Trials and Tribulations:
Trauma in Margaret Mahy's Young Adult Fiction

By

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Abstract

As New Zealand's most celebrated children's writer, Margaret Mahy is renowned for her warm-hearted authorial persona and playful writing style. Beneath her entertaining narrative tone, however, Mahy deals with the darker realities of everyday life. This thesis argues that trauma is a key feature of Mahy's Young Adult fiction.

Mahy's characters suffer various traumatic events, ranging from situations related to death (bereavement, murder, suicide) to interpersonal violence (abduction, abuse, bullying). They are also subject to more common traumatic conditions, such as excessive parental expectations, living in a broken family, and sibling rivalry. Many of Mahy's novels are so rife with trauma that not only the main characters, but also their relatives and even enemies are traumatised. While a few critics have noticed the importance of trauma in Mahy's YA texts, they mainly discuss trauma's impact on the development of adolescent identity or the major characters' individual psychological issues. My study takes it further by looking at how the protagonists and other supporting characters work together to weave an intricate web of trauma. I will also pay attention to how Mahy's narrative techniques reflect her complex conceptualisation of trauma.

The prevalence of traumatised figures in Mahy's books suggests a possibility of trauma's communicability, which is the focus of my first and second chapter. The opening chapter examines Mahy's treatment of intergenerational trauma, and more specifically, how trauma is transmitted vertically from grand-parental figures to the youngest generation. In the second chapter, I move on to investigate a pattern which I call "intersecting trauma": the horizontal connectedness of trauma between contemporaries within a larger, communal body. The third chapter continues to expand

the scope, looking at the representation of New Zealand's historical trauma through a postcolonial ecocritical lens. My last chapter shifts from the domestic to the international political arena, examining Mahy's reflection of disastrous events which took place in more recent global history. The four chapters together show the depth and complexity of Mahy's treatment of trauma in her YA fiction.

Many of Mahy's novels contain fantastical elements, and all her books that are primarily concerned with collective trauma are works of fantasy. While the choice of the genre of fantasy enables young readers to gain knowledge of trauma in a safe, distanced realm, Mahy never over-relied on supernatural intervention as a resolution. Consistently, she championed the more realistic way to work through trauma via narrative. With her playful and thoughtful writing style, Mahy seeks to represent trauma in a way that is both artistic and edifying. Her delicate handling of the dark subject not only allows us to acquire moral lessons without feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of trauma, it also preserves us from the illusion of a false world in which all problems of violence can be tackled by the fantastical. All in all, it is storytelling that serves as the ritual of exorcism in the everyday life and helps us dispel the ghost of trauma.

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Introduction

In 1969, when Margaret Mahy was asked why she wrote for children, she stated that "it was simply to entertain them" (Duder 142). But years later, Mahy found this explanation no longer satisfying, so revised her opinion as follows: "'[s]imply to entertain' is an odd statement in itself, for the sources of entertaining, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde's comment on truth, are rarely pure and never simple" (143). As Mahy's revision suggests, she did not want her serious literary side to be downplayed, because of her playful writing style, being, as Sam Hester remarks, "ironic, humorous, tender" (172). Beneath her entertaining, light-hearted narrative tone, Mahy deals with the darker realities of everyday life. Indeed, trauma is a key feature in Mahy's Young Adult fiction.

The word, "trauma," is from the Greek for a physical wound, but its principal application today has been developed into psychic injury.[1] Sigmund Freud played a crucial part in this shifted understanding of trauma by separating the psychic from the physical dimension. "[Freud's] early twentieth century writing on traumatic experience […] has proved especially influential to those active in trauma studies" (Ward 3-4). Although it is not until 1990s that the Freudian conceptions of memory were developed into the paradigm of trauma, we should consider the year of 1980 as a milestone in trauma studies. In 1980, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) first appeared as a diagnosis in the third edition of *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM III)* by American Psychiatric Association (APA). "The arrival of PTSD," claims Roger Luckhurst at the opening of *The Trauma Question* (2008), "helped consolidate a trauma paradigm that has come to pervade the understanding of subjectivity and experience in the advanced industrial world" (1). As indicated by the prefix "post-," trauma is a negative psychological outcome caused by a distressing event. Since the formulation of PTSD, the scope of the term "trauma" has extended greatly. Although our understanding of the possible intrusive symptoms of trauma has expanded somewhat,

1 The use of trauma to mean psychic injury occurs in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED)* from 1894. It might be worth noting that medical professionals still use the term "trauma" in the physical sense, for instance, "trauma to the right leg," but this physical sense has dropped out of everyday language. Moreover, in the category of trauma as a psychoanalytical and psychiatric term, *OED* further differentiates between "[a] psychic injury" and "an internal injury, esp. to the brain, which may result in a behavioural disorder of organic origin."

the real broadening has taken place in definitions of possible stressor events. Based on these evolving standards for what can be considered as a stressor, my analysis will include both specific traumatic events and also traumatic conditions as possible causes for psychic injury.

According to *DMS-III*, PTSD is a response to "a psychologically distressing event that is […] generally outside the range of such common experiences as simple bereavement, chronic illness, business losses, and marital conflict" (APA 236). In *DMS-V* (2013), however, the definition of stressor events has been modified to a larger scale. "Criterion A" includes "[e]xposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways":

1. Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.
3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.
4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains; police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse)

Note: Criterion A4 does not apply to exposure through electronic media, television, movies, or pictures, unless this exposure is work related (APA, *DMS-V* 271).

Compared with the 1980 version, the definition of stressor events has been much expanded and explained with greater specificity; the *DSM* still does not, however, fully incorporate the range of traumatic stressors that some psychologists have identified. Feminist psychologist Laura S. Brown, in her article "Not Outside the Range: One Feminist Perspective on Psychic Trauma" (1995), notices that daily occurrences can be traumatic as well: stressors beyond the *DSM* definition, like financial pressure, physical illness, and verbal/emotional abuse, can render an individual powerless and traumatised (104). Other researchers, noting that the experience of trauma is by its very nature subjective, push the boundaries one step further. As Richard J. McNally points out in *Remembering*

Trauma (2003), "the psychological interpretation of the event may be the crucial determinant of whether it produces PTSD," and thus "[s]ome people develop PTSD following exposure to noncatastrophic, non-life-threatening stressors" (96-7). With trauma studies booming in the academic field, the word "traumatic" is given an expanded meaning in everyday language. As Luckhurst notes, "[t]he *OED* also records a further drift into general use of the adjective 'traumatic' for any difficult or untoward event" (*Trauma Question* 3). Drawing on these studies, I propose to include both traumatic events and traumatic conditions as the cause for psychic injury. Or, we may consider that people experience trauma in two ways: Big Trauma and little trauma.[2] In the context of my thesis, Big Traumas refer to the psychic injury caused by the severe cases related to death and interpersonal violence (Traumatic events), which mostly fit into *DMS-V*'s "Criterion A." By comparison, the more common stresses (traumatic conditions), such as parental divorce and sibling rivalry, give rise to little traumas.

Applying the broadest definition, I contend that trauma is a keynote in Mahy's YA fiction. Her characters suffer various Traumatic events, ranging from situations related to death to interpersonal violence. Murderous fathers appear in both *The Tricksters* (1986) and *Twenty-four Hours* (2000); the latter novel also includes suicide, abduction and bullying. We read about child abuse in *The Haunting* (1982) and *The Changeover* (1984). A worse case comes from *The Magician of Hoad* (2008): the female protagonist, Cayley Silence, falls victim to the abuse of her psychopathic mother, who nearly drives her to death. Bullying and sibling loss are Traumatic events foregrounded in *Memory* (1987). Parental loss is a common tragic plot as well. At the opening of *Dangerous Spaces* (1991), we are informed that the main character, Anthea Wakefield, has lost her parents, both dead

2 The distinction I make here between 'Trauma' and 'trauma' is not one that is found in psychological or psychotherapeutic literature, but takes its inspiration from James Paul Gee's well-known distinction between Discourse and discourse in his work on discourse analysis. According to Gee, "[a] Discourse is a characteristic way of saying, doing, and being" (30), while "'discourse,' with a little 'd,' [means] language-in-use or stretches of language (like conversations or stories)" (34). Simply put, Discourse looks at language in a generalised social context, and discourse focuses on the more individualised usage. While my distinction between Trauma and trauma does not reflect some difference between social and individual experiences, Gee's Discourse/discourse distinction is nevertheless useful, because the way he examines the usage of language at both macro and micro level offers a model for viewing psychological wound from a double perspective. In the strict sense, Trauma refers to the authoritative psychiatric diagnoses from the *DMS*; it is caused by the specific severe Traumatic events listed in the manual, which tend to occur quickly and unexpectedly. By comparison, trauma is related to the ongoing traumatising circumstances one has to endure over a long period of time. Based on the broadened, popularised understanding of stressor events, these sustained, nerve-racking conditions can also cause psychic injury.

in a yachting accident. Similarly, in the first chapter of *Maddigan's Fantasia* (2005), the heroine Garland Maddigan witnesses the brutal scene of her father being killed. Mahy has also written about sexual assault, as demonstrated by *The Tricksters* and *Alchemy* (2002). Parental abandonment could be either a Traumatic event or a traumatic condition, depending on the circumstances. For example, *The Changeover* features a pair of protagonists, Laura Chant and Sorensen (Sorry) Carlisle, both affected by parental desertion, albeit to varying degrees. In Sorry's case, his mother's abandonment of him should be considered as a Traumatic event, because it triggers a catalogue of misfortunes, and as a consequence, he must consult a psychotherapist for recuperation. As for Laura, being forsaken by her father appears one of the traumatic conditions she is wrestling with. It emerges that many reasons lead to her traumatised status. Or, as Kathryn Walls puts it, Laura's life becomes "not only practically but also psychologically challenging," due to the following stresses: her age, her parents' divorce, her father's second marriage, the financial problem of her family, her mother's unstable relationship with men, and her role as a caregiver ("Generic" 65). Other traumatic conditions in Mahy's novels include self-contradicting parental expectations in *Memory*; sibling rivalry in nearly all Mahy's novels; the loss of a sense of superiority in *The Other Side of Silence* (1994), to name a few.

In Mahy's fiction, Big Traumas are so closely bound up with little traumas that the two categories often work in tandem. At other times, where the first is absent, the second is always present. Whether traumatic events or conditions, they can bring about similar painful results. It can be what Cathy Caruth labels as "*possession* […]. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" ("Introduction to Trauma and Experience" 4-5; emphasis original). For instance, in *Memory*, Jonny Dart, the male protagonist, is plagued by recurring flashbacks to not only traumatic events (his sister's death and himself being bullied), but also traumatic conditions (sibling rivalry and contradictory parental expectations). On other occasions, a traumatic condition can yield "a feeling of helplessness, of physical or emotional paralysis," a common response to trauma (van der Kolk and van der Hart 175). Mahy's 1985 novel, *The Catalogue of the Universe*, depicts how the little trauma of knowing oneself as an illegitimate child can have a numbing effect on the psyche. When the heroine Angela May confronts the rejection from her biological father, her immediate reaction is to recall clever words, a helpless gesture to deaden her internal pain. The emotional

paralysis serves as a prelude to psychic injury: a few pages later, Angela feels that she "would bleed to death" (Mahy, *Catalogue* 98). With the psychological injury imagined as physical, Mahy is playing with the different senses of "trauma."

If, as I proposed, trauma is a key feature in Mahy's YA fiction, why is it that only few critics have directly confronted this aspect of her work thus far? I would first suggest Mahy's humorous style as an important reason. In Mahy's books, gravity is often tempered with comic relief. For instance, as I argued in my article, "Trauma Beneath the Mask: The Camp Aesthetic of Margaret Mahy's Young Adult Fiction" (2020), Jackie Cattle, the campest figure from *Twenty-four Hours*, treats the world with flippant irony, but his camp sensibility turns out to mask his traumatic past. Mahy's relaxed domestic setting also diverts our attention from the real shocking events, as exemplified by *The Tricksters*. The novel unfurls against a festive backdrop when the Hamilton family gather at their beach house to celebrate Christmas. Yet, as Rose Lovell-Smith argues, the "bright and sunshiny" beach emerges to be a "Gothic [site]," open to atrocious events (93-4). Aside from Mahy's gentle and humorous style, her often-delayed revelation of dark secrets works further to shift our focus from the representation of trauma. Take *Memory* and *The Other Side of Silence* for example. The narrative formula in both novels follows a repetitive pattern: the protagonist constantly oscillates between departing from and returning to the same place for the bulk of the story. On the one hand, it seems to reflect what scholars have theorized as "repetition compulsion" (Levine, "The Compulsion to Repeat" 1167), a mechanism of trauma. On the other hand, the oscillation defers the disclosure of the unresolved trauma till the very last stage, by which time the reader might have forgotten the previous clues to trauma.

It is important to note that in Mahy's fiction, the key traumatic events rarely appear in the narrative's foreground; instead, they tend to function as backstories, displaced in another space or time and/or indirectly experienced by the protagonist through his/her fellow characters. In *The Tricksters,* for example, while we learn at an early stage that the heroine Harry Hamilton is traumatised by sibling rivalry, the much more severe event of an unavenged murder remains in the background, till the novel's latter half. Meanwhile, in the novel's foreground, the key trauma is manifested in the displaced form of three ghost brothers, each interacting with Harry in a distinctive mode. Furthermore, we have to admit that Mahy sometimes adopts an evasive representational

manner, when she approaches sensitive topics, such as New Zealand's colonial trauma. As Geoffrey Miles points out, while dealing with "Māori land rights" in *Kaitangata Twitch* (2005), "Mahy, as a Pākehā writer, is touching very delicately on this sensitive political issue, but avoiding a head-on engagement, preferring to work on the level of symbolism and myth" ("Utopia" 110). On colonialism's influence upon cultural identity, Harry Ricketts notices that *Kaitangata Twitch* belongs to the YA novels which "give Māori ancestry to contemporary characters who seem otherwise Pākehā, […] a ploy which neatly avoids the charge of appropriation" (72). These examples suggest Mahy's ambiguity or lack of confidence when tackling the unresolved historical trauma of her home country. Last but not least, I would suggest that Mahy's avoidance of using the word "trauma" must have obstructed our recognition as well. She has used a number of synonyms, metaphors and metonyms, such as blow, scar, bruise and weal, to allude to this important theme. In Mahy's YA oeuvre, the word "trauma" only appears twice: once in the middle part of *The Other Side of Silence*, the other time at the very end of her last novel, *The Magician of Hoad*.[3]

On a larger scale, the critical gap of Mahy's treatment of trauma results from the fact that trauma has received relatively less attention in children's literature, although it has become a central concern in literary writings and cultural studies since the late twentieth century. In "Trauma and Literary Theory" (1997), James Berger identifies four major reasons for the surging interest in trauma studies: "a popular culture and mass media obsessed by repetitions of violent disasters […], […] the preoccupation with family dysfunction […] in the media, […] the interest in the enigmatic figure of the survivor," and "the late twentieth century" as "a time marked, indeed defined, by historical catastrophe" (571-2). These factors, combined with the formulation of PTSD in 1980, have significantly boosted the upswing of literary studies from the lens of trauma, as demonstrated by the following examples: Ronald Granofsky's *The Trauma Novel: Contemporary Symbolic Depictions of Collective Disaster* (1995), Anne Whitehead's *Trauma Fiction* (2004), Roger Luckhurst's *The Trauma Question* (2008) (in particular, the second chapter "Trauma in Narrative

3 In the middle part of *The Other Side of Silence*, the heroine Hero Rapper, while reflecting on her speech problem of selective mutism, tells the reader: "In general, experts think it is caused by some trauma such as change of residence, illness, mouth injury, or a family upheaval" (Mahy 96). By the end of *The Magician of Hoad*, the male protagonist Heriot Tarbas reveals that "trauma" is a catalyst for the separation of his magician-self from his daily-self, which took place in his childhood: "[the boy Heriot] had been struck down by the power of a trauma–a trauma […] had somehow formed him, too" (Mahy 408).

Fiction"), and Gabriele Schwab's *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (2010).

Although these critics mainly focus on discussing what is categorised as adult literature, the inevitable participation of young characters in some of the novels in question makes it an imperative to ponder over trauma's impact on the younger generation. In his discussion of Doris Lessing's *The Memoirs of a Survivor*, Granofsky remarks that "[t]he trauma depicted in *Memoirs* is horrific partly because the usual symbol of survival beyond trauma in the sub-genre, the child, is here so totally beyond the reach of assimilation" (35). While looking at Binjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments: Memories of a Childhood 1939-1948*, Whitehead points out that the novel, by adopting the viewpoint of a child, "increases the reader's involvement and presents the facts of the Holocaust in a new and innovative light" (*Trauma Fiction* 38). As Luckhurst notes of Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*, the baby ghost's haunting of her murderous mother signifies "both the traces of individual histories […], as well as condensations of an entire community" (*Trauma Question* 94). While Luckhurst's observation raises the subject of trauma's social transmission, Schwab's *Haunting Legacies*, as indicated by the book's title, explores trauma's intergenerational communicability. In her fifth chapter, Schwab examines "two Maori novels that deal with the issue of replacement children in a different fashion, Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* and Patricia Grace's *Baby No-eyes*" (38). The former novel represents "the frequent intersection of identity trouble with gender trouble in replacement children, especially in patriarchal cultures"; the latter work "reflects the phenomenon of replacement children in the context of biocolonialism, which is directed at the genetic inheritance of indigenous people" (38). Given that Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* is generally considered to be a YA text and Grace writes not only short stories but also children's fiction, Schwab's study points to the use of cultural and collective trauma in children's literature.[4]

It is noteworthy that the employment of collective trauma in children's literature, primarily the Holocaust, has become the focus of several critical studies. Among them, Hamida Bosmajian's *Sparing the Child: Grief and the Unspeakable in Youth Literature about Nazism and the Holocaust* (2002), Adrienne Kertzer's *My Mother's Voice: Children, Literature, and the Holocaust* (2002) and

[4] In *A Made-up Place: New Zealand in Young Adult Fiction* (2011), both Ihimaera and Grace receive critical attention.

Lydia Kokkola's *Representing the Holocaust in Children's Literature* (2003) are prominent examples. Yet, as Kathrine Capshaw Smith states in her opening article for *Forum: Trauma and Children's Literature*, rather than following the mainstream of adopting a psychoanalytical approach to examine the representation of the Holocaust, some scholars have turned to "expanding our conception of trauma to include under-represented histories and repressed sites of violence and suffering" so that "other modes of criticism—such as sociohistorical analysis, critical social theory, and gender studies" are introduced into the literary studies of trauma (116). The studies included in the forum are ground-breaking. While Donnarae MacCann's paper, "The Sturdy Fabric of Cultural Imperialism: Tracing Its Patterns in Contemporary Children's Novels" (2005), explores the collective traumas of "racism and colonialism" (186), Margaret R. Higonnet's article, "Time Out: Trauma and Play in Johnny Tremain and Alan and Naomi" (2005), looks at how the "mutual construction of an individual memory […] and a social narrative is at work in children's fiction about wartime trauma" (150-1). Although Higonnet notes the overlapping "questions of individual and social trauma" (166), the 2005 forum mainly situates children's literature in the context of collective, historical trauma, whereby less attention is given to young people's personal trauma, as well as the more common stresses which could be disturbing under certain circumstances.

More recently, an increasing number of literary critics have noticed the prevalence of trauma in the everyday setting of children's and YA books. In *Melancholia and Maturation: The Use of Trauma in American Children's Literature* (2010), Eric L. Tribunella devotes the first three chapters to demonstrating how a child's traumatic loss of a loved person/object, a common phenomenon in both life and fiction, can "work as a catalyst for maturation" (xi). Tribunella then shifts to discussing war trauma and the Holocaust in American children's culture, elaborating "the ways childhood and children themselves are imagined as the very objects that American culture sacrifices both to generate a sense of progress and potential and to construct an adult citizen characterized by melancholia" (xxxv). While Tribunella's book examines both individual and collective trauma, some other scholarly works focus more specifically on personal ordeals. As Kate Norbury remarks in "Representations of Trauma and Recovery in Contemporary North American and Australian Teen Fiction" (2012), "[t]he social world" depicted in each selected text "may be 'familiar,' although it is immediately clear to readers that something about the way the character experiences his or her

environment is seriously awry" (33). Similarly, in "Trauma and Young Adult Literature: Representing Adolescence and Knowledge in David Small's *Stitches*" (2013), Leigh Gilmore and Elizabeth Marshall draw attention to the representation of individual sufferings in the graphic memoir, and point out that "Small's comics chronicle his traumatic coming-of age, including psychological abuse within his family, and radiation-induced cancer" (16). These studies offer me a solid critical context, but none has treated Mahy's trauma-ridden novels.

Overviewing Mahy commentaries to date, we find that the critical approaches mainly focus on her innovative use of literary conventions, or draw on gender studies, psychology, and post-colonial theory. An avid reader since her childhood, Mahy inevitably incorporated literary traditions into her novel writing. Some relevant critical discussions are Elliott Gose's essay "Fairy Tale and Myth in Mahy's *The Changeover* and *The Tricksters*" (1991), Michael Pohl's MA thesis, "Classical Myth and Margaret Mahy's Young Adult Fiction" (2010), and Catherine Proffitt's MA thesis, "Margaret Mahy and the Golden Age of Children's Literature" (2011).

In her adulthood, Mahy became a solo-mother writer, so was deeply concerned about women's living conditions. Many of Mahy's female characters are endowed with her own resilience and perseverance. As I claimed in my 2020 article, Mahy's fascination with androgynous characters delivers a gesture to throw off the shackles of gender norms. A good example demonstrating Mahy's liberative view on gender is *The Changeover*, which according to Adam Berkin, serves as "a stepping stone to a feminist literary awareness" (250). Berkin also notes that the reversal of gender roles in Mahy's novel is "natural and appropriate," as opposed to "many feminist fairy tales" which "confront us and shock us into awareness" (250). Or, as Duder summarizes it, Mahy's feminism is "deeply felt but subtle" (101). Another study on Mahy's feminism is Lorinda B. Cohoon's "Pirate Parenting in Margaret Mahy's Middle-Grade Readers" (2005). Cohoon "[combines] feminist analysis and queer theory with Bakhtinian discussions of the carnivalesque," showing how Mahy's middle-grade texts, *The Pirate Uncle* and *Tingleberries, Tuckertubs and Telephones*, "expand conventional representations of parenting to explore expressions of sexual identity and gender roles" (84). A more recent essay in this vein comes from Roberta Seelinger Trites. In "Margaret Mahy: Embodying Feminism" (2014), Trites investigates three of Mahy's YA books, *The Changeover*, *Dangerous Spaces* and *Kaitangata Twitch*, discussing how Mahy "invites her reader to question

what it means to be female, what it means to be sexualized" (148). As Trites concludes, "[a]lthough Mahy offers her readers no easy answers to these questions, she makes clear how central issues of embodiment are to feminist thinking" (148). The feminist perspective of Mahy's fiction, especially her portrayal of resilient females (who often appear as economically and/or socially marginalized), points to a thematic interest in trauma, since according to the psychologists Martha Kent and Mary C. Davis, "resilience and traumatic experiences both occurred in the same extreme environments" (qtd. in Kent et al. xvii).

Indeed, many critics have recognized that Mahy's YA books tend to invoke psychology, including psychoanalysis. Mahy's psychological modes, most likely suggestive of Freudian, Jungian, and Adlerian analysis, might have been shaped in the 1950s, when she attended university as an arts student first in Auckland and then Christchurch. I will talk about Freud in more detail later; we now focus on other psychological studies that have influenced critical analyses of Mahy's writing. In "*The Changeover*, A Fantasy of Opposites" (1992), Josephine Raburn employs what Carl Jung has theorised as the cyclical nature of the world, examining how *The Changeover*, like "Jung's world, […] delicately balances opposites into undivided wholes" (27). Another discussion taking a psychological approach is Saskia Voorendt's 2007 MA thesis, "Method to Her Madness: Abnormal Psychology in Margaret Mahy's Young Adult Fiction," which, as I shall discuss soon, contributes significantly to establishing the critical foundation for the subsequent studies on the treatment of trauma in Mahy's YA books. In the essay anthology *Marvellous Codes: The Fiction of Margaret Mahy* (2005), both Anna Smith and Claudia Marquis deliver psychoanalytical readings of Mahy's fiction to explore the notion of adolescence. In "Margaret Mahy: An Adlerian Reading" (2008), Kathryn Walls, applying Adler's Individual Psychology, provides a convincing conclusion that the young protagonists are "liberated from their inferiority complexes not by any […] superiority, but to use an Adlerian term, by their identification with their 'fellow men'" (197). In her later critical discussion of *The Changeover*, Walls explores the novel's interplay of supernatural elements and psychological interpretation, arguing that "Laura's notion of Braque as lemure is a projection and thus a delusion" ("Generic" 71).

In regards to Mahy's treatment of psychological trauma, three recent studies deserve our special attention. In her MA thesis, Voorendt argues that "[a]bnormal psychology is in fact the basis

of several Mahy's novels" (iv), and elaborates on how "Mahy projects her characters' traumatised states" with recourse to the device of "externalisation" (108): "the stories (including setting, character, and incident)" externalise "the disturbed inner landscapes that the novels explore" (iv). Drawing on what Voorendt labels as "externalisation," Pohl points out in his reading of *The Tricksters*: "[t]he presence of the supernatural is always very understated, and always occurs in conjunction with, or even in the background of, some psychological trauma […] that the protagonist is undergoing" (50). As Pohl goes on to comment, Harry's trauma of being overshadowed by her domineering older sister, Christobel, is manifested as the hostile confrontation between Harry and the most dominant trickster, Ovid (50). Most recently, in her article "The Generic Ambiguity of Margaret Mahy's *The Changeover*" (2016), Walls sets out to examine the psychological challenges of the young characters in the novel: while Laura (the female protagonist) "resorts to the defense mechanisms of displacement and projection as proposed by psychoanalytic theory" to cope with her inner insecurities (66), her little brother, Jacko, might fall victim to "[d]epression in early childhood" (68). As Walls further notes, Sorensen (the male protagonist), "traumatized by the beatings inflicted upon him by his unhappy foster father […], explains to Laura that he has been through a course of psychotherapy in Sydney" (65).[5] But while the three studies are concerned with the influence of trauma on Mahy's characters, they mainly discuss the major characters' individual psychological issues. My own study takes it further by looking at how Mahy uses her protagonists and other supporting characters to weave an intricate web of trauma. I will also pay attention to how Mahy's narrative techniques reflect her complex conceptualisation of trauma.

As I said earlier, in addition to psychology, post-colonial readings constitute an important part of Mahy criticism. While some commentaries, such as Sarah Fiona Winters's essay "Aliens in the Landscape: Maori Space and European Time in Margaret Mahy's Fiction" (2008) and Anna Jackson's chapter "Englishness" (2011), explore how Mahy represents the cultural influence of colonialism, other critical discussions draw attention to Mahy's assertion of her New Zealand identity. Consistent with Mahy's statement that "[t]he English language is mine, and disconcertingly,

[5] In her 2016 paper, Walls similarly draws on Voorendt's thesis, noting that "almost all of [Mahy's] protagonists are, as Saskia Voorendt has demonstrated, in psychological crisis and are thus untrustworthy witnesses" (70).

so was the powerful and beautiful English tradition. But I was not English" (qtd. in Duder 165), several studies examine the New Zealandness of her writing, as exemplified by Diane Hebley's "'A Fertility and Felicity and Ferocity of Invention': New Zealand Landscapes in Margaret Mahy's Young Adult Novels" (2005), Clare Bradford's "Made in New Zealand: Place and Enchantment in Margaret Mahy's Picture Books" (2014), and Adrienne E. Gavin's "Becoming New Zealand Writers: Margaret Mahy and *The Tricksters*' Harry Hamilton" (2015). The post-colonial strand of Mahy scholarship provides a critical context for my examination of historical trauma in her fiction, but none of these studies focuses on the ecological dimension of colonial trauma, to be discussed in my third chapter.

While postcolonial ecocriticism will contribute greatly to my thesis, trauma theory is the cornerstone. As stated earlier, Freud made a notable contribution to trauma studies by separating the psychic from the physical dimension. Indeed, Freud is acknowledged as a founding figure in the history of the conceptualization of trauma" (Leys 18). But it is equally important to keep in mind that the Freudian theoretical frame, especially its overemphasis on "sexual drives in the origin of the neuroses," has been discredited by a number of physicians, despite their approval of "Freud's ideas about psychogenesis for guidance in the analysis and treatment of the war neuroses" (22). Moreover, Freud's "ambivalence regarding the significance of the historical event" is problematised by Berger:

> The chief problem with *Moses and Monotheism*, it seems to me, is its overreliance on the mythical, oedipal anthropology of *Totem and Taboo*. All *historical* traumas are seen ultimately as repetitions of a 'phylogenetic' ur-trauma, the murder of the primal father—an interpretation which, in addition to being fanciful, […] discredits the event, whether in a personal or a social history, in favor of some all-encompassing instinctual biological determination. ("Trauma and Literary Theory" 570)

As a hint of Freud's recognition of the flaws in his own theory, he is said to have "modified his initial hypothesis, in particular, coming to doubt the reality of at least some of the scenes of childhood seduction whose existence he had once postulated as necessary" (Most 456). While

bearing in mind the pitfalls of Freud's understanding of trauma, we cannot deny the fact that "his work is the unavoidable foundation for theories of trauma, and this is undoubtedly the case for cultural studies" (Luckhurst, *Trauma Question* 8). In his study "Emotion, Memory, and Trauma" (2009), Glenn W. Most reminds us that "repression" and "deferral" are among the basic concepts which dominated Freud's lifelong thinking on the subject of childhood trauma. On the mechanism of repression, Most writes: "A trauma is not forgotten but repressed. It is removed from consciousness, yet does not in the least thereby cease to exist. Instead, it persists in the unconscious, continues to produce effects, and can be called back into consciousness" (456). Of deferral, Most summarises: "Events produce effects not only when they occur, but also much later. A childhood experience may completely escape the child's conscious understanding at the time, but it remains latently powerful and can produce neurotic symptoms decades later" (456). Looking into subsequent trauma-focused cultural studies, Freud's imprint can be easily perceived.

While Jean-Francois Lyotard interprets modernity as a cultural symptom, a mode of haunting resulting from violent suppression (Luckhurst, *Trauma Question* 5), Caruth makes the most of trauma's latent power. In an early 1990s article, Caruth claims that "[t]he pathology consists […] solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the [traumatic] event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it" ("Introduction" 3). In her influential book, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), Caruth further develops the idea of belatedness, proposing that "[t]raumatic experience […] suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness" (91-2). It is important to note that Freud's concept of repression also contributes greatly to theories of intergenerational trauma. As Nicholas Abraham points out in "Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology (1987), "[t]he phantom is a formation of the unconscious that has never been conscious […]. It passes […] from the parent's unconscious into the child's" (289). In other words, what remains repressed haunts the parent, giving rise to a distorted mode of interaction with the child, who ends up being infected with the trauma of the older generation.

The mechanism of repression entails a catalogue of traumatic consequences, one of which is silencing oneself. "To describe people as traumatized," states Kai Erikson, "is to say that they have withdrawn into a kind of protective envelope, a place of mute, aching loneliness" (186). Given trauma's close connection to silence, trauma theories tend to rely on words to restore the damaged psyche. For example, as Josef Breuer and Freud propound in "On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication" (1893), "*when the patient had described that event in the greatest possible detail and had put the affect into words*," s/he should be on the way to recuperation (6). Similarly, as Caruth claims, "the transformation of the trauma into a narrative memory that allows the story to be verbalized and communicated" is essential to healing, and this transformation enables the patient to "tell a 'slightly different story' to different people" in different social contexts, as opposed to trauma's unassimilated nature ("Introduction Recapturing" 153). Or as Abraham puts it, "to stage a word […] constitutes an attempt at exorcism, that is, an attempt to relieve the unconscious by placing the effects of the phantom in the social realm" (292). While trauma scholars give much credence to the therapeutic value of narrative, healing trauma is far too complex to be reduced to a choice of "to speak" or "not to speak."

Accordingly, we are introduced to the skeptical strand of theoretical framework of trauma theory, which "reads trauma as an aporia of representation, placing emphasis on difficulty, rupture and impossibility, consistently privileging aesthetic experimentation" (Luckhurst, *Trauma Question* 82-3). Prioritising the conflict between trauma's disrupted temporality and narrative's diachronic nature, Lyotard contends that "any attempt to lay this ghostly traumatic trace is a form of tyranny or totalization" (qtd. in Luckhurst, *Trauma Question* 81). Siding with this "ethical turn [given] by Lyotard" (81), Caruth suggests that "the shock of traumatic sight reveals at the heart of human subjectivity not so much an epistemological, but rather what can be defined as an *ethical* relation to the real" (*Unclaimed* 92). In addition to the ethical issue of representing trauma, the danger of transmission, as the Cornell critic Dominick LaCapra observes of trauma narrative, deserves our attention. Considering that psychoanalytical therapy, or talking cure, could entail transference of traumatic memory, LaCapra cautiously differentiates empathy, an understanding characterised by one's critical attitude, from over-identification, which can lead to "surrogate victimage" (211). Simply put, language wields paradoxical power, in its capability of healing and passing on trauma.

Despite the valid concern about the limits and side effects of narrative as a cure, "[r]epeatedly, there is the claim that psychoanalysis and literature are particularly privileged forms of writing that can attend to these perplexing paradoxes of trauma" (Luckhurst, *Trauma Question* 5). Indeed, although Caruth sees trauma as "a crisis of representation, of history and truth, and of narrative time" (5), she affirms that literature has excellent potential for conveying unspeakable, traumatic events. "For Caruth," notes Whitehead, "literary fiction plays a crucial role in providing the reader with a narrative which is not straightforwardly referential, but which nevertheless offers a powerful mode of access to history and memory" (*Trauma Fiction* 13). Likewise, LaCapra not just warns us against over-identification, but also acknowledges transference as "the occasion for working through the traumatic symptom" (Berger, "Trauma and Literary Theory" 576). As Berger explains, "[t]ransference in psychoanalysis is itself a return of the repressed, or rather a more conscious summoning of the repressed; transference repeats or acts out a past event or relationship in a new, therapeutic setting that allows for critical evaluation and change" (576). The positive value of transference is also approved by the psychoanalyst A. Modell, who "considers that at the core of healing in the therapeutic relationship is the fact that 'Affects are communicative and contagious, so that the other person is involved in the affective repetition and will collude, either consciously, or unconsciously, in confirming or discontinuing the subject's category of perception'" (qtd. in van der Kolk and van der Hart 179). These scholars have discerned opportunities for healing in the paradoxical agency of language, supporting Luckhurst's claim that "if trauma is a crisis in representation, then this generates narrative *possibility* just as much as *impossibility*" (*Trauma Question* 83; emphasis original).

As I stated earlier, healing trauma is by no means a choice of "to speak" or "not to speak"; rather, it is a matter of "how to speak," or in Luckhurst's words, how to "[generate] narrative *possibility*." In *A Double Dying: Reflections on Holocaust Literature* (1980), Alvin H. Rosenfeld poses the question: "Physical injury, visual impairment, linguistic incapacity, the moral discouragements of listener lassitude and reader reluctance – what kind of literature can develop against such extreme countervailing forces?" (qtd. in Crockett 3). "A literature of fragments, of partial and provisional forms" is Rosenfeld's answer (3). Mahy's fiction epitomises this type of literature, because nearly all her novels depict some deferred yet powerful symptoms, following the

repression of trauma. In Mahy's fantasy texts, fragmented temporality often takes the form of unavenged phantoms haunting the present, as exemplified by *The Haunting* and *The Tricksters*. In *Maddigan's Fantasia*, the temporality is further complicated, because the present is haunted by both the past and the future. At the novel's opening, we are introduced to three time-travellers, fleeing to the present from the future world ruled by a Hitler-like leader. As one of the travellers admits, "we might be half-ghosts in one way" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 47). In Mahy's realist fiction, literal ghosts are replaced by their pathological counterparts: the protagonists of *Memory* and *Twenty-four Hours*, for example, suffer recurring flashbacks to their traumatic experiences. What Rosenfeld notes as "provisional forms" might correspond to the device of dream/nightmare, which suspends Mahy's characters in a liminal status, as in the cases of *Dangerous Spaces* and *Kaitangata Twitch*. As Freud writes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, "dreams are derived from the past in every sense. Nevertheless the ancient belief that dreams foretell the future is not wholly devoid of truth" (615). In other words, dream can manifest an unresolved past and offer potential for solution. It is hardly surprising that in both *Dangerous Spaces* and *Kaitangata Twitch*, rescues take place in the climactic dream scene.

Yet, consistent with the strand of trauma studies affirming narrative's healing power, it is discourse that serves as the more common cure for trauma in Mahy's fiction. For example, in the denouement of *The Haunting*, Troy Palmer, a silent girl initially, talks on and on in front of the whole family, revealing not only her repressed identity as a magician but also the unresolved past of her anti-witchcraft great-grandmother. Similarly, in *The Tricksters*, the introverted Harry finally verbalises her feelings before the gathered family, confiding her indignation at being overshadowed by her older sister Christobel and disclosing the secret of their father's sexual scandal. Harry's talk is recuperative in a double sense. In addition to driving away the ghost visitors, the revelation further reverses her position as an underdog in sibling rivalry. Looking up to her parents as a paragon couple, the dominant Christobel is now shocked and crestfallen. Likewise, Hero Rapper, the heroine of *The Other Side of Silence*, breaks her silence by calling out loud for rescue at the novel's end, and she writes down her experience as a selective mute in later years. As *Twenty-four Hours* draws to a close, the orphan Ursa Hammond transforms her traumatic memory into narrative memory, telling the protagonist Ellis Hudson about her family tragedy and her subsequent life struggles.

As a manifestation of Mahy's ingenuity, narrative as cure further operates on a figurative level. Decorative art, for example, can be a metaphor for writing, hence the portrayal of the tattooist culturallin *Twenty-four Hours.* While Phipps's obsession with tattooing results from his trauma of losing land ownership, it helps him gain imaginary control over his environment. Moreover, in Phipps's case, there is a suggested analogy between tattooing body and marking property. Mahy plays the body motif in many a way. Most notably, aligned with "dance scholarship in literature, [which argues] that the dancing body was seen as a readable text" (Gilchrist 213), the dance of Mahy's characters at the end of some novels, like *Memory, Dangerous Spaces,* and *Kaitangata Twitch,* seems to be equivalent to the writing of the body, adding a visual impact to the healing achieved by discourse.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that Mahy is aware of the detrimental effect words can exert on people. In "'True-seeming lyes' in Margaret Mahy's Fiction" (2005), Kathryn Walls discusses three of Mahy's novels, *The Catalogue of the Universe, Aliens in the Family* (1986), and *Memory,* concluding that these texts "embody a disapproval of lying" (165). Indeed, lying, or warped storytelling, recurs in Mahy's fiction; this type of narrative cannot address the problem, only to further repress the trauma and compound the situation. Even truthful storytelling can be a medium for trauma transmission, as will be discussed in my first chapter.

The prevalence of traumatised figures in Mahy's books suggests a possibility of trauma's communicability. This is the focus of my first and second chapter. The opening chapter discusses Mahy's treatment of intergenerational trauma, and more specifically, how trauma is transmitted vertically from grand-parental figures to their descendants. In Mahy's fantasy novels, intergenerational trauma finds expression in haunting and ghosts. In Mahy's realist fiction, the supernatural devices are removed, but grand-parental figures similarly exert a negative influence on the youngest generation. In my second chapter, I move on to investigate the pattern which I call "intersecting trauma," namely the horizontal connectedness of trauma between contemporaries within a larger, communal body. My primary interest lies in the pivotal role of place for constructing the intersection: the place at the centre of each selected story allows the traumatised people to meet whereby their present interaction brings the unresolved past to the fore. As in the preceding chapter,

my examination of intersecting trauma is structured around the division between realist and fantastical representations.

Whilst the first half of my thesis deals with Mahy's treatment of individual trauma, the second half revolves around Mahy's concern with collective trauma. Following the second chapter on intersecting trauma in the community, my third chapter continues to expand the scope, looking at the representation of New Zealand's historical trauma through a postcolonial ecocritical lens. We tend to think of colonialism as a phenomenon that traumatises people, but Mahy anthropomorphises nature to expose the environmental harm done by anthropocentric colonial practices, while the traumatisation of people seems to be left in the background. The highlighted ecological dimension in her work, as I propose, belongs to Mahy's larger project of avoiding tackling colonial trauma head-on. My last chapter shifts from the domestic to the international politics, examining Mahy's reflection of disastrous events which took place in more recent global history. In particular, I will discuss how Mahy represents the political trauma of totalitarianism and war trauma in the novels published during her final years. The four chapters together show the depth and complexity of Mahy's treatment of trauma in her YA fiction.

Here, it might be useful to explain why a thematic approach to Mahy's fiction is preferred over a chronological one. As a manifestation of her complex treatment of trauma, Mahy tends to include various types of trauma in one single text. By structuring Mahy's work thematically, I hope to look at each strand of trauma as closely as possible. Take *The Tricksters* for example. Labeled as "[Mahy's] most complex novel" (Duder 118), *The Tricksters* deals with three types of trauma. While my study will discuss the representation of intergenerational trauma and colonial trauma, Walls's noting of "the failings of Mahy's two father figures" in this book points to the intersection of traumas from two separate families ("Biblical" 91). Due to the limitation of writing space, it is understandable that some types of trauma are given more attention, while others have to stay in the narrative's background, waiting to be explored fully at another time. Since Mahy's work is often haunted by too many layers of meanings, the way she writes might be compared to the dynamics of trauma: what remains unresolved recurs under the workings of latency and repetitive compulsion. My thematic approach aims at putting together Mahy's different representations of one type of

trauma, while also noting the place of each separate novel that contributes to forming the mosaic of trauma.

Thanks to her neat handling of the subject, we do not feel overwhelmed while reading Mahy's trauma-ridden narratives. It is a perfect demonstration of what Sam Hester has characterized as Mahy's warm-hearted authorial persona (173). "To get a true picture of ourselves," says Mahy, "we are increasingly required to understand ourselves as points of tension in a field of opposites, to acknowledge and cope emotionally with paradox" (Duder 143). Trauma, indeed, is a paradox: whatever attempt we make to avoid a head-on confrontation, trauma comes as a blow and the tension created by its haunting power disrupts the workings of our psyche. Yet, the psyche is also a creative space. As Mahy writes, "[t]he definition of imagination which I prefer […] is not simply the power to create in the mind, images of things not present, but that it is the ability to deal creatively with reality, one of the definitions given by a dictionary" (143). Put simply, creativity can be a coping strategy, as aesthetic distance enabled by imagination has the potential to facilitate exploring a resolution. Mahy's belief in imagination as a kind of salvation could explain why her young characters are often observed to address trauma with recourse to talking and writing, as will be seen firstly in my chapter of intergenerational trauma.

Chapter One: Intergenerational Trauma

Introduction

Trauma is a key feature in Mahy's YA fiction. Many of her novels are so rife with trauma that not only the main characters, but also their relatives, friends and even enemies are traumatised. The prevalence of traumatised figures in Mahy's books suggests a possibility of trauma's communicability. Indeed, as Nancy Miller and Jason Tougaw state in their introduction to *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community* (2002), "[t]he term 'trauma' describes the experience of both victims—those who have suffered directly—and those who suffer with them, or through them, or for them" (2). The closest work to exploring the topic of trauma transmission in Mahy's work comes from Kathy Saunders, who argues in "Setting Free: Margaret Mahy and Disability" (2005) that the disabled/ill parents featured in Mahy's fiction all have an adverse effect on their teenage children (119). While Mahy's parental figures often play a role in causing/compounding young people's trauma, it is the grand-parental figures, as we shall see, that turn out to be the underlying source of transmission. In this chapter, I will focus on how trauma is transmitted vertically from grand-parental figures to the youngest children. I will begin by examining the representation of intergenerational trauma in Mahy's fantasy novels, where family phantoms act as a metaphor for the ancestors' unresolved past. The key texts to be discussed are *The Haunting* (1982), *The Tricksters* (1986) and *Dangerous Spaces* (1991). I will then move on to Mahy's realist debut, *The Catalogue of the Universe* (1985), looking at how a ruthless grandmother damages the life of the youngest generation. My first chapter concludes with contextualising the fantasy/realism distinction in Mahy's treatment of intergenerational trauma.

Intergenerational Trauma in Mahy's Fantasy Novels

The Haunting

Mahy's YA debut, *The Haunting*, is a highly complex domestic novel, providing a rich seam of intergenerational trauma. The story features three Palmer children, Troy, Tabitha, and Barney, as the main characters. Their mother, Dove, lost her life in childbirth, so the Palmer children are now living with their father, John, and their stepmother Claire. Aside from the Palmers, the text introduces to us another household, the Scholars, Dove's family. The Scholars are a big family: Great-Grandma Scholar, Grandpa and Grandma Scholar (Dove's parents), and four great-uncles (Great-Uncle Guy, Great-Uncle Alberic, Great-Uncle Barnaby, Great-Uncle Cole). When the story begins, Great-Uncle Barnaby is dead, so the Palmers all come to condole with the Scholars. We are also informed that Great-Uncle Cole is believed to have died in his boyhood.

Given the three deaths introduced early on, it is not surprising that the novel opens with Barney's knowledge that "he was about to be haunted again" (Mahy, *Haunting* 1). In the first half of the book, several plausible reasons lead us to a psychological interpretation as the cause of this haunting. Barney is haunted by intense feelings of guilt, because Dove died when giving birth to him. The key trauma of parental loss is further compounded by other traumatic conditions: John's detached relationship with his children, and Barney's worries about the pregnancy of the loving Claire. Yet, these explanations turn out to be a red herring. We learn from the latter half of the novel that Barney is haunted by the 'ghost' of Great-Uncle Cole, who turns out to be alive. Cole is a born magician, and so his 'ghost,' more precisely speaking, is a magically empowered presence.

