door' (Magorian 1983, p.293). Right away, as he tells Annie Hartridge that he's been learning to ride Zach's bike, Annie can see the dramatic change in Will: '[s]he was about to say that he looked and sounded a little like Zach. He had an extrovert air about him, that was unusual in Will' (Magorian 1983, pp.293-4). However, Annie senses that it would be better to hold back and allow Will to manage Zach's death as he sees fit. Indeed, Annie is not the only one to notice the change in Will's demeanour. In the weeks that follow, everyone notices the dramatic change in Will; he even takes Zach's role in the school play and rehearses all of his lines to the imaginary Zach.

Cohen, Mannarino and Deblinger classify this behaviour as emotional dysregulation. They define emotional dysregulation as: 'problems that often accompany exposure to significant traumatic experiences.

Emotional

dysregulation is the sudden change in affective states and/or difficulty tolerating and coping with negative affect' (Cohen, Mannarino, & Deblinger, 2006, p. 8). Lawson believes that this occurs because 'trauma undermines coping skills,

triggering physiological changes that affect one's ability to identify and process the traumatic experience. Fear and over-stimulation create a sense of confusion and being out of control. These children feel overwhelmed by emotions that continue long after they have been removed from the stressor' (Lawson 2009, p.209). Young children, like Will, require a 'predictable, caring, and constant caregiver' to develop the type of resilience that is required to cope with such traumatic grief (Schoore, 2013). However, a stable caregiver has been lacking in Will's life. Even when he was sent to the steady, assured and committed care of Mr. Tom, he was suddenly wrenched from him with little or no warning or regard for Will's wellbeing. Therefore, he could not rely on the care of Mr. Tom being a constant in his life. However, that is not to say that children like Will cannot overcome the traumatic grief they have suffered. Lawson believes that there are several variables that foster resilience, such as: 'secure attachment and connection with emotionally supportive adults, the development of cognitive and self-regulation skills, a positive self-concept, internal and external motivation to behave efficaciously, parental warmth, and high expectations for the child and peer support' (Lawson 2009, p. 204). Therefore, the reaction to Will's performance in the Christmas play is pivotal to his acceptance of Zach's death. Once Will becomes secure in his place in Little Weirworld and has the support of the village and his peers he slowly comes to the realization that Zach will not be coming back.

As the weeks pass, and the Christmas play comes to an end, Will slowly accepts that the Zach of his imagination is not the boy he knew:

As Will lay back in his bed that night he felt a little sad, in spite of all the applause. He was sad that Zach hadn't been there to share it. He realized now that the Zach he had been talking to for the last few weeks was a person created from his own imagination and a handful of memories. It was just that the Zach part of himself, the outgoing, cheeky part of himself, had been buried inside him and it was his friendship with Zach that had brought those qualities to the surface. (Magorian 1983, pp. 294-5)

With a maturity beyond his years, he realises: 'I'm not half a person anymore, he thought. I'm a whole one. I *can* live without Zach even though I still miss him' (Magorian 1983 p. 295). This demonstrates that children, even those as young as Will, can eventually accept the finality of loss if they are given the space to come to that conclusion themselves and through their own processes.

However, the text does not portray the reality of such situations. For the child reader it appears that once Will has accepted Zach's death, the thoughts of him being alive and playing a part in his life simply go away permanently. However, in reality this may not be the case for the grieving child, where even after the acceptance of death the trauma of their loss may still be triggered. Pynoos believes that these 'intrusive and distressing trauma-related thoughts, memories, and images may be triggered by trauma reminders (situations, places, people, smells, sights, or sounds that remind the child of the traumatic nature of the death), loss reminders (thoughts, memories, objects, places, or people who remind the child of the deceased person), or change reminders (situations, people, places, or things that remind the child of changes in living circumstances caused by the traumatic death (Pynoos, 1994). However, it does depict well a child's tendency to avoid such triggers, as can be seen in Will's avoidance of situations that trigger these

distressing thoughts so that he can evade the consequent difficult feelings. Cohen et al. believe that: 'avoidance allows the child to decrease the frequency or intensity of exposure to trauma, loss, and change reminders, whereas emotional numbing allows the child to minimize the pain and other negative feelings when exposure to such reminders inadvertently occurs.' (Cohen et al 2000 p.311). However, in bereaved children, these PTSD coping mechanisms, if persistent or acute enough, may substantially avert the successful completion of the tasks of uncomplicated bereavement (Eth & Pynoos, 1985, p. 312-313).

In conclusion, this chapter addressed trauma as a result of domestic violence and war and questioned whether the unspeakability of trauma is, as Caruth believes, a universal response to trauma or whether it is a mechanism the trauma survivor employs to cope with their trauma. When Will arrives in Little Weirworld he does not speak of the abuse he suffered at his mother's hands, which seems to align with Caruth's hypothesis. However, later in the text when he must return to his mother's care it is evident that he is accustomed to behaving in as compliantly as possible so that he does not trigger his mother's wrath. Therefore, it is evident that Will's lack of willingness to discuss his trauma is due to his lack of trust in adult caregivers rather than being unable to recall his traumatic experiences. However, though Will chooses not to discuss his traumatic experience with Mr Tom it is evident to him that Will has been physically and emotionally abused. That is not to say that there were no indirect consequences of his trauma, as discussed, the bedwetting supports Caruth's theory of an unconscious reaction to trauma.

However, as Will has both direct and indirect knowledge of his trauma it does not fit Caruth's hypothesis that traumatic memory can only be accessed belatedly rather it firmly supports Satterlee's pluralistic literary trauma theory. Much like Will, Mr Tom who is grieving the loss of his wife and child, also chooses not to discuss his trauma. However, again when questioned by Will about his wife and baby, Mr Tom openly discusses them and the trauma he suffered as a result of their loss. When Will suffers the loss of his baby sister, Mr Tom is well placed to help him navigate his trauma. However, as with the previous texts, grief is never discussed or acknowledged. Even when Will loses best friend Zach, grief is not mentioned even though the role of other traumatised villagers such as Mrs Hartridge and Geoffrey Sanderton play a vital role in helping Will through his grief. Certainly, psychiatric intervention is not valued as Mr Tom's reaction to the hospital psychiatrist reveals. It seems that the belief is that Will simply needs to get home to people who know him to get past Zach's death. However Will does not simply get past it and dissociates to cope with Zach's loss, which suggests that there is more to helping a grieving child than simply getting past it. However, the text then takes an unrealistic turn when Will simply decides Zach is no longer with him and he no longer dissociates as a means of escaping his trauma and grief.

Overall, compared to the previous texts there is more of an acknowledgement that children are affected by loss but there is still no direct acknowledgement or recognition of childhood grief in this text.

Chapter 4

A Taste of Blackberries & Bridge to Terabithia

This chapter explores childhood grief as the result of the sudden death of a friend. In this chapter, two texts are utilised to depict how a child's age can affect how a child expresses their grief. It draws on Doris Buchanan Smith's *A Taste of Blackberries* which is aimed at the children's literature market and Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* which is aimed at the YA market. It explores whether the depiction of grief in both books is reflective of developing research around childhood grief at the time of publication. It also explores whether gender influences societies reaction to a child's expression of grief. Furthermore, this chapter looks at the benefits of societal death rituals to the grieving child and explores disenfranchised grief, a type of grief that can affect a child who is not permitted to publicly express their grief.

As can be seen in *Goodnight Mr. Tom*, the impact of the loss of a friend can have a devastating effect on a child. However, the depiction of grief in both *A Taste of Blackberries* and *Bridge to Terabithia* is reflective of the developing research and support around childhood grief at that time, particularly that of Maria Nagy- a Hungarian psychologist who conducted one of the first research studies on childhood grief after WWII, and Elisabeth Kubler Ross who developed the age specific stages of grief in children in 1969. By the time these texts are published in the 1970's there is much more awareness of the effects of loss on a child and how

differing ages can affect how that grief is expressed. Therefore, for this chapter two books are analysed, one children's literature and one YA literature, to show the contrast in expressions of grief depending on the age of the child.

That is not to say that there are no commonalities between the different age groups. What many bereaved children have in common is a feeling of isolation from other children who have not been bereaved, they have 'a sense of themselves as being different or alienated from other children, thinking that no one understands how they feel. In short, children's grief may have psychological (emotional and cognitive), physical, behavioural, social, and spiritual dimensions and may be expressed in a variety of ways' (Corr et al. 2010, p. 16). However, how a child reacts to and expresses the loss of a friend is very much based on the child's age when they experience the loss. For instance, the younger child has little concept that death is final and may, for some time, expect to see the friend again. Corr et al. explain that '[i]n a world where children are mastering object permanence (appearance and disappearance), death can be confusing' (Noppe and Noppe, 2008). The first challenge for the younger child is to understand the circumstances of death and the long-term implications. The death may shake the child's sense of immortality (Snyder Cowan 2010, p. 224). On the other hand, children in the 9-12 age group, such as Will Beech, are very much aware of the finality of death but still find it difficult to accept and '[q]uite often children will make an effort to maintain an ongoing connection to the individual' (Corr et al. 2010, p. 16). Therefore, to further explore the impact of the death of a friend on

differing age groups, two texts that deal exclusively with the loss of a friend will be examined: Doris Buchanan Smith's *A Taste of Blackberries* (1973) and Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977).

Both these texts they differ from the previously discussed texts in that they are not didactic in nature. Jennifer Mooney states that '[h]istorically, the enterprise of writing for the young was associated with the notion that it ought to be educational and mindful of moral consequence' (Mooney 2023, p. 50). However, by the time of publication these texts have moved passed these notions. Instead they face the deaths of the friends head on and explore the range of dark emotions that the loss of a friend can evoke. This is particularly evident in *Bridge to Terabithia* which is aimed at an older age group than *A Taste of Blackberries*. This reflects Mooney's assertion that 'YA literature has a tradition of courting controversy in terms of how it addresses contemporary issues, but especially in more recent years in relation to the prevalence of depressing themes and bleak endings in many YA texts' (Mooney 2023, p. 50). That is not to say that *A Taste of Blackberries* shies away from the impact of loss, however given that it is aimed at a younger age group the emotions and impact of the friend's death are depicted in an effective and relatable way that is not overwhelming for the intended age group. That said, both books very much depict the harsh realities of the loss of a friend, the grief and the guilt that can accompany that loss and how the differing age groups of the two protagonists affects the way in which they deal with their friends' deaths.

4.1 Loss and Child's Age

The protagonist of *Bridge to Terabithia* is ten-year old Jesse Aaron, who experiences the loss of his friend, Leslie Burke. While *A Taste of Blackberries* does not specify the age of the unnamed child protagonist, he is portrayed as a younger child of seven to eight years old. Therefore, these two texts consider how the loss of a friend impacts the different age groups. Though two to three years does not appear to be a significant age difference, their expected reaction to the grief is very distinct. According to the Irish Childhood Bereavement Network (ICBN), the reaction to grief for a child in the 5-8 year age group is that they gradually learn that death is final, that all people will die at some time, and '[t]hey may blame themselves in some way for the death and can engage in 'magical thinking'; filling the gaps when information has not been given to them' (ICBN 2017, p.20). However, a child in the 9-12 years age group understands that 'death is irreversible, universal, and has a cause. Grief can express itself through physical aches and pains and challenging behaviour' (ICBN 2017, p.20). Though their reactions vary widely that is not to say they cannot also experience some of the same emotions as a result of grief. For instance, what is pertinent about these two texts is the responsibility and guilt both protagonists feel following the death of their friends. In *A Taste of Blackberries*, the unnamed boy narrator loses best friend Jamie to a bee sting. He is present when Jamie is stung, but he thinks Jamie is playacting when he drops to the ground. The boy leaves Jamie in the garden only to learn later that he had an allergic reaction to the sting and has died. Similarly,

Jesse Aaron in *Bridge to Terabithia* feels guilty at the death of best friend, Leslie Burke, because he goes on a trip to Washington without inviting her along. While he is away Leslie attempts to cross a flooded creek to their secret lair, falls and dies.

4.2 Jamie

Both protagonists express the guilt they feel at the loss of their friend in very different ways. Nelson and Rae state that this is a common reaction amongst bereaved children, '[w]hen children understand the idea that the loss is permanent, they can have feelings of remorse or guilt, i.e., they feel that they are in some way responsible for the situation' (Nelson and Rae 2008, p. 11). This is borne out in both texts, with both friends feeling responsible for their friend's death but an added element of guilt for both boys is that they sometimes found their friends irritating. For example, the narrator of *A Taste of Blackberries* occasionally found his friend's persistent pranking an irritation: '[t]hat Jamie. For my best friend he surely did aggravate me sometimes...he didn't know when to quit. Sometimes it was funny. Sometimes it was just plain tiresome' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 3). This irritation sometimes spilled over into physical fights, which Jamie usually won due to his sheer stubbornness:

He grabbed the side of my head and pulled me toward him, curved his leg around behind mine, then pushed. As I went down, I clutched his shirt and pulled him with me. We rolled around in the dirt until I said, "I give up." Jamie would never quit, but I got tired after a while. I had seen Jamie fight with bigger boys. Even if he was getting beat, he wouldn't give up. (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 4)

However, despite finding the friend irritating at times, the boy also accepts that without Jamie life is very dull. So even though Jamie drags them into countless scrapes it adds a sense of adventure to the boy's life. For instance, when Jamie suggests they filch crab apples from a local orchard, initially the boy declines because the farm is guarded by a farmer with a shotgun. However, Jamie accuses him of being afraid of the farmer, teasing, "Come on, chicken." to urge him on' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 6). Despite his fear, and thinking he may have seen the farmer on his porch with 'a shotgun cradled in his arms' he follows Jamie's lead: 'I squeezed my eyes closed, waiting for the blast. Next thing I knew I was in the field myself racing towards Jamie. He pushed an apple in my hand, and we made tracks back to the creek. Two boys never cleared a fence so fast' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 7).

4.3 Jesse and Leslie

In *Bridge to Terabithia* the narrator's friend, Leslie Burke, also adds a sense of excitement to Jesse Aarons' dull home life. As the middle child of four sisters, Jesse has a very mundane daily routine, that is until Leslie Burke moves into the house next door. Jesse gets up early every morning to milk the cow and practice his running, because he wants to be the fastest runner in his year when he returns to school after the summer break: '[h]e figured if he worked at it – and Lord, had he worked – he could be the fastest runner in the fifth grade when school opened up. He had to be the fastest – not one of the fastest or next to the fastest, but *the* fastest. The very best' (Paterson 2017, p. 2). After practice he goes to school and

once he returns he must help his mother farm, while his father is out trucking all day. When Leslie first moves in next door, they do not immediately hit it off. Leslie comes and introduces herself to Jesse a few days before school and then they do not see each other again until school begins. Jesse has been working very hard on his running and cannot wait to show off his progress at the first school lunch break. However, it does not go as planned: 'He felt it before he saw it. Someone was moving up. He automatically pumped harder. Then the shape was there in his sideway vision. Then suddenly they pulled ahead...This was the day he was going to be champion – and he hadn't even won his heat' (Paterson 2017, p. 34). Leslie has beaten him in the heats. Jesse is devastated not only has he been well beaten but feels an added sense of embarrassment because a girl has beaten him. In his very gender biased upbringing this brings him great shame. It turns out, however, that Leslie can beat every boy in the school at running not just Jesse: '[r]unning wasn't fun anymore. And it was all Leslie's fault. They went through the motions of the contest on Friday, but when it was over and Leslie had won again, everyone sort of knew without saying so that it was the end of the races' (Paterson 2017, p. 37). Just as with Jamie, Leslie is an irritation at times to her friend.

However, as with Jamie, her sense of adventure wins Jesse over. Once there are no more races to train for it is Leslie who suggests they set up a secret lair:

we need a place,' she said, 'just for us. It would be so secret that we would never tell anyone in the whole world about it'... 'it might be a whole secret country,' she continued, 'and you and I would be the rulers of it' her words stirred inside of him. He'd like to be a ruler of something. Even something that wasn't real. 'OK,' he said. Where could we have it? (Paterson 2017, p. 50)

They settle on a wooded area across a dry creek, and they drag board and other materials down from the scrap heap by their neighbour's, Miss Bessie, pasture, where they build their castle stronghold. It is Leslie then who names their secret land, 'Terabithia'. Much like Jamie in *A Taste of Blackberries*, Leslie has a much broader sense of adventure than Jesse, and she is prone to taking many more risks. For instance, when the dry creek that they swing across to gain access to Terabithia floods, Jesse is extremely reluctant to cross, whereas Leslie fails to see the danger. One Easter Monday, they go to the creek and the water is very high, Jesse wants to leave but Leslie insists on going across to Terabithia. Luckily, they make it across safely, but by Wednesday the creek has swollen so much that they have to run through ankle deep water just to get to the rope to swing across the creek. Jesse is very scared but Leslie 'never seemed to hesitate, so Jess could not hang back' (Paterson 2017, p. 115).

