TRAUMA AND COLONIALITY IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN AND CHILEAN WOMEN WRITERS

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ABSTRACT

This project analyses the literary practices of women writers in Australia and Chile in order to further study the representation of trauma in postcolonial societies. Both countries share a comparable colonial past. The representation of trauma allows the comparison between two distinct geographic, linguistic and cultural areas which at the same time represent connections inherent in the Global South. The study of women's writing in these contexts shines a light on silenced voices and marginalized narratives that contradict the postcolonial "Grand Narrative". The reading of these women's writing introduces the different types of violence experienced by characters whose voices remain unheard. The corpus also shines a light on intergenerational trauma that haunts the later generations who are unable to make sense of the obsessive thoughts and recurring overwhelming experiences they face. Thus, the research aims to expand our understanding of truth-telling in postcolonial societies. How can truth be told in a postcolonial context where truth is silenced and violence is normalized? The corpus reveals that this impossibility to tell leads the protagonists towards alternative ways to acknowledge their trauma. Without another's assistance to understand and heal the past, fiction becomes a crucial mechanism to bring sense and coherence to fragmentary narratives. The project makes use of narrative analysis in conjunction with affective theories of trauma and (post)colonialism. The analysis of fiction gives a privileged insight into the characters' minds and opens a window on non-conventional modes of beliefs. The research demonstrates how the protagonists engage with trauma through fiction. Storytelling and writing become essential processes of trauma narrative. It will be shown how the understanding of trauma requires the reconciliation of conventional and non-conventional modes of beliefs as well as the capacity of literature to inform our understanding of the functioning of trauma.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I Mélanie Martinez Cidon declare that the Thesis entitled *Trauma and Coloniality in Australian and Chilean women writers* is not more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. The thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Date: March, the 8th 2024.

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DEDICATION

I am dedicating this thesis to my grandmother, my parents, and my nephews.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Late one evening Daniel Johnson sits alone on the verandah of a newly renovated homestead, reading from a tatty notebook, his lantern light low. The notebook is sixteen years old now – a collection of sketches, poems and memories. He knew he had to put it all down somehow. From the moment that spurred the four of them – Danny, Joe Junior, Henry James and little Delphi – to run into the mountains to be with them, and everything he learnt in those four short years. Their knowledge ancient beyond comprehension, and there was only so much they could share. Time and society were against them [...] Danny's thoughts race back to the moment that was the inspiration for his poem. It was suggested by her, Louisa. 'Write a poem, perhaps? A way to ease the pain . . . the hurt and the loss. You don't have to show it to anyone or share it. It's just for you, Danny.' [...] Contained between the pages of the old notebook is the story of a great woman, strong, steadfast, reliable and loving: his ma, Molly Johnson, nee Stewart.[1]

And what monsters, our ancestors, nothing but stories that drive children crazy.[2]

When we're happy our imagination is stronger; when we're unhappy our memory works with greater vitality.[3]

[1] Purcell, L. (2019). *The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Jonhson*. Melbourne: Hamish Hamilton, p.8.
[2] Costamagna, *A. (2021). The Touch System,* trans. Lisa Dillman. Oakland: Transit Books, p.9.
[3] Costamagna 2021, p.9.

1.1. Truth-telling

The first fragment from Purcell's rewriting of the Australian famous tale *The Drover's Wife* introduces characters who write stories, who feel the need to "put it all down somehow" to soothe the pain of the past and to share the knowledge they have acquired. Writing down the truth also appears as the only way to express themselves when "time and society were against them". Purcell's protagonists engage with writing to tell and transmit the story of their mother that contradicts the grand narrative that would otherwise wipe away their witnessing.

The second extract above are the quotes that open Costamagna's *The Touch System* in which later generations are severely impacted by their ancestors' traumatic past. Haunted by "stories" that they did not live, they find themselves trapped in an interminable repetitive pattern that challenges their sanity. The recurring struggles they experience create the desire to understand the past and look within to understand the subconscious memories that constantly arise.

The main aim of this research is to extend our understanding of truth-telling in postcolonial societies where violence is ignored and where truth is silenced. The research project analyses how literature constitutes a key device that permits giving voice to silenced narratives. The research is focused on the literary practices of women writers in Australia and Chile where the representation of trauma through fiction plays a crucial role. A comparison is therefore made between two distinct geographic, linguistic and cultural areas which at the same time represent connections inherent in the Global South. As a result, the project creates new knowledge and dialogues between previously unconnected bodies of work. The research problem is: How can truth be told in postcolonial societies where state violence is normalised and where truth is silenced?

In order to answer this question, the thesis analyses how trauma is represented in the literary practices of women writers from different cultural and linguistic worlds who share similar colonial legacies. The comparison reveals that these authors introduce characters who systematically face violence while trying to acknowledge traumas. This impossibility to tell

leads the protagonists towards alternative mechanisms to witness their struggles. In this respect, the use of fiction is precisely what permits the arising of traumas and truth-telling.

Additionally, other research questions can be underlined. For instance, the first interrogation that arises refers to the manifestations of trauma in the characters' lives. How and to what extent is trauma affecting them? How is this represented within the corpus? In relation to this, the research analyses how the representation of the landscape constitutes a fundamental component in the understanding of trauma aftermaths. It can be argued that the landscape represents the interface on which trauma becomes visible. Its analysis permits us to better comprehend what occurs in victims' minds. Another fundamental question that needs to be addressed is: How is truth silenced in these postcolonial societies? In other words, what are the mechanisms established in these societies in order to keep the truth hidden? Further interrogating this reality allows the understanding of the protagonists' need to find alternative ways to acknowledge their struggles. In this respect, it appears that fiction creates the space where the past can be understood. The close analysis of the protagonists' imaginary worlds, dreams, and invented stories reveals the serious impact of the past on the present. Thus, another research question that is taken into consideration is: How do subconscious, hidden or silenced traumas arise through fictional elements? Therefore, the project further studies how the use of fiction is crucial to reconstruct the traumatic past.

In so doing, I propose a close literary analysis of the following books. I simultaneously explore an Australian corpus, comprised of the novels *Family Skeleton* (2016) by Carmel Bird, *Heat and Light* (2014) by Ellen Van Neerven, *The Drover's Wife* (2019) by Leah Purcell and *The Secret River (2005) by* Kate Grenville while the Chilean corpus includes: *How to order the universe* (2017) by Maria José Ferrada, *The Touch System* (2018) by Alejandra Costamagna, *Mirror Earth* (2008) by Maribel Mora Curriao and *The Rest is Silence* (2008) by Carla Guelfenbein. Each book depicts different types of trauma, but all represent characters who have been uprooted from their homelands either by escaping a war, by living in a post-

dictatorial context, or by experiencing a violent Indigenous dispossession. Other protagonists discover hidden family secrets that deeply erode their sense of identity. Also, some novels portray characters facing racist and sexist stereotypes or the damaging impact of the neoliberal economy. Overall, the novels reveal characters struggling with the pain and violence of colonialism and its aftermath.

1.2. About the corpus

Family Skeleton: Bird's novel tells the story of Margaret O'Day, an elderly woman who decides to write her memoir at the end of her life where she narrates the story of her family across the years. Margaret describes herself as a family woman and talks about her deceased husband Edmund, her descendants, and the previous generations of her family. She also describes the funeral business owned by her family. Genealogy is a fundamental pattern within the book as every branch is accurately described. She is depicted as a family woman and a model of virtue on which her entourage relies. Her father Killian occupies an important place in her narrative as he has been her own role model throughout her life. Margaret feels a deep admiration and love towards her father on which she always counts.

However, the writing of her memoir, combined with the revelations brought by a skeleton hidden in the cupboard, allows the emergence of forgotten past memories and the discovery of her sister's existence kept secret by her father. The character absolutely wants to keep this truth hidden to preserve her father's spotless reputation. In order to hide the truth, the protagonist kills a distant cousin who came from the United States of America to further study the genealogy of the O'Day family before dying in a car accident. The discovery of her father's lie completely erodes Margaret's long-term beliefs about her family and herself, plunging her into a deep feeling of despair where she cannot recognise herself anymore. She discovers that her father was not a caring doctor, but rather a monster who selfishly trapped his illegitimate daughter in a convent to save his reputation and marriage. The extreme fear of seeing the truth being exposed leads her to death to avoid the unbearable shame and anxiety she experiences.

‘Water’: This futuristic novella represents the second part of Van Neerven’s *Heat and Light*. It is about a fictionalised Australian nation where Indigenous people are meant to be given back what they have lost. In order to reach this goal, a project titled ‘Australia2’ has begun. It aims to reshape Russell Island so that it can host Aboriginal people who can apply to live in the ancestral land. However, some strange and surprising creatures have risen with the sea. They take the shape of ‘plantpeople’ – who are not entirely human – and that have taken root in the land. They appear as a main problem for the government's plan for Russell Island. The reader follows the story of Kaden – an Indigenous person with a mixed family background – who is deeply willing to know herself. She has been disconnected from her Indigenous roots. The new government lead by Tania Sparkle seems to increase her identity struggle, using Indigeneity and Reconciliation as excuses for her opportunistic actions. The author depicts a country where communities are separated. White Australians are shamed for past actions while Aboriginality is celebrated. Nevertheless, the latter becomes institutionalised and controlled as it has to fit within the state’s prerogatives. Consequently, Indigenous people are forced to meet expectations they do not share and collapse under state pressure.

The main character begins to work in Russell Island where the plantpeople are encountered. Their fruitful interchanges allow Kaden to reconnect with ancestral knowledge and discover who she truly is. Indeed, it is later revealed that these plantpeople are the spirits of the Ancestors who came back with the purpose of breaking the cycle of segregation, injustice, and pain. An attack is thus being prepared in order to resist a criminal government that was trying to kill them and stop their project of division between Australians.

The Drover’s Wife tells the story of Molly Johnson, a drover’s wife who is left alone in the threatening bush with her four children. Purcell’s story introduces a female protagonist who constantly fights for her survival and her children’s. She is forced to murder her violent and abusive husband to protect herself. During the delivery of her still-born child, she accidentally meets Yadaka, an Aboriginal storyteller, who tries to escape from the authorities. The man is

accused of a murder he did not commit but has no right to defend himself in the 19th century. The storyteller helps Molly during the delivery and the latter burial of her child. In exchange, Molly helps the man by removing the chains that bind him. Their encounter leads to storytelling. The Aboriginal man narrates his traumatic life story. He had been displaced while his family was killed. Through her overwhelming and inexplicable emotions during this telling, Molly is recognised by Yadaka as the Aboriginal woman he always heard the story of. Molly Johnson discovers that her mother is Aboriginal. The murder of her husband is discovered. She also kills violent officers to survive. The protagonist faces the threat of her children being removed from her because people know they are what they call "octaroons". She escapes to place them in the safety of the ancestral mountains where they can rejoin their community. She is captured during the journey and later murdered by the authorities. The official narrative describes an Indigenous woman who is feeding an intergenerational hatred towards white men. However, her children rescue the truth that they transmit towards future generations thanks to their own story.

The Secret River tells the story of William Thornhill from his childhood in London to his arrival in Australia. Grenville's character has always evolved in misery and misfortune. He grew up in an abusive household where he could never find his place. He has always lived in the shadow of this older brother – also called William - who died. Thornhill is forced to steal to be able to feed himself. A feeling of anger and rage increases over the years due to the injustice he constantly endures. Later, he marries Sarah whose father enjoys a more successful position within society; After years of hard work, the main protagonist finally accesses an upgraded position and seems to find stability. However, his mother-in-law's disease coupled with a very tough winter that freezes the river Thames where he works plunges the whole family into debt. William is forced to steal again. He is caught and sent with his family to the colony as a punishment. Australia appears to him as a place inherently frightening and hostile where he feels lost and despairing. In this land, he also encounters Indigenous people. His

desire is to simply build a house for his family. Despite his good intentions towards Indigenous communities, he finds himself involved in their massacre. Grenville's novel shows a character who is constantly fighting for survival – either in England or in Australia – with no assistance or support. He also appears consumed by the anger caused by this repetitive and unfair series of tragic events.

How to Order the Universe is about a seven-year-old little girl who grows up during the dictatorship period in Chile. The character avoids going to school and creates her own reality with a particular emphasis on the landscape imagined as the Great Carpenter's creation. Every day, she skips school and travels across the countryside to sell tools with her father. She describes herself as his sales assistant. She uses the catalogue of tools to explain the surrounding world – trying to understand and make sense of what she cannot comprehend. For example, her mother's emotional distance to whom she lies about her daily activities. She somehow remains preserved from the state repression by living in this parallel and imaginary world until she witnesses the murder of a family friend by the authorities. The photographer was taking pictures of the disappeared people's corpses when he was caught by the police who murdered him only a few meters away from the protagonist who remained hidden. From then, she is forced to go back to reality where she is unable to fit in and begins to describe herself as a ghost. Her father is imprisoned, and she reluctantly moves to a new city. The whole world she used to love is crumbling with the implementation of a neoliberal economy. The small shops she used to visit daily close while great multinational companies have a monopoly on the sales. At the end of the book, the travelling salesmen commit suicide as they cannot survive. The young protagonist is hopeless and feels she cannot overcome the situation.

The Touch System is mostly about uprooting trauma. The main protagonist discovers how she is haunted by the story of her great-aunt who had to escape a war in Europe and move to Chile. Costamagna's book narrates the story of Ania Coletti, a teacher and house sitter who is constantly invaded by self-doubts and invalidating recurring thoughts. She wants to withdraw

and retire from the world. She feels unsatisfied in every single area of her life. One day, her father requests her to undertake a travel to the little village of Campana, in Argentina, where the funeral of his cousin Agustín will take place. Ania crosses the Andes to attend this event. During her stay in Campana, she gets to know more about her great-aunt Nélida's past. She remembers her insanity and how her relative was constantly fighting against intrusive thoughts that made her appear delusional. In the old family house, she discovers a box filled with letters, objects, and pictures about the past.

This discovery allows her to better understand Nélida's traumatic past but also her own struggles. Nélida suffered from uprooting trauma since she was forced to leave Italy to try to adapt herself to a new country where she never found her place. The reader is shown the different manifestations of this uprooting trauma across the family. Nélida's son has always been unable to leave his house in Campana despite his strong desire to travel the world. By contrast, Ania's father moved to Chile, married Leonora after his wife's death, and replaced his genealogy with that of his new wife. Ania does not find herself in the family pictures as her father has completely cut off links with his family. At the end of the novel, Ania comes back to Santiago after her trip to Campana where she gets to know herself and her past more. It seems that she has been able to somehow break the "evil inheritance" - the family curse. She decides to create a different reality for herself and let go of the harmful ties she was maintaining.

Mirror Earth is a poetic work that alludes to themes such as displacement, uprooting, sadness, but also hope. Indeed, one of the crucial themes of the book is the hope to return to the lost lands. The poems are filled with melancholy towards the past. Also, notions such as motherhood and female lineage are brought to the fore in relation to the origin.

The Rest is Silence is about the discovery of a family secret. The main protagonist, a twelve-year-old boy, accidentally finds out the truth about his mother's death. She did not die from a disease but took her own life. Following this discovery, Tommy Montes conducts his

own investigation, which leads him to another discovery: his hidden Jewish origin. The protagonist evolves in a world made of secrets and lies where adults cannot be trusted and where truth is hidden from him. Furthermore, adults have the tendency to withdraw from the traumatic reality instead of facing their problems. His father submerges himself into his work as a surgeon and pilots his plane to distance himself from the traumatic reality. He cannot accept the death of Tommy's mother or his son's inadequate behaviour and disease. Thus, Tommy starts recording their conversations. Despite his heart condition, he manages to successfully investigate the past until he reaches the truth. Reconnecting with this hidden background and embracing the truth empowers Tommy who finally faces his fears and feels confident about himself. He understands how the permanent feelings of rejection and inadequacy had already been experienced by his mother. In this respect, it should also be noted that Tommy is also bullied at school and ignored within his family. Like the adults, he also withdraws into his invented world to meet his imaginary friend which helps him cope with loneliness. At the end of the book, Tommy visits his mother's grave and dies in the cemetery after being hit by a wave. However, his death permits him to reconcile his father Juan with his stepmother Alma who are forced to finally face their issues.

Regarding the selection of the authors, an important criterion was to give an overview of the cultural diversity inherent in both countries. The presence of Indigenous writers seemed essential in order to better represent this variety. The selection also permits the introduction of these two areas as lands of immigration, showing that many authors have a European heritage which is represented in their writings. Indeed, the different journeys undertaken by the characters permit the author to open the window to the interaction between these different parts of the world through the lens of trauma. This allows us to further study, for instance, the arrival of an exiled European family into a postcolonial society where they have to face the traumas of the locals. Therefore, the impacts of postcolonial trauma on characters that are not directly impacted by its aftermath can be analysed. The corpus also shines a light on traumatised

characters who arrive in a postcolonial area where they have to face similar experiences of pain and violence within a different context. Acknowledging that Australia and Chile also constitute sites for non-European migrations, the project focuses on the European heritage of many authors in both countries. The presence of European characters in the books sometimes permits us to analyse the interaction between the coloniser and the colonised. It also permits further study of the evolution of migrants from the same continent within two distinct postcolonial societies. Additionally, it can also allow the analysis of the main discourses of colonial states in order to justify their violence. For instance, the corpus shows characters who face feelings of guilt and shame as they are haunted by the trauma of the coloniser – which has also been inherited.

Regarding the corpus, a thematic approach has been privileged for the selection. The crucial use of fiction in relation to the representation of trauma within the books has been a determinant for the selection. Fiction has been considered a fundamental tool to better understand the subconscious impacts of trauma on the characters' minds. The analysis of the protagonists' imaginary worlds allows the understanding of the deep impact of trauma on the brain. It shows to what extent the outside world is interpreted in the light of trauma. Also, the introduction of fiction within the corpus demonstrates how trauma is always present as a palimpsest in the protagonists' subconscious minds.

The list of books is non-exhaustive and is likely to be extended with other works. In this respect, it must be said that the current Chilean corpus has been translated into English. Many other books could have been included in the initial selection. However, there is no English version available at the moment, which is a necessity in order to permit a reader to fully understand the content of the primary corpus.

The idea of comparing the literature of Chilean women writers with other postcolonial literature, written in another language and within another culture, started to seem compelling as the same literary patterns were found in Australian women's writings. A further study of the

historical context of Australia and Chile reveals that both countries can be seen and analysed through the prism of coloniality. Both societies present a certain number of striking similarities. For instance, the common presence and use of extractive industries can be considered as a manifestation of the capitalist thought that sees the land as an exploitable economic resource, at the expense of local populations. These industries permit the highlighting of the key role played by colonial states through violent dispossessions and the instauration of policies that are not consensus-driven. These social inequalities and distrust towards the state authorities are amplified by the fact that Australia and the state of Queensland have been defined as police states. Additionally, another significant treat shared by both countries is the arrival of numerous multicultural migrants that have contributed to the creation of discourses based on the notions of rationality, modernity, and progress. This dominant discourse somehow invalidates opposite narratives and normalises state violence. In both societies, violence has therefore become a main component of the landscape. However, in Australia and Chile, truth-telling seems to be a major difficulty in a context where violence is not recognised as such. It appears that truth cannot yet be spoken. The political and social context of these countries permits us to understand the emergence of literatures that seek to recognise the truth and to understand violence as violence. The selected corpus therefore introduces characters who face this inability to tell in a society where violence is normalised. The books also show how the different protagonists find alternative ways to tell silenced truths by means of fiction. It can also be said that the comparison allows us to reflect on our own society through another one.

The emphasis placed on women's writings comes from an interest and curiosity of the researcher as women authors were absent from Chilean literature academic courses. A thorough reading of women writers revealed that their literary productions permit the shining of a light on the postcolonial violence perpetrated against women in both countries. The project studies how the narrativisation of trauma can bring sense and coherence to a residual and fragmentary life experience. In this respect, the project will adopt the key methodology of trauma theory

and its intersections (post)colonialism, with a particular emphasis on work by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, Sigmund Freud, and Cathy Caruth in order to understand how traumatic memories affect later generations who have not experienced trauma themselves but are subconsciously affected by its consequences. It demonstrates how trauma theory and coloniality can be brought together in literary studies, giving voice to the silenced experiences of women writers in the Global South.

The project will be divided into three parts. The first part is allocated to an analysis of trauma theory as a methodological framework for understanding the resurgence of trauma in the present. *Unclaimed Experience*[4] constitutes a crucial reference in which the author, Cathy Caruth, explains the reactivation of trauma through memory triggers. Bessel Van der Kolk further analysis this, by highlighting a "continual reappearance of a death" in *The Body Keeps the Score.*[5] This permits a reader to demonstrate more precisely the impact of past traumas on a survivor's body and to understand the struggle experienced by the characters.

The second part of the research will position these trauma theories within the historical contexts of Australia and Chile in order to analyse the works' treatment of coloniality. In that sense, Walter Mignolo represents a key reference as he demonstrates the impact of coloniality on contemporary societies. Similar theorists, Santiago Castro-Gómez and Ramón Grosfoguel, argue that the effective decolonisation of subaltern territories is a myth rather than reality, demonstrating the need to decolonise trauma theory to better understand the lived realities of (post)colonial contexts.

As such, the project argues that these women writers bear witness to other realities often silenced, unseen or unknown in a world marked by coloniality. These postmodern fictions, focused on the diversity of human experience, show other truths and represent a past

[4] Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
[5] Van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body keeps The Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the healing of Trauma*. Paris: Albin Michel.

that is still alive in the present.[6] The third part of the research will therefore be allocated to the crucial role played by fiction in the representation of trauma. By comparing two postcolonial societies represented here by Australia and Chile, considered hybrid cultures where different identities can cohabitate among the locals, the research further studies the representation of silenced trauma, focusing on its cross-cultural features.

1.3. Coloniality in Australia and Chile

This research seeks to establish unexplored connexions between Australia and Chile in order to further analyse the representation of trauma in these postcolonial societies and further study how the use of a different language and culture can impact the perception and representation of trauma. The comparison between both countries is central to the project. This parallelism shines a light on significant similarities between both countries that had to face violent Indigenous dispossessions as the severe consequences of a neoliberal economic transformation. Irène Hirt traces the History of the Mapuche people as marked by several projects of exclusion over the centuries.[7] In this respect, Fernando Pairican and Marie-Juliette Urrutia explain that "the colonisation of Mapuche lands was by no means spontaneous. It subscribed to the dynamics of national capitalism and its various international connections"[8], drawing particular attention to the occupation of the Araucanía defined as a capitalist project of conquest occurring between 1861 and 1883 which lead to a territorial reservation or reduction.[9] This military occupation has led to the impoverishment of Mapuche communities who were confined within these reservations by the State forces while their lands were given to settlers. The Australian context echoes the Chilean one as, in the late 18th and 19th centuries, Indigenous Australians were expropriated from their economic resources and removed from their homeland.[10] The

[6] Hutcheon, L. (1998). *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London: Routledge.
[7] Hirt, I. (2007). 'Geographies of resistance and decolonization. A study of the reconstruction of Mapuche territories in Chili'. *Géographie et Cultures*, p.63. https://doi.org/10.4000/gc.1919.
[8] Pairacan, F., Urrutia, M- J. (2021). 'La Rebelión permanente: una interpretación de levantamientos mapuche bajo el colonialismo chileno'. *Radical Américas. 6* (1), p.12. 6 ,10.14324/111.444.ra.2021.v6.1.012.es.
[9] Pairican, Urrutia 2021, p.12.
[10] Jalata, A.(2013) 'The Impacts of English colonial Terrorism and Genocide on Indigenous/ Black Australians'. *Sage Journals, 3* (3), without pagination. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013499143.

author also explains how "colonial settlers and their descendants have justified their theft and robbery of the resources of indigenous people by the discourses of race, backwardness, civilisation, and modernity.[11] Similarly, José Bengoa reminds us that Mapuche individuals were depicted as "good savages",[12] describing the history of the Mapuche as a history of intolerance where they had to defend themselves against the "civilised savagery".[13]

Australia and Chile can be thus compared based on their colonial past in which discourses of Modernity, rationality, and progress where imposed on the local populations that were racialized. The history of violence, Indigenous dispossession, displacement, and discriminations establishes a link between both countries. Additionally, the implementation of a neoliberal economy and the presence of extractive industries that deeply modify the landscape also needs to be considered. In both countries, these realities show the continuity of colonial practices.

On the other hand, the historical process of *mestizaje* in Chile -understood as a racial mixture - contrasts with the racist policies that were implemented in Australia. Indeed, both countries wanted to create and preserve an homogenous nation. However, in 20th century Australia, national homogeneity was thought of in terms of a "White Australia", in which Aboriginality is incompatible or undesirable in the modern Australian nation.[14] The initial concern was "to preserve the link between white race, nation and territory" in order to justify the colonisation and the occupation of Aboriginal lands.[15] Then, "as racism lost legitimacy after the Second World War, the emphasis turned to the preservation of cultural homogeneity, as a source of national cohesion and national progress".[16] In such a context, "racial discrimination and segregation, and expressions of racial difference more generally, were

[11] Jalata 2013, without pagination.
[12] Bengoa, J. (1996). *Historia del Pueblo Mapuche (Siglos XIX y XX*). Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Sur, 1996, p.5.
[13] Bengoa 1996, p.5.
[14] Moran, A. (2005). 'White Australia, Settler Nationalism and Aboriginal Assimilation'. *Australian Journal of Politics and History*. 51 (2), p. 169. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8497.2005.00369.x.
[15] Moran 2005, p. 169.
[16] Moran 2005, pp. 169-170.

problems that could be ameliorated by policies of assimilation [of the Aborigines]".[17] In Australia, national homogeneity is thus structured around the coloniser's culture. Furthermore, recent multiculturalism might "other" Indigeneity and keep the past distant in modern Australia. In this respect, "unlike the US and European countries, where migration policies tend to assimilate migrants to the host society, Australia embraces the spirit of multiculturalism".[18] Indeed, "multiculturalism in Australia allows for the passage of people from any nationality, ethnicity, culture, religion, or language"[19]In relation to this, it can be added that "the focus of migration policy in Australia shifted from the White Australia policy, which aimed to restrict non-European immigration before the 1950s, to the non-discriminatory immigration policy that led to an influx of migrants from Asia and the Pacific after the 1970s".[20] Thus, Indigenous voices might still be "othered" in a state that nowadays appears non-discriminatory.

However, the situation in Chile differs from the Australian context. For instance, Sarah Walsh explains that in Chile racial mixing resulted in a homogenous national population.[21] This national homogeneity lies in "the racial mixture" between European ancestry and Indigeneity.[22] In this respect, it is argued that racial "melting" had occurred centuries ago, during the colonial period.[23] In these circumstances, the concepts of Chilean nationality and racial character overlap.[24]

Thus, while both countries share a similar colonial past, differences can be observed regarding contemporary realities. The project aims to further study the representation of trauma in the

[17] Moran 2005, p. 170.
[18] Amati, M. et al., (2023). Landscape of multiculturalism in Australia: Tracking ethnic diversity and its relation with neighborhood features in 2001 – 2021, in *Applied Geography 160* (4), *p.* 103114. 0.1016/j.apgeog.2023.103114.

[19] Amati et al (2023), p. 103114.
[20] Amati et al 2023, p. 2.
[21] Walsh, S. (2019). The Chilean Exception: racial homogeneity, mestizaje and eugenic nationalism and eugenic nationalism in *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies 25* (1), p. 105. https://doi.org/10.1080/14701847.2019.1579499.
[22] Walsh 2019, p. 105.
[23] Walsh 2019, p. 105.
[24] Walsh 2019, p. 105.

literary practice of women writers in these two different postcolonial areas that share a similar history of Indigenous dispossession and the severe consequences of the neoliberal economy.

1.4. (Post)coloniality and trauma in women's writing

Within the corpus, it appears that what has also been colonised is the protagonists' bodies and minds. Indeed, most of the struggles they face lie in their incapacity to be confined to (post)colonial expectations regarding their body or behaviour. They do not have the right to define themselves freely. Their identity is decided according to broader criteria they must meet – unsuccessfully. The characters are pre-defined in closed categories in which they feel entrapped. For instance, the case of Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* can be cited. Throughout the novel, the colonial expectations placed on her are patent. She is solely a woman and a wife with no rights. She is placed in an extremely vulnerable position where she is repeatedly abused, mistreated, and marginalised due to her condition. Furthermore, in Van Neerven's "Water", the character struggles to find her gender identity as she cannot identify herself within the category she is supposed to fit in. On another note, Purcell's rewriting of *The Drover's Wif*e also sheds light – not only on gender discrimination– but also on racial discrimination. Thus, the corpus introduces a patriarchal society where minorities are marginalised. Coloniality is not only experienced on a state level but also within the characters' social circle and family. This shows how one part of the population has integrated these discourses on race and gender.

In these (post)colonial contexts, trauma writing appears as a mechanism to bring some sense and coherence to traumatic life experiences. The literary practice of both countries shows how literature represents and explains the political, social, and economic context. More specifically, the corpus gives voice to characters whose voices are silenced and invalidated. The state narrative excludes all the other discourses. The corpus also depicts contexts where expressing oneself is not even possible. Writing trauma can be considered a tool to free one's voice and transmit what cannot be said otherwise. In this context, it appears that women's writings might encapsulate even more these traumatic experiences that can be embodied by

women – especially in a postcolonial context where their voices are marginalised. In this respect, it can be specified that when *Heat and Light* was written, the author was not identifying themself as non-binary. However, if Van Neerven does not sit comfortably within a corpus of women's writing, the work of a non-binary Indigenous writer shows their further marginalisation. Their work is particularly relevant to the corpus as it shows how a non-binary identity can cause to be unheard or misunderstood in both communities. Furthermore, their story of trauma might somehow be dismissed due to their gender identity that creates an additional discrimination.

Literature does not only bring visibility to silenced narratives but allows us to put residual and fragmentary life experiences together. Within the corpus, characters often take the initiative to write down or narrate their imprecise memories and overwhelming traumatic thoughts. Literature can thus be seen as a mechanism to bring sense to trauma dissociation.

1.5. Chapter overview

The third chapter considers all the different books comprised in the corpus to show how the authors share the will to tell a silenced truth and how characters systematically face violence while trying to acknowledge their trauma. It explains the different types of violence depicted in the books. This chapter also demonstrates how characters are constantly invaded by intrusive and recurring thoughts that they cannot comprehend or make sense of. This chapter also highlights how the different characters engage with these thoughts in order to feel better. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how trauma exists independently from the characters' will. It will be argued that trauma repeatedly addresses the characters through their intrusive thoughts and overwhelming emotions in order to be acknowledged. It will be shown how the use of fiction is precisely what allows the traumatic memories to arise.

The fourth chapter further studies to what extent trauma affects the characters' perception of the outside world. It compares Grenville's *The Secret River* with Ferrada's *How to Order the Universe* to analyse the representation of the landscape. The characters' views on

the landscape will be discussed. It will be shown how the subconscious trauma fundamentally structures the characters' perception of the world by being projected onto the landscape. It will also be argued that the characters' descriptions of the landscape are thus not objective, but rather a reflection of their own inner state. Therefore, the representation of the landscape becomes crucial to understanding how trauma impacts the victim. It will be shown how trauma is associated with the landscape that becomes an extension of the thoughts of the characters.

The fifth chapter is focused on Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* and Guelfenbein's *The Rest is Silence.* Both books approach subconscious traumas that have been inherited and embodied. The focus is brought on the characters' emotions considered precious clues that lead to the truth. It will be shown how – in a context where trauma is not consciously known – the arising of emotions allows the discovery of the truth. This permits us to advance the hypothesis that subconscious trauma has its own mechanisms to be known and challenge the censorship that has been put in place in postcolonial societies. In this respect, the protagonists' conscious actions to understand the cause of their struggle will be discussed. For example, the process of storytelling in Purcell's writing or the characters' imaginary worlds in Guelfenbein's novel will be further studied to demonstrate how fiction plays a crucial role in truth-telling. The persistence of the past within the present will be highlighted.

Chapter 6 establishes a comparison between Bird's *Family Skeleton* and Costamagna's *The Touch System.* This chapter focuses on the use of fiction within both novels to distinguish two distinct temporalities: the traumatic time and the everyday life timeline. It will be argued that this distinction overlaps the distinction between the Time of Modernity and the Indigenous circular conception of time. It will demonstrate how the traumatic temporality can be schematised under a circular pattern – or loop – in which the characters find themselves entrapped. On the other hand, the everyday life in which they are inscribed obeys a linear and future-orientated timeline. In relation to this, Kristeva's theory about Women's Time will be taken into consideration.

The last chapter contrasts Mora Curriao's *Mirr Earth* with Van Neerven's "Water" to bring to the fore the notion of origin. It will be argued that origin is the concept around which the time of Modernity and the Indigenous circular conception of time might reconcile. It will be shown how characters across the corpus have built their identity around trauma. They appear unable to perceive themselves around this traumatic – and often subconscious – narrative. The analysis of Mora Curriao's *Mirror Earth* allows the emergence of an origin that does not appear as fundamentally traumatic. In so doing, a close analysis of the natural landscape will be provided. The origin that is mentioned throughout Mapuche poetry is based on acceptance, safety, and hope. Similarly, the close reading of "Water" reveals a reconnexion with an origin that has been lost. This reconnexion allows the protagonists to rebuild their identity on a non-traumatic base. It will be demonstrated how the analysis of both literary works draws a circular pattern whose origin needs to be regained in order to create a better future. In this respect, it will also be shown how linear and circular conceptions of time are both necessary in the understanding of trauma functioning. It will finally be argued that resilience and strength can be found in traumatic situations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Classic Trauma theory

The literature review uses classic trauma theory in order to highlight the intersection between trauma theory and postcolonial studies. This reveals how scholars have shown the limitations of classic trauma theory by shining a light on its Eurocentric perspective. New and broader definitions of trauma will then be explored to better appreciate the sufferings that occur in (post)colonial contexts. Particular attention will be given to scholars who have challenged the dichotomy between Western and Non-Western approaches. The last part of the literature review will evaluate trauma narratives in the process of recovery.

Trauma theory emerged in the early 1990s, due to the crucial contributions of scholars such as Cathy Caruth who defines trauma as a "response to an overwhelming and unassimilable life-threatening or wounding".[25] It is therefore described as "individual and event-based" in the terms used by Irene Visser.[26] Caruthian writings are strongly marked by Freudian psychoanalysis where trauma becomes "engraved" in the subject's mind. Caruth also introduces the fundamental notion of "not knowing", related to the dissociation of trauma in the mind. However, the traumatic past arises through memory triggers through the paradoxical role played by the body. Two key limitations have been pointed at by the critics regarding Caruthian works. Firstly, the impossibility of accurately remembering and verbalizing the past due to the victim's lacking memory has been questioned. Secondly, the idea that telling the traumatic past might constitute a betrayal of that past has also been criticised and contrasted with an opposite argument formulated by psychiatrist Judith Herman.[27] In this book, she views narrative as an empowering and effective therapeutic method in the treatment of trauma victims that may contribute to healing and recovery. It can therefore be argued that the Caruthian

[25] Caruth 1996, p.61.
[26] Visser, I (2015). 'Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospects'. *Humanities, 4*, p.252. https://doi.org/10.3390/h4020250.
[27] Herman , J. (1997). *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basicbooks.

trauma model is mainly focused on trauma and stasis. The corpus analysis similarly reveals how different characters feel the need to tell their traumatic story, either orally or through writing, which allows them to bring sense to a fragmentary memory or even to bring forgotten or unknown memories to the consciousness.

In that respect, Marinella Rodi-Risberg argues that "in Cathy Caruth's famous definition, trauma causes an epistemological crisis and bypasses linguistic reference and is thus paradoxically only experienced belatedly through representation in the form of traumatic effects, which are seen to literally represent the traumatic event".[28] This point might lead to the warning formulated by Joshua Pederson,[29] and Michelle Balaev[30] against the risks of trauma's pathologizing effects, arguing that these effects disempower the victim's responses and narratives. While Suzanne LaLonde explains how the story of trauma becomes a testimony of another's trauma in Caruthian.[31] This has been taken up by Shoshanna Felman and Dori Laub who argue that "it takes two to witness to unconscious".[32] Regarding this, the project shines a light on the interaction between characters to analyse how the discovery of another's trauma permits the acknowledgement of one's own traumatic past.

Other scholars have further studied the impact caused by trauma on the victim's mind by highlighting the continual reappearance of a death that is repeatedly hunting the survivor.[33] In that respect, Eldra Solomon and Kathleen[34] have also demonstrated how a traumatic experience can severely impact the survivor's brain to the extent that it becomes impossible for the victims to understand and interpret the world outside of the trauma. Robert Scaer also

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[28] Rodi-Risberg, M. (2018). 'Problems in Representing Trauma*'* R. Kurtz (ed.). *Trauma and Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.110.
[29] Pederson, J (2014). 'Speak Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory", *Narrative, 22*(3), pp.333-353. 10.1353/nar.2014.0018.
[30] Balaev, M. (2008). 'Trends in literary trauma theory'. *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal, 41*(2), pp.149-162. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44029500.
[31] Lalonde, S. (2018). *Healing and Post-Traumatic Growth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[32] Felman, S. and Laub, D. (1992). *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge, p.15.
[33] Van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body keeps the score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Paris: Albin Michel.
[34] Heide, K. and Solomon E. (2005). 'The Biology of Trauma: Implications for treatment'. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 20*(1), p.54. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260504268119.

demonstrates how traumatic memories fundamentally differ from others by the intense emotions and sensations of loss, fright and horror they awake.[35] This theoretical point helps to explain the repeated presence of traumatic memories in the characters' minds as they struggle to control their arising.

Without denying the importance of the early trauma theory developed in the 1960s, this "theorization of trauma in literary studies has aroused not only widespread scholarly approbation and enthusiasm, but also resistance and opposition, and much of the latter has come from the side of postcolonial and non-Western literary criticism".[36] Many postcolonial studies strongly criticised what they consider to be a Eurocentric trauma theory that "neglects the specificity of Non-Western and minority cultural trauma".[37] In that respect, Michael Rothberg's essay has been recognised as a major turning point in trauma studies as it demonstrates how a Eurocentric trauma theory, which is event-based and narrowly focused on Freudian psychoanalysis and deconstructivism, is unable to study trauma in postcolonial contexts. Characters within the corpus appear to be haunted by past traumas that are not necessarily event-based as they are the result of a transmission that is intergenerational and unconscious. Given a multiplicity of traumas can operate within the same protagonist, the victim is not always able to define a precise origin of trauma as they overlap and interact with each other. It also appears that traumas are strongly engraved in the character's mind to the extent that they subconsciously rule all their behaviours and attitudes without even being consciously known.

A large number of scholars have developed Rothberg's initial critique of Eurocentric and event-based trauma. The edited collection *The Splintered Glass*[38] argues that a sociological

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[35] Scaer, R. (2014). *The Body bears the Burden: Trauma, Dissociation, and Disease*. London: Taylor & Francis.
[36] Visser, I. (2018). 'Trauma in non-Western contexts', *Trauma and Literatur*e, p.124. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316817155.010.
[37] Andermahr, S. (2015). 'Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism'—Introduction, *Humanities*, 4, p.501. 10.3390/h4040500.
[38] Herrero, D. .and Baelo-Allué, S (2011). *The Splintered Glass: Facets of Trauma in the Post-Colony and Beyond*. Amsterdam & Rotterdam: Rodopi.

orientation is needed in post-colonial studies to move away from the Freudian psychoanalysis that deeply dominates the contemporary Eurocentric theory. Stef Craps has notably argued that classic trauma theory has failed to recognise the sufferings of individuals in Non-Western societies because of its Eurocentric bias.[39] Post colonial studies have pioneered a rebuttal to this Eurocentricity of knowledge production. Walter Mignolo argues that coloniality still has a significant impact on everyday knowledge, as it is strongly marked by a Eurocentric point of view that has emerged from colonial legacies since the 17th century.[40] Additionally, Anibal Quijano similarly defines the concept of "modernity" as "the intersubjective relationships of dominance under the European hegemony between different social identities and geocultural parts of colonialism".[41] Distancing themselves from the Eurocentric event-based definition of trauma in favour of one that is "not only understood as acute, individual, and event-based but also as collective and chronic".[42] Such attributes particularly characterise colonial trauma.[43]

In that respect, other works bring the idea that "the traumas of non-Western or minority groups must be acknowledged on their own terms,[44] shining a light on the crucial role played by non-Western literature in the development of a new paradigm in trauma theory that takes into account the suffering of non-Western beings.[45] Irene Visser also reminds us of the importance of integrating the long-term and systemic violence of colonisation, racism, exploitation, and oppression as 'early trauma theory's too narrow Eurocentric model has been expanded due to non-Western perspectives to include a broader understanding of trauma that

[39] Craps, S. (2013). *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
[40] Mignolo, W. (2000). *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, pp.11-12.
[41] Quijano, A. (2020). 'Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina*' in Quijano Anibal (ed.) Cuestiones y horizontes de la dependencia histórico-estructural a la colonialidad/descolonialidad del poder*. Buenos Aires: CLASCO, p.873.
[42] Andermarhr 2015, p.502.
[43] Visser 2015, pp.126-139.
[44] Craps 2013, pp.9-14.
[45] Craps 2013, p.9-14.

integrates different approaches and disciples, for instance, anthropology, sociology or cultural studies.[46]

2.2. Decolonizing trauma theory

Nevertheless, other essays highlight the cohabitation of distinct cultural identities within the same individual, questioning the dichotomy made between the "West" and the "non-West". Firstly, Dovile Budryte looks for ways to transcend ethnic and national boundaries by working with trauma narratives that shine a light on individuals' complex identities described as "border identity".[47] He focuses on real bodies and lived human experiences that permit the "disaggregation of monumental trauma" to the human scale, through a decolonizing perspective.[48] This "disaggregation of monumental does not necessarily have to be classified or described as 'non-Western'".[49] Similarly, in *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A reflection on the practices and discourses of decolonization*,[50] Indigenous Bolivian critic Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui describes entangled identities compared to the juxtaposition of black and white dots that are not mixed together but, when seen from a distance, create a new grey colour. The accent is placed on, what the author names, *the included third.*[51] This non-binary logic symbolises the identities' capacity to cross borders and bring together opposite poles.[52]This non-binary identity is massively present within the corpus where a few protagonists have deeply integrated cultural features of both Western and Non-Western sides. A similar phenomenon is depicted in the corpus where characters feel the need to immigrate to Europe in order to escape a sweltering experience in their homeland of Australia while other protagonists had to face exclusion and racist stereotypes as European immigrants.

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[46] Visser 2015, pp.257-263.
[47] Budryte, D. (2016) 'Decolonization of Trauma and Memory Politics: Insights from Eastern Europe', *Humanities*, *5*(1), p.7. https://doi.org/10.3390/h5010007.
[48] Budryte 2016, p.10.
[49] Budryte 2016, p.11
[50] Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2010). *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa. Una reflexión sobre prácticas y discursos descolonizadores*. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón.
[51] Rivera Cusicanqui 2010.
[52] Rivera Cusicanqui 2010.