Cole's haunting of Barney is symptomatic of the Scholars' unresolved family history. It transpires that Great-Grandma Scholar has hated and persecuted people with magical abilities, hence her traumatic relationship with Cole. Failing to wipe out the child Cole's special talent, the frustrated mother began to punish him cruelly. Cole fled her persecution after the demise of his loving father. Soon, a boy's body was found in the river, identified by Great-Grandma as her runaway child. But Cole is not only alive, he also kept in touch with his favourite brother, Barnaby. It is not until

Barnaby's death that Cole begins to feel lonely and haunts his great-nephew Barney. Since Barney's christened name is Barnaby (3), we may infer that Cole, through haunting his great-nephew, envisages maintaining a kind of connection with the dead Barnaby. More important than seeking psychological relief, Cole chooses Barney on the presumption that the boy is a magician, just like himself. Traumatised by his unhappy childhood, Cole plans to take Barney away, before Great-Grandma persecutes the boy. As Cole tells Barney via telepathy, "there's no place in a family for people like us. It is a discovery we all make" (37).

Later, we come to realize that Cole's haunting of Barney is a clumsy attempt to make friends with him, but the unwitting boy is badly traumatised, first frightened to a faint and then unsettled by his speculation about Cole's "need and purpose" (49). More gravely, as Barney's haunting experiences increase in frequency, the boy is observed to have a "haunted" look:

> His face was clear and pale as if it were beginning to be transparent, but the skin under his eyes was dark, almost bruised. Every now and then something strange happened to his eyes. They seemed caught in a glare of light that no one else could see, flooded with a brightness they could not stand. […] Barney seemed to falter all over. Once he stared at his cornflakes as if they were moving around the table, then dipped at them with his spoon quite missing the dish. (51)

With Cole's haunting of Barney taking place in the foreground, we see how trauma is transmitted from the great-uncle to the great-nephew. However, the ultimate traumatiser turns out to be Great-Grandma Scholar,[6] whose story stays in the background, at a more distant time. We shall see that her unsolved childhood trauma plays a crucial part in causing Barney's suffering.

As revealed at the novel's close, Great-Grandma was a magician, but has eradicated her magical power, because she could not come to terms with her perpetrator trauma. She committed a magically empowered atrocity in her childhood, purposefully burning her sister's hair out of

6 Throughout the story, we are never informed of the old lady's given name, and she is addressed consistently as Great-Grandma Scholar. The emphasis on the surname implies that she is an oppressive figure in the household.

jealousy. Traumatised by feelings of guilt and shame, Great-Grandma repressed her magician-self and eventually killed it. Great-Grandma's self-repression entails her hatred against other magicians, including her own son. As the psychologist Doris Brothers writes in an article on intergenerational trauma, "some trauma-generated attachment patterns arise out of the need by traumatized parents to deny differences between themselves and one or more of their children" (8). This could be a description of the traumatic mother-and-son relationship in *The Haunting*: Great-Grandma "hoped to bring Cole into line" with her non-magician sons (Mahy 65), and by extension, with herself who has lost her magical talent.

Great-Grandma's denial of Cole's difference is further demonstrated by her egocentric belief that "he could give up being a magician if he set his mind to it and that it was only a sort of wicked stubbornness that made him cling to his powers" (65-6). However, Great-Grandma's charge of her son's wickedness proves to be false, since Cole only used his magical power to entertain his family members. As Great-Uncle Guy recalls of Cole's amusing trick, "you'd go in for dinner and find a table fifteen-feet long covered with roasted peacocks and sucking pigs, toppling jellies, trifles, boar's heads, puddings, and pancakes burning in brandy—all a sort of joke" (66-7). In addition to her vicious slander on Cole's good-natured banter, Great-Grandma lied to her children that only males in the family would inherit magical power (64), in the hope of putting a further gloss on her unresolved past.

The falsehood becomes the immediate cause for the haunting experiences of Barney, the only boy in the youngest generation. As Barney later confides his anxieties to his father, "Cole […] thinks I'm the same sort of person that he is, but I'm not. I know I'm not. But he doesn't believe me" (90). In the narrative's foreground, Barney's interaction with Great-Grandma also compounds his psychological fragility. Unsettled by her insensitive remark that "Dove died when this one was born" (20), Barney throw himself into a torment of self-blame. He asks himself, "if your mother died when you were born, did that make you in some way a murderer?" (25).

Great-Grandma's repression of magic adversely influences not only Barney but also his older sisters. I now turn to Troy, the oldest Palmer girl. As will be found out surprisingly in the end, Troy is the family magician, but remains suppressed and silenced for the bulk of the story. As Troy expresses it in a self-mocking manner, "[b]etter to be like me and tell only lies" (29). In one of the

novel's final episodes, Troy reveals that she is able to telepathize, hence her access to the inherited "memories from all the Scholar magicians" (120). As Troy says to Cole, "[w]hat I remember most about you is the wooden toys you used to make and that Great-Granny was always finding them and burning them" (120). The revelation almost could be seen as a narrative prototype of Marianne Hirsch's notable concept, "postmemory."[7] The term, as defined in Hirsch's seminal book, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (2012), "describes the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up" (5). Or as Seo-Young Chu summarises it, "children of Holocaust survivors often 'remember' a tragedy they did not experience firsthand," and "this form of intergenerational remembrance […] is at once virtual and real, secondhand and familiar, long ago and present" (71). While examining the representation of postmemory in Korean American literature, Chu argues that "science-fiction is singularly equipped to accommodate the contradictions and spatial-temporal discontinuities that make postmemory so elusive a referent" (189). What Chu notes as the science-fictional representation of intergenerational memory could help us better understand Troy's case, in which the repressed family history is transmitted via telepathy.

Whereas Troy's decision of concealing her magical power until she reaches maturity is a self-defensive action, repressing her magician-self is traumatising. Troy is portrayed as a quiet girl, wearing a "still, inexpressive face" and hiding herself in the bedroom, a place described as "neat" but "somehow so mad" (Mahy, *Haunting* 78-9). On the Palmers' condoling visit to the Scholar house, Troy has to build up her defence at a higher level to escape Great-Grandma's detection. This time her face looks like "an empty house, windows sealed, doors locked" (20). As Anna Jackson remarks, Troy "has barely even left her room, and seems imprisoned even in her own body" ("Uncanny" 162). The sense of imprisonment duly reminds us of the siege of the city Troy. By

[7] In "Narrative Matters: Trauma Paradigms and the Role of Popular Culture" (2018), Roger Luckhurst argues convincingly that "psychological concepts and terminologies, and psychiatric diagnoses, are inevitably embedded in shifting cultural contexts" (296). For example, "the idea of the traumatic flashback appears first in film, the key instance being Alain Resnais's avant-garde film, *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1957)" (296). Although the term "postmemory" was formulated by Hirsch in the early 1990s, Troy's inherited memories might be seen as a kind of prototype of the concept.

comparison, the character Troy, in inheriting memories, is trapped in her ancestor's unresolved past. As if a projection of the transmitted trauma, there is a physical similarity between Great-Grandma and Troy: the "sudden sharpness" in Troy's eyes, as Barney observes, resembles "that on Great-Granny Scholar's face" (Mahy, *Haunting* 29-30).

Great-Grandma also negatively affects Troy's younger sister, Tabitha. In this case, trauma transmission is demonstrated by the parallels suggested between the two characters. Although Tabitha complains that Great-Grandma is "like a wall with furious swear words scribbled all over it" and "[v]isiting her is like having a long refreshing drink of vinegar" (11), Tabitha's manipulation of language shows her as a detached figure, which mirrors the unloving old lady. To justify her unwillingness to visit the Scholar house, Tabitha refutes Troy's statement that the Scholars "like seeing us," and then goes on to remark bitterly: "They must be mad! […] None of us is beautiful" (17). Similarly, Great-Grandma is unwilling to interact with the Palmer children. At the sight of them, Great-Grandma looks sulky, greeting them with "grim kisses in the centre of each forehead" and saying "disagreeable" words (20). The "brown, round Tabitha" (5) might be read as a comic version of the small-statured Great-Grandma, who according to Jackson, resembles an uncanny doll ("Uncanny" 163). In some way, Great-Grandma's repressive role is reflected by Tabitha's logomania, a contributor to the silence of Barney and Troy (Mahy, *Haunting* 12).

Tabitha's obsession with noting down people's misfortunes further indicates an inability to sympathise, recalling Great-Grandma's cruelty. Tabitha takes notes on Great-Uncle Barnaby's death, primarily because she wants to collect "good material" for her future novel (5). After Barney is scared to a faint, Tabitha seems to be oblivious to her brother's suffering: she "[watches] with interest" and takes on a "very businesslike" look (7). As explained later, Tabitha has written down Barney's haunting story and plans to have him sign it as testimony (9). While Tabitha is "a real pain" because she "never shuts up" (qtd. in Duder 173), we have to admit that she has a rebellious spirit, as exemplified by her critical comment that "[p]eople think being good and being quiet are the same thing in children" (Mahy, *Haunting* 21). Consistent with one character's response that "[s]he doesn't get that tongue from the Scholars" (21), Tabitha's affinity with language will contribute to healing intergenerational trauma.

Paradoxically, the cure derives from the symptom. This is an idea most notably championed by Dominick LaCapra, who proposes in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001) that writing trauma "involves processes of acting out, working over, and to some extent working through in analyzing and 'giving voice' to the past" (186). To put it differently, language, in its performative capacity, facilitates both processes of transmission and healing. Aligned with Jackson's observation that "Tabitha who has taken action […] has succeeded in converting the uncanny into the familiar" ("Uncanny" 162), this loquacious character emerges to be a central, therapeutic figure. At the end of *The Haunting*, Great-Grandma remains uncommunicative at one level, but it is suggested that intergenerational trauma receives treatment through the agency of Tabitha, a comic version of the old lady. Though initially portrayed as a quasi-double for the cold-hearted Great-Grandma, Tabitha learns to use words kindly in the course of the story, hence her expression of sympathy for the old lady at the novel's close: "I don't mind hugging you a bit because you're so little and miserable and nobody agrees with you" (Mahy, *Haunting* 123). Tabitha's self-proclaimed profession, "the family novelist" (5), provides a channel for healing Cole's damaged psyche. She is working on her new book, entitled *Ghosts and Magicians*, "to be devoted especially to Great-Uncle Cole" (127). Tabitha's major recuperative significance seems to hint at Mahy's realist stance on treating trauma: the character is endowed with rhetorical power, as opposed to magical power.

While Tabitha works towards taming her tongue, Barney and Troy learn to express themselves more confidently. With the repressed family history coming to light, Barney's fear dissolves so that he becomes more talkative, suggesting kindly that Cole should learn "[h]ow to be a great-uncle and a magician as well" (129). Likewise, Troy frees herself from the influence of Great-Grandma, with a confident assertion that she is "a Palmer magician" (118). The emphasis on the name of a different household conveys the message that the traumatic bond between the Scholars and the Palmers is now broken.

The Tricksters

Similar to *The Haunting, The Tricksters* is chronologically double-layered. In the narrative's foreground, Ariadne (Harry) Hamilton, the seventeen-year-old female protagonist, and her family all gather at their holiday house, Carnival's Hide, to celebrate Christmas. Although the novel unfolds against a festive backdrop, the reader quickly learns that Harry, already traumatised by sibling rivalry, is further unsettled by her father's affair with a family friend. It is a secret only known to a few family members. At Carnival's Hide, the Hamiltons entertain several guests. One of them is Anthony Hesketh, a young Englishman coming to New Zealand on a forestry fellowship. Soon, the guest group expands, as a trio of tricksters turn up. They proclaim themselves the descendants of Edward Carnival, the English settler who built Carnival's Hide about a century ago. With recourse to their stunning tricks and clever words, the Carnival brothers (Ovid, Hadfield, and Felix) earn themselves the permission to stay on as Christmas guests. We could anticipate that something unusual will happen, because Harry is privately writing a gothic romance in which the main characters strikingly resemble the three tricksters. As the story progresses, Harry and Felix fall in love with each other, but the Carnival brothers later conspire against the heroine, tricking her into releasing the secret of her father's infidelity. The revelation initially disrupts the peace in the family, but brings about a therapeutic result on the whole.

Considered as Mahy's most complex novel, *The Tricksters* draws together the unresolved trauma of two households, the Hamiltons and the Carnivals, and New Zealand's colonial past. The Englishness pervading the novel's beginning signifies a thematic concern of colonial trauma, which will be discussed in my third chapter. Living up to its critically acclaimed complexity, *The Tricksters* represents Harry's problem in a sophiscated manner. On the one hand, the heroine's trauma is inseperable from the Hamiltons' family drama (sibling rivalry and the father's infidelity). On the other hand, Harry's problem finds expression in the open hostility between her and Ovid, the double of Harry's dominant sister (Pohl 50). Interestingly, while the portrayal of the three tricksters contributes to acting out Harry's trauma, the heroine's interaction with the trio also facilitates

uncovering the repressed history of the Carnivals. But it is the English visitor Anthony who plays a much more central role in eliciting this lurid backstory, the unavenged murder of Teddy Carnival.

It turns out that the trickster trio is the tripartite ghost of Teddy, who was murdered by his father Edward at Carnival's Hide. Teddy's death only offers a glimpse of the Carnival children's tragic fate. We are also told that Teddy and his sister, Minerva, suffered a painful childhood, which resulted from Edward's pedagogy. Traumatised by the loss of his wife who died in childbirth, Edward "felt such guilt it made him believe that he was at fault for loving" (Mahy, *Tricksters* 222). Therefore, repressing emotion in favour of rationality is a key feature of Edward's pedagogy, under the workings of which, Teddy grew up with a split psyche and was skilful in manipulation. To avenge his unhappiness, Teddy goaded Edward into killing him. The tragic story of the Carnivals is relayed to the Hamiltons by Anthony, who turns out to be Minerva's great-grandson. Unknown to Edward, Minerva happened to witness the atrocity of Teddy's murder. She returned to Britain with her father in due course, but having repressed her traumatic memories for a lifetime, Minerva grew insane in her old age. As Anthony recalls, she was often seen to talk with the dead as if they were alive (210). Minerva's psychiatric disorder could well fit into LaCapra's description of the traumatised, who tend to "relive the past, to be haunted by ghosts or even to exist in the present as if one were still fully in the past, with no distance from it" (142–3). One week before her death, Minerva confessed the murder committed by Edward to Anthony, who was then a small boy.

Because of Minerva's madness, the child Anthony struggled to believe her, but his desire to discover the truth eventually takes him to Carnival's Hide. It is important to note that with Minerva acting as an unreliable narrator, Anthony grew up thinking Carnival's Hide as "a real fairytale" (215). The phrase, "real fairytale," points to what Chu notes as the "virtual and real" quality of postmemory (71). In Mahy's fiction, while Troy inherits memories via telepathy, Anthony acquires postmemory through Minerva's storytelling.

Besides storytelling, trauma transmission is embodied in Anthony's resemblance to his ancestors. While Ruth P. Feingold observes the overlapping function of Anthony and the Carnival trio, pointing out "their roles as romantic provocateurs" (213) and "Christmas visitors, or ghosts" (215), my focus is on the shared cruelty of Minerva and Anthony. Like the great-grandmother who was harsh on Teddy at her young age (Mahy, *Tricksters* 210), the great-grandson treats his ex-

girlfriend ruthlessly (251). Losing interest in her, Anthony breakes off their engagement and escapes to New Zealand on the aforementioned forestry fellowship (214-5). The similarity between Minerva and Anthony is further underlined, when the great-grandson is captured acting his great-grandmother in his attempt to disentangle Hadfield and Felix from their fight:

> "That's *quite* enough!" someone said with tremendous authority. Hadfield froze. Ovid turned, his own lips parting on an unspoken reply. Felix, rolling clear, sat up in the salt water, blinking and overwhelmed, not by his brothers, but by something he heard in the voice. The speaker was Anthony Hesketh.
>
> "If you don't learn to behave, the Black King will never let you out in the world," Anthony told them. It was as if he were speaking to children, using someone else's words in someone else's voice. (200; emphasis original)

Anthony's words quickly end the clash; the self-indulgent Ovid even makes a brief apology for his brothers' lack of manners (200). The reason is offered a few pages later. The Black King refers to Edward (209), whom Anthony physically resembles a little (213). "That's *quite* enough!" is what Minerva used to say to her great-grandchildren when they were young. The phrase conveys her "very imperious style" so that the children would "all take notice" (214). Anthony's acting takes in the ghost brothers, thereby enhancing his resemblance to Minerva. To a certain extent, the role-playing recalls the archetypal plot of haunting, hence Felix's speculation: Teddy's ghost is summoned, for "there was a feeling of Minerva in the air" (224). Just as in *The Haunting*, Cole's haunting of Barney plays an indispensable part in making known intergenerational trauma, the phantom's intervention in *The Tricksters* also brings to light what remains repressed, thus offering a prospect of healing.

Whereas *The Haunting* shows the Palmer children as central healing figures, *The Tricksters* transcends the former pattern, attaching greater importance to the cooperation between the old and new generation. Drawing on Feingold's observation of the affinity between Anthony and the Carnival brothers, we could call them a quartet of tricksters. As William J. Hynes states in "Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters: A Heuristic Guide" (1997), the trickster is often regarded

as “a tinker or fix-it person, noted for his ingenuity in transforming anything at hand in order to form a creative solution” (42). In the course of the story, Anthony and Teddy’s tripartite ghost impress the reader as collaborating towards a joint solution. Most notably, they bring to Carnival’s Hide a pair of fantasy books, written by Teddy and Minerva when they were small children suffering Edward’s suppression. In this (meta)fictional world, Teddy and Minerva called themselves the Boy Enchanter and the Goddess of Wisdom respectively, and Edward, as mentioned above, was referred to as the Black King. The ghost brothers lead the way in conjuring up *Seven Ways to Outwit the Black King: Advice to Mortals by the Goddess of Wisdom and the Boy Enchanter*, spotted by Harry on the hallway table (Mahy, *Tricksters* 147). Then, Anthony, while telling Harry’s mother, Naomi, the stories of the Carnivals, presents the other work, *The Goddess of Wisdom and the Boy Enchanter*, which he has inherited from Minerva (208). Clearly, behind the veil of fantasy, the two books are trauma narratives. It is noteworthy that Anthony’s plan to donate his book to the local historical museum where Naomi works as an archivist raises the importance of testimony for working through trauma. “The testimony,” proposes Shoshana Felman in “Education and Crisis, or the Vicissitudes of Teaching” (1995), “will […] be understood […] as a mode of *access to*, that truth” (24; emphasis original). Thanks to Anthony and the Carnival trio, the childhood writings of Minerva and Teddy are brought together as “necessary testaments of the Carnivals’ secret history” (Feingold 222), but solutions to trauma extend to the verbal. Following Anthony’s storytelling, Felix confides in Harry the story of Teddy’s murder as if making a collaborative gesture (Mahy, *Tricksters* 222-4). The narrations form a kind of duet, which takes place right before Teddy’s tripartite ghost is restored into one piece and departs from the house: “Felix […] flung his arms protectively around his brothers, embracing them tightly—one arm over Ovid and one over Hadfield. […] They dissolved, they vanished” (234). Compared with *The Haunting*, *The Tricksters* lays emphasis on a collaborative cure to intergenerational trauma, which involves the work of both the ancestors and descendant in the Carnival household, and even the effort of two separate families. The joint mode of healing recurs in *Dangerous Spaces*, to which we are turning.

Dangerous Spaces

As in *The Haunting* and *The Tricksters*, the past and the present are intricately intertwined in *Dangerous Spaces*. The story features a pair of protagonists, Anthea and Flora Wakefield, both eleven years old. At the novel's opening, the reader is informed that Anthea, having lost her parents who died in a yachting accident, moves into her cousin Flora's family. In conjunction with her bereavement, Anthea has difficulty settling in, because her previous home was spacious and delicate, but the current one is crowded and messy. Anthea's surrogate parents, her uncle Lionel and her aunt Molly, are loving and considerate, although they sometimes argue. The reason remains the same: Molly gets impatient at Lionel's procrastination in renovating their home. It transpires that Lionel is affected by the ghost of his father, old Lionel, who built the house when he was alive. Old Lionel grew so attached to the place that his ghost has refused to leave. We have to admit that in this novel, family quarrels cannot count as a key trauma, but given the psychological finding that "adolescents who live with the stress of family conflict are prone to chronic emotional arousal and increased reactivity to other stressful events" (qtd. in Wilmshurst 586), we could consider the arguments between the Wakefield couple as a traumatic condition, aggravating Anthea's difficult situation.

Due to the trauma of bereavement and other more common stresses, Anthea grows desperate for space and solitude since her relocation. The wish is fulfilled in her dream: every night during her sleep, Anthea retreats into a vast, imaginary land called Viridian. It has a sea in the middle, with an island in the heart of the water. In Viridian, Anthea meets a young boy named Griff, who invites her to come to the central island with him. Griff turns out to be the ghost of Henry, old Lionel's younger brother. Although a dream scene, Viridian is fraught with dangers and threats, because it is a kind of limbo where Henry's ghost is stuck, and the island in the middle of the sea turns out to be an entry into the underworld. Too scared to go there alone, Griff wanders in Viridian, awaiting his brother's ghost, whom he calls Leo in this other world, to join the journey. However, old Lionel's ghost is preoccupied with haunting the Wakefield house. Since Leo fails to turn up, Griff's patience

is worn out; eager to move on, he inveigles Anthea into the journey to death. Consequently, from her access to Viridian onwards, Anthea shows suicidal tendencies during her sleepwalking.[8]

The intense foreground easily diverts our attention from the traumatic backstories of Henry and old Lionel, which emerge to be inseparable from Anthea's current severe situation. Though a great-uncle, Henry died at the age of ten, so had never met Anthea in real life. In Henry's very short life, he had little space, because the dominant older Lionel took up all. Unhappy and distressed, Henry had to build Viridian out of his imagination, seeking comfort from this fantasy land. Old Lionel was traumatised for a different reason: he had repressed his grief of losing his brother and separating from his sister. Retiring from his job as a doctor in the city, old Lionel returned to the country and expanded the family house. We learn that the poor man built his sadness into the house: the hidden sorrow was "told only to wood and tin, running down his arm and through his hammer and into the nails" (Mahy, *Dangerous* 149). Consistent with the analogy Flora draws between house and descendant (131),[9] old Lionel's traumatic memories have been passed on to the building and, by extension, the youngest generation of the family.

As early as the second chapter, the narrator offers a clue to the danger of storytelling as a vehicle for trauma transmission. It is made known that old Lionel used to tell Anthea stories about his past during her Christmastime visits:

> As he named these ghosts and told stories about the past, old Lionel would sometimes begin to cry. His voice would go on just as usual, but tears would spill out into the wrinkles around his eyes.
>
> "It's not that I'm sad," he had once declared, sounding impatient with himself, "I just remember too much." (12-3)

Despite the feigned calmness in old Lionel's voice, the tears betray his grief, and the statement that "I just remember too much" brings to mind the unassimilated nature of traumatic memory. As the

8 Voorendt offers a detailed discussion of Anthea's suicidal tendencies in the fifth chapter of her thesis, where she claims that "Viridian is associated not only with death, but specifically with suicidal death" (101).

9 The house/descendant analogy will be discussed in more detail, when I look at the healing of intergenerational trauma in the novel.

pioneering French psychologist Pierre Janet tells us, the traumatised tend to be "attached" to trauma, "as if their personality development has stopped at a certain point and cannot expand any more by the addition or assimilation of new elements" (qtd. in van der Kolk and van der Hart 164). This could be a depiction of old Lionel, who "had hated all changes except his own, had hated the new plantations of pines […]; he had hated the new houses along the road to the city, and the new people, new cars, and new dogs who lived in them" (Mahy, *Dangerous* 12).

Anthea's struggle of integrating with the new surroundings echoes her grandfather's hatred of change, evidence of trauma transmission. Anthea's difficulty in adapting herself to the foster family is depicted in a dramatic key-searching episode in the second chapter. Whereas Molly and Flora are busy helping Lionel look for his car keys, Anthea detaches herself from the bustling domestic scene, craving "a few minutes on her own" to dwell upon her dead parents (15). As the story develops, Anthea goes so far as to idealise the dead:

> If she had had a telescope Anthea believed she might even have been able to make out two slender, golden-brown people diving and swimming through the sunny water [of the Viridian sea]. It was just the sort of place her parents might have swum to. By now she felt as if her parents had always been beautiful merpeople, only accidentally on land. (79)

Anthea's fairy-tale vision of her lost parents could be a narrative description of George H. Pollack's diagnosis that "[i]dealization of the dead, which cannot be corrected by experience, is critical in making the mourning process pathogenic" (qtd. in Morrison 291). Indeed, as revealed by the novel's end, "those golden merpeople, laughing and sunbathing on their little, lost island" turn out to be "[Anthea's] own ghosts" (Mahy, *Dangerous* 146). In *Trauma and Memory: Brain and Body in a Search for the Living Past* (2015), Peter Levine claims: "The 'fixity' of imprints prevents us from forming new strategies and extracting new meanings. There is no fresh, ever-changing now and no real flow in life. In this way, *the past lives on in the present*" (7). In accordance with Levine's claim, the illusory comfort Anthea takes from her trauma-induced fantasy comes at the price of her interaction with the current surrogate family. The shared rejection of changes between Anthea and old Lionel signifies trauma transmission.

Mahy's three fantasy novels adopt a similar pattern in representing intergenerational trauma. Whereas the great-(grand)uncle acts as the haunting ghost in the narrative's foreground, the grand-parental figure transpires to be the source of trauma transmission. Moreover, in each text, transmission assumes a paradoxical power, initially compounding the situation but eventually leading to a solution. In *Dangerous Spaces*, Viridian works as such an agent of transmission, bringing together the traumas of the ancestors and descendant. Yet, Viridian facilitates a fantastical resolution to the crisis it has opened up, since Anthea's rescue takes place in this other world.

Like *The Tricksters*, *Dangerous Spaces* embraces the mode of collaborative working-through via narrative. In a dream scene, Flora converses with her grandfather's ghost, posing the question: "What's the use of worrying about the shape of the rooms when the people of the house are giving up and getting ready to go" (Mahy, *Dangerous* 130-1). "I'm your true house," Flora goes on to make the house/descendant analogy, "So's Anthea. Why go haunting wood and nails while the blood gets lost in nothing?" (131). Thanks to Flora's persuasion, old Lionel's ghost comes to realize its lingering as a fault, and so departs from the house. Together with the phantom, Flora enters Viridian, embarking on the rescue of Anthea:

> "We have to go to the island," [Leo] cried to [Flora], making a new voice for himself from the wind and the storm and the cry of the birds.
>
> "Is it far to the island?" asked Flora.
>
> "I know the way," called Leo, sounding both sad and triumphant. (133)

Contrasting old Lionel's hatred of changes, Leo's new voice signifies a positive turn, and duly prefigures the success of the rescue plan. When Leo and Flora arrive by the sea, Griff is trying to lure Anthea into boarding a rowing boat. The water and the boat are associated with the underworld, since they recall "the ancient Styx and […] Charon, the classical ferryman of the dead" respectively (Pohl 18). Leo's timely reunion with Griff saves Anthea from the grave danger of death, after which the ghost brothers set out on their belated journey. It is noteworthy that while Leo and Griff bid farewell and express their gratitude to Anthea and Flora, the descendants are captured "[waving]

but [making] no reply" (Mahy, *Dangerous* 143). The girls' response denotes a sense of closure, marking the end of trauma transmission.

As a follow-up demonstration of healing, Anthea and Flora, on their return to the real world, resolve to "light [their] own fire and find [their] own drift-wood" and "do [their] own dance" (153), which parallels what Leo and Griff are doing on the central island of the Viridian sea. The design of the doubling activities conveys the message that breaking the bond of intergenerational trauma and paying tribute to one's dead ancestors are not mutually exclusive. To complete the happy picture, we are told that the girls want "a funny story" rather than "[a] ghost story," because as Anthea suggests, "if you don't keep laughing, you get out of practice" (153-4). The reference made to the two types of story at the novel's end might serve as a reminder of storytelling's paradoxical agency: while celebrating the soothing, therapeutic power of "a funny story," Mahy seems to warn us against the contagious power of "[a] ghost story."

Intergenerational Trauma in Mahy's Realist Fiction

Introduction

"Family life," as Mahy once said, "is where you get your greatest blessings, but it's also the area where a lot of people sustain their greatest damage" (Interview with Edmond 106). In Mahy's fantasy novels, the damage one receives from his/her family finds expression in intergenerational haunting and ghosts. In Mahy's realist fiction, supernatural devices are excluded, but grand-parental figures similarly exert a negative influence on the youngest generation. For example, in Mahy's 1992 novella, *Underrunners*, a young character called Sylvia Collin is unsettled by her parents' "rocky marriage" (39) and the guilty feeling of being involved as a culprit. The self-accusing tendency seems to be an influence from Sylvia's grandmother, who tells the girl that "having children took the romance out of [Sylvia's parents'] marriage" (39). Likewise, in Mahy's 1994 realist novel, *The Other Side of Silence*, both parental and grand-parental figures prove to be responsible for the heroine Hero Rapper's selective mutism. Reading through the text, we learn that Hero's dominant mother holds the primary responsibility and Hero's opinionated grandmother compounds the situation. The sharp-tongued old lady often meddles in the affairs of Hero's family. While both Rappie and Sylvia's grandmother appear as minor characters, Mahy's 1985 realist debut, *The Catalogue of the Universe*, depicts in more detail how trauma is inflicted upon a grandchild by a cruel grandparent. To gain a fuller understanding of Mahy's negative portrayal of grand-parental figures in her realist fiction, we must look at this novel.

The Catalogue of the Universe

The Catalogue of the Universe features a pair of seventeen-year-old protagonists, Angela May and Tycho Potter. The main plot revolves around the development of their friendship into a romantic relationship. Angela has been raised by her unmarried mother, Dido May, who was abandoned by her wealthy but uncaring boyfriend, Roland Chase, at his discovery of her pregnancy. During Dido's stay in the maternity ward, she was told by the hospital staff that it was crucial for a child to be brought up in the love of both parents, so Dido lied to Angela about her past with Roland. In the warped version of the story, Dido fell in love with Roland, a married man, who eventually chose to leave his mistress under moral obligation. But they had Angela, in the hope of attesting to their true love for each other. Growing up believing Dido's romanticised story, Angela desires to meet her father. Having tracked down Roland's identity, she finds him in his office.

Angela's imagined happy reunion only descends into the traumatic situation of being rejected by Roland. Angela now comes to realize: Roland has never been married; Dido has never been loved; "she herself was just another accidental person who might have been aborted if abortions had been legally obtainable in the past" (Mahy, *Catalogue* 93). At the shocking discovery, Angela exhibits signs of being psychologically wounded:

> Something terrible was happening to her, something deep inside her had started to bleed so that she thought she could actually feel the blood come up into her mouth, thick as syrup and sour-tasting. For a second she wondered if her heart had actually broken, not because she had lost a father, but because at the same time she was also losing the mother she was used to. (93)

At first sight, Roland appears as the major culprit in causing Angela's trauma, but reading on, we will find that the arch-villain turns out to be Mrs Chase, Roland's mother.

Similar to Mahy's fantasy novels, *The Catalogue of the Universe* represents intergenerational trauma through an indirect route. It is not until the middle part of the novel that Mrs Chase makes a

very belated first appearance at Roland's office, which runs concurrently with Angela's visit. At the point of this unexpected encounter, the narrator offers a verbal portrait of Mrs Chase, diffusing clues to her cruel nature:

> But at that moment the door opened without a preliminary knock, and a glamorous, elderly woman sidled into the room, resplendent in a jade-green suit, her hair rinsed a rusty colour. Wonderful shoes softly embraced feet at the end of thin legs. Over one arm hung a squashy leather handbag, and on the end of the arm was a hand whose nails resembled oval drops of blood. This woman, skinny as a whippet, pointed a bright and dog-like face at Angela, then turned and pointed at Roland Chase, having given Angela a brief view of eyes made up with eyeliner, eye shadow and mascara and a mouth like a scarlet scar folded in on itself, the lips edged with tiny lines, fine as hairs into which the lipstick had run, blurring its outline slightly. (92)

The excerpt speaks volumes about the woman's unloving character. Mrs Chase's uninvited entry indicates a lack of respect for Roland's feelings, from which we could further infer a traumatic mother-and-son relationship. It emerges that Mrs Chase's intervention is the main cause for Roland's abandonment of Dido. In fact, Roland had wanted to marry Dido in the knowledge of her pregnancy, but Mrs Chase sent him away to Australia, for fear that the relationship would destroy her son's future; more gravely, she visited Dido afterwards, only to offer money for abortion (172-3). The backstory makes better sense of the juxtaposition of superficial glamour and uncanniness in Mrs Chase's portrayal: her nails are likened to blood drops and her mouth is compared to a scarlet scar. The analogies seem to associate her with the image of a murderous cannibal. Mrs Chase's small stature, as implied by her caricature as a skinny whippet, reminds us of the hardhearted, doll-like Great-Grandma Scholar. Just as in *The Haunting*, Great-Grandma acts as the source of trauma transmission, so also in *The Catalogue of the Universe*, Mrs Chase is largely responsible for Angela's suffering.

It is unsurprising then, that Mrs Chase's presence at Roland's office only worsens Angela's trauma. What follows hard on the heels of Roland's rejection is the heroine's discovery that she and

Mrs Chase share the name of Angela. This, again, harks back to *The Haunting*, in which name-sharing relates to trauma transmission.[10] The double blow causes a severe damage to Angela's psyche, and duly elicits what trauma theorists call the fight-or-flight response. Aligned with the psychologist Harry Stack Sullivan's view that disengaging oneself from devastating surroundings is "the most basic capacity of the human mind to protect its own stability" (qtd. in Jay 78), the flight reaction takes effect at first. Angela is portrayed as recalling Tycho's clever terms: "Try being enigmatic […]. Think of stars: say the name Aldebaran! Remember the moon's shadow racing across the world during a total eclipse. Don't lose your temper" (Mahy, *Catalogue* 94-5).

After Angela flees from Roland's office, the fighting mode takes over. She begins to fantasize a revenge tragedy of some sort:

> She would bleed to death out there in the open street, and Roland Chase would read about it next day in the paper and be stricken with remorse. No, he wouldn't; that was just a romantic notion. She'd have to live long enough to tell her story with her dying breath to the ambulance men who would, in turn, tell reporters. It would be in all the papers and everyone would despise him. His business associates would snub him … (98; ellipsis in original)

While "[bleeding] to death" signifies the severity of Angela's psychological wound, "[having] to live long enough to tell her story with her dying breath" denotes a sense of resilience. As Meg Jay propounds in *Supernormal: The Untold Story of Adversity and Resilience* (2018), "[r]ather than raging against another *person*, for supernormals, fighting the good fight is more often about battling back against a *situation*—poverty, discrimination, abuse, bullying, unfairness, abandonment—whatever the case may be" (63). Indeed, Angela is wrestling with a traumatic situation, although we have to admit that her fight has been so far confined to an imaginary realm. However, as is characteristic of Mahy, she will allow a solution in (fictional) reality: by the novel's end, Dido's maternal love and Tycho's romantic love work together to address the trauma that the Chases have inflicted upon Angela's psyche.

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10 In *The Haunting*, Barney's christened name is Barnaby, same as his dead great-uncle. As discussed previously, the name-sharing serves as a factor in causing Cole's haunting of Barney.

But Mahy as narrator is far too realistic to stop here. "Returning to the scene of the trauma," according to a group of psychologists, "is often recommended as part of trauma-focused cognitive-behavioural therapies for post-traumatic stress disorder" (Murray et al. 1). Given Mrs Chase's primary role in causing intergenerational trauma, she is expected to engage in the working-through process. The reconstruction of the original traumatic event takes place at the novel's close, in the form of a phone call the grandmother makes to the granddaughter. At first glance, the conversation suggests a possibility of reconciliation between the two generations, since Mrs Chase acknowledges herself as Angela's grandmother and admits to being responsible for the separation of Roland and Dido. Yet, the reader would soon detect that working-through is by no means an easy task. The chief reason for Mrs Chase to mend her fences with Angela transpires to be the girl's physical resemblance to Roland, so we cannot help suspecting that Mrs Chase is attempting to turn things to her advantage once again.

With Angela hanging up the phone "quickly and rather rudely" (Mahy, *Catalogue* 173), the road to recovery seems to be blocked, but Dido's revelation of what truly happened in the past saves the situation. The prospect of healing is indicated by a cheerful conversation about clock-making between the mother and the daughter. When Dido shows her interest in "[learning] how to make clocks," Angela "[likes] the thought" and says to her mother: "I'll help you […]. Not those sickly chiming clocks though. We'll make clocks that laugh and mutter to themselves. We'll be Old Mother Time and her everlasting daughter" (178-9). The image of clock deserves our attention, because trauma entails memory distortion and a disturbed sense of time. As Roger Lippin asserts in "Three Fragments on Trauma and Time" (2019), "[a]mong the classic stigmata of psychological trauma, repetition phenomena such as morbid rumination, flashbacks and recurrent nightmares feature. All plunge the sufferer into a changed relationship with time" (21). However, making a collection of laughing and self-talking clocks conveys a therapeutic message. The happy picture reassures the reader that traumatic memories can be tackled with recourse to optimism, resilience and storytelling.

Accordingly, in the novel's final scene, Angela delivers a gesture of reconciliation with Mrs Chase while making fun of the old lady's physical look. As Angela says to Dido and Tycho, "I'll even forgive the old whippet, shall I? Shall I ring her and get her to take me out to some marvellous

place and buy me pancakes, and strawberries and cream? I ought to do good for others" (Mahy, *Catalogue* 183). "I feel really sorry for the whippet," Angela continues, "[f]or one thing she's got legs like little thin sticks, and you can tell they've been like that all her life" (183).[11] Although Dido is amused by Angela's jokes, "her laugh," as Tycho observes, "[dies] into a smile […] that might accompany secret, ironic thoughts" (183). Dido's meaningful smile segues into a warm-hearted reminder: "Don't get too turned on by the prospect of doing good for others […]. I don't mind you being kind-hearted in principle, but be careful" (183). In much the same way as the novel's treatment of romantic love strikes the reader as "overall [pessimistic]" (Sheridan 47), the solution to intergenerational trauma is suggested with utmost care and caution. In so doing, Mahy seems to issue a fair warning against oversimplifying the matter of forgiveness and the process of working through trauma.

Chapter Summary

In an interview with Stephen Trevor Hensman, Mahy is asked why her adolescent characters are "often deeply influenced by family secrets and by the power of ancestors" (120). Mahy's answer is twofold. On the one hand, she explains that it satisfies an aesthetic need: "I suppose the preference of this secret is once again something that happens in folk tales to a certain extent, and it makes a good dramatic point" (120). On the other hand, the recurring plot well serves Mahy's intriguing mode of collapsing the divide between fiction and life: "I think that most families have problems of one sort or another" (120). Mahy's thematic interest in dysfunctional families is demonstrated by her treatment of intergenerational trauma, which as we have seen, follows a meandering representational pattern.

But the clues to trauma transmission, particularly in Mahy's fantasy novels, often glimmer at an early stage, through the narrator's depictions of family pictures. Indeed, as Hirsch notes in *Family*

11 The way Angela jokes about her grandmother's appearance echoes Tabitha's attempted reconciliation with Great-Grandma Scholar: "I don't mind hugging you a bit because you're so little and miserable and nobody agrees with you" (Mahy, *Haunting* 123).

Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory (1997), the visual and the verbal can be complementary to each other: "Family pictures depend on […] a narrative act of adoption that transforms rectangular pieces of cardboard into telling details connecting lives and stories across continents and generations (xii). In *The Haunting*, we read from the second chapter that "[l]ike ghosts, the old faces of the present great-uncles could be seen haunting the faces of the young great-uncles in the photograph" (Mahy 13). In the opening chapter of *The Tricksters*, Anthony is captured "[glancing] back at the photographs [of the Carnivals], as if (Harry thought) he suspected them of watching him behind his back" (Mahy 10). As if an echo of the uncanny photos of the Carnivals, the portrait of old Lionel is described as closely watching the acts of his descendants, at the beginning of *Dangerous Spaces* (Mahy 11; 42). In these three fantasy novels, family pictures construct a hiding place where the ghosts of intergenerational trauma reside.

Although the prevalence of family phantoms in Mahy's stories indicates her serious concern that the unresolved past of ancestors is a haunting legacy, the employment of supernatural elements offers great hope in healing. As we are assured by Tabitha, the character whom Mahy identifies as "quite a self-portrait" (qtd. in Duder 172), "[g]hosts could be beaten. Their secrets could be found out and their power taken from them. They could be exorcised" (Mahy, *Haunting* 52).

Whereas in Mahy's fantasy works, intergenerational trauma takes the form of family ghosts so that exorcism can eradicate them, her realist novel, *The Catalogue of the Universe*, poses a challenge to this optimistic view. The conversation between Angela and Dido at the novel's end suggests that the idea of reconciliation does not always work practically with the action of forgiveness (Mahy, *Catalogue* 183). Therefore, it might be said that Mahy resorts to fantastical devices to address trauma in a more optimistic way than realism would allow. As we enter into the discussion of intersecting trauma in the second chapter, trauma in relation to the distinction between realist and non-realist representations will be further explored.

Chapter Two: Intersecting Trauma

Introduction

Following the discussion of the vertical transmission from the ancestor(s) to the descendant(s), my second chapter continues to explore trauma's communicability in Mahy's fiction,[12] but the focus is shifted onto the lateral connectedness of trauma between contemporaries. As Kirby Farrell claims in *Post-Traumatic Culture: Injury and Interpretation in the Nineties* (1998), "contagiousness" is a "significant quality of post-traumatic stress," which enables trauma to be categorized as an "experience that mediates between a specific individual's injury and a group or even a culture" (12). Mahy's texts represent what Farrell notes as horizontal transmission through a pattern which I call "intersecting trauma": while multiple traumas belonging to different characters arise independently, when people come together, their problems intersect; initially, this intersection complicates the situation but eventually leads to a resolution. In a broader sense, it might be said that nearly all Mahy's novels adopt this framework of interconnection, since fiction in general, by its very nature, tends to draw together different strands of plot. However, my primary interest lies in the interconnection of people's trauma and the pivotal role of place for constructing the intersection: the place at the centre of each story allows the traumatised people to meet whereby their present interaction brings the unresolved past to the fore. As in the preceding chapter, my examination of intersecting trauma is structured around the division between realist and fantastical representations.

While discussing Mahy's realist fiction, I draw on Clare Cooper's landscape study "The House as Symbol of Self" (1971) and further suggest that the place serving as the key setting mirrors the traumatised status of the characters. More importantly, I propose that the place appears both familiar and strange thereby being susceptible of various contingencies; through these chance events, the

12 Here, I am talking about "communicability" in the sense of telling of a narrative, as opposed to transmission of a disease.

troubled characters are brought together. In other words, I intend to further underline the importance of coincidence in orchestrating the realist mode of intersection.

Whilst my discussion of Mahy's realist setting lays emphasis on the intervention of chance events, Alison Waller's reading of the setting in Mahy's realist novels, *Memory* and *Twenty-four Hours*, builds upon Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "chronotope," namely "time-space." In Waller's study "Memory and the City in Mahy's *Memory* and *24 Hours*" (2015), Mahy's bi-dimensional place, especially the cityscape in the texts in question, is interpreted as "an urban chronotope in which space also becomes memory" (157). As Waller explains, "the cityscape provides more than a coherent setting for [Mahy's] protagonists; it also offers a temporal structure that is both steeped in cultural memory and alive with up-to-date immediacy" (154). Waller's reading of Mahy's realist setting as a Bakhtinian chronotope offers a template for my examination of intersecting trauma in Mahy's fantasy novels.[13] While acknowledging chronotope as a powerful medium of reading Mahy's realist texts, I would like to suggest that the concept might be even better suited to interpreting Mahy's fantasy novels: with recourse to supernatural devices, it would not violate our expectation too much that time and space, memory and place, literally merge into one single entity. As I argue, the central setting of the house acts as a Bakhtinian chronotope in which the boundary between time and space melts. In this way, the building functions as a site of intersection, which contributes to bringing traumas to light. The second half of this chapter will be devoted to Mahy's supernatural handling of intersecting trauma. Now we begin with the realist framework of intersection.

13 I will revisit Waller's article in the introduction to intersecting trauma in Mahy's fantasy novels.

Intersecting Trauma in Mahy's Realist Fiction

Introduction

As mentioned above, the first part of this chapter examines Mahy's realist texts while highlighting the role of coincidence in constructing the intersection. But firstly, it might be worthwhile reviewing Mahy's realist debut, *The Catalogue of the Universe*, since the novel's use of coincidence, in building the link of trauma transmission, may have inspired her later realist work. In representing intergenerational trauma in her fantasy stories, Mahy deploys the family ghost as an instrument of connection, weaving together the backstory of the ancestors and the problems plaguing the descendants in the present. In *The Catalogue of the Universe,* with the supernatural device of haunting removed, it is the technique of coincidental encounter that facilitates resuming the link between Angela May, the female protagonist, and Mrs Chase, her grandmother. Mrs Chase remains absent from Angela's life till she reaches adulthood, so at their first meeting, the grandmother "stared at [the grandchild] with surprise, and then began to suspect, with the changing expression of someone seeing an improbable prophesy come true before her eyes" (Mahy, *Catalogue* 93). When it is further revealed that the two characters share the name of Angela, one more layer of randomness adds up: "It's just a wobble" (94), the girl Angela recalls what is earlier proposed by her friend, Tycho Potter.