Both protagonists share a similarity in that they are the willing sidekick rather than the natural leader. In *A Taste of Blackberries* there are several examples of the boy being drawn into one of Jamie's adventures. It is obvious that Jamie has a commanding influence on the boy, who ostensibly seemed easily led, but who, on the other hand, does not need much persuading to go along with Jamie's plans. For instance, when Jamie's little sister, Martha, asks to see where the boys go to school, the boy is not so sure as they have no permission, however he still agrees to go along. Again, when they encounter heavy thunderstorms on the way to the school, Jamie decides to hitch a ride home. The boy is unsure but

when a car stops, he willingly climbs aboard with Jamie and Martha. But as can be seen, it is Jamie who takes on an assertive leadership role when the driver berates them for being so far from home alone and hitching a ride. The driver asks: 'What are you doing so far from home with such a little girl... Don't you know better than to hitch a ride? I could be a kidnapper, you know' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 19), and the boy leaves it to Jamie to deal with the interrogation. Again, when the boy's mother sees them getting out of the car and enquires whose car they are in, it is left to Jamie to cover for them, saying he was the father of one of their school friends who gave them a lift home in the storm (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 19).

Therefore, with Jamie's loss from his life, and Jesse's loss of Leslie, it is not just the loss of their friends that they are grieving, but also the loss of the more extrovert character. So, as well as losing the friend, they are also losing the confidence and sense of adventure that the friend brought to their everyday lives. This type of grief is considered a secondary loss which often occurs as a result of the death of a friend:

A secondary loss can be a physical or psychological loss that develops as a result of the initial loss. E.g., loss of confidant but also e.g., loss of ties to other friend groups where the deceased child was the common friend. Secondary losses result in incremental grief, ...when others do not understand this grief process or reaction, the child often feels unsupported, and if surviving friendships terminate, there is additional pain. (Snyder Cowan 2010, p.227)

So, while the boys sometimes felt irritated at times by their friends' risky behaviour, it also provided them with a reason to behave in a way that they would not have otherwise. This is quite evident in Jesse's case, who loved that he and

Leslie shared a secret lair that only they knew about, and where he could play out aspects of his character that he did not have the confidence to do in his everyday life:

Terabithia was their secret, which was a good thing, for how could Jess ever explain it to an outsider? Just walking down the hill toward the woods made something warm and liquid steal through his body. The closer he came to the dry creek bed and the crab apple tree rope the more he could feel the beating of his heart. He grabbed the end of the rope and swung out toward the other bank with a kind of wild exhilaration and landed gently on his feet, taller and stronger and wiser in that mysterious land. (Paterson 2017, p. 59)

Therefore, as well as losing Leslie, Jesse loses the one place where he felt confident and in control, without Leslie to share it with, Terabithia loses that meaning for him. Consequently, it is not surprising that he grieves this loss also. This is a significant loss that may not be obvious to others but is a huge void in the life of a child such as Jesse, who may not have control in other aspects of his life.

It is a particularly significant loss to Jesse because he was being bullied in school. Leslie provided a kind of remedy to these experiences, making up stories about how they defeated giants that threatened the peace of Terabithia, which, in turn, reassured and empowered Jesse. Leslie builds on Jesse's newfound sense of confidence and helps him to defeat the real giant in their life, the bully, Janice Avery. Jesse draws Janice's wrath when he defends Leslie against her but does not stand up for himself. However, when Janice turns her attention to Jesse's younger sister, May Belle, he feels obliged to retaliate.

Again, given the very strong gender lines enforced in Jesse's life, he feels unable to confront Janice physically, so Leslie comes up with a plan. She decides

to write a note purporting to be from Janice's crush, a seventh grader named Willard Hughes and plants it in her school desk. It asks her not to get on the school bus as usual but instead meet him after school. She does so; however, Will is on the bus and when Janice's friends discuss the note with him the truth emerges, and Janice becomes a laughingstock. Initially Jesse is happy that they have gotten back at Janice. However, when they return to school, Leslie hears Janice crying in the bathrooms, and, against her better judgement, Jesse advises her to try to help. She gives Janice some advice and there is a sort of truce declared between them. Therefore, the bullying issue is resolved by his friendship with Leslie, so this is another strand to the loss he has suffered. However, this aspect of loss is not always apparent to the adult caregiver. Consequently, while the death of a friend or classmate during childhood is often recognised as a significant event in a child's life, its full effect on a child may not always be properly understood by adults.

Another aspect of grieving not always acknowledged in children's literature is the guilt that the surviving child feels at the death of a friend. In *A Taste of Blackberries* Jamie is portrayed as the risk taker in the friendship and, it is his lack of reverence for threat and danger that ultimately leads to his untimely death. It was while Jamie, the boy and other neighbourhood friends were scraping beetles off Mrs. Houser's grapevines that Jamie poked a nest of bees, and was stung:

Suddenly there was a grand humming noise, louder than you would've thought bees could make... The bees came swarming up out of the hole in a ball of fury...The kids were all screaming an yelling an running for home. Except Jamie. He was already home, next to Mrs. Houser, and he wanted to put on one of his dramatic

shows for everyone. He screamed and gasped and fell on the ground. (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 25)

Jamie's death was an unfortunate accident that took place in seconds: '[o]ne minute we were all laughing at Jamie; the next he lay upon the ground like he was dying' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 23). However, the boy, sick of Jamie's carry on and believing it to be another of Jamie's pranks, does not realise the seriousness of the situation. Between the apples and taking a lift in the friend's father car, the boy had had enough of Jamie's pranks for one day, he left Jamie writhing on the ground and made his way home, taking one final look back at what he thought was Jamie putting on an act "you might as well quit it, you brat," I said under my breath. "Nobody's even watching you" (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 25).

The boy leaves Jamie writhing on the ground and goes home to get an ice pop. It is not until sometime later after the boy returns to Mrs. Houser's that he is informed by another friend, Heather, that something was in fact wrong with Jamie. It is only when Mrs Houser comes out of Jamie's house that he realises the seriousness of the situation, given that she never visits her neighbour's houses. The boy feels so guilty and upset that he left Jamie when he needed help that he instantly goes into denial when the other neighbourhood kids speculate whether or not Jamie is actually dead. The boy calls them crazy and declares: 'Nobody dies of bee stings', and that Jamie was likely to have hurt himself having a fit (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 31). Furthermore, the boy tries to convince himself that the other kids are overreacting, and that Jamie is simply attention seeking, stating: '[h]e was an expert attention getter, even when, maybe he didn't intend to be...I guess I was

the only kid in the neighborhood who hadn't been impressed by that ambulance' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 32).

Likewise, in *Bridge to Terabithia*, Jesse suffers from a deep sense of guilt when Leslie dies. When Jesse and Leslie go to the creek on Easter Monday, the water is very high. Jesse has concerns about crossing the creek during the flood, but Leslie insists on going across to Terabithia, and they make it across safely. However, by Wednesday the creek has swollen so much that they have to run through ankle deep water just to get to the rope to swing across the creek. Jesse is very scared but Leslie 'never seemed to hesitate, so Jess could not hang back' (Paterson 2017, p.115). After the rain persists for several days, Jesse makes the decision that he will tell Leslie he is too afraid to cross to Terabithia again.

However, he does not get the opportunity to tell her, as it is at that moment that May Belle comes to say there is a phone call for him. Jesse is so excited about the call from Miss Edmunds, asking him if he would like to accompany her to the Smithsonian in Washington, that he does not get the chance to speak with Leslie. To add to his sense of guilt in his excitement '[i]t didn't occur to him until the car was past Millsburg that he might have asked Miss Edmunds if Leslie could have come, too. When he thought about it, he couldn't suppress a secret pleasure at being alone in this small cosy car with Miss Edmunds' (Paterson 2017, p.126). Afterwards Jesse's guilt is twofold, he did not warn Leslie not to cross the creek again while the water was swollen and also that he did not think to ask if Leslie could come along on the trip.

While both boys' senses of guilt at the death of their friends seems justified in their eyes, often the bereaved child feels guilty even when there is no obvious reason. Diane Snyder Cowan believes this to be a normal childhood response to grief:

Common reactions that occur when a friend dies include confusion, sense of disbelief, fear, anger, self-blame, and guilt. Other reactions include loneliness, a sense of responsibility of regret, reminders and dreams of the deceased, concentration difficulties, and possible sleeping difficulties and somatic complaints. Like adults, children will grieve in their own unique ways. However, they are often ill-equipped to identify, let alone manage, these feelings and other grief reactions, and the grief may not even manifest itself until months or years later. (Snyder 2010, p. 222)

This sense of disbelief is evident in the boy's reaction to Jamie's death in *A Taste of Blackberries*; he does not want to believe it. However, he cannot remain in denial for long. When he sees his mother crossing the road and she motions for him to come with her, he senses the urgency and runs over to her. On one level he knows what she is going to tell him, but is conflicted, 'part of me wanted to find out all about Jamie; but the other part was afraid to hear' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 33). This need to know but not wanting to accept the death of a friend is a further frequent reaction to grief. To best address the death of a friend with a child, Worden believes that the bereaved child needs adequate information:

clear and comprehensible, about an impending death and after a death has occurred, fears and anxieties should be addressed, reassurance that they are not to blame, careful listening and not minimise their concerns, validation of their feelings, help with overwhelming feelings, involvement and inclusion before and after a death without being forced to join in, continued routine activities play school etc, modelled grief behaviour adults sharing their own grief opportunities to remember. (Worden 1996, p. 19)

This is executed very well in *A Taste of Blackberries*, as the boy's mother addresses the situation head on: '[s]he sat down at the kitchen table and motioned for me to sit down. I couldn't sit. Some awful instinct was hammering on my brain. I tried not to listen "Jamie is dead, darling," she said' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p.33). While the mother's method of imparting the news may seem very candid, this is considered the best method for children of this age because '[i]f they do not receive accurate information to guide their understandings of such events, they most often will attempt to develop their own explanations about what is going on. The danger is that the demons of their imaginations may be far scarier than the truth about what is really happening' (Corr et al. 2010, pp. 24-25). However, it does not make it any easier for the boy to accept: '[i]t was as though she had punched me in the stomach. I saw Jamie again falling down and writhing. I closed my eyes. I shouldn't have run. I should have helped him. But how could I know? I swallowed. I thought I was going to be sick' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 34).

4.4 Grief and Gender

In *Bridge to Terabithia*, Jesse does not have such an open relationship with his parents, particularly not with his father. His father is depicted as a person with very concrete ideas on gender specific roles and expectations for his children. For example, Jesse would love to be an artist, but his father does not see it as a proper job for a boy, especially his boy:

He would like to show his drawings to his dad, but he didn't dare. When he was in first grade, he had told his dad that he wanted to be an artist when he grew up. He'd thought his dad would be pleased. He wasn't. "What are they teaching you in that damn school?" he had asked. Bunch of old ladies turning my only son into some kind of a –"he has stopped on the word, but Jess had gotten the message. It was one you didn't forget, even after four years. (Paterson 2017, p. 17)

So, while Jesse spends the majority of the day in the company of females, his father expects him to act in stereotypical masculine ways, yet the father does not make an effort to interact with him and give him an example of the behaviour he expects of him. Jesse's father thinks that the behaviour he expects of Jesse is innate, and it is a burden on his son to know how to act in such ways:

Sometimes he felt so lonely among all these females – even the one rooster had died, and they hadn't yet gotten another. With his father gone from sunup until well past dark who was there to know how he felt? Weekends weren't any better. His dad was so tired from the wear and tear of the week and trying to catch up around the place that when he wasn't actually working, he was sleeping in front of the TV. (Paterson 2017, p. 18)

Yet Jesse's father treats his daughters in a vastly different way, he opens the truck door for her, May Belle can run after the dad and hug and kiss him which would not be acceptable coming from Jesse, and Jesse is envious of that relationship stating that May Belle is a '[d]arn lucky kid. She could run after him and grab and kiss him. It made Jesse ache inside to watch his dad grab the little one to his shoulder or lean down and hug them. It seemed to him that he had been too big for that since the day he was born' (Paterson 2017, p. 19).

This is significant because a parent's behaviour with a child clearly influences many aspects of their emotional maturity and can prove to be particularly

important when a child is coping with loss. Being upfront and candid about the death of a friend and willing to listen and speak with the child is an especially important aspect of helping a child cope with loss. However, it is not the only way to help a child cope with loss. In addition, the reaction of the child's caregiver to the death of their friend is particularly important, as children look to adults to help process their grief:

With death the child's worldview is disrupted. The child's illusion is that the world is out of control. Children often turn to families for support; however, many adults do not recognise their child's grief or are grieving themselves...Children can feel very alone if parents are not supportive or if the school is unable to help (Snyder 2010, p. 224)

Obviously, there are helpful and harmful ways to go about being candid with the child. As mentioned above, *A Taste of Blackberries* depicts a helpful approach to the child's reaction to the loss of his friend. When the boy tells his mother that he thought Jamie was faking when he fell down, she reaches out to him, but he believes he is 'out of reach and I didn't move closer' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p.4). However, what is important here is that even though the boy feels he is beyond his mother's help, how she portrays her reaction to Jamie's death helps the boy to cope with his own grief.

Where *Bridge to Terabithia* differs is that it does not try to soften the impact of Leslie's death. For example, the way in which Jesse learns of Leslie's death is quite brutal. When Jesse returns from his trip with Miss Edwards, he is very excited to tell Leslie all about it. However, when he gets home all of the family is sitting around the table not eating and with the TV off. When his mother sees him, she

starts wailing: “[w]hat –?” he tried to begin. Brenda’s pouting voice broke in “Your girlfriend’s dead, and Momma thought you was dead, too” (Paterson 2017, p. 130). This is how Jesse first hears of Leslie’s death. However, an unexpected source of solace comes from Jesse’s father, who is a little more compassionate explaining: ‘[t]hey found the Burke girl this morning down in the creek’ (Paterson 2017, p. 131). Jesse displays a common reaction to grief and goes straight to denial in order to process the information being imparted to him: “No” he said, finding his voice. “Leslie wouldn’t drown. She could swim real good” (Paterson 2017, p. 130). Jesse’s father further explains ‘that rope you kids been swinging on broke’. His father went quietly and relentlessly on ‘they think she musta hit her head on something when she fell’ (Paterson 2017, p. 132). Jesse is unable to cope with what he is hearing, and he accuses them of lying before fleeing. Denial is an expected reaction to childhood grief, as the child is overwhelmed by what they are hearing and cannot process it. Lancaster argues that: ‘[y]oung children may exhibit the normal process of "magical thinking," believing that the loved one can return upon a wish. Other children may try to search the home or neighborhood to find the absent loved one’ (Lancaster 2011, p. 277). Therefore, it is important that the adults in the child’s life are supportive and understanding and give time to listen to the child.

Though portrayed as a man who treats his child’s emotional needs according to the strictures of defined gender expectations, in *Bridge to Terabithia*, Jesse’s father goes against type when he follows him and picks him up in his arms:

For the first few seconds Jesse kicked and struggled against the strong arms. Then Jesse gave himself over to the numbness that was buzzing to be let out from a corner of his brain. When they

pulled up to the house, his father sat quietly, and Jess could feel the man's uncertainty, so he opened the door and got out, and with the numbness flooding through him, went in and lay down on his bed. (Paterson 2017, p. 132)

This demonstrates the father's own uncertainty about how to behave, but it is vital that adults are open about their own sense of loss and grief. What is crucial is that the adult does not attempt to hide it from their children in the mistaken belief that it is best not to upset them. In fact, the opposite is true:

Shock, disbelief, sadness, anxiety, fear, and anger are heightened as part of the grief reaction. It is the role of the families, the school, and the community to help these children identify and express these big feelings, empower them with constructive coping strategies, and transform the experience into something positive. (Snyder Cowan 2010, p. 232)

At times these feelings are so overwhelming that children will often try to block them out in order to try to cope with the trauma. This is why it is important that parents, in particular, help the child to process these feelings rather than to suppress them. Johnson and Afgun state that bereaved children experience 'feelings of disbelief, anger and bitterness, preoccupation and yearning for the deceased avoidance, withdrawal and loneliness difficulties accepting the loss of the deceased, and visual and auditory hallucinations' (Johnson and Afgun 2021, p. 249) which is very well depicted in both texts, For example, in *Bridge to Terabithia*, Jesse retreats to his bedroom and eventually falls asleep. He awakens later and tries to convince himself that it was just a bad dream. He thinks he should go find her and go to Terabithia with her, even though they have never been in the dark, '[b]ut there was enough moon for them to find their way into the castle, and he

could tell her about his day in Washington. And apologize. It had been dumb of him not to ask if Leslie could go, too' (Paterson 2017, p. 135). In an attempt to appease this feeling of guilt, Jessie visualises this meeting with Leslie, apologising to her for not thinking to ask her to come to Washington and Leslie brushing off his apology saying she'd been 'thousands of times' before (Paterson 2017, p. 135). Even the morning after, Jesse continues to behave as though nothing has happened. However, realising that Jesse is in denial, his father sits beside him and says 'your friend Leslie is dead, Jess. You need to understand that' (Paterson 2017, p. 139). While Jesse may not want to speak about it, he does have to acknowledge and accept the truth. Although he is an older child than the boy in *A Taste of Blackberries*, Jesse still processes the death of his friend in a childlike manner, and he finds it difficult to accept that Leslie has died. This is not unexpected at Jesse's age, while a child of his age understands death, depending on the child they sometimes struggle with the permanence of death. Maria Nagy, a Hungarian psychologist, examined 378 children living in Budapest just after World War Two. Nagy discovered children in age range seven to ten years old believed that death was not definitive, and did not see it as final, rather they equated it with sleep or departure. Nagy found that in this age group, death was often personified as a person such as the grim reaper or a ghost. Therefore, they believed death could be escaped if they were quick enough i.e., they believed death could be avoided. So, depending on the emotional maturity of the child, it is not unusual that a child of Jesse's age may not initially accept that their friend has died and try to act as if it has not occurred.

