"I Came to Heal You": Representations of Trauma in Young Adult Literature: Stephen Chbosky's The Perks of Being a Wallflower, Jay Asher's Thirteen Reasons Why, and Patrick Ness' A Monster Calls

Schreurs, Maike

"I Came to Heal You"

Representations of Trauma in Young Adult Literature: Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower,* Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why,* and Patrick Ness' *A Monster Calls*

Maike Schreurs
MA Thesis
MA Educatie in de Taal en Cultuurwetenschappen: Engels
Leiden University
June 28, 2023
S2906937
m.schreurs@umail.leidenuniv.nl
First Reader: Dr. H.D.J. van Dam
Second Reader: Dr. E.J. van Leeuwen

Abstract

This paper examines representations of trauma in Young Adult literature, mainly the so-called “problem novel”. These types of novels are becoming increasingly popular among youngsters. Though teenagers enjoy them, parents frequently express their concerns about the age-appropriateness of the content and subject matter.

By analysing the novels *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky, *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher, and *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness, this study illustrates that these novels try to resemble trauma by means of stylistic features. These features include absence, repetition, indirection, and belatedness. The authors not only chose to incorporate these into their narratives, but also in their choice of lay-out, which allows for an increased immersion and engagement of the reader with the text.

Keywords: trauma theory, trauma narratives, Young Adult literature, problem novel, absence, repetition, indirection, belatedness

Table of Contents

Introduction

Recent years have seen an upcoming trend at American middle- and high schools considering the literature that they teach. Often the novels children and teenagers must read for class touch upon sensitive topics and depict traumatic experiences. In novels directed at a younger audience, the focus often lies on the loss of a beloved (Erik Tribunella), a suicide, or sexual abuse or assault. These novels frequently divide opinion. Teachers see their didactic qualities, whereas parents commonly try to remove these books from school curricula or public libraries (American Library Association). Joshua Pederson states that "it is a widely accepted therapeutic truth that the stories we tell about the catastrophes that beset us … can be crucial tools for recovery" (97). So, there must be a link between reading or talking about trauma stories and dealing with a traumatic experience. But why do people, and more particularly teachers, value that those children who have not been through a (similar) trauma read such books? This thesis aims to answer the questions: How is trauma represented in Young Adult (YA) literature? And how do these representations relate to trauma theory. To do so, this thesis must explain previous and current views on trauma theory and its relation to language and it must define the so-called "problem novel".

The thesis will use three YA novels to answer these questions, namely *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky, and *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness. The novels are written between 1999 and 2011 and therefore classify as contemporary works. The main characters in these novels experience traumatic events in their lives. These trauma experiences differ from each other and can be placed in various categories. Chapter One will elaborate on these categories and explain why distinguishing between the different experiences is necessary. Moreover, the three main characters are at different stages of understanding their trauma experiences. In *Wallflower* the reader follows Charlie as he is trying to remember and understand what he experienced when

he was much younger. In *Reasons,* the reader follows Hannah's narrative right after she has suffered multiple trauma events and explains what happened. Ultimately, in *Monster*, Conor is trying to come to terms with what will happen to him soon, with what has not taken place yet. Each novel tries to teach the reader that talking about your struggles and feelings is essential and that a person in distress needs someone who listens to their story in order to survive. They express this idea in their own ways. Hannah tells her story through mailing tapes, Charlie by writing letters, and Conor by interacting with a monster.

Chapter One will provide an overview of trauma theory from the 19th century until now. It will discuss the most important concepts of trauma and traumatic experience and its relation and similarity to language and trauma narratives. In addition, it will examine the consequences of experiencing trauma to eventually explain the behaviour of the main characters in the three novels that will be analysed in this thesis. Chapter Two will explain what YA literature is and will discuss its subpart the "problem novel." The problem novel is of interest for this thesis, because it is often these novels that touch upon sensitive topics and depict trauma, like the novels that will be used in this analysis. It will continue explaining how trauma is represented in these books. The next section will comprise the analyses of the selected novels. Chapter Three starts with an analysis of *Wallflower*, followed by an analysis of *Reasons* in Chapter Four, and the section will conclude with an analysis of *Monster* in Chapter Five. Chapter Six will reflect on and discuss the findings of this thesis and will include a conclusion of the main results of each chapter and why they are important to the larger whole.

Chapter 1: Trauma Theory and Trauma Language and Narrative

1.1 The Origin of Trauma

To understand trauma theory like modern theorists approach it now, we must turn to the origin of the word trauma. Trauma is derived from Greek and means "wound" (Cathy Caruth 3). Before theorists applied it to the psyche, it merely meant "an injury inflicted on the body" (3). Trauma was first recognised as a psychological rather than physiological problem in the late 1800s by Jean Martin Charcot (Jerrold R. Brandell and Soshana Ringel 3). He believed that the symptoms of hysteria – the term used in his time – were a response to having gone through insufferable experiences and that it had nothing to do with the biological makeup of a woman, like many others assumed before him (3). After Charcot, Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, in their book *Studies on Hysteria*, discussed that people with hysteria suffered from episodes in which they found themselves in the same physical state as experienced before (Brandell and Ringel 4). The patients were reliving the traumatic experiences.

Both Breuer and Freud believed that "traumatic experiences produced an altered state of consciousness" (Brandell and Ringel 4). This process was then labelled as "dissociation" by Pierre Janet (Brandell and Ringel 4). Dissociation was and is still understood as a disruption of the consciousness, a detachment of the person from its awareness (Brandell and Ringel 4; David H. Gleaves, Mary C. May, and Etzel Cardeña 577). This disconnection could happen at multiple levels of the consciousness: "memory, identity, or perception of the environment" (Gleaves, May, and Cardeña 577). Trauma could therefore cause a person to not perceive and/or process what is happening during the traumatic experience, or to not remember what had happened moments after it took place. According to Freud, the suppressed matter made the patient unable to store and recognise it as a memory of the past

and caused the patient to compulsory and repeatedly endure it as a new experience (Freud 12).

After World War II (WWII) and the Vietnam War, when soldiers returned home scarred, psychologists regained interest in trauma theory (E. Ann Kaplan 32). Earlier findings made by Breuer and Freud tie in with what more contemporary researchers Soshana Felman and Dori Laub discuss in their book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992). In her analysis of Camus' *The Fall,* a novel about a man witnessing a woman drown after jumping of a bridge, Felman identifies that "in his paralysis, the narrator is unable ... to experience and to truly *know* what is occurring" (167). The narrator is physically there when the traumatic experience takes place, but he is unable to witness and process what is happening. He is in disconnection with his awareness. In addition, Felman analysed words and poems by Paul Celan – a Romanian born to German-Jewish parents. He was sent to a labour camp during WWII and later learned that both his parents were killed during the war (26). In Celan's poems and language about his past war experiences, he mentions that people enter a state of paralysis when reality hurts them (28). Moreover, Joshua Pederson states in his chapter on "Trauma and Narrative" that "trauma, as understood by psychologists like Judith Herman … hits the human psyche with such force that it delays (or even disables) the mind's ability to access memories of the event" (100). So, philosophers, authors, psychoanalysists, and psychologists come to the same conclusion: a traumatic experience delays the process of understanding what is happening or even disables it. It is relevant for this study to address the belatedness of trauma and the dissociative effect of traumatic experiences, for these qualities are present in the discussed novels.

Researchers distinguish single, acute trauma experience from complex, prolonged trauma (Didier Kramer and Markus Landolt; Wendy D'andrea et al.). Studies have shown that more than half of the general population mention that they have experienced at least one

traumatising event in their lives (D'andrea et al 378). Frequently experienced single trauma events include "witnessing someone being badly injured or killed; being involved in a fire, flood, or natural disaster; and being involved in a life-threatening accident" (378). These experiences often lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A distinction is made, because people who suffered prolonged trauma often show different and more complex symptoms on top of those related to PTSD (Marylene Cloitre et al. 399-400). This phenomenon is referred to as complex PTSD or CPTSD. Prolonged trauma is "frequently reported among survivors of childhood abuse, domestic violence, and those who have been witnesses to or targets of genocide" (399). It is of importance to this thesis to recognise the different types of traumas and their implications and effects on the victims, because the main characters of the selected works experience distinctive trauma events which could explain their behaviours, the differences in their behaviours, and the way they try to cope with their traumas.

According to the DSM-V "the essential feature of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to one or more traumatic events" (American Psychiatric Association 274). These symptoms include re-experiencing the traumatic event, persistently avoiding stimuli associated with the traumatising experience or "negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event", and "alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event(s) (273). These symptoms must last longer than one month for a person to be diagnosed with PTSD. The manual comprises behavioural characteristics of individuals with PTSD and states that they are easily made angry and might verbally or physically express this anger (275). In addition, they are hypervigilant, show risky or destructive behaviour, and find it difficult to recall key aspects of the trauma (274). These disturbances generally lead to

"clinically significant distress or impairment in relationships with parents, siblings, peers, or other caregivers or with school behavior" (274).

Even though, CPTSD is not included separately in the DSM-V, many researchers claim its existence. It is however included into the *International Classification of Diseases 11th Revision* (IDC-11) (World Health Organisation). The IDC-11 classifies PTSD as an anxiety disorder from which the symptoms can be categorised in three clusters: re-experiencing, avoidance, and sense of threat (Palic et al 3). The clusters for CPTSD are dysregulation, negative self-concept and interpersonal problems. It is a hierarchical structure, so for a person to be diagnosed with CPTSD, they must first meet the criteria for PTSD (3). So, whether PTSD and CPTSD are seen as part of the same disorder or as separate but reliant on each other, the symptoms remain clear. It will become evident in Chapters Three, Four, and Five of this thesis that the main characters of the novels show many symptoms of either PTSD or CPTSD as mentioned in the DSM-V and IDC-11 as a result of their trauma(s).

