Fairies, Stuffed Animals, and Death Never Grow Old

The Literary 'Representation' of (Autobiographical) Trauma in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*

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Contents

Abstract

For a long time, children's literature has been underrated and under-researched. During the past few decades however, a more critical scholarly interest has arisen. Children's literature has its own parameters which allow for it to explore aspects of reality which normally might appear inaccessible. To research a complicated part of said literature – the representation of trauma – this thesis poses as its research question the question: how do J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1911) and A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926), as works of early-twentieth century children's fiction that feature fantasy elements, represent (autobiographical) trauma? By asking this question, this master thesis concerns itself with other academic debates, such as the representation of childhood in children's literature, the (un)representability of trauma, the role of the author in relation to the creation of meaning, and the literary potential of fantasy as a literary mode. By drawing from existing work on Barrie's and Milne's work, close readings are carried out to answer these questions. The literary analyses are substantiated by several theoretical frameworks which have proven to be influential in their own academic fields. This thesis consequently makes clear that children's fiction operates through other ways of meaning making and an illusionary image of straightforwardness, which create the opportunity to address the literary expression of the un-narratable and un-representable. It furthermore shows that fantasy in this regard can function as a mode to create an atmosphere through which trauma can be acknowledged without being firmly defined.

Keywords: Childhood, Trauma, Life Writing, Narrator, Fantasy, Literary Mode, Literary Silences

Introduction

"Begin at the beginning," the King said, very gravely,
"and go on till you come to the end: then stop."

-L. Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

One of the first literary experiences that I can remember, is my father reading *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997) to me. This particular experience has always stuck with me, for – in hindsight – it has become clear that the narrative and the experience have done more than simply tell me the story of a special boy who lived in the cupboard under the stairs. This book has had the power to enkindle a fascination for reading, books, fantastical worlds and different perspectives. It made me aware of the magical potential of literature and in particular children's literature, for children's stories have been having this effect on other children for decades now. Two stories that were able to reach an immense number of people are J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1911) and A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926). These texts are part of early-twentieth century children's literature, but they have managed to outgrow their literary bounds and manifested in many cultural forms. And they have not yet stopped growing.

Children's stories and their materialisations are everywhere, as they are an inseparable part of our everyday life. Compared to 'adult' literature, children's literature is able to enjoy a fairly unrestricted context. Which is why many aspects of this form of literature can be found in other cultural disciplines and expressions (Reynolds, 61). Strikingly, the immense influence that children's books can have has been underestimated for a long time. Fortunately, over the past centuries, a fascination for the complexity of children's literature has – very slowly – been developing. In order to fully grasps all its paradoxes and contradictory aspects it is important to explore children's literature from multiple perspectives.

Past research in relation to children's books used to primarily investigate the didactic possibilities or the appropriateness of these literary texts (Hunt, 2006, 5). Children were seen either as extremely receptive to sinful influences or as beacons of hope and innocence, resulting into the belief that they should be protected at all costs. However, from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, an academic interest

emerged which centred around children's literature specifically, instead of children's culture in general (Reynolds, 20). With regard to the story of Peter Pan, Jacqueline Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan, Or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984) helped incite the exploration of the complexity of the narrative, especially researching whether children's fiction is actually for children or if it inherently represents adult views on children, as it is mainly written by adults (Rose, 2). Barrie's novel has also sparked a specific interest in the workings of Freud's concept of the Oedipus-complex and the workings of ambivalent gender representations in relation to Peter Pan as character and as a narrative (Stirling, 3). *Winnie-the-Pooh* was able to captivate many young and old readers through its humorous play with language. The book however incited academic interest as well. Although the inhabitants of the Hundred Acre Wood may come across as fairly straightforward at first glance, scholars have been (especially) interested in the philosophical questions they bring to the fore. In *Pooh and the Philosophers* (1995), John Tyerman Williams explores how the experiences of Christopher Robin, Winnie-the-Pooh and the rest of the characters shed a unique light on the thoughts of contemporary philosophers (Williams, 1995). So slowly but surely, the early-twentieth century children's texts have been evoking serious scholarly attention. There is however still a lot more to them that has not been researched.

Next to developing a new focus on the often-overlooked complexity of children's literature, attention developed for the implied information that can be found in literary works (Zumwalt, 1999, 25); people started to read between the lines. This kind of approach is necessary to research another important part of children's literature, namely the often-returning theme of traumatic events in children's stories. Fairy tales are almost always built on the irrevocable loss of something extremely dear, or on transcendentally painful experiences that keep on haunting the protagonist(s), even when the stories have been made 'appropriate' for young readers (Froud, 34). So, although one might not always immediately become aware of the portrayed loss in children's stories, many children's stories have been infused with some form of trauma. Think, for example, of *Peter Pan*'s story, which is almost completely grounded on the irreversible loss of the mother figure and following mother figures. Or think of Milne's text, which was written and published against the backdrop of the First World War, a war that most certainly has left an impression on the story. To research the presence of trauma in such texts, this thesis will focus on the question of how J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*

(1911) and A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926), as works of early-twentieth century children's fiction that feature fantasy elements, represent (autobiographical) trauma.[1] To ground this main question however, other significant academic fields will have to be explicated here as well. For, because of their rupturing effect, representations of traumas are often seen as unable to leave room for narrativity. Cathy Caruth has been highly influential in this regard – and in the realm of memory and trauma studies in general. She argues that trauma is so overwhelmingly direct, the experience becomes impossible to narrativise and comprehend (Caruth, 1995, 6). As the traumatic experience therefore appears to operate outside of language, closure cannot be given, and the victim is not able to place the disruptive event into the past.

Thus, within the field of children's literary studies, there has been an interest in the way how children's fiction might not – or not solely – be written for children. Within trauma studies, the mysterious workings of traumas are being explored by looking at its non-representability and its being outside of language. By combining and analysing both these implications, a relevant effect could become noticeable. In relation to trauma in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*, a fascinating dynamic appears to unfold. Both Barrie's and Milne's work feature autobiographical elements, even though they are works of fiction. Furthermore, Barrie and Milne both encountered traumatising events that left intrusive impressions on them as people and on their writing style.

By taking into account their complicated lives, the additional information might lead to the finding of supplementary manifestations of meaning within the pieces of children's fiction. The inclusion of the author as meaning creator goes however against the structuralist notion of the 'death of the author' that emerged and has remained to be influential to this day (Douglas, 69). This thesis subsequently tries to position itself in between of these principles by recognising the fluidity of meaning and by arguing that autobiographical information can extricate additional forms of meaning. For, there is a striking thing going in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* which might make it significant (re)take into account the author more thoroughly: throughout the books the narration does not stay static, as the narrator changes from being an absent narrator into an involved one. This literary aspect could take on importance when keeping in mind the autobiographical tendencies in the texts, as the narration could possibly be pointing

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[1] A more specific indication of the set-up of this master thesis will be provided at the end of this introduction.

towards the effect of the author's personal trauma becoming noticeable in a work of fiction. Hence, Gérard Genette's influential work on the voice and the narrator in literature will be taken into regard.

Furthermore, narratives are the product of exclusion, for they cannot contain everything. Silences and gaps will therefore be present in texts (Frank, 81). In order to consciously position oneself to this manner of thinking about narratives, Arthur W. Frank's notion of 'socio-narratology' will be used. In fiction that features fantastical components, such as Barrie's and Milne's works, the literary gaps are then being 'filled' with un-explainable occurrences. This effect could point towards a possible solution to the non-representability of the trauma; the language of fantasy might fill the void/black hole. This is why fantasy is another important academic field to explore when trying to uncover some of the underlying processes in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Fantasy literature has often been neglected in adult literature, for its supposedly unserious nature. What becomes clear however is that fantasy fiction does not avoid the incomprehensible or the silenced (Jackson, 4). Fantasy possesses a great potential with regard to the un-narratability of trauma. Although trauma is deemed un-narrativisable, retelling the traumatic experiences is seen as an important way to become free from their tight grip. Fantasy as a literary mode might therefore be a helpful tool in making the unnarratable narratable again.

This thesis will try to combine these academic fields and developments to provide an attribution to the cultural forms of expression that too often have been belittled. In order to do so, the literary texts will be researched on the basis of positioning myself with existing academic works and by means of close reading. As has been mentioned earlier in this introduction, the research question that will tried to be answered is: how do J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1911) and A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926), as works of early-twentieth century children's fiction that feature fantasy elements, represent (autobiographical) trauma? To help provide an answer to this question, three sub-questions have been formulated: how is childhood represented in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*?; in what ways are the workings of (autobiographical) trauma represented through the narrator and narration in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*?; how does the notion of fantasy as a literary mode function with regard to silences within *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*?.

These sub-questions will provide the structure and focus of the body of the thesis,

as – accordingly – the middle part will be split into three chapters. Thus, after this introduction, the first separate chapter will concern itself with the representation of childhood in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*, as works of early-twentieth century children's literature. The theoretical framework for the chapter will consequently consist of texts on the representation of childhood in early-twentieth century children's literature, and the idea of the 'impossibility' of children's literature, which takes into account the role of the adult in relation to the representation of childhood. Chapter two will explore the interaction between trauma, autobiographical elements and narration. Discussed will therefore be the representation of trauma in children's literature, the notion of 'life writing', and Gérard Genette's thoughts on 'heterodiegetic' and 'homodiegetic' narrators. The third – and final – chapter will address the potential of fantasy to relate itself to literary gaps, that is why the subversive nature of fantasy, and Arthur W. Frank's 'socio-narratology' will be the main focus. The methodological and theoretical frameworks will be explicated more thoroughly in the chapters to come (which will directly implement them).

Chapter One

The Early-Twentieth Century's *Zeitgeist* is (Not) Child's Play
The Representation of Childhood

"My Dear Lucy, I wrote this story for you, but when I began it I had not realized that girls grow quicker that books. As a result, you are already too old for fairy tales, and by the time it is printed and bound you will be older still. But some day you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again."

-C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*

Childhood is an intricate phase, feeling, and concept. Childhood is a period in one's life that is simultaneously romanticised and cursed. A child's world is often seen as a simple, serene place that is freed from commitment and hardship, that is why this life phase is often revered from a nostalgic, adult perspective. However, at the same time, there exists a general consensus that the child's innocent world view cannot last for too long, for – in contrast to adulthood – childhood is a state that one should grow out of (Summerfield, xiii). It is cute when a child believes in fairies, but the child should not believe in imaginary creatures for too long either.

What makes it even more complicated is that there is a significant difference between children as human beings and their childhood 'as a shifting set of ideas' (Cunningham, 1). Childhood – in this context – can then be regarded as a social, cultural, historical construct that has changed quite drastically over the decades. To clarify the biological-cultural distinction, think of the fact that the length of childhood has fluctuated clearly over the decades. Three hundred years ago, from a biological viewpoint, children developed their adolescent characteristics at a much later point of time compared to now, while, from a social/cultural perspective, children had to carry out adult labour from an early age onwards, in for example factories. Consequently, children in the eighteenth century had to act like adults much earlier on compared to contemporary children (McCulloch, 8). Even more strikingly, the notion of childhood as we know it did not even exist before the eighteenth century. Before that, children were just seen as undeveloped adults that lacked in strength and intellect. So, it becomes clear

that the notion of 'childhood' is not one to pin down easily. However, after the forming of the concept of childhood during the eighteenth century, there does appear to develop a stronger agreement on a distinction between adulthood and childhood.

The most important difference between the two life phases has to do with how people make sense of the world, and how they understand and create meaning. By acknowledging that children are not just 'little adults', it should also be recognised that children and adults perceive the world around them in different, but equally valid ways. Geoffrey Summerfield argues that an emphasis from the inquiring and magical way of knowing to a rational, empirical approach seems to be underlying of the significant rite of passage from the 'useless' state of being a child to the useful state of being an adult:

> But we possess at least two complementary, and potentially conflicting, ways of knowing. One is the poetic, metaphorical, animistic, even magical – the 'useless' – way. The other is the empirical, scientific – the 'useful' – way. The relationship between these two epistemologies can, and does, generate tension, conflict, anxiety, and jokes. (Summerfield, xi).

As childhood can be seen as a set of shifting ideas and therefore as a discursive, ideological matter, the way how childhood is represented in children's literature should be explored carefully. This is especially the case for these specific literary works as they are mainly written by adults, for children.

During the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, an anew general interest in childhood emerged, leading to the naming of the twentieth century as the 'Century of the Child' (Reynolds, 19). This particular period emphasised and celebrated the creative potential within children and was characterised by its explicit nostalgia for wholesome childhoods. These were tumultuous times and children were considered to be beacons of hope. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* are manifestations of this child-centred zeitgeist and, consequently, (re)produce fascinating views on childhood.

These views and the ways in which these views correlate with general beliefs about childhood of that time, will be researched in this chapter. To do so, the chapter will concern itself with the sub-question: how is childhood represented in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*? To see whether these two literary texts could be seen as representative of the beliefs of their time, firstly, a brief historical overview will be

provided that focusses on the development of children's literature and the way how early-twentieth century children's literature represents childhood. Then, the idea that children's literature is solely written for children will be questioned. For, the 'how'-question in this chapter does not only imply the final formalisation of the representation, the person responsible for that representation is also of great significance. *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* will consequently be analysed in relation to the ways how they represent childhood and how childhood is represented through them.

1.1 New Kid on the Block

The beginning of Western children's literature is a diffuse and porous matter. Histories of children's literature often start at the late-seventeenth century/early-eighteenth century, as – from that time onwards – books for children slowly started to be printed for public distribution, instead of private use (Reynolds, 9). Although this point in time can be considered to be the beginning of children's literature, it is important to mention that children's books did not emerge in isolation but are part of a literary continuum. For, before the seventeenth century, children were already listening to oral stories or reading fables (McCulloch, 32). What is different however, is that at the end of the seventeenth century childhood became a demarcated period in an individual's life, leading to the acknowledgement of the difference between a child and an adult. Children, therefore, had to be taught what it meant to become good individuals. This was partly done so by means of literature. Consequently, children's literature was mightily educational and pedagogical in nature. This characteristic started to change during the mid-eighteenth century, when children's literature started to slowly resemble the global media industry it is today.

