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Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

# Trauma and Absent Parents in Fairy Tale and Fantasy: Fairy Stories, Harry Potter, Twilight and His Dark Materials

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BA (Hons), MA

Submitted to the University of Wales in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

**2010**



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Summary (Abstract)

This thesis begins with an examination of paradigmatic, classic fairy tales and moves on to the contemporary fiction series of *Harry Potter*, *Twilight* and *His Dark Materials* mapping similarities of content in relation to trauma with specific reference to absent or lost parents. Highlighted in this study are the continuities, parallels and differences of the treatment of trauma and absent parents in these texts, with reference to their structure, content, themes, ideologies and preoccupations. The absence of parents is a recurring theme of fairy tale and fantasy stories, and leads to the creation of new or surrogate family structures such as stepfamilies, extended families and elective families. These new family structures, and the emotional, ethical and cultural tensions arising from them, are critical themes of the texts this thesis examines. The causes of trauma, including abuse, neglect, change, loss, death, violence and related features are mapped and deciphered, noting the similarities across the texts studied. These experiences can cause a person to become psychologically disturbed, with a range of damaging consequences. Obsession, repetition, fragmentation and repression are themes which are mapped across the chosen texts, as is the idea of containment. Also the importance of psychological splitting is uncovered and examined within the stories. Splitting is a very important element of trauma. It can be a survival mechanism, a moment of life change and a way of repressing a traumatic experience, and is often the catalyst for action within the plot. This thesis shows how the characters of these texts have portrayed and dealt with their traumatic affects and examines the traumatic journeys they have undertaken within the plots of these fantastical stories.

Declarations and Statements

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This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Contents

# Introduction

## Introduction

In this thesis I explore literary representations of trauma and the loss of parents in fairy tale and fantasy stories for children, from traditional fairy tales to contemporary texts for a teen and cross-over audience. I have chosen either iconic fairy stories or best-selling fantasies, all of which have had a considerable impact on wider popular culture. This thesis will highlight the continuities, parallels and differences in the treatment of trauma and loss of (or absent) parents in these texts, with reference to their structure, content, themes, ideologies and preoccupations.

The thesis begins with a consideration of paradigmatic, classic fairy tales and moves on to the contemporary series of *Harry Potter*, *Twilight* and *His Dark Materials,* mapping similarities of content in relation to trauma with specific reference to absent or lost parents. The rationale for focusing on popular fantasy texts is that on the one hand they appear to be the natural heirs of fairy tales and to consciously draw upon them (Zipes, 2006, 91), while on the other, their draw and appeal to a wide readership makes them culturally important texts.

**Absent Parents**

One of the key themes of my chosen texts is absent parents. This, along with the loss of parents, is a recurring theme of fairy tale and fantasy stories, and such absences lead to the creation of new or surrogate family structures such as stepfamilies, extended families and elective families (that is, those families constructed by consenting choices). Remarriage, parent/child role-reversal and deliberate choice are all recurring features of these new family structures and the emotional, ethical and cultural tensions arising from their creation are critical themes of the texts this thesis examines. These new family structures are also at the centre of experiences of trauma, either generating it or alleviating it (or perhaps both, simultaneously).

In addition to the impact of a restructuring of the family arising from the absence of parents, the experience of losing one's parent or parents is itself traumatic. Effects such as grief or abandonment are common features of the selected texts. Structurally, the absence of parents in a story or novel is also significant, as this loss often becomes a catalyst to force the main character into an adventure or a journey or quest, with emotional/psychological difficulties, possibly symbolised by certain tasks or obstacles, which need to be faced and worked through. These journeys are often

symbolic enactments of the process through which a child must go in order to cope with such a heartbreaking situation as losing a parent.

Further themes which provide a degree of continuity between fairy tale and fantasy are death, violence and exposure to danger. These experiences can cause a fictional character to become traumatised and psychologically disturbed, and such consequences as these are themes which I will be mapping across my chosen texts.

**Representing Trauma**

Trauma has, in large part, been defined by its resistance to representation: "trauma comprises an event or experience which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation." (Whitehead, 2004, 3.) Nevertheless, there are ways in which literature can, if not represent, then at least suggest trauma and, perhaps more importantly, its psychological impact and the ways in which these can be worked through. For instance, psychological journeys as represented through actual adventures, as mentioned above, are one way of representing the healing process of working through trauma.

As trauma theory will inform my approach in this thesis, it is necessary to provide a background for this condition in order to help explain why I have chosen to focus on the way in which texts have registered it and why I have chosen children's literature as my subject. The word 'trauma' carries two definitions: the first medical, and the second psychological. Medically, trauma is known to refer to a serious injury, including a wound, impact or shock. Psychologically, trauma is an emotional disturbance due to a profoundly perturbing and/or painful experience. The incident is likely to produce continuing mental anguish and consistent negative effects. Medical trauma refers to the impact or the cause of the medical complaint, whilst psychological trauma also refers to the aftermath of an experience. Cathy Caruth notes that Sigmund Freud assumed psychological trauma to be not only a wound in the mind but the *unrelenting cry* of the wound (Caruth, 1996b, 4).

Testimony had an immense impact in the twentieth century. Kali Tal states that mythologisation is the process by means of which trauma becomes a representational story, and that the testimonial writing that tracks this process commonly deals with deeply disturbing subjects, and often seeks to break taboos (Tal, 2004, 139). Frequently, the survivors of personal catastrophe, or of large-scale tragedy, need to tell their stories in order to survive and to share their experience so as to create awareness. Writing can be a tool for conveying truth and reality, and

testimonial writing is often used as a release – a way of working through a painful past in order to be able to escape from it. It may also be an attempt to ensure a public record of the experience, so as to enable better understanding of it – and over the last century, general understanding of trauma as a phenomenon has indeed improved. For a survivor, writing about traumatic experiences can be a cathartic exercise, which not only releases them from the obsessive nature of their trauma, but also creates witnesses out of the people who may read their writings. There can also be a sort of transference of pain by writing and reading, which can also guarantee the sufferer a strange immortality.

There are significant aims of trauma narratives and testimony, as Laurie Vickroy has noted:

> Trauma narratives endeavor to expand their audiences' awareness of trauma by engaging them with personalized experientially orientated means of narration that highlight the painful ambivalence that characterizes traumatic memory and warns us that trauma reproduces itself if left unattended (Vickroy, 2002, 3).

This warning is very important, as it alerts general readers to the problem of silence. Silence is one effect of trauma, and it in no way helps an individual to heal: staying silent can prolong and intensify the effects.

Writing about trauma can also be a means of recuperating what has been lost, including repressed cultures or people. Documenting the loss becomes a way to recapture the past and to revitalise it rather than to forget it. In Dori Laub's words: 'Survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories; they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive.' (Laub, 1995, 63.) Silence and the refusal to speak only further fuels the trauma and prolongs its hold over the psyche.

Testimony can function in two ways: either it is a process of healing, a bearing witness, thereby creating witnesses and awareness, or it is a historical account, seeking no more than to record of a period in history.

**Experiencing Trauma**

Experience of a traumatic nature has the power to affect the human psyche in sometimes catastrophic ways. It can damage memory and pervert it so that it constantly affects the present: the traumatised can be continually aware of dangers, and become obsessed with negativity and pessimism, expecting disaster.

In 1980 post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, became an acknowledged term used within psychiatry and the medical professions. Survivors of the Vietnam War campaigned for the recognition of this term (Whitehead, 2004, 4). PTSD is the taking over of the mind by the direct reality of a traumatic event, which cannot be controlled. One form of treatment for PTSD that has been found to be helpful is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. CBT focuses on talking and learning how one's actions affect one's state of mind. It is concerned with the present and working through the difficulties and issues that affect a sufferer on a daily basis, rather than with focusing on the past. But working through trauma may often cause it to act out further, especially perhaps when the traumatised has suffered a loss. While the loss remains in the past, paranoia can easily take hold, causing present and future worry about losing others – not only is the individual now seen as vulnerable, but all those whom (s)he may hold dear are also seen as equally at risk.

Repression and obsession are exceptionally important aspects of trauma. A traumatised individual can not only repress their underlying trauma but also harbour an obsession with anything linked or associated to it. As Laurie Vickroy suggests in *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*: 'repetition can be an attempt to attack one's own fears.' (Vickroy, 2002, 90.) Moreover, repetition is connected to obsession; the two could be seen as almost synonymous. Being affected by these elements is often described as being haunted, which is a rather gothic description, but nevertheless accurate. The trauma can return to the individual again and again with no clear route for release. Dominick LaCapra has suggested that 'the hauntingly possessive ghosts – of traumatic events are not fully owned by anyone and in various ways affect everyone.' (LaCapra, 2001, xi.) This idea connects the individual to a group and personal relations to the wider society: one can assume that a chain reaction takes place and the consequences have global potential. Often when a traumatising event occurs, the individual can be extremely secretive about the occurrence and the aftermath. In a group dynamic, the feeling of being involved in a secret society may frequently be created. Repression, however, poses a problem. Repressed memories are troublesome and it is arguable that they are suppressed for a reason, because the subconscious knows that they cannot be consciously coped with. Such memories are therefore liable to return in other forms, for example, flashbacks or dreams.

There is another mechanism also frequently at work in cases of trauma. It is thought that at the moment of a traumatic incident, psychological splitting occurs (Vickroy, 2002, 28). This means that the victim's perception of time is separated into before and after the experience, almost separating life into old and new, creating a strange rebirth, perhaps. Splitting is significant and a very important element of trauma. It can be a survival mechanism, a moment of life change and a way of repressing a traumatic experience.

Trauma remains paradoxical. It is unmanageable and makes the victim powerless. Even when such an experience can be spoken of freely and accurately, it may still remain out of reach for the victim – it is still uncontrollable. Flashbacks and disturbing dreams are often factors in such cases: these are further elements which cannot be inhibited. They reinforce the victim's feeling of powerlessness, originally experienced at the moment of psychic damage. As Sigmund Freud writes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*:

> The fact that the traumatic experience repeatedly forced itself on the patient even during sleep is assumed to be proof indeed of just how deep an impression it made. The patient is assumed to be, so to speak, psychically fixated (Freud, 2003, 51).

As Freud suggested in his study, the effects of trauma are remarkably deep and refuse to be healed. Repetition, repression and the experiences of flashbacks and dreams all become interconnected. Coming to terms with trauma creates the need for a period of mourning, similar to when one has suffered a loss. 'Working through trauma,' as LaCapra has observed, 'brings the possibility of counteracting compulsive "acting-out".' (LaCapra, 1996, 174.) This fosters an environment in which repetition can be controlled and worked through in order to provide significant release from obsession.

Trauma can influence the family structure: it can also be transmitted through generations of groups and families. Mothers who have experienced deprivation of identity and culture, history and esteem can potentially pass on these problems and issues to their daughters, and thus on through the generations. While female or childhood trauma are particularly common, the problem of getting acts such as rape and incest recognised and dealt with has been extremely difficult. Indeed, the process itself has been continually traumatic and has often achieved no justice for the victim.

As Kali Tal proposes in *Worlds of Hurt*: 'Women view their trauma as a natural extension of powerlessness. Warriors [men] are forced to realize the vulnerability of everything they have considered powerful.' (Tal, 2004, 139.) It is thus possible to view trauma as a gendered experience, as some men and women appear to respond differently when dealing with its affects. Furthermore, Tal mentions the idea of 'cultural coping – mythologization, medicalization, and disappearance.' (Tal, 2004, 6.) Medicalisation suggests that an individual has an illness that can be cured. But incidents of trauma involve not physical but psychic damage, which may be difficult to prove objectively and so may lead to the questioning of their authenticity. The latter is unfortunately an easy option for the wider society when dealing with trauma and interestingly is also a possible effect of trauma, since denial can appear to be an easier option than dealing with the truth.

When Freud connected hysteria and trauma with women and the high levels of abuse, incest and rape at the end of the nineteenth century (Horvitz, 2000, 3), his theory was poorly received and attracted male-controlled criticism, which created silence. But, of course, silence is itself frequently a consequence of trauma. Even now in the twenty-first century, many crimes against the person are unreported and denied; further fuelling silence, injustice and shame. But Freud later moved from sexual to battle trauma, and it was, tellingly, only when he began to analyse the trauma experienced by males during warfare that his theories began to seen more credibly.

In the early twentieth century, shellshock was a serious problem affecting soldiers. Freud's analysis profitably helped in the discovery of some of the psychological problems that arise out of warfare. He believed that soldiers struggled between the call to duty and the instinct to ensure their own personal survival – and it was their resulting helplessness and inability to be decisive and control their actions that fuelled their trauma (Vickroy, 2002, 16). The theory of Male trauma was often seen as an attack on masculinity and the expectations of maleness. Elaine Showalter suggests in *The Female Malady*, that 'The Great War was a crisis of masculinity and a trial of the Victorian Masculine ideal.' (Showalter, 2007, 171.) And this hysteria, or trauma, that men were being affected by was thought to be due to excess femininity within the male (Showalter, 2007, 172). According to Showalter, women understood shell shock far better than men could. Indeed, female writers actually took this as a subject for their writing, which helped to bring it to society's attention (Showalter,

2007, 190). One important example was Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier,* published in 1918.

Psychological trauma can potentially be not only an individual but a group experience. In the late nineteenth century doctors began labelling psychological illnesses leading from mass accidents, such as railway disasters, traumatic neurosis (Farrell, 1995, 2). These were early examples of mass trauma due to advances in technology. In such circumstances, post-traumatic stress may be contagious (Farrell, 1995, 12):

> Explicit symptoms such as phobias or rage are likely to disturb people around the victim. And as the etymology of the word *panic* witnesses, and as Victorian doctors acknowledged in one meaning of the diagnostic term *hysteria*, we are creatures susceptible to infectious fear and arousal. [...] Because of our capacity for suggestibility, post-traumatic stress can be seen as a category of experience that mediates between a specific individual's injury and a group or even a culture (Farrell, 1995, 12).

More recently, it has become apparent that traumatic shock need not arise from an issue directly experienced by an individual: as technology has greatly advanced in the latter half of the twentieth century, visual news is far more widely spread and far more explicit and therefore creates witnesses out of people who would be unprepared for such disturbing experiences.

> Through mass communications, the millions of people comprising large viewing and listening audiences become aware of much more than they could experience directly. Happenings in faraway places are brought into the homes and lives of millions of people. [...] responses to national traumas have meaning for individuals through the creation of links between personal thought and action and the historical dimensions of their time and place (Neal, 1998, 16).

Due to these advances and improvements in global communications, trauma can be spread more rapidly and vividly, and can potentially cause profound effects in its viewers or victims (Meek, 2010, 2).

> Exposure to media alone is not a sufficient cause of traumatization. Nevertheless, the price of this exposure may be an emotional and intellectual disengagement with the wider world and even a "psychic

> numbing" that is itself listed as a symptom of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Meek, 2010, 5).

Partly because of mass communications, and also developments in warfare and advances in technology and transport, both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw unimaginable genocide, mass disasters, and economic, political, cultural, and social shifts that have completely altered many countries. Furthermore, people are living longer: this means that people survive and live with their trauma for longer (Oldham & Riba, 2003, xv). These are all experiences and developments which have contributed to traumatic memory becoming a vast concern over the last two centuries (Winter, 2006, 52).

**Representing Trauma in Literature**

Contemporary authors can be sensitive to the multiple ways in which trauma manifests itself in narrative. They can also provide personal responses to horrors of the recent past or present. One of the strengths of literature is that it enables trauma to be portrayed in complex ways. Its consequences can be written about realistically, not least by demonstrating that characters can be unaware of the exact causes of their problems. Indeed, trauma can often be easier to digest when featured in a fantasy – especially within children's literature, in the form of either traditional fairy tales or contemporary best sellers in popular series such as *Harry Potter, Twilight* and *His Dark Materials*. Fantasy can be at its most popular and most successful when seemingly rooted in ordinary reality and it is this combination that perhaps enables it to address the experience of trauma so effectively. Creative writers have the ability to mirror a reader's past and present fears, and trauma novels can prove to be means of exploring traumatic experience at least as valuable as memoirs and testimonies. Children's literature is capable of having a profound effect on its readers, as Peter Hunt has noted:

> The experience of children's literature for its primary readership is (or can be, or should be) one of revelation, expansion and exploration – of pushing back limits (Hunt, 2003, xi).

Hunt suggests that literature for children is highly influential (Hunt, 2003, 1) and should push boundaries. My reason for choosing children's literature as my subject

for this thesis is precisely because of its frequently daring creativity and its ability to be controversial.

Children can learn in abundance from literature: it can teach the child readers about the world and alert them to possibilities of negative and positive life experiences. Often the context and subject of a children's story is alarmingly violent or mature. The characters not infrequently experience trauma. I feel it is important to discover how they deal with this. It is important to examine this due to the potential influence children's literature has on its readership, particularly bearing in mind the enormous popularity of novels such as those with which I shall be concerned.

A simple fairy story can be safe and juvenile on the surface, but on deeper enquiry turn out to deal with harrowing subjects or incidents, often subjects of which arguably a child may not be aware. The three series of books I analyse have all been seen as controversial due to either their subject or content, and indeed, much of the content in the traditional fairy tales I consider might be seen as controversial also. Consider, for example, the case of Disney's famous sanitising of fairy tales. The Disney version of 'The Little Mermaid', released in 1989, is considerably different in tone as well as content to Hans Christian Andersen's 1836 version. Symbolism is an elementary aspect of the engagement with trauma in fiction and Ronald Granofsky points out in his monograph *The Trauma Novel* that eating and sex are significant in this connection as they are fundamentals of living.

Granofsky also suggests that the four elements of earth, fire, water, air, can feature prominently in trauma writing (for example, the four elements are represented within the four houses of Hogwarts School in J K Rowling's *Harry Potter* series), and shows that William Golding is an example of an author who has effectively illustrated their importance (Granofsky, 1995, 18). He also states that regression, fragmentation, and reunification are stages present throughout a test concerned with trauma (Granofsky, 1995, 108). They are the results of shattered innocence – for example, fragmentation may become symbolic of the bewildering breakdown of a character's world. It becomes the reader's job to piece together the fragments in order to fully understand the narrative. Splitting, which is what happens at the moment of trauma as an individual's world splits and makes the before and after of the event distinctly different, remains as ever a dichotomous experience, which further accelerates the breakdown of the individual's world. The shape of the narrative in literary fiction can

sometimes be similar to the 'plot' of trauma, as it negotiates between knowing and not knowing. In both cases, a basic knowledge and understanding are required, but ultimate revelations are tantalisingly delayed. Anne Whitehead consequently suggests that 'Trauma is suspended between event and symptom,' (Whitehead, 2004, 162) and she connects this idea with literature, suggesting that trauma, like fiction, lives in the space between content and form (Whitehead, 2004, 162). This appears similar to knowing and not knowing, and proposes that trauma and fiction both reside in a liminal state. Moreover, memories of a traumatic event are able to reincarnate themselves metaphorically, and this has a strong connection to literature. And literature concerned with trauma brings peripheral and marginal people or problems into focus, attracting attention to otherwise silent people and to issues that would perhaps be conventionally overlooked by society.

However, there are many complex and interesting ways in which trauma fiction becomes distinctly different to other fictions, despite elements of trauma potentially featuring in all stories and all novels. Granofsky suggests that

> What distinguishes the trauma novel from other novels is the exploration through the agency of literary symbolism of the individual experience of collective trauma, either actual events of the past, alarming tendencies of the present, or imagined horrors of the future (Granofsky, 1995, 5).

Trauma writing creates a stunning attempt at fusing not only past, present and future, but the obvious and implicit, the real and the fantastical, while also seeking to separate them.

Like trauma itself, trauma fictions are paradoxical and contradictory. Anne Whitehead poses the following question: 'if trauma comprises an event or experience which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation, how then can it be narrativised in fiction?' (Whitehead, 2004, 3.) In dealing with trauma, authors may not only use their own experiences, but draw on information gained from other sources, such as medical studies of trauma. But this may create a problem. Whitehead states that: 'Modern novelists who represent in their fiction traumatic events of which they have no first-hand or personal experience often feel an undeniable sense of discomfort and unease.' (Whitehead, 2004, 92.) This is understandable, especially

since there can be quite a fine line between truth and exploitation, and accuracy and gratuitous sensationalism.

Trauma theory is said to have begun in the 1990s in the United States, in an attempt 'to elaborate on the cultural and ethical implications of trauma.'(Whitehead, 2004, 4.) It emerged in part from postmodernism and postcolonialism, (Whitehead, 2004, 81). However, such theorising is also firmly rooted in psychoanalysis. This mode of study therefore appears to be ecumenical and eclectic: it refuses to be sectioned into any clear theory, drawing instead on a wide range of explanatory and analytical discourses. I hope my analysis of children's literature using trauma theory will provide an insight into the similarities in content, structure and traumatic occurrences across a range of popular fairy tale and fantasy stories, showing how the characters cope with their difficult experiences and the connotations that result for the reader.

**Structure of Thesis**

The thesis will be split into four chapters, each dealing with a different set of stories or series. In my first chapter I examine iconic European fairy stories from such authors as the Grimm Brothers and Hans Christian Andersen, in order to map the creation of fantastical children's stories and to examine fundamental elements of such stories which remain popular today in children's novels. My sources are varied, as the thesis draws on the 1957 versions of the early nineteenth-century Grimm Brothers' tales 'Cinderella', 'Hansel and Gretel', and 'Little Snow-White', 'The Three Little Men in the Wood', 'Rumpelstiltskin', 'Brother and Sister', 'Sweetheart Roland', 'The Riddle', and 'Little Red Cap'; Hans Christian Andersen's 1836 version of 'The Little Mermaid'; the 1894 version of 'Tattercoats', an English Cinderella-type story; and Daniel Morden's 'The Leaves that Hung but Never Grew', published in 2006. In all these cases, I am particularly interested in the treatment of death, loss and abuse.

Building upon my discoveries in chapter one concerning the older fairy tales, in my second chapter I examine the *Harry Potter* series by J K Rowling, the most popular children's literary series of the last 13 years. The individual volumes in this series are *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, published in 1997; *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, published in 1998; *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, published in 1999; *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, published in 2000; *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, published in 2003; *Harry Potter and the*

*Half-Blood Prince*, published in 2005; and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, published in 2007. These are often supposed to have brought children back to reading (*Waterstone's Booksellers Ltd: Harry Potter Improves Children's Reading*, 2010). Their importance to the world of children's literature (and their cross over into adult fiction) has been profound. A new age of children queuing up at midnight for a book release was created and the sort of hysterical publicity that would be expected for a rock band was generated. While J K Rowling created an appealing magical world, she also tackled some difficult subjects: Harry suffers from losing his parents and other loved ones and has to fight evil. I feel it is important to decipher how trauma has been dealt with in this story, especially due to the series' popularity and impact on children. This, as I shall endeavour to demonstrate, is partly because Rowling's fiction draws upon very ancient models. The story of Harry Potter, for example, has similarities to the classic tale of Cinderella: both are a rags to riches tale, and Harry also has a 'fairy Godmother' type character in the form of Hagrid, who changes his life by providing him with the knowledge and ability to escape from his current existence.

In my third chapter I examine the *Twilight* Saga by Stephenie Meyer. The first book, *Twilight,* was published in 2006; the second, *New Moon* and the third, *Eclipse*, were both published in 2007; and the fourth book, *Breaking Dawn,* was released in 2008. These books have also achieved immense popularity. Like the Potter sequence, The *Twilight* story is framed within an unreal world, but one that remains partly within the reader's own world. The content of these novels is troubling and worthy of analysis not only due to their popularity but because of their psychological connotations particularly when dealing with the issue of absent parents. Compared to the Harry Potter novels, this series would perhaps be more correctly defined as suitable for young adults or teenagers as in content they are aimed at a slightly older (and predominantly female) audience. It will therefore be interesting to compare them with the Potter novels, not least because they share with Rowling's fiction a concern with absent parents, the trouble of being an outsider, and the creation of new family-like relationships.

In my fourth chapter I examine the *His Dark Materials* series by Philip Pullman, which consists of three books: *Northern Lights*, published in 1995; *The Subtle Knife*, in 1997; and *The Amber Spyglass* in 2000. While the novels I discuss in chapters two and three of this thesis have achieved considerable success in sales and popularity, Pullman's novels have achieved critical success in addition to sales. While

similar to the novels of Rowling and Meyer in respect to the fantastical world and epic adventure, these novels are far more complex and both deeper and darker. However, they, too, feature a lack of parents and creation of new families. And this series, too, follows the fairy tale style adventure and journey that is so familiar to readers of such traditional fairy tales, as the story of Snow White or The Little Mermaid.

The issue of 'containment' is prevalent throughout my chosen texts and I provide an examination of them from this point of view, during the course of seeking to understand how trauma can be safely presented and mediated for a young audience. Fairy tales and fantasy stories often deal with difficult subjects, as I have stated, and perhaps such subjects are easier to negotiate when dealt with in a 'parallel universe,' a safely self-enclosed reality that is not the reader's own, which allows the reader to take a step back from the situation at hand, to create a distance between themselves and the trauma or difficult subject of a story. After all, one feature of the fantastical story is that is recognisably set in a world with supernatural elements not present in the reader's reality. This helps create the distance which allows the reader to feel safe and to know that the trauma in the story will remain contained within the fantastical world of the tale. However, it is important to also mention that regardless of how unreal or fantastical a world is portrayed within a story, elements will always overlap with the reader's reality.

In these four chapters I therefore hope to demonstrate how trauma and its effects are represented through literature and will draw on trauma theory to inform a discussion of how the characters of the stories work through their traumas and problems. And in order to provide my study with focus, I shall highlight and map recurring themes in literature for children, concentrating on such post-traumatic effects as silence, repression, obsession, splitting, etc. and identifying some of their causes (abuse, violence, neglect, loss, a sudden event, etc.). I shall also endeavour to identify the way in which these texts use generic characteristics and narrative strategies to 'contain' the distressing matters with which they are concerned.

# Chapter One:

# Fairytale Families

## Chapter One: Fairytale Families

Fairytales (stories which are based on folk tales with fantastical elements and happy endings, primarily aimed at children), have the potential to have a profound influence upon the ideas and ideals of children. They can also provide nurturing and enthralling experiences, which often stay with the child for many years. Marina Warner suggests that 'Fairytales play to the child's hankering after nobler, richer, altogether better origins' (Warner, 1995, 210). As fairytales have such an important place in children's writing (not to mention their influence on wider literature), it is important to evaluate the symbolism and tropes which form such an important part of their subtextual resonance and meaning.