The "actual vagueness of the boundary between West and Non-West"[53] can be found in the presence of European cultural features within Aboriginal cultural practices.[54] This work reveals the significant presence of European cultural references in Aboriginal writings, which echoes Ashcroft's point that Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural productions are placed in a continuum rather than in opposition.[55] In this respect, it can be added that the narrativisation of trauma is often gothic. Indeed, it is thus not surprising if the colonisers used this European genre to describe the arrival to Australia. Regarding Gothic literature, it has been said that the "sense of spiritual malaise is often communicated through the Gothic mode, that is, through a literary form which emphasises the horror, uncertainty and desperation of the human experience, often representing the solitariness of that experience through characters trapped in a hostile environment, or pursued by an unspecified or unidentifiable danger".[56] Moreover, "from its inception the Gothic has dealt with fears and themes which are endemic in the colonial experience: isolation, entrapment, fear of pursuit and fear of the unknown".[57] Furthermore, "the Gothic was a way to invest Australia with a living history, by turning to detailed research on transportation and convict conditions, stories of cannibalism and rape, betrayal and suffering, as a way to frame his story of hardship and redemption enacted in an Australian landscape".[58]

Gothic fiction arrived in Australia as a European and colonial production used by settlers to describe the "strangeness and unfamiliarity of the colony" in the terms of Sabina Sestigiani. Aboriginal writers have however engaged with Gothic in numerous ways and have finally transformed the original Gothic into a tool to express the strength of Aboriginal culture and identity.[59] This example significantly echoes the concept of the "transformative cycle"

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[53] Ashcroft, B. (2010). 'Reading Post-colonial Australia'. in O'Reilly Nathaniel (ed.). *Postcolonial Issues in Australian Literature*. New York: Cambria, p.3.
[54] Althans, K (2010). *Darkness subverted: Aboriginal Gothic in Black Australian Literature and Film*. Göttingen:Vandenhoeck Ruprecht.
[55] Aschroft 2010, p.3.
[56] Turcotte, G. (1998). 'Australian Gothic' in *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, p.1.
[57] Turcotte 1998, p.1.
[58] Turcotte 1998, p.5.
[59] Wisker, G. (2020). 'Shadows in Paradise: Australian Gothic' in Gildersleeve Jessica (ed.). *The Routledge Companion to Australian Literature*. New York: Routledge.

brought by Lydia Wevers where she describes "a mode of interaction with globalisation that is satirical, recycling and transformative".[60]

In that respect, it can also be said that Aboriginal cultural features can be usefully transposed to non-Western contexts.[61] For instance, Aboriginal beliefs bring an alternative perception of time by rejecting the linear chronology, instead having an ancient non-linear time, figured in rings, circles, holes and tunnels.[62] Australian history is therefore presented as "an original, generated by deep elemental events, ancient symmetries and protections which contain and explain colonisation"[63] and "colonial history is the result of mythological Aboriginal events that repossess the contemporary world".[64] Also, Lynn McCredden underlines how Indigenous poetic writers create texts "where sacred and secular are not held in separate categories, but allowed to interpenetrate, to be seen as intersectional conditions", remembering that "the future might be deeply informed by the past.[65] Redrawing history, therefore, permits non-Indigenous readers to engage with new and different knowledge as "they have to participate, to cede agency, accept concepts, landscapes and actions that challenge not just power relations but also their apprehension of what history is and how it is understood, that challenge also their epistemologies, taxonomies and contingencies.[66]

This rewriting of history, based on a circular timeline, is also fundamental within the Mapuche community as explained by anthropologist Ana Mariella Bacigalupo. This article shows that the Mapuche community refers to a different timeline where past, present and future are intrinsically entangled.[67] The state violence is explained by the presence of spirits called

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[60] Wevers, L. (2006). 'Globalising Indigenes: Postcolonial Fiction from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific'. *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, pp.147-156. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2020.1734338.
[61] Wevers 2006.
[62] Wevers 2006.
[63] Wevers 2006.
[64] Wevers 2006.
[65] Mc Credden, Lyn. (2020) 'Something New at Hand: the Sacred in Australian Literature', in Gildersleeve Jessica (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Australian Literature*, 274-281. New York: Routledge.
[66] Wevers 2006.
[67] Bacigalupo, A-M. (2017). 'El fantasma de la nación estatal chilena en comunidades Mapuche: Metáforas de terror, poder de accionar de los no-finados y políticas encarnadas del sufrimiento'. *Mitológicas, 32,* pp.9-34. https://www.redalyc.org/journal/146/14655248001/movil//.

"no-finados" who create trauma within the contemporary Mapuche community in order to force them to remember past traumas, which also permits the creation of a new form of history.[68] In this version of Time, present traumatic events are seen as being provoked by those spirits in order to remember the past. The state violence is thus replaced with a broader picture that involves Indigenous beliefs. Their comprehension of violence can therefore be seen as a historical continuum where different temporalities overlap.[69] This alternative perspective also permits to seek a better future through past remembrance and healing by means of Mapuche rituals.[70] The timeline depicted here contradicts the one described by José Bengoa as "the time of Modernity" where the past is forgotten and nostalgia is seen as a disease. The scholar characterises modern times as a broken relationship between human beings and nature.[71] In his writing, this modern time is contrasted by what Mircea Eliade called the "Eternal return" as a persisting cycle where ancestors are included in the present time and where the sacred space permits the conjugation of past and present within a unified time.[72] In this context, the circular timeline of Indigenous worldview intersects with an approach to traumatic time, which is often depicted as a time "that is broken, and that is characterised by ellipses and stasis and, in the best cases, by returns and sudden progressions".[73]

Scholars have pointed to the importance of literature in bearing witness to trauma. Later scholars have supported Judith Herman's observations on the importance of trauma narrative in the recovery and healing process. Marinella Rodi-Risberg argues that "literature becomes a privileged site for bearing witness to trauma through innovative literary forms that mimic She argues that "storytelling reduces fragmentation, dissociation, and other trauma symptoms", which allows focus on trauma healing and resilience by arguing that "melancholy

[68] Bacigalupo 2017.
[69] Bacigalupo 2017.
[70] Bacigalupo 2017.
[71] Bengoa, J.(1996). *Historia del Pueblo Mapuche (Siglos XIX y XX)*. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Sur.
[72] Bengoa 1996.
[73] Herrero, D. (2011) 'The Australian apology and postcolonial defamiliarization: Gail Jones's *Sorry*'. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing, 47*(3), pp.28-295.DOI: 10.1080/17449855.2011.572660.

cannot be the defining condition of trauma" as it seemed to be its major defining feature in early trauma theory.[74] Suzanne LaLonde's[75] theory echoes Visser's point and stipulates that "postcolonial trauma narratives often also demonstrate that resilience and growth are possible in the aftermath of traumatic wounding[76] as she argues that storytelling permits recovery and post-traumatic growth.[77] Herrero also argues that "intertextuality often appears as a key literary device in trauma fiction for it can encapsulate the surfacing to the consciousness of forgotten and repressed memories".[78] The importance of fictional references appears crucial in the remembering of past memories. The use of intertextual reference, imagination and storytelling within the corpus helps to bring some sense and coherence to imprecise and fragmented memories.

Regarding trauma narratives, James Waldram has observed Aboriginal healing programs in prison, where prisoners tell their stories within a sacred circle in the presence of the Elder. During these sessions, the impact of the past and colonisation on present actions is highlighted. Indeed, "the appeal of healing is its on-going connection to the past, to its 'traditionality', that is, an ill-defined era in which Aboriginal 'culture' is assumed to have been intact, integrated, functional, and even therapeutic".[79] This could be explained by the fact that – for Aboriginal people – the knowledge is connected to all parts of social and emotional wellbeing. Indigenous researchers Kelleigh Ryan and Nicole Tujague acknowledge that "our thoughts, beliefs, spirit and spirituality", "the connection to Country, community, family and kinship", "our physical being" and "our ancestors, our culture, or our roots" form all together a circle of knowledge in which each of these dimensions is interconnected. In other words, the authors recognise that [they] understand that all our behaviours or thoughts are being

[74] Visser 2015.
[75] LaLonde. S (2018). *Healing and Post-Traumatic Growth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[76] Visser 2018.
[77] Lalonde 2018.
[78] Herrero 2011.
[79] Waldram, J. (2014). 'Healing History ? Aboriginal healing, historical trauma, and personal responsibility,' *Transcultural Psychiatry 51* (3), p. 375. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461513487671.

influenced by the whole of the context that we live in".[80] This echoes Moreton-Robinson's reminder that Indigenous knowledge is embodied. The researcher also highlights that "standpoint theory's recognition of partiality and subjectivity brings together the body and knowledge production, which is in contrast to the disembodied epistemological privileging of 'validity' and 'objectivity' within western patriarchal knowledge production".[81] It can also be added that "Australian Indigenous research paradigms are founded on a construction of humanness that is predicated on the body's connectedness to our respective countries, human ancestors, creative beings and all living things".[82] Furthermore, "this interconnectedness is the basis of Indigenous sovereignty, which informs our standpoint as embodied socio-cultural and historically situated subjects of knowledge".[83]

Thus, trauma cannot be told as a single and isolated event. Trauma narratives take into consideration multiple dimensions that are embodied within the subject. The past cannot be omitted as it also constitutes a source of knowledge that informs the present and the future. This interconnectedness is necessary to tell the whole story of trauma in Indigenous cultures. Similarly, in Chile, it can be said that "for Mapuches, man and the environment is oneself, that is, they must be in a relationship of balance, and when this does not happen, nature manifests itself".[84] Furthermore, "in the worldview of his community, 'the negative is not bad. It's just part of the balance of the positive. Negativity is a fundamental component without which there is no balance. And, again, balance – inside and individual in this case – is key". This means that knowledge is also embodied in Mapuche communities. Trauma does not represent an individual event, but must be replaced into a broader context to be comprehended.

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[80] Tujague, N & Ryan, K. (2023). *Cultural safety in Trauma-Informed Practice from a First Nations Perspective: Billabongs of knowledge*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 67.
[81]Moreton-Robinson, A. (2013). Towards an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory: A Methodological Tool. *Australian Feminist Studies*, *28*(78), 331–347. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2013.876664.
[82] Moreton-Robinson 2013, p. 335.
[83] Moreton-Robinson 2013, p. 335.
[84] Translated ContentEngine LLC. (2020). The sun dies in every eclipse, according to the worldview of the Mapuche Indians. In *CE Noticias Financieras* (English ed.), p. 1- 3.

In relation to truth-telling, "autobiography has dominated the list of texts produced by Australian Aboriginal writers since the 1960s" in a context of "postcolonial amnesia" – or "a set of discursive and ideological practices through which the violence and racism of colonialism is subjected to a process of forgetting".[85] However, "the recovery and remembering of colonialism is a necessary element in processes of decolonisation, since otherwise the colonial past lurks beneath the surface, its repression or repudiation a cause of historical and psychological unease".[86] Thus, these autobiographies "trace the complexities of a postcolonial setting in which the traumas of the past are not resolved or finished".[87] Furthermore, "this very state of unfinishedness calls for a continuing and sustained re-membering of the past and a determination to find a way out of the inequalities and imbalances produced by the colonial encounter".[88]

The autobiographies of Indigenous writers constitute a key point in literary truth-telling. It also appears that the process of truth-telling is written with the purpose to impact the present and the future. It seems to be conceived as a mechanism to learn from the past and reach Reconciliation. Also, the crucial role of poetry in the process of storytelling has been highlighted by the critique. Indeed, "poetry offers opportunities for First Nations voices to be heard above the throbbing, relentless white noise of colonisation that continues to reverberate in postcolonial countries such as Australia".[89] Additionally, this approach to poetry also "will help to build dialogue, knowledge-sharing and connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians".[90] Also, "creative poetry gatherings are a timely decolonial strategy to address the need for Australian truth-telling and treaty".[91]

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[85] Bradford, C. (2001). 'Worth in the telling': Tales of Trauma in Australian Aboriginal Narratives, *Canadian Children's Literature 27*, p. 9.
[86] Bradford 2001, p. 9.
[87] Bradford 2001, p. 9.
[88] Bradford 2001, p. 24.
[89] Manathunga, C. et al.(2020) Decolonisation through Poetry: Building First Nations' Voice and Promoting Truth-Telling. *Educ. as change* [online]. 2020, vol.24 (1), pp.1-24. http://dx.doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/7765.
[90] Manathunga 2020, p. 24.
[91] Manathunga 2020, p. 24.

Scholars have also studied how storytelling is a fundamental component of Indigenous knowledge: "Storytelling is a practice in Indigenous cultures that sustains communities and validates the experiences and epistemologies of Indigenous peoples".[92] Also, "Indigenous peoples engage oral traditions, historical/ancestral knowledges, and cultural resources to examine current events and Indigenous understandings in ways consistent with traditional worldviews and cosmologies".[93] The power of storytelling is highlighted as it allows a complex mindfulness develops through storytelling. This process of telling stories and truth-telling is used as a way of recovery from colonisation and of remaking ourselves. Storytelling in Indigenous cultures allows witnessing, remembrance, but it also supports spirituality and is used as a pedagogical tool for learning life lessons.[94]

2.3. The Representation of Australian and Chilean landscape

An important part of the storytelling is often allocated to the description of the landscape. In Australia and Chile, the landscape is described as being intrinsically linked with the historical context and marked by the repeated violence, either past or present, in these colonised areas[95], for instance by the means of Indigenous spirits. Indigenous writers often describe an altered landscape displaced from its original state. In her analysis of the Australian landscape, Sabina Sestigiani explains that Indigenous land was portrayed by European colonisation as a "land apparently devoid of human trace or unexploited according to European standards of productivity".[96] Additionally, she mentions that "the colonist's setting of limits and boundaries

[92] Iseke, J. (2013). ' Indigenous Storytelling as Research,' *International Review of Qualitative Research 6 (4): Special Issue: Indigenuous Enquiries,* pp. 478-627.
[93] Iseke 2013, pp. 478-627.
[94] Iseke 2013, pp. 478-627.
[95] Sestigiani, S. (2014). 'Writing Colonisation: Violence, landscape, and the act of naming in Modern Italian and Australian literature'. In *Currents in Comparative Romance languages & Literatures Series, Vol. 220*. New York: Peter Lang, 2014.
[96] Sestigiani 2014.

to the land helps him to interpret and master the earth" in order to bring "the land under his control" through demarcation lines.[97]

Additionally, Gina Wisker argues that "how Australia constructs and represents itself in literature and film is necessarily Gothic, replete with hidden, misrepresented and misunderstood histories and a consistent concern with guilt, identity, contradictions and confusions, producing a range of haunted lives, inherited and recent memories, and a hauntology of invaded and erased spaces".[98] The scholar also mentions that Aboriginal authors use Gothic features to expose "the horrors and their legacy about the brutal past and the voiding of Aboriginal history which ghosts the land".[99] Similarly, Stephanie Green demonstrates that a sense of anxiety leading to horror is now a well-established theme in Australian writings and how "this cultural theme operates in terms of a confrontation between human and non-human forces, within an overwhelming, indeed sublime, sense of the power of country and the destructive force of invasive alienation".[100] In Chile, more than Gothic features, magic realism is widely spread in the literary representation of trauma. The main characteristics of the magic(al) realism are: "irreducible magic that is presented matter-of-factly, the obvious presence of the phenomenal world, the cultural-dependent possibility of doubt in the reader who tries to reconcile contradictory perceptions of the events described, the merging of realms, and finally the disruption of established notions of time, space and identity".[101] Additionally, the magic(al) realism's "[...] rootedness in the real world [...], rather than in one far removed from what we perceive as our reality" has been highlighted.[102] Besides, "there is a fairly strong consensus that a magic(al) realist world is one in which magic can occur in any place and at any time, so no one should be surprised to encounter ghosts in broad daylight or see flying rugs

[97] Sestigiani 2014.
[98] Wisker 2020.
[99] Wisker 2020.
[100] Green, S. (2020). 'Emblematic Spaces: Postcoloniality and the Region' in Gildersleeve Jessica (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Australian Literature*. New York: The Routledge, 2020.
[101] Luburic Cvijanovic, A. (2020). 'Magic, realism and the river between: The cultural weight of postcolonial magic(al) realism', *Kultura*, p.70. 10.5937/kultura2068069L.
[102] Luburic-Cvijanovic 2020, p.71.

in the tunnels of the London underground".[103] Therefore, "depending on the point of view, [...] this either offers freedom from the limitation of mimesis or represents an imitation of a world which reveals and revels in the coexistence of the palpable and the spiritual".[104] It can also be mentioned that " magic(al) realism's ex-centric position to hegemonic systems is precisely the cause of its appeal to postcolonial writing where the magical is a reflection of culture".[105] Finally, "in earlier postcolonial literature, magic(al) realism turned out to be a powerful tool in cultural recuperation, recovery, or rebirth within struggles against the depreciation, erasure, or negation of precolonial cultures".[106] Also, "in later postcolonial writing, magic(al) realism contributes to celebrations of cultural cross-pollination against dangerous myths of cultural purity, with magic pervading both rural and urban spaces".[107]

While in the corpus, magic(al) realism is not really present, Chilean literature is inscribed in this literary and cultural tradition. This massive influence could explain the significant presence of fictional elements drawn from magical realism in the contemporary literary practice of Chilean women writers. This influence of magical realism on the authors' writing – or more broadly the inclusion of fiction –'softens' the impact of the truths that emerge in the analysed books. Fiction allows the truth to emerge gradually. The reader is also led to piece all the different parts together to understand the past. It appears that some truths are too abrupt to be told from the beginning. Fiction allows a softest approach by slowly introducing the truth that progressively emerge. By creating a parallel universe, the use of fiction also creates a space where the reader can reflect about his own past or society with perhaps a greater objectivity and critical distance.

[103] Luburic-Cvijanovic 2020, p.71.
[104] Luburic-Cvijanovic 2020, pp.71-72.
[105] Luburic-Cvijanovic 2020, p.72.
[106] Luburic-Cvijanovic 2020, p.73.
[107] Luburic-Cvijanovic 2020, p.73.

While in the corpus, magic(al) realism is not really present, Chilean literature is inscribed in this literary and cultural tradition. This massive influence could explain the significant presence of fictional elements in the contemporary literary practice of Chilean women writers. Furthermore, the literary practice of both Australian and Chilean authors makes use of Gothic or magic realism features to approach traumatic situations. For instance, such features are used to evoke the ghosts of the past that keep haunting the present.

Regarding the Chilean landscape, it is depicted as deeply modified by colonisation. Representations of the landscape particularly abound in Chilean poetry. Through its allusive nature, this genre constitutes a privileged site to analyse the authors' views on the landscape. It can also be added that Mapuche communities have a long tradition of orality. The landscape is widely depicted in Mapuche poetry. An analysis of this poetry permits us to shine a light on the recurring representation of the postcolonial landscape. Firstly, contemporary poetry often describes the city as a cold, cruel and dark place as opposed to the land, nature is considered as the world where ancestors live and is linked with dreams and myths.[108] The negative connotation of the city echoes Bengoa's argument that "the city is the emblem of modernity".[109] Secondly, the circular chronology previously mentioned can also be found in the landscape descriptions as "when the poet forgets the city and returns through memory to the blue world of the past that he wants to make present".[110]

The previous point can also be explained by Bacigalupo's work about how Indigenous writings highlight the temporality of dissolution, where the past is entangled with the present and future, in the Mapuche landscape.[111] Additionally, Lydia Wevers shines a light on the crucial concept of Origin in Indigenous beliefs.[112] Another scholar that can be mentioned is Val Plumwood who remembers that the master western narrative of progress naturalised in our

[108] Carrasco Muñoz, H. (2002). 'Rasgos identitarios de la poesía mapuche actual'. *Revista Chilena de Literatura, 61,* pp.83-110. https://revistaliteratura.uchile.cl/index.php/RCL/article/view/1672.
[109] Bengoa 2000.
[110] Carrasco Muñoz 2002.
[111] Bacigalupo 2017.
[112] Wevers 2006.

concepts of time and economy is justified by a more powerful future.[113] This implies that "the pervasively future-orientated societies of the west define an ontological break that determines that the past is finished" while "Indigenous society, by contrast, has a basic orientation towards origins" as "its action continues in the present".[114] It can therefore be argued that opening trauma theory through non-conventional modes of beliefs that contradict the Western rational way of thinking permits bringing alternative ways to approach postcolonial trauma. In this respect, it can be argued that fiction is precisely what permits us to shine a light on these beliefs within the corpus by opening up the possibility of alternative ways to apprehend time, History, landscape and parallel realities.

Bridie McCarthy has studied how postcoloniality is understood in Australia and Latin America through the analysis of the contemporary poetic productions of both countries.[115] The periphery – as opposed to the European "centre" is thus seen as a "transnational, multilingual space, and it takes postcoloniality beyond the Anglosphere".[116] McCarthy points out that "Eurocentric histories provide a connecting point between Australia and Latin America, and an investigation along these lines underscores perhaps unlikely affiliations that exist despite large linguistic and cultural differences".[117] The different representations of coloniality within the poems of both continents highlight their shared colonial legacies. Besides, the comparative analysis of poems written by Australian and Latin American authors reveals that some fractured and distorted legacies of colonialism articulated by Latin American poets are nonetheless applicable to Australian postcoloniality.[118] Both traditions show the duality that inhabits

[113] Plumwood, V. (2007). "A Review of Deborah Bird Rose's 'Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation'. *Australian Humanities Review*, https://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2007/08/01/a-review-of-deborah-bird-roses-reports-from-a-wild-country-ethics-for-decolonisation/.
[114] Plumwood 2007.
[115] McCarthy, B. (2010-12). Identity as Radical Alterity: Critiques of Eurocentrism, Coloniality, and Subjectivity. Contemporary Australian and Latin American Poetry. *Antipodes 24* (2), pp. 189.
[116] McCarthy 2010-12, p. 189.
[117] McCarthy 2010-12, p. 189.
[118] McCarthy 2010-12, p. 196.

postcolonial subjects – divided between "sameness and alterity".[119] The comparative study also demonstrates how "postcolonial subjectivity becomes endlessly problematised".[120]

Other authors have also sought to analyse the contributions of Latin American writers in Australia. Indeed, "migrants from Latin America have had a literary presence in Australia since the 1970s and their work forms an important part of Australia's multilingual literature".[121] For instance, numerous volumes of poetry, short stories, novels, plays biographies and autobiographies have been published in Australia. Thus, "a sustained and significant body of literature over more than three decades has been created by Latin American authors".[122] In this respect, "the majority of this literature has been written and published in Spanish, and this has meant that its circulation, for the most part, has been limited to Spanish-speaking communities and readership".[123] Consequently, Latin American literary production has received little critical attention from Australian literary scholars. Michael Jacklin affirms that "to date, critical response to works by Australian writers of Latin American heritage remains almost non-existent in English".[124] Besides, it is also uncommon for Australian- Latin American writers to publish their work in Spanish in their country of origin. However, the study of these literary productions demonstrates that "Australian literature is not limited to writing in English" and that Latin American authors exist in Australia.[125]

In *Speaking the Earth's Languages: A Theory for Australian-Chilean Postcolonial Poetics*, Stuart Cooke wonders: 'Can Aboriginal and Indigenous Australian Latin-American poetics be brought closer together?'[126] The author acknowledges that – on the face of things – the observed set of cultural, political, and literary practices of the Mapuche of Southern Chile

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[119] McCarthy 2010-12, p. 196.
[120] McCarthy 2010-12, p. 196.
[121] Jacklin, M. (2010). 'Desde Australia para todo el mundo hispano: Australia's Spanish-Language Magazines and Latin American/Australian writing. Antipodes 24 (2), p. 177.
[122] Jacklin 2010, p. 177.
[123] Jacklin 2010, p. 177.
[124] Jacklin 2010, p. 177.
[125] Jacklin 2010, p. 184.
[126] Cooke, S. (2013). *Speaking the Earth's language: A theory for Australian-Chilean postcolonial poetics*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

seem to have very little in common with Aboriginal traditions in Australia. However, the author noticed that "shared histories of colonisation, dispossession, and exploitation by European powers bring Aboriginal and Mapuche people into inextricable proximity. It is this proximity that creates an emergent, trans Pacific indigenous poetics".[127]

In both countries, the coloniser sees the land as a "terra nullius", where the newly brought narratives of colonisation and progress deny the previous realities. The coloniser acts "as if the land and its occupants were the dormant forms of something not yet realised".[128] In other words, "the colonist, in turn, acts as if he were the creator of this world, as if the land and its indigenous custodians were nothing other than parts of a material field awaiting sanitisation and re-sculpting."[129] Furthermore, "the colonist's identity is determined by his own imagination; the new world needs to exist so that the colonist can colonise".[130] The way in which Aboriginal and Mapuche people come together beneath the colonisation's sheet is by the Indigenous Australian and Chilean poets' ability to deconstruct such restrictions to reveal the swarming, dynamic landscapes beneath.[131] In this process, Cooke highlights the crucial element of nomadic poetics that depicts "genuinely postcolonial form of habitation, or a habitation of colonised landscapes that doesn't continue to replicate colonialist ideologies involving indigenous dispossession and environmental exploitation".[132] In such poetry, the landscape is apprehended as an "ongoing" and "dialogic" process, which decolonises colonial thought: "The land needs to become a moving, evolving process, not a continent abstracted into a nation-state by the lines on a map".[133] Similarly, a nomad poem "often incorporates a variety of authors, translators or voices. The evolving, ever-permeable approach to the local is what allows the nomadic thinker to incorporate such a wide variety of knowledges".[134] In

[127] Cooke 2013, p. 5.
[128] Cooke 2013, p. 1.
[129] Cooke 2013, p. 2.
[130] Cooke 2013, p. 2.
[131] Cooke 2013, p.2.
[132] Cooke 2013, p.5.
[133] Cooke 2013, p. 5.
[134] Cooke 2013, p. 12.

nomad poems, it can be said that "there is a conflation of the literary with the non-literary, or a premise that the way one writes is reflective of, or inextricably connected to, the wider world". Additionally, "the syntax of a nomadic poetics […] seeks to draw connections between accumulations of matter or energy. As in systems biology, the emphasis is on how the components of an environment work together".[135] Thus, nomadic poetry demonstrates the resonance between Mapuche and Aboriginal poetry.

CHAPTER 3: REPRESENTATION OF VIOLENCE, THE WILL TO TELL AND THE EMRGENCE OF THE TRUTH

> Louisa takes the lead. 'Can I hear you? Your story, Missus Johnson?' 'Molly . . . my name is Molly.' 'Can I hear your story, Molly?' Taking a deep breath, and for the first time in a long time, Molly smiles. A smile weighted with much sorrow. 'For my children. Let not my sin overshadow my children knowin' my love for them.'[136]

A common thread between the analysed authors in this project is their impetuous will to tell a silenced truth through their work. This chapter is focused on all the books comprised in the corpus to show how a comparable pattern is found throughout the corpus. Indeed, Leah Purcell affirms in an interview that her "mother came from a generation of Aboriginal women that weren't given a voice" and that her "grandmother was considered sub-human" to explain her purpose to "bring stories to the forefront and to be a truthteller.[137] Similarly, Ellen Van Neerven

[135] Cooke 2012, p. 17.
[136] Purcell 2019, p.213.
[137] Purcell, L. (2012). "My grandmother was considered a sub-human": The drive behind Leah Purcell's new film, interview by Garry Madox. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, July, 23, https://www.smh.com.au/culture/movies/how-leah-purcell-coped-with-old-memories-hug-the-kids-walk-the-dog-20210713-p589dx.html?.

also highlights her goal to give voice to silenced narratives as she declares that she "believe[s] in the power of fiction to carry truth".[138]

Additionally, in the introduction of her essay titled "Restorying care"[139], Van Neerven brings attention to the matter that being listened to remains a crucial difficulty for Indigenous people in nowadays Australia: "one space (there are many) where we [Indigenous people] consistently struggle to feel heard or tell our story is in the health system. A space traditionally for healing, "health" in Australia today reflects the colonial patriarchal society brought on Aboriginal land by whitefellas: classist, sexist, violent, sterile, impersonal".[140] Furthermore, Carmel Bird also appears to be a believer in the power of storytelling to reach truth-telling and conciliation as she states in the introduction of *The Stolen Children: Their stories* that: "Perhaps imagination is one of the most important and powerful factors in the necessary process of reconciliation. If White Australians can begin to imagine what life has been like for many years Indigenous Australians over the last two-hundred years, they will have begun to understand and will be compelled to act. If we read these stories, how can we not be shocked and moved".[141] In the wake of reconciliation, Kate Grenville talks openly about the reception of her book *The Secret River* among the Australian public. She firstly admits her own need to acknowledge and recognise the terrible things her ancestors did and which she is now benefiting from, before portraying a similar motivation within the Australian society:

> I expected that people would resist the story that it has to tell which is of a certain amount of frontier violence. It's - to my view, it's the shadow story of the frontier. And it's the side that until quite recently, I think Australians didn't much want to look at. So the fact that it has been received with hunger by readers who really

[138] Van Neerven , E. (2016). An Interview with *Heat and Light* author Ellen Van Neerven, interview by Belinda Wheeler. *Antipodes*, *30*(2), pp.294-300.
[139] Van Neerven, E. (2019). Restorying Care, Overland, https://overland.org.au/previous-issues/issue-235/feature-restorying-care/.
[140] Van Neerven 2019.
[141] Bird, C. (1998). *The Stolen Children: Their Stories*. Random House Australia.

> want to know as much as I did, what we done [sic] two hundred years ago is wonderful to me.

The author explains the massive success of her book to an audience's desire to "re-capture something of what it might have been like […] on the frontier" to "acknowledge something for themselves in the present". She also adds that the "reception has been driven by something that's happening to today's Australians". Grenville's words therefore express the need to tell a silenced truth to create an impact on the present through the writing of an historical fiction.

On the other side of the Atlantic, similar thoughts are brought into consideration by female writers. Firstly, Maria José Ferrada also reports, in an interview, an "unwillingness to listen" coupled with an "extreme intolerance[142] in her own country. In this respect, she believes that "there is no interest in listening" in nowadays Chile, which permits us to understand her approach to bringing realities - such as forced migration and dictatorship- closer to children through her literary practice. In her books, she often addresses an audience of children or creates a type of literature that can also be approached by the youngest as she "trust[s] in the reflective capacity of children, in their ability to be moved by the pain of other children", showing her faith in the power of storytelling to have an impact on the current society as "after reading these books, children ask themselves what they can do, because that is the question that arises naturally when they see the pain of another". Regarding Alejandra Costamagna, she highlights that "the past is not something that has already happened. The past is here".[143] Thus, writing for her is intrinsically linked to the act of remembering as "memory in writing is like the voice of the echo, that comes back converted in a sound that recalls and at the same time creates its own rumour. In this sense, it works as a never-ending question", adding that "writing about the past means confronting this history with present discomforts". On another hand, Carla

[142]Ferrada, M-J. (2020), '*A conversation with Maria José Ferrada*, interview by Marcelo Gonzalez and Andrea Casals Hill', *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature,* 58(4), pp.65-72: : For additional information about this article https://doi.org/10.1353/bkb.2020.0069.

[143] Costamagna, A. (2023). La producción artistica debe mantener vivo el pasado en discordia, interview by Josefina Marcuzzi. Télam digital, May, 16.

Guelfenbein's analysis is that "women did not have a voice for centuries and when they did have a voice, they were confined to certain types of writing". At the same time, while talking about her views on literature, she adds that "it must represent reality in its secrets and in its mysteries, the less visible and apparent sides".[144] Finally, in one of her articles about Mapuche poetry, author Maribel Mora Curriao investigates how "the Indigenous productions are still a "special" element in Latin America as only a few critical studies take charge. Perhaps because the simple fact of naming this reality brings about the explanation of a system of oppression and the constitutional and juridic ignorance that these human groups are still facing with the nations they are part of" to bring the focus on the silence surrounding these literary productions.[145]

3.1. Silenced narratives

It is thus convenient to further study through which mechanisms the characters' stories are systematically silenced within the corpus or how the authors represent this impossibility of telling the traumatic truth. In Purcell's *The Drover's Wife*, the violence depicted is a colonial, racist and patriarchal violence against an Aboriginal woman, embodied by her husband and by the authorities derived from the colonial power. Her female condition places her into a vulnerable position aggravated by the revelation of her Aboriginality. Her voice has never been listened to within the family sphere as she was solely considered as being a drover's wife where she was systematically shut down and abused to the extent that she had to kill her husband in order to survive and protect her own children. While trying to tell her story of repeated abuse to the authorities, towards the end of the novel, the same mechanisms are put into place as she is judged based on racial and gendered considerations. Her narrative is completely ignored and invalidated to create an alternative narrative where "Her hatred towards the white men killed

[144]Guelfenbein, C. (2015). 'La literatura debe sacar a la luz lo que es invisible', El comercio, May, 27, https://www.elcomercio.com/actualidad/cultura/carlaguelfenbein-premioalfaguara-escritora-contigoenladistancia-entrevista.html).

[145] Mora Curriao, M. (2008). *Mirror Earth, in* Huenún Villa, J.L (ed.) (2014) *Poetry of the Earth: Trilingual Mapuche Ontology*. IP: Carindale, p.47.

by her hand is generational. Stemmed from the knowledge learnt [146]about her heritage and her own mother's plight, by the black man who was wanted for abhorrent murders, he is indeed a callous murderer himself. He encouraged her to seek revenge".[147] As the main protagonist of Purcell's work acknowledges: "There is no one to listen, no one to confide in or to comfort her" highlighting her loneliness and isolation in a context where the victim is considered as guilty of her unfortunate fate.

Despite a totally distinct family situation, Bird's *Family Skeleton* also represents the life story of a woman crushed by the weight of patriarchal expectations on her shoulders as she evolves in a social context where she is not allowed to be herself or to open herself up: "Margaret did have friends, naturally she did, but I think a better word for them might be "acquaintances" really. She would never open her heart to them".[148] The novel depicts a woman forced to always fulfil other people's expectations regarding her conduct: "Margaret considered Charmaine as an idiot, but she fulfilled her function as an excellent breeder for the O'Day children".[149] The protagonist has always evolved in the shadow of her husband, bottling up her unpleasant emotions and feelings: "Margaret had withdrawn to the house for a few moments in order to preserve her good temper. She had been on the point of making a sharp remark, the kind of remark she very seldom, if ever, makes in public. She was a woman of considerable self-control, known for her goodness indeed for her virtue, as I have already said. She generally concealed most of her own more unpleasant emotions behind a face and demeanour of charm, even sweetness".[150] The greatest evidence of this impossibility to tell lies in the fact that there is no one she can trust to be a listener of the trauma she has discovered to the point that death is the only issue she can find in order to make sure that she will never be exposed: "Margaret

[146] *The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson*, directed by Purcell. L (Memento films, 2021). 1hr., 49. 10,55.
[147] Purcell, L.(2019). *The Drover's Wife.* Sydney: Penguin Random House; Purcell. L. (2016). *The Drover's Wife: The play*. Redfern: Currency Press, p.209.
[148] Bird Carmel (2016). *Family Skeleton*. Crawley: UWA Publishing, p.13.
[149] Bird 2016, p.13.
[150] Bird 2016, p.10.

had shut the door on Doria because she was afraid, she was sure, that Doria was going to expose the aching wound in Margaret's own heart, the knowledge that her father, her spotless and beloved father, was flawed".[151] This passage permits us to understand the lack of a supportive environment where the female protagonist lives as she would be judged and blamed for her father's sin, and she will therefore fall from the pedestal she stands on: "Margaret's task, the task of her heart, was to prevent Doria Fogelsong from bringing it all into the light and publishing Killian's sins for all the world to know".[152]

Alternatively, in Van Neerven's *Heat and Light*, within the first part of the book, the principal character tries to make sense of her current struggles by discovering the truth about her real family heritage. However, her questions remain unanswered and are denied by her father: "The stories we construct about our place in our families are essential to our lives. My father still won't say anything about it. He refuses to admit that Pearl is his mother".[153] Within the second part of the work, in "Water", the plantpeople can be seen as a perfect metaphor for a silenced voice as their humanity is totally denied, justifying abominable treatment against them despite the facts that they have feelings and thoughts. The violence is also embodied by an imaginary government that takes unilateral and non-consensus-driven decisions coupled with strong censorship: "Julie tells stories from working at the Freedom of Speech office. I have a friend who actually went to jail over a text message".[154] In this respect, it can be added that the government pretends to work in the favour of Aboriginal people. However, in reality, politicians only think about their own profit and do not make the life of Indigenous people better: "We talk about How Things Are Really Shit Now. Julie said it began ten years ago: she was there. In August 2012, a young Tanya Sparkle went to see Hugh Ngo speak at the Gallery

[151] Bird 2016, pp.216-217.
[152] Bird 2016, p.217.
[153] Van Neerven, E. (2014). *Heat and Light*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, p.216.
[154] Van Neerven 2014, p.783.

of Modern Art".[155] The protagonist describes a world where Indigenous are forced to act in a way that is expected by the government and exploited for political benefits.

In Grenville's *The Secret River*[156], the impossibility of telling lies in the coloniser's and the colonised's irreconcilable visions. It can also be argued that William Thornhill is never given a safe space and time to process his overwhelming emotions and acknowledge trauma. He constantly faces different threats and must fight for survival. Being exposed to danger does not allow him to try to piece together his struggles. Therefore, he remains stuck in an infinite repetition of traumatic events and emotions that he cannot stop.

Within the Chilean corpus, similar types of violence are being portrayed by female writers. In *The Touch System*, written by Alejandra Costamagna, Ania tries in vain to address her close circle regarding her reoccurring struggles. Her complaints remain unheard or dismissed: "Ania didn't know how to sleep. Over the years she'd forgotten how to sleep. Diazepam, Zolpidem, zopiclone, she'd tried them all. She was always tired, yawning in the middle of conversations. You couldn't go around like that and be in charge of a class, teach anything. You need to have better sleep hygiene, people at school said. And she found the expression amusing. Pictured wiping a soapy sponge over her exhaustion, sweeping up her nightmares".[157] Perhaps more importantly, it seems that she has become invisible within her own family, which is patent in her relationship with her father: "Now say she's going to the bathroom, walk into her father's office. Look at the shelves and walls lined with family photos. Search for herself but does not appear in any of them. Stepkids, stepfamily: walls inhabited by a foreign genealogy. Offspring with ash-grey eyes and round noses, nothing like her. Not find herself there, not exist".[158] While severely mentally and emotionally impacted by the aftermaths of an intergenerational trauma of uprooting, the negation of her origin increases her

[155] Van Neerven 2014, p.767.
[156] Grenville, K. (2015). *The Secret River*. Melbourne: Swan House.
[157] Costamagna 2021, p.15.
[158] Costamagna 2021, p.21.

malaise: “And Ania needs whatever […] Ever since she can remember, more like. Ever since her mother died when she was two and not yet a fully formed person. Ever since Leonora turned up, her father started speaking another language. A language with no tongue, unintelligible to Ania. Ever since Leonara appeared, her father started getting lost on a map of his own, sending her out of orbit. Ania has stopped listening to words streaming out of her father’s mouth and dived headfirst into a cloud of pressing needs and obligations”.[159] The absence of comprehension as the lack of communication shines a light on the unwillingness to listen that surrounds Costamagna’s main protagonist.

Similarly, in Guelfenbein’s *The Rest is silence*, the character only faces disdain, condescendence, lies and silence while trying to express himself, particularly while trying to know the truth about his mother’s death and his real origins. The violence is perpetrated within the family area, especially by masculine figures as illustrated by the following extracts: ““This boy is completely crazy!” he shouts. “As crazy as his mother!””.[160] His Jewishness is not accepted and is hidden from him. He feels so abandoned and misunderstood: “It’s like he’s talking to some other childlike he doesn’t see me”,[161] that he must create an imaginary friend that he can talk to about his struggles. Additionally, all the memories of his deceased [162] mother have been erased from the house where he lives, and she is never mentioned.

In *How to order the universe*, written by Maria José Ferrada, the reader witnesses how the enchanted world seen through the eyes of a seven-year-old girl falls apart after the discovery of the horrors of Pinochet’s dictatorship and the dreadful consequences of the neo-liberal economy in Chile. Following the realisation of the atrocities perpetrated in her country, the main character explains the presence of a hole increasingly growing within her: Months went by, and the black hole was still there. I decided to cover it up by busying myself with being a

[159] Costamagna 2021 p.14.
[160] Guelfenbein, C. (2011). *The Rest is Silence*, (translated from Spanish by Silver, K). London: Portobello books, p.191.
[161] Guelfenbein 2011, p.213.
[162] Ferrada, M-J.(2021). *How to Order the Universe*, (translated from Spanish by Bryer E). Portland: Tin House, XXXIX.

good person".[163] However, she does not find anyone who will listen to and acknowledge her struggles: "In a couple of weeks, they'd had grown a few centimetres and I'd shrunk a few. They didn't seem to notice, but I did".[164] Her traumatic life experience is silenced and ignored: "When D came home several kilos lighter with a three-day beard and bruises all over his body, my mother and I had left for what I called "our next life"[165] where she is forced to fit within a world deeply marked by the censorship without any support system: "And the truth was, at that very moment, the bad people I loved so much could have been blowing their brains out, a clear sign that, if I wanted to survive, I had to switch sides".[166] The adults do not represent a source of help as they find themselves trying to unsuccessfully cope with the consequences of a neoliberal economy: "He explained that business wasn't good. The sonsofbitches of big chains, those fuckers, were eating up small and midsized businesses […] All travelling salesmen would pull the trigger in unison the day the last business closed".[167]

Finally, in Mora's *Mirror Earth,* the theme of violent Indigenous dispossession with its subsequent uprooting is treated through her poetic work. Multiple mentions are made regarding the violence perpetrated against Indigenous languages as well as the landscape in poems filled with a feeling of melancholia and a tenacious desire to take back what has been lost. A deep feeling of hopelessness and despair is also patent within the different poems, highlighting the marginalisation of the Mapuche beliefs in a postcolonial state where the rationality of modernity is predominant. In her poem titled "Bad Dreams", the Mapuche poet narrates that:

> For now we are nothing
>
> Not even straw
>
> In the eye of God
>
> Who forgets us.[168]

[163] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXIX.
[164] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXVI.
[165] Ferrada 2021, p.XXX.
[166] Ferrada 2021, p.XXX.
[167] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXVII.
[168] Mora Curriao 2014, p.85, lines 56-60.

These verses shine a light on the loneliness felt in front of a state that invalidates these narratives.

3.2. The voice of trauma

The books comprising the corpus show how characters systematically have to face different types of violence while trying to acknowledge their traumas and tell the truth. While the characters' voices might be silenced, an echo – repeating the trauma - seems to resonate in the form of intrusive and repetitive thoughts within the protagonists' minds. This echo might also take the shape of a deep and permanent feeling of loneliness and despair. The authors' focus on the characters' interiority, on their feelings, emotions and thoughts permits us to open a window on a mind deeply affected by the aftermaths of trauma. The reader can access the characters' thoughts which are sometimes also described and analysed by an external narrator who offers additional information to what is said by the protagonists in a fruitful dialectic. It is shown that trauma does not end up in the past but keeps reappearing in the present and that it structures the characters' lives.

In Purcell's *The Drover's Wife*, many examples of these types of thoughts can be found throughout the book: "Molly is unwell and lost in thoughts",[169] "My mind has raced away, all the way, robbin' me of this walk and day […]. Is that why my head's so full of all these thoughts?"[170]. 'Bein' closed indoors, with only walls to look at screamin' restless children, bickerin' and fightin'. Nowhere for my thoughts to escape".[171] The character - as re-imagined by Purcell- is constantly invaded by reoccurring thoughts that she is unsuccessfully trying to chase from her mind. These thoughts can become invalidating, and are always present in the latent stage, waiting to be triggered by any apparently unrelated event. For instance, when the storyteller Yadaka tells the story of the bullock and unintentionally causes Molly's malaise, or when he tells the story of his traumatic situation in which the female character imagines her

[169] Purcell 2019, p.22.
[170] Purcell 2019, p.23.
[171] Purcell 2019, p.23.

own children. This demonstrates how trauma keeps operating in the background of the character's mind through diffuse thoughts that the protagonist does not necessarily make sense of. However, their frequency and intensity become so overwhelming for the protagonist that she is not able to get rid of them: "I stop my reminiscin', smile, and give Danny's hand a gentle lovin' pat, givin' him reassurance that my frownin' is nothin".[172] This extract shines a light on the fact that sometimes the reminiscences take over reality as the main character seems to get trapped in them.

An additional example of this phenomenon is found in Bird's *Family Skeleton* where a multiplicity of undesired and uncontrollable thoughts start appearing with the visit of a distant cousin who seeks to further study the O'Day's family tree. Without any apparent reason, Margaret starts to experience overwhelming thoughts of concern and fear that she cannot repress: "I will keep coming back to Doria because she worries me" [173] ,"I think I prefer talking to myself here in my journal. Am I afraid of something? Of being unmasked? But I don't think I am masked in the first place. Am I? Am I wearing a mask? What a funny thought. Should I just be bearing my soul on Facebook? Would that do me good?".[174] This permits us to understand that even in the case when trauma is not known by the character, it remains present in her mind through – using Caruthian terms – dissociated thoughts. The subconscious knowledge that something traumatic happened is expressed through Margaret's thoughts of anxiety regarding the potential secrets that Doria Fogelsong might discover through her research: "She was researching the family history of the O'Days. That's a reasonable and ordinary thing to do, but there was something about Doria that seemed somehow out-of-the-way, that was unsettling […] She was wise to note the appearance of Doria, but then Margaret had a certain amount of second sight. I mean that, she did. She had occasional second sight. She knew somehow that Doria was the archetypal stranger who rides into town - Doria was the

[172] Purcell 2019, p.16.
[173] Bird 2016, p.27.
[174] Bird 2016, p.27.

harbinger of fate".[175] This passage induces the idea that the repressed memory or knowledge of trauma is awakened through repetitive uncomfortable thoughts triggered by an external event – apparently unrelated to the traumatic past.

In Van Neerven's *Heat and Light,* the situation differs from the two previously mentioned books as the main character partially knows the reason behind the struggles that she experiences daily. However, a lot of questions regarding her Aboriginal condition and her past remain unanswered. Just like the other characters, abundant unwanted thoughts frequently arise: "Early in the day, while I'm on the water, the time seems to go really slow, and my thoughts cramp. I'm bored and anxious, like when I worked at the biscuit factory. But after a while, the tasks on the water become relaxing and I find myself thinking of Dad and other things. Maybe I can find some sort of peace with myself out here".[176] The repetitive thoughts within the character's mind are reproduced within the writing through their multiple references: "I thought Russell would be what you expect of an island – peaceful, isolated, good for my thoughts, but it's not".[177] The narrative thus insists on their omnipresence. Coupled with these thoughts, a sense of displacement, of being lost as an impossibility to find her place in the society she is living in is also experienced by the protagonist: "From the art, Dad's estate, Mum and I have enough money to live comfortably, with no worries. Though why would Mom move from our family house, and why would I not try to make a decent career for myself?".[178]The character tries to understand the cause behind the experienced difficulties over the years: "For so long I'd been alone with all these questions about who I was and I hadn't even realised how much I was hurting. I was empty. Not able to connect with anyone".[179] This extract therefore demonstrates the feeling of emptiness and despair felt for a long period of time.