In her little and to the point work *Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction*, Kimberley Reynolds explains that during the eighteenth century, when the publishing of children's literature became a commercial enterprise, the literature had come to follow Enlightenment thought (Reynolds, 15). Children had primarily been reading adult's literature that was deemed appropriate enough for the younglings to read. The literature was supposed to teach children to not give into the alluring attraction of sins, and to show how they ought to behave in society (Smith, 77). However, from the eighteenth century onwards, when books started to be written specifically for children,

beliefs regarding the supposed functions of children's literature started to change (Hunt, 2006, 5). Changes in the representations of children followed accordingly. Being freed of the seventeenth century sin characteristics, children's books were supposed to warn against superstition and promote rationality and substantiated education for children. Furthermore, even though children were portrayed as being capable of understanding the importance of these features, they were still often represented as subaltern people. Without the proper guidance of adults, children were seen as lacking life experience, as lacking in a sense of responsibility and simply as being ignorant (Reynolds, 15). Fortunately, during the nineteenth century, also known as the 'Golden Age of Children's Literature', these negative views on children started to make way for a more complex view of child readers and child characters (Reynolds, 15). This development continued during the twentieth century. Modernity 'struck' full force, evoking strong feelings of nostalgia for easier times and uncomplicated childhoods, and causing a new, extensive interest in the notion of childhood. This led to the process of the twentieth century becoming the 'Century of the Child'. During this time, children, consequently, came to be seen as close to nature and not in need of help. Their creativity and freedom allowed for them to explore the world in an innocent and pleasant way. However, 'the child' in this context was still a normative, hegemonic child. Slowly, during the second half of the twentieth century, texts started to include children that did not tick all the boxes of being western, white, middle-class, and born to heterosexual parents (Reynolds, 21). Even though nineteenth and twentieth century (and today's) children's literature is still subjected to derogative connotations (Zumwalt, 24; Trend, 109), the second half of the twentieth century paved not only the way for different representations of children, the literary style changed drastically as well. Fantasy, comedy, realism: these modes of writing also changed the way how children were regarded, for more complex literary styles and diverse representations point towards the fact that children are seen as capable of understanding these less 'simplistic' texts.

By means of this very brief historical conspectus, it becomes clear that over the centuries the notions of 'the child' and 'childhood' as we know it underwent several extensive changes. Furthermore, as has been mentioned above, a significant period in relation to the revival of childhood, is the time of modernity. Especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, the days were filled with speed, tension, and uncertainty (Berman, 15-17). This not only had to do with aspects of modernity such as

secularisation and industrialisation, the approaching First World War was of grave importance as well. Like all cultural phenomena, children's literature reacted and absorbed the instability that came with these extensive developments. Instead of explicitly mentioning them however, literary texts for children tried to offer a foothold by presenting children as the solutions of tomorrow. For, Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb argue that the lack of security previously provided by religion or reason caused discrepancies between the world and the experience of the individual's sense of self (Thacker; Webb, 105). Without an a priori sensibility of human progress, the experience of the child began to be regarded as a pure way of experiencing modernity. Children were considered to supposedly be left 'un-poisoned' by the chaotic times and were consequently seen as the innocent, primitive children, known from the romanticism period. There is, however, an important difference between the formerly romanticised image of the child versus the representation of the early-twentieth century child, for the children's literature that originated during modernity often obtains a poignant paradox. Next to presenting children as adventurers that do not need constant supervision, it becomes more and more difficult to leave out the uncertainty of the 'adult world' (Thacker; Webb, 105). The developments make it impossible to create a completely naïve world view and consequently, the child world becomes implicitly infiltrated by the adult world. This leads to the intricate relation of conjuring up the pinnacle of nostalgia, while simultaneously knowing this is an unattainable illusion. One craves the seemingly easier times of the period in one's life he or she had to leave behind. Within children's fiction, because of the strong feelings of nostalgia, this translates into 'the child' being represented as a fairly uncomplicated child. As for, the adventurous early-twentieth century literary child is primarily raised within a heteronormative, middle class, white family, and free from any care in the world (Reynolds, 19).

So, it becomes clear that – over the decades – the representation of childhood in children's literature has changed, adapted and influenced the then current zeitgeist (and vice versa). During the seventeenth/eighteenth century, children were acknowledged as being different from adults and having different ways of making sense of the worlds around then. Consequently, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, literature began to be written specifically for children, instead of adjusting existing works. Children, moreover, began to be seen as subjects that could be taught to be rational and well-

behaved, instead of primarily being seen as potential sinners. This development continued throughout the nineteenth century – also known as the 'Golden Age of Children's Literature' – by allowing for more complex characters to be featured in children's fiction. Which brings us to the 'Century of the Child': the twentieth century. This century came to be known for its revised interest in the creative possibilities within children; an interest that re-emerged because of the instability that characterised the first half of the twentieth century. As a consequence, the innocent child view was pushed forward as a possible solution to the unrest that dominated the adult world; an endeavour that was foremost infused with nostalgia for idealised childhoods. The pivotal works *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* emerged from this period as well and one could therefore wonder whether these literary works can be considered to be representative of early-twentieth century children's literature – mainly in the ways they represent childhood – or whether they occupy a subversive stance within the generally accepted literary forms of that time. First, however, it is important to look at the construction of the representation of childhood from another perspective, namely who represents and who is the audience of that representation.

1.2 Belittling the Little?

Children's literature is extremely difficult to pin down because – in contrast to other cultural expressions – it is not defined by style, genre or topic. Its audience is often seen as the binding factor (Reynolds, 31). However, as it turns out, the idea of a clear audience is questionable as well. Typically, children's literature is considered to be written for children. Interestingly though, the literature – in general – is not written by children; it is written by adults. This raises the question whether the children's fiction that is written by adults actually provides children with narratives they would like to read and whether this adult view on childhood is representative of the child world that perhaps only children have access too. However, what does become clear is the fact that adults are a significant part of children's literature. A more pragmatic aspect of this thought is the fact that (young) children – most of the time – do not actually buy, pay or read the books themselves. Consequently, parents are simply important parts of their children's literary upbringings. The presentation of children's books should therefore also be attractive and responsive to adults, but this aspect goes deeper than one might expect at first.

Nowadays, there are many books that are being read by children and adults, thus even further complicating the seclusion of children's literature in the realm of ('adult') literature. These stories are called 'crossover fiction', and instead of children crossing over to adult books, adults started to read literature that is foremost branded as being children's literature (Reynolds, 17). Ironically, when in the eighteenth century, lines were drawn between childhood and adulthood, cross-writing immediately blurred the borders from both sides (Beckett, xii). Children had been reading (adult) literature for quite some time, but when children's literature turned into a public, commercial endeavour, adults started to read literature that primarily was aimed at children as well. In order to attract both child and adult, the often-used literary device of 'dual address' is able to create an atmosphere that caters to a variety of readers (Holmes, 140). Adults often read to their children and in order to speak to both of these 'types' of audiences, texts often simultaneously address them both. Through dual address, the narrative is not interrupted for the children, but the deeper meanings of certain words or phrases can enrich the texts for the adults that are reading along. In other words, the more literal meaning is accessible for children, whereas the more ambiguous, hinted at meaning is noticeable for the adult reader.

However, if children's literature is first and foremost for children, one could question what 'kind' of child is implied as reader. Is it any and every child or is it a specific child? Is it an individual child or is it a group? Even though early-twentieth children's literature was often presented as being for a diverse group of children, it was mainly for the western, middle-class, white child. Children are not a homogenous group. Furthermore, one could even ask the question whether children are being addressed at all, for children's literature might not even be *for* or *about* children at all. Precisely because of its seemingly straightforwardness, in terms of language, Barrie and Milne are able to explore dynamics that otherwise would not have been possible. For example, throughout the story and the character of Peter Pan, there exists a constant ambiguity with regard to identity, sexuality and desire (Stirling, 27). This tension between transparency and opaqueness creates a unique space in which the author can experiment with his/her own interests and fascinations. However, consequently, this possibility makes another aspect of children's literature cognisable. Jacqueline Rose has named this aspect 'the impossibility of children's fiction'. In her work *The Case of Peter Pan: or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1994), Rose draws attention to the

underlying – often poignant – implications of Barrie's work, such as repression, problematic sexuality, and child abuse. With regard to the complicated, paradoxical representations of childhood in children's fiction, like *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*, Rose remarks:

> Peter Pan is a front – a cover not as concealer but as vehicle – for what is most unsettling and uncertain about the relationship between adult and child. It shows innocence not as a property of childhood but as a portion of adult desire. (Rose, xii)

The representation of childhood is exactly what it says to be: a representation. Because these literary representations are not created by children, but by adults, it becomes unclear to what extent they provide access to the actual phenomenon. The danger in this is the fact that childhood can become fetishized (Rose, 4); a rather uncanny effect for something that is supposed to be the pinnacle of innocence. Furthermore, since children's literature almost always has an educational substratum, children could potentially develop a sense of childhood that is contorted or one that does not resonate with the children's own sense of self. Childhood therefore becomes 'impossible' to represent, for it is often hijacked and appropriated.

So, childhood is not just a difficult concept to grasp, its representation is extremely complex as well. Because of the fact that children's literature is not demarcated by traditional categories, such as genre or writing style, its audience is often seen as the defining factor. The problem however is that 'children's' literature is not solely for children. Through several literary tools, of which 'dual addressing' is one, children's fiction is often read by adults. For, parents are a big part of children's culture. However, cross-writing and cross-reading are not new developments as they have existed since the 'disassembling' of humankind in adults and children, and consequently since the differentiation between adult and children's literature. However, through the increasing scholarly interest in children's fiction, questions were raised whether children's literature is written for children at all. The fact that these literary explorations are foremost written by adults complicates the idea of adequate representations of childhood. Because of children's fiction's veil of transparency, adult writers are able to express their own explorations, but a problematic backwash occurs, for children's fiction is in threat of fetishizing childhood and the child. To see how childhood is represented in

Peter Pan and *Winnie-the-Pooh* (by Barrie and Milne) the next part will focus on the literary works in question.

1.3 Outgrowing Boundaries

J.M. Barrie's and A.A. Milne's other literary accomplishments have mainly been overshadowed by their works that are to be considered children's fiction. *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* have – over the many years – accumulated immense success and recognition. They are stories that appear to have 'outgrown' their literary boundaries by becoming more than just novels. This has to do with the fact that children's literature in general often defies categorisation, for children's literature is not specifically demarcated by genre or style (Reynolds, 2). It is foremost defined by its audience, making it a difficult art form to get a grip on. Especially since – as has been explored – this 'audience' is very difficult to define as well. Next to not being delimited or labelled as a specific genre of literary style, children's literature has become an extremely successful and popular industry because of its transmedial qualities. Children encounter stories in a wide variety of ways, media and performances. Many narratives for children serve as the base for the creation of content through a variety of different cultural forms and media (Vaughan, 176). Consequently, children's literature is characterised by experimentation with regard to the conveyance of narratives; children had – and have – to be able to immediately relate to a story in order for it to be of importance. The views on childhood that *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* represent are a crucial factor of their ability to engage both child and adult readers from all over the globe.

Barrie's story of Peter Pan started off as a play titled *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1904). In 1911 however, Barrie adapted the play into a novel: *Peter Pan.[2]* The novel tells the story of a boy – Peter Pan – who did not and does not want to grow up. Peter is able to fly (because of lovely thoughts and pixie dust) and is therefore able to take children to Neverland. Neverland is the place where Peter, the Lost Boys, fairies, pirates, mermaids, the Piccaninny tribe, the crocodile, and the 'guest children' experience all sorts of adventures. One night, Peter enters the Darling household in London and convinces the Darling children to go to Neverland with him, to the horror of Mr. and Mrs. Darling. After several dangerous – but thrilling – experiences, the Darling children and the Lost Boys return from Neverland and eventually grow up. As the novel

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[2] The novel version is sometimes also published as *Peter and Wendy.*

revolves around the idea of growing up, childhood can be considered a main theme in Barrie's children's novel. From the start of the book, this becomes quite clear:

> All children, except one, grow up. They soon know that they will grow up, and the way Wendy knew this was this. One day when she was two years old she was playing in the garden, and she plucked another flower and ran with it to her mother. I suppose she must have looked rather delightful, for Mrs Darling put her hands to her heart and cried, 'Oh, why can't you remain like this for ever!' This was all that passed between them on the subject, but henceforth Wendy knew that she must grow up. You always know after you are two. Two is the beginning of the end. (Barrie, 1)

Consequently, this first paragraph of the book immediately sets the tone for the rest of the narrative and expresses already several notions about childhood. The fairly generally accepted idea of childhood being a temporary state in everyone's life shines through instantly. Furthermore, and more strikingly, it is mentioned that children are painfully aware of this idea as well. Society, and therefore its 'inhabitants'/adults, make it known to their younglings that they – by adopting some sort of impossible meta perspective – should cherish their childhoods and their then present-day life experiences, for they are doomed to be ephemeral. For, what is also noticeable in this paragraph, is that childhood evokes nostalgic outcries from adults and hence is considered to be a source of both comfort and discomfort; closeness and unattainability.

Besides childhood in general, *Peter Pan* delineates a specific image of 'the family' as well, as "There never was a simpler, happier family until the coming of Peter Pan (Barrie, 6). Indeed, the Darlings as a family are almost the picture perfect heteronormative, middle class, white family, and this is also a feature that they strive to uphold: "Mr Darling had a passion for being exactly like his neighbours; so, of course, they had a nurse. As they were poor, owing to the amount of milk the children drank, this nurse was a prim Newfoundland dog, called Nana," (Barrie, 4). Thus, although the Darlings were not actually middle class, they feel the need to portray and reflect that image to the outside world. Keeping up appearances was still of high significance and can be seen as a remnant of the Victorian age. The rise of the middle class was possible because of economic prosperity and the manners and acts of the proper family should reflect this development (Ittlmann, 195). However, even though *Peter Pan* features quite

the 'ordinary' family in relation to its setup, Barrie simultaneously appears to question the interpretation of the perfect fin-de-siècle family. In the above quote, the fact that the Darlings' nurse is a dog can be regarded as an ironic stance against the extensive emphasis on middle class decorum. Debunking the artificial façade becomes a reoccurring theme throughout the novel by, for example, mentioning that Mr Darling "was one of those deep ones who know about stocks and shares" (Barrie, 2), but "though he knew about stocks and shares, [he] had no real mastery of his tie" (Barrie, 17). Barrie's work makes explicit the tension between the external idea of the ideal family and the actual relations that unfold in a family. Furthermore, it is important to note that the Darlings are actually poor. Keeping up appearances subsequently is not adhering to the norms and values of a time, but it is part of the complicated process of trying to imitate a social class one can never truly or completely be a part of.