When Jesse moves past trying to block out the death of Leslie, he thinks ahead to how the other children in his class will react when he returns to school:

'[h]e was the only person his age he knew whose best friend had died. It made him important. The kids at school on Monday would probably whisper around him and treat him with respect – the way they'd all treated Billy Joe Weems last year after his father had been killed in a car crash' (Paterson 2017, p. 143)

But it is not long before his thoughts turn to anger '...Leslie had failed him. She went and died just when he needed her most. She went and left him. She went swinging on that rope just to show him that she was no coward' (Paterson 2017, p. 145). In anger, he throws all the paints Leslie had bought him as a present into the creek. His father comes to try to comfort him, patting him on the head. However, Jesse is too angry to take comfort from his father, shouting: 'I hate her I wish I'd never seen her in my whole life' (Paterson 2017, p. 147). ICBN state that anger is a natural emotion for a child of Jesse's age, as they have difficulty expressing their emotions at the death of the friend. Indeed, they may be angry at the person who has died for dying, they may be angry at those around them because they feel they do not understand what they are feeling or they may be angry at themselves because they do not know how to process the myriad of emotions they are feeling (ICBN 2017, p.20). As can be seen in *Bridge to Terabithia*, Jesse's mood swings from one emotion to the next in a matter of minutes. This is a very good example of how the bereaved child may act and react to the death of their friend. They may even have what could be perceived as selfish thoughts. For instance, Jesse thinks now that Leslie is dead, he is 'now the fastest runner in fifth

grade' (Paterson 2017, p. 146). Again, these range of feelings are not unusual for a bereaved child of Jesse's age.

4.5 Benefits of Death Rituals

What is also interesting in both texts are the differing beliefs that the children have regarding what happens after death. In *A Taste of Blackberries*, the boy questions the meaning of death and what happens after death. As he is young, he does not accept that death is final. He wonders what kind of things Jamie can do now that he has died: '[w]hat kind of things could you do when you were dead? Or was dead just plain dead and that's all?' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 36). That is not to say that he does not understand that Jamie is gone, 'I looked at Jamie's window. He would never flash me a signal again' (Buchanan Smith 1988, pp. 3637), and later on he remarks: '[n]o more Jamie. Who would we have to make us laugh anymore?' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p.39). So, the boy does understand that Jamie is gone but requires support accepting the permanence of death. Thus, an important aspect of the grieving process to aid the child's management of their grief is the funeral process.

Nelson and Rae believe this is an especially important aspect of the grieving process for the child stating, 'another area which may affect whether a child is able to cope with death, loss and bereavement is the cultural and religious background. The process of grieving may be shaped or dictated by the customs of the religion or culture' (Nelson and Rae 2008, p. 9). Historically, it was not commonplace for children to attend funerals, as such ceremonies were understood to be beyond the

comprehension of the grieving child. However, in more recent times, the opposite is true, as Noope and Noope believe: '[t]he funeral is an important ritual for the release of grief and can be a valuable educational opportunity. However, children need to be told what to expect, particularly if it is an open coffin as the sight of a friend in a coffin can heighten fears' (Noppe and Noppe 2008, p. 232). Not only can the thought of the funeral be daunting to the child but, as it is a societal practice only conducted when somebody has died, it means the death of the friend has to be acknowledged and accepted by those attending. This can be difficult for children in the five-to eight-year-old age bracket, as can be seen by the boy's reaction to his parents as they prepare to attend Jamie's funeral: 'Dad and mom were getting ready to go to the funeral parlor. They asked me if I wanted to go, but I couldn't do that to Jamie. It seemed that as long as I acted like he wasn't dead, he wouldn't be dead' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 40). For the boy, it would almost amount to a betrayal of Jamie if he were to attend the funeral. By agreeing to attend the service, it will mean that Jamie's death is real, and this is too much for the boy to cope with.

An added element of worry for Jesse is that Leslie's family were not religious. The Aarons were not very religious themselves and only went to church at Easter, with Leslie joining them on a single occasion because she had never been before (Paterson 2017, p. 102). However, when Leslie says she doesn't believe in the Bible it worried Jesse's little sister, May Belle, who had asked Leslie: 'What if you *die*? What's going to happen to you if you *die*?' (Paterson 2017, p. 109). While the question is an innocent query at this time, it becomes a source of distress for

the Aaron children when Leslie does die. They are concerned for what happens to her now that she has died. In addition to these changing emotions, Jesse has the added worry that Leslie will go to hell because she wasn't religious, but his father reassures him: 'lord, boy, don't be a fool. God ain't gonna send any little girls to hell' (Paterson 2017, p. 148). This is why a strong adult caregiver is very important to allay the fears of the grieving child. Therefore, an important factor that can prove beneficial to the grieving child is being part of the funeral process. Even though it can seem daunting to the child, Noope and Noope believe that the funeral process is an essential element in the grieving process for the child. Moreover, '[w]hen friends are invited to participate in a funeral, it helps them feel respected as mourners.' Particularly as '[t]he death of a friend can be the first death a child experiences' and '[a]cknowledging and validating grief reactions is the first step in recovery' (Noope and Noope 2008, p.232). Lancaster concurs, stating, '[n]ot being included in family rituals could be more upsetting. It helps to see how adults grieve; children may resent their exclusion. Their involvement will assist with grieving.' Further adding '[c]hildren can benefit from helping to plan and by attending the funeral, including allowing them opportunities for questions and learning from the emotional reaction of adults. They can benefit from the support of others displayed at funerals to help overcome feelings of isolation' (Lancaster 2011, p. 277).

Therefore, how a caregiver reacts to the first experience of death for a child can impact how the child grieves for that friend and how they cope with the loss in general. For example, in *A Taste of Blackberries* despite his parents'

encouragement to attend Jamie's funeral, the boy is very hesitant to go. However, by showing they are still going to attend the funeral despite his hesitancy, his parents occasion a change in his mind about attending: '[t]hey were going to see Jamie. Suddenly, panicky, I yelled. Wait. Wait for me' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 42). That is not to say that he was wholly comfortable with the idea, 'I'd never been to a funeral parlor before, I'd been to a funeral, at a church, when my dad's Uncle Jonah died. He had tripped with this shotgun and blown the top off his head. At least that's what they said' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 42). This demonstrates that the boy's prior experience of death was one where he was kept in the dark about the true nature of his uncle's passing. However, children, even young children, 'notice disruptions in the emotional currents of their families, so it is not unusual for them to sense that something important is happening when the adults around them are grieving. Children may not completely understand such emotional disruptions, but they are not likely to be wholly oblivious' (Corr et al., 2010, p. 24). So, while keeping the true nature of his uncle's death from the boy was most likely done in good faith, he understood enough to realise he was not being told the whole truth.

However, this retention of information to protect the boy has had the unintended consequence of determining how he reacts to his next death experience. Therefore, this demonstrates why it is vitally important to be as frank and open as possible with children around the topic of death and grief, no matter what their age. While the boy acknowledges that Jamie's death was under different circumstances: '[o]f course nothing like that had happened to Jamie', as

a result of being kept in the dark about the nature of his uncle's death, he questions whether the circumstances of Jamie's death were true. He questions if Jamie's death could simply have been the result of a bee sting, '[h]e had got stung by a couple of bees. It just didn't seem possible that a tiny thing like a bee could kill' (Buchanan Smith 1988, pp. 42-43). That is why going to the funeral is an important aspect of the grieving process for a child; the boy can gain some acceptance that Jamie is gone and see that he is not the only one grieving the loss of Jamie. However, although children benefit from attending the funeral, they do need some protection from the raw expression of grief that may be shown at that time. Therefore, attending in the company of someone less affected by the death than the immediate relatives, such as the grieving child's parents, is desirable (Black 1998, p.931).

Additionally, attending the funeral helps the boy to process his feelings around Jamie's sudden death and he feels that he is honouring his memory: '...if it was possible that Jamie knew what was going on I wanted him to know I was there, thinking about him...I leaned my back against the door frame, thinking to Jamie. I'm here. I'm here, Jamie' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 44). Furthermore, it helps the child to accept the finality of death, particularly as, sometimes adults, use euphemisms such as the dead are sleeping or eternally resting, which can hinder the acceptance process. This was the experience of the boy, who was unprepared for the viewing of Jamie's body in the funeral home: '[h]e didn't look like he was asleep to me. Jamie slept all bunched up, Jamie looked dead...It began to sink in that Jamie wasn't going to open his eyes and stare back at me. He wasn't going to

blink. He wasn't going to laugh' (Buchanan Smith 1988, pp. 44- 45). As a result, the boy was unprepared and unable to cope with the resulting emotions and he ran from the funeral home. However, he was in the fortunate position of having two supportive parents, his father providing physical support: '[m]y father called to me and grabbed my shoulder and turned me around. "Daddy!" I buried my head in his chest until he buttons in his suit hurt my face' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 45). While his mother provided emotional support: 'Mother hung around, telling me that sometimes we don't understand why certain things happen. She waited for me to talk. I just lay in my bed with my hands behind my head' (Buchanan Smith 1988, p. 45). It is important that support of the grieving child extends beyond the funeral, as is evident in *A Taste of Blackberries*. The boy is very distressed, crying not just for Jamie but for himself, 'the strange thing is I wasn't crying for Jamie, I was crying for me... the tears kept coming until I had them smeared all over my face. My face was tight where the tears had dried' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 47). The boy's father is there to provide support and, rather than quietening him, allows him to express his grief while providing physical consolation, he 'came over and picked me up as easy as if I were a baby. He sat me on his lap and cradled my head to his chest. Funny, I hadn't thought of dad's lap, but it was just as good, I cried and cried and cried' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 48).

4.6 Disenfranchised Grief

Another reason that attending the funeral is so important for a child is so that there can be a public acknowledgement of their grief. If there is no such

validation of grief there is a risk that disenfranchised grief may occur. The term disenfranchised grief is a phrase developed by Doka to describe grief that is not publicly acknowledged or socially sanctioned. It is characterised as 'grief when it is not acknowledged or addressed by society. Disenfranchisement occurs because of the socially constructed nature of grief, with social norms determining what can be visibly acknowledged, publicly lamented, or socially supported, and for how long and by whom' (Leitch 2021, p. 355). Therefore, the concept of disenfranchised grief recognises that societies have sets of norms – in effect, grieving rules – that attempt to specify who, when, where, how, how long, and for whom people should. For this reason, the grief of children is often disenfranchised, because they are often overlooked in the grieving process. As a result, bereaved children are frequently referred to as the invisible or forgotten mourners (Snyder Cowan 2010, p. 226). It is particularly a problem in bereaved children as: '[t]here is limited support for the grief of friends and few rituals legitimating friends as mourners' (Silverman 2000, cited in Snyder Cowan 2010, p. 226). That is why, as previously mentioned, parents and adult caregivers are so important because they 'create the social norms for the grief experience. Their belief or lack thereof about the impact of the loss can disenfranchise the grief' (Rowling 2002). What should also be noted is that children can form attachments quickly, and do not necessarily have to be a close friend of the deceased for a prolonged period to be deeply affected by their loss. At times, adults may not appreciate the depth of grief a child is suffering because they do not believe the children to be close friends. However, these grieving rules may not correspond to the nature of attachments, the sense of loss,

or the feelings of survivors and hence their grief is disenfranchised (Corr et al. 2010 p. 37). Human beings have a great capacity to attach – to a wide variety of others, in our past or present, to people we do not even know, across species – and when there is a loss of that attachment, we grieve (Corr et al. 2010).

Another important aspect of the grieving process for the child is the difficulty in accepting that life continues despite the trauma that has disrupted their life. In *A Taste of Blackberries*, the boy finds it very distressing that the neighbourhood children are out playing just a day after Jamie's death: '[t]he next morning some of the kids were playing...I wondered how they could play at all. The heaviness of Jamie's death was on me' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 49). The boy could not understand why the other children seemed unaffected by the loss of Jamie, 'They were busy playing sling statue. Games, I thought. And Jamie just dead. I shook my head, ashamed that they could so easily forget. Ashamed, too, that my own feet seemed anxious to run and jump and play' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 70). However, despite the boy's distress at the other children playing, *The Harvard Child Bereavement* study, conducted in 1996, states that a grieving child should be encouraged to resume activities such as playing, to give them some respite from being engulfed by grief (Worden 1996). Furthermore, the study states that rather than withdraw and:

become preoccupied with thoughts about the person who has died, many bereaved children immerse themselves in activities of everyday life, such as play and school. This behaviour pattern appears to reflect a temporary defence against being overwhelmed by the implications of the loss. In doing so, children seem to engage in a kind of dosing themselves with grief and

mourning, allowing themselves to experience their grief reactions and their efforts to cope for a while, but then turning away when that becomes overwhelming or when other concerns attract their attention (Worden 1996, pp 16-17)

However, although it is important to support a child's desire to engage in play, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all children respond to grief in the same way, as can be seen by Jamie's friends' reaction. Here, the boy is very much upset at the return to routine so while it is important to be aware of the benefit of play as a form of escape, it is also important to note that each child grieves individually. As *Bridge to Terabithia* demonstrates a return to normality can help the grieving child, but it can also magnify the loss of the friend. When Jesse imagines returning to school, he thinks about how he will be centre of attention because he was Leslie's best friend:

He could hear the whispers behind him. He was suddenly ashamed that he'd thought he might be regarded with respect by the other kids. Trying to profit for himself from Leslie's death. I wanted to be the best – the fastest runner in the school – and now I am. Lord, he made himself sick. (Paterson 2017, p.143)

This is not the only insight into how unprepared he was for the return to school; he was ill-equipped for the impact it would have on him that Leslie would not be there. Even though he knew Leslie was dead, still he half expected her to run across the fields for the school bus on Monday. When she did not, he convinced himself that Bill had already dropped her, but when he got in and her desk had been removed from the class, he could no longer pretend to himself that everything was okay and felt very deflated (Paterson 2017, p.143). This demonstrates that the

school plays a role in dealing with child's loss of a friend, because the school, and particularly the classroom, provides a sense of community and 'psychological grounding' for students. When trauma happens, security is lost (Snyder Cowan 2010, p. 229). This is very well reflected in the book. The school made the decision to remove Leslie's desk prior to the return of the children. The decision was based on the fear that it would magnify the loss of the school friend if there was an empty desk at the top of the class as a constant reminder. However, it has the opposite effect on Jesse, who feels they are trying to eradicate Leslie's memory: '[w]hy were they all in such a rush to be rid of her? He put his head down on his desk, his whole body heavy and cold' (Paterson 2017, p. 157).

Another aspect of loss that the grieving child must deal with is interacting with the grieving family. For example, in *A Taste of Blackberries* the boy must deal with Jamie's younger sister, Martha, and also with Jamie's mother. Due to her early age, Martha is unaware of the impact of Jamie's death on others, so the boy must cope with her unfiltered observations about Jamie's death: 'Jamie's dead. She said...Jamie's not coming home again. Not ever. Her little face still had a pudgy baby look, and she didn't cry at all as she talked about it. She might as well have reached inside me and snatched out some of my guts' (Buchanan Smith 1983, pp57-58). On the other hand, as an older child, the boy is more aware of the grief endured by others, and, in particular, he is concerned that he will be a reminder to Jamie's mother of the child she has lost and he feels guilty about this, '...it didn't seem fair to remind Jamie's mother that I was alive' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 58).