Fairy and fantasy stories often deal with difficult subjects, perhaps because such subjects are easier to negotiate when portrayed in a reality that is not the reader's own, therefore allowing the reader to take a step back from the situation at hand, to create a distance. A recurring subject which forms a core focus for so many of these stories is the problems which occur within the structure of the family. Absent parents, in particular, are a recurring feature of fairytales and fantasy and interesting patterns emerge concerning the loss of parents and the dynamics of family relations in stories where there is an absent parent. This chapter will discuss the ways in which these losses are portrayed and consider the significance of these patterns. A key concern will be to consider how the trauma associated with the loss of a parent is represented within these stories, and how characters cope with and potentially overcome their situations. In exploring the theme of absent parents in fairytales, the function of stepfamilies is an important issue. Furthermore, themes of abuse, neglect, and violence are closely linked to the family and appear in stories which include the loss of a parent. Trauma theory is of great value in addressing these issues.

Often, parental loss (and indeed other objectionable traumatic occurrences) is glossed over or ignored: the emotional impact upon the characters or the reader of such a traumatic incident is characteristically given little or no elaboration or acknowledgement in fairytales. Thus it may be argued that the brushing aside of difficult and unpleasant episodes creates a textual silence, and a repression of painful events. Where no time or space to grieve, and thus to heal, has been allowed to the

characters, their traumatic experiences may come to dominate the text. It is interesting to consider how the effects of trauma upon the characters are represented within a text, whether they are problematic to the ultimate happiness of the characters or eventually lead to positive outcomes. It is illuminating to consider how far the traumatic affects are ultimately necessary for the positive resolution of the narrative.

In this chapter, I will be exploring these issues of the loss of a parent, the representation of the trauma of this loss and the possible trauma connected to the dysfunctional dynamic of the resulting stepfamily, with reference to some of the most popular and iconic fairytales, which originate from the European originals of the Grimm Brothers, Hans Christian Andersen, et al. I will be considering the following tales: the 1957 versions of the early nineteenth century Grimm Brothers' tales 'Cinderella', 'Hansel and Gretel', and 'Little Snow-White', 'The Three Little Men in the Wood', 'Rumpelstiltskin', 'Brother and Sister', 'Sweetheart Roland', 'The Riddle', and 'Little Red Cap'; Hans Christian Andersen's 1836 version of 'The Little Mermaid;' the 1894 version of 'Tattercoats', an English Cinderella-type story; and Daniel Morden's 'The Leaves that Hung but Never Grew', published in 2006. These tales are from a selection of different periods and cultures and some feature the loss of a parent, as well as featuring negative representations of stepfamilies. It is interesting that such tales remain consistently popular.

**Death and Loss**

As previously observed, many of our best-loved fairytales aimed at children deal with the loss of the mother. Marina Warner states that 'The absence of the mother from the tale is often declared at the start, without explanation, as if none were required.' (Warner, 1995, 210.) Although the loss of a parent is undeniably a very traumatic experience, it is nevertheless a frequently occurring theme in the most famous and enduring fairytales, suggesting it is a common and important fear to which young readers are drawn. Marina Warner notes:

> The good mother often dies at the beginning of the story. Tales telling of her miraculous return to life, like Shakespeare's romances *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*, have not gained the currency or popularity of 'Cinderella' or 'Snow-White' in which she is supplanted by a monster (Warner, 1995, 202).

This observation is psychologically interesting: perhaps the death of a mother and replacement wicked stepmother reflects the altering relationship between a growing child and his/her mother (Bettelheim, 1991, 120). Perhaps this death is not a literal death but a transfiguration, and the death may be wanted by the child reader. Figures of evil in popular fairytales are quite often female, and in tales that feature the loss of a mother, there is often also a negative female presence, whether it is a stepfamily member or an external element, like a wicked witch, the significance of which is discussed in more detail later.

As Marina Warner suggests, an absent mother is a common feature of our most popular tales. In the Grimm Brothers' tale, 'The Three Little Men in the Wood', the death of the mother is declared immediately: 'There was once a man whose wife died, and a woman whose husband died, and the man had a daughter, and the woman also had a daughter.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 78.) No explanation is allowed for these respective deaths or even expected. The Grimms' tale 'Rumpelstiltskin' begins: 'Once there was a miller who was poor, but who had a beautiful daughter.'(Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 264.) In this case the absence of the mother is completely ignored, and similarly, no explanation is given or allowed. In Daniel Morden's collection of Welsh tales, *Dark Tales from the Woods,* there is a rather interesting tale called 'The Leaves that Hung but Never Grew', which adopts the style of earlier European folk-tales. This story centres upon parental abuse and violence, and the main character, Anwen, who has to overcome evil before returning home. Upon arrival at her home she discovers that her mother is dead: 'Her mother was dead. Anwen buried her. Afterwards she couldn't bear to stay in that place.' (Morden, 2007, 29.) After escaping evil, and expecting to return home to her loving mother, the immediate loss of her parent would be disastrous. However, in the text, Morden only allows a brief mention of the probable pain. The death and burial are mentioned in short snappy sentences, and the aftermath of the experience is summed up in one line, stating that she could no longer bear to be in her mother's house. Silence is used within the text to suggest the traumatic effects that Anwen experiences. The almost fragmented section of text represents the wider experience affecting her: 'She took to wandering. She slept in barns and under hedges.' (Morden, 2007, 29.) This tale is somewhat unusual as the death of the mother is a feature of the close of the tale, rather than the beginning, and so it becomes a very difficult event for Anwen to overcome after having survived her initial traumatic journey. The inversion, in this story, of the more

usual order of events, allows us to consider why earlier tales tend to place the loss of the parent at the *beginning* of the story.

Bruno Bettelheim, in *The Uses of Enchantment*, makes the following observation concerning the death of parents in fairy stories, and the reasons why the deaths are glossed over:

> many stories *begin* with the death of a mother or father; in these tales the death of the parent creates the most agonizing problems, as it (or the fear of it) does in real life [...] It is characteristic of fairytales to state an existential dilemma briefly and pointedly. This permits the child to come to grips with the problem in its most essential form, where a more complex plot would confuse matters (Bettelheim, 1991, 8).

Morden may have reversed the order of the death of the mother in an attempt to portray a more realistic situation, and to show that once a tale has ended, further upsetting events can take place. By ending this tale with a death there is no room to overcome the loss and none of the working through or portrayal of traumatic affects (which are characteristic of other fairy tales) can occur. The result of it is, paradoxically, to leave the reader more likely to be affected by the girl's loss. There is no opportunity for resolution and closure which is characteristic of fairy tales that feature a death at the beginning.

Bettelheim seems to be suggesting that the use of only a brief mention of death in a fairy story is in order to alert the child to the possibility of it happening in their reality. Thus, no extra time is allowed within the text to explain or examine how difficult the death of a parent can be. While this is understandable, it is also questionable as to whether this brief mention may nevertheless stay with the child and potentially cause greater confusion or anxiety. Perhaps the lack of addressing the death would seem to lessen the disastrous nature of the death itself. Addressing the death more thoroughly would make it seem more disastrous, but arguably, rightly so, and would enable these stories to serve their purpose for children confronting their fears.

In Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm's version of 'Hansel and Gretel' the biological mother is absent (Another Grimm's tale that features an absent mother is 'The Three Feathers' (1857)). It is implied that she is deceased, as the father has remarried. They

are an impoverished family, and ultimately the stepmother and father agree to abandon the two children:

> 'I'll tell you what, husband,' answered the woman, 'early to-morrow morning we will take the children out into the forest to where it is the thickest; there we will light a fire for them, and give each of them one more piece of bread, and then we will go to our work and leave them alone.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 86-7.)

The stepmother is portrayed negatively, and the father, while attempting to stand up to her, is ultimately silenced and carries out her wishes. The biological mother of Hansel and Gretel is unmentioned. The loss of the mother is given no consideration but is a constant, if silent, presence throughout the tale. I suggest that if their natural mother were still alive or present then the children would not have been cast away, despite the poorness of their lives. It is possible that the idea of the loss of the mother is too painful to mention for the children and the father, and is therefore repressed textually. The loss of the biological mother is absolutely pivotal to the lives of Hansel and Gretel, as they would unlikely have been forced into such a traumatic situation if she were present.

The deaths of the mother and of the stepmother are interestingly treated in similar ways: 'The children, too, had not been able to sleep for hunger, and had heard what their step-mother had said to their father. Gretel wept bitterly and spoke to Hansel: "Now it's all up with us."' (Grimm & Grimm, 2008.) This passage illustrates the loss of Hansel and Gretel's mother, and their realisation of their loneliness. The unspoken words are an acknowledgement of their mother's death. Similarly, unspoken words become an acknowledgement of the stepmother's death: 'The woman, however, was dead. Gretel emptied her pinafore until pearls and precious stones ran about the room, and Hansel threw one handful after another out of his pocket to add to them.' (Grimm & Grimm, 2008.) Hansel and Gretel do not directly acknowledge either death. Neither is explicitly mentioned and no time is given to acknowledge any potential grief: the silence and vulnerability of the children symbolises the absence of the mother while the riches Hansel and Gretel distribute symbolise their joy and security at the demise of their stepmother and the wicked witch. It is also interesting to note that the death of the witch can be seen as the symbolic death of the stepmother. The relationship of the children to the stepmother

and to the witch are both defined by food, the stepmother causing starvation and neglect of food, while the witch uses it to feed her gluttony.

The Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm version of the ever-popular tale 'Cinderella' begins by dealing directly with the death of Cinderella's mother, and presents an emotional death bed speech: 'Dear child, be good and pious, and then the good God will always protect you, and I will look down on you from heaven and be near you.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 121.) This tale differs from previous examples, in that it includes such an immediate focus upon the actual death of the mother. This is unusual, as I have asserted in my opening to this chapter. Indeed, as Cinderella follows her mother's wishes, her command maintains a presence throughout the story. Cinderella's father quickly remarries and a new family is formed, providing a stepmother and stepsisters for his daughter. This is not a positive change, as noted in the text: 'Now began a bad time for the poor step-child.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 121.) Cinderella's mother's death has a profound effect upon her, as not only did she lose a parent, her mother's final speech strongly influences and even dictates her actions, mimicking the enduring affect of the trauma of her death. It could be suggested that Cinderella tolerated to the point of acceptance the abuse meted out to her by her stepfamily because she was willingly following her mother's wishes and waiting for her happy ending (which ultimately she does receive). Again, in the pattern which is becoming familiar, Cinderella's loss is expressed through silence: 'Besides this, the sisters did her every imaginable injury – they mocked her and emptied her peas and lentils into the ashes, so that she was forced to sit and pick them out again. In the evening when she had worked till she was weary she had no bed to go to, but had to sleep by the hearth in the cinders.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 121.) Her lack of response to her mistreatment is a representation of her trauma and her numbness and inability to feel and to resist is symbolised by the cinders in which she sleeps. She accepts her fate and endures it, and is subservient to what she believes are her mother's wishes. Cinderella's survival strategy is to cling to her mother's last words and wait for her happy ending.

In the Grimm Brothers' 'Little Snow-White', Snow-White's life is similarly plunged into insecurity and torment after her mother's death. Correspondingly to Cinderella, Snow-White's life is filled with abuse and neglect, but in a more extreme form as she is ordered to be killed by her stepmother, rather than to just be continually ridiculed and bullied. Snow-White's loss is also portrayed through silence: she herself

in fact becomes a covert figure, as she has to hide away and pretend to be deceased in order for her stepmother to believe that she is so. The reader will appreciate her grief by recognising her need to remove herself from her current life, to hide away from her grief and her impacting feelings of dealing with her loss. Her hiding is implicit negation of herself and is therefore a metaphor for her having to stifle and hide her grief.

In the English Cinderella-type story, 'Tattercoats', the mother dies in childbirth, and because of this the daughter is resented and neglected by her grandfather, as he sees her as the cause of his favourite daughter's death:

> In a great palace by the sea there once dwelt a very rich old lord, who had neither wife nor children living, only one little granddaughter whose face he had never seen in all her life. He hated her bitterly, because at her birth his favourite daughter died; and when the old nurse brought him the baby, he swore, that it might live or die as it liked, but he would never look on its face as long as it lived. (Jacobs, 2008.)

Marina Warner states: 'In this case, her ragged, starving, neglected state reflects his excess of mourning and her anguished guilt, and neither of them can be healed of the wound – the story has an unhappy ending.' (Warner, 1995, 210.) Through the grandfather's constant blame, the granddaughter is understandably going to blame herself for her mother's death, and also feel abandoned by her. If her mother had lived, then her life would perhaps be far different and possibly happy, but instead both characters are left with their grief and trauma-inflicted wound. Neither character is able to work through the issues, and this proves problematic, leaving both characters trapped, unable to effect any reconciliation. Moreover, the silence between the grandfather and granddaughter, which is the cause and the symbol of their ongoing fracture, curbs the possibility of the reader being left with the feeling of hope which modern fairytales usually provide. Another relevant version of 'Cinderella', is 'Donkeyskin', by Charles Perrault. This version also features the death of the mother. Also: Italian tale, 'Cenerentola' (1850); European tale, 'The Cinder Maid' (1916); Irish tale, 'Fair, Brown, and Trembling (1890); Norwegian tale, 'Katie Woodencloak' (1888); and Portuguese tale, 'The Maiden and the Fish' (1882). (Heiner, 2008b). As I have begun to show with the above paradigmatic examples, loss is a very important aspect of trauma within popular fairytales, and textual silence is repeatedly used to

represent a variety of traumatic affects, often the repression and glossing over of these unhappy experiences. Traumatic effects can also provide profound moments where readers must use their own imagination to fill the silences.

**Change**

Interestingly, an important theme within popular fairy tales is that change itself may act as a traumatic event. A journey, for instance, may be used to suggest many changes throughout the course of a story (and of course death itself is commonly described figuratively as a journey and a transition). Kendell Johnson states in the study, *Trauma in the Lives of Children,* that

> Unnoticed losses can include marriage or remarriage, achievements, success, and growth. Although these changes are usually considered to be positive, they do represent the loss of an earlier life-style and coping pattern. Such a loss can create turmoil even though the over-all life change is for the good (Johnson, 1989, 14-5).

It is interesting that even positive changes can psychologically impact the lives of children. If every change is a loss, a passing of something, a good change is still leaving one normality and a set of coping patterns behind. In a fairytale several changes or adjustments must be made which might be interpreted in the light of Johnson's assertion. For example, in addition to the common initial loss, of a parent or way of life, the conclusion usually provides a change, normally for the better. In 'Hansel and Gretel' the stepmother's death is seen as a change for the better, and yet it still could be potentially traumatic, according to Johnson's theory. It is arguable whether a change for the better can be seen as traumatic, but I am inclined to agree with Johnson's theory. Conversely, people can learn to adapt and cope in the most desolate of situations (Cinderella in 'Cinderella' being an example of this: she adapts to her cruel treatment due to her inability to feel or resist), and even the loss of something negative has the potential to cause some form of anguish. This is interesting when considering fairytales, as change is a primary feature.

If changes for the better may be traumatic, then negative changes and the need to overcome them provide the most important narrative drive in fairytales. The death of a parent dominates the plot of fairytales which begin with this loss, and acts as a catalyst for all subsequent events, even though it may not seem obvious. In Cinderella's story, she endures considerable abuse (which is something I will expand

upon later in this thesis), due to her father remarrying, and so has a negative situation to be rescued from. If, however, her mother had lived, she would perhaps have been happy and not have experienced any abuse and neglect and would not have needed to be rescued. Thus without the suffering which demands narrative fulfilment, she may not have achieved the 'happily ever after' of the tale.

The characters of fairytales experience moments of psychological splitting where their worlds divide between before the traumatic event and after, creating a noticeably different past and present, even though, as already noted, in these texts little time or consideration is given to these moments and the narrative moves quickly past them. These moments of splitting are one kind of traumatic result of experiencing the death of a loved one. In fairytales, the psychological splitting becomes almost the drive for happiness, not within the character, but within the logic of the plot (characterisation is flimsy while action and plot dominates in fairytales), and this splitting early in the tale creates a need for a mirror or balancing event, for positivity to evolve out of negativity, and to provide hope and an example to show that problems can be overcome. For example, in 'The Leaves that Hung but Never Grew' by Daniel Morden, the moment of her discovery of her mother's death becomes a moment of splitting for Anwen, and also in The Grimms' 'Hansel and Gretel', the moment they realise they are to be abandoned also becomes a moment of splitting. These moments cause the before and the after of the event to be distinctly different. Ronald Granofsky in *The Trauma Novel* states that

> one of the chief characteristics of animistic childhood is the use of dichotomy as an ordering device. Everything is "black" or "white" with no shades of "grey." [...] during trauma, a dichotomous splitting of experience helps initially to preserve the world view as it was before trauma ensued: the "black" can be excluded or destroyed like the wicked step-mother/witch figure in fairytales (Granofsky, 1995, 109).

I agree with Granofsky's suggestion: fairytales do portray a world of extremes: they are stories centred on good and evil. If the death of the mother causes a moment of splitting for the character, then the intruding stepmother can be seen as evil almost immediately, and as a result, she must be destroyed in order to regain goodness in the fairytale world.

Thus, the loss of a parent has a great impact on the narrative structure as well as upon the representational families of fairytales. It can cause the family structure to

deteriorate (lack of communication and potential paranoia, abuse and neglect) and inequalities to prevail, and the failure to work through these deaths potentially causes further psychological issues. As I have suggested, these losses are also fundamental to the stories, and they become almost a trade: a loss in return for a happy ending. I will next consider how these happy endings are reached and examine the nature of the difficulties experienced by the protagonists of the stories, which, as I shall show, are intimately linked to the loss of the parent and the resultant restructuring of the family.

**Stepfamily**

The loss of the mother creates the possibility of remarriage and stepfamily, and in popular fairytales these stepfamilies are a compelling element, as they often provide the wickedness for the protagonist to overcome. 'Hansel and Gretel' (1944 edition) offers an interesting example of the function of stepfamilies as the instrument of cruelty, neglect or other abuses within fairytales. The Grimm Brothers' original version of the story (1812) did not feature a stepmother but a natural mother. Significantly, they altered subsequent versions (second edition, 1819, through to seventh edition, 1857) (Byatt, 2004, xlii-iv) and I must question why this change occurred, as it is not unknown for a natural mother to abandon her children. It seems that the Grimms were attempting to maintain the image of the perfect mother by providing the stepmother substitute. Marina Warner states that:

> The disappearance here of the original mothers forms a response to the harshness of the material: in their romantic idealism, the Grimms literally could not bear a maternal presence to be equivocal, or dangerous, and preferred to banish her altogether. For them, the bad mother had to disappear in order for the ideal to survive and allow Mother to flourish as symbol of the eternal feminine, the motherland, and the family itself as the highest social desideratum (Warner, 1995, 212).

The Grimms softened their family stories, in this case changing the mother to stepmother and making the father heartbroken at his actions. Similarly to 'Hansel and Gretel', the Grimms exchanged a mother for a stepmother in the story of 'Little Snow-White'. Initial versions featured Snow-White's own mother's jealousy and murderous desires, as Marina Warner notes:

> The 1819 edition is the first to introduce a stepmother in her place; the manuscript and the editions of 1810 and 1812 place Snow White's

> natural mother at the pivot of the violent plot. But it was altered so that a mother should not be seen to torment a daughter.
> (Warner, 1995, 210-1.)

The reasons for the changes only being made in the third edition are unclear, but the result is that the image of the mother was idealised and constructed as diametrically opposed to the evil stepmother (in yet another example of the Madonna/whore dichotomy). The stepmother (along with the wicked witch) is thus the central evil element in the story, and someone legitimately to be overcome.

While thus enshrining the ideal of motherhood in their editing of these tales, the Grimm Brothers construct stepfamilies and remarriage in a negative light. Their tale of 'Cinderella' features a remarriage very early. Almost simultaneously with the mention of the remarriage, Cinderella's suffering is also referenced:

> When the winter came the snow spread a white sheet over the grave, and by the time the spring had drawn it off again, the man had taken another wife. The woman had brought with her into the house two daughters who were beautiful and fair of face, but vile and black of heart. 'Now began a bad time for the poor step-child. "Is the stupid goose to sit in the parlor with us?" they said. "He who wants to eat bread must earn it; out with the kitchen-wench." They took her pretty clothes away from her, put an old grey bedgown on her, and gave her wooden shoes (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 121).

Immediately the scene is set and the reader understands the negative impact of Cinderella's new family. Her bad times are not undocumented, and times of weeping by her mother's grave are mentioned. It is unclear whether she is crying for the loss of her mother, the abuse she is receiving or perhaps both. The snow on the mother's grave in the quotation above suggests the purity and spirituality of the first wife and mother, and is in stark contrast to the 'black hearts' and the grasping materialism and selfishness of the stepfamily highlighted in their treatment of Cinderella. This tale has an almost condemnatory feel towards remarriage (or is at least concerned to foreground the problems that can occur if remarrying too swiftly). The stepfamily is associated with cruelty and these representations of disharmony and abuse within the stepfamily constructs an idealised image of the original biological family.

The tale of 'Little Snow-White' begins similarly to 'Cinderella', the natural mother's death, and this provides a channel for further action. Like the mother in 'Tattercoats', Snow-White's mother dies in childbirth. When the king remarried, a

year after his wife's death, Snow-White was very young and therefore not a threat to her stepmother. Once Snow-White is grown and the queen is growing older, she becomes a threat to the queen's beauty, and so the latter proves to be a wicked stepmother: 'Take the child away into the forest; I will no longer have her in my sight. Kill her, and bring me back her lung and liver as a token.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 250.) Again, this is compounding the message of wickedness concerning stepfamilies, emphasising, as in the example from Cinderella above, the inherently competitive nature of the new element of the stepfamily, and, of course, retaining the ideal image of the gentle, loving, unselfish, natural mother. Many of the Brothers Grimm's tales begin with immediate negativity towards the stepmother. In their tale 'Sweetheart Roland', the stepmother is condemned as a witch in the opening sentence of the story:

> There was once upon a time a woman who was a real witch and had two daughters, one ugly and wicked, and this one she loved because she was her own daughter, and one beautiful and good, and this one she hated, because she was her step-daughter
> (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 268).

Before the story has even begun it has been frankly explained that the witch or stepmother hates her stepdaughter simply because she is not biologically (and thus temperamentally) her own. In 'The Riddle' it is also explained earlier in the story that the stepmother is wicked: '"... Do not go in." "Why not?" asked the King's son. The maiden sighed and said: "My step-mother practises wicked arts; she is ill-disposed toward strangers."' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 128-9.) The Grimm Brothers appear to be suggesting that the terms 'witch' and 'stepmother' are almost synonymous (the tale 'Hansel and Gretel' implicitly conflates the two terms as well, as I have previously suggested). Furthermore, in 'Brother and Sister', a similar explanation is given within the initial sentence: 'Little brother took his little sister by the hand and said: "Since our mother died we have had no happiness; our step-mother beats us every day, and if we come near her she kicks us away with her foot."' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 67.) This graphic denial of love and nurture is a further example of the negative portrayal of stepmothers used by the Grimms. I think it is fair to suggest that stepfamilies are used as a device to introduce cruelty, and a way to deflect a negative association from biological mothers. Perhaps the prevalence of these stories suggests that as readers we need to examine the difficult relationships we may have with mothers by using the

figure of a stepmother/witch as a symbolic figure. Giambattista Basile's tale 'Nennillo and Nennella' (1847) also features immediate negativity towards the stepmother. As do: Russian Tale 'Baba Yaga' (1903), James Taylor Adam's 'The Babes in the Woods' (1940), English Tale, 'The Rose Tree' (1890) and a tale from Kashmir, 'The Wicked Stepmother'. (Heiner, 2008).

Indeed, stepfamilies, and stepmothers in particular, may be an essential device to allow the modern versions of these tales to dwell on maternal cruelty and emotional and physical neglect or abuse. Jack Zipes notes correctly in *The Brothers Grimm* that 'We tend to forget or repress the cruel episodes children experience in the Grimms' fairytales due to the many happy endings that follow them.' (Zipes, 2002, 167.) It is apparent that when reading a fairytale it is far too easy to simply gloss over any negativity (this negativity, although easily glossed over if the happy ending is achieved, is not necessarily forgotten – it can potentially stay with the reader, especially if the ending is somewhat ambiguous). It seems to me that the stepfamily in fairytales is used symbolically, rather than literally, allowing us to gloss over or deflect the wickedness of natural parents as we naturally gloss over the more cruel elements in a fairytale. It might be argued, for instance, that the introduction of a stepmother is an extension of the child's fear of abandonment and the related fear of the intruder (these two themes or fears are explicitly linked in 'Hansel and Gretel'). Yet stepmothers also clearly function as a means of idealising natural mothers.

Interestingly, however, Zipes seems to suggest, in his discussion of the Brothers Grimm, that fairytales deliberately engage with a wide range of different types of family structure, including stepfamilies:

> These tales indicate that there was widespread child abuse in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and they are clearly symbolic representations by their narrators and writers of disturbed relations *in the different types of families that existed* at that time
> (Zipes, 2002, 168. My emphasis).

If many different types of family existed, then it could be argued that the use of stepfamily was purely a reflection of the time, yet even if we allow this concession to realism, it does not alter the fact that the tales using stepfamilies to explore cruelty, particularly where earlier versions depicted biological families, implicitly suggests

that it is worse for a natural parent to be abusive, and less forgivable, reflecting, indeed, what society generally judges to be the case.

Marriage is often a key element of a fairy story, and if the wedding takes place at the conclusion it usually signifies a happy ending. Marina Warner suggests that 'The weddings of fairytale bring the traditional narrative to a satisfying open ending which allows the possibility of hope' (Warner, 1995, 219.) In this sense, closing a tale with a wedding can indicate a kind of rebirth into a better existence. If the wedding in a fairytale takes place at the beginning, however, it betokens turmoil. It follows the anguish already present caused by the death of a parent, and this remarriage can also signify the pain of bereavement.

(Re)Marriage introduces the stepmother, and she is often a force for evil within a fairy story: she is an element that the protagonist (and possibly also the protagonist's family) must overcome in order to achieve happiness. Max Luthi in *Once Upon a Time* mentions that 'Psychological investigators of the fairytale claim to see in the witch an image of the destructive power of the unconscious. The same is said of the stepmother.' (Luthi, 1976, 64.) There is merit in this suggestion, but surely it should address all evil or wicked characters, not just the female versions. It seems interesting but troubling to suggest that the destructive power of the unconscious only represents itself in a female form, but there is, however, a prevalence of the use of female characters to represent evil. Perhaps the potency of the evil woman/mother image is due to the archetype of the gentle nurturing mother: to destroy that image and present the diametrically opposed stepmother/witch has greater impact than any trope of the evil male. Significantly, the very characteristics that the evil women (stepmothers, stepsisters and witches) perpetuate is based on supposedly female failings and female-female relationships: women resent other women and jealousy is a primary reason for this. The wicked stepmother in 'Cinderella' is jealous of Cinderella's beauty and the relationship she has with her father; the wicked stepmother in 'Hansel and Gretel' is jealous of the two children (and does not see why she should be concerned with their welfare, and rejects the natural feminine mother role); and in 'Little Snow-White' the wicked stepmother is purely jealous of Snow-White's appearance and beauty. Also, in Charles Perrault's 'Sleeping Beauty', the princess is cursed due to a wicked fairy's jealousy (Perrault, 1993). This heavily suggests that women are superficial and selfish beings, and that males perhaps engender more justifiable suffering, or do not contribute at all, cutting rather less

impressive, even impotent, if somewhat more sympathetic figures. Adam Phillips in the article, 'Discover your Inner Fairy Godmother', states: '[In "Cinderella"] ... the function of the two main men, the father and the prince, is to be captivated (or dominated, depending on one's point of view) by their women.' (Phillips, 2008, 16.) The men in stories such as 'Cinderella' or 'Hansel and Gretel' become the submissive characters, who are secondary to their wives, the stepmothers. Once the 'natural' order has been subverted, and men's dominance usurped by women, evil ensues.