In the same vein, it is said that individuals with (C)PTSD have a higher risk of developing Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) and accordingly suffer from depressed mood, the feeling of being worthless, or even suicidal ideation (World Health Organisation; American Psychiatric Association 161). MDD is accompanied by a high mortality rate, which is mostly due to individuals who suffer from it dying by suicide (164). This relation between trauma and PTSD and suicide is of importance when considering Hannah's behaviour and decisions in *Reasons* as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

1.2 Trauma Narrative and its Language

The previous section explained trauma, its history, and its effect on the victims. Yet, what is trauma's connection with language and narrative? Firstly, language and the absence of language are means to express trauma. Cathy Caruth, a university teacher who focuses on the language of trauma explains that:

> trauma seems to be much more than … the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language. (4)

As mentioned before, in Greek the word trauma means wound. In these lines, Caruth thus states that the wound – the trauma experience – demands to tell its story. Trauma should not merely be about the symptoms that follow the shock, it should also focus on how it happened. A way to express this part of trauma is through language – spoken or written. Yet, the how and what is frequently unavailable to the sufferer at first and results in an incomplete expression when told afterward. So, trauma is addressed in language, but also in the lack of it. It is important to pay attention to the silence too.

Secondly, many people understand that telling our traumatic stories is therapeutic and helps with the healing process (Pederson 97). In his study of listening to testimonies from holocaust survivors, Laub identifies that "the survivors not only need to survive so that they could tell their story; they also needed to tell their story in order to survive" (78). Their narration is what kept them alive. Their wounds needed consideration, otherwise they would have meant the death of the victims.

Thirdly, "it is the imaginative quality of literary narrative that allows it to access traumatic experience" (Pederson 99). Literary narrative can transform a trauma by using different words and metaphors and it can "envision traumas history cannot" (99). The narrative does not need to be factual to be able to grasp "the feel of traumatic experience" (99). Art Spiegelman, author of the graphic memoir *Maus* which tells the story of his father and his experience of the holocaust, used mice to depict the Jews and cats and pigs to portray the Germans. The Jews are therefore seen as vermin and pray, which is how the Jews were

treated during World War II. This is an example of how a metaphor can strengthen the depiction of a trauma.

Meanwhile, a metaphor can also protect the traumatised person. According to Emma V. Miller, "the use of metaphor can provide 'a shield" (237). This is often the case for child victims of sexual violence (237). The metaphor distances the narrator or listener from the trauma experience and protects them from reliving the pain. They do not have to share their experience through their own eyes or hear it happening to them again. So, a person could not be able to apprehend the full trauma and what had happened or would want to shelter themselves from experiencing it again but could still be able to describe the impact of it through a fictional narrative. Moreover, Caruth states that direct, "archival" accounts have a "hypnotic or numbing quality," and Raul Hilberg "fears that even excellent historical narratives of trauma may give false sense that true knowledge has been achieved" (as qtd. in Pederson 98). So, they argue that non-literary language – unlike literary narrative – fails to capture this 'feel' of traumatic experience (98).

To build upon previous examples, some trauma theorists also argue that trauma is formally and structurally similar to language (100). They are both "either inaccessible or only indirectly accessible to the individual" (100). Pederson mentions that these narratives of trauma often include the notions of "absence, indirection, and repetition" (100). This idea of framing trauma fiction is a hot topic for debate. Where Anne Whitehead shares the thought of Pederson, Laurie Vickroy presents a narrower frame of trauma narrative to which it must adhere to be called trauma fiction (Alan Gibbs 29-31). She says that trauma fiction must not only represent trauma, but trauma must be transmitted: the reader is to become a witness to the trauma (30). Besides the three characteristics already mentioned, Roger Luckhurst identified more in this set frame which has shaped a genre: the narrative is fragmented, it often includes "non-linear chronologies, … shifts in narrating voice, and a resultantly

decentred subjectivity" (as qtd. in Gibbs 27). These are all examples of "temporal disruption" (27). So, trauma fiction – in their eyes – tries to mimic trauma as closely as possible.

To demonstrate, narratives of trauma are characterised by literal gaps – for instance, gaps between stanzas – and gaps in the telling of the story (Pederson 101). This is reminiscent of the disconnection between a person and their consciousness and memory while and after experiencing trauma. "There is silence [in both the narration and the experience] where story should be" (101). So, the absence in a person's memory of traumatic experience caused by the shock of the emotional intensity of the event is frequently present in the form of gaps in trauma narratives. However, Pederson argues that silence not always signifies an inability to remember or speak about trauma, but that it could also function as a coping mechanism, as "an intentional decision to gather one's strength and memorialize loss" (107). In addition, these gaps and silences in narratives not only originate because of psycho- and neurological reasons, but also because of political reasons (102). According to Laub, the physical inside witnesses of the holocaust were exterminated by the Nazis and no outsider took over the role of witness to observe what horrendous thing was taking place (Felman and Laub 80-81). In some cases, for example in *The Fall* by Camus, a person or group of people can deliberately decide to avoid acknowledging what they witnessed and their awareness and reality (183). Laub therefore states that "history is made by, and rewritten through, the silence of the censor" (184). These are examples of deliberate reasons and political motives that cause gaps in narrations.

Equally, trauma narratives are characterised by indirection. They avoid the actual trauma and try to go around it, creating an indirect link to the event (Pederson 102). This insight is crucial when discussing *Monster* in Chapter Five. It is often through metaphor and symbolism that the reality of the traumatic event is being acknowledged and made accessible (103). These texts are referred to by Dominick LaCapra as 'traumatic realism' (Pederson

103). Pederson mentions that “for some psychologists and neuroscientists, traumatic experience is similarly inaccessible, and traumatic realism allows authors to discuss such experience through the filter (and with the protection) of metaphor” (103-04). They create distance between themselves and the traumatic experience. In Millers’ words, the metaphor functions as a shield and mediator for the person who experienced the trauma (237). Richard Kearney agrees by saying that “the ‘as if’ of fiction, enables a degree of detachment without which the trauma might be overwhelming” (as qtd. in Giskin Day 12). Literary narratives therefore make the traumatic event accessible through their fictional characteristics and dissociative qualities.

Repetition of the traumatic experience often occurs in flashbacks in literary narratives (104). Characters therefore relive and retell their story constantly. This idea brings the circle back to Freud. He said that patients could not recognise their suppressed experience as a memory of the past and that they therefore kept reliving the events (Freud 12). This is a form of repetition and makes the narrative non-linear. Freud also talked about dreams and how they have “the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident” (7). Such dreams are similar to and have a similar effect as the flashbacks in literary narratives. This is another structural and formal characteristic which trauma and language share and which is reflected in the books discussed in this thesis.

This chapter discussed different views on trauma theory and explained related concepts and ideas. It illustrated the role of language in expressing traumatic experiences and how trauma narratives frequently try to mirror these experiences with the use of stylistic features. The following chapter will briefly explain what Young Adult literature entails. The explanation will focus specifically on the problem novel. In addition, it will illustrate how trauma is represented in YA literature and will provide insights into the implications and possibilities of portraying trauma in fiction written for a young audience.

Chapter 2: Representation of Trauma in Young Adult Literature

2.1 Defining Young Adult Literature

Young Adult literature roughly entails literature written for adolescents between the ages of twelve to eighteen (Young Adult Library Services Association; Alleen Pace Nilsen & Kenneth L. Donelson 1). It is hard to define as a category because it includes works taking characteristics from a range of different types of novels such as contemporary realism, fantasy, dystopian, romance, mystery, and many more. It encompasses most genres also found in adult literature, only YA literature commonly introduces young adolescents as their main characters who are between the ages of twelve to eighteen – like the targeted reader. The story is regularly told from the point of view from at least one of these characters (Catherine Sheldrick Ross 175, Julia Anderson 1). Michael Cart states that moving from childhood to "young adulthood is a unique part of life" that calls for unique needs and "by addressing these needs, young adult literature is made valuable not only by its artistry but also by its relevance to the lives of its readers." Thus, YA literature is relatable for the young reader because the main characters regularly go through the same phases of life, emotional and physical changes, and have the same needs as them.

YA also focuses on the struggles that come paired with young adulthood. Maria Nikolajeva mentions that YA "attempts to convey exactly an adolescent's inability to understand the world and other people; the confusion and anxiety of being young; [and] the discomfort about the profound changes in mind and body" (89). The world is big and young adults have had limited experiences and need to explore the world they live in. YA fiction has the informative ability to tell youngsters the truth about what is going on (Cart). Young people might grow up in a single town with its own bubble, and literature can introduce them to people from other walks of life. Moreover, during adolescence the body changes and the brain is still developing. These changes are paired with confusion and anxiety. Adolescents

start comparing themselves to others, they might experience what it is to like someone for the first time and explore more intimate relationships without knowing much about it. This can be daunting, and these situations are not always solely joyful and fun but could also possibly place them in dangerous situations. It is also the age in which youngsters get introduced to various unhealthy behaviours such as smoking nicotine, drinking alcohol, and doing drugs. In general, these behaviours are important themes in YA literature. YA literature is therefore very relatable for youngsters because it not only focuses on the positive aspects of their development but also the struggles that come with it. So, YA literature provides its readers with the opportunity to identify with the characters in the novel on many levels and learn things about themselves and others.

2.1.1 The Problem Novel

A recognisable work of YA literature is the so-called Young Adult realism or problem novel. It has been defined over the years as the innocent teen novel and the realistic, dark novel (Joy Bean 21). It discusses coming-of-age and taboo topics and touches upon social issues, such as suicide and mental health, drug use, poverty, bullying, and often include characters who have gone through a traumatic experience (Ross 175, Anderson 1). The stories commonly take place in an urban, contemporary setting and revolve around the protagonist's feeling of alienation (Ross 175; Anderson 1; Barbara Feinberg). The critique raised around these books involves concerns about the age-appropriateness of the themes and topics and the vulgarity of these novels. These themes and depictions of real-life situations are deemed inappropriate for students in high school, even though they resemble real-life situations youngsters could find themselves in.