[175] Bird 2016, p.20.
[176] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 986.
[177] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 751.
[178] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1237.
[179] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement1298.

In Grenville's *The Secret River*, the reader can feel how feelings of rage, anger, hatred, despair, and sadness have been embodied by the main protagonist. This is particularly patent in the descriptions made of the landscape that encapsulate the protagonist's overwhelming thoughts. Additionally, his arrival in Australia exacerbates this impression of despair and feeling of injustice. The feeling of loss William experiences is projected all over the landscape which is described as inherently traumatic and hostile. Plenty of fragments highlight the negative thoughts he faces as if traumatic situations were inevitably part of his destiny.

Within the Chilean corpus, in *The Touch System*, the reader becomes the witness to the intrusive thoughts that similarly invade the character's mind through a multiplicity of quotes. For example, the protagonist is often withdrawn from reality, and dragged by a flow of thoughts without barely noticing what is happening. The joint analysis of two quotes permits us to shine a light on this phenomenon: "[I] close the encyclopaedia, put it back on the shelf and stop dredging up old memories. Now comes the cake and Ania walks straight onto the stage where, in the dark, her father is the protagonist.[180] In this extract, Ania's memories are triggered by the reading of an encyclopaedia in the family library, lost in her past thoughts, so absorbed by her memories that she forgets about the present moment. Her mind seems to withdraw from reality as it gets lost in fragmented thoughts related to her past that keep coming up to her. This analysis seems to be confirmed by a similar occurrence that happens during a conversation with the protagonist's father. Ania seems to be a prisoner of the multiple thoughts that stream in her mind: "Her father cleared his throat, bringing her back. Suddenly the previous scenes vanished, and the rasp of his croaky voice prevailed. Javier, their first conversation at his apartment, the start of something, all vanished. Now what she saw was her father, in the same old cafeteria, his third cigarette smoked and say-yes face, and don't-let-me down face".[181] This confirms that the protagonist's uncontrollable thoughts can become so predominant that she

[180] Costamagna 2021, p.22.
[181] Costamagna 2021, p.17.

seems to lose contact with reality as the conscious of place and time. These thoughts might also appear to be associated with her will to disappear: "What Ania really wanted was to retire by forty, but that was impossible. Maybe housesitting was her future, being a stand-in occupant. Slowly turning into the people she substituted".[182]Like the other characters, Costamagna's female protagonist experiences invalidating thoughts as an inexplicable feeling of being lost in a society where she does not fit in.

In Guelfenbein's *The Rest is Silence,* the child also has to face unpleasant thoughts that highlight his loneliness and emptiness as he also feels marginalised and neglected. He evolves in a difficult context of school bullying, where his only friend is a product of his imagination, and where his family is unable to hear the story he is willing to tell: "Every time I think about Alma, which is a lot, I remember her coming home with that man. That's how I try to think about her as little as possible. It's time to leave for the bottom of my bed, where Kájef is waiting for me".[183] Tommy Montes tries to escape a traumatic reality by withdrawing to his imaginary world that seems to be the only possible alternative: "I like to stay under my sheets because here everything falls back into place. When I'm with Kájef, I forget that tomorrow is another day of school".[184] Like Costamagna's main protagonist, *The Rest is Silence*'s main character would like to disappear in order to escape the struggles he is experiencing daily.

In Ferrada's *How to order the Universe,* the uncontrollable thoughts of despair begin after the protagonist's witnessing of a murder, which also brings the understanding of the cruelty of Pinochet's dictatorship. This creates a turning point in the character's life that will be marked by the feeling that she is disappearing: "I was a failure. One hiding a second failure, which I still didn't know what to call".[185] But at the opposite of the two other previously

[182] Costamagna 2021, p.16.
[183] Costamagna 2021, p.130.
[184] Costamagna 2021, p.114.
[185] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXVIII.

mentioned characters, she does not want to vanish: "I didn't want to disappear. And to stop that from happening, I had to cling to Planet Earth".[186]

Finally, in Mora Curriao's *Mirror Earth,* a great majority of her collection of poems shows the omnipresence of the past within the present through an incredible number of references to the old times. In this respect, it can be added that most Indigenous Chilean authors that have been translated into English are poets, which can also be explained by their oral tradition. Besides, the allusive nature of poetry allows free associations that prose does not permit. For instance, in the poem titled "Bad Dreams", the lyric subject constantly recalls the past brought to her knowledge thanks to her ancestors:

> My childhood was flooded with his Pehuenche memories. Characters from his stories paraded before my eyes: vilu, ñirre, panqui, from left to right, Mapudungun words, his language, which he passed on to us precariously.[187]

These witnessings consequently imply the feeling of loss that daily invades the subject, for instance, by the means of dreams:

> In dreams I have seen blood spring from my side
>
> And rapacious birds born from my temples
> Devour my hands and tongue[188]

This fragment demonstrates how the traumatic memories are also brought to the lyric subject's mind by different means. In this respect, it can also be added that the landscape itself seems to awake the memories of the past as "The forest is no more than a memory of an Eden that was never promised to us".[189] This fragment also highlights the nostalgia of the past and the strong will to regain the lost land. The remembrance of the past therefore seems to be a crucial part of the present that arises and comes back to the character's mind.

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[186] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXVIII.
[187] Mora Curriao 2014, p.87, lines 17-21.
[188] Mora Curriao 2014, p.41, lines 4-7.
[189] Mora Curriao 2014, p.36, lines 29-30.

It is now crucial to analyse how the distinct characters respond to these thoughts and how these feelings are being addressed. Overall, it can firstly be said that – while certain protagonists might try to temporarily escape from these overwhelming thoughts – they all engage with them eventually. A close reading of the books demonstrates that the characters try to make sense of these fragmented and reoccurring thoughts in different ways, either through a conscious act or a series of unconscious decisions that lead to trauma discovery.

Within the Australian corpus, Purcell's writing represents from its beginning the tactic used by the protagonist to try to bring some coherence to her thoughts through the practice of storytelling "Gives the children a chance to ask me about my life, and for some reason I open up, tell them what I know and what I don't. [...] I am so in my head today, thinkin' too much on the past. But that's what these walks are for, sharin' life story".[190] This fragment shows the will to try to understand the repetitive thoughts about the past by interrogating them in a process of storytelling. Furthermore, storytelling constitutes a habit, almost a daily routine, for the family, and its importance is often highlighted in the book: "Danny likes to tell of the bravery of his dog, but his favourite story is the one about the time when that blasted copperhead found its way inside. If there's one thing I am scared of out here, it is the copperhead snake, the last reptile to go into hibernation, with a bite that kills".[191] It is shown that telling stories about the past, especially about a past triggers unpleasant emotions.

In Birds' *Family Skeleton,* the engagement with this internal echo is even more patent with Margaret O'Day's initiative to write her memoir: "By eight o'clock that night Margaret sat up in her bed, opened a lovely big journal covered in blue linen, took her fountain pen (yes) and began to write. Jottings to begin with. Then she started to get into the swing of it, and she would write it just about every night".[192] Her writing practise seems to highlight the confusions she feels as her will to bring some sense to it by recollecting her memories into this project.

[190] Purcell 2019, p.16.
[191] Purcell 2019, p.15.
[192] Bird 2016, p.21.

Her decision to write is motivated by the worry felt after her distant cousin's arrival: "It was as if Doria, with all her emphasis on the importance of the recent and distant past, had startled Margaret into taking stock of her own life. So there was Margaret, busily writing every day, noting the passing of time".[193] The order in which the events occur confirms the hypothesis that a conscious action is taken in order to respond to a series of triggering thoughts. It can also be added that Margaret's memoir is "a story full of the writer's own private thoughts"[194] and "the exploration of Margaret's own feelings"[195], which demonstrates her will to understand.

In *Heat and Light*, more specifically in "Water", the action taken by the protagonist is rather subconscious as she does not explicitly take the decision to try to sort out her invasive thoughts. However, her decision to work on Russell Island to her sharp interest towards the plantpeople who live there allowed her to get to know more about her own past and to answer the questions that kept coming up to her mind for many years. "For so long I'd been alone with all these questions about who I was […] And then, under the strange, intense circumstances, I was drawn to Larapinta; somehow she had understood me, she made me want more for myself".[196] This extract suggests that, through all the questions regarding the plantpeople, as through the will to know them, the protagonist was subconsciously trying to answer her own questions about herself – questions finally answered when this species appears to be Indigenous: "They are our old people. Spirits. Something happened when the dugai brought the sea up. They rose with it". Her decision to work on the island permitted her to create a favourable context to meet the Indigenous spirits and – from this encounter – the protagonist is able to understand more about her past: "Their knowledge goes back, big time, hub. They've helped us piece back our language".[197]

[193] Bird 2016, p.20.
[194] Bird 2016, p.21.
[195] Bird 2016, p.21.
[196] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement1298.
[197] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1279.

Grenville's *The Secret River* can be considered as a counter-example compared to the other books. As has been mentioned before, William Thornhill is unable to process the traumatic events he is experiencing and their related emotions as he is constantly in survival mode. William is trapped in a colonial logical that outreaches him and against which he cannot rebel.

In the Chilean corpus, *The Touch system* shows the trip during which Ania replaces her father at the funeral of a cousin marking the starting point of a sort of investigation regarding her family. This process will allow her to puzzle together the great number of intrusive thoughts that she is caught up on, stopping her from living in the present. Her discoveries during her travel to the village of Campana allow her to make sense of her personal struggles by uncovering the ones of her ancestors, as stated in one of the preliminary quotes of Costamagna's novel: "And what monsters, our ancestors, nothing but stories that drive children crazy" (Maria Sonia Cristoff), which implies the impact of her ancestors' trauma on her mind. It can finally be added that, during her trip to Argentina, the female character also starts to write to bring some sense to her fragmented thoughts:

> Ania thinks it makes no sense to be here, she should go back to Chile and finally face up to things. What things? Her existence, what else? But she realises that this thought is not entirely her own. There's something moving around in there without her will, in her head, something that she can't fully grasp. Then fourth night, she gets up, uncovers the typewriter and begins to type the first thing that appears: sentences run wild, images banged out like drums.[198]

In this extract, it is interesting to further study the mention of a thought that would not be completely hers. It could be interpreted as the voice of trauma itself seeking to be known, this echo that never stops, and that cannot be silenced. A voice that the protagonist addresses by typing to bring memories together and to assemble these diffuse thoughts.

[198] Costamagna 2021, p.100.

Similarly, Guelfenbein's protagonist seems to sense that a secret is yet to be discovered in *The Rest is Silence*. Indeed, the novel opens up with Tommy's confession that "sometimes words are like arrows. They fly back and forth, wounding and killing, just like in wars. That's why I like to record what grown-ups say".[199] Through his recordings, he discovers the truth about his mother's death who did not die from a disease but committed suicide. His investigation led through these rigorous recordings, permits the discovery of her own religious origin, which explains his constant feeling of rejection and not fitting in. The protagonist has always been moved by a desire to understand and to know the truth as he admits that "it was last year when I started recording things that popped into my head. The first time was while we were reading Genesis in school. That's when I found out that God created the week to make some order out of the chaos. […] My teacher said that to name something is to give it a shape our minds can understand and absorb"[200]. This passage might suggest that the character was intuitively feeling the presence of a past trauma which the need to keep score of his own thoughts and others' is a manifestation of. The act of recording helps to bring the different pieces back together and put some sort of consistency to vague thoughts and words. His accidental discovery about his mother's passing might also be considered as the inextinguishable echo of trauma that Tommy addresses through his thorough investigation: "Even though they're all talking over each other, and it'll be hard to get anything worthwhile, I turn on my MP3 player and voice recorder and start recording".[201]

The need to "make sense out of the chaos" seems to be shared – to a certain extent – by M., the anonymous protagonist of Ferrada's *How to Order the Universe*, which seems to be suggested by the reading of the title. From the beginning of the book, the character expresses her desire – or her obsession – to provide accurate explanations of the world where everything must be understood. However, this strong need to explain the world can be derived from the

[199] Guelfenbein 2011, p.7.
[200] Guelfenbein 2011, p.43.
[201] Guelfenbein 2011, p.7.

impossibility of understanding a traumatic reality made of gaps and ellipses, especially in the mind of a seven-year-old little girl: "Everything that happened next was only possible because my mother was absent. It wasn't that she left the house much, it was that a part of her had abandoned her body and now resisted coming back".[202] In order to explain her mother's unavailability, M. elaborates on different theories: "Maybe that fragment of my mother was an astronaut, and on one of her journeys through outer space she had come across D […] and had decided that the part of her that did come back would stay with him. Or, rather, with us".[203] Her mother's absence permits the young protagonist to live a double life as her father's assistant, escaping from school and therefore from the dictatorial world that she replaces by an alternative universe created in her mind. But this other enchanted reality seems to be created as a mechanism to escape a trauma that is still latent in the character's mind. Also, her abundant explanations based on the instructions related to the use of the tools sold by her father appear to be a sole attempt to make sense of what she cannot explain, of the questions that always remain unanswered: "I, accustomed to salvaging uncomfortable situations – there wasn't a huge difference between a hardware store counter and our family table – intuited that the only thing bringing us together at that moment, and therefore the thing that could save us, as we'd seen on television the day before".[204] This passage seems to confirm the hypothesis that the protagonist feels the need to find alternative ways to explain a dysfunctional family reality and to address its related thoughts.

In Mora Curriao's *Mirror Earth,* the echo of trauma is addressed through the will to reach what has been lost previously, as memories arise through dreams:

> In dreams I have seen blood spring from my side
> And rapacious birds born from my temples
> Devour my hands and tongue

[202] Ferrada 2021, VII.
[203] Ferrada 2021, VII.
[204] Ferrada 2021, XVIII.

The lyric subject expresses openly her engagement with the revelations brought by the means of dreams:

> So I rise and re-make
> This same face, this same body
> The same anguished heart.[205]

The difference in Mora Curriao's writing is that the lyric subject is aware of the past trauma of displacement and uprooting and claims her desire to go back to her land.

The analysis of the books permits us to shine a light on the reoccurrence of intrusive thoughts as the presence of a feeling of loneliness, despair or loss that cannot be stopped. Furthermore, the different ways in which the distinct protagonists engage with this internal echo of past trauma has been developed. This leads the research towards a Freudian theoretical point that has been further studied by Caruth. She reminds her reader that, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* the psychoanalyst "describes a pattern of suffering that is inexplicably persistent in the lives of certain individuals".[206] Furthermore, she argues that "in some cases, Freud points out, these repetitions are particularly striking because they seem not to be initiated by the individual's own acts but rather appear as the possession of some people by a sort of fate, a series of painful events to which they are subjected, and which seem to be entirely outside their wish or control".[207] This is explained by Freud by the fact that "trauma repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his very will".[208] This permits us to explain why thoughts and feelings related to a past trauma keep coming up to the characters' minds and how the protagonists often find themselves in situations that trigger similar emotions. But it also confirms the hypothesis of a trauma that has

[205] Mora Curriao 2014, p.41, lines 4- 7/lines 18-20.
[206] Caruth 1996, p.1.
[207] Caruth 1996, p.1.
[208] Caruth 1996, p.1.

its own voice, pace and unstoppable mechanisms to be known, of a sound that never stops resonating. Caruth mentions the very first meaning of the term *trauma* which means "wound".[209] While it was originally referring to a physical wound, "in its later usage, particularly in the medical and psychiatric literature, and most centrally in Freud's texts, the term *trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind".[210] Within the corpus, the unresolved trauma can therefore be considered as an unhealed wound upon the mind seeking to be assisted. Also, this wound is not "fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor".[211] This point would permit us to explain the actions taken – even subconsciously – by the characters – to try to acknowledge the truth. In this respect, Freud used the metaphor of the wound to argue that "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".[212] In a context of systemic and long-lasting violence where truth cannot be told, the only voice that remains unsilenced is thus precisely the voice of trauma. However, Freud points out the crucial importance of another in the address of this voice. In other words, "we can also read the address of the voice here, not as the story of the individual in relation to the events of his own past, but as the story of the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound".[213] The researcher also adds that "likewise, the listening to another who addresses us forms the centre of Lacan's reinterpretation of Freud […]".[214]

While in the corpus, certain parts can be analysed in these Freudian terms that describe trauma as an address to another who would share or witness it. The analysed books permit us

[209] Caruth 1996, p.3.
[210] Caruth 1996, p.3.
[211] Caruth 1996, p.4.
[212] Caruth 1996, p.4.
[213] Caruth 1996, p.8.
[214] Caruth 1996, p.9.

to wonder how trauma can be acknowledged and how truth can be told without this essential interaction in a context where no one is willing to listen, and where expressing oneself is not permitted. It has been seen how characters try to address their inner screaming wounds themself as the other is systematically invalidating, hiding or denying what the voice is trying to tell. Regarding the studied corpus, it is, therefore, necessary to argue that – due to this impossibility of telling another – the trauma's wound addresses the character himself in different ways, such as dreams, the presence of intrusive or even obsessive thoughts, overwhelming emotions, or through their own imagination in order to be known. Additionally, it seems that the different actions – either consciously or unconsciously taken – of the characters constitute the excepted response to this address.

It is now convenient to further study the severe impact of trauma on the characters' lives through the analysis of the representation of the landscape, which permits us to understand how trauma is projected to the external world. The next chapter will show how the landscape can be considered as an extension of the characters' inner state who project their own feelings and thoughts onto the external world. It will be argued that the view of the landscape evolves according to the protagonists' personal evolutions. The main argument that will be formulated is that the inner and the outside world overlap – between the characters' feelings and the landscape. The external world is thus interpreted in the light – or in the shadow – of trauma. It will also be shown how the whole world becomes structured around trauma after this overwhelming event.

CHAPTER 4: *HOW TO ORDER THE UNIVERSE* AND *THE SECRET RIVER*: SPACES OF TRAUMA

> There was a drama, every time, in watching the black shadow of the hill behind him—his own hill—move down across the garden, leaving everything behind in grey dusk. At the river, the shadow seemed to pause in its progress. At last, he would see a line at the base of the cliffs. Then it seemed only to take a few minutes to move up and engulf the fluid shifts of light.[215]

Drawing a parallel between Grenville's *The Secret River* and Ferrada's *How to Order the Universe*[216], the second chapter aims to further analyse to what extent trauma rules the characters' perception of reality and of their own identities. Throughout *The Secret River,* Kate Grenville narrates the life story of William Thornhill – from his precarious life in London to his deportation to Australia where he tries to build a new home and a better life for his family, and where he participates in the massacre of the inhabitants of an Aboriginal community. In this respect, the novel "dramatize[s] different aspects of frontier conflict and attempts to deal with the troubled, and sometimes obscured, origins of the family."[217] The writer acknowledges her strong desire to know the past – not only of her family – but of the nation she lives in. She is therefore willing to dig into the family secrets and the silence of a nation around this past. In such a context where truth is silenced, fiction appears as the only way to "reckon with the emotional inheritance of colonial family histories, especially the shame, guilt, and horror of perpetration[218]", for instance by presenting through her writing "the figure of a convict, a stain on the family's good name [that] is hidden in the past; so too in a more heavily screened

[215] Grenville 2015, p.345.
[216] Only critiques in non-academic journals and newspapers can be found about *How to Order the Universe.*
[217] Barnwell, A. and Cummins, J. (2018). *Reckoning with the Past: Family Historiographies in Postcolonial Australian literature.* London: Taylor & Francis, p.16.
[218] Barnwell 2018, p.18.

memory, are the relations between settlers and the traditional owners of the land".[219] By fictionalising the life story of her ancestor, the author tries to understand the "the question of intergenerational transmission" and "how we live with the legacy of silences, secrets, and suppressed emotions within the family".[220] Thus, fiction is used to try to know the past, to wonder "what it felt like to be a convict settler in colonial Australia".[221]

The writer characterises her novel as "an apology for the crimes of settlement[222]", locating "*The Secret River* within a discourse of postcolonial reconciliation that has been a prominent feature of debate about the contested past in the twentieth- and the twenty-first century".[223] Also, her will to know the past seems to be massively shared by a great number of Australians as The *Secret River* has been received with enthusiasm by the audience. Indeed, the novel won multiple awards and was overwhelmingly described as a positive and much-needed re-visioning of the national past in newspapers and literary magazines.[224]

However, regardless of the novel's massive success among the audience, analysts' opinions have not been unanimous and the novel "has […] been the subject of intense scrutiny and controversy, becoming a focus of criticism by both historians and literary scholars".[225] The main criticism contained in the critique is that "despite appearing sympathetic towards Indigenous Australians, they claim, the novel silences Indigenous voices"[226] by bringing the focus to Thornhill's misery, introducing him as an almost "innocent convict".[227] In this respect, researcher Eleanor Collins argues that "our sympathy as readers with Thornhill and his problems becomes an increasingly awkward stance"[228] as "one of the discomforts of *The Secret*

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[219] Barnwell 2018, p.16.
[220] Barnwell 2018, p.17.
[221] Barnwell 2018, p.18.
[222] Dalley, H. (2014). *The Postcolonial Historical Novel: Realism, Allegory, and the Representation of Contested Pasts*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, p.47.
[223] Dalley 2014, p.47.
[224] Clarke, R. and Nolan, M. (2014). 'Reading groups and reconciliation: Kate Grenville's The Secret River and the ordinary reader*',* *Australian Literary Studies, 29*(4), p.20. 10.20314/als.589e1e5b02.
[225] Nolan, Clarke 2014, p.19.
[226] Nolan, Clarke 2014, p.20.
[227] Collins, E. (2010). 'Poison in the flour: Kate Grenville's *The Secret River',* in Kossew, S. (ed.). *Lighting Dark Places*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, p.168.
[228] Collins Eleanor 2010, p.169.

River is the pressure of weighing Thornhill's considerable suffering in an unjust English class system against the Darug's people unimaginable suffering in an unjust colonial racial system".[229] While the scholar acknowledges that "Grenville almost certainly not intend any equation"[230], she argues that "there is a sense in the novel's structure that one system of harness and lack has led directly to the other".[231] This explains why the novel has also been considered as a "an exercise of in white self-exculpation".[232]

To this research, however, the attention brought to Grenville's protagonist - through the description of his feelings - appears to be fruitful. Indeed, a close reading of *The Secret River* reveals the symbiosis between the character's feelings and the surrounding landscape. This association not only enables the comparison between Grenville's and Ferrada's novels as a similar process is depicted in the latter, but it also allows a better understanding of the severe impact of trauma on the victim's brain. Both literary works shine a light on a trauma that is projected on the outside world that, thus, appears fundamentally traumatic to the characters, creating confusion between the inner trauma and the external reality. Furthermore, reading *The Secret River* in the light of Ferrada's novel allows a better comprehension of the experience lived by the settlers on the Australian land whose feelings of loneliness and fright have been studied by the critique, for instance through the narratives of their arrival. In these writings, Gothic characteristics were often used to describe "what is wild and unknown in an unfamiliar land"[233] as the feelings of loss, fear, and foreignness experienced by the settlers.

The comparison with *How to Order the Universe* offers a new reading of these Gothic descriptions that can thus be seen as an expression – or an address – of the trauma seeking to be acknowledged. In this respect, the descriptions found in Ferrada's book bring some knowledge about the existing relationship between landscape and trauma by retracing the main

[229] Collins Eleanor 2010, p.169.
[230] Collins Eleanor 2010, p.169.
[231] Collins Eleanor 2010, p.169.
[232] Dalley 2014, pp.45-46.
[233] Wisker 2020, p.386.

character's perception of the landscape through the lens of her own emotions. Through her writing, the Chilean author draws a landscape understood as the site where unprocessed or unbearable trauma is projected. The landscape seen through the eyes of the young M. demonstrates how the voice of trauma overcomes the censorship of Pinochet's dictatorship as her own ignorance by structuring her whole reality around a tragedy that is known on a subconscious level. The comparison of both books reveals some similarities and some contrasts. While both writings establish a direct link between the landscape's description and the characters' emotions, two main differences can be outlined. Firstly, in Grenville's book, like in many other settlers' narratives, the new landscape encountered after the arrival on the Australian land is described as a frightening, haunted, and lonely place.

However, in Ferrada's novel, the described landscape does not change as no journey or displacement is narrated, only the narrator's perception of the world has evolved. The harmonious landscape becomes a site of horror. This idea introduces the hypothesis that the characters' descriptions do not represent inherent features of the landscape, but rather their own views. This shows how traumatic emotions can be projected onto the landscape that can be perceived and described as inherently traumatic, which underlines the deep impact of trauma on the victim's brain. Secondly, while a reader might believe that Thornhill's descriptions accurately and objectively depict the Australian landscape, the openly fictional descriptions used by the author in *How to Order the Universe* indicate that the external world is not faithfully portrayed.

Additionally, the use of fiction presents the landscape as a site where trauma is projected and as an extension of the protagonists' feelings. In this respect, it can be added that fiction does not necessarily appear as the opposite of the truth as it brings a better understanding of the aftermaths of trauma by showing how this event deeply modifies the perception of the surrounding world. The contrast between the pre- and post- trauma descriptions in Ferrada's

novel might suggest that the Gothic features attributed to the Australian landscape paint an inner state that is projected on the outside.

The first part of this chapter focuses on *How to Order the Universe*'s main characters' worldviews and how they fundamentally structure her perception of the landscape where she evolves. Then, the impact of trauma on these worldviews will be further analysed to demonstrate how trauma radically modifies the perception of the world. Finally, the second part will analyse *The Secret River* – specifically the descriptions of the landscape – through the lens of Ferrada's representation of trauma. Through this comparison, the aim is to demonstrate that trauma is perceived by the protagonist as an external phenomenon rather than an inner process.

4.1 Enchanted world: life on the margins of trauma

How to Order the Universe offers a privileged insight into the protagonist's mind through the multiple descriptions of the landscape that she provides throughout the book. Firstly, before witnessing a traumatic event - represented by the murder of a family friend coupled with the implementation of a neoliberal economy -, the character sees the world as a coherent and harmonious system regulated by a superior figure associated with a Great Carpenter who provides safety and order: "I remember how, at school camp, when we were out looking at the stars, I used the Southern Cross as a reference point and explained to my classmates that the specks that shone so brightly in the distance weren't stars but three-inch tacks that the Great Carpenter had used to hang out the whole sky. Us included".[234] This extract reveals that every element seems to have a specific role to play in the ordered world imagined by the character, it also seems deeply enchanting as all the discoveries made by the young protagonist bring her positive knowledge about life: "In my fourth year of life, I stepped out onto the patio of my house and saw fireflies. I decided that this would be my very own, unclassifiable memory.

[234] Ferrada 2021, p.VIII.

Fireflies that never stopped glowing".[235] The character only seems to see the positive and reassuring aspects of existence as no chaos or disorder is depicted. During the first part of the book, the reader is immersed in a dreamlike world that seems totally isolated from the reality of the dictatorship.

The external world therefore appears to reflect the innocent and joyful inner world of a little girl who is able to understand and read it through her own classifications: "After hearing so much talk about Kramp products, I started using them as a way to comprehend the workings of the world, and that was how, while my classmates wrote poems about trees and the summer sun, I wrote to door viewers, pliers, and saws".[236] This implies that each character's world view depends on his own system of beliefs, and M.'s world is strictly limited to her experience as a sales assistant for a company of tools. Also, the protagonist transposes this personal knowledge to a world she tries to make sense of: "What I'm trying to say is that every person tries to explain the inner workings of things with whatever is at hand. I, at seven years of age, had reached out my hand, and had grasped a Kramp catalogue".[237] The fact that M. uses a catalogue that explains the use of tools to comprehend the world allows us to understand the logical and pragmatic world she sees through this specific lens: "My comprehension of the world expanded like a sponge, especially when you include everything I heard at the hardware store counters, in the coffeehouses, the hotels".[238] This quote highlights the crucial role played by one's own personal experience in the perception and understanding of the world.

The landscape she describes therefore represents an extension of the joy and the fulfilment she feels within as it mimics her singular life experience: "The drives I most liked were the drives home. And it wasn't because home was at the end of the road, but because the late-afternoon light simplified everything. At that time of the day, the world looked like a scale

[235] Ferrada 2021, p.IV.
[236] Ferrada 2021, p.VIII.
[237] Ferrada 2021, p.VIII.
[238] Ferrada 2021, p.XVI.

model I'd seen in one of the many hardware stores we visited".[239] In the young protagonist's perception of the world, everything appears to be measurable and translatable into numbers and proportions, which directly refer to M.'s personal experience.

Furthermore, the world appears to be extremely familiar and understandable: "Someone had cut out the trees and set them down along the straight line that out of convention we called a road, someone had whittled a house and put it there (had used steel shears and a gouge). And, following that logic, which the light prompted me to do, someone had fashioned us and put us here. Great Carpenter, I whispered, as if I aiming to irritate someone who was a little deaf".[240] The focus brought by the protagonist on the demarcations of the land somehow echoes the coloniser's desire to dominate and to own the territory. In this respect, researcher Sabina Sestigiani argues that "the shortcoming on the part of the imagination to comprehend the vastness of unmarked land urges a need to fence territory, to cut it into portions which are easy to handle".[241] Also, setting up a boundary in the territory represents a way for the coloniser to understand the land".[242] This desire to control the land totally differs from the Indigenous worldviews where the world is organic, alive, and has been created by ancestral creator beings. Also, Aileen Moreton-Robinson underlines that in the Indigenous epistemology, one is worth no more or no less than other living things[243], which negates the will to dominate the landscape. Furthermore, the desire to know and understand the world is somehow limited by the reality that "there are other forms of knowledge that exist beyond that exist beyond us as humans".[244] The creation of demarcation lines and boundaries thus does not appear as a necessity in contrast with the coloniser's need to rule the land.

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[239] Ferrada 2021, p.XXII.
[240] Ferrada 2021, p.XXII.
[241] Sestigiani 2014, p.67.
[242] Sestigiani 2014, p.67.
[243] Moreton-Robinson, A. (2013). 'Towards an Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory: A methodological tool'. *Australian Feminist Studies, 28*(78), p.341. https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2013.876664.
[244] Moreton-Robinson 2013, p.341.

On another note, all the preceding extracts show how the thoughts and views of the protagonist are projected on the external world, and how she transposes subjective characteristics to the landscape. The represented world is therefore not the result of objective and accurate observations, but rather a personal interpretation seen through the eyes of a 7-year-old little girl. In her universe, everything obeys "the classifications used by the Great Carpenter"[245], which permits the explanation of the perceived harmony: "In the town stores there was no disorder, only dynamic order".[246]

4.2. Haunted landscape: The mark of trauma

However, the witnessing of a murder and the extinction of the small stores for the benefit of big companies represent a turning point in her description of the world as, since then, the landscape will only reflect the feeling of loss and despair she experiences. For instance, the world becomes "a ridiculous theatre"[247] when her dream world starts to crumble - an ending that seems to be subconsciously felt as her emotional and physical state started to deteriorate before this discovery:

> I got over my cold – or pneumonia – but my appearance wasn't the best. I was very skinny, and two shadows – each the shape of a half-moon – settled beneath my eyes, never fade away.
>
> I had a recurring dream: we were travelling along the highway, and the salesmen's Renaults were flashing their headlights in different combinations. My task was to discover what they meant. Two blinks: Continue? Just one blink: Caution? Three blinks: Stop? As hard as I thought and as much as I jotted down ideas on my notepad, I didn't manage to decipher them. I woke from the dream distressed and had trouble getting back to sleep.[248]

[245] Ferrada 2021, p.XIX.
[246] Ferrada 2021, p.XIX.
[247] Ferrada 2021, p.XXIV.
[248] Ferrada 2021, p.XXVII.

Her dreams become agitated and initiate the modification of her peaceful and regulated perception of the world that she is no longer able to decipher with clarity. Her confusion is projected on the outside world.

As an example, the highway - where the character previously found safety and order ("Each highway, town, and city had its place in my parallel education about the working of things"[249]), the same that she was rejoining with excitement every day ("most days we kept on past the school gate and headed for the highway"[250]) - becomes a place of confusion and uncertainty. The highway suddenly does not seem enchanting anymore and rather becomes a frightening place, reflecting the protagonist's inner change. The feeling of unsafety she experiences is projected on the outside world through the filter of her gaze.

Also in dreams, she sees how her vision of the world is slowly falling apart: "When I got back, I didn't feel like dinner, and I dreamed about a tree that bloomed with nuts and door viewers. There were also glass flowers. And in the dream, I thought that such a garden wouldn't survive the winter".[251]Through dreams, she metaphorically visualises the dramatic event that is about to happen in the real world. She sees that the little companies are vulnerable and will not be able to survive in the era of neoliberalism. She seems to be able to subconsciously sense – by means of dreams – that her world will soon fall apart.

Dreams thus seem to play a crucial role in the trauma discovery as they are able to break through the wall of illusions and fantasies created by the young protagonist to interpret the world, by bringing the knowledge of the traumatic reality she lives in. Dreams might therefore appear as the voice of trauma itself seeking to be known and acknowledged as, eventually, the cruelty of the dictatorship and its aftermaths cannot be escaped. The dreams made by the female character seem to confirm the realities she observes and does not want to recognise or the ones she cannot make sense of, such as the absence and the depressive mood of her mother or the

[249] Ferrada 2021, p.XVI.
[250] Ferrada 2021, p.VIII.
[251] Ferrada 2021, p.XXVI.

silences and secrets within her family circle that she fails to explain. This implies that her conscious mind does not know the truth that she tries to explain through her own classifications, but her subconscious brings fragmented answers about the reality of the situation through dreams. The later murder that she witnesses forces her to face the part of the reality she tried to escape. It seems like she creates a fantasy world to try to make sense of what she cannot explain, and thus to protect herself from the painful reality. However, she subconsciously knows something feels off, and this knowledge is brought to her consciousness through dreams and diffuse uncomfortable feelings.

It has been previously mentioned how traumatic memories can be repressed and dissociated in the victim's brain to come back by means of dreams. In this respect, it can be added that "outside of the dream world, where the reality principle prevails, these conflictual or traumatic complexes cannot be thought of declaratively as they are being pushed into the unconscious because of their intolerability. In the dream world, in which the pleasure principle prevails, the affective information comes more easily to the fore, and the "dream-organiser" […] seeks a solution by creating a tolerable micro-world in which the affective information suppressed or dissociated in the waking state can come "alive and become solvable".[252]

Once the reality cannot be avoided anymore as the disappearance of the salesmen has begun and the atrocities perpetrated by the dictatorship have been witnessed, the emotional state of the character starts to modify as she becomes fully aware of the real situation: "Because I told my mother about the ghost town, E's call, the gunshots. And about S and the envelopes too. About the booklet of false excuse slips. About the hardware stores, perfumeries, S's little double, skipping school and, finally, the Great Carpenter. As I went on with my story, I'm not sure why, but I started crying, and once I'd started. I cried for several hours".[253] The character

[252]Ambresin, G., Fischmann, T. and Leuzinger-Bohleber, M.(2021). 'Dreams and Trauma Changes in the Manifest Dreams in Psychology Treatments - A Psychoanalytic Outcome Measure', *Frontiers in Psychology 12*, pp.3-4, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.678440.
[253] Ferrada 2021, p.XXX.

realises the cruelty of the world she lives in hidden behind the fictional world she created. Not only the reality of the context where she evolves has been discovered, but also the precarious and abnormal situation lived within her family circle has been acknowledged, aggravated by her unsatisfactory new life in another city where her mother got remarried and where she becomes invisible. The newly experienced feeling of sadness as the sensation that she is disappearing is patent through the following extract: "And the list of things that were now distant affected me profoundly. So much that on two occasions I tried to take my life by holding my breath. I failed and, at nine years of age, understood that the self-preservation instinct really was something else".[254] This extract highlights the trauma-related emotions around which M.'s life seems to be now structured.

From that moment, the descriptions she makes of the landscape fundamentally differ from the previous ones. These feelings of sadness, emptiness and desolation are simultaneously massively depicted in the landscape's descriptions: "We made our first stop at the coffeehouse. No travelling salesman showed up to keep us company, so we quickly set off for the leading hardware store. This newfound solitude was repeated over the next few days. It made the image of the desert materialise again and settle on the coffees I ordered. I stirred the image with my teaspoon, dispersing it".[255] The coffeeshops or a place previously described as "private suns"[256]and as "the center of the universe around which the planet of sales revolved"[257], where the protagonist "liked breathing in the smoke from their cigarettes. Watching salesmen order one coffee after another"[258] seems to have turned now into a depressing and lonely place absorbing the character's solitude.

The comparison between both descriptions of the same place – embodied in the coffee shop – at distinct moments of the character's life permits us to demonstrate how the atmosphere

[254] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXII.
[255] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXV.
[256] Ferrada 2021, p.IX.
[257] Ferrada 2021, p.IX.
[258] Ferrada 2021, p.IX.

of the depicted places seems to match the protagonist's feelings. In other words, the external world seems to be an extension of her inner state. Another example of this phenomenon can be found towards the end of the story - where the protagonist acknowledges that she cannot stop the societal change she is living -: "D went off with his sample case to try to sell his nonexistent products. Seen from a distance, the hardware store looked unreal to me too".[259] Her familiar and under-control world becomes unrecognisable at the same pace as her feelings change.

The multiple mentions of ghosts in Ferrada's writing deserve to be mentioned. This term was first used to refer to the people murdered by the dictatorial power: "It took a long time to find the ghosts. You had to ask questions, make calls from public telephone booths, and talk with people who were afraid of telling you what they knew".[260] The term "ghost" was later used to describe the protagonist herself: "D and I, in contrast, kept still, and at first started to lose our colours, then our shapes".[261] Other extracts express the protagonist's sensation of becoming a ghost. For example, when she tries to reassure herself about the fact that she really exists: "And I asked her to sell me a couple of planks. If I could feel their weight, if I could hold them in my hands and take them home, it meant I was still a real person"[262] or when she feels that she has already disappeared: "We had existed a long time earlier and, contrary to what I had imagined, disappearance itself wasn't painful at all. You turn into smoke. People of the future do what they can with your remains".[263] In this respect, it can be said that ghosts are a crucial theme in postcolonial writings:

> Ghost stories question and reopen the solid walls of time, space and received history. They upset the complacencies of the everyday by leaking hidden stories and terrible hidden events through the ostensibly safe walls of stone and brick, and of validated histories, legitimated, exclusive versions of the past. Nothing is ever

[259] Ferrada 2021, p.XLI.
[260] Ferrada 2021, p.XVII.
[261] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXV.
[262] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXIX.
[263] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXIX.

> closed down, everything reopened to be reviewed and understood anew not just for what really happened or for what it meant but also to reconnect with contemporary bodies and experiences of the living, and learn from mistakes, hopefully counteract past evils, avoid repetition. There are tales to be retold, and boundaries to be questioned and breached.[264]

In *How to Order the Universe*, the mentions of ghosts shed light on the presence of the traumatic past within the present. This present even seems to be an extension of this never-ending past that encompasses everything. Reality almost appears as a fictional world that does not seem real. The only reality experienced by the protagonist is the traumatic event she had witnessed and the slow disappearance.[265]

While in Ferrada's novel, the references to ghosts are metaphorical, they still bring the truth about the hidden past, challenging the silencing imposed by the dictatorship. They also permit the demonstration of how trauma is not something that is over in the past, but that keeps impacting the present. Furthermore, they might symbolise an author's will to tell the truth in a Chile that – in Ferrada's words – is not willing to listen.

4.3. The illusion of control

These descriptions of the post-traumatic vision of the world permit us to understand how trauma is conceived by the character as something that happens outside of herself and that is contained within the landscape. For instance, when the character affirms that "we kept on: every day, a town. But something in the landscape we moved through didn't match the snapshot of reality I'd filed in my head"[266] or when she blames the Great Carpenter for the disappointing course of things: "I cursed the Great Carpenter again".[267] Newly-made subconscious associations between the landscape and her thoughts shape a new reality and world vision around trauma.

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[264] Wisker G 2022, p.267.

[266] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXVI.
[267] Ferrada 2021, p.XXXVI.

The subconscious associations can be explained by the fact that "trauma affects the belief system. Psychologically, when trauma happens there is often a corresponding change in the person's cognitive perception of themselves, the world, and other people. Janoff-Bulman (2010) refers to this process of belief change after trauma as "shattered assumptions".[268] In other words, the assumptions or beliefs that the person has about the world, themselves, and others are drastically affected and changed by the traumatic experience".[269] New associations have thus been made – based on the experienced trauma. The landscape – where trauma took place – is now seen as inherently traumatic. The character is unable to conceive herself outside of this singular event, and the previously beloved and marvellous external world cannot be seen outside the prism of trauma. Both realities seemed to have merged and to be intrinsically linked within the character's mind. The landscape does not appear as it used to look before – or as it really is – but it has become a mere reflection of the past trauma.

Regarding these associations, Bessel Van der Kolk remembers in an interview that trauma "is an injury. It is a wound. Something happens to you that is too big for your mind to comprehend. It is overwhelming, by definition. It is too much. And so, because of that, the consequence of that is that you get stuck. And things keep coming back, and you get overwhelmed again. And your mind and your brain and your being are incapable of comprehending and making sense of that event. And because you cannot integrate it, it keeps coming back[270]". The researcher therefore argues that trauma is an internal injury, highlighting that the event is not the trauma. Trauma is "how people respond to the event". Van der Kolk thus brings a crucial point by affirming that "trauma is a wound that is being lived out on a day to day basis in your life".[271]

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[268] Buxton, C, Kiyimba, N. Pathe, E. and Shuttleworth, J. (2022). *Discourses of Psychological Trauma*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, p.220.
[269] Buxton, Kiyimba, Pathe, Shuttleworth 2022, p.220.
[270] Van der Kolk, B (2018). *Bessel Van der Kolk on Understanding Trauma*, interview by Victor Yalom: 10:26.
[271] Van der Kolk Bessel 2018, 11.11.

The following extract from Ferrada's novel constitutes a fundamental example of this returning trauma, and of this "shattered assumption" that indivisibly considers the landscape and the trauma witnessed in this place as two sides of the same coin:

> The town seemed like a desert, so I sat beneath a tree – a mulberry – and pulled a cigarette out of my bag. The smoke rings rose and, on watching them dissipate, I had the second epiphany of my life. I shrank and was borne away on one of my smoke rings. On that privileged night journey I saw how the stars amassed heat and: POOF! Appeared. Millenia went by, they consumed their last reserves of hydrogen, and POOF! They dissolved. The view of the stars blended with that of the tacks, which, even though they were made of stainless steel, didn't escape the cycle of dissolution. (POOF! POOF! POOF). Swinging from my smoke ring, I got a privileged view of things. And it was while I was experiencing this clarity of mind that I heard a hoarse voice shout: "Let's see if you'll still feel like digging up bones when you're in hell, fucking dog".[272]

This extract demonstrates the accordance between the main protagonist's feeling of loneliness and insignificance - as her own fear of disappearing- and the "cycle of dissolution" she observes around her. The external world itself seems to be facing the threat of extinction. The last sentence of the previous paragraph permits us to bring another point into consideration as the sentence heard by the character is the one pronounced during the murder she witnessed. It can thus be argued that trauma remains a fundamental component of the present as the described landscape has not changed, but the view of it – through mental associations – is fundamentally distinct and brings back past memories.

Furthermore, as her previous enchanted vision of the landscape has vanished to be completely replaced by a view deeply marked by trauma, the feeling of disappearance she experienced might not be solely related to the disappearance of her previous conception of the world, but to the fact that her whole identity seems now built exclusively around trauma. The

[272] Ferrada 2021, p.XXVII.

boundary between the character's internal and external world seems blurry as confusion is made between trauma and its consequent internal feelings, and the landscape where this traumatic event took place. Both elements seem to be mixed up. Indeed, parts of the landscape are mistaken for trauma as they trigger its memory. It can therefore be said that these associations are subconscious and taken for real by the protagonist as trauma is considered an external and uncontrollable event. She is therefore placed in a vulnerable position as trauma is seen as a fatality that cannot be worked through or overcome. This could explain why, at the end of the story, the protagonist feels like she is disappearing and becoming a ghost herself as no hope or resolution can be found. It seems that trauma is able to engulf all the previous memories to become omnipresent. The character's world is now structured solely around trauma.