Of course, death is the fundamental cause that introduces the stepmother into these stories: the natural mother dies, and the father, eager to provide a new mother, remarries quickly and sometimes recklessly in order to do this. The time period between the death and the remarriage is often very short, and the existing children would likely have not adequately achieved a point in their grief to accept this new person, and new mother. Fairytales emphasise the painfulness of this situation. In a fairy story, the stepmother can be seen as a representation of grief, and she becomes the element that the protagonist must overcome or work through in order to find a release from the loss of the mother. The elements of abuse and neglect that a stepmother provides are perhaps suggestive of the grief process, and the attempt to deal with the loss of a mother. For example, Cinderella works through her grief by accepting the unpleasant fate that is meted out to her by her stepmother. She becomes a slave who has to work in order to survive, and this can perhaps be seen as a physical representation of mentally working through the grief process.

The evil stepmother is symbolic of several figures and situations. As well as displacing the potential cruelty of the natural mother, she can also be used to represent the mother-in-law, and the problems that can be engendered by this unlooked for mother-figure in a marriage, as Marina Warner suggests:

> The mother who persecutes heroines like Cinderella or Snow White may conceal beneath her cruel features another familiar kind of adoptive mother, not the stepmother but the mother-in-law, and the time of ordeal through which the fairytale heroine passes may not represent the liminal interval between childhood and maturity, but another, more socially constituted proving ground or threshold: the beginning of marriage (Warner, 1995, 218).

As the terms 'stepmother' and 'mother-in-law' were initially indistinguishable (until the mid nineteenth century, and 'daughter-in-law' was also used for stepdaughter

(Warner, 1995, 218)), this is an interesting suggestion. If the stepmother and the problems that are to be overcome are a foreshadowing or a representation of future strife that the mother-in-law will cause, then it does put the 'happily ever after' that a marriage provides in jeopardy. When a tale closes with love and marriage, no further problems are pictured and yet the problem of the mother-in-law has been prefigured in the form of the evil stepmother from whom the bride has escaped.

So, the stepmother is of paramount importance to a tale, since she can provide the necessary evil and is multifaceted, representing a range of undesirable figures or situations. If, however, these tales are considered as stories *about* stepmothers, it is clear the stepmother has a considerable amount of prejudice to deal with herself. Socio-historically, when marrying a widower, the woman could often find herself fighting for the available resources for herself and her children (Warner, 1995, 237). It could almost become a competition between the old family and the new. Warner notes:

> As remarriage becomes more and more common, stepmothers find they are tackling a hard crust of bigotry set in the minds of their new children, and refreshed by endless returns of the wicked stepmother in the literature of children (Warner, 1995, 237).

If stepmothers are already considered monsters before they have even proved themselves otherwise, it is unsurprising that the child might believe the new mother to be evil, and that any small negative remark becomes emphasised to prove their inclination. If a character in a fairytale already believes the 'intruder' to be evil, will she eventually become so? If the stepmother of the fairytale has to tread carefully and attempt to win the hearts of her stepchildren, and yet finds no way to do so, is it simply the easier option to become the monster that they imagine her to be? In Warner's words,

> Hatred of the older woman, and intergenerational strife, may arise not only from rivalry, but from guilt, too, about the weak and the dependant. The portrait of the tyrant mother-in-law or stepmother may conceal her own vulnerability, may offer an excuse for maltreatment (Warner, 1995, 227).

I would suggest that those who bully the weak are vulnerable themselves, and so when beginning a marriage with a widower who has existing children, is the role of

the tyrant simply the easier option for the stepmother in a fairytale? And is assuming the stepmother to be a tyrant also the easier option for the children, such as Cinderella? If hating is seen as easier than loving, then channelling this hatred towards the new mother figure may be easier than dealing with the grief of the loss of the natural mother. While the stepmother's potential vulnerability is certainly no excuse to abuse and neglect, vulnerability on both sides could engender the tyrant or evil stepmother. If after a distressing incident it is easier to merge oneself with the distress than to work through it, then perhaps both sides initially mobilise the trope of evil stepmother, as a way of coping.

Warner suggests that 'The bad mother has become an inevitable, even required ingredient in fantasy, and hatred of her a legitimate, applauded stratagem of psychic survival.' (Warner, 1995, 212.) If the bad mother is expected within a fairytale, then does the stepmother have even a chance of being good and being liked? If for the existing fictional children the evil stepmother is a representation of the grief for the departed mother, then this evil is something that needs to be eventually worked through by the entire family, otherwise happiness will not be achieved nor will a release be found, before the end of the tale. In such tales as 'Hansel and Gretel', where the stepmother dies at the end of the tale, this could potentially signify the final release from grief (and also could symbolise release from poverty), which also provides a clarification as to why the explanation of her death is so matter of fact: 'the woman, however, was dead.'(Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 94.)

If we accept that some fairy stories deal with the anxieties of children, then the issue of safely addressing these concerns is important to consider. The form of fairytales is central to the containment of the potentially traumatic subject matter. The role of the happy ending is a confirmation of the possibility of hope and happiness for the reader. Choosing the side of the 'good' means one will be rewarded. Stories solely for children from the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century did not necessarily portray a happy ending, as it was thought that true happiness could only be achieved in adult life, and so happy endings were used in stories for a general audience, rather than stories for children in particular (Pape, 1992, 183). Changing attitudes concerning childhood and children meant evolving endings for children's stories. The origins of fairytales are rather vag*ue*, and no authoritative versions are available due to the years of oral tradition, passing stories down from generation to generation. The structure of a tale has been ingrained for hundreds of years, and while

each generation perceives a reflection of itself in each update of a story, certain elements like the happy ending seem almost fundamental. Steven Swann Jones suggests in *The Fairytale: The Magic Mirror of the Imagination* that 'This happy ending is such a basic and important aspect of the genre, it may be regarded as a third definitional feature.' (Swann Jones, 2002, 17.) (The other features, according to Swann Jones, are: the adherence to a classic storyline (Swann Jones, 2002, 8); depicting fantastical events (Swann Jones, 2002, 9); and identification with the protagonist (Swann Jones, 2002, 17).) Alan Garner, in his collection of essays *The Voice that Thunders*, observes that

> After the revelation of a truth in a dimension of timelessness, the hearers have to be returned safely to every day living. Just as the start of the myth is delineated, so is the release from eternity, by a formal conclusion that is an act of play, no matter how serious the story has been (Garner, 1997, 152).

Garner is alluding to the prevalence of the signifiers 'once upon a time' and 'happily ever after', and I believe that providing a fairy story ends suitably and delivers what the reader expects (the 'happily ever after'), then the negative elements are not necessarily as predominant as might perhaps be assumed.

**Closure**

Containment is achieved by the clearly demarked gateways of the formulaic beginnings and endings of fairytales. As readers we expect a variation of 'once upon a time' and 'happily ever after' to satisfy the anticipation of entering a different world. Many of our best-loved fairytales do in fact conform to this formula. When considering the opening sentence to a story, I believe the key word to be 'once'. This implies that the contents of the following story are in no way going to infringe upon the present. The beginning of the Grimms' 'Little Red Cap' provides this exact opening: 'Once upon a time there was a dear little girl who was loved by every one who looked at her.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 139.) This is a safe beginning. The world of Little Red Cap is introduced as taking place in the past, and in a place that cannot affect the reader. Also, the closing sentence provides the relief and fulfilment that is expected of an ending: 'But Red-Cap went joyously home, and no one ever did anything to harm her again.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 143.) While this is not the 'happily ever after', it is almost synonymous. To be told that the character was never

again harmed is suggesting that she went on to live a happy and safe life, and this conclusion is comfortable for and expected by the reader.

The Grimms' tale of 'Little Snow-White' also begins similarly: 'Once upon a time in the middle of winter.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 249.) Again, this is providing the containment of the fairytale world. It allows the reader to feel safe to acknowledge that this tale and all of its contents are far removed from their everyday life and reality. The ending of 'Little Snow-White', while obviously happy for Snow-White, that she marries her prince, is more troubling, as rather than focusing upon the happy ending it focuses upon the downfall of evil:

> At first she would not go to the wedding at all, but she had no peace, and had to go see the young Queen. And when she recognised Snow-White; and she stood with rage and fear, and could not stir. But iron slippers had already been put upon the fire, and they were brought in with tongs, and set before her. Then she was forced to put on the red-hot shoes, and dance until she dropped down dead (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 258).

While this does not explicitly state that the ending is happy, the positive result is shown through the downfall of the wicked queen. To make this the last focus of the story is to make the triumph of good over evil overt and intensified. It becomes clear that now that the queen is dead, and Snow-White has married her prince, the fairytale world of the story will be happy, and so there is apparently no cause for concern for the reader. Another fairytale that ends similarly to 'Little Snow-White' is that of 'Cinderella'. This begins by explaining the death of Cinderella's mother, and it ends with not only the wedding of Cinderella to her prince but also the demoralisation of the wicked stepsisters. Before and after attending Cinderella's wedding, the stepsisters have their eyes pecked out by birds: 'And thus, for their wickedness and falsehood, they were punished with blindness all their days.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 128.) The protagonist is happy and married and the evil element has been punished and removed, adequately keeping the world they inhabit contained and intact.

The Grimms' tale of 'Hansel and Gretel,' however, does not begin by prompting quite such a distant feel: 'Hard by a great forest dwelt a poor wood-cutter with his wife and his two children.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 86.) Despite this, I still feel that it provides an entrance to another world, as 'a great forest' could possibly

seem like another world to any city or town dweller, and a place that children are prohibited to enter. And the ending does seal this world sufficiently: 'Then all anxiety was at an end, and they lived together in perfect happiness.' (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 94.) This is an ending that would be expected of a good fairytale, and 'perfect happiness' is more than satisfying closure. The four tales that I have mentioned were all versions written by the Grimm Brothers, and so this is obviously a model that they favoured for their tales, and utilised successfully. However, the stories remain to an extent problematic as the family-related problems could connect too closely to a reader's life, and therefore the negative issues could linger within the reader's mind, causing a break in containment.

Hans Christian Andersen's tale 'The Little Mermaid' is not quite as simple regarding its beginning and ending. It starts as one would expect, providing a rather distant feel: 'Far out in the ocean, where the water is as blue as the prettiest cornflower, and as clear as crystal, [...] There dwelt the sea king and his subjects.' (Andersen, 1836.) The beginning of this tale provides obvious entrance into a contained world, as it begins in the far away and deep ocean. It signals a safe read as it suggests that it is very much removed from reality. Of course, the tale does not remain confined to the sea, and features land and humans, with the main character desiring to turn into mortals and to live outside of the water. As I suggested above, the happiness at the end of 'The Little Mermaid' is harder to find, for a modern audience, than in other fairy story endings, and in fact the concluding paragraph explicitly breaks out of the containing frame:

> 'In three hundred years I shall rise like this into God's kingdom,' she said.
> 'You may be able to go there before that,' whispered one of the others to her. 'Invisibly, we fly through the homes of human beings. They can't see us, so they don't know when we are there; but if we find a good child, who makes his parents happy and deserves their love, we smile and God takes a year away from the time of our trial. But if there is a naughty and mean child in the house we come to, we cry; and for every tear we shed, God adds a day to the three hundred years we already must serve.' (Andersen, 1974, 76.)

This closing paragraph provides a sentimental rendition of the presence of a judgemental and omniscient God, and addresses children directly. Despite the apparent closure of the happy ending, this fairytale world is not quite hermetically

sealed, as children are being directly addressed and warned concerning their behaviour. There is also the threat of repetition, that the mermaid's misfortune will continue, so that it appears as if the children are being coerced into becoming better and maintaining excellent behaviour. This connects to the purpose of early children's literature, which was to promote good behaviour by frightening the children into submission. This purpose was either to lead by example or to provide a threat in order to foster proper behaviour. This suggests that Andersen's tale is risky, in comparison to the assumed safe, contained fairytale world.

While tales have evolved, endings have also done so, and as Steven Swann Jones suggested, the happy ending has become of paramount importance. A happy ending today would provide a clear-cut positive and instantly gratifying ending in *this* life. Whereas a tale from a century ago, or earlier, could provide the promise of happiness in the next life. The ending of Hans Christian Andersen's story 'The Little Mermaid' provides such an ending. Oscar Wilde's 'The Fisherman and His Soul' (1888) is a similar tale to 'The Little Mermaid', and also has a troubling ending. Also the German tale 'The Golden Mermaid' (1892) (Lang, 1965), the Danish tale 'Hans, The Mermaid's Son' (1897) (Lang, 1967), and Freidrich de La Motte Fouque, 'Undine' (Bunnet, 1867).

Containment or closure is always jeopardised by such factors as violence and representing the reality of the reader's world too closely. While violent acts are common within fairytales, they are still potentially difficult and confusing for the modern day reader. Some of the traumatic or disturbing incidences within a fairytale would be too gruesome to include in a film for a small child to watch. Here is an example taken from 'Cinderella', concerning the ugly stepsisters:

> When the betrothed couple went to the church, the elder was at the right side and the younger at the left, and the pigeons pecked out one eye from each of them. Afterwards as they came back, the elder was at the left, and the younger at the right, and then the pigeons pecked out the other eye from each (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 128).

This scene is rather disturbing, and one may feel uncomfortable to allow a young or even slightly older child to watch such a scene or have it read to them. So perhaps fairytales are only suitable for modern-day children if they are first sanitised to soften the edges and remove the unwanted violent or gruesome occurrences, otherwise they

remain worrying and somewhat disturbing. Consumerist giants like Disney have provided a prime example of severely editing and changing fairytales. The Disney version of 'Cinderella', for example, does not even hold a hint of the violence of the older tale (Geronimi et al., 1950). However, despite removing the explicitly disturbing incidences, traumatic problems, like the loss of the mother or the abuse, are still included. Containment is also continually threatened by violence and ambiguity, and this provides a reason for the changing of tales in modern adaptations. The ending needs to be clearly happy with no ambiguity left to prevail.

A fairytale is required to remain contained in order to not intrude upon the reader's reality, and for a modern audience, closure is not always achieved. This may be viewed as problematic as containment, or closure, is a defining feature of a fairytale. Overcoming problems and emerging victorious is a key element in traditional fairy or folk tales, as in many respects they are survival stories. When the victory is absent the sinister aspects of the tale can be unnerving or even disturbing where the reader recognises issues experienced in his or her own life. Even when a tale does end with 'happily ever after', this closure may not be sufficient to blot out the unhappy incidences.

Where some of the potentially traumatic events, such as the death of a parent, are glossed over, the lack of time given to it can sometimes have positive results. If the story does not provide time to work through problems, the reader may dwell less on such unhappy losses. Providing that the tale gives the happy ending that is expected and desired I believe that the world of the fairytale can still be contained, as long as no focus is placed upon any of the discontented events.

Families in fairytales are rather ambiguous. The family unit is rather less stable than would be desirable or indeed normal in life, and even when the stable family is evoked by the beginning or ending of fairytales the 'present' of the tale tends to focus on the turmoil experienced by children in bereaved or unhappily reconstituted stepfamilies. As I have suggested, if a marriage takes place at the beginning it is likely to signify marital problems, or neglect and deprivation for children. But by the close of the tale marriage often provides a happy ending, along with the downfall of the evil character. The depiction of unhappy families in fairytales could be used as a warning for children, a message for them to maintain good behaviour, but it can also reflect the real issues experienced within families. The problems featured within a fairytale could thus be connected to a child's fear, and

therefore the child reader might form parallels between the fantastical and their own reality, in some cases perhaps prompting them to maintain good behaviour. After all, children's literature was originally envisioned as a tool for frightening or leading by example in order to discipline. Jack Zipes has the following example of how fairytales can almost mirror reality, and cause the reader distress, using the Grimms' version of 'Hansel and Gretel' as an example:

> Their condition, though extreme, was representative of that of numerous peasant households in Germany during the first half of the nineteenth century, especially during famines. In this regard, the Grimms' fairy tale sheds light on social realities of the times in a manner that many didactic and so-called realistic tales of this period concealed (Zipes, 1997, 49).

This suggests that fantastical stories can easily echo real life. I believe that the key issue in dealing with the negative aspects of such stories lies within the idea of containment. If a tale ends happily and remains contained within its own fairytale world, then any negative aspects can easily be glossed over and forgotten. Perhaps, as humans, we have a better memory for pleasure than pain, and it becomes all too easy to repress unpleasant memories or events. A tale can be considered successful if it provides a connection to reality and sticks with the reader, while also achieving containment and providing hope. The families of fairytales can be pivotal to containment of a story, since they are the providers and the destroyers of hope, and their influence on a fairytale is elementary. Fairytales and children's stories often feature the loss of a parent, or absent parents, and this, along with traumatic affects of silence and repetition, and the fundamental idea of containment, will be issues that I will be exploring further in other contexts throughout this thesis.

# Chapter Two:

# *Harry Potter*

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The Harry Potter series, by J.K. Rowling, has been a worldwide phenomenal success: over 400 million copies have been sold, and it has also been translated into 67 different languages (*Rowling "makes £5 every second",* 2009). There are seven novels in the series, beginning with *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, published in 1997; *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, in 1998; *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, in 1999; *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,* in 2000; *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix,* in 2003; *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince,* in 2005; and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, in 2007. Rowling has also written three charity companion books for the series: *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001); *Quidditch Through the Ages* (2001), the school books of Harry Potter; and *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* (2008), a collection of fairy tales referenced in the final novel. The series also has extremely successful film adaptations. The first film, *Philosopher's Stone,* was released in 2001, and the latest, the sixth novel, *Half-Blood Prince,* in 2009. The adaptation of the seventh novel, *Deathly Hallows,* is to be split into two films, and will be released in 2010 and 2011 (*Final Potter Film Split in Half,* 2009).

The Harry Potter series is a highly moral story, which stresses good and evil and illustrates these ideas within both a realistic and a magical world. The seven books represent each of Harry's years at secondary school. Dark and challenging themes are tackled within this series, and it shows that even with magic, problems cannot be easily silenced or solved. The Harry Potter series is no stranger to controversy. Deborah J. Taub and Heather L. Servaty-Seib, in their essay 'Controversial Content: Is Harry Potter Harmful to Children?', address this matter:

> the Harry Potter books have been heralded as a publishing and cultural phenomenon, they also have been the subject of challenge and controversy from the publication of the first book through the last. The Harry Potter books were the seventh most frequently challenged books of 1990-2000 [...] Objections to the books stem from their controversial content – from the centrality of magic to the topic of death to scenes that some believe are too violent, intense, or scary for children (Taub & Servaty-Seib, 2009, 13).

As Taub and Servaty-Seib note, popularity and controversy have been closely entwined for the Harry Potter series, and of course, this is no new situation for children's literature. As I discussed in the previous chapter, 'Fairytale Families', fairy tales do feature magic, death and violence, which can indeed be seen as inappropriate for children by parents. Rowling herself has on numerous occasions commented that death is a theme within the series (Taub & Servaty-Seib, 2009, 22), and while this obviously is the case due to the sheer number of casualties throughout and the fact that the sequence begins with death, the emphasis is not just on the event itself. Rowling portrays the aftermath of death and grief and portrays how the characters handle these incidences.

In this chapter, I will examine various elements of this series through the use of trauma theory. The loss of parents and the representation of family will continue to provide the focus of the discussion, but I will also be considering particular aspects of trauma, and how it is psychologically manifested within a person, with reference to the work of critics, such as Cathy Caruth, Laurie Vickroy, and Ronald Granofsky. I will throughout be concerned with how trauma is expressed textually. Trauma fiction is fascinating due to the fact that the experience itself is something which appears to defy representation; so I will be attempting to interpret how it is represented through the language and literary devices used by Rowling. In the expanding field of Harry Potter studies, a wealth of criticism is being accumulated on diverse subjects, such as philosophy and international relations. With reference to this growing area, I will be paying close attention to the existing studies, including, for example the 2008 edition of *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter*, edited by Elizabeth E. Heilman, which includes essays from sociological and critical perspectives on the subject of family and home and good versus evil, amongst other topics. Also consulted will be the 2003 study *Reading Harry Potter*, edited by Giselle Liza Anatol, which features essays on theories of child development and morality.

This chapter will address the Potter series in sections, focusing on the protagonist, on Harry Potter's moment of psychological splitting, and on the materialisations of trauma, which connect and continue on from this moment. I will move through the series with particular focus upon these matters, and on the depiction and connection of family, death and change.

**Splitting**

The Harry Potter series begins when he is eleven years old and about to enter secondary school, a momentous moment of departure and a rite of passage in itself. Despite this, the story really begins ten years earlier, when Harry was a baby, Lord Voldemort was at his most powerful, and his reign of terror was widespread. A prophecy, foretold by the Divination teacher, Sybill Trelawney, which constructs Harry in almost messianic terms, is the reason that Voldemort chooses to seek out Harry and kill him:

> The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches ...born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies ... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not ... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives ... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies ... (Rowling, 2003, 741.)

Voldemort is made aware of this prophecy by the Potions teacher, Severus Snape, but the second-hand version is fragmented, perhaps causing him panic and prompting him into rushed action. This prophecy could have been aimed towards two boys, both born at the end of July: Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom. Voldemort chooses the Half-blood wizard like himself, rather than the Pureblood, Neville. A half-blood wizard is a wizard of mixed parentage. Meaning, either mother or father was born a wizard (a Pureblood or Half-blood), and the other born a Muggle (non magical person), and therefore a Muggle-born wizard. Often Pureblood wizards, such as Lucius Malfoy, and Lord Voldemort himself (despite being a Half-blood wizard), look down upon Muggle-borns, and use the derogatory term 'Mudblood' as an insult. This directly parallels racism and racial terminology in reality. Voldemort gains access to the Potters' home and kills Harry's father, James; he offers Harry's mother a reprieve and states that he is only interested in killing the boy, not her, but Lily refuses to step aside and sacrifices herself in order to save Harry. When Voldemort then attempts to perform the killing curse 'Avada Kedavra' on baby Harry, the spell rebounds and Voldemort's own downfall is caused instead. The reasons behind this reverse of events is unknown until further on in the series. This moment when Voldemort's spell fails, together with the death of his parents is Harry's moment of psychological splitting, Harry is a baby, and a baby exists in a state of innocence, which is meant to

be protected, and yet this is when his world changes. It becomes distinctly different, even if he is not immediately or consciously aware of it. Harry's moment of splitting haunts him consistently throughout the series, either through flashbacks or dreams: this is something that I will be discussing in more depth below.

Harry is left alive, and Voldemort flees: all that remains from this traumatic occurrence is a lightning bolt-shaped scar on Harry's forehead. Not only is this physical scar a representation of his trauma, it becomes a symbol of his fame. The scar is a psychological manifestation of the wound in the mind: as I have previously mentioned, Sigmund Freud assumed psychological trauma to be not only a wound in the mind, but the *unrelenting cry of the wound* (Caruth, 1996b, 4). Harry's scar is unrelenting and never healing. Albus Dumbledore, Harry's headmaster and father-figure, stated: 'He'll have that scar forever.' (Rowling, 1997, 17.) Dumbledore is suggesting that the scar will never heal, and for the duration of the series, it does not. The scar continually causes Harry pain. His moment of splitting leaves a physical mark on his person, for all to see. It is harder for him to hide his trauma and his past, moreover, his visible scar can be seen as a representation of his wider fame – it has significance not only for Harry, but to the entire wizarding population. And his trauma almost becomes a wider collective trauma. Harry and his scar are a representation of Voldemort's victims, but crucially the scar also signifies Voldemort's initial downfall. It is a bittersweet symbol and represents survival and the triumph of good over evil as well as the ever present threat to good.

Interestingly, Harry has no real or accurate knowledge of what happened to him as a baby. He is brought up by neglectful and abusive relatives and is told that his parents died in a car crash when he was very young. It is plausible for him to have always grieved for his parents, as Taub and Servaty-Seib suggest: 'Harry cannot grieve actual, physical relationships with his parents, but he can and does grieve the relationships he was never able to establish with them.' (Taub & Servaty-Seib, 2009, 24.) He is grieving for an absence. He is told the truth about his past by Hagrid, a half human, half giant, who comes to rescue him from the clutches of the Dursleys, the family that he has lived with ever since his parents died. This revelation is handed out along with the knowledge of his magical ability and that he is about to attend a school for magic:

> 'Hagrid,' he said quietly, 'I think you must have made a mistake. I don't think I can be a wizard.' To his surprise, Hagrid chuckled.
> 'Not a wizard, eh? Never made things happen when you was scared or angry?'
> Harry looked into the fire. Now he came to think about it ...Every odd thing that had ever made his aunt and uncle furious with him had happened when he, Harry, had been upset or angry... chased by Dudley's gang, he had somehow found himself out of their reach ... dreading going to school with that ridiculous hair-cut, he'd managed to make it grow back ... and the very last time Dudley had hit him, hadn't he got his revenge, without even realizing he was doing it? Hadn't he set a boa constrictor on him? Harry looked back at Hagrid, smiling, and saw that Hagrid was positively beaming at him
> (Rowling, 1997, 47).

Harry absorbs substantial information about himself and about his past very quickly and without tremendous panic: it is as if he already knew the information, but had been repressing it, along with his feelings of grief for his parents. At this point, the fragments of his past align and he fully understands why he has been an outsider, even within his own home. Now that he has accepted who he is, his mind almost allows his traumatic past to slowly seep into his subconscious, as now he knows that magic and the unreal are in fact his reality, and that despite his Aunt and Uncle continually forcing the 'there's no such thing as magic' (Columbus, 2001) statement into his brain for numerous years (as illustrated by the film adaptation of *Philosopher's Stone*), his buried gut feeling was in fact correct.