The idea of the "wobble" draws attention to the inevitability of randomness in life as opposed to our intrinsic desire for apprehending the world by order and rationality. "The big deal," says Tycho, "is we're made to expect symmetry […]. But we're wrong. Our idea of things being fair is a sort of symmetry, but there's always the wobble" (46). Interestingly, although the novel is entitled *The Catalogue of the Universe,* as Sam Hester asserts in her essay, it impresses the reader with "a surprising number of references to the idea that the contents of the universe cannot be catalogued" (184). Siding with Hester's observation, Catherine Butler's discussion of the novel draws a similar conclusion that "[t]ruth is unstable; knowledge is fragile and tentative" (143). While both Hester and Butler take notice of Mahy's concern that human cognitive models only wield limited power to

help the individual understand the world in a state of flux, it is also important to note that *The Catalogue of the Universe*, apart from being Mahy's realist debut, occupies a special position in her YA oeuvre: "When asked to name her favourite novel, Margaret has sometimes expressed a particular fondness for this book, and admitted that, of all her characters, the shy, brainy but ungainly young astronomer and philosopher Tycho Potter is more of a self-portrait than any other, even Tabitha in *The Haunting*" (Duder 191). In these words, it is reasonable to assume that *The Catalogue of the Universe* provides a model for Mahy's subsequent realist work, just as *The Haunting* is found to 'haunt' her later fantasy novels. It is not surprising, then, that the idea of the wobble, as manifested by Mahy's employment of coincidence in *The Catalogue of the Universe*, recurs in her other realist fiction, orchestrating the pattern of intersecting trauma.

Whereas the representation of intergenerational trauma largely follows the stable relation of cause and effect, since the source of transmission can be always tracked down to a grand-parental figure, the realist mode of intersecting trauma, in lacking such a familial link, inevitably demonstrates a much heavier reliance on the mechanics of chance events to establish interconnection between traumatised characters. "Coincidence," as defined in Hilary P. Dannenberg's book *Coincidence and Counterfactuality: Plotting Time and Space in Narrative Fiction* (2008), being "a constellation of two or more apparently random events in space and time with an uncanny or striking connection" (93), becomes a tailor-made device for organizing the intersectional framework. Because this section places emphasis on Mahy's realist texts, it is worthwhile looking more broadly at the scholarship examining the importance of coincidence for the realist tradition. Since Dannenberg's book enumerates a dizzying list of relevant discussions on the realist fiction of Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy (239), a brief reference to the studies on the Victorian pair's deployment of coincidence might suffice to draw the contours of the idea. "Coincidence, resemblance, surprise," as Neil Forsyth argues in the paper "Wonderful Chains: Dickens and Coincidence" (1985), "are characteristic turning points in his [Dickens's] plots" (152). Similarly, Elana Gomel asserts that "forces of mutability, unpredictability, and chance shape Dickens' social universe" (14). Lawrence Jay Dessner's essay "Space, Time, and Coincidence in Hardy" (1992) notes that "[t]hrough his extravagant use of coincidence […] Hardy seems to take considerable liberty with readers who come to him willing, even anxious, to suspend their disbelief"

(154). Most recently, Adam Grener in *Improbability, Chance, and the Nineteenth-Century Realist Novel* (2020) argues that "improbability is central to the representational aims and strategies of the nineteenth-century realist novel" (3). Two chapters examining Dickens's and Walter Scott's realism are particularly illuminating. "Dickens's handling of coincidence," as Grener points out, "formalizes the contradictory perspectives that define the modern metropolis: Individuals experience the space of the city as one of anonymity and therefore autonomy, but that experience is in fact the product of the market economy's dense webs of interdependence and connection" (100). Interestingly, a similar sense of contradiction resides in the pattern of intersecting trauma. While a traumatised individual might suffer alienation within the self or disconnection from the larger, social body, in Mahy's realist fiction, a coincidental encounter always occurs at the novel's opening, initiating a connection between the traumatised protagonist and a fellow troubled character. As the story progresses, more chance events take place; the person-to-person link expands to a complicated web of correlation, with more traumatised people brought together. The increasing level of intersection is not only essential to the protagonist's recognition of his/her own problem(s), it can also contribute to building up in-group cohesion, creating favourable conditions for a resolution.

Furthermore, in his discussion of Scott's tale "The Two Drovers," Grener invokes what Tzvetan Todorov theorizes as "the fantastic," elucidating his point that the "evocation of superstition through 'precise coincidences' is a key tool [Scott's] historical novels use to stage encounters with historical and cultural otherness" (70). On "the fantastic," Grener neatly summarizes:

> According to Todorov, the fantastic denotes a duration of hesitation—by readers and characters alike—between competing causal interpretations of seemingly supernatural occurrences: "There is an uncanny phenomenon which we can explain in two fashions, by types of natural causes and supernatural causes. The possibility of a hesitation between the two creates the fantastic effect. (79)

The Todorovian hesitation also helps to enlighten my interpretation of intersecting trauma. Following the chance meeting at the novel's beginning, Mahy's characters continue to interact in certain places serving as the central setting, such as the house. The place, confirming Voorendt's

observation that Mahy often externalizes "the disturbed inner landscapes" via agencies like "setting" and "incident" (iv), reflects the traumatised status of the characters, thereby evoking a sense of uncanniness.

While the uncanny, as defined in Sigmund Freud's 1919 seminal essay, refers to "in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" (*Standard* 241), Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle further explain the concept as follows: "The uncanny has to do with a sense of strangeness" and "more specifically with a disturbance of the familiar" (34). Accordingly, the central setting in Mahy's realist fiction appears at once familiar and strange. On the one hand, we are reminded of Mahy's mode that "[s]he plays with fantasy, twisting the strands of fantasy and reality together into a continuous thread with no visible joins. She doesn't divide the world into 'real' or 'imaginary'" (Duder 215). On the other hand, we find such a setting unsettles the protagonist and exposes him/her to a departure-and-return tension. The hero/heroine makes repeated attempts at escaping from the place, only to keep returning to it. In a general sense, the state of suspense recalls the hesitation "between real and unreal" that the fantastic engenders (Todorov 168). Quite often, the oscillation is inseparable from the intervention of chance events. This seems not impossible, given that an (extra)ordinary setting can be susceptible of various contingencies. In a few cases, the coincidence prompting the departure or the return works in a manner almost akin to some kind of supernatural force so that the bewildered protagonist (the reader too) is left to ponder over the circumstances, which precisely confirms Todorov's assertion that "[t]he fantastic occupies the duration of this [interpretive] uncertainty" (25). More importantly, the oscillation provoked by the departure-and-return tension facilitates making progress towards intersecting trauma. It is during the state of suspense that the protagonist comes across clues to some secret(s) emerging to be central to the intersection. The final revelation serves as the axis on which the plot turns, as the knowledge tends to come hand-in-hand with epiphanic moments associated with healing and maturation. To put it differently, while traumas intersect beneath a seemingly static surface, the oscillation helps to develop a resolution.

In what follows, I will examine the orchestration of intersecting trauma in three of Mahy's realist novels: *Memory* (1987), *The Other Side of Silence* (1994) and *Twenty-four Hours* (2000) and

I will demonstrate how the device of coincidence facilitates weaving together the traumatised characters. As Duder writes in Mahy's biography, "*Memory* provides a fascinating glimpse into Margaret's frequently quoted belief that it is the fiction writer's job to create imaginative originality by finding new and interesting connections" (213). This novel might serve as a good starting point for our discussion of the connections that Mahy sets out to make in her fiction, which are not only "interesting" but also therapeutic.

Memory

As suggested by the title *Memory*, the novel's backstory is important. As the story progresses, we come to understand that Jonny Dart, the nineteen-year-old protagonist, is traumatised by the false memory of being responsible for the accidental death of his sister Janine. The accident took place five years ago, when Jonny and Janine, with their mutual friend Bonny Benedicta, climbed to the top of a steep cliff to play tarot cards. In the trio, Bonny played the role of the Pythoness; her card, showing a lightning-stricken tower and a figure plunging into the sea, uncannily predicted the looming tragedy. The Dart children were remarkable tap dancers, but the older and dominant Janine, eager to prove that she was more skilled, crossed the fence marked "Danger" and danced on the edge of the cliff. Challenged by his sister, Jonny followed her. Therefore, when Janine fell, he was right behind her. To save Jonny from being blamed and from the trouble of being questioned as a suspect, Bonny suggested that he lie to the police, telling them that he had stayed with her on the other side of the fence. Jonny took the advice. Soon after the tragic event, Bonny's family moved away, but a fear began to haunt Jonny: he thought that he might have pushed Janine when he stood behind her. The fear can be traced to the grudge which Jonny had held against Janine for a long time. Being the less favoured child in the family, he might have "half wanted to do so" (Walls, "Lyes" 159). Furthermore, the falsehood told by Jonny blurred his memory. Unable to clarify his doubt, Jonny has been possessed by vivid flashbacks to Janine's fall and his ambiguous memory of having pushed her.

Memory opens with Jonny's attempt to find Bonny five years after Janine's death, with the hope that she will be able to provide answers to his uncertainty about what happened. Departing from the family dinner organized to the memory of the dead Janine, Jonny joins his friends at a city pub where he drinks excessively, "hoping to hold off attacks of memory" (Mahy, *Memory* 2). Then, getting involved in a fight and arguing with his father outside the police station, Jonny escapes from the scene and gropes his way to the Benedicta country house. While it is later made known that Bonny has moved out, Jonny unwittingly gate-crashes into the land march party[14] given by Bonny's foster parents, a married couple of doctors. For fear that the drunken Jonny will make trouble, the Benedictas ask a friend to give him a ride back to the city. Waking up on a traffic island with a terrible hangover, Jonny is described as "[deciding] to abandon himself to the magic of chance" (27). The reference made to chance anticipates Jonny's accidental meeting with Sophie West, an elderly lady with Alzheimer's disease. Because of her mental disorder, Sophie wanders outside a supermarket in the early morning hours.

"In essence," as Mahy herself expresses it, "it is a 'magical encounter between two unlikely people, both of who are possessed, in different ways by a dissolving rationality'" (qtd. in Duder 213). Interestingly, Mahy's intention to portray the pair as mirroring characters manifests itself from the very moment of their meeting: while observing his own walking image in the shop windows, "[s]uddenly, with childish horror, [Jonny] saw another movement in the glass. Something rippled towards him" (Mahy, *Memory* 33). The illusion of seeing his double is short-lived. Turning back, Jonny makes out "a short, thin old woman wearing a hat like a crimson chamber pot without a handle. Strands of grey hair hung around her ears" (33). With recourse to parallelism, Mahy as narrator makes a further effort to indicate Jonny and Sophie as quasi-doubling figures: "He thought

14 This is to do with New Zealand's colonial trauma, to which I will turn in the next chapter. A note here might be helpful in offering some relevant background knowledge. In 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi, generally regarded as the country's founding document, was signed between the British Crown and the Māori chiefs, but different interpretations of the English and Māori versions have paved the way for a subject of considerable debate. For example, whereas the English version wrote "Māori cede the sovereignty of New Zealand to Britain," in the Māori Treaty, "the word 'sovereignty' was translated as 'kawanatanga' (governance)" so that "[s]ome Māori believed they were giving up government over their lands but retaining the right to manage their own affairs" ("The Treaty in Brief"). As Anna Jackson notes in her chapter "Englishness" (2011), "[t]he 1980s saw Māori grievances dominate New Zealand politics, […] with land marches in 1983 and 1984, and with Waitangi Day protests becoming an annual occurrence" (46). Mahy's *Memory*, published in 1987, happened to fit into this cultural and political context.

he must look equally strange to her in his striped blazer, bloodstained shirt, and blue jeans, his face swollen under his fringe of brown curls" (33-4). A similar structure is adopted to describe the physical appearance of the pair: in both cases, the clothes first come into view and the focus is then shifted onto the hair. Mistaking Jonny for her cousin, Alva Babbitt, whom she had once hoped to marry, Sophie invites Jonny to come home with her. Jonny has nowhere else to go at this inconvenient hour, so he accepts the offer. In the belief of "offering himself blindly to chance" (39), Jonny follows Sophie's steps and arrives at her place. As suggested by the language of improbability, another coincidence is to be introduced. Sophie's house is easily distinguishable from its twin building next-door, because of a giant simulacrum of a tap above the balcony, which was an advertisement for the plumbing business of her deceased husband. It also gives the place its name, the "Tap House"; this happens to make a pun on Jonny's tap dancing, building a connection between the place and the person. Indeed, as the story develops, we come to realize that the house, in addition to serving as the novel's primary setting, symbolises the responsibility that Jonny reluctantly assumes for Sophie. As a result, he ends up staying there rather than going back home.

In accordance with Cooper's claim that the interior of a house mirrors the "self viewed from within" (7), the residence, old and chaotic, reflects the mental illnesses of the two people it contains. While Voorendt notices that "the similarities between Jonny and Sophie in terms of their memory dysfunction together resemble definitions of madness" (44), "[t]he narrative," as Alison Waller points out in her essay "Amnesia in Young Adult Fiction" (2016), also "encourages readers to contrast Sophie's dementia with Jonny's own forms of teenage amnesia" (288). As a result, the Tap House works to mirror the pair's mental disorder but represents each case distinctively. The place is, as Jonny puts it figuratively, "a memory vacuum" (Mahy, *Memory* 61). On the one hand, the void aptly describes Sophie's long-term, pathological memory loss: "Forgetting how she has aged and how time has passed, Sophie regularly forgets that her husband and other lovers are dead, and mistakes Jonny for her cousin Alva" (Waller, "Amnesia" 287). The memory vacuum can also refer to the pathetic condition that Sophie has no place in the web of social ties: with no children, relatives or friends, she is "forgotten by society" (Scutter 10). On the other hand, although the house is likened to a memory vacuum, the void is represented not by sheer emptiness, but a total lack of order, which recalls trauma's "unlocatable" nature. As Caruth articulates in her influential book *Unclaimed*

Experience (1996), "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, […] its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4; emphasis original). The chaotic condition of the house mirrors Jonny's post-traumatic memory disorder. While the flashbacks to Janine's fall are always vivid in his mind, Jonny also suffers amnesia: he is unable to recall whether or not he has pushed his sister from behind, which is compounded by his alcohol abuse. For these reasons, the chaotic house is a metaphor for Jonny's traumatic symptoms.

In addition to mirroring Jonny's and Sophie's mental problems, the Tap House is reminiscent of the archetypal "haunted house" whereby a sense of uncanniness arises. A remnant of a once flourishing suburb that is now becoming derelict, Sophie's home is located beyond "a car-wrecker's yard" where torn-down vehicles are "[rearing] out of the grass and weeds" (Mahy, *Memory* 44-5) and its backyard garden now becomes "the ghost of an old order […] lost itself in its own weeds" (85). The dilapidated surroundings, together with the building's chaotic interior, endow the place with an (extra)ordinary quality. Jonny's immediate response to the Tap House might serve to illustrate the point. With Sophie opening the front door, "he saw a tiny entrance hall, coats hanging on coat hooks, and the bottom steps of a staircase skirted by a passage to the back of the house" (44). Although the place looks quite normal, Jonny hesitates to make his first entry, for fear that "he might never come out again. He imagined some owner of Tap House opening a wardrobe door in the distant future and finding Jonny Dart hanging from one of the coat hooks, dried out, leathery, but still recognizable" (45). Interestingly, the reference made to the fairy tale "Bluebeard" works further to defamiliarize the ordinary, domestic atmosphere, almost adding to it a kind of supernatural aura. As Sophie gets impatient with him, "Jonny still hesitated, shifting from one foot to the other" (45). At the point of being torn in two directions, the protagonist again submits himself to chance: "he looked around, half hoping for instruction out of the air" (45). The quandary is then solved: Jonny feels he is "being observed from the balcony next door" where he makes out "a vague, inhuman outline," and "the thought of [seeing] aliens" prompts him to enter what he suspects as a "house of doom" (45). Jonny's initial hesitance prepares the ground for the above-mentioned departure-and-return tension to which the Tap House will expose him.

As we learn from the fourth chapter, Jonny's first attempt at departure fails, due to a mixture of coincidence and conscience. Waking up at the Tap House next morning, Jonny "realized he must get out at once," but on the point of leaving, he "found old Sophie, sensational in a strange collection of underwear, rising up the stairs towards him with a bottle of milk in her hand" (61). Sophie's presence, in its perfect timing, suspends the protagonist's action. Putting on the headphones of his Walkman in case he may hear Sophie calling after him, "Jonny hesitates in the doorway, staring right, staring left" (68-9). Running concurrently with his internal struggle, music bursts and pours into Jonny's ears: "'SHUT YOUR EARS BUT THE VOICE GOES WANDERING ON,' jeered the band. […] 'TURNING ON THE WHEEL—TURNING ON THE WHEEL IN THE AIR,' sang the band" (69). As though treating the random lyrics as a sign, Jonny chooses to stand on the side of conscience: "He had just found that he couldn't walk away and leave Sophie with nothing to eat except moldy biscuits. […] Turning like a wheel inside a wheel, he faced into Sophie's house once more" (69).

By the end of the sixth chapter, Jonny again makes up his mind to leave, but a strange happening holds him back. Sophie brings inside the Tap House a book entitled *A History of Angels* whose front cover, as Jonny discovers immediately, has Bonny's full name on it. "'Bonny Benedicta,' he read aloud. He thought he must be having an intense, momentary dream […]. Jonny hit his head with his free hand, hoping to bump loose circuits back into place, but neither the name nor the book changed" (95). Jonny's reaction precisely echoes the interpretive uncertainty associated with the Todorovian hesitation: "reality or dream? truth or illusion?" (Todorov 25). As Jonny dashes out, desperately looking in the street for the deliverer of the book, the man is captured driving away in his car. Yet, the fantastic effect lingers on: the improbable event is likened to "a vision" and Sophie, to "a sort of magical fool"; Jonny wanders along the road, "reading doors and signs" and feeling that "the tide of accident was certainly flowing his way at last" (Mahy, *Memory* 97). Although the thought of going back home still flickers in Jonny's mind, the book coincidence becomes "a clue of chance that he was unwilling to abandon" (101-2). It nearly evokes a comical feeling when we see Jonny spin himself a valid reason for making the return: "He shivered, recalling that he had left his blazer on a hook in Sophie's kitchen. With open exasperation and a secret, irrational relief, he understood that he must return" (102). Walking back to the Tap House, Jonny is

described as “studying it rather mistrustfully” (102). It harks back to the point which I made earlier that an (extra)ordinary place can be capable of chance events.

As I explained earlier, while the uncanny setting exposes the protagonist to a departure-and-return tension, it simultaneously gains time for intersecting trauma. Indeed, Jonny and Sophie, it transpires, share a similar traumatic experience – being bullied. Jonny was a victim of bullying at school, because he was a dancer and his tap-dancing was seen as being effeminate. His bullies used to force him to dance while hurling abuse and threat at him. Jonny not only suffers recurring flashbacks to those insults now, the humiliating episodes of being tormented have been absorbed into his muscle memory so that the reader finds him often dance out of the blue. Drawing on Roberta Seelinger Trites’s observation that “Jonny’s feet [having] muscle memory” parallels “his brain muscles [storing] memories (*Literary Conceptualizations* 46), I further suggest that Jonny’s tap-dancing operates as a traumatic symptom. It is interesting to note that when dancing on the riverbank where he was bullied as a child, Jonny “did a small succession of muffled grab-offs” (Mahy, *Memory* 99). The muted steps, in a way, reminds us of Suzanne B. Phillips’s claim that pathological silence “intensifies the impact of trauma” (65).

It takes some time to realize that Jonny’s trauma mirrors Sophie’s current situation. Each time Jonny returns to the Tap House, the place reveals to him strange evidence: while Sophie’s handbag alternately disappears and re-emerges, some suspicious receipts, all for small amount of money and signed with the name Spike, add up mysteriously. In fact, the clue is introduced to the reader as early as the third chapter, when Jonny enters Sophie’s home for the first time. Something in the kitchen gives out a shrill cry so that Jonny goes to investigate the source. While the culprit turns out to be the kettle on the burner, a pink receipt of twelve dollars is found by accident: “Jonny read it automatically. It was right under his eye” (Mahy, *Memory* 50). The shrieking kettle, together with the steam which “came from it in puffs that reminded Jonny of comic-book speech balloons” (49), seems to link the house with a sort of storytelling role. It echoes the narrator’s earlier depiction of the place: “*I know, but I’m not telling,* the house was saying to [Jonny]” (42; emphasis original). In comical contrast, the knowing house does tell by presenting Jonny with those mysterious receipts. On Jonny’s second return, it is realized that “[s]omeone was almost certainly enriching himself by calling in every day or two and signing a receipt for whatever Sophie had to give” (107). In the

eighth chapter, the desire for departure pounces on Jonny once again: “Sophie’s house felt like a trap closing around him. I’ve got to get out of here, he thought” (125). Predictably, Jonny not only “hesitated” before closing the front door, he also “stopped at the railway line and looked nervously back over his shoulder” (128-9). The hesitance foreshadows the failure of Jonny’s third attempt at departure. Shortly, he enters a local pub where some coincidences take place, and as a result, he is made to return. In the tavern, Jonny comes across a transistor which he recognizes to have gone missing from Sophie’s home. As we recall, on his first return, Jonny helps to tidy up the house; he discovers the radio in the kitchen and toys with it (89-90). In the pub, Jonny encounters Nev Fowler, his old bully (136), who admits boastfully that he has taken the transistor from the house and bartered it for beer (144-6). When Jonny realizes that the villain who victimized him now victimizes Sophie, traumatic experiences intersect, which enables Jonny to better relate to Sophie. Therefore, he is determined to make one “careful and deliberate” return, different from his previous “accidental, somehow ramshackle” returns (146-7). Despite only knowing this old lady for two days, he cannot leave Sophie, because as Jonny thinks, she is “possibly a prey to the same predators that had once preyed on him” (147). Interestingly, an earlier juxtaposition of two sets of memories which are associated with bullying has hinted at the intersection of trauma. When Jonny wakes up in the Tap House after his second return, he can feel Bonny’s “mysterious and shadowy” presence, but “all mixed up with images of pink receipts, missing handbags, the poplar tree beside the river and Nev Fowler” (112). The riverbank, as mentioned above, is the site where Jonny was bullied and taunted.

Bonny’s uncanny presence in Jonny’s imagination hints at her real existence close by. The house next-door contains Bonny, from whom Jonny has to reclaim his lost memory and correct the false past. “Memories,” as Chris Moulin tells us, “can quite readily be full of errors and inconsistencies even in the most healthy and intelligent minds because they are reconstructions of representations made at the point of retrieval” (xxii). While Bonny’s intervention contributes a new portal of retrieval so that Jonny is gradually freed from the flashbacks to Janine’s fall, their meeting initiates the process of intersecting trauma. It is worth noting that coincidence plays a vital role in facilitating the reunion. Because of her dementia, Sophie takes things from Bonny’s letterbox. On his third-time return, Jonny happens to find in the kitchen drawer an envelope addressed to Bonny (Mahy, *Memory* 161). After the accidental discovery brings them together,

the pair continue to interact from which it emerges that Bonny's problem mirrors certain aspect of Jonny's.

In the Tap House, Bonny confides to Jonny that she was traumatised by her upbringing: adopted by the Benedictas who take pride in their anti-racism, the ethnically-mixed Bonny somehow feels unloved, since her adoption might have been a political gesture (236-7). Bonny's sense of self-worth is further undermined, because her foster parents seem to be more invested in their other adopted child, Samantha/Hinerangi, a Māori rights activist. As we remember, when the novel opens, a land march party is thrown at the Benedicta household. The Benedictas are eager to watch the midnight news, which as they expect, may report on Hinerangi's feat of resistance. By contrast, Bonny appears a much plainer figure, or as she expresses it, "I know the doctors feel a little let down by me, as if I've chosen to live too safely" (237). Because of her overshadowed self-identity, the younger Bonny played the Pythoness as a coping strategy, "wearing her Pythoness clothes, her snake ring, and her jingling necklaces and bracelets" (24). Now, in Bonny's house stands a faceless dummy, flamboyantly dressed and outlandishly decorated, which Jonny labels as the Pythoness at first sight (169). The model transpires to be the uncanny observer that earlier stands on the balcony and frightens Jonny into entering Sophie's house (45). The dummy also symbolises Bonny's unresolved past, as the present-day Bonny, no longer playing the Pythoness, looks "neat and plain in ordinary tight blue jeans and a floppy grey sweater" (162). Although benedicta literally means "blessed," the surname, in contrasting the girl's rather unhappy upbringing, contains a note of irony.

Similarly, Jonny is the overlooked underdog in sibling rivalry. His parents, like Mr and Mrs Benedicta, showed favouritism towards one child. Jonny remembers that he was always blamed unfairly by Janine, but "his parents seldom argued with her. 'Don't upset Janine,' they had warned him over and over again" (116). Spoiled by her parents' love, Janine could not accept that Jonny was the better dancer. In retaliation, Janine deliberately ignored him and never acknowledged his talent to his face. Consequently, Jonny feels unworthy of love and attention, just like Bonny. Yet, his case is even worse: Jonny goes so far as to suffer "survivor guilt," a term defined as the "ever present feeling of guilt accompanied by conscious or unconscious dread of punishment for having survived the very calamity to which their loved ones succumbed" (Niederland 238). What

Voorendt has noted as Jonny's episodic eruptions into violence (43), the cause of the swellings and bruises on his face, might be interpreted as a self-punishing tendency. Such a guilty feeling is also made clear when Jonny recollects his friend's blunt remarks about Janine's death:

> "You know what, Dart?" A friend of his had once said with casual acrimony. "Everyone reckons if one of you two had to go over, it was a pity it wasn't you." It was no news to Jonny. He had begun believing this while Janine was still spinning in the air. (Mahy, *Memory* 25)

As Heather Scutter points out in her discussion of *Memory*, Jonny's case demonstrates how "the set of remembered perceptions that identifies the self is shown to be obscurely shaped and determined by that which is omitted from memory-suppressed, repressed, denied, elided, forgotten" (10). Aligned with Scutter's point on selfhood, we might see Jonny as a dramatized version of Bonny in terms of weak self-identity. As with bullying connecting Jonny with Sophie, so also sibling rivalry and harmed self-worth connect Jonny with Bonny, so that they mirror each other's predicament. Jonny and Bonny have moved away from their parents' house, because neither can solve the problem with the family.

The intersection of trauma is the axis on which the plot turns. It finally leads to a collaborative resolution, which is prefigured by the tap that gives the house its name. The water discharging from the tap in the rain symbolically baptizes Jonny as if making him a new person (Mahy, *Memory* 245-6). After that, Jonny bravely confronts the hooligan trio led by Nev; Sophie later joins their fight (247-52). By defeating their common enemies, Jonny and Sophie, though unbeknown to her, together overcome their victimizing. Interestingly, Jonny's tap dancing which operates as a traumatic symptom for the bulk of the story does him a good turn this time. As Anna Jackson points out, "Jonny finally uses his skill as a tap-dancer to bewilder his bullying nemesis and defeat him in their final fight" (64). In one of the book's final episodes, Jonny's dance further takes on a therapeutic significance. Six weeks after the fight, Jonny returns to the Tap House, dancing for Bonny and Sophie beneath the balcony. In keeping with Trites's observation that "his muscle memory [is] fully engaged and his false memories [are] fully exorcised" (*Literary*

Conceptualizations 46), Jonny's dancing casts off its previous metaphorical implication in trauma, since his moves are no longer "muffled" as they were (Mahy, *Memory* 99). Not only does Jonny change into proper shoes, while dancing he also sings with the music played on a tape recorder (260-1). Moreover, whenever tap-dancing serves as a traumatic symptom, Jonny dances privately. It confirms the point made by Bessel A. van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart in their seminal essay, "The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma" (1995): "Traumatic memory has no social component; it is not addressed to anybody, the patient does not respond to anybody; it is a solitary activity" (163). By contrast, the final dancing scene becomes a public show; the cheering audience include Bonny, Sophie, as well as a few passers-by. "On the other side of the road, quite unexpectedly, there was more clapping. Jonny turned and saw a woman and two children staring at him and applauding. He waved to them and they waved back" (Mahy, *Memory* 262). Implicit in what seems to be a random interaction between Jonny and the strangers is the suggested message that social connection provides a favourable condition for redemption, which proves to be the core value of intersecting trauma.

Simultaneously, the self-worth of Bonny and Jonny is built up by their joint good works, as they end up taking turns to attend to Sophie, which addresses her pathetic situation of being forgotten by society. As we are told of Sophie's house in the novel's last chapter, "[s]omeone had vacuumed the foot of the stair, had polished the hand rail. There was an unexpected brightness about everything" (262-3). Meeting up with Bonny proves therapeutic in other ways as well. She twice reassures Jonny that he was not liable for Janine's death so that his traumatic flashbacks begin to dissolve. As Jonny puts it, "I can remember Janine falling, but I don't remember it all the way I used to. It's got smaller. […] It used to seem like a vision" (270). In addition, Bonny contributes to healing Jonny's sense of inferiority which results from sibling rivalry. While Janine taunted her brother by calling him "sentimental" (196), Bonny appreciates his "imaginative" power (268). Not only expressing her wish to be endowed with such a quality, she also reveals to Jonny what Janine was unwilling to admit: "You were the true dancer. Everybody knew that, even Janine" (174). Bonny's admiration for Jonny paves way for the potential that they might become romantic partners, as suggested by their flirtatious banter at the end of the novel (273-6). The possible romance could offer a resolution helping Bonny cast off her feeling of being unloved.

While Mahy often gives us a reassuring ending, a troubling element always remains. In *Memory*, intersecting trauma results in a sense of empathy for the characters. The role of mutual support in healing emphasizes the significance of community, which "offers a cushion for pain" and "a context for intimacy," as Erikson proposes in "Notes on Trauma and Community" (188). Yet, it does not mean that everything can be resolved on a horizontal level. For example, Jonny's problem with his family needs to be further processed, as implied by the very belated presence of a psychologist. We are told that Jonny has an overnight stay at the hospital after his fight with the hooligan trio. When coming back, Jonny says to Bonny: "some sort of shrink came and talked to me and to my parents. I ended up going back twice and talking to him with them there, going over all this stuff, and it lost its feeling of being a terrible secret" (Mahy, *Memory* 268). Jonny's account is tinged with humour, but it suggests Mahy's serious concern that healing is not an easy task and there is always more to be done.

The Other Side of Silence

The Other Side of Silence features the twelve-year-old Hero Rapper, a selective mute, as the heroine. The novel is a first-person narrative, told by an older Hero. It might be interesting to begin the discussion by looking into the implications of the surname "Rapper" which derives from the word "rap." As we shall see, this is a fascinating example of Mahy's ingenious wordplay. According to the *OED*, "to rap" is defined as an act of speech: "To utter (words, speech, etc.) sharply or suddenly" and "To perform rap music." Not surprisingly, we learn that Hero grows up in a loquacious household and many of her family members resort to the power of language to draw attention to themselves. Moreover, based on the blow/trauma metonymy noted in the introduction to my thesis, we could claim that the word "to rap" also has meanings that are suggestive of a traumatic dimension: "to strike (a person or thing) in a sharp, usually relatively light, manner." As implied by the definitions of the word, "rap," Hero's mutism is inseparable from her upbringing. As the story progresses, we come to understand: growing up in a wordy family, as well as being an underdog in sibling rivalry, Hero tries to gain agency and power with recourse to silence. Hero is

the middle child of the Rapper household; she has two older siblings, Ginevra and Athol, and a younger sister, Sapphire/Sap. Hero's father, Mike, is a househusband, while her mother, Annie, financially supports the family. Annie not only holds a position as a lecturer in the Education Department of a local university, she is also an ambitious educationalist of international renown, especially famous for her "theories about bringing up wonderful, talented children" (Mahy, *Silence* 5). Years ago, Annie's first publication, *Average-Wonderful: Helping Your Child to Dance with the World,* was a smash hit. Interestingly, the image of dancing, as the name of Annie's book may conjure up, harks back to Jonny and Janine, a pair of tap dancers. Just as in *Memory* tap-dancing serves as a traumatic symptom, so also in *The Other Side of Silence*, the recurrent image of dancing strikes a note of trauma. The Rapper children, intelligent as they are, turn out to dance with their own problems.

While Hero's main problem is mutism, Ginevra's is her difficult relationship with Annie, which largely results from the latter's super-kid scheme; this serves as the novel's backstory. Under Annie's guidance, Ginevra was brought up to believe in her own specialness. Indeed, she had been a child celebrity, amazing people with her clever words, as recorded in a television interview. Yet, as the narrator reminds us, "she was only repeating something she had heard" (54-5). Ginevra's stardom gave a boost to Annie's above-mentioned publication, "which appeared in the bookshops a few weeks later, accompanied by blown-up black-and-white shots of Ginevra taken from that exact news item" (55). Moreover, without much effort, Ginevra remained a top student in mathematics for years. Due to her childhood fame and great performance at school, not only did Ginevra almost think herself as "a *magician,*" but people also "acted as if she was" (70). However, it emerges that Ginevra's upbringing has stunted her ability to cope with setbacks in life. After a student called David Ching appeared, Ginevra's sense of superiority grew to be seriously injured. Equally smart but more hard-working, David caught her up and eventually outstripped her. The disenchanted Ginevra blamed Annie for having forged the illusion about her uniqueness. The tension culminated in a scene verging on the farcical: smashing their family car, Ginevra yelled at her parents that she would have her revenge, by which she meant leaving home and making a fortune in Australia. Therefore, at the novel's beginning, we are informed of her four-year absence in the Rapper family. Whereas Ginevra who reaped her fame too early ends up giving up her education,

Athol is finishing an M.A. degree in New Historicism hence his long working hours in the study. Beneath his "ordinary" look (7), we may detect something unusual, if not yet problematic: "he seemed to be planning to sit around doing nothing but study for the rest of his life. He was so leisurely about his future, and [Mike and Annie] were frightened he was turning out to be all cleverness and no character" (20). Hero's little sister, Sap, carries around a book called *Mrs Byrne's Dictionary of Unusual, Obscure and Preposterous Words*, from which she frequently quotes, sometimes to the point of being irritating (7-8). As for Hero, in addition to her retreat into silence, she also looks for private space outside her noisy family.

When the novel opens, the reader is told of Hero's little quirk: every morning, she climbs trees, trespassing on her neighbour Miss Credence's garden to watch the woman feed birds. Although Miss Credence has inherited the property from her dead father, Professor Conrad Credence, she works at a local post shop as well. One day, "[stepping] back carelessly" (13), Hero topples over and falls into the garden. The accidental fall creates a link between Hero and Miss Credence, who offers her a part-time job of gardening and, later, housekeeping. Aside from their employment relationship, Hero and Miss Credence are further connected via the trauma they share; it emerges that both characters have fallen victim to parental suppression.

While the status of the Rapper children indicates the problem of Annie's Average-Wonderful pedagogy, Miss Credence's case is much worse. She turns out to be deranged, behaving as if Professor Credence, her one-time oppressor, is still alive. Similar to Ginevra's story, Miss Credence's family history makes part of the novel's backstory. When alive, Professor Credence was an iconic figure in his research field, but his achievements were inseparable from his mother and his wife who looked after the household for him. Encouraged by her father, Miss Credence became an exceptional scholar, as well as developing "a mind above housework" (107). However, after his wife's demise, Professor Credence's expectation for his daughter took a capricious turn. He wanted her to give up her academic career so as to take over the role as his housekeeper. Yielding to her father's demand, Miss Credence turned herself into an unhappy housewife. Later, she had a love affair with her father's colleague, Dr. Clemence Byrne, but ended up being abandoned by him. The woman grew to be severely traumatised.

In much the same way as the Tap House reflects Sophie's mental illness, Miss Credence's place is the physical expression of her traumatic symptom. She appears to swing between resistance and obedience to Conrad's haunting tyranny. On the one hand, the ruined garden and chaotic mansion epitomize Miss Credence's rejection of the domestic role that was once forced upon her. Looking at the garden overrun with weed, she says to Hero: "why pretend? I'm not a gardener. I don't even want to be" (18). Likewise, when Hero is cleaning up the messy kitchen, Miss Credence is desperate to express her detachment from housework: "I've never cared for housework. […] I know it's all different now, and women aren't tied to the kitchen the way they used to be" (80). On the other hand, as the story develops, she is found paradoxically to "maintain [her father's] standards," one of which is to "[keep] this garden strictly free of cats" (49). Therefore, on one frightening occasion, Miss Credence holds a gun and a dead cat that she kills, while Hero is commanded to photograph her in that pose (48). More gravely, the analogies drawn between Miss Credence and her place seem to indicate trauma's dehumanizing effect. At the novel's beginning, Miss Credence is likened to a few common garden creatures. Her body "felt like a tree"; her nails are "bitten so short that the tops of her fingers bulged over them. It made them look like the fingers of a tree-climbing lizard" (14-5). When Miss Credence taps the code unlocking the front door of the mansion, her "long forefinger" is compared to a bird's beak "pecking at a little panel" (17). Later, with Hero's main task shifted from gardening to housekeeping, it is as if Miss Credence almost metamorphoses into the malfunctioning tap in her kitchen. In one storytelling episode, "Miss Credence ran on and on, while [Hero] struggled with the greasy plates under the piddling tap" (80). On the next page, Miss Credence's speech problem continues to be projected onto the tap, which in tandem has trouble discharging water properly:

> she paused, her sentence hanging loose, looking as if she wasn't sure quite how to finish it. Then words filtered through to her once more, and she was off and away […]. The tap panted and hissed, then coughed and cleared its throat. Water burst out of it, stopped, and then burst out again. (81)

By the end of the novel, the idea of house-as-symbol-of-self is made clear when Miss Credence calls herself "[a] haunted house, as well as the actual ghost that does the haunting" (148).

Whereas Miss Credence's place mirrors her traumatised status, both the Credence mansion and the Rapper residence represent Hero's problem, since the protagonist oscillates between the two sites. On her first entry into the Credence house, Hero feels herself being observed in the hallway: "The heads of two deer and a wild pig with tusks all gazed down at [her] with glass eyes" (76). As Hero goes on to look into the sitting room, she is greeted by another collection of Conrad's hunting trophies: "On the wall were mounted heads of deer and sets of antlers, underlined by an old gun" (76). While the recurring image of dead animals alludes to an oppressive father-and-daughter relationship, as if conveying the message that Miss Credence is to Conrad as prey is to predator, Annie is similarly portrayed as a predatory figure, though in a more comical sense. Earlier in the novel, Mike jokes about Annie's new nail polish, likening it to "[v]ampire blood" (26). In response, "Annie grinned, and made clawing gestures at the air with her empty hand" (26). Although the casual domestic banter neutralizes the disturbing suggestion of the parent/predator analogy, it subtly betrays Annie's parenting problem. As noted in Pohl's MA thesis, Annie claims that her pedagogy places the child as the centre of things, but because she takes delight in being the centre, her children end up being pushed to the edge (58). Clearly, Annie's parenting clashes with her educational theory. When she defends herself against Hero's mutism, her statement sounds equally self-contradictory:

> "What am I being punished for?" [Hero] once heard Annie say. "I've loved my children, and I've *wanted* them to be themselves."
>
> But, for [Hero], being [herself] meant being silent. "I suppose all parents push their kids in some direction," Annie had said. "But have I ever—ever *once*—stopped my children from being themselves? Have I?" Mike had no answers to this. No one had. (Mahy, *Silence* 97; emphasis original)

Although we are told that Hero "somehow magicked [herself] into silence" (2), with the story developing, we also come to learn that Annie, it seems, unwittingly plays a major part in 'staging' Hero's mutism. As the narrator recollects, it is Annie's contrasting of Ginevra, the "word child,"

with Hero, "the quiet one," that provoked the latter's thought of her quietness as "something mysterious, something to be really proud of" (63). "It could be," the narrator continues, "the exact moment in which I began to be proud of quietness, too" (63-4). In contrast, the novel opens with Hero's confiding to the reader that "in the heart of [her] silence, [she] was still a word child" (2). The paradox in Hero's silence harks back to Miss Credence's swinging symptom: both characters alternate between performing submission and putting up resistance to a dominant parent, suggesting a wrecked psyche torn in two directions. In much the same way as Hero's has a "true life" (private life) as opposed to her "real life" (domestic life), Miss Credence is observed to lead a double life. As the narrator claims it, "I knew that her life at the post shop was her real life, but that her life behind the [Credence] wall was her *true* life" (19; emphasis original). Aside from inner division, parental suppression can give rise to the feeling of being trapped. In accordance, the Rapper house is reminiscent of a cage. When the novel begins, a pair of builder brothers, Colin and Kevin Brett, are hired to add an upper storey to the Rapper house, so they set up around it "a frame of steel pipes and planks" (53). Clearly, the scaffolding serves as a metaphor for parental suppression.

Given that the novel's key setting shifts between the Credence property and the Rapper residence, both places are endowed with an (extra)ordinary atmosphere, but Miss Credence's place, in line with her later discovered insanity, appears much more uncanny. In addition, with strange noises bursting out from time to time, the Credence property further reminds us of a haunted site. In *Abject Terrors: Surveying the Modern and Postmodern Horror Film* (2005), Tony Magistrale defines the haunted house as having an organic life: "In most horror films and Gothic novels, the haunted house/castle serves as a vehicle for the inner psychology of its inhabitants. The protagonists appear trapped within its recesses especially as the house 'awakens' to assume an infernal biology of its own" (90). Indeed, because Hero hears faint screams and gobbling sounds within the Credence property, it is as if the place takes on a life of its own. Moreover, the large number of references made to canonical children's stories contribute significantly to defamiliarizing the setting. As discussed in Proffitt's MA thesis, "Margaret Mahy and the Golden Age of Children's Literature" (2011), *The Other Side of Silence* exemplifies Mahy's inventive use of Victorian sources, *The Secret Garden* and *The Jungle Book,* as well as her borrowing of classical fairy tales, such as "Jorinda and Joringel" and "Bluebeard." While Proffitt further notes that the Credence mansion is an archetypal

storybook house (69), my focus is on how the setting is made familiar and strange at once. Hero's family nicknames Miss Credence's place "Squintum's House." Not just an inside joke about the woman's badly matched eyes, the name also contains reference to a story taken from *Old Fairy Tales*:

> Mr. Fox tells one person after another that he is going to Squintum's House, but you never find out anything about either Squintum or the house. Squintum might have been a man or a woman, the house might have been real or imaginary. […] It was a place with a name, but otherwise quite unknown. (Mahy, *Silence* 20)

In sharing the name with a fairy-tale place, the Credence property is allowed to occupy a liminal position between the real and the unreal, thereby enhancing its (extra)ordinary quality.

As for the Rapper house, the cage-like scaffolding evokes a sense of uncanniness, which as proposed earlier, exposes Mahy's protagonist to a departure-return tension. Accordingly, the Credence property and the Rapper residence collaborate in attracting and repelling Hero, hence her oscillation between the two sites. Like Jonny's case in *Memory*, Hero's oscillation is inseparable from the intervention of random events taking place against the (extra)ordinary settings.

As noted above, Hero's accidental fall initiates an economical link between herself and Miss Credence. Or as Walls puts it, it is also "a relationship of obligation" ("Money" 192), on which account we may claim that Hero is bound to return to the Credence property. However, it is noteworthy that chance events, especially in the first half of the story, provide the main impetus for Hero's return. One Saturday morning, Hero's aforementioned sister, Ginevra the prodigal, suddenly turns up at the Rapper house. Not only arriving with the injuries resulting from her last job as a stunt driver, she also brings back an ethnically-mixed boy called Sammy. Sammy's father is Ginevra's ex-boyfriend, but since he has abandoned them both, Sammy ends up being adopted by Ginevra.

In conjunction with Ginevra's sensational return, Hero's grandmother Rappie Rapper drops by. The bossy Rappie is notorious for her attacks on Annie's workaholism. As expected, she kicks up a fuss, on knowing that "Annie had driven off as if Ginevra's sudden appearance was nothing out of the ordinary" (Mahy, *Silence* 39). Feeling overwhelmed, Hero is made to flee to the Credence garden,

only to find the nosy Brett brothers "listening intently to the words of a private family soap opera that were squeezing out from under the door" (39). As the narrator tells, "[w]hat with it being Saturday, what with Ginevra turning up like that, I was going to Squintum's House much later in the morning" (40). "[L]ike that," the reader may be entitled to ask, like what? Interestingly, given that Ginevra once imagined herself as a magician, her return, in taking everybody by surprise, might be almost compared to a magically empowered event. If Ginevra's appearance is somewhat reminiscent of Todorov's term "the fantastic," the upcoming coincidence may be read as exemplifying the mode of the fantastic in the sense of eliciting hesitation. On her return to the garden, Hero is asked to photograph Miss Credence who poses with a gun and a dead cat, at which point "a gust of wind suddenly struck [them] and brought [Hero] what seemed like the scream of the ginger cat's ghost" (50). While the mention of ghost injects into the scene a sense of the supernatural, the ambiguity surrounding the occurrence leads Hero to vacillate between alternate interpretations: "The sound wasn't loud. It was part of the actual wind, pressed against my ear, then pulled away again. Had I really heard it? I *knew* I had and then, a second later, I just *thought* I had" (50; emphasis original). Hero's suspended (dis)belief resembles Jonny's "momentary dream" (Mahy, *Memory* 95). In both cases, with a chance event intervening, the boundary between truth and illusion gets temporarily obfuscated. Or, to put it differently, the fantastic effect is engendered.

The random intrusion of the wind/scream prompts Hero's departure. Miss Credence is observed to have "heard the scream" and "wanted her garden to herself" (Mahy, *Silence* 50). However, thanks to coincidence one more time, the departure-and-return tension remains ongoing. It transpires that Miss Credence accidentally gives Hero an extra twenty-dollar note: "the notes were so new and crisp, their folds coinciding so exactly, that it was as if they were both part of the same thing" (72). Hero feels proprietary about the extra amount, because she was earlier subject to the dreadful taking-photo experience, but her conscience finally wins the day. She comes back to her employer "*for the second time on the same day*" (73), only to be offered a second job of housekeeping. Hero reluctantly accepts the offer while acknowledging that "it might have been something to do with the magic of money" (82). Confirming Walls's observation that "Hero's alliance with Miss Credence […] has a distinctly material dimension" ("Money" 134), from Hero's access to the mansion onwards, the lure of money replaces coincidence, acting as a primary driving

force behind her returns.[15] As the narrator admits, "I held on to the twenty dollars, and knew that, by accepting it, I was promising to come back again" (Mahy, *Silence* 84).

With the lure of money maintaining the departure-and-return tension, the oscillation buys time for Hero to discover Miss Credence's dark secret. The discovery is central to constructing intersecting trauma. It transpires that after Clem's abandonment, Miss Credence gave birth to their illegitimate faulty daughter, Rinda. By the time of Rinda's birth, Conrad had passed away, but for fear that her dead father's reputation would be sullied, Miss Credence locked up her daughter to hide the secret from view. It is nearly eighteen years later when Miss Credence's psychopathic act gets uncovered.