The shortcomings of living such a constrained life become apparent in the Darling children's will to go on a life changing adventure. Even though they all relate differently to the featured adventures, Wendy, John and Michael are all quite ready and excited to embark on an unknown situation without supervision: "How could she [Wendy] resist? 'Of course it's awfully fascinating!'" (Barrie, 39). They even adapt fairly quickly to a life without adults, with Peter Pan as their pivotal example of the independent, adventurous child. Throughout the story, the children are revered for their imagination and their ability to adjust to all kinds of unexpected circumstances. However, the child characters prove to possess more complexity than meets the eye. With regard to the Darling children, the significance of adult influence is fairly apparent:

> Mrs Darling first heard of Peter when she was tidying up her children's minds. It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day. [...] When you wake in the morning, the naughtiness and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind; and on the top beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on. (Barrie, 6)

Even though they might come across as independent, children's minds supposedly still have to be 'moulded' by adults/parents in order for them to become proper individuals

and to function accordingly within the 'real world'. To do so, the children's minds have to be ordered and categorised; children's thoughts have to be made rational and follow reason.

Moreover, and perhaps more strikingly, Barrie's words hint towards the idea of children being receptive of and possibly even being prone to evil. The combination of these seventeenth and eighteenth century beliefs regarding childhood manifest throughout the whole narrative and are most clearly represented in the concept of the character of Peter Pan: "The truth is that there was a something about Peter which goaded the pirate captain to frenzy. It was not his courage, it was not his engaging appearance, it was not –. There is no beating about the bush, for we know quite well what it was, and have got to tell. It was Peter's cockiness" (Barrie, 141). The mentioned cockiness is a consequence of Peter's forgetfulness. After some time, he forgets all his adventures and hence all the lessons he learns. Subsequently, he is not aware of the actual danger that surrounds him and always goes in head-first. This forgetfulness stems from the fact that Peter is – and always will remain – a small child that came into the world without any form of parental nurturing. He – as Rosalind Ridley argues – is therefore is not able to put situations in perspective and is only able to feel a few emotions at a time (Ridley, 79). Because of this, Peter – and all of the other children – is portrayed as quite an inconsiderate and selfish persona. So, paradoxically, even though *Peter Pan* showcases a great deal of nostalgia for childhood, it actually also portrays children as being inherently and undeniably ungrateful.

However, Barrie's work also shows that (most) children cannot remain egocentric forever, for their worlds are often infiltrated by phenomena that are originally unknown to a child's world: "It was then that Hook bit him. Not the pain of this but its unfairness was what dazed Peter. It made him quite helpless. He could only stare, horrified. Every child is affected thus the first time he is treated unfairly (Barrie, 107). Unfairness is thus part of Neverland even though it is completely constructed by the rules of the child. This spatial dimension – like Peter Pan himself – can be seen as the manifestation of the created energy that is constructed through childhood (Cecire; Field; Finn; Roy, 1). The interaction of characters is strictly built on the guidelines of child's play, and when these are broken, the children are not able to remain in their comfortable, innocent bubbles anymore. Therefore, the concept of unfairness underlines even more the idea of childhood as being a phase that is under constant threat; the

grown-up world always knows how to creep in and cause uncertainty and instability: "Their faces assumed the awful craftiness of children listening for sounds from the grown-up world. All was still as salt. Then everything was right. No, stop! Everything was wrong." (Barrie, 39).

Therefore, J.M. Barrie's 1911 work represents childhood in a few paradoxical ways; it is a state one certainly has to grow out off, but it also is a state that is celebrated for its imaginative potential. In addition, it is part of the idealised version of the early-twentieth century family, but it is able to contest this image as well. Lastly, it allows for independent, adventurous children, but these children do have to be guided by parents to function appropriately within the real world, for otherwise they might remain egocentric. However, what also becomes evident is the fact that even though the story is built around a fictional world, the 'real world' will find a way to permeate it (Mills, 127). Milne addresses childhood in a varied way as well, but – as will become clear – does so very differently from J.M. Barrie.

The set-up of Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* is very different from *Peter Pan*, for in J.M. Barrie's work there is a relatively clear distinction between the real world and Neverland. However, Milne shows Winnie-the-Pooh's internal world only through the fantastical world of the Hundred Acre Wood. The Hundred Acre Wood is the fictional place in which the story of *Winnie-the-Pooh* is told. The narrator – or perhaps the author – shapes the narrative of Christopher Robin and his stuffed animals, and their adventures. When Christopher Robin and Winnie-the-Pooh and the rest enter the Hundred Acre World, Christopher Robin changes from being an ordinary boy into a character and the stuffed animals change into living animals. Together they then embark on several adventures. Since these adventures take place in the Hundred Acre Wood, they unfold in an atmosphere that is supposed to completely resemble a child's world (Mills, 124).

The idea of transitioning from childhood to adulthood is therefore far less explicit, however, it is present: "I [Winnie-the-Pooh] must find Christopher Robin or Owl or Piglet, one of these Clever Readers who can read things, and they will tell me what this missage means." (Milne, 137). Throughout the story, Milne distinguishes between being book smart and being street wise. In general, all the characters show a great deal of admiration for the supposedly educated characters. Kenneth B. Kidd shines light on the fact that the story places quite some attention on the concept of language and the idea of well-written messages and well-interpreted words (Kidd, 54): "" And we must all

bring Provisions." "Bring what?" "Oh!" said Pooh happily. "I thought you said Provisions. […]" (Milne, 113). Even though most of the written messages by the 'book smart characters' contain mistakes, their status makes sure that the other characters believe their abilities and regard them as highly intelligent. However, the quick and clever solutions to unexpected situations are often provided by the 'street smart characters', such as Winnie-the-Pooh and Rabbit. Their intuition and imagination allow for nonsense ideas, but for useful creative thinking as well. Consequently, one can wonder whether education and reason should be put on such high pedestals and whether we should actually be more aware of the potential in intuitiveness and experimentation and recognise its qualities. These questions become even more interesting when reminded of the fact that limitless imagination is often linked to childhood and substantiated rationality with adulthood.

Moreover, even though *Winnie-the-Pooh* does not address the family as such – the absence of Christopher Robin's mother is remarkable – the narrative does portray children as being adventurous and capable of being on their own for long periods of time: ""It's Christopher Robin," he [Winnie-the-Pooh] said. "ah, then you'll be all right," said Piglet. "You'll be quite safe with him. Good-bye," and he trotted off home as quickly as he could, very glad to be Out of All Danger again (Milne, 41-42). Christopher Robin lives alone on the other side of the forest and although he barely is the stimulator of adventures, he always plays a significant role in almost every situation. Even though he is a child, he is regarded as the most intelligent and helpful of them all. From that perspective, Christopher Robin (as a character) could actually be regarded as quite an educated, mature and 'adult-like' figure. However, in comparison, he does contain more 'child-like' characteristics, which – in turn – are deemed to be very positive as well. Like the other characters, he is creative and adventurous, but he is also informative and protective. This assemblage of character traits showcases the complexity of the child, instead of depicting it as a one-dimensional figure (Reynolds, 21).

However, just like in *Peter Pan* there also appear to seep in some other kind of beliefs regarding childhood:

> "I didn't want the others to hear," said Christopher Robin.
>
> "Quite so," said Rabbit, looking important.
>
> "It's – I wondered – It's only – Rabbit, I suppose you don't know, What does the North Pole *look* like,"

"Well," said Rabbit, stroking his whiskers. "Now you're asking me."

"I did know once, only I've sort of forgotten," said Christopher Robin carelessly.

"It's a funny thing," said Rabbit, "but I've sort of forgotten too, although I did know *once.*" (Milne, 122)

Although Christopher Robin is presented as the epiphany of knowledge to the other characters, in this passage it becomes clear that even he does not know everything; acting preceded thinking. Even though he does not want the others to find this out, his further response is quite nonchalant, in turn resembling *Peter Pan*'s 'careless' characters. Furthermore, like Peter Pan himself, Christopher Robin's forgetfulness is mentioned a few times. Both the carelessness and forgetfulness seem to point towards the fact that during childhood one does not have the mental capacity yet to store and execute a variety of feelings, phenomena, and thoughts (Norrick, 6). However, the condescending tone from Barrie's story is most definitely missing and is contrasted with an endearing one.

Unfortunately, even the endearing tone of *Winnie-the-Pooh* is not able to keep the grown-up world out. Although Milne has constructed a world that is based on a child's sense of reality, the 'real world' has permeated the innocent Hundred Acre Forest:

Next to his [Piglet] house was a piece of broken board which had: "TRESPASSERS W" on it. When Christopher Robin asked the Piglet what it meant, he said it was his grandfather's name, and had been in the family for a long time. Christopher Robin said you *couldn't* be called Trespassers W, and Piglet said yes, you could, because his grandfather was, and it was short for Trespassers Will, which was short for Trespassers William. And his grandfather had two names in case he lost one – Trespassers after an uncle, and William after Trespassers. (Milne, 34)

The board can be seen as a vestige of the adult world. Even in the perfect, idyllic world of Christopher Robin, the reader is still reminded of the looming, unstable reality. As, the slightly older reader will be aware of the fact that the text on the board refers to the sentence 'trespassers will be prosecuted' or even 'trespassers will be shot'. Both messages are supposed the put off possible intruders and are therefore inherently threatening. Milne specifically reacts to this fact by playfully turning it into something humorous. So even though the uneasy meaning of the intended words is partly emptied, it still refers to darker sides of life that are often put out of sight, but that also have the

tendency to pop up anyway. Throughout the book though, Milne, often successfully, – like his characters – tries to turn any negative situation into a positive one, and supress the haunting tumult of the adult, real world.

Like Barrie, Milne is able to give his child characters a certain depth, which – consequently – is able to showcase the complexity of the representation of childhood. An important aspect in this regard is the concept of education. In *Winnie-the-Pooh*, the presence of knowledge and logical thinking is praised, but it at the same time sometimes gets overshadowed by imagination and gut feeling. However, all the characters and especially Christopher Robin are able to demonstrate their abilities to survive on their own and go on adventures unsupervised. This aspect however is being contrasted with the fact that also in Milne's work, the characters appear to sometimes be self-centred. As a consequence, however, the characters become less simplistic and straightforward. Unfortunately, though they live in a demarcated forest, they are not able to escape the influence of the adult world and adulthood; between the lines they find ways to infiltrate Christopher Robin's peaceful world.

So, in their own ways, both *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* are able to conjure heart-warming, literary sensations. The emphases on the child's way of making sense of the world result in fascinating adventures. The novel version of Barrie's work manifested in 1911 and thus at the very beginning of the twentieth century. The fact that *Peter Pan* excels in playing with the idea of childhood very much shows the renewed interest in the experience of the child of that time. It does also become clear that 'the child' in the novel is a complicated concept. The representation of childhood in *Peter Pan* is a combination of this anew positive image of the child by celebrating creativity, innocence and vulnerability, whereas it is also constructed of a hesitant stance against exactly these idealised characteristics. Instead of solely focussing on the romanticised image of childhood, Barrie's writing carries through some older, less positive beliefs regarding children, such as them being irresponsible and self-absorbed. However, more generally speaking, by providing Neverland, the novel allows for children and adults to literally and figuratively escape the real world and roam around in the exciting, adventurous, fun world of Peter Pan. By constructing a space in which imagination and irrationality can run wild, Barrie's work is in strong contrast with the fast and tumultuous reality of the early-twentieth century. However, as has been made explicit, even Neverland is not completely safe from the intimidating adult world.

Winnie-the-Pooh was published in 1926 and displays similarities and differences compared to *Peter Pan*. Milne's story is not just reflective of the idea of a child's view on the world, it completely takes it as its starting point. By pretending to look through a child's eyes, the whole atmosphere exemplifies notions about childhood. As a consequence, one becomes aware of the fact that – like in *Peter Pan* – the child character is extensively more intricate and paradoxical one would expect at first glance. Again, the innocent, adventurous, but slightly self-centred child is seen as independent, but not completely free of the adult realm. What is important to note though, is the fact that Barrie's and Milne's tone throughout the narratives are quite different. Whereas Barrie sometimes displays an even condescending approach regarding childhood, Milne in his writing almost carries out a longing for the specific life phase. This might have to do with the time of which the story was written, as *Winnie-the-Pooh* formalised a few years after the First World War. The combination of modernity and the aftermath of this extensively destructive war could very possibly evoke a deeply rooted, nostalgic desire for the childhood years.

However, even though the novels say a great deal about the concept of childhood and children in general, and about the people whom have constructed these views (primarily adult writers), more can be researched in relation to the role of the author. That is why the next chapter will explore the 'presence' of the author in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*, by means of analysing its use of narration.

1.4 Imagining Fata Morganas

It is safe to say that 'the child', 'childhood', and 'children's literature' are all intricate terms. During the eighteenth century, the difference between adult and child was recognised and acknowledged. This led to the process of creating literature that was specifically aimed at children. Over the following centuries, ideas and beliefs regarding childhood demonstrated continuity and change. During the early-twentieth century, because of senses of instability that modern life brought with it, an anew interest and emphasis on the child's view emerged. This period of time celebrated the adventurous, innocent, primitive child and was characterised by strong feelings of nostalgia for idealised childhoods.

Childhood can be represented from a steered perspective because of the fact that children's fiction is often being written by adults. Even though the audience is

considered to be the conjunction between the literary works, the idea that children's literature is solely written for children is being contested. Children are not in control of representing their childhoods and one can therefore wonder whether these adult representations are fitting of the actual life phase. As representations are – and always will be – problematic, when reading children's literature, one has to be aware of this aspect, as it could present certain parts of childhood in a wry – but seemingly familiar – way.

J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* were published during the beginning of this 'Century of the Child' and both contest and affirm the general conceptions of the representation of childhood. Both novels are very different, but what they very much have in common is the fact that they are able to create adventurous, thrilling, child-centred worlds. Furthermore, they both praise creativity and intuitiveness, and they both display doubt with regard to traditional notions of reason. However, what these two books are able to do as well is provide a certain depth to the children's fiction of that time. Simultaneously, Barrie's and Milne's work praise childhood, but they also show that it is not perfect. By providing characters, situations and spaces that are more complex than they might seem, it becomes clear that romanticised, idealised childhoods are like fata morganas; wonderful when regarded from afar but stinging from up close. The nostalgic forms of childhood that are craved so desperately are destined to disappoint, as they are constructed illusions. Consequently, in its representation, childhood can be formalised with a patronising edge and as unsafe from the outside adult world.