In his book *Melancholia and Maturation,* Eric Tribunella points out that many children's books focus on the loss of a beloved of the child protagonist – whether this is a person or a pet. He states that these books channel the idea that the loss must wound the

psyche to function as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood (xi-xv). It must be someone close to them to result in trauma and it is this traumatic experience which changes the children in these novels; they leave their childhood innocence behind and move towards maturity. The theme of loss is not just present in children's books, it is also a commonly identified topic in problem novels, like the books discussed in this thesis. In addition, Feinberg notices that in these novels "the parents are absent, either physically or emotionally." Instead, Ross identifies that there is a frequently present character who functions as "the adult mentor" (Ross 177). Feinberg agrees by saying that the child's "relief from unhappiness comes from a relationship with an adult outside the family." Catherine Capshaw Smith proposes a view which might explain why the adult mentor is somehow essential to the child and their healing process in these stories. She

> reads representations of children's trauma as circumscribed by the adult investment in childhood innocence, and thus she tentatively argues that these representations depict the child either as the ultimate victim of trauma, who needs special protection by adults, or as the ultimate survivor of trauma, whose innocence and resilience offer a model for adult survivors. (as qtd. in Tribunella xiii)

Thus, this idea that the child must be protected from the traumatic experience by adults might explain the presence of an adult mentor in such novels where the parents are absent. The concept of an adult mentor will be further addressed in Chapters Three and Five.

Besides the theme of loss and the presence of an adult mentor, Feinberg identifies various additional characteristics of the problem novel. She says that pain and trauma are the focus and starting points of the novel instead of the characters or the plot. Moreover, she states that the narrative is also often "flat, and emotionally detached" (Feinberg). Feinberg perceives the narrators as inauthentic because they lack a "fantasy [or] an imaginative counterpart to the experience," – with this Feinberg means the idea that "the universe is

animate – and they seem to know and see too much. In other words, a real child would not notice and understand everything that is going on around them.

2.2 Representation of Trauma

Vickroy, Caruth, and LaCapra, say that through mimicking traumatic experience, literary works try to evoke an emotional response in the reader and ultimately try to transmit the trauma to them (Gibbs 28-30). Vickroy believes that the reader becomes a witness to the trauma, while Caruth and especially LaCapra believe that the reader is then also able to experience that trauma. According to Jonas Kellerman, this is what many readers of Hanya Yanagihara's novel *A Little Life* experienced (341). The novel unpacks the traumatic life of Jude St. Francis in grave detail, which made readers feel extreme empathy for the characters. These aroused feelings overwhelmed many readers, resulting in an emotional and affective response so great that the experience of trauma was directly transmitted to them. The readers felt like they had become a witness to Jude's traumas, feelings, and experiences. Many people decided to put down the novel for that reason. It is therefore debatable whether it is desirable to vividly depict traumatic events in a literary work especially if it is directed at a younger audience.

On the other hand, Gibbs says that "[t]o suggest [that a trauma text] somehow mimics the original experience of trauma is deeply problematic" (28). He disagrees with the transmission argument by stating that it "effaces the representational dimension of trauma narratives, focusing instead on supposedly innovative forms, while suggesting that such texts grant us unmediated and direct access to trauma. It is clearly absurd to elide this categorical difference between the experience of a trauma sufferer, a witness, and the second-hand reader" (28-29). Gibbs distinguishes between categories of experiencing trauma and places the second-hand reader even further away from the sufferer than the direct witness. Laub however does see the listener to the holocaust testimonies – who can be placed in the same

category as the second-hand reader – as someone who is part of the traumatic event and shares it with the trauma sufferer (57).

On the contrary, Colin Davis believes that "witnessing the other's trauma is precisely *not* to share it," but the reader must be able "to regard the other's pain as something alien, unfathomable, and as an outrage which should be stopped" (as qtd. in Marinella Rodi-Risberg 113). Rodi-Risberg continues expressing her concern that people should be mindful not to appropriate the other's trauma and keep their distance (113). Art – and thus literature – "should be careful not to succumb to voyeuristic and arrogant spectatorship" but rather it should provide "a perspective on that which 'we' have not experienced" (Martin Modlinger and Philipp Sonntag as qtd. in Rodi-Rinsberg 114). Literature therefore presents the reader with insight into the minds of different people, different points of view, and invokes understanding and empathy. So, there is also a group of researchers who reject the concept of secondary trauma and who believe that literature merely presents this unfathomable perspective. The reader should aim for a balance between critical distance and sensitivity and empathy instead of understanding because people cannot understand what is unfamiliar to them (113-14). It is important to note that it is rather impossible to ask for such an understanding from young people without guiding them in the process. They need an adult to teach them what critical distance is and how not to appropriate someone else's trauma or become a voyeuristic observer.

2.2.1 Criticism

Some scholars discuss that trauma is for adults and not for children, because every child deserves a happy childhood (Nikolajeva as qtd. in Roger D. Sell). This statement ties in with the feeling of inappropriateness raised around the problem novel and argues that children could become unhappy from reading these books. Robert W. Motta states that "hearing about or witnessing trauma situations, and an inclination to identify with those in the

trauma situation, can also result in secondary trauma reactions, especially if these vicarious experiences evoke fear reactions in the witness" (257). And because the characters in young adult literature are similar to the reader, the reader easily identifies with them. The characters frequently are a victim of or witness to a rape, a death (by suicide) or killing, and drug, sexual, and/or domestic abuse. These experiences are serious and frightening. Following the lines of Motta's reasoning, this leads to a significant chance of secondary trauma especially because the topics in problem novels are so daunting. Thus, according to the ideas of Motta and other researchers such as Laub, who support the existence of secondary trauma, reading problem novels could be harmful and problematic for youngsters.

2.2.2 Enhancing Social Skills

As discussed above, some researchers believe that literature arouses empathy. Scientists David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano have found that literature might also improve a person's theory of mind (Nikolajeva 89). Theory of mind includes identifying someone else's emotional state, understanding it, and empathising with the other, as well as the mental presence of images of and assumptions about others' beliefs and intentions (Kidd and Castano, "Improves" 377). Theory of mind could teach a child that making an inappropriate comment about a peer might be hurtful to the other. It is important to learn how to identify what the other is feeling and why they feel that way. If a person does not agree with the other's reaction, they could learn to consider that they might have different moral standards or are emotionally dissimilar. This requires empathy and sympathy. Fiction achieves enhancing these skills by challenging readers' assumptions about the world and other people and presenting them with other perspectives to explore (Kidd and Castano, "Three" 522). Through fiction, the reader does not see the world through their own eyes, but someone else's. A character might go through the same things as the reader, yet they could have a completely different approach and response as the reader to what is going on.

Rachel N. Spear agrees with the idea that stories enhance our social consciousness and understanding of the other and ourselves (72). She also believes that fiction can function as a mirror. Like Spear, Nikolajeva identifies that the characters in YA literature explore and try to understand themselves and learn about their identity (87-89). The targeted reader of YA literature – teens between the ages of twelve to eighteen – is in line with Erik Erikson's fifth stage of the life cycle of the human being (David Elkind 6-7). This stage is called "adolescence" and starts from the age of twelve and ends roughly around the age of eighteen. Fundamental to this stage is the struggle of identity versus role confusion and the idea of self-exploration (Elkind 12, Laurence Steinberg & Amanda Sheffield Morris 91). The key question is: Who am I in different contexts and how do these different versions of me relate and interact? The targeted reader of YA is amid learning about themselves. So, reading narratives from the point of view of many different people can also provide them with insights about themselves. They see that characters are made up of different versions of themselves depending on the context they are in, and that each version contributes to the overall identity of that character. They learn that that is completely normal and that they do not have to feel confused about it. Furthermore, they might disagree with a character's opinion or feel empowered by what they stand for. They might be introduced to new topics and ideas to which they now have to discover how they feel and think about. It is a gateway to a bigger understanding of the world and how they themselves fit into it. In addition, this ability to hold up a mirror to the reader, might also give the reader a sense of belonging (Cart). An adolescent might finally feel like they are not alone and no longer an outsider because they realise that there are people just like them.

Trauma literature is a specific genre which offers readers a range of unfamiliar perspectives which they might not come across in other genres, because they do not focus on a person who has gone through traumatic events in their life in such detail. Trauma literature

can teach readers about recognising signals when someone is struggling, how trauma affects someone's life after the trauma experience, and could provide them with insights into what they could do to help or what they should not do. So, trauma literature, including the problem novel, enlarges a reader's exposure to different points of views to learn from and supports the belief that trauma narrative has a didactic function.

In the end, theory of mind is an essential social skill to have. It helps people understand each other and their similarities and differences. Moreover, literature – including trauma fiction – can help to develop these skills and could also help people understand and explore their own identity and self.

Chapter 3: Expressing Suppressed Feelings to an Unknown Receiver

Stephen Chbosky's The Perks of Being a Wallflower (1999)

3.1 The Epistolary Novel and the Form of Trauma

Wallflower is an epistolary novel in which the reader follows the life of Charlie through letters he writes addressed to a stranger. Even Charlie does not know who he is writing to besides the fact that the person is known for being a good listener. From the start of the novel, it is clear that Charlie is a little different from his peers and that he went through difficult times in his life. He writes about how his friend Michael died by suicide in the first letter he posts. He explains to the reader that he writes these letters because he needs someone who listens to him without judgment and who will not turn on him. The main story line of the novel is Charlie trying to explore who he is, how friendships work, and why he is so different compared to his peers. Charlie writes about almost everything that he needs to get off his chest. Angel Daniel Matos states that it is these "brutally honest letters [which] manage to convey the story of an adolescent trying to evolve from a passive observer of life to an active participant" (87). This means that it is Charlie writing about and coming to terms with his hardships that instigates his biggest transformation from observer to participator. As the reader moves forward in the book, Charlie keeps developing and learning things about himself to the point – at the end of the novel – where Charlie and the reader simultaneously find out what happened to Charlie when he was a child.

Wallflower ticks many of the boxes on the list of characteristics of a problem novel discussed in Chapter One of this thesis. It is told in first-person narrative, the protagonist is alienated, it is set in an urban setting, and is sexually explicit. In addition, in problem novels the parents are either physically or emotionally absent. In this novel, Charlie's parents are there physically, but his family does not talk about things and seldom give each other hugs or tell each other that they love them. They are emotionally distant. Furthermore, it is Charlie's

adult English teacher – Bill – with whom he connects first at school and on a deeper level than with any other adult character. Bill assigns Charlie certain books to read. These books include messages to help Charlie understand the world and stimulate his own development in understanding himself. Bill therefore classifies as the adult mentor outside his family.