4.4. *The Secret River* seen through Ferrada's writing

The analysis of Grenville's *The Secret River* corroborates the hypothesis of feelings being projected on the landscape. The novel opens with the encounter between the main protagonist embodied in William Thornhill and the Australian land depicted in-depth as a hostile and dangerous place through several extracts: "Above him in the sky a thin moon and a scatter of stars as meaningless as spilt rice. There was no Pole Star, a friend to guide him on the Thames, no Bear that he had known all his life: only this blaze, unreadable, indifferent".[273] The main character experiences a deep feeling of loneliness and hopelessness due to his unwanted exile: "There were things worse than dying: life had taught him that. Being here in New South Wales might be one of them".[274] These feelings seem to be projected on the surrounding landscape described as "meaningless". The character also says that "this was a place, like death, from which men did not return. It was a sharp stab like a splinter under a nail: the pain of loss. He

[273] Grenville 2015, p.10.
[274] Grenville 2015, p.11.

would die here under these alien stars, his bones rot in this cold earth".[275] The landscape also appears cold and scary as a reflection of his own fear and loneliness.

Furthermore, human actions and characteristics are attributed to the landscape, which increases the impression of its hostility towards the coloniser: "The darkness in front of him whispered and shifted, but there was only the forest".[276] Other personifications of the forest can be found: "Trees stood tall over him. A breeze shivered through the leaves, then died, and left only the vast fact of the forest".[277] Additionally, the descriptions of the Australian landscape highlight the impotence and the insignificance of the protagonist left alone in a foreign land.

The descriptions of the landscape in Grenville's novel seem to borrow some typical elements of Gothic literature, traditionally used by the settlers to describe the foreign land. In the literature review, the use of Gothic by settlers to describe the Australian landscape has been mentioned. It has been said that the landscape appeared hostile, dangerous, and unfamiliar to them. Gothic features are a way to express the fright and horror they experience. The unfamiliarity of the forest and its wilderness are common themes in this type of writing. In this respect, "Fred Botting suggests that the gothic landscape can be defined by its remoteness and, in particular, its wilderness"[278], highlighting the fact that "wilderness exists in opposition to civilisation, wild animals in opposition to humans. These simple binary structures help to demarcate places that are safe for humankind and those areas, and species, that threaten us".[279] Like in Ferrada's book, these descriptions completely contrast with Indigenous beliefs of the land where everything is harmoniously ruled, inter-related and understood – and where humans fundamentally belong.

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[275] Grenville 2015, p.11.
[276] Grenville 2015, p.13.
[277] Grenville 2015, p.10.
[278] Kaja, F.(2020) 'The Wilderness' (2020) in Bloom Clive (ed.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Gothic*, p.243, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
[279] Kaja 2021, p.243.

Another passage, found in the narrative of his arrival, reveals the comparison made by the protagonist between the sea discovered during his journey and the river Thames in his hometown London:

> All the many months in the *Alexander*, lying in the hammock which was all the territory he could claim in the world, listening to the sea slap against the side of the ship and trying to hear the voice of his own wife, his own children, in the noise from the women's quarters, he had been comforted by telling over the bends of his own Thames. The Isle of Dogs, the deep eddying pool of Rotherhithe, the sudden twist of the sky as the river swung around the corner to Lambeth: they were all as intimate to him as breathing […], and still in the eye of his mind he rounded bend after bend of that river.[280]

In this context of fear and unfamiliarity, the evocation of the river Thames is solely associated with positive memories and is seen as reassuring and welcoming. This melancholic description however only partially coincides with the ones made during his life in London. It is true that this river has been described by the protagonist as a familiar and safe place:

> After a time the mud-choked water and the ships it carried, thick on its back like fleas on a dog, became nothing more than a big room of which every corner was known. He came to love that wide pale light around him out on the river, the falling away of insignificant things in the face of great radiance of the sky. He would rest on the oars at Hungerford Reach, where the tide could be relied on to sweep him around, and stare along the water at the way the light wrapped itself around every object.[281]

Plenty of details are provided about a river that seems to bring comfort to the protagonist. This description is found when the character's situation has improved as he is on his way to leaving

[280] Grenville 2015, p.11.
[281] Grenville 2015, p.39.

misery. His enthusiasm and hope are somehow reflected on the Thames. However, this element of the landscape is linked to his misfortune when the better life he managed to create is compromised by the tough winter, and he is forced to return to poverty: "It was in that month of freeze, with no money coming into any household by the river, that Thornhill's world cracked and broke".[282] Furthermore, "it was only after the ice on the river broke up, the hole dug and the prayers said over the two coffins as they swayed down on the undertaker's ropes, that the Thornhills realised everything was gone".[283] This combination of fragments highlights how London's River is objectively linked to the fate of Thornhill as its freeze stopped him from working and generating income. But since this unfortunate turn of events, the descriptions of the Thames provided by the protagonist are drastically modified:

> He sat for a long time on the pier at Bull Wharf watching the red sails of the sailormen bellying out as they tacked from reach to reach. The tide was pushing in from the sea. Across the surface of the river, pocked, pitted, rough, ran another kind of roughness, a buckle in the water crossing from one bank to another. […] He watched the tide, and thought of how the river would go on doing this dance of advance and fall back, long after William Thornhill and the griefs he carried in his heart were dead and forgotten. What point could there be to hoping, when everything could be broken so easily?[284]

Throughout the extract above, the river Thames is not described as quiet and reassuring anymore. Instead, the accent is placed on its roughness and its unfriendliness. The river no longer constitutes a source of comfort and appeasement as it is totally indifferent to the character's tragedy. It rather symbolises the injustice of the hardship he is experiencing. This return to misery - as the following exile to Australia can be considered as a trauma repetition -

[282] Grenville 2015, p.47.
[283] Grenville 2015, p.48.
[284] Grenville 2015, pp.51-52.

as similar emotions of anger, impotence, and revolt are triggered by these situations. In this respect, the landscape seems to reflect the feelings of the protagonist throughout the book.

The combined analysis of Ferrada's *How to Order the Universe* and Grenville's *The Secret River* shines a light on the representation of landscapes that have the commonality to reflect the feelings and thoughts of the protagonists of these stories. Additionally, in both novels, it seems that the depicted landscapes remain the same – only the character's feelings have changed, modifying their perceptions of the surrounding world. The hypothesis that these feelings are projected on the landscape is strengthened by the fact that, in Grenville's book, Thornhill's emotions are integrated as an inherent and essential component of the depicted Australian land.

This projection could be explained by the overwhelming nature of trauma that encompasses everything and overflows on the landscape. Characters become unable to see themselves outside of a trauma that repeats itself and keeps coming back. The notion of trauma embodiment can be considered a key concept to understanding this phenomenon as it presupposes that "we incorporate biologically - from conception to death –our social experiences".[285] In this respect, Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* adds the idea that not only social experiences are embodied but also individual experiences. The philosopher highlights the importance of "the association of ideas" that bring back experience"[286] in the process of perception. In this respect, he adds that "to perceive is not to experience a multitude of impressions that bring along with them some memories capable of completing them, it is to see an immanent sense bursting forth from a constellation of givens without which no call to memory is possible".[287] This theoretical point explains the characters 'descriptions of a landscape that appears inherently traumatic and frightening as it has been associated with the

[285] Beltran, R., Chae. D., Duran, B., Evans-Campbell, T., Mohammed, S., Walters, K. (2011). 'Bodies don't just tell stories, they tell histories: Embodiment of Historical Trauma among American Indians and Alaska Natives', *Cambridge*, *8*(1), pp.179-189. DOI:10.1017/S1742058X1100018X.
[286] Merleau-Ponty, (2013). *Phenomenology of Perception*. Florence: Taylor & Francis, p.15.
[287] Merleau-Ponty Maurice, 2013, p.23.

trauma and their overwhelming emotions. No distinction seems to be made between the inner and the outside world.

Furthermore, this embodiment "can be expressed in patterns of health, disease, and well-being".[288] It can also be added that "embodiment acknowledges that while bodies tell [his]stories, they reveal stories that are also not conscious, hidden, forbidden, or even denied by individuals or groups[289]". Additionally, this concept of embodiment aligns with Indigenous worldviews "that recognise the interdependency between humans and nature, the physical and spiritual worlds, the ancestors and the future generations".[290]

On another hand, in the context of postcolonial literature, this projection of personal feelings on the landscape could also be explained by the coloniser's will to control the landscape. The literature review has previously underlined this desire to rule and dominate the colonised landscape that is described as frightening and hostile. This intention is somehow expressed by Ferrada's protagonist as shown in the following extract:

> The salesmen's destinations were cities and, mostly, towns. These functioned as base camps, the strategic hearts of which were the hotels. Once set up, the salesmen embarked upon – we embarked upon –forays to conquer the neighboring territories. We were colonisers, and we wanted to convert the savages to the religion of Kramp products, Parker pens, English cologne, or Made-in-China plastic products. The more virgin territories there were, the better it was for us: the towns spontaneously recovered their virginity every thirty days, a time period that roughly coincided with the spell between the salesmen's visits.[291]

In this extract, the protagonist explicitly expresses her will to colonise unexploited territories and convert them to her own religion at all costs. Her view echoes the one expressed by

[288] Beltran, Chae, Duran, Evans-Campbell, Mohammed, Walters 2011, pp.179-189.
[289] Beltran, Chae, Duran, Evans-Campbell, Mohammed, Walters 2011, pp.179 – 189.
[290] Beltran, Chae, Duran, Evans-Campbell, Mohammed, Walters 2011, pp.179 – 189.
[291] Ferrada 2021, p.XVI.

Grenville's character who embodies the role of the coloniser, and who has to build a place for himself and his family in a foreign land. The fragment above also implies the failure of this attempt to control the land that seems to be ruled by its own rules.

In a nutshell, *How to Order the Universe* offers a representation of the landscape that reflects the protagonist's feelings and personal views, and that evolves according to the events and the situations she lives. The point is to highlight that the landscape itself does not change – it remains the same – but the protagonist's views do change and are projected on the external world that becomes traumatic following the disaster. Similarly, in Grenville's novel, the landscape embodies the character's emotions as its descriptions evolve across the narration. This projection of trauma can be explained by its overwhelming nature that becomes omnipresent, and every single element becomes related to trauma while it was not previously. No distinction is made between trauma and landscape that are seen as a whole by the distinct protagonists. Furthermore, this wants to project one's views on the landscape echoes a colonialist vision where the land is seen as "inherently exploitative" and submitted to human will. However, the fact that the landscape does not appear as fixed and immutable – but rather likely to evolve – seems to highlight its indifference and neutrality towards human history. It also seems that it obeys its own rules and pace. Acknowledging that trauma is an internal state - different from the landscape – simultaneously permits us to recognise that trauma can be approached by working through its related emotions and adopting a decolonised gaze on the landscape.

In this respect, a set of sentences formulated by the female narrator of Ferrada's novel permits one to apprehend trauma in a different way despite the hopeless ending of the story: "Billions of years before, on that same night, the big bang had taken place, and from then on everything drew apart, and continued to draw apart, irretrievably. Up there, the waning moon

was the same one that Neil Armstrong had walked on years before. But other things had changed forever".[292]

This extract shines a light on a distinction that can be made between trauma and the environment where it takes place as both elements appear to be associated in the character's mind. By recognizing that both elements obey different rules and belong to a different reality and by acknowledging that trauma is something internal that is being projected on the landscape and that the trauma-bound associations do not constitute the reality, trauma can therefore be considered – not as an inherently traumatic reality contained within the landscape – but as an internal state that the survivor can work through. The difficulty in distinguishing between trauma and the context where it happened is increased when the origin of trauma is unknown or repressed. Trauma-related feelings are being projected on the outside world making it appear inherently traumatic. In this context, the so-called "negative emotions" might precisely constitute the thread leading to trauma that permits the undoing of these associations. The fact that the descriptions of the landscape evolve across the book paradoxically permits the affirmation of its neutrality as it solely reflects an internal trauma that needs to be worked through. It can also be said that the projection of trauma transposed to the landscape can be considered as an address of this trauma to the victim in order to be acknowledged.

In this sense, the specific structure found in Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* allows a different understanding of the landscape. The narration draws attention to a great variety of natural elements, which becomes a fundamental component of the book. From the prelude, the nature's own timing is brought to the forefront:

> I love the snow gum.
>
> Its stout trunk strong... beautiful coloured
>
> Patterns appear when wet; a gift from God.
>
> The sturdy tree's limbs outstretched, waiting to

[292] Ferrada 2021, p.XLI.

Take the weight of winter... the weight of you.

Oh, to see these trees after an autumn shower...

It's this rare beauty that reminds me why I stay...[293]

A close analysis of this fragment highlights a cyclical representation of nature through the mention of seasons. This worldview suggests that the external landscape obeys its own rules. This cyclical approach is corroborated by the descriptions of the moon's distinct phases, which bring the focus on a temporality that appears to be totally external to the human's thoughts and emotions. The moon is mentioned at the very beginning of the novel: "He stops on a page that features a full moon, the many rings he's drawn representing the moon's larger-than-normal halo of light; a powerful glow and energy, brining unrest to the land".[294] This element of the landscape is also represented in relation to the seasons, which increases the impression of a cyclical organisation: "But that first winter's full-moon night became momentous in more ways than one...".[295] Furthermore, the moon depicted in Purcell's novel also seems to bring appeasement and guidance to the character: "The full moon was to guide him away, north, back home to his mother's country[296]". The evolution of this component is also retraced throughout the book. For example, at the end of the story, it is a "new moon" that smiles down on the landscape below".[297]

The whole landscape seems to be objectively and accurately depicted through its inherent characteristics: "From the recent rain, the moss's bright green on the black-grey granite is stark, contrastin' with the snow-white trunks of the white sallees scattered on the hillside. Yellowing tufts of tussock grass, indicating autumn is upon us, jut out from the boulders and rocks that form the cavernous walls to the river below, its dark water indicatin' its depth".[298] In this extract, the landscape seems to be fully independent of the protagonists'

[293] Purcell 2016, p.8.
[294] Purcell 2019 p.8.
[295] Purcell 2019, p.9.
[296] Purcell 2019, p.9.
[297] Purcell 2019, p.222.
[298] Purcell 2019, p.47.

will. This impression is confirmed by the following quote: “The snow gum marks the end of the cleared area of the front yard. Beyond that are perfectly placed white salles marking the perimeter of Molly’s property and beyond these trees are further young saplings, scrub and thicket; the land then drops away to the river below. To the left, the south, are the flood plains. You can see the river stretch out before you, snaking its way through the land”.[299]

The landscape does not appear as a receptacle for the protagonists’ emotions and thoughts or as an extension of their internal state. By contrast, the landscape seems to remain neutral with an internal logic that somehow seems to be above the characters' lives. This refers to Indigenous views on a country according to which humans constitute one of its elements in harmony with other creatures and natural components. Indeed, an impression of verticality might emanate from the characters’ descriptions of the landscape: “In the light of the day, the land around him and his family is of heroic proportions. The colossal mountain range stretches to the north and south and the thick scrub country dwarfs Molly and her children isolated within it".[300]

Finally, it can be added that the landscape appears to be the stage where human lives take place. However, both components remain separate: “Further out front, beyond a protruding mound of the old wood heap, the ancient snow gum stands like a sentinel, its stout trunk strong and curved like a woman’s form in the moonlight, its sturdy limbs outstretched, waiting to take the weight of the winter. Behind the snow gum someone watches, crouching unseen in the shadows, the full moon spotlighting the brutality before them”.[301] Both elements seem to coexist while remaining independent. The characters seem to fall within the landscape, irrespective of their situation or feelings.

The representation of the landscape in Purcell’s writing fundamentally differs from the ones found in Ferrada’s and Grenville’s novels. This distinction might illustrate the difference

[299] Purcell 2019, p.55.
[300] Purcell 2019, p.57.
[301] Purcell 2019, p.13.

between the Indigenous and the colonial vision of the landscape. In this respect, it can be said that Indigenous people "have very different understandings of white colonial history and different epistemological, ontological, and cosmological understandings that inform their relationships together and their ways of being in the land".[302] Furthermore, "Indigenous people's sacred and indivisible relation to the land [is seen] as opposed to the colonial frameworks of land ownership and possession"[303] as in Indigenous worldviews, "the land is the mother, and we are of the land. We do not own the land, the land owns us. The land is our food, our culture, our spirit and our identity. The physical world encapsulates the land, the sky and all living organisms".[304]

The understanding that landscape is not – and cannot – be owned by humans seems to be at the heart of Indigenous worldviews. It has previously been said that landscape is embodied in Indigenous understandings of the world. An example of this embodiment might lie in the fact that when an Aboriginal man says that a particular area of land is his mother, he is not speaking metaphorically. To him the land is his mother in a literal sense, in a way quite inaccessible to the Western mind".[305] In this respect, the term "relationality" has been brought to the fore by the critique to describe Indigenous worldviews – a concept "that is grounded in a holistic conception of the inter-connectedness and inter-substantiation between and among all living things and the earth, which is inhabited by a world of ancestors and creator beings".[306]

Thus, this view on embodiment does not imply any attempts of ownership as the landscape is – by essence – something uncountable, that cannot be possessed or measured according to Indigenous world views. Indeed, "the Aboriginal world is not constrained by time

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[302] Neumeier, B. and Schaffer, K. (2014). *Decolonizing the landscape: Indigenous Cultures in Australi*a Amsterdam: Brill-Rodopi, p.150.
[303] Neumeier, Schaffer 2014, p.150.
[304] Foley, D (2003). 'Indigenous epistemology and Indigenous standpoint theory' , *Social Alternatives*, 22(1), p.2 pp.44-52. earch.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/ielapa.200305132.
[305] Christie, M. (1984).'The Aboriginal World View'. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education 12*(1), p. 4, https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/ielapa.809324087748276.
[306] Moreton-Robinson, A. (2017). 'Relationality: A key presupposition of an Indigenous social research paradigm', in Anderson Ch. and O'Brien J. (ed.). *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*. London: Routledge, p.7.

or space in the same way or to the same extent as the white world. The spirits of the dead people are constantly present".[307] Additionally, "a second distinctive feature of the Aboriginal perspective is that things cannot be quantified. In a world made up of objects related through their spiritual essences, rather than their physical properties, counting is irrelevant".[308]

Furthermore, the humans seem to fit within a greater space: "The family and the land both became objects of creative and emotional investment […] In the Yolngu system, for example, there are literally dozens of kinship terms each bearing certain responsibilities and even certain feelings that go with that relation. Everyone in the Aboriginal world is related. Everyone fits irreplaceably into a complex circular system which accurately reflects the timelessness of their world view".[309]

This vision introduces the idea that the landscape is ruled by its own principles that are above the human experience. Therefore, this vision also allows the breaking of the previously mentioned "shattered assumptions" - or the subconsciously established links - between the landscape and one's internal state, confirming the hypothesis of a trauma that can be worked through. Its projection on the landscape can therefore be seen as an address of the unresolved trauma seeking to be acknowledged.

The next chapter considers intergenerational subconscious trauma and its potential resolution through the analysis of "negative emotions" that - once understood and processed - permit the deconstruction of these "shattered assumptions" or trauma-bound associations.

[307] Christie 1984, p.4.
[308] Christie 1984, p.4.
[309] Christie 1984, p.5.

CHAPTER 5: *THE DROVER'S WIFE* AND *THE REST IS SILENCE:* THE EMERGENCE OF THE TRUTH OR THE MEMORY OF THE BODY

> The wind strokes me and whispers in my ear. Suddenly, the canoe shakes. I hold on to the sides, but our boat turns over and we both fall in. Kájef disappears under the sea. I'm floating. I feel like I've lived this before. But when? When? I curl up into a tiny ball and the memory gets thicker. I hear a loud noise, then a voice talking to me. I try to hold on to it with my hands, but it's going away. I squeeze my fists, but I can't. The thread of my memory breaks; the memory sinks into the dark waters in the depths of the ocean, along with Kájef.[310]

Leah Purcell has spoken openly about her project to rewrite an Australian classic tale.[311] In so doing, she combines her different abilities and talents as a well-known film director, actress, playwright and novelist, which enables her to retell the original story from various angles. Henry Lawson's 'The Drover's Wife' (1892) famously tells the story of a woman left alone in the lonely and threatening bush with her children. The climax of the plot describes a snake entering the house through a small crevasse and the mother's murder of the invader in order to protect her young family. Lawson's story depends on a colonial reading of the Australian bush as a site of danger and fear, a simplistic opposition of nature and culture, in order to expose the very real system of gendered oppression at work in late nineteenth-century Australia. Purcell's *The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson*, written first as a play (2016), then as a novel (2019), and then as a film (2021), is a reinterpretation of Lawson's story and a critical intervention in the discourses of gender, race, and culture which underpin assumptions about

[310] Guelfenbein 2011, p.199-200.
[311] Purcell, L. (2022). "The Songlines of Leah Purcell", interview by Deb Mailman. *ABC News*, June, 19, 2022.Video,29:12, https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-09/the-songlines-of-leah-purcell/13922656.

Australian national identity.[312] Martina Horáková highlights that "the main incentive for Purcell's rewriting of Lawson's story is the desire to inscribe a much larger and significant presence of Indigeneity in the famous tale"[313]as "in Lawson's canonical story, Indigeneity remains elusive, marginal, and ultimately ambivalent".[314] By contrast, "in Purcell's rewriting, Indigeneity is brought to the forefront as Purcell assigns both these characters a much more fundamental role in the plot".[315]

Purcell invents a history for the main character, now given a name she did not possess before and transforms her into a woman who has ignored or hidden her Indigenous heritage. When this heritage comes to light it forces Molly to confront her past, as well as the legacy of those traumas in the present. Purcell's version is unafraid to identify violence where it occurs, recognising the drover as the instigator of domestic violence, driving Molly herself to murder, and also introduces new characters, such as Yadaka, an Aboriginal man who is incorrectly accused of murder because of his race. Chained and fleeing from the authorities, Yadaka seeks Molly's help and assists her in turn during the delivery (and burial) of her breech and ultimately stillborn child. It is through their growing friendship that Molly also comes to recognise her own Aboriginal heritage. Although Molly herself is tried for the murder of her husband and another officer and hung at the narrative's end, the discovery of this legacy means that her children can reconnect with their Aboriginal family and go on to live safely among their people. The representation of trauma, fear, and anxiety within Purcell's work permits the explanation of how these emotions constitute essential driving forces for the protagonist that permit her to place her children in safety.

Purcell's rewriting of 'The Drover's Wife' thus highlights the gap between what Jean-François Lyotard calls 'grand narratives' and 'little narratives', between the official verdict

[312] Purcell, L. (2016; 2019; 2021).
[313] Horáková, M. (2002). 'Kin-fused' revenge: Rewriting the canon and settler belonging in Leah Purcell's The Drover's Wife'. *Oxford Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *58*(4), p.512. 10.1080/17449855.2022.2051867.
[314] Horáková 2022, p.512.
[315] Horáková 2022, p.512.

regarding the drover's wife and her own history as both an object and subject of violence[316]. Critically, she does this through an engagement with the power of negative emotions, in particular, the use of trauma, fear, and anxiety to paradoxically promote connection and self-discovery.

For Purcell, such acts of revisioning are a means of reworking our understanding of Australian history, the stories we tell about our nation and its past, affirming that 'slowly we're giving the power of the voice back to the individual, back to the mob, back to our people so that we can be the truth tellers[317]. In this way, she makes visible violence that is often silenced or untold with the aim of reaching conciliation by representing an Aboriginal woman who is a victim of domestic and state violence. This echoes Fiona Morrison's point that: "Purcell storms straight into the "great Australian silence"[318], to use Stanner's famous formulation of Australia's widespread historical amnesia; a phrase now used to characterise extensive settler-invader elisions and negations of Indigenous experience".[319]Perhaps even more significantly, Purcell sees this storytelling to be the responsibility of all Australians, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous:

What the arts open up to our wider audiences is their ownership of Australia's Indigenous heritage. Because I believe that if you call Australia home, this ancient culture is yours as well. To be proud of and to participate in. It's nothing to be ashamed of or say that it doesn't exist. This is who we are and it's mighty".[320] As such, Purcell's adaptations offer a message of hope, empowerment, and survival, even as they directly confront the nation's traumatic past. Furthermore, Purcell recognises the personal dimension behind her rewriting of Lawson's short story: "I've re-imagined it and I've applied my family's personal story

[316] Lyotard, J-F. (1979). *La Condition Postomoderne (The Postmodern Condition*). Paris: Minuit.
[317] Purcell, 2022.
[318] Stanner, pp.25-25.
[319] Morrison 2018, p.174.
[320] Purcell 2022.

throughout it, so it's connected through me[321]" as she remembers that "when I was about five years old, my mother would read to me the Henry Lawson book of short stories, and Drover's wife was one of them, and it was our favourite […] I saw my mother as the drover's wife".[322]

Similarly, in an interview, Carla Guelfenbein also mentions the importance of storytelling during her childhood: "I started writing short stories when I was a young girl. My mother – a philosophy teacher – kept them in a wooden box which I remember well. Unfortunately, when we had to flee Chile, during Pinochet's dictatorship, we had to leave behind most of our treasures, and among them was the wooden box".[323] Additionally, she narrates her return to Chile after years of exile where she discovers the new reality of her home country where telling one's truth is not permitted: "I left as a teenager, and while I was discovering the world, my friends had grown-up in fear and silence under Pinochet's rule".[324] This imposed silence is depicted within the novel where the main protagonist, Tommy Montes, is not allowed to express himself, ask questions or seek answers, and where the truth surrounding his mother's death and his Jewish background is completely silenced. In this respect, it can be added that the theme of Jewishness echoes the family history of the author which is used as an inspiration for her writing and demonstrates her willingness to tell the story of her origins.

Both books are worth comparing as they permit us to interrogate the reality and what is presented as the truth. In this respect, the Chilean writer expresses that she has "always felt that reality doesn't exist, that reality is what we perceive from it […]. Through the different voices and visions, […] [she tries] to convey a kaleidoscopic image of reality, which is never complete, never final, and never categorical".[325] In both books, the protagonists discover that

[321].'The Songlines of Leah Purcell', interview by Mailman, D. *ABC News, J*une, 19, 2022.Video,29:12.https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-09/the-songlines-of-leah-purcell/13922656)
[322] Purcell L. "The Songlines of Leah Purcell", interview by Deb Mailman. *ABC News, J*une, 19, 2022.Video,29:12.https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-09/the-songlines-of-leah-purcell/13922656)
[323] Popescu 2011, without pagination.
[324] Popescu 2011, without pagination.
[325] Popescu 2011, without pagination.

what is taken for real and true only constitutes a façade behind which their story is hidden. Both authors share not only the will to tell the truth and to break the imposed silence or chosen amnesia of their nations, but they also introduce characters who totally ignore the truth, and who reach its discovery through the memory of trauma kept by their bodies. In both stories, the analysis – and even the recording – of their thoughts permits the characters to embark on a journey towards the truth in which trauma is not considered an external fatality, but an internal process of remembrance.

The comparison of both novels permits the understanding of the fundamental role played by emotions in this process of truth discovery that permits the creation of a future where conciliation and healing are possible.

5.1. Re/writing the Traumatic Past

In the novel adaptation of *The Drover's Wife*, Purcell's narrator asserts that 'a life's story untold is a life not lived' reflecting the author's will to tell as the crucial motivation of her storytelling.[326] Indeed, the existence of three distinct adaptations – comprised of a play, a novel, and a film – also highlight this desire to not only tell the truth but to get it right, to rehearse the story over and over until it is complete. As Purcell expresses in the novel's Author's Note: 'I was determined to fill in the gaps in our history'.[327] Story is the means by which we give voice to silenced narratives, bearing witness to unseen or hidden traumas.

Australian colonial narratives were typically based on European Enlightenment discourses of rationality, modernity, and progress, and their descriptions construct the country as a place where violence is normalised – for instance, through the presence of extractive industries or police states – as a main component of a landscape described as 'inherently exploitative'[328]. In Australia, then, truth-telling has been difficult in a context where violence is not recognised as such. Purcell's rewriting of Lawson's story is an approach that seeks to

[326] Purcell 2019, p.173.
[327] Purcell 2019, p.224.
[328] Sestigiani 2014, p.15.

recognise the truth, to understand violence precisely as violence, and to trace its legacies and consequences. Purcell's multiple rewritings also draw attention to Linda Hutcheon's assertion that adaptations indicate the way in which there are only truths in the plural and that the representation of the past means to open it up to the present.[329] The growing dialogue between Purcell's adaptations strengthens her narrative as their combination permits us to comprehend the story more fully. Moreover, the openness to the reader or viewer evident in the three versions recreates the importance of oral transmission, enabling this history to remain open, flexible and multiple: 'There is no malice in the giving of this story. It's the truth, your truth. I was given it by a great woman. Part of my lore – our lore – is to share the stories so we live long into tomorrow and beyond […] and your mother, Black Mary, Waraganj, lived. Lived large in her short time'.[330] Here Yadaka indicates the will to pass this story on to future generations. The multiple adaptations of *The Drover's Wife* can be seen to operate as mechanisms that permit this lost history to survive and for the truth to inform the present and the future.

One of the major differences between Lawson's and Purcell's versions of the story lies in the treatment and identification of the drover's wife herself. Lawson's title indicates the way in which this character is defined by her anonymity. In contrast, Purcell not only gives a name to her character – Molly Johnson – but immerses the reader in the female protagonist's internal world by accessing her thoughts and feelings. This significantly differs from Lawson's original story where "the reader is invited to look at the scene through other eyes than the perception of the drover's wife, which implicitly suggests she does not show any emotions".[331]

In order to expose and construct her interiority, Purcell introduces a change in the narration where Molly Johnson is able to speak for herself: she is not only described by an

[329] Hutcheon 1989.
[330] Purcell 2019, p.173.
[331] Vandamme, C. (2016). 'The Drover's Wife: Celebrating or Demystifying Bush Mythology', *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, *38*(2), pp.73-81. 10.4000/ces.4898.

external narrator but uses the first person in order to put her own experience into words. In particular, Purcell identifies a sense of imprisonment in Molly's isolation, her lack of community or outlet for her thoughts:

> The squabblin' of the children brings me back to reality. They're arguin' over who's won the race to the 'turnaround' point. It feels like we've only just started. My mind has raced away, all the way, robbin' me of this walk and day. […] Is that why my head's so full of all these thoughts? Bein' closed indoors, with only walls to look at, screamin' restless children, bickerin' and fightin'. Nowhere for my thoughts to escape to".[332]

This extract from early in the novel exposes Molly's intrusive thoughts, a frequent symptom of conditions of trauma and anxiety. This strategy does not just indicate Molly's interiority, but her entrapment in colonial patriarchal expectations. Constructing the interior life of an Aboriginal woman, and the psychological effects of her oppression, is thus one means of decolonising literature. On the other hand, the external narration maintains attention on her emotional state and poor living conditions: 'Molly is unwell and lost in thoughts as she does the mundane chores she has done every day at this time since she arrived to live in the shanty'[333]. The external narrator thus validates Molly's interior monologue and underscores the process of truth-telling.

Molly's interiority also allows us to understand the dissociation and confusion in the character's mind. This fragmentation is typical in its illustration of trauma as an overwhelming experience which was never consciously processed, implying that survivors are haunted by a past they cannot consciously recall, even as the trauma becomes 'engraved in their mind[334]'. In other words, the trauma cannot be fully owned by its victim as it has been dissociated in the mind. However, the traumatic past does arise through memory triggers and the paradoxical role

[332] Purcell 2019, p.23.
[333] Purcell 2019, p.22.
[334] Caruth 1996.

played by the body in the complex process of forgetting and remembrance[335]. In this respect, it has also been demonstrated how traumatic memories fundamentally differ from others by the intense emotions and sensations of fear and anxiety they awaken in those experiencing them[336]. In this respect, Anxiety is characterised as "diffuse, objectless, unpleasant, and persistent […] The rise and decline of fear tend to be limited in time and space, whereas anxiety tends to be pervasive and persistent".[337] Also, anxiety tends to be shapeless, grating along at a lower level of intensity [than fear][338]. This in part justifies the representation of distress experienced by characters as they experience repetitions of trauma and struggle to control their irruption into daily life.

Traumatic memory is thus primarily constituted by the presence of recurring thoughts and associated emotions of trauma, fear, and anxiety that the character fails to understand. Fragmented memories and their linked feelings arise but remain unexplained. The narrativisation of trauma, the telling of trauma's story, is thus critical to understanding those memories and emotions, knowing the past and revealing the truth. Molly attempts to do this early on – 'Gives the children a chance to ask me about my life, and for some reason I open up, tell them what I know and don't know. […] I am so in my head today, thinkin' too much on the past. But that's what these walks are for, sharin' life's story' – but it is only once Yadaka gives her the tools with which to understand those fragments that Molly's story can be made whole: 'It all makes sense now. With the story Yadaka told her'.[339] Storytelling is the means by which Purcell's characters shine a light on the unknown and bring sense and coherence to fragmentation.

Storytelling is thus also the path to recovery and resilience, a mechanism that permits the victim to overcome the impossibility of accurately remembering and verbalising the past

[335] Caruth 1996.
[336] Scaer 2014.
[337] Rachman, S. (2019). *The Nature of Anxiety*. London: Psychology Press, p.3.
[338] Rachman 2019, p.3.
[339] Purcell 2019, p.196.

due to the victim's lacking memory.[340] Storytelling is therefore seen as 'an empowering and effective therapeutic method' as it permits to mimic and transmit the phenomenon - through innovative literary forms - to readers in its literality.[341] It also means to reduce the dissociation and other symptoms caused by trauma.[342] This does not only operate on individual terms. On a broader level, it has also been demonstrated that postcolonial trauma narratives often show that resilience and growth are possible in the aftermaths of trauma as storytelling permits recovery and post-traumatic growth.[343] This process of storytelling explains the project of Purcell's work in which she rewrites an earlier colonial text through an understanding of trauma and ultimately the exposition of another truth.

Purcell's version of *The Drover's Wife* makes the argument that storytelling constitutes the crucial element that allows us to bring some coherence to fragmented and dissociated memories, to make the 'fractured pieces' of Molly's story 'take form', and to establish a link between different life stories (even between the literary text and the real world).[344]. Similarly, 'memories of the story come flooding back to Yadaka. They do not come in chronological order but in bits and pieces'.[345] The final revelation of the truth appears as the result of the storytelling process that allowed Molly and Yadaka's fragmented pieces of memory to arise and connect and act as guidelines for the progression of the story. Once the truth is known, all the dissociated memories appear to be inserted into a greater story so 'the past makes sense of the present'.[346]

The encounter between Molly and Yadaka also demonstrates the significance of passing on stories as a work of responsibility: 'She had a story to tell, a story she held very dear but was forbidden to share with others in her clan […]. By adopting Yadaka as her son, his adopted

[340] Caruth 1996.
[341] Rodi-Risberg 2018.
[342] Visser 2014.
[343] Visser 2014; Lalonde 2018.
[344] Purcell 2019, p.172.
[345] Purcell 2019, p.125.
[346] Purcell 2019, p.196.

mother, Ginny May, could share it with him. He was her chosen one to keep her story alive. He was now responsible for it".[347]'This responsibility is also held by Purcell herself, and it is one she shares with her readers. She is the storyteller entrusted with the task of 'keeping the story alive', of transmitting knowledge beyond her lifetime or, in Bakhtinian terms, a story that remains present in the 'Great time' that goes beyond 'the small time of contemporaneity'.[348] Ultimately, then, Purcell's storyteller – and her storytelling – constitutes a responsibility for the survival of national experience.

5.2. Negative Emotions and Storytelling

For the story to be 'reconfigure[d] again', as Yadaka puts it, therefore requires (at least) two people in dialogue[349] as listening to another's story of trauma permits the other one to know without knowing about one's own trauma.[350] Indeed, it can thereby be said that the story of trauma becomes the testimony of another's trauma as one's own trauma appears to be tied up with the trauma of another's'.[351] In other words, 'it takes two to witness the unconscious'.[352]' In *The Drover's Wife*, the interaction between Molly and Yadaka is necessary to reveal both Molly's and Yadaka's traumatic pasts. In this section, we now demonstrate how trauma, fear, and anxiety constitute the core of the storytelling which permits this recognition of trauma between the characters.

First, it is necessary to recognise that 'emotions are complex phenomena [that] occur in response to triggering situations in the external environment' and are often considered as 'opposite pairs'.[353]. However, it can also be argued that 'positive and negative elements melt together in every single emotion' and thus that acknowledging their structural ambivalence seems to be the most appropriate scientific attitude'.[354] Considering emotions as fundamentally

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[347] Purcell 2019, p.125.
[348] Petrilli 2016.
[349] Purcell 2019, p.125.
[350] Lalonde 2018.
[351] Lalonde 2018.
[352] Felman and Laub 1992.
[353] Dellantonio, S. Giacomoni, p.and Valentini N. (2021*). The Dark Side: Philosophical Reflections on the "Negative emotions"*. New York: Springer, p.1.
[354] Dellantonio, Giacomoni, Valentini 2021, p.4.

ambivalent allows us to understand 'why – despite their negativity – they may turn out to be positive. […] This opens up a perspective in which each emotion can be understood as a complex interlacing of negative and positive properties'.[355] As we have shown so far, in Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* the apparent and overwhelming negative emotions felt by the protagonist reveal the existence of her past trauma and promote the telling of the truth. In this way, they are central to the process of storytelling as it appears in Purcell's work. The representation of trauma, fear, and anxiety in the play version is primarily through stage directions that gradually reveal pieces of the story; for instance, 'A woman clearly showing signs of physical abuse'.[356] Although an external descriptor, such directions allow the audience to fill in the gap and assume the emotions felt by the protagonist, especially highlighting negative emotions like trauma, fear, and anxiety Moreover, such stage directions also point towards the characters' interiority, as when we are told: 'She is wondering how much she has seen'.[357]

The film adaptation also works in a similar way, as the characters' expressions reveal the traumatic truth. A similar experience occurs in the film *The Drover's Wife*. Molly's growing friendship with Louisa Clintoff (modelled after Louisa Lawson, Henry Lawson's mother) can also be studied under the prism of trauma and its expression through fear and anxiety as Louisa has experienced the death of her sister in the context of domestic violence and fears for Molly. Despite its foundation in grief their friendship is based on shared understanding and empathy as Louisa shows sincere concern and care towards Molly based on her previous lived experience. Their encounter establishes a link between the characters and finally also permits the truth to be known through Louisa's article about the life of Molly Johnson.

However, the novel adaptation offers up closer means of representing the interiority of emotion, rather than the interpretation of physical acts relied upon in the play and film.

[355] Giacomoni, Dellantonio, Valentini 2021, p.4.
[356] Purcell 2016, Scene 1.
[357] Purcell 2016, Scene 1.

Significantly, memories emerge through the description or expression of negative emotions, but with positive outcomes. For instance, the starting point of this alternative chronology is the encounter between Molly and Yadaka, marked by the birth of her stillborn child. Molly's grief at this loss – and the loss of previous children – pervade this scene. However, the expression of these emotions and of the experience also work to build an environment of trust between the two characters which is crucial for the later discovery of the truth. It is during the burial of the child's corpse that Molly starts to be seen from another angle:

> Absentmindedly Molly turns and places the swaddled baby in the coffin without any further word. She turns away. Still no sign of emotion. Eventually, she speaks. 'I rode for nineteen miles with that dead baby boy in my arms. He was six months old. Didn't see a soul. My cow died. I truly was alone.' Yadaka looks at her, a little perplexed by the story she tells'.[358]

The context of grief and sadness is precisely that which allows Molly to start to tell her own life's story as Yadaka, her listener, gradually puzzles the pieces together. When 'Molly goes to him, clenches her fist and places it gently on the baby's covered forehead [and] blows through her fist', 'Yadaka frowns with curiosity. He knows this action and what it means. How does she know this? "So you are always with her" he says to her'.[359] The witnessing of another's trauma is understood through its associated related emotions. Locating this singular event within the protagonist's wider history demonstrates how this context of past trauma is necessary to build the complicity that permits truth-telling. Molly responds:

> A gin showed me. She helped me bury my first son, Jack. […] He is intrigued with her story now. There's something about her, but he can't put his finger on it. It has been a long time since Ginny May told him that story – a story so dear to her that she would repeat it over and over whenever she had a chance... is it this woman?[360]

[358] Purcell 2019, p.122.
[359] Purcell 2019, p.123.
[360] Purcell 2019, p.123.

It can therefore be argued that without the expression of past traumas, the truth might have never been discovered. The context of loss and its related negative emotions seems to be essential for the truth to be known and told as the repetition of trauma causes the will to tell. The negative emotions are for Purcell therefore a fundamental tool to discover the past and to tell the truth.

The remembrance of hidden or forgotten traumatic memories also occurs through the experience of trauma, fear, and anxiety. The episode analysed above helps the reader to make sense of previous passages belatedly. For example, it explains when the drover's wife sees an Aboriginal woman during a nightmare:

> Molly sleeps […] Her face distorts: she is dreaming. Her eyelids continue to flicker as she tries to make sense of the impressionistic jumbled images, to obscure to see details, flashing before her mind's eyes. Her breathing becomes shallow and quick. Her hands tense, grabbing at her dress over her pregnant belly. She mumbles something inaudible […]. The roar of her surroundings cuts through her nightmare.[361]

In this way, the reader is encouraged to fill in the gaps by interpreting the representations of trauma, fear, and anxiety and thus to piece the different histories together:

> There before me ... floatin' before me. Is a woman. A fair-skinned Aboriginal woman, her native features strong in the contours of her face, her hair red; long and swirling […]. A calmness comes over me. I'm mesmerised by the woman's deep, dark eyes. I stare at her as if nothing else matters. The look in her eyes tells me something, I tilt my head to understand her thoughts. She speaks to me ... her eyes wide open ... she is willing me on. To fight. To live. My children![362]

[361] Purcell 2019, p.51.
[362] Purcell 2019, p.53.

Here the knowledge of the truth, which ultimately leads to a state of calm recognition, emerges from a context of fear and anxiety. The integration of the truth constitutes a solution to the fragmentation caused by trauma, but this is only possible through the expression of fear and anxiety. The most crucial part regarding the revelation of Molly's past is certainly Yadaka's storytelling where the story evolves according to the expression of Molly's anxiety and fear: 'she was possessed with fear and pain', she has 'become very flustered', while Yadaka 'senses her anxiety and thinks: "something is not right here".[363] Molly's emotions allow her to speak the revelation of truth – 'she died giving birth to me. My Ma' – and for the whole truth, her *not knowing*, to be known'.[364] Her trauma, fear and anxiety allow the progression of Yadaka's storytelling as he grasps all the different points of her story: 'From things he has seen and heard about her life since he's been here, it's all sounding very familiar, and now this last piece of information ... Slowly Molly's story fractured pieces are taking form for him', until the storyteller's final revelation: 'Ngarigo they're your family'.[365]

5.3. Cyclical Stories and the Expression of Trauma

Embracing the truth is what, at the end of Purcell's work, permits Molly to create a distinct future of a safe place for her children: 'Molly knows the word "octaroon" will get her children taken. It all makes sense now, with the story Yadaka told her. The pieces of her life's puzzle are falling into place. The past is making sense of the present'.[366]'This crucial knowledge and the acceptance of the past opens a way to resilience offered by a new beginning where 'the laughter and their squeals of delight can be heard from outside. Molly's old shanty is now a large family home' where 'Danny and his siblings loved that the story was honoured by the Ngarigo for their ma's bravery and respect for her plight and that it brought her into the family clan'.[367] Following trauma, fear and anxiety leads, at the end of the story, to the recognition

[363] Purcell 2019, pp.144-146.
[364] Purcell 2019, p.172.
[365] Purcell 2019, pp.172-173.
[366] Purcell 2019, p.196.
[367] Purcell 2019, p.221.

and construction of Molly's own life story 'of survival' that will be passed on through the generations: 'It's the story I lived, it's the story I have told and will retell. The story of survival I'll pass down[368]'. Paradoxically the trauma-related emotions of fear and anxiety experienced by the protagonist lead her to act in order to protect her children, creating for them a safe future. The conscious fear following the discovery of her children's aboriginality and the constant anxiety for their safety throughout the story allow her to act and make the necessary decision to save them from deportation.

The expression of trauma, fear, and anxiety is necessary to give voice to the main protagonist and seek the justice she could not get during her lifetime: for her story to survive. The acknowledgement and the acceptance of the past allow the characters to build a distinct and safe future. The timeline, rather than being linear, is non-chronological and presented in an order whereby the past, present, and future seem to be entangled and intrinsically linked. This alternative vision deeply echoes Aboriginal beliefs that bring an alternative perception of time by rejecting linear chronology in favour of ancient non-linear time, figured in rings, holes and tunnels[369]. These characteristics can be transposed to the process of storytelling that does not obey a linear timeline but rather goes back and forth and is comprised of gaps and repetitions. In this respect, a parallel can be made with the timeline of trauma, often depicted as a broken time, made of ellipses and statis, 'and in the best cases, by returns and sudden progression[370]'. Purcell's adaptations thus allow a study of trauma through the analysis of storytelling. This process informs us about the temporality of trauma by means of the storytelling's own mechanisms. The telling of the story triggers the fear, and anxiety associated with the trauma and allows a recognition that trauma is ruled by a circular timeline made of repetitions in which these emotions constitute the remaining link to the forgotten truth.