While attending the funeral and going through the rites is an aid to the grieving child to accept the loss of a friend, that is not to say that they will automatically fully accept that the friend is gone for good. Many children, as can be seen with the boy in *A Taste of Blackberries*, resort to bargaining in an attempt to change the reality of the situation in which they find themselves. Lancaster makes the point that:

The act of asking God to return the loved one in return for a chore or a promise to be fulfilled by the child is more natural for children. The difficulty in understanding the permanence of death adds to the notion that the loved one can be returned. Adolescents and adults also commonly bargain for more time with the lost loved one. (Lancaster 2011, p. 277)

Lancaster's insight resonates with the actions of the boy in *A Taste of Blackberries*. Even though he has attended the funeral home and seen Jamie laid out in his coffin, still he feels that acting in a particular way could change the reality that Jamie was dead: 'I kept feeling if I did certain things, like think about Jamie in the bathtub, or didn't do certain things, like eat, that somehow everything would be all right and it wouldn't be true that Jamie was dead' (Buchanan Smith 1983 p. 58). However, the realisation soon hits that nothing will change the awful truth of Jamie's death '...the more I began to know that it wasn't a dream. No matter what we wished, or hoped, it was real' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 59). This reality hit most when the day of the burial arrived. The first thing the boy notices is that Jamie's younger sister, Martha, is not present. He questions his mother about Martha's absence: 'Where is Martha? I asked... honey she is too young. She doesn't understand what is going on. I almost said yes she does but I kept my mouth shut'

(Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 60). Martha's absence confirms the widely held belief that a funeral and/or burial were entirely inappropriate settings and occasions for a child of her age. While that may be true of some children of her young age, current thought on childhood grief suggests that attending the funeral is better than not as it gives some closure to the child. However, preparing the child about what to expect at a funeral is vital as they are most likely not to have been to one before.

In *A Taste of Blackberries*, the boy is aware that 'all of Jamie's friends would be there. A preacher or someone would say some things about Jamie. Then Jamie would be buried' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 49). Another important aspect of the funeral is that it allows the grieving child to question why this awful thing has happened and it broadens the number of people they can speak to about their grief. For instance, the boy speaks with his neighbour, Mrs. Mullins, about Jamie's death: "Why did he have to die?" The question lay in the air between us. The sound of it shocked me but Mrs Mullins didn't act surprised' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 54). The boy's presence at the funeral allows him to express thoughts that they may feel reluctant to discuss with people closer to them. For instance, the boy also asks the neighbour: "What's it like to be dead? Or is that another one of those questions?" (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 55). While it may not provide many answers, by allowing the child to attend the funeral they can ask the questions they otherwise may not get the opportunity to express, as family members may be reluctant to discuss the loss of the friend for fear of upsetting them. As the boy

reveal, the boy's sister does not discuss Jamie's death with him at all 'My sister didn't say anything to me about Jamie and I didn't say anything to her about him.

Maybe she was afraid I would cry' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 55).

Attending the funeral is also a pathway to acceptance, a step towards recognising that life can and will continue. Many children feel guilty about doing even the most mundane of things such as eating, as they realise that their friend is unable to do these simple everyday tasks. In *A Taste of Blackberries*, the boy does not understand why he feels the way he does, but he knows that once he attends the funeral these tasks will become easier to complete, 'I hadn't eaten anything since Jamie died...it was over 24 hours now. My stomach was gnawing on itself...how could I explain to her? Maybe it didn't make much sense, but I knew I couldn't eat until after the funeral' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p.56). The funeral is also an opportunity to think about what comes after death if anything. The boy thinks that: 'Jamie would be happier on the ground, playing with me and picking blackberries. It didn't seem possible for heaven to be so wonderful that you weren't even lonesome for the people and the things you knew before' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 60). In a way, it is an opportunity to think through these thoughts and to gain a perspective on the finality of death. It is not so much the funeral ritual itself but rather the time it gives the child to process their thoughts in a given time and place that is important to the boy: 'I wasn't paying much attention [to the burial service]. I was busy trying to make Jamie hear me, make him know I was there. During the prayer I looked at the toes of my shoes. It was hard to think about

God when something as small as a bee could kill your best friend' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 65).

Even during the funeral service, the boy is hoping Jamie will commune with him: 'I wished Jamie could tell me. I closed my eyes and concentrated on listening to him' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 60). What the funeral service also gives the child is the opportunity to see that they are not the only ones grieving the loss of the friend. They see the parents, siblings, family, and friends of the lost child mourning their loss, so they get a sense of community and solidarity in the loss of the friend. While they may not approach any of the other mourners, the boy wants to but can't speak to Jamie's parents, as he reveals: '[m]y brain was swirling with all the things I wanted to say and couldn't' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 71). Even prior to the funeral he had wanted to approach Jamie's parents but cannot find the right words to express how he feels about losing Jamie: 'I wanted to run to them [Jamie's parents] and say something to them, but I was finding out that some things were impossible. Like making Jamie come back alive' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 63). But the funeral does show him that he is not alone in his grief. This is particularly important because the loss of a friend leaves a huge gap in the young person's life, as the boy states: '[t]here was the hole. Jamie's hole' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 65), and it is important for the child to see that they are not the only person who feels this way.

In the end, however, *A Taste of Blackberries* resolves the boy's experience of grief in a cursory and unsatisfactory manner, wherein, once the funeral is

concluded, the boy very quickly goes back to his normal life. The narrative provides a few further invocations of the boy's relationship with the deceased Jamie, such as when the boy thinks how he would like to pick fresh blackberries for his breakfast the following morning and how he wishes Jamie was with him: 'I wished I was invisible. I didn't want anyone to see me, even Heather. I wanted to go blackberry picking with Jamie' (Buchanan Smith 1983 p. 68). Slightly later, he has an imaginary conversation with Jamie: 'Boy, look at those big ones, Jamie. I'll take your mother the best ones...Do you remember, I asked Jamie in my mind, 'the taste of blackberries?' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 70). However, the book simply finishes with the boy stating that now the funeral was over, so is the 'main sadness [...] In my relief I felt that Jamie too was glad the main sadness was over. I wondered how fat angels, or whatever he was now, could move. 'Race you' I called to him, and I ran up the hill' (Buchanan Smith 1983, p. 73). This is not at all realistic and is very misleading for the child reader. Neither a grieving child nor an adult would suddenly overcome the 'main sadness' of loss after the funeral. For children, the main impact of the death can occur many months after the loss of the friend. Children are intermittent grievers, and as they move through their developmental stages, grief can resurface (Smith, 1999 cited in Snyder Cowan 2010, p.225). This delayed reaction is often confusing for adults who think the child 'should be over it' and do not recognise that the child's grief has been triggered by other events (Snyder Cowan 2010, p. 225). Because of this 'it can be difficult to distinguish between 'normal' and 'traumatic' grief ...and any number of triggers can cause a new burst of grief' (Snyder Cowan 2010, p. 229). Certainly, it is not a linear and

neatly defined process to be wrapped up and forgotten about once the funeral and burial have taken place, as a portrait of a grieving child the book's resolution provides an unrealistic picture of the grieving process and how long it can take to regain a sense of normality.

As far back as the 1940's, Maria Nagy was developing age specific stages of grief for children. While many children's stages of grief fall within the expected age specific brackets, it is important to listen to the individual child. It should not be assumed that very young children have no awareness of death and or that mature children have grasped the concept of the finality of death. Children can grasp the concept that '[t]he cessation of corporal life is a third stage of understanding, they recognise that death is a process that operates within us, a process in which bodily life ends and that death is both final and universal' (Corr et al. 2010, p. 26). However, that is not to say that they do not still talk to the deceased friend or feel a bond with them. As can be seen in both texts, despite the age differences, the bereaved child continues to connect with their deceased friend. With this in mind, it is important to stress that: '[t]hese connections involve continuing bonds with an internal representation of that individual. Such bonds depend on new, altered relationships with the deceased, who remain transformed, but ongoing presence in the life of a bereaved child. (Objects, photos, mementoes)' (Corr et al. 2010, p. 16). Literature can play a key role in helping the bereaved child to understand that they are not alone in their grief and demonstrate to them that the feelings they have are natural. While there are a vast number of children's books focusing on death and dying, these two texts are particularly good at showing the whole

grieving process from denial to anger to sadness to the funeral process and life beyond the death of the friend. Corr et al. believe that children can often personalise what is happening in the book to their world. Literature used in middle-school classes frequently includes the death of a character. This storyline can be used as an educational opportunity on how to cope with grief and loss (Snyder Cowan 2010, p. 233). For that reason, both texts are a good example of how these bonds can continue after the death of a friend. Most importantly they show that 'Children do grieve, and their grief, whether it be sporadic, traumatic, or ongoing, needs to be validated and normalized' (Snyder Cowan 2010, p. 235).

Most importantly, both texts demonstrate that life does not always have a happy ending. As Mooney states there is a problem with many YA texts in that they feel obligated to provide a happy ending, 'The idea that an 'unhappy ending' in YA is problematic relates to the notion that difficult or challenging subject matter ought to have a cathartic effect on the reader, and that one of the main functions of YA is to impart a sense of hope, rather than hopelessness, about the difficulties involved in burgeoning adulthood to a coming-of-age reader' (Mooney 2023, p. 51). However, as both these texts demonstrate awful things can and do happen, and these texts do not feel obliged to provide the prerequisite happy ending.

While it may seem the boy in *A Taste of Blackberries* seems to accept the loss of Jamie quite readily at the end, this reflects the expected reaction of a boy that age, as detailed in Nagy's age stages of grief. Nagy found that children in the seven to ten age bracket believed that death was not definitive, and did not see it as final,

so the finality of death would not be understood by the boy. Therefore, both texts treat the young adult reader/child reader in the mature manner they merit.

Chapter 5

A Monster Calls

Set in contemporary England and reflecting the time of its publication in 2011, *A Monster Calls* details the trauma and grief of 13-year-old Conor O'Malley, as he struggles to cope with his mother's terminal diagnosis and her inevitable death. *A Monster Calls* is specifically aimed at the young adolescent reader, so depicts the more complex reactions to grief that bereaved teenagers may experience. This chapter explores the concept of anticipatory grief which is a type of grief suffered by the child prior to the death of a terminally ill parent. In particular, it examines the guilt Conor feels at wishing his mother's suffering would end for both their sakes. Additionally, as this text resonates with many of the theories of trauma central to the arguments of this thesis, particularly those of Caruth, Freud and Leys, this chapter addresses issues such as the unspeakability of trauma and associated involuntary nightmares. In addition, this text addresses themes of guilt, bullying, isolation and dissociation, all symptoms of grief associated with the bereaved adolescent. Therefore, this chapter explores bereavement and bullying as well as dissociative grief. It depicts how the special treatment he receives at school due to his mother's terminal illness has resulted

in some of his classmates bullying him. As a direct consequence of this bullying, Conor falls out with his best friend who tries to defend him which only results in making the bullying worse. Consequently, it explores the isolation Conor feels isolated both at school and at home as he has nobody to discuss his innermost thoughts and fears with, which in turn leads to him suppressing the guilt and fears around his mother's terminal decline and results in the monster calling. Lastly, it examines how this text demonstrates how far attitudes to childhood grief have evolved since the publication of *The Secret Garden*.

A Monster Calls, authored by Patrick Ness, a double Carnegie Medal winner, differs from the previously discussed texts in that it was specifically written to address childhood grief. This sets it apart from the other texts in that it is focused on the exploration of childhood grief. As it is written with a YA audience in mind, it engages with grief on a symbolic level, allowing the reader to visualize grief in the form of a monster. It also offers a realistic portrayal of grief and the complex and conflicting emotions that often accompany loss. It also explores the benefits of facing the truth and acknowledging the feelings that death and grief can evoke. Also, as it places a young adult at the centre of the narrative, it provides the reader with a protagonist they can identify with. As a result, it provides the young adult reader with a relatable and authentic exploration of childhood grief and help them navigate the complex feelings that come with loss. This is especially important when you consider that in 2015, 'the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) estimated that worldwide nearly 140 million children under age 18 had experienced the death of one or both parents, a children's book

written specifically to address the grief associated with parental death is much required, particularly a book that does so as effectively as *A Monster Calls* (Alvis et al. 2022). This is important because the trauma associated with loss can be so difficult for an adolescent to process and, therefore, it is often internalised. As a result, they can dissociate from the root cause, and experience symptoms not always recognised as resulting from the trauma and grief the adolescent is experiencing. This ties in with the trauma theories of Caruth and Freud, who believe that trauma and memory are inextricably linked. It also fits with the hypothesis that the traumatised can suppress their distress so are unaware that their behaviour and emotional state are a consequence of the trauma they are suffering. While it may be obvious to the outside observer that their actions are a result of the trauma they are experiencing, the traumatised child may not because they are too immersed in the situation to recognise that their behaviour is linked to the trauma they are suffering. As Leys explains:

Trauma was defined as a situation of dissociation or "absence" from the self in which the victim unconsciously imitated, or identified with, the aggressor or traumatic scene in a condition that was likened to a state of heightened suggestibility or hypnotic trance. Trauma was therefore understood as an experience of hypnotic imitation or identification-what I call mimesis-an experience that, because it appeared to shatter the victim's cognitive-perceptual capacities, made the traumatic scene unavailable for a certain kind of recollection. In short, from the beginning trauma was understood as an experience that immersed the victim in the traumatic scene so profoundly that it precluded the kind of specular distance necessary for cognitive knowledge of what had happened. (Leys 2000, pp 8-9)

Therefore, children's literature that addresses the unspeakability of trauma is important, particularly when it comes to parental loss. This is especially significant post pandemic, as the *World Health Organisation (WHO)* estimates that worldwide 'COVID-19-associated orphanhood and caregiver death has left an estimated 10.5 million children bereaved of their parents and caregivers' (Hillis et al. 2022, p. 1). Although *A Monster Calls* deals with the loss of a parent to cancer, its message regarding the effects of trauma and grief holds true for any parental loss suffered by an adolescent. This is, in part, because it was written with the specific experiences of childhood trauma and grief in mind, which is very apparent in the way it deals with loss, guilt, and anger that many grieving adolescent's experience. More importantly, what is different about *A Monster Calls* is that because it is aimed at the young adolescent, it isn't a one-dimensional, children's grief book explaining death in a simplistic, childlike fashion to the grieving adolescent, nor is it a non-fiction book aimed at the adult caregiver helping a child cope with grief. Instead, it is a fictional story for the young adolescent reader that treats the adolescent with emotional intelligence and addresses all stages of grief that a bereaved teenager may suffer. Most importantly, it is not providing a sanitised version of grief and death, instead it addresses the complex, unsavoury, unspoken reactions to grief that bereaved adolescents may experience. It is also important that this is a work of fiction and can be read as a novel rather than being a prescriptive, non-fiction text listing the expected stages of grief, full of self-help directives which may not resonate with the adolescent reader.

Certainly, when it comes to childhood grief, fictional texts, such as *A Monster Calls*, that represent the trauma the child may be experiencing, are invaluable both in terms of demonstrating changing attitudes to childhood grief but also in bibliotherapeutic terms *A Monster Calls* was originally conceived by acclaimed author, Siobhan Dowd, whose own terminal cancer diagnosis prompted the book's subject matter. Regrettably, Dowd did not have the opportunity to complete the text before her premature death, so, instead, children's author, Patrick Ness, took on the mantle of finishing her work. By his own admission, Ness was initially hesitant to take on another author's draft, declaring that he 'would normally say 'no' to turning somebody else's idea into a book' (BBC, 2011), because he 'couldn't write a novel mimicking her voice' (Ness, 2015 p.6). However, Ness eventually acquiesced, stating, 'the idea was so strong and so vivid that I never felt like I was completely fabricating something she didn't want' (BBC, 2011). In *A Monster Calls*, Ness explains that Dowd 'had characters, a premise, and a beginning. What she didn't have, unfortunately, was time' (Ness 2011, p.2). By way of further explanation of his rationale in authoring a book whose concept and characters were that of another author, he adds '[s]tories don't end with the writers, however many started the race. Here's what Siobhan and I came up with. So, go. Run with it. Make trouble' (Ness 2011, p.2).

Despite Dowd and Ness having their own very distinctive styles as writers, Ness's decision to complete Dowd's creation resulted in a highly regarded piece of work. Indeed, Nathan Carlin, notes that though they were very different authors, and though they had never met, Ness recognised that 'what he and Dowd had in

common was a kind of wanting the emotional truth for our readers, of wanting teenagers to be taken seriously, as complex beings' (Ness and Kay, 2012). The resulting text, *A Monster Calls*, went on to win many awards, not least the prestigious Carnegie Medal for both the text and its illustration. It also went on to be adapted into an award-winning movie featuring Liam Neeson as the voice of the monster (Bayona, J. A., 2016).