The letters cover a timespan of about a year. Since Charlie himself describes the situations he was in and what happened in his life in these letters, the reader is dependent on Charlie's honesty and accuracy (Matos). Charlie could therefore be considered an unreliable narrator.

Wallflower does not focus on a single traumatic event. Throughout the year in which the reader follows Charlie, Charlie is the witness of actions of and talks about domestic abuse within his family, of a rape at a party, and the suffering of people who are not accepted for who they are. Moreover, there are traumatic events that have happened to Charlie before the novel starts. These include the passing of his Aunt Helen and the repeated and prolonged sexual abuse she had inflicted on him before she died.

Charlie begins to remember what happened to him through flashbacks. This is in line with trauma theory. As mentioned in Chapter One of this thesis, theorists believe victims relive their trauma experience through nightmares and flashbacks. Most of Charlie's flashbacks are triggered by certain places, activities, or experiences. The idea to start writing these letters is what triggers Charlie's first flashback. He talks about himself and why he thinks he is the way he is (Chbosky 3). This makes Charlie remember the death of his best friend Michael last year. The first time Charlie heard the news about Michael he was in shock since he did not "really remember much of what happened after" (4). This passage is a great example of how trauma theory describes the initial shock and incomprehensibility of a traumatic experience as explained in Chapter One.

The first time Charlie's Aunt Helen is mentioned in the book, Charlie talks about how his dad does not like to go to the cemetery, but Charlie does because his Aunt Helen is there (Chbosky 18). Talking about this makes Charlie remember how his Aunt Helen would babysit him and his brother and sister when their parents would go get drunk and play games with another couple. The memories of these nights become more significant later in the novel. It is the cemetery which makes Charlie have this flashback to his childhood. At first, Charlie does not know how to interpret the flashbacks and sudden memories and he believes that they are merely dreams: "when I fell asleep, I had this dream" (Chbosky 218). To Charlie, they are fiction and not a realistic memory of his past.

Another instance is when Sam hugs Charlie and Charlie thinks about how "his family doesn't hug a lot except my Aunt Helen" (24). Sam has just told Charlie, before she hugs him, that Charlie cannot think about her romantically. Shortly after when Charlie felt Sam's body against his he took a step back. This part is written as if Charlie steps back because he merely feels romantically attracted to Sam. However, this could also mean that Charlie's body already remembers what it went through as a child– because it is a later romantic and sexual interaction with Sam that makes him remember what his aunt used to do to him – but his brain has no idea yet.

In addition, every Christmas Charlie is reminded of his aunt's death. He blames himself for her death because she was out on the road to get him a special present. That is when she got into a car accident. The memory of him as a child not understanding and believing the police officers, makes Charlie extremely sad. Moreover, the blame causes him to go into a downward spiral mentally again. Like trauma theory suggests, these flashbacks and nightmares cause victims to relive the trauma and the pain and that is what the novel does to Charlie.

Besides repetition, Chbosky's novel also incorporates absence as introduced by trauma theory. It tries to achieve this in the literal sense by creating holes – there are gaps between the dates of the letters and days which are not incorporated – and through Charlie's silence – his inability and unwillingness to write about certain events or feelings.

When Charlie was a child, he hardly spoke and when he eventually comes to understand what had happened to him as a child at the end of the novel, he also "didn't speak or acknowledge anyone for a week" (225). Charlie was unable or unwilling to. After a week he started talking to his therapist, which helped him work out things about his past, but he does not like to write about the details in his final letter. Charlie does explain that he now knows that the dreams he had about his aunt mistreating him were true. Thus, by having Charlie not talk about everything, Chbosky creates silence in the narrative which is similar to the absence identified in trauma narratives. Furthermore, there are literal gaps in the narrative. When Charlie reflects on the moment he was told that his Aunt Helen had passed away, he starts feeling guilty again and has to stop writing because he is getting too sad (98). That is when the letter abruptly ends, and the next entry is not until four days later. Thus, Chbosky has created literal gaps in time, text, and narrative.

Furthermore, *Wallflower* also incorporates indirection. In Pederson's words, *Wallflower* frequently "passes straight through the landscape of pain, describing the difficult sights along the way" (107). An example is the rape scene. In contrary to the melodramatic language used to describe a rape in *Reasons*, which will be made clear in the next chapter of this thesis, the scene in *Wallflower* is very graphic and explicit:

> 'Please. Dave. No.' … After a few minutes, the boy pushed the girl's head down, and she started to kiss his penis. She was still crying. Finally, she stopped crying because he put his penis in her mouth, and I don't think you can cry in that position. I had to stop watching at that point because I started to feel sick, but it kept going on, and the

> kept doing other things, and she kept saying ‘no.’ Even when I covered my ears, I could still hear her say that. (Chbosky 33)

Everything is mentioned by its literal name and the boy’s force and the girl’s despair are shown explicitly. It also shows Charlie’s confusion and how he not fully understands those things yet. Another example of this straightforward and direct description of trauma, is the death of Michael. Charlie receives the news from Dave who said that his mother at that time “played bridge with one of Michael’s neighbors and they heard the gunshot” (4). It is described in less detail than the previous passage, but there is no metaphorical language used here. There is no shield to protect Charlie or the reader from visualising what happened to Michael. A third example concerns Charlie’s good friend Patrick. Patrick and a boy named Brad like each other, but Brad’s father does not approve of their sexuality. When Brad’s dad finds out, he starts beating Brad and afterwards sends his son to rehab. These instances of abuse are described through direct language: “Brad’s father started beating Brad. Not a slap kind of beating. A belt kind. A real kind. … He wanted to say ‘Stop’ and ‘You’re killing him.’ He even wanted to hold Brad’s father down. But he just froze” (158). In addition, Chbosky does not refrain from showing the aftermath of the abuse:

> On Monday, Brad came back to school. He looked very different. It wasn’t that he was bruised or anything. … But before, Brad was always this guy who walked down the hallway with a bounce. … It’s just that some people walk with their heads to the ground for some reason. They don’t like to look other people in the eye. Brad was never like that. But now he is. Especially when it comes to Patrick. (161)

The implication that Brad was not bruised this time, is a reference to the previous beating in which Brad thus was. In these occasions, Charlie was not a direct witness to the traumas. He heard from others how his friend had died, and he heard from Patrick what happened to Brad. This could explain why Charlie is able to unambiguously express what happened. Charlie

was only a direct witness to the rape, however he did not fully understand what was happening at that time and the assault was not directed at him. This is in contrast with the analysis of the language used to describe the sexual abuse Charlie suffered when he was a child as mentioned earlier. Whereas those events are not explicitly explained, they are hinted at via Charlie's interactions with Sam and the dreams he had about his aunt. So, when it comes to the most traumatic experiences Charlie himself had, Chbosky does go around it and creates an indirect link towards the events as described by trauma theorists.

3.2 The Implications of Prolonged Trauma on Charlie's Behaviour

Charlie's character develops throughout the novel. He slowly learns things about himself and his traumatic past and how to deal with it. He also learns to participate in life. These developments go paired with mental breakdowns and other struggles that frequently relate to the trauma experiences he suffers or has suffered before. An analysis of Charlie's mental health, PTSD symptoms, and development provides insight in how YA novels deal with these situations.

Until the end of the novel, Charlie only remembers the good things about his aunt. Leonard Shengold, a psychoanalyst who specialised in the impact of prolonged abuse and neglect in childhood on children has found that they develop dissociation abilities (Judith Herman 381). He states that abused children use mind-fragmenting operations to "preserve 'the delusion of good parents'" (as qtd. in Herman 381). In these children's minds "contradictory images of the self and of the parents are never permitted to coalesce" (as qtd. in Herman 381). Aunt Helen is in this case a substitute for the parents. Charlie has developed a coping-mechanism to keep the happy memories about her alive and to suppress the awful things she did to him.

Shengold also mentions that survivors of childhood abuse often display additional behaviours more than other patients of abuse (Herman). According to Briere, these include

"insomnia, sexual dysfunction, dissociation, anger, suicidality, self-mutilation, drug addiction, and alcoholism" (as qtd. in Herman 380). Charlie displays behaviours of anger when he got furious at his friend Sean and seriously hurt him during a fight (Chbosky 9). Moreover, after Charlie had a bad week and tried LSD for the first time at a party, he also starts smoking and says "I'm now up to about ten cigarettes a day" (110). He smokes a lot when life gets tough. This is a form of drug (ab)use and addiction. Additionally, Charlie shows sexual dysfunction. The first time he receives a hug from Sam, he feels uncomfortable and steps back (24). Towards the end, Charlie and Sam become intimate and Sam touches his private parts, it makes Charlie feel good, but at the same time it felt wrong to him and made him turn pale and feel bad (217-18). Yet, he does not know why. During this interaction, he also shows dissociation. While it is just him and Sam he says "I can't do that anymore. I'm sorry," but he is not saying it to Sam, he is saying it to someone else who is not in the room (118). He is not in connection with reality. So, the abuse Charlie suffered as a child, has an effect on his mental state and behaviour throughout his childhood and teenage years.

Besides these symptoms, Charlie also suffers from the feeling of alienation. Since the death of his friend Michael, Charlie felt as if people treated him differently, especially his teachers (Chbosky 5). As a result, he feels isolated and alienated from his peers and the rest of the world. Charlie also never really participated in life, he mostly observed others. He is a wallflower, hence the title of the novel. It is not until he meets Bill that Charlie starts to realise that he is doing that and starts to practice participating. This feeling of alienation remains the same until Charlie starts to spend more time with Patrick and Sam and their friends. These are the type of people who are quiet and understand difficult things according to Charlie (49). He sees himself in them and it arouses a feeling of belonging within him.