The representation of childhood is thus constructed through a text's zeitgeist and through the author. In order to further investigate the significant role of the adult author, the next chapter will focus around the question: in what ways are the workings of (autobiographical) trauma represented through the narrator and narration in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*?

Chapter Two

Story of 'My' Life
The Unfolding of (Autobiographical) Trauma

"There is something at work in my soul which I do not understand."

-M.W. Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Trauma, like childhood, is both as a word and as a phenomenon elusive. The etymology of the word 'trauma' can be traced back to the Greek word for trauma which meant 'physical wound' (Kirmayer; Lemelson; Barad, 4). In general, trauma continued to be seen as an intrusive puncturing or breaking of (parts of) the body. However, from the late nineteenth century onwards, during the early stages of modernity, trauma came to be considered not only to be a physical condition, but a psychological one as well; trauma as an injury inflicted on the body and the mind (Young, 6). In their interdisciplinary work on trauma, Lawrence J. Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson, and Mark Barad mention that our current concept of trauma has been mainly and heavily shaped by a few specific developments during the twentieth century:

> (1) the wars of the twentieth century and the clinical and moral challenges they have raised, (2) the inclusion of PTSD in official psychiatric nosology, and (3) the increasing public and professional recognition of the prevalence and long-term effects of childhood abuse. (Kirmayer; Lemelson; Barad, 4)

As becomes clear, the notion of trauma will adapt repeatedly, for every age has its own hardships and developments. The interpretation of the word trauma has always been in a dialogical relationship with its time and will probably continue to do so in time to come.

The inclusion of psychological trauma has however not made the concept any easier. Sigmund Freud's thoughts on trauma had a big influence on the idea of trauma being able to puncture both body and mind. Cathy Caruth builds on his ideas and formulates trauma as:

> An overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the
> response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive
> appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. (Caruth, 1996, 11)

Trauma is an experience that unfolds through the occurrence of reminders of the traumatic situation that force themselves upon the individual. Important to note is that these reminders – such as flashbacks, hallucinations or nightmares –manifest themselves subconsciously, without the involvement of the person they are inflicted on. This is because the person is not able to wrap his/her mind around the traumatic event when happening, and consequently, is not fully consciously experiencing it. The experience is so extensively direct and overwhelming, it becomes impossible to comprehend it all. Paradoxically, not because of a general inaccessibility, but because of this extreme immediacy, the trauma itself unfolds after a certain 'incubation period' (Caruth, 1995, 6). Thus, inherent to the trauma is an unexpected latency, which becomes apparent through the repetitive, painful infiltrations by the unconscious. Caruth says that "The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all" (Caruth, 1995, 6). The idea of forgetting does however imply that what is forgotten used to be known or was able to be known. Instead of forgetting and remembering, through the repetitive manifestations of the trauma, the individual might be trapped in a constant process of trying to recollect. The person consequently remains positioned between knowing and not-knowing. Through the incomprehensibility of the dynamics of trauma, trauma seems to function completely outside of language and 'appear[s] to resist narrativization' (Van Vree, 278). Furthermore, because of this difficult relationship with language and narrativization in general, traumas can be seen as beyond representation (Van Vree, 279).

However, the idea of trauma being unrepresentable does raise a fascinating question, for if trauma is not reachable by language, why are stories used globally in order to help traumatised people? It has become known that by consciously trying to rephrase elements of the occurred trauma, the person involved could be able to reclaim incomprehensible parts of the experiences. In literature, one way of representing traumatic autobiographical elements is by means of the use of carefully chosen narrators. Structuralist Gerard Genette has distinguished several 'types of narrators' that are helpful in investigating the ways how narration is of influence. For he explores

the involvement of a narrator by means of implementing among other his notions of the 'homodiegetic' and 'heterodiegetic' narrators.

That is why, to get a better insight, *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* will be analysed again but from a different perspective, as an emphasis on narration will be applied. More specifically, this chapter will address the (anti?) representation of trauma in early-twentieth century literature, the notion of autobiographical writing with regard to trauma, and the role of narration in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Consequently, the second sub-question 'in what ways are the workings of (autobiographical) trauma represented through the narrator and narration in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*?' will be explored.

2.1 Wounded Tales

Next to having medical and psychological meanings, trauma has also become a reoccurring trope within literature. Even though there exists a general consensus around the idea that children's literature should be appropriate for children, the representation of trauma – in all its overwhelming directness and paradoxical latency – could arguably be an off-limit kind of topic for young people. Since the 1980s, however, the number of children's books that focus around the Holocaust has been growing (Kidd, 181). Holocaust literature has claimed a permanent place within literature as a whole. Because of its special dynamics, children's literature has even raised the question whether perhaps it is actually the most suitable form of literature to represent trauma (Kidd, 181). Holocaust-inspired children's literature positions itself as a clear example of literature that tries to investigate the complex workings of trauma. However, children's literature has of course dealt with traumatic experiences before the emergence of Holocaust literature.

For example, Mark Froud draws attention to the fact that the fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm are full of violence, gore and death. Interestingly, even though they have been sanitised over de centuries, these often bloody stories are quite a big part of the foundation of children's literature. More strikingly, now – the changed versions of the original fairy tales – are even often considered to be "signifier[s] of an ideal of happiness" (Froud, 13). The image of the dangerous and/or endangered child existed before the introduction of language and it is not likely that it will stop to exist very soon. This, again, has to do with the fact that children's literature can be considered to be

about them and not *for* them. Children's fiction has featured a great deal of violence and loss, as society has always known destruction and grief. Children's literature has subsequently represented many children encountering or enduring traumatic experiences. What makes trauma-related literature of the second part of the twentieth century – like Holocaust literature, but also other autobiographical or fictional works – stand out, however, is the fact that it does not just talk about trauma as an event, it explores the impact of trauma on the protagonist's psyche (Kidd, 182). So, besides mentioning death, suffering and loss, the emotionally destabilising effects of trauma can be explored.

Therefore, the inflicted wound cannot be demarcated or pinned down, for it has significant, unexpected emotional and psychological influences on many aspects of the story and the characters. This effect, however, does not have to be overtly explicit. For, because of trauma's ambiguous and fluid nature, confrontation is not always the best approach with regard to the representation of trauma (Kidd, 184). The unfolding and working through of traumas is a long-term process which is mostly subconscious. Its representation is, consequently, most likely going to be dialectic and intricate as well. Through literature, it becomes possible to experiment with the complex mix of trying to forget and to recollect, to deny and acknowledge. Moreover, because of the fact that children's literature has its own parameters, it could provide different ways of exploring trauma through words. As mentioned in the previous chapter, childhood is seen as an innocent, pure state of someone's life that centres around the world being a magical and surprising place; making sense of the world does not always revolve around rationality. This lack of reason very much resonates with the lack of a chronological structure, which is regarded a characteristic of traumas. By being able to evade traditional, narratological aspects of (adult) literature, for children's literature it becomes a bit easier to investigate – in different ways – what normally would be considered completely un-representable. As Gabriele Rippl, Phillip Schweighauser and Therese Steffen argue, another important aspect of trauma-related literature is the fact that stories and storytelling are both acts that have a special connection in relation to the traumatic experiences themselves. Hearing, reading or constructing narratives based around traumas are all forms of (re)witnessing the initial traumatic experiences (Rippl; Schweighauser; Steffen, 10). Consequently, by actively positioning oneself to the trauma, it is being kept fluid. Instead of burying it, by consciously relating to the traumatic experiences, feelings, emotions

and meanings do not become static and can develop and change over time. In this regard, the formulation of these narratives is for a large part determined by the story teller or the author. As a consequence, as writing stories can be seen as a way of relating to traumas, the author's process of dealing with certain traumatic experiences is of grave importance as well. This idea will be further explored in the upcoming parts.

Thus, from the beginning onwards, literature has dealt with traumatic experiences and the struggle of representing them. It has been a reoccurring theme within children's fiction as well. Even though children's literature is often thought of as being happy and hopeful, it does address dark topics. By adopting the view of a child, adult authors are able to investigate the different ways of representing trauma. Because of the fact that within children's fiction the traditional narratological devices do not always have to be met, authors are able to evade the linear structure of narratives and consequently can offer literary works that explore the unconventional and subconscious effects of traumas. Next to expressing the management of trauma, after a while, the psychological and emotional effects of a trauma on the protagonist – and sometimes even on the author – became important features of literature that emerged during the second half of the twentieth century. With all these ideas in mind, however, in this and the next chapter, I would like to argue that the psychological and emotional confusion that can be caused by traumas can be found in perhaps more subtle and nuanced ways in seemingly innocent children's fiction from before the second half of the 'Century of the Child'.

2.2 Matter of Life and Death

Paradoxically, traumas are considered to unfold outside of traditional language, while – at the same time – stories are considered to possess healing powers in relation to dealing with traumatic events. Storytelling's "reparative nature and ability to "restory" one's life" is especially deemed to be significant with regard to making sense of situations (Malchiodi; Ginns-Gruenberg, 167). Literary works are used to start dialogues between the involved and consequently change the way people relate to negative emotions. Furthermore, the telling or writing down of stories can have a therapeutic effect as well (Malchiodi; Ginns-Gruenberg, 168). By means of being able to regulate their own narratives, traumatised people have a better chance of being able to have some control over the experienced traumas and their aftermaths. Instead of having to be

passive, forced witnesses, individuals can claim back some subjectivity and offer resistance. One way of doing so is by 'life writing' (Rippl; Schweighauser; Steffen, 6). Life writing is a more general, inclusive term for autobiographical writing. The concept of autobiographies has been quite heavily scrutinised from a scholarly perspective with regard to the claim of truthfulness (Douglas, 68). However, simultaneously, through contemporary media authors have become quite present in the public eye. The complex relationship between the author and (his/her?) text will be investigated in the next parts.

Over the decades, literature that is influenced by the author's life has been given many different names and has manifested in varied forms, such as autobiography, autobiographical fiction, fictional autobiography, and many more. In order to speak about these forms of writing, today the term 'life writing' is most often used. Life writing can be thought to compass: "writing of diverse kinds that takes a life as its subject. Such writing can be biographical, novelistic, historical, or an explicit self-reference to the writer" (Smith; Watson, 3). Modernist literature started to blur the boundaries between autobiographical, biographical and fiction; a development which intensified with the postmodernists. Literary works – such as *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* which combine fiction with autobiographical elements – could consequently not always be interpreted adequately anymore by means of existing terms, leading to the formulation of the idea of life writing. The current interest in life writing reveals a contemporary tension with regard to the role of the author. In today's popular culture, there does seem to appear a form of pushing back against structuralist and poststructuralist notions, such as the 'death of the author'. For example, Roland Barthes, W. K. Wimsatt and Thomas R. Smith have all argued that the meanings of literary works are not completely determined by the authors (Douglas, 69). Authors should not be seen as creative geniuses or as sole creators, for texts are influenced by more factors, like its context and reader. Hence, when trying to explore literary works, one should be aware of this fact. Autobiographical works have furthermore had to face extensive criticism. As has been mentioned before in relation to trauma, the act of remembering is a very complicated one. Memories are in a constant flex and dependent on the times when they are accessed. Moreover, since spatial and temporal dimensions have changed when someone is trying to remember something from the past, one can wonder whether memories are completely accessible

at all. This is especially the case when someone tries to evoke parts of their childhood, as Kate Douglas mentions in her book on childhood:

> For an adult writing an autobiography of childhood, childhood memories are at best fragile and fragmented and at worst impossible to retrieve. In short, the notion that individual childhood memories exist and are accessible to the autobiographer has been hotly contested within both popular and scholarly responses to these texts. (Douglas, 21)

Ironically, when autobiographies contain details that do not add up, the trustworthiness of the whole piece is questioned. As a consequence, autobiographical texts have been heavily scrutinised. Thus, simultaneously, while the possibility of complete access to memories is contested, full historical accuracy is still asked from the autobiographer to legitimise his or her text. Since the 1990s, however, autobiographies have become more and more popular (Douglas, 24). Moreover, the author has become a reoccurring figure on our contemporary (social) media channels. At the table on talk shows or heavily promoted on Instagram, authors – and not just autobiographers – have taken a significant place within the eye of the general public. Next to an anew interest in the author as the possible source of praiseworthy creativity, through forms of life writing, the discussion about the constructedness of other texts that are not autobiographical can be instigated. Also, through fictional and non-fictional life writing, people that used to be silenced can speak up or talk back. When taking into account these perhaps paradoxical workings of life writing, exploring autobiographical elements in a text perhaps does not provide 'the truth' or 'the meaning', but it can open up unexpected dimensions of a literary work or excite dialogues.

Both *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* are not specifically considered to be autobiographical novels, but the lives of Barrie and Milne have been of influence with regard to the stories they have written, and they are of interest to many readers and scholars. Both writers took inspiration from children from their lives. As a result, the complex relationships between these children and the authors have been put under the microscope. This has, unfortunately, led to a fair amount of unsubstantiated judgement and interpretation as well; something one should be aware of when hearing or reading about Barrie's and Milne's lives and work (Tonkin, 260). That does, however, not mean that it is impossible to learn about aspects of their lives that proved to have an influence

on their work. For example, on 9 May 1860, James Matthew Barrie was born in Kirriemuir, Angus (Scotland). He was the youngest with eight older siblings. When Barrie was six however, he lost his brother David Jr. For, because of an ice-skating accident, David drowned as a child. After this traumatic experience, Barrie's mother – Margaret – could not cope with the loss of her supposedly favourite son. Barrie would subsequently dress and talk like him to keep the childlike image of his brother David alive (Dudgeon, 268 and Ridley, 28); to keep up an image of a boy who did not grow up… According to his biography of her, Barrie described that this development caused his mother to not love him anymore as an individual of his own. Decades later however he was able to become part of other children's childhoods. For he came to meet and befriend – among others – the Llewelyn Davies family, to which he would tell adventurous stories (Ridley, 14); stories that eventually were a source of inspiration for *Peter Pan* in all its forms. These narratives were foremost constructed for the Llewelyn Davies boys: George, John, Peter, Michael and Nicolas. Many have interpreted the relationship between the boys and Barrie to be of some kind of paedophilic nature, however, there has never been found any concrete evidence for this claim and Nicolas Davies has actually refuted the accusation (Tonkin, 263).