While Rinda's literal confinement underlines the Credence property's association with parental suppression, it harks back to the cage-like scaffolding built around Hero's family house, which as noted above, symbolises the same problem. Although both girls are portrayed as victim daughters, Rinda's case is much more grave. Whereas the Rappers are "caring, if imperfect" (Walls, "Adlerian" 191), Miss Credence is traumatised to the point of madness. It takes a while for Hero to discover the secret of Rinda's captivity. She thrice enters the Credence mansion which acts as a kind of reserve of clues. Hero spots a locked door at the back of the hall (Mahy, *Silence* 75). She also finds in the kitchen a china cup which reminds her of something that "a hospital might use for an invalid" (80). The gobbling sounds bursting out at intervals, for which Miss Credence blames the old pipes (109), go on to pique Hero's curiosity. She cannot help suspecting that Conrad may be still alive, but imprisoned by Miss Credence somewhere in the mansion. In due course, Hero procures from Miss Credence's birthday book three codes (112-4), which enable her to later access the garden, the house, and the stairwell behind the door at the end of the hall (127-8). The stairwell leads to the tower room where Hero finds not Conrad but Rinda. Incapable of speech, Rinda is described as

[15] Throughout the novel, Hero's return to Miss Credence place is inseparable from coincidence. Subsequently, random events, such as Ginevra's faint and the revelation of Annie's pregnancy (Mahy, *Silence* 123), create an immediate diversion in the Rapper household, while provoking Hero's feeling of being overwhelmed. As the narrator expresses it, "I set out for Squintum's House in the light, long, late-summer evening, leaving the great family song […] behind" (103). On another occasion, prior to Hero's return to the mansion, the narrator says: "[m]y family could see me nodding away, but the room was so crowded with the astonishment of other people's stories that nobody felt too curious about mine" (126). We have to admit that as the story develops, coincidence comes to play a secondary role in maintaining the departure-and-return tension, but it still serves as a catalyst of some sort.

"waiting for [Hero] like a terrible kind of twin" (130). The moment Hero recognizes Rinda as her mirroring figure, their traumas intersect.

In fact, an exquisitely conceived episode of intersecting trauma has surfaced earlier in the narrative. When Hero enters the study for the first time, she catches sight of Rinda's portrait:

> The child's face bulged on one side in a way that suggested mumps rather than the curve of a smile. It was the sort of painting that I should have been able to laugh at. However, as I stared up at the smiling child, I felt more frightened than I had felt at any time during the visit. Even the gobbling sound I had heard in the sitting room had not filled me with the horror I now felt as I stared at that picture. (83)

The excerpt implies a moment of self-recognition, since the painted child, says Miss Credence, "looks a little like [Hero]" (83). Yet, the intersection goes beyond the connection between Hero and Rinda. Shortly, the underlying reason for Hero's fright comes to light: Rinda's portrait turns out to be modelled on Ginevra's photo (85). As aforementioned, the picture of the younger Ginevra was used to publicize Annie's book. Later, it is admitted by Miss Credence that she had ordered a large copy of Ginevra's photograph, based on which she created the image of her ideal Rinda, "the one [she] *should* have had," as Miss Credence proclaims (151; emphasis original). However, what Miss Credence vainly hopes for her faulty child takes the sinister twist to imprisonment, which in a way alludes to the fact that Annie's expectation for Ginevra also backfires. As Walls observes of Ginevra's case, "[h]er injury points to the damage of a more psychic character which is its cause, since it is quite clear that Ginevra has been, if not exactly suicidal, unconcerned for her own young life" ("Adlerian" 190). Suffice to say, then, that the grotesque painting serves as an agent of intersection, linking together Miss Credence, Hero, Rinda, and Ginevra, a quartet of characters victimized by parental suppression.

Intersecting trauma functions as an essential route to resolution. Following Hero's discovery of Rinda, Miss Credence turns up, locking the girls together. Confined in the tower room, Hero is made to confront her mirroring figure and contemplate their shared speech problem: "I had chosen [my silence]. Rinda had never been able to choose" (Mahy, *Silence* 136). Hero goes on to ponder

over a certain resemblance between Miss Credence and herself, drawing an analogy between her mutism and the woman's madness: "What sort of person stops talking? Real people all talk. Perhaps the silence that had made a special person of me in my talking, arguing family really showed that I was a little mad, as well" (136). In keeping with Robyn McCallum's assertion that "[c]oncepts of personal identity and selfhood are formed in dialogue with society, with language, and with other people" (3), Hero's reflections on her relation to Rinda and Miss Credence constitute a form of dialogue pivotal in transforming Hero's identity. Firstly, she turns into a child of action, as contrasted with her previous passive image. When the tower room door is opened, Hero "didn't hesitate […], charging at [Miss Credence] with teeth bared, fists flying and feet kicking" (Mahy, *Silence* 137). Despite the failed attempt at escape, Hero persists in her efforts. On the next morning, she manages to make a peephole on the painted window, from where she spots Sammy. Hero "didn't hesitate" (144), smashing the window with Rinda's chamber pot. It transpires that Sammy kills time by tracking Hero, so he sees her enter the Credence property. As Sammy and Hero stare at each other through the crack, she "didn't hesitate," calling out for help (145). Taking action three times without hesitation, Hero finally breaks the spell of silence. It is clear that the rescue scene adopts the classical fairy-tale pattern in which the character repeats an act thrice, making a huge difference on the third occurrence. This confirms my previous point that in Mahy's realist work, the setting is often defamiliarized by fairy-tale elements. The Rappers quickly arrive, releasing the girls from the tower room. In desperation, Miss Credence shoots herself in the head, which causes severe brain damage. She ends up being institutionalized for three years till her death (155).

In the book's last section, Mahy resorts to the voice of the third-person narrator, taking a step further to reassure us of the prospect for healing. We are told that "Hero looked up and saw her own house with surprise" (157). As Rose Lovell-Smith asserts, "the astonishing degree of power Mahy assigns her young heroines" is best exemplified by their ownership of the family house (107). In addition to property ownership, Hero's regained agency is manifested by her mastery of language. "She had been talking for three years, and yet her voice often had the power of a stranger's" (Mahy, *Silence* 158). Hero also becomes a writer empowered by her own writing: "Time to move on! she thought. Now I have power over the memory of Squintum's House. I've turned it into a story. All I have to do is write *The End*" (163). Hero's narrative gives voices to the repressed history of the

Credence family, initiating the process of working through trauma. The chance of healing is further suggested by the destruction of the Credence property, which as noted above, symbolises parental suppression. The place is sold to the land developers so that Rinda can be well looked after. The remedy to the problem of the Rappers demonstrates a similar pattern. As indicated by the dismantling of the cage-like scaffolding, the children are recovering from the trauma of being suppressed.

The revelation of Athol's identity as an author goes on to brighten the therapeutic prospect. It turns out that Hero's brother has been working as a scriptwriter for the popular television drama, *Pharazyn Towers,* under the guise of writing his MA thesis. Athol's story features a wicked woman, Athelie Pharazyn, who tries to screw up the life of a young girl called Kate, presumably her own daughter (99). While Athol draws inspiration from his family, using their banters and squabbles to weave his plot, the oppressive figure of Athelie seems to be linked particularly to Annie. As we may remember, Annie is earlier captured playing a comical vampire in a joking scene (26). Probably in parallel to this image, Athol's Kate speaks the line that her family are "*vampires of disaster*" (68; emphasis original). Where Hero's writing directly addresses the trauma of parental suppression, Athol's works on a metafictional level, so that the pair might be taken as a kind of healing duet. It is worth noting that at the novel's very end, Hero, in response to Annie's "seal of official approval" that "'you're a *writer*. You really are'" (Voorendt 35), burns her own writing. While Hero's action is interpreted by Voorendt as "a move away from 'expert' approval" (35), the destroyed narrative, in reminding us of Harry's burnt gothic romance in *The Tricksters,* conveys a message of exorcism by fire. In "[t]he roar of the fire," Sammy suggests to Hero that they "rap out of this story" and "dazzle the world with a different glory" (Mahy, *Silence* 169). Since the "glory" is, presumably, "different" from Annie's expectation, Hero's burning of her book works to exorcise the trauma/ghost of parental suppression.

In *The Other Side of Silence,* intersecting trauma urges Hero to realize the danger of trapping herself in silence, as well as the absurdity in seeking attention with recourse to self-isolation. Since insight can be achieved through drawing connections between oneself and other people, it underlines the importance of community as an agent of mutual support. But while trauma researchers emphasize "the value of actively engaging survivors in constructing a community

response to trauma and healing at the local level" (Todahl et al. 630), Mahy seems to interrogate our literary expectations by suggesting that intersecting trauma is by no means a surefire cure. For example, as noted in Voorendt's thesis, Rinda is "reduced to a scientific anomaly and fought over by psychologists," including Annie (35). To undo her intention of studying Rinda, Mike reminds his wife that "what Rinda Credence needs—needs desperately—is full-time love" (Mahy, *Silence* 160). Athol goes on to express his concern: "Does anyone love her? […] Can anyone love her? If we're being brutally honest" (160). Despite Rinda's association with the fairy-story characters of Jorinda and Rapunzel (130), Athol's query dashes our fairy-tale hopes. Given that "[n]o one but Hero seemed to hear this terrible question" (160), we cannot help but wonder how Rinda's problem would be properly solved.

Twenty-four Hours

On 2 January 2000, Mahy, in response to an invitation, published an article in *Sunday Star-Times* to mark the event of the millennium. Mahy's writing, as noted by a critic at the time, was "a fantastical, quirky and welcome breath of fresh air among some more portentous offerings" (qtd. in Duder 271-2). Nonetheless, Mahy's article savours of millennial uncertainty: "are those '0's three *eyes* staring back at us? The thought of it seems to make some people uneasy. Disasters are being predicted. We may be about to enter on a time of revelation and disaster" (qtd. in Duder 272). In the same year came out Mahy's novel, *Twenty-four Hours*, which features the seventeen-year-old Ellis Hudson as the protagonist. As if sharing the millennial anxiety conveyed in Mahy's newspaper article, her millennium text, as we shall see, presents us with a large group of badly traumatised characters.

In the story's opening scene, Ellis wanders out on the town, thinking about his best friend, Simon Carroll, who had wanted to become a stage actor but ended up killing himself. Ellis is also envisaging his own university life, particularly looking ahead to joining the drama society, since he has auditioned successfully for the role of Claudio in Shakespeare's play, *Measure for Measure*. While walking, Ellis encounters his old schoolmate, Jackie Cattle, who hoaxes him into gate-

crashing a barbeque party. As Ellis drives the family car approaching the spot, he "sighed to himself in fatalistic despair" (Mahy, *Twenty-four* 21), because the stylish event, Ellis realizes, happens to be held at the country house of the wealthy Kilmers, friends of his parents. While it is soon revealed that Mr and Mrs Kilmer organize the party to 'celebrate' their separation, the reason why Jackie targets this particular event is also made known: he is plotting against Christo, the froward and wilful Kilmer boy, by stealing from him a girl called Ursa Hammond. Christo was a notorious bully at the school which Ellis and Jackie attended. Both of them fell victim to Christo's abuse, but Ellis's suffering had started from his childhood: "Many years ago, before Ellis could swim properly, Christo and his sister, Sophie, had pushed him into a deep pool […], and watched him gasping and choking, struggling and sinking, with chilly interest […]. They also told him that they had drowned kittens and puppies in that very pool" (33). The string of coincidences at the novel's beginning immediately launches the pattern of intersecting trauma: together confronting Christo, their common nemesis, Ellis and Jackie are bonded as "practised crosstalk comedians putting on a show" (34). With tension increasing, Ursa decides to leave the party with her younger sister, Leona. Under the workings of chance events, not only does the long and bitter feud between Christo and his victims surface again, a new connection is established in tandem: Ellis falls in love with Leona at first sight and so readily agrees to drive the Hammond sisters back to their inner-city home. The shabby house, previously a motel, is nicknamed "The Land-of-Smiles."

It is noteworthy that Mahy's handling of coincidence, from the novel's outset, is tinged with a sense of the magical, as indicated by Jackie's sharp retort to Christo's interrogation:

> "What are you *doing* here?" Christo was demanding […].
>
> "Doing here?" repeated Jackie, frowning. "Big question. But what are any of us doing here, if it comes to that? I reckon it's pretty random myself. What's that word you were going on about the other day?" he asked, turning to Ursa. "Not telepathy, but *like* telepathy. It was to do with design or something … that things keep happening because of what's meant to happen."
>
> "Teleology," said Ursa. (32-3; emphasis and second ellipsis in original)

With “teleology” misused as “telepathy,” it nearly evokes a sense of the magical in the novel’s everyday setting. As we may infer, at the story’s beginning, Mahy seems to be framing a world of improbable, dramatic events, which will roll in within the forthcoming twenty-four hours. The fast-moving, riveting storyline also gives the novel its title. To some extent, it might be said that we are invited to consider the subsequent series of coincidences as inevitable, or as Jackie puts it, “meant to happen.”

Ellis’s encounter with the Hammond girls develops the plot, since he is taken back to the aforementioned former motel. The Land-of-Smiles belongs to Lewis Montgomery (Monty), the sisters’ foster father; every night, it hosts what Jackie calls “a continual big party” for a group of social outcasts (Mahy, *Twenty-four* 37). Like the Tap House and the Credence mansion, the ramshackle motel reflects the traumatised status of the people it contains. Just as the place is observed to be “haunted by its past” (50), the Land-of-Smiles inhabitants all struggle with their own traumatic past. The Hammond sisters, Ursa, Leona and Fox, are the surviving witnesses of their family tragedy: years ago, their father, having killed their mother and brothers, shot himself at the Moncrieff Road cemetery. As Ursa explains the trio of animal names to Ellis, “the Lion, the Fox and the Bear. Our father named us all after storybook beasts” (78). Although the fairy-tale reference might be Ursa’s gesture of shielding herself and her sisters from the trauma of bereavement, the girls’ tragic experience, as Jackie comments, becomes “part of them forever” (125). Monty suffers from bereavement and social ostracism, thereby appearing as a nostalgic and melancholy figure. Jackie, besides Christo’s victimization (37), is plagued by parental abandonment (75; 124), hence his declaration that the motel is his home (125). Like Jackie, the baby girl, Shelley, is a forsaken child: deserted by her mother, Mystique, she ends up being looked after by Ursa and Leona. The Land-of-Smiles habitués, the hairstylist Pandora and the tattooist Phipps for example, also turn out to be traumatised, as suggested by the name of the businesses they own respectively in Moncrieff Street: Kurl-Up & Dye and Sepulchre Tattoos. Pandora’s inner wrist is “scored with three bluish lines,” a clear sign of self-harm (66). With his face and body overwhelmingly tattooed, Phipps is described as “[concealing] himself in the heart of his own illustration and […] looking out at the world through a confusing veil” (64). While Phipps’s obsession with tattooing derives from his trauma of losing land ownership, it enables him to gain imaginary control over his environment.

As the story progresses, we come to understand that Ellis, likewise, has a traumatic history: he is severely afflicted by Simon's death and the memory of Christo's bullying. Interestingly, Ellis's case bears striking resemblance to Jonny's in *Memory*. In much the same way as Jonny's problem, initially caused by sibling rivalry and school bullying, is compounded by his sister's death, Ellis's trauma, arising from being bullied, is worsened by Simon's suicide. Furthermore, just as Jonny struggles with a wrecked sense of self-worth, Ellis suffers a weak self-identity. For instance, while driving Jackie and the Hammond girls back home, Ellis "felt as if he did not exist […] except as a sort of driving ghost" (39). After Ursa throws Jackie out of the car, the consequence of their quarrel, Ellis drives "obediently" at Ursa's command (45). In containing a cast of traumatised characters and having Ellis as a guest, the Land-of-Smiles offers excellent potential for intersecting trauma.

Despite the significance of the Land-of-Smiles, it should be noted that the novel's main setting, in a broader sense, is the dilapidated inner-city area. Like the settings of Mahy's other stories, the city centre in *Twenty-four Hours* appears at once familiar and unfamiliar. The Moncrieff Road cemetery, "an [sic] historic landmark" (47), gives off "the scent of new hay" at one point (99). The shops on Moncrieff Street, "which had once seemed nothing more than stage props," transpire to constitute "a true neighbourhood" (136). The old library is undergoing transformation into apartments, hence its familiar and strange look: although Ellis "had visited [it] regularly as a child," the building is now "bracing its stone shoulders against a constricting cage of platforms, steps and orange-coloured piping" (10). It emerges that Christo lives in one of these apartments. His place is later compared to "a new stage" (158). Predictably, the Land-of-Smiles is endowed with two levels of reality. The "tumbledown motel," Mahy admits, is modelled on "the flats of university students [she's] known," with "an element of Carroll-like craziness or surrealism" and "odd characters coming and going at all hours" (Duder 278-9). In keeping with the Land-of-Smiles's (sur)real quality, Ellis's dizzying experiences in the city centre are characterized by a "feeling of timelessness […], space and adventure" as if he has "lived for a while in some other lifetime" (277). Moreover, the plentiful "folklore references and literary allusions" continue to defamiliarize the realist setting (278). While Proffitt discusses how *Twenty-four Hours* borrows from Lewis Carroll's *Alice* stories (11-3), my focus is on Mahy's use of theatrical elements. As I observed in my 2020 paper, virtually all the novel's characters deny their traumatic circumstances with recourse to a life of theatricality.

Drawing on this observation, I further propose that the bleak city centre, likened repeatedly to a "stage" (Mahy, *Twenty-four* 9; 16), evokes the setting of Absurdist drama. Indeed, in accordance with Martin Esslin's assertion that "the Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought" (24), Jackie later confides to Ellis: "Everyone in this [motel] is a bit – not mad, not bad – *damaged*. […] We do a few funny things […]. And it's not really anyone's fault […]. It's the fault of the world" (Mahy, *Twenty-four* 124; emphasis original). Moreover, since "the essential question of the absurd [is] man's place in the world devoid of any verifiable truth, value, or meaning" (Logan 63), the city centre, as if echoing the absurdist world, is charged with irrationality, thus susceptible to improbable happenings. Or as Proffitt puts it, Ellis's life takes a strange turn: "He plunges from his middle-class, schoolboy life into the underbelly of the city, discovering alcohol, fast cars and lust along the way" (12). Yet, as we shall see, the key unlikely event tugging the storyline is Shelley's disappearance. Ellis arrives at the Land-of-Smiles on Friday evening. He then joins the party and ends up sleeping over in a drunken stupor. On Saturday morning, Ellis wakes up to find Leona looking for Shelley. She is deeply concerned about her whereabouts, which foreshadows the plot that someone calls anonymously to issue a bye-bye-baby threat. Knowing that Shelley is in danger, Ursa, Leona, Jackie and Ellis make a rescue team of four.

While the baby search progresses with twists and turns, Ellis is exposed to a departure-return tension, which begins from his first sight of the motel. Although "Ellis hesitated" before his first entry and "[had] been thinking of home with pleasure" (Mahy, *Twenty-four* 48), he ends up following the Hammond sisters. The reason is revealed a few pages later: "wouldn't that goodbye be rather like walking out before the end of the film? And, besides, he wanted to see Leona just once more" (57). Throughout the novel, Ellis's desire to leave clashes with the pair of beckoning forces. Where one force dies down, the other rises up, creating a sustainable tension. On one occasion, Ellis is tormented by a terrible hangover, which makes him long for home, but he decides to stay, because of "the smile [Leona] directed at him," which as the narrator expresses it, "was the smile of an angel ─ a grateful smile promising future blessing" (109). Later, based on the information gleaned from the homeless children wandering in the city cemetery, the rescue team

suspect Mystique of taking away her own baby. Together with the other three, Ellis drives to the place of Winston, Mystique's boyfriend, only to initiate a Hollywoodish car chase. At last, Winston's car gets trapped in a ditch, but to everybody's disappointment, the bundle on the backseat is not Shelley, but Ursa's computer. Winston admits stealing it in retaliation for a quarrel he once had with Jackie.

After the car race, the four return to the Land-of-Smiles. Jackie grows sympathetic towards Ellis, and tries to persuade him to go home: "you need a break. […] I don't think you've had anything like the practice at scruffy living that I've had" (123). Indeed, "Ellis had certainly thought rather longingly of home […]. However, Jackie's suggestion that he might actually like to go home felt like an abrupt dismissal" (123). The will to stay takes hold of him once again. As suggested by the word "dismissal," the feeling of being part of a story is foregrounded in maintaining the departure-return tension. Ellis's departure takes place in the wooing scene when he makes advances to Leona in the motel lobby. Rejected, he runs from the Land-of-Smiles. The failed wooing results from Ellis's shocked reaction to Leona's revelation that she works as an undertaker at Dommett & Christie, the organizer of Simon's funeral. Earlier in the novel, en route for the Land-of-Smiles the first time, Ellis drives past the undertaking business. The sight of Dommett & Christie triggers Ellis's gnawing inward pain: "It seemed he could not escape […] from Simon's ironic smile […]. After his death, Simon's body had been taken to this white building, and someone somewhere in there had given him a final, enigmatic expression" (45-6).

Interestingly, aligned with the novel's echo of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure,* a play in which "passion" is associated with "death and decay" (Maus 2174), the wooing scene transpires to be an episode in which Ellis's trauma of bereavement intersects with Leona's. As Ellis imagines that "[i]t might have been Leona's slender fingers, the fingers that had curved so warmly inside his own palm only a short time ago, that had given Simon that enigmatic expression, so tentative, yet so final," Leona recounts how she improves the dead: "Every day, […] I disinfect dead people, drain the purges […]. Every day I soak cotton wool in autopsy gel" (Mahy, *Twenty-four* 132). Ursa later reveals that Leona's job serves as a coping strategy facilitating her understanding of mortality: "It's suited her well, because she needs to be with people to whom death is … just a part of things" (189; ellipsis in original). While Leona's narration of her job routine is symptomatic of trauma, at her

words, Ellis's painful memory is simultaneously summoned, hence his two interruptions: "'Don't go on about it,' cried Ellis, imagining Simon being purged and disinfected. […] 'Don't go on!' exclaimed Ellis, still thinking of Simon" (132-3). Ellis's response confirms the claim made by one literary commentator that "[p]sychological trauma in the trauma novel […] may be defined as *a painful experience which defies assimilation and demands accommodation*" (Granofsky 8-9; emphasis original). Whereas intersecting trauma initially compounds the situation, because Ellis is struck by the searing pain of Simon's death and left disillusioned with his romantic fantasy, it paradoxically elicits a quasi-epiphanic moment. In being "humiliated by a horror he despised himself for feeling, but which was too deep and ancient to be resisted" (Mahy, *Twenty-four* 133), Ellis develops a deeper knowledge of death, from which he benefits in his later confrontation with Christo.

The departure-and-return tension remains, as Ellis soon comes back to the motel. The return is inseparable from the intervention of coincidence. As Ellis sits in his car parked outside the Land-of-Smiles while "[s]taring out blankly, he found himself meeting, through a narrow slot of space between the buildings in front of him, the hard gaze of Phipps – the painted Phipps" (134). As we are told earlier in the novel, "someone had painted three huge portraits [of Pandora, Phipps and Monty] with photographic accuracy" on a blank wall near Moncrieff Street (95). Detecting "something quizzical in the way the painting regarded him […], out of the blue, Ellis found himself remembering the real Phipps – the one who had spoken to him earlier in the day" (134). As Ellis recalls, prior to the car chase, the rescue team hastily cross Moncrieff Street, at which point Phipps leans in the doorway of his tattoo shop, calling after them: "What's the rush? […] Lost something?" (97). The "mocking note in Phipps's voice" entices Ellis to turn back, while the tattooist is captured "watching them with something approaching derision" (97-8). The gaze of the painted Phipps's and the encounter with Phipps the person set up a chain of coincidence, based on which Ellis ponders:

> For if he could sit there in front of the Land-of-Smiles and see the painted Phipps looking back at him through a narrow gap in intervening walls, might not the real Phipps be able to climb up to some rooftop perch […] and watch all comings and goings from the Land-of-Smiles? (135)

As Ellis's suspicion increases to the point that his recollection "now troubled" him, his desire for home surges also: "He'd had enough. More than enough. Why set himself up for more? He would go home immediately" (135). In tandem, however, the feeling of being involved in a story sweeps over Ellis: "how could he leave the Land-of-Smiles without knowing what had happened to Shelley? How could he tear himself out of the story when he had been in it from the beginning and might even have picked up a clue that nobody else had?" (136). Finally yielding to this beckoning force, Ellis makes for Moncrieff Street where Sepulchre Tattoos is located.

Taking advantage of Phipps's obsession with marking people, Ellis devises a scheme: he will get a tattoo if Phipps will divulge the clue in exchange. Despite Phipps's claim of knowing nothing about Shelley's whereabouts, there emerges the possibility of a deal, as the tattooist concedes: "I probably don't know anything useful. But work brings out the old woman in me. I gossip about all sorts of things" (139).

As suggested by the name of the tattooing business, the scene in which Ellis gets marked constructs another episode in which the traumas of bereavement intersect. With his arm being swabbed with disinfectant, Ellis recalls what Leona says about an undertaker's job routine (140). The intersection goes on, as Phipps and his workmate cooperate to tell how the Hammond sisters become orphans (140-1). Meanwhile, Ellis's bereavement fully integrates with the traumatic concerto, because the duration of the tattooing acts as a metaphor for narrative pointing to Simon's tragedy. The picture marked on Ellis's arm is "a little skull – one with a sense of humour. […] It smiled around the rose as if it were making fun of [Ellis]" (139). The design harks back to Simon's final expression, which has haunted Ellis as "a smile about to begin but never quite managing it" (46). As Phipps continues to gossip, he reveals that he saw Christo's car turn up earlier in the morning, but it pulled off shortly afterwards. It transpires that Christo has kidnapped Shelley in reprisal for the humiliation at the barbeque party. The moment the secret comes to light, Ellis's childhood trauma intersects with Shelley's abduction: "He thought of the toddling child. He thought of drowning kittens. All day he had been anxious, but his anxiety had been a reflection of other people's distress. Now he felt a true horror that was all his own" (144). Due to the harm

received from the same bully, Ellis's worry about Shelley grows intensified whereby he feels compelled to return to the Land-of-Smiles.

It is noteworthy that the intersection of the traumas of being bullied surfaces from the novel's opening and evolves through as an ongoing process. Apparently, Christo is the chief victimizer, because the backstory of Ellis and Jackie having been bullied by him emerges to be intertwined with the foreground plot of his abduction of the baby. As Tom Blackwell says, bullies are traditionally regarded as "maladapted, troubled people, lashing out because they had been abused or harassed themselves or at least had dysfunctional home lives." While this could well be a depiction of Christo, because we learn later that he is severely traumatised by parental negligence, it seems that victim and victimizer also merge into one portrayal of the Land-of-Smiles people: they are troubled by their own tragic circumstances, but their initial, unfair treatment of Ellis might be taken as a sort of bullying. When Ellis comes across Jackie downtown, the latter is described as being "[r]aised unnaturally *high* on his roller blades" and "staring *down* at Ellis with friendly interest" (Mahy, *Twenty-four* 13; emphasis added). Yet, Ellis quickly realizes that Jackie is "not just […] being nice": his catch-up offer turns out to serve the purpose of hitching a ride, or in Jackie's words, "[t]his is straight-out exploitation" (17). On his first acquaintance with Phipps, Ellis is greeted with the tattooist's "inexplicably calculating stare" from which he senses "resentment" (63). Moreover, at the early stage of Shelley's rescue, Ellis is constantly neglected and bossed around. When Christo anonymously calls the motel to issue a threat, Ursa remains motionless, asking Ellis to pick up the phone instead (79). In his shock of the menace, Ellis is eager to share the information, but the Hammond sisters take no notice of his words, hence his shout at them for attention (80-1). Ellis's position as an underdog is precisely delineated by the imperative tone in which Jackie speaks to him: "All we want from you is blind obedience […]. Just do what I tell you to do" (88-9). In these observations, it can be said that Ellis's contacts with the Land-of-Smiles people initiate a new form of bullying, which runs in parallel with the bullying he received from Christo. As the story develops, all traumas of being bullied are brought together, culminating in the revelation of Shelley's abduction by Christo.

In accordance with my previous proposal that intersecting trauma is a necessary prelude to the resolution, a positive turn is just around the corner, as exemplified by the car-race episode.

Although "[i]nstructions and abuse exploded around him," Ellis focuses on his reckless driving (113). Irritated by Jackie's parody of Leona's voice, Ellis commands him to "shut up" and the latter gets "momentarily silenced" (114). The initially dominant Jackie ends up being disempowered. On a whim, Ellis "[takes] both hands off the wheel and [waggles] them in the air," whereas Jackie is described "making an impulsive movement, a symbolic half-grab at the wheel" (116). In making Jackie terrified, Ellis "felt an immediate relaxation that was partly triumph" (116).

Although Shelley's rescue remains unfinished, the problem of Ellis's weak self-identity is being tackled. This improved situation confirms the paradoxical effect of bullying that Katharine Kittredge and Carolyn Rennie discuss in "Old-School Bullies at Hogwarts: The Pre-Victorian Roots of J. K. Rowling's Depiction of Child-on-Child Violence" (2018). Noting that in *Harry Potter* series, bullying gives rise to both "the positive emotional fortification and the negative emotional scarring," Kittredge and Rennie explain their point:

> Rowling presents the persistence of bullying and its effects on her characters over seven years (and several thousand pages) to ultimately affirm the power of children to fight their own battles among themselves, insisting that in the course of these conflicts, children will learn valuable lessons from both the battles they win, and those they lose. (99)

Likewise, through the power struggle with the Land-of-Smiles 'bullies,' Ellis grows mentally stronger, as he learns to speak up for himself and carry out his own will. The dethroned Jackie gains a lesson as well. In the motel kitchen, he admits reluctantly to Ellis: "I feel a bit responsible for you, I suppose. Oh God! […] I've done my best, but it's happening. […] I'm becoming mature" (Mahy, *Twenty-four* 124). Jackie's confiding further empowers Ellis. One page later, he makes a slightly mean joke at the expense of Jackie, his one-time exploiter (125). Predictably, Ellis's interaction with the resentful Phipps also helps to address his weak self-esteem. Prior to his departure from Sepulchre Tattoos, Ellis stakes his claim on the tattoo, declaring to Phipps: "it's not your mark, it's mine. Firstly I chose it, and secondly I'm stealing it. Because I'm not going to pay you" (145). Ellis's confident assertion strengthens his self-identity. Brimming with "an energy […] that surprised him," Ellis makes for the motel while "gathering his new power into himself

and hoarding it there like treasure" (146). Together with Jackie and the Hammond girls, Ellis finds Christo in his inner-city apartment.

The dramatic rescue of Shelley stages an episode of intersecting trauma. First, the traumas of bereavement are brought together. To avenge himself on his uncaring parents, Christo threatens to jump off the building. More gravely, Shelley is put in danger of death, because Christo carries her in a backpack. While undoing the bully's suicidal intention, Ellis begins by speaking in the voice that he recently uses "when talking to people about Simon" (169). The voice conjures up Simon's image in Ellis's mind; he "took it prisoner" for possible, future use (169). Ellis goes on to explain the futility of banking on suicide as an act of revenge, which is followed by his reflection on Simon's tragedy (171-3). Ellis further invokes his newly acquired knowledge of death, quoting Leona's narration of her job routine (173). Intersecting trauma is most forcibly presented in the following description: "Bits and pieces rushed together, drawn from the present and the past, to fit into a single, unswerving form. Voices that had never had anything to say to one another in real life ran together inside [Ellis] so that Leona's words sang through Simon's" (172). In the final stage of the rescue, Ellis resorts to his stage acting experience, reciting Claudio's lines from Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. Claudio's words make a crafted rhetorical speech teetering between his abhorrence of the "weariest […] worldly life" and intense "fear of death" (176). By playing Claudio, Ellis puzzles out the confusion arising from this conundrum "for Simon as well as for himself" (176). Predictably, as the traumas of bereavement intersect, it improves the intense situation. Not only does Christo give up his suicidal attempt in a while, Ellis's problem is also addressed: "In the back of his mind, Simon smiled faintly and went out like a light. […] And he found that he had dissolved; [sic] not his sadness over Simon's death, but its oppression – its power" (176-8).

Running concurrently with the first intersection, the traumas of being bullied are connected together. While exposing Shelley to the danger of heights, Christo shouts out "what he had said many years ago as he pushed Ellis, again and again, under the water" (164). Yet, the intersection anticipates the healing of the trauma. Although Christo initially speaks in the "languid voice of the master" (167), the hierarchy is reversed a few pages later when Ellis talks in "the voice of a master" (171). As their conversation progresses, Ellis grows "daring to interrupt" his adversary, whereas

Christo's voice "lost all its earlier confidence" (172-3). When Christo comes down from the roof at Ellis's command (178-9), the power structure is completely overturned, which suggests that Ellis's trauma of being bullied receives treatment.

Intersecting trauma benefits not just Ellis but also his fellow characters. At the novel's close, Ellis revisits the Land-of-Smiles. In gratitude for his rescue of Shelley, Ursa tells Ellis a complete version of her family story as "a sort of funny Christmas present" (187). Progressing nonstop, Ursa's narration signifies healing. In other words, what van der Kolk and van der Hart call "the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences" are put together (176). The moment Ursa finishes her story, Jackie appears. In contrast with his previous self-mocking remark, "No real job. No self-respect" (Mahy, *Twenty-four* 18), he tells Ellis that "he might train for a job" (189). Jackie also gives Ursa a "patently false-pearl ring," which according to him, testifies to "a changed life" (190). Besides Ursa and Jackie making a pair of lovers, it is foretold that Leona will be married to her employer and Fox to Ellis (191).[16] Although in the novel's last scene, Ellis pedals off to "the sound of Fox's laughter" (192), it raises again the question to what extent intersecting trauma can resolve the problem, confirming Roni Berger's point that "[t]o heal communities, it is not sufficient to address the needs of individuals within the community" (177). While Ellis "[sets] out once more into the dangerous world" (Mahy, *Twenty-four* 192), it is suggested that the problems plaguing the Land-of-Smiles people are far from being resolved, for the motel's broken electric sign still announces its name as "THE AND-OF-MILES" (48).

16 It seems that Mahy's three pairs of lovers contain another echo of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. At the end of the play, Claudio, the Duke and Angelo marry Juliet, Isabella and Mariana respectively.

Intersecting Trauma in Mahy's Fantasy Novels

Introduction

In my discussion of Mahy's realist representation of intersecting trauma, it is noted how coincidence contributes significantly to sustaining the departure-and-return tension whereby the protagonist is attracted and repelled by an (extra)ordinary setting, while traumas intersect beneath the seemingly static surface. As proposed earlier, I will draw on Bakhtin's concept of "chronotope," which Alison Waller has used to examine Mahy's realist setting, to investigate the importance of the place for constructing intersecting trauma in Mahy's fantasy novels.

Before elaborating on this point, it might be useful to firstly gain a brief knowledge of Bakhtin's concept of "chronotope," namely "time-space." In his 1937 essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," Bakhtin writes:

> In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (119)

To put it simply, then, the interconnection between time and space prominently features the notion of chronotope: time finds embodiment in space; space responds to the flow of time.

In its impressive attempt at fusing together past, present and future, the concept of time-space is tailor-made for reading Mahy's trauma-ridden narratives. "What distinguishes the trauma novel from other novels," Granofsky propounds, "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" (5). Aligned with Granofsky's

claim, Waller's investigation of "the function of memory" not only entails "an examination of the images and metaphors that [Mahy] employs in *Memory* and *24 Hours*" ("Memory and City" 148), it also points out the "temporal tension […] between the heroes' diurnal movements through the city and their symbolic journeys into the past" (160). Indeed, Mahy's urban chronotope activates the intricate link between what-was-then and what-is-now, or to say it differently, the traumatic backstory and the foregrounded plot. In *Memory*, the cityscape, in providing Jonny with "clues […] written on buildings," facilitates his "quest to find Bonny" (159), from whom he retrieves the missing part of his memory whereby his trauma of bereavement is addressed. Likewise, in *Twenty-four Hours*, Ellis's "grand quest to find Shelley" (152), the abducted baby, grows to intersect with his own trauma of being bullied, but Ellis's discovery that Shelley and himself both fall victim to Christo is inseparable from the his unintentional meeting with the gaze of the painted Phipps, the street art which is described as "an urban mnemonic, setting off a train of memories" (159).

Drawing on Waller's interpretation of Mahy's realist cityscape as a Bakhtinian time-space, I intend to use the concept to examine the representation of intersecting trauma in two of Mahy's fantasy novels, *The Changeover* (1984) and *Alchemy* (2002). The former's protagonist is the fourteen-year-old Laura Chant, while the latter's is the seventeen-year-old Roland Fairfield. My focus is on the role of the house at the centre of each story. Aside from allowing the traumatised characters to meet, the place further offers the protagonist a physical space for a mental journey, during which process s/he is enabled to bear witness to the unresolved past. In this way, the house functions as an agent of chronotope, linking the present with the past. In other words, space reacts to the linear movements of time and plot. Simultaneously, people's traumas find expression in the image of the houses that contain them, a manifestation of time becoming visible in space.

In fact, the concept "chronotope" might be even better suited to reading Mahy's fantasy novels: because of supernatural intervention, such as witchcraft and magic, it would not surprise us too much that time and space, memory and place, literally merge into one single entity. In much the same way as Laura's changeover is described as a "journey [that] is inward, but will seem outward" (Mahy, *Changeover* 139), Roland, in the novel's climactic scene, embarks on a journey "both outwardly and inwardly" (Mahy, *Alchemy* 225). Moreover, it is noteworthy that the houses from which Laura and Roland must find their way out are initially plunged into total darkness, as it might

contain an allusion to Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy*, which according to Anne Whitehead is "[t]he literary work that developed out of and most powerfully reflected the medieval approach to memory" (*Memory* 45). While Dante's influence on Mahy has been discussed before by Voorendt who acknowledges *Divine Comedy* as a source of inspiration for Mahy's representation of suicide in *Dangerous Spaces* (104-7),[17] Dante's text, it seems, has also made an impact on *Changeover* and *Alchemy*. In *Divine Comedy*,

> Dante as narrator […] recounts his journey through the three realms of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. He encounters there the souls of the dead, who are in the precise place that has been allotted to them by divine justice. Dante converses with them and stores their stories in his memory, in order to recollect and repeat them in the cantos of his poem. (Whitehead, *Memory* 45)

The Hell depicted in Dante's work, being "a dark realm" in which the poet narrator "frequently cannot make out clearly the images that arise before him as he proceeds on his way" (Whitehead, *Memory* 45), seems to find an echo in Mahy's descriptions of the houses. In *Changeover*, Laura steps out of a bathroom door which "opened on darkness," but the blackness also "seethed with the spirits of people and events" (Mahy 139-40). Likewise, Roland's entry into the house introduces him into "a narrow twisting darkness" (Mahy, *Alchemy* 225), but he later confronts "[a] whole company of tenuous figures" (230). Just as Dante's visit enables him to know other people's life stories, the journeys that Mahy's protagonists make in the houses also allow them to witness the fellow characters' pasts so that the trips can be interpreted as an exploration into the realm of memory. In that sense, the house at the centre of *Changeover* and *Alchemy* serves as a memory

[17] Mahy's interest in Dante can be traced back to an early poem, "The Burnt Library," which she wrote at the age of sixteen: "And Dante with Defoe and Dekker fell; No Virgil came to guide him through the Hell" (qtd. in Duder 71). While Duder uses the poem to demonstrate the literary talent the young Mahy possessed (70), Butler proposes that the work "hints at an early interest in some of the perplexing aspects of librarianship Mahy was to explore in her adult work: […] Dante, Defoe, and Dekker fall, but at least they fall in alphabetical order" (130). More obviously, this poem indicates Mahy's basic knowledge of Dante's narrator being conducted through Hell by Virgil.

container in which the time-space boundary blurs. The fantasy genre precisely makes for our readiness to accept the place as a chronotope.

While experiencing a collection of memories during their mental trips, Mahy's protagonists get intimately acquainted with the unresolved pasts of themselves, as well as that of other characters. The evoked memories intersect in the sense that people share similar painful experiences. Yet, where traumas interconnect, a high probability of a collective cure glimmers. As the protagonists are made to witness other people's repressed traumas, the solution of surrogate recollection is proposed, which contributes to healing a wider range of traumatised psyches. Working-through by dint of surrogate memory also makes greater sense in the fantasy genre than in its realist counterpart. In what follows, I will discuss the pattern of intersecting trauma in *Changeover* and *Alchemy*. My examination highlights the importance of the house which, in acting as a Bakhtinian chronotope, facilitates bringing together people's traumatic pasts thereby producing a joint solution.

The Changeover

As suggested by the novel's title, the protagonist Laura Chant's changeover, which refers to her transformation from a girl to a witch, serves as the central action of the narrative. When the novel begins, Laura's three-year-old brother, Jacko, is tricked into having his left hand stamped by an old man named Carmody Braque. The stamp's imprint dissolves the next morning, but the boy becomes terribly ill. With a sneaking suspicion that Jackie's life is being consumed by Braque, Laura turns to Sorensen (Sorry) Carlisle, a prefect at her school, whom she suspects to be a witch. Laura's presumptions prove to be true: while Sorry is a witch, Braque turns out to be a lemure, an evil spirit preying on the lives of other people. As Jacko falls victim to Braque, his health rapidly deteriorates so that he is hospitalized, but no doctors can find an efficient cure. Meanwhile, the boy's condition is made known to other members of the Carlisle family, Sorry's mother, Miryam, and his maternal grandmother, Winter. The women are witches as well. Aside from telling Laura that Braque's stamp works as an entry into Jacko, Winter further proposes a solution: Laura must find a way to mark Braque, just as the villain did to Jacko; the purported changeover can enable this to

happen. Later, in the bathroom of the Carlisle house, Laura undergoes her transformation with the help of Winter, Miryam and Sorry. Reborn as a witch, Laura is given a stamp, the symbol of her transformed identity. Accompanied by Sorry, Laura finds Braque at his place and succeeds in stamping his hand. With Braque being disempowered, Jacko makes a remarkable recovery. Laura further seals her triumph by luring Braque into a park and turning him into a pile of dead leaves.

As noted above, in a chronotope, time and space are fused together; one manifestation of the temporal-spatial interconnection is that people's unresolved pasts become perceptible in the image of the house. The interior of the Carlisle house precisely mirrors the inner landscape of the family members. Living up to its name, Janua Caeli, which means "the door of heaven" (Mahy, *Changeover* 212), the place is spacious and well-decorated, but beneath the glamorous surface lurks an undercurrent of trauma, as exemplified by a painted picture:

> Among little hills and trees and sparkling fountains, smiling monsters played cards or gathered flowers. In the background a great face, which was partly a building, watched the scene with melancholy detachment, and in the very front of the picture a man covered in short feathers turned an owl's face to stare out of the frame, but whether he was wearing a mask or whether he was some sort of man-bird Laura could not tell. (88-9)

As we shall see, the macabre painting alludes to the traumatic backstory of the Carlisles. While Kathryn Walls observes that Sorry is "traumatized by the beatings inflicted upon him by his unhappy foster father" ("Generic" 65), the underlying reason for the boy's psychological scar can be identified as the abandonment by his birth family.

It emerges that Miryam had wanted a baby, because the family needed a helper to protect their land from the threat of urbanization. Little information is provided about Sorry's biological father, except that Miryam "doesn't know who [the] father is and tried to arrange it so she'd never know" (Mahy, *Changeover* 114). In a storytelling episode, Winter reveals to Laura:

> We decided to raise what we call a cone of power over the farm […]. We would still be visible, but somehow not observable. The city would know we were there but would pass

> us by. However, such a condition is hard to create and even harder to maintain. We needed a third witch. (Mahy, *Changeover* 90)

Yet, since a witch is presumably female, Sorry's gender went against his family's expectation, hence the plan to forsake the baby. Miryam further confides to Laura: "I am not a motherly woman and, when I thought of my son, I felt quite trapped" (91). Therefore, the Carlisle women selected a seemingly perfect foster family for Sorry and kept an eye on him distantly. However, as Miryam confesses, after her father's death, she quickly "forgot to be concerned," because the family land was exposed to the threat of her uncles, a bunch of city businessmen who coveted the property (93). To worsen the situation, Sorry's adoptive father became abusive so that the boy suffered a catalogue of misfortunes, such as being beaten and imprisoned. With recourse to his magical power, Sorry found his way back to the Carlisle house, at which point Miryam was shocked at his "shattered" look and recognized belatedly that her son was "a true child of power" (93). While narrating this part of the story, Miryam is captured "[shaking] her head, less at Laura than at Winter, sharing a memory that could not be described" (93). As if Miryam's gesture passes the storytelling role onto her mother, Winter continues:

> We struggled to save […] his humanity […]. We took him to doctors, we patched him together. He imitates normal life very well now […]. Sorensen is very much a broken-down car himself, and none of us can tell how badly broken. He doesn't appear to feel very deeply, though he can seem quite clever. (93-4)

The joint confession helps the reader understand Miryam's earlier remark that Sorry "can be very inept at times" (63). The mother says so, because Laura is embarrassed by Sorry's obscure compliment on her legs. Admonishing Sorry's misdemeanour, Miryam calls out his name; her "soft but quelling" voice is compared to "a velvet cushion used to smother a prince in a tower" (63). Now, we come to understand that the mother-murderer analogy hints at Miryam's responsibility for Sorry's childhood trauma, bearing which in mind, how appropriate it is that the boy is named "Sorry," a word associated with grief and regret.