5.1 The Monstrous Green Man

An important aspect of the monster is that it takes on the form of a yew tree, which is often associated with healing. This may be because while initially Conor does not perceive what the monster is doing as healing, eventually that is what happens. It is also noteworthy that the monster refers to itself as the Green Man, often associated with nature and revival, 'I have had as many names as there are years to time itself! roared the monster. I am Herne the Hunter! I am Cernunnos!

I am the eternal Green Man!' (Ness 2011, p. 26). Ellen Castelow explains 'the name 'Green Man' was first used by Lady Raglan in March 1939 in an article she wrote for the 'Folklore' journal; before this, they had been known just as 'foliate heads' and no-one had paid them any particular attention' (Castelow 2022). That is not to say that the symbolism of the Green Man had not been used prior to this, in fact, it is 'an example of how images from the Old Religion were brought into Christian churches before the Reformation, and is one of the most ancient, pagan symbols to be found in the Christian church. Pre-Christian pagan traditions and superstitions, particularly those related to nature and tree worship, were still

influential in the early Middle Ages' (Castelow 2022). Castelow further explains that often the Green Man is 'portrayed with acorns and hawthorn leaves, symbols of fertility in medieval times, this would seem to reinforce the association with spring. However, the common theme which runs through these figures would seem to be that of death and rebirth, and the Green that means life' (Castelow 2022). Therefore, the most common symbol that the Green Man is associated with is that of rebirth.

However, Aliona Yarova also sees the Green Man as a symbol of holistic ecology, stating that 'Holistic ecology considers nature and society as a whole, viewing humans and the environment as interdependent and interconnected' (Yarova, 2020, p.466). Yarova goes on to explain:

The eternal Green Man—as the tree introduces itself—embodies this bond by being simultaneously tree-like and human-like, a complex merger of "the Green" (nature) and "the Man" (humanity). The monster-tree fulfils several powerful and empowering roles, such as monster and storyteller, destructive force and powerful healer, savage and philosopher, nightmare, and escape. (Yarova 2020, p. 466)

This destructive quality associated with the monster in the text is very important, particularly when it warns Conor that 'I am this wild earth come for you, Conor O'Malley... I do often come walking, boy, the monster said, only for matters of life and death. I expect to be listened to' (Ness 2010, p. 27). Additionally, the monster seems to be responsible for much of the anger and destruction that Conor exhibits throughout the text. However, Yarova believes that:

The "untamed" nature of Conor's anger appears as the only condition for the monster to reveal its wild powers. When Conor accepts his mother's death, he takes a step towards emotional

maturity and the monster returns to the garden. For the adult characters the tree has a different role: a destroyer, a source of hope, a remedy; only for Conor is it a wild monster that also transforms him. (Yarova 2020, p. 474)

Therefore, its purpose is not to be destructive but instructive, which is a complex theme for a text aimed at the adolescent reader. In fact, as Mascha Hansen points out, Ness's *A Monster Calls* is one of the few texts aimed at younger readers that contains a 'complex monster saviour.' Hansan believes the reason that Conor shows no fear in the face of this monster is because he is facing a much bigger monster to contend with in real life:

When he first sees the monster, the 13-year-old protagonist Conor O'Malley is not frightened at all. Even when the monster threatens to eat him, Conor is not impressed by old-fashioned fairy-tale malignity: this monster is not the one Conor expected. There is a "real" monster in his life, that is, death, and it has taken shape in his dreams: "formed of cloud and ash and dark flames" and with "real read eyes," who tears his mum out of his hands and into the abyss in his nightmares. (Hansan 2019, p. 179)

Therefore, the monster is a conduit through which Conor vents his anger and frustration and, by allowing Conor to express his fears and frustrations, the tree eventually restores balance to Conor.

As previously discussed, the Green Man is also associated with the pagan symbol of rebirth. In the Celtic tradition it revolved around the fertility of the land and represented the cycle of growth each Spring. In *A Monster Calls* it may symbolise a rebirth of sorts for Conor, his new life without his mother. Through the guise of the monster, it addresses the complex feelings that arise as a result of having to face the inevitable. In particular, it focuses on the guilt, anger,

dissociation, together with the associated trauma and grief. With regards to guilt, the text focusses on the guilt Conor feels both for being unable to save his dying mother but also wishing that it would just be finished because he fears the unknown, and what will become of him when his mother dies. The guilt Conor feels particularly ashamed about is wishing his mother's death would just be done with, and it is a subject matter that is dealt with extremely sensitively in the text. Though it is causing him great distress, this thought is not one he has verbalised to anybody, even though it haunts him in his nightmares almost every night. Conor has not spoken about that either: 'He'd told no one about the nightmare. Not his mum, obviously, but no one else either, not his dad in their fortnightly (or so) phone call, definitely not his grandma, and no one at school. Absolutely not. What happened in the nightmare was something no one else ever needed to know' (Ness 2011, p.6). This unspeakability of Conor's trauma goes unsaid, but continually manifests itself involuntarily through recurring nightmares, which is recognised as one of the most common symptoms from which trauma victims suffer (Schönfelder 2015, p. 116). Schönfelder believes that traumatic anxieties expressed through dreams and nightmares evokes 'the Freudian idea that the ego cannot control, and censor dreams the way it can conscious thoughts' (Schönfelder 2015, p. 116).

As discussed in previous chapters, Freud was the founding father in this conceptualisation of trauma as unspeakable. While, as Leys says, 'Freud's early ideas about hysteria belonged to a turn-of-the century discourse on trauma and dissociation' (Leys 2000, p. 11), his theories are still relevant today, as it was Freud

who first 'stressed the role of a post-traumatic "incubation," or latency period of psychic elaboration, in ways that made the traumatic experience irreducible to the idea of a purely physiological causal sequence' (Leys 2000, p.19). So, while some literary trauma critics may feel Freud's theories are outdated, trauma critics, such as Leys, still see them as relevant. Leys maintains that:

Freud is unavoidable precisely because his aporetic and contradictory writings about the neuroses, including the traumatic neuroses, exhibit a simultaneous preoccupation with and evasion of the question of mimesis in a manner that exemplifies the tensions and paradoxes that have continued to trouble the field to the present day (Leys 2000, p. 11)

Therefore, Freud's theories do resonate with contemporary literary trauma theory, and some of his theories, such as the involuntary return of trauma through dreams are evident in *A Monster Calls*. Where it differs is that rather than subconsciously repressing his trauma and fears, Conor is consciously refusing to acknowledge them. However, as with unconscious suppression of trauma, it is resurfacing involuntarily through his dreams. Therefore, it is not surprising that Conor is so fearful of the monster because he is pushing Conor to confront the truth of the situation in which he finds himself. More pressingly, Conor's biggest fear, that someone will discover his darkest thoughts about his mother's impending death, may be about to become a reality, because the monster appears to have access to Conor's innermost thoughts and fears. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Conor's fears and anxieties manifest as a monster in his dreams, it could be that Conor's subconscious is symbolically expressing how monstrous he believes these thoughts to be.

Furthermore, Caruth believes that the difficulty in speaking to family and not wanting to stress them isolates the trauma victim. The inability to share their traumatic experience with others, whether it is because they are worried about stressing the family member or because there is no one ready to listen can also be traumatic. According to Caruth, this inability to be able to witness their trauma to anyone else, the inability to tell others, can lead to the involuntary return of the trauma repeatedly. This is what happens in Conor's case when the yew tree monster begins to visit Conor in a recurring nightmare every night at the exact same time '12.07. Seven minutes past twelve' (Ness 2011. p.6):

The monster showed up after midnight. As they do. Conor was awake when it came. He'd had a nightmare. Well, not *a* nightmare. *The* nightmare. The one he'd been having a lot lately. The one with the darkness and the wind and the screaming. The one with the hands slipping from his grasp, no matter hard he tried to hold on. The one that always ended with –. (Ness 2011, p.6)

As can be seen here, Conor's thoughts are so abhorrent to him that he cannot even verbalise them to himself, instead they are expressed through a dash in the narrative, thus symbolising the unspeakability of his thoughts. Again, this resonates with literary trauma theory's arguments on the unspeakability of trauma; however, the monster is threatening to change all that. Where Freud and Caruth believe that dreams are an involuntary window into unspeakable traumatic memory, here it seems that the monster of Conor's nightmare is trying to force him to speak his darkest thoughts and fears. As a result, 'Conor dreads what will happen after he hears the third and final story because the monster has warned

him that when the telling is done, Conor must speak his own tale: “Not just any truth. *Your* truth.” Otherwise, the beast will eat him alive’ (Bruder 2011).

Unfortunately for Conor there is no reprieve from the monster during his waking because this involuntary manifestation of the monster is not confined to his nightmares. Initially, Conor believes the monster is simply part of a nightmare, however, he then hears the monster call to him while he is awake: ‘[s]omeone was calling his name. *Conor*. He felt a rush of panic, his guts twisting. Had it followed him? Had it somehow stepped out of the nightmare and-?’ (Ness 2011, p. 7). Conor does not want to accept that the monster is real, and he even tries to reason that the voice calling him is that of his father, even though he does not live with him: ‘he wondered for a crazy minute if his dad had somehow made a surprise trip from America and arrived too late to phone and-. *Conor*. No. not his dad. The voice had a quality to it, a *monstrous* quality, wild and untamed’ (Ness 2011, p. 8). However, Conor soon acknowledges that he is awake and answers the monster “*What?*” Conor said, his heart thumping, suddenly impatient for whatever was going to happen’ (Ness 2011, p. 8). Just as he is anxious for his mother’s impending death to be over with, similarly, Conor is anxious for the monster to do whatever it is he has come to do. Conor shows no fear in the face of the giant yew tree monster who has ‘set its hands on either side of his window, lowering its head until its huge eyes filled the frame, holding Conor in its glare’ (Ness 2011, p. 9). Conor’s apathy towards the monster is reflective of the indifference he feels towards life in general. This is an often-overlooked reaction to grief in an adolescent, particularly with children in Conor’s situation where he feels he has no control over the

situation. For adolescents in situations akin to Conor's '[t]he sense of being ineffectual in controlling life events [impinges] on the self [and] may lead to a kind of passivity, apathy, and depression, similar to the mental state described by Seligman in his theory of "learned helplessness" as the precursor of depression' (Osterweis et al. 1984, p. 128). Conor reacts to the monster initially with defiance, refusing to comply with his demands. When the monster tells him '*I have come to get you, Conor O'Malley,*' Conor does not behave how the monster expects him to, he displays no fear, instead he reacts with disinterest:

A monster Conor thought...Come to get him. But Conor didn't run. In fact, he found he wasn't even frightened. All he could feel, all he *had* felt since the monster revealed itself, was a growing disappointment. Because this wasn't the monster he was expecting. "So, come and get me then," he said. The monster paused for a moment, and then with a *roar* it pounded two fists against the house. "Shout all you want," Conor shrugged, barely raising his voice. "I've seen worse." (Ness 2011, p. 10)

Even when the monster grabs him and squeezes him so hard, he can barely breathe, Conor does not react: '*You really aren't frightened, are you?* "No," Conor said. "Not of you, anyway." The monster narrowed its eyes. *You will be*, it said. *Before the end*' (Ness 2011, p. 10). The last thing Conor remembers about this encounter is the monster opening his mouth to 'eat him alive' (Ness 2011, p.10). Then it is the following morning and Conor wakes up in his bed. He laughs to himself and thinks to himself how stupid he was to think the monster was real and dismisses it as a dream after all. However, all that changes when he steps out of bed to 'the sound of a crunch beneath his feet. Every inch of his bedroom floor was covered in short, spiky yew tree leaves' (Ness 2011, p. 12). This, for Conor, is

proof that the monster is not just a figment of his imagination or confined to his dreams but that it actually walks.

For the reader, who is outside the text and removed from the trauma that Conor is experiencing, the appearance of the spiky yew tree needles in Conor's bedroom resonates as a further example of his trauma breaking down the link between fact and fiction. Moreover, they are a manifestation of his fears and anxieties; however, Conor takes them as confirmation that the monster physically exists. Consequently, Conor cannot deny the monster's existence, even in his waking hours, so real or not, Conor has to conduct himself as though the monster exists and can appear at any moment. And in many ways, it does exist, even if it is just in Conor's imagination, as it serves as a conduit to Conor's subconscious fears and it becomes an outlet for the trauma he is experiencing. This is particularly important to the traumatised adolescent who tends to respond to harrowing experiences with avoidance and denial – with repression, in psychoanalytical terms, or even escapism (Schönfelder 2015, p.116). Also, repression is a feature of trauma that is experienced by many trauma victims, children, and adults alike. Repression, as a consequence of trauma was first brought to public attention through Freud's work. Though the understanding of trauma has moved on from Freud's theories, they continue to be a significant theoretical reference point, particularly the view into the subconscious that dreams can provide. The novel's emphasis on dreams concurs with Deirdre Barrett's assertion that 'dreams constitute a unique window on trauma and its effects,' revealing how much the individual is affected by the traumatic past' (Barrett 1996, p. 1). Consequently,

what Conor cannot face up to in his waking hours is being played out in his nightmares and it will only be resolved when Conor faces up to his biggest fear in reality.

While the monster is a figment of Conor's imagination, he has no control over when the monster appears, which reflects Freud's hypothesis that the subconscious can only be accessed involuntarily through dreams and triggers. Additionally, this ties in with Caruth's previously discussed theories, as well as Bessel van der Folk's theories which also concur with the notion that:

traumatic memory may be less like what some theorists have called "declarative" or "narrative" memory, involving the ability to be consciously aware of and verbally narrate events that have happened to the individual, than like "implicit" or "nondeclarative" memory, involving bodily memories of skills, habits, reflex actions, and classically conditioned responses that lie outside verbal-semantic-linguistic representation.' (Leys 2000, p.7)

While it may not be a universal response to trauma, quite often children do have a delayed reaction to the trauma they are experiencing or may not recognise their feelings are linked to that trauma. Leys believes:

most descriptions generally agree that there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts, or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event. (Leys 2000, p. 229)

However, modern literary trauma theory allows for the hypothesis that the traumatised are aware of the source of their trauma but are choosing not to speak about it, and this does seem to be quite evident in Conor's case.

While for many years it was theorised that the traumatised suffered a type of traumatic amnesia, in 2003, Richard McNally released *Remembering Trauma*, 'a review of new research that has been widely viewed as a shot over the bow of the trauma studies establishment, and that is now essential reading for specialists' (Pederson 2014, p. 334). In it, McNally challenges the field's 'sacred truth' about the unspeakability of trauma and memory loss, and believes 'traumatic amnesia is a myth, and while victims may *choose* not to speak of their traumas, there is little evidence that they *cannot*' (Pederson 2014, p. 334). Whether conscious or unconscious, the unfortunate thing about bereavement is that there is no escape from the trauma it wreaks on the adolescent. While they may be able to suppress the demons in their waking hours they emerge in their dreams. As Schönfelder asserts: 'intrusive memories typically observed in trauma victims appear with striking immediacy and intensity and are beyond the individual's control' (Schönfelder 2013. p. 115). But in Conor's case he is unable to sleep because he is unable to accept the truth that the monster is trying to force him to face up to: 'he'd only slept long enough that morning to have the nightmare, as if things hadn't been bad enough. There he'd been again, with the horror and the falling, with the terrible, terrible thing that happened at the end. He'd woke up screaming' (Ness 2011, p.86). Sleep disturbance and nightmares in traumatised children are very common symptoms. In fact, it has been shown that children of Conor's age who often cannot express their fears and anxieties openly suffer very vivid nightmares. Again, much like Archibald Craven in *The Secret Garden* this ties in

with Freud's and Caruth's assertions that the trauma returns involuntarily through dreams.

Furthermore, Mascha Hansen believes that we create our fears in our dreams as 'monstrous Others, projecting and externalizing our fears, our greed, and our destructiveness. Yet being part of us, they stubbornly refuse to stay out of our lives, returning to force us to see and accept the truth about ourselves, and about the consequences of our words and deeds' (Hansen, 2019, p.180). However, the traumatised, in particular traumatised children, may not be aware that the monster they are conjuring up in their dreams is the embodiment of their greatest fears and that it will keep resurfacing until they tackle these fears and anxieties. Therefore, as with Conor, the nightmares continue to return night after night. In Conor's case, he is anxious to know what the monster wants from him; however, the monster gives an unexpected reply: 'The monster pressed its face close to the window. *It's not what I want from you, Conor O'Malley, it said. It is what **you** want from me.* "I don't want anything from you," Conor said. *Not yet,* said the monster. *But you will'* (Ness 2011, p.25 emphasis in original). What the monster is saying is that Conor will have to face up to his fears if the monster is going to leave, but Conor is not ready yet to verbalise his greatest fear. However, what is different here is that Conor is aware of what his greatest fear is, he just cannot acknowledge it to himself or anybody else. He does not want anyone to know the truth, but the monster is making him face up to it:

You know that your truth, the one that you hide, Conor O'Malley, is the thing you are most afraid of. Conor stopped squirming. It couldn't mean -. There was no way it could mean -. There was no

way it could know *that*. No. no. he was never going to say what happened in the real nightmare. Never in a million years. *You will tell it*, the monster said, *for that is why you called me...You will tell me the fourth tale. You will tell me the truth.* "And what if I don't," Conor said. The monster gave the evil grin again. *Then I will eat you alive.* (Ness 2011, p.28)

Though Conor cannot see it, or perhaps is not ready to see it, the monster forcing him to face up to the truth will eventually help Conor reach a level of acceptance about his mother's illness.