Milne based his stories about Winnie-the-Pooh and Christopher Robin on a young boy as well, as the inspiration was drawn from his only son Christopher Robin Milne. Before the birth of his son however, the author had lived through some chaotic times already. Born in Kilburn, London (England) on 18 January 1882, Alan Alexander Milne's childhood was relatively peaceful. However, this all changed when in 1914 the First World War broke out. Milne was an outspoken pacifist; however, he did serve in both World Wars. When he enlisted for World War I, he was already a playwright and assistant editor, in the army however he would serve as a Second Lieutenant and a signalling officer (Van Emden; Piuk, 20). Even though the beginning of his service was fairly uneventful, Milne ended up spending four months at The Battle of the Somme. Fortunately, he made it out alive, but he did witness an unimaginable abundance of death at close range. He did get injured during the battle which led him to return to England invalidated. The Somme Offensive was supposed to cause a big break for the Allies. However, even though they did win ground on the Germans, it was not the extraordinary victory they had hoped for. Because of its casualties, the battle did become one of the bloodiest battles of the First World War. These aspects and his experiences of

the war had a significant impact on Milne. His pacifistic tendencies became more firmly grounded and it changed his writing. To fellow writer H.G. Wells, Milne expressed his attitude towards his time of service by simply exclaiming: "I simply can't tell you how I loathe the Army" (Thwaite, 177). Furthermore, before the war he used to address difficult topics from an ironic or humorous perspective. In her extensive biography of Milne, Ann Thwaite mentions however that the overwhelming destructiveness of the years between 1914 and 1918 left the author without words:

> He [Milne] could not write about the filth, the smells, the lice, the rats, the lack of any privacy, the constant fear. He could not describe the corpses, including the suicides, and the men executed for cowardice or desertion – all the things that life in the Army meant on the Somme in 1916. He could not write now about the meaningless lunacy of the whole horrible business. That would come later. (Thwaite, 177)

Therefore, both Barrie and Milne went through traumatic experiences that had an intrusive impact on not just their lives, but on their attitude towards their worlds and on their writing as well. In order to see how (autobiographical) trauma might be present in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh,* the novels will be analysed with regard to their use of narration and narrators.

As mentioned above about life writing, narration is important to take control over the incomprehensible. Trauma disrupts one's life and therefore one's ongoing narrative. Because the traumatic experiences cannot be fully known to be involved, they cannot be narrativised. As a consequence of this, the trauma remains to infiltrate the present for it cannot be given a satisfactory place within the past. After giving it some time, however, to become a little less painful, by intentionally trying to put the events into words, the trauma "may become lifted from the subconscious and integrated into conscious memory" (Hunter, 68). Within literature, the narration of the story is determined by two important factors: the author and the narrator. Even though there exists a general consensus that within fiction the author and the narrator are not the same, it can be difficult to distinguish the two. Structuralist Gérard Genette tried to explore the structures of stories and one way of doing so was to investigate the 'voice'/narrating instance of a text (Genette, 212). He noticed that the presence and the involvement differed per narrator and consequently was able to categorise a number of

types of narrators. For example, Genette makes a distinction between a narrator that plays a role in the narrative and a narrator that simply does not; a 'homodiegetic narrator' and a 'heterodiegetic narrator' (Genette, 245 and Wurth; Rigney, 178). Moreover, he uptakes a quite firm position with regard to the gradation of absence and involvement of the narrator in stories, as according to Genette: "Absence is absolute, but presence has degrees" (Genette, 245). This is why he makes another distinction in relation to the homodiegetic narrator: the 'autodiegetic narrator' and the witness-narrator. The involvement of the autodiegetic narrator is substantial as he or she is not just a character within the story, but even (one of) the protagonist(s). In comparison to the witness-narrator, which – as the name implies – narrates the story as a bystander or witness and therefore assumes a more passive role. However, the narrator in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* does appear to shift from being a absent narrator to a more personally involved one. How this unfolds – and its implications – will be analysed in the next part.

It has become clear that the role of the author is a complicated one. Even though the author has become somewhat of a fetishised celebrity in our current culture, the truthfulness of autobiographical writing has – and is still – heavily questioned from an academic perspective. However, counter stances have been emerging as well. By coining the concept of life writing, the complexity of autobiographical writing can be explored more in-depth. Furthermore, by being positioned against non-biographical writing, it demonstrates the constructedness of all forms of writing, and it showcases the opportunity for oppressed or silenced people to speak out. Moreover, though both Barrie and Milne have not said their works are part of forms of life writing, *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* are based on real-life people, events and traumatic events. Even though traumas are so intrusive because of their un-narrativity, by consciously taking charge of the story, a traumatised person can reclaim the experiences and put them partly to rest by putting them into words. In both Barrie's and Milne's work, moments of reflexivity might be found in the formulation of the narrator, as the narrators change throughout both books. By using Genette's 'types of narrators', it could be explored how they do so.

2.3 Writing on the Wall

Even though both *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* tell stories of confusion, loss and danger, not many people would compare them to other novels like Kurt Vonnegut's science fiction war story *Slaughterhouse 5* (1969) or Jeanette Winterson's autobiographical novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985). These narratives are known for the ways in how they try to tackle the complex workings of trauma as a cultural and societal concept and as a literary concept. One way of doing so was by experimenting with narration. These books, however, did obviously not come out of nowhere and were able to be made because of other, pre-existing literature. By taking a close look at how narration plays a significant role in Barrie's and Milne's texts by means of Genette's types of narrators, it could become clear how trauma might be represented in these seemingly innocent works. They might, consequently, even be part of the genealogy of trauma literature.

Besides dealing with confusion, loss and danger, *Peter Pan* even hints at death and the loss/deaths of children (Faivre, 30): "He [Peter Pan] did not alarm her [Mrs Darling], for she thought she had seen him before in the faces of many *women who have no children*. Perhaps he is to be found in the faces of some mothers also". (Barrie, 12 (emphasis mine)). It is not completely clear what is meant by the phrasing of 'women who have no children', for it might just be young women or women who simply do not have children. However, the passage does make it seem that something tragic happened. Mrs Darling is able to recognise the boy at a moment when she – even though she does not know it yet – was about to lose her children. Another passage refers to the death of children as well: "The boys on the island vary, of course, in numbers, according as they get killed and so on; and when they seem to be growing up, which is against the rule, Peter thins them out […]" (Barrie, 59). Next to the absence of children, *Peter Pan* even mentions the killing of children by another child. Although the novel does not provide specifics or place an emphasis the loss of these children, it becomes clear that next to the lack of a mother figure, child death is a chilling theme that runs through Barrie's work.

Interestingly, the mentioning of loss or death is often presented through dialogue-less passages. These are consequently being followed up by fascinating, dialogue-focussed situations: "He [Peter Pan] was accompanied by a strange light, no bigger than *your* fist, which darted about the room like a living thing; and *I* think it must have been this light that wakened Mrs Darling […] If *you* or *I* or Wendy had been there we should have seen that he was very like Mrs Darling's kiss." (Barrie, 12 (emphasis

mine)). Or: "Let *us* pretend to lie here among the sugar-cane and watch them as they steal by in single file, each with his hand on his dagger." (Barrie, 59 (emphasis mine)). While the former parts present the situations quite distantly, the latter passages demonstrate a more subjective and involved approach towards that what is unfolding. An unidentified narrator intrudes upon the action and consequently blurs the boundaries between characters and narrator. By addressing the reader directly, the narrator in the latter part appears to even take on a perspective that tends towards the metafictional (Tonkin, 278). Strikingly, though both forms of narration from both passages display a distant difference in presence and involvement, the narrator does not play a role within the story.

This effect becomes even more noticeable in another part of *Peter Pan*, namely through one of its criticised segments:

> Peter was not quite like other boys; but he was afraid at last. A tremor ran through him, like a shudder passing over the sea; bot on the sea one shudder follows another till there are hundreds of them, and Peter felt just the one. Next moment he was standing erect on the rock again, with that smile on his face and a drum beating within him. It was saying, 'To die will be an awfully big adventure.' (Barrie, 109)

Though these words might seem to glamorise death, when aware of Barrie's childhood another layer of meaning is added to them. For, it resembles the drowning of his brother David and the traumatic aftermath that followed it (Ridley, 21). The idea of death allows for extensive imaginative potential with regard to the subject. In relation to the narration, again, this quite overwhelming experience is depicted in a manner that suggests distance. Since the narrator does not play a part in the evolvement of the narrative, he/she could be considered to be a heterodiegetic narrator. However, while the solution to Peter Pan's situation manifests, a different narrator becomes noticeable. For when as the Never Bird tries to save Peter Pan from drowning, a situation develops that draws attention to the workings of language and to the nature of storytelling: "In fanciful stories people can talk to the birds freely, and *I* wish for the moment *I* could pretend that this was such a story, and say that Peter replied intelligently to the Never Bird; but truth is best, and *I* want to tell only what really happened." (Barrie, 112 (emphasis mine)). By changing the form of narration, passages like these are able to

incite feelings of closeness and engagement. However, the illusion is still created that the narrator is not able to interfere. Thus, while this narrator is still a heterodiegetic one, he/she does partake in a different manner of narration. This difference appears to stem from varying degrees of involvement; the former narrator observes, while the latter contemplates from a meta-perspective. One could hence wonder whether the division that Genette made with regard to the homodiegetic narrator could be applied to the heterodiegetic one as well. As it appears that absence of the unfolding of the story does not mean absence from the narrative itself. The possibility presents itself that the mentioned examples exemplify two types of narrators that cannot be fully described or comprehended by Genette's distinctions. As an addition to his work, it might therefore be good to formulate new, adding types. In order to better understand the narrators of the texts, the distinctions that I formulated after affiliating myself with the theory and the literary works are: the 'witness-heterodiegetic narrators' and the 'meta-heterodiegetic narrators'. The last passage furthermore revolves around the feeling of not being understood. The change in narration into a more personal, engaged one could point towards Barrie's struggle of being understood by his mother as an individual.

However, one of the most agonising parts of *Peter Pan* might be left for the end of the story:

'Don't turn on the light,' he [Peter Pan] cried.

She [Wendy] let her hands play in the hair of the tragic boy. She was not a little girl heart-broken about him; she was a grown woman smiling at it all, but they were wet smiles.

Then she turned on the light, and Peter saw. He gave a cry of pain; and when the tall beautiful creature stooped to lift him in her arms he drew back sharply.

'What is it?' he cried again.

'I am old, Peter. I am ever so much more than twenty. I grew up long ago.'

'You promised not to!'

'I couldn't help it. I am a married woman, Peter.'

'No, you're not.'

'Yes, and the little girl in the bed is my baby.'

'No, she's not.' (Barrie, 204-205)

In the story, Peter Pan keeps having to lose mother figures. This reoccurring trauma leaves him imprisoned and unable to grow up. Subsequently, one can wonder, is it that he does not want to grow up, or is he not able to? Once again, this scene unfolds through a 'witness-heterodiegetic' form of narration and is followed up by a reflexive 'meta-heterodiegetic' one: "As *you* look at Wendy *you* may see her hair becoming white, and her figure little again, for all this happened long ago. Jane is now a common grown-up with a daughter called Margaret [...]" (Barrie, 206-207 (emphasis mine)). Next to actively addressing the reader again, the meta-heterodiegetic passage appears to be addressing everyone and anyone as well. The all-knowing, but involved voice demonstrates how his/her knowledge is presented in the present but stems from the past and consequently becomes very similar to an autobiographical narrator (Theisen, 125). Furthermore, the analysed connections between the passages show another aspect which substantively refers to the workings of trauma and its representations. Like the manifestation of trauma and its repetitive infiltrations, the more reflexive narration can only be done after the events themselves. The experiences are described almost distantly and un-emotionally, compared to the pieces that foreground a more present narrator. The actions in the story appear to stand on their own, whereas the conscious reaction follows behind. This literary latency feels very compatible to the latency that occurs during the experience of traumatic events. Rationally trying to describe the events does not adequately represent them. It consequently becomes clear that through exploring the events through words can help ground the events and the narrator.

Similar effects can be detected in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, however, they find different ways of expression. From the introduction onwards, the novel creates a clear distinction between the narrator, Christopher Robin as the boy who the narrator is telling the stories to, and the characters of the told stories (including Christopher Robin as a character):

> Once upon a time, a very long time ago now, about last Friday, Winnie-the-Pooh lived in a forest all by himself under the name Sanders.
> *("What does 'under the name' mean?" asked Christopher Robin.*
> *"It means he had the name over the door in gold letters and lived under it."*
> *"Winnie-the-Pooh wasn't quite sure," said Christopher Robin.*

> *"Now I am," said a growly voice.*
>
> *"Then I will go on," said I.)* (Milne, 4-5 (Original emphasis))

By taking on the clear role of narrator, the narrator distinguishes himself as a significant part of the story and could therefore be considered an autodiegetic narrator. Furthermore, the narrator declares himself as quite the authoritative force (Hunt, 2013, 81). However, this mostly happens when a dialogue commences between Christopher Robin and the narrator; a conversation that takes place separately from the unfolding events within the story itself.

Moreover, though, for the rest of the narrative the narrator foremost assumes a completely absent/heterodiegetic position, there are occasions when this changes: "Then they all went home again. And *I* think, but *I* am not quite sure, that Roo had a hot bath and went straight to bed." (Milne, 128-129 (Emphasis mine)). Instead of carrying out an autodiegetic or absent, heterodiegetic form of narration, the narrator in this passage appears to assume a 'meta-heterodiegetic'-like type of narration. This change however – compared to the successive shifts in narration in *Peter Pan* – is quite subtle and does not seem to have a direct connection the events that happened prior. The chances in narrative voice refer more to the act of narration than the described actions (Ryan, 151). By taking on a more involved interest in the unfolding of the story, the narrator appears to suddenly become aware of the ways the stories are constructed. Instead of Barrie's playful, conspiring tone, the voice of this narrator tends towards slight surprise.

Though the shifting between different narrators might not specifically refer to traumatic experiences, they could point towards important, reoccurring themes within the story: "When the rain began Pooh was asleep. It rained, and it rained, and it rained, and he slept and he slept and he slept. He had had a tiring day. *You* remember how he discovered the North Pole," (Milne, 134-135 (Emphasis mine)). Or like in this passage:

> You can imagine Piglet's joy when at last the ship came in sight of him. In after-
> years he liked to think that he had been in Very Great Danger during the Terrible
> Flood. [...] You can imagine his joy when at last he saw the good ship, *The Brain of
> Pooh* [original emphasis] (Captain, C. Robin; 1st mate, P. Bear.) coming over the
> sea to rescue him.
>
> And that is really the end of the story, and as *I* am very tired after that

sentence, *I* think *I* shall stop here. (Milne, 145-146 (original and added emphasis))

Throughout *Winnie-the-Pooh*, the fear and distaste of water and drowning is brought to the fore in several instances. Next to being a general metaphor for unpleasant circumstances, the rain could be a subtle reference to the Battle of the Somme, which started a day late because of heavy rainfall. The excessive amounts of water made the first few months of the battle even more difficult. The "Terrible Flood" might be constructed as a fictionalised parallel with the Somme Offensive. Furthermore, these water-based passages display a similar shift in narration. Again, the 'meta-heterodiegetic narrator' appears to be slightly startled by becoming aware of writing. In terms of the narrativisation of traumatic experiences, this resembles the practice of becoming conscious of that what haunts the subject in the subconscious and trying to actively relate oneself to it. Though the narrator does not comment on the actions from a meta-perspective, he does comment on the act of narrating from a meta-perspective.