The unresolved history of the Carlisles is reflected in the aforementioned painting. The smiling monsters seem to anticipate the storytelling scene in which Sorry reveals in a "perfectly cheerful" voice how he was maltreated by his foster father (115). The huge face, partially a house, might be an allusion to Janua Caeli. With an air of detachment, the face foreshadows Winter's remark on the Carlisle household: "We are a fond family rather than a loving one" (101). The word "fond" indicates the degree of modest affection that falls far short of normal familial love, especially maternal love. Given Sorry's "real affinity with birds" (104), the feathered man represents Sorry himself. Interesting to note is the painted figure's association with an owl (89), which is a symbol of wisdom and a literal predator. It well matches Sorry's characterisation. Whereas he impresses Laura as being "[s]mart, and sort of tricky" (94), Sorry is not unrelated to the act of predation. As Gose draws an analogy between him and the novel's archvillain, "[l]ike Braque, who uses trickery to ensnare Laura's brother, Sorry shows himself a trickster in his sexual designs on Laura" by "[posing] as her rescuer" (8).

While my discussion, thus far, makes explicit that time becomes visible in space, as trauma manifests itself in the interior of Janua Caeli, how space responds to time is best exemplified by the linchpin of the novel, the changeover. According to Walls:

> Laura's changeover is not itself depicted as magical […]. It seems to Laura herself, as she undergoes the changeover, that she is experiencing a sequence of physical trials in a surreal setting. But in reality […], Laura does nothing but sit "in the dark" (186), allowing her mind —and only her mind—to follow the prompts of the full-fledged witches ("Generic" 61).

While Walls makes the point in support of her realist reading that Braque's supernatural power is "no more than a figment of Laura's imagination" (62), the psychological dimension emphasized in Walls's remark that "Laura journeys inside herself" contributes to my interpretation of the changeover as an exploration of memory (67). Interestingly, what Miryam murmurs to Laura in the preparation stage of the changeover assigns to Janua Caeli the role of a chronotope: "For tonight, this room is a crossways of many lines of space and time" (Mahy, *Changeover* 136). Based on the claim, I further propose that the house where Laura stays throughout her mental journey

seems almost to be magically transformed into a memory vessel whereby people's unresolved problems are evoked. Or to quote Winter, the changeover enables an access to "the memory of all living things" (149). The connection between Janua Caeli and memory might derive from the ancient Roman god, Janus, who looks both back to the past and forward to the future. While Janua Caeli facilitates moving the past into the present, it creates a favourable condition for intersecting trauma.

Shortly after she sets out on her changeover journey, Laura hears her name called by a number of fellow characters:

> 'Lolly!' said Kate [Laura's mother] in her ear. 'Laura,' said Chris Holly [Kate's boyfriend]. 'Baa-lamb!' said her father. 'Laura Chant,' said old Winter. 'Chant' said Sorry in his prefect's superior voice, touched as always with self-derision. Jacko did not call her. He floated in his hospital womb, tied to life by wires and tubes, devoured from within by the ravenous lemure. (141)

Implicit in the juxtaposition of the people's names is the intersection of their traumas. As being forsaken by their spouses connects Kate and Chris (49), so also parental abandonment makes one connection between Sorry and Laura. While Sorry's traumatic story has been made known to us, we come to learn that Laura's father, Stephen, forsook his previous family so as to marry his mistress, Julia. Living in the same household, Jacko and Laura are exposed to similar stressors. As Walls points out, Kate's distraction, caused by a solo mother's financial stress and her relationship with Chris, can be a problem for both Laura and her brother ("Generic" 68).[18] Interestingly, Jacko's case mirrors certain parts of Sorry's in that the birth of the boys initially derives from the mothers' manipulative motives. While we already know that Miryam wanted a child to secure the family property, Kate's scheme is revealed when she tells Laura in great distress:

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[18] A detailed discussion of Laura's traumatised status comes from Walls's observation that the heroine, at the novel's opening, is confronted with a "practically" and "psychologically challenging" situation: "she is fourteen; her parents have been divorced and her father has remarried; her mother […] is preoccupied by the desperate need to work for a living; and Laura is therefore often required to care for her three-year-old brother" ("Generic" 65).

> I only had Jacko because I thought your father might leave - he was already having an affair with Julia then and I knew that this time it was serious, so I had Jacko! Still it's a rotten reason for having a baby, just to tie someone to you, isn't it? […] I really don't believe it's my fault - yet in a superstitious way I feel that it's sort of punishment for past mistakes. (Mahy, *Changeover* 124-5)

Although traumas intricately interlock, complicating the situation, the intersection is pregnant with therapeutic possibilities. As we shall see, the working-through of Laura's problem emerges to benefit her fellow characters, thereby bringing about a collective cure. Thus, it is worth looking at the treatment of Laura's trauma.

In one of the changeover's later sessions, Laura cuts the briars with a sword. "[S]creaming with a voice Laura dimly recognized as her own" and "[dripping] her own blood on her" (146-7), the briars serve as a metaphor for Laura's trauma, so the act of slashing is symbolic of dealing with her problem. Laura's head-on confrontation with her traumatic memories gives rise to "a shock of pain, followed by a spasm of rank sickness" (146). The searing and sickening pain Laura suffers in this episode might correspond to "[t]he recurrence of the extreme fear or sadness that occurred during the original [stressor event] during psychotherapy" (Bremner et al. 82).

Aligned with my earlier proposal that the healing of other characters hinges on the heroine's, their unresolved pasts are immediately evoked in the treatment of Laura's problem:

> Kate and Stephen stood together in church being married; [Laura] saw herself born, her first day at school, saw Winter Carlisle, much younger and softer, feeding hens […], saw Miryam, stricken, hold a baby who must be Sorry, and Sorry himself crouched under a rain of blows […]. She saw Chris, in another country, holding a letter he hesitated to post. (Mahy, *Changeover* 147)

In the gush of vivid memories, Laura gains access to her own past while becoming a witness to other people's history.

What plays in Laura's mind's eye is almost akin to a testimonial video, through which all the traumas are brought to light. Testimony, as Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub put forward in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), is instrumental in reconstructing a healing space where trauma can be "reinscribed, translated, radically rethought and fundamentally worked over" (xv). In accordance with Felman's and Laub's claim, the prospect for a joint working-through is suggested when Laura "saw herself looking in a mirror, saw all the possibilities, her own and other people's" (Mahy, *Changeover* 147). As Laura's changeover progresses to the grand finale, "[i]t suddenly occurred to her she was being born again […]. She was held and expelled, moved in a great vice, believing her intransigent head with its burdens of thoughts, dreams and memory must split open" (151). With "burdens of thoughts, dreams and memory" all tackled in one changeover, it would not be going too far to say that Laura's trauma is worked through on both conscious and unconscious planes. Therefore, while Gose identifies the changeover as "a ritual" and "a quest" (7), what Laura undergoes in Janua Caeli might also be called an ideal psychotherapy, which helps to reconstitute the past through recollection.

By now, the initials of the Carlisle house, sharing those of Jesus Christ, make greater sense. Acting as a memory container, Janua Caeli contributes to replaying the repressed pasts, which not only frees Laura from her familial trauma but also makes her an eye-witness to other people's unclaimed experiences. Confirming the therapeutic significance the house assumes, a few gratifying outcomes spring up on the changeover's completion. Sorry's "divided face" is described as "modified, beginning, perhaps, to come together under the pressure of something new and nameless in him" (Mahy, *Changeover* 151). Next, Laura "saw [Miryam's and Winter's] calm faces touched with what she thought might be a springtime change" (152). Given the immediate benefits that Laura and the Carlisle witches reap from the changeover, it is worthwhile to review what Miryam earlier says to Laura: at the night of the changeover, the bathroom becomes "a crossways of many lines of space and time […], but only witches and similar people can catch fish on them" (136). The fish metaphor further bears out the Janua Caeli/Jesus Christ analogy, since in Christian texts, a fisherman serves as a traditional image for Christ.[19] The biblical allusion in Mahy's text

19 In the New Testament, Jesus called on two fisher brothers (Simon called Peter and Andrew) to follow him. Jesus told them that in so doing, they would be made "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:18-20; Mark 1:16-20).

also raises the subject concerning the Christian ideal of universal sibling-hood, which is relevant to the remedy of surrogate memory. On the completion of the changeover, we are told that it is "as if [Laura's] journey had been [Sorry's] as well, and was continuing to affect him" (152). Laura's own suffering saves her fellow characters from their painful memories, which again harks back to the aforementioned meaning of Janua Caeli, the door of heaven.

Intersecting trauma as a prelude to interlocking resolutions is best exemplified by Jacko's recovery. Although it is not until Braque's defeat that the little boy's situation is improved significantly, because of the trauma Sorry shares with Jacko, the former character's healing might be taken as a turning point in the plot of the latter's rescue. After the changeover is accomplished, Sorry kisses Laura in Janua Caeli. The kiss elicits Laura's feeling that "it seemed as if he kissed her for Jacko in the past, himself in the present and for another unknown child somewhere in the future" (155). Drawing on Anna Lawrence-Pietroni's observation that the kissing episode demonstrates the fluidity of adolescence, as "Sorry runs into Jacko […], while Laura is mother, sister, and lover in the giving and receiving of one kiss" (35), we can also interpret the kiss as connecting together the past, present and future so that the trio of timelines converge in the space of Janua Caeli.

Meanwhile, Laura's burgeoning relationship with Sorry helps to address their shared trauma of parental abandonment. After Laura's stamp disempowers Braque, the heroine confides that she "[wants] him to suffer," while Sorry attempts to undo her vengeful intention by posing the question: "what's the use of getting rid of—of wickedness, say—in the outside world if you let it creep back into things from inside you?" (Mahy, *Changeover* 184-5). In accordance with Walls's realist interpretation that "when Braque appears as literal demon he does so only to reveal himself as […] the part of Laura that Laura once refused to see" (71), Laura's desire to prolong her punishment of Braque, a symbol of the familial trauma to which she has just reconciled herself, seems to evoke what Freud terms as a patient's "[fixation] to his trauma" (qtd. in Caruth, "Introduction Recapturing" 152). Although Laura preempts a further discussion on the topic, Sorry's question contributes to changing her mind. A few pages later, we are told that Braque, without being tortured further, is reduced to "nothing but dead leaves" (Mahy, *Changeover* 192).

The bond between Laura and Sorry is shown to be reciprocal. In the middle part of the novel, Sorry tells his traumatic story in the hope of distracting Laura from her distress caused by Kate's

relationship with Chris, but it also suggests the possibility of reconciliation. Reflecting on Miryam's abandonment of him, Sorry says: "I think she did the right thing. It wasn't her fault that it didn't work out" (113). The therapeutic value of their romance is further underlined when Sorry reveals to Laura: "[Miryam and Winter] thought of me as a sort of – say an uncontrolled charge of electricity, and you as a way of earthing the charge – bringing it back into line" (201).

Moreover, since the changeover fantastically extends Laura's scope of experience that is otherwise impossible, she becomes a witness to the trauma of spousal abandonment Kate and Chris share, which anticipates the healing of the two adults. By the end of the story, Chris's bond with Kate develops, and his relationship with Laura and Jacko improves. In one of the novel's final scenes, he behaves like a surrogate father, cooking dinner for a family party held at the Chant house. The remedial implication of Chris's characterization resonates with Walls's observation that the "designation 'Christ'" in *The Changeover* "is attached to the Canadian 'Chris Holly,' who saves the newly-single mother of the female hero from her loneliness" ("Biblical" 86). The surname "Holly" denotes an added message of redemption, as in the Christmas carol "The Holly and the Ivy," the plant of holly serves as a symbol of Christ.

In the restored domestic warmth, we might expect to celebrate a wonderfully happy ending, but the inevitable parting between Laura and Sorry brings back the troubling element haunting the pattern of intersecting trauma: "chosen as a trainee for the Wildlife Division" Sorry will soon begin a four-year peripatetic training, and what awaits Laura is "at least three years of school ahead" (Mahy, *Changeover* 202-3). Furthermore, Sorry's speech disorder, the stammer resulting from his childhood trauma, lingers through until the novel's last page (214). Whereas the remaining and upcoming problems seem to point to the limited scope for healing that intersecting trauma can offer, a note of reassurance comes in tandem with the intervention of the fantastical. As the novel draws to a close, the young couple's telepathic communication increases in frequency as if indicating that their relationship could continue to develop, despite their physical distance. Sorry's sarcastic humour further works to relieve Laura's worry, as well as an empathetic reader's: "'Get over, Chant!' Sorry commanded. 'We're both on the same side, you and me, remember? And anyway you're as likely to meet someone else as I am'" (203).

Alchemy

Like *The Changeover*, *Alchemy* features a pair of main characters, the aforementioned hero, Roland Fairfield, and the heroine, Jess Ferret. At the novel's beginning, Roland, accused of shoplifting from a local supermarket, is blackmailed by Mr. Hudson, his English teacher, into spying on his classmate Jess, who according to Hudson is struggling with some problem. Whereas Roland is a popular prefect, Jess appears as a pariah, so Hudson suggests he befriend her first. Stalking Jess after school, Roland learns the location of her home to which he later pays a visit. To Roland's surprise, the real Jess is very different from her public image. She impresses him with her clever wordplay; the eloquent Roland is a good match for her. On departure, Roland spots an eerie figure on the landing. Predictably, the uncanny creature suggests that something has gone wrong with Jess. As the story progresses, we come to know that Jess, a magician dealing with alchemy, is exposed to the threat of a dark magician called Quando who feeds on other magicians. Aside from being one of Quando's victims, Jess further attributes the quality of sexual violence to his feeding: "He just wanted a way *into* me. […] It was rape—sort of rape" (Mahy, *Alchemy* 203). Meanwhile, it emerges that Quando tried to steal power from Roland when he was a little boy. As we find out in the latter half of the story, like Jess, Roland is a born magician. When the two characters exchange the stories about their traumatic encounters with the evil magician, it is revealed that Quando's real name is Tyrone Hudson, and Mr Hudson is his older brother (as well as accomplice). Soon, danger looms large. Roland hears in his mind Jess's voice crying for help and so makes for her house, but he finds Quando lurking around. Ignoring the villain's warning against entering the place, Roland manages to unlock the door and seek out Jess. Together with Hudson, Quando breaks in, forcing Roland and Jess to surrender their power. At the critical juncture, the magical confrontation culminates in Roland's defeat of the dark magician, while Quando is reduced to a powerless figure, leaving the house under Hudson's escort.

The name Quando, Latin for "when," seems to suggest a close affinity between the antagonist and time, pointing potentially to the chronotope dimension. The focus of my discussion is on Jess's house, which as I propose acts as a time-space. Consistent with *The Changeover* in which the

Carlisle house facilitates mirroring the family history, Jess's home, as Voorendt observes, reflects the owner's mental disintegration and her trauma-induced social avoidance (74-8). Not surprisingly, in the rescue episode, Jess's house, described as "crushing her to death" (Mahy, *Alchemy* 222), is dominated by darkness (225) and annihilation (234). The severe condition of the place also reminds us of what Dori Laub and Nanette Auerhahn call "traumatic blackout," which refers to "the moment or stretch of life […] during which overwhelming traumatic affect takes center stage and leads to a shutdown of thinking, self-reflection, reality testing, and conscious remembering" ("Fantasy" 174). The locked front-door of Jess's place seems to resonate with the word "shutdown," indicating that the heroine suffers a damaged psyche. The Medusa-head knocker is also noteworthy. In addition to implying Jess's terrifying magical power, which as she later reveals, makes her "too strong" to be destroyed by Quando (Mahy, *Alchemy* 203), the decoration, given Poseidon's disreputable rape of Medusa, might allude to the experience of metaphorical rape which Jess suffers at Quando's hands. Jess's house works further to divulge her past by containing the aforementioned strange figure, which Roland later recognizes as "another version—a distorted ghost—of Jess" (89). This other version of Jess is reminiscent of the double, which as Freud theorizes it, is "often an uncanny figure marking a site of repression" (Rothberg 89). Indeed, the presence of the ghost is inseparable from Jess's repressed trauma, which serves as the novel's backstory.

It turns out that Jess is badly traumatised by her parents' separation and her mother's romantic relationship with Quando. Before the novel begins, Mr Ferret was desperate to leave for travelling, while Mrs Ferret wanted to marry Quando. More gravely, when Jess told her parents about Quando's threat to her, neither adult took it seriously. Helpless and furious, she put a sleeping spell on her parents, partly to punish them and partly to forestall their divorce, but she ends up being divided in two, hence the ghostly creature at her place. Jess calls it the "eidolon" which is explained as the "part of [herself]" that currently resists her embrace (Mahy, *Alchemy* 250). The eidolon, in its association with the double, hints at the traumatic symptom of inner division.

Jess's trauma intersects with Roland's in a few aspects. First, Quando is their common bully. He who victimized the boy Roland now harms the teenage Jess. Second, just as Jess is troubled by the relationship with her parents, so also Roland cannot reconcile with his father, Mr. Fairfield.

When Roland was eight, his father forsook the family and left for travelling, an escapist gesture shared by Jess's father. With Mrs Fairfield left heartbroken, her trauma was transmitted onto the child Roland: "For the first few months after his father had disappeared, Roland would wake in the night to hear his mother crying […]. The sound of that sadness […] had pushed its way out relentlessly from under her door and in under his" (51). The resilient Mrs Fairfield manages on her own with Roland and his two younger brothers, but "the lurking sadness" is observed "waiting to move in on her once more" (52). Because of his father's abandonment of the family, "Roland did not want to resemble in any way [Mr Fairfield]," although he has inherited his father's good look (52). Third, both Roland and Jess are confronted with the problem of inner division. While Jess's divided self is encapsulated in the double, Roland's is made known in the novel's opening scene which depicts a nightmare haunting him for years. As we are told, Roland feels himself "dividing like a cell, becoming two, then three people – the dreamer, the child in the dream and someone outside it" (7).

Roland's case seems to be more complicated than Jess's. His divided self is represented by not only the nightmare but also an "*inner voice speaking from deep inside his own head*" (Mahy, *Alchemy* 13; emphasis original). As recalled in the dream, Mr Fairfield took the four-year-old Roland to a fair. There, they encountered Quando who invited the father to participate in his magical trick. Mr Fairfield declined the offer, so Quando turned around to his son. The father seemed to have reservations, as he tightened his fingers around Roland's, but shortly the child was pushed forward. Climbing into Quando's wonder-box, Roland was transported to an infinite space where he felt himself becoming a grain of dust and a burning sun. When the trick was finished, Quando bombarded the boy with questions about his experience in the box, at which point an internal voice that Roland had never heard urgently warned him not to divulge anything. Partly because of the advice, the child gave an ambiguous answer: "*I was shut in, but I wasn't frightened*" (12; emphasis original). In response to Quando's compliment that "*[Roland] does have the gift*," Mr Fairfield made a pun of the word "gift" so that his son was given a little parcel (12-3; emphasis original). However, the moment Roland unwrapped Quando's present, the internal voice started shooting at him contradictory instructions: "Take no notice! It's nothing. It's nothing! It's nothing! *Three times, like a spell. But the other voice is strong. It rises in pitch and intensity*. Up! Up! Up!

Yes! *it insists*" (14; emphasis original). Reading through the text, we find that the mysterious voice is Roland's father who, it transpires, is a magician as well. As suggested by the self-cancelling commands Mr Fairfield gives to his son, he also suffers a fragmented psyche.

It is not until the latter half of the novel that the Fairfields' backstory comes to light, but as is characteristic of Mahy, the clues have been diffused at an earlier stage. In the seventh chapter, the reader is introduced to an old photograph of the Fairfield side of the family, which offers important information about Roland's grandparents who are now dead. The grandfather is captured "looking back at [Roland] with a shy, sly smile" (63). The grandmother, by contrast, impresses herself as a domineering figure: "'I'm more than a match for you – more than a match for anyone,' she seemed to be asserting. 'Do as I tell you! I'm the boss!' She had a hand on her husband's shoulder as if she were arresting him (63-4). "[Standing] a little behind his mother," Roland's father is likened to "a meek servant" (64). Roland's grandmother reminds us of Mahy's archetypal characterization of a dominant old woman, as typified by Great-Grandma Scholar in *The Haunting*.

Indeed, Mahy applies the thematic contour of *The Haunting* to *Alchemy* so that Roland's grandmother is similarly found to have repressed family magicians. In the twentieth chapter, Mrs Fairfield discloses to Roland that his father has inherited magical talent from his grandfather, but both magicians were harmed by the grandmother. As Mrs Fairfield recalls, the woman not only cast aspersions on her husband whenever he was caught using magic, she also tried to eradicate her son's magical power by making him "fight against it," which as Mrs Fairfield thinks, gradually "detached him […] from life" (157). As Roland's mother continues to share her view on Mr Fairfield's abandonment of the family:

> In the beginning his being a bit off-centre didn't show, but the years went by and he grew more – I don't know – more distracted – always wrestling with something inside himself. I know he didn't leave us for any of the usual reasons. There wasn't another woman or anything like that. It was because he was haunted […]. He ran to keep ahead of his ghosts. (157-8)

Mrs Fairfield's storytelling harks back to a traumatising episode of *The Haunting* in which Troy, the repressed family magician, is captured "struggling with some ghost of her own" (Mahy 79). Likewise, warring against the magical part of himself, Roland's father ends up suffering internal fragmentation. Moreover, it seems that Mr Fairfield's dominant mother has terrified the manliness out of him so that the ineffectual father sacrificed his son when faced with Quando's threat.

With Roland, Jess and Mr Fairfield sharing the traumatic symptom of inner division, it creates a favourable condition for intersecting trauma, which as previously proposed, facilitates addressing the problem. It emerges that when Quando tried to steal Roland's power in the wonder-box, the child's psyche was split up, but Mr Fairfield found an entry so that he has become a part of his boy. The revelation retrospectively explains why the dream scene opens as follows: "*Look! There they go, moving through the fairground, side by side, Roland and his father – hand in hand, yet apparently joined in other ways as well*" (Mahy, *Alchemy* 7; emphasis original). Despite Mr Fairfield's physical absence in Roland's adolescence, the father and the son remain connected via the common trauma of divided self. More importantly, the intersection serves as an essential precondition for Roland's rescue of Jess. In his three attempts to unlock the front door of Jess's house, Roland deals with "the mechanism of a lock" (224), as if acting on the behalf of his father who used to be a door-maintenance expert (152). Reading on, we are told that before entering the house, Roland thinks to himself: "Perhaps by inheriting his father's role, perhaps in some ways by *becoming* his father he had been practising for such a moment—the moment when he would face something from which his father had always turned away" (227). While as suggested by Roland's thoughts, Mr Fairfield's fragmented psyche will be tackled via the agency of his son, the resolution to Jess's trauma, as we shall see, also hinges on Roland's action, in particular his exploration of her house. Functioning as a chronotope, Jess's place, like Janua Caeli, is turned into a memory container which summons the unresolved past. In this way, space responds to the movement of time.

In the rescue episode, Jess's house descends into pandemonium: "darkness was too familiar and friendly a word for that savage absence of anything, that negation, that chaos" (225-6). Ascending the stairs in darkness, Roland confronts a "succession of advancing, opaque figures" which he thinks to be "[g]hosts […]. Those closest to him had faces in which there was no single

reliable feature, for his active vision melted everything it fell on" (230). "Most of them," as Jess later tells Roland, "were people who have lived in this house. It *remembers* them. They're part of […] its hidden *texture*" (242; emphasis original). The explosion of memory phantoms associates the house with the role of chronotope, so it is not surprising to find the place steeped in Jess's traumatic memories. As Roland continues to grope his way, a collection of fixed faces come to his sight, among whom he recognizes "many Jesses – a hopeful, plain child of about three, a cautious child of eight, a ten-year old saddened by her own apartness, a girl of thirteen able now to rejoice in solitude—all of them stepping down the stairs towards him, all holding firm at first, then seething and disintegrating" (231). The disintegration of Jess's images on sight is reminiscent of exorcising a ghost, a common metaphor for trauma, through bearing witness to the past. Yet, as argued in a case study, "exorcisms, despite being seen as culturally meaningful healing rituals, can trigger painful memories and make people reexperience their trauma" (Pietkiewicz and Lecoq-Bamboche 20). Exorcism as a potentially re-traumatising occasion could fit into Jess's case, since her eidolon is immediately evoked, "looking down at him with an expression Roland was unable to define" (Mahy, *Alchemy* 231). The gaze subjects Roland to an intense feeling of terror, but he tries to overcome the fear by crying aloud to himself: "come on, Childe Roland! […] Forget it. I don't even know where the bog is in this house" (231).

In *Alchemy*, Roland identifies himself as the eponymous hero of Robert Browning's poem "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came." Since "[m]ost critics of Browning's poem read it as a journey into an internal landscape, a psychic quest as opposed to a literal one" (Voorendt 64), the reference made to the work further bolsters up my interpretation of Jess's house as a memory vessel. It is more important to note that when Roland goes on to quote from the poem, shouting out the line "Childe Roland to the dark tower came, […] his voice caused the staircase to reform itself" (Mahy, *Alchemy* 232). Given that the restoration of Jess's place is inseparable from Roland's assertion of his presence there, it might be said that the hero comes to reclaim the heroine's unclaimed experiences which result in her psychic suffering. This again points to the above proposed idea that surrogate memory acts as a resolution in Mahy's fantasy novels.

As the house is being restored, Jess's weeping grows clearer so that Roland succeeds in finding her in the bedroom upstairs. Crestfallen and helpless, Jess offers Roland an "incoherent

explanation" for the current situation, at which point "[s]exual desire swept through him in waves of hot compulsion" (235). In their kisses, "[d]esire cast a spell of its own" hence the restoration of the entire bedroom (236). Jess's parents are now found "[l]ying side by side on the bed" as if "[having] been laid out for burial," the consequence of Jess's sleeping spell (236). While as Julian J. P. Warmington points out, "[t]he sex-as-magic motif is underlined by Mahy […] in the climax by the actions and reactions of Roland and Jess to one-another" (104), this is also consistent with Mahy's other novels in which romantic possibility glimmers in the pattern of intersecting trauma, as exemplified by Bonny/Jonny in *Memory* and Laura/Sorry in *Changeover*. The full-fledged relationship between Roland and Jess has a similar therapeutic implication. In Roland's suggestion that they come downstairs to the kitchen, he seems to encourage Jess to eye-witness her own unresolved past. When Roland kicks wide the bedroom door which opens to "collapsing space," Jess's "panicky cry" might be read as a response to the traumatic memory that she is about to confront (240). With Roland leading the way, Jess comes to the kitchen where she tells a complete version of her own story (245-51). In contrast to her previous "incoherent" speech (235), the latter narrative manages to restore the shards of traumatic memory, hence a marker of healing. Accordingly, Jess's place is observed as "[not] frozen in the way it used to be" (251). Yet, because the house grows less frightening and thus more accessible, Quando grasps the chance breaking into Jess's home.

The villain's intrusion serves as a catalyst for the climax of intersecting trauma, from which a collection of resolutions arise. As Roland and Jess are cornered in the kitchen, Quando summons the eidolon, wanting desperately to devour it. Together with the creature come Jess's parents, still bewitched. At this juncture, Roland's father rejoins his son in the mind, "speaking as an outer voice now" (260). The thrilling episode brings together the problem of divided self which Roland, Mr Fairfield and Jess all suffer, but the intersection is essential to a collective cure. Mr Fairfield's voice, which previously haunts Roland as a symptom of inner division, now cooperates with him, revealing the Fairfields' repressed family history:

> "my father had to trick his mother, and to do that he had to trick himself. I had to trick myself," [Roland] found himself crying aloud in that other voice. "I wouldn't let myself

> believe what I truly was. I betrayed myself, so in the end I betrayed everything and everyone I loved. There was nothing left of him," said Roland, speaking with his own voice now, understanding more and more of his lost father and speaking both for him and with him. (261)

In the cohesively narrated story, Mr Fairfield's trauma comes to light, which anticipates his reconciliation with his suppressed identity. As Roland's father asserts through his son's mouth, "[i]t's been in us for years, flowing between parent and child, parent and child. […] We are the *true* magicians" (261; emphasis original). As if responding to Mr Fairfield's claim, "'Free at last!' [Roland] shouted in his father's voice, 'Free at last!' he shouted in his own. 'Let's all be free'" (262). Roland's duet with his father, in celebration of their freedom to be magicians, not only tackles Mr Fairfield's inner division but also channels healing power into Roland's psyche, since the father and the son already reunite as a pair of "stick figures […] smudged together along an inner boundary" (260). With the Fairfield magicians united and thus empowered, they defeat Quando together whereby the victimization of Roland and Jess is overcome. To complete the happy picture, the eidolon returns to Jess so that she becomes "whole again"; the sleeping spell cast upon Jess's parents is undone and the Ferrets "clung to each other with confused forgiveness" (263-4). As demonstrated by the novel's climactic scene, people's traumas intersect, so also the resolutions to their problems interconnect.

Alchemy concludes with revisiting the familial trauma of the Fairfields. As noted in Waller's paper "'Solid All the Way Through': Margaret Mahy's Ordinary Witches" (2005), Mahy's heroines are placed "firmly back into domesticity and reality as soon as they have become comfortable with their magic" (40), but this is not just confined to Mahy's girls, since she does the same for Roland. Where Jess's house offers a healing space on a supernatural level, the problem plaguing Roland's family is continually tackled in the more ordinary, domestic realm. Returning from Jess's place, Roland finds his mother receiving an international call from his father who rings to apologize: "She laughed a little. Tears rolled down her cheeks as she laughed. Yet the feelings Roland sensed in her were not feelings of sadness but rather of violent confusion and slowly beginning to dominate it, relief, as if a long-endured pain was fading at last" (Mahy, *Alchemy* 270).

The call, in addition to addressing Mrs Fairfield's aforementioned "lurking sadness" (52), delivers the good news that Mr Fairfield "[is] coming home for a while," but Roland's mother goes on to clarify that he is "not moving in […] or anything" (271). In accordance with Warmington's remark that "the denouement involves a large dose of pathos" (85), the working-through of the Fairfields' familial trauma remains unfinished, which again confirms my earlier observation that although intersecting trauma elicits therapeutic results, certain problem will linger on. Yet, the supernatural intervention at *Alchemy*'s close, similar to that of *The Changeover*, injects a note of hope into the future:

> "We don't have to rush into anything," said Mrs Fairfield. "We'll be careful."
>
> "Careful!" echoed that [Mr Fairfield's] voice in Roland's head. But this time the speaker seemed to be laughing.
>
> Right! Roland said back to it. "Careful!" he said aloud, smiling at his mother. (Mahy, *Alchemy* 271)

As the telepathic communication between the father and the son enables a Fairfield trio, it conjures up a sense of reunion whereby it is reasonable to assume that the family's situation will continue to improve.

Chapter Summary

The chapter of intersecting trauma examines the horizontal connectedness between Mahy's traumatised contemporaries whilst underlining the importance of place for constructing the intersection. In each of Mahy's three realist novels, the central setting appears at once familiar and strange thereby being susceptible of various coincidences, through which the troubled characters are brought together and their unresolved problems. By contrast, my reading of Mahy's fantasy fiction lays specific emphasis on the house, which acts as a Bakhtinian chronotope where the

boundary between time and space melts. In this way, the place is enabled to hold together layers of history, which makes for its transformation into a memory vessel in the story's pivotal scenes. With people's painful experiences replayed, the house functions as a site of intersection whereby all the problems are brought to light.

Aiming at weaving together a whole collection of repressed traumas, this intersectional formula in Mahy's realist and non-realist texts is most suggestive of the Freudian concept "overdetermination." As Glenn W. Most summarises the term in his study "Emotion, Memory, and Trauma" (2009):

> no event in psychic life has only one effective cause. For any effect to happen, a multitude of partial causes must concur to produce it. The task of the psychoanalyst is to move from the manifest causes to the latent ones: only when the very last of these has been brought to full consciousness, by means of a second, therapeutic return of the repressed, is the work of psychoanalysis complete and the patient cured. (456)

To put it simply, it is not until all the causes of trauma are located and tackled that a traumatised psyche can be fully healed. But given that trauma is notorious for its complex mechanisms, and in extreme cases, horrible experiences may be indelibly imprinted in the brain, the notion of "overdetermination" seems to lend itself, more or less, to a sense of idealism. Whereas the pattern of intersection could be related to Freud's concept, Mahy's treatment of trauma is not in the least idealistic. Accordingly, under the intersecting framework, the foregrounded trauma ends up being settled, but other relatively minor problems linger on. As demonstrated by *Twenty-four Hours*, while the protagonist Ellis triumphs over his traumas, the remaining seeds of trouble exist in the fellow traumatised characters, the Land-of-Smiles people, who are less sufficiently cured. Likewise, at *Alchemy*'s close, it is suggested that more work is requested to address the traumatic consequences of Mr Fairfield's abandonment of his family.

In the pattern of intersection, what initially appears as an attachment of trauma is finally elevated to a therapeutic interpersonal connection, but quite often, the transcendence gets undermined by an air of pessimism emerging from the novel's ending, as exemplified by Mahy's

treatment of romantic love. In *Memory*, despite the mutual attraction developed between Jonny and Bonny, we still cannot be sure that they will become partners. By the end of the novel, Bonny's relationship with her boyfriend is not yet finished hence Jonny's grumble at the thought of this: "'Bonny Benedicta,' he muttered, 'I reckon your engineer doesn't stand a chance.' But he knew it was something he could not afford to speculate on" (Mahy, *Memory* 276). In *Changeover*, Laura's inevitable parting with Sorry serves as another example of Mahy's anti-idealistic view, which seems to again problematize the scope for healing under the framework of intersection. The overall pessimism subduing the therapeutic results of intersecting trauma might be better understood with a brief look at the study "Failed Empathy — A Central Theme in the Survivor's Holocaust Experience" (1989), in which Laub and Auerhahn express their concern:

> massive failure of the environment to mediate needs, as in genocide, will throw into question the existence of empathy, human communication, and ultimately one's own humanity, to which any mirroring ceases to exist. Such a life experience will represent, to the survivor of trauma, failure of a responsive empathic agent or function. (377)

As a consequence of severe psychic injury, the ability to empathize could malfunction thereby hindering people from rebuilding emotional connection. In Mahy's lurking scepticism about working-through via the mode of intersecting trauma, we may recognize a kindred mind. "Realistic children's fiction," as Maria Nikolajeva writes, "depicts happiness metonymically, by offering temporary solutions on individual or occasionally social levels" (193). Aligned with Nikolajeva's view on the ethics of happy endings, we may conclude that in both her realist and fantasy stories, Mahy seems to have carefully set the parameters within which intersecting trauma can work towards a joint resolution.

Then, what do we make of the role of the fantastical? If Mahy's supernatural treatment of intergenerational trauma, as proposed earlier, offers greater hope for healing than her realist representation of the same subject, is it the same case with intersecting trauma? To a large extent, we may say yes, since supernatural agencies, like witchcraft and magic, enable trauma to be treated with surrogate recollection. Yet this is not to say that problems can be magically worked through.

For example, when Miryam and Winter see Sorry's healing, their faces show "tentative relief, not fully developed, still at an experimental stage" (Mahy, *Changeover* 152).[20] Mahy's scruples seem to dovetail with the concern raised in Hamida Bosmajian's book, *Sparing the Child: Grief and the Unspeakable in Youth Literature about Nazism and the Holocaust* (2002):

> The young reader who is to acquire memory through reading in order to become a witness will, finally, know very little of disastrous history, for the facticity of that history and the grief of the author are concealed by a delimiting rhetoric that ensures the impossibility of representing that history and that grief. (xvii)

Acquiring memory via reading is not dissimilar to witnessing the past by means of surrogate memory. Both methods, as it seems, exert limited positive influence on the very victims of trauma. While Mahy views the healing capacity of intersecting trauma with reserve (and her supernatural fiction is no exception), the fantastical devices that Mahy deploys reassure the reader, offering a more optimistic outlook. As demonstrated by the endings of *Changeover* and *Alchemy*, Mahy's characters are expected to overcome their physical distances and retain a therapeutic connection with recourse to telepathy.

20 Prior to the scene, Miryam and Winter make a joint confession, bringing to light their family story while acknowledging their responsibility for Sorry's childhood trauma (Mahy, *Changeover* 89-94). The Carlisle women's storytelling seems to anticipate Sorry's own revelation of his unresolved past, which comes several pages later (113-9). Sorry's confiding, a cohesive narrative, serves to mark the beginning of his recovery. The case of the Carlisles exemplifies how Mahy's characters validate storytelling and emphatic listening as the key to healing trauma, whereby it implies Mahy's insistence upon a realist resolution.

Chapter Three: Colonial Trauma

Introduction

In the preceding discussion of intersecting trauma in Mahy's fiction, I demonstrate how the key setting mirrors the traumatised status of the characters. Whereas the depictions of place offer a perfect foil for the traumatised individuals in the intersectional mode, Mahy's treatment of colonial trauma seems to be delivered in the opposite fashion. In Mahy's colonial mode, "nature" is anthropomorphised and brought into focus as a victim of colonialism, while the traumatisation of the people is left in the background. Just as the life of a traumatised individual is dominated by "a sense of alienation, of disconnection" (Herman 52), Mahy's anthropomorphised nature seems alienated and detached from human, because of the environmental damage inflicted by anthropocentric colonial practices.

"[A]nthropomorphism and anthropocentrism," writes Bryan L. Moore in *Ecology and Literature: Ecocentric Personification from Antiquity to the Twenty-first Century* (2008), "have long worked in tandem, the former representing the world in human terms and the latter in proclaiming the whole world for human ends" (12). While Moore acknowledges that "anthropomorphism […] is indeed long connected […] with supporting anthropocentrism," the central aim of his study is to show that "[anthropomorphism] may be and often is a tool to *undercut* anthropocentrism" (13; emphasis original). Before discussing how her fiction seems to express a kindred stance in the postcolonial context, it is worthwhile reviewing the tricky tactics Mahy adopts to deal with colonialism-related material. The highlighted ecological dimension in her work, as I propose, belongs to Mahy's larger project of avoiding tackling colonial trauma head-on.

Mahy's general negative portrayal of rich Pākehā landowners as, in Kathryn Walls's words,

"materially wealthy" but "emotionally inadequate and selfish" ("Money" 128), can be read as a projection of New Zealand's colonial guilt. Mahy's evasive approach to historical trauma is also exemplified by her recourse to indirect reference. As Geoffrey Miles remarks on Mahy's 2005 novel *Kaitangata Twitch*, the plot of "[saving] the tapu island from the developer could be read as a struggle for Māori land rights," but "Mahy downplays this aspect of the story," because of her "[p]reference to work on the level of symbolism and myth" ("Utopia" 110). Not just alluding to the injustice of Māori land loss, Mahy represents colonial racism at a remove. *The Other Side of Silence* presents us with a minor plot of Pākehā racial prejudice: Sammy, the foster child of Hero's sister Ginevra, is suspected of theft only because of his brown skin. While Sammy's case describes the harm done by colonialism to individual psychology, *Memory* places emphasis on the ruptured indigenous identity by "[framing] its main plot about the importance of memory with a subplot about [...] contemporary Māori identity" (Jackson, "Englishness" 46). Although the way Mahy scatters colonialism-related subplots in separate novels somewhat mimics the fragmented form of trauma, adversely she leaves the suffering of the people in the background, thus, calling into doubt the agency of her ambivalent representational manner. If "cultural trauma," as defined by the Yale critic Ron Eyerman, "refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion" (23), wouldn't Mahy's relegating strategy seem too gestural to address the crushing blow to the people?

As indigenous scholar Bonita Lawrence tells us, "much of postcolonial theory addresses how the colonial project has constructed categories of 'race' which still structure contemporary social relations" (509). But as we have seen, Mahy is not particularly overt in representing racial issues in her work. To take the discussion a step further, Mahy's tricky stance on who are the tāngata whenua deserves our attention. As Sarah Fiona Winters observes of *Kaitangata Twitch*, "[t]hat the original residents are so coded as English suggests the text is arguing against equating 'native' with Maori and 'settler' with Pakeha" ("Aliens in the Landscape" 416). Miles's reading of the text shares a similar view: "[a]re the 'old-timers' the local Māori? Perhaps, but Mahy is not spelling out the point. The whole plot-line seems to make something of a joke of arguments about who are the tāngata whenua" ("Māori Gothic" 206). Mahy cunningly plays down the novel's racial

importance through what might seem a throwaway remark made by the Māori character Lee Kaa, the heroine Meredith's great-uncle: "Pakeha, Maori, I don't think it matters too much" (*Kaitangata* 75). It is not surprising that at the end of the story, Kaa encourages Meredith, who has mixed Pākehā and Māori ancestry, to think of "[his] people" as "[her] people too" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 164). Kaa's hedging attitude of "[dismissing] race as irrelevance" reflects accurately Mahy's diffidence in dealing with the guilt from New Zealand's colonial history (Miles, "Māori Gothic" 206). As a result of her evasiveness, Mahy deviates from the tāngata whenua as the victim of colonialism and turns to engaging more directly with the environmental issues raised by colonial practices.

Although the ecological dimension highlighted in Mahy's fiction arises from her avoidance of tackling colonial trauma head-on, "settler colonialism," asserts indigenous environmental justice scholar Kyle Whyte, "commits environmental injustice through the violent disruption of human relationships to the environment" (125). The ecological impact of colonisation provides a possibility of reading Mahy's texts from a postcolonial ecocritical perspective. The central argument of this chapter, as I stated earlier, is that Mahy anthropomorphises nature to expose the environmental harm done by anthropocentric colonial practices.

It is worth noting that in the past few years we have witnessed the trend of tackling anthropocentrism with recourse to anthropomorphism in natural rights movement. In 2017, New Zealand's third largest river, the Whanganui, was "granted same legal rights as human being," the fruit of 140 years' persistent endeavours by the local Māori tribe (Roy). The aim of the act is to call for the "correct way to approach [the river], as in indivisible whole, instead of the traditional mode […] of treating it from a perspective of ownership […]. The new status […] means if someone abused […] it, the law now sees no differentiation between harming the tribe or harming the river" (Roy). This real-life event of giving a nonhuman entity legal personhood invites a re-imagination of human/non-human relationship within an eco-centric framework, which could provide inspiration for my examination of Mahy's ecological representation of colonial trauma. Again, I use *Kaitangata Twitch* as an example. When being treated anthropocentrically as a colonial object, the titular island behaves like a proactive human character: not just causing

commotion to expresses its anger, Kaitangata even worms its way into the heroine Meredith's dream, thereby seeking protection against the land developer Carswell's (neo)colonial invasion.

Indeed, as Roberta Seelinger Trites comments on Kaitangata in "Margaret Mahy: Embodying Feminism" (2014), the island is "more than anthropomorphized," since "Mahy [...] complicates the dependence of the body upon the land by transforming the land into a sentient being with its own predatory intent," and by "[manipulating] Meredith's consciousness," Kaitangata achieves the goal of "[manipulating] Carswell" (147-8). While Trites centres her argument on Mahy's feminism, Trites's discussion also speaks to Mahy's representation of colonial trauma, in particular its ecological dimension. By anthropomorphising nature to expose the environmental harm done by anthropocentric colonial practices, Mahy seems to embrace Moore's aforementioned belief that anthropomorphism can be used as a tool for undercutting anthropocentrism.

An example of this preoccupation is found in the scholarly discussions of C. S. Lewis's *Narnia* books, which according to Moore, construct a site where anthropomorphism is employed to address environmental concerns (20). As Moore briefly remarks, Lewis's stories "pit pro-nature anthropomorphic elements against villainous, anti-nature ones" (20). More recently, Clare Echterling, a children's literature critic, further explores the representation of environmental issues in the Narnia series through a postcolonial ecocritical lens. In "Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Classic Children's Literature, and the Imperial-Environmental Imagination in *The Chronicles of Narnia*" (2016), Echterling claims that Lewis's "novels do express a deep reverence for nonhuman nature and condemn its exploitation," but she also admits: "Although the novels may not be *overtly* supportive of colonial practices and may in fact at times offer a critique of colonialism […], they are certainly not free from the dominant colonial discourses of Lewis's day" (102-3; emphasis original). Echterling's article contributes greatly to establishing the critical foundation for my own study, as it cites a large body of literary scholarship on postcolonial ecocriticism, such as Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2010) and Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley's co-edited collection, *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (2011).

"DeLoughrey and Handley," as John Miller points out in "Postcolonial Ecocriticism and Victorian Studies" (2012), "offer four points of intersection between postcolonial and

environmental concerns" (477), among which two are most relevant to my discussion. The first, "ecology is central to any understanding of colonial and postcolonial geography, imbricated as it is in histories of resource-use and land ownership" (477), raises the (ab)use of natural resources in the context of colonialism-induced anthropocentrism; the second, "drawing on postcolonial work on the subaltern, postcolonial ecocriticism is better positioned to theorize 'the question of who can 'speak for nature', thereby enriching discussions of agency and representation" (478), harks back to the topic of anthropomorphism. These two points work together to support my postcolonial ecocritical reading of Mahy's YA fiction, in which I argue that Mahy anthropomorphises nature to criticize the environmental harm caused by anthropocentric colonial practices. The key texts to be examined are three fantasy novels, *The Tricksters* (1986), *Aliens in the Family* (1986), and *Kaitangata Twitch* (2005).