5.2 Anticipatory Grief

Conor thinks it awful that he wishes that his mother would die so that her impending death would not be constantly looming over them. Moreover, Conor feels that if anyone knew the truth about these feelings that they would be disgusted by him. However, this is, in fact, a very common reaction by both children and adults to the terminal illness of a close relative, such as a parent. So common in fact that it is recognised as a category of grief in itself, specifically, anticipatory grief. Anticipatory grief differs from conventional grief in that you can hold on to hope that they will get better while also preparing to let them go. However, children, such as Conor, may feel they are betraying or abandoning their loved one by preparing themselves to let them go. Often people just want their loved one to be out of pain, but they feel a sense of betrayal for wanting it to be over for them and feel ashamed of these thoughts and feelings. However, it is in fact proven that it is better that they prepare to let a parent go while they are still

living and that denying this reality prior to their death can in fact prolong the grieving process once they have passed (Elridge 2022).

In addition to coping with the feelings of betrayal, Conor is also coping with caring for a sick parent. Aside from the everyday mundane chores of cleaning the house, washing his own clothes, and preparing their meals, he must also cope with the continual decline of his mother's health and the worry about whether or not she has made it through another night. In the mornings after getting ready for school he does some chores to pass the time before he must leave. However, he is not completing the chores because they need to be done, rather he is using them as an excuse to wait about until his mother wakes up so he can go to school in the knowledge that she is still alive:

Still ten minutes left. Still no sign of- "Conor?" he heard, from the top of the stairs. He let out a long breath he hadn't realized he was holding in... "I'm sorry I wasn't up." "it's just the new round of- "It's *okay*," Conor said. She stopped, but she still smiled back at him. She hadn't tied her scarf around her head yet this morning, and her bare scalp looked too soft, too fragile in the morning light, like a baby's. it made Conor's stomach hurt to see it. (Ness 2011, p. 13)

Thus, there is a constant pressure on Conor, both worrying that she might have died in the night and also wishing that he did not have to deal with the unrelenting stress of her illness. What Conor is feeling is a very typical example of anticipatory grief, which, had he confided in an adult, he would have learned that it is a perfectly normal reaction to witnessing his mother's terminal decline. Instead, he goes through the torment alone and copes with it as only an adolescent his age can, through nightmares and monsters. As a result, Conor is left alone with these feelings but does not have the coping skills to navigate through them, therefore,

he acts out his frustrations through violent and angry outbursts. Eruptions of violence in bereaved boys is far more common than in girls experiencing trauma and grief. In fact, '[b]ereaved boys show higher rates of overall psychological difficulties, with more aggressive and acting-out behaviour than bereaved girls (Downey et al., 1999; Elizur & Kaffman, 1982; Kranzler et al., 1990)' (Downey 2000, p. 824). Therefore, explosive anger and violence are a common response to trauma and grief in children of Conor's age, which is depicted throughout the text.

For example, when Conor is at his grandmother's house, he notices her prized clock hanging over the mantelpiece, and is irritated that it just continues to tick away as though everything is normal:

the pendulum swinging back and forth like it was getting on with its own, private life, not caring about Conor at all. He approached it slowly, fists clenched... The instant the bong was about to start, he grabbed the pendulum, holding it at the high point of its swing. He could hear the mechanism of the clock complaining as the first b of the interrupted bong hovered in the air. Conor stepped back quickly, letting go of the pendulum. It dropped to its centre point but didn't start swinging again. Nor did the clock make any of the whirring, ticking sounds it usually made...uh-oh. Conor's stomach started squeezing as he realized what he'd done. Oh no, he thought. Oh, no. (Ness 2011, p.69)

Once Conor realises the destruction he has caused to his grandmother's precious clock, he immediately dissociates from the devastation he has caused. Instantly he notices the clock has stopped at 12.07 and when he turns around, the monster is in his grandmother's sitting room. Therefore, it is evident that when Conor is unable to face up to the feelings he is experiencing, he acts out his frustrations through the guise of the monster and uses one of the monster's three stories to

carry out the destruction. For example, the monster's second story is that of the Apothecary who uses nature to help cure the local village people. However, the village's church parson preaches against the apothecary, and refuses to allow him to use the church's yew tree for his cures. As a result, the Apothecary loses the business of the villagers. However, when the parson's daughters then take ill, and conventional methods cannot cure them, he turns to the Apothecary, promising he will send all his parishioners back to him for their every ailment. The Apothecary, surprised to see the Parson ask for his help, questions the parson's integrity before deciding whether or not to help him

“you would give up everything you believed in?” “If it would save my daughters,” the parson said. “I'd give up everything.” “Then,” the Apothecary said, shutting his door on the parson, “there is nothing I can do to help you”. That very night, both of the parson's daughters died. (What? Conor said) (Ness 2011, p.77)

The monster then tells Conor as punishment he came walking and tore the parsonage from its very foundations. In a dreamlike state Conor watches as the monster destroys everything within the parsonage. While in this daydream, the monster asks Conor if he would like to join in the destruction as:

it is most satisfying I assure you. The monster stepped forward and puts a foot through a settee not unlike Conor's grandmas. What shall I destroy next it asked. Knock over the fireplace...He was yelling as he did it, so loud he couldn't hear himself think, disappearing into the frenzy of destruction, just mindlessly smashing, and smashing and smashing. The monster was right. It was very satisfying...And suddenly they were back in Conor's grandma's sitting room. Conor saw that he had destroyed almost every inch of it. (Ness 2011, pp 80-2)

At this stage, Conor has completely dissociated from reality and while in the dreamlike state has destroyed his grandmother's living room. When he comes around, he cannot understand where the monster has gone and why it is that it is his grandmother's house that is destroyed and not the parsonage of the monster's tale.

5.3 Dissociative Grief

As far as Conor is concerned, it is the monster who has destroyed the sitting room not him. Conor does not see that the stories the monster 'tells' him are manifestations of his own agonies and anxieties, and that the monster's violent reactions are, in truth, his own venting of frustrations. Nishan Ghoshal and Paul Wilkinson explain that 'over the course of the book, Conor is repeatedly visited by a monster who tells him different stories. These stories are reflections of fears and worries that Conor is experiencing in his everyday life' (Ghoshal and Wilkinson 2017, p.309). As a result, Conor is very upset by the stories the monster tells him, particularly when the monster tells him that once he is done telling him the three stories, then Conor must tell the monster a story, his truth. Conor is so disturbed by the monster's stories, and by the fact that the monster is insisting he confront his fears, that he reacts very violently towards the monster. However, he is unaware of his actions until he emerges from his 'dream' as he describes the visitations from the monster. Ghoshal and Wilkinson describe how 'after he has 'come around' from these 'visits', Conor sees that somebody has engaged in destructive and violent behaviour, such as trashing his grandmother's lounge or

assaulting a bully' (Ghoshal and Wilkinson 2017, p.309). Conor's memories are that he has seen the monster carry out these acts, even though the witnesses state it was Conor: [d]uring these events, Conor experiences feelings of dissociation and a sense of disconnect from himself; he describes the events as if he is watching from an outsider's perspective, seeing the 'monster' act in his stead' (Ghoshal and Wilkinson, 2017, p. 309).

Dissociation is a long-known reaction to grief in children of Conor's age. According to Diseth dissociation can 'bring apart, split off or disconnect elements that have something in common, as the opposite of association. Mental dissociation refers to disruptions in memory, consciousness, identity and/or perception of the environment, but is also manifested in disturbances of sensation, movement, and other bodily functions' (Diseth 2005, p. 79). However, it is only more recently that it is fully understood why, as Diseth explains:

The discovery of trauma as an aetiological factor in mental dissociation is more than a century old, but neurobiological research in the last decade has started to clarify a neurobiological basis that may shed light on the complex symptomatology observed in traumatized children. Dysfunctional stress responses, emotional-based style of functioning, hyperarousal, anxiety, irritability, impulsivity, disengaged attention and educational underachievement may thus begin to be better understood. Recent research on traumatized children and adolescents has demonstrated some permanent neurochemical as well as functional and structural abnormalities in brain areas that are involved in the integrative process of cognition and memory. (Diseth 2005, p. 79)

Therefore, Conor's dissociation from reality while the monster is creating chaos is a perfectly normal response to the overwhelming feelings he is experiencing as a result of his trauma and grief. Ghoshal and Wilkinson further explain that:

The aetiology behind Conor's dissociation lies in the emotional trauma he deals with. As he finds it hard to acknowledge and express his feelings about his mother's terminal illness, they manifest as dissociative symptoms. Another precipitating factor is that Conor faces recurrent bullying at school and has few friends – indeed, one of the stories the monster tells reflects on the fact that Conor feels invisible in his school. This feeling of invisibility may serve as another factor that drives his sense of dissociation. The dissociation that Conor experiences is an engaging example of how feelings of disconnect can act as a coping mechanism during times of emotional trauma. (Ghoshal and Wilkinson, 2017)

It is unsurprising, then, that Conor is displaying dissociative symptoms, given that he is coping with the imminent loss of his mother, the bullying, and the loss of his friendship with Lily. Dissociation for Conor is a form of protection, not just physically but emotionally. When he is feeling overwhelmed by the intrusive thoughts of letting his mother go, then the monster appears and causes destruction, when the bullying becomes too much to bear then the monster appears and takes care of the situation. By distancing himself from the pressures and stresses, Conor does not have to confront the feelings that arise as a result of these feelings. It is notable that the adults in Conor's life also deal with their stresses in a similar manner. Conor's mother is hesitant to acknowledge to Conor or herself for that matter, that the treatments are not working. Conor's teachers and friends avoid talking about the issues Conor is coping with and Conor's father is largely absent from his life even though his only other parent is terminally ill.

5.4 The Grieving Adult Caregiver

What is pertinent here is the reaction of Conor's grandmother. When Conor reconnects to real life, he is shocked to see the destruction of his grandmother's prized possessions, but he barely has time to register what has happened when he hears her pull into the driveway. Conor is expecting to be punished for the destruction the monster has caused but instead his grandmother reacts in a completely unexpected way:

[s]he groaned, deep in her chest, her mouth still closed. It was a sound so painful; Conor could barely keep himself from putting his hands over his ears...And then she screamed...then she stepped into the room...She went to the display cabinet, the only thing remaining upright in the room. And she grabbed it by one side and pulled it hard once-twice- and a third time. Sending it crashing to the floor with a final sounding crunch. She didn't look at Conor, didn't look at him once as she stood back up and left the room, leaving her handbag where she'd dropped it, going straight up to her bedroom and quietly shutting the door. He could hear her in there, weeping. (Ness 2011, pp 84-5)

The grandmother's reaction and, in turn, Conor's reaction to his grandmother's response, demonstrates the importance of the adult caregiver in the grieving adolescent's life. It is of vital importance that the grieving adolescent can rely on the adult caregiver if they are to process their grief effectively. Alvis et al. have set out a framework that catalogues the optimum actions by the adult caregiver if they are to prevent prolonged maladaptive grief in the adolescent:

The framework identifies five domains of caregiver behavior – protection, reciprocity, control, guided learning, and group participation – as distinct pathways to different socialization outcomes. Although the framework emphasizes specificity, linking

each socialization domain to a specific developmental outcome via different processes, certain caregiver behaviors may reflect a combination or interplay of different domains of socialization. (Alvis et al. 2022)

As can be seen in the grandmother's response to Conor's sundering of the sitting room, the grandmother is also grieving the imminent loss of her daughter. In addition, she has the added burden of helping her grandson through his trauma and grief. With little support from his father, most of the caring and protection of Conor is left to his grandmother. Unsurprisingly, he is resistant to speaking to his grandmother about where he will live after his mother is gone because that means acknowledging and more importantly accepting that she is dying.

Each time she tries to broach the subject, Conor refuses to engage. Even when his grandmother tells him that his father is returning from America, '[y]our father is flying in on Sunday' he straightened up. Dad's coming?' (Ness 2010, p. 56), Conor refuses to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation: 'His father was coming. His *father*. From *America*. Who hadn't come home since the Christmas before last. Whose new wife always seemed to suffer emergencies at the last minute that kept him from visiting more often, especially now that the baby was born. His father was coming. Why?' (Ness 2010, p. 56) However, despite not engaging with his grandmother about his living arrangements once his mother is gone, he has considered the possibility that he could live with his father. Therefore, at a certain level he has accepted that his mother will not be around. However, once he speaks with his father and relates to him that he is hoping that he will take

him back to America with him, his father makes it very clear that he has a new wife and family in America, and there is no room for Conor in his new family:

We barely have room for the three of us Con, your grandma has a lot more money and space than we do. Plus, you're in school here, your friends are here, your whole life is here. It would be unfair to just take you out of all that'. 'Unfair to who?,' Conor asked. 'I'm sorry,' his father said. 'I know it seems really unfair, and I wish it was different- '. Do you? (Ness 2011, p. 66)

Not alone is Conor confronted with the impending death of his mother, and the complete change in domestic circumstances that are facing him, Conor's father, the only parent he will have left, is not fully there for him during one of most traumatic periods in his young life:

How long are you here for?... Just a few days. Conor turned to him. "that's all?" Why did you come then?" Conor asked, "Why bother coming at all?" I'll come back, tho," his father said. "you know, when I need to." His voice brightened "And you'll visit us at Christmas! That'll be fun." "In your cramped house where there's no room for me," Conor said. (Ness 2010, p. 68)

Deprived of proper support from his father, Conor must also deal with his rejection. Positive parental support particularly when an adolescent is coping with the imminent loss of one of their parents is vital. And this is a point underscored by Alvis et al. who believe that it is vital for the surviving parent or caregiver to provide reassurance to the bereaved adolescent as well as a number of specific measures which include:

parental acceptance versus rejection (reversely scored), positive dyadic routines, parent's use of positive reinforcement, stable positive events in the family, adolescent's feelings of being understood by their parent, and open communication. (Alvis et al. 2022)

Alvis et al. found that as a result of these types of measure a bereaved child found reassurance that they would be taken care of into the future and allayed any fears they may be abandoned (Alvis et al. 2022).

Conor is longing for stability and continuity of parental care, but Conor's father seems surprised when Conor explicitly tells his father that he wants to live with him, 'I don't want to live with Grandma, why can't I come and live with you? Why can't I come to America? His father licked his lips, "you mean when – "' (Ness 2011, p. 66). Conor's father demonstrates that he has not even considered the possibility of having his son live with him once his mother dies. Significantly, this exchange between Conor and his father also demonstrates that even the adult caregiver in Conor's life cannot clearly express the fact of Conor's mother's imminent death. This may reflect the trauma that her terminal illness diagnosis is having on both of their lives, as Caruth believes gaps and pauses in the narrative can be an indication of the unspeakability of trauma. The power of trauma is reinforced and reflected through the narrative's complex, fragmentary nature, through various kinds of gaps, disruptions, and displacement. Schönfelder believes 'this poetics of disruption and fragmentation not only performs the forces of trauma, but it also traces the intricate interrelations between trauma and narration, signaling the limitations of the medium of language' (Schönfelder 2015, p. 120). Schönfelder further explains that 'through ruptures in narration and displacements in reception, the novel points to trauma's intricate position in the symbolic order and its resistance to processes of verbalization and narration.'

(Schönfelder 2015, p. 123). So, being unable to articulate his feelings and have an in-depth conversation with Conor about his future, Conor's father simply states, "Stories don't always have happy endings" (Ness 2020, p. 95).

Conor's father is not a constant in his life, he has a new wife and family in America and barely makes the time to see Conor. Conor is aware that he is not going to be any more present in his life once his mother is gone. Again, this is something that the grandmother is aware of, and she is trying to make a safe and secure place for him in her home. Conor is not yet open to discussing his future living arrangements, but by slowly initiating conversations about where Conor will live after his mother passes, she is showing him that he has a secure place with her. By keeping lines of communication open, the remaining caregiver gives a sense of security to the bereaved child, which is vital for them to process their grief. Again, Alvis et al. reiterate that their analysis of other studies, such as Grusec 2011, shows the need for bereaved children to have 'effective emotional regulation, and a safe place to express their distress' (Alvis et al. 2022). Additionally, they state that it might also 'decrease prolonged maladaptive grief responses in bereaved children.' Therefore, implementation of these measures can have a positive effect on the bereaved child's long-term adaptation to their loss. Alvis et al. conclude that 'parents' open, positive, engaged communication with their children about the loss may enable their children to ask questions and process the loss, leading to lower maladaptive grief symptoms' (Alvis et al. 2022).