The different narrators in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* are thus able to make different aspects of the representation of traumas explicit. They do so, however, in varying ways. Whereas Barrie's heterodiegetic narrators vary from being more and less present and involved, Milne's narrators even shift from being heterodiegetic and homodiegetic. Both books, furthermore, demonstrate the possibility of gradation in relation to engagement within Genette's concept of the heterodiegetic narrator; witness-heterodiegetic narrators and meta-heterodiegetic narrators might be possibilities with the expression of narration. Moreover, the narrators in *Peter Pan* appear to interact with each other by means of the manifestation of latency. The narration in Barrie's work, subsequently, does not solely represent different approaches to the described events, it even appears to simulate trauma's psychological and emotional workings. In *Winnie-the-Pooh*, the changes in terms of narrators are less frequent and more subtle. However, they do address the notion of narrating the un-narratable. In order to relate oneself to traumatic experience, the involved should be able to become conscious of the repetitive manifestations of traumas and adhere an active stance. Furthermore, the changes in narration occur in both literary works at the describing of significant, overwhelming or traumatic events. By drawing connections between the experiences of the involved, authorial narrators and the lives of the authors, extra layers of meaning can be added to the experience of reading the stories. It is important that trying to pinpoint

autobiographical aspects in fictional works does not have to reduce the works, but can actually enrich them. For it is important to be aware of the fact that if the zeitgeist of when a text is published is considered to be of influence, we should take in account the author as well, as he or she is partly a manifestation if that time, whether they try the adhere to it or assume a subversive perspective.

2.4 Unravelling Trauma, Author, and Narrator

So, while the last chapter explored the representation of childhood, this chapter tried to unravel the rather mysterious and inaccessible – but fascinating – aspects and implications of trauma. For, from the very start literature has been a form of expression that apparently lends itself to the exploring of traumatic experiences. This happened in literature that we deem to be children's literature as well. The last chapter discussed the diverting parameters of children's fiction and because of them, writing for children does not always have to follow the logical ways of meaning making; a crucial aspect for the representation of trauma, as the lack of unification is at the core trauma itself. Consequently, and most explicitly, after the Second World War, several aspects of literature and children's literature openly investigated the psychological and emotional effects of traumatic events on important characters. However, as has become clear through the rest of this chapter, seeds of this development can be found in earlier children's fiction, by means of changes in narration.

  This has to do with the fact that beliefs about both the author and the narrator are intricate and often entangled. The author has currently become quite a visible figure in popular culture. However, the idea of authors being the sole or main meaning maker or of being bringers of truths through texts has been heavily criticised by structuralist and poststructuralist thinkers. By including the practice of life writing, it became possible to draw the attention back to the positive and constructive aspects of literary works with varying amounts of autobiographical elements, for it brings attention to the constructedness of all literature and to the impossibility of bringer forward 'the truth', as there is no such thing. It consequently became possible to take on a nuanced position which floats between the idea of the author as literary genius and sole meaning creator and the idea of the 'death of the author'.

  Furthermore, as mentioned above, literature can serve as a means to explore specifically the parts of one's life that do not make sense in the first place. Traumas have

their intrusive impacts precisely because of their incomprehensibility. By actively investigating its – often strange – workings through words, people and authors are able to turn the incredibly painful – but inevitable – experience of reliving through their traumas into productive forms of reclaiming control of the haunting events. In literature, this reflexivity can become noticeable through its narration and its narrators.

Both Barrie and Milne have lived through experiences that proved to be traumatic. They even had influence on their writing. By analysing their works through means of Genette's different 'types' of narrators: heterodiegetic, homodiegetic, autodiegetic, and witness-diegetic, it becomes clear that these distinctions prove useful in explaining how narration can be used by the author as a literary device to approach personal traumas. What has become apparent as well, however, is the fact that Genette's 'narrator types' do not cover all forms of narrators. In *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* a narrator finds expression that simultaneously takes up a distant role in terms of the unfolding of the story, but one that proves to be highly involved of the narrative as a whole as well. There might exist narrators that are both heterodiegetic, but assume the role of witness or meta-commentator at the same time. Furthermore, the shifts in narration in Barrie's work point towards an effect of trauma from a metafictional perspective. The latency and complexity characteristic of traumas finds its way into *Peter Pan* by means of demonstrating an emotionally struggling narrator. The changing narrators in *Winnie-the-Pooh* are perhaps less explicit, they do reveal significant aspects of Milne's work. By formulating a 'meta-heterodiegetic narrator' as well, the text draws attention to the importance of formulating personal narratives to counter the un-narrativity of traumas. In order to do so, becoming aware of the chosen words is crucial.

Lastly, both Barrie's and Milne's text contain autobiographical elements. By drawing possible connections by trauma related autobiographical aspects of their lives, it becomes clear that literary works can have layers of meaning that do not dictate 'the meaning' – even though, again, there is no such thing – of a text. By trying to refrain from interpreting aspects of their lives un-substantively as much as possible, this chapter has shown how through means of analysing the narrators and narration several aspects of Barrie and Milne's traumatic experiences – which proved to be of influence with regard to their writing – and of the working of traumas in general could be brought to the fore.

Chapter Three

A Deafening Silence

The Presence of Literary Gaps Through the Use of Fantasy

> *""Meanings is not important, said the BFG. I cannot be right all the time.*
> *Quite often I is left instead of right.""*
>
> -Roald Dahl, *The BFG*

For a long time, fantasy literature was not often considered to be part of serious literature or to be literature at all; however, there has been developing a significant interest in the illuminating aspects of literature that explores the fantastical (Fabrizi, 10). Fantasy literature is not just acknowledged for its narrative structures, archetypal themes or linguistic experimentation, it is being recognised for its cultural, social and ethical potential as well. Through fantasy, grand questions about people, ideas and life can be asked. This is possible because of fantasy's characteristics, as the term 'fantasy' – according to Rosemary Jackson in her book *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981) – "has been applied rather indiscriminately to any literature which does not give priority to realistic representation" (Jackson, 13). Fantasy literature does not have to adhere to traditional narratological or linguistic conventions and can consequently investigate parts of reality that might be inaccessible in other forms of literature. These ways of thinking of fantasy literature are in quite a strong contrast with how it was seen before, as the specific genre of literature was foremost considered for its entertainment and escapist related possibilities (Le Guin, 69).

The reason why it is difficult to find out about its functions and characteristics is because fantasy literature blurs and breaks boundaries. The value of fantasy – in and out of literature – is created through precisely the resistance of definition (Jackson, 1). By undermining relatively demarcated dimensions, such as time and space, fantasy literature is able to experiment with normative, discursive and ideological limitations. Authors of fantasy literature are able to play with, criticise, and change these seemingly static boundaries. The fantasy author, as a consequence, has to set his/her own

demarcations, in order for himself/herself to be able to – in turn – subvert them once again. By going against the norm and the familiar, fantasy literature offers another possibility to disturb the course of events. Not only the content of fantasy allows for a certain kind of freedom, the people who explore this content are characterised by a range of diversity (Jackson, 41). Through the subversive-ness of fantasy literature, marginalised writers – and especially women – receive more possibilities with regard to showing their literary qualities.

As fantasy literature operates through a constant process of balancing divergence, its liminality encourages readers to read between the lines as well. Writing stories is based on the notion of exclusion as the printed words have gained preference over innumerable other possibilities. This does however not mean – as also has been mentioned in the previous chapter – that 'the meaning' of a narrative is therefore fixed and final. Literary works are built with words, but with silences as well; silences that are possibly too loud to ignore.

Peter Pan and *Winnie-the-Pooh* are both novels that rely on the workings of fantasy and feature fantastic elements. This is why, the combination of fantasy literature's parameters and the fascinating workings of its perhaps non-traditional literary use will be researched in this chapter, by trying to answer the third – and last – sub-question: how does the notion of fantasy as a literary device function within *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*? Consecutively, the use of fantasy elements in modern-day novels, fantasy as a literary device, Arthur W. Frank's socio-narratology in relation to literary silences for it his thoughts are capable of opening up the dialogue about gaps within literature that force the reader to become aware of what is not being said and consequently makes him/her stop and think, and the role of fantasy in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* will be discussed in the upcoming parts of this chapter by looking at, for example, fictional spatial dimensions, the construction of fluid identity, anthropomorphism, and the weight of names.

3.1 The Mysterious Arbitrariness of Rationality

Nowadays, fantasy is often celebrated for its potential to take the reader onto a journey to a happier place, as these texts are able to offer an alternative to the real world. Fairy tales, science fiction and fantasy fiction create an atmosphere through which the impossible becomes possible. The literary works that feature fantastical elements

however – besides being celebrated at the same time – have had to face quite extensive criticism. For, like with children's literature – people find it difficult to place them within the realm of 'serious' 'adult' literature (Hunt; Lenz, 2). Moreover, the idea of enjoyment is a significant part of reading fantasy fiction and, strangely, this allows for it to be considered as something frivolous. This aspect strengthens the idea of escapism in relation to fantasy literature, for emerging oneself into another world can then be seen as putting blinders on for mere entertainment purposes or as an easy coping mechanism which makes it unnecessary to deal with actual hardships in the real world. Fortunately, through modern works of (fantasy) fiction and because of changing stances with regard to fantasy literature, it becomes clear that fantasy is far more complicated than it often is thought to be.

Fiction that features fantasy is able to delve into the shadows, the unwanted, and the unknown (Apter, 6). For, unlike other forms of literature, the pieces of fantastic literature do not just mention the repressed, they foreground them; fantasy provides a view *in* instead of *on*. By stretching our conceptions of reality, the fantastical brings forward opportunities to learn about the real world in unexpected ways. That is why it is important to note that imagined worlds from modern fantasy novels do not project a totally different and severed reality compared to the real world. Ursula K. Le Guin mentions that the criticism of fantasy literature being solely capable of accomplishing the effect of a shallow form of escapism is based on the idea that the texts portray places that are complete opposites of the places that we mentally and physically live in (Le Guin, 69). In order to achieve this however the author would have to be aware of the world he or she is evading from and the writer would consequently still be relating to real life. By proposing an imagined world, literature will still not be able to refrain from reality completely. One can furthermore wonder whether fiction that relies on fantasy (always) wants to remove itself from the real world, for through the construction of another world it becomes possible to create distance and to reflect critically on reality (Le Guin, 19). When the reader is confronted with literary works which include fantastical worlds that are contrasted with the real world, the real world can become disturbed and turned into something unfamiliar (Jackson, 3). Consequently, fiction that contains fantasy elements and fantasy literature are able to reveal the ideological and discursive constructed-ness of the 'real' world, and take up a questioning, critical or even subversive position with regard to the facets of reality which are deemed fixed,

normative and essentialist.

By opening up meaning, fantastic fiction is able to explore another underrepresented aspect of society as well, namely the subconscious (Rottensteiner, 7). Texts with fantasy elements are able to differentiate themselves to other pieces of fiction by often portraying the subconscious not as something strange, but as a big part of everyday life. Fantastical texts shine light on the silenced and repressed and therefore emphasise parts of life which are normally kept hidden. Instead of primarily rational acts, the complex workings of the misunderstood, incomprehensible, and even unwanted can be investigated. What becomes clear is that the conscious and subconscious state cannot be separated completely; they are inherently and inextricably connected. A great deal of fantasy fiction recognises, acknowledges and celebrates this part of human life, instead of trying to hide it. Furthermore, again, by creating space for the hidden, significant elements of society can be revealed. The subconscious – like the concept of trauma – exemplifies a powerful force that cannot be fully interpreted or mediated through dominant notions of reason and rationality. This is why stories that deviate from the norm are often presented as less valuable. The eagerness to shun the uncontrollable might have to do with an aspect of alterity. Fantasy stems from a desire to allow for the mysterious, irrational and chaotic to exist and to unfold; otherness is emphasised (Le Guin, 64). The Other is therefore a significant part of literature that uses the fantastical in fictional works. Perhaps even more important, this form of literature does not only make people aware of the artificiality of the 'real world', the presence of the subconscious also makes it impossible to ignore the Other within the Self. Boundaries become blurred within fantasy fiction and subsequently start to raise awareness to the fact that the people from the real world are social constructs as well. Fantasy literature forces its readers to face their fear of the unknown and come to terms with the idea that this otherness is human. Interestingly, by approaching fantasy, it becomes apparent that it is not built on irrationality, but that it actually shows the arbitrariness of rationality.

In this regard, fiction that uses fantastical elements can emerge because fantasy can operate as a special context with the above-mentioned parameters. Fredric Jameson describes this context as the 'literary mode':

> For when we speak of a mode, what can we mean but that this particular type of
> literary discourse is not bound to the conventions of a given age, nor indissolubly

linked to a given type of verbal artefact, but rather persists as a temptation and a
mode of expression across a whole range of historical periods, seeming to offer
itself, if only intermittently, as a formal possibility which can be revived and
renewed. (Jameson, 142)

While moving beyond the notion of genre, the concept of a literary mode transcends
historical periods and can be interpreted as an adaptive way of expressing and thinking
(Furby; Hines, 28). In linguistic terms, the mode can be seen as a base language from
which expressions derive. Fantasy as a literary mode is therefore not limited to a
specific cultural form, but it allows for an atmosphere to exist that exudes imagination,
the repressed and the impossible (Jackson, 7). As it often serves as a starting point, this
does not mean that every piece of fantastical fiction operates in the same ways or
conforms to all of the often-returning themes. Fantasy often hints at the stretching of
boundaries, the testing of reality and the exploration of the hidden, while staying a non-
fixed, fluid mode. The fluidity of fantasy allows for its questioning nature, for fantasy
opens up the static. It infiltrates normalised 'truths' and consequently tears down its
constructed legitimacy. By doing so, fantastical fiction voices meanings that go against
the dominant power structures and it therefore becomes polysemic (Jackson, 23).