3.3 Charlie's Call for Help

Wallflower can help the reader learn things about themselves and others. The main plot centres around Charlie, yet there are many subplots and secondary characters the reader gets to know through Charlie. These characters all have different identities, personalities, and struggles. So, there are many characters for the reader to identify with or to learn from because the characters might be different from the reader themselves. Furthermore, it could help them understand the world and the hardships that come with it and how they can differ per person. This is a lesson in awareness for the reader. In addition, Charlie expresses the necessity of talking about tough things and how he is not able to do that at home throughout the novel. This provides the reader with the message that it is essential to talk to an adult – preferably an expert – and that it could save someone's life. The novel also shows the reader that a stable and supportive surrounding is essential. Without his friends, Charlie's fate might have been different. This is emphasised through the storyline of Brad. Brad lacked a supportive surrounding – his dad did not improve of his sexuality and beat him and send him to rehab – which makes Brad miserable. These are examples of real-life situations and provide the reader with insight into other situations. It could open someone's eyes to what other people are going through and how this might affect the other's emotions, feelings, and behaviour.

The choice to write the novel as an epistolary has multiple functions and asks for active engagement from the reader in various ways. First of all, the epistolary is reminiscent of the diary form yet differs from it in the sense that the epistolary novel requires a form of communication (Marie Dücker, "Form" 163). It calls for an addressee whereas the diary form does not, "causing the writer of the journal entries [in a diary] to reflect without any influence from the outside" (Abbott as qtd. in Dücker, "Form" 163). Charlie's letters however ask for an exchange or response (164). This ties in with the overall message of the novel that Charlie

needed someone to talk to. This type of narrative positions the reader in a different situation then when reading a traditional narrative form. It suggests reflection and reaction from the reader to the content of the letters. Charlie's letters are written to an unknown receiver, but somehow ended up in the hands of the reader, making them an active participant of the narrative and more involved in Charlie's story. This immersion could lead to a more authentic and emotional response to the content of the novel.

Secondly, the epistolary form requires active engagement from the reader because the reader must fill in the gaps in the narrative and piece together different fragments of it to create a whole (Dücker, "Form" 162; Talia E. Crockett 4). As with trauma theory, silence is sometimes better equipped to tell the story on an emotional level than language (Crockett 4). To emphasise the emotional impact of coming to understand what Charlie's aunt had done to him, there is a monthlong gap between Charlie finding out and writing his final letter. These silences create gaps in narrative and the reader must therefore engage with the text and rearrange and piece together the fragments of the narrative. According to Crockett, "this active engagement often creates an empathetic response; when a reader is able to think as a character would, they are invited to align themselves with a character's thoughts and feelings" (4). So, these stylistic choices not only mimic trauma, but they also try to actively engage the reader with the content of the novel.

In the next chapter, these elements are also visible, yet achieved in a different way. I will explore and illustrate how this is done and what it asks from the reader.

Chapter 4: Recording your Experiences for Others to Listen to

Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher (2007)

4.1 Press Play: The Impact of Lay-out on the Representation of Trauma

The story unfolds with Clay Jensen, one of the main characters, finding a package filled with tapes at his front door. The package is directly addressed to him. He has no idea what is on the tapes and who sent it and is therefore nervous to play them. When he listens to the first tape, he hears the voice of Hannah Baker, the second main character of the novel who died by suicide two weeks prior to Clay receiving the tapes. Clay is confused and shocked while finding out that Hannah recorded these tapes to tell the thirteen reasons why she committed suicide. Each side of a tape is directed towards a certain person and all of them are to blame for Hannah ending her life according to Hannah. The reader then follows Clay all over town listening to the tapes. Clay and the reader therefore simultaneously find out what happened to Hannah little by little leading up to her last moments. This also means that the reader is directly exposed to Clay's reactions, thoughts, and feelings to what he hears and learns about Hannah, himself, and other people he knows. Clay can therefore be seen as a secondary witness to the traumas Hannah suffered, since he is listening to what happened to her, but he was not there when it took place. This places the reader even one step further away from Hannah's suffering, whereas the reader can be considered a direct witness to Clay's suffering because the story is written as if the reader is there together with Clay listening to the tapes.

Reasons is a mixture of single traumatic events happening to Hannah and traumatic events to which Hannah becomes the witness. Ultimately, Hannah's death by suicide is traumatising to Clay and other minor characters in the book. Hannah is constantly being bullied at school, she is the witness of a rape, becomes an accomplice of a fatal car accident,

is sexually harassed, and being stalked by a person. All these events contribute to her final decision.

Every chapter in *Reasons* resembles a side of a tape Hannah send to the intended group of thirteen individuals, except for chapters 1 and 2 and the final chapter, which respectively function as a prologue and epilogue to the main narrative. As Clay plays the first tape, the reader is introduced to the buttons on a radio through small, printed images. These images include the rewind, forward, play, pause, and eventually stop button. These symbols of the buttons divide the chapters into sections. The play button indicates that Clay is listening to a tape. Whereas the pause button is an intermission from Hannah's narrative and mostly indicates that it is interrupted by Clay's timeline. It provides the reader with the knowledge that Clay has paused the tape but that it is not finished yet. The stop button indicates the end of a tape. The forward and rewind buttons do not show up again. The use of these symbols creates a fragmented narrative of the story. These temporal disruptions form gaps and indicate silences reminiscent of those identified in trauma theory.

Not only the layout tries to mimic trauma, but the narrative does so as well. From the start of the novel, the reader knows that Hannah killed herself and how she did it. Yet, it is unknown to the reader why this happened to Hannah and what has led to this outcome. The belated and fragmented qualities of someone trying to understand or remember their trauma is mimicked in *Reasons* through the sides of the tapes who tell fragments of Hannah's experiences, and the reader needs all these sides to fully understand what had happened. They are fragments to the reader and flashbacks to Hannah interrupted by Clay's reactions and his storyline.

Reasons is a great example of the struggle of the interpretation of silence between the first and the second wave trauma theorists as discussed in Chapter One. At one point in the novel Hannah says "Was I unable to talk? Or did I just not want to talk?" (Asher 160-61).

The first wave theorists believed survivors were unable to talk about their traumas, whereas the second wave theorists also suggest that it could be a coping mechanism to not want to talk about it. Hannah mentions both and implies that she does not know the answer herself. This struggle is illustrated through Hannah's inability or unwillingness to say the word suicide. "It's there that I first started to consider…to consider…a word that I still cannot say" (161). It creates an absence and silence in the narrative. It takes her almost the entire novel to finally get the word out of her mouth. This is an example of refraining from saying something as a coping mechanism as discussed in Chapter Two. Hannah still must gather her strength and come to terms with her situation before making it real. Though Hannah is unable or unwilling to talk about certain things, the novel does provide the reader with the message that talking about your struggles and feelings is important. Hannah is finally talking about her experiences through the tapes, meaning she had to do it to make her feel better, but it is too late for her. She is already gone. If she had believed that telling her story would not be important, she would not have made the tapes. In addition, Hannah tried to talk or hinted about wanting to talk to different people throughout the novel. She tried with the notes in Peer Communications, and she tried to talk to Clay. Ultimately, the final thing she does is trying to seek the help from the school counsellor by trying to talk to him. The importance of talking is also illustrated by the last thing Clay does. At the end of the novel Clay runs to a girl he used to know named Skye – a silent girl who has alienated herself from the rest of the school – to talk to her with the intention to stop history from repeating itself. So, *Reasons* emphasises the importance and necessity to tell your story to someone and incorporates ideas from trauma theory.

The novel also integrates silence or absence by means of its form. Every chapter is another side of a tape, so another traumatizing event that happened to Hannah. Before each side plays, Clay has to take the tape out of the tape recorder, turn it around and insert it again.

The gaps and silences between the chapters indicate this action. Yet, it also means a silence before another traumatic experience is introduced. Hannah needs a break before continuing her story and so does Clay and the reader. When Hannah tells the story of Tyler, at its high point when she tells Clay and the reader what he took from her she pauses: "*[b]ut you took away what was left.* She pauses. And within that silence I realize how intensely I've been staring at nothing" (89). This shows how Tyler's acts have also impacted Clay. Hannah is silent for a moment and that is when Clay realises that he was frozen himself by what he heard. Hannah's behaviour implies that it is still hard for her to talk about the things that happened and how her life then, and now still through Clay's actions, is put on hold for a little because of it.

Throughout the novel, there are multiple instances where Hannah takes a pause while telling her story. The most pivotal one is during her last day when she tries to explain everything that is going on to the school counsellor. When she says life is too hard there is a pause and when she runs out of his office telling him that if she has to get over it, she might as well get on with it there is a last "pause. He's not coming … he is letting me go" (279). This pause indicates not only the trauma that was, but also the trauma that is awaiting her. Her last silence is her last cry for help. Her words were not enough for the counsellor to notice that she was asking him for help, so Hannah turns back to silence. This last interaction Hannah has with her school counsellor could have been the trigger to push Hannah over the edge. According to Laub, "the absence of an empathic listener, or more radically, the absence of an addressable other, an other who can hear the anguish of one's memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness, annihilates the story" (Felman and Laub 68). Hannah feels as if no one is taking her seriously and paying attention to what she is really trying to say. This makes Hannah feel confused and start to doubt her own story. She now believes that it is her fault and that her pain and struggles are not real or important enough, which makes her feel

even worse. An active listener, who recognises what someone has been through, is essential to help a person in need. No one took on that role for Hannah.

The novel also incorporates repetition through the repetitive quality of the tapes. Everything is linked and interwoven, and Hannah often hints to a future tape and story and sometimes reflects on previous experiences already discussed. She is either reminded of or forced to explain what happened before or what will take place later in this storyline. So, while recording the tapes, Hannah repeatedly relives the awful events. Thus, the novel tries to imitate characteristics of trauma such as repetition and silence through its form: the use of tapes and the pause/play buttons and the two interwoven narratives of Clay and Hannah.