**Dreams and Flashbacks**

After Harry becomes a student of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, his dreams become a steady focus of the story, even becoming entwined with reality in later novels. While Harry does not directly remember any of the circumstances of his moment of splitting or his arrival at the Dursleys' home, his dreams show fragments of his memories. Before his night of revelation, and while his existence at the Dursleys' was still 'normal', he dreams of his past: 'There had been a flying motorbike in it. He had a funny feeling he'd had the same dream before.' (Rowling, 1997, 19.) Repetition is a key element of trauma, and Harry is showing elements which keep haunting him. Harry and the Dursleys are both unaware that Hagrid brought Harry to the Dursleys', straight after his parents were killed, on an enchanted, flying motorbike belonging to his Godfather, Sirius Black. Whether at one year old Harry would really remember the motorbike is arguable, but somehow the

memory has lodged itself within his subconscious and released itself within his dream. Anne Whitehead states that 'Trauma emerges as that which, at the very moment of its reception, registers as a non-experience, causing conventional epistemologies to falter.' (Whitehead, 2004, 5.) As Whitehead suggests, traumatic experience manifests itself as something which is too large to comprehend at the time. The fact that Harry is an infant gives Rowling a way of representing this incomprehensible, un-graspable characteristic of trauma in a realist way – a baby is unlikely to wholly comprehend such an event and any memories are likely to be fractured and incoherent. Despite this, the power and traumatic nature of the memories seem to break the boundaries of the expected – they are perhaps supernatural memories which are out of Harry's control and haunting him. A recurring element of the night Harry's parents died is the green light, which is inexplicable to him. He remembers nothing except this green light:

> 'Are you really Harry Potter?' Ron blurted out.
> Harry nodded.
> 'Oh – well, I thought it might be one of Fred and George's jokes,' said Ron. 'And have you really got – you know…'
> He pointed at Harry's forehead.
> Harry pulled back his fringe to show the lightning scar.
> Ron stared.
> 'So that's where You-Know-Who-?'
> 'Yes,' said Harry, 'but I can't remember it.'
> 'Nothing? said Ron eagerly.
> 'Well – I remember a lot of green light, but nothing else.'
> (Rowling, 1997, 74.)

This dialogue is part of Harry's introduction to his future best friend Ron. It shows not only that Harry is famous within the wizarding world, but that he is a figure of much interest. Harry has illustrated that he has the ability to remember events from his infancy, even if he has been unaware of what the memories really were or what they represented. The green light refers to the colour that is produced by the killing curse, which Voldemort performed on his parents and Harry himself. This green light would be an overwhelming fixation in memory as not only an unusual occurrence, but an easy diversion – instead of remembering Voldemort's face, or his mother dying, the green light could become something to fix on, in order to not dwell upon the reality of the moment. As Harry remembers the green light, it is plausible that he can also remember other, more harrowing details of that night, but his mind is repressing

them. Laurie Vickroy states in *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction*, that 'Fundamental to a traumatic experience is that the past lingers unresolved, not remembered in a conventional sense, because it is not processed like nontraumatic information, either cognitively or emotionally.' (Vickroy, 2002, 12.) Vickroy's explanation of traumatic experience is connected to traumatic memory and how it becomes fragmented and repressed. This memory cannot be stored (possessed) or interpreted as nontraumatic memory can be, since traumatic memories resist possession (tending instead to possess) and resist interpretation (tending instead to be inassimilable, beyond comprehension). This is suggestive of why Harry cannot recall a fuller image of the night his parents died. His mind refuses to show him anything other than fragments: however, these fragments continue to haunt him. On his first night at Hogwarts, Harry has such a haunting and incomprehensible dream:

> Harry was going to ask Ron if he'd had any of the treacle tart, but he fell asleep almost at once.
>
> Perhaps Harry had eaten a bit too much, because he had a very strange dream. He was wearing Professor Quirrell's turban, which kept talking to him, telling him he must transfer to Slytherin at once, because it was his destiny. Harry told the turban he didn't want to be in Slytherin; [one of the four houses at Hogwarts, which is seen as the house for purebloods and potential evil. Voldemort was a Slytherin] it got heavier; he tried to pull it off but it tightened painfully – and there was Malfoy, laughing at him as he struggled with it – then Malfoy turned into the hook nosed teacher, Snape, whose laugh became high and cold – there was a burst of green light and Harry woke, sweating and shaking.
>
> He rolled over and fell asleep again, and when he woke next day, he didn't remember the dream at all (Rowling, 1997, 97).

While this is an example of a recurring dream that features the haunting green light, it also holds other meanings, which at this point in the story are cleverly hidden. The dream suggests a connection between Harry and Voldemort, and Slytherin house is the representation of this connection. Harry is subconsciously aware of doing all he can to fight any connection with Voldemort. Trauma, which is a recurring but indefinable threat, is used to create dramatic tension, as the reader knows more than Harry, who forgets this dream upon waking. However, importantly, the incomprehensible memory does have some meaning, once we have the key. This perhaps works against the paradigm of trauma as an incomprehensible event for the reader, but it still remains incomprehensible for Harry. Another mention of the green

light takes place over the Christmas holidays of Harry's first year: 'He started having nightmares. Over and over again he dreamed about his parents disappearing in a flash of green light while a high voice cackled with laughter.' (Rowling, 1997, 158.) Again this shows the torment and frustration of this haunting and recurrent image. The night of his moment of splitting is an unrelenting distress for him, but in an abstract and fragmented way. At the end of the first book, Harry has a confrontation with Voldemort (who is not yet in human form and more of a ghost, although not dead), and manages to survive again. At the start of the second book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Harry's nightmares have changed, having been given a face:

> Harry had slipped through Voldemort's clutches for a second time, but it had been a narrow escape, and even now, weeks later, Harry kept waking in the night, drenched in cold sweat, wondering where Voldemort was now, remembering his livid face, his wide, mad eyes ...(Rowling, 1998, 12.)

Now Harry is also haunted by Voldemort's face, a new traumatic experience. His initial dreams of the night his parents died begin to take on a new form in the third novel in the series, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, due to the strange creatures called Dementors. Dementors are creatures invisible to Muggle eyes, but visible to witches and wizards. They drain all happiness from a person (the Dementors are used as a representation of depression), and can even remove the soul, performing a 'Dementor's kiss'. Harry's first introduction to these unpleasant creatures is on the train on his way to Hogwarts at the start of term. The encounter proves both a terrifying and confusing experience for him, as while he relives the night that his parents died, he is also unconsciously aware that this is what he is experiencing:

> An intense cold swept over them all. Harry felt his own breath catch in his chest. The cold went deeper than his skin. It was inside his chest, it was inside his very heart ... Harry's eyes rolled up into his head. He couldn't see. He was drowning in cold. There was a rushing in his ears as though of water. He was being dragged downwards, the roaring growing louder ... And then, from far away, he heard screaming, terrible, terrified, pleading screams. He wanted to help whoever it was, he tried to move his arms, but couldn't ... a thick white fog was swirling around him, inside him – (Rowling, 1999, 66).

This experience haunts Harry and revisits him several times, until he learns to recover from it. Cathy Caruth suggests that 'The flashback, it seems, provides a form of recall that survives at the cost of willed memory or of the very continuity of conscious thought.' (Caruth, 1996c, 152.) As Caruth suggests, Harry's flashback survives within his mind in a form that he cannot consciously recall or interpret. He believes the flashback to be real, as when it is over, he enquires as to who was screaming: "What happened, Where's that – that thing? Who screamed?'' (Rowling, 1999, 66.) Caruth adds:

> The history that a flashback tells – as psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and neurobiology equally suggest – is, therefore, a history that literally *has no place*, neither in the past, in which it was not fully experienced, nor in the present, in which its precise images and enactments are not fully understood. In its repeated imposition as both image and amnesia, the trauma thus seems to evoke the difficult truth of a history that it constituted by the very incomprehensibility of its occurrence (Caruth, 1996c, 153).

I believe Caruth's assertion to be particularly pertinent in relation to Harry when taking into consideration his age at his moment of splitting. He was merely one year old and therefore could not fully understand the experience. And now, at age 13, he still cannot fully understand what his Dementor-induced flashback consists of, despite a deep inclination to feel fear and torment at its display. It is similar to the green light he has dreamt of: it is abstract and symbolic as well as being the most literal representation of his moment of splitting that his mind can evoke. Caruth appears to be suggesting that traumatic history is dislocated in time and space, and for Harry this is the case. His traumatic past has no place within the present, but refuses to remain in the past. Once it has been explained to him that the Dementors enable the victim to relive their worst memory, he realises what it is that he is experiencing and decides to seek help in order to combat the awful experience that they provide. Professor Lupin teaches him how to perform a Patronus charm:

> The Patronus is a kind of positive force, a projection of the very things that the Dementor feeds upon – hope, happiness, the desire to survive [...] which will work only if you are concentrating, with all your might, on a single, very happy memory (Rowling, 1999, 176).

This repelling charm for Dementors is almost like a technique for working through trauma – particularly depression. It suggests a similarity to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, focusing on the present and reprogramming one's mind to work through issues on a daily basis, replacing negative thought for positive. (*Cognitive Behaviour Therapy,* 2009). Harry manages this advanced magic – and works through this particular aspect of his trauma. However, despite him being able to successfully work through this experience, it still provides a harrowing resonance for him. As Roni Natov suggests in the essay 'Harry Potter and the Extraordinariness of the Ordinary', the use of the Dementors feeds the continual guilt that Harry feels:

> What tortures Harry is his overwhelming guilt and sorrow at his mother's death. At the sight of these gray-hooded figures [Dementors], Harry hears his mother's desperate cries: "No, take me, kill me instead." Haunted by her pain and feeling guilty that she died to save him, Harry is drawn into intense ambivalence. Rowling explains that even though it was so painful for Harry to hear the "last moments" of his parents "inside his head," these were the only times that he'd heard their voices since he was very young (Natov, 2004, 134-5).

It is bittersweet that something that Harry should long for comes to him in the most harrowing of ways. The only times that he has been able to hear his parents' voices since they were alive would be through traumatic memory, further causing him distress. In *Philosopher's Stone* Harry discovers the Mirror of Erised, which shows him his heart's desire: his family. He sees his family standing around him. This provides him an unreal representation of the family he desires.

Memory is subjective and flawed, and this is expanded within the series with the use of a Pensieve. A Pensieve (a large stone basin) is a wizarding tool, which contains memories that have been removed from a person's mind and placed into its care, in order for other people to view the memories. This tool provides information that a person would not be able to freely give, as translation from a mental memory into a verbal explanation will no doubt provide a less realistic version. Jason T. Eberl observes that

> Harry does not simply watch Dumbledore's memory, as if it were a movie, but is actually inside the memory itself, as if he had been present at that moment and witnesses the event himself as it happened. Though he is literally "inside" Dumbledore's memory, Harry and Dumbledore do not share the same consciousness (Eberl, 2004, 205).

This is why memories stored in the Pensieve are so important: they are as accurate as human memory can possibly be – even if the person has attempted to change or distort the memory they have provided. By the fourth novel, Voldemort has gained strength, which in turn strengthens the strange connection between himself and Harry. Harry begins to dream of Voldemort's memories. For this reason amongst others, memory becomes an important aspect to the series. In order to defeat Voldemort, memory is the key to discovering his successes and his failures. The Pensieve is crucial, as in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. It provides many memories of Dumbledore's which have a direct relation to Voldemort, plus memories from others who also hold crucial fragments of Voldemort's past. Without these abstract pieces of memory, Harry would not have sufficient information to attempt to defeat him. I find it significant that fragmented (and in some cases traumatic) memory is the only way to provide the knowledge that will help piece together what has happened and what will help Harry to succeed. The fictionalised events are suggestive of the means of working through trauma: examining the traumatic occurrences and working through them, and providing order, meaning and significance, in order to move on.

**Obsession**

As soon as Harry is aware of his real past, he becomes perhaps more aware of his traumatic memory; it becomes slightly less distorted, especially after his confrontation with Voldemort in *Philosopher's Stone*. Harry's hauntings change from abstract ideas, like the green light, to the face of Voldemort, as I have previously asserted. He develops an overwhelming obsession with his enemy. Harry is obsessed with Voldemort, as Voldemort is obsessed with Harry. Obsession is ultimately a product of trauma, as recorded by Daniel M. Wegner, in his study, *White Bears and Other Unwanted Thoughts*:

> Trauma appears to etch a deep psychological scar in the person. Like the rape victim, victims of all kinds often become obsessed with their traumas. The incest victim for instance, may find that disturbing and painful thoughts of the traumatic events can last a lifetime [...] It is not entirely clear why traumas have this effect. Why should people be so deeply moved by traumatic events? The development of a full-blown obsession might only take a minute (Wegner, 1994, 162-3).

Harry and Voldemort are obsessed with each other for personal as well as wider reasons: they are not allowed to forget about each other. They are encouraged to remember who the other is and that one must cause the other's downfall. As Wegner suggests, an obsession may only take a short time to develop, and although Harry was not consciously aware of Voldemort's existence until his first year at Hogwarts was approaching, the mere mention of Voldemort and his past would have sparked off an obsession, fed by his existing trauma. When Hagrid initially tells Harry about his parents, he feels his past develop with new memory and new pain:

> Something very painful was going on in Harry's mind. As Hagrid's story came to a close, he saw again the blinding flash of green light, more clearly than he had ever remembered it before – and he remembered something else, for the first time in his life – a high, cold, cruel laugh (Rowling, 1997, 46).

Harry is beginning to nurture an obsession with Voldemort, and it builds up rapidly once he enters Hogwarts School and receives more knowledge and information concerning him. From the moment of splitting onwards, Voldemort is continually connected to Harry, as a piece of his fragmented soul lodges itself within Harry, caused by the killing curse's failure. This means that Voldemort is always with Harry, as Harry is always with Voldemort. This appears to be a highly symbolic representation of traumatic obsession.

The fourth novel, *Goblet of Fire,* actually begins with Harry's dream of Voldemort. It is a detailed dream, connected to Voldemort as the events in the dream take place: he kills a man, and plots his return to full power, after the dream:

> Harry lay flat on his back, breathing hard as though he had been running. He had been awoken from a vivid dream with his hands pressed over his face. The old scar on his forehead, which was shaped like a bolt of lightning, was burning beneath his fingers as though someone had just pressed a white-hot wire to his skin (Rowling, 2000, 20).

The consequence of this dream and its aftermath is to remind the reader of the powerful connection between Harry and Voldemort and how it is not yet fully understood. Voldemort is many things to Harry, but ultimately he is his obsession: Harry's scar provides a direct link to Voldemort as a piece of Voldemort's soul is encased within, and so when Voldemort feels anything, the scar causes Harry pain.

This is a literal version of psychological pain. Also Voldemort himself is another form of a haunting, a representation of trauma. Harry cannot be free until Voldemort is defeated, or perhaps 'worked through': he is an unrelenting connection and obsession. As Harry's fate has defined his identity, there is the potential that his identity would not withstand the erasure of his obsession and enemy. However, aside from defeating Voldemort, Harry has only ever desired friends and a family, and so once Voldemort is defeated, Harry will have the ability to define himself according to what he considers a normal life: family and a career of further protecting the wizarding world, as he achieves a role within the Ministry of Magic and has a happy family life.

**Life and Death**

Harry Potter's story is one of death and loss. His moment of splitting, being the night of his parents' death, is his first and profound loss, as he not only loses his parents, but he loses his wizarding world and lifestyle which leads to his abuse as a child in a format which echoes the traditional fairytale. Harry is placed in the care of his only living relatives, Vernon and Petunia Dursley, as Petunia was his mother's sister. They also have a child who is the same age as Harry, called Dudley. Harry's reality becomes one of abuse and neglect. Similarly to the fairy tales I discussed in chapter one, where the protagonist would be neglected or abused by a stepparent, Harry is mistreated by his extended family. The Dursleys make Harry sleep in the cupboard under the stairs (Rowling, 1997, 20), he potentially suffers from malnutrition due to lack of food (Rowling, 1997, 20), and he is continually insulted and bullied (Rowling, 1997, 23), In Elaine Ostry's essay, 'Accepting Mudbloods: The Ambivalent Social Vision of J. K. Rowling's Fairy Tales', the point is made that

> Although Harry grows up a bit, he is essentially a static character like the fairy-tale hero. He tells Hermione and Ron that he will never join the enemy, and we believe him. The books rest on the image of Harry as inherently virtuous. The kind of neglect he encountered at the Dursleys would realistically create an antisocial boy desperate to curry favor and win power for himself; instead when he magically received attention beyond his wildest dreams and Hogwarts, he instantly rejects this status (Ostry, 2003, 97).

While I agree with Ostry's suggestion that Harry's upbringing could easily have led to him becoming a completely different person with antisocial issues, I do not quite

agree that he is a static character. Harry shows considerably more courage and personality than a typical fairy tale hero. His upbringing, while being very difficult to endure, also taught him resilience and strength, and enabled him to continue to believe in better. Harry also is required to echo reality. Like the protagonist in a fairy tale, he is needed to represent the reader: it is not unfair to suggest that Harry's initial story will spark a recognition that transfers into real life – abuse and neglect are after all common. Similarly to a fairy tale, Aunt Petunia takes on the role of wicked stepmother,

> She is shown to not only hate Harry and resent his presence in her family but to loathe him. She is of course jealous of Harry, as all evil stepmothers are traditionally represented, and goes to all ends to make sure he had a miserable life (Mayes-Elma, 2006, 99).

A further similarity to a fairy tale is the use of food, which is central to the relationships between evil stepmothers and their victims. Stepmothers are frequently shown starving or offering poisoned food to their unwanted stepchildren. Food becomes a metaphor for withheld motherly love. Also, like sex, it is often used as an element of trauma. Ronald Granofsky, in *The Trauma Novel,* suggests that

> Eating and sex are frequently portrayed in the trauma novel as the representatives of the drives to individual and collective survival respectively. Eating also occurs as a central motif in many trauma novels ... (Granofsky, 1995, 16.)

Since these novels focus on the lives of children, sex is not as strong a major theme, but eating is a regular occurrence. When Harry discovers the wizarding world, his life changes dramatically, and this is easily conveyed by the contrasting use of food. At the Dursleys food is almost absent for Harry. There is plenty of food for themselves (Dudley is particularly over-indulged, food-wise, as well as being a spoilt and inconsiderate child), but hardly any for Harry:

> The Dursleys bought Dudley and Piers large chocolate ice-creams at the entrance and then, because the smiling lady in the van had asked Harry what he wanted before they could hurry him away, they bought him a cheap lemon ice lolly (Rowling, 1997, 24).

At Hogwarts food is plentiful: 'feasts' are common:

> Harry's mouth fell open. The dishes in front of him were now piled with food. He had never seen so many things he liked to eat on one table: roast beef, roast chicken, pork chops and lamb chops, Yorkshire pudding, peas, carrots, gravy, ketchup and, for some strange reason, mint humbugs (Rowling, 1997, 92).

This is a simple comparison to show how almost immediately Hogwarts feels more like his home than ten years with the Dursleys ever did. Rowling takes care to describe Harry's meals, and especially during a Hogwarts' feast. Food is a particular focus, as it also has been in many boarding school stories (Smith, 2003, 81). However, in Harry Potter's story, I believe food to be of particular importance because of the continual drive for survival that runs through the tale.

Matriculating and attending Hogwarts is seen as positive for Harry, but it is not so clear-cut. As I have previously suggested in Chapter One, even a positive change can cause a child some turmoil (Johnson, 1989, 14-5), especially as this move to the wizarding world and to Hogwarts is easily relatable to the child reader as it is the same change as entering secondary school from primary school. Also, there is scope for a further suggestion, on how Harry's upbringing has affected him: he has been a loner his whole life, and has never experienced friendship. While at Hogwarts he gains solid friendships quickly and easily, making friends with similar marginal, potentially unpopular children. Ron, coming from a poor family, and Hermione, being a Muggle born and a bookworm, are both characters who are bullied for their backgrounds, and Harry, instead of choosing 'safer', popular friends, chooses children like himself, with the potential to be outcasts. A normal child entering secondary school for the first time might have a similar experience to Harry: feeling completely out of their depth. He worries that he will not fit in whatsoever. During the sorting hat ceremony, where the new students are sorted into their houses, Harry has the following anxiety:

> A horrible thought struck Harry, as horrible thoughts always do when you're very nervous. What if he wasn't chosen at all? What if he just sat there with the hat over his eyes for ages, until Professor McGonagall jerked it off his head and said there had obviously been a mistake and he'd better get back on the train? (Rowling, 1997, 90.)

Harry's desire to belong extends from his school-life to his home-life. When his Godfather, Sirius Black, becomes a part of his life again, albeit for a brief period, Harry begins to feel hope for a happy family life. However, Sirius' life is in fact cut short:

> The second jet of light hit him squarely on the chest. [...] It seemed to take Sirius an age to fall: his body curved in a graceful arc as he sank backwards through the ragged veil hanging from the arch. Harry saw the look of mingled fear and surprise on his godfather's wasted, once handsome face as he fell through the ancient doorway and disappeared behind the veil, which fluttered for a moment as though in a high wind, and then fell back into place (Rowling, 2003, 710-1).

Aside from the trauma of Sirius' death, there is a further curious element to the way in which he died. This battle is taking place in the Ministry of Magic, in the department of mysteries. In this particular room there is an old archway, with a suspended veil. This hanging appears to be an entrance to death and the beyond, a physical symbol of the common saying about the afterlife, 'beyond the veil'. Sirius's death is a symbolic death – more than a sudden death, it is a representation of death itself. Rowling is providing an attempt to represent the ultimate in incomprehensible trauma. Sirius falls behind the veil, one moment alive and present within the room and the next moment completely gone without a trace. To me, this appears to be a representation of death in general, which can be inexplicable and illogical, as noted by John M. Violanti in *Traumatology of Grieving*:

> Sudden deaths are usually more difficult to grieve than deaths where there is some prior warning [...] A sudden death will generally leave [...] a sense of unreality about the loss. [...] Guilt feelings are also common among survivors of sudden deaths (Violanti, 1999, 81).

This is certainly true in Harry's case. Immediately after the death he is in disbelief:

> 'Get him, save him, he's only just gone through!'
> '-it's too late, Harry.'
> 'We can still reach him –' Harry struggled hard and viciously, but Lupin would not let go ...
> 'There's nothing you can do, Harry ... nothing ... he's gone.'
> [...] 'He hasn't gone!' Harry yelled.
> [...] 'HE – IS – NOT – DEAD!' roared Harry (Rowling, 2003, 711-2).

Harry cannot comprehend the situation and refuses to believe that Sirius is dead with little warning and fanfare. He will also feel tremendous guilt for Sirius' death:

> 'I know how you're feeling, Harry,' said Dumbledore very quietly.
> 'No, you don't,' said Harry, and his voice was suddenly loud and strong; white-hot anger leapt inside him; Dumbledore knew *nothing* about his feelings. [...]
> 'It is *my* fault that Sirius died', said Dumbledore clearly
> (Rowling, 2003, 725-7).

He feels responsible for Sirius' death, and Dumbledore, realising this, attempts to remove the blame, implying that he himself is to blame, due to his decision not to inform Harry about the connection between himself and Voldemort. While Harry's life has now taken another huge blow, and yet more traumatic events have occurred, he still has to work through them, move on and rebuild as he knows that he is to be the one to conquer Voldemort. However, during this process, losses continue to mount. Dumbledore too dies, further destroying another person of 'safety' for Harry, and yet another father figure. This death is equally perplexing to Harry, but for quite different reasons, because it was in fact planned for several months by Dumbledore himself who had been severely injured before the beginning of the sixth novel, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Dumbledore was aware that he was slowly dying. After realising that Voldemort had given the job of murdering him to a student, Draco Malfoy, Dumbledore decides to ask Hogwarts teacher Severus Snape to perform a mercy killing, completely of Dumbledore's choice to make sure that he died at a time of his choosing and also that Draco Malfoy would not have to become a murderer. Harry is unaware of this agreement:

> 'Severus ... please ...'
> Snape raised his wand and pointed it directly at Dumbledore. 'Avada Kedavra!' A jet of green light shot from the end of Snape's wand and his Dumbledore squarely in the chest. Harry's scream of horror never left him; silent and unmoving, he was forced to watch as Dumbledore was blasted into the air: for a split second he seemed to hang suspended beneath the shining skull, and then he fell slowly backwards, like a great rag doll, over the battlements and out of sight (Rowling, 2003, 556).

And, similarly to his reaction to Sirius's death, Harry's first reaction is intense disbelief: 'Harry felt as though he, too, were hurting through space; *it had not*

*happened ... it could not have happened ...*' (Rowling, 2005, 557.) However, this time there is a dead body to compound the reality of the situation. As with the death of Harry's friend Cedric, in *Goblet of Fire*, there is a body to mourn over.

> Harry expresses and exhibits symptoms and behaviours common for bereaved teenagers. His responses are often multifaceted and include shock, numbness, blame and guilt, sadness and rage. More specific to being a teenager, Harry is actively reluctant to discuss his grief, particularly following the deaths of Cedric and Sirius (Taub & Sevaty-Seib, 2009, 26).

Harry seems more inclined to repress or to avoid articulating what has happened, and this is an effect of his trauma. These further losses deepen Harry's obsession and desire to conquer Voldemort. It is as if the more traumatic events that he witnesses or experiences further fuel his need to break free and stop his enemy for good: it can almost be seen as representing an attempt to break a cycle of trauma, by working through and overcoming the effects, but it also suggests that trauma can be a stimulating experience.

Another option for Harry could be the Weasleys, who are in fact his ideal family, and he spends substantial time with them. Their world is a safe one, in comparison to Harry's (The Weasleys actually do become Harry's family eventually, as Harry marries Ginny Weasley and gains a family of his own by having three children with Ginny). Ron Weasley becomes Harry's best friend on the first journey to Hogwarts in Harry's first year, since then Harry is welcomed into the Weasleys' hearts and home. Ann Alston, in *The Family in English Children's Literature*, observes that

> The Weasleys represent the perfect family that the families in the domestic texts of the late twentieth century fail to live up to. Mrs Weasley feeds eleven people wholesome British food at seven o'clock exactly, and even the sun shines on them (Alston, 2008, 123).

However ideal the Weasleys appear to Harry, this substitute family also experience the threat of losing their father (Arthur Weasley), as he is seriously attacked and his recovery is difficult and lengthy. This alarms the family (and Harry). It is a reminder

for Harry that nothing and no one is really safe, especially the male wizarding population and particularly father figures. The night of Arthur Weasley's attack is problematic for Harry, more so than just being upset that yet-another father figure has been injured. His connection to Voldemort makes Harry aware of the attack, and because of this he is able to alert the appropriate people so that Arthur is found quickly and safely. However, Harry also feels as though it was he himself who caused the attack, and experiences it in a dream as if he were doing the deed:

> But the man was stirring ... a silver Cloak fell from his legs as he jumped to his feet; and Harry saw his vibrant, blurred outline towering above him, saw a wand withdrawn from a belt ... he had no choice ... he reared high from the floor and struck once, twice, three times, plunging his fangs deeply into the man's flesh, feeling his ribs splinter beneath his jaws, feeling the warm gush of blood...
> (Rowling, 2003, 409.)