Literature that draws upon fantasy is therefore on the one hand praised for its
ability to transport its reader to another realm and on the other hand it is still often not
recognised for its in-depth literary potential. Modern fantasy fiction specifically relates
itself to the real world, while exploring the workings of the subconscious and
consequently proves that it can conjure up varying effects, instead of just feelings of
escapism. When these aspects of literary fantasy are acknowledged, it becomes
noticeable that these texts are able to approach topics and emotions that normally are
considered to be nonvaluable, unwanted, dangerous, scary or inaccessible. Fantastical
fiction is able to do so because of its workings as a literary mode through which it can
open up ideological and discursive limits. By uncovering the repressed and the other,
fiction that features fantasy can take up a subversive position thanks to its potential to
question the constructed-ness of socially accepted narratives and therefore functions as
an important cultural force which has a significant ethical side to it.

3.2 A Breath of Fresh Air

When critically assessing fantasy fiction, it thus requires an uninhibited approach. As this thesis has tried to make clear, texts that can be considered to be part of children's literature, trauma literature and fantasy literature all – in their own ways – ask for an open-minded attitude. One could therefore wonder whether the ways we think about stories should be reassessed, or at least broadened. Instead of trying to pin down 'the meaning' within narratives, Arthur W. Frank – with his socio-narratology – tries to see what kind of effects stories have on their listeners, tellers, time and contexts (Frank, 3). For, narratives that deviate from the norm are still narratives. Literature continuously tests the limits of what stories are meant to do or how they could be constructed. Frank therefore calls for a new way of thinking about narratives, and – fascinatingly – he does so be focussing on the silences within texts (Frank, 81). At the base of his socio-narratology lie some changes with regard to approaching stories which might make it a bit easier to understand how the unnarratable is present in fantasy fiction and literature in general.

In his book *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology* (2010), Frank takes a closer look at the role stories play in people's lives. Narratives are often thought of to have a mimetic purpose and to consequently mirror reality (Rippl; Schweighauser; Steffen, 9). However, Frank argues, to be aware of the fact that one is experiencing something worth remembering, he or she has already formalised that experience into a story. One can only consciously experience a situation when it has been narrativised. Frank therefore mentions that narratives precede experiences: "what people know as experience hitches a ride on stories those people know; the stories shape what becomes the experience" (Frank, 22). Although one could argue that the experience and narrative are formed through their dialectic relationship, instead of one existing separately and a priori. It does exemplify the fact that stories and language are highly performative and that they do not serve as uninfluential, solely objective representations. Through his socio-narratology, Frank acknowledges the agency of stories and how they operate in a dialogical manner; every time a story is told it consists of a reassembling of parts of individual and collective memories. Narratives consequently manifest again and again in a constant state of flux and are part and parcel of that process. This is why Frank uses the expression of stories that 'breathe', for through the inextricable relationship the stories give meaning to life (Frank, 25). Because of Frank's recognition of the importance of teller and listener, the narratives are able to provide multiple meanings.

While investigating these aspects of stories, Frank stresses the importance to consider the gaps in stories as well. Main characters and parts of narratives are often blessed with extensive descriptions and room to develop, whereas peripheral characters and components are not lucky enough to enjoy the same space (Frank, 80). Stories are used to make sense of the world, to create some feeling of order or control within the chaos. Consequently, narratives are – consciously and unconsciously – built on exclusion, for the simple reason that not everything can be talked about in one story. How straightforward this part of narratology may be, it has other less innocent implications as well. Unfortunately, because of its performative abilities, marginalised people become marginalised in stories as well (and vice versa). By taking away or restricting non-normative identities, their representability becomes undermined and jeopardised. Over time, a distance is created that causes a diminishing of understanding between people. As a result of this, some parts – and people – might even become unnarratable (Frank, 76). This however also means that some aspects which are deemed incomprehensible, might become narratable once again. Frank proposes his socio-narratology in order for it to become clear that stories can have both destructive and constructive effects.

This would mean that parts of reality that used to be invisible can claim their right to be acknowledged and recognised through narratives. Through the telling of stories, that what used to have to remain a secret or forgotten can 'cry out' and embody its existence (Frank, 76). Frank therefore argues to take this into consideration when reading or relating oneself in any way to a literary text and focus onto the question who of the literary characters are able to fully tell their stories. Furthermore, resistance does not have to be loud; the silences in literature can function as buffers that make readers stop and think (Frank, 60). These gaps are able to temporarily disrupt the flow of the story and consequently create a space for contemplation. As this kind of gaps can be found in Barrie's and Milne's work, the next part of this chapter will elaborate on this effect more extensively. What, for example, will become apparent is that the holes will have to be filled with words again and one should be careful to let the impact of the silences fade. Thus, through his request of letting stories breath, Frank is not after defining narrativity, he is after researching its effects. As he argues that stories should not be considered as mere representations, he highlights the fact that narratives have agency of their own and that telling and hearing stories are performative acts. Stories

are vital matter and they largely shape our ways of living. These narratives however cannot be completely inclusive and subsequently contain silences and holes. By recognising that non-hegemonic aspects of society are often silenced, Frank sees opportunities for the repressed to speak up, as deliberate silence can be deafening. Frank is aware of the fact that stories can paradoxically be a source and act of both repression and empowerment. That is why it is important to see how the literary gaps are being filled.

So, in general, Frank's quest for a way to find literary options for the repressed to empower itself demonstrates many similarities with the ways trauma is represented. The implementation of a socio-narratology could therefore be a significant theoretical framework to explore the issues with the representability of trauma. Moreover, as the previous section of this chapter has mentioned, fantasy can serve as a literary mode to address the hidden. The next part of this chapter will therefore investigate the 'trialectic' relationship between trauma, fantasy and silences within – of course – *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh*.

3.3 What's in a Name?

The previous chapter has drawn attention to the role of the narrator and the narration in relation to the possible literary unfolding of the complex workings of trauma. By analysing Barrie's and Milne's work in this regard it became apparent that there are several, varied examples of how trauma makes itself present in literary texts without explicitly being mentioned. In order to follow up on these findings, next to the significance of the narrator – the course of the narrative itself will be researched. My means of Frank's socio-narratology, the disruptions and gaps in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* can hopefully be partly interpreted. Moreover, as they are part of children's literature and fantasy fiction, the interaction between complicated identities and the manifestations of fantastical elements can point more in-depth towards the subversive potential of children's fantasy fiction.

Within the story of Peter, Wendy, John, Michael, and many more, the importance of narratives, narration and storytelling is often emphasised. Though the novel discusses many adventures (good and bad), perhaps one of the saddest elements from the story comes at the end when the children – except for Peter Pan, of course – have grown-up and lost the ability to fly. John, however, apparently lost something even more precious:

"The bearded man who doesn't know any story to tell his children was once John" (Barrie, 199). The idea that the boy who used to be able to fly to Neverland loses his self in the end comes as a surprise, for it represents the actual danger of growing up. Although most of the children who grow up turn out to be just fine, John unexpectedly loses his sense of sense; an effect which comes as a shock. John forgot how to use his imagination and therefore forgot how to tell stories and because of this lost who he used to be. Next to catching the reader off guard, the sentence emphasises hole in John's identity. The above sentence furthermore exemplifies the idea that narratives and storytelling are extremely performative and have an extensive influence on the unfolding of people's lives. It shows that people are able to change over time. These changes take place in a special environment, one that changes over time as well: Neverland.

The fictional land of Neverland is a place – and space – of wonder and imagination. When the Darling children follow Peter Pan's directions "'Second to the right, and straight on till morning'" they arrive at the infamous island (Barrie, 45). Neverland – even though it is a piece of land surrounded by probably water, and therefore should be fairly demarcated – proves to be a place without limits. The island is compared to the mind of a child and therefore constantly changes: "the Neverland is always more or less and island" (Barrie, 7). This fantastical land allows for visitors to set its boundaries, similar to how the involved with fantasy and fantasy literature have to formulate barriers. The absence of order does however not cause fear; it creates possibilities, as Neverland among other provides: "astonishing splashes of colour here and there, and coral reefs and ravish-looking craft in the offing, and savages and lonely lairs […] and a hut fast going to decay, and one very small old lady with a hooked nose." (Barrie, 7). Barrie's fictional land operates as a space that is not all good or all evil, but it allows for both aspects to unfold legitimately. Beauty and ugliness, safeness and danger, dark and light are able to enjoy the right to exist non-hierarchically. It displays a literary evasion of a fixed identity by inherently saying nothing and everything at the same time. As a consequence, Neverland is not portrayed as some sort of utopian fata morgana, but it shares several aspects of everyday life and of the real world.

Like Neverland, other parts from *Peter Pan* have fluid forms as well. The first chapter zoomed-in on the realisation that Barrie's characters often display paradoxical traits and that their identity is far less defined as one might think. Frank mentions that

less important characters often have to make do with fairly shallow background information (Frank, 80). In *Peter Pan* however the main protagonist precisely struggles with a lack of identity. Peter Pan's whole existence might manifest itself from this gap, leaving him unable to grow up. This aspect becomes extra poignant when in the narrative Peter Pan is confronted with this fact as he loses his shadow. The events of the story are put on hold when Peter gets separated from his shadow and desperately tries to reattach it with soap. Within fantasy fiction, shadows can be seen as references to the subconscious (Le Guin, 63). After losing his shadow, Peter is consequently unable to obtain his normally confident posture and displays signs of vulnerability.

Peter's distorted identity is even further emphasised during his vulnerable state as Wendy asks about his past:

'What is your name?'

'Peter Pan.'

She was already sure that he must be Peter, but it did seem a comparatively short name.

'Is that all?'

'Yes,' he said rather sharply. He felt for the first time that it as a shortish name.

(Barrie, 28)

Thus, next to not having a shadow anymore, Peter does not have any middle names like "Wendy Moira Angela Darling", a real address, or a mother either (Barrie, 28). Wendy's questions force Peter Pan to dwell on and contemplate about these painful traits which he tries to forget desperately. Moreover, during this disruptive moment he – and possibly the reader – becomes aware of the fact that Peter Pan does not possess an individual identity and consequently throughout the novel Peter has to assemble his identity by means of relating himself to others, such as Wendy or Captain Hook (Kavey, 78). When asked about his address Peter says it is the 'second to the right and then straight on till morning' (Barrie, 28), however when the child characters reach this made up 'address', it turns out that "Peter, you see, just said everything that came into his head." (Barrie, 45). Even though the protagonist does not have a clearly defined identity, he tries to conceal this by repeatedly making one up. Peter surrounds himself with make-believe so much that his appearance even changes accordingly: "Make-believe was so real to him that even during a meal of it you could see him getting rounder" (Barrie,

88). From a meta-level, the other characters become aware of the personal holes that he tries to fill with fantasy and even they start to subsequently wonder whether he is real.

Thus, *Peter Pan* features moments which cut through the pace of the stories and emphasise parts without strongly constructed boundaries. It demonstrates how fantasy narratives and places are performative and defy constricting categorisation. By showing that many parts of narratives cannot be confined, the fantastical elements can question normalised boundaries from the real world. Most important appears to be the protagonist's lacking identity. This reoccurring gaping hole evokes the necessary silences within the text. The pauses are countered with the use of fantasy, without trying to deny their right to exist. By implementing fantasy, the unfamiliar is not regarded as something that has to be dealt with, but as something that has value and should be allowed to unfold – even when it does not adhere to dominant forms of meaning making.

Like Neverland, Milne's Hundred Acre Wood is a fictional literary world full of magic and fantasy. The forest is based on an actual place in the United Kingdom, namely the Five Hundred Acre Wood. The Hundred Acre Wood functions as a spatial dimension that takes up an active role within Christopher Robin and Winnie-the-Pooh's adventures. The foremost reason being that the other characters call the forest their home. The first chapter *'The Early-Twentieth Century's Zeitgeist is (No) Child's Play: The Representation of Childhood'* has however argued that the fictional world is not completely isolated from the outside world. The real world is able to infiltrate the lives of amongst others Piglet, Eeyore, and owl. As a result, however, through *Winnie-the-Pooh* critical questions can rise about the non-fictional world. One could therefore wonder which world infiltrates which.

Another extremely significant aspect of the Hundred Acre Wood is the fact that in this fantasy world the animals become highly anthropomorphised. For, one of the most fantastical elements of *Winnie-the-Pooh* is the fact that the stuffed animals 'come to life'. The change from Winnie-the-Pooh being an object without agency to Winnie-the-Pooh turning into an active subject calls for a moment of pondering and adjusting. The literary and visual projection of the human form on animals – anthropomorphism – is an often-reoccurring phenomenon within popular culture (Barrett, 20). An interesting dynamic can be discovered when researching anthropomorphism, as animals are not able to communicate like people, people have the tendency to objectify and project human values and characteristics on them (Melion; Rothstein; Weemans, 1). By doing so, the

unobtainable other has been made to fit hegemonic narratives. Anthropomorphised animals furthermore exude the idea of innocence and are therefore ideal shells to hide dominant, ideological views on contemporary society (Duncum, 122). However, by contrasting the stuffed animals with a child in a fairly equal way, the anthropomorphism can function as an unexpected occurrence that creates moments in which time stands still for a second.

Whereas (the lack of) identity evoke breaks in time in *Peter Pan*, the role of language foremost appears to incite breaks in the narrative of *Winnie-the-Pooh*. When reading Milne's work, it becomes clear quite early on that playing with language, spelling, grammar and interpunction are important components. In some ways similar to Lewis Carroll's writing style, Milne uses language in a humorous manner to address serious, underlying ideas with regard to how words can shape life (Shaw, 81). One way of doing so is through the emphasis on names in *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Names and nicknames keep popping op through the story and especially Winnie-the-Pooh's name has a rich history. Even though there is a strong focus on the origin of his name, Winnie-the-Pooh is addressed in actually several manners: "Bear, Pooh Bear, Winnie-the-Pooh, F.O.P. (Friend of Piglet's), R.C. (Rabbit's Companion), P.D. (Pole Discoverer), E.C. and T.F. (Eeyore's Comforter and Tail-finder [....] Pooh [...] Bear of Very Little Brain" (Milne, 144). Winnie-the-Pooh and the other animals find great significance in their names as they provide them with a secure sense of identity. Steffan Nyström argues however that the giving of varying variations of names throughout a story could be regarded as a sign that one word is not enough to pin down a constantly changing identity (Nyström, 39); an identity that the reader again does not learn a great deal about. So, like in *Peter Pan*, through language the attention is again redirected to subjectivity and identity. Milne however takes this even a step further by examining the impact of meaning through the act of telling and reading:

> Owl licked the end of his pencil, and wondered how to spell "birthday."
>
> "Can you read, Pooh?" he asked, a little anxiously. "There is a notice about knocking and ringing outside my door, which Christopher Robin wrote. Could you read it?"
>
> "Christopher Robin told me what it said, and *then* I could."
>
> "Well, I'll tell you what *this* says, and then you'll be able to."
>
> So Owl wrote … and this is what he then wrote:

Pooh looked on admirably.