The tapes represent trauma events and the person in control of the play, pause, and stop symbols have power over them, like the traumas had over Hannah when she was alive. Clay frequently presses these buttons in between tapes, but also in the middle of some of Hannah's accounts. He does this when he must reflect on what she said, or when it becomes too overwhelming. The play button therefore becomes a symbol for Hannah's suffering, and the stop button for temporarily forgetting about it. For Hannah, to press play is to live and to live is to suffer. That is why Hannah sometimes desires for life to be put on hold, she longs for a pause from living and therefore suffering. When her life is on pause, nothing new can happen that will add to her misery.

Reasons also tackles the idea that trauma is not always visible or noticed by other people. What Jessica did to Hannah is made visible by making Jessica physically hit Hannah which left a scar above her eyebrow. This is made explicit in the following lines said by Hannah: "*Jessica, my dear, I'd really love to know if you dragged yourself to my funeral. And if you did, did you notice your scar? And what about you – the rest of you – did you notice the scars you left behind? No. Probably not. … Because most of them can't be seen with the naked eye*" (Asher 68). This quote illustrates how trauma experiences scar people on the

inside, they damage their souls, minds, and hearts. It emphasises our human ignorance and how people not always realise how bad they are hurting someone else with their actions and words and that people do not know what the story of other people is. In addition, Hannah says about the scar that "I see it every morning when I get ready for school" (68). While others do not know Hannah's struggles and pain, she herself is constantly reminded of it. This ties in with the repetitive quality of trauma. When looking in the mirror, she relives the trauma like a nightmare or flashback.

The rape scene in *Reason* is implicitly described: "The bedsprings screaming under his weight" (Asher 226). This imagery refers to the unconscious girl being raped and who is unable to oppose her attacker in this state. It is important to note this language because it is in accordance with the trauma theory, which suggests that trauma narratives regularly include indirection. In this passage, many things are being described except the rape itself. The consequences are mostly about Hannah instead of the girl, for Hannah says that she "couldn't stand all the emotions anymore. I wanted the world to stop . . . to end. … I don't know how many songs went by with my face buried in those jackets. The beats kept sliding from one song into another. After a while, my throat felt so scratched" (Asher 227). The language used to describe this scene and its consequences differs from the language used in *Wallflower* since it is indirect and ambiguous. There is use of symbolism and metaphor, many senses are triggered, and there is a lot of emotion in the words. This could classify as melodramatic language. This type of language externalises emotion and is regularly exaggerated, emotional, and dramatic (Juliet John 28). It is expressed through "music, the body, spectacle, and … words" (28). This is exactly how Hannah describes the experience: through the bass, the music she can hear and feel through her body, and the sound the bed makes. She mentions how her throat felt scratched, which is another instance in which the body is being used to describe what is going on or how she feels. The language is extreme and dramatic to boot.

Hannah says that to stop what the boy was doing, she "had to stop the entire world from spinning" first (Asher 227). In *A Little Life* by Yanagihara, it was this type of language that reinforced the reader to be "so empathetically entangled with the affective states of the characters themselves that the traumatic extremity of the narrative" was directly transmitted onto them (Kellermann 341).

This part of *Reasons,* in which Hannah is a direct witness of a traumatic experience to someone else, places the focus on Hannah's emotions and feelings and how it affects her. As a result, by placing the emphasis on Hannah in combination with the use of melodramatic language, the reader seems to feel more empathy towards Hannah and tends to place the girl who is being raped and who the reader is merely acquainted with at a second place.

4.2 Press Pause: The implicitness of Trauma and its Consequences

Hannah suffers from a lot of bullying inflicted by her peers at school. Even though bullying is not considered a traumatic experience according to the DSM-V, researchers have found that bullied individuals show an increased risk to develop suicidal thoughts and attempt or commit suicide (Sameer Hinduja and Justin W. Patchin 206-7). Hannah's symptoms would therefore probably align more with those of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). In spite of that, *Reasons* hardly shows what the actions do with Hannah's mental state. The tapes and Clay's thoughts do explain that Hannah showed the exterior signs – she impulsively changed her appearance – but there is practically no insight into her feelings and emotions.

Halfway through the novel, Hannah makes explicit that she is thinking about killing herself and later she starts to contemplate how she is going to do it. Thinking about and plotting suicide are symptoms of MDD. Throughout the novel she does mention that there is a pain inside her head which could hint to her being mentally sick, but that remains the only insight. She says that she feels mad inside, but never really shows anger towards the outside world. She does not fight or become physically or verbally angry at a person. She also states

that she and Justin could have stopped the rape, yet she never really blames herself too much. Thus, the behaviours and symptoms Hannah shows tie in more with MDD than PTSD.

4.3 Press Stop: Hannah's Goodbye

The key theme of the novel is the idea that someone does not know what is going on in another person's life and that each word said, or action done can add to someone's misery. The novel can function as a mirror to the reader. If the reader finds themselves at a dark place, the novel can comfort them by showing that they are not alone. Even though the story line of Hannah implies that when nobody seems to listen and they should simply give up, Clay's narrative negates this idea by showing that talking is important and could be a step towards the better direction. It also shows the reader how to identify when someone is struggling, since it discusses warning signs multiple times throughout the novel.

Asher has made the decision to include stylistic features that make his text look and feel like the narrative is played from a tape recorder. As mentioned in this chapter, he mainly did this by incorporating pictograms within his text. They stand out from the page because unlike everything else they are non-textual (Dücker, "Coming" 83). Similar to a stop button on a tape recorder, these non-textual pictograms create a disturbance in the text and therefore the narrative. Not only do these pictograms emphasise the emotional load of Hannah's story, they also "assist the reader in fully immersing themselves in the reading experience [and] visualize the listening experience of Clay" (Dücker, "Coming" 84). The pictograms provide the reader with an active and performative role because every chapter ends with a stop button and indicates the end of a tape after which the reader must turn the page – insert a new tape or turn the tape around – to continue the story (86). The reader must do this to connect all the parts of the story. This stimulates "cognitive curiosity" and enlarges the reader's immersion into the narrative and therefore also probably their empathetic response (86).

In the previous chapter, the author chose literal gaps to mimic trauma and to let the silence speak. In *Reasons* it are non-textual symbols that disrupt the narrative, yet they also visualise Clay's listening experience for the reader and provide the reader with an active role that increases their involvement with the narrative. The following chapter will analyse how *Monster* achieved a similar effect by incorporating non-textual illustrations.

Chapter 5: Coming to Terms with your Feelings by Interacting with a Monster

Patrick Ness' *A Monster Calls* (2011)

5.1 The Imaginative Qualities of "The Nightmare"

Monster follows thirteen-year-old Conor O'Malley and how he must come to terms with his mother's terminal illness. The novel illustrates his relationship with his father and his grandmother and how they cope with the situation and try to help him. However, at the centre of the story is a monster who shows up just after midnight and who demands from Conor to speak the truth. In return, the monster tells Conor three fantastical stories to explain his purpose, and which will eventually help Conor understand what he feels inside and what he has to do to accept his reality.

Through stylistic features *Monster* resembles the temporality of traumatic experience. The novel opens with Conor having a nightmare before the monster shows up. The nightmare is a metaphor for Conor's feelings and emotions towards his mother dying. I will explain this further down in this chapter. The nightmare is however only partly illustrated and cut short: "The one with the wind and the screaming. The one with the hands slipping from his grasp, no matter how hard he tried to hold on. The one that always ended with –" (Ness 1). This sentence is unfinished, and the end replaced with a dash to indicate a gap. By doing this, Ness not only creates a visual gap but also a gap in the narrative. The further the novel progresses, the more the reader starts to understand what is happening to Conor's mother and the more detailed the nightmare is explained. So, little by little the traumatic experience unfolds. Yet, it is not until the very last pages of the novel that Conor's mother dies, and Conor's nightmare is fully expressed in words. This is conforming the idea that a victim of trauma sometimes only entirely understands what has happened a while after it took place.

When Conor has the nightmare another time, it becomes clear that it is his mother who is falling: “This is what it felt like, this is what it *looked* like, the edges of the world crumbling away and Conor holding on to her hands, feeling them slip from his grasp, feeling her *fall* –” (141). And then it is suddenly over again. In trauma theory, the initial traumatic event is explained as sudden as well. The nightmare awakens a reaction and emotion in Conor, which mimics what he felt when he first realised his mother is dying.

Within the nightmare, Ness uses the metaphor of a monster, yet this time the monster is bad in Conor’s eyes. Conor refers to this monster as “the real monster” (179). Ness displays the duality of life, by letting these two monsters coalesce. This duality is emphasised by the monster saying “there is not always a good guy. Nor is there always a bad one. Most people are somewhere in between” (64). Conor eventually needs to realise that this monster is also helping him to let go of his mother, which will provide Conor with the chance to start healing.

The nightmare ends with Conor letting go of his mother. It is the end of the nightmare, but not the end of the fourth and final tale – Conor’s truth. Conor explains to the monster that he had to let her go, because he could not bear it anymore. He wanted the knowing that his mother would die and leave him to be over. After having the nightmare Conor falls asleep. He is woken up by his grandmother, who then rushes them to the hospital. This is the moment his mother passes away. However, this is not explicitly written down. It is implied with references to Conor’s nightmare:

> He knew it would come, and soon, maybe even this 12:07. The moment she would slip from his grasp, no matter how tightly he held on. *But not this moment*, the monster whispered, still close. *Not just yet.* Conor held tightly onto his mother. And by doing so, he could finally let her go. (205)

These are the final lines of the novel. So, the novel does not start with the traumatic experience, it ends with it and Conor's understanding of the trauma does not happen until the very last pages. This shows that the novel focuses more on Conor trying to cope with the situation and his development throughout the novel than the traumatic experience itself.

This analysis of the nightmares does not only illustrate the belatedness of the understanding and addressing of the trauma, but also its repetitive quality. The trauma takes place at 12:07 and the monster – the Yew tree – almost always shows up at precisely this time. Before he does, Conor always has the nightmare. The trauma has not happened yet, but Conor already knows deep down what will happen eventually. He is already constantly reliving the trauma through the nightmare. The eventual reality – the idea of a future without his mother – keeps haunting him.