Before discussing these stories, it might be useful to briefly revisit Mahy's second YA fantasy, *The Changeover*. Published two years prior to *The Tricksters*, *The Changeover* seems to lead the way in taking Mahy's treatment of colonial trauma in an ecological direction.[21] As we already know from my second chapter, the novel features Laura Chant and Sorry Carlisle as a pair of protagonists. Sorry comes from an established Pākehā household that once owned a large amount of land. When we are first introduced to the Carlisle house, the narrator's reference to "a wood of silver birches and poplars" near the residence implies the family's European ancestry (Mahy, *Changeover* 55). Whereas Sorry's family background alludes to colonialism, the character himself is associated with decolonizing practices. Unlike colonizers who exploited natural resources, Sorry treats nature with reverence, and embraces the belief that "[n]ature is like a holograph in some ways […]. Any part contains the whole picture" (107). Besides advocating a holistic view of nature, Sorry is portrayed as a lover of birds: in his study, there are "many photographs of birds" and a painting depicting a

21 Mahy's YA debut, *The Haunting*, impresses us as an exceedingly domestic novel, hence its very focus on family problems. As Jackson notes in her article "Englishness," the Scholars, in their association with the plot of intergenerational haunting, "provide the Gothic elements" and "seem to have the […] sort of stultifying English heritage," but "[t]he Scholar family's 'Englishness' is never identified" (51-2). Siding with Jackson's observation, Walls further points out: "although the relative wealth of the characters (the Palmer family and its Scholar family relations) is not an issue, the Scholars do exude an 'establishment' aura that anticipates that of the Carlisles [in *The Changeover*]" ("Money" 127). The absence of the "'establishment' aura" of the Scholar household supports my claim that Mahy's thematic interest in colonial trauma surfaces as early as her second novel, rather than her first YA book.

man whose face is "shadowed by enormous wings rising high above his shoulders" (95). Being a male witch, Sorry can conjure up a kingfisher as his companion. As if indicating Sorry's respect for nature, the bird appears to be at ease with people, "sitting on his finger clicking its beak but otherwise seeming quite unperturbed" (104). At the novel's end, Sorry is luckily "chosen as a trainee for the Wildlife Division" (202), which echoes one of his pro-nature claims: "it seems to me that I'm more a part of nature than most people, not outside it or above it. I always feel I work with it, not against it" (114). On one level, Sorry's empathy with nature seems to suggest a distinction between the younger generation's eco-centric attitude and the Carlisles' family history which points to colonialism. On another level, Sorry's respectful attitude towards nature might be an embodiment of Mahy's "little sympathy for the contemporary notion that only Maori can have a spiritual feeling for the land": the feeling, according to Mahy, "[is] up to individuals" (291). In a final scene of the story, Laura, now transformed into a witch, has a vision depicting a cosy human and nature symbiosis: "she saw herself and Sorry walking along around the estuary, the grey herons flying, the kingfisher clicking its beak, the crabs scuttling and semaphoring messages of invitation and threat to one another" (211).

Aligned with Winters's remark that "apart from Laura's Polynesian ancestry, Maori issues are absent from this novel" ("Aliens in the Landscape" 423), Mahy's first excursion into colonial trauma does not focus on the representation of racial issues. Moreover, Sorry's close affinity with nature seems to add one more layer of evasiveness to Mahy's ecological representation of colonial trauma: despite romantic notions, on the contrary, indigenous people can be the culprit causing environmental stakes, and colonisers are not always guilty of ecocide. While we have to admit that the ecological issues foregrounded in Mahy's work evince her avoidance of representing colonial trauma in a straightforward manner, as implied by Laura's vision, whether of Polynesian or Pākehā ancestry, people share the same environment, and nature's revenge, manifesting itself in environmental disasters, will eventually affect humans as a whole. The ecological dimension of Mahy's first foray into colonial trauma seems to have set the tone for her subsequent texts. Yet, compared with *The Changeover* which associates the Pākehā Sorry with decolonizing practices, the three texts to be discussed in this chapter delivers more explicitly Mahy's criticism on the ecological effects of colonisation, through the portrayal of an anthropomorphised natural world. Since

colonialism, flanked by anthropocentrism, often entails the crime of ecocide, the anthropomorphised nature in the three novels appears to be alienated from human beings. In what follows, I will begin by discussing how the nature/culture dichotomy is foregrounded as a consequence of anthropocentric colonial practices in *The Tricksters*.

The Tricksters

Following *The Changeover*, *The Tricksters* introduces to us another wildlife officer, Anthony Hesketh, a young Englishman coming to New Zealand on a forestry fellowship. While my first chapter noted how the portrayal of Anthony facilitates depicting trauma transmission in the Carnival household, in this chapter, Anthony's kinship with the Carnivals, in which the colonizer Edward acted as the household head, might be a good starting point to examine the novel's representation of colonial trauma. Ruth P. Feingold, in her postcolonial reading of the text, observes the overlapping function of Anthony and the Carnival brothers, and points out "their roles as romantic provocateurs" (213) and "Christmas visitors, or ghosts" (215). Drawing on Feingold's study, I contend that the shared identity of Anthony and the trickster trio (Ovid, Hadfield and Felix), as the descendants of an English settler is key to understanding why the natural world seems to be tremendously unsettled and disturbed by their presence at Carnival's Hide.

The novel's beginning draws attention to the tension between the nor-west wind, a force of wildness, and Carnival's Hide itself, a mark of Edward's colonising practice. As David Lodge tells us in *The Art of Fiction* (1992), "[w]eather is frequently a trigger for the effect John Ruskin called the pathetic fallacy, the projection of human emotions onto phenomena in the natural world" (85). Consenting to Ruskin's criticism of pathetic fallacy as "a symptom of the decadence of modern art and literature," Lodge further points out that "it is indeed often the occasion of overblown, self-indulgent writing" (85). Yet, the critic also reminds us of the more positive potential of the literary device: "used with intelligence and discretion, it is capable of powerful effects, without which fiction would be much the poorer" (85). In *The Tricksters*, the fury of the wind neatly introduces to

the reader the pronounced dichotomy between nature and culture, a symptom of colonialism and anthropocentrism.

Anthony's appearance almost seems to have a nuanced connection with the wind's hostility against Carnival's Hide. Upon their arrival, the Hamiltons and their English guest are greeted by "the nor-west wind, strong as a lion" so that "everything […] struggled, lashed and laboured under its power" (Mahy, *Tricksters* 4). Standing on the verandah, Anthony half-jokingly poses the question "where does [Teddy's] ghost walk," at which point "the lunging wind" is described as "[shaking] the house like a prey between its paws" (6). Anthony's interest in the phantom is not simple but signals a deeper connection between them. As Feingold observes, he "may even in some ways […] be responsible for the three others' very existence": according to Felix, Anthony's presence generates an aura of Minerva in the air, thereby facilitating the appearance of Teddy's ghost (214). Given Teddy's intense hatred of his repressive father, the "little bit" of physical resemblance Anthony bears to Edward could play a role in igniting the phantom's vengeful desire (Mahy, *Tricksters* 213). All four characters, the tricksters and Anthony, share the blood of Edward, the English settler, who displayed a tendency towards anthropocentrism.

In the opening chapter, we are introduced to an old photograph in which Edward is captured "[standing] on a beach, gesturing proudly at the sea" (8). As acknowledged by previous scholarship, there is indeed a clear sign of hubris in Edward's character. Aligned with Feingold's claim that "Edward's colonial project was nothing if not ambitious" (224), since his two main activities, tree-planting and house-building, "offer a form of immortality" (222), Walls remarks that "Edward was playing God," fantasizing "his Garden of Eden as a sanctuary of innocence in a fallen world," but "his preoccupation with the work of gardening made it emblematic of that very world, the world of work" ("Biblical" 90). As a result of Edward's implied anthropocentric approach to nature and land, the nor-west wind blows wildly to take it out on Anthony, blood of Edward's blood. It might be said that nature is avenging itself on the descendant of the colonizer, whose human-centric practices had, and continue to have a traumatising impact on the environment. Edward's engagement with anthropocentrism is further implied by the portrayal of the Carnival brothers, who claim to be "[d]irectly descended" from him (Mahy, *Tricksters* 56). For example, Ovid, the most dominant trickster, sees the Christmas tree as "lucky" because it can "blaze out for one hour rather than live a

thousand years and never be seen" (94). In Ovid's opinion, the tree is a thing to be seen by people, rather than a living being in its own right. Mahy's criticism of anthropocentrism also extends to minor characters contemporary with the Hamiltons. As Harry comments, the Taveners, her family's wealthy friends, "like to be one up on nature" (115): "Suppose God had given them wings, they'd still want an executive jet" (115).

The episode taking place just before Teddy's ghost is reincarnated into a tripartite form and brought into the narrative's foreground well depicts the traumatising impact of anthropocentrism on nature, which impresses itself as if being saddened and violated:

> The night sighed around her [Harry's] bare shoulders, but then there was a perpetual sigh in the air, even between the gusts of wind, as if silence itself was breathing into the enchanted dark. She could hear, faint but unmistakable, the sea sidling around the rocks, sucking and fretting at the land below the trees. In the orchard, a shadow moved as if someone were standing there looking up at her, but when she put on her glasses and looked again it was nothing but an accident of night. (50-51)

The moving shadow seems to foreshadow the arrival of the tricksters, who turn up the next morning. The "perpetual sigh in the air" later finds an echo in the depiction of a sailing boat, which "rang a sad, silvery bell, muffled rather than clear, as if ringing from under water or through a mist that blurred sound as well as sight" (77). The "sad" and "muffled" tinkle, evoking the image of a silenced traumatised individual, segues neatly into an allusion to New Zealand's colonial trauma. On the next page, the Carnival brothers turn up on the beach, dressed separately in red, white and blue, eliciting Anthony's remark that "there's a very patriotic note" (78). Serving as a metonym for the Union Jack, the tricksters are bound up with New Zealand's colonial past, so that we may call them a trio of colonial ghosts.

As the novel progresses, the Carnival brothers continue to act out colonial haunting, and it reaches a climax in the fourteenth chapter entitled "Magical Changes." The tricksters bring the colonial past to the fore, transforming the hall of Carnival's Hide into itself as it was in Edward's time (146-8). In response to the return of the colonial past, the landscape appears to be tremendously

offended: "[Harry] looked up into a sky grown livid with angry, rolling cloud—thunder made visible. Once seen, the sky actually spoke aloud. The trees lashed around frantically" (148). Simultaneously, "the whole harbour was transformed into a vast bruise as if a giant had pressed his thumb into the land" (148). If the massive bruise may be taken as a metonym for colonial trauma, the imaginary giant may be understood as an allusion to the British Empire in its heyday. "Beside her on the verandah," the narrator goes on, "the cardboard cartons were stacked inside one another, like a nest of mathematical boxes made to educate a child giant" (148). In reducing the British Empire to a child giant in need of cultivation, Mahy criticizes the inherent ignorance in the ideology of anthropocentrism, which often manifests itself in colonialism. The colonial ghost Ovid, while confessing to the uninvited changes made to the hall, appears too absorbed in his own rhetoric to take any notice of other things: "A baby nor-wester breathed over them, billowing the curtains at the open windows, rattling the old posters and making the needles of the Christmas tree tremble, but Ovid talked on apparently unaware of it" (166). Ovid's negligence of nature's response is indicative of colonialism-induced anthropocentrism.

In addition to the wind, the birds in the novel represent the pronounced tension between nature and man. Prior to the evocation of Teddy's ghost, a seabird "cried wordlessly," making a "harsh and musical and desolate" sound (50). The call of the seagulls is remarked by Anthony as "[s]trange," because of "that bit of sadness in the air" (203). In stark contrast to Sorry's carefree kingfisher, the birds in *The Tricksters* evoke a strong sense of the uncanny, which according to Nicholas Royle, can be "a matter of something strangely beautiful," a mixture of beauty and fear (2). The seabird's "musical" but "desolate" cry is a strong image of precisely this form of the uncanny. In my chapter on intersecting trauma, the uncanny was invoked to show how the central setting of Mahy's realist fiction appeared at once familiar and strange. In this chapter, I revisit the notion, but place an emphasis on its potential relevance to trauma. As defined by Freud, the uncanny is fundamentally the familiar, only becoming "alienated" from our mind due to "the process of repression" (*Standard* 241). Significantly, the repressive dimension of the uncanny dovetails with one of trauma's defense mechanisms, repression, and the result of alienation reminds us of the traumatic symptom of dissociation. Other similarities between trauma and the uncanny, according to Marita Nadal, include: "haunting, uncertainty, repetition, a tension between the known and the unknown […] and

the intrusive return of the past" (180-1). Drawing on trauma's affinity with the uncanny, I would suggest that in *The Tricksters*, the uncanniness of the birds, a mouthpiece for troubled nature, is symptomatic of colonial trauma.

At the novel's close, Mahy underscores the healing function of storytelling: it brings to light the secret of Teddy's murder, and facilitates the exorcism of the phantom. The disappearance of the tricksters assumes a double recuperative meaning: the healing of intergenerational trauma within the Carnival family and a solution to colonialism-induced anthropocentrism. With the colonial ghosts dispelled, the tension between nature and culture is relieved, so that the interlocutors of the natural world appear at ease with humans. "[T]he wind […] shifted a little toward the north overnight," and "up above the clouds blue sky showed cool and clear" (Mahy, *Tricksters* 250). Casting off their previous aura of uncanniness, "seagulls hovered, or, striking some fiercer draft, whirled upwards to calmer air where they resumed a steady glide over the sea" (250). Yet, we will soon find out that colonial trauma has not been addressed to the full extent, as flickering embers linger till the novel's end. A few pages later, the narrator says: "Out in the dark a seagull cried, circling in the air, and another called from across the harbour. They searched for each other in the early morning of the New Year calling and answering in melancholy, harsh, but beautiful voices" (261-2). "[C]alling and answering in melancholy […] but beautiful voices," the birds seem to perform a storytelling duet, as if indicating that exorcism alone is not sufficient for healing the wound of nature. This, again, reveals Mahy's realist stance that problems cannot be fantastically worked through, but the prospect of an ongoing recovery is suggested by "a small earthquake" taking place in the final scene: "[Benny, Harry's younger brother] was excited rather than frightened by this familiar, even homely twitching of the solid earth, reminding him who was powerful" (264). The land's gentle twitch might be interpreted as nature's friendly reminder: the eradication of anthropocentrism is a key to healing colonial trauma.

Aliens in the Family

Just as in *The Tricksters*, Mahy anthropomorphises nature in *Aliens in the Family* to reflect New Zealand's colonial history. In both novels, the natural world looks woeful and is endowed with a sense of uncanniness. But as we shall see, unlike *The Tricksters* in which the landscape's fury operates as a most notable traumatic symptom, *Aliens in the Family* foregrounds a detached nature as a traumatised figure.

The novel draws together three strands of stories, set in the past, present and future respectively. The historical story revolves around Sebastian Webster, a Pākehā Māori who lived in the early nineteenth century. The plot is simple: Sebastian was making his way back home from a sawmill with his two Māori friends. The present-day story is a family drama, featuring the teenage girl, Jake Raven, as the heroine. Already psychologically fragile because of her parents' divorce and her role as a caregiver, Jake is further troubled by a difficult relationship with her step-siblings, Dora and Lewis. The future story introduces an alien boy called Bond, who is sent to present-day Earth to finish a training programme, as requested by his extra-terrestrial school, Galgonqua. When Bond is chased by the Wirdegens, the enemies of Galgonquans, Dora hides him in the family car. Later, Bond meets the Raven children, who decide to jointly protect him from the harm of the Wirdegens. In the hope of easing the tension between Jake and her step-siblings, the Raven parents, David and Phillipa (Jake's stepmother), suggest that the patchwork family go pony trekking in Webster's Valley. Keeping in mind the rescue plan, Dora proposes to take Bond with them, claiming that he is Jake's friend. Despite the hesitation of the adults, Bond is allowed to join at last. As Phillipa tells the children, Webster's Valley has a reputation of being haunted: Sebastian had seen ghosts in the valley, and he wrote down this uncanny experience in his text, "An Account of Strange Appearances in the New Zealand Forest, by Sebastian Webster, Sailor and Whaler and Pakeha Maori," which can be found in the library in the fictional world (Mahy, *Aliens* 92-3).

Interestingly, since the Ravens live in the present-day world and Bond comes from the future, their presence at Webster's Valley, a site of the haunting past, neatly weaves together the three separate timelines. This recalls a prominent feature of trauma fiction, as mentioned in my preceding

chapter: the fusion of past, present and future. Moreover, it will be revealed in the novel's climactic scene that Dora is descended from Sebastian, and Bond from Dora. In the course of the narrative, the ties of kinship are suggested by a greenstone which seems to be worn by the three characters at the same time. The stone, passed down as an heirloom, results in an effect called "object anomaly" (8); this effect facilitates a time slip whereby people from the past, present and future are enabled to meet at Webster's Valley.

The focus of my discussion is on Mahy's depiction of Webster's Valley. Anthropomorphised to represent colonial trauma, the melancholy-looking valley evokes a sense of the uncanny and this is expressed in colonial terms. The narrator gives us a clue by having a teacher from Bond's extra-terrestrial school say: "There have been some unfortunate instances in the past" (86). Immediately, the narrative camera turns to Sebastian and his two Māori friends, Koro and Hakiaha, who entered the dense bush in 1838 (86-7). It is important to note that the emphasis on the year 1838, being just two years before the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, hints at the subject of colonialism. As reflected in the natural world, "[a]n unseen creek" is described as "[making] a faint, melancholy sound down below them" (87). As Michael King writes in *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (2003):

> Waitangi, the name of the estuarine river that emerges below the site of James Busby's house into the western side of the Bay of Islands,[22] means 'waters of lamentation'. It would turn out to be an appropriate label to attach to the Treaty signed in its vicinity in February 1840. (156)

While the sorrowful creek is reminiscent of the Waitangi River, the exchange between Hakiaha and Sebastian points directly to the Treaty, which has sowed seeds for ongoing conflict over Māori-Pākehā land ownership. In response to Hakiaha's question "how can one man think he owns all the land," Sebastian reassured his friend: "I'm not like that myself […]. I used to be a sailor. I don't put up any fences" (Mahy, *Aliens* 87).

22 Appointed as "the first British Resident in New Zealand in 1832" and "in effect, the representative of British law and order and diplomatic interests in the country," James Busby "arrived in the Bay of Islands to assume these responsibilities in May 1833" (King 152).

An implied criticism of colonialism and anthropocentrism, Hakiaha's confusion segues into an image of wounded nature, which unfolds on the next page: "Divided by a gully of dense native bush, the hill looked as if it had once been struck by the wand of a powerful magician and had never recovered from the blow" (88). The arising tension between the natural and cultural world suggests that nature's trauma is symptomatic of anthropocentrism:

> Not very far behind them were the paved yards of Rackham Rides [the horse-trekking business], the office with its filing cabinets, the Range Rover and all the things that clearly proved that humankind controlled the world. And further beyond was the city, and in the city the new house which now seemed like a memory of long ago, though they had left it only that morning. The bush closed densely around them as if it must stretch out for miles, and it was easy to believe that they had passed into a world with no other people but themselves. (88-9)

Webster's Valley lives up to its reputation of being haunted in its quasi-hypnotic power. The eagerness of the exuberant native bush to reassert its authority over mankind seems to confront the challenge of anthropocentrism.

The presence of the uncanny native birds, the mouthpiece for nature, adds a further layer of eeriness to the haunted valley:

> A bellbird called in its strange, pure voice, like a music-box gone slightly wrong. Then it made a sterner, husky sound […]. The bellbird, clearing its throat again, now seemed to be making a more human sound that [sic] Lewis. It was as if they had swapped over. Suddenly there was another bird call, and this one sounded like someone laughing […]. The bird sang again. It was surprising that anything so clear and simple could be eerie, but it was partly the great clarity that made it ghostly in a world where everything else was softened and blurred with shadows. (91-2)

As their voices are likened to human sound and laughter, the birds seem to take on the role of traumatised storyteller. Bursting out every now and then, the callings almost reflect trauma's fragmented nature. "Sound," according to the ecomusicology scholar Jeff Todd Titon, "is an indicator of the health of an ecosystem. The healthier the habitat, the more 'musical' the polyphony of the creatures that occupy it" (78). Webster's Valley, however, stands in diametrical opposition to a musical polyphony. Interestingly, at the very opening of *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, King uses the bell-like, "melodious" birdsong as a symbol of the unspoiled pre-colonial world, or as he puts it, "a last vibration of primordial New Zealand" (15). By contrast, the uncanny singing of the birds in Mahy's novel points to the harm done by colonialism to the native ecosystem, and suggests that nature's health is at stake.

It is noteworthy that *The Other Side of Silence* also represents colonial trauma through depictions of birds. While gardening at the Credence property, Hero discovers that Miss Credence is a killer of cats. To justify her horrible deeds, the woman explains: "[cats] prey on birds, and I just can't have that. This whole country was a country of birds once […]. Then people brought cats, and cats are not just murderers, they're torturers, too" (Mahy, *Silence* 49). After finishing her gardening job, Hero jogs back home and thinks to herself:

> Miss Credence was right in what she had said. New Zealand had once been a country filled with birds. They had even lived on the ground because they were safe there. There were no enemies to kill them, back then. In the early morning the whole land had rung with song after song.
>
> But people came, and rats came with people, and both people and rats ate birds to stay alive. And then yet *more* people came, and different rats, and then cats to catch rats which caught birds instead. It is strange to think that Ratty in *The Wind in the Willows* was really as bloodthirsty as any stoat or weasel. In any case, people brought the stoats and weasels, too. (51)

These two paragraphs contain plenty of historically accurate allusions to the environmental problems caused by early settlement and European colonialisation.[23] In fact, the narrator has alluded to the tragic fate of New Zealand's native birds at the novel's beginning. We are told that Miss Credence feeds birds in her garden-forest every morning: "once Miss Credence appeared, the whole forest would begin to tremble and thrill with waiting birds … sparrows, starlings, blackbirds and thrushes" (4; ellipsis in original). The very absence of native birds in Miss Credence's garden, "planted purposefully by a European settler family" (Hebley 197), hints at the ecological dimension of colonial trauma. Webster's Valley in *Aliens in the Family*, on the other hand, contains native birds, but their presence is described as ghostly. We might even interpret them as the ghosts of New Zealand's indigenous birds.

Following the depictions of eerie native birds, the narrator introduces to us "a long valley green with autumn grass but curiously desolate" (Mahy, *Aliens* 96). The valley, impressing itself as living and dead in the same breath, is enshrouded by an aura of uncanniness, which is, again, indicative of colonial trauma:

> At some time in the past someone had burnt all the bush that covered it and the valley sides were studded with a ghostly army of blackened tree stumps. These remains of taller trees […] looked sad against the grazing green that had taken the place of native forest. It was almost like a ruined city, moving through its bleached, burnt and splintered foundations. (96)

The sad-looking trees recall the traumatic impact of the timber industry that burgeoned in New Zealand in the 1820s (King 125), but it is not just the forests that fell victim to colonial, anthropocentric practices. According to King:

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23 The birds that "lived on the ground" could be a reference to the flightless moa, whose extinction mainly results from the overhunting by the early Māori (King 63). The rats that came with people might be kiore, the Polynesian rat responsible for the elimination of a few species of terrestrial and small seabirds. The coming of "*more* people […], different rats and […] cats" should refer to the European settlement, which entailed the introduction of more predatory animals, hence a second wave of anthropogenic extinction of birds. As King tells us, "[a]mong the New Zealand birds that disappeared in the nineteenth century were the piopio, native quail and Stephens Island wren," followed by other native kinds, such as huia and the laughing owl (196-7).

> Commercial activity in New Zealand's frontier between 1792 and 1840 […] highlighted a number of realities that had relevance for the country's immediate and long-term future. […] And finally, it would become apparent from the unrestricted 'quarrying' of extractive resources – initially seals and whales, later timber – that unsustainable use of resources eventually annihilated the resource, a variation on the 'future-eating' phenomenon that had wiped out the country's big game and destroyed forests in the early years of Maori settlement. (127-8)

With this historical context in mind, how apt it is that Mahy's present-day characters are given the surname, Raven!

Mahy depicts the traumatic impact of deforestation on nature and criticizes anthropocentrism in colonial practices elsewhere in her work as well. For example, in her short tale, *Shock Forest* (1996), the colonists who "cleared the native trees" to plant "gorse and broom" are remarked as being "[m]ad" (Mahy 42). In the novella, *Portable Ghost* (2006), the sea waves are described as "sighing their eternal sigh," as if lamenting for "the vanished forest and the beach where those men [the European sailors] had once landed" (Mahy 110). The recurring image of a sad, sighing nature underlines Mahy's interest in the ecological dimension of colonial trauma.

Consistent with my earlier claim that the natural world in *Aliens in the Family* appears more detached from ravenous mankind than furious with it, we read that when Jake struggles desperately on the horse's back, "[t]he surrounding scarred tree trunks looked calmly down at her […] and the valley did not care" (Mahy, *Aliens* 99). As the riders reach Webster's Bush, they are "engulfed in a sunny silence, not hostile, but not exactly welcoming either. It was as if the hills did not mind them being there but would not mind if they went away" (107). After Bond disappears in the valley, Dora, Jake and Lewis feel "the bush looking back at them, dense and silent, not giving away any secrets" (109). Slipping away from their parents to search for their friend, the Raven children venture into the bush, where "a deadly hush" reigns: "they understood that part of the tranquillity about them was the silence of the past. They could hear the clockwork of the years not ticking but sighing out

into the quietude" (133). Since "the clockwork of the years" functions in the book as a metonym for history, the 'loud' silence in Webster's Bush can be read as being symptomatic of colonial trauma.

While silence and indifference are symptomatic of trauma, the image of a threatening natural environment also depicts the traumatic consequence of colonialism, and serves to interrogate the ideology of anthropocentrism. Dora, Lewis and Jake finally succeed in tracking down Bond, but the Raven parents sink into a helpless state, unable to find their missing children, and shocked by nature in its formidable guise: "It was no longer possible to look down onto the bush and see it as something over which people had control, for it now towered above them, as if in a single second they had slept for a hundred years" (122). The anti-anthropocentric message is clear: despite the wonderful accomplishments of civilization, humans possess only a very limited control over nature. Meanwhile, groping their way in the bush, Bond and the Raven children are described as "all aliens together […] in a place that belonged to none of them" (125). As Miles notes in "Māori Gothic" (2011), the three temporal strands of the novel's plot are "linked very explicitly by the common theme of alienness: Bond is literally an alien on Earth; Jake feels like, and is perceived as, an alien in her step-family; Sebastian is alienated from his own European people but not quite accepted by his adopted Māori ones" (202). Siding with Miles, I further suggest that Mahy's anthropomorphised nature is alienated just as her characters are, and this alienation is a result of the unsustainable use of natural resources during the colonising process.

The novel climaxes in the fifteenth chapter, when the three timelines intersect at Webster's Valley. This climax is preceded by an electric shock and an earthquake. In the eleventh chapter, the Ravens are struck by "[a] mild kind of lightning," a sensation described as "something snake-like in the churning twist that had overtaken them" (Mahy, *Aliens* 97). In the thirteenth chapter, Jake and Dora feel a quivering "too mathematical to be an earthquake. It was as if someone had plucked an invisible string in the very heart of all matter, and now the entire world was vibrating to a single note" (119). These two strange happenings are explained later in the fifteenth chapter: the lightning brings people back to Sebastian's time; the quivering draws Sebastian and his friends back with the Raven children (152). When history, present and future converge at one point, the valley becomes a chronotope, bringing together Sebastian, Dora and Bond. Dora, then, realises that they themselves are the ghosts written in Sebastian's book: "Having always been frightened of the haunted valley,

she now knew who it was that haunted it. It was herself she had been afraid of all the time" (152). Dora's recognition is a narrative depiction of Royle's claim that the uncanny "is (the) unsettling (of itself)" (5). Given trauma's close affinity with haunting, when Dora's fear of the (colonial) ghosts gives way to knowledge and certainty, it marks the beginning of healing.

This healing is reflected in the natural world; the landscape is transformed. The Raven children find themselves "no longer on a peninsula but on an island. There was no longer any labour beyond the hills, but an erupting volcano" (Mahy, *Aliens* 152). The volcanic eruption, as the children see it, looks much grander than the fireworks on Guy Fawkes night (152). The impression that natural phenomenon's greatness exceeds that of a man-made scene manifests an anti-anthropocentric ethos, which contrasts people's imagined control over nature, as exposed earlier in the novel (88-9). "The final chapter," observes Miles, "sees the present-day characters carried back by a time convulsion millions of years to witness the birth of Lyttelton Harbour out of a volcanic eruption – the origins of New Zealand on a geological rather than a historical level" ("Māori Gothic" 203). The final focus placed on the country's natural history is aligned with my argument that Mahy addresses colonial trauma from an ecological standpoint. When the Ravens gaze in awe at the volcanic eruption, nature regains from people their reverence, described as showing a willingness for re-connection: "the volcano did not wish to be ignored […] and it wanted people to notice it and to tremble at its force" (Mahy, *Aliens* 159). The restored nature/human harmony manifests itself in the joke David makes to Dora: "you're lost in time with a volcano as a next-door neighbour" (160). The volcano's great fiery "tears" go on to suggest that colonial trauma is no longer repressed and nature is now capable of mourning (160).

As I said in the introduction to this chapter, Mahy endows nature with a sense of personhood so that people affected by colonialism seem to be left in the background. Despite displacement as such, Mahy comes back to deal with human problems. The proposed solution is, again, re-connection. At the novel's beginning, the narrator introduces to us a white saw-miller for whom Sebastian and his Māori friends worked. Epitomising "the land-grabbing ethos" of the European settlers (Walls, "Money" 129), the saw-miller tempted Sebastian with a vision of land ownership so as to convince him to stay on at the mill:

> "I didn't think *you'd* walk out on me," he was saying. "Look at the work that still has to be done! We could use another pair of hands. The Maori boys – well, I can't say I'm surprised about them moving on – but you're an English-man! I can help you build a wee cottage here, you could find yourself a bride and probably get some land of your own someday. I mean …" he gestured widely,[24] "look around you! It's all there for the taking! It doesn't belong to anyone. Your son could be a gentleman. Mine will be!" (Mahy, *Aliens* 8-9; ellipsis in original)

The saw-miller's mindset points to colonial trauma in two aspects: estrangement between races and plunder of natural resources. As suggested by the surname "Webster," which is associated with the act of weaving, and by his self-identification as a "Pakeha Maori" (93), Sebastian works to mend the division between Pākehā and Māori, mankind and nature. Not only wearing "his long, fair hair twisted up in a knot Maori-style, and a long, greenstone pendant hung from his ear," Sebastian is also described, along with his Māori friends, as being "accustomed to their land of hill and bush" (9). In these words, we learn of Sebastian's disapproval of the contemporary ethos of white supremacy and anthropocentrism, issues raised by colonialism.

Descended from Sebastian, Bond, whose name literally means connection, plays a similar role as a weaver. As Bond reveals to Dora and Jake, his extra-terrestrial school is carrying out a mission, which aims at connecting disparate and often oppositional ways of thinking and approaching the world:

> We Galgonqua […] are trying to make something that is a great work of art – and of science as well. We call it the Inventory – a collection of all the knowledge in the Universe, but an integral part of knowledge is the way we connect things together. We think that when it's all put together it'll be more than a list. It will make a wonderful pattern […], because everything matters, nothing is disconnected from anything else. (128-9)

24 In *The Tricksters*, Edward is similarly described as "gesturing proudly at the sea" (Mahy 8). The gestures made by the settlers denote anthropocentric attitudes.

Galgonqua's project strongly recalls the holistic view of nature, championed by the Pākehā boy Sorry in *The Changeover*.

Yet, compared with Sorry, the cultural identity of Sebastian and Bond seems more Māori than Pākehā. Whilst Sebastian's identification with Māori is indicated by his hairstyle, his greenstone earring, and more importantly, the fact that he "no longer considered himself [a Pākehā]" (Mahy, *Aliens* 9), Bond's case grows even more radical. It emerges that his fair face and blond hair are merely a disguise facilitating his training programme on earth. Back at Galgonqua, Bond has a true shape which is "suggestive of Maori traditions of facial and bodily ornament" (Bradford 206). His gill flaps are "looking like black and scarlet lace tattooed onto his skin between the base of his ears and his throat" (Mahy, *Aliens* 7), which according to Clare Bradford, "connects him with Indigenous culture" (206). The greenstone Bond wears further underlies his affinity with Māori culture. In addition to being an emblem of both secular and spiritual power, greenstone further symbolises harmony, and gifting the stone is regarded as a peace-making gesture in Māori communities.[25]

It is not surprising, then, that greenstone plays a fundamental role in mending division in *Aliens in the Family*, most notably by creating the effect of "object anomaly" to bring together Sebastian, Dora and Bond at the valley. Following the stone's workings, connections are restored in the three timelines. "The tension had eased between Sebastian and his Maori friends" (Mahy, *Aliens* 157). The Raven children reunite with their parents, who "made everyone hold hands in case […] one of them should be plucked away and lost forever" (159). Clearly, the cohesion signifies that the discord within the patchwork family will be properly addressed. As for Bond's life in the future, the threat of the Wirdegens, to which he is exposed on earth, turns out to be a mock test, designed by the school as a part of his training programme (149), and he returns to Galgonqua safe and sound (154-6). Running concurrently with all three storylines is a re-connection between humanity and nature. As the uncanny valley is transformed into a lively, new world, the Ravens, as if in response to the quasi-hypnotic power of the valley (89), fall into a slumber after which they are brought back to the present day and the starting point of their ride (166-7).

25 This is exemplified by the historical fact about a greenstone named Hine-nui-o-te-paua, which was gifted by the Ngāti Paoa people to Governor George Grey as "a token of their desire to keep peace with the white man" (Mead 170).

The "barren world" created immediately after the volcanic eruption (162), in some way, echoes a scene late in *The Changeover*. Before initiating the last part of her changeover journey, Laura stands "high on a range of hills as bare as if they were covered with nothing more than a sinewy, brown skin," and she claims it to be "the beginning land" (Mahy, *Changeover* 148-9). As Laura's statement suggests, just like the riding of the Ravens, which enables a return to "the origins of New Zealand on a geological […] level" (Miles, "Māori Gothic" 203), the changeover journey takes Laura back to the virgin land unspoiled by colonial trauma. Both journeys, thus, move towards restoration. While Laura's trip primarily facilitates tackling personal issues, the Ravens' journey foregrounds the representation of colonial trauma. However, the fantastical device of time-slipping intervenes in both journeys, and Mahy's insistence on a realist working-through does not allow a surefire cure for the problem. As demonstrated in her other books, Mahy's traumatised characters often resort to self-talking as an attempt to transform traumatic memory into narrative memory. In *The Haunting,* for example, when Great-Uncle Guy confides in Tabitha the repressed family secret, "[i]t was as if Great-Uncle Guy were telling himself this story. His voice seemed like the voice of someone arguing with himself, and he did not look at Tabitha while he spoke" (Mahy 66). Likewise, in *Alchemy,* Mrs Fairfield has a midnight conversation with Roland, telling him why his father has abandoned the family, but she is described as "working it out for herself rather than for him [Roland]" (Mahy 157). In Mahy's fiction, self-talking serves to mark a recuperative beginning while suggesting that more work needs to be done. In this context, it makes better sense why waking from their sleep, the Ravens hear the creek "[flow] along murmuring to itself" (Mahy, *Aliens* 167). We may infer that the wounded nature is on the road to recovery, but colonial trauma has to be continually addressed.

Kaitangata Twitch

Written nearly 20 years after *Aliens in the Family*, *Kaitangata Twitch* revisits the environmental aspect of colonial trauma, visualised in the description of Kaitangata as "lying like a secret, strange tear on the moonlit cheek of the harbour" at the story's opening (Mahy, *Kaitangata*

22). The tear-shaped island is redolent of Sebastian's greenstone earring, which tugged him "as if it might melt like ice and run in green tears down his neck" (Mahy, *Aliens* 10). Yet there is a significant difference in the representation of colonial trauma in the two texts. Whereas *Aliens in the Family* employs the device of time-travel, enabling the Ravens to witness New Zealand's colonial past, *Kaitangata Twitch* resorts to what Huggan and Tiffin term "(neo)colonial practices of incursion" to re-imagine colonial trauma ("Green" 9). In *Kaitangata Twitch*, the nineteenth-century colonist of *Aliens in the Family* metamorphoses into the modern portrait of Marriot Carswell, a wilful Pākehā real-estate businessman. Carswell's development plan for the wild island of Kaitangata is overtly colonial in nature. He threatens to not only build a holiday house, but also "plant a few nice English trees" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 155). In *Kaitangata Twitch*, the displacement of colonial trauma is taken to the point that the anthropomorphised island seems to have a life and show a mood of its own. Becoming a character in its own right, Kaitangata manifests its anxiety over colonialism in earthquakes. Thus, the novel is entitled *Kaitangata Twitch*.

The story's heroine is twelve-year-old Meredith Skerritt. Her family live by the harbour; Kaitangata lies in the middle of it. When the novel opens, Carswell's business plan begins to disturb the peaceful and eco-friendly lifestyle of the Skerritts. The land along the shore has already been developed for construction purposes, but Carswell goes on to spread the word that he will build a fancy palace for himself on the island. This is not so much a residential need as a gesture of retaliation, because the proud Carswell is troubled by an unresolved past closely associated with Meredith's parents. The three turn out to be old acquaintances having known each other since school: back then, Mr Skerritt mocked Carswell's short stature, and Mrs Skerritt rejected Carswell as her boyfriend. Carswell's continued attachment to Meredith's mother is behind his vindictive scheme. Nonetheless, Kaitangata is by no means a passive island to be manipulated by people. As Walls points out, "[t]hat the island remains, as it were, 'free' […] appears to be due to the volition and power of the island itself" ("Money" 135). Besides its self-expression in earthquakes, the island is said to have swallowed up a Pākehā girl, Shelly Gentry, fifty years before the events of the story.

Aligned with Shelly's surname which hints at the division between nature and culture, we are told that the Gentrys had intended to 'gentrify' Kaitangata by building a holiday house on it, but they gave up the plan after Shelly went missing there. Shelly's story is recounted to Meredith by

her great-uncle, Lee Kaa (a Māori character), who witnessed in his dream vision how Kaitangata devoured the girl (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 164-7). The island, therefore, lives up to its name: kai in Māori means food, and tangata, people. But the matter emerges to be far more complex: Kaitangata is "[h]aunted by history" (167), a past associated with Māori cannibalism. As Kaa confides to Meredith, the island is "sort of *tapu*. A forbidden place" (164), because "Ngai Tahu had killed people there – and eaten them" (101). The blood of the ancient people, surmises Kaa, might have empowered Kaitangata, so that the island is enabled to plug into and draw power from the dreams of its potential protector (166-7).

It is worthwhile at this point to look at the significance of cannibalism as a common trope in post-colonial scholarship. A most notable link between colonialism and cannibalism comes from bell hooks, who interprets the desire to eat the other as an embodiment of imperial dominance and racist violence (21-39). And, as noted by Carolyn Daniel in *Voracious Children: Who Eats Whom in Children's Literature* (2006), cannibalism also raises the topic of cultural appropriation, which is "achieved by a process of assimilation, inculcation or through consumption" (141). Daniel goes on to cite Elspeth Probyn's study, *Carnal Appetites: FoodSexIdentities* (2000), and points out that "Western anthropology and Western interests in general have had something of a preoccupation with the notion of cannibalism, which, she [Probyn] says, 'reveals much about the colonial imagination'" (141). Aside from reminding us of the cannibalism/colonialism connection, Daniel's book further implies cannibalism's potential link with the concept of the uncanny:

> cannibalism evokes horror because it unsettles discrete categories and blurs oppositions. It dissolves the difference between the eater and the eaten, between the human as subject and the human as object, between inside and outside, desire and dread, love and aggression (in the case of endophagy), allure and horror. It is a topic that both comforts and thrills. (162)

The contradictory doubleness inherent in the notion of cannibalism shares a similarity to the concept of the uncanny, which according to Royle, "has to do with a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality" (2). More importantly, as I have shown in my discussion of *The Tricksters* and *Aliens in the Family*, the uncanny bears a traumatic dimension, and can be

symptomatic of trauma. The overlapping features of cannibalism, the uncanny, and trauma lead to a persuasive reading of Kaitangata's cannibalistic practice as a symptom and symbol of colonial trauma. Furthermore, drawing on Paul Moon's claim that Māori cannibalism appears as "both a demonstration of [post-conflict] intense rage and an act of supreme revenge" (139), I would suggest that in Mahy's novel, people's indignation at colonialism is displaced onto Kaitangata, which expresses its anger in earthquakes. In more threatening situations, the island practices cannibalism in revenge for colonial, anthropocentric conduct. To put it simply, the anthropomorphised Kaitangata seems to be emotionally affected by colonial trauma.

The novel opens with a sleepwalking scene in which Meredith is troubled by a nightmare. As Walls observes, unlike the orphan Anthea's case in *Dangerous Spaces*, Meredith's "tendency to sleep walk is unaccounted for by any familial trauma that we know of. When it is exacerbated, this is clearly the product of the anxieties provoked by Carswell, anxieties that Meredith shares with her father" ("Money" 134). Walls's comment draws attention to trauma's communicability, based on which I contend that Meredith further takes on Kaitangata's worries about Carswell's looming colonialism, so much so that she emerges to act as an agent of the island. The character's sleepwalking and nightmare, then, could be interpreted as a displaced manifestation of Kaitangata's anxieties.

Given trauma's affinity with the uncanny, it is not surprising to find that the island depicted in the opening nightmare is endowed with uncanniness. The island speaks to Meredith "in a muffled and struggling way" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 3), as if mimicking the speech problems a traumatised individual might have. "The strange light seemed to be seeping up out of the land" (4). "Far ahead of her, in the distant mist stood a crowd of waiting people, dark and faceless" (6). More horribly, a rubber glove grips her leg like "a hand, powered by a secret muscle running the whole length of the beach" (7). In her nightmare, Meredith sees that "someone had put up signs and *named* the beaches" (6; emphasis original). The signs remind her of the adverts for Carswell's business, which duly evokes the feeling that "it seemed he was out on Kaitangata too, labelling and dividing up her private world" (6). "Colonialism," propounds William Mark Adams, "promoted the naming and classification of both people and places, as well as nature, in each case with the aim of control. Landscapes were renamed, and these names were entrenched through mapping and the formal

education system" (24). In these terms, the italicised thus highlighted word, "*named*," makes greater sense, as does the narrator's reference to Carswell's renaming of the Old Creek area as "the new Trident Cove" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 6). A few pages later, colonial trauma manifests itself in the scar motif: looking out at Old Creek through her binoculars, Meredith "could make out gingery scars of raw, volcanic soil scraped free of bush and grass" (10-1).

While the scar motif is a visual image of colonial trauma, the most severe traumatic symptom, as proposed earlier, is Kaitangata's consumption of people, but Mahy conveys some of the ambivalence and avoidance surrounding cannibalism, a repressed part of New Zealand's history, through the portrayal of Mr Skerritt. When Meredith mentions that "Lee said the Ngai Tahu had killed people there [on Kaitangata]—and eaten them," her father responds "dismissively" that "Lee's a storyteller, not a historian […]. I suppose they [the ancient early Māori] may have, a long, long time ago. Or it might refer to a single incident. He doesn't know the difference" (101-2). It is interesting to note that Mr Skerritt's reluctant stance has been subtly introduced only one page earlier. After having finished his "Arts degree in the UK," he came back to New Zealand and "studied […] horticulture" (100). In fact, Mr Skerritt works as a gardener now. The man's occupation and his English education offer an explanation for his uneasiness about broaching the topic of cannibalism, which belongs to New Zealand's primitive culture. Indeed, as Royle expresses it, "cannibalism can be described as the taboo desire *par excellence*" (206; emphasis original).

Yet, we may soon find out that Kaitangata's cannibalism seems to be quite justifiable, because the self-identified warriors of the bay, Mr Skerritt and his oldest daughter Kate, turn out to be impotent fighters. A gardener who "[would] want to be rich for noble ecological reasons" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 84), Mr Skerritt lambasts Carswell for his plan of urbanization, and claims with resolution at the novel's beginning: "Right! We need to *organise*. Some voters might be blind sheep, but there are plenty of us can work out what's just around the corner" (16). But as the story develops, an ironic twist undercuts Mr Skerritt's stated determination. Stuck on the "wait and see" level, he never moves forward (111). Tired of Mr Skerritt's playing-safe strategy, Kate makes herself 'a woman of action.' First, she shaves off her long hair in the hope of "[becoming] a slash-and-burn *sign*" (110), which entails Mr Skerritt's reaction of "hovering behind her like a useless angel" (108). Then, Kate acts as a "phantom sprayer" (130), damaging Carswell's advertisement notices, until she

is caught by the developer himself, who reports her vandalism to the local police. Since neither Mr Skerritt's inaction nor Kate's activism proves to be effective in relieving Kaitangata's anxiety over colonialism, the island has to take the initiative as the true warrior, avenging itself with recourse to cannibalistic practice.

Aligned with Raymond J. Rice's argument that "[t]he community marks the limits of its constitution by the […] 'rational' decision to deny or cross out that possibility [of cannibalism], replacing it with the safety of discourse's endlessly deferred satisfaction" (300), the Skerritts constantly engage themselves in conversations filled with references to cannibalism, which extends to the more general discussions of eating. Mr Skerritt sings an old song about a cannibal isle "Hi-tiddly-hi-ti-ti" to amuse his children (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 53). Meredith tells her father that "[t]he excitement of nursery tales was all about who managed to eat who" (102). As Meredith's younger brother Rufus observes, "the fish they use in fish and chips is often *shark* meat, and it's *us* eating *them*, not *them* eating *us*" (114-5; emphasis original). As we may claim, the angst of the cannibalistic island is assimilated into the family's light-hearted banter.

Interestingly, depictions of people's ravenous appetite often follow hard on Kaitangata's own cries of hunger. In the opening dream scene, Kaitangata chants to Meredith, "*Need! Feed! Need! Feed!"* (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 3). Soon after, people are caught scavenging for themselves in the kitchen. Ignoring Mrs Skerritt's orders, Kate is "enjoying a private, pre-lunchtime feast," later joined by Mr Skerritt, Rufus and his school friend (14-6). On another occasion, Meredith wakes up from a dream in which the island calls out to her "*Eat! Eat! Eat*" (57; emphasis original). As if responding to the call, she makes herself "an illegal pre-breakfast breakfast of noodles," while thinking that she would come back for more food (58). As suggested by Mrs Skerritt's disapproval and the word "illegal," eating in *Kaitangata Twitch* is closely connected with the taboo of cannibalism. In *Post-Colonial Eco-Criticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (2015), Huggan and Tiffin use *Robinson Crusoe* as an example, contending that "the archetypal fear of being eaten is also apparent if, in this particular instance, it is also followed by qualification or distance realisation of some kind" (186). This could well depict the Skerritts whose hunger and consumption of food realise cannibalism at a remove. As a foil for the hungry people, roads and birds in the story also appear as greedy eaters (127; 129). With the new roads "writhing across the land and eating it

into a different shape," the land presents a wounded image: "on the hillside rose scarred slopes crossed with bands of tumbled raw clay, and spiked with the stumps of kanaka [sic] and wilding pines snapped like sticks" (127). By likening the trees to "snapped […] sticks," Mahy the narrator delivers an implicit criticism of (neo)colonialism-induced anthropocentrism.