As can be seen in *A Monster Calls* the opposite approach can have detrimental effects on the grieving child. Nobody has verbalised to Conor that his mother is dying. Even Conor's mother cannot bring herself to reveal to Conor that her treatment options are not having the desired effect and that she is coming to the end of the road:

These last treatments not doing what it's supposed to' she said, 'all that means is they're going to have to adjust it, try something else'. 'Is that it? Conor asked because' and Conor stopped for a second and looked down at the floor, 'Because you could tell me, you know. And then he felt her arms around him, her thin, thin arms that used to be so soft when she hugged him. She didn't say anything, just held on to him. (Ness 2010, p. 58)

It is understandable that Conor's mother is struggling to come to terms with the consequences of the treatments not working, again it reflects the unspeakability of trauma. However, it is confusing for Conor because it is offering him false hope and it is not fitting in with what his grandmother is telling him, with his father's return from America and with the truth the monster is trying to have him acknowledge. Though his mother may be trying to protect him, it is having the opposite effect and, instead, is adding to the trauma Conor is suffering.

What is also noteworthy is that the cure that Conor's mother lays her last hope in is derived from a yew tree, and this, in part, may be the reason that the monster took the form of a yew, '[t]he green things of this world are just wondrous,' Conor's mother observes, 'We work so hard to get rid of them when sometimes they're the very thing that saves us' (Ness 2011, p. 92). So, Conor is not the only one not facing the reality of the situation. Conor's mother, facing her own

demise, is not prepared to accept that the treatments are not working and fears upsetting Conor by telling him so. But by protecting him from the truth, she gives him false hope. Though deep down he knows she is terminally ill, she has not expressly told him so, and, therefore, he holds on to the hope that she might pull through. It is not until he is pulled from school in the middle of the day to visit his mother in hospital that he has to accept that things have taken a critical turn that he could not avoid: 'he had a sour feeling in his stomach at what he might find inside. They'd never pulled him out of school before, not in the middle of the day, not even when she was hospitalized last Easter' (Ness 2011, p. 114). The issue is, having been in denial and been protected from the truth by his mother, Conor is not prepared to face the truth and is lashing out looking for someone to blame. He is deliberately obtuse when he speaks to his mother, forcing her to spell out why he has been pulled from school in the middle of the day:

"What's going on?" he asked "I wanted to see you," she said. "You could have seen me tonight." He knew he was asking a question. He knew she knew it, too. And so, he knew when she spoke again that she was giving him an answer. "I wanted to see you now, Conor," she said, and again her voice was thick, and her eyes were wet. (Ness 2015, p. 115)

Conor's mother is forced to verbalise the truth of the situation and it is the first time in the text that she states that she is not getting better, and it may be the first time that she has verbalised that she is dying:

"There aren't any more treatments," "You said it would work," he said, his voice catching. "I know."
"You said. You believed it would work." "I know." "You lied," Conor said, looking back up at her, "You've been lying this whole time."
"You be as angry as you need be," she said. (Ness 2011, p. 116)

Conor's inability to face what is happening is having repercussions for how he is handling the truth of the situation now that his mother's death is imminent. Conor's mother is acutely aware that there are things that are going unsaid because of Conor's state of denial. And in order to try to prevent future regrets and trauma, she attempts to address the fact that he is unable to verbalise his fears and anxieties, as well as his anger and upset at her leaving him. To this end, she says:

'if, one day," she said, really crying now, "you look back and you feel bad for being so angry, if you feel bad for being so angry at me that you couldn't even speak to me, then you have to know Conor, you have to know. that it was *okay*. It was okay. That I *knew*. I *know* okay? I know everything you need to tell me without you having to say it out loud." (Ness 2011, p. 117)

Conor's mother recognises the unspeakability of trauma and, in that way, Ness does not have to verbalise the impact of these words on Conor and, by association, the bereaved adolescent who may be reading the text. Grief impacts every adolescent individually and what may be one adolescent's experience may not be that of another. In addition, grief is so traumatic that it is very difficult to fully articulate it in narrative form, which, as Schönfelder maintains, resonates with Caruth's theorisation:

Caruth allows for the possibility of trauma being transformed into a narrative that tries to make sense of the incomprehensible but claims that such a narrative is likely to distort the 'truth' of trauma and weaken its impact. Similarly, Geoffrey Hartman emphasizes how words are inadequate or even fail in the face of trauma, but he also grants that '[l]iterary verbalization, however, still remains a basis for making the wound perceivable and the silence audible'. (Schönfelder 2015, p.31)

This inability to verbalise their greatest fears can also be seen as a form of protection, as the adults in Conor's life are trying their best to help him through this traumatic event. Alvis et al. believe the remaining adult caregiver plays a vital role in how the bereaved child copes with their loss:

The protection domain describes caregivers' sensitivity and responsiveness to their adolescent's distress (Grusec & Davidov, 2010). Bereaved children, particularly those who have experienced the death of a parent, have lost a major attachment figure, leading to distress over the loss (i.e., separation distress) as well as distress over their future security and safety within the family (i.e., existential distress). (Alvis et al. 2022)

So, while it may have the opposite effect as intended, Conor's mother and grandmother are trying to be as sensitive as possible as Conor navigates this traumatic situation. However, by avoiding the situation there are unintended consequences outside of the family unit. Conor does not want to acknowledge that his life is any different to any other child's, particularly when he is in school. However, the school is aware of the situation and make allowances for Conor when he has behavioural issues in school, but while the teachers are willing to overlook them some of his classmates are not. They do not agree with allowances being made for Conor due to his mother's illness, not that Conor agrees with them either. Had he had his way his classmates would never have known of his mother's illness, but a friend inadvertently let it slip and a small cohort of boys have bullied him ever since.

5.5 Bereavement and Bullying

Conor's burden of trauma is added to by the fact that he being bullied in school, which is common among adolescents who have an ill family member at home. The UK's Anti-bullying Alliance state that:

Research has shown that young carers are a vulnerable group and are significantly more likely to be bullied. Young carers have a range of responsibilities which might include caring for a sick relative or friend. This can have a significant impact on their lives which can leave them feeling different or isolated from their peers, they may miss out on social opportunities and are more likely to be bullied or harassed. (Carers Trust, 2016)

One of the reasons for this is that teachers and adults are often more lenient about rules with the adolescent carer, which can lead to the bullying. According to the Anti-bullying Alliance there is 'a fine line between allowances for late homework or access to their phones, as they don't want to be marked out as 'special' or different by their peers as this can lead to bullying' (ABA 2016). This is precisely the issue that Conor faces in school. Prior to his mother's terminal diagnosis, Conor was not bullied but, as he states, something changed over the past year, not when his mother got sick but when he started having the nightmare with the screaming and falling. Therefore, there is a direct link between when his mother was terminally diagnosed, the bullying began, and the monster appeared.

This change hadn't come when everything started with Conor's mum. No, it had come later, when Conor started having the nightmare, the *real* nightmare he would never tell another living soul about. When Conor started having *that* nightmare, that's when Harry noticed him, like a secret mark had been placed on him that only Harry could see. (Ness 2011, p. 17)

While Conor associates the bullying with the start of the nightmare, he believes that Harry, his bully, somehow knows the truth of the nightmare rather than a change in Conor's demeanour.

Indeed, Carers Trust UK research has shown that young carers are significantly more vulnerable and susceptible to bullying than their peers due to a myriad of reasons, with bereavement and an unstable home environment as a consequence of that bereavement identified as high-risk factors (Carers Trust 2016, p. 5). Carers Trust is recognised as the UK's largest charity for, with and about carers. Their aim is 'to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, unpaid, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems' (Carers Trust 2016, p.3). In their guide for protecting young carers from bullying, they state that bullying occurs most frequently in school, where they spend most of their time. This tallies with Conor's experience where classmate Harry, and his two friends Anton and Sully, bully Conor, verbally and physically attacking him, while he does nothing to defend himself, "You're bleeding O'Malley," Harry said. "He'll have to get his baldy mother to kiss it better from him!" Sully crowed' (Ness 2011, p. 17). While it may seem incredible that an adolescent would be bullied because they have an ill family member, research carried out by the Carers Trust UK shows that this is quite commonplace. According to their studies a 'significant number of the young carers identified disability or illness in the family as a main reason why they had been

bullied. Young carers felt they had been singled out and targeted because the appearance or behaviour of a family member was distinctive' (Carers Trust 2016, p. 6). They believe young carers may be more vulnerable emotionally, due to the constant fear and pressure they are under caring for a disabled or dying family member. Moreover, they have found that 'recently bereaved and therefore highly vulnerable young carers reported being subjected to direct and, in some cases, sustained bullying' (The Children's Society, 2013 p. 7).

Bullying as a result of trauma and grief is very well addressed in the text, with instances of intimidation and physical violence against Conor distributed throughout the text. It also tackles the distress victims of bullying have about teachers being informed of the bullying. When Conor's former friend, Lily, tries to come to his defence and tells the teacher about the bullying, Conor feels a sense of betrayal by Lily and lies, saying he fell over. While Lily had been trying to help, instead she creates more scope for the bullies to persist with their behaviour, as they now perceive Conor as weaker still for not reporting them. It is not that he is weak but, rather, he simply wants to fit in. The Carers Trust UK believes that '[t]he strength of desire to blend in and be like everyone else and the fear of being singled out can lead to young carers choosing to not report bullying incidents' (Carers Trust 2016, p.14). Additionally, their research has shown that '[t]he young carers said that they were concerned that the action taken against bullying could compound the situation for them' (Carers Trust 2016, p.16).

Also, refusing to verify Lily's account of the bullying has the added impact of creating friction between the two former friends. Conor and Lily had been very close friends, as had their mothers, but Conor no longer speaks with Lily because he blames her for everyone in his class finding out about his mother's illness: '[no] one knew. Then Lily's mum knew, of course. Then Lily knew. And then everyone knew. Everyone. Which changed the whole world in one day. And he was never going to forgive her for that' (Ness 2011, p. 22-23). More than the sense of betrayal, it was the sense of invisibility that was brought about by everyone knowing that most affected Conor. Once Lily tells his classmates, word quickly spreads around the classroom. Being only 13 years old themselves, the classmates neither have the life experience or emotional maturity to deal with this type of information, so rather than approach Conor and speak to him their first reaction is to avoid him. Conor is now conscious that people saw him differently, so he started to pull away from his friends rather than make them feel awkward:

Eventually he stopped going over to groups of friends, stopped looking up at the whispers, and even stopped putting up his hand, not that anyone seemed to notice. It was like he'd suddenly turned invisible. (Ness 2011, p. 50)

Though Conor chooses to pull away from the friends, it is obvious how deeply disturbed he is by the friends' reactions and the consequent sense of invisibility he feels, as it forms the basis of one of the three stories the monster tells Conor:

There was once an invisible man, the monster continued, though Conor kept his eyes firmly on Harry, who had grown tired of being unseen. It was not he was actually invisible, the monster said, it was that people had become used to not seeing him. And if no one sees

you, the monster said, picking up its pace, too, are you really there at all? (Ness 2011, p, 103)

This impression of being invisible not only can take the form of the adolescent feeling they are not seen but it is also common for children's grief to be invisible to those close to them, particularly if they themselves are also grieving. Donna McCrea Godfrey believes that 'Because children are perceived not to have the cognitive or emotional capacities to respond to death, they tend to be overlooked during times of grief. Their grief may be invisible to those around them. Yet, they are busy mediating their emotions internally' (McCrea Godfrey 2020). As soon as Conor's bully realises that invisibility is what Conor fears the most, he acts on it: "'Goodbye, O'Malley," Harry said, looking into Conor's eyes. "I no longer see you" (Ness 2011, p. 102). But, once more, in the guise of the monster, Conor knocks Harry to the floor as everyone watches: 'Conor clenched his fists even tighter. Then the monster leapt forward to make Harry see' (Ness 2011, p. 105). Having responded in this physically violent manner, Conor 'remembered all the screaming and running. He remembered the other kids fleeing to get teachers. He remembered the circle around him opening wider and wider as the monster told the story of all that he'd done for the invisible man. Never invisible again, the monster kept saying as he pummelled Harry. Never invisible again' (Ness 2011, p. 107). Conor realises that though he is no longer invisible to everyone, he is still further away from them than ever because the school is using his mother's illness as an excuse not to punish him. Before standing

up to the bullies himself, the school does try to intervene, but Conor denies there is any problem:

Are you sure everything's all right between you and those boys? Miss Kwan said putting her voice into its 'kindly' mode, which was only slightly less scary than full-on shouting. He knew what was coming. He knew and he hated it. 'I can't imagine what you must be going through, Conor' Miss Kwan said, so quiet it was almost a whisper, 'but if you ever want to talk, my door is always open.' (Ness 2011, p. 53)

The reason he will not acknowledge the bullies is because he cannot bear the sympathy that will come with it. He doesn't feel he deserves their sympathy because of the terrible secret he is holding inside. As he reflects: 'He couldn't look at her, couldn't see the care there, couldn't *bear* to hear it in her voice. (Because he didn't deserve it) (The nightmare flashed in him, the screaming, and the terror, and what happened at the end-)' (Ness 2011, p. 54). Once again, 'the monster gives Conor an outlet for his feelings, which the boy uses to take down bullies and wreak destruction in his grandmother's house. The adults around him reflect an unspoken understanding of Conor's plight when they refuse to punish him: "What would be the point?" they say. His mother is dying. Isn't that punishment enough for anyone?' (*Malta Independent* 2017). So, the cycle of bullying continues as the school's hesitancy to punish Conor for his actions further enrages the bullies who take it out on Conor again.

Conor is left in a state of isolation because he has alienated his best friend and has no one to whom he can turn. This type of alienation is not uncommon among young people coping with the stresses of having a terminally ill family

member at home, '[t]he young carers reported that bullying leads to them becoming increasingly isolated and excluded (Carer Trust 2016, p.11). In the main, this tendency to isolate is because '[c]oping with illness or disability can be stressful for the whole family and can impact upon the mood or behaviour of an adolescent in other settings, which may then have an alienating effect on their relationships with other children' (Carer Trust 2016, p.8), as can be seen in Conor's case. An added pressure for children dealing with the imminent death of a parent is not wanting to confide in them about the bullying, given that the parent already has enough stress and worry with which to deal. Research in this area indicates that young carers are careful not to put additional pressure and stress on the ill parent, so they do not tell them the bullying is happening. The Carer's Trust state that:

They may hold back from telling someone about their worries or things that have happened to them based on the state of that person's health on a particular day. They may put the needs of the person they care for before their own and either not tell them about bullying incidents at all or minimise their seriousness. (Carers Trust 2016, pp 14-15)

As a consequence, there is nobody to intervene or advocate on behalf of the bullied child, so the bullying continues. Additionally, the young carer does not have the emotional support at home to help cope with the consequences of the bullying which adds to the burden they are already carrying.

Therefore, it is imperative that lines of communication are kept open as bullying, in addition to trauma and bereavement can have profound effects on the adolescent mind. This may go some way to explaining why Conor does not believe

it was him but the monster who attacked Harry in the dining hall. When questioned by the headmistress Conor denies responsibility for Harry's injuries:

"What do you have to say for yourself?" the Headmistress asked. Conor shrugged. "I'm going to need more than that," she said. "You seriously hurt him." "It wasn't me," Conor mumbled. "What was that?" she said sharply. "It wasn't me," Conor said, more clearly. "It was the monster who did it." "The monster," the Headmistress said. "I didn't even touch Harry." (Ness 2011, p. 108)

Therefore, it's clear from this interaction with his headmistress that Conor is still not facing up to reality. He is still maintaining that the monster is responsible for hurting Harry, even though the whole school canteen witnessed him carrying out the attack. This again is a further example of Ghoshal and Wilkinson's point that in Conor's head, it is the monster who carried out these actions and is further evidence of the dissociation Conor is experiencing. Therefore, it demonstrates that Conor is still unable to face reality and the truth of his situation, not just the attack on Harry but that of his mother also.