When Harry wakes up he realises immediately what has happened and tells Ron: 'Your dad! He's been bitten, it's serious, there was blood everywhere ...' (Rowling, 2003, 409.) I feel that this is a representation of Harry's guilt. For every attack that Voldemort makes, Harry may feel blame in the same manner that he feels guilty over his parents' deaths. Perhaps Voldemort could be seen as Harry's alter-ego, acting out a disturbed desire of his, exacting revenge on father-figures in anger at the original desertion of his own father. Whereas he cannot verbally communicate his feelings or his grief, or his traumatic memories, his dreams become a place where these feelings can be explored. John Granger suggests that plot-wise 'the scene is more than confirmation of Dumbledore's theory that Lord Voldemort has divided his soul.' (Granger, 2008, 49.) Harry's dream provides proof of the connection between Voldemort and Harry, and also that Voldemort has performed dark magic and created Horcruxes, which mean he has separated his soul and placed the fragments in different secure places in order to become immortal (Rowling, 2005, 469*)*. As Voldemort's soul was completely shattered on the night he attempted to kill Harry for the first time, Lily's sacrifice-created force, love, caused Voldemort's killing curse to fail and for a fragment of his soul to become encased within Harry. This makes Harry an accidental Horcrux (Rowling, 2007, 568). His trauma is thus given symbolic form, by the fragment embedded within his head: unrelenting and indiscriminate. This

fragment is both a foreign element and also a part of him. It creates a merciless connection between Harry and Voldemort.

Harry and the Weasleys experience a loss during the final battle between Harry and Voldemort at Hogwarts. Fred Weasley, twin brother of George Weasley and one of Mr and Mrs Weasleys' seven children, dies at the hand of one of Voldemort's followers (called Death Eaters (Rowling, 2007, 512)). This is a horrific loss for the family, but also for Harry, as he has now lost someone who was like an older brother to him.

> The literary symbol in the trauma novel facilitates a removal from unpleasant actuality by use of distance and selection. While human memory achieves distance temporally, the symbol in fiction achieves it spatially by imposing itself between the reader and the thing symbolized (Granofsky, 1995, 6).

I believe this paradigm is prominently present throughout the Harry Potter series, and is particularly applicable to the following scene. During the final battle between Harry and Voldemort, when Voldemort tries to kill him, Harry is taken to a sort of waiting area, where the deceased Dumbledore explains that he has a choice: to go on fighting and living or to travel to death. Harry chooses to continue and battle on:

> Voldemort had raised his wand. [...]
> He saw the mouth move and a flash of green light, and everything was gone. [...] He lay face down, listening to the silence. He was perfectly alone. Nobody was watching. Nobody was there. He was not perfectly sure that he was there himself. [...]
> He recoiled. He had spotted the thing that was making the noises. It had the form of a small, naked child, curled on the ground, its skin raw and rough, flayed-looking, and it lay shuddering under a seat where it had been left, unwanted, stuffed out of sight, struggling for breath. [...]
> 'You cannot help.'
> He spun around. Albus Dumbledore was walking towards him [...]
> 'But you're dead,' said Harry.
> 'Oh, yes,' said Dumbledore matter-of-factly.
> 'Then ... I'm dead too?'
> 'Ah,' said Dumbledore, smiling still more broadly. 'That is the question, isn't it? On the whole, dear boy, I think not.' [...]
> 'I've got to go back, haven't I?'
> 'That is up to you.'
> 'I've got a choice?'

> 'Oh yes.' Dumbledore smiled at him. 'We are in King's Cross, you say? I think that if you decide not to go back, you would be able to ... let's say ... board a train.'
> 'And where would it take me?'
> 'On,' said Dumbledore simply. [...]
> 'Tell me one last thing,' said Harry. 'Is this real? Or has this been happening inside my head?'
> Dumbledore beamed at him, and his voice sounded loud and strong in Harry's ears even though the bright mist was descending again, obscuring his figure. 'Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?'
> (Rowling, 2007, 564-79.)

This liminal, border area, which Harry believes looks a little like King's Cross Station in London, is not defined in the text but it appears to be a sort of waiting area between life and death. Dumbledore is present as he has a lot to explain to Harry. The small child that is mentioned is a physical manifestation of the fragment of Voldemort's soul, which is now destroyed so that the connection between him and Harry no longer exists. The representation of Voldemort as a wounded, vulnerable child appears to be suggesting that underneath the acts of evil he is in fact still just a neglected child. It also suggests that now each of his Horcruxes is being destroyed, he will not be as invincible as he believes himself to be, and will be as helpless and powerless before death as any other person. I find Dumbledore's assertion concerning whether the scene is taking place within Harry's mind or not, psychologically interesting: it suggests that mental issues are as important as reality, and should not be ignored. Dumbledore is there to help Harry to make his decision between working through his trauma or giving up. This scene is a representation of the mental struggle Harry may experience in attempting to confront his anxieties. Spatially, he is separated from the two outcomes (life or death), and in this neutral space he may attempt to make his decision.

Voldemort had made six Horcruxes (fragments of his soul encased within a foreign objects) purposefully, and one accidentally. Each had to be destroyed before Voldemort himself was killed, otherwise he could return, as he did on the night of Harry's moment of splitting (After Voldemort's initial downfall on the night he killed Harry's parents, he withdrew into hiding and spent many years in a sort of spirit form attempting to return to full power, before succeeding). Voldemort is symbolic of trauma, that will return unless confronted and combated. He is continually haunting

and fragmented. Once the Horcuxes are destroyed, in the final dual with Harry, Voldemort is killed not by Harry, but by his own rebounding spell (Rowling, 2007, 595). This implies that if trauma is fought, it will eventually destroy itself. Perhaps since it feeds upon itself ('...earlier trauma "feeds" into the later trauma.') (Gallo, 2007, 104), if it is not able to do so, due to being confronted, then it cannot continue to hold its control over a person's mind. While working through trauma takes considerable courage and strength, so too does rebuilding afterwards. After this final battle Harry chooses to rebuild rather than destroy himself (and contribute to the decline of society with the wizarding world), and he completely defeats his trauma. He goes on to have his own family with his wife, and embarks on a good career and normal and happy life. The Epilogue of the seventh and final novel illustrates this, as it shows Harry with his friends and family seventeen years on, putting their children onto the Hogwarts Express at the start of their new school year (Rowling, 2007, 603). Harry thus manages to achieve the family life that he never had the opportunity to experience as a child himself.

In *J. K. Rowling: A Year in the Life,* which aired on ITV in December 2007, the author observed that '... climbing back to normality... after trauma is much, much harder. It's much harder to rebuild than destroy.' (Runcie, 2007.) In acknowledging the difficulties in combating trauma, she shows how important it is that Harry manages to rebuild his life. The Harry Potter series is a deeply moral story which is a thorough and complex example of dealing with trauma, from initial moment through to working through and rebuilding. The magical world in which Harry's journey is set does not diminish his intricate story, as it shows that even in a place of advantage, there can be immense difficulties.

# Chapter Three:

## *Twilight*

## Chapter Three: Twilight

Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga has achieved significant popularity with readers and has managed to generate some of the publicity and fascination that the Harry Potter series has enjoyed. This saga currently consists of four books: *Twilight*, published in 2006; *New Moon*, published in 2007; *Eclipse*, also published in 2007; and *Breaking Dawn*, published in 2008 (Meyer has stated that the series may continue, but from a different character's point of view. A rewrite of the first novel from another character's point of view, titled *Midnight Sun,* is partly available to read on Meyer's website). While the saga has been published worldwide, its core popularity remains in the USA, where it has been described as 'America's answer to Harry Potter' (*Twilight could be more popular than 'Harry Potter'*, 2009). In 2008 a film adaptation of the first novel, *Twilight,* was released; *New Moon* was released in 2009, and *Eclipse,* the latest film in the series, was released in 2010. An adaptation of the fourth novel is also planned (like *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, *Breaking Dawn* is planned for release in two parts. The first to be released in 2011 and the second in 2012).

The *Twilight* saga focuses upon a teenage girl, Bella, who decides to live with her father in Washington State. She enrols at the local high school and has a near death experience, from which she is saved by fellow student, Edward, who happens to be a vampire. These two characters then fall in love and maintain a relationship through many trials and life-threatening problems. It is a vampire-romance story, which, closely paralleling the TV series, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, depicts a section of the vampire community which attempts to overcome their base desires and do good in human society. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is a film/TV series/comic/novel series. In the TV series which ran from 1997 to 2003, the vampire slayer, Buffy, falls in love and maintains a relationship with a vampire, Angel, who aligns himself with good and drinks animal blood rather than human. They have chosen to only drink animal blood, instead of what they instinctively desire: human blood. Vampires in contemporary tales such as *Twilight* have changed dramatically from their antecedents in Bram Stocker's *Dracula* and earlier tales of terror and the supernatural, as Brendan O'Neill has suggested:

> unlike many other vampire films, the "victim" in this one - human teen Bella - is not scared of Edward and his family of cold-skinned, beautiful vampires. In fact, she wants to join them. The chase is reversed: the human pursues the vampire, and the vampire resists (*How vampires got all touchy-feely*, 2008).

This is an example of how the saga twists and distorts the usual vampire tale: this is something that I will return to in this chapter. The main focus, however will be on the fascinating representation of family and trauma and I will examine this series using ideas, theory and critical material that I have established in my previous chapters from critics such as Cathy Caruth and Jack Zipes and Ronald Granofsky. I will begin with an overview of the saga and the reversal of family roles and then turn to trauma and focus on the principal moment of splitting for the protagonist Bella before going on to explore how trauma and fragmentation are fundamental to the structure of the novels and how the vampires themselves can be considered as 'survivors'.

The *Twilight* saga is a surprisingly moral story for a tale which portrays vampires in a positive light, and a particular emphasis is placed on Christian values of service, self-sacrifice and, in particular, on chastity and love. It is also, arguably, a deeply conservative work with its emphasis on reverence for patriarchal authority, traditional gender roles within marriage and, arguably, sex only for procreation and maternal self-sacrifice. Interestingly, however, the inclusion of vampires as central characters blurs the conventional lines of good and evil. While *Twilight* deals with many fantastical elements, this series follows the pattern of previous texts we have explored in using a fantasy framework to address some very ordinary, everyday issues. At the centre is the family and its various permutations. Bella's parents are divorced, and Bella parents her mother, giving up her home to allow her mother and new husband to live their chosen life. Bella also fulfills the role of surrogate wife to her father, cooking and doing other domestic chores for him. Although her relationship with both parents is warm, Bella also has two surrogate families: her old family friends the Blacks, who live on La Push reservation (and who turn out to be a tribe of shape shifters, taking the form of werewolves) and the 'family' of vampires to which Edward belongs. This last is itself a surrogate family arrangement rather than a biological family and is portrayed to the human world as comprised of parents and adopted children.

**Absent Parents**

Bella's mother left her father when she was young and took Bella away from her hometown of Forks, Washington. In many ways, this move could be seen as being the end of her childhood – as her relationship with her mother, as already mentioned, is a role reversal. As she departs for her father's home and her new life in Forks, the parting between mother and child is inverted. Bella the mother sees her mother as a vulnerable child:

> My mom looks like me, except with short hair and laugh lines. I felt a spasm of panic as I stared at her wide, childlike eyes. How could I leave my loving, erratic, harebrained mother to fend for herself? Of course she had Phil now, so the bills would probably get paid, there would be food in the refrigerator, gas in her car, and someone to call when she got lost, but still ... (Meyer, 2006, 4.)

This inverted relationship is reiterated repeatedly in the *Twilight* series. Once Bella leaves for Forks, her mother sends her the following e-mail:

> Write me as soon as you get in. Tell me how your flight was. Is it raining? I miss you already. I'm almost finished packing for Florida, but I can't find my pink blouse. Do you know where I put it? (Meyer, 2006, 28.)

And Bella replies: 'Your blouse is at the dry cleaners – you were supposed to pick it up Friday.' (Meyer, 2006, 29.) These quotations emphasise that her mother is naive and incapable of looking after herself properly. They also support the thesis that Bella has had to grow up ahead of schedule in order to be the person to be relied upon, becoming a surrogate husband (the protector) in the absence of the true husband, Bella's father. It is significant that she is forced to leave at the point her mother marries again, making her role redundant.

Avigdor Klingman suggests in the essay, 'Children and War Trauma': 'Serious risk also exists for growing up too fast and losing childhood too early, for example by being forced to resolve serious moral and emotional conflicts before full maturation.' (Klingman, 2006, 622.) Bella is forced by her childlike mother to grow up too quickly and make life-changing decisions before being at an age to truly understand and appreciate them. Bella's parents are largely absent in her life for different reasons: this is significant for her because not only does she and her mother

maintain almost reversed roles, but her father is forced to adopt a hands off approach to parenting through lack of opportunity to engage regularly with his daughter. As a result he initially treats Bella more like an adult than a child. He ensures that she has her own transportation so she can be independent (Meyer, 2006, 7), and he also comes to rely on Bella to cook meals for him and to generally take care of herself with minimal supervision (Meyer, 2006, 30-1). This does not seem to portray a father-daughter dynamic, but one of a couple instead.

As the remarriage of Bella's mother is the catalyst that persuades her to return to her father full-time, she, in her reversed role, recognizes that her mother would want time alone with her new husband and therefore removes herself from the situation. This is interesting as perhaps a more typical or conventional teenager would use this time to fight for ultimate attention, not retreat and relinquish the mother's attention. Perhaps this withdrawal and self-sacrifice stems from potential damage caused by growing up too quickly. The divorce, change, and then remarriage cause Bella to come full circle. On the one hand her mother takes her away from her home, and then unconsciously forces her to return, on the other Bella is conscious of stepping into her mother's shoes as she moves in with her father. This is most poignantly demonstrated when she chooses to fling her mother's parting words at her father when Bella, in turn, has to depart against his will: '"Just let me go, Charlie." I repeated my mother's last words as she'd walked out this same door so many years ago.' (Meyer, 2006, 344.)

Although Bella's move involves a journey of thousands of miles, a complete change of climate and environment, and changing school at a difficult time in an adolescent's life, she nevertheless makes certain important gains which are characteristic of, and indeed vital to, fantasy adventure stories. Bella is more or less free to do whatever she wants. There is a lack of parental authority from her father and her mother and their general ignorance of her activities further undermines any parental responsibilities they feel. If freedom from parental constraints is necessary for the action of teenage fantasy fiction, in fairy tales the lack of parental intervention (or parental rejection) tends to engender the loneliness and isolation of the protagonist.

Jack Zipes suggests that in a fairy tale "the danger in the intimate circle and the safety in nature and the universe are special forms of interdependence and isolation in which the basic pattern of the fairy tale's image of humankind can be

seen." (Zipes, 2006, 147.) The story often portrays an independence from family, from parents, from other humans, and a dependence on nature. As already demonstrated, Bella's beginnings in the *Twilight* saga follow the pattern of seeking refuge from hurt in her family relationships in the non-human world. Like Cinderella, Belle, Snow-White or the Little Mermaid, Bella lives largely in isolation from other humans, both symbolically and actually. Her dependence on nature is displayed in her growing love and reliance on the rain and green foliage of Forks: the forest becomes a place which she initially fears but then begins to seek refuge in, away from her pain. It also becomes a place that is away from humans and the dangers of family: the glade in the forest that Edward takes her to is a place of serenity. Zipes suggests that the interdependence of intimate danger and a safety in nature portrays the 'fairy tale's image of humankind', and that pattern is also present in *Twilight*. Humans and non-humans both take refuge in nature, but humans also initially fear it: Bella is an example of this.

Bella's social awkwardness and outsider status connects to Harry Potter. Like Harry, she also has fears of not fitting into her new school environment:

> Facing my pallid reflection in the mirror, I was forced to admit that I was lying to myself. It wasn't just physically that I'd never fit in. [...] I didn't relate well to people my age. Maybe the truth was that I didn't relate well to people, period (Meyer, 2006, 9).

Like Harry Potter, who also fears being a social outcast, she is attracted to the marginal characters, despite being offered the friendship of those who are popular. Bella feels as though she does not fit in, and it is arguable that this is a consequence of her reverse role with her mother. She does not align with children of her own age, nor with adults, and this could be due to the fact that she is mentally older and yet not fully prepared to be so. Conceivably this is a traumatic effect of being forced into a reversed parent-child role, and the equal role that she takes on with her father. For example, she automatically takes care of him by cooking meals. It is arguable that the average teenager would expect to be looked after to a higher degree than Bella appears to expect. She displays calm normality in her new home, but the repression of her true feelings might cost her emotionally. She is heavily described as clumsy: I wonder if her clumsiness is a significant representation of her awkwardness and lack

of control? Clumsiness is often associated with teenage growth spurts, and perhaps Bella's awkwardness betrays the conflicting emotions beneath her.

**Splitting and Obsession**

Trauma informs both the structure and nature of individual plot lines and experiences in the book as well as the structure of each novel as a whole. Cathy Caruth, in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, states:

> ... the pathology [obsessive recall] cannot be defined either by the event itself – which may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatize everyone equally – nor can it be defined in terms of a *distortion* of the event, achieving its haunting power as a result of distorting personal significances attached to it. The pathology consists, rather, solely in the *structure of its experience* or repetition: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experience it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event (Caruth, 1995, 4-5).

While Bella has experienced many moments of splitting in her life (her parents' divorce and her return to Forks are examples of this), the most significant is the moment early in the first novel where Edward, a vampire, saves her from being hit by a car and killed:

> Edward Cullen was standing four cars down from me, staring at me in horror [...] A low oath made me aware that someone was with me, and the voice was impossible not to recognize. Two long, white hands shot out protectively in front of me, and the van shuddered to a stop a foot from my face, the large hands fitting providentially into a deep dent in the side of the van's body.
>
> Then his hands moved so fast they blurred. One was suddenly gripping under the body of the van, and something was dragging me, swinging my legs around like a rag doll's, till they hit the tire of the tan car. A groaning metallic thud hurt my ears, and the van settled, glass popping, onto the asphalt – exactly where, a second ago, my legs had been (Meyer, 2006, 47-8).

This seemingly inexplicable occurrence sparks off an obsession within Bella. As Caruth suggests, she is traumatised because she is completely possessed by this initial event and this image of Edward. This obsession rules her thoughts and manifests itself in her dreams. She seeks out information and dreams regularly of him, recalling him at a distance or even as a predator (Bella dreams of a fight between Edward and a

wolf, but is not afraid of Edward, despite him being a vampire, as she is only afraid of harm coming to him. (Meyer, 2006, 114)). She also develops romantic thoughts for Edward. This realisation is clearly shocking to her, as she finds it difficult to comprehend and assimilate. After the incident occurs, Edward immediately denies that he was standing several cars away the moment before the accident, countering Bella's perception of reality:

> "Bella, I was standing *with you*, and I pulled you out of the way." He unleashed the full, devastating power of his eyes on me, as if trying to communicate something crucial.
> "No." I set my jaw (Meyer, 2006, 49, my emphasis).

Edward, not Bella, experiences the denial caused by a traumatic experience: he needs to deny his real involvement as he is terrified that he has exposed himself and his family to the people observing. This fear of discovery is part of the distortion of vampire narratives: the traditional vampire would not have such cares or worries (Worley, 1999, 79). The reinvention of the vampire appears to begin with Anne Riche's novels, which began a shift in the perception of the creatures (1976 onwards). The car crash alone could be traumatic for Bella (and even for Edward), however the confusing element of being saved in a supernatural way causes the two to become obsessed with each other. Her haunting dreams begin the night of the accident (Meyer, 2006, 57), and this may be her outlet to try and understand this incident and the nature of her feelings towards Edward. Kathryn Belicki and Marion Cuddy suggest that 'Nightmares (and flashbacks) may also reflect a struggle to make sense of the trauma and to integrate it with one's experience and conceptions of self and the world...' (Belicki, 2001, 49.) In Bella's dreams Edward is unobtainable:

> In my dream it was very dark, and what dim light there was seemed to be radiating from Edward's skin. I couldn't see his face, just his back as he walked away form me, leaving me in the blackness. No matter how fast I ran, I couldn't catch up to him; no matter how loud I called, he never turned. Troubled, I woke in the middle of the night and couldn't sleep again for what seemed like a very long time. After that, he was in my dreams nearly every night, but always on the periphery, never within reach (Meyer, 2006, 58).

It appears that she is trying to grasp for answers, but it also reflects her own sense of isolation and her growing obsession with Edward. Her dream is an attempt to make

sense of what has happened and what is happening, but she states that she can never reach him. Like traumatic memories and experiences, dreams exist outside of real life and deal with real memories only in a symbolic form. In my previous chapter, I discussed the following suggestion by Ronald Granofsky:

> The literary symbol in the trauma novel facilitates a removal from unpleasant actuality by use of distance and selection. While human memory achieves distance temporally, the symbol in fiction achieves it spatially by imposing itself between the reader and the thing symbolized (Granofsky, 1995, 6).

This paradigm is helpful here: both spatially and symbolically, Bella is imposing a distance between herself, her trauma, and Edward. In her dreams he is always too far away: she cannot reach out to him and she cannot reach him, despite trying. Spatially there is distance between them, and this is present within her dream, as in reality: Edward remains unattainable to her. Also, he is representational of her trauma, which only exists symbolically and is similarly unattainable. Until she can reach him, she cannot begin to work through her trauma. This is feeding her sense of loneliness and deepening her obsession, whilst she distances herself from being able to confront any potential trauma. This dream recurs and proves continually troubling. Granofsky explains that the spatial distance between the reader and the trauma is being created by the symbol, so the reader does not directly access the trauma, and neither does the character.

Moreover, Bella's dreams prefigure her reality, as Edward decides to remain away from her for as long as he can. Despite her making new friends and having social engagements, they do not halt the inexplicable longing she feels for Edward: she remains isolated and alone, consistent with Laurie Vickroy's suggestion:

> The social environment, the severity of the event, and the individual's characteristics and experience all determine how someone will cope with trauma. Social supports are essential to survivors' adjustment. [...] In some cultures there is an acceptance that trauma cannot always be completely worked through [...] When cultures do not function this way, individuals feel unprotected and are forced to cope in isolation (Vickroy, 2002, 14).

This can go some way to explaining how Bella's trauma is manifesting itself. She was already an isolated person who felt marginal, and the town in which she now lives

retains an unofficial policy of keeping certain things, like the existence of the Cullens (Edward's family), quiet (Certain people in the town of Forks are aware of the vampires' existence but remain quiet and in denial about them due to a very old law between natives and vampires to stick to their own areas of town. (Meyer, 2006, 108)), therefore she has no one to talk to about her experience: it must remain unspoken. This means that Bella has no avenue to work through her recent experiences, as the only person she can find a release with is Edward, the precise person who was involved in the incident and is feeding her trauma by his denial.

Her obsession grows when she is unable to discover the truth of her moment of splitting; she turns to her own research and to a friend, Jacob Black, for information: "'There's always a risk for humans to be around the cold ones, even if they are civilised like this clan was. You never know when they might get too hungry to resist.'" (Meyer, 2006, 108.) This information and Bella's research piece the fragments together, confirming her fearful interest. Discovering that Edward and his family are in fact vampires should have been seen as evil and have a negative impact on Bella, but due to being saved by Edward, she finds it difficult to associate him with evil. Initially she almost refuses to believe her own intuition and Jacob's tale:

> If Edward was a vampire – I could hardly make myself think the word – then what should I do? Involving someone else was definitely out. I couldn't even believe myself; anyone I told would have me committed." (Meyer, 2006, 120.)

Despite achieving an answer, Bella is still in isolation and disbelief. This is unsurprising as Edward and his family do not adhere to the predictable storybook idea of a vampire: they do not only emerge at night, for example, or sleep in coffins (Meyer, 2006, 117). It seems that Edward is a twisted version of a vampire, and his relationship with Bella, once established, twists a negative situation into a troubling positive.

It takes a potential attack on Bella to force Edward to ignore his over-developed tendency toward self-sacrifice and the resisting of his desires, and to begin a relationship with her. Again, he saves her, this time from assumed rapists/murderers:

> I probably wouldn't have a chance against one of them, and there were four. [...] I tried to swallow so I could build up a decent scream. Headlights suddenly flew around the corner [...] the silver car unexpectedly fishtailed around, skidding to a stop with the passenger door open just a few feet from me.
> "Get in," a furious voice commanded (Meyer, 2006, 140).

Edward, guided by his own senses and his sister's psychic abilities, had been watching Bella and so knew to run to her aid. She, however, grateful to be yet again saved by Edward, was unprepared to have to help persuade him not to kill all four of the attackers:

> "What's wrong? My voice came out in a whisper.
> "Sometimes I have a problem with my temper, Bella [...] But it *wouldn't* be helpful for me to turn around and hunt down *those*..."
> He didn't finish his sentence [...] "that's what I'm trying to convince myself."
> "Oh." The word seemed inadequate, but I couldn't think of a better response (Meyer, 2006, 142-3).

This is an example of the paradox that is Edward: Bella is safe and has been saved by him and yet she is also being exposed to a very dangerous being. As Jerry A. Boriskin has observed, '...intensity can be self-reinforcing, and many trauma survivors are attracted to dangerous endeavours.' (Boriskin, 2004, 53.) It is arguable that Bella may be subconsciously attracted to the confusing danger and safety that Edward represents for her. And perhaps the initial incident involving him has now desensitised her from being overly shocked by further traumatic experiences. Kathleen O. Nader suggests that 'After trauma, numbing and reexperiencing may either alternate [...] or coexist...' (Nader, 1997, 25.) Bella is alternating between reliving her traumatic experiences - her dreams being the main symbolic display of this - and feeling numb towards everything. Her muted reaction to Edward's rage and the dangerous situation that he rescued her from is an interesting example.

Edward is Bella's unrelenting obsession. However, it is undeniable their relationship brings constant attacks upon her, not only from outside sources, from which he manages to save and shield her, but also potentially by Edward himself:

> "We are still dangerous."
> "I don't understand."

> "We try, " he explained slowly. "We're usually very good at what we do. Sometimes we make mistakes. Me, for example, allowing myself to be alone with you."
> "This is a mistake?" [...]
> "A very dangerous one," (Meyer, 2006, 163).

Being a vampire, he thirsts for Bella's blood and yet he also loves her. This a confusing and threatening element. It feeds her trauma: she is obsessed and in love with someone with the potential to end her life at any moment and her obsession, as I have shown, in part arises from her inability to move on from a dangerous and traumatic situation. Indeed, the importance of danger in their relationship is central. The bond between Bella and Edward is intensely erotic and the tension between danger and desire is the key to this eroticism, with her sexual attraction towards him being constantly frustrated and her desire deferred by his fear of losing control and endangering her. The link between sex and the penetration of the vampire's fangs and blood drinking which is such a central element of the traditional vampire story is not missing here.