[368] Purcell 2019, p.219.
[369] Wevers 2006.
[370] Herrero 2011.

Many Indigenous writers also create texts in which the 'sacred and secular are not held in separate categories but are allowed to interpenetrate, to be seen as intersectional conditions, while remembering that the future appears to be deeply informed by the past.[371] In this way, constructing a better future, and the possibility of survival depends on the remembrance of the past.[372] This timeline contradicts 'the time of Modernity' in which the past is forgotten, and considered meaningless.[373] Rather, it constitutes what Mircea Eliade calls the 'eternal return' as a persisting cycle where ancestors are included in the present time and where the sacred space permits the conjugation of past and present within a unified time.[374] Thus, for Yadaka, 'All of a sudden, memories of the story, come flooding back […]. They do not come in chronological order but in bits and pieces […]. He will ask the ancestors for guidance. If Ginny May has passed on, maybe she will come to him in his dreams'[375]. In Purcell's work, then, the negative emotions permit the characters to reconnect with ancient knowledge and with an alternative timeline where different temporalities coexist and overlap.

In the film, for instance, entrapment in the trauma of the past is represented by the environment comprised of encircling mountains, while at the end of the film, the horse-drawn carriage driven by the son Danny is free to move toward a place of freedom marked by the family's cyclical and seasonal returns. This provides a deeper understanding of the way in which the narrativisation of trauma allows us to remember the past by instead making clear the way that this allows acceptance of one's origins. This permits the building of a better future for the individual and the collective. Truth integration breaks the cycle in order to create a different future.

[371] McCredden 2021.
[372] Bacigalupo 2017.
[373] Bengoa 1996.
[374] Bengoa 1996.
[375] Purcell 2019, p.125.

5.4. Negative emotions and the Possibility of Freedom

These findings are particularly significant in the post/colonial context depicted in *The Drover's Wife*. The world described in the book is strongly marked by the extreme violence that the protagonist systematically faces because of her gender and origin. In this respect, for instance, the film opens with the arrival of the colonisers 'in her Majesty's service' aiming 'to uphold Her Majesty's law and administer the new legislations'. Purcell's work provides plenty of examples that witness this violence: 'The Crown versus Molly Johnson. An all-male jury. Miss Shirley's declaration of Molly's mixed-blood heritage'; 'By their own law the white men had the right to shoot any black on sight – to eradicate, or to disperse, the heathen savages […]. We will disperse them. For Queen and country, we will prevail'; 'Maybe he would be better off dead? What kind of future does he have in a land where he and his people are treated like a stubborn stain on a white linen shirt?".[376] These quotations reveal the difficulty of telling one's own story when violence is systematically experienced. '[T]here is no one here who cares for her opinion. She's just a woman' – 'There is no one to hear, no one to confide in or to comfort her', Molly observes. 'No one, so why, bother? "Cryin' gets ya nowhere" is what her da always said'.[377] Confronted with this impossibility of telling – with no one to address, no one to hear – fear and anxiety can be seen as a critical mechanism for acknowledging trauma and witnessing one's struggles. At the end of the narrative, the characters are not seen as victims or prisoners of emotions beyond their control. Rather, emotions can be defined as privileged tools from which the truth can emerge. In other words, just as trauma is 'always the story of a wound that cries out', emotions can therefore be considered as clues, or precious pieces of information, that keep an accurate memory of the *not-knowing*, of what the character has consciously forgotten[378]. In a postcolonial world where victims are silenced, the negative emotions appear to be a direct link to the truth.

[376] Purcell 2019, pp.62,85.
[377] Purcell pp.10, 55.
[378] Caruth 1996.

The treatment of trauma, fear, and anxiety in Purcell's work constitutes a place of conciliation, agreement, and understanding between colonisers and the colonised. The growth of shared sympathy across the three adaptations is evident at the end of the film when Molly's death is mourned not only by her family but by the colonisers too, represented by the forward-thinking couple Nate and Louisa Clintoff. The representation of their sadness and support for Molly's cause mimics the similar feelings of empathy raised in the viewer, leading eventually to open a way to conciliation. Negative emotions in *The Drover's Wife*, then, form the critical path to acknowledging the truth, knowing another part of the story, and understanding and empathising with someone else's past, to create a different future.

5.5. A silenced truth

In Guelfenbein's *The Rest is Silence*[379], the attempt to keep the truth hidden is patent from the very beginning of the book. For instance, through the initiative of removing all the pictures of Tommy's mother, Soledad. Eliminating material evidence of her existence obeys the belief that the past can be covered up: "Inside I found countless photographs of Juan, from adolescence to young adulthood. His travels, his friends, the sports he played, his metamorphoses. It wasn't the images in the photos that would remain etched in my memory, however, but rather the white spaces in between, spaces from which dozens of photographs have been removed".[380] This fragment highlights the strong will to keep the truth hidden by acting as if the deceased had never lived, erasing all the memories of her and imposing a silence around her death. In such a hermetic context, asking questions about the past and trying to know the truth appears to be a major difficulty.

The previous point also implies that Tommy's family members seem to believe that hiding the past will stop the truth from being known: "Don Fernando twirled his silver-shanked cane in the air and said that the Earth was round before Columbus but that men had lived

[379] Only reviews can be found regarding *The Rest is Silence*.
[380] Guelfenbein 2011, p.14.

perfectly well thinking it was flat until then. His little parable baffled me. Was he implying that even if I did have Jewish blood, I could carry on perfectly well as I was as long as I didn't know about it?".[381] Through this quote, it seems that truth does not seem important and rather is kept covered under lies. Furthermore, it seems - to the ones who know it - that truth can only be discovered if it is told and that the past can easily be kept secret.

The strategy of silencing the truth echoes the character's own censorship mechanisms: "Later, when Juan joined us, I didn't mention that I'd seen the photo album. I still haven't, not even to this day. Maybe I'm afraid of discovering something painful, something that would come between us".[382] This passage implies that Alma, Tommy's stepmother, prefers to avoid a truth that could make her reality – or at least her marriage – fall apart. Avoiding the truth appears to be a recurring defence mechanism in this protagonist's life. Indeed, since her childhood, withdrawing into her own imaginary world seems to be the only way to cope with the painful and unbearable reality of parental neglect coupled with precarious living conditions: "Until I was sixteen years old, I imagined the world as an empty house filled with water, a building of some kind rising as if out of the ocean floor, its blinds drawn, surrounded by melancholy. In one of the rooms, hidden from the light and everybody's sight, lived a fish. I was that fish".[383] Through her imagination, she creates a place where she can escape to - where she can hide – behind the blinds. The water seems to bring her comfort and safety and to keep her away from the surrounding melancholy. This fictional creation answers the need to be protected from the unsafe environment she lives in:

> This didn't prevent Maná from coming home every afternoon with new friends or staying up with them until late all hours of the night, playing the guitar, listening to music, and smoking pot. I would close my bedroom door, enter my house of water, and go to sleep. It wasn't hard for me. Inside there, neither the smoke or Maná's lovers

[381] Guelfenbein 2011, p.14.
[382] Guelfenbein 2011, p.14.
[383] Guelfenbein 2011, p.25.

could touch me. Sometimes I was deeply submerged in my house that when somebody spoke to me, I couldn't understand their words.[384]

This quote permits the understanding of how this defence mechanism is put into place each time the character perceives a threat or feels hurt during her childhood. The only safe space that Alma could find was in her own mind – through the fantasies she imagines. It could be thought that escaping from reality when it gets too painful to face - by withdrawing into a fantasy world - is a defence mechanism left in the past. However, as a young adult, the protagonist acknowledges that "everything in my life had come to a standstill, everything except the implacable and secretive construction of my house of water",[385] which demonstrates that this mechanism still operates in her adulthood.

Throughout her life, the house of water that she mentally created during her childhood might sometimes take other forms, but the act of withdrawing from suffering - once uncomfortable emotions are triggered - remains constant. For example, when her marriage crumbles, she decides to temporarily abandon everything to start a parallel relationship with Leo, leaving her daughter Lola and Tommy behind: "Instead of remaining hidden away in a dark and lonely place, my childhood house of water has now become transparent and it's floating above the city".[386] In this space – the apartment she rents with Leo - she seems to forget about her unsatisfactory existence outside of these walls and acts as if these painful circumstances did not exist, creating a parallel and fictional reality. Additionally, she also dismisses any reminder of the life she is trying to escape from and that threatens her fragile fantasy: "Her [daughter's] name carries with it a blast of reality that stuns me. That's how it happens. The sounds of certain words break the dams and sorrow pours in through the cracks"[387]. This proves that the protagonist – not only physically – but also mentally and

[384] Guelfenbein 2011, p.25.
[385] Guelfenbein 2011, p.55.
[386] Guelfenbein 2011, p.149.
[387] Guelfenbein 2011, p.133.

emotionally withdraws from reality. Not only the painful truth is avoided, but also its related unpleasant emotions that are not being dealt with.

Withdrawing into fantasy to protect oneself from the unbearable truth is a mechanism that is shared by all Guelfenbein's protagonists. Like Alma, her husband Juan has also created a space where he can momently escape from the traumatic past and its aftermaths: "Through the windshield of the cockpit the heads keep getting smaller […] From up here, everything becomes insignificant: Alma's grudges, Tommy's peculiar behaviour, my father and his little temper tantrums, my brothers and all their problems. Altitude – like the passage of time – emphasises the most pleasant parts of life".[388] Flying away therefore seems to represent an escape route for this character. The journey he takes on board his plane could be considered a metaphor for the distance he creates in his mind –how far he mentally runs from a traumatic past he has not processed. But the whole life of Juan Montes seems to be a loophole to run away from the past: "It was right after Tommy was diagnosed that I decided to specialise in cardiac surgery. There was always a problem to solve, a procedure to carry out, and more research to do. Somehow, my work, and my pragmatic nature, protected me from having to delve too deeply into my emotions".[389] His career constitutes a perfect excuse not to deal with his emotions and avoid them by being constantly busy.

Contrary to what one might think, Tommy's father is conscious of his struggle to deal with difficult emotions as he recognises his attempt to escape: "*To evade*: to take refuge in escape or avoidance. *To elude:* to avoid adroitly, especially an anticipated difficulty. To run away to escape. That's what I do when I start up the engines, press down on the accelerator, and a few minutes later lift the nose of the airplane off the ground".[390] Just like his wife, he withdraws from the traumatic reality once he feels the presence of a threat.

[388] Guelfenbein 2011, p.21.
[389] Guelfenbein 2011, p.22.
[390] Guelfenbein 2011, p.144.

Furthermore, flying away or being totally absorbed by his work - withdrawing physically and mentally - seems to be a way of protecting himself and others from the pain: "But what she doesn't know is that those grateful faces help me forget what an angry man I am, how I am full of guilt and pettiness. A pettiness I am afraid will spill out over everyone else".[391] No time or space is left for emotions too painful to be faced. Juan Montes creates a fictional world where he is able to keep things under control as he "never forget[s] that something unforeseen can happen at any moment".[392] It can be said that this character has created a life where is looked at as if he was "God",[393] a powerful entity able to save other people's lives through cardiac surgery to forget that he could not avoid the chronic disease of his child or his wife's death. He therefore seeks to create an illusion of control and omnipotence.

An alternative imaginary world also seems to be needed by the main protagonist of Guelfenbein's story to cope with the traumatic reality. Tommy Montes creates an imaginary friend called Kájef to ease his loneliness: "I stick my head under my blankets and go to meet Kájef. We ride through the rough surf in his canoe and stop in the middle of the ocean. The dark sky has a strange glow, as if it were being lit up by a gigantic spotlight. Kájef stands and stretches out his arms. I smile".[394] This fragment shows how the little boy seeks – in his imagination – the attention and protection he lacks in real life by imagining the friend he never had. Each time Tommy feels misunderstood or rejected, he looks for his imaginary friend: "Sometimes I know what it feels like to be unhappy, to wait for night-time so I can hide under the sheets, close my eyes, and escape forever to Kájef's barge".[395]

All the characters – for many different reasons – seem unable to find someone able to receive and understand their narrative. It could be said that the text directly addresses the reader

[391] Guelfenbein 2011, p.149.
[392] Guelfenbein 2011, p.23.
[393] Guelfenbein 2011, p.149.
[394] Guelfenbein 2011, p.198.
[395] Guelfenbein 2011, p.12.

to witness and acknowledge the trauma that is being told through the book. The creation of an imaginary world- where they escape to - highlights the deep feeling of loneliness they share as they are unable to find any real comfort for themselves. This could be explained by the fact that all characters seem to be stuck in their own trauma that they are paradoxically trying to avoid.

5.6. Infernal cycle: When the past comes back

Characters withdraw into fantasy in order to avoid facing the traumatic reality. However, this process seems to be more complex. In this respect, it can be added that these fictional worlds permit to shine a light on what is precisely lacking in the real world, underlying the lies that surround the protagonists' lives. For instance, in her house of water, Tommy's stepmother finds the safety and the reassurance that her mother and – later – her husband cannot offer her while Juan embraces an illusion of control that makes him forget his incapacity to prevent his son's serious illness or the death of his wife. Finally, Tommy imaginarily reaches a feeling of acceptance, understanding, and love that he does not find in a world where he is rejected in every area of his life – either at school or within his family.

A kind of vicious circle seems to operate where past trauma is impossible to be faced and its avoidance only perpetuates emotions that the characters try in vain to escape from. However, it does not matter how hard they try, the voice of trauma seems to scream out and cannot be eternally avoided. Furthermore, the repetition of these emotions can be seen as the voice of trauma itself seeking to be known – as it has been previously mentioned.

Independently of the characters' will, similar emotions are recurringly triggered through different situations. Regarding Alma's case, her husband's absence and his neglect awakened well-known feelings like the ones experienced during her childhood. Juan himself experiences the same feelings of impotence and hopelessness he once lived with Tommy's mother when he is confronted with his son's behaviour. And, finally, the young child experiences similar feelings of rejection within his extended family where he is seen as an

"insignificant bug"[396] by his cousins or in the relationship he has with his father: "Papa is embarrassed by me; he's ashamed of my body, that I don't play soccer, that I'm afraid of closed spaces, that I do things he thinks are stupid."[397] The protagonist does not feel accepted for who he is and he feels rejected for not being able to reach other people's expectations. Similarly, in a school context, he is also seen as a failure, does not have friends and is regularly bullied. Once again, Tommy does not feel safe talking about the problem he is facing at school: "If I tell Papa or a teacher at school, it will only make things worse. They'd accuse me of being a tattletale. Anyway, you can't force a kid to like another kid".[398]

Additionally, in Tommy's case, it also seems that, without knowing it, he experiences the same feelings of rejection and unwantedness his mother previously faced. This fact is later guessed by the protagonist once the truth starts to emerge: "I think Mama must have felt sad or angry for a moment, like I do now, and before she could regret what she was doing, she was dead".[399] While this repetition of traumatic situations and circumstances can be seen as a fatality or a burden, it could also be considered as the trauma seeking to be known, acknowledged and resolved through these repetitions. This contradicts the characters' view that truth can be covered up by lies and silences.

Furthermore, the protagonists also seem to subconsciously reproduce patterns of behaviour they have previously witnessed. For instance, Juan's attitude towards his son echoes in a certain way his own father's. He seems incapable of listening to his son and he invalidates his narrative, reproducing a scheme that has been started by his own father. In the same way, Alma claims her desire to become the antithesis of her mother ("and I was resolved to never be like my mother"[400]). However, she is deeply disappointed in herself towards the end of the

[396] Guelfenbein 2011, p.193.
[397] Guelfenbein 2011, p.203.
[398] Guelfenbein 2011, p.45.
[399] Guelfenbein 2011, p.116.
[400] Guelfenbein 2011, p.56.

story as she feels that she has "ruined everything"[401] by adopting a behaviour that reminds her of that of her mother as she feels guilty to have neglected Tommy to escape with Leo.

A hidden principle – escaping the character's will and consciousness, seems to rule their lives through the different experiences they (re)live, the actions they subconsciously take and through a series of unstoppable repetitions. An explanation that permits us to understand this phenomenon is brought by Alma:

> Maybe Juan and I, without knowing it, are trapped with what Maná called 'our legacies', those things we bring from our families, things we don't actually choose. We cling to them, or pieces of them, even though they hurt us, and they define our lives to such an enormous extent that we prefer not to look at them squarely.[402]

This explanation confirms the hypothesis that the characters are trapped in schemes that are beyond their power or their will. The protagonists seem to be sentenced to reproduce certain patterns and to re-experience recurring unpleasant emotions or situations. This situation is also present in other books. For instance, it has been said Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* and Grenville's *The Secret River* also introduce characters who are stuck in repetitive traumatic schemes.

Regarding the treatment of these "negative emotions", the main difference between Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* and Guelfenbein's *The Rest is Silence* lies in the way in which characters address them. In the first case, it has been previously shown how Purcell's protagonists try to make sense of the intrusive recurring thoughts they experience and how this type of emotion constitutes a driving force for Molly Johnson that always leads her to seek for safety of her children. By contrast, in Guelfenbein's novel, while these emotions are omnipresent, the characters avoid feeling them– as much as they can – by withdrawing into a parallel reality in order to soothe the pain and to forget about the traumatic reality they live in.

[401] Guelfenbein 2011, p.245.
[402] Guelfenbein 2011, p.252.

5.7. Breaking the cycle: The power of truth

Despite the external silencing and the inner censorship of the different characters, the voice of trauma finds a way to be heard in the form of an accident or a coincidence – that will permit it to break the infernal cycle of repetitions. Like in Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* where the female protagonist subconsciously knew the danger that was threatening her children through a constant and diffuse feeling of anxiety, Guelfenbein's main character intuitively senses that the words of adults cannot be trusted. Indeed, from a very young age, this thought made him keep accurate records of their conversations – and his own – as he is highly suspicious.

This behaviour of obsessively observing and recording adults might come from the inner knowing of past trauma. In this respect, psychiatrist Serge Tisseron permits us to better understand this phenomenon in the context of family secrets as "such secrets have grown around the traumatic experiences of one or more generations […] The memory of these events tends not to be given a verbal expression, but it is instead partially symbolised in gestures and attitudes. These partial symbolisations can manifest themselves among parents as silences or enigmatic words, facial expressions, spontaneous cries or mutterings or even rages – all totally incomprehensible to children".[403] This theoretical point permits us to explain how Tommy Montes knew some secret was hidden and yet to be discovered. His constant suspicious and observation of adults were the most visible symptoms of the inner knowing of the hidden truth. Furthermore, the silences of his father are mentioned: "When Papa doesn't say anything, it's like somebody just turned off the light and everybody is standing around in the dark, lost in their own corners. That's why Papa's silences are black. White silences are different; they're full of light".[404] The child also expresses that "Papa and I hardly talk to each other".[405] Both fragments shine a light on Juan's silences that remain a mystery and a source of unsafety for Tommy who tries to unravel the mystery behind them.

[403] Tisseron 2002, p.171.
[404] Guelfenbein 2011, p.58.
[405] Guelfenbein 2011, p.42.

Also, “the net result of this situation is that children will be confronted by major difficulties without knowing how to address them. Children closely observe their parents and other family members, and they will witness parents demonstrating emotions and expressions related to a very powerful past experience without being able to understand the nature of these feelings from the past; their present relevance will be even more of a mystery”.[406] This allows the understanding of Tommy’s will to make sense of a mystery he can sense through obsessive recordings and analysis of the strange behaviours he observes. Also, in such a context, “a child can imagine that he is the cause of the suffering that he detects in his parents and can develop a feeling of culpability”.[407] It can be observed that Tommy is prone to feel guilty for other people’s behaviour. For instance, he blames himself for his mother’s suicide once he discovers the truth: “If Mama killed herself, it’s because she didn’t love me”[408] or when Alma and Juan were fighting: “Papa and Alma are still mad at each other, and it’s all my fault”.[409]. His feeling of guilt is coupled with a deep feeling of shame, especially regarding his weak body. Tommy feels ashamed to be different and unable to meet other people’s expectations.

His first impression that something is wrong and that words can lie will be confirmed by what the protagonist hears – when he is sitting under a table at his cousin’s wedding, recording the conversation of some adults: “Even though they’re all talking over each other and it’ll be hard to get anything worthwhile, I turn on my MP3 player and voice recorder and start recording”.[410] “That’s what they told everyone to avoid a scandal, but Soledad committed suicide. I know it for a fact”.[411] This discovery – under the shape of a coincidence – can be considered as the voice of trauma finding unsuspected ways to be known as it will lead to the truth about Tommy’s real origin and religion. A trauma that was already addressing the

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[406] Tisseron, S. (2002). ‘The weight of the family secret *»’. Queen’s Quarterly 109*(2), pp.171. https://www.proquest.com/docview/233298200?pq-origsite=primo/7D262AD73BE444C3PQ/1?accountid=14723&_oafollow=false&sourcetype=Magazines.
[407] Tisseron 2002, p.172.
[408] Guelfenbein 2011, p.11.
[409] Guelfenbein 2011, p.103.
[410] Guelfenbein 2011, p.7.
[411] Guelfenbein 2011, p.11.

different characters through their subconscious behaviours or their silences, through their constant running from the past or the recurring unpleasant emotions they try to avoid.

Tommy's discovery of the truth about his mother's death coincides with the apogee of his feelings of loneliness and rejection. The marriage between his father and Alma is falling apart, under the weight of repetitive fights, and both characters try to escape the family house. Tommy therefore feels abandoned with his overwhelming feelings that nobody is able to recognise as the protagonist is not listened to. Communication with his father Juan seems impossible: "I've never told him that I hate that word 'champion'. Champion of what? It's like he's talking to some other child, like he doesn't see me".[412] It seems that the father cannot see his son out of the expectations he has put on him and never really gets to know him. Juan constantly invalidates his son's feelings and what he is trying to express. Not only does Tommy feel deeply misunderstood by his father, but also Alma begins to act distant and leave Tommy behind while she is trying to escape from her unhappy marriage: "That woman is a different Alma and I don't know her".[413] Not to mention the persistent bullying met at school.

However, from his primary discovery about his mother's suicide and his following investigation, the child's attitude regarding the painful reality gradually starts to evolve – but also his whole personality. His emotional state positively evolves across his discoveries no matter how painful they are. Despite the immense pain, the discovery of the truth brings appeasement and quietness to the young Tommy. His discoveries are methodologically organised, and the narration offers detailed descriptions of the emotions felt by the protagonist along with his investigation towards the truth. Facing the truth appears empowering.

In his metamorphose, the role played by emotions that could be defined as "positive" deserves to be mentioned. In other words, the gradual discovery of the truth is accompanied by increased emotions of peace, relief, and happiness as he finally accepts himself. Truth allows

[412] Guelfenbein 2011, p.201.
[413] Guelfenbein 2011, p.235.

the young character to feel empowered as he finds in his true origin the acceptance he was struggling to obtain.

It can therefore be said that these "positive" emotions seem to be a sort of compass that helps the character to navigate through the discoveries he makes. This is especially true in a context where truth is hidden and denied, and where the 12-year-old boy is repeatedly addressing adults who are truly unable to receive his address. The increasing relief he feels during his investigation gives him the strength and the motivation to keep researching. He is not a weak and fearful child anymore, but he finds the necessary strength to conduct his investigation despite his heart condition. In this respect, while the role played by the so-called "negative emotions" such as trauma, fear, and anxiety constitute useful tools that permit the emergence of the truth, it has also been demonstrated that "positive emotions signal flourishing. But this is not the whole story: Positive emotions also produce flourishing. Moreover, they do so not simply within the present, pleasant moment but over the long term as well. The take-home message is that positive emotions are worth cultivating, not just as end states in themselves but also as a means to achieving psychological growth and improved well-being over time".[414] Regarding Guelfenbein's protagonist, it can be said that the emotions of relief and quietness he gradually feels lead him on the path to truth and healing. They allow him to intuitively understand that truth can be empowering. But also, the relief and acceptance he feels make him realise that he is going down the right track as the initial shame and self-hatred he used to feel is slowly vanishing. Furthermore, these newly experienced emotions of acceptance and relief fundamentally differ from the rejection and marginalisation he used to experiment with before.

The old version of the week and fragile Tommy – incapable of standing up for himself – disappears and gives way to a renewed and unrecognizable version of the little boy who

[414] Fredrickson, B. (2001). 'The Role of Posittive Emotions in Positive Psychology'. The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *The American Psychologist 56*(3), p.218. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.218 .

fearlessly confronts the adults: "I also want to tell you that I have a friend called Sarah. She is Jewish".[415] Being able to face and accept the face gives Tommy the strength that the other characters lack. The feeling of shame he has always felt for not fitting in disappears, and he starts to be proud of who he really is. His investigation – divided into ten discoveries –not only led to the truth regarding his mother's death and his Jewishness but also led him to a feeling of acceptance and self-love.

Indeed, the discovery of his hidden origin permits him to understand the feeling of shame and inadequacy he felt all along: "Sixth discovery: Mama's grandfather, my great grandfather, hid the fact that he was Jewish so he could be accepted in society".[416] It seems that he has always been trying to fit in a society – and blaming himself for not being able to – while he subconsciously knew he did not belong there. In this respect, it can be said that the Jewish origin is the secret that has been kept hidden across the generations that the discovery of Tommy's mother's suicide permits to reveal. Tommy's invasive impression of being different and not accepted by his peers finds an explanation in the discovery of his Jewishness.

Regarding this secret, it can be said that it represents a "transgenerational haunting"[417] that permits to explain Tommy's behaviours and emotions that can be "traced to a secret kept by a family member in another generation".[418] According to Abraham and Torok, trauma is something that cannot be metabolised. Thus, trauma becomes "dissociated from the experienced self".[419] However, its presence is perceptible through "a "something" that gives rise to inexplicable feelings and sometimes to psychic and somatic symptoms".[420] Abraham and Torok name this phenomenon a "psychic phantom"[421], which "can be transgenerationally

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[415] Guelfenbein 2011, p.178.
[416] Guelfenbein 2011, p.232.
[417] Rashkin, E. (2014). *Family Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Narrative*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.22.
[418] Rashkin 2014, p.22.
[419]Yassa, M. (2013). 'Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok—the inner crypt'. *The Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review*, *25*(2), p.83. https://doi.org/10.1080/00111619.2010.500315.
[420] Yassa 2013, p.83.
[421] Yassa 2013, p.83.

transmitted" in the context of family secrets whose effects are powerful.[422] Indeed, "in the first generation, the secret is something that must never be revealed, unspeakable because of the pain and shame it would evoke. In the next generation, it becomes unmentionable, since the bearer derives its intuitive existence, but is ignorant as to its context. For the third generation, it finally becomes unthinkable, something that exists, albeit in no way mentally accessible".[423] This permits us to understand Tommy's emotions related to a trauma he is not aware of – emotions he is thus incapable of linking to a specific cause or event.

Embracing and reconnecting with this truth will allow the protagonist to heal and – as in Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* – to break the circle of repetitions by discovering a feeling of acceptance. A significant example of this acceptance lies in the meeting with another character called Mr. Milowsky, a Jewish man who knew Tommy's mother. The young protagonist goes to visit him and, by lighting the Shabbat candles together, feels included in this ritual. With the old man, Tommy dares to express himself and ask for the information that he cannot ask for within his family circle. He also gets marks of affection from Mr. Milowsky: "For a twelve-year-old boy, you are very perspicacious".[424]

Through these "positive" emotions, a new pattern is created by Guelfenbein's protagonist, that totally differs from the infernal cycle of repetitions. From his first to his tenth discovery, a strong pull towards the truth leads Tommy and pushes him to go forward, progressively leaving the past behind while he embraces a new reality as a new vision of himself. Moving forward is materially and physically represented – by his recollection of the tenth discoveries – but also by his own journeys to know the truth during his investigation. He is not turning in circles anymore, or going back and forth between reality and imagination, but literally moving towards the truth. In the book, this is metaphorized by the travels he starts to discover the past "Aunt Corina's house isn't far away. Once, I went there with Yerfa. We took

[422] Yassa 2013, p.83.
[423] Yassa 2013, p.83.
[424] Guelfenbein 2011, p.171.

a bus and got off at the stop in front of the shopping mall. I remember the way perfectly and all I do is retrace our steps. When I'm finally on the sidewalk in front of Corina's house, I can't believe what I have accomplished. Too bad Lola, or my classmates, or Papa can't see me now".[425]

His desire to know makes him reach great achievements considering his heart condition and permits him to turn his chronic shame into pride. The idea of movement is implied in this extract: the discovery of the truth seems to be gradual and linear just like his journeys to the places where bits of the truth are discovered. A significant example is Tommy's visit to Aguas Claras hospital where his mother died:

> When I ride my bicycle, the wind blows against my face and arms like a million feathers. *Don't run, don't jump, don't get excited, don't move*. I go down a deserted street. The pavement's smooth surface offers no resistance, like water. *Take your watch, check your heart rate, don't go too far away.* I go full speed downhill. You can't do that – be careful! I'm free, I tell myself. Even though I've heard the word "freedom" many times, I don't really know what it means. I know that normal children think they're invincible, so could this be how they feel?[426]

In Guelfenbein's novel, the truth's discovery seems to be represented as a linear process – that could be assimilated into a journey – from Tommy's total ignorance about his origins to the knowledge of his Jewishness. This journey is literally represented in the book as linear, and this progression permits us to break the cycle of repetitions. A similar pattern has also been observed in The Drover's Wife where the final journey towards the ancestral mountains allows to break the traumatic cycle and to reconnect with Indigenous knowledge.

This cycle is definitively broken by the death of Tommy – who was hit by a wave while he was walking down a hill: "The sea is very rough; the waves are getting higher, stronger […]

[425] Guelfenbein 2011, p.124.
[426] Guelfenbein 2011, p.138.

I see the impact, the twisted iron over my head, Mama's bleeding face; I hear a shout; I see my heart beating faintly under my ribs[…] All of that is inside me; all of that is me[427]". While Tommy's death could be interpreted as history repeating itself – as a suicide disguised as an accident after the discovery of a traumatic truth, the calm as the feeling of completeness felt and expressed by Tommy before his death permits him to understand this tragedy differently. This idea is previously implied by Tommy himself: "night approaches, and an almost invisible piece of the moon appears from behind the clouds. I know that the moon in front of us is full; we just can't see all of it. That's what happens with most things. We only see one part".[428]

Indeed, this tragic event will force the other protagonists to instantly come back to reality and face their most painful emotions. No avoidance is possible anymore. Tommy's death means the end of Alma's long-lasting defence mechanisms: "And then it happens. The house of water implodes. I no longer have anywhere to hide. I break out in tears, my body heaving convulsively. I fold in two and bury my head in my hands".[429] This is also materially represented: "The vanishing afternoon has the same texture as the glass house: a fictitious world suspended in time, a world I no longer belong to".[430] Alma is now forced to face a reality she cannot escape from anymore. Simultaneously, she acknowledges that she must finally face her past to create a different future:

> I am struck by the suspicion that I'd be running away from something I would soon find again. The crisis I'm facing goes back a long way, to issues I've tried to hide or push aside to avoid confronting them. I've been wanting to escape, and there's nothing wrong with that, but I guess that perhaps that would only lead me further into my fantasies, my detachment, my silence.[431]

[427] Guelfenbein 2011, p.215.
[428] Guelfenbein 2011, p.30.
[429] Guelfenbein 2011, p.245.
[430] Guelfenbein 2011, p.254.
[431] Guelfenbein 2011, p.236.

Alma recognises the circular nature of trauma repeating itself as the crisis comes from a long time before Tommy's death and refers to an issue she has been constantly avoiding. All the elements she was trying to forget suddenly came back to her mind: "It's strange that until a few hours ago I couldn't see any of this, but now I can picture my present life so clearly. Tommy, Juan, Lola: I see their faces so amazingly real, down to the last detail, and the spaces I've tried to leave blank in my imagination begin to fill up with powerful, vibrant emotion".[432]

Similarly, Juan is forced to face the truth when he finds Tommy's records in his desk where he exposes all his discoveries. The death of his son does not make him run away on board his plane towards his work – but rather permits him to reestablish communication with his wife Alma. In this respect, right after the announcement of Tommy's death, Juan expresses that "Tommy is dead. He's dead... and that makes absolutely no sense".[433] The tragedy somehow becomes meaningful for the father who confesses to Alma what for him could be the purpose of Tommy's death: "You are the thread Tommy left for me to go out of the labyrinth, because I can't do it alone".[434] Tommy's father seems to simultaneously acknowledge that he was stuck in the spiral of trauma that he associates with a labyrinth and that Tommy's purpose was to help his father find a way out of this labyrinth, to break the traumatic cycle. In this respect, the image of the thread seems to represent the linear movement orientated towards the future that symbolises the exit of the traumatic circle in which the characters are trapped. In this respect, the role of the tragedy can be further studied. In Aristotle's definition of tragedy, "it would seem [...] to mean that tragedy arouses emotion, but by doing so frees us from emotions, perhaps excessive or damaging ones, which are the same as or similar to those aroused".[435] The philosopher uses the Greek term "catharsis" which has been translated into English as "purgation or purification" of such emotions. In Guelfenbein's novel, Tommy's

[432] Guelfenbein 2011, p.236.
[433] Guelfenbein 2011, p.243.
[434] Guelfenbein 2011, pp.258-259.
[435] Mason, A. (2009). *Ancient Aesthetics*. *L*ondon: Routledge Taylor & Francis, p.87.

death can be seen as a tragedy that permits the catharsis of the other characters' emotions by freeing emotions that were repressed for a long time. His death forces them to feel the overwhelming and unbearable emotions they are avoiding by withdrawing into their imaginary worlds. Their defence mechanisms do not work anymore and cannot protect them from the incommensurable pain triggered by Tommy's death. This tragic event appears as a way to experience these emotions that are exacerbated in order to process them.

Additionally, Juan's words find an echo in Alma's thought: "I think again of the snake who, after squeezing through the sharp rocks to peel off its skin, finds that the sores are still there. How could I not have realised this sooner: That healing isn't a solitary exercise? We need other people. I see it so clearly now. I feel like shouting it out".[436] Like Juan, his wife seems to detect Tommy's will to create a different future.

In Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* and in Guelfenbein's T*he Rest is Silence*, a cycle of repetitions is broken when the traumatic past – that was still ruling the present – is acknowledged. In both books, embracing the truth also permits the creation of a different future as the actions taken by the main protagonists permit the writing of a different history in which reconnexion with one's origin is fundamental. The theme of origin will be further analysed in Chapter 7 to show how resilience and trauma recovery pass through the reconnexion with an origin that is previous to trauma. Within the corpus, some characters manage to reconcile with an anterior version of themselves that is not solely based on trauma.

[436] Guelfenbein 2011, p.252.

CHAPTER 6: *FAMILY SKELETON* AND *THE TOUCH SYSTEM:* ENTANGLED TEMPORALITIES

> Do not imagine that Margaret headed her section of The Book of Revelation with Edmund's sayings. No, that was all the work of the skeleton in the wardrobe.[437]

> When she wakes up, Ania tries to remember details of her dream, but someone else's handwriting has scribbled over the images and she finds nothing.[438]

This chapter aims to analyse the representation of the temporality of trauma by the use that is made of fiction in *Family Skeleton* and *The Touch System*. Firstly, the capacity of fiction to trigger subconscious and repressed memories will be discussed. The notions of fiction and reality will be challenged. Then, drawing on these previous research studies on temporality, the second part will further study the way in which trauma manifests in the characters' lives. In this respect, it can be argued that literature plays a double role. While fiction illustrates the discontinuity of a time that appears to be non-linear and non-monodirectional, it also shows the caesura that can be observed between the temporality of trauma – mimicked by fictive time in the novels – and the specific temporality of everyday life. Therefrom, the traumatic temporality will be analysed making use of Julia Kristeva's conceptualisation of Women's Time in contrast with "the linear time of history".[439] This point will introduce possible ways of undoing the "shattered assumptions" or trauma-bound associations.

Both Bird's *Family Skeleton* and Costamagna's *The Touch System* stage a story within the story, a narrative that slips between the gaps of the protagonists' consciousness. Within these novels, the murmur of trauma is not only voiced but also highlighted through their

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[437] Bird 2016, p.2.
[438] Costamagna , 2021 p.96.
[439] Apter, E. (2010). 'Women's Time' in Theory'. *Differences 21*(1), p.3. https://read.dukeupress.edu/differences/article/21/1/1/97681/Women-s-Ti.me-in-Theory.

specific structure. In both books, the literary mechanisms put in place by the authors depict a time divided between two distinct temporalities. The structure of the books includes and alternates different voices, stories, and timelines allowing a better understanding of the temporality of trauma. The literary text transcends the limits of chronological time, moves freely through the characters' minds, superimposes narratives, and mixes dreams and material reality. This freedom offered by fiction informs us about the complex functioning of trauma that seems to escape a conscious and logical understanding.

In Bird's novel, while the protagonist Margaret O'Day writes the story of her life, the skeleton hidden in the cupboard holds the pen and tells a completely different narrative. He actually offers an alternative version of Margaret's story. The character's writing seems to be a collection of doubts and interrogations: "How was my life changed by meeting Edmund? Was he my defining moment? I suppose he was […] Was our marriage made in heaven? What does that really mean".[440] It thus appears that the confused protagonist seeks answers through writing. In this respect, her memoir appears as a tool whose purpose is to make sense of her past. Contrasting with Margaret's uncertainty, the skeleton only speaks up to subtly answer her questions and to give the reader allusive clues. The protagonist does not completely know the past she tries to make sense of it through her memoir which is filled with questions. In contrast, the skeleton is the one who knows: "And I'm not in the history anyway. I know and I tell, but I don't act, being the skeleton in the wardrobe, you understand".[441] The skeleton in the cupboard can be considered as a metaphor for the trauma hidden in the character's subconscious seeking to be known that directly addresses both the protagonist and the reader. It comes to represent Margaret's subconscious knowing that rules her actions and thoughts. Not only Margaret's narrative is not linear as past and present are alternating, but the narratives of both characters overlap throughout the book.

[440] Bird 2016, p.58.
[441] Bird 2016, p.85.

Similarly, in Costamagna's book, the present cannot be understood without the past. *The Touch System* also introduces a character lost in her thoughts, full of uncertainties, trying to make sense of her life that she wants to escape. The primary plot is quite simple. The novel tells the story of Ania – an unhappy teacher and house sitter who travels from Chile to Argentina to attend the funeral of her father's cousin, Agustin. The plot does not especially appear as eventful and full of turns. The main part of the story is revealed through dreams, thoughts, memories, and allusions to the past. The protagonist's travel to the other side of the Andes will awaken the past of her ancestors that strangely echoes in her present. Moving freely through time and through places, alternating between dream and reality, switching between memories and present time, the truth emerges in bits and pieces. Fragmented elements are revealed and progressively puzzled together by the character who discovers the truth at the same pace as the reader. Like Bird's *Family Skeleton* where Margaret's life story is told in a linear way, from her birth to her death, Costamagna's *The Touch System* narrates a time-limited travel. However, during the protagonist's stay in Campana another story takes over in which Ania could be considered as a medium for past trauma to be acknowledged. During this period of time, her own story becomes secondary as the focus is placed on the family's previous generations. While the skeleton guides Margaret's writing, the traumatic past of the great-aunt Nélida is told through Ania's narrative. Indeed, both stories overlap as suggested in the preliminary quote of the novel: "And what monsters our ancestors, nothing but stories that drive children crazy[442]", which underlines the impact of the past within the present. This quote also foresees that the knot of history is the intergenerational trauma that is given a voice.

Literature, through its fictional processes, mimics the deeply complex functioning of trauma. Its capacity to simultaneously represent the characters' inner and outside world permits us to materialise the subconscious and hardly attainable mechanisms of trauma. Thus, literature gives some tangibility to this invisible reality. The literary work appears as a key device for the

[442] Costamagna 2021, p.9.

study of subconscious trauma. In Kristeva's words, literature is "perhaps a place – a space – where new borders between what can and cannot be said can find the *time* to form[443]", where what is known and unknown might find an expression.

Within these novels, fiction introduces a second story within the story. Fictional elements, such as the skeleton in Bird's novel or the structuring presence of dreams and literary works in Costamagna's, are precisely what comes to break the linear course of history to present an alternative temporality. This non-linear temporality echoes Bachelard's concept of a "discontinuous, ruptured temporality".[444] In other words, the philosopher evokes "a time marked by a dialectic of presence and absence, breaks and flows [that] does not simply provide the backdrop of human creative action, but flows from it".[445] Furthermore, "Bachelard's time is a "fictive temporality", a product of human imagination".[446] Fictional elements in both novels break the flow of linear temporality where past, present, and future succeed one another, blurring temporal boundaries and creating a time outside of the time. In this respect, Bachelard opposes Bergson's concept of duration which "involves a flow, a river of time, marked by the constant interpretation of moments".[447] To Bachelard, "Bergson's *durée* [appears] as an affirmative philosophy where there is no emptiness, negation or void, simply a continuous becoming"[448] and he "objects that this sense of continuous flow between present and past does not allow the present to create anything, as this requires a break, a negation"[449] as "any real human evolution is marked by instants of creation, which creates temporal breaks".[450] In *Family Skeleton* and in *The Touch System*, these temporal breaks – that discontinue the linear time of narration – are allowed by fiction. And, within this alternative temporality, memories

[443] Jardine, A (1981). 'Introduction to Julia Kristeva's *Women's Time*'. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *7*(1), p.12. https://doi.org/10.1086/493854.
[444] Russell, C. (2005). 'Fictive Time – Bachelard on Memory, Duration and Consciousness'. *KronoScope: Journal for the Study of Time*, *5*(1), p.4. https://doi.org/10.1163/1568524054005258.
[445] Conrad 2005, p.4.
[446] Conrad 2005, p.4.
[447] Conrad 2005, p.4.
[448] Conrad 2005, p.5.
[449] Conard 2005, p.4.
[450] Conrad 2005, p.5.

of subconscious trauma and fragments of the truth find a place to arise. Gaston Bachelard sees a "sense of closure"[451] in continuity that is undermined by these temporal breaks. Time can thus be seen as "an old conundrum. It appears objective, never more so than in the sequence of events called history; and yet, it is the ineluctable companion of subjectivity".[452]

Previous research studies have focused on the temporality of trauma, arguing that "traumatic experiences generate a disruption in the person's identity and sense of reality, which deeply involves the dimension of time".[453] In other words, "from a phenomenological and existential perspective, past, present, and future each tends to transcend itself',[454] which means that "different temporal dimensions tend to form an indissoluble unity, where distinct moments are inseparable and unified in a present continuous",[455] "this unity of temporality is disrupted in traumatic experience, whereby the person is confined in a sort of timeless dimension".[456]

Thus, "trauma disrupts the common idea of linear temporality, which moves from past to present, and from present to future. Trauma points to a radical reconceptualization of the concept of life: life is lived forward but can be signified only retrospectively in the form of the après-coup".[457] The concept of "après-coup" refers to "Freud's early conceptualization of traumatic temporality",[458] where the traumatic time involves a double movement constituted by an original – or primal – shock that can somehow be "missed" by the victim and that is only experienced as traumatic belatedly through a later event that "catalyses a response of intense affective charge, only explicable by referring to the first event".[459] That is to say, "the original shock becomes consciously traumatic only in conjunction with a further, signifying occurrence,

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[451] Conrad 2005, p.6.
[452] Ferrell. R (1997). 'Julia Kristeva, in her analysis of the tides of feminism in her paper "Women's Time"', *Australian Feminist Studies, 12*(26), p.195. 10.1080/08164649.1997.9994858.
[453] Bochicchio, V., Mezzalira, S., Santoro, G. and Schimmenti, A. (2023). 'Trauma and the disruption of temporal experience: A psychoanalytical and phenomenological perspective'. *American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 83*, p.37. https://doi.org/10.1057/s11231-023-09395-w.
[454] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.37.
[455] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.37.
[456] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.37.
[457] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.41.
[458] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.38.
[459] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.39.

and becomes a subjective experience only in the interaction with it".[460] This implies that "the original trauma is not present to conscious awareness as a temporal moment of self-narrative until subjectivity realises it in the symbolic realm of understanding. In this perspective, the first event appears to be engendered by a further, signifying moment, ripping off the linear, monodirectional conception of time".[461] Also, "trauma paralyses the individual in a timeless, alien world, where the temporal continuum is disaggregated into separate moments'.[462]

From a distinct perspective, it can be added that trauma has also been studied through the prism of queer temporalities. In this field, researcher Clementine Morrigan shares her own experience with the reader in the preamble of her article "Trauma Time: The Queer Temporalities of the Traumatized Mind"[463]:

> There is something very queer about the way I experience time. As a person living with complex trauma, I do not experience time as a straightforward, orderly procession from the past, through the present, through the future. The past rushes up on me with the urgency of the present. The future creeps out of crevices, leaking into the now. The future and past are intimately entwined, the present produced in their merging. Amnesia sucks up whole stories, leaving embodied feelings but no facts. Sections of time are uprooted and relocated into different chapters of my life. The present is disconnected, disoriented, unmapped.[464]

This theoretical point does not only echo the representation of time in *Family Skeleton* and *The Touch System* where linear time is altered by what could be called *fictive time*, but it also refers to the time represented in the other books of the corpus where the protagonists' intrusive thoughts and emotions challenge the linear understanding of time by bringing back the past into the present that is somehow cancelled by the fear of the future. Through a series of

[460] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.39.
[461] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santorno, Schimmenti 2023, p.43.
[462] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santorno, Schimmenti 2023, p.43.
[463] Morrigan, C. (2017). 'Trauma Time: The Queer Temporalities of the Traumatized Mind'. *Somatechnics*, *7* (1), p.50. 10.3366/soma.2017.0205.
[464] Morrigan 2017, p.50.

repetitions, trauma appears as an event that repeats itself, merging different temporalities together.