Another reason for this belatedness, is Conor's unwillingness to talk about his nightmare. There are multiple instances where Conor mentioned that he deliberately refrains from telling his story: "What happened in his nightmare, no one needed to know" (2) and "the nightmare with the screaming and falling, the nightmare he would never tell a living soul about" (19). There is an absence where story should be. Considering trauma theory, this might not be an inability to speak about it but could also be a coping mechanism. Conor is mad at his best friend for telling everyone that his mother is sick. He now feels alienated and treated differently by others. He hates this. He chooses not to tell his story to blend in, to make him normal. He already relives the trauma in his nightmares, he does not want to relive it more by talking or writing about it. This is emphasised by Conor not partaking in Mrs. Marl's life writing assignment. So, there is absence in the narrative because Conor does not want to talk about certain things.

Absence is not only achieved through gaps in the narrative, but also by physical gaps in the text. For example, right after the opening line "The monster showed up just after

midnight. As they do" there are two white lines before the story continuous (1). Midnight is dark and empty, and a monster is a daunting thing. So, when it arrives, there is a literal gap, a silence. This silence creates suspense because the reader does not know what is going to happen. Likewise, the descriptions of the monster and the illustrations in the book, function as gaps too. For instance, the following sentence describes a loss in Conor's memories while also visualising a literal gap: "And the last thing Conor remembered was the monster's mouth roaring open to eat him alive" (9). This description of an open mouth creates a visual image of a big black hole – a gap – in the mind of the reader. Similarly to the non-textual pictograms in *Reasons* as explained in Chapter Four, the full-page illustrations in *Monster* create literal gaps in the written text and thus the narrative.

As discussed in Chapter Two, some trauma theorists such as Pederson and Miller believe that symbolisms and metaphors can function as a filter through which the author can talk about a traumatic experience or a shield to separate the sufferer's or reader's reality from disaster and harm. *Monster* rather explores the realm of pain through metaphors and symbolism than directly describing it.

To illustrate, time plays an important role in *Monster*. Not only does the monster repeatedly show up at 12:07, but it is also the time at which Conor's mother passes away. 12:07 is a symbol for his mother's death and how her life has already been on hold for a longer time, while Conor's life keeps continuing. The first time Conor breaks something, he says, "this time *he* was the nightmare" and it is his grandmother's clock which he breaks first (94-95). Conor wants to stop time and keep his mother. While at the same time the clock stopped at the specific time of 12:07, which calls the monster. This could also imply that Conor is the one calling for the monster because he longs for understanding of his feelings and has the desire for this all to end. The metaphor of time gives this all away without

directly addressing and describing the pain and catastrophe of what will happen to his mother.

The way Conor's mother will die is never described in the novel. The only reference to it is Conor's nightmare. However, his nightmare is full of fantastical elements. The graveyard in which it happens, suddenly breaks apart and a huge monster arises from the chasm which eventually pulls Conor's mother from the grip of his hands, indicating his mother's passing. The fantastical and imaginative qualities of the nightmare work around the trauma and distance Conor and the reader from direct exposure, creating a shield. In this way, the trauma is never directly addressed and only indirectly implied through metaphor.

Additionally, every single story the Yew Tree tells has its own symbolic meaning and tries to help Conor understand the trauma he is suffering. These highlight the rough sides to the trauma Conor is experiencing, but frequently still provide a fantastical edge which tries to distance the reader from it. Even Conor says, "This is all sounding pretty fairy tale-ish" and does not believe the stories are true at first (Ness 53). The first tale is being told after Conor's grandmother tells him to come live with him. She believes that "thirteen-year-old boys shouldn't be wiping down counters without being asked first" (41). This is one of the many hard things about having a mother being so sick she cannot care for herself or her son. Conor has to do grown-up things and is not being given a chance to be a child. This can be traumatic in itself. He blames his grandmother because he thinks he is doing fine and becomes mad at her. Then, as soon as Conor sees his mother throwing up, Conor has the nightmare and then the monster shows up and the scene is cut to the first story. As a result, the most awful details about what Conor's mother endures and Conor himself witnesses are being left out and replaced by interactions between Conor and the monster.

5.2 The Monster and Dissociation

Conor shows some significant symptoms of suffering from PTSD throughout the novel. He keeps re-experiencing the trauma though nightmares and experiences "distress or impairment in relationships with parents, siblings, peers, or other caregivers or with school behavior" (American Psychiatric Association). This mostly applies to the relationship Conor has with his peers – the interactions with the bully Harry and his mates, and his fight with his friend Lily – and his grandmother.

Most importantly for this thesis, is Conor's display of anger and dissociation. In *Monster,* Conor becomes very irritable and small, sane things make him feel or act aggressively. Conor's anger is frequently paired with dissociative episodes. The first time this occurs is when his grandmother explains that he should come live with her:

> Conor frowned, and for a second the whole room seemed to get darker, for a second it felt like the whole house was shaking, for a second it felt like he could reach down and tear the whole floor right out of the dark and loamy earth –. He Blinked. His grandma was still waiting for a response. (Ness 42-43)

For a second, Conor is in disconnection with reality. As discussed in Chapter One, people experiencing a traumatic event regularly dissociate themselves from what is happening. In this case, Conor is somewhere else for a moment. This instance resembles characteristics of traumatic experiences and creates a disruption in the narrative. Conor experiences more of these dissociative episodes throughout the novel. At some point during these episodes, Conor starts to break things in real life: "And suddenly they were back in Conor's grandmother's sitting room. Conor saw that he had destroyed almost every inch of it" (114). The final episode occurs in the school cafeteria when Harry deliberately drops orange juice on Conor's lap. Conor stands up from his chair, the monster right with him and being a part of him now. While Harry tries to walk away, Conor shouts for him and then sends him flying across the

floor (147). Harry is bleeding from his head and says to Conor "'[b]ut do you know what *I* see when I look at you, O'malley?' … 'I see *nothing*'" (152). That is when Conor clenches his fists and turns to the monster to ask him for help and the "monster leapt forward to make Harry see" (152). What happens is not described, only the aftermath is discussed. This includes Harry ending up in hospital (153).

In short, the closer Conor gets to the reality of his mother dying, the more his anger transforms from aggressive thoughts, to breaking things and ultimately hurting people. He was in dissociation with reality from the start, but towards the end his imagination and reality almost morph into one. He has trouble distinguishing what is real and seems to think he has become one with the monster. Since, Conor cannot remember what happened during these episodes, it is more reminiscent of dissociation than a psychosis (Nishan Ghoshal & Paul O. Wilkinson 84). Due to the inclusion of dissociative episodes and the realistic portrayals of symptoms of PTSD, the content of *Monster* is in agreement with trauma theory.

5.3 Conor's Truth

Having a parent who is sick or knowing a peer whose parent is sick, is a rather common thing to experience as a youngster. *Monster* could therefore function as a guide to the reader on how a peer in such a situation might feel or it could help them understand their own situation and the emotions and feelings that come with it. It implicitly provides them with advice on how relationships are under stress during such situations, but that everyone is doing their best and wants the best for you and that you should always make up and try to make things work.

What is interesting about *Monster* is that it is about Conor's struggle between wanting his mother to stay on the one hand, and for this misery to be over on the other. It is honest and realistic, because it focuses on Conor feeling relief that his mother is passing away instead of ignoring this part of the situation. An important part that might cross a real-life

child going through this situation's mind as well. It tells them to not be ashamed or afraid of these thoughts and that it is important to talk about and discuss this with an adult. The novel also tells the reader that a person in such a situation might distance themselves, but that all they want is to be treated normally and to be seen. Ultimately, it tells people that they must look out for each other.

Ness may have chosen to portray dissociation in his novel to create awareness in the reader. Dissociation and hallucinations are often-stigmatised topics. In their article about dissociation in YA novels, C. da Cunha, H. Coughlan, and M. Cannon discuss that certain literary devices challenge this stigma because they provide "sensitive and relatable insights" into such experiences (3). Two of the literary devices identified in their study which apply to *Monster* are "emphasising similarity" and "embracing ambiguity and contradiction" (2). Conor is at a similar stage in his life as the reader and the reader can thus identify more easily with Conor. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the monster frequently shows Conor the duality and ambiguity of life. According to Cunha, Coughlan, and Cannon, it is important that the reader can identify with the protagonist by means of their similarities and is being shown life's ambiguity to stimulate imagination and the ability to not think in stereotypes (2- 5). Ultimately, these devices lead to greater empathy within the reader.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the illustrations in *Monster,* similarly to the symbols in *Reasons,* divide the physical text and therefore disrupt the narrative. A reason for Ness to do this could be to provide the reader with a break to take in the content and to take a step back from the emotional load. Furthermore, the illustrations emphasise the fantastical and imaginative qualities of the narrative. Most of the illustrations either include the monster and visualise his interactions with Conor or Conor's nightmare. Other parts of the novel are only sporadically supported by smaller illustrations. As a result, the illustrations strengthen the shield – the nightmare and the monster which respectively symbolise the death of Conor's

mother and Conor coming to terms with how he feels about her illness – which distances the reader from the described trauma.

The stories the monster tells Conor, also disrupt the narrative. They show Conor the truth and duality of life. Ness' choice to incorporate elements of myths, fairy tales, and folklore within the presentation of these stories and their subject matter, make these stories universal (Day 119). This is important because the stories eventually help Conor understand his situation and finally tell his truth. It shows the belatedness of his trauma and the understanding of it. Although it is told to Conor, because of its universality the meaning of the stories applies to everyone. It implies that people need to talk about their feelings and need help coming to terms with their traumas.

Conclusion

Through an analysis of the narrative and lay-out of the novels *Perks, Reasons,* and *Monster,* this study answered the questions how trauma is represented in YA Literature and how these representations relate to trauma theory. To be able to do this, it started with determining what features characterise non-fiction trauma narratives and what are the effects of a trauma experience on a victim's life afterwards. The most prominent characteristics of trauma narratives identified by trauma theorists are absence, repetition, belatedness, and indirection. Many trauma victims develop (C)PTSD and symptoms related to their trauma.