The humanisation of the vampire is an essential and inevitable part of the romantic plot. There are obvious similarities within the love story of Bella and Edward to that of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (Byron, 2009, 174-5). This allusion is made absolutely explicit in the novel. Bella expresses her love for Edward very early in the story:

> About three things I was absolutely positive. First, Edward was a vampire. Second, there was part of him – and I didn't know how potent that part might be – that thirsted for my blood. And third, I was unconditionally and irrevocably in love with him
> (Meyer, 2006, 170-1).

And Edward returns love:

> His gold eyes grew very soft. "You said you loved me."
> "You knew that already," I reminded him, ducking my head.
> [...] "I love you," I whispered.
> "You are my life now," he answered simply (Meyer, 2006, 275).

However, their love is strongly connected to obsession. This firmly started on the day that Edward first saved Bella's life: the day of her psychological splitting. She is

completely drawn towards him, but also to the Cullens. She becomes willing to give up her family and life as human after a very small amount of time with them. In a traditional fairy tale, it could be imaginable that a wicked witch had in fact placed a magic spell upon her in order to turn her into a monster, but as Glennis Byron has suggested, the monster has become the tragic hero, and so the human-vampire relationship almost becomes normal, expected even. On the other hand, Edward is still a predator: he still hunts, despite hunting only animals and not humans. He also would be able to sense Bella's vulnerability, being an outsider and unconsciously drawn to danger.

**Traumatic Effects**

Beyond the attractiveness of Edward's dangerous side and the sexual tension which is so alluring for Bella, he also represents the way into a stable, idealised family environment. His family, the Cullens, although not being blood relations, appear to her as the perfect family: his parents are genuinely happy together and have good relationships with their adopted children and the whole family unit works together for the good of each member. This ideal family, with its clearly distinct and distinctive identity, contrasts strongly with Bella's own, highlighting its damaged structure and incomplete relationships. She desperately wants to become a part of the Cullen family. It is interesting and perhaps significant, given the contemporary American teenage audience addressed by the fiction, that the surrogate family offered by the Cullens mirrors the role of gangs for young people. It is also significant that Bella will have to undergo an excruciatingly painful initiation ceremony. There will be no possibility of leaving the gang once admitted, and it is likely that she will have to kill as a young initiate (young vampires are supposed to be unable to control themselves in their early life).

Bella's first visit to the Cullens' home, as Edward's girlfriend, ought to be a very intimidating experience because it involves meeting and being confined with seven vampires, yet she, too, overlooks this. The first feelings she experiences are those of any ordinary girlfriend meeting her boyfriend's parents: she is nervous they might not like her. The wealth and culture of the Cullens is also noted as fulfilling a childhood fantasy:

> My eyes wandered again to the beautiful instrument on the platform by the door. I suddenly remembered my childhood fantasy that, should I

> ever win a lottery, I would buy a grand piano for my mother (Meyer, 2006, 283).

Bella's unfulfilled childhood dream is a reality at the Cullens' house (although it is interesting to note that even here her dream is one of parenting her own mother). Thus, at the Cullens', under the maternal eye of Esme and the paternal authority of Carlisle (Edward's adoptive parents), she sees a dream come true, even if it is at a distance since the home is not hers. The consonance of this home with her childhood dream produces a strange sense of security.

Bella's own family, which with its absent and inadequate parents is comparable to the traditional 'evil' of the fairy tale, is contrasted with this ideal American nuclear family. The obvious irony is that Renee and Charlie (Bella's parents) are good hearted, liberal people, if somewhat flawed parents, while Esme and Carlisle and their adopted children are, on the face of it, damned monsters and murderers. Instead of good conquering evil, as we expect in the modern fairy tale, good is inextricably entwined with evil and not only in the form of the 'good' vampires, but also in the troubling ambivalence of Bella's well meaning but damaging parents.

The humanised vampires, the injection of ambivalence and contradiction into this epitome of selfish evil, might be compared to the tale of *Beauty and the Beast* by Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont. But here, instead of the beast regaining his human form, it is the human who gains a vampire form: it is a twist on the classic fairy tale. And yet it also follows it, as while the human becomes a vampire, the vampire also becomes humanised.

Bella and Edward's relationship is born of a traumatic event, and her dependence on him becomes connected to the profoundly conservative nature of the values in the story. She remains attracted to danger and in many ways remains his prey despite his portrayal as a tragic loveable being. While he feels it is his role to keep Bella safe, he also appears most chauvinistic in his manners, and she allows herself to be the helpless little girl who needs saving. There are many times when the characters fit old-fashioned gender roles. Edward makes it clear to Bella that he will not have sexual relations with her until they are married, and eventually she agrees to marry him, despite some misgivings about her age. He initially refused to have sex with her until she had been changed into a vampire, for fear of causing her great pain

due to his strength. However, in the fourth novel, *Breaking Dawn*, once married, Bella persuades him otherwise, with disturbing results:

> Under the dusting of feathers, large purplish bruises were beginning to blossom across the pale skin of my arm. My eyes followed the trail they made up to my shoulder, and then down across my ribs. I pulled my hand free to poke at a discoloration on my left forearm, watching it fade where I touched and then reappear. It throbbed a little. [...]
> "Oh," I said.
> I tried to remember this – to remember pain - but I couldn't. I couldn't recall a moment when his hold had been too tight, his hands too hard against me. I only remembered wanting him to hold me tighter, and being pleased when he did (Meyer, 2008, 89).

Edward's inhuman strength has got out of control during sex. While it seems incredible that Bella could simply not notice enough force and pain to cause multiple bruises, it suggests, a denial of abuse or control or a penchant for masochism. She seems utterly helpless and numb. Her trauma-induced numbness appears to have made her feel jaded towards the pain in her own body, and she appears to enjoy the domination that Edward exerts. It is almost as if she has formed an addiction to dangerous and harming events. Her simple reaction, 'Oh,' suggests her lack of care for the situation; she is completely desensitised to the abuse she has received. This also echoes her response to Edward's threat to kill her would-be rapists, quoted above. This disturbing echo ties two scenes of sexual violence together.

Bella is addicted to dangerous situations and the potential abuse that can ensue – her numbness has stopped her from feeling pain from force and violence during sexual intercourse, and her reaction upon realising it is nonchalant. Nancy K. Miller and Jason Daniel Tougaw have noted how

> We've become accustomed in American culture to stories of pain, even addicted to them; and as readers (or viewers), we follow, fascinated (though as many profess disgust), the vogue of violent emotion and shocking events (Miller & Tougaw, 2002, 2).

Just as a reader can become addicted to the pain and horror of reading or viewing reports or stories of great suffering and trauma, so perhaps Bella could also become unconsciously addicted to the dangerous trauma-producing situations and people that she meets. It is arguable that she is representative of the trauma reader. If she is numb

to some of her experiences then it is almost as if she is not present and inactive within the moment, more like an observer, fascinated and engaged. She does not appear to be upset or hurt by her experiences, but that further shows her numbness.

Traumatic experience is represented within the saga by the use of repetition and fragmentation. An interesting narrative device employed by Meyer is of her provision of a piece of fragmented text at the beginning of each novel, a terrifying glimpse into a particularly traumatic section later in the novel. This strikes me as fascinating, as it is symbolic of fragmentation of traumatic memory. Ronald Granofsky suggests that while fragmentation is an effect of trauma, it is also part of the process of recovery. Fragments come from something that is broken, but they can also be pieced back together:

> fragmentation may be the result of a "shattering" experience, but it may also be an important stage in the necessary regrouping of psychic or social resources to overcome trauma (Granofsky, 1995, 108).

These opening fragments, while being curious and enticing structural devices, are key pieces which represent recurring anxieties and ultimately denote a part of the development of recovery. The opening 'fragments', referred to in the text as 'prefaces', suggest that there is no way out of the situation. For example, the fragment at the start of *Twilight* ends with 'The hunter smiled in a friendly way as he sauntered forward to kill me.' (Meyer, 2006, 1.) The 'preface' of the second novel, *New Moon,* states that '... I forfeited any desire to live.' (Meyer, 2007b, 2.) The third, *Eclipse*, also states 'Black eyes, wild with their fierce craving for my death, watched for the moment when my protector's attention would be diverted. The moment when I would surely die.' (Meyer, 2007a, 1-2.) And finally, *Breaking Dawn*: 'When you loved the one who was killing you, it left you no options.' (Meyer, 2008, 1.) These quotations are unrelated to the opening of the texts themselves and all portray a very bleak forecast for the novel and in fact the whole series. These fragments are not repeated in their appropriate sections, but they are taken out of their contexts and placed where they do not belong. They are stand-alone pieces which belong in future sections. They appear to be symbolic for the traumatic effect of fragmentation but also for psychological splitting. They are portraying the shattering of memory. The short 'prefaces' all comprise about five short paragraphs, and these are literally split from the surrounding text and placed as the opening of each story with no context, which

makes full comprehension of their meaning and import impossible. Ultimately, Bella survives each incident, despite these fragments hinting otherwise. The threat of repetition is implicit in the privileging of these passages as prologue. They are events which have become temporally detached from their proper sequence in the novels, foreshadowing and even threatening to predetermine the events which follow.

One of Bella's recurring fears is the prospect of ageing. She is haunted by the spectre of the physical decay which comes with age and this is represented in a dream at the beginning of book two, *New Moon*:

> I was looking at my Grandma Marie [...] With a dizzying jolt, my dream abruptly became a nightmare. There was no Gran. That was *me*. Me in a mirror. Me – ancient, creased, and withered. Edward stood beside me, casting no reflection, excruciatingly lovely and forever seventeen (Meyer, 2007b, 3-6).

This dream from the opening chapter haunts the rest of the novel without it actually being realised. It is a further manifestation of her trauma. Bella is not only haunted by recurring nightmares and visions, but the very plot of the novel represents traumatic repetition. She is continually under threat from other vampires. It is interesting to note that such a threat is not only itself traumatic, but represents a recurrence of the trauma associated by the first attack by James. This attack may also be read as a representation of the threat of attack by Edward, and of the danger he poses, consistent with Carol Hoare's observation

> Repetition seems to be the path (and predilection) of the psyche [...] We repeat; we repeat; we repeat. One on [sic] hand, we repeat to re-create the familiar, on the other, we repeat in an effort to create something different – something new. The repetition compulsion functions as an attempt to heal (Hoare, 2006, 226).

Bella repeats many actions: she continually puts herself in dangerous places or makes herself vulnerable to traumatic experiences, and she repeatedly associates herself with the outsiders of the town, such as the Cullens and her friend Jacob and his family. She discovers that Jacob is a shape shifter, part of a group who display themselves in wolf form. So she is repeating the same story as with Edward, and also develops strong, possibly romantic, feelings (which do not fully develop on her side) for Jacob. She repeatedly chooses friends or boyfriends who place her in great danger simply by

being with them, regardless of the outside danger to which they also connect. Bella is hunted by other vampires who do not align themselves with the Cullens' way of life, and she is also hated by other shape shifters who do not agree with her association with the vampires.

Bella chooses the Cullens as her adoptive family, and in doing so she leaves the relative safety of her father's home and becomes part of a life which is under continual attack. Her first social engagement with the Cullens leads to her being hunted by an evil vampire, James, who tries and almost succeeds in killing her (Meyer, 2006, 397). This incident, along with Edward's abandonment of her, causes her dreams to develop into increasingly traumatic experiences:

> For the first time in more than four months, I'd slept without dreaming. Dreaming *or* screaming. I couldn't tell which emotion was stronger – the relief or the shock. I lay still in my bed for a few minutes, waiting for it to come back. Because something must be coming. If not the pain, then the numbness (Meyer, 2007b, 142).

The beginning of the second novel, *New Moon*, shows the progression from the trauma of being hunted at the end of the first book: Bella's dreams have increased in intensity so much that she prefers to avoid sleeping. When Edward decides to remove himself from Bella's life in order for her to remain safe, she takes steps to become reckless and deepens her attraction to danger:

> "If you're doing this for free, I'll pay for the parts."
> [...] Jacob just nodded. This all made perfect sense to him. As we skulked back to the makeshift garage, I contemplated my luck. Only a teenage boy would agree to this: deceiving both our parents while repairing dangerous vehicles using money meant for my college education (Meyer, 2007b, 136).

And she pushes herself and places herself in such potential harm that she hears Edward's voice within her head telling her to stop:

> "This is reckless and childish and idiotic, Bella," the velvet voice fumed. [...] The bike bucked under me, yanking me forward and then collapsing to the ground half on top of me. [...]
> "Bella?" Jacob jerked the heavy bike off me with ease. "Are you hurt?"

> But I wasn't listening. "I told you so," the perfect voice murmured, crystal clear.
> "Bella?" Jacob shook my shoulder.
> "I'm fine," I mumbled, dazed. More than fine. The voice in my head was back. It still rang in my ears – soft, velvety echoes
> (Meyer, 2007b, 184-5).

It seems clear that Bella is psychologically damaged. The further she endangers herself, the more she hears Edward's voice in her mind. This is troubling and also confirms her severe and rapidly developing attraction to danger, in keeping with psychiatric theory

> Some [PTSD] patients may also become attracted to abusive relationships or place themselves in danger. Most of these patients are thought to be driven by unconscious compulsions to re-experience earlier traumatic events, perhaps in an attempt to master the trauma, but instead become trapped in cycles of abuse (Elkin, 1999, 109).

This suggestion of what occurs for some Post Traumatic Stress Disorder patients can arguably be applied to Bella and her life and relationships. She repeats similar relationships and finds herself in repeated dangerous situations, often of her own volition. It appears as though she is attempting to conquer her initial traumas – to make sense of herself and her place within her life, but ultimately cannot do so. Consequently, as Elkin suggests, Bella becomes encased in the continuing cycles of danger and threat. Edward's abandonment of her is a major traumatic event in her life and the effects of this traumatic incident colour her actions for much of the rest of the saga. Bella pushes herself into danger so far that she even willingly places herself amongst the most feared vampires in the world. When Edward decides to go to the Volturi (the Volturi are a group of respected and feared Italian vampires who have control over the vampire population to some extent) in order to be killed by them, as he believes that Bella is dead, she follows in order to attempt to save him: "It was very strange, for I knew we were both in mortal danger. Still, in that instant, I felt *well*. Whole." (Meyer, 2007b, 452.)

**Collective Trauma**

Bella's apparent love for Edward causes her to overlook and yet seek out treacherous situations. It is as if her numbness increases as time continues and her addiction to Edward and to hazard extends. Her addiction to him is recognised by her

friend, Jacob: '"He's like a drug for you, Bella."' His voice was still gentle, not at all critical. '"I see you can't live without him now. It's too late. But I would have been healthier for you ..."' (Meyer, 2007a, 599.) The closer she and Edward become, the more peril is presented for her: in the third novel, *Eclipse*, she is yet again faced with life-threatening problems. Victoria, the partner of James, who tried to kill Bella in the first novel, is now intent on killing Bella, and has developed a small army of newborn vampires who are committing countless murders across the state. Once again Bella is placed in mortal danger due to her connection with the Cullens. While shielding her in the short term, her ideal family are the long term threat and ultimate causers of her continual danger. Despite this, she accepts Edward's marriage proposal and is drawn deeper within his family. She becomes desperate to join the Cullens and become a vampire: "I've chosen my life – now I want to start living it." (Meyer, 2007a, 614.) It seems interesting that Bella's words speak of life, when really she'd be dead and living would become existing. Arguably she appears to be caught up in the romance of being a vampire, and not the reality – or unreality - of it.

This Cullen family is idealised, since in fact the group identifies with a collective trauma. These themes of dysfunctional families, trauma and fairy tale connect to my previous discussions in earlier chapters: these fantastical stories retain structure and thematical issues that old fairy stories possessed. Bella wants to belong, and becoming officially part of the Cullen family is her final acceptance. This family appear ideal to her because they share a bond of otherness. Dori Laub suggests that "Survivors often claim that they experience the feeling of belonging to a "secret order" that is sworn to silence." (Laub, 1995, 67.) Her desire to belong is the desire to enter into the collective trauma, to belong to a group who understand and have experienced the same trauma. In a sort of twisted way, the Cullen family are all trauma survivors. Each has become a vampire in a harrowing way or come from a disturbing life. Dori Laub suggests, while discussing survivors of the Jewish Holocaust, that

> The survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories; they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive. There is, in each survivor, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself. One has to know one's buried truth in order to be able to live one's life (Laub, 1995, 63).

The Cullen family are no exceptions to this idea: they agree for Bella to know of their stories, not only for her to understand their pasts but to release themselves. The interesting thing is that while the vampires are technically living, they are not alive, and so 'life' becomes a questionable term: life in a biological sense is different from life in a metonymic sense where the word is used to refer to the composite totality of actions an individual performs while on this planet. If they tell their stories because they need to be able to live their lives (testimony is a way of working through trauma, after all), it again blurs the lines between human and vampire. These vampires are not only 'good', but tortured: they may be seen as 'people' who have suffered. For example, Carlisle Cullen comes from a religious family and in searching for evil in order to destroy it, under his father's guidance and wishes, discovers a group of vampires and becomes changed into one while in the process of trying to eradicate them (Meyer, 2006, 289-90). This story appears to be a tragic tale of a heavily influenced man who died trying to save others, and it has a profound effect on Bella, confirming that vampires can have a genuine and unfortunate background. They may therefore not be entirely evil. Carlisle states that after he became a vampire he resisted the evil implicit in preying upon human victims for their blood and tried to destroy himself instead, not wanting to become a monster. But once resigned to his fate, when he discovered other people with a traumatic past hovering on the brink of death, he would change them into 'good' vampires also, so that he would not be alone (Meyer, 2006, 298). Carlisle is ultimately committing a selfish act, despite having good intentions. He has created his own group of trauma survivors. Each of the Cullen family has his or her own horrible past, and each could be considered traumatised. Indeed Rosalie resents her transformation (after a brutal gang rape). Yet Bella wants to belong to this group because she feels as though she fits in because she does not fit elsewhere. These vampires could be seen as a representation of the marginal members of society, who keep to themselves but are understood to have endured tragedy. They also include those who are just too 'other' to fit in to what is described as 'normal'. Perhaps they could be described as a sect. The novels thus appear to be about tolerance and ignorance as much as about vampires and 'evil'. And it turns out that these marginal members of society are often trapped within their silence.

While the family unit is a stable component of a fairy story, so too is marriage, and the two are interconnected. Marriage is linked to transformation and escape: marriage is for Bella the vital entrance into the Cullen family, providing her with the

transformation she desires. Although she is living in a catastrophic and broken version of modern reality, her story still adheres to a classical fairy tale in some elements, marriage being one of them. Bella and her 'prince', Edward, experience 'true love' and desire to marry in order to begin sexual relations and for her to become a vampire. The wedding takes place very quickly, and as Bella is a young teenager, she could be seen as a child bride. Another element of her upbringing manifests itself – she was required to grow up rapidly and now has become a married woman and a wife before perhaps she is really ready to do so. It is a continuation of her previous roles as surrogate wife/husband with her parents.

**Fairy Tale**

Jack Zipes notes Max Luthi's point concerning marriage in a fairy tale:

> Marriage is the goal in most fairy tales, but it is not the subject matter. Like the royal realm it is symbolic. Both male and female protagonists strive for this goal, and often the family itself causes difficulties (Zipes, 2006, 147).

The *Twilight* saga follows fairy tale themes. The Cullens are for Bella a symbolic ideal which upon closer inspection forms a far more complex and difficult group. Her marriage with Edward underpins the need for Christian tradition and virtue. It becomes a goal which diverts problems and worries, and is symbolic for 'proper' behaviour and chastity. His insistence on chastity and Christian abstinence as a virtue echo beyond the specifics of her virginity and marriage, and refer to the Cullens' abstemious practices: for example, their refusal to drink human blood. Thus we are reminded of their goodness and morality, which is an inversion of the immorality of a vampire. It is suggested that marriage will solve the problems of Edward and Bella as a couple: they will then both be vampires and no longer will she be chased for being a human in a vampire group. It appears a quick fix to satisfy tradition and to act as a diversion:

> In that moment, as the minister said his part, my world, which had been upside down for so long now, seemed to settle into its proper position. [...] I looked into Edward's shining, triumphant eyes and knew that I was winning, too. Because nothing else mattered but that I could stay with him. I didn't realize I was crying until it was time to say the binding words (Meyer, 2008, 49).

As in a fairy tale, their marriage is described as perfection and something that rights all wrongs – Bella states that her life in its chaos becomes calm and serene, as if all troubles fade away. However, in a fairy tale, it is at this moment that the story would close, and the reader would be left with the impression that the ending was happy and that Edward and Bella would live 'happily ever after'. But in this saga, unlike a fairy tale, we get to see beyond the wedding day and into their married life together, which comes with many unexpected problems aside from the banal. All of the original trauma and dilemmas are still present for Bella and the Cullens. The wedding only diverted the existing problems for a short while. The wedding, while symbolising pureness and convention, also represents an induction for Bella as she now legally and metaphorically becomes a Cullen and officially belongs to their secret group of trauma survivors. It is now that her character actually fits in and is relieved of its sense of otherness. Edward and Bella's wedding is not only providing a diversion, as in a traditional fairy story: it is providing a new beginning, not a perfect ending.

In addition to the Christian conservatism and values embodied by Edward and the Cullens, the closely interlocking imagery of sex and vampiric transformation is prevalent. It is agreed that he would not change Bella into a vampire before marriage. Neither will they have sexual intercourse before marriage. The two acts (sex and vampiric transformation) become almost synonymous:

> "Getting married, though? What's the rush?" He eyed me suspiciously again. The rush was due to the fact that I was getting closer to nineteen every stinking day, while Edward stayed frozen in all his seventeen-year-old perfection, as he had for over ninety years. Not that this necessitated *marriage* in my book, but the wedding was required due to the delicate and tangled compromise Edward and I had made to finally get to this point, the brink of my transformation from mortal to immortal (Meyer, 2008, 16).

While Bella is discussing being changed into a vampire she could easily be discussing sex and how they are waiting until after their wedding. Vampirism has sexual connotations: it is a form of penetration. With its bloodlust, transformation into a vampire is intimately linked to sexuality, and so sex and vampiric transformation could be easily confused in the text, especially considering that Bella is waiting for both. Edward is to transform her from virgin to wife and mother but the symbolism is also linked to the transformation from virgin to vampire. The transformations are

paralleled: Edward changes Bella from virgin to wife and mother to vampire, as giving birth and vampiric change occur concurrently.

After marrying Edward, Bella falls pregnant immediately. She becomes the mother officially now, but motherhood does not come without immense trauma. Despite being married, and assuming that a vampire and human cannot conceive, Bella, in fact, becomes pregnant on their honeymoon night and their first time having sex. This not only makes her a teen bride, but hers a case of teenage pregnancy. This development is seen as negative to Edward and most of his family. It is also difficult for Bella to become the official mother so quickly, perhaps because of her reversed role with her own mother. If we read her incautious attitude to contraception in the light of psychiatric theory, we could see it as arising from the effects of trauma. The committee on Adolescence of the group for the Advancement of Psychiatry suggests that

> It is likely that the unprotected sexual activity that results in pregnancy is the consequence of a complex array of trauma-related factors, including problems with affect regulation and impulse control, low self-esteem, and lack of hope for the future (The Committee on Adolescence of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 2003, 184).

As Bella has no human future, and also a lack of self-confidence, this suggestion seems applicable to the situation. This states that trauma can cause carelessness and recklessness, and while Bella and Edward were married neither gave any thought to protection for sexual intercourse. Aside from Edward consulting Carlisle on the likelihood of his wife conceiving, and despite the decision being that she could not, is not conclusive proof, as neither of the vampires would have the experience or knowledge to back up any sort of claim. Also it is clear that Bella found marriage unnecessary and did not want to wait to have sex: this would be considered as careless to the Christian conservatism of Edward. Perhaps as she had to grow up ahead of time, and having been unable to fit in with children of her own age or adults, it seems psychologically realistic that she would end up pregnant at an early age as the desire to belong would be a driving force and she finds acceptance with the Cullens, even if the only route to this acceptance is through marriage. Interestingly, as much as Bella's life has sped along at a more rapid pace than an average life, the length of her pregnancy is also quickened:

> I had absolutely no experience with pregnancy or babies or any part of that world, but I wasn't an idiot. I'd seen enough movies and TV shows to know that this wasn't how it worked. I was only five days late. If I *was* pregnant, my body wouldn't even have registered that fact. I would not have morning sickness. I would not have changed my eating or sleeping habits. And I most definitely would not have a small but defined bump sticking out between my hips (Meyer, 2008, 124).

This is not a regular pregnancy – the child that is growing rapidly will only be born by bursting out of the mother and killing her in the process. Now, Bella comes under attack from something within her own body, and leaving aside the wider, multivalent symbolism of the shocking image of the mother being destroyed by the child, we can see this as symbolic of the destructive impact of psychological trauma upon the individual, where a person's mind is 'attacked' by something which is both internal yet alien and uncontrollable. While Edward tries to persuade Bella to have an abortion, she refuses and goes ahead with the labour. The trauma of a difficult childbirth is greatly exaggerated. On the verge of death Bella is changed into a vampire in order to save her - perhaps a warning or judgement about teenage pregnancy is present here. While the situation is obviously different to reality, the dangers present transfer:

> Teen pregnancy is considered a risk factor for the mother. The teen mother may face interruptions in education [...] her socioemotional development may be affected, as she prematurely assumes the highly demanding role of parent. [...] The girl's health and that of her baby may also be at risk. She has a higher probability than older women of experiencing prolonged labor, toxaemia, haemorrhaging, and miscarriage; and, the infant is more likely to be premature or of low birth weight (Dwywe & Hunt-Jackson, 2002, 87-8).

By having this baby Bella is further affecting her socioemotional development, by interrupting her education and risking her own life. These dangers, although present in a supernatural, unreal story, have direct parallels to those of teenage pregnancy in reality. Bella's labour is a very traumatic experience, and the self-sacrificing love that she feels for the child is the only reason she finds the strength to endure such trauma:

> I knew it would be much easier to give in. To let the blackness push me down, down, down to a place where there was no pain and no weariness and no worry and no fear (Meyer, 2008, 370-3).

While Bella recognises that it would be easier to give in to the pain, to the trauma, she also realises that because of the love she has for others and for the love they have for her, she must fight on and work through. However, it is confusing that fighting on also means becoming a vampire and ending her human life. So, like the rest of the Cullen family, she is 'saved' and made a vampire due to no other option being present. She becomes like them, a sympathy-inducing figure.

As a vampire can technically live forever, it can be eternally tormented, and so it seems predictable that the Cullen family will be haunted by the past and the potential future danger that is a constant lingering threat. This also furthers the element of sympathy present for the vampire and furthers the image-change that has happened over the late twentieth century: the vampire is now a tortured soul, who not only is helpful to humans but is also pitied and desired by humans. The lines between good and evil have been blurred to an extent that monsters have become ambiguous. While this remains contradictory to the majority of fairy tales, where good and evil appear clearly divided, it still echoes *Beauty and the Beast*, with the lovable vampire taking the role of the beast, but as previously stated, it is the human who changes into the beast, not the beast into a human. While Bella becomes a vampire as there is no choice other than death, it still completely distorts the classic aesthetic of a fairy story. She chooses otherness over convention (vampire over human) and yet also chooses convention over freedom (marriage and motherhood over youth): there are many contradictions present within Bella's story.