In this respect, the author provides some more of the characteristics of trauma's queer temporality. Firstly, she highlights the capacity of nightmares, flashbacks, and intrusive thoughts to "transform the past into a visceral present"[465] as their intensity "override[s] the present, replacing it with a past that seems far more real".[466] On the other hand, amnesia is also mentioned as a way "that trauma queers time"[467]: "Trauma can be remembered and forgotten simultaneously, through the body and also through structural dissociation".[468] Additionally, "hypervigilance and avoidance are a mapping of the past onto the present in order to avoid a particular future which could recreate a traumatic past".[469] Thus, "these are temporal practices which are about the past as much as the future, and yet they shape the present".[470] Finally, the ongoing disorientation in time is highlighted to exemplify the queerness of trauma time[471] as "trauma survivors often experience dissociation, derealisation, and depersonalisation, experiences which can feel like being 'outside' of time, and even reality".[472]

6.1. Reality/Fiction: Inverted paradigms

In *Zissou and Queenie and the coincidence: Personal essay on life and fiction*[473], Carmel Bird states that there is one way in which fiction and nonfiction differ: "nonfiction just is; but fiction is an illusion, a bit of a trick […] All [of] that [is] imagination".[474] Along with this statement, the storyteller of *Family Skeleton* introduces himself as a "fiction writer"[475] while the female protagonist, elderly Margaret, answers that she "wouldn't dream of writing fiction'[476] when

[465] Morrigan 2017, p.54.
[466] Morrigan 2017, p.55.
[467] Morrigan 2017, p.55.
[468] Morrigan 2017, p.55.
[469] Morrigan 2017, p.56.
[470] Morrigan 2017, p.56.
[471] Morrigan 2017, p.56.
[472] Morrigan 2017, p.56.
[473] Bird, C. (2016). 'Zissou and Queenie and the coincidence: Personal essay on life and fiction'. *Meanjin, 75*(4), pp.194 -197. https://search.informit.org/doi/epdf/10.3316/informit.637432390968619.
[474] Bird 2001, p.197.
[475] Bird 2016, p.2.
[476] Bird 2016, p.1.

her servant Lilian interrogates her about her project of writing: "So will it be truthful, the story you tell? The journal – or the memoir? Or do you plan to make it up?".[477] This seems to imply that Margaret O'Day expresses her intention to tell the truth about her life, which is also the purpose of a memoir contrary to fictional writings that – in Carmel Bird's words – are filled up with imagination. The skeleton's address to the reader at the very beginning of the book thus appears paradoxical: "Trust me, I'm a fiction writer – but that would be a bit silly, wouldn't it".[478] The reader might wonder how a fiction writer can be trusted. The skeleton might lack credibility when the story begins.

The skeleton somehow scrambles the tracks as the reader might assume that his narrative is a pure product of imagination that comes to bypass Margaret's life story which possesses the truth. However, throughout the novel, this tendency progressively reverses. This confusion seems to invite the reader to interrogate the concept of fiction. In this respect, "The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines "fictive", as opposed to "fictitious" (which implies falsehood) as "creating or created by imagination".[479] Thus, this definition stipulates that fiction does not necessarily represent the opposite of the truth as imagination is distinguished from falsehood. The reading of *Family Skeleton* raises questions regarding the veracity of both narratives as the border between fiction and nonfiction becomes tenuous. Furthermore, Carmel Bird is described as "fascinated with boundaries, the fine line between fact and fiction, the place where 'one thing ends and another begins".[480] Her "fondness for narrative for narrative complexity, for the second or even third-hand version of a story with no guarantee of authenticity".[481]

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[477] Bird 2016, p.1.
[478] Bird 2016, p.2.
[479] Pearsall, J. (2005). *Concise Oxford English Dictionary.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.525 in Conrad 2005, p.6.
[480] Walker, S. (2004). 'All The Way To Cape Grimm: Reflections on Carmel Bird's Fiction', *Australian Literary Studies*, *21*(3), p.266. 10.20314/als.9e6949c7ee.
[481] Walker 2004, p.265.

Through her memoir, Margaret O'Day tells the story of her life that seems to be set in stone. The protagonist places importance on things that could be qualified as countable and measurable, such as dates and genealogies. All the elements seem to perfectly fit together in an almost logical way. Her primary narrative seems linear, immutable, and fixed. This vision of the past is indeed claimed by the character: "This would be Doria's territory again, the unravelling of the connections. I hate the thought of her unravelling. The past is all knitted up to produce the present what can be gained by undoing it and twisting it all up again? I actually think I am a true romantic, that I wish for the unfathomable past to remain unfathomable". Margaret takes her whole memories for granted and does not seem to interrogate the past that appears as real, and truthful. Her vision of the past completely differs from the perception of the truth that originates from *The Rest is Silence* where it states that: *"*Images get delicately pieced together, then deposit themselves in memory, but they don't remain stable there; they continue to change along with the feelings that accompany them, until one day it becomes impossible to know how much truth they contain".[482] This quote suggests the idea that truth is not fully known and that the past seems unclear. By contrast, Bird's protagonist does not want her vision of the past to evolve.

Additionally, she allocates a great part of her journal to the description of the different branches of the family and to the relationship between its members that she classifies into distinct categories to navigate throughout the family's past. Plenty of quotes shine a light on these classifications: "My mother was with Auntie Iris, one of the nice fat ones",[483] "I sometimes remember with a jolt of surprise that my mother came from a family of methodists, and she converted when she married my father".[484] Different categories are created within the family, from where one cannot escape, which is amplified by the focus brought to the image of the family tree – a recurring pattern that is also highlighted by the skeleton: "You can see

[482] Guelfenbein 2011, p.37.
[483] Bird 2016, p.32.
[484] Bird 2016, p.35.

that the family tree is branching out quite nicely here, one way and another [...] Edmund and Margaret were in fact related. He came from the business side of the family, and she came from the more artistic and professional side".[485] The family introduced by both narrators seems to be based on categories, classifications, and characteristics that one cannot conflict with.

Furthermore, the protagonists' identities seem to be predefined by the side of the family where they were born: "He was a 'funeral' O'Day and she was a 'medical' O'Day - two areas of interest that are not so very far apart[486]". Through these quotes, it appears that the characters' identities depend on the previous family history that will rule their lives and behaviours. The female protagonist will prolong the tradition as she is expected to: "She was known as a philanthropist and patron of the arts, and people from the news media would sometimes come round with various recording devices and would then tell stories about her and her good works and her pretty family life in Toorak".[487] In the same way, her husband obeys to the precepts proper to his side of the family as "when his father died in 1968, Edmund took over the family funeral business and it never looked back. It had always been steady, but Edmund turned it, people said, into not just a business, but an art form[488]". There is a form of continuity through generations that aligns with the vertical image of the family tree. Additionally, after Edmund's death, "the sons took over the business, and things went on as usual".[489]

Additionally, the skeleton almost starts his narration with the description of these two branches within the family: "Pause here to look briefly at the two branches, to continue the tree metaphor, of the family. There were the Toorak O'Days, and the Eltham O'Days . The suburbs in which they lived and breathed, and their beings were statements also of the divide between them. Toorak is the grandest suburb of Melbourne. It's where the most powerful, most wealthy, most established families tend to congregate".[490] The skeleton also provides plenty of details

[485] Bird 2016, p.5.
[486] Bird 2016, p.5.
[487] Bird 2016, p.vii.
[488] Bird 2016, p.3.
[489] Bird 2016, p.16.
[490] Bird 2016, p.16.

about the observable reality: “Where the houses are spread, tall and solid and set in large grounds, where the streets are lined with handsome and sheltering trees, where security cameras have operated in every nook and cranny since time immemorial”.[491] Thus, the skeleton paints a portrait of the reality in which each element finds its place.

The reader might wonder why these numerous and prolix descriptions matter that much as they take the focus away from the main protagonist’s own history. Perhaps the dissimulated purpose of the storyteller is to first introduce a version of the story that appears unquestionable. The genealogy and the family history seem perfectly clear and almost geometrical. At the beginning of the story, his narrative matches Margaret’s words that look real. This also permits us to present what seems to be the only certainty in Margaret’s life, which is the love she feels towards her father.

Outside this certainty, the character is full of doubts and uncertainties she asks herself multiple questions. For instance, she doubts the authenticity of some of her memories: “So much of life is memory. That day under the willow tree in Tasmania frequently comes back to me in a lovely glow, and I wonder, was it so beautiful at the time? Or does distance lend it an artificial glamour? Have I half invented it?”.[492] Repeatedly addressing herself through her journal, Margaret not only doubts her own memories but also her own nature that she sometimes seems to ignore: “How well do I know myself and my own motives? I believe I try to do what is right and good, but do I? Do I? Silly Sissy Bagwell goes around imagining she is doing good. But am I so different from Sissy, after all? What a truly horrible thought”.[493]

The protagonist appears as a strongly alienated woman, crushed by overwhelming principles she must obey. The high expectations placed on her restrict her freedom and might explain the sense of anxiety that is visible through the writing in her journal. Her multiple interrogations and *not knowing* conveys this anxiety and give the impression of an elderly

[491] Bird 2016, p.16.
[492] Bird 2016, p.31.
[493] Bird 2016, p.41.

woman who is not at the helm of her life. The protagonist who writes her memoir is in sharp contrast to the version of herself she shows the world: "To an outsider looking in on Margaret as she sits or stands at a wise and careful distance from the window, with her field glasses, she might resemble a large, slender, quiet, spying, elegant moth […] Margaret is conscious of all this, is theatrical, and she half realises she might be at this moment a character in an obscure Celtic opera".[494] The character publicly appears as a strong and firm person who can almost seem intimidating. She manages to keep up appearances and she always controls herself. Only the writing of her memoir reveals the endless interrogations and agonising indecisions she struggles with. This suggests the idea that reality can be ambiguous.

However, the protagonist raises questions and concerns that she is not willing to address as she feels comfortable enclosed in the official and well-known vision of the family history. It can be said that she practices a form of self-censorship just like the characters in Guelfenbein's *The Rest is Silence*, which can be considered as one trick of her consciousness to protect herself from a hurtful truth: "I have lost touch with all of these people, but I sometimes think of them in the context of how the family tree branches and fans out to a kind of infinity. The idea makes me dizzy. I can't follow family trees very well for some reason; I find them complicated".[495] Margaret thus seems to find comfort within the frame of the known family branches. She also seems quite intolerant of what she cannot control and know. As it has been previously mentioned, she does not want to dig into the past or to try to undo the story.

In such a context, her constant interrogations might be considered as the voice of trauma hidden in her subconscious, interfering with her consciousness and seeking to be known. This *knowing* – personalised by the skeleton – manifests through her numerous thoughts and questions. By recurringly second-guessing herself, the protagonist cannot avoid questioning reality. Like in the other books, there is an inner knowing that something is inexplicable and

[494] Bird 2016, pp.52-53.
[495] Bird 2016, p.30.

that a truth is yet to be discovered. In half words, the skeleton also puts forward the idea that the truth is known on a subconscious level: "Sometimes Margaret talked to her reader. Sometimes this reader seemed to be part of herself, sometimes not. The journal ranged freely across the present and the past. It was a memoir of a conversation. Often she wrote with such detailed care that surely, she supposed there would one day be a reader, a stranger who required a certain amount of explanation about things".[496] Margaret's memoir can be analysed as a "conversation" between the conscious and the subconscious parts of herself, a dialogue where the *knowing* meets the *not-knowing* in the form of recurring thoughts about the past or feelings of anxiety and fear related to the secrets that the distant cousin Doria might discover. The recurring questions of the protagonists seem to be generated by the subconscious knowing of the past trying that keeps addressing her. In *Family Skeleton*, trauma is literally being given a voice through the fictional character of the storyteller. The skeleton – considered as a metaphor for this subconscious trauma – acknowledges this knowing that escapes Margaret's consciousness: "she isn't really such a great writer. I don't mind giving you bits and pieces, but I will need to interrupt from time to time since what Margaret knows is not necessarily as much as I know. Trust me, remember?".[497] The main protagonist's conscious knowledge is thus only partial and incomplete.

While she writes the story of her life, the subconscious trauma constantly takes over the narration. It brings it away from what seems to be important – from the principal events – to focus on what might seem completely secondary - or even irrelevant - to the story: "All the memories of those times at our house in Eltham glow with sunlight. Lovely rows of washing flap about on the clothesline. Everything smells of the sun. Moments in the past seem to light up in my memory like scenes from a film. They are not always important moments – sometimes I recall tiny flashes of things that seem to have very little real significance".[498] Memories from

[496] Bird 2016, p.21.
[497] Bird 2016, p.21.
[498] Bird 2016, pp.34-35.

the past arise in a discontinuous and non-chronological order just like Margaret's journal that moves freely between past and present. It looks like they come to break and disturb the course of the story. Some of these memories "seem to have very little real significance" and that almost seems unreal. It will be shown later how these blurry memories will deconstruct the O'Day family's "grand narrative" as they are echoes of the trauma addressing the protagonist.

Furthermore, the intergenerational transmission of trauma is also brought to the fore by the skeleton:

> Baby Ophelia Rose sleeps on. In the perfect little baptised package that she is, Ophelia Rose must surely contain somehow – this is me being a bit mystical – all the things that have ever happened to Margaret, as well as to all the other people mingling there in her sweet little bloodstream and psyche. Psyche. Did I say that? For now, let's see how Margaret is going with her rambling journal-writing.[499]

Through this fragment, the skeleton confirms the hypothesis of subconscious knowledge that is also passed through generations. A knowledge that is stronger and more persistent than the characters will, that is anterior, and that guides their psyche. This subconscious knowing contrasts with Margaret's uncertainty – with the conscious part of herself seeking answers. Also, this gives weight to the argument that the skeleton holding the pen and writing the story is a perfect metaphor for the subconscious trauma structuring the character's mind and dictating her actions.

Besides, the only unwavering certainty expressed by Margaret through her writing is her great love towards her father, Killian, due to his undoubtable "goodness".[500] "Plenty of quotes can be found within Bird's novel where this feeling is explained: "Back to memories of my father [...] Daddy was utterly dedicated to my mother, utterly faithful to her and to God and also to his parents. He was the very best kind of old-fashioned family doctor, the best kind of

[499] Bird 2016, p.56.
[500] Bird 2016, p.72.

old-fashioned father".[501] Furthermore, the following quote can also be read within Bird's novel: "My father is the hero of the story, as he was the hero of my life. Every single thing he did always seemed to me to be an example of his goodness".[502] Through the process of writing, the memories of Margaret's father keep coming back to her mind in an almost circular way. While the character's memories are unstable, the goodness of her father is the only component of her life she cannot doubt to the extent that the paternal figure constitutes the core of her identity:

> Whenever I consider my own practices of charity, my mind naturally flies back to my father who was, I think, a saint. He was a family doctor; I idolised him from the beginning, and I always will. It's a strange thing – but I have always felt that my father was more a part of me than my mother was; he was the genesis, without him I would not exist; he was completely bound up in my identity, in my core.[503]

Killian O'Day is thus described as the pillar of Margaret's life. It seems that her identity can only be defined in relation to this figure, to this example of virtue without which she does not exist. The character additionally declares that he is the spark that sets her going.[504] Such an insistence on her father's virtue throughout the book could potentially be analysed as an expression of the character's inner knowing that a mystery envelops his past. In this respect, a comparison can be drawn with Ferrada's *How to Order the Universe* where the protagonist's creation of a fantasy world has been interpreted as a defence mechanism to protect herself from the cruelty of the dictatorship. Only the words pronounced by the skeleton create the first fissures in Margaret's narrative: "Margaret's father was the local and beloved doctor (Keep an eye on that word 'beloved'.)"[505], keeping his promise of guiding, telling the reader where to look, and suggesting various ways of thinking about the things he sees. The revelations gradually brought by the skeleton will eventually totally undermine Margaret's narratives about

[501] Bird 2016, p.37.
[502] Bird 2016, p.72.
[503] Bird 2016, p.72.
[504] Bird 2016, p.69.
[505] Bird 2016, p.17.

her life, creating an alternative version of the truth in which she does not recognise herself. The discovery of her father's "cruellest act"[506] by abandoning his illegitimate daughter Ophelia and hiding her from the world deeply erodes Margaret's identity and leads to a loss of bearings.

With respect to the discovery of a hidden child, it can be added that "the motif of lost, stolen and abused children is a pervasive and significant element in all Bird's work. Also, the religious portrait that the character paints of her father as an example of virtue and his medical profession she always draws attention to can be interpreted as Bird's special interest in "the phenomenon of charisma: the rise of medical and religious charlatans, the mesmerising power they exert, and the terrible damage they cause. These are bad, mad people, and she offers no extenuation for their crimes".[507] Furthermore, "although Bird's narratives raise important social questions, their concerns are much more profound. Their narration – by means of the fantastic, the absurd, the Gothic – guarantees their compelling interest".[508] In this respect, the character of the skeleton can be seen as a Gothic element referring to the dark and hidden past of Margaret's family. It has been mentioned that a narrative of trauma can be seen as Gothic as it evokes threatening and frightening emotions. In Australian literature, Gothic features are often used to represent the dangers faced by the characters.

Researcher Gina Wisker argues that "like postcolonial gothic, of which to some extent it is an example, Australian Gothic cuts through the received, limited, but formal versions of histories, cartographies and lives. Postcolonial Gothic carries the guilt of the histories and interpretations it denied disturbed". In this respect, it can be added that the Gothic representations seem to convey "a sense of shame or guilt about the consequences of Australia's colonial origins".[509] Thus, Gothic itself is considered as a narrative of trauma[510].

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[506] Bird 2016, p.217.
[507] Walker 2004, p.264.
[508] Walker 2004, p.264.
[509] Gildersleeve, J. (2021). 'Contemporary Australian Trauma' in *The Palgrave Handbook of Gothic Origins*, ed. Clive Bloom. Ilford: Palgrave Macmillan, p.91.
[510] Bruhm, S. (2002). 'The Contemporary Gothic: Why We Need it', In *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jarrold E. Hogle. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.268.

Carmel Bird uses Gothic terms to describe the Australian land. In *Some of the Ghosts: Growing up in Tasmania*, Carmel Bird explains that "the repressions of these memories [of the inhumanity of the penal settlement of Tasmania and of the attempted annihilation as well of a whole race of people] has had the effect of filling the island with ghosts. The spirits of the Tasmanian convicts and the spirits of the Tasmanian Aborigines dwell in mournful restlessness beneath the surface of consciousness of the island. Tasmania is a haunted place".[511]

Additionally, "there is also, in each novel, a female voice, moving and convincing, which counterpoints the main narrative and so rounds it out[512]". While the skeleton is not presented as a female figure, this characteristic makes sense if it is considered a metaphor for Margaret's subconscious. Drawing on Bird's metaphor of spirits "beneath the surface of consciousness", the skeleton can be interpreted as Margaret's repressed memories of the shameful past. Her whole behaviour could then be read as an attempt to cover the guilt she feels regarding her family's past. Her obsession with constantly fulfilling other people's expectations and looking perfect might be an attempt to hide her inner guilt.

Throughout the novel, the arising of the repressed memories in the protagonist's consciousness can be observed. In this process of remembrance, the role played by fiction is crucial. The truth is revealed through the different fantasies Margaret nourishes in her mind. For instance, her obsessive interest in the Russian Royal family: "It's my obsession, or one of them[513]". Also, "she imagines she resembles one of the princesses, perhaps Tatiana".[514] The protagonist acknowledges the fictional nature of such a thought: "I have sometimes longed to travel on the Trans-Siberian railway, but I realise that it can never really take me to the romantic past, which is where I would like to go. It's just a dream. A childish fantasy".[515] Again, her romanticised version of the past that she would like to be exempt from changes is patent.

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[511] Bird, C. (1989). 'Some of the Ghosts: Growing Up in Tasmania'. *Australian Literary Studies*, *14*(2), p.252. 10.20314/als.dcd5d2ca47.
[512] Walker 2004, p.266.
[513] Bird 2016, p.35.
[514] Bird 2016, p.44.
[515] Bird 2016, pp.35-36.

While this could be read as an insignificant detail that only distracts the reader from the main story, the skeleton provides the audience with a meaningful explanation for such a fantasy: "She claims she was always more concerned with the immediate present and the future, not the past, although her own love of recollection and memory could give the lie to this claim. And her recently started journal is, as we know, full of ramblings down memory lane […] She nurtures deep in her heart a long-held secret desire to discover a link between herself and the Romanovs. Not that she is actively searching for this. She somehow hopes, vaguely, that one day the link might just become apparent [...] What she said in the journal about being interested in Russian history – well, that was true enough, but she was masking her deeper, sillier fact of her true thought, her true desire".[516] Thus, Margaret is not only interested in this royal family, but she would love to be related to them. While her desire can firstly seem delusional and meaningless, it must be replaced in a postcolonial context where shame and guilt can be prominent feelings for convicts' descendants. In fact, the skeleton intervenes to explain that "while it's fashionable in Australia nowadays to find Indigenous people and nineteenth-century convicts on the family tree, Margaret doesn't follow the fashion at all. Secretly, since she was about eleven, she has longed to be linked to the beautiful and tragic girls in far off Russia [...] The faces are idealised images of saints".[517] Through imagination, Margaret imagines an alternative genealogy in which convicts are non-existent and that the iconography represents the features of holiness – an attribute she uses to describe her father across the book. This could be interpreted as a way of denying an inner knowing that could make her identity's foundation crumble.

One can wonder what triggers these fantasies and, this is where fiction constitutes the place where repressed memories arise. Through fictional stories, often read in books, the protagonist identifies herself with characters that have apparently very little in common with

[516] Bird 2016, p.44.
[517] Bird 2016, pp.44-45.

her: “One long shelf in her tapestry room is devoted to her collection of books about the Romanovs. Whenever she takes down one of these books she becomes lost in the world of early twentieth-century Russia […] in the intense drama and colour and poignant tragedy of the royal household”.[518] In Bird’s novel, the stories read by the characters are not randomly chosen but rather evoke the family's past. They present significant similarities with the family secret Margaret does not know about. There seems to be a dialogue between the literary works and the protagonist’s subconscious knowing that results in a conscious interest that she fails to explain. It can thus be said that the narrative one reads is also interpreted in the light of subconscious trauma. The reader’s identification or empathy directly talks about his subconscious or repressed memories:

> My father was fascinated by Russian history, and I have some of his books. Now often I read about the Romanovs, and experience the anguish of their final months and their last moments. How can I even begin to imagine such anguish? What captivates me is the horror of a family of human beings, first of all set in a world of luxury and riches beyond belief, then reduced to trapped creatures in the dark cellar […] I have a shelf of books about them, and there is a never-ending trickle of more and more books as the years go by and as different facts come to light, as different storytellers tell the tale.[519]

Different elements deserve to be mentioned in the extract above. Firstly, the protagonist’s astonishment to be fascinated by “the horror of a family of human beings” and her incapacity to explain this interest. Secondly, some similarities can be found with the character’s background as “she went to live in the wealthy atmosphere of Toorak”[520] where she “has led a life of privilege”[521], as explained by the storyteller in his prologue. This could partially explain

[518] Bird 2016, pp.44-45.
[519] Bird 2016, p.35.
[520] Bird 2016, p.vii.
[521] Bird 2016, p.vii.

Margaret's identifying with the books' characters. In this respect, she highlights the unexplainable feeling of anguish she experiences during her reading, which might be due to the subconscious fear of seeing her own life of privilege fall apart. Once the terrible truth about her father is discovered, the protagonist feels an unbearable anxiety that she cannot stand and that leads her to death. The mention of "trapped creatures in the dark cellar" might look like a premonition regarding her own story. The matriarch in *Family Skeleton* desperately wants to hide the truth once discovered to the extent that she murders her distant cousin, Doria Fogelsong, who had attempted to draw a family tree of the O'Days, in order to stop her from potentially discovering the truth: "Margaret had discovered she was capable of doing whatever it took for the story for the story to remain undiscovered".[522] Thus, this led her to "shut the door on Doria because she was afraid, she was sure, that Doria was going to expose the aching wound in Margaret's own heart, the knowledge that her father, her spotless and beloved father, was flawed".[523]

For the character, the idea that the truth could be discovered one day is unacceptable. She could not tolerate the shame associated with her father's sin. The only thought of the truth being revealed creates a persistent anxiety within Edmund's widow: "Oh, dear God, the story would come out one day, in a year, or in a hundred years, one day everyone would know what Killian did to Ophelia, what Killian did to Margaret, that Killian had feet of clay".[524] For the protagonist, the knowledge of the truth within the family would mean the loss of her privilege, which also causes her deep feelings of anxiety. Indeed, she understands that her privileged position within society lies in her sister's misfortune. Telling the truth about the past would make her lose her excellent reputation that means everything to her. It can therefore be said that Margaret is facing the dilemma where she cannot correct a wrong by telling the truth about her sister without losing the qualities that have guaranteed her social privilege so far. As it has

[522] Bird 2016, p.218.
[523] Bird 2016, p.217.
[524] Bird 2016, p.218.

been previously said, the character must always fulfil the social expectations placed upon her in which she embodies a model of virtue, seen by everyone as a model of perfection.

Through fiction, Margaret had already experienced – to a certain extent – the feeling of anguish associated with the loss of privilege. But also, fiction somehow awakens the inner knowledge of her hidden sister's existence: "One of my favourite books is *Sense and Sensibility.* And I think that the real reason I love it is because of the bond between the sisters. When I'm reading that novel I become lost in the feeling of that bond. It's a feeling so deep and wonderful. It makes me sad, but somehow it comforts me. Elinor and Marianne. I identify with Marianne. I do love Elinor too. But it's the life of sisters that I really wish for, the closeness, the intimacy, the support, the fun, the sharing".[525]

Furthermore, Margaret recognises her long-lasting and strong desire to have a sister: "My father promised me a sister and I longed for her, but she never came. Daddy was so magical that he should have been able to give me a sister. I used to pray St Margaret, but nothing ever happened".[526] Again, there is a discrepancy between the official version of the story and what really happened, between Margaret's conscious and subconscious knowing, or between, what is presented as reality and fiction. In this context, fiction allows the arising of repressed or subconscious memories, awakening emotions that seem inexplicable and that make the protagonist question herself about her past. Thus, fiction seems to be more truthful than what is thought to be real. The "grand narrative" of the O'Day family – even its family tree – appears as a story that has been created while the character's apparent fantasies that could easily be invalidated contained a greater fragment of truth.

Coming back to the "shattered assumptions" through which trauma is projected on the landscape, making it seem inherently and wholly traumatic, it can be added that other associations are subconsciously made between trauma and reality. More broadly, life seems to

[525] Bird 2016, pp.38-39.
[526] Bird 2016, p.38.

be understood through the prism of trauma, and emotions play a fundamental role in this process. This could be considered as additional evidence about how trauma speaks independently of the character's will, and how this wound has its own narrative to tell. The knowledge of the truth resides in the subconscious mind that addresses the consciousness.

6.2. Ophelia Rose and Agustín: The key to trauma

In Bird's novel, reality finally meets what is thought to be fiction. Margaret's official life story intersects with the fantasies she entertains in her mind, and the events confirm the feelings awakened by the literary works she reads. The birth of Ophelia Rose, the protagonist's granddaughter, can be considered as the central event of the story that will soon trigger a series of remembrances of the past. Ophelia Rose's arrival on earth also constitutes the first moment of a chain of events that eventually leads to trauma discovery. Edmund's widow consciously ignores the hidden existence of her sister – or the supreme act of cruelty committed by her father. In this respect, the Freudian notion of *Nachträglichkeit* or *après-coup* could be applied to understand Margaret's overwhelming emotion when the newborn's first name is pronounced for the first time: "The truth was that naming a baby Ophelia made Margaret nervous. She wasn't entirely sure why this was, but there was definitely something about it that troubled her. There was the madness and the drowning in *Hamlet*, of course, and there was also a painting Margaret knew from childhood – Ophelia disappearing beneath the water".[527]Once again, Margaret's inner knowing is patent through this extract. She experiences trouble that she cannot translate into words – however, the memory seems to have been embodied. The event is consciously not known, but the associated emotion has remained in the shape of inexplicable sensations. The nervousness she experiences reflects this inner knowing and perhaps expresses what she has repressed. In this respect, it has been demonstrated that "the original trauma remains an 'a-semantic' trace that is not organised nor coherently articulated within the person's self-narrative. The process through which an actual event opens up the opportunity

[527] Bird 2016, p.15.

for the past to become present allows the person to grasp its semantic connotation within the horizon of the available meanings".[528] The naming of her granddaughter will trigger Margaret – not only emotionally – but this event will make her interrogate herself about the past. Indeed, "in this view, it is as if the primal event left behind a mnestic trace which remained "mute" until another element bestows a meaning on it".[529] The naming of Ophelia Rose represents proves that "the signifying present can give sense to a past that would be otherwise compelled to remain latent in its significance".[530] This means that the protagonist's inner knowing has always been there, in a latent state, waiting to be awakened.

Furthermore, the narration repeatedly insists on Margaret's discomfort in relation to this name: "When Father Rhys's friend - his life partner, if you must know – art master Clive Bushby started eulogising about the beauty of the name Ophelia and quoting and quoting lines from *Hamlet* about rosemary for remembrance and pansies for thought, Margaret quietly left the party table".[531] The fact that Margaret escapes from the scene might refer to the very nature of trauma to be overwhelming and unbearable. Again, the role played by fiction can be highlighted here as the pieces of art etched in Margaret's memory are somehow linked to the truth leaking through apparent coincidences to the extent that they actually contain the information Margaret's consciousness is missing.

On the other hand, Ophelia's baptism allows the remembrance of a past story that Margaret ignores being a part of: "I have only ever heard of one baby named Ophelia before, and she died at birth, so that's a sad memory attached to it. Perhaps that's really I wish Charmaine hadn't chosen the name. It was early in 1941 and so I was five. For some reason the name of the baby has stayed with me[532]". Margaret thinks to be an outsider of the story she remembers. This could also echo the fact that, as "the original event is not accessible for

[528] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.40.
[529] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.41.
[530] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.40.
[531] Bird 2016, p.19.
[532] Bird 2016, p.31.

conscious recollection"[533], "the person is confined "outside" the event".[534] Thus, "in a sense, it is in the repetition of what did *not* take place that the elusive nature of trauma resides".[535]

In this respect, the memories awakened by the birth of Ophelia Rose do not appear in chronological order. They come to break the linear narrative of Margaret's life story. These memories seem to appear in the form of intrusive thoughts that come to slow and bypass Margaret's main story. They appear as details of the past that suddenly become omnipresent and in which the protagonist is somehow stuck. For instance, the episode in the garden, where a five-year-old Margaret listens to the conversation between her mother and her aunt Iris takes a huge proportion. One particular aspect of this memory is the remembrance of the surrounding context, such as the noises that were simultaneously taking place:

> They were talking in low, sad, earnest voices while they were wandering around the garden dead-heading the roses. I was walking beside them […]. They were punctuating their sentences with the snip of the stems and the soft plop on the flowers as they fell into the basket. The 'plop' is I think too loud for the sound the flowers made. Yes. There was almost no sound, more like a space in time than a sound. But the 'snip' was real […]
>
> 'The poor child – snip – died within hours – plop – and yes – snip – the baby I understand lived for – snip – minutes only – plop.
>
> 'And you say – snip – Kitty called her – plop – Ophelia?' [536]

Regarding the quote above, different elements deserve to be analysed. First of all, it highlights the intrinsically different nature of traumatic memories. The accuracy of this memory fundamentally contrasts with the ignorance that surrounds it. Additionally, "unlike other autobiographical memories, the mnestic traces of trauma are not inscribed in the person's self-

[533] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.40.
[534] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.40.
[535] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.42.
[536] Bird 2016, p.32.

narrative".[537] These memories progressively arise in bits and pieces, but they are introduced as being completely foreign to Margaret's life story. This precise remembrance also underlines the very complex and unpredictable nature of traumatic memories as "trauma can be remembered and forgotten simultaneously, through body memories and also through structural dissociation".[538] Indeed, "trauma can cause complete memories to be blocked from consciousness, or memories may be available only partially [...] Memories can also include sensations, images, sounds, but not include an overarching narrative".[539] The arising of these memories interrupts the writing of Margaret's memoir, imitating the movement through which intrusive thoughts alter the linear time. In other words, it can be said that "traumatic thoughts and flashbacks significantly alter perceived temporality".[540] Margaret's description of this childhood memory in the garden also shows the relational system structured around trauma. The excessive importance allocated to the noise and the disproportionate intensity used to describe it brings the focus to the rose – the second name of Ophelia. Thus, Margaret's subconscious seems to establish links between different elements apparently separated whose combination contains the key to past comprehension. These mental associations represent the link between past and present, between the unknown initial trauma and the actual event.

In relation to this point, it can be added that the presence of fiction accompanies the character's recollections of past memories. For instance, the literature she studies brings the memory of the conversation in the garden and the memory of Ophelia – the stillbirth newborn she once heard about as a child: "But to return to Kitty and Ophelia – when I studied *Hamlet* at school the distant conversation about Kitty and Ophelia echoed in my mind, the tragic young Ophelia in the story merging with the tragic young Kitty, everything blurring into a dreadful

[537] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.50.
[538] Morrigan 2017, p.55.
[539] Morrigan 2017, p.55.
[540] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.50.

sadness".[541] This could be considered as additional evidence of these "shattered assumptions" - or these trauma-associated links.

The combined analysis of the two following extracts shines a light not only on these associations but also on their dissociation from the protagonist's mind:

> Years after I had listened to my mother and Iris talking about baby Ophelia, I wrote an essay about Ophelia and Hamlet and it won the prize for the best essay in the school. Now that I remember the essay prize, it gives me confidence to keep writing this journal. Ophelia drowned. Nellie Melba drowned. Kitty died and the baby died". The photograph of my father, the soldier, hanging in the place where Kitty as Melba used to be.[542]
>
> The war. Father's absence and then his miraculous return from the war are also somehow mingled in my mind with what happened to Kitty and her baby Ophelia […] The loss of it [the jack-in-the-box] reminds me always of the disappearance of Kitty and of the non-existence of baby Ophelia Mary. Then I think of the picture of Nellie Melba, and then of the photos of my noble father over the piano. He looks so handsome and so good.[543]

Without any apparent logical reason, Margaret's father is somehow associated with Kitty's personal drama in Margaret's mind. These sentences perfectly illustrate the concept of knowing without knowing. Memories arise in an order that is not chronological, breaking then the linear perception of time and letting the past flow and merge into the present. But, also, the main character's thoughts move freely, and unexpected associations are made. While these links are consciously impossible to justify, they highlight the subconscious knowing of the truth. Regarding this process of remembrance, the first extract above emphasises the fundamental role of fiction in the memories to be triggered. The first part of this chapter brought focus to

[541] Bird 2016, p.36.
[542] Bird 2016, p.37.
[543] Bird 2016, p.37.

fiction's ability to trigger embodied memories of trauma. However, it seems that fiction and reality do not function as opposite poles, but rather interact with each other in a meaningful dialectical process. Each dimension encloses one part of the truth. The juxtaposition of both sides helps to puzzle together the story.

In this respect, it is convenient to consider Margaret's final discovery regarding her father's past: "Lilian brought in the post. As she placed three ordinary envelopes on the cloth beside the cup, Margaret felt a sudden jolt of alarm. There was something out of the ordinary, some special and dangerous thing in one of those envelopes. Margaret does sometimes have these feelings, and they're often right".[544] This fragment underlines the protagonist's inner knowing of the truth, in the form of a premonition. This moment could also be read as the culmination of Margaret's constant alarm. Her habit of analysing every single event that takes place around her might be explained by her conscious' effort to protect her from the harmful truth. A truth that the letter she receives completely reveals: "It was a letter from a Charles Clark-Finn, a solicitor with Colley, Morton and White of King Street […] He was writing to inform her that her half-sister had passed away at the Convent of the Holy Child in Greensborough […] Her name was Ophelia Mary O'Day. Margaret stared at the name. She couldn't make any sense of it. It seemed like a curse".[545]

Two main elements can be pointed out in the passage above. Firstly, not only does the present open up the past, but an actual event brings sense to what was considered *fiction* so far. Margaret's longing for a sister finds its origin in this letter. The critique had already argued that "the nature of psychic temporality points to a complex figure that has no one-way direction (past to present, present to future), and where what comes after might constantly construct what came before, thus challenging the supposedly monodirectional arrow of time"[546] and that trauma "resists linearity and causality as the only right, or natural ways to relate to time, and

[544] Bird 2016, p.124.
[545] Bird 2016, p.125.
[546] Bochicchio, Mezzalira, Santoro, Schimmenti 2023, p.44.

instead opens up time as a space that can be moved through in any direction [...]".[547]. In relation to this, fiction can be taken into consideration to better understand this traumatic temporality. The notions of *fiction* and *reality* introduce a dynamic within the novel, where both spheres refer to and inform each other.

This dynamic is already observable in Purcell's *The Drover's Wife* and in Guelfenbein's *The Rest is Silence*. The presence of fiction allows the characters to simultaneously escape the traumatic reality and return to it with a better understanding. In Purcell's writing, Molly Johnson reconnects with the past through storytelling that makes the truth arise. In Guelfenbein's novel, the fictive universe of the distinct protagonists makes them withdraw from reality while highlighting the source of their suffering. In *Family Skeleton*, Margaret's apparent fantasies materialise through the letters she receives. Before this revelation, it seems that her subconscious was regularly sending her clues about the secret past. In this process, the dynamic between reality and fiction appears to be crucial as both components are not isolated, but function together. The surrounding world seems to be interpreted in the light of trauma. For example, Margaret's reading of *Hamlet* keeps the memory of Ophelia Mary, awakening ambiguous feelings that she struggles to explain. The character's passion for the book *Sense and Sensibility* where she is truly fascinated by the bond between the two sisters also contains a seed of truth related to her own covered past. It can be said that fiction directly refers to a reality that – eventually – ends up addressing it. The final revelation of Ophelia Mary's life and later death permits us to puzzle together all the memories and inexplicable emotions that had arisen by the means of fiction. At the end of the novel, reality seems to be the thread that links all the different pieces together.

This movement – between reality and fiction - could symbolically be represented by a circle, in which both parts interact and inform each other. This dynamic, indeed, breaks the linear temporality and is not monodirectional. Instead of the linear arrow of time, two arrows

[547] Morrigan 2017, p.58.

could be drawn. One from reality to fiction, and the other one in the opposite direction, from back from fiction to reality.

On a larger scale, this circular movement is also perceptible in the way in which trauma addresses the conscious part of the victim's mind. In *Family Skeleton,* a distinction is made between the everyday life of Margaret O'Day, from her birth to her marriage with her distant relative Edmund, to her passing – and the story of trauma that first appeared as a secondary plot. The first one is presented under a linear perspective while the latter is only given to the reader in bits and pieces. These fragmented parts of information seem to mimic the continuous but dissociated intrusive thoughts in the character's mind: This movement from the subconscious into the consciousness is often triggered by fiction. It can be argued that the way in which the story is progressively revealed also obeys this circular logic. In this respect, the repetition of trauma has been analysed in *The Secret River*, *The Drover's Wife* and *The Rest is Silence*, where the characters systematically re-experience similar situations. They reproduce past circumstances or even behaviours belonging to previous generations of their family that they have integrated. They seem to be stuck in a loop of repetitions.

Similarly, in Bird's novel, Margaret somehow reproduces her father's act by silencing the truth about Ophelia's existence. But, also, trauma seems to have its own timing and pace. The story it tells has a different starting point than the story told by Margaret in her journal. Ophelia Rose's birth represents the pivotal point that causes a series of remembrances and significant events. For instance, "Doria came shortly after before Ophelia Rose's baptism, and she was a guest at the party in the garden".[548] The arrival in Melbourne of the distant cousin also provokes Margaret's anguish and fear. The inner knowing of a secret past she does not want to be revealed becomes patent. All the elements were already there through Margaret's blurry memories that she tries to put together through writing. The final revelation permits us to decipher all these thoughts and to close the cycle.

[548] Bird 2016, p.19.

Furthermore, the fact that the skeleton opens and closes the book also implies this idea of circularity. The character insists on the repetitive nature of trauma making it look like a never-ending circle through his final words: "That's all from the wardrobe for now. Life goes on. I still have my own teeth –but I believe I already told you that".[549] Firstly, it can be thought that the subconscious mark of trauma can last and be passed on to future generations. At least, this extract shows how trauma finds its own ways to be revealed. The fact that the story of the secret is over "for now" suggests that it is likely to come back as truth cannot be escaped. Additionally, plenty of quotes corroborate the circularity of trauma time, in which the past, present, and future are entangled. For instance, it can be read that: "The past is not the past – it can rise up in the present and take new shapes, like a creature that sleeps as if it dead, […] gradually and suddenly the creature raises its scaly head and smiles with dreadful teeth and opens its scarlet mouth and licks its shining lips".[550]

The image of the dreadful creature can be superposed to the skeleton one. Both are used as metaphors for a shameful and painful past that cannot be escaped and that seems to be independent of the character's will. One might believe that the past is dead. However, it keeps impregnating a present that once was the future - drawing a circle between these moments. In this respect, this point is indeed confirmed by the following fragment: "'Secrets', said Evan, 'can have an independent life on their own. They make an appearance when they're ready. They float about the universe waiting for their time. And people often don't know they are in fact carrying key bits of information, either. It's like a disease, you know. People die of fact fever. It's incurable".[551] The unavoidable resurgence of the past is brought to the fore. Also, the dialectic between conscious and subconscious is referred to as people carrying bits of information without being aware of it. Secrets of the past always find a way to be acknowledged – addressing the characters by different means, such as dreams, intrusive thoughts, and

[549] Bird 2016, p.228.
[550] Bird 2016, p.127.
[551] Bird 2016, p.157.

repetitions. While these elements are traditionally perceived as invalidating, they seem to invite the victim to engage with the past by revealing the covered truth. In relation to this, one last passage could be quoted: "'In Tasmania, you know,' Doria said, 'hundreds of records were officially destroyed in the hope of keeping the population free from the stain of its criminal past. This never works totally. The truth has a way of seeping out somehow. It's fascinating, I find. Really fascinating".[552] The term "seeping out" deeply echoes the one used by Serge Tisseron to describe the same phenomenon. Thus, the temporal categories of past, present, and future appear to be permeable and unstable. Past seeps out into the present in the victim's mind, bypassing the future. It somehow repeats itself in other ways in both present and future. This repetition can be associated with a circle – or a loop – from which the victim cannot escape. This is also represented by the presence of intrusive thoughts that recurringly come back at regular intervals, which gives an impression of circularity. The three temporalities seem to be entangled.

The same impression of circularity emerges from the reading of Costamagna's *The Touch System*. The repetitive nature of trauma is amplified through its intergenerational transmission. The notions of past, present, and future appear to be even more porous and blurry. The main protagonist's story is intrinsically tied up with the story of her great aunt, Nélida. Ania's life cannot be understood without the knowledge of her family's distant past. Both stories overlap. The present somehow seems to be an edited version – or a replication - of the past, which is implied through the following metaphor: "When she wakes up, Ania tries to remember details of her dream, but someone else's handwriting has scribbled over the images and she finds nothing".[553] Present struggles that cannot be fully comprehended without knowing the past of her family – a past that Ania discovers during her travel to Campana to bury the last member of the Coletti family: Agustín, her father's cousin. The "someone else's

[552] Bird 2016, p.155.
[553] Costamagna 2021, p.96.

writing – mentioned in the quote above – suggests that another person's story seeps out through Ania's. Fragments of this history arise through dreams that the protagonist cannot totally grasp.