Threatened by Carswell's (neo)colonial conduct, the cannibalistic island of Kaitangata craves sacrifice. When Meredith's "blood ran down on bare soil," the island "soaked them up quickly" and "greedily" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 41). As the narrator continues, "Meredith, still on all fours and clenching her teeth against pain, felt the world under her palms and knees rise, then fall, as if Kaitangata had secretly gasped for breath … or for more blood" (41; ellipsis in original). The horror culminates in Meredith's sight of a bouquet "set down like some sort of sacrifice," which she vaguely remembers having seen before (42). Indeed, the bouquet makes its first appearance in the opening nightmare scene: "One figure stood […] poised as if patiently waiting to give a speech or offer a gift. Though Meredith could not be sure, she had the strangest feeling that it might be holding a bunch of flowers" (6). Reading through the text, it would be reasonable to assume that the uncanny figure is Shelly Gentry, consumed by Kaitangata as a sacrifice in Kaa's dream vision fifty years before. Shelly's fate foreshadows that of Carswell, who ends up being devoured by Kaitangata in Meredith's dream.

While the island's consumption of humans is symptomatic of colonial trauma, consistent with Jennifer Brown's claim that the cannibal is "paradoxically a symbol of the permeability of those boundaries [between us and them]" (9), Kaitangata's cannibalistic practice also, paradoxically, suggests the therapeutic possibility of mending divisions. An early short story by Mahy, "The Cat Who Became a Poet" (1977), represents the unifying agency of eating and consumption. After a cat swallows a mouse that proclaims itself a poet, "[the predator] felt as if his head was full of coloured lights. Pictures came and went behind his eyes. Things that were different seemed alike. Things that were real changed and became dreams" (Mahy, "Cat" 23). Clearly, it is through eating the mouse poet that the cat becomes the same poetic kind. It might be said that "The Cat Who Became a Poet" hints at Mahy's thematic interest in Māori cannibalism. Just as the cat devours the mouse out of enmity, cannibalism in traditional Māori culture has been long characterised as a way to "ingest and transform the mana of a defeated enemy" (Calder 37). As if consenting to the idea that cannibalistic

practice collapses the self/other divide, Kaa whispers to Meredith: "We are what we eat" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 75). Kaa's statement lays textual foundation for what Winters observes of Meredith's last dream vision, in which the Māori people killed and eaten by Ngai Tahu on Kaitangata become the Pākehā girl, Shelly Gentry: "all the people, fair and dark, are merely dream-personifications of the island itself. And that land is both Maori and Pakeha, having fed and been fed by both peoples" ("Aliens in the Landscape" 421-2).

In fact, the idea of connection via consumption surfaces as early as the opening nightmare scene in *Kaitangata Twitch*. "Sand seemed to fall away around [Meredith], as if the island were opening a mouth" and "[s]truggle as she might, she was being drawn into the very stuff of the island" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 7). At the critical juncture when "[s]he was about to become part of the island for ever […] Meredith woke up […] kneeling on the window seat in the familiar, family sitting room" (8). In this dream vision, Kaitangata's consumption of Meredith remains incomplete, but it helps to establish a connection, so that the island's anxiety over colonialism can be projected into Meredith's dreams.

As the story develops, the human/island bond strengthens to the point of enabling Meredith to act as an agent of Kaitangata. After Carswell threatens to build himself a palace on the island, Meredith promises to help Kaitangata. Acting upon the classical fairy-tale rule of repeating an action for three times, she tries to invoke Carswell in a sort of incantation:

> She held her hand with the ring[26] on it still higher. 'Silver to silver,' she said at last, hissing the words into the night air. 'Marriot Carswell . . . Marriot Carswell . . . Marriot Carswell. I call you! I call you! I call you!' […] 'Kaitangata! Kaitangata! Kaitangata!' she whispered. (146; first and second ellipsis in original)

26 During their short-lived romantic relationship, Carswell gave a ring to Meredith's mother and he had an identical one for himself. Whilst Mrs Skerritt's ring has been kept in a box since their break-up, Carswell has been wearing his. On their first acquaintance, Meredith notices Carswell's ring (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 44). Later, finding the other ring by accident, Meredith is told by Mrs Skerritt the old story between her and Carswell (78-80).

Meredith's voice, "a sandy, gravelly voice that sounded as if it sifted out into the world through moss and fern roots" (146), recalls the sound of the huge shell, given to Meredith by Kaa. The shell is a quasi-musical instrument. To demonstrate how to play it, Kaa blows the pointed end, making a sound which "seemed to struggle into the world through sand and moss" (68). In suggesting an affinity between man and nature, the similarity between Meredith's voice and the shell's resonates with Kevin Dawe's claim that "musical instruments […] have an intrinsic ability to reconnect us to the natural world through the wood, bone, skin, metals, and clay from which they are made" (109). The mossy voice also belongs to Kaitangata, which as described in Meredith's nightmare, almost sings in "a muffled and struggling way, as if the song were coming out of a mouth filled with moss" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 3). Although the island's muffled voice indicates trauma-induced silence, by letting the shell and Meredith share a similar voice, Kaitangata manages to find an outlet for its repressed trauma. Since the shared voice enables the island, the shell, and Meredith to achieve a form of unity, it points to the ideal of humanity in harmony with nature. In addition, as suggested by the name Shelly, the great shell might be read as a transfiguration of the missing Pākehā girl, who after being consumed by Kaitangata in Kaa's dream, gains the voice of the indigenous land. Meredith's case is similar, even though she is only devoured by Kaitangata in dream. The result is the same: Meredith's acquisition of the island's voice.

Using the acquired voice, Meredith summons Carswell to her dream. His anthropocentric attitude is made explicit when he calls Kaitangata "a *nothing* place" (155; emphasis original) and "[his] own land" (157). It is important to note that in this dream vision, Meredith and Kaitangata appear as one single entity: "She felt the island inside her as well as outside" (155). Enraged by Carswell's hubris, "Meredith looked up to where she knew the island's rocky fist clenched itself against the sky" and cries out "I like it *wild*," while "punching upwards in a freedom sign of her own" (156; emphasis original). The parallel gestures work further to blur the boundary between people and place, enhancing the human–nature connection. Meredith's emphasis on the word "*wild*" anticipates Kaitangata's upcoming cannibalistic practice, since the cannibal, according to Probyn, "is to be understood as the ground zero of humanity, the very limits of being human" (90). The imaginary consumption of Carswell in Meredith's vision prefigures the reality of Carswell's bankruptcy. His business ends up being swallowed up by a big firm called Eyot Industries.

Consistent with Mahy's wordplay on "eyot" which literally means a small island, Carswell's anthropocentric view, as manifested by his 'big' plan to colonize Kaitangata, fails when the island eats him.

With colonial threats dissipating, the island casts off its previous uncanniness, and begins to look "small" and "ordinary" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 174). In parallel, Meredith's sleepwalking, a displaced manifestation of Kaitangata's anxieties, comes to an end. As Marina Warner observes in "Fee Fie Fo Fum: the Child in the Jaws of the Story" (1998), the trope of cannibalism "exemplifies a defensive response: internalising the aggressor in order to stave off fear, as children like to playact the monstrous part and feel the pleasure of imagined power" (179). Ancient as it is, Kaitangata seems to be child-like from Kaa's perspective. When Meredith asks if he can "play any sort of tune" on the great shell, Kaa answers: "You can get a bit of rhythm out of it […]. Plays a sort of lullaby, perhaps […]. It's hard to get some babies to sleep" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 68). In the course of the story, we see Kaa sometimes play saxophone at night to pacify the restless island. His music is likened to "a melodious snake" (66). In his association with snake, Mahy's Kaa might be inspired by Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, in which Mowgli's friend and instructor is a snake character called Kaa. But Mahy's fiction also seems to ascribe a unifying power to the image of the snake. For example, in *Aliens in the Family*, there is "something snake-like" in the first electric shock, which enables the Ravens to travel back to Sebastian's time (Mahy 97). Kaa remarks on another occasion that "like tame snakes," roads bind people together (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 52). If trauma, as defined by Caruth, is a "wound of the mind—the breach in the mind's experience of time, self and the world" (*Unclaimed* 3-4), wouldn't connection work as the best cure?

Compared with *Aliens in the Family*, *Kaitangata Twitch* displays a less fantastic working-out of the solution to the natural environment ravaged by (neo)colonialism. It turns out that "Marriot's plans were not his alone. They have become an official District Scheme" (Mahy, *Kaitangata* 173). Houses must be built, as well as new roads. However, because the threat from Carswell, the anthropocentrism incarnate, is neutralised, Kaitangata looks calmly at the construction work taking place at the bay. The island's tranquility seems to convey the message that so long as people do not go so far as to violate the tapu/taboo, like the Gentrys and Carswell, the natural world will remain tolerant and welcoming. In the last chapter, Meredith paddles to Kaitangata. Walking along the

beach, she blows into the huge shell whose "melancholy, mossy songs somehow echoed back into itself as it sang out into the world" (177). Since the voice of the shell, a mouthpiece for Kaitangata, is no longer described as being muffled, we may infer that colonial trauma has been addressed. The re-connection between nature and humanity is further indicated by the scene, which shows the sound of the sea and that of the shell in a perfect harmony: Meredith "flapped her hand over the wide mouth of the shell, and the sound rose and fell, rose and fell in musical waves matching the small sea weaves that curled up softly before flopping on the sand" (177). But even in this beautiful picture, Mahy hints subtly at the need for an ongoing treatment. The shell's melancholy song, in echoing back into itself, is reminiscent of the creek, which murmurs to itself at the end of *Aliens in the Family*. In both cases, self-talking serves as a mark of healing and a reminder that people should not be contented until the problem is thoroughly worked through. At the novel's close, it is implied that Meredith and the island, once again, merge into one: they seem to breathe the same breath and reflect the image of each other (179-80). This final moment of anthropomorphism strikes a lingering note, inviting us to continually interrogate the boundary between human and nonhuman and rethink humanity's position in nature.

Chapter Summary

My postcolonial reading of Mahy's fiction focuses on the representation of nature as a traumatised figure. Affected by colonialism and anthropocentrism, the natural world appears uncanny and estranged from people. But as well as exposing problems, Mahy also suggests ways to heal the rift. Most notably, she appeals for treating our environment with respect so as to restore the connection between nature and humanity. This is made explicit in *Alchemy*, when Roland reads about the broader definition of alchemy from a dictionary:

> In its fullest sense, alchemy was a philosophical system containing a complex and rudimentary science, elaborated with astrology, religion, mysticism, magic, theosophy, and many other constituents. Alchemy dealt not only with the mysteries of matter, but with

> those of creation and life. It sought to harmonise the human individual with the universe surrounding him. (Mahy 101)

In *Alchemy*, Mahy shows a strong thematic interest in dividedness and reunion. While the representation of inner discord was discussed in my second chapter, the excerpt above raises the issue of the division between nature and humanity. The ultimate aim of alchemy as expressed here—to mend the divide between people and their environment—manifests an anti-anthropocentric ethos, which later finds an echo in Jess's belief that "every grain of dust is a universe" (199). Whereas Roland and Jess champion such a holistic view of life, the antagonist Quando causes divisions by feeding on and destroying other magicians. Quando is a sorcerer, conjurer and politician. More gravely, we are told that the evil man might become the future prime minister of the country (54). Mahy's perhaps uncharacteristic concern over political dangers here foreshadows the treatment of political trauma in her late novels, which I will discuss in my final chapter.

Chapter Four: Political Trauma

Introduction

In my first chapter, I examined how the trauma of ancestors is vertically transmitted to the descendants in the domestic realm. In the second chapter, I moved on to exploring the horizontal connectedness of trauma between contemporaries within a larger, communal body. The third chapter continued to expand the scope, looking at the representation of New Zealand's historical trauma through a postcolonial ecocritical lens. The three chapters together show the depth and complexity of Mahy's treatment of trauma in her YA fiction. But the grand design for Mahy's 'trauma palace' goes one step further to include her reflection of disastrous events which took place in more recent global history, as demonstrated by *Maddigan's Fantasia* (2005) and *The Magician of Hoad* (2008), a pair of fantasy novels published during Mahy's final years.

Mahy is cautious about dealing with political matters straightforwardly in her writing. Kathryn Walls, in support of her argument that Mahy's YA novels "embody a socialist critique of New Zealand," gathers abundant evidence for Mahy's "egalitarian perspective" and "socioeconomic preoccupations," but admits that "Mahy maintains a distinct reserve on the question of how inequity should be addressed. Her politicians are uninspiring background characters whose party allegiances remain undefined" ("Money" 112-3). Similarly, as discussed in my third chapter, Mahy tackles New Zealand's colonial trauma in an evasive way by foregrounding its ecological aspect, leaving people's traumatisation in the background. Yet, whereas the sensitivity of domestic politics may serve to justify Mahy's ambivalent representational manner, she appears more confident about exposing issues creating crises in the international sociopolitical landscape.

Both *Maddigan's Fantasia* and *The Magician of Hoad* are catastrophe-ridden narratives, unfolding against a desolate, post-apocalyptic backdrop. In *Maddigan's Fantasia,* we read about the horrors of total warfare, undemocratic regimes, famines, energy crises, epidemics and sociopolitical iniquities of lesser kinds. In *The Magician of Hoad,* the titular kingdom faces the

double threat of a looming civil war and potential international conflicts, the consequence of Hoad's long-running feud with its neighbours. On the one hand, it seems that the deep concerns over wars and politics raised in the two novels are relevant to the traumatic context of the post-9/11 world. As we know from Mahy's biography, she believes that "[t]he need for stories in the troubled, post-9/11 age […] is greater than ever" (Duder 294). On the other hand, the books work to reflect global history, as well as issuing a warning against the possibility of a bleaker future. At the opening of *Maddigan's Fantasia,* we are informed that the novel's heroine, Garland Maddigan, lives in an age called "the Remaking," preceding which the world witnessed two disastrous historical periods, the Destruction and the Chaos. During the former era, people were subject to "the poisonings and then the wars"; during the latter, "there were the plagues and a sort of dissolving of everything" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 7). When describing to her friends the brutality of warfare, Garland says: "The bombs fell and all that. Buildings just toppled over! Whole cities sank into the ground or turned to dust" (88). Although the book's setting evokes a "post-apocalyptic New Zealand" (Duder 292), Garland's depiction also recalls the imagery of 9/11 attacks, the war-scarred cities of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the two world wars marking the twentieth century. The novel's use of time travel, in juxtaposing the present-day world with a dystopian future dominated by one monstrous dictator called the Nennog, facilitates a fusion of past, present and future, which as noted in my second chapter, features prominently in trauma fiction.

Like *Maddigan's Fantasia*, *The Magician of Hoad* draws together different timelines, presenting, as Christine Wilkie-Stibbs expresses it, "an ambiguously defined temporality that could just as easily be a medieval past[27] as a postapocalyptic future" (126). While Mahy admits that the setting of this story belongs to "'an 'elsewhere', vaguely European" and "approximately the same as early Tudor times" (Duder 289), we could situate the heavy casualties caused by the violent clashes between the kingdom of Hoad, along with its seven counties, and their eastern enemies, the Hosts of the Dannorad, in the contemporary context of our own world. Since Hoad is ruled by "wealthy, fair-skinned characters" (Wilkie-Stibbs 127) and the Dannorad women appear in half-

27 It might be more precise to say that *The Magician of Hoad* is set in a post-medieval time, since Mahy explicitly suggests that the setting evokes "early Tudor times" (Duder 289).

veiled fashion (Mahy, *Hoad* 111), it reasonably reminds us of the Gulf War and War on Terror, both waged in the Middle East.

Although, as I intend to show, Mahy foregrounds the treatment of political trauma in *Maddigan's Fantasia* and *The Magician of Hoad*, we should bear in mind that these stories do follow Mahy's general writing mode, which according to Walls, "positively [invites] interpretation in 'psychological' […] terms" ("Money" 113). To put it differently, in her final major novels, Mahy weaves together an intricate web of individual and collective trauma. While the plot of *Maddigan's Fantasia* revolves around the eponymous circus's travelling through a broken landscape, a sign of war trauma, we are introduced to Garland's personal trauma at the novel's very intense opening: she loses her dear father, Ferdy, when the Fantasia members involve themselves in an armed combat with the Road Rats. As a coping strategy, Garland keeps a diary to pour out her grief while imagining the writing process to be a way of communicating with the dead Ferdy. The heroine's compulsive return to her unresolved trauma culminates in the time-shifting episodes by the novel's end, when Garland travels back to the point right before Ferdy's demise. However, as she soon realizes, there is no way to revive her father, and consequently, she is made to witness the brutal scene of the killing. Inevitably, the design raises the following question: if Garland's time travel fails to save Ferdy, what role does it play in the novel? As I would suggest, what seems to be a futile return turns out to be a crucial point in tackling the trauma of bereavement. At the novel's beginning, Garland, after seeing Ferdy shot in the chest, has a bad fall and suffers a blackout. By the time she wakes up, Ferdy has passed away. The lacuna in between mimics the persistent tension between knowing and not knowing which defines traumatic memory. In some way, the blackout anticipates the paradoxical nature of Garland's diary writing, which is both an attempt at mourning and a gesture of denying the loss. Whereas during the time-shifting Garland is exposed to the blow of losing Ferdy twice over, it facilitates an access to her unresolved past, so that she gains a full knowledge of her father's death. Not surprisingly, following the time travel episodes, "[Garland's] life with Ferdy was […] somehow closed down. She no longer felt obliged to tell him where the Fantasia was, and what it was getting up to" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 365). Significantly, Garland's diary, aside from its association with her personal trauma, is further connected to public memory. The notebook, to be stored away in the archives in the future time, is brought back to the present-day world.

Likewise, individual and collective dimensions intersect in *The Magician of Hoad*. While the novel shows a profound preoccupation with domestic politics and international relations, Mahy's epic fantasy manages to retain its focus on personal issues, rather than mythologizing them into some grand heroic terms. As Geoffrey Miles remarks in his review of *The Magician of Hoad*, "Doubles and Damage" (2009), "[l]ike much of Mahy's work, though in a more deliberately mythic mode, it is about the making of identity: how people fit themselves to, or are devoured by, the roles they take on and the stories they become part of." Compared with *Maddigan's Fantasia*, the epic scope of *The Magician of Hoad*, the tension between the identities of the characters and the social roles they play, suggests a closer link between the microcosm of personal suffering and the kingdom's crisis situation. Indeed, as one character thinks at the novel's opening, "[h]istory was being made, and they were to be part of it" (Mahy, *Hoad* 38). In this story, the fate of individual characters swings and turns in the capricious game of politics, and it is represented most forcefully in the portrayal of the novel's pair of protagonists, Heriot Tarbas and Cayley Silence. As we learn from the text, the role of the King's Magician, a mind-reader and intelligence agent, is forced upon Heriot, due to the post-war political tension between Hoad and its neighbors. After five years' service with the court, Heriot feels himself "being reduced to a series of freakish functions" (129). Reading through the text, we find that several factors work together to cause Heriot's identity crisis, but the unstable international relations should count as one of them. Compared with Heriot's case, Cayley's problem is more relevant to the power struggle dominating the domestic political arena. Although the ancient law of Hoad allows a King/Hero power division, there is a fundamental difference between the two roles: whereas kingship is hereditary, the Hero is forbidden to marry and he must fight for his position by killing the predecessor in a duel. It emerges that Cayley is the illegitimate daughter of Carlyon, the current Hero of Hoad. In addition to being a surviving witness of her father's murder of her twin brother, Cayley is the victim of the abuse by her psychopathic mother, who grew mad because of Carlyon's brutal treatment of his family. The whole series of misfortunes that befell Cayley could well explain why she is given the surname, Silence, a word which, by itself, is symptomatic of trauma. As Cayley's story shows, what lies at the root of her personal trauma seems to be Hoad's self-contradictory law, which glorifies the war hero and in the same breath suppresses him.

While individual psychology remains crucial in these novels, it serves to dramatise larger issues. More specifically, I will argue that *Maddigan's Fantasia* reflects the political trauma of totalitarianism through depicting autocratic leaders and the oppressed masses. I will then turn to Mahy's representation of war trauma in *The Magician of Hoad*. Before discussing *Maddigan's Fantasia,* it is worthwhile to look briefly at what critics have identified as the trend in post-9/11 popular culture that "the Nazi has been used to symbolize the terrorist" (Hartman-Warren 222). If as Michael Rothberg contends, "we frequently understand one instant of historical trauma through another, understanding emerging 'through dialogue with […] proximate histories of violence'" (qtd. in Luckhurst, "Beyond Trauma Torturous Times" 18), the terror of totalitarian politics depicted in Mahy's novel might be interpreted as an attempt to tackle the sociopolitical anxieties dominating the post-9/11 milieu. Although *Maddigan's Fantasia* has been criticized for "[lacking] a centering principle" (Coats 98) and building up its "sheer breadth […] at the expense of depth" (Duder 311), my reading will try to show how Mahy deals with the political trauma of totalitarianism in a coherent manner.

Introduction to *Maddigan's Fantasia*

Maddigan's Fantasia features the twelve-year-old Garland Maddigan as the heroine. The story recounts how the eponymous circus troupe travel through a war-wrecked landscape and bring back a solar converter to their home city, Solis, before it is destroyed by a severe energy crisis. The Fantasia is led by Garland's parents, Ferdy and Maddie, but soon after they set out, Ferdy, the ringmaster and magician, loses his life. The circus is left in the charge of Maddie who urges her people to move on. With Ferdy's death, the Fantasia lacks a proper magician, but the joining of an enigmatic boy magician, Eden, settles the problem. Eden brings with him his older brother, Timon, and baby sister, Jewel, from, as Garland eventually learns, a future Solis terrorised by the monstrous Nennog. The children have inherited a powerful treasure called the Talisman, desired by the Nennog, and so have fled from their present day into the time of this story to escape the Nennog's pursuit.

They themselves do not know what the Talisman is, only realising, in the course of the story, that it is their own baby sister Jewel. In saving themselves and protecting their sister through travelling in time, the children have the further opportunity to rewrite history. As the novel unfolds, it becomes apparent that the Nennog is the future incarnation of the current Duke of Solis, whose gradual deformation is the result of his exploitation of genetic technologies following his destruction of the solar converter. The characteristically optimistic tone of Mahy's novels assures the reader that the resilience of the young characters, and their appeal to what remains of the Duke's humanity, will lead to a satisfying ending.

In the first half of their trip, the Fantasia members travel through a series of places: the timber town of Milton; a gorge which is inhabited by a tribe of giants; the big industrial town of Gramth; the small town of the Swampland; the Apothecary's Nidus where the cure for Fantasia Fever is found; and Greentown in which people are enslaved because of the enchanting power of a "mind-weed." After Greentown, the travellers arrive at the city of Newton, which marks the mid-point of the trip; they succeed in acquiring the solar converter from the place. In the latter half of the journey, the circus makes its way back home. In the Tunnels of the Dead, the troupe confront the Nennog, who has travelled to the present-day world via underground radioactive links. Then, after a chance encounter with Gabrielle, Garland's long-lost great-grandmother, and a meeting with the Birdboys, a group of victims of famine, the Fantasia members cross the lake and return to Solis. In the novel's final scene, the solar converter is installed, thereby resolving Solis's energy crisis. Timon, Eden and Jewel return to the future Solis, a place made better without the Nennog's terrorisation.

In the same year when *Maddigan's Fantasia* was published, Mahy's short tale on World War II, "The Question Mark," appeared in Michael Morpurgo's edited anthology, *War: Stories about Conflict* (2005), as if indicating Mahy's shift of focus towards political trauma in her final years. "The Question Mark" features a girl named Elizabeth as the heroine. As we may infer from the character's young age, this story is inseparable from Mahy's own early childhood experience of living through WWII. As she claims in the preface of the tale:

> In about 1940 (when I was four), my father was building a wharf in the north of New Zealand and we did live in a tin hut and a caravan. At nine o'clock each night Big Ben would chime

> out through our hut. This was always dramatic, but it became dramatic in quite a different way when the Japanese came into the Second World War and began edging down towards Australia and New Zealand. […] So you see, there is quite a lot in this story that is autobiographical. (83)

But as we shall see, Mahy's interest in representing her early memories of war surfaces as early as her 1992 realist novella, *Underrunners*, which features the boy Tristram Catt as the protagonist.

Tris lives on a barren peninsula eroded by narrow ditches which he calls "underrunners." At the story's opening, Tris, already traumatised by his mother's abandonment of the family, is further exposed to anxiety over his father's second marriage. As a coping strategy, he seeks solace in science fiction fantasy, in which Tris and Selsey Firebone, his alter-ego, work as a pair of secret intergalactic agents protecting their territory from the Veng, invaders from another planet. While in Tris's imagined world, the underrunners form a network of secret tracks the Veng could travel through, the tunnels have a practical use. In one of the big underrunners, Tris hoards provisions, because he "imagined bringing his father here during a time of military crisis. They would sit and eat peanuts until the enemy air attack, or offshore bombardment" (Mahy, *Underrunners* 32). This imaginary scenario of total warfare harks back to Mahy's childhood memories of WWII, which grew to influence and shape her literary work, as she became a writer of children's and YA books. Consistent with Walls's remark that Mahy's texts often "positively invite interpretation in 'psychological', and thus apolitical, terms" ("Money" 113), *Underrunners* lays emphasis on the personal issues of Tris and those of his fellow characters, so the shimmering strand of political issues ends up staying in an inconspicuous corner of the narrative's background. Nonetheless, the realist novella serves as a pointer to Mahy's thematic interest in this aspect, which she would have the opportunity to explore at great length in her final fantasy books. As I intend to show, *Maddigan's Fantasia* reflects the political trauma of totalitarianism through depicting dictators and the oppressed masses.

Totalitarianism in *Maddigan's Fantasia*

I shall begin by looking at the novel's arch-villain, the Nennog, who not only terrorises the future Solis, but also causes incessant disturbance to the Fantasia's journey by means of time travel, haunting, and dispatching robot assassins. The portrayal of the Nennog as an omnipresent villain, in particular the episodes of his haunting, raises a red flag that the post-apocalyptic world depicted in *Maddigan's Fantasia* is simultaneously threatened by the unresolved political trauma of totalitarianism. There are several autocratic rulers who might be said to incarnate totalitarianism in the twentieth century, and the Nennog seems to evoke Adolf Hitler in particular. The Nennog's grotesque appearance echoes Elizabeth's imagination of Nazi Germany in "The Question Mark." Green- and scaled-skinned, the Nennog is "a cross between a cockroach and a lizard" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 430). Similarly, the Germany on Elizabeth's War Map is described as a "savage mossy-green dragon that had devoured country after country" (Mahy, "Question" 88). Moreover, the Nennog's ruthless persecution of Jewel, whose name starts precisely with the word "Jew," reminds us of the unforgivable crime of the Holocaust. The Nazis' racist policy targeted more than Jews. The historian Sybil H. Milton opens her article, "'Gypsies' as Social Outsiders in Nazi Germany" (2001), by revealing a less known but equally shocking fact: "The mass murder of between one-quarter and one-half million Roma and Sinti, usually referred to as 'Gypsies,' during the Holocaust has been largely invisible in current historiography about Nazi genocide" (212). In these words, we come to understand why the Duke disdainfully calls the Fantasia "that gipsy trash" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 428), as though turning a blind eye to the convoy's remarkable contribution to the city of Solis. If the portrayal of the Nennog alludes to Hitler, it is unsurprising that the Duke, the Nennog's predecessor, also demonstrates racial prejudices.

There are more parallels between Hitler and the Duke. The character's misuse of technology, which turns him into a monster, could be an analogue to the history of science during the Nazi years, when "sciences, such as psychology, anthropology, human genetics, and various forms of racial science and racial hygiene, […] flourished" (Proctor 16). For readers familiar with WWII history, Mahy's specific reference to the Duke's abuse of genetics recalls the Nazi government's systematic

investigation of people's genetic make-up and genealogical tree, a racist scheme to separate the Aryan Germans from their 'undesirable' counterparts, the Jewish Germans. The Duke is by no means the only dangerous figure threatening the order and safety of the present-day world. As the Fantasia members travel towards Newton, they bear witness to the political terrors evoked by totalitarian regimes.

When the Fantasia arrives at the small town called the Swampland, we are introduced to the Witch-Finder, a dramatic villain using fear to deceive and terrorise the folks. It emerges that the Swampland people are brainwashed into believing that their place is haunted by ghosts and the Witch-Finder is their protector. During the troupe's stay, old Goneril, the Fantasia witch, and Eden, the magician, are framed and imprisoned, because the Witch-Finder is jealous of their magical power (Mahy, *Maddigan* 131). On their rescue of Goneril and Eden, Garland and her Fantasia friends (Timon and Boomer) discover that the ghosts are only puppets that the Witch-Finder uses her devices to control remotely. However, when the Witch-Finder is exposed as a liar, the townsfolk refuse to accept the truth, and so the political trauma of totalitarianism remains unresolved in the Swampland.

As Garland tells us about the Swampland people, "[t]heir town has no name. […] They say the Witch-Finder eats names. We just call it the Community" (120). "The Community," in itself, recalls the Nazi's National Community scheme. This observation is further bolstered by the comparison Timon makes between the Witch-Finder and the Hitler-like Nennog: "[The] Witch-Finder reminded me of the Nennog in some way. It's as if she had some sort of darkness in her head, and when they have that darkness – when they lose the light – people stop seeing clearly" (127). The Witch-Finder lives in a dark tower which shines out at night. On one level, the tower harks back to medieval realities, where baronial castles dominated the surrounding territory. The tower's relevance to medieval history paves the way for the upcoming plot of witch-hunting. On another level, a traditional image in the fantasy genre, the dark tower evokes an atmosphere of evil, reminding us, for example, of Tolkien's Barad-dûr, a fortress of powerful dark magic. Dark tower as a fantasy trope for wickedness is an apt association here. Built high on a hilltop, the Witch-Finder's tower signifies her oppressive regime, or as Paul Corner and Jie-Hyun Lim put it, "the classical idea of the coercive 'dictatorship from above'" (xxiii).

As the local girl Sara tells Garland, "[w]e're a special place–because the Witch-Finder lives there [in the tower], […] keeping the ghosts from coming in at us and eating our souls" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 121). The townspeople's adulation of the Witch-Finder points to personality cult, which derives from fascist leaders' eagerness to cast a heroic image for themselves. Predictably, the Witch-Finder soon emerges to be an unheroic figure. As José Ortega y Gasset observes, "[w]hichever way we approach fascism we find that it is simultaneously one thing and the contrary, it is A and not A" (qtd. in Passmore "Preface"). Fascism's self-contradictory nature resonates with the portrayal of the Witch-Finder, who ironically looks much like a witch herself:

> The Witch-Finder was dressed in layers of crimson and gold. Her shirts and skirts swirled around her as if worked on by a wind that nobody else could feel. Those skirts were clean and shining and yet they gave her a curious, ragged look, while the long, lumpy rod she was holding in one hand […] resembled a piece of polished driftwood, […] with a swollen knot just below the point where the arms of the rod divided, springing up and out as if the rod was warning the world of danger. The Witch-Finder's long fingers were hooked around that rod like claws, while in her other hand she carried a whip which she cracked as if she were herding the wind ahead of her. (Mahy, *Maddigan* 124-5)

The rod is used to discern spirits. Whenever they are detected, the rod will twitch and writhe, by dint of which the Witch-Finder singles out old Goneril and Eden as demons. Provoked by the Witch-Finder's allegation, "a few Community women closed in on Goneril, […] while others grabbed Eden, and yet more stepped forward to keep other Fantasia people at bay. One of the women drew a knife" (129).

The collaboration between the Witch-Finder and her followers demonstrates what is typical of mass dictatorship. In "Organic Modernity: National Socialism as Alternative Modernism" (2018), Konrad H. Jarausch points out that "in an age of mass politics dictatorship required the complicity of the oppressed […]. In the Third Reich, the charismatic nature of Hitler's rule combined ruthless repression by the party and SS with acclamation and consent by the majority of the German

population" (39). This coercion-and-complicity political mode could fittingly depict the Swampland community because people are coerced into compliance out of their fear of the 'soul-eating ghosts.'

The lives of Goneril and Eden are at stake, because the Community people plan to duck them in the swamp the next morning, to cleanse them of witchcraft, as they believe (Mahy, *Maddigan* 130). Whilst the misfortunes of the two make a reference to the early modern treatment of 'witches,' the act of witch-hunting often contains an undertone of political persecution. For example, Arthur Miller's 1953 play, *The Crucible*, dramatises the real events of Salem witch trials in the 1690s to allegorise the McCarthy era paranoia in the US, when the government persecuted people whom they suspected to be communists.

The root cause of the Witch-Finder's victimisation of Goneril and Eden transpires to be jealousy. As Garland reveals, "she's always suspicious of us, most likely because the people here love us" (124). The Witch-Finder's xenophobic practice of excluding foreigners whom she considers as her rivals is evocative of Nazi terror. As Jarausch notices:

> The Nazi vision of a homogenous *Volksgemeinschaf* also implied a series of negative initiatives to exclude political enemies, those considered racially inferior as well as disliked foreigners. Immediately after the seizure of power the SA (*Sturmabteilung*/Stormtroopers) and the police rounded up prominent political opponents, […] and held them in detention in order to eliminate potential rivals. (41)

On the night of Goneril's and Eden's imprisonment, Garland ruminates on the strange attachment between the Witch-Finder and her people: "perhaps small towns in an uncertain land were always frightened of the dangerous world around them. Perhaps having someone fierce in charge of them also made them feel they were being protected" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 131). On their rescue of Goneril and Eden, Garland, Timon and Boomer break into the Witch-Finder's tower and discover the foolish secret which the Witch-Finder hides from view.

The shining spirits/ghosts in the tower turn out to be a bunch of remote-control puppets, which the the Witch-Finder uses her rod and whip to operate. The children also find a store of detonators, the facilitator of her game of bluff. The toys work metaphorically to represent the repressed

Community people, and the manipulator herself is symbolised by a grotesque doll lying inside a coffin-shaped box, which Boomer calls "[a] Sleeping Beauty" (139). Switched on, the Sleeping Beauty moves around and jumps out of the window, somersaulting all the way through to the edge of the swamp, where the Witch-Finder is commanding the folks to duck Goneril and Eden. With the appearance a headless marionette causing an immediate diversion, the rescue team divulge to the Community the shameful secret of their leader (143-4).

Whereas we may expect that the beheading of the Sleeping Beauty foreshadows the Witch-Finder's downfall, the woman's psychological victimization of the folks goes so far that "even with the evidence in front of them – they don't want to believe" (145). It is not until Timon threatens to explode the detonators in her tower that the Witch-Finder finally gives in, so Goneril and Eden return to the Fantasia safe and sound. On departure, Garland makes her last attempt at convincing Sara that the Witch-Finder is a charlatan and there are never ghosts in her tower, but Sara "declared obstinately" that "[they] *are* haunted" and then "stalked haughtily away" (146-7; emphasis original). The mob's devotion to the Witch-Finder is reminiscent of Hitler's followers. In *Childhood and Society* (1977), Erik H. Erikson identifies Hitler as a "gang leader, who kept the boys together by demanding their admiration, by creating terror, and by shrewdly involving them in crimes from which there was no way back" (304). By the same token, the Community people have "no way back," because they would not allow themselves to break off from their totalitarian leader. It is important to note that on their arrival, the Fantasia troupe plan to perform at the Swampland an act called "the rise-of-Solis," which refers to the trick of "a magical library" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 123). We are told that "all that juggling with books that appear and disappear […] stands for dancing with wisdom" (123). Since saving Goneril and Eden becomes the Fantasia's preoccupation, they cannot spare the time for a proper performance. However, in making Timon and Garland dance with the Sleeping Beauty (141; 143), a quasi-double for the Witch-Finder, Mahy seems to parody the idea of dancing with wisdom while spontaneously reassuring the reader that political terror can be known and defeated, on condition that one has the courage to face the music. Sadly, judging from Sara's reaction, the Community people are far from ready to dance with wisdom. While though as Adam-Troy Castro claims it, "[n]othing hurts an established power figure more than being made to look

ridiculous" (129), we are not sure how much the Sleeping Beauty scandal can hurt the Witch-Finder. Her authority remains intact and her people choose to stay ignorant.

The representation of political terror is not just confined to small places; a suffocating atmosphere of fear also enshrouds the big town, Gramth, which suffers at the hands of what seems to be the Nazi paramilitary organizations. The narrator gives a clue by drawing an analogy between the town and a drudge: "Though the Fantasia was on the road, somehow it was Gramth which seemed to be travelling, advancing towards them in slow, heavy steps" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 79). For people wanting to trade in Gramth, it is mandatory to "pass the guards and sentries, and fill in all the right forms" (79). At the city gate, a strange thing happens:

> A young man suddenly burst out of nowhere and began running alongside the queue, shouting as he ran.
>
> 'No more oil slaves! No more oil slaves!'
>
> […] Gramth officers were closing in on him, flourishing the long metal poles they called their rods of office. One of the officers reached out, touching the young man's shoulder with the rod […]. The man's words melted into one another, becoming a scream, while his running turned into a shapeless leap. He stumbled; he fell. Officials closed around him. (80-1)

The excerpt suggests that the Gramth government not only deals with dodgy business but also adopts high-handed measures against its own people. As the story develops, the Fantasia children discover the town's dark secret: unknown to their parents, children from poverty-stricken households are abducted by the officers and forced to work in the mines. After the Fantasia gets into the town, Garland makes friends with the teenager Chena and her brother Tarq, who later become forced labourers.

Heavily guarded and strictly divided into sectors, Gramth is seething with political and military tensions. If the town's security forces are evocative of the Nazi apparatus of terror and surveillance, the children trapped in the mines could be a reference to the captive labourers of the German concentration camps. In *Hitler's 'National Community': Society and Culture in Nazi Germany*

(2017), Lisa Pine writes that "the SS systematically exploited the forced labour of concentration camp prisoners for lucrative economic enterprises, setting up the German Excavation and Quarrying Company Limited to monitor production and distribution" (55). When Garland and Timon go down into the mines, the underground tunnels are described as "gaping at them greedily with wide black mouths" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 100), recalling the harsh exploitation committed by the Nazis. In a huge, dark cavern, Garland and Timon find many child labourers monitored by the guards:

> It was almost as if they were being surrounded by a colony of mining trolls. But the trolls took shape as they came towards the centre of the cavern, and became a group of children, panting and straining, pulling a loaded cart along its rails. To their horror Garland and Timon could clearly see that each child was linked to the next by a large dragging chain. (102)

"Life in the concentration camps," summarises Pine, "was characterised by the arbitrary violence and brutality of the SS guards, as well as extremely poor living conditions" (54). This could well describe the status of the mining children, who will be beaten if the guards find them not doing the job properly (Mahy, *Maddigan* 107). "The culmination of the forced labour policy was 'annihilation through labour'. Many prisoners died from exhaustion, for example, clearing the Dachau marshes or quarrying stone at Flossenbürg" (Pine 51). What Garland and Timon confront in another cave might be tantamount to the annihilation-through-labour scheme:

> The rocky roof, curving over their head was rough and low. Very few adults could have stood upright. Even Timon had to stoop a little, and Garland put one hand up to the rocks above anxious not to bang her head. They crept to the edge of that circle of light and found themselves looking in at more children, blackened and weary, linked to one another by long chains, bent over with the weight of the pickaxes with which they chipped at the walls around them. There was Tarq, and there, standing as tall as possible, was Chena. (Mahy, *Maddigan* 106)

This heartrending episode harks back to the personification of Gramth as a man trudging along, laden with heavy burdens.

Aside from the Gramth children, the narrative depiction of forced labourers terrorised and tortured in concentration camps, there is a suggested parallel between the operation of the Gramth government and the process of Hitler's accession to power. As we learn from the text, the Mayor of Gramth is overshadowed by the Aide, a senior official supposed to represent the Mayor. The Mayor is likened to "a small-time king [who] lived in the centre of the city, and almost never came out of his office of brick and stone" (82). Whereas the Mayor is absent from the sight of the public, the Aide appears as an active political agent. When the Fantasia marches through the town's main gate, the Aide grasps the chance to "[climb] up into the front of the [Fantasia] van […]. People clustered along the edge of the street and the Aide waved to the crowd as if he […] were the true ringmaster" (82). Clearly, the Aide lacks the popularity Hitler enjoyed in the 1930s, since "no one cheered him or waved back to him" (82). However, as Roderick Stackelberg points out in *The Routledge Companion to Nazi Germany* (2007), "[t]he key to Hitler's success was the determination of conservative leaders to replace the Weimar system with an authoritarian regime" (116). The Mayor's political ineffectiveness mirrors the defunct Weimar Republic, being, as the Jewish émigré historian Hans Rothfels claims it, "too democratic, permitting the masses to elevate the Nazis to power" (30). Ironically, the Mayor is described as looking "bright in a powerful uniform" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 88), but we know too well that superficial glamour cannot effectively sustain a dysfunctional regime.

The rescue of the mining children exposes the government's dark secrets. Whereas Chena leads the infuriated townsfolk into a rebellion, the Aide is reduced to a comical figure: "He wheeled sharply, walked a few steps, looked over his shoulder, and then began to run" (114). Throughout the Gramth chapters, Chena plays a positive role as a political activist, showing great courage and determination to overthrow an authoritarian regime. On their first acquaintance, she reveals to Garland:

> 'I've been in hiding with the rebels. We want to get rid of the slavery that's taken us over. We want everyone to have good chances … not just the powerful ones. And that's just the

> beginning, because there are a lot of things wrong with the world. But we're going to change everything. When we're organized, that is.' (91; ellipsis in original)

Because Chena and her fellow activists display what the Community people lack, the Gramth episodes end on a more optimistic note. As Garland later writes in her diary, "someone like Chena made a difference to what was going on around her […]. I don't know how Gramth will turn out . . . but it will never be the same again. When we come back again Chena might even be the Mayor" (118; second ellipsis in original). Through the portrayal of Chena, Mahy seems to reassure the reader that the oppressed masses can rally to win democracy, if a spirit of the Resistance and a high level of integration can be achieved.

Furthering the discussion of ways to tackle the political trauma of totalitarianism, we must return to the role of the Fantasia. As above-noted, the members bring back to Solis the solar converter and their joint efforts save the future world from the Nennog's dictatorship. The Fantasia also works to address the collective traumas plaguing the present-day world. Most directly, the troupe of travelling tricksters bring comical relief to people terrorised by dictators: "The Fantasia dressed not only its clowns and acrobats in astonishing clothes, but turned the vehicles that carried it along the leftover tracks of the wild world into a bright and shifting village on wheels" (4). While laughter can be an antidote to fascism-induced fear, a more powerful weapon to fight repression is the initiative to acquire knowledge, to dance with wisdom as embodied in the rise-of-Solis act. Therefore, during their stay at each problem-ridden place, the Fantasia, most notably the children, discover dark secrets of local authority, opening avenues for lessons on how to cope with political terror.

This subplot of youth activism contributes significantly to saving people's way of life and healing political trauma, as demonstrated by the Gramth episodes. As Nicola De Luigi, Alessandro Martelli and Ilaria Pitti point out in their article on the role of young activists in the context of global socioeconomic crisis:

> In all these practices of social and political activism, young people have taken on a primary role in finding the solution to a personal and collective problem, becoming 'agents of

> change' for themselves and for others, trying to shape a world where nobody feels excluded from the opportunity to have a say and to be recognised. (265)

Likewise, Mahy's young characters often radiate the urge to bring about a better change for themselves and for others.

The mode of finding a joint resolution to the intertwined personal and collective issues is best exemplified by Garland's writing of the diary, which serves as a reserve of individual and public memory. In addition to facilitating addressing Garland's personal issue of bereavement, the notebook takes the role as archive material, an embodiment of history. "Until we want to know something," claims Ann Curthoys, "[the archives] are just there, inert; but if we ask questions, they might yield answers. The archive lives when we use it" (15). In Mahy's text, the fantastical elements enable the diary to further take on a life of its own. As we are told of the copy brought from the future Solis, the words keep changing all the time, which leaves open the possibility of rewriting history, thereby retrospectively offering a magical solution to the political trauma of totalitarianism. But as I said in my previous chapters, Mahy's stories always insist upon a realist working-through. Accordingly, in times of crisis and dispute, the Fantasia organizes a parley, which is "the name given to the meetings when all the Fantasia people collected around the fire in the centre of the circle of vans and tents and talked about what they would do next" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 20). Since the parley guarantees all the members voting rights, power is never restricted to the Fantasia leaders. It can be said that the group implements a democratic system.

The Fantasia's role as a healer of collective trauma also operates at a metaphorical level. Drawing on my earlier claim that the depictions of place in Mahy's fiction offer a perfect foil for the traumatised individuals, I further propose that the broken landscape in *Maddigan's Fantasia* symbolises a global psyche damaged by fascist threats and political terror. At the story's opening, Garland writes in her diary:

> Anyhow we are the left-over people going between the left-over places . . . place to place . . . place to place . . . on and on and on . . . and as we go everything alters. Old paths twist and

> swallow themselves. Some roads stay put, but others just seem to disappear. (7-8; all ellipses in original)

While the treacherous condition of the roads seems to echo trauma's unlocatable nature, the repeated phrases, "place to place" and "on and on," in some way recall the traumatic mechanism of compulsive repetition. Moreover, the shortage of paper in Garland's age suggests not only the destruction of written culture, a reserve of collective memory, but also the difficulty of transforming traumatic memory into narrative memory, a crucial process of healing.

Luckily, the parallel which Rebecca Solnit draws between walking and writing appears to gesture a way out of the dilemma: "To write is to carve a new path through the terrain of the imagination, or to point out new features on a familiar route" (72). In *Lines: A Brief History* (2007), Tim Ingold makes a similar comparison, pointing out that "walking, […] storytelling, drawing and writing […] all proceed along lines of one kind or another" (1). The walking/narrative analogy might help us understand why travelling through a broken landscape appears as the most salient and striking feature of Mahy's novel. Mimicking the process of storytelling, the Fantasia's journey can be interpreted as a symbolic treatment, which together with the literal narrative of Garland's diary, constructs a healing space where personal and collective traumas can be tackled in tandem. While Garland's individual problem is properly solved via writing and the final time-travel episodes, collective trauma is far more complex to be addressed all at once. However, since the Fantasia is portrayed as a travelling lot, their journeys to be made in the future reassure the reader of a continual treatment.