The fourth book, *Breaking Dawn*, while providing the ideal fairy tale ending of a wedding, also allows the reader to see beyond it and into the problems of married life and the traumatic events that continue occurring for Bella. In a sense, she does not work through her trauma. She embraces the potentially traumatic life and works within it, rather than through it. She belongs to a secret crowd which is comparable to a trauma survivors group, and while this group may attempt to piece together their fragments of memories in order to heal, they must keep their real selves hidden and silent in order to remain as safe as possible, which is a metaphorical equivalent of the experience of those who belong to groups identified by collective trauma.

Yet, Bella's story has a happy ending: it sticks to the traditional close for a fairy story. The final sentence of the four-book saga is a striking and almost literal rendition of the traditional 'happily ever after': 'And then we continued blissfully into this small but perfect piece of our forever.' (Meyer, 2008, 754.) In this sense, this story does not break the containment of a fairy tale. It is closed in a safe and unobtrusive manner. In fact, the final chapter is titled 'The Happily Ever After' (Meyer, 2008, 742), which appears to be an acknowledgement of the structure of a fairy story and the requirement for a happy and contained closure. Also, like a fairy tale it hints at problems to come and issues that are unresolved. As there have been continual attacks upon Bella and her family, the reader is left to assume that there may be more and that the cycles of trauma will continue, despite attempts to work through them.

While this story is fantastical and otherworldly, it embodies a strict moral stance, as a fairy tale would do: good triumphs over evil, despite evil and good being intertwined and confused. There is a distinct message of sobriety and chastity, and also disguised warnings on the problem of growing up too quickly. Like traditional fairy tales it suggests caution and offers advice on proper behaviour. The *Twilight* saga could thus be said to function like an extended fairy tale.

# Chapter Four:

# *His Dark Materials*

## Chapter Four: His Dark Materials

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* series differs from the books discussed in earlier chapters in that he has achieved considerable critical, as well as commercial, success. The series consists of three novels: *Northern Lights*, published in 1995; *The Subtle Knife,* published in 1997 and *The Amber Spyglass*, published in 2000. Two companion books, *Once Upon a Time in the North,* and *Lyra's Oxford*, were published in 2008 and 2003 respectively. Further companion books are planned for the future (*Philip Pullman Interview,* 2009). The series has been adapted into a play by Nicholas Wright which was debuted in 2003. A film adaptation of the first novel was released in 2007. It is unclear whether the other books in the series will also be made into films due to disappointing box office returns in the USA (*High Hopes for Pullman Sequel*, 2008).

*His Dark Materials* is a multifaceted story, featuring multiple main characters whose narratives all contribute to the main aim of the tale. It is a fantastical story featuring parallel worlds and strange beings. Like a fairy story, it deals with themes such as love, loss, evil and adventure. The story is a retelling of Adam and Eve, influenced by Milton's *Paradise Lost* (the title, *His Dark Materials* is taken from Milton's poem), and also work by Blake and Kleist (*An Interview with Philip Pullman*, 2007). The story is a fantasy adventure, which ultimately involves children saving the worlds in which they exist or travel through. This chapter examines the impact of absent parents upon the characters, death within the trilogy, and the traumatic effects the characters experience. Connections and comparisons will be made with the discussion of traditional fairytales, children's fiction and teen fiction in earlier chapters.

**Absent Parents and Adventure**

The protagonist of the first novel is Lyra Belacqua (also known as Lyra Silvertongue). A twelve year old girl living in Oxford, in a world somewhat similar to our own, Lyra lives at Jordan College with her uncle, Lord Asriel, and does not appear to know her parents. She keeps the company of adults, with the exception of occasional contact with local street children, and the pattern of her life is dictated by the dry formality of college routine. Like Harry Potter, she is all too familiar with the loneliness and neglect of the orphan; like a more feisty version of Potter she is

fiercely self-reliant and intellectually independent. Lyra is an adventurous and questioning child; the lack of parental control and supervision allows her to maintain a secret freedom from the adults and scholars of Jordan College. The absence of her parents, therefore, grants her a privileged if lonely position: she is a heroine poised for adventure.

Lyra suffers multiple traumatic experiences. As the story begins her perception of reality alters dramatically as she discovers real danger is present in her life rather than being merely a product of her childhood imagination. This realisation may be seen as her moment of psychological splitting, as her imagined fears become a reality. This moment is where her world begins unravelling:

> "It's a good thing I didn't [leave the room]," she whispered back. "We wouldn't have seen the Master put poison in the wine otherwise. Pan, that was the Tokay he asked the Butler about! They're going to kill Lord Asriel!" (Pullman, 2007a, 8.)

Suddenly her world takes a sinister turn and her desire for adventure leads her on a life-changing journey. Despite her willingness to undertake this journey, she feels worried, her main thoughts are anxious (Pullman, 2007a, 10), and she feels afraid of potential dangers.

Lyra has endured a childhood with little affection. Lord Asriel, her supposed uncle, treats her abusively in the following scene, both verbally and physically, when she is discovered in hiding in the Retiring Room:

> He sized her wrist and twisted hard.
> "Lyra! What the hell are you doing?"
> "Let go of me and I'll tell you!"
> "I'll break your arm first. How dare you come in here?"
> "I've just saved your life!"
> They were still for a moment, the girl twisted in pain but grimacing to prevent herself from crying out louder, the man bent over her frowning like thunder.
> "What did you say?" he said more quietly.
> "That wine is poisoned," she muttered between clenched teeth.
> "I saw the Master put some powder in it." [...]
> There was a knock on the door.
> "That'll be the Porter, said Lord Asriel.
> "Back in the wardrobe. If I hear the slightest noise I'll make you wish you were dead." (Pullman, 2007a, 14.)

This incident is made worse by the fact that, unbeknown to the reader and Lyra, Lord Asriel is her father, not her uncle, thus he functions both as absent parent and abusive parent at the same moment. Lyra's behaviour has been affected by her lack of parenting. Natasha Giardiana states that

> Lyra's parents are not just evil: they are also flawed. They are so concerned with their own careers and ambitions that they have completely abrogated their parental responsibilities: Lyra has been raised by strangers, and until halfway through *Northern Lights*, she does not even know her parents' true identities. Occasionally during her childhood, Lord Asriel would see her and give her money, but there is no sense of parental care in this relationship. The pair's questionable parenting practises are an extreme example of real-life issues affecting families today (Giardiana, 2005, 147).

Similarly to the protagonist of a fairy tale, Lyra has experienced loneliness and a lack of family structure, but also a lack of the unconditional love and affection that loving parents should provide. She discovers that Mrs Coulter and Lord Asriel are her parents in *Northern Lights,* and Mrs Coulter returns to Lyra for her own gain. Her parents are selfish and deeply flawed people. As in fairy tales or modern fantasy stories, the unreal world of fiction connects to real life situations, encouraging young readers to make connections between their experience and the apparently fantastical worlds or events described. As Giardiana states, Lyra's parents can be seen as an extreme representation of the lack of parenting and lack of relationship between parents and children today.

Lyra realises at a young age that adults do not always make the right choices or decisions. Her relationships with friends have replaced familial affections and so the death of her friend Roger is particularly difficult for her. Furthermore, the sadness of the loss is deepened by the knowledge that the blame for his death lies with her parents as well as herself.

Will Parry, Lyra's soul mate, is introduced into the series in the second book, *The Subtle Knife*, and he appears to be from the *His Dark Materials'* version of our own world. Will's name, short for William, is representational of 'free will', a theme that runs throughout the series. He is the same age as Lyra and lives near Oxford. He spends a great deal of his time taking care of his mentally ill mother. His father is absent, having failed to return from an expedition. Will has been forced into a parental role due to his absent father and ill mother. He has spent most of his time

trying to hold his family life together and maintaining a stable appearance to the outside world. Like Bella in *Twilight*, he is forced into a reversed role, albeit a far more serious one: 'Will had first realized his mother was different from other people, and that he had to look after her, when he was seven.' (Pullman, 2007c, 8.) Seven years old is a young age to begin to take responsibility for a parent and this strain takes its toll on Will's life as he becomes isolated, unable to maintain friendships or engage in the normal activities of a child. The absence of his father leaves him in the role not only of his mother's carer, but also of substitute husband, as he becomes her protector. Elizabeth A Grill notes:

> The earliest studies [of the effect of absent fathers] showed father absence to have negative outcomes with respect to children's cognitive, social, and emotional development [...] The researchers suggested that the presence of a father may be associated with a child's developing self-esteem (Grill, 2005, 169-70).

The absence of Will's father has made obvious problems for Will, as he lacks social development. The only person to whom he knew he could take his mother for care was his old piano teacher, the only person with whom he considers himself to have any sort of relationship, aside from his parents. While obviously not a friendship, it is the closest thing to a friendship that he has achieved. This lack of social development stunts the growth of his self-esteem, childhood emotional development, and social interaction.

After this debilitating upbringing, Will finds his world changing dramatically when he accidentally kills a man sent to search his house for an item belonging to his father. This dramatic and traumatic encounter could be described as his initial moment of splitting within the story:

> Will waited till the man was framed in the open doorway, and then exploded up out of the dark and crashed into the intruder's belly. But neither of them saw the cat. As the man had reached the top step, Moxie had come silently out of the bedroom and stood with raised tail just behind the man's legs, ready to rub herself against them. The man could have dealt with Will, because he was trained and fit and hard, but the cat was in the way, and as he tried to move back he tripped over her. With a sharp gasp he fell backwards down the stairs, crashing his head brutally against the hall table (Pullman, 2007c, 7).

This accident changes Will instantly. He too now becomes homeless, like Lyra in her other world. He is also haunted by the traumatic event:

> He couldn't get out of his mind the crack as the man's head had struck the table, and the way his neck was bent so far and in such a wrong way, and the dreadful twitching of his limbs. The man was dead. He'd killed him (Pullman, 2007c, 7).

This cataclysmic event creates a sort of jadedness within Will, which enables him to face the new world and the challenges within with a sort of protective numbness. But his ongoing pain and trauma are represented symbolically by his unhealing wound. Lauren Shohet has suggested that:

> Will is deeply effective in the trilogy, but he acts through an instrument – the subtle knife – that wounds its wielder. Every bearer of the knife has fought for its possession, and it cuts off two fingers from the left hand of every victor. "Will", therefore, can execute action better than anyone in the trilogy, but is made incomplete and bleeds continually from his left hand (Shohet, 2005, 27).

The constant blood from his weeping wound, like Harry Potter's unhealing lightning-shaped scar, not only becomes symbolic for Freud's psychological trauma as more than a wound in the mind: it is the *unrelenting cry of the wound* (Caruth, 1996b, 4). Will's loss of fingers and the open wound become emblematic of the wider trauma experienced by himself and Lyra. The physical loss symbolises the loss of childhood and innocence as well as the loss of parents, and the psychological wound (represented by the physical wounds) does not heal. Its causes are troubling and require a long process of working through to eventually overcome them.

If Will's family life is marred by an ill mother and a father whose absence appears to be involuntary, Lyra's life has been denied a family structure by the adults who rejected her. Her rejection of her parents and their views furthers her isolation and marginal status, making her a lonely figure moving into a new world with only her daemon, part of herself, for a companion. But this does not completely damage her ability to love, or her desire for it, which is made obvious by her connections to other characters who form a self-constructed surrogate family.

As Lyra chooses to leave Jordan College and later Mrs Coulter, she makes herself homeless. When Mrs Coulter takes Lyra away from her home in Oxford it

becomes a traumatic sudden change, which not only forms part of the journey or adventure of the protagonist, but also provides a more profound push into the unknown and equally lonely life ahead of her. When she decides to move into the unknown, parallel world, which means that her reality splits and everything becomes questionable, she leaves any safety present in her life, which is minute, but the college itself provides shelter and food. All familiar people and surroundings are now lost to her. The issue of homelessness is psychologically connected to Lyra's story. Her experience reflects real world features of homelessness for young people, recorded by Sanna J. Thompson:

> Homeless youth are more likely to come from families that lack parental responsiveness, social support, and supervision; rejection by parents/caregivers is common [...] These severely disturbed families exhibit high levels of child abuse, neglect, and family violence that significantly contribute to runaway behaviour (Thomson, 2007, 205).

Thus here is another example of the way in which this fantastical story connects directly to issues prevalent in our own society. As Thompson states, rejection and neglect are considerable contributing factors in homelessness, and both Lyra and Will, who have suffered from one or both of these, duly find themselves homeless.

Lyra's behaviour also conforms in part to that of a troubled child from a neglectful or disturbed family. Richard Harland highlights the 'disruptive' behaviour of the heroine when viewed outside the context of a fantasy story.

> Picture Lyra in our reality – she'd never get away with any of her tricks. Kids forming up gangs, roaming around unsupervised? Shock! Horror! Lyra and her friends would be a social problem
> (Harland, 2005, 110).

Lyra's 'antisocial' behaviour goes further: she prides herself on her ability to lie and to lie convincingly, and is even renamed for the attribute:

> "You tricked Iofur Raknison?"
> "Yes. I made him agree that he'd fight you instead of just killing you [...]"
> "Belacqua? No. You are Lyra Silvertongue," he said
> (Pullman, 2007a, 346).

Lyra's behaviour thus illuminates many 'problems' that can arise from the absence of parents, although the activities which would be seen as transgressive and problematic in our world (as Harland notes) are portrayed as worthy of admiration in Pullman's novel. Lyra is never a victim or a failure. Nevertheless, her behaviour can be read as a direct outcome of her lack of parental support. John Briere suggests that

> ... children who are raised by unloving, unresponsive, or otherwise emotionally neglectful parents are at risk for psychological disturbance in the short and intermediate term, perhaps especially in terms of disturbed attachment to and relationships with others
> (Briere, 1992, 12).

While Lyra seems capable of forming relationships, these are often questionable and potentially expose her to danger.

She chooses friendship with a violent, armoured bear called Iorek Byrnison in order to gain protection, and when she initially meets Will Parry in the second novel, she immediately trusts him and wants to retain his presence, due to the fact that he is a murderer: '*He is a murderer.* When she saw the answer, she relaxed at once. [...] A murder was a worthy companion.' (Pullman, 2007c, 28.) Like Bella in *Twilight* (and conforming to Briere's description, above), Lyra seems to be seeking out and taking refuge with danger. A connection to contemporary gang culture (which itself can be seen as a surrogate family structure) can be seen in these allegiances: Lyra trusts Will because he is a murderer – he has proved himself, much like the required entrance to a gang, for example, committing a killing at random to prove worth. This is again similar to Bella's inclusion in a family of vampires in the *Twilight* saga: a case of creating a family or gang when one's own has been damaged or irrevocably broken down. Iorek Brynison renames Lyra, and this makes her feel proud. This too is suggestive of gang culture, where a person may be renamed or provided with a nickname upon entrance. Her renaming offers her a sense of belonging, despite the price of associating with dangerous, marginal characters. These characters whom Lyra and the reader trusts might easily be seen as dangerously bad, just as the vampires of the *Twilight* series defy their traditional role. As readers we do not question her allegiances: we understand that she is making the right connections to help her overall quest.



If Lyra's allegiances are suggestive of some forms of bonding in gangs, there is also a bilateral and very close bond between her and Will. When they meet in the new world, Cittagazze, there is trust and companionship, something neither had previously properly experienced. It becomes obvious that the two characters are opposites of what would be expected of their gender roles in a traditional story: Will is the quiet character who knows how to cook and take care of others and Lyra is the louder authoritarian. They are two flawed and deeply lonely people, both have been neglected and rejected, and perhaps they recognise this within each other. Trauma sufferers or survivors often find solace with similarly minded people. It is almost like joining a secret society and sharing a similar trauma between them. Lyra and Will share comparable pasts, and the relationship that forms illustrates their desire for love and affection. This is consistent with contemporary psychological theory:

> Because survivors of trauma have been deeply hurt by significant relationships in childhood, it can feel perilous and frightening to try to become intimate with others later in life. Simultaneously, they have a deep longing for love and connection and a deep fear of staying connected. Those who are willing to take the risk of being in an intimate relationship may find that it provides an opportunity for healing and growth. [...] Trauma survivors carry contradictory fears – of being abandoned and of being engulfed. Both of these fears can create anxiety around the subject of commitment. The results may be running rashly into commitments without allowing time to know the other person or trying to stay clear of any relationship that feels permanent (Dayton, 2000, 69).

Perhaps it surprising that Lyra and Will manage to form a commitment so quickly, yet Dayton's suggestion appears applicable to them both as while they want love and to be connected to each other, they are forced to separate after only a short period together. In terms of plot, this separation and sacrifice is necessary, but it may also be interpreted as enacting a fear of staying together, trapped, in a serious relationship at a particularly young age. Arguably, through the association and then separation of Lyra and Will, Pullman is obliquely trying to represent the manifestation of trauma within his plot.

**Externalising the Internal**

Building on my discussion of psychological representations, one of the many appealing inventions of Pullman's invented universe is the presence of creatures, or beings, known as daemons, who are connected to the people of Lyra's world. In one

interpretation, these daemons are manifestations of the humans' souls or the essence of their being. The daemons exist outside the person's body and take the appearance of an animal or bird, for example. Children's daemons shape shift until they reach maturity, when their daemon assumes the form it will remain for the rest of its human's life. The close relationship between child and daemon and the unbreakable tie between daemon and human is very attractive, somewhere between the adoring pet dog Timmy, who accompanies George everywhere in Blyton's *The Famous Five,* and the ideal human friend. It is not difficult to read these daemons as a variation on the imaginary friend created to steer away loneliness. These can also be an expression of an exuberant imagination and can be used for exploring the developing sense of self (Newman & Newman, 2008, 206). This idea finds meaning within the text: daemons can be seen as the child's imaginary friend, constantly changing their form as a product of the child's imagination, and further helping to develop the child's sense of self. Pullman's use of such creatures is thought-provoking. The use of daemons is creative and imaginary, as the daemons themselves are.

> Daemons, whether external or internal, may represent yet another characteristic of awakened consciousness: its "dialogic" nature. It has been said that all sensitive and thinking people carry on a sort of ongoing internal "conversation" with themselves, and certainly this occurs frequently in the novels, when characters argue their "best" or "worst" impulses. In a sense, consciousness of this kind might be equated with "conscience." (Lenz & Scott, 2005, 8.)

As Lenz here suggests, the daemons of the *His Dark Materials* world could be connected to a person's conscience. As imaginary friends are extensions of a child's imagination, daemons are a person's soul – their conscience, consciousness and creativity. Pullman's externalisation of an internal dialogue is an interesting device for foregrounding the process of imaginative creativity and displaying the process of thought and action of a character.

For our purposes, the device of the daemon is particularly interesting for its externalisation of mental process which may include the effects of trauma. The daemon can show fears and can instinctively warn, so it may even display more explicitly the symptoms of emotional and psychological pain than the human. For example, where Lyra remains outwardly fearless, her daemon, Pan, is more aware of and anxious about potential danger:

> "There's no one there," he whispered. "But we must be quick." [...]
> Lyra darted along and through the door into the Retiring Room. [...]
> "Happy now? Can we go?" he whispered.
> "Don't be silly! I want to look around!" [...]
> "Behind the chair – quick!" whispered Pantalaimon...
> (Pullman, 2007a 4-5.)

As this quotation from the opening pages of the first book in the trilogy shows, Pan, Lyra's daemon, proves himself to be more alert and more worried than she about their surroundings. This sensitivity suggests that as a representation of consciousness, Lyra's emotional and psychological well-being may be observed in Pan's behaviour, rather than in Lyra herself.

Besides daemons, there are other strange beings in Pullman's world(s), one of the most poignant types being the Spectres. Like the Dementors in the Harry Potter series, these beings destroy daemons: they literally eat the soul. "... the Spectres eat consciousness, leaving in their wake a terrible loss of memory and concentration, an emptiness like a kind of cosmic Alzheimers." (Lenz & Scott, 2005, 8.) Lenz's suggestion reinforces the idea of Spectres being a literary symbol for mental illness or the outcome of trauma which is associated with memory loss. In the text the process of a Spectre eating a daemon is described thus:

> "Well, when a Spectre catch a grown-up, that's bad to see. They eat the life out of them there and then, all right. [...] At first they know it's happening, and they're afraid, they cry and cry, they try and look away and pretend it ain happening, but it is. [...] You look in they eyes, you see the back of they heads. Ain nothing there." (Pullman, 2007c, 60.)

Spectres kill daemons, consequently robbing the human of thought, expression and creativity. Their bodies become confused and find it impossible to retain individual thought, so that they become merely an empty shell. The Spectres also symbolically represent the effects of trauma, as mentally, trauma eats away at the mind, like a Spectre eating a daemon. Daemons are threatened in *His Dark Materials* from the much more sinister and cruel process of 'intercision'. This is a process whereby a child is separated from its daemon in order to create Dust to open the parallel worlds. In the *His Dark Materials* world, Dust is explained to be dark matter, which cannot be seen by the human eye. Dust is attracted to humans and is conscious. It is of particular

interest to scholars who believe it can be used to create an opening into a parallel world, and to the church, who believe Dust to be a form of original sin. Creativity, individual thought and metal health, as represented by the daemons, are in jeopardy throughout the three novels. In this, again, they resemble the effects of trauma, which also threatens an individual's mental well being. However, Will and Lyra's daemons return to them, suggesting that working through trauma can heal mental health problems.

While Lyra and Will trust each other, the betrayal of trust is a major theme of Pullman's tale. Lyra trusts and is betrayed many times within the story. She is lied to and tricked by people who should be closest to her. Lord Asriel and Mrs Coulter both break her trust. Both hide their identity from her, and like Sir Charles Latrom (really Lord Boreal), use their disguise to achieve what they desire. Lord Asriel and Lord Boreal both need the alethiometer (a quasi magical instrument) and so cultivate Lyra's trust in order to betray her. In her turn, she too betrays: she feels that she has betrayed Roger by leading him to his death and she betrays herself by agreeing to be separated from her daemon. Mrs Coulter in particular appears used to winning over people's trust by making them fall in love with her and then betraying them. Even Lyra falls for her charm:

> "So, Lyra. You've been talking to Mrs Coulter. Did you enjoy hearing what she said?"
> "Yes!"
> "She is a remarkable lady."
> "She's wonderful. She's the most wonderful person I've ever met." (Pullman, 2007a, 69.)

It is Pantalaimon (Pan), Lyra's daemon, who realises that Mrs Coulter is not the wonderful person that she believes her to be, and Lyra acknowledges this: "'You just don't like her. Well, that's hard luck. I like her.'" (Pullman, 2007a, 85-6.) Pan, being part of Lyra's consciousness, has in fact revealed Lyra's own misgivings about Mrs Coulter and her deep down lack of trust of her. Lyra appears to be in denial, ignoring her intuitive assessment of Mrs Coulter's true character. Daemons, the separate but linked beings who manifest themselves in animal form, are crucial in representing the psychology of individuals. Thus, they can exhibit signs of trauma and portray feelings and worries which the reader interprets when the humans of whom they are a part may not have consciously realised or accepted them. Mrs Coulter, for instance,

manages to betray herself through her daemon: her golden monkey daemon attacks Pan when Mrs Coulter is feeling particularly frustrated with Lyra (Pullman, 2007a, 87). Compared to their human counterparts, daemons are unable, or less able, to conceal their true feelings than their human counterparts. In this sense, they betray their humans and expose something of their inner selves to the reader.

**Repression**

The character of Dr Mary Malone is another lonely and confused individual (her very surname emphasises that she is 'alone'), whose characterisation also seems to conform to certain paradigms of the traumatised. A scientist who used to be a nun, Mary became an atheist in order to experience sexuality and romantic love.

> Mary left her religious order to find self-fulfilment, recovering from years of self-renunciation in the name of spiritual good by attending to the desires of body. Will and Lyra, on the other hand, find themselves reasoning in a fashion not unlike that of a young person considering a vocation to religious celibacy (Moloney, 2005, 183).

Will and Lyra's calling to be the new Adam and Eve is profound, but then to be separated in order to build heaven on earth is as if they are commanding a higher position and abandoning the joys of relationships. It is as if Mary and Lyra and Will have swapped purposes: Mary gave up her higher position or calling as a nun, but Lyra and Will have assumed a pseudo religious rite, albeit in a different form. Mary was religious, working towards a heaven after death, and Lyra and Will are atheists, working towards a heaven on earth. Mary is spoken to and instructed to play the snake, as in the bible story, part of an ideology which she had previous denounced. When Lyra first mentions good and evil, she immediately feels uncomfortable:

> "Everything about this is *embarrassing*," she said.
> "Do you know how embarrassing it is to mention good and evil in a scientific laboratory? Have you any idea? One of the reasons I became a scientist was not to have to think about that kind of thing."
> (Pullman, 2007c, 96.)

Mary appears to be repressing her past, as noted by Judith Lewis Herman:

> In avoiding any situations reminiscent of the past trauma, or any initiative that might involve future planning and risk, traumatized

> people deprive themselves of those opportunities for successful coping that might mitigate the effect of the traumatic experience (Herman, 1997, 31).

As Herman suggests, trauma survivors may block the event in order to 'forget' the experience, and in doing so further cause themselves anguish, as they are also blocking their way of working through their trauma. Mary appears to have done this exact thing. She does not allow herself to speak or think of good and evil, or religion. She is traumatised by her experience: being a nun and leaving in order to experience physical pleasure and then choosing the apparent freedom of atheism has become a sort of reversed oppression to the traditional shame derived from impure thought or actions for a strictly religious person. Mary's loss of her faith may thus be understood as traumatic. She is punishing herself for thinking about ideas such as good, evil and religion, rather than punishing herself for thinking about sexual and other experiences, and it seems suggested by Lyra's response ("'You *got* to think about it!'" (Pullman, 2007c, 96)), that she should be free to want, believe, experience and think about both her present life and her past; that good and evil can be thought about without having to conform to extremes. Mary has blocked her healing by not discussing her past and involving it in her present, and her journey within the story involves the coexistence of science and spirituality. This helps her to work through her trauma.