In this respect, fiction – for example, through dreams – also establishes a particular dynamic within the novel. The dialectic between the so-called *reality* and *fiction* materialises the dialogue between consciousness and unconsciousness, seen as a reciprocal conversation where both parties interact. The narration alternates past, present, and future, by juxtaposing the stories of the different family members. Fiction constitutes a crucial mechanism through which each generation meets the others and through which their stories converge. In relation to this, the trio formed by the great aunt Nélida, her son Agustín, and the protagonist Ania has been highlighted by the critique.[554] Indeed, the typewriter – used by both Nélida and her child – that Ania discovers in the empty house connects the three generations: "The journey on the keyboard embodies the connection with the genealogy".[555] Moreover, "the insistence on the typos made by the previous generations – and their reproduction through the archives – refer to a broader theme: the theme of the mistake, of the acts that are unchangeable".[556] Besides, "we are facing a novel of characters that are out of the norm, marginals, coming from dislocated genealogies, on the edge".[557] Finally, it can be added that "the mistake that has determined their existence comes from the decisions taken by others in their names, during their childhood, and reproduced by them during their adulthood".[558]

All the later generations are impacted by Nélida's fate – who was forced to suddenly leave her cherished and familiar Piedmont in Italy to marry her distant relative, Arnoldo. This uprooting – coupled with the memories of the war and the witnessing of her young nephew's death – severely damaged her mind. But this also strongly impacted the destiny of the later generations. If the son Agustín has never been able to leave his village of Campana, Ania has

[554] Ferrús Antón, B. (2022). 'Migrant Affections in *El Sistema del Tacto* by Alejandra Costamagna', *Cartaphilus, 20,* p.44. https://ddd.uab.cat/record/273532. (translated by the researcher)
[555] Ferrús Antón 2022, p.44. (translated by the researcher)
[556] Ferrús Antón 2022, p.44. (translated by the researcher)
[557] Ferrús Antón 2022, p.44. (translated by the researcher)
[558] Ferrús Antón 2022, p.44. (translated by the researcher)

always felt uprooted. Indeed, she has never found her place within society, living by procuring. It could be thought that the three characters embody the three temporal dimensions: the past, the present, and the future – that are entangled and structured around the past trauma. Ania "does remember that Nélida's thoughts came to life all by themselves, unbidden, the European conflict from a butchered Argentina that she didn't understand".[559] While the principal character does know part of her ancestor's story, she cannot understand her current struggles that she does not associate with the traumatic past. Her great aunt's incapacity to adapt to the new context is reflected in Ania's inadequacy regarding social norms.

Author Alejandra Costamagna talks about the aftermaths of the uprooting she depicts in her novel. She mentions the "fracture in the identities while commencing a new life that truncates parts of them and the emergence for migrants to become others in a foreign land".[560] The author also sheds light on the traumatic aspect of the European migration that was encouraged, "for economic purposes (to settle the country and start the production) and also, in a veiled way, for the disdain towards the Indigenous and the mestizo. It was aimed to replace the native population with one that would be more "civilised".[561] In this context, Costamagna highlights that "the expectations of this promised America sometimes quite differ from the reality that the migrants encountered when they arrived".[562]

If material objects – such as the typewriter – play a crucial role in the connection between the three generations of the family, the representation of fiction deserves to be brought to the fore. Throughout the novel, fictive elements create the dynamic between the distinct stories, between past, present, and future, and between conscious and subconscious memories. Like in Bird's *Family Skeleton*, literary works are mentioned. Firstly, they create a meaningful link between Ania and her distant cousin Agustín, which is mentioned on the very first page of

[559] Costamagna 2021, p.36.
[560] Franken Osorio, A. (2019). 'Interview with Alejandra Costamagna'. *Revista Letral*, *22*, pp.324. https://doi.org/10.30827/rl.v0i22.8724. (translated by the researcher)
[561] Franken 2019, p.324. (translated by the researcher)
[562] Franken 2019, p.324. (translated by the researcher)

Costamagna's book: "She won't read them, Agustín thinks. Chilenita won't read them. He just loaned her the last three books that Skinny Gariglio, his friend from typing class, loaned him: *The Evil Inheritance*, *Panic in Paradise*, and *Devil Children*".[563] The title of the books, especially the first one, somehow echoes the preliminary quote that opens the novel: "And what monsters, our ancestors, nothing but stories that drive children crazy".[564] The horror stories read by the characters introduce monsters, devils, and demons – terms that are also transposed to the intrusive thoughts that live in the characters' mind: "It struck her at the time that Nélida's mind was the one that dreamed up the horror stories that Agustín lent her".[565] While the skeleton in Bird's novel could be considered a Gothic figure that represents the traumatic past that has not been processed, these horror elements could also symbolise the painful truth. Plenty of quotes establish a parallel between Nélida's insanity and the horror novels:

> But the demons in those stories never truly took hold in Ania's head. They were too simple to take seriously. Nélida's, on the other hand, were always more dangerous. Because they were closer and stayed in in the family [...] So she listened to her, equally possessed by those ungovernable apparitions. Now she realises that Agustín and Nélida lived under the sway of the same darkness, which was not the darkness of death but that of unruly, possessed thoughts, like tornadoes lashing the pampas.[566]

These uncontrollable thoughts are this "evil inheritance" that is being passed through generations, which increases the impression of a loop or circle. Fictionalizing these thoughts that are compared – or attributed – to demons shines a light on the traumatised minds of the characters who appear as helpless victims. A fragment of *The Touch System* particularly reveals Nélida's vulnerability: "Ania would visit, the woman would ask her not to turn on the light.

[563] Costamagna 2021, p.11.
[564] Costamagna 2021, p.9. (quote from María Sonia Cristoff)
[565] Costamagna 2021, p.124.
[566] Costamagna 2021, p.125.

She didn't want to see them, she'd say. If any light came in, they'd take her with them, she would insist, lowering her voice".[567] This extract shows how trauma is considered an external phenomenon –something contained outside that one cannot reach or master. The traumatic thoughts are seen as a fatality that cannot be avoided, and Nélida is placed in an extremely vulnerable position.

The repetitive nature of these thoughts is also mentioned: "Ania didn't dare to ask who they were, who would take her away. Nélida would be silent, and return for a few minutes to a precarious kind of calm. And then after a while she she'd bring her hands to her head and move her fingers slowly, in a very meticulous to and fro"?[568] The elderly woman's quietness is repeatedly interrupted by these thoughts that keep coming back. Again, this could schematically be represented by a circle. It seems that a doom spiral has taken place within Nélida's mind that she cannot stop and in which she is trapped. The idea of a traumatic loop increases in importance when Ania in turn is lost in thoughts she cannot control: "Leaving the school behind she walks slowly down San Martín to Calle 9 de Julio [...] Suddenly she thinks she sees Nélida across the street. What is the matter with you, Ania? Who's sending you these visions? Then she gets a stabbing pain in the back of her neck: someone poking her with a pin and extracting it very slowly to prolong the effect. She closes her eyes, but Nélida is still there".[569] This could be interpreted as the voice of trauma seeking to be acknowledged, addressing the protagonist regarding the story of her ancestors that still rule her life.

Thus, fiction – through dreams and literary works – brings the focus on this intergenerational trauma that repeats itself. The invisible thread that links the two female protagonists becomes patent through dreams: "In that night's dream, Ania is travelling across the sea in search of her father's remains […] At seventy-three, the man has fled Chile and landed in the Piedmont of his parentage […] Ania travels light, her life fits in a carry-on. The

[567] Costamagna 2021, p.124.
[568] Costamagna 2021, p.124.
[569] Costamagna 2021, p.75.

red silk scarf (which in typical dream-distortion is more pinkish: blood diluted in water) […] And her passport, which she has to show at the border: Nélida Damilano […]".[570] In dreams, temporalities and identities are entangled and mixed up. This shows how the past deeply impregnates the present that once was the future. It also demonstrates how the subconscious knowledge about trauma is brought through dreams in the shape of fragmentary clues. What is conceived as unreal is then crucial for the trauma to address the character about the past.

The alternation between *fiction* and *reality* creates this double movement where the first component informs the second one. For example, the mention of *Panic in Paradise* reveals that "Agustín always interprets the stories so negatively[571]" as he keeps affirming that "what exists is panic"[572] - which reminds us that trauma is projected on the outside. The fictions he reads are only interpreted regarding a trauma he projects on the outside world. Therefore, it can be argued that not only trauma is projected on the landscape, but also on the outside world, for instance, objects. The character's panic to leave the house and the village where he was born is reflecting on his perceptions of fiction books. Trauma structures the subconscious to the extent that everything is interpreted in the light of trauma. While this is traditionally seen as invalidating and disempowering, it can also be analysed as the call of this subconscious wound to be known and processed. The last part of the chapter will further study how the protagonist addresses this call to create a better future.

Like in Bird's *Family Skeleton*, the concepts of *reality* and *fiction* finally merge. The intrusive thoughts, the fragmented pieces of information brought by the means of dreams, and the feelings that arose through the reading of literary works find an explanation during Ania's trip to Campana. Her stay in the family house after Agustín's burial allows her to puzzle together the thoughts, feelings, and visions she experiences and to link them with the family's past. Alongside the linear narration – where Ania travels from Chile to Argentina for a limited

[570] Costamagna 2021, p.143.
[571] Costamagna 2021, p.87.
[572] Costamagna 2021, p.87.

period of time – trauma time appears to be circular. In Bird's novel, the birth of Ophelia Rose augments the remembrances of the past. It somehow created the premise for the final revelation. In *The Touch System*, the death of Agustín similarly changes the course of the story. It allows Ania to comprehend the family's past and to make sense of her current struggles. In Bird's novel, the trauma – hidden in Margaret's subconscious - seems to follow its own independent path. It eventually found a way to be acknowledged. This means that the voice of trauma is stronger –louder than the censorship imposed by the state or by the characters themselves. Regarding truth-telling, it can be said that past trauma always addresses the characters in an environment where they are unable to express themselves. The truth about past trauma is hidden in the subconscious and is being projected on the outside. Thus, the past seems to be stronger than the different mechanisms put into place to keep it secret. A similar phenomenon can be observed in Costamagna's writing:

> When Ania gets back to the house she makes herself a cup of tea on the little stove and takes some water crackers out of her bag. She searches the pantry for sugar or some type of sweetener for her tea, and what she finds is something else. An enormous cardboard box. Where there should have been sugar, a box of Nélida and Agustín's belongings. That part she will learn in two minutes when she opens it. Ania thinks, at that moment, that the box has been waiting for her since Nélida herself died and that it decided to appear before her now that Agustín has gone too. Now that she's buried him. As though together, from the afterlife, mother and son had made an arrangement with the box and were sending Chilenita their belongings. They should have been in the house next door, but they're here.[573]

The discovery of the box appears as a coincidence that will reveal the truth about the family history. This event presents some similarities with the naming of Ophelia Rose. Both represent significant coincidences that bring information about the past. The pictures, postcards, and

[573] Costamagna 2021, p.90.

archives that Ania found bring the understanding – not only of Nélida's or Agustín's demons – but also her own. In this respect, the critique has highlighted that "this great quantity of physical objects (to which can be added the typewriter, a little green appartement, a phone that strangely still maintains the same ringtone) have the function within the novel, as argued by Maria Teresa Johansson, to be agents that precipitate to the memory's operations by triggering a superposition of past and current images".[574] It can therefore be argued that this operates in the same way that the landscape where past and present are intertwined in the character's gaze. Also, "it is through them that the family […] is able to circulate and to transcend both time and space".[575]

The distinction made between the linear temporality of everyday life and the circular temporality of trauma can be analysed in the light of Kristeva's theorisation of women's as opposed to men's time. Indeed, the psychoanalyst argues that "women have a cyclical life in which everything is repeated and their life is the repetition of repetitions. However, men have a linear time in which they can improve their life and make progress".[576] In relation to this, she adds that "as for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains repetition and eternity from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilisations".[577] Furthermore, "there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature [...]".[578] "On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes)".[579] Finally, it can be added that this female temporality – which is cyclical and monumental – is

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[574] Amaro Castro, L. (2020). 'When we are unhappy: present, past, and future in *The Touch System*, by Alejandra Costamagna', *Revista Mapocho, 88*, p. 71. https://www.academia.edu/45184073/_Cuando_somos_infelices_presente_pasado_y_futuro_en_El_sistema_del_tacto_de_Alejandra_Costamagna. (translated by the researcher)
[575] Amaro Castro 2020, p.71. (translated by the researcher)
[576]Is something missing here?): 1329, doi:10.4304/jltr.5.6.1328-1333.
[577] Blake, H., Jardine, A. and Kristeva, J. (1981). 'Women's Time'. *Signs, 7*(1), p.16. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173503.
[578] Blake, Jardine, Kristeva 1981, p.16.
[579] Blake, Jardine, Kristeva 1981, p.16.

thus conceptualised as opposite to "a certain conception of time: time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding: time as departure, progression, and arrival – in other words, the time of history".[580]

This distinction between linear and circular temporality permits us to distinguish the trauma time from everyday life. The first one is repetitive, recurring, and undefinable while the second one is straight, measurable, and accountable. One repeats itself while the second one moves forward. In the first case, the past comes back into the present while in the second case, the past is left behind. The distinction made by Julia Kristeva between Women's and Men's Time - respectively defined as circular and linear – overlaps the distinction between the Indigenous time and the time of Modernity. These two different conceptions of time have previously been discussed. It has been said that in Indigenous "ontology […] is the reverential connections between the spiritual realms of operations of the universe and the material operating platform or the physical earth, or the treasured Mother; acting in accord beyond peaceful- coexistence. The beyond is […] the unalienable tenure of relevance to life, birth, and death that engulfs the spiritual and material Mother in a cyclic pattern of perpetuity[581]". The circular and monumental time – also associated with the motherly figure – is found is Indigenous worldviews. The temporality is represented by a circle where the past, present, and future are entangled. The past repeats itself into the present and impacts the future. This worldview is seen as the antagonism of the so-called Time of Modernity defined as a time that "distinguishes a past from a present that aims a progression of events that further a particular end or outcome often associated with science, 'discovery', reason, knowledge and individual freedom".[582]

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[580] Blake, Jardine, Kristeva 1981, p.17.
[581] Japanangka, W. (1998). *Speaking Towards an Aboriginal Philosophy. Indigenous Philosophy Conference*. Linga Longa, p.2.
[582] Ramgotra, M. (2022). 'Time, Modernity and Space: Montesquieu's and Constant' ancient/modern binaries'. in Albertone, M. and Potofsky, A. (ed.) *History of European Ideas*. Oxford: Taylor & Francis, p.263.

This distinction can be thought of in relation to the "shattered assumptions" through which trauma is projected on the outside world through a system of post-traumatic associations. It has been argued that traumatic characteristics were transposed to the landscape that is then seen as inherently and wholly traumatic. In this respect, acknowledging the distinction between both temporalities – the traumatic circular time and the everyday linear time – can dissociate the subconscious link made between the external and the internal world. Understanding that trauma and the outside reality obey different temporalities and thus constitute different entities can assist in undoing these "shattered assumptions". What repeats itself is the fear, the anxiety, and the traumatic memories in the victim's mind in order to be recognised and processed – the external world follows this course in a temporality that can be measured. Within the novels, linear temporality is represented through the characters' journeys that imply a certain and defined timeline. It is also represented in contrast with the time of fiction that interrupts the linear course of events.

CHAPTER 7*: MIRROR EARTH* AND *HEAT AND LIGHT:* ORIGIN AND RECONCILIATION

And then

Cherries will blossom

Then a new moon

New dreams

And butterflies on the horizon[583].

("Bad Dreams" by Maribel Mora Curriao)

7.1. Trauma and identity

As an introduction to this last chapter, *Family Skeleton* and *The Touch System* are going to be analysed with respect to the crucial notion of *identity, which* will later be contrasted with the identity approached in Mora Curriao's *Mirror Earth* and Van Neerven's *Heat and Light*. *Family Skeleton* and *The Touch System* shed light on the relationship between trauma and identity. Both protagonists are placed in an extremely vulnerable position due to the fact that they do not know themselves. Moreover, the foundation of their identity seems to be based on something located outside of themselves.

This is particularly true in the case of Margaret O'Day as the core of her identity has always been her father whom she qualifies as her "genesis". She feels safe and comfortable within this frame: Her father seems to be the only certainty on which she bases her identity. However, the discovery of her father's sin completely erodes her identity – multiplying the thoughts of anxiety she used to experience. Her interrogations and doubts increase to the extent that she loses all her bearings: "[…] her father knew, and he had lied. He was a lie. This is not possible. If Margaret had a sister, then she never knew her own father, he was a duplicitous

[583] Mora Curriao 2014, p.85

stranger, a play-acting stranger who sang to her the songs from a lying songbook".[584] The protagonist discovers that the image she cultivated of her father is a lie. He was not the devoted father, husband, and doctor she was deeply proud of. However, it appears that Margaret is unable to establish a separation between her father and herself. Her personality is tied up to her father's. The discovery of his true nature makes her doubt her own: "What she realises, what has dawned on her during the strange drive to Bellevue, is that she is now a different person from the woman who left home this morning to visit Charles Clark-Finn. The father she knew is now nothing but a myth, and in some horrible sympathetic gesture is beginning to feel she does maybe not quite exist".[585] Margaret's principal core values were her loyalty and admiration for her father.

Once the truth has been discovered, the main protagonist does not betray these feelings and keeps identifying herself with him, incapable of coping with the "bewildered rage"[586] she experiences. The perception of Killian has however shifted from the "unblemished saintly father, the doctor, the soldier, the faithful husband'[587] to a "murderer".[588] As Margaret is unable to define herself without referring to the paternal figure, she starts contradicting everything she has previously written in *The Book of Revelation* as "she has undergone a black metamorphosis"[589], making "the transition, so suddenly - oh so very suddenly - from good to evil".[590] The character joins her father in "this act against goodness, this act of supreme cruelty"[591] by locking her cousin in the cellar in an attempt to keep the truth hidden. She kind of reproduces her father's act of locking away her daughter Ophelia in a convent to make sure the past will never be discovered. The character would be truly unable to stand the gaze of others and would crumble under the shame caused by her father's lie.

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[584] Bird 2016, p.129.
[585] Bird 2016, p.138.
[586] Bird 2016, p.194.
[587] Bird 2016, p.137.
[588] Bird 2016, p.150.
[589] Bird 2016, p.215.
[590] Bird 2016, p.215.
[591] Bird 2016, p.215.

The vulnerable position she finds herself in lies in the fact that the core fundament of her personality is placed outside of herself. It lies on something external over which she has no control. Once she discovers that her whole identity is based on a lie, she is unable to recognise herself and keeps living with the weight of the past and the fear of being discovered. This impossibility of living under these new circumstances could be explained by Margaret's incapacity to mourn the ideal vision of her father and her previous status. In this respect, a few quotes highlight the protagonist's initial shock when she receives the letter: "Then her mind went completely blank and she sat at the table staring down at the letter with its nasty legal letterhead […] A mistake? The letter must be some absurd mix-up, some insane and ghastly error. Yes, surely the whole thing was some kind of terrible mistake".[592] Her mind seems to try to protect her from the truth, trying to rationalise what is happening. Furthermore, the scene seems unreal: "It was like a letter that floats down in a movie dream sequence, opens itself up and falls on the table with a little 'ting', the words dancing in mockery".[593] A sense of anxiety is already present, and Margaret's defences are set up.

Indeed, it can be argued that Margaret faces the mourning of her past life and identity based on her deepest love towards her father. She lacks the tools to overcome this grief as her entire personality is solely based on external elements she cannot master - such as the gaze of others, their judgements, and her father's actions. Her primary reaction when she opens the letter can be explained by Freud's theory regarding mourning. Her consciousness tries to deny what she has just read and find logical explanations to justify the letter. Her denial constitutes the first stage of her impossible grief. The elderly woman remains in this state of denial as she cannot accept the truth and its possible discovery. This leads her not only to murder Doria to stop her from discovering the truth, but to her own death which appears as the only way to escape the truth.

[592] Bird 2016, p.125.
[593] Bird 2016, p.125.

Regarding the process of mourning, the psychoanalyst argues that "when a love object dies, the task of grief is the decathexis of libido so that energy is available for investment in a new object. This process, which Freud called "work of mourning", consumes time and energy because the mourner rebels against the reality of the loss and only reluctantly abandons the original attachment, initially denying the reality of the death".[594] Thus, "Freud emphasises that in normal bereavement, the goal of recovery is the relinquishment of the mourner's ties to the love object".[595] In *Family Skeleton,* the character can somehow unable to overcome this denial. Besides, the incapacity to remove the ties to the love object might rest on the fact that both are intrinsically linked together. They form one in Margaret's mind and cannot be detached. Thus, the disappearance of her ideal paternal figure eventually generates her own.

This could be considered an example of pathological grief described as "a refusal to relinquish the love object".[596] Also, "in these cases, often marked by narcissistic and ambivalent attachments, the ego is unable to decathect the loved and hated object, instead identifying with the object".[597] Also, it can be added that "the mourner is then free to attack his or her own ego in excesses of remorse and guilt, which serve the dual purpose of voicing surreptitious recriminations against the disappointing love object and failing to give way to the full reality of the death".[598] Margaret's guilt regarding her father's past and her own actions seems to also be what she wants to escape through death. The truth is impossible to bear as it supposes the death of the whole identity she has created throughout her life: "Killian, the paragon of virtue Dr Killian O'Day, had betrayed his devoted wife, his devoted daughter, he had betrayed Kitty Sullivan, the trust of Kitty's family – he had betrayed most of all the baby Ophelia[599]".

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[594]Shapiro, E. (1996). 'Grief in Freud's life: Reconceptualizing Bereavement in Psychoanalytic Theory', *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, *13*(4), p.548. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0079710.
[595] Shapiro 1996, p.549.
[596] Shapiro 1996, p.549.
[597] Shapiro 1996, p.549.
[598] Shapiro 1996, p.549.
[599] Bird 2016, p.217.

This is perhaps why this information was dissociated in her mind and was therefore not accessible to her consciousness. An example of this defence mechanism can be found when Margaret opens the letter and learns about the past: "Gradually the pieces began to fall into place […] Margaret could not reconcile the information in the letter from Charles Clark-Finn with the conversation she had overheard about Kitty so long ago. Suddenly her brain refused to recover the memory of the conversation. Then it came back to her in hollow snatches".[600] Margaret's consciousness tries to protect herself from the shock and the certainties she had become blurry and distant: "They did say the baby died. They did. The more she tried to hear their voices, the more distant and empty they became".[601]. This type of self-censorship somehow echoes the ones set up by Guelfenbein's characters who use to withdraw into their own imaginary worlds to avoid pain and suffering. Similarly, the protagonist's end can be interpreted as the only possible way to withdraw from the unbearable reality.

The car accident offers her the possibility to shut down the endless thoughts of anxiety, shame, and guilt she has after the discovery of the truth. Only death can end the knowing of her father's sin and hers: "Just beneath the surface of her mind lay always the reality of the message he had delivered to her, whispered in his steady voice: your father, your idol, had feet of clay; he betrayed you, he betrayed your mother, he betrayed Ophelia Mary, he lied, he lived a lie, he didn't love you, didn't love you at all. He killed Kitty Sullivan. Murderer".[602] This message only generates overwhelming emotions that the protagonist is truly unable to deal with. The "grand narrative" of her life completely falls apart. It appears that the official story of the O'Day family was only a lie. The woman everyone knew might have never existed.

This new reality shows a female character totally out of control and the anxiety she feels is perceptible during her final drive: "The lovely engine of the Mercedes ran quietly, the luxurious tyres rolled quietly, Mozart played quietly. Margaret's head ached and throbbed, and

[600] Bird 2016, p.126.
[601] Bird 2016, p.126.
[602] Bird 2016, pp.149-150.

her thoughts went round and round, now screaming and twisting, now purring fuzzily along, flowing in a fog, only to jolt suddenly and burn and flare with hot bright light".[603] The recurring intrusive thoughts run wild in a loop that she cannot stop. Again, the idea of a trauma that keeps coming back, following a circular pattern is reinforced by the following extract: "The images, the thoughts and fears swirled round and round in Margaret's mind [...]".[604] This exemplifies the notion of a time that is fragmented, non-linear, but rather circular. The past annuls the present and the possibility of the future: The present does not really exist anymore as the resurgence of the past encompasses everything. The present is not fully lived as the past is constantly thought of and the future is feared.

The emotion she feels is further described in the following passage: "The word she kept thinking was 'anguish' - this was anguish as she had never before known it [...]".[605] The anguish that the truth will one day be discovered is omnipresent to the extent that she "did not regret what she has done[606]". The feeling of anguish can be defined as follows: "Rooted in the present and coloured by the past, anguish dives deep into the realm of current suffering and distress. Often born from loss, trauma, or profound existential reflections, anguish is not merely an emotion – it's a state of being. It speaks to our deeper vulnerabilities, echoing pain, despair, and, sometimes, a yearning for something".[607]

The priority was to preserve her spotless father's reputation and hers as "Margaret had discovered she was capable of doing whatever it took for the story to remain undiscovered[608]".

However, the reader witnesses the kind of madness the protagonist experiences: "At some moments she thought she could smell smokes [...] The flames of hell – how silly. She knew there was no such place as hell, no hellfire. Hell was the absence of God. The loss of

[603] Bird 2016, p.215.
[604] Bird 2016, p.218.
[605] Bird 2016, p.215.
[606] Bird 2016, p.215.
[607] Ramasubbareddy, C. and Swetha, A. (2023) 'Anxiety and Anguish: Navigating Psychological Corridors from Childhood to Adulthood'. in Floriana, I. and Fabio, G. (ed.) (2024). *Anxiety and Anguish: Psychological Explorations and Anthropological Figures*. Rijeka: IntechOpen.
[608] Bird 2016, p.217.

goodness. That was it – the loss, the absence of goodness. Not flames. This".[609] Trauma engulfs her whole reality and suddenly becomes structured around it and nothing else seems to exist anymore. Trauma is, thus, projected on the outside world and the traumatic reality replaces the neutral landscape. The latter is rather seen as an extension of trauma.

The character's anguish can be explained by the knowing of her incapacity to eternally keep the truth hidden: "[...] Margaret's task, the task of her heart, was to prevent Doria Fogelsong from bringing it all into the light and publishing Killian's sins for all the world to know".[610] As Margaret's identity is based on other people's judgement, this would be intolerable for her. However, she knows that: "Doria was only the first – there would be other interfering family members digging into the secret recesses of people's lives". Was she planning to lock them in the bomb shelter too?".[611] Trying to control what is out of her hands triggers this sense of anguish that appears insolvable: "Oh, dear God, the story would come out one day, in a year, or in a hundred years; one day everyone would know what Killian did to Ophelia, what Kilian did to Margaret, that Killian had feet of clay".[612]" In this situation, Margaret entirely loses the control and stoicism she has always shown.

The feelings preceding the protagonist's death radically contrast with this sense of anxiety. She seems to find peace and reassurance in death while remembering her childhood: "Margaret felt suddenly warm and safe and unafraid, the horror in the cellar far behind her in a pocket of unreality[613]". Remembering her happy days as a child in the suburb of Eltham, she dreams about a reality she is willing to meet. While her passing takes the shape of an accident on the highway, it rather seems that the character wishes to find the ideal version of her life that reality has recently destroyed:

[609] Bird 2016, p.215.
[610] Bird 2016, p.217.
[611] Bird 2016, p.218.
[612] Bird 2016, p.218.
[613] Bird 2016, p.220.

> There was not much traffic on the highway. Margaret gripped the wheel tightly, missing the feel of her gloves, wishing she had returned for them. But as the lights of Dinner Plain danced towards her in her imagination, the slippery ink discs moved in across them and Margaret's hands seemed no longer able to hold on to the wheel. She glanced down at her right hand; it didn't seem to belong to her[…].[614]

It appears that Margaret does not seem to put up any resistance against her fate. It almost seems like it is her conscious choice to choose her previous reality – reached through imagination – rather than the truth she has recently discovered. In this context, death – which she does not seem to try to avoid - appears as a relief. Indeed, no comfort or hope can be found in life as truth always finds ways to be known. Thus, the character's death at the end of the novel can meet the Freudian concept of death drive according to which "the aim of all life is death"[615] as "everything living dies for internal reasons". Self-destruction appears as the only way to escape the trauma and come back to a state of peace. The fatal accident allows her to stop feeling "in her mind and heart a terrible jungle of despair".[616]

Costamagna's character seems to make a different choice at the end of *The Touch System*. The calm and sense of familiarity she experiences come from a fundamentally different place. While her initial situation is somewhat comparable to Bird's protagonist, she does not choose death and disappearance, but rather life. She therefore takes a completely different path than the rest of her family as she represents the last survivor. The discovery of the truth does not erode her identity but brings her some foundations that were lacking to build herself for the first time. Indeed, the paradigms are inverted. Ania had the feeling that she did not really exist throughout her entire life – being unseen, unheard, and replaced within her family and society.

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[614] Bird 2016, p.221.
[615] Freud, S. (1920*). Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in Strachey, J. (1995). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Vol. XVIII. London: Hogarth Press, p.38.
[616] Bird 2016, p.217.

The discovery of the truth not only brought some explanations regarding this feeling but also a base on which she could build her identity. The character's intrusive and repetitive thoughts find an answer through the history of her ancestors. It can be said that Ania built herself on a void – the void created by the premature decease of her mother and the absence of her father who replaced her with her stepfamily: "And Ania needs whatever [...] Ever since her mother died when she was two and not yet a fully formed person [...] Ever since Leonora turned up and her father started getting lost on a map of his own, sending her out of orbit".[617] The character had to face loss and absence. These components are still present once she becomes a grown-up adult as her identity seems to have been built on these core elements. Either in her social or professional life, she has the feeling of being invisible. She sees the surrounding world through the lenses of loss and lack – living her life by procuration through housesitting. This is why she had the impression of being "a stand-in occupant. Slowly turning into the people she substituted".[618] The lack of self-knowledge leads her to try to copy other people's habits. She can only try to identify herself to others – to imitate them – as she has no clue about who she is.

Furthermore, Ania lacks the tools to comprehend the world in which she lives. She acknowledges that "ever since Leonora turned up [,], [...] her father started speaking another language. A language with no tongue, unintelligible to Ania".[619] As her identity is built on a void, there is a discrepancy between the reality she perceives – the one she fails to interpret – and the reality of others, to the extent that "sometimes she thought she wasn't cut out for working".[620] Additionally, regarding her teaching practice, she explains that "and yet the actual children themselves (people in general, but children in particular), she didn't really care for".[621] This shows how the protagonist does not find her place in the world. She does not feel at home

[617] Costamagna 2021, p.14.
[618] Costamagna 2021, p.16.
[619] Costamagna 2021, p.14.
[620] Costamagna 2021, p.15.
[621] Costamagna 2021, p.15.

anywhere as she has been replaced in her own household: “Look at the shelves and walls lined with family photos [...] Stepkids, stepfamily: walls inhabited by a foreign genealogy [...] Not find herself there, not exist”.[622]

The way in which Costamagna’s character built her identity is thus also fundamentally traumatic. Discovering the truth surrounding her family’s past allows her to define herself outside of others’ judgements, categorisations, and dysfunctional relationships. Knowing and empathizing with the history of her immigrated ancestors - who had to change their identity to fit in their new country - brought the explanation of her present struggles. This also reconnected her with her real roots that were rubbed from either the family pictures or the current traditions. The perceived mismatch between society and herself could also be considered as a projection – or a consequence – of the gap between who she thought she was and who she truly is. At the end of the book, her identity does not merely depend on external factors on which she has no control, but on elements she can manage. This is metaphorically shown in the last pages of the novel. Firstly, the external world does not seem indifferent or hostile anymore, but rather welcoming and friendly:

> The panic she feels at flying hasn’t changed from when she was ten, fifteen, twenty years old. But now has the impression that the glimmering sun is keeping her safe. A velvety light brings things into focus, the little valleys, the hills, the peaks, the snow stretching across the summits. The plane judders. She knows the mountain is willing to receive her, with its yawing canyons. For her to land on rocky ground and build a provisional nest, far from the meekness of humanity.[623]

Firstly, the description of the landscape reflects her inner feeling of safety, especially in a context where the mountains were previously described as a “geographical accident”.[624] Ania has somehow been considered a foreigner all her life who does not belong anywhere. Within

[622] Costamagna 2021, p.21.
[623] Costamagna 2021, p.150.
[624] Costamagna 2021, p.101.

her family, she has been replaced and she has become invisible. She has suffered from the uprooting trauma of her family who had been forced to forget their Italian roots to fit in the Argentinian society by adopting new habits, and she was not welcomed for being Chilean in Argentina in a moment of conflict between both countries. While she never found her place within her family or society, the knowledge of the truth makes her reconcile with this past that was denied by the Coletti family. A mention is made of a "nest" in the extract above, which could symbolise warmth, safety, and protection. The safety is found in the fact that Ania's identity is not based on external factors that she is unable to control, but on the truth and the peace she has found within the discovery of the truth.

> Suddenly it strikes her that the source of her problems is that she doesn't have a garden [...] But she's certain, very certain, that in the near future, when all this is over, she'll have a garden and she'll water it with care. Like it was a little field out in the country, a small plot free of memories and blood [...] And some nights she'll think she can hear the voice the call of a bowerbird or the voice of her father. A sound that will seep into her head and keep her awake. And she'll get up in the night and arrange the hose and turn on the faucet and let the water flow into the tufts of grass and form a puddle that, drop by drop, will create the contours of her very own pond. [625]

The attitude adopted by Ania radically differs from Margaret's. She decides not to follow or reproduce her ancestors' behaviours and patterns, but to create "her very own pond" regardless of the inherited past trauma. The image of the garden is meaningful as it represents a space that she can look after, master, and create. The garden can be seen as a metaphor for her mind that she wants "free of memories and blood" that keeps her prisoner from thoughts that do not belong to her – from these voices in her head that are not hers. This passage directly refers to the recurring intrusive thoughts that turn around in the victim's mind under the shape of an

[625] Costamagna 2021, p.151.

endless loop or circle. Once the truth is known, the character seems to make the choice to break the traumatic associations that were structuring her entire life.

The parallelism between the garden and her own interiority is previously made by the protagonist herself when she pronounces the following words: "Counterpoints: do not compete with either the dog or your father's wife, do not try to find yourself in photos on other's walls, do not live through other's lives [...] have a garden and water it by night [...] cry at other's funerals as well as your own, especially your own".[626] While Ania always wanted to retire and replace other people as if she did not exist, she seemed to begin feeling aware of her very own identity. While Margaret attempts to escape a truth she cannot tolerate, Ania desires to (re)build her life on the truth she has discovered: "[...] climb into attics as if climbing a mountain. That's what she needs to do: dare to climb the stairs to the attic and bring her memory face to face with the ruins".[627] Contrary to Margaret's consciousness that did not want to remember the past to protect her from the pain, Ania is willing to know the origin of her struggles. She desires to understand the past and know the place where the overwhelming voices in her mind come from.

Finally, the symbolic meaning of the garden and the water deserves to be analysed. The garden is a well-known pattern of the Genesis[628], which is linked to the notion of origin. The garden is also related to the "virgin land", an uncultivated territory[629]. Furthermore, nature is symbolically associated with femineity and maternity[630], which amplify the notion of origin. Considering the garden as a metaphor for Ania's mind, it can be thought that it is a space that has been freed from "the memories and the blood" - a space that is stripped of the negative thoughts and voices she used to face and that she can cultivate with her very own voice. In this respect, the pattern of the water that comes to clear up – or to wash away – the unwanted voices also deserves to be brought to the fore. This element is traditionally associated with purification

[626] Costamagna 2021, p.101.
[627] Costamagna 2021, p.101.
[628] Ferber, M. (2017). *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.88.
[629] Ferber 2017, p.143.
[630] Ferber 2017, p.42.

and restoration, for instance, through the act of baptizing in the Christian tradition[631] where water is a symbol of innocence, redemption, and reconciliation.[632] Also, "water assumes the role of a mediator since it generates the possibility of a return to the state of regained innocence of body and soul. In being so, water also legitimizes the possibility with oneself [...]".[633] In *The Touch System*, water comes metaphorically to clean up the mind from past trauma when it emerges to the surface of consciousness. The last sentence of the book describes how this water, drop by drop, will help the character create her very own pond. This metaphor represents the identity she builds based on her own voice, away from the trauma aftermaths inherited from the previous generations of her family. The trauma-based bonds that were tying her up to the other family members are released, while Margaret hangs on to them.

Both stories stage the evolution of a genealogy with its distinct generations. They also place a deeply alienated woman at the centre, carrying the weight of the acts committed by her ancestors. In *Family Skeleton*, Margaret seems to be enclosed in the traumatic circle by reproducing her father's cruellest act in order to prevent the truth from being known. She is also unable to escape the intrusive thoughts in her mind. By contrast, *The Touch System* introduces a main character who breaks the circle by leaving the past behind to open up a new present and future.

The next part of Chapter 7 will further develop the notion of origin and demonstrate how it can be the meeting point where Kristeva's Women's and Men's Time - or where the linear Time of Modernity and the Indigenous circular conception of time - converge. It will also be shown how both temporalities are necessary to comprehend and to, eventually, find some resilience.

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[631] Oklopcic, B. (2008) 'Symbolism of water in Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*'. *Neohelicon, 1*, p.249. DOI: 10.1007/s11059-008-3017-7.
[632] Oklopcic 2008, p.248.
[633] Oklopcic 2008, p.248.

7.2. *Mirror Earth* and "Water": Dreams of Home

Two principal movements can be observed in the Mapuche poetry of Maribel Mora Curriao. The hope towards the future is conveyed throughout her collection of poems. This desire to create a better future is linked to the nostalgia for the lost past that keeps arising through dreams and visions of the land. Her writing depicts the exile, dispossession of the land, and the forced migrations of Mapuche people in Chile, contrasting the modern built-up cities with the country of yesteryear. In *Mirror Earth*[634], the sharp pain regarding the loss coexists with the hope of regaining this lost past. Thus, the vision of a linear future on the horizon and the permanence of the past within the present come together.

Her poetry is filled with references to the ancestors, the Indigenous divinities, the natural land, and the maternal figure coupled with the past generations. The missed past and the melancholy of the lost land are omnipresent. Dreams and visions are a prominent theme, especially the ones associated with the notion of *Perrimontun* defined as "a concept alluding to the visions and supernatural experiences of a person initiated as a machi (Mapuche shaman)".[635] Thus, the poet leads the reader into a world dominated by spirits, and supernatural forces, in which the past is an inherent part of the land that manifests through dreams. The latter assures the connection with this past that the lyric subject is willing to regain. The importance allocated to the notion of *origin* is crucial.

In this respect, the critique has highlighted that the reconstruction of the family and the ancestral memory constitutes a fundamental component of Mora Curriao's writing[636] , where "the Indigenous presence manifests itself through its enunciative ethnic space".[637] For instance, it manifests through the title of the poems and the words of wisdom written in Mapuche. In this

[634] Not many research papers can be found related to *Mirror Earth*, especially not in English, however the theme of displacement has been treated.
[635] Mora Curriao 2014 , p.64.
[636] Pinto Carvacho, K. (2016). 'A la junta de los ríos. Identitary Tensions in Sur by Diana Bellessi and Perrimontun by Maribel Mora Curriao', *Aisthesis, 59*, p.99. http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0718-71812016000100006 *(adapted translation from Spanish by the researcher)*
[637] Pinto Carvacho 2016, p.99. (translated from Spanish by the researcher)

way, the lyric subject explicitly warns the audience that she shall look for her roots.[638] Furthermore, Mora Curriao's poetry is about "a territorial "displacement" that sheds light on the "expulsion" from the original land.[639] This journey – in which some authors have seen a correlation with the Jewish exodus – will be reviewed by the poetic voice from the identification to a lineage where the female figures (the mother and the grandmother) play a crucial role compared to the masculine ones.[640] Accordingly, scholar Pedro Gissi highlights the existence of three generations that give shape to the Mapuche urban presence, which in this literary work are represented by their women. It thus seems that the Chilean author's verses point towards the construction of a feminine genealogy in which the great-grandmother acquires a fundamental role, as she marks the start of the displaced line that will culminate into the urban clan formed by the grandmother, the mother, and the speaker.[641] Besides, Maribel Mora Curriao is inscribed in a poetic tradition, one of whose the central characteristic is the revindication of the ancestral.[642] Mapuche. Memory, family origin, original territory and own language are core elements of this poetry.[643]

This Indigenous world presents a radically different conception of time where "for the Mapuche, past events are never only or entirely in the past. Instead, their engagement with spirits of the past creates an alternative way of doing history – a multitemporal strategy".[644] Additionally, "Mapuche understand state violence as existing simultaneously in the past, present, and future".[645] It can be added that "Mapuche project themselves into different pasts and presents and experience traumas from different times as a multitemporal history. From this liminal place, unrestricted by time but trapped in space, the undead construct an alternative

[638] Pinto Carvacho 2016, p.99.
[639] Pinto Carvacho 2016, p.100 (translated from Spanish by the researcher)
[640] Pinto Carvacho 2016, p.100 (adapted translation by the researcher)
[641] Pinto Carvacho 2016, p.100 (adapted translation by the researcher)
[642] Mora Curriao, M. (2017). 'Muestras de poesía Mapuche Trazas poéticas sobre una cartografía indigéna incesante'. Santiago: *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*.
[643] Mora Curriao 2018, p.172.
[644] Bacigalupo, A-M. (2018). 'The Mapuche Undead Never Forget: Traumatic memory and Cosmopolitics in Post-Pinochet Chile'. *Anthropology and Humanism, 43*(2), p.230. DOI: 10.1111/anhu.12223.
[645] Bacigalupo 2018, p.230.

history, not of remembering suffering but of making history itself".[646] Thus, "the undead are agents in history and upon history rather than simply memories of the past violence".[647] Regarding the notion of future in this Indigenous culture, other scholars argue that "to apprehend and comprehend how the Mapuche perceive the past and the present [...], we must concomitantly grasp how they perceive the future. Considered in our terms, they don't. The Mapuche language labels time only in 'present' and 'past'".[648] Indeed, it either refers to the time of the ancestors or the present, or the time since the ancestors and embraces the individual and the four immediately preceding generations".[649]

This conception of time also echoes Indigenous Australians' beliefs, where "the myths associated with origins, being almost invariably associated with culture heroes, the Ancestors of the Dreaming, dignified and personalised the universe and everything in it in a way that has no parallel in the impersonal constructs of Western science".[650] Furthermore, "most of the ancestors were associated with the land and its features, and their spirits beings were believed to remain dwelling in the land".[651] The country is embodied in Indigenous beliefs. It is a living concept that is sacred in which humans and non-humans are connected. On the other hand, the concept of *Dreaming* - which is crucial to understand the "interconnectedness of this Aboriginal world view"[652] - deserves a further explanation. This notion of *Dreaming* is "common to many, if not all, Aboriginal groups and languages"[653] and "the Dreaming denotes an ever-present reality, a dimension more real and fundamental than the physical world, which is merely temporal and contingent".[654] It can also be added that "unlike the myths of origin of

[646] Bacigalupo 2018, p.230.
[647] Bacigalupo 2018, p.230.
[648] Robertson, C.(1979). 'Pulling the Ancestors: Performance Practice and Praxis in Mapuche Ordering'. *Ethnomusicology*, *23*(3), p.398. https://doi.org/10.2307/850912.
[649] Robertson 1979, p.398.
[650] Haynes, R. (2000). 'Astronomy and the Dreaming: The Astronomy of the Aboriginal Australians', in Helaine, S. (ed.). *Astronomy Across Cultures: The History of Non-Western Science* (vol.1)/Dordrecht: Springer, p.56, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-011-4179-6_3.
[651] Haynes 2000, p.56.
[652] Haynes 2000, p.54.
[653] Haynes 2000, p.54.
[654] Haynes 2000, p.54.

most religions, Aboriginal creation stories locate the creative power not remotely in the heavens, but deep within the land itself".[655]

This echoes the notion of eternal return as theorised by Mircea Eliade. In his study of archaic societies, the historian argues that in "these traditional societies, one characteristic has especially struck us: it is their revolt against concrete, historical time, their nostalgia for a periodical return to the mythical time of the beginning of things, to the "Great Time".[656]

In *Heat and Light*, author Ellen Van Neerven also brings the theme of origin to the fore. The distinct stories constituting the book introduce uprooted characters in search of their roots. This chapter focuses on the second part - titled "Water" - where the origin is metaphorized by the *sandplants* who represent the spirits of the old people who rose from the sea. They perfectly represent the Indigenous belief according to which spirits remain present within the land. They also symbolise the permanence – or the resurgence - of the past within the present. This repetition does however not occur to destroy, but to allow the protagonist to reconnect with this past of the origins. Like in *The Touch System*, the principal character built herself on a void – disconnected from her roots. The later meeting with the *sandplants* creates the necessary condition for her to discover the ancestral knowledge she seeks. In *Heat and Ligh*t, Van Neerven's characters struggle deeply with their identity, with the desire to know themselves in a postcolonial context that seems divided between two different worlds. This separation is constantly highlighted by the political circumstances depicted in "Water", where Indigeneity is used as an excuse for the political gain of the state to the detriment of Aboriginal people who disagree with the measures. The characters have the impression that a sort of censorship is implemented where their voice cannot be heard. Furthermore, they feel like they are entrapped in a single and unilateral historical version and identity in which they do not especially recognise themselves. It seems that the state somehow has a monopoly on Indigenous identity

[655] Haynes 2000, p.54.
[656] Eliade, M. (2005). *The Myth of Eternal Return: Cosmos and History*. Woodstock: Princeton University Press, p.3.

that cannot be contested while the characters are still trying to build themselves. In these circumstances, the old spirits incarnate wisdom, peace, and a sense of home in which the character will find safety.