Subsequently it discussed if and how these characteristics are incorporated into the narratives and lay-outs of the selected novels to answer how the representation of trauma in YA literature relates to trauma theory. First of all, as seen in Chapters Three, Four, and Five, the novels each do incorporate the characteristics in their narratives. In all three novels, there are silences in the narrative, things the main characters do not tell, remember, or only explain later in the story. The reader is therefore encouraged to fill in those gaps and to really engage with the text. All three texts focus on repetition as well. In *Reasons,* Hannah relives her traumas when recording her story and her story is being retold each time another person listens to her tapes. Similarly, Charlie in *Perks* keeps having dreams about what happened to him, and Conor in *Monster* repeatedly has the same nightmare about the passing of his mother. Moreover, Charlie's, Hannah's, and Conor's narratives are fragmented, and the main characters only fully come to understand their situations at the end of the novel, as does the reader. Finally, in all three novels the trauma the main character suffers is never directly addressed. The authors worked around it to protect the characters and readers from direct harm. These choices all lead to the texts bearing resemblances to the structural characteristics of the non-fiction narratives of trauma victims.

In a similar way, the lay-out of the three novels also contributes to the novels' resemblances to trauma theory. The epistolary form in *Perks,* creates literal gaps in the text when Charlie decides not to write on certain days. The use of symbols in *Reasons,* disrupt the text because they stand out since they are non-textual. Likewise, the non-textual illustrations in *Monster,* separate the pieces of text by creating a void in between them. These lay-outs cause gaps and silences and make the narrative fragmented. Thus, both the textual and non-textual features of these YA novels contribute to their similarity to trauma theory and narratives.

Besides these findings, this research illustrated how each main character of the novels showed symptoms of either (C)PTSD or MDD like a real victim of trauma generally would. In the three chapters, it also mentioned that each novel – in their own way – stressed the importance of talking about your situation and feelings, and that people should listen to another and genuinely pay attention to the other's needs.

This thesis has bridged the gap between trauma theory and YA Literature by focusing on the form of the narrative and the lay-out of the novels. Based on this analysis, we can conclude that the representation of trauma in the selected YA novels resembles characteristics of trauma theory by means of choices made in narrative and lay-out. It is a question of future research to investigate the effects of these choices on the young reader's reading experience and how it affects them emotionally. Future analyses concerning a larger corpus are necessary to validate the kinds of conclusions drawn from this study. Research into other lay-out forms that achieve the same as the lay-outs analysed in this study might prove interesting as well as a comparison between the representation of trauma in children's, middle-grade, young-adult, and adult literature.

Works Cited

American Psychiatric Association. "Depressive Disorders." *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th, ed. American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013. https://dsm-psychiatryonline-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/doi/epdf/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Andersen, Julia. "So You Want to Write YA: Social Responsibility and Young Adult Literature." *ESSAI* 12.8 (2014): 1-18. Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Asher, Jay. *Thirteen Reasons Why.* London: Penguin Books, 2009. Print.

Bean, Joy. "A Fresh Look at YA Literature." *Publishers Weekly* (July 7, 2003): 21. *EBSCOhost.* Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Brandell, Jerrold R., and Shoshana Ringel. *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Trauma Theory, Research, and Practice*. Columbia University Press, 2019. *EBSCOhost*, https://web-s-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHh3d19fMjA5MDc1OV9fQU41?sid=2b7286f9-b999-44bc-91d3-087a9d75d1c1@redis&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Cart, Michael. "The Value of Young Adult Literature." American Library Association, 2008. http://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/whitepapers/yalit Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/lib/leidenuniv/detail.action?docID=3318659. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Chbosky, Stephen. *The Perks of Being a Wallflower.* London: Simon and Schuster UK Ltd, 2012. Print.

Cloitre, Marylene, et al. “A Developmental Approach to Complex PTSD: Childhood and Adult Cumulative Trauma as Predictors of Symptom Complexity.” *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 22.5 (2009): 399-408. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Crockett, Talia E. “The Silence of Fragmentation: Ethical Representations of Trauma in Young Adult Holocaust Literature. *Barnboken,* 43 (2020): 1-18. Web. 1 June 2023.

D’Andrea, Wendy, et al. “Physical Health Problems After Single Traumatic Exposure: When Stress Takes Root in the Body.” *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association* 17.6 (2011): 378-92. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Da Cunha, C., Coughlan, H., and M. Cannon. “Representations of Hallucinations and Dissociation in Young Adult Literature: Using Literature to Challenge Stigma About Psychosis.” *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine* (2022): 1-7. Web. 1 June 2023.

Day, Giskin. “Good Grief: Bereavement Literature for Young Adults and A Monster Calls.” *Medical Humanities* 38.2 (2012): 115-119. Web. 2 Jan. 2023.

Dücker, Marie. “Form and Emotion in Stephen Chbosky’s *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*.” *Writing Emotions: Theoretical Concepts and Selected Case Studies in Literature.* Edited by Ingeborg Jandl, Susanne Knaller, Sabine Schönfellner, Gudrun Tockner. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2017. 159-174. Web. 1 June 2023.

---. “Coming of Age in the Context of Hyperemotional Listening and Cognitive Mapping: Navigating the Emotional Landscape in Jay Asher’s Thirteen Reasons Why.” *Aspeers: Emerging Voices in American Studies* 11 (2018): 77-99. Web. 1 June 2023.

Elkind, David. “Erik Erikson’s Eight Ages of Man.” *The New York Times Magazine,* 5 Apr. 1970, reprint: 1-27. Web. 1 June 2023.

Feinberg, Barbara. “Reflections on the ‘Problem Novel.’” *American Federation of Teachers.* AFL-CIO, 2004. Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Felman, Soshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* Translated by James Strachey. Edited by James Strachey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company ltd, 1961. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Gibbs, Alan. *Contemporary American Trauma Narratives*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014. *EBSCOhost*, https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xww&AN=830678&site=ehost-live. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Gleaves, David H., May, Mary C., and Etzel Cardeña. "An Examination of the Diagnostic Validity of Dissociative Identity Disorder." *Clinical Psychology Review* 21.4 (2001): 577-608. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Ghoshal, Nishan, and Paul O. Wilkinson. "Narrative Matters: A Monster Calls – A Portrayal of Dissociation in Childhood Bereavement." *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 24.1 (2019): 84-85. Web. 1 June 2023.

Herman, Judith L. "Complex PTSD: A Syndrome in Survivors of Prolonged and Repeated Trauma." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 5.3 (1992): 377-391. Web. 14 December 2022.

Hinduja, Sameer, and Justin W. Patchin. "Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Suicide." *Archives of Suicide Research* 14 (2010): 206-21. Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

John, Juliet. *Dicken's Villains: Melodrama, Character, Popular Culture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. Web. 1 June 2023.

Kaplan, E. Ann. *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, New York: Rutgers University Press, 2005. Web. 24 June 2023. https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.36019/9780813541167

Kellermann, Jonas. "Witnessing Trauma in Hanya Yanagihara's *A Little Life*." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 62.3 (2021): 334-346. Web. 29 December 2022.

Kidd, David Comer, and Emanuele Castano. “Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind. *Science* 342 (2013): 377-80. Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

---. “Reading Literary Fiction and Theory of Mind: Three Preregistered Replications and Extensions of Kidd and Castano (2013).” *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 10.4 (2018): 522-31. Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Kramer, Didier N., Markus A. Landolt. “Characteristics and Efficacy of Early Psychological Interventions in Children and Adolescents After Single Trauma: A Meta-Analysis.” *European Journal of Psychotraumatology,* 2.1 (2011): 1-24. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Matos, Angel Daniel. “Writing through Growth, Growth through Writing: The Perks of Being a Wallflower and the Narrative of Development.” The *ALAN Review* 40.3 (2013): 86-97. Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Miller, Emma V. “Trauma and Sexual Violence.” *Trauma and Literature.* Edited by John R. Kurtz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 226-38. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Motta, Robert W. “Secondary Trauma in Children and School Personnel.” *Journal of Applied School Psychology* 28.3 (2012): 256-69. Web. 29 December 2022.

Ness, Patrick. *A Monster Calls.* Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2011. Print.

Nikolajeva, Maria. “Memory of the Present: Empathy and Identity in Young Adult Fiction.” *Narrative Works: Issues, Investigations, & Interventions* 4.2 (2014): 86-107. Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Nilson, Alleen Pace, and Kenneth L. Donelson. *Literature for Today’s Young Adults.* 8th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2009. *Pearsonhighered.* Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Palic, S., et al. “Evidence of Complex Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD) Across Populations with Prolonged Trauma of Varying Interpersonal Intensity and Ages of Exposure.” *Psychiatry Research* 246 (2016): 692-99. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Pederson, Joshua. “Trauma and Narrative.” *Trauma and Literature.* Edited by John R. Kurtz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 97-109. Web. 28 Dec. 2022.

Rodi-Risberg, Marinella. “Problems in Representing Trauma.” *Trauma and Literature.* Edited by John R. Kurtz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 110-123. Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Ross, Catherine Sheldrick. “Young Adult Realism: Conventions, Narrators, and Readers.” *Library Quarterly* 55.2 (1985): 174-91. Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Sell, Roger D. *Communicational Criticism: Studies in Literature as Dialogue.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011. *EBSCOhost.* Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Spear, Rachel N. “‘Let Me Tell You a Story’: On Teaching Trauma Narratives, Writing, and Healing.” *Pedagogy* 14.1 (2014): 53-79. Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Steinberg, Laurence, and Amanda Sheffield Morris. “Adolescent Development.” *Annual Review of Psychology* 52 (2001): 83-110. Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Tribunella, Eric L. *Melancholia and Maturation: The Use of Trauma in American Children’s Literature.* Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2010. *EBSCOhost.* Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

Young Adult Library Services Association. “About YALSA.” *American Library Association,* 2007. http://www.ala.org/yalsa/aboutyalsa Web. 29 Dec. 2022.

World Health Organisation. “Mental, Behavioural or Neurodevelopmental Disorders.” *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems,* 11th ed. World Health Organisation, 2019. https://icd.who.int/browse11/l-m/en#/http%3a%2f%2fid.who.int%2ficd%2fentity%2f334423054 Web. 28 Dec. 2022.