The Magician of Hoad

Introduction to *The Magician of Hoad*

The Magician of Hoad impresses the reader as a very complex fantasy, with multiple layers of narrative structure and a vast array of characters. In contrast to the broken landscape depicted in *Maddigan's Fantasia*, the geographic setting of *The Magician of Hoad* is highly structured, which implies that the text can be read as a sociopolitical allegory. Indeed, as Miles observes of the novel's prologue, "[t]he flat simplicity of the announcement that this is 'a story,' the capitalised labels of the characters, suggest that we are in the world of fairytale, peopled by types rather than characters" ("Doubles"). Conforming to the fairy-tale conventions that "three" and "seven" are magical numbers, the novel's main setting, the city of Diamond (the capital of the kingdom of Hoad), comprises three rings,[28] and Hoad consists of seven counties, each in the charge of its separate lord. The story features a pair of young, grassroots protagonists, the hero, Heriot Tarbas, and the heroine, Cayley Silence. Heriot comes from a farm in County Glass, and Cayley from the remote Hoadish village of Senlac. Also woven into the novel is a secondary plot revolving around a pair of noble teenagers: Prince Dysart, the youngest son of King Hoad, and Lady Linnet, the heiress of County Hagen. Dysart has two older brothers, Prince Betony Hoad, the King's heir, and Prince Luce, a promising candidate for the Hero. Overshadowed by Betony and Luce, Dysart is the underdog in the trio. This is firstly suggested by his nickname, the Mad Prince, but Dysart believes himself as being haunted by some sort of ghost. Dysart's ghost, as will be revealed in the course of the story, is Heriot, who has been similarly haunted by Dysart in a dream since his early years. We are also told that Heriot frequently suffered headaches and fits in his early childhood. Unknown to Heriot, these strange occurrences signify his identity as a magician.

When the novel opens, Izachel serves as the incumbent royal Magician, whilst Heriot is a twelve-year-old boy, living with his family in the Tarbas ruins. Since Izachel's magical power is

28 The first, second, and third ring are inhabited by the ruling class, the merchants, and the poor respectively.

weakening, the King's men are dispatched to find Heriot as a replacement, at which point his unfamiliar magician-self has crystallized into what is called an occupant, after the boy has a frightening vision near Cassio's Island, the Hero's domain. We will learn by the novel's end that Heriot's occupant is forced out by the dark power generated from Carlyon's murder of his own son. When the atrocity takes place, Heriot is close by, hence his brief encounter with the child Cayley later on. Although the King's men plan to take Heriot by force, the boy manages to escape. Wandering aimlessly to the sea, Heriot comes across Carlyon, who ruthlessly attacks him, in the knowledge that he is the new magician the King is looking for. The injured boy is helped by a cart driver who carries him to the one-time battlefield, which now becomes the camp site of the peace negotiation between Hoad and its enemies, Dannorad and Camp Hyot. There, Heriot meets Dysart, and they recognize each other as the ghost. Soon after Heriot is introduced to the court, Izachel vanishes. Meanwhile, with the peace agreements signed, the noble families all return to their lands. Heriot is taken to the city of Diamond, serving as the King's Magician. In the next few years, Hoad witnesses a seemingly peaceful period, but the problem is far from being resolved. As I propose, war trauma is manifested in the persistent power struggle between a warmonger trio and a peace-building group in the post-conflict Hoad.

The novel's profound preoccupation with the tilting balance between a war-to-peace transition and the expression of the intense anxiety about the outbreak of a new war may not be adequately understood without some relevant background knowledge. *The Magician of Hoad* is an abridged and adjusted version of Mahy's 800-page unpublished adult fantasy, finished in the late 1980s (Knox 28). The whole work is said to have gone missing, but thanks to Elizabeth Knox who procured an excerpt of the fragmented manuscript, we are enabled to get a taste of this intriguing piece in Knox's co-edited anthology of New Zealand fantasy stories, *Monsters in the Garden* (2020). As suggested by the excerpt's title, "Misrule in Diamond," politics is a key subject matter for Mahy's lost book. "Misrule in Diamond" might be connected with the historical and political context of the Cold War. As if echoing the war-induced chaos and turmoil in the twentieth century, Mahy's name symbolism in "Misrule in Diamond" signifies collective trauma. The excerpt tells that two men are locked up in the kingdom's intimidating prison, Hoad's Pleasure: while one is an old man called Creon Memory, whose imprisonment results from his careless way of telling old stories

(Mahy, "Misrule" 107-8), the other is a young lad, "a declared man of the Burnt History gang" (124). When Mahy's revised work came out in 2008 as *The Magician of Hoad*, the text keeps neither Creon Memory, the repressed father-history figure, nor the Burnt History gang, presumably an anti-history activist organization. But, straddling the Cold War and War on Terror eras, *The Magician of Hoad* provides Mahy a fantastical space to express her serious concern: there is a distinct possibility that one seemingly settled conflict can plant the seeds of the next one.

Mahy's epic fantasy seems to be a narrative echo of what Ivan Gusic observes as "the continuities of war in peace" (1). As Gusic states in *Contesting Peace in the Postwar City: Belfast, Mitrovica and Mostar* (2020), "rather than moving from war to peace, postwar cities tend to be stuck in postwar status quos—where war might be over yet the sociopolitical ordering of society remains contested" (1-2). The "continuities of war in peace" recall trauma's unassimilated nature and haunting power: in much the same way as a traumatised individual is haunted by his/her painful memories, a war-stricken kingdom is unsettled by its history of lethal warfare. Therefore, I suggest that the uneasy post-conflict status in Hoad can be interpreted as a collective symptom of war trauma. In *The Magician of Hoad*, the contrast between the portrayal of the Hero Carlyon and that of King Hoad depicts not only the division within Hoad's internal politics, but also the intrusion of the sentiment for international war into the kingdom's peace: whereas Carlyon impresses himself as a bloodthirsty war hero, King Hoad is deemed as "the very essence of the peace" (Mahy, *Hoad* 287). In other words, the power struggle between the Hero's party and the King's men operates as a symptom of war trauma.

On the root cause of conflict, Stephen Gibson and Simon Mollan identify "the competition for resources" and "the division of power" as "two interrelated factors" in causing violence, and they further point out that "[h]umanity is in this sense very much a prisoner of its own need for resources and its own collective (or cooperative) action to create security related to that" (7). Whereas conflict is acknowledged as a common, inevitable phenomenon in both natural and human worlds, Walter Benjamin's association of violence with the concept of social (in)justice moves the issue onto a higher, ethical plane. As Benjamin claims in his seminal essay, "Critique of Violence" (1921), "violence can first be sought only in the realm of means, not of ends" and "if violence is a means, a criterion for criticizing it might seem immediately available. It imposes itself in the question whether

violence, in a given case, is a means to a just or an unjust end" (277). Benjamin goes on to propound that nonviolent resolutions to violence are not impossible, with the stipulation that "[c]ourtesy, sympathy, peaceableness, trust" act as the "subjective preconditions" (289). Because violence is so closely bound up with power distribution, the portrayal of powerful figures in *The Magician of Hoad*, along with their roles in provoking warfare or facilitating nonviolent resolutions, is well worth examining. As I intend to show, the Hero's party, a warmonger trio, and the King's party, a peace-keeping group, represent the opposite views of power in relation to violence. Carlyon, Betony and Izachel represent the scheming politicians who resort to violence to serve their personal interests and desires. The peace-building squad, by contrast, epitomises the public-spirited statesmen devoting themselves to making the greater good.

In "Patriarch, Parasite, and Pervert: Evil in *The Magician of Hoad*" (2015), Sarah Fiona Winters analyses the novel's three antagonists, Carlyon, Izachel and Betony Hoad, elucidating her point that the trio "embody three ideas about evil: Carlyon is cultural evil, or evil as patriarchy; Izachel is natural evil, or evil as parasitism; Betony is supernatural evil, or evil as perversion" (204). Whilst Winters's study highlights the "relationship in Christian theology and myth between primary good and secondary evil" (205), concluding that Mahy "uses her only excursion into high fantasy to blur the genre's clear-cut distinctions between […] good and evil" (219), my own focus is on the representation of war trauma, which as proposed, is manifested in the tension between the self-serving warmonger trio and the pubic-spirited peace-keeping group. I will also pay attention to the intersectional mode of individual and collective trauma, as examined in my discussion of *Maddigan's Fantasia*.

War Trauma in *The Magician of Hoad*

As above-noted, the warmonger trio consists of Carlyon, Betony and Izachel, three scheming politicians resorting to violence to serve their personal ends. First of all, it is important to note that the backstory of Carlyon's ascension to power denotes the growing sentiment for warfare:

> According to the customs of Hoad, a young man called Carlyon had challenged the Hero, Link, and the King and his court were carrying him to combat in the Hero's Arena […]. Three days later they had returned, carrying Link's body in great splendor, leaving young Carlyon, Hero by conquest, to discover the island on his own and take possession of his hidden city. (Mahy, *Hoad* 15)

Since the word "link" means connection and duly suggests cohesion, the Hero Link's death implies a disruption to Hoad's military stability and the King's peace-keeping project. When the novel begins, Carlyon, now middle-aged, has deteriorated into a dangerous narcissist troubled by the 'ennui' of peace. As he poses the question, "[i]t looks as if the King might get that great peace he has worked for, but what happens to the Hero when there's no need for his heroism?" (85). Carlyon's self-worth is built around the "thrill of war" (357), hence his role as an instigator of warfare.

Betony displays his pathological obsession with being extraordinary. While being introduced by King Hoad as his "oldest son . . . Prince Betony Hoad," the crown prince is captured "[smiling] a curious, wincing smile, as if, by naming him, his father had struck him a blow" (40; ellipsis in original). As the story develops, we come to realize that deep down Betony is not interested in politics nor kingship. He wants "something beyond simple humanity" (128), or as Carlyon later expresses it, "Betony Hoad wants to be as close as he can to being a god" (358). Unsurprisingly, then, while the King and his court make for Cassio's Island to watch the duel between Luce and Carlyon, Betony is thinking to himself:

> *It's not enough! […] Nothing is enough. Look at this display, this charade. Look at all this posturing, this game they're playing, this pretense of true wonder. Of course death has excitement, but this will be death carefully arranged, death reduced, made tedious. I don't care who kills whom. Somewhere there are things wonderful beyond all dreaming. But where are they? Why am I shut away from them? Why do I have to waste time watching*

> *these gesturing puppets? I want to be remade. I don't want to be the mere sign of the sun. I want to be the sun itself.* (248)[29]

As demonstrated by the excerpt, Betony is unconcerned about either life or death, not to mention his brother's safety. He also adopts a sheerly nihilistic vision of the world: all is a sham, a game, a show.

More gravely, Betony appears as a prisoner to his own narcissistic self-absorption, under the illusion that his appetite for wonder should be satiated at the cost of the entire world. If the duel, as Betony believes it, entails "*death carefully arranged*" and "*made tedious*," warfare could cater well to his longing to "step outside the cage of human limitation" (356), in causing random killing and total chaos. As the novel progresses, King Hoad assigns himself a peace-building mission, travelling far to the Islands to remind his traitorous allies that "peace is the essence of our kingdom" (287), so Betony is temporarily made the surrogate monarch. The King's departure is tantamount to the absence of the spirit of peace, hence Lord Hagen's confusion: "He seems to have left his city, his whole country, so undefended […]. I want to know why" (332). It transpires that the King does have a plan of his own. As Carlyon says to Dysart, "I think your father […] is determined to wring a possible King out of Betony Hoad if he can, or, failing that, he wants a reason to replace him" (358). By the time of King Hoad's return, together with Carlyon, Betony has committed a series of unforgivable atrocities that would suffice to bring about his downfall. Heriot gets chained to the wall in a dungeon, being assaulted and tortured by Betony, whose envy of the magician's power goes so far that he threatens Heriot with a cannibalistic desire: "You know I long for wonderful extremity, and what could be more wonderfully extreme than killing the Magician of Hoad […] even eating him. Digesting him and feeling his power dissolving into my blood and becoming part of me" (299-300; ellipsis in original). One may add that the name of the huge prison, Hoad's Pleasure, is shortened from Betony Hoad's Pleasure. In the meantime, Dysart and some of the King's men are taken hostage. Having made preparations for the deposition, Betony, on King Hoad's return, declares to his father in a playfully indifferent tone: "you could step back from the

29 Betony's thoughts are highlighted originally in italics in the text.

throne, and I could play the game of Kings for a little longer […]. We could arrange […] probably a war or two for [Carlyon]. He'd be able to ride in true glory once more" (375-6). Just as Carlyon regards war as a path to reliving his past glories, so also Betony identifies war as a fun, exciting game at his pleasure.

Whilst both Carlyon and Betony are eager to instigate warfare for a self-serving purpose, consistent with Winters's observation that "[o]f the three antagonists, [Izachel] is the least prominent in terms of plot and characterization" ("Patriarch" 212), the wicked magician impresses the reader as a less active war agent. But he is crucial in weaving the intersectional pattern where individual problem and collective trauma overlap. Izachel turns out to be the main culprit for Heriot's personal trauma. On his first acquaintance with the evil magician at the camp site of the peace negotiation, the boy Heriot recognizes Izachel as "the predator who had torn him in two and who had forced some part of himself to hide behind a black window in a lost part of his head" (Mahy, *Hoad* 102). The metonym for Izachel, "a white face looking out of the shadows of a black hood" (101), evokes terror and uncanniness. Izachel's close association with the imagery of shadow suggests not only his evil nature, but also his fading power. It emerges that Izachel's loss of magical power takes a sinister twist: he turns to feed on Heriot, hence the boy's wounded psyche, along with the physical symptoms of headaches and fits.

In addition to the primary role he plays in causing Heriot's individual trauma, Izachel further functions as a facilitator of disrupting the peace-building process, as exemplified by the magical show he performs at Betony's wedding at Carlyon's command. It turns out that during the long period of his disappearance, Izachel collaborates secretly with Carlyon. By the time of the royal wedding, seven years have gone past since the peace treaties were signed, and Carlyon, empowered by Izachel's joining, has grown "very difficult" and "very inexorable" (178). At the wedding banquet, although Carlyon addresses the King in "a warm, embracing voice […], he also seemed to be mocking the very things he was praising, with a secret derision" (180). Carlyon's unnatural tone segues into Izachel's magical show which conjures up the horrible scenes of war:

> Men of Diamond, the Dannorad and Camp Hyot clashed violently, and […] these men fell pierced through, chopped down, hacking each another with a graceless skill […]. Men of

> the three kingdoms lay crushed and oozing among the stones, or twitched in grass that was not grass but a dim green mist the Magician had not been interested in resolving into its constituent blades and seed heads. […] At last Hoad triumphed. The men from the Dannorad were either dead or fled, and one of the warriors turned to the company, showing the vivid face of young Carlyon, bloody and exultant, the age, perhaps, of Luce, who was standing entranced behind the older Carlyon's chair. But then the visionary Carlyon faded, and they were left in darkness with the violated dead before them, beginning to pass into shocking and accelerated decay under the Magician's power. (182-4)

Apparently, this is political intrigue. Betony's bride is Princess Quaeda of Camp Hyot, and the wedding guests include "various noble visitors from the Dannorad and Camp Hyot as well as the Lords of Hoad" (176).

Since the name "Quaeda" reminds us of Al-Qaeda terrorists, the culprit for 9/11 attacks, it is not surprising that Izachel's magical performance borders nearly on a terrorist event. Terrorism, as defined in Bruce Hoffman's study *Inside Terrorism* (2016), refers to "deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change" (41). Hoffman's definition matches with the top five elements characterising a terror event, as summarised from fifty academic definitions: "1) Violence, force; 2) Political; 3) Fear, terror emphasized; 4) Threat; 5) (Psychological) effects and (anticipated) reaction" (Schmid 74). Izachel's show does not involve physical violence, but it does pose threat of violence and provoke terror through the evocation of bloody war scenes. The political element lies in the timing of the wedding; clearly, the arranged marriage between Betony and Quaeda is a peace-making gesture. Izachel's act also elicits a strong emotional response from the spectators: "There was a moment of stillness, then an angry scraping. Chairs were pushed back and visiting men were on their feet, shouting and hissing with outrage. Hoad and Carlyon were being reminded of other reciprocal atrocities and defeats, of old grievances and broken promises of safe conduct" (Mahy, *Hoad* 184). With the crowd thrown into absolute darkness (184), which echoes the earlier description of Izachel as "looking out of the shadows of a black hood" (101), he seems to find an outlet for re-asserting his authority as a powerful magician, a pointer to his egocentricity.

While the villainous trio show a perverted appetite for the pleasure of violence, which underlines their untamed irrational drives, "Heriot might be a rational Magician," as Lord Glass, the King's Devisor, surmises at the novel's beginning (Mahy, *Hoad* 57). Indeed, Heriot seeks non-violent solution to collective trauma, as exemplified by the wedding scene. Although war trauma is reopened and compounded at the banquet, Heriot's magical intervention relieves the tension between the war-instigating and peace-building party. "'I am the Magician of Hoad,' he declared, restoring the scene in the center of the room. […] The Hero's Magician was tired and shocked by the huge power Heriot was suddenly revealing" (185). At the critical juncture, Heriot "[let] his occupant free to flow through him and out into the world, touching [the audience] all, gathering them up like threads he would shortly weave into some new tapestry. Everyone in the room […] all began to dream Heriot's dream" (186). The metaphor of the weaver marks the beginning of mending the division. Heriot conjures up a vision bursting with life and hope:

> Heriot's memory of connection with the inner life of apple trees in winter, spring, and early summer became part of his spell. Slowly, slowly the dead men rose up again, arboreal men turning faces as mild as a green spring up to the sky. A Dannorad man held out his arms, becoming a living tree, supporting flowering vines, his wounded side putting out crimson flowers, the chains that hung like a shifting metal curtain from the sides and back of his helmet transformed into leaves and tendrils. (187)

The tree/man image harks back to Mahy's early fantasies, in which the growth of tree symbolises the restoration of psyche. In *The Haunting*, for example, the healing of intergenerational trauma culminates in the episode, when Troy Palmer "became a flowering tree […]. She shrank to the size of a seed, grew great and dim like a mist spreading through the room, blazed once more and then became Troy again" (Mahy 121). From Mahy's YA debut to her final novel, the tree/man image conveys a therapeutic message. As Heriot's performance progresses, "up from the grass and stones came little saplings," which are nurtured by the "tears" he sheds (Mahy, *Hoad* 187-8). Because the saplings symbolise people's newly restored psyche and Heriot's tears initiate the mourning process, working-through now takes place on a collective scale:

> Trees so tall their tops were now lost in distance, smooth trunks brocaded with tiny luminous mosses, shed tears of gold that ran down the bark and then fell, burning harmlessly, into the perpetual twilight under their branches, while the forest retreated without visible end. The space between the tables, between the people sitting at them, grew vast beyond understanding. Each man and woman in the hall was alone with the trees. (188)

In the meantime, Heriot's occupant and his everyday-self cooperate in perfect harmony, hence his physical transformation. "A moony shine burst through him, as if he had become nothing more than a human skin, while everything within him dissolved into light" (188-9). Running concurrently with Heriot's recovery from his inner division is the treatment for war trauma: "now he felt an echoing awe and kindness, a new resolution taking form in the hall around him" (189). He goes on to "[move] away from the table […], leaving the whole company […] caught in his transformation so that they themselves were transformed like the fabulous dead into a woven vision of peace and gentle resolution" (189). In this spectacular episode, magically empowered psychotherapy and peace-building effort merge seamlessly together, or to put it differently, the solution to personal and collective trauma is presented as one.

Not only providing a joint solution to individual and collective trauma, the intersectional pattern also works to sustain the driving force in developing the plot. The two types of trauma alternately occupy the narrative foreground: whereas war trauma receives treatment, personal issue rises up. Heriot's magical performance is interrupted by his dear friend Dysart, who cannot bear the probability of losing him, Heriot's ordinary self that is. Following Dysart's disruption, "[Heriot's] everyday self was coming back to him, but his occupant was still dominant, raging with the energy of its release" (189). Dysart's head-on confrontation with the occupant, an agent of overwhelming supernatural power, results in a dead faint. "[C]ertain that anything he might try to do could only make things worse," Heriot decides to leave the banquet hall (190). The remaining peace-building task is safely handed over to King Hoad, the most experienced peace-maker in the group, who is, by now, left "strengthened and able to correct any damage the Hero's invocation of that violent past might have done" (190). Before his departure, Heriot sends instructions into the King's mind: "Lord

King, move now. The vision will begin to fade, and me—I am already fading. Share grief. Share the mystery. Move on into reconciliation and joy. Speak before the Hero moves" (190). Whereas Heriot ensures a continued treatment for war trauma, his identity crisis is brought to the fore. Frightened by the occupant who is not yet subject to his control, Heriot flees in consternation and shouts out "*[w]hat am* I"? (191; emphasis original). The shifted focus onto Heriot's personal issue from Hoad's war trauma creates an ongoing tension for the narrative.

I now turn to Dysart and Linnet, who construct the novel's secondary plot, as mentioned previously. Although the text foregrounds their love story, the portrayal of the pair also suggests a brighter peace-building prospect. On their first acquaintance at the camp site, Dysart confides in Linnet: "perhaps I was the mad Prince, but secretly I thought I might be the *true* Prince . . . the one who finally becomes King" (77; ellipsis in original). As the story develops, we come to understand why Dysart should be the heir to the throne. Betony's desire to transcend human limitation reduces him to a depraved monster. Luce's yearning to make himself a Hero indicates that he is a born warrior rather than a king. On one occasion, the young lad is captured "in the rooms at the base of the Tower of the Hero, singing battle songs with his campaigner friends and watching Carlyon with an altered expression, more openly predatory than ever before" (211). In the prince trio, Dysart is the only person who, according to Heriot, has "a kind heart" (202). A fuller picture of Dysart's character can be grasped from the aforementioned excerpt, "Misrule in Diamond," which informs us of his adventures to the third ring of Diamond: "Dysart, it seemed, when the chances had offered, had ridden out into the third ring and knocked on Creon's yellow door again. And then returned, again and again" (Mahy 108). Dysart's visits to the third ring draw him closer to the grassroots, suggesting his compassion for the common people and concern about their welfare. Dysart's affinity with Creon Memory, the storyteller and father-history figure, further implies his potential to become a healer of war trauma. Clearly, Dysart is endowed with sense and sensibility, important attributes in a statesman.

It is interesting to note that Dysart lives in the Tower of the Crow. While the notorious link between crow/raven and death omen meshes with the wordplay on Dysart's name, "Dies heart" and "Dice Heart" (Mahy, *Hoad* 206), the more positive implications of crow can be applied to Dysart's characterization. Aligned with "the classical notions of the birds' longevity and prophetic powers"

(Ferber 169), Dysart's confiding that he will be the King makes greater sense. In the novel's latter half, Luce is killed by Carlyon in the duel and Betony ends up being placed under a sleeping spell, a symbolic death. Dysart survives and 'the crow prince' becomes the crown prince.

Unsurprisingly, Dysart, 'the crow prince,' falls in love with Linnet, 'the bird lady.' In many an aspect, she is a good match for him. Clever, brave, independent and steadfast, Linnet has all the makings of a decent queen. The reader could get an inkling of Linnet's virtues from a teasing joke Dysart makes to her: "'People say you're fierce—they say you were born with teeth like needles,' he said inquisitively. 'Go on, show me. Smile!'" (Mahy, *Hoad* 42). Linnet comes from Hagen, a small county which Dysart observes as "treacherous" (360). In the novel's early peace-negotiating episodes, it is revealed that Lord Hagen is having an affair with a Dannorad girl. Soon after Linnet's mother dies in childbirth, the mistress becomes her father's second wife. The marriage is partly a diplomatic manoeuvre, as the woman is the daughter of a Dannorad Duke.

Here again, two strands of trauma are interwoven. While Linnet has to cope with her personal sufferings, the grief for losing her mother and the anxiety caused by her step-mother's pregnancy, war trauma is manifested in the contested political relationship between Hoad and its one-time enemies. On one occasion, Heriot detects "*trick*" and "*lie*," while reading the mind of a honey-tongued Dannorad councillor (126). Yet, the situation can be worse: "Often Heriot, meeting the eyes of some messenger, would see them filled with hatred, would feel mad cats of hostility striking in at him, claws unsheathed, but quickly learned to protect himself" (126). In these words, Lord Hagen's ambivalent political stance seems to be valid: if by any chance, the next war breaks out, his union with the duke's daughter would help to secure his realm. The ongoing political tensions are symbolised by a volcano in the northeast of Hagen. It is called Warning, with "its plume of smoke perpetually streaming" (138).

Interestingly, the mountain is endowed with a double implication. In addition to being a metaphor for the warning of potential flashpoints, it embodies Linnet's aforementioned virtues: "the volcano, rather than the flower, was Linnet's chosen sign—an unyielding cone with fire at its heart" (138). Formidable as the mountain Warning, Linnet climbs into the Tower of the Crow late at night, saving Dysart from the enchanted faint with recourse to sexual love (209-15). This is, again, what Warmington labels as the "sex-as-magic" motif in Mahy's fiction (104). Later, when King Hoad

leaves for his peace-building mission, Lord Hagen tries to convince Linnet to abandon her love and turn to marry Prince Alain of the Dannorad, because he senses that "[Dysart's] situation is … unstable" (Mahy, *Hoad* 333; ellipsis in original). Linnet remains loyal and steadfast, running away from Hagen to warn Dysart of the danger.

Fairly speaking, Lord Hagen is not so wicked as Betony or Carlyon, but he is a petty leader, being terribly small-minded in his preoccupation with short-term gains at the sacrifice of his daughter's happiness and his county's connection to the larger society of Hoad. While arguing with her father against his plan to wed her to Alain, Linnet cries that "it is Dysart I love," but Lord Hagen turns a blind eye to Linnet's suffering, retorting with derision instead: "Love! […] What do you mean by that?" (331). On the next page, Lord Hagen's intention to severe Hagen from Hoad is made explicit: "I have always favored the Dannorad. Hoad has history […], but it has lately become incomprehensible. Let's stand back from something so unreliable. Let's knit ourselves into the Dannorad" (332). Although from Lord Hagen's perspective, it is politically expedient to side with the Dannorad against Hoad, the choice will pose a danger to peace in the long run. In contrast to her father, Linnet shows a greater capacity for perceiving the whole picture. It is exemplified by an earlier arguing scene in which she points out the fundamental flaws in Lord Hagen's second marriage, "reminding him that Hoad was not happy with a Dannorad marriage, particularly as there had been times over the last two hundred years when Hagen had struggled under false masters—all Dannorad men" (141). Aside from her foresight, Linnet is portrayed as a humane and morally stable figure, so it is reasonable to assume that her final union with Dysart will curb Hagen's "treacherous" tendency and give a further boost to King Hoad's peace-building project.

Last but not least, we look at Cayley's role in maintaining peace. Most convincingly, we will see that she rescues Heriot, the peace agent, from his imprisonment. As mentioned previously, the younger Heriot has a brief encounter with the child Cayley. It is not until five years later when their second-time encounter takes place. On her return to the novel's foreground, Cayley is disguised as a boy, captured shoplifting from a fruit stall. Heriot has a vague idea of knowing the child thief, so they start making friends. The secret of Cayley's gender is kept until the middle part of the narrative (273). Her cross-dressing is a means of self-protection, as she grows up in the slum area of the third ring. The sufferings Cayley has endured help to shape a resilient and tricky personality so that she

is well equipped for becoming a Wellwisher, the King's assassin, as aforementioned. Later, when Cayley moves to live together with Heriot as his boy helper, she gets acquainted with Voicey Landis, "the old Warden of Arms, […] who worked in the castle arena, conducting the war games, the fencing, archery, wrestling" (173). As suggested by his given name Voicey, the warden plays a significant role in helping Cayley Silence overcome her traumatised status of being silenced. Spotting Cayley's talents, Voicey tries to "make a warrior" out of her (173). Through Voicey's training, Cayley properly develops the skills of combat, which enables her to mount a challenge to Carlyon towards the novel's end. As they fight, Cayley shouts and laughs, letting people know the terrible crimes committed by their 'respectable' Hero (385-6). The silence/voice contrast highlighted in Cayley's portrayal harks back to a final episode *of The Other Side of Silence*, when Hero Rapper (a selective mute), imprisoned by her psychopathic neighbour Miss Credence, breaks her silence by calling out for help. In much the same way as Hero's regained voice facilitates initiating the rescue and making known Miss Credence's dark secret, Voicey's assistance helps Cayley regain her agency/voice, so that she finally avenges her family and brings to light her repressed trauma.

By the time of Heriot's imprisonment in the dungeon, Cayley has grown to be a qualified Wellwisher at service, thus being granted permission to access Hoad's Pleasure. Taking full advantage of her position, Cayley dresses Heriot up as a cleaning maid and leads him out from the prison. With the help of the Travellers, the indigenous people of Hoad, Heriot and Cayley are taken far from the city of Diamond and arrive at a deserted village. The two stay on for a few days. In addition to saving the peace agent of Heriot from the prison, Cayley's intervention turns the plot in other strands. At this point, Linnet is on the run from Hagen. While struggling with two bandits, she luckily stumbles into the village where Cayley and Heriot are staying, so the crisis is resolved. More importantly, Cayley plays an indispensable part in healing Heriot's personal trauma. Their lovemaking initiates the process called "*[m]elting*" (326; emphasis original), whereby it bridges the divide between Heriot's occupant and his everyday-self. In the meantime, Cayley's damaged psyche receives further treatment because of this full-fledged romantic relationship.

With Heriot's personal trauma tackled, war trauma is brought into focus. On their return to Diamond, Heriot, Cayley and Linnet set out to rescue other members of the peace-building group.

After Dysart is freed from imprisonment, Cayley approaches the Wellwishers, reminding them that "their first and only connection" is to the King (373). Meanwhile, the remaining three find the warmonger trio in the Room of Reception. Whereas Izachel loses virtually all his magical power because of his defeat in the wedding episode, Carlyon and Betony are caught forcing King Hoad to abdicate (374-5). The timely arrival of the young characters saves the King from the impending danger and marks the triumph of the peace-building group. While Heriot uses his magical power to freeze the armed Carlyon, complying with the King's will of sparing his treacherous son from harm, Heriot casts on Betony a spell, under which "[h]e'll sleep and dream for a long time" and "make […] a land of the glories and nightmares he's longed for" (378). At this moment, Cayley leads into the room a legion of Wellwishers who pledge their allegiance to the King, adding a fitting finale to the defeat of the warmonger trio.

Cayley's role as a Wellwisher draws attention to the developments in the portrayal of the King's assassins in the text. When the novel opens, they are described as "the bogeymen of Hoad," with their faces "masked in white paint […]. It was said they never died, that their heads held no brains, only a space in which a King might lodge an order, and that once the King had put a name in that space, nothing could save the man to whom the name belonged" (45-6). Although this group of government forces are initially bound up with threats of violence and politically motivated terror, as the story progresses, the ominous tone seems to be tempered by a comparison between the Wellwishers and normal people: "Cloud and Tree, the King's Assassins, had impressed Heriot as men lacking the warm variety and untidiness of other people, purposely tying themselves to a single function" (166). A few pages later, at Betony's wedding banquet, we are introduced to a show called "the Dance of the Clown" (179). "[O]ut came dancers, one of whom, the clown, was dressed as a parody of the Assassin Cloud, with a red mop-head wig sewn over with glass beads" (179). "In festivity," Lord Glass claims, "we try to deflect what we fear" (179). On the one hand, the counterbalanced sense of terror acts as a prelude to Cayley's joining. On the other hand, the turn from "bogeymen" to human serves to raise the question of moral choice, for monsters are rarely troubled by ethical issues. As suggested by their final act of securing the King's safety in the attempted coup, the Wellwishers are not incapable of making right choices, although being

dangerous and formidable. With the "wicked shape" redeemed through good work, the Wellwishers can now live up to their name.

At the novel's close, with the tension between the warmonger trio and the peacekeeping group neutralized, war trauma receives treatment. But, healing is not achieved to the full extent. As Heriot writes in his epistle addressed to Dysart, "*for many years your father's peace will go unchallenged. Not forever, of course. Nothing lasts forever*" (403).[30] Heriot's letter also explains the reason for his departure for now:

> *I need to wander a bit, and, though I am completed at last, I need to complete the completion. I need to find out just what it truly means to be a Magician of Hoad. I am an unknown country to myself, but I know by now that being the Magician doesn't mean standing at the King's elbow reading his enemies or providing entertainments on grand occasions.* (403)

Heriot closes the letter by telling what he believes as the meaning of a true Magician of Hoad: "*a secret essence, a connection of the land, which, when I fuse with it, will use my understanding to understand itself and become even more wonderful than it is now*" (405). The underlined importance of connection for the workings of magic harks back to the portrayal of Eden, the boy magician in *Maddigan's Fantasia*. Eden is endowed with the knack of "[d]issolving barriers. He's […] a boundaryman. He connects across barriers, like the barriers between men and trees" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 72). The tree/man link is reiterated in Heriot's letter: "*Trees have always haunted me, haven't they? Perhaps when the Magician springs to life in some tree, flowing with its sap, the tree understands in some peculiar way just what it means to be a tree, tied into the soil of the land*" (Mahy, *Hoad* 404). The bond between man, tree, and land suggests an analogy with the relationship between magician and kingdom.

Accordingly, despite his departure from the court, Heriot carries on with the peace-building mission. He is soon joined by Cayley, who finds him in the deserted village where their lovemaking heals his inner division. Heriot is informed that "Dysart and the King, they talk it all over together—

30 In the final part of *The Magician of Hoad*, Heriot's letter to Dysart is highlighted in italics.

policies for Diamond, plans for Hoad, peace for everyone" (409-10). Whilst Dysart and the King address war trauma at the level of policy-making from above, Heriot and Cayley fling themselves into peace-building efforts on the grassroots plane. "I think we should go wandering," suggests Heriot, "wander through all the counties of Hoad and tie them together, reinforce the land, and ourselves at the same time" (410). Cayley agrees, praising "the idea of wandering" as "wonderful" (410). Collective healing by dint of wandering, again, reminds us of *Maddigan's Fantasia* in which travelling through a broken landscape serves as a metaphor for storytelling and working-through.

In addition, the wandering hints at an ongoing treatment of Cayley's personal trauma. The design is valid, since in Cayley's case, storytelling as a realist resolution comes very late by the novel's end, and unlike Heriot's healing, there is never a magical cure for Cayley's wounded psyche. Aligned with the claim Jane Suzanne Carroll makes in *Landscape in Children's Literature* (2011) that "the roadway topos […] causes the traveller to consider, and perhaps even to revise, a sense of self" (96), it is reasonable to think that Cayley's travelling assumes a therapeutic significance.

Mahy's last major novel ends in a mood of optimism, with the narrative camera zooming in on the four young characters of the peace-building group: "a noble girl and a Prince were being drawn together, embraced by a city, commonplace in many ways, yet always mysterious. A Magician and a wild girl set off, […] feeling the way the world worked, dissolving, always dissolving, yet locking itself together over and over again" (Mahy, *Hoad* 411). The closing sentence, "[a] story has to end somewhere. This story ends here" (411), echoes the final line in the novel's prologue, "[a] story has to begin somewhere. This story begins here." The cycle does not suggest compulsive repetition. Instead, this is a therapeutic circle of restoration.

Although *Maddigan's Fantasia* and *The Magician of Hoad* revolve around political terror and war trauma, the genre of fantasy enables Mahy to create for her young readers a distant, secured space in which they can explore political ideas about war and peace, repression and resistance, self-serving leaders and public-spirited statesmen. As I said, Mahy's approach to representing trauma is neither idealistic nor escapist. Admittedly, on several occasions, fantastical elements can help to solve an immediate crisis at a perfect timing: the device of time travel in *Maddigan's Fantasia* preempts the pending destruction of the solar converter; Heriot's magical spell cast on Carlyon by the end of *The Magician of Hoad* saves people from his attempted assault. However, Mahy seems

to suggest that there is a limitation to the effect of magical intervention. For instance, Garland's time travel fails to save her father's life. Cayley's hand is cut off by Carlyon in the dueling scene, because she gets distracted from the combat, while laughing at him. In this case, we do not have Heriot helping her out. Consistent with Mahy's insistence on a realistic treatment of trauma and with writing as a resolution, we are presented with Garland's diary and Heriot's epistle at the end of both novels. The final image of the narratives conveys the message that storytelling is a continual means of healing and working-through.

Conclusion

In her essay "Endings & Beginnings," Mahy writes: "I think that any writer, any reader, any human being, gives themselves a structure through stories" (*Dissolving* 26). Mahy's outspoken advocacy of story's constructing function shares a similar stance with the strand of trauma theories, which attaches great significance to narrative as a cure. Or, as Freud asserts, therapeutic process is initiated by a patient's ability to rework his/her fragmented traumatic memory into linear narrative memory. Accordingly, Mahy's characters are often observed to overcome trauma with recourse to talking and writing. For example, in Mahy's YA debut, *The Haunting*, while telepathy allows an access to the repressed family history, and thus facilitates addressing intergenerational trauma, Tabitha Palmer, "the family novelist" (5), appears as the central healing figure at the story's close. Mahy was consistent in her embrace of narrative's healing power, beginning from *The Haunting* and persisting until her last novel *The Magician of Hoad*.

In Mahy's fiction, narrative as a cure for trauma further operates on a metaphorical level, as exemplified by *The Catalogue of the Universe*. In this novel, the male protagonist Tycho Potter's family struggles with unfavourable financial conditions, which results from Mr Potter's epilepsy, developed after a severe car accident. Mrs Potter is portrayed as a resilient figure, devoting herself to looking after her sick husband and the entire household. Interestingly, she attends china painting classes in her very limited free time. As Mrs Potter confides to Tycho, "you people—my family—you're all I've got apart from china painting" (Mahy, *Catalogue* 105). Given that the definitions of china and pottery overlap, Mrs Potter's hobby could serve as another example of Mahy's brilliant wordplay. Painting china/pottery is not dissimilar to writing down the life struggles of the Potter family, but Mahy's ingenuity adds to this figurative solution to trauma an extra layer of aesthetic beauty. Another example of Mahy's employment of art as a metaphorical cure comes from *Memory*. As discussed in my second chapter, Jonny's tap dance, initially symbolising a traumatic symptom because of its muffled sound, takes on a therapeutic meaning at the novel's end. In a final scene, Jonny's dance is accompanied by music and his own singing, so that it breaks the previous silent

mode.[31] The analogy between an audible dance and a recuperative narrative is further suggested when Jonny, in his last performance, is described as "a surreal man whose feet stuttered like typewriters, though the story they wrote down vanished as soon as it was told" (Mahy, *Memory* 261). As the narrator continues, "[i]t was too shy a story—too full of contradictions which cancelled each other out—to stand being put into words. In the very moment of being communicated, Jonny's story disappeared" (261). Clearly, this reiterates writing's agency of restoring the damaged psyche, as communication brings to light what remains repressed and thus puts an end to trauma's haunting power.

While decorative and performing arts can symbolise narrative in Mahy's novels, wandering becomes a trope for writing in her work concerning collective trauma. In *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths, and Monuments* (1994), Christopher Tilley identifies walking with "a combination of places and times," asserting that "[m]ovement through space constructs 'spatial stories,' forms of narrative understanding" (28). In fusing together time and space, wandering constructs a chronotope, which enables the intersection of past, present, and future, whereby the traumatic backstory is moved to the narrative's foreground. In *Aliens in the Family*, the Raven family's horse-riding into Webster's Valley recalls Tilley's description of walking as a "spatial [story]" which "involves a continuous presencing of previous experiences in present contexts" (28). The riding enables history, present and future to converge at Webster's Valley, at which point it marks the beginning of healing.

The trans-temporal riding serves as a kind of narrative: just as writing helps to rearrange the unassimilated scraps of trauma, the horse-riding, in weaving together the three temporal dimensions, similarly contributes to tackling the traumatic symptom of a fragmented sense of time. Furthermore, the riding carries the Ravens back to New Zealand's geological origin, fulfilling the father David's wish that "[i]t'd be nice to get to some clear place before things and history began and we could see one another very clearly and talk together like friends straight away, with no worry about the past" (Mahy, *Aliens* 61). Aligned with Walls's observation that David "contemplate[s] the quarrels

31 Similarly, in a last scene of *Kaitangata Twitch*, Meredith dances and sings on the island of Kaitangata, "inventing a few of her own words to an old song" (Mahy 178). After her performance, the eerie face of the island crumbles away and Kaitangata remains peaceful ever since.

created by 'things' and also by 'history'" ("Money" 136), the Ravens' arrival at the beginning place, "a barren world" where nature is captured unspoiled by colonialism (Mahy, *Aliens* 162), denotes a sense of restoration.

To some extent, the horse-riding might be understood as a gesture to (re)write the country's colonial history. As Duygu Gül Kaya claims in "Coming to Terms with the Past: Rewriting History Through a Therapeutic Public Discourse in Turkey" (2015), "[r]ewriting national history through the psychotherapeutic terminology of individual trauma and healing, it repositions the nation as a wounded and traumatized self within the reconfigured temporal sequence of past, present, and future, and reimagines it according to the moral–political norms of therapeutic reconciliation" (689). During the riding in *Aliens in the Family,* nature is reimagined as a wounded figure, thereby exposing the problem of colonialism-induced anthropocentrism and inviting the reader to respond with empathy. It is important to note that whilst healing trauma is an ongoing process, the Ravens only go riding once, so we may infer that working-though remains incomplete. However, as if delivering a gesture to further reassure the reader, Mahy draws our attention to a murmuring creek, which "sounded as if it had always been there and always would be" (*Aliens* 167). The emphasis placed on "always," particularly for the would-be future, ensures that recuperation by dint of narrative will continue to take place.

In *Maddigan's Fantasia* and *The Magician of Hoad*, Mahy's final two novels representing political trauma, travelling through a broken landscape is turned into a metaphor for narrative therapy. As I proposed, the Fantasia's travelling mimics the process of storytelling, and thus can be interpreted as the figurative counterpart of Garland's travel journal. Likewise, before his departure from the court, Heriot leaves Dysart a letter; then, we are told of Heriot's hope to "wander through all the counties of Hoad and tie them together, reinforce the land" (Mahy, *Hoad* 410). Here, the wandering/writing analogy is made very explicit: just as psychotherapy resorts to the power of narrative to mend trauma-induced cognitive gaps, wayfaring is endowed with the capacity to put together a kingdom shattered by the double blow of internal and external political crisis. We tend to think of wandering as a relatively private experience, as opposed to politics being a public matter, but the design of walking as a figurative treatment of political trauma seems to bridge this personal/public divide, confirming Janet Newman's assertion that "such [governmental]

practices are implicated in the production of cultural imaginaries of peoples" (197). Moreover, unlike the once-for-all horse-riding in *Aliens in the Family*, it is suggested that the characters in *Maddigan's Fantasia* and *The Magician of Hoad* will wander for a longer time. The Fantasia troupe are described as "people who like to be on the move" (Mahy, *Maddigan* 115). Heriot reveals that he would like to revisit the kingdom of Hoad someday, but "maybe not for a while" (Mahy, *Hoad* 410).

In the first half of my thesis, I looked at Mahy's treatment of personal trauma on the domestic and communal level, as well as exploring its relation to the distinction between realist and non-realist representations. However, as I shifted focus from Mahy's depiction of individual trauma to that of colonial and political trauma, we do not see such a distinction. In other words, it is Mahy's fantasy books that are primarily concerned with collective trauma. Although collective trauma might be too complicated and nerve-racking for young readers to confront head-on, magical fantasy, in its own artificiality, enables them to gain knowledge of sociopolitical issues in a safe, distanced realm.

Yet, Mahy never over-relied on supernatural intervention as a resolution. It seems that she had made clear her realistic stance as early as her first YA novel. Significantly, in a final scene of *The Haunting*, it is implied that narrative takes precedence over magic as the cure for trauma: Great-Uncle Cole, one of the family magicians (previously acting as a haunting ghost), is captured following Tabitha, the family writer, with "a meek step and a mischievous smile" (Mahy, *Haunting* 130). The magician's meekness suggests magical intervention as the secondary cure. As reflected in her treatment of collective trauma, although Mahy represents larger issues with recourse to the genre of fantasy, she attaches greater importance to narrative, rather than supernatural devices, as the more efficient means of healing. Therefore, on their return to the everyday world from the time-slipping episodes, the Ravens are firstly greeted by the murmuring creek, an interlocutor of the nature wounded by colonial trauma. Likewise, in *Maddigan's Fantasia* and *The Magician of Hoad*, Mahy orchestrates a therapeutic duet by weaving together the final image of writings and the wandering/writing trope.

It can be safely concluded that, whilst many of Mahy's novels contain fantastical elements, with great consistency she champions the more realistic way to work through trauma via narrative. As Mahy confides:

> I am […] concerned that my story should do something for them [my readers], complete some circuit or exorcise some demon. I have come to see these stories as shadows cast in the conscious world by unconscious actions and journeys, the crests of icebergs shining in the sun while their greater part remains drowned in green water. (qtd. in Duder 143)

Here, Mahy seems to identify writing with shedding light upon the repressed trauma, or as she says, the shadows hidden in the unconscious. The aim of using storytelling to "complete some circuit or exorcise some demon" clearly demonstrates Mahy's approval of narrative's recuperative agency. With her playful and tender authorial persona, Mahy seeks to represent trauma in a way that is both artistic and edifying. Her delicate handling of the dark subject not only allows us to acquire moral lessons without feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of trauma, it also preserves us from the illusion of a false world in which all problems of violence can be tackled by the fantastical. All in all, it is storytelling that serves as the ritual of exorcism in everyday life and helps us defeat the demon of trauma.

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