5.6 Facing the Truth

However, as his mother's health further declines Conor cannot go on hiding from reality. Even when his mother tells him the latest treatment is not working, Conor does not want to accept what she is telling him, accusing her of lying to him about the seriousness of her condition: "You lied," he said again. "I think, deep in your heart, you've always known," his mother said. "Haven't you?" Conor didn't answer her' (Ness 2011, p. 117). They both know that they knew this day was

coming and now that he has faced up to the truth of the situation, he wants to confront the monster. Angrily he tells the monster that he had lied about being able to heal, however the monster tells him:

I did not come to heal her, the monster said. I came to heal you. "Me?" Conor said, stopping his squirming in the monster's hand. "I don't need healing. My mum's the one who's..." But he couldn't say it. Even now he couldn't say it. Even though they'd had the talk. Even though he'd known it all along. Because of course he had, of course he did, no matter how much he'd wanted to believe it wasn't true, of course he knew. But still, he couldn't say it. Couldn't say that she was—. (Ness 2011, p. 121)

The monster will not allow Conor to remain in denial, telling him it is time face the truth and tell the fourth tale, he must speak the unspeakable and tell the monster the end of the nightmare. And then, 'He [Conor] spoke the truth. He told the rest of the fourth tale. "I can't stand it anymore!" he cried out as the fire raged around him. "I can't stand knowing that she'll go! I just want it to be over! I want it to be finished' (Ness 2011, p. 131). Finally facing the nightmare not only provided Conor with a sense of relief, but also enabled him to face the reality of his mother's death when it finally came. By speaking his trauma, by facing it and acknowledging it rather than supressing it, Conor was able to speak his truth and tell his mother that he does not want to let her go:

And that was all he needed to say. He leaned forward onto her bed and put his arm around her. Holding her. He knew it would come, and soon, maybe even this 12.07. The moment she would slip from his grasp, no matter how tightly he held on. But not this moment, the monster whispered, still close. Not just yet. Conor held tightly onto his mother. And by doing so, he could finally let her go. (Ness 2011, p. 141)

Consequently, once Conor verbalises his worst fears, and speaks his truth, the suppressed guilt about wishing for an end to his mother's suffering is immediately lifted and the monster no longer has a hold over him.

Therefore, texts such as *A Monster Calls* that detail reactions such as the child wishing for an end to the parent's suffering are vital because it shows bereaved children that these types of responses are quite common. Indeed, Grace Christ and Adolph Christ document that bereaved children of terminally ill parents are more likely to suffer 'misunderstandings and guilt surrounding the parent's deteriorating condition and terminal illness' than children who experience other forms of loss (Christ and Christ, 2006, p. 25). Furthermore, they believe that when parental death follows a lengthy illness 'child disturbance may precede the death itself' and that 'for children it may be the time of highest distress' (Christ and Christ, 2006, p. 25). Therefore, being aware that their reactions are not uncommon for children in their situation may be of benefit to them during such a stressful period of their life. Moreover, it is particularly important for children with a terminally ill parent to be aware that such reactions are common and normal as they are statistically more likely to experience 'less self-esteem and social competence, and more depressive and anxiety symptoms, compared to community counterparts (Saldinger et al. 1999, p.41). Indeed, this is particularly important to such children as Saldinger et al's findings state that children of terminally ill parents 'have more to lose because they are more sensitive to the particular stresses associated with anticipated deaths and have fewer resources to cope with these stresses' (Saldinger et al. 1999, p. 40). While there are many texts

available that detail the many stages of childhood grief, and there is no denying they can be beneficial to some, they rarely focus on the less pleasant aspects of grief particularly regarding the stresses associated with anticipated deaths. That is why texts such as *A Monster Calls* are a such important resource for bereaved children. Rather than cloak grief in a collection of glib clichés as many books about grief do, *A Monster Call's* details the harsh, unsavoury, unpleasant realities of the loss of a terminally ill parent. It does not try to shield the child reader from these aspects of grief, instead it faces them head on. In doing so it acknowledges to the child reader an awareness of the complex, complicated, confused thoughts and emotions such a horrific experience evokes within them. Most importantly, for the bereaved child it demonstrates that grief comes in many guises, and not all of them will fit a neat little list of stages developed half a century ago. What is most important is that they can grieve freely and be true to themselves and the emotions they feel, and not be pressurised to conform to set expectations of what grief should look like. As the monster says is that 'If you speak your truth you will be able to face whatever comes' (Ness 2011, p.140).

Conclusion

In conclusion, *A Monster Calls* is uniquely tailored for young adolescent readers, offering a lens into the complex emotional responses that bereaved teenagers often face. The chapter addressed broader themes such as guilt, bullying, isolation, associated with childhood grief. In particular, the exploration of anticipatory grief within the context of this text highlights Conor's internal conflict, specifically the

guilt he experiences at wishing for his mother's suffering to end. Likewise, the depiction of Dissociative Grief demonstrates that grief can be complex and have lasting implications if not properly addressed. In particular, it highlights the importance of facing the truth and the guilt and fear associated with it in order for the child griever to fully process their grief. In addressing these themes of grief and loss it looked at how the text is an effective bibliotherapeutic resource for children experiencing loss and facilitate their understanding of grief particularly as it allows children to gain insight into the effects of loss. Lastly, the chapter demonstrates how the depiction of childhood grief in "A Monster Calls" aligns with this thesis's arguments concerning trauma and childhood grief.

Conclusion

In recent years, there has been significant progress in attitudes concerning childhood grief, marked by an increased acknowledgment of the requirements of bereaved children. This thesis illustrates a considerable shift in attitudes toward childhood grief, tracing this evolution from the initial publication of *The Secret Garden* in 1911 through to the publication of *A Monster Calls* in 2011. As society gradually gained an awareness of the profound effect of loss on children, with notable studies by Nagy, Kubler Ross, and Worden playing a key role in this understanding, this understanding of childhood grief, it slowly began to be reflected into depictions of childhood grief within children's literature. Additionally, by analysing the texts through the lens of literary trauma theory it highlights that in earlier texts where childhood grief is not explicitly acknowledged, the bereaved children still exhibited discernible symptoms of grief as the result of loss. Additionally, by utilising literary trauma theory as a lens in the thesis, it highlights the limitations of traditional literary trauma theory. It is apparent that the scope of literary trauma theory is too narrow to be universally applicable to all forms of trauma.

As *The Secret Garden* demonstrates, a little over a century ago this was not the case. Children were believed to be resilient and would recover in the absence of external intervention. As can be seen in the case of Colin Craven, this lack of support can lead to feelings of isolation and prolonged grief. Viewed through the

lens of literary trauma theory, Colin's and Mary's grief very much adheres to the Caruthian model of literary trauma theory, in that the trauma was not recognised or consciously acknowledged. Mary's and Colin's angry outbursts are very typical of Caruth's theory of belatedness where the trauma can come back belatedly in the form of dreams or repetitive behaviour. This can also be seen in Mary's building of a garden, which she often did in India and which she continued to do on a much larger scale in England. For Caruth this repetitive behaviour is a subconscious reaction to the trauma suffered and will go on being repeated until the trauma is resolved. Archibald Craven's repetitive dreams about deceased wife, Lilies, also fit's Caruth's trauma theory. Much leeway is given to Craven due to his grief, even though it is still unresolved almost a decade after her death, yet Mary only recently orphaned and uprooted from her home is given no such accommodations. Therefore, it is clear that adult grief was accepted and understood, however, children's grief went completely unacknowledged. Therefore, while it seemingly adheres to Caruth's theory of the unspeakability of trauma, it is more likely that the non-verbalisation of Mary's and Colin's grief is due to cultural and societal practices of the time rather than an inability to verbalise their trauma.

The Yearling was published in 1938, and not much advancement in the recognition of childhood grief was evident. What is significant about *The Yearling* is the knowability of the trauma. Contrary to Caruth's assertion that trauma can only be known belatedly, Penny, Ora and Jody Baxter are very much aware of their

trauma and the effects it has on their relationship with one another. Jody Baxter is deeply traumatised by the death of his pet yearling, Flag, and the sudden passing of his friend, Fodder-wing. Jody's parents' traumas, having lost several children before Jody, is evident throughout the text. Ora Baxter demonstrates a remarkable ability to articulate her grief, and it is expressed very well in the text. Therefore, from a literary trauma theory perspective, once again Caruth's hypothesis that trauma can only be expressed indirectly through gaps and omissions in the narrative does not hold true. Rather, it confirms Satterlee's assertion that Caruth's hypothesis regarding universality of memory and trauma was too narrow a concept and does not allow for every response to trauma. Ora and Penny Baxter's relationship with Jody is an excellent example of Satterlee's theory on the knowability of trauma. Ora is aware of her detachment from Jody as she is afraid to build a bond in case she loses him also; Penny Baxter recognises that he is much softer on Jody due to him being his only surviving child and Jody recognises his trauma when Ora shoots Flag and he has to finish what she started. However, as with *The Secret Garden*, there is no evidence of a recognition of the traumatic grief that Jody is experiencing and the grief at what he perceives to be Penny's betrayal. Even when Jody runs away from home, grief is not considered a probable reason. When Jody eventually returns home, no mention of the grief or trauma he suffered is made. This is unsurprising as no research into children's grief has been made at this stage, and societally it is believed that children do not grieve as adults do. Therefore, as with *The Secret Garden*, while ostensibly the text seems to adhere

to the Caruthian model of the unknowability of trauma, again it is more a reflection of societal beliefs and practices at the time of publication.

By the time *Goodnight Mr Tom* was published there had been some developments in the understanding of childhood grief. Though set in the 1940's, this book was published in the 1980's and, as such, does acknowledge that trauma and grief has had some impact on Will Beech. However, it depicts the beliefs around grief from the time it was set in, i.e., that children should be shielded from grief and the way that was done was not to talk about it. As with adults, children were very much encouraged to suppress rather than express their feelings, which is reflected in Mr Tom's reaction to the loss of his wife, Rachel, and their son. Mr. Tom isolated himself following their deaths and shut out anything and anybody that reminded him of them. Consequently, this was very much the template he used when Will lost his mother and sister. He took Will from the care of a psychiatric hospital, believing Will would recover from his trauma without doctors or medication. Where it differs from the previous texts is the question of the unspeakability of trauma. Both Mr Tom and Will are very much aware of the trauma they have suffered, but rather than subconsciously suppressing it, they are consciously choosing to not speak of it. However, it does appear to be the case that they cannot verbalise the extent of their trauma, which adheres to Caruth's model of literary trauma theory. However, they are very much aware of the trauma they have suffered which does not align with Caruth's theory around the unknowability of trauma. Therefore, once again this depiction of trauma aligns with Satterlee's contemporary approach to literary trauma theory, which allow for

a deliberate, conscious silencing of traumatic memory. As Satterlee points out a '[s]ingle conceptualization of trauma will likely never fit the multiple and contradictory depictions of trauma in literature because texts cultivate a wide variety of values that reveal individual and cultural understandings of the self, and society' (Satterlee 2014, p. 8).

Another aspect of trauma that Caruth's literary trauma theory does not allow for is the effect trauma can have on the compliant child. Compliant children will continuously adjust their behaviour to the environment they find themselves in. For example, Will tries not to upset Mr Tom, and is fearful of the repercussions for wetting the bed. These are both triggers for his mother's wrath and so when he enters a new environment in *Little Weirworld*, he brings with him this fear of triggering a similar response from Mr Tom. Again, this reinforces the notion that Will is very much aware of the trauma and is fearful of triggering a new wave of violence and trauma. Rather than speak of the trauma they are suffering, they choose to remain silent, fearful of triggering a similar trauma in a new environment. Therefore, in *Goodnight Mr Tom* while the trauma suffered may not be fully verbalised, there is full awareness of the trauma suffered. At the time of the setting of the novel, there was evidence of a growing awareness that children did grieve. However, the response was to shield children from it, not acknowledge it and hope they would grow out of it. Even the medical answer to childhood trauma and grief was to sedate the child, and not allow them to cry or express their grief. Instead, it was preferable for children to suppress their grief, rather than

allow them to work through it. Therefore, again the lack of direct expression of trauma was the result of social norms rather than an inability to voice their trauma.

In *A Taste of Blackberries* and *Bridge to Terabithia* there is a significant change in the attitude to childhood grief. There is an evident shift towards the recognition of childhood grief as a normal response to loss, rather than something to be ignored or silenced. Another critical development is the recognition that different age groups grieve differently. The language employed by the parent in *A Taste of Blackberries* is age appropriate and direct, displaying an understanding that the young boy will need adult support to navigate the loss of his friend. In *Bridge to Terabithia* there is a nuanced depiction of Jesse's grief and clear representation of the guilt he suffers. Jesse's sibling's reactions, and his father's response to his grief is also particularly important. The children's grief is recognised and acknowledged, and the trauma suffered as a result is explicitly expressed in the text. The depiction of grief in both texts is reflective of the developing research and support around childhood grief at that time, particularly that of Maria Nagy, a Hungarian psychologist who conducted one of the first research studies on childhood grief, and Elisabeth Kubler Ross who developed the age specific stages of grief in children.

Additionally, both texts emphasise the importance of societal death rituals, and its role in helping children navigate their grief, particularly rituals around funeral services and the importance of seeing adults grieve. This is important because children can often be overlooked during the grieving process. If there is

no public validation of their grief it can lead to disenfranchised grief where children feel forgotten and do not get the opportunity to publicly express their grief. Recognition of a child's grief and support finding their way through their feelings helps them realise that life continues after traumatic events and that a return to normality may seem impossible but is achievable. For this reason, children's literature containing the subject matter of grief and life after grief can provide a space for processing and healing from these experiences. Therefore, books such as *A Taste of Blackberries* and *Bridge to Terabithia* are an excellent resource in helping a bereaved child traverse such a difficult period in their lives and can provide a secure space for children to explore their emotions and come to terms with their loss.

This is particularly true of *A Monster Calls*, written specifically with the grieving YA and child reader in mind. Of all the texts analysed, this text unequivocally demonstrates that trauma can be directly expressed in literature. It does not attempt to lessen the impact of grief; it depicts it in a brutally honest manner. It contains references to the opposing thoughts of fearing the parent has died in the night and wishing the terminally ill person would just die not a pleasant thought but not an uncommon one among the children of terminally ill patients. It shows how these thoughts are not something to repress or be ashamed of, they are just a way of hoping the dying parent is out of pain and misery and that the anticipation of what comes after can be put to bed. The resultant guilt and trauma is conveyed in several ways in the text - through projection onto a monstrous Other, through intrusive thought and nightmares, through traumatic amnesia and

through dissociation. *A Monster Calls* shows how important children's literature can be in helping children understand that these thoughts are normal and not a betrayal of their dying parent and that it is possible to hold onto hope that a person may get better but be prepared to let them go at the same time. Another important aspect of *A Monster Calls* is that it depicts other symptoms associated with grief, such as feelings of anger or expression of grief through physical aggression. It also deals with topics not often spoken about or associated with the grieving child, namely bullying, isolation and dissociation. It gives an excellent account of dissociative grief, a common reaction to grief that can lead to disruption in memory, identity, and which had been found to have neurobiological basis in recent research. In addition, *A Monster Calls* gives a very good account of the grieving adult caregiver, and shows the grieving child that adults grieve too, just sometimes in different ways. Finally, it is an excellent resource to show the importance of facing the truth both from the child's perspective but also from the adults. It shows how important it is to keep the child properly informed so that they are properly prepared for the future and can prepare to accept the situation they will face. Overall, the last century has seen a growing recognition of childhood and is a much better understanding that grieving is a normal and natural reaction to loss. Children are no longer expected to simply get over the loss of a loved one. Instead, the importance of supporting children who are grieving, is widely recognised with support services increasingly available. This shift in attitudes has led to more compassionate and effective care for grieving children. There is a

recognition that children may not have the same ability to vocalise their grief but that does not mean that it affects them any less.

Literary trauma theory is an invaluable method of addressing the psychological impact of traumatic experiences. It demonstrates how literature can be a valuable resource in supporting and sustaining trauma survivors in times of emotional need and help them cope with and heal from traumatic experiences. However, the denial of the trauma survivor's ability to directly articulate and be a witness to their own traumatic experience only serves to silence the traumatised. To dismiss their memory, experience and recollection of the traumatic event and insist knowledge of it remains outside normal memory and narrative representation, not only undermines them as a trauma victim but denies them the opportunity to tell their own story. That is not to say that the symbolic does not have a place in representing trauma in literature, fragmentation; repetitions, omissions, all have a part to play. But as these texts demonstrate, they are not the only methods of representing trauma in literature. Obviously, no single representation of trauma can fully convey every trauma survivor's individual experience, however children's literature can and does provide a valuable means of representing trauma. Not only that but it provides a means of communicating trauma, it provides solace from it and can even play a role in helping the traumatised child to accept their loss. Moreover, reading about characters going through a similar experience can be a powerful source of comfort and support for the grieving child and ease the sense of isolation a child can feel when they are left behind. As Flynn and O'Brien say '[I]oss is only suffered by the living, and while it

may put them in mind of their own death, the telling of trauma, through representations in fiction, poetry and drama, provides a spoken locus from where some form of psychic healing can take place' (Flynn and O'Brien 2018, p. 7). Children's literature, therefore, can and does play a vital role in the processing of trauma for the grieving child.

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