Mary's loss of faith is a life-changing experience, as is Lyra's loss of her best friend, Roger, who is abducted by the 'Gobblers'. These are explained as an urban myth about child abduction at the beginning of the first novel, but when Roger goes missing Lyra sets herself the goal of finding him. It transpires that the Gobblers do indeed exist and the name derives from the General Oblation Board of which Mrs Coulter is the head, which is part of the church and interested in Dust. The idea of children being taken by the Gobblers is surely a child's nightmare – and yet one which has now become truth for Lyra. Her world has changed and now what could be seen as the dream or fantasy world has become her reality. Here we see how the fairytale world of monsters gobbling up children is very closely linked to very real threats of cruel and selfish adults – in this case Lyra's very parents. Roger is taken by them and the way in which he dies is significant. Lord Asriel separates Roger's daemon from Roger in a violent quasi-medical procedure in order to create enough power from Dust to make an opening to a parallel world, and this action kills Roger. Lyra's response echoes this violent severance: "She felt wrenched apart with

unhappiness. And with anger, too; she could have killed her father [...] for what he'd done to Roger. And to her..." (Pullman, 2007a, 393.) It is at this moment that Lyra and Pan lose any residual trust in adults and the information that adults have provided. This refusal to take any information on trust is the basis for her questioning and rejection of the adults' assertion that Dust is bad and something to be destroyed (the church believe that separating daemon from human will save the children from original sin, but they discover that intercision creates a burst of energy which can then be used to open parallel worlds): "Because if *they* all think Dust is bad, it must be good." (Pullman, 2007a, 393.)

**Loss and Separation**

That the children in *His Dark Materials* are traumatised by the losses they endure (even while the associated adventures make such exhilarating reading) is suggested by turning again to the overtly symbolic parting of daemons and humans. In addition to the violent and lethal severing of children and daemons carried out by the Gobblers, Lyra and Will Parry themselves undergo an unnatural and painful separation from their daemons: they lose a part of themselves for a time.

> Lyra bent over the alethiometer for the twentieth time, making little unconscious sounds of distress – whimpers and catches of breath that would have been sobs if they were any stronger. Will, too, felt the pain where his daemon had been, a scalded place of acute tenderness which every breath tore at with cold hooks (Pullman, 2007b, 385).

Here, we see two children reeling from the pain of a split self, symbolically representing the way the experience of trauma causes internal, psychological fracture. Importantly, the use of the physically separate children and daemons allows Pullman to represent this fracture in a dramatic and effective way as a literal facture, a literal loss. Here, trauma is shown to rob persons of their full character: it takes away their control, power, and sense of self (Herman, 1997, 52).

While the pain and loss suffered by the two children is acute, they are not victims of unwilling severance of the invisible thread which ties daemons to their humans. They willingly send their daemons away in order to achieve greater good, despite the painful cost.

Sally Munt suggests that

> Shame is based upon separation and loss, in this instance, it presages the excision of self/other that constitutes Lyra's loss of her daemon in the final volume. Yet, it is this separation from Pantalaimon that ensures the radical success of Lyra's redemptive narrative. In this depiction Pullman is suggesting that even in selfhood, desire for the other internal self must be spatially negotiated (Munt, 2008, 198).

Munt suggests that the disconnection of Lyra from her daemon is of crucial importance within the story due to the connotation that the internal self must be acknowledged. Space must be granted for the internal self, or other, as Munt states, and in Lyra's case, this part of her is external and visible so we witness her 'failure' to make space for her 'other' self. I see the division of human and daemon within the story as a physical representation of the health of the mind. For example, mental health issues, such as bipolar disorder, can cause the sufferer much shame and embarrassment, and so to manifest the soul or the consciousness through a physical being is to reinforce the validity and reality of such problems.

Fragmentation is a recurring theme throughout the third novel, and a literary way of illustrating trauma. Pieces of text are placed almost at random throughout the book. These passages are fragments taken out of context, and placed between chapters in order to show that the characters are disjointed, and need to be pieced back together:

> 'll get us out of here, Roger, I promise. And Will's coming. I'm sure he is!"
> "I dunno who that is, and he won't come here," he said, "am if he does he won't know me."
> "He's coming to me," she said, "and me and Will, oh, I don't know Roger, but I swear we'll help. And don't forget there's others on our side. There's Serafina and there's Iorek, and (Pullman, 2007b, 36.)

These fragments of text concern Lyra and Roger, and consist of sections of their conversations in the afterlife (Pullman, 2007b, 8, 9, 36, 78, 92). They place importance on the guilt she feels for his death, and they also show Roger's faith in Lyra, and her faith in Will. And these broken fragments, pieced together, show Lyra's acknowledgement of the task ahead of them. Like the fragmented section in *Twilight*, these fragments suggest a shattering of memory, and a split of consciousness, which as Lyra was separated from her daemon in the afterlife, is a physical as well as mental experience.

Dreams are also a strong element of trauma. Memories and fragmented images manifest themselves in the dreams and nightmares of a trauma sufferer, and the loss of Roger would be particularly jarring to Lyra. He does in fact haunt Lyra in dreams, when he calls her to him:

> "Oh, but my *dream*, Will – I can't tell you how strange it was! [...]
> "It was... Remember I told you about my friend Roger, and how the Gobblers caught him and I tried to rescue him, and it went wrong and Lord Asriel killed him?
> "Well, I saw him. In my dream I saw him again, only he was dead, he was a ghost, and he was like beckoning to me..."
> (Pullman, 2007b, 165.)

While this dream turns out to be prophetic, it also represents guilt that Lyra feels about Roger's death. Lyra tried to save him, but could not, and his death would have been traumatic. His appearing in her dreams not only foreshadows their meeting in the afterlife and her eagerness to go there, but is also a haunting image which is part of her recurring thoughts and images connected with the night he was killed. T. J. Wray and Ann Back Price have the following suggestions concerning positives that arise out of trauma dreams:

> Trauma dreams can be helpful in several ways. First, trauma dreams can help us accept the reality of our loss. [...] Second, trauma dreams can help us work through the various feeling and emotions (some of which we've never felt before) that come with profound loss. [...] Finally, trauma dreams can help us with the painful adjustment process as we learn to live in a world without our loved one. [...] despite the terror associated with these dreams, more often than not, bereaved dreamers eventually come to view their trauma dreams positively (Wray & Price, 2005, 120).

Lyra's dream, although visionary, can also be seen as a trauma dream. In it she is aware that Roger is dead, and this reinforces the reality of what has happened. It also appears that the beckoning can be interpreted as Lyra wanting to be near to Roger in order to save him, which she was unable to do the first time. She does help him to find his release as he is saved with the other ghosts in the kingdom of heaven. Lyra also manages to absolve some of the guilt she feels for Roger's death. I feel that her need to reach him and travel to the afterlife is a display of the trauma and guilt she feels due to his death. In the text, Lyra states:

> "And... it was me that took him there, to Svalbard, where he got killed, it was my fault he was dead. [...] I got to go down into the land of the dead and find him, and... and say sorry (Pullman, 2007b, 166).

Like a trauma dream, Lyra's is viewed positively by her, as it leads her towards freeing herself from the grief and blame of Roger's death. Guilt trauma can lead to survivor's guilt (Matsakis, 2004, 26) and in her case her emphasis on fault suggests that she too feels this:

> "... It was my fault. I'm so sorry, Roger, honest, it was *my* fault, you wouldn't've been there otherwise..."
> "Well," he said, "I dunno. Maybe I would've got dead some other way. But it weren't your *fault*, Lyra, see." (Pullman, 2007b, 307.)

Symbolically, the afterlife in which this exchange takes place could be described as a dream world. Lyra visits Roger in a place that a human cannot go: perhaps this afterlife could be a dream, and her subconscious has created this meeting in order for her to reach peace and to alleviate blame of herself. Perhaps this figuratively could be her dreams or her consciousness providing a release for herself, and therefore provide a wider message of forgiveness and healing.

When Lyra and Will reach the afterlife in the third novel, *The Amber Spyglass*, it is clear that it is a frightening place:

> There's others who longed to be dead when they were alive, poor souls; lives full of pain or misery; killed themselves for a chance of a blessed rest, and found that nothing had changed except for the worse, and this time there was no escape... (Pullman, 2007b, 287.)

This suffering is largely inflicted by the Harpies, creatures who guard the afterlife and torment the ghosts with memories of negative occurrences in the past or threaten the present family or friends in the living world. This appears to be a twist on the classic use of a ghost: the ghosts in the afterlife are not haunting the living, but themselves are haunted, as Judith Lewis Herman notes:

> the traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during

> sleep. Small, seemingly insignificant reminders can also evoke these memories, which often return with all the vividness and emotional force of the original event. Thus, even normally safe environments may come to feel dangers, for the survivor can never be assured that she will not encounter some reminder of the trauma (Herman, 1997, 37).

Trauma sufferers are haunted by the past, and these ghosts in the afterlife are also haunted and locked in a cycle of continual suffering. Obsession is a key theme of trauma: not only are the survivors haunted, they are also completely obsessed by the previous traumatic occurrence. It is interesting that Herman notes that even safe environments can feel dangerous, as the afterlife, or heaven, is thought to be peaceful and safe, and yet in the world of *His Dark Materials* the afterlife is at least as tormented by trauma as is life. The harpies also represent repetition, another key element of trauma, closely connected to obsession. Traumatic events may be repeated in a similar way to triggers of trauma, providing continual reminders of past horrors, much in the way the harpies repeat their attack on the ghosts. The afterlife seems figurative for trauma and its effects, and especially the way in which Lyra and Will overcome it. They tell the harpies stories, truthful stories about life. They testify, and encourage others also to do so, which is a key way of working through trauma. Laurie Vickroy suggests that

> Another significant aim of trauma narratives is to reshape cultural memory through personal contexts, adopting testimonial traits to prevent and bear witness against such repetitive horrors (Vickroy, 2002, 5).

While *His Dark Materials* may not be described as a trauma narrative, the scene in the afterlife does exactly what Vickroy suggests. The act of testifying becomes a way to prevent future repetitive horrors occurring. In a symbolic and real way, Lyra and Will encourage these traumatised ghosts to work through their trauma and find release. By doing this, Lyra and Will find a release themselves by specific means:

> The pact that Will and Lyra strike with the harpies is this: if the harpies will release the dead souls, then in future years, the dead will return to 'feed' the harpies with stories about their actual lives. As Pullman

> himself glosses this passage, Lyra 'leaves fantasy behind, and becomes a realist...' (Falconer, 2009, 78.)

Falconer notes that Lyra and Will become realists, and leave fantasy behind them – and nightmare too, perhaps. To live in a traumatised state is almost to live in an unreal world, and Lyra and Will have managed to help others and themselves to work through their trauma, by becoming more realistic, they are changing their mental attitudes to focus upon the present, and not dwell on past events or allowing their imaginations to run wild about potential future occurrences. Of course, Will and Lyra experience further traumas, but this experience with the ghosts in the afterlife appears to enable them to move forward (as it enables Lyra to move on from Roger's death), especially concerning their forthcoming separation within the story. This part of the novel is also significant for Lyra, particularly as it means she has to focus upon the truth, and not lie, which is something that she has prided herself on in the past. It provides a working through of some of her past behaviour, which was symptomatic of her lack of love and family life.

The narrative line of *His Dark Materials* story is complex, and the stories of Lyra, Will and Mary are all difficult and traumatic. Loss of parents, of freedom, and of sense of self run through this tale, and good and evil are confused and inverted. Unlike the other stories I have mentioned, *His Dark Materials* lacks a definite happy ending. The characters return to their worlds and continue to work through their problems in order to exist peacefully, but we are left with the heartbreaking separation of Lyra and Will. Ultimately what is good does survive and a release is found for those who desire it. The ghosts of the afterlife are able to release themselves as they dissolve into the air, which is their final release from trauma. The final two sentences of the text read: '"And then what? Said her daemon sleepily. "Build what?" "The republic of heaven," said Lyra' (Pullman, 2007b, 522). This conversation closes the tale and shows that free will, freedom, love, joy, creativity and whole consciousness will be sought on earth, providing the triumph over trauma and oppression. This suggests if not a happy ending, then at least a promise of happiness to come. For the reader, the worlds explored by the fictional sequence are contained in order not to break containment, but like the fairy tales, elements connect into our own world, which leaves haunting mixed emotion.

# Conclusion

# Conclusion

Over the course of researching and writing this thesis, I have drawn several conclusions and discovered interesting similarities between both classical fairy tales and contemporary fantasy novels. My main topics of trauma and absent parents have been consistently present throughout all texts studied. The following themes and elements have constantly recurred: containment, loss of/absent parents, families (stepfamilies or unofficial families created by the characters), death, abuse and neglect, change causing traumatic affects, psychological splitting, adventure, good and evil, love, marriage and the various traumatic effects such as silence, repetition, dreams, fragmentation, etc.

**Family and Loss**

The most obvious aspect that connects all of the texts I have researched is that they all deal with quite difficult subjects. But they are all rooted in either loss or death, and turmoil. For example, the fairy tales often begin by introducing one or more main characters who have either been abandoned (Hansel and Gretel (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 86-7)), or suffer the grief of the death of a parent (Snow-White) (Grimm & Grimm, 1912), or suffer abuse or neglect from a wicked Stepfamily (Cinderella (Grimm & Grimm, 1975, 121)). Connecting to those themes, Harry Potter's parents are killed when he is just a baby and so he is brought up by his abusive and neglectful Aunt and Uncle (Rowling, 1997, 19). In *Twilight*, Bella suffers from a lack of parenting and she decides to undertake a sort of wilful abandonment by isolating herself with her father and moving away from her mother (Meyer, 2006, 4). Lyra, in *His Dark Materials,* also experiences a lack of parenting and suffers from neglectful guardians (Pullman, 2007a, 8). The loss or absence of the characters' parents is deeply traumatic for them and the effects are widely displayed within the texts. I have illustrated the interconnected yet differing traumatic effects within this thesis by examining the symptoms that the characters have displayed. Absent or lost parents are featured consistently throughout the texts I have analysed. As I have stated, the characters in these stories suffer from a lack of parenting, and the loss of these parents can cause an irreparable blighting of a life. In the case of Harry Potter, this blight continues until the traumatic consequences of this loss are sufficiently worked through. As I have noted throughout my thesis, absent parents lead to the

creation of new families, whether it be a stepfamily, or a marriage or a family created by consenting choices. Fairy Tales traditionally end in marriage (Tatar, 2003, 92) for several reasons: the first being that a wedding is seen as an ending guaranteeing future happiness. It leads the reader to assume that a new happy family life has been created. It is also seen as a release from a harmful family or background, such as is associated with a stepfamily or isolation and loneliness. The protagonists choose their perfect partners and create their new families on the basis of marriage. In the case of tales such as that of Hansel and Gretel, the two children regain their family and grant their father forgiveness for abandoning them. By contrast, the contemporary novels have slightly different families: in the three series I have mapped, the families created have consisted of marginal characters, as John Briere has remarked:

> children who are raised by unloving, unresponsive, or otherwise emotionally neglectful parents are at risk for psychological disturbance in the short and intermediate term, perhaps especially in terms of disturbed attachment to and relationships with others
> (Briere, 1992, 12).

Bella finds solace with vampires; Lyra seeks the company of potentially dangerous people/beings; and Harry Potter aligns himself with other marginal characters at school. In Harry's case, this shows that his upbringing, especially his bullying at the hands of his cousin, Dudley, has made him befriend others who are also lacking in self-confidence, such as Ron, because he is the last of a long line of successful brothers, and Hermione because she is Muggle born (Muggle born: witch or wizard born of non magical parents). Harry's chosen family enables him to beat his enemy and overcome his trauma, as does Lyra's. However some families in fairy tales are more ambiguous in nature, and in *Twilight*, Bella's chosen family helps her to live or survive with her trauma rather than work through it. The families that the characters create for themselves provide fascinating insights into the mental and emotional states of the characters. These families have proved themselves to be pivotal to the plots of the stories and to the characters' abilities to either work through their trauma or to merely survive it.

**Splitting**

Psychological splitting is heavily featured throughout the stories and all characters appear to have a moment when their world is severed, separated into two

distinct times: before and after the traumatic incident. Splitting is a very significant element of trauma. It encompasses a survival mechanism, a moment of life change and repression.

> Splitting is a common defence mechanism accompanying trauma that illustrates the nonintegration of traumatic memory with normal memory, whereby survivors can occupy dual positions, both inside and outside their pasts, and reenact the past without recalling it (Vickroy, 2002, 28).

In the fairy tales, for example, the moment of splitting is not dwelt upon, but often acts as the catalyst for further action. Psychological splitting gives rise to a drive for happiness within the plot, and the splitting in half of a tale creates a need for a mirror for positivity to overcome negativity, and to leave readers with the happy ending that they desire. Hansel and Gretel's moment of splitting is the moment in which they realise that they have been abandoned: it creates their need for survival. Harry Potter has a very distinct moment of splitting. Although he is merely a baby during its occurrence, he continues to be haunted by this moment through flashback and dream throughout his life. As his enemy, Voldemort, kills both of his parents and indeed tries to also kill him, but Harry (protected by his mother's love as she sacrificed herself for him) deflects the spell onto his enemy.

The death of his parents is the profound moment that changes Harry's life from a potential happy family existence to a miserable and damaging childhood, from which he escapes in much the same way that Cinderella does in the classic fairy tale – he is even provided with a fairy Godmother (Hagrid) who provides him with the help he requires to substantially change his life. Bella's moment of splitting, similar to Harry's, also happens at a time in which her life is saved. Differently to him, she would have already experienced potentially traumatic occurrences in her life due to her reversed parental role with her mother: she has already had to grow up ahead of time and has endured a dramatic change (moving to be with her father) which too could have provided anguish, but her moment of splitting within the timeline of the story occurs when she is involved in a car crash. Edward Cullen, a vampire, saves her from being crushed by a friend's truck. This moment then changes her life considerably. In *His Dark Materials*, several characters' moments of splitting are featured, the most obvious being that of the male protagonist, Will. Will's

psychological splitting occurs when he accidentally kills a man, and this causes him to begin a journey and join Lyra in an epic adventure. These examples from across the stories underline how fundamental psychological splitting can be to a character and to the plot of the story. By analysing this element of trauma, I have shown its effects are an instantaneous event, which is not only pivotal to the plot of a story but also provides insights into the thoughts and subconscious of the characters.

**Traumatic Effects**

Numerous elements of trauma are reflected within the stories which I have analysed. Obsession, fragmentation, repetition, silence, flashbacks and dreams are common results of trauma.

> Trauma appears to etch a deep psychological scar in the person. Like the rape victim, victims of all kinds often become obsessed with their traumas. The incest victim for instance, may find that disturbing and painful thoughts of the traumatic events can last a lifetime [...] It is not entirely clear why traumas have this effect. Why should people be so deeply moved by traumatic events? The development of a full-blown obsession might only take a minute (Wegner, 1994, 162-3).

Obsession and repetition stand out as noteworthy results of damaging psychological experience in these stories. The former occurs as an immediate (or delayed) aspect of the moment of splitting. For example, Harry Potter has delayed obsession concerning Voldemort. He is haunted by the night of his parents' death in dreams and flashbacks, even before he actually understands what took place on that fateful occasion. Once Harry is properly informed concerning Voldemort his obsession grows. Voldemort and Harry are equally obsessed with each other and both desire to overcome the other. Voldemort both instances trauma and symbolises it. He desires to overcome Harry, mentally, and Harry's struggle with him is representative of the process of working through trauma, an effort to release oneself from obsession. Bella in *Twilight* is an example of immediate obsession. At her moment of splitting, her obsession with vampire Edward Cullen begins and it continues until the end of the story. She does not overcome it. Symbolically it is as though Bella has found a way to live with her trauma, rather than working through and overcoming it. Obsession is also an important catalyst which causes the characters to embark upon their journeys.

Dreams are consistently important through *Harry Potter*, *Twilight* and *His Dark Materials* as not only do they provide echoes of the characters' moments of

splitting and further traumatic incident, but in the case of Harry Potter have also been distorted further by his trauma concerned with Voldemort. Due to the connection between Harry and Voldemort, the latter retains the ability to further twist Harry's thoughts and dreams (Wray & Price, 2005, 120). By convincing Harry that Sirius is in danger, he indirectly causes Harry to lead Sirius to his death, which causes guilt within Harry. Similarly with Lyra in *His Dark Materials*, who feels tremendous guilt for the death of her friend Roger.

Fragmentation is featured within both *His Dark Materials* and *Twilight* in a textual manner. Sections of text are displaced within the final novel of the former series, and a section of dislocated text is placed at the start of each book in the *Twilight* saga. These fragments are symbolic of the fragmentation that occurs in traumatic memory (Granofsky, 1995, 18).

Silence and repression are almost synonymous. The former is used within the tale 'The Leaves that Hung but Never Grew'. The character of Anwen displays her grief and trauma at the loss of her mother by her silence and her lack of acknowledgement of the devastating experience. Silence is a strategy also adopted by Harry Potter after the death of Sirius, as he finds himself unable to express what he is feeling after experiencing another traumatic loss.

Death is a recurring theme within both fairy tale and fantasy stories, and it is evident from the texts I have examined within this thesis that not only is the loss of parents cataclysmic for the characters of the tale, but further deaths compound the losses further. For example, in *His Dark Materials*, the death of Roger, Lyra's friend, is very profound for her and not only does she become haunted by him, but his loss informs her journey and helps her to make her decisions along the way. She feels a heavy burden from his death. Similarly, Harry endures further losses after those of his parents. He loses Sirius, his Godfather and father-figure, as well as Dumbledore (not to mention those lost in the battle of Hogwarts), and these losses cause Harry to fight on against evil to ensure the victory of good.

Good and evil are interesting themes within these stories (Bottigheinmer, 2003, 57). Fairy tales usually have a rather obvious view of moral issues. The protagonists and their lost parents are good and the stepfamily or witches or other typical figure of wickedness are the evil characters. However, in *Twilight*, characters that would traditionally be seen as evil – the vampires – are in fact primarily good. The majority of them within the story are creatures that Bella seeks to align herself

with. While this is partly due to the recent trend in the romanticisation of vampires, it also appears to be a symptom of Bella's trauma: her attraction to danger (Briere, 1992, 12). As I have previously stated, Lyra, in *His Dark Materials,* also displays elements of her traumatisation by seeking or accepting the friendship of characters that are questionable: she trusts Will purely based on the fact that he is a murderer and she feels safe with other murderous beings such as Iorek Byrnison. These elements not only show the characters' trauma but also the way in which they have suffered from a lack of parenting. The twisting of the conventional evil figures creates an ambiguous tone. Harry Potter too feels comfortable in the knowledge that he is a wizard and does not question it overtly. Perhaps these characters are also displaying a jadedness caused by their debilitating upbringings, evident in their unfazed reactions to dangerous situations that they place themselves in, or to the supposed evil characters that they seek friendship with.

**Change**

Furthermore, my research has shown that change is an essential factor in producing trauma. It has an obvious place in both fairy tales and fantasy stories. Psychologically, change affects emotional and mental development, as the ability to adapt and cope with difficult or different situations is beneficial to a person's mental well being.

> Unnoticed losses can include marriage or remarriage, achievements, success, and growth. Although these changes are usually considered to be positive, they do represent the loss of an earlier life-style and coping pattern. Such a loss can create turmoil even though the over-all life change is for the good (Johnson, 1989, 14-5).

In the Potter sequence, change associated with progressing from primary to secondary school is seen as significant and Harry experiences this. Bella also appreciates a move in school but at a slightly older age. Both of these imperative moves for each character are traumatic in their own right but they also lead them to form their own families to replace those to which they have previously belonged.

The closure or the end of a fairy story is required to ensure that the fantastical world remains limited to the story. As I stated in chapter one, traditional tales have opening and closing markers that ensure the reader is aware of the unrealness of the story – the words 'once upon a time,' for example. Alan Garner suggests that

> After the revelation of a truth in a dimension of timelessness, the hearers have to be returned safely to every day living. Just as the start of the myth is delineated, so is the release from eternity, by a formal conclusion that is an act of play, no matter how serious the story has been (Garner, 1997, 152).

Even if there is a hint of trouble to come, the closing wording of a fairy tale must allow the reader to feel safe in the knowledge that the world will not intrude on the reader's reality. This also carries on to the contemporary novels I have discussed, although containing alternate worlds within these novels is slightly harder to achieve due to the connection with 'our world'. Harry Potter initially inhabits the same reality as the reader, until called to the magical world; Will too lives in the reader's world until he crosses over into a parallel one. And Bella's story is entirely set in our world, except for the presence of vampires. These texts deal with difficult subjects, and containment must be ensured in order to maintain a distance between the reader and the troubling content. This distance helps the reader acknowledge the trauma present without feeling overwhelmed by it. While the connections with 'our world' are present within the contemporary novels, their other worldly feel still helps to ensure their essential 'otherness.' However, regardless of this, there will always be elements that connect to normal reality and all of these stories have the ability to leave the reader with haunting and poignant thoughts and emotions.

**Gang Culture**

An interesting subject which I believe would be fruitful for further study would be that of the correlation between families and contemporary gang culture within children's literature. *Harry Potter*, *Twilight* and *His Dark Materials* all feature chosen or constructed families. These require a task or an achievement as a condition of entrance. In modern times, with the decline in family structure the problem of violent gangs appears prevalent within big cities and towns. These often require a test before admission is granted, whether it be a violent act or another action. These gangs then become the youths' family which they protect and provide for, sometimes with extreme outcomes. In *Harry Potter*, Harry arrives at Hogwarts where he is faced with a task: to sit on a stool in front of the whole school with the 'sorting hat' on his head, while this hat examines his characteristics and attributes. It decides in which house Harry (and the other new students) must reside. The houses even correspond to colours, which is suggestive of the gang colours of geographical areas. The purpose of

these school houses is to provide a family within the school, to allow the students to develop a sense of belonging, whilst separated from their parents. And the idea of the four houses is to develop diversity and to develop team working and friendships between each house. However, connotations of gang culture can be seen in this arrangement. Also, in the *Twilight* series, the entrance to Bella's new family involves a more violent scenario than that of Harry Potter's. To join the vampire family or gang a human must be bitten by a vampire, an action with overtones of penetration, perhaps symbolic for such violent acts as rape (Read, 2000, 181), or stabbing, or killing at random, which are often tasks used for initiation into a violent gang. In *His Dark Materials* too there are similarities. Lyra, for example, trusts Will and allows him entrance to her 'family' because he is a murderer. These characters all come from a difficult background with broken family structures, and therefore seek a new family and feelings of belonging elsewhere.

My research into trauma in children's literature has hopefully come to suggestive conclusions, which I have outlined above. My analysis of a range of materials from classical fairy tales to contemporary texts has shown how the popular literature of today is indebted in structure and theme to fairy stories, and that the popularity of these has remained consistent for hundreds of years. Trauma theory has illuminated many central aspects of these stories, many of which involve absent parents, and it has highlighted the important features (such as obsession, repetition, attraction to danger, fragmentation and dreams). I have also highlighted the potential causes of trauma, such as abuse, neglect, change or other incidents. And what I hope my research has revealed is that popular fantasy fiction is the contemporary heir of a fairytale tradition that has for millennia enabled human beings to confront, and even to overcome some of the most distressing kinds of psychological damage.

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