"I'm just saying 'A Happy Birthday,'" said Owl carelessly.

Because of the fact that the reader knows that Owl does not know how to spell 'birthday', he or she immediately notices that he did not write it correctly. The mistakenly written message causes the reader to stop reading for a second and frown. Consequently, by claiming that it means 'a happy birthday', Owl changes the words from nonsense into a message, since they come to mean what he claimed what they meant. Through this dialogical relationship between reader and text, traditional forms of meaning and language are questioned. The use of make-believe allows to uncover the arbitrariness of language, and consequently of truth and meaning. That is why *Winnie-the-Pooh* exemplify the idea that narrative nor experience comes first, but that they manifest simultaneously through their relationship. Consequently, they are always able to change each other.

The Hundred Acre Wood can thus be seen as a place that is reflexive of the outside world. In the forest Christopher Robin's stuffed animals change into being anthropomorphised animals, a fantastical development that can lead to pauses within the narrative. Other elements of Milne's text are able to create gaps as well. The simultaneous importance and unimportance of singular, fixed names could become part of the debate that concerns itself with the question whether names – as bearers of identity – are able to represent fluid forms of identity (Aldrin, 385). Language leads to silence as well. The use of fantasy does not hide the silence but gives it room to unfold. It furthermore points towards the arbitrariness of language and meaning.

3.4 Pregnant Pauses

This third and final chapter tried to answer the sub-question 'how does the notion of fantasy as a literary mode function within *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh?*'. For, fiction with fantasy elements and fantasy fiction are gaining academic attention, but they have often been brushed off as childish, frivolous, and escapist. Their attention to marginalised subjects and objects has however opened up new worlds and ways of approaching the unnarratable, for they explore – among other – the repressed, the scary, and the subconscious. What is specifically important about literature that features

fantastic elements is the fact that it does not cautiously approaches otherness, but that it centres around it as presents it as a crucial part of the self and of society. Fantasy fiction is able to do so for it operates as a literary mode that concerns itself with its relation to the real world, imagination, and the Other. The texts are consequently in the position of expressing a critical, questioning and/or subversive stance with regard to ideological and discursive, normalised boundaries.   As these stories break down the idea of fixed meanings, the way stories are assessed should change as well. Instead of trying to uncover 'the truth', Arthur W. Frank's 'socio-narratology' tries to investigate the effect of narratives on people. He acknowledged of the performative ability of stories. Whether people tell or absorb narratives, they are able to shape meaning and shape life. As the relationship between text and reader is dialogical, one should be aware of the fact that these meanings are ideologically determined and therefore often leave out non-dominant aspects of society. The repressed and marginalised have been pushed to the background and can therefore be present in the story by means of gaps or silences. These holes could consequently have positive implications as the non-hegemonic cannot be completely hidden.

By way of thinking about fantasy stories in this regard, it becomes apparent that both *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* – in their own ways – contain gaps. These gaps often occur in relation to traumatic situations or situations similar to traumatic experiences. Furthermore, like trauma lacks form, the literary silences point towards a literary lack of identity (as can be found in *Peter Pan*) or a literary lack of meaning (*Winnie-the-Pooh*). Whereas normally these pauses would be ignored, the disruptive elements in Barrie's and Milne's works are accompanied with a variety of fantastical elements. The presence of fantasy in relation to the gaps allow for an exceedingly dynamic. Without acting as a coping mechanism or distraction, fantasy allows for the unnarratable, such as traumas, to exist and unfold in their own way until they have become narratable again. Fantasy does not take away the validity of the incomprehensible, it gives it back. The silences that indicate trauma speak the loudest and it could therefore be said that the un-representability of trauma is precisely its way of representing itself; words and silences are both polysemic.

Conclusion

Books help us enter different places, world and universes. Through words, the unimaginable can become imaginable. When growing up children – and 'adults' – are able to take off on exhilarating adventures. Experiencing the right literary texts can consequently allow individuals to dream and to hope. The power of literature however does not only provide insight in fictional words, it flows over into the 'real' world as well. The magic of (children's) literature is that it can teach its readers to put oneself in someone else's position and become a more open-minded person. Although it is impossible to fully understand the other, acknowledging and valuing his or her differences and similarities is vital. Literature stresses all aspects of everyday life; the good and the bad. It can therefore make people aware of the fact that many parts of reality are considered foreign, whereas they are intrinsic parts of life.There exists a fear that by researching and by laying bare aspects of children's literature, its magic can diminish partially. Art and culture manifest in fascinating and mysterious ways, 'dissecting' it could lead to a rationalisation and categorisation of the miraculous. Fortunately, however, – as this thesis has tried to prove as well – analysing literature can do the opposite and offer an even richer reading experience.

By trying to find an answer/answers to the question how J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* and A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* represent the unrepresentable, the polysemic nature of children's literature with fantastical elements comes to the fore. For, this thesis combined multiple developments with regard to children's literature, trauma literature and fantasy literature; all academic and cultural areas which push the boundaries of the idea of 'the truth'. As even though children's literature makes up a big part of a lot of people's lives, there has only recently developed a more extensive academic interest in its workings. Next to looking at its appropriateness with regard to its supposed didactic effects, scholars have been exploring how childhood is represented through children's literature. An interest has also developed in the representation of trauma in said

literature. Whereas people used to think that children's literature is the least suitable cultural expression to explore the complicated manifestations and workings of trauma, some scholars are now arguing that it might be the most suitable form. Moreover, within the realm of literature in general, the role of the author might be changing. Although the author has been declared dead, in today's world, he or she often plays a highly noticeable role in relation to the literature they produced. The explorations of these scholarly developments in combination with analyses of how autobiographical elements in texts can point towards personal trauma uncover information about the author, which – in turn – lead to the revealing of additional layers of meaning within children's literature.

This thesis is built on complex terms, such as trauma, life writing, fantasy, and it all started with the complicated notion of 'childhood'. A child's world is often interpreted as innocent, free, and pre-reason. Because of these characteristics, it's literature – children's literature – is regularly seen as an opportunity to project a nostalgic view from the present on the past and to construct a more wholesome image of the self. In order to do so, children's literature has its own set of – relatively boundaryless – parameters. This paradoxical aspect has to do with the idea that children have different ways of making sense of the world. Through a more intuitive approach to life, children would be able to offer a different, more positive outlook on reality. Therefore, when writing children's literature, adults could appropriate this romanticised, overarching perspective on all facets of life. In comparison to adult literature, children's literature is consequently not determined or defined by genre or topic, but by its audience. The audience appears to be one of the few stable factors with regard to children's literature. The anew scholarly interest however demonstrated that important questions can be asked concerning the supposed audience of the literature. As children's literature is written by adults, one can wonder whether the texts are *for* children or *about* them, consequently turning the representation of children and childhood into a significant field of inquiry. As *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* are considered to be pivotal works with regard to their portrayal of a child's imagination, exploring the ways how childhood is represented – and by whom – was crucial to uncover some of the implicit workings of early-twentieth children's literature. It, for example, became clear that both J.M. Barrie's work and A.A. Milne's work adhere and – simultaneously – provide nuance to the image of texts from the Century of the Child. The pieces of literature exemplify the notion of

idealised childhoods, but they defy them as well. Neverland and the Hundred Acre Wood are both places designed for the adventurous, creative, care free child. It is impossible to fully surrender to a completely innocent and positive world. The desire for naivety is sought desperately, but knowingly in vain as the real world always finds a way to infiltrate the fictional world. Furthermore, the books are able to show continuous forms of complexity in relation to its characters and believes with regard to childhood. Precisely the innocent image of children's literature is what makes this possible. Its 'promise' of clarity and immediacy creates an atmosphere which puts forward the idea of straightforwardness. Underneath that veil of transparency, children's literature is able to explore aspects of life that transcend rationality.

By diverting some limitations of reason and rationality, children's literature is able to accommodate to the difficult workings of trauma, even though it used to be seen as the least appropriate cultural form of expression. The relationship between trauma and literature is an intricate and paradoxical one, for trauma is thought of to be one of the only phenomena that operates outside of language while formulating narratives – at the same time – is considered to be an essential way of recovering from traumas. Traumas form when an experience is too direct and too overwhelming to comprehend. Repetitive, latent infiltrations from the subconscious haunt the victim long after this experience, as no closure can be found. Trough the immediacy and the incomprehensibility, it becomes impossible to formulate a coherent narrative and, consequently, the traumatic event cannot be regarded as part of the past but remains part of the present and the future. However, by consciously and actively trying to put into words how the dialectic relationship between the experience and victim unfolds, peace might manifest because of the control that can be exercised on the acknowledged inaccessibility which – as has been mentioned – is an inherent part of trauma. Especially after World War II, literature took on a new approach that besides describing traumatic events started to explore the psychological implications of trauma on characters. The characters are however not the only people involved, as the author plays a significant role as well. The concept of life writing shows that autobiographical elements in literary texts can have many forms and shapes and consequently play a fascinating part in literary pieces of fiction. Although this thesis has not claimed that the author should be regarded as the sole meaning creator of a text, it has opened the discussion about whether the influence of the writer should be taken into account (again). Especially the

author and the narrator sometimes appear to overlap and being aware of a writer's life could therefore allow for an enriching of a literary work. It is known that both J.M. Barrie and A.A. Milne lived complicated lives and that traumatic experiences left lasting impressions on them as people – and as writers. As traumas often come to the surface subconsciously, the voice of the text can be influenced by the author's personal traumatic experiences. This aspect becomes noticeable through the narration of a text. After considering Gérard Genette's notions of 'heterodiegetic narrator' and 'homodiegetic narrator', it became clear that both terms were not able to fully encompass the roles of the narrators in *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh.* In both the pieces of children's literature – which feature autobiographical elements – the narrator constantly changes between being an absent narrator and an involved one; between being a heterodiegetic narrator and a homodiegetic one. Although in general both Barrie's and Milne's work have heterodiegetic narrators, the level of involvement and reflexivity changes. That is why I formulated the terms: 'witness-heterodiegetic narrator' and 'meta-heterodiegetic narrator'. By applying these concepts, it became evident that during parts of the texts that possibly point towards personal, autobiographical trauma the narration switches from being a witness-heterodiegetic narrator into a meta-heterodiegetic narrator. In the case of *Peter Pan* it furthermore can exemplify the inextricable latency of trauma. *Winnie-the-Pooh* demonstrates how a conscious approach to the subconscious workings of trauma could lead to a feeling of being in control with regard to the incomprehensibility. Instead of firmly trying to pin point trauma in Barrie and Milne's work, this second chapter tried to show the potential of including an author's life to provide unexpected layers of meaning to texts. Especially with regard to children's literature and its 'veil of transparency', looking at literary narrators uncovered a depth that otherwise would have remained inaccessible and invisible.

Peter Pan and *Winnie-the-Pooh* furthermore contain fantastical elements which are of significance. Fantasy elements are able to create a particular atmosphere within literature, for fantasy can function as a literary mode. As a literary mode, fantastic phenomena create a context, a discourse, that centres around imagination, pushing boundaries, and otherness. By focussing on these aspects of everyday life, fiction that contains fantasy elements is able to question reality and its normalised 'truths'; it breaks down fixed meanings and shows how the real world is constructed. Consequently, by

emphasising and foregrounding the other, fantasy fiction and fiction with fantasy elements take on a different approach towards non-dominant, repressed, hidden parts that are very much part of the non-fictional world. This unusual approach asks for a changing position with regard to the consideration of narratives as dialogical entities as well. Arthur W. Frank's socio-narratology draws attention to the dialectic nature of stories and shows how some components are left out of the narrative. These gaps point towards aspects of life that people cannot – or will not – formulate into a coherent story. The un-narrativity of trauma would fascinatingly then be represented through exactly the silences of texts. As fantasy as a literary mode draws attention to the incomprehensibility, both story and pause are allowed to be acknowledged. *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* are examples of how lacks of demarcated identities and meanings do not have to be covered up, but how they are allowed to coexist with more graspable aspects of life. As a consequence, the content of these 'holes' are staying in a constant state of flux and are therefore in the position to develop or even to challenge normative boundaries. Furthermore, by letting it be, the un-narratable is able to breathe and be recognised as a part of reality, for not everything that cannot be understood directly should immediately be regarded as a threat or as something unwanted. The seemingly unrepresentable opens up conventions and starts dialogues through its boundlessness.

      To conclude this conclusion, by researching how *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the-Pooh* as works of early-twentieth century literature which feature fantastic elements represent (autobiographical) trauma it became clear how such seemingly straightforward works of literature are able to interfere within several academic debates. The combination of the un-representability of trauma, the fascinating parameters of children's literature and the language of fiction and fantasy uncovered that some texts perhaps not represent, but allow traumas to unfold. Children's literature does not have to follow the strict rules of rationality and is able to project an innocent image on itself; one that only can be broken down by recognising children's literature's potential to investigate difficult phenomena. These particular parameters provide a space through which something that normally is considered to be un-narratable is able to find literary expression. Instead of hiding or forcibly demarcating the unrepresentable, fantasy shows how it is an inherent component of life. Moreover, precisely through the un-representability of the unrepresentable the unrepresentable is represented; we – as humans – cannot understand everything and that is okay.

This thesis therefore tried not to turn trauma into a fixed entity, but tried to demonstrate how by researching the depths of children's literature the polysemic qualities of words and languages can be uncovered. It would be interesting to research how the discoveries with regard to (autobiographical) trauma apply to other pieces of children's literature. Furthermore, both Christopher Robin and the Llewelyn Davies-boys suffered from their literary 'counterparts' and came to resent their exteriorly constructed personae. They – in turn – have confessed that the world-famous stories have had traumatic effects on the formulation of their identities. Analysing the relationship between trauma, language and identity in that regard could bring to the light additional aspects of the workings of trauma. These options for further research will however stay in the future a bit longer, as they are the stories of tomorrow – and the day after.

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