Regarding the role of these spirits, the critique has highlighted that "the main character's realisation of the inhuman actions undertaken in the name of modern science introduces an epistemological reflection on knowledge and power. Rapidly losing its privilege over the course of the novel, modern science appears imbued with a linear version of time and a belief in progress which, in turn, finds itself defeated by an alternative Murri worldview".[657] Both conceptions of time interact within Van Neerven's writing. The emergence of the sandpeople – the spirits of the past – seems to mimic the circular pattern through which trauma repeats itself. Indeed, "the final revelation by Kaden's Murri uncle reverses the story's significations: the so-far (scientifically) undefinable creatures have not emerged in the future, instead, for the Murri peoples they are spirits who have always been there. Some have always known what others struggle to know. What looks like the future to some is to others "for all times".[658] In this context, fiction also offers alternative ways to comprehend time. It also permits the representation of alternative narratives that validate the character's reality. Thus, the inclusion of Indigenous beliefs seems to inform our understanding of trauma - through the circular and recurring perception of time.

Furthermore, the concept of magic realism has been used by non-Aboriginal readers to explain the presence of Aboriginal old spirits.[659] However, this label has been challenged by some scholars who argue that it assimilates Indigenous knowledge and stories of time to replace them with the familiar discourse of the settler reader's comfort zone as "non-Western worldviews are associated with mere magic and hence delegitimised, and the Western

[657] Charon, M. (2023). 'Decolonising categories: Learning from "Water" by Ellen Van Neerven*'. Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature*, *23*(1), p.5. hal-04180721f.
[658] Charon 2023, p.5.
[659] Charon 2023, p.1.

worldview is positioned as the only valid reality".[660] Thus, attempting to decolonise the category of magic realism, researcher Jeanine Leane proposes the term "Aboriginal realism" - inspired by Alexis Wright.[661] In this context, "Ellen Van Neerven's short story can be considered a work of Murri realism, in which beings called the Jangigir first appear as strange and fantastical according to the colonial worldview and are finally acknowledged as spirits within the Murri worldview".[662] Fiction is used to challenge the dominant discourse of Modernity, rationality, and progress in postcolonial societies. When alternative versions of this "Grand narrative" are voiced, they are often dismissed, marginalised, or ignored. In this context, the introduction of apparently "strange and fantastical" beings - who are dehumanised – might materialise these ignored witnessing. The Jangigir also bring knowledge regarding present struggles that have not found answers in the rationality that often invalidates their symptoms.

Besides, "the opening of "Water" introduces us to a vivid image of economic exploitation of natural resources that also speak to colonial and imperial histories".[663] The criticism towards (post)colonialism is present throughout the short story – depicting a modern world that profoundly differs from the ancestral knowledge brought by the Jangigir.

The notion of origin is, thus, fundamental in Indigenous world views. In *Mirror Earth,* poet Mora Curriao illustrates the importance of this origin for Mapuche people which constitutes a core element of their identities. In *Heat and Light,* this importance is highlighted through the reconnexion of the protagonist with the reassuring past. In the previous chapter, it has been argued that the characters' identities were based on a traumatic experience whose overwhelming emotions reproduce themselves throughout time. The fact that trauma deeply affects the victim's brain to the extent that it engulfs and replaces previous memories has also

[660] Charon 2023, p.1.
[661] Charon 2023, p.1.
[662] Charon 2023, p.1
[663] Grassi S (2017). '"Queer natures": Feminist Ecocriticism, Performativities, and Ellen Van Neerven's "Water"'. *Lingue e Letterature d'Oriente e d'Occidente, 6,* p.189. http://dx.doi.org/10.13128/LEA-1824-484x-22336.

been discussed. For example, in *How to Order the Universe,* the world of the young protagonist M. solely reflects the traumatic event she had witnessed. Her inner state is projected on the outside world that appears inherently and wholly traumatic though, erasing all of her previous joyful perceptions. Regarding *Family Skeleton, The Touch System,* and *The Rest is Silence,* it can be remembered that the different characters had to build their identity based on loss, absence, inexplicable secrets and lies that did not allow them to express themselves. While this is also true in the case of *The Secret River* and *The Drover's Wife*, it can be added that the urgency and the fight for survival increase the impossibility of perceiving oneself outside of this traumatic event that has been structuring one's whole life. For many protagonists, the foundation of their identity lies in a trauma that keeps coming back or that constantly rules their perception of the world and themselves. It seems to represent the subconscious origin to which they refer by means of complex associations.

The origin described in Mora Curriao's poetry is fundamentally different from the traumatic shock at the core of the protagonist from the other books. This origin is described as a source of peace, fulfilment, wholeness, and oneness. It is also a source of hope that does not bypass the idea of the future with thoughts of anxiety and fear but creates a purpose for tomorrow. The desire to regain this original state in the future is a source of hope. Similarly, *Heat and Light* not only shows the struggles that result from the ignorance of one's roots but also how the character is finally able to find a sense of peace through reconnexion with the past.

This last chapter shall firstly analyse Mora Curriao's *Mirror Earth* to decipher its notion of origin whose characteristics will then be discussed in the light of Van Neerven's work. Secondly, the other literary works from the corpus will be reconsidered in the light of this Indigenous poetry. This part will further analyse how the pattern of origin is represented within the novels of these women writers and how it informs our understanding of trauma. Then, the final part of the research will demonstrate how the notion of origin constitutes the key point

that reconciles the linear and goal-orientated Time of Modernity with the circular Indigenous conception of time. It will be discussed how both perceptions of temporality are not only necessary to comprehend trauma but how they are intrinsically linked to the notion of origin. The analysis will mix the symbolic meanings of elements from both the coloniser's and the colonised's culture to show how their combination is crucial to fully understanding the novels.

Mora Curriao's *Mirror Earth* contains eleven poems. The symbolic meaning of this number emphasises the importance of the number one – which appears twice - considered as a symbol of unity and as the origin of all things. It could thus be interpreted as a preamble of one of the main themes of this collection of poems. The writer represents one of the most famous female Mapuche poets in Chile and her writing synthesises the central characteristics of the poetry written by Mapuche women. In this respect, the critique has highlighted the crucial presence of Memory in this type of poetry.[664] Remembering Paul Ricoeur's statement that "memory is from the past"[665], it seems that the final referent of memory will always be the past". [666] The multiple mentions of this past underline its recurring appearance into the present. This past keeps coming back in circles on a measurable timeline orientated towards the future. Thus, "time and movement become central through this affirmation, one is prior, and the other one is posterior, time and memory overlap".[667] In Mapuche poetry, the poetic voice describes an idealised past that should be regained in the future. The focus is simultaneously brought on the past and future. The lost past encompasses the disappointing present.

Furthermore, the philosopher argues that this "aporia of the presence of the absence is resolved by the means of imagination. This is how the hallucinatory seduction of imagination happens. The enchantment that takes place comes from the act of imagination and cancels absence and distance".[668] By means of dreams and visions, the bond that ties the lyric subject

[664] Luongo, G. (2012). 'Memory and Revolt in Poetry by Mapuche Women: Intimacy/Social bond I'. *Aisthesis, 51*, p.188. https://doaj.org/article/fa2831ee41f244aeb5eb712734e890c2.
[665] Luongo 2012, p.188.
[666] Luongo 2012, p.188. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[667] Luongo 2012, p.188. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[668] Luongo 2012, p.188. (adapted translation by the researcher)

to the original land is always felt and lived. Therefore, the past is not past and remains present through imaginary processes that challenge the main narrative of Modernity.

Also, "the importance of obsession in collective memory is also underlined as it mostly refers to the past that does not pass".[669] "The obsession for the forgetting forces the recalling. It also enlightens the happy memory and the shadow of the wretched memory. The duty to remember is intertwined with the notion of justice that transforms memory into a project that is triangulated with grieving process and work of remembering [...].[670]" This empathises the double status of the past that is at the same time absent and present, lost and recurring, missed and permanent. There is an ambivalent dynamic of grief and hope towards the past. In a postcolonial context, the work of memory is considered an act of revolt associated with the notion of dignity[671] and conceptualised as return, inversion, displacement, and change.[672]

Overall, Mora Curriao's *Mirror Earth* introduces different patterns to convey these themes. For instance, natural elements are massively represented throughout her work. Nature first appears through the poems' titles. Indeed, some titles integrate natural components, such as "Dreams in the Valley", "Dusk on the river", "Dawn behind the windows", "in the shadows", and "landscape". An impression of quietness and peace emerges from these titles. Additionally, other ones introduce the theme of dreams, which amplifies this impression: The poems "Perrimontun" and "Bad dreams" added to "Dreams in the valley" create a dreamlike atmosphere where spiritual and material worlds interact. The presence of Indigenous beliefs is present through the titles "Tewin Malen" - which refers to "a Mapuche feminine mythological spirit"[673] - and "Perrimontun" - related to visions in which the spirits of the ancestors manifest. The theme of orality is also represented through "Our songs remain behind" and "Song for my mother".

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[669] Luongo 2012, p.188. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[670] Luongo 2012, p.188. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[671] Luongo 2012, p.189. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[672] Luongo 2012, p.189. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[673] Mora Curriao 2014, p.75.

Nature has often been seen as a maternal element throughout history. Thus, the notion of origin is presented through the topics of nature and motherhood. In Mora Curriao's poetic work, this nature displays by the means of many natural components, including: "the moon"[674], "the mountain"[675], "the valley"[676], "the dawn"[677], the "flowers"[678], the "night"[679], and "the rains".[680] Some of these elements seem to point towards the concept of origin as they refer to womanhood and motherhood. In this respect, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* reminds us that "flowers, first of all, are girls"[681] while the moon is described as "invariably feminine".[682]

Regarding the night, "Milton describes night as the "eldest of things", though in Genesis it is coeval with day; it is "darkness" that precedes everything but the void or chaos itself". Also, "Spenser calls Night the "most ancient grandmother of all",[683] highlighting its feminine and maternal nature. It can be added that the rain is metaphorically interpreted as a "fertilizing force from the above",[684] which thus has a strong spiritual meaning that also refers to birth and motherhood. This spiritual meaning seems to be brought to the fore in the poem "Perrimontun" as the following verse can be found: "you flowered with the rains".[685] More broadly, it refers to the pattern of water, which is considered as feminine element. Similarly, the dawn "has been personified as a young woman".[686]

In Mora Curriao's poetry, rain – or more largely water – seems to represent (re)birth and blossom. Besides, origin and birth are explicitly mentioned in the same poem:

> Do not fear
>
> They [the dreams you sowed as a child] blossom from your hands

[674] Mora Curriao 2014, p.64.
[675] Mora Curriao 2014, p.41.
[676] Mora Curriao 2014, p.43.
[677] Mora Curriao 2014, p.64.
[678] Mora Currao 2014, p.64.
[679] Mora Curriao 2014, p.64.
[680] Mora Curriao 2014, p.64.
[681] Ferber 2017, p.80.
[682] Ferber 2017, p.137.
[683] Ferber 2017, p.143.
[684] Ferber 2017, p.74.
[685] Mora Curriao 2014, p.64.
[686] Ferber 2017, p.56.

Now the dawn flowers will give birth.[687]

The theme of origin is evoked through the mention of birth. The latter appears in conjunction with natural elements traditionally linked to womanhood. It thus seems that femineity, maternity, and origin are fundamental components of Mapuche poetry that are often symbolised by natural elements. This brief fragment also illustrates the double temporal movement where the past is strongly missed while the future is hoped for as it constitutes the place where past dreams will take place. In this respect, it can be said that the conception of time is one of the central points of Mapuche ontology[688]. In this cosmovision, time is cyclical and circular - as the present is considered as a return to the past – and from there to the future.[689] Furthermore, the return to the past is necessary as the model of future actions must be developed as the ancestors did.[690] While the events can be located on a linear and chronological timeline, the source of hope and reassurance lies in the circular return to the past.

The origin is explicitly mentioned in the poem "Our songs remained behind":

You know it, sister!

You silence it, sister!

The origin no longer exists

And only the origin exists

Until the impulse

Of Gnechen[691]

Ends

In

[687] Mora Curriao 2014, p.64.
[688] Lencina, R. (2021). 'Experiences of Mapuche women in Olavarría. An ethnographic approach to multiple ontologies'. *Reflexiones, 100*(1), p.15. DOI 10.15517/rr.v100i1.39609. (Adapted translation by the researcher)
[689] Lencina 2021, p.15.
[690] Lencina 2021, p.15.
[691] This term refers to "a divine being of the Mapuches. Master of Earth and people". (Mora Curriao 2008, p.36).

Infinity.[692]

The origin does not seem to merely refer to the lost lands from where Mapuche people have been chased but to something broader that remains mysterious in the poems – something that includes all the Mapuche myths. In the poem, it is said that the origin has been lost, but remains present. The idea of the future is also implied through the eternal nature of the origin that "exists until the impulse of Gnechen ends in infinity". In relation to this, scholars have demonstrated that Mapuche people live together in a diversity of times.[693] Although their daily life is ruled by the cyclical temporality described in the Mapuche cosmovision, their life is still traversed by modern ontology's linear temporality.[694]

On the other hand, *Mirror Earth* creates a dichotomy between earthly and celestial elements. This distinction between verticality and horizontality can also be observed between the mountain and the valley. This could be interpreted as a representation of the *Wall Mapu* – or the territory acknowledged by the Mapuche people as the base of their existence and culture.[695] This territory gives an account of an understanding of the world according to a circular pattern formed by a vertical and a horizontal structure.[696] This Indigenous community identifies its spiritual and historical being within this territory.[697] On one side, "the vertical structure firstly corresponds to the *Wenu mapu*, sacred space where spirits of goodness and ancestors live; Ragiñwenumapu, intermediate space; *Nag mapu*, the planet Earth where nature and human beings coexist, and, finally, *the Minche mapu*, which corresponds to the earth from the down world.[698] On the other side, the horizontal structure is defined by the ones who comprise the four cardinal points in the Mapuche zone (East, North, West, South).[699]

[692] Mora Curriao 2014, p.36.
[693] Lencina 2021, p.16. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[694] Lencina 2021, p.16. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[695] Lencina 2021, p.11. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[696] Lencina 2021, p.11. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[697] Lencina 2021, p.11. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[698] Lencina 2021, p.11. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[699] Lencina 2021, p.11. (adapted translation by the researcher)

Furthermore, the territory is seen as a container of spaces, where the energy contained in these living beings and in the natural forces that are located in this harmonious balance coincide and merge.[700] Additionally, the circle as a geometrical figure and circularity as an idea are the most accomplished representations of totality.[701]

The previous paragraph allows us to bring the hypothesis that linear and circular time are intertwined. This idea can also be corroborated by the fact that the circular Mapuche cosmovision contains – schematically - the horizontal, linear timeline from Modernity. Besides, the notion of totality is brought to the fore and seems to somehow annul the effects of this duality. The analysis shall explain later how both conceptions of time merge and are reconciled towards the notion of origin in relation to trauma.

After having highlighted the most crucial characteristics of Mora Curriao's *Mirror Earth*, two poems from this collection will be used as case studies. They will be further analysed and considered as a microcosmos of her poetry.

The first chosen poem is "Landscape"[702]:

Every evening
The same tree
Waits in the path
Of the same flock of thrushes.

This brief poem illuminates the circularity of life and its repetitive nature. This circular pattern is at the heart of Mora Curriao's poetry. There is a sense of totality – as if nothing exists outside of this circle, which also implies the idea of fatality. Time repeats itself inexorably. This repetition however appears to bring comfort by its familiarity. In parallel to this circularity, the linear conception of time is implied. Not only the notion of totality seem to incorporate opposite movements, but circularity cannot be thought of without a linear timeline where events are

[700] Lencina 2021, p.11. (adapted translation by the researcher)
[701] Lencina 2021, p.12. (adapted translation by the researcher).
[702] Mora Curriao 2014, p.61, line 4.

located. The first line of the poem above - “Every evening” - places the occurrence within a linear timeline where past, present, and future can be identified. The mention of wait brings the focus to a period of time that is quantifiable and orientated towards the future.

The second poem is “Perrimontun”[703]:

I drank the anguish of the Earth
Slowly,
I immersed my essence in the blue
And my impulse was blood.
My voice hidden in the weeds
Lost in the foothills and valleys.
The moon I greeted as a child
Rose to kiss desires
Dissolving into nothingness.
Daughter
- it said -

Do not come out at dusk
Dawn flowers will cover your bones.
Dreams will give birth.
Do not fear the marked hours
Your sign is not of the dead
You flowered with the rains
Yearning
Your steps will light the night,

[703] Mora Curriao 2014, p.64, lines 1-28.

Your path will be the way.

Daughter mine

The cry of dawn opened your eyes

And I abandoned you in the valley,

But I keep the dreams

You sowed as a child.

Do not fear

They blossom from your hands

Now the dawn flowers will give birth.

Mora Curriao's poetry – initially written in Mapudungun – has been translated into Spanish and English versions in which past and future tenses coexist. This reveals that – in order to be translated for non-Mapuche readers – a timeline that appears linear is necessarily used. From this linear conception of time, a feeling of hope towards the future emerges throughout the poem. The abundance of verbs conjugated in the future tense demonstrates the belief in a theological conception of time. A purpose seems to be given to the poetic voice's existence, which is to reach what has been lost. This goal will take place in a reality that does not yet exist.

According to a circular reading of time, past and future somehow meet each other and reconcile as the past keeps coming back and repeating itself. A circular interpretation of time in "Perrimontun" reveals that the core element of the repetition is an origin that brings peace and hope. The future is not feared. The circularity is not about an endless traumatic loop. No mention is made of a trauma that keeps coming back and whose repetition is anticipated and feared by the victim. The comeback is awaited. The starting point is not an overwhelming event that cannot be processed. By contrast, the poem emphasises past dreams and a feeling of safety.

The past the poem refers to is not traumatic but rather feels like home. Thus, the poetic voice has kept the memory of the reality that precedes trauma and reminds the reader that another reality exists outside of this trauma.

A close analysis of "Perrimontun" reveals the crucial presence of femineity and maternity. The whole poem appears as a dialogue between the lyric subject and the motherly nature that resuscitates past dreams and hopes. This personified nature celebrates childhood – associated with safety and home – throughout the verses. While it has previously been demonstrated how trauma was projected on the external world, this poem seems to suggest that the motherly characteristics attributed to nature create a totally distinct vision of the world. Indeed, the external world appears as an adjuvant that brings protection and assistance to the poetic voice. Nature is therefore personified and conceived as a living entity that has its own will. From the very first verse, the separation between the inner and outside world is somehow cancelled where it is written that "I drank the anguish of the Earth slowly". Thus, a nexus is created between the poetic voice and the nourishing Earth that is presented as a provider. The "anguish" mentioned in this poem is not overwhelming and invalidating, but it can rather be interpreted as an impulse that encourages the lyric subject to live and move forward. It seems that the deep pain – or the anguish - from the past is transformed and becomes a driving principle. The poem appears as a message of hope and a good omen. It can be read as a promise of a brighter future, where past expectations shall be met.

Additionally, the nourishing aspect of the Earth is amplified by the pattern of the moon which is given a motherly nature as it pronounces the word "Daughter" to directly address the poetic voice. In this poem, the description of nature is totally opposite to the ones provided in Grenville's *The Secret River*, where nature is presented as a site of hostility and danger. The nature here is personified as a caring mother figure who reassures and shows the way. As it has been mentioned earlier, the association made between the moon and motherhood represents a well-known symbolic pattern. Indeed, Krappe observes that the moon becomes the "master of

women", remembering that "a feminine character came to be attributed to the moon and a masculine to the sun".[704] The notion of origin can also be linked to this natural element as "Man, from the earliest times, has been aware of the relationship between the moon and the tides, and of the more mysterious connexion between the lunar cycle and the physiological cycle of woman".[705] The moon is thus associated with the notion of maternity – and consequently – of origin.

It seems that all the natural components point towards the same pattern throughout the poem as the other elements, such as the rain, the flowers, and the night, come to corroborate the feminine and motherly nature of the moon. The combined analysis of their symbolic meanings also brings the idea of resurrection, regulating principle, and germination to the fore. Firstly, the periodicity of the moon deserves to be mentioned. In "Perrimontun", the following verses can be read:

> The cry of dawn opened your eyes
> And I abandoned you in the valley,
> But I keep the dreams
> You sowed as a child.

These verses seem to refer to the periodicity of the moon. Not only its changing phases but also the fact that it is sometimes hidden from the human eye. The poem also seems to imply that even during this time of disappearance – when the poetic voice has been left abandoned in the valley – the moon remains present. *A Dictionary of Symbols* reminds us that "it is generally conceded nowadays that the lunar rhythms were utilised before the solar rhythms as measures of time, and there is also a possible equation with the resurrection – spring follows upon winter, flowers appear after the frost, the sun rises again after the gloom of night, and the crescent

[704] Cirlot, J. E (1971). *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 2nd ed. (translated from the Spanish by Sage, J). London: Routledge, p.215.
[705] Cirlot 1971, p.214.

moon grows out of the 'new moon'".[706] The poem thus seems to underline the circularity and repetitive aspect of the lunar cycle. However, this repetition brings comfort and safety. Applied to the field of trauma, it can be said that the overwhelming trauma aftermaths are not meant to last, but only constitute a phase. The traumatic circle – or loop – in which the protagonists find themselves stuck could be considered as one stage of a broader circle whose origin is not trauma.

In this respect, it could be thought that the principle of resurrection governs the poem. This resurrection refers to the dreams the poetic voice "sowed as a child" - that might seem lost - but that is meant to "give birth". In this respect, it can be added that all the natural components of the poem harmoniously congregate around the notion of (re)birth. Indeed, "the regulating function of the moon can also be seen in the distribution of the waters and the rains, and hence it made an early appearance as the mediator between earth and heaven. The moon not only measures and determines terrestrial phases but also unifies them through activity: it unifies, that is, the waters and rain, the fecundity of women and animals, and the fertility of vegetation".[707] Metaphorically, what is meant to become alive in the poem is the idealised and lost past. Past dreams are somehow introduced as seeds that will "blossom", which is highlighted in the last stanza:

> Do not fear
>
> They blossom from your hands
>
> Now the dawn flowers will give birth.

Again, a parallel is established between the poetic voice and the nature. Both harmonise, and nature is described as a site of hope and assistance. The rebirth of the past can be interpreted following the Indigenous pattern in which time is circular. This is implied by the omnipresence of the moon "as a clear and entirely visible circle".[708] Past dreams will "blossom" in the future

[706] Cirlot 1971, p.215.
[707] Cirlot 1971, p.215.
[708] Cirlot 1971, p.215.

and their return implies circularity. In relation to the notion of rebirth, it can be added that there is "the mythic belief that the moon's invisible phase corresponds to death in man, and, in consequence, the idea that the dead go to the moon (and return from it – according to those traditions). 'Death', observes Eliade, 'is not therefore an extinction, but a temporal modification of the plan of life. For three nights the moon disappears from heaven, but on the fourth day it is reborn...".[709] Death thus does not appear as a fatality but as a necessary stage that leads to life. Applied to the field of trauma – considered as the death of the previous life – this would signify that trauma aftermaths constitute a phase of a wider process. In "Perrimontun", the moon symbolically celebrates a forgotten origin – that seems to have been covered up by trauma. The circularity that emerges from Mora Curriao's poetry does not appear as inherently traumatic but as a source of hope. As has been mentioned before, the future is not feared because the past is not feared. The repetition of trauma is not mentioned, what is at play is the resurgence of a safe and comforting past.

The poem reminds the reader of past dreams – anterior to trauma – that are meant to come to life in the future. While the resurgence of the past within the future implies circularity, the linear conception of time cannot be avoided as this return is awaited in a measurable and quantifiable period of time. Furthermore, the awaited past is not present yet and can be located in the future on a chronological and linear timeline. Both conceptions of time appear to be complementary and intertwined.

Additionally, the rain is also mentioned to exacerbate the notion of fertility implied by the moon:

Do not fear the marked hours

Your sign is not of the dead

You flowered with the rains

Yearning

[709] Cirlot 1971, p.215.

The moon reminds the reader of a peaceful past in which nature is celebrated as a caregiver. The injunction "Do not fear" - repeated twice in the poem – seems to corroborate the hypothesis of trauma as a temporary period that is not meant to last and recur. The future is presented as a safe place only because – at the origin - the past was. The poetic voice "flowered with the rains" and – consequently- her childhood dreams will also "blossom" as "the dawn flowers will give birth". The conjugations superpose past and future – not as opposite sides – but as two ends gathered around the origin. Besides, "the rain has a primary and obvious symbolism as a fertilizing agent and is related to the general symbolism of life and water. Apart from this, but for the same reason, it signifies purification".[710] In the poem, the moon might have been personified and given a voice to remind us that – originally- there is life. The whole poem could be read as an invitation to reconnect with the life that precedes loss and trauma.

Moreover, it is thought that water and light are of the same symbolic family.[711] Thus, it does not appear as a coincidence that this element is mentioned in contrast with the night within the poem:

Your steps will light the night,
Your path will be the way.
Daughter mine

These lines constitute another example of the caring and motherly voice – embodied in the moon – that promises a better future. The reconnexion with the past appears as deeply empowering and healing. Regarding the symbols used in these verses, it can be said that the night has a strong symbolic meaning. Indeed, it represents "the passive principle, the feminine and the unconscious. Hesiod gave it the name of 'mother of the gods', for the Greeks believed that night and darkness preceded the creation of all things. Hence, night –like water – is expressive of fertility, potentiality and germination". It can be added that "for it is an

[710] Cirlot 1971, p.271.
[711] Cirlot 1971, p.271.

anticipatory state in that, though not yet day, it is the promise of daylight".[712] The metaphorical meaning of the night sheds light on motherhood and our origins. It also corroborates the promise of a better future. Its association with the unconscious seems to be fundamental in relation to trauma. The daughter is not defined as a victim but as an empowered woman able to survive and step out of the traumatic reality. Her path is celebrated as her "steps will light the night". These verses seem to refer to the notion of resilience. In this respect, light is symbolically associated with the principle of illumination: "Psychologically speaking, to become illuminated is to become aware of a source of light and, in consequence, of spiritual strength".[713]

The opposition made between *night* and *light* might overlap the one that can be established between unconscious and consciousness. This research has previously discussed how subconscious trauma constantly addresses the characters through overwhelming emotions and thoughts that are projected on the outside world. Trauma is encapsulated in the subconscious and only reveals itself in a fragmented manner. In this process of remembrance, consciousness plays a crucial role through the orientated actions taken by the protagonists to order these recurring thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, the corpus shows how spiritual strength can emerge from a traumatic situation. This is particularly obvious in *The Rest is Silence*, where Tommy's death takes a cathartic dimension for the other family members that forces them to confront the past they were running from. The young boy's death breaks the cycle of repetitions and initiates a new dynamic in which the other protagonists are determined to work through their trauma and unresolved issues. It can be added that Tommy himself found peace and confidence through the empowering process of truth discovery. The conscious actions taken by the protagonist light up the inexplicable feelings of rejection, shame, and suffering he used to experience.

[712] Cirlot 1971, p.228.
[713] Cirlot 1971, p.188.

In Purcell's *The Drover's Wife*, the characters' decision to tell stories to bring coherence to their overwhelming thoughts allows them to bring consciousness to their subconscious trauma and – eventually – reveal the truth. In *Family Skeleton*, Margaret's reflected decision to write her memoir to process the worrisome emotions awakened by Doria's arrival and the birth of Ophelia Rose. The processing of writing shone a light on Margaret's constant doubts, which revealed her extremely fragile identity that contrasts with the one she shows publicly. The writing of her journal has been interpreted as a dialogue between the unconscious and consciousness. It appears as a dynamic process where both parts alternatively hold the pen. The author consciously tells the story of her life while repressed memories gradually arise. Only the final revelation brings the understanding of her interrogations. The letter she receives also contains an explanation of the anxiety and the pain she experiences. Like in Purcell's novel, the suffering triggered the necessity to resort to storytelling.

This process of storytelling is common to many characters across the corpus as a coping mechanism to attenuate the pain and survive. For instance, in *How to Order the Universe*, the main protagonist M. is forced to submerge herself into an imaginary world to avoid the unbearable pain of living in a dictatorship in which her parents are the first victims. Similarly, in *The Rest is Silence*, all the protagonists withdraw into a fantasy world that meets the needs that are unsatisfied in the real world. It can also be highlighted that in Costamagna's book, the characters' literary choices are consciously made. The horror stories they read are not related to their personal trauma. The latter is projected onto the outside world that appears inherently and wholly traumatic. However, the protagonists' conscious decisions appear to be crucial to understanding their struggles. In the same way, Tommy's conscious decision to record the conversations he hears as his own thoughts will trigger the discovery of the truth and his later investigation.

Therefore, the protagonists' conscious decisions and actions demonstrate how they engage with the trauma addressed in a dynamic process. This permits us to apprehend the

characters in another light. Indeed, they do not merely appear as disempowered victims, but as beings able to take enlightened actions and reach understanding and – in some cases – resilience. Besides, fiction sometimes takes the shape of literature – either through writing or oral tradition – like in *Family Skeleton* and *The Drover's Wife*. Storytelling can thus be seen as an empowering process. In this respect, the literature review has highlighted the importance of storytelling to reduce dissociation. More broadly, it can be argued that postcolonial women's writings- that depict trauma's mechanisms and give visibility to hidden narratives - can be seen as a powerful act of resilience. Mora Curriao's poetry brings the notions of germination, fertilisation, and potentiality to the fore. Within her writing, trauma does not appear as the origin or the genesis. The poetic voice seems to remind the reader that the core pillar of one's identity is not trauma – but an origin prior to the latter. The poetic voice also gives the promise that this origin shall be met in the future. The starting point of the circular repetition does not seem to be the traumatic event, but the place of safety and familiarity described in the poem. Following this logic, trauma is not understood as an ending comparable to death, but as a sort of in-between stage. It can also be seen as an ending that leads to a new beginning considering the symbolism of rebirth displayed across the Mapuche poet's work. Trauma could be seen as a germination process that leads to some sort of spiritual strength. The last part of this chapter will demonstrate how this purpose is met in the corpus. Similarly, the process of writing in postcolonial societies could be seen as a germination process that brings understanding about the working of trauma as a pathway to healing and resilience.

In a nutshell, it can be argued that the notion of origin is at the heart of Mora Curriao's poetic work. The poet uses natural components whose symbolic meaning refers to femineity, maternity, (re)birth, fertilisation, germination, and life – bringing a message of hope regarding the future. She introduces a poetic world, where the future is not feared but seen as the time where the missed past is regained. Past and future seem to reconcile around the concept of an origin that is not traumatic. The poem also revives childhood dreams that are meant to

"blossom" in the future. Adopting a circular perspective, implies that the origin is a place of safety that is expected to repeat itself. The poem is not about an endless traumatic circle, but a life circle in which the traumatic period only constitutes one ephemeral stage. Trauma is thus not presented as permanent and irreversible. This conception fundamentally differs from the one depicted in other literary works, such as *How to Order the Universe.* In this novel, the narration shows how the principal character's reality becomes completely structured around trauma to the extent that she feels herself becoming a ghost. The traumatic event she witnessed becomes the core component of her life and she cannot see herself outside of it. The period that follows this traumatic event is perceived as an end and the possibility of the future no longer exists. Additionally, in Bird's novel, Margaret O'Day can only conceive the future as an extension – or a repetition – of her traumatic discovery. While both characters seem to have nothing in common, a similarity can be found between them. Both female protagonists have placed the pillar of their identity outside of themselves. Their whole identity was based on a reality that appeared to be untruthful. The basis of Margaret's identity was the spotless reputation of her father which confers her a privileged position within the O'Day family. The writing of her memoir revealed the extreme pressure the character was facing to meet society's expectations. While Ferrada's protagonist creates her whole identity based on a false narrative according to which she is her father's sales assistant. Her entire world seems to be structured around this discourse in the absence of which she does not exist. The character describes her role as a seller across the book but never defines herself in this occupation. Like Bird's character, her entire identity lies on something external that she cannot control. Her extremely vulnerable position is due to the fact that – once this narrative crumbles – she cannot define herself anymore. Her identity was intrinsically related to a fictitious worldview that could not last.

On the contrary, Mora Curriao's poetry depicts a harmonious correlation between nature and human beings. The feeling of hope and unity seems to come from within, which can

be inferred from the following line: “They [the dreams you sowed as a child] blossom from your hands”. This verse brings the focus back to an identity whose kernel lies within. The poetic voice is placed at the heart of the poem. She is not presented as a vulnerable victim, but as a responsible being whose actions matter. The previously analysed metaphor that opposes the light to the night brings the idea of enlightenment. Thus, the poetic voice is called upon to act and take her power back:

Your steps will light the night,

Your path will be the way.

In relation to the notion of identity, the moon in “Perrimontun” comes to remind the lyric subject of her own power. Past is remembered as the place of fulfilment, happiness, and satisfaction to which the poetic voice can reconnect to draw a better future. As her childhood dreams are celebrated, the origin is placed within herself. This confers her inner strength as she does not exclusively rely on an external event that she cannot control. In this respect, the critique has spoken about the notion of *home* in Mapuche poetry to highlight that: “The idea of displacement implies not only a human movement, but also a displacement of the conceptualisation of what we understand as space, place and, especially, home. Belonging, in brief, is meant to be moveable and with a capacity to relocate, being embodied, just as suffering and nostalgia, in the same word of memory”.[714]

This quotation seems to imply that sense of belonging, and home can be embodied – and thus located within. This would also confirm the hypothesis of remembrance – not only of past trauma – but of the reality that used to precede it. While in *Family Skeleton*, the character explicitly locates her origin outside of herself, “Perrimontun” alludes to an inner origin that can be regained. The paradigm thus seems to be inverted. The poem is not a narrative of loss, but a narrative of hope. In relation to this, the return of the past within the present – and

[714] Navarette González, C. and Andrea Saldías, G. ‘Territorio y pertenencia: Las experiencias del desplazamiento en la poesia de mujeres mapuche’. *Revista de Letras*, *58*(2), p.34. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26757478. (translated by the researcher)

eventually the future – draws a circular movement. However, this cyclical logic cannot be separated from a linear perspective in which the past is left behind in order to progress towards a distinct future. Indeed, the use of the future tense to refer to the time when dreams will blossom entails this idea of linearity. This is amplified by the image of the way – or the path – that will be lightened up by the poetic voice's steps. The metaphor of the way carries the idea of linearity and progress. It implicates a process comprised of different steps that need to be progressively walked through.

This entanglement of temporalities can also be observed in "Water" - the second part of Van Neerven's *Heat and Light*. The tripartite structure of the book corresponds to the three temporal categories. Thus, "the three parts of the book are [...] time-related (Heat-Past, Water-Future, Light-Present)".[715] Like in Mora Curriao's *Mirror Earth*, "prominent themes within the book include family, country, and identity".[716] In this respect, the writer states that "[...] *Heat and Light*[717] is largely about desire and longing and the overlap with identity. Some of these characters desire in others what they want for themselves (e.g., the ability to carry a strong queer or Aboriginal identity). In these cases, the relationships are never going to work".[718] Author Van Neerven introduces characters who express a strong desire to know themselves and find an identity in which they feel represented. This longing seems to be constantly frustrated as the protagonists evolve in a world in which their origin has been lost and usurped by the established power. "Water" is a futuristic novella within which past, present, and future interact. This coexistence is needed to change course and reconnect with the lost origin. This reconnexion ceases the research of one's identity in others and introduces an inner movement of recognition and remembrance.

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[715] Wheeler, B. (2016). 'An Interview with *Heat and Light* Author Ellen Van Neerven'. *Antipodes*, *30*(2), 298.https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/interview-with-heat-light-author-ellen-van/docview/2003611177/se-2?accountid=14723.
[716] Wheeler 2016, p.294.
[717] The representation of non-conventional identities and queer identity s in *Heat and Light* has been studied by the critique.
[718] Wheeler 2016, p.296.

Water is the pattern that establishes a link with the poetry of Mora Curriao in which natural components are omnipresent. In Van Neerven's writing, this element is also meaningful and deeply related to the theme of origin. Not only, this natural element is present within the title, but it also opens the novella. Its first pages narrate the journey of the protagonist towards Russell Island aboard the ferry:

> When I'd told my mother I was going to work on Russell Island, I admitted it was by no means an easy thing, yet I didn't feel any reluctance leaving the mainland and heading off in the ferry, powering through the thrilling surge of ocean. On the way to Russell, we passed the smaller islands; they glinted in the sun".[719]

Firstly, the theme of origin is spotlighted from the very beginning of the "Water". Not only does the protagonist refer to her mother – but this reference appears together with the pattern of the ocean. In many cultures, water is seen as "the image of the prime matter".[720] Ancient cultures consider water as the beginning and the end of all things on earth.[721] Besides, "the projection of the mother-imago into the waters endows them with various numinous properties characteristic of the mother".[722] More specifically, "the ocean as a whole, as opposed to the concept of a drop of water, is a symbol of universal life as opposed to the particular. It is regarded traditionally as the source of the generation of all life, and science has confirmed that life did in fact begin in the sea".[723] Furthermore, "the ocean is also to be found as a symbol of woman or mother".[724]

The theme of origin thus seems to be inscribed at the heart of Van Neerven's writing. Moreover, it can be added that the overall feeling that emerges from the paragraph above is a feeling of freedom and relief that derives from the journey to Russell Island. The principal character seems to find comfort by leaving the mainland while travelling across a calming and

[719] Van Neerven 2014, p.751.
[720] Cirlot 1971, p.364.
[721] Cirlot 1971, p.364.
[722] Cirlot 1971, p.364.
[723] Cirlot 1971, p.242.
[724] Cirlot 1971, p.242.

soothing ocean. Additionally, an impression of movement emanates from these lines, which recalls the travel undertaken by other characters. The image of the ferry "powering through the thrilling surge of ocean" – leaving the mainland behind to reach the ancestral land – also reminds the linearity through which the past is progressively left behind. In Guelfenbein's *The Rest is Silence*, the protagonist undertakes journeys to discover the truth. The linear movement implied by these itineraries could be interpreted as an image of the gradual progression towards truth and resilience. This linearity offers an overview of the character's progression where his increasing empowerment and amelioration can be objectively observed.

Similarly, the journey undertaken by Kaden will lead her to the truth regarding her origin and will allow her to create a distinct future. In this respect, Van Neerven's writing combines the symbolism of different natural elements to reinforce the structuring presence of origin:

> No one checks my ticket as I hop on board the ferry. I am the only one who elects to sit outside, and I soon find out why. The wind. I can already feel my face is beaten, my skin stung, my lips chapped. But I made myself comfortable, my legs drawn up underneath me, and I am away from the other people so I just sit back and feel the wind in my ears. I must fall asleep [...].[725]

The fragment above amplifies the impression of quietness and relief felt by the character during the journey to Ancestors' Island. Coupled with the omnipresence of the ocean, the wind is this time mentioned. In this respect, the symbolic meaning of this element deserves to be mentioned as it represents "an air in its active and violent aspects, and is held to be the primary Element by virtue of its connexion with the creative breath or exhalation [...] At the height of its activity, the wind gives rise to the hurricane (a synthesis and 'conjunction' of the four Elements), which is credited with the power of fecundation and regeneration".[726] Therefore, nature occupies a

[725] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 744 on 2559.
[726] Cirlot 1971, p.373.

significant place in Van Neerven's novella. The idea of a regenerative origin enables the parallelism with Mora Curriao's poetry. Both authors – who present a mix family origin comprised of an Indigenous and a European side - seem to conciliate the cleavages around the notions of nature and origin.

In this respect, it can be said that the Australian natural landscape has been described as feminine since early colonial narratives. Indeed, scholars have drawn attention to the fact that "the central image against which the Australian character measures himself is the bush".[727] Thus, the Australian natural landscape is often depicted as follows: "the male-as-norm and land-as-other; the bush as central and city as peripheral to self-definition; and the personification of the bush as the heart, the Interior – a mysterious presence that calls to men for the purpose of exploration and discovery but is also a monstrous place in which men may perish or be absorbed".[728] This echoes the Australian gothic genre in which the landscape is described as a site of danger. Grenville's *The Secret River* illustrated these frightening descriptions of the Australian land seen through the eyes of the settlers.

In such a definition, the "[...] use of the term "absorption" is suggestive of the power of the bush, like the fantasy of the primal mother, to suck up its inhabitants, assimilating them into its contours and robbing them of a separate identity".[729] Nature is thus presented as an entity that cannot be obliged and fully mastered. Furthermore, "it is one of the ways in which the feminine is present in the bush tradition – not necessarily in actual figures of women inhabiting the bush, but in response to the bush itself. The landscape provides a feminine *other* against which the bushman-as-hero is constructed".[730] Besides:

> What is assumed in the constructions of the masculine character is an otherness at their borders against which identity is measured [...] On the one hand, Australia is

[727] Schaffer, K. (1989). 'Women and the Bush: Australian National Identity and Representations of the Feminine'. *Antipodes*, *3*(1), p.7. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41956015.
[728] Schaffer 1989, p.7.
[729] Schaffer 1989, p.7.
[730] Schaffer 1989, p.7.

> largely the "other" of England, the mirror image. In metaphoric terms, the child directs his gaze back to the parent whose authority he challenges, but whose recognition he desires. On the other hand, the Australian character asserts an independent identity through an assumed relation not to parent culture but to the land as other. Representations of man's relation to the land attempt to fix the nature of Australia's unique difference from England [...] The land takes on the characteristics of feminine otherness in opposition to the masculine sameness of national self-identity.[731]

The Australian landscape is thus described as fundamentally feminine to claim its otherness in relation to the coloniser. It seems that an inherent characteristic of this feminine nature is its capacity to remain indomitable and inaccessible. In Van Neerven's writing, the spirits of the ancestors emerge from the sea and occupy the landscape in which they have rooted. The following fragment can be found in "Water":

> These plantpeople, who divide their time between the water, Russell Island and the edges of some of the smaller unoccupied islands, must cooperate during the process, for the safety of all.
>
> Some of them 'root' - that is, they firm their roots to an area, into the ground, and are hard to persuade to move; you can't get them away.[732]

The spirits of the past are associated with water, reminding the existing link between this element and the notion of origin. The fact that they are rooted in the land increases this idea of origin that remains present within the land. It could be considered that the image of nature conveyed by the author echoes this idea of an unconquerable nature that can be resisted. Additionally, the story of the sandplants who arose from the sea seems to refer to the "[...] system of belief upon a "long ago" Dreaming or Story Time in which ancestral beings –

[731] Schaffer 1989, pp.8-9.
[732] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 825 on 2559.

animals, birds, fish and other parts of Nature such as floodwaters, clouds, rain and lighting – emerged from a pool of spiritual essence, created the land and all of its features, and, on completing this task, returned into the land, becoming totemic ancestors for the human clans that followed".[733] It can be added that "Aboriginal spiritual and social being is also firmly rooted in place".[734] This confirms the permanence of the past within the present and the entanglement of the three temporalities. Water is also associated with the idea of origin when the land was created. Indigenous and European interpretations of nature seem to coexist within the literary practices of these authors. It also seems that both visions of nature are intrinsically linked to the notion of origin.

On the other hand, Kaden's initial journey to Russell Island presents a certain ambivalence. Indeed, other fragments juxtaposed to the previous ones produce a sense of anxiety and sorrow: "It isn't long until I guess the shape before us is Russell, and I make out the buildings, the smoke from the industry tankers".[735] This description sharply contrasts with the quietness and harmony felt on the ocean. The island begins to appear as a prolongation of the mainland. The first description provided of Russell is not a peaceful island, but a place that has been industrialised and exploited. This aspect is underlined by the protagonist: "I thought Russell would be what you expect of an island – peaceful, isolated, good for my thoughts, but it's not. It's a centre of activity, the company is a good way along to completing the 'Australia2' project for the government by the 2028 deadline".[736] A feeling of disappointment and disenchantment is perceptible. As it has previously been said, scholars see in these words a critique of colonialism. The political situation depicted in "Water" presents some striking similarities with Australia's colonial past.

[733] Strang, V. (2005). 'Knowing me, knowing you: Aboriginal and European Concepts of nature as self and other', *Worldviews*, *9*(1), p.43. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43809287.
[734] Strang 2005, p.43.
[735] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 751 on 2559.
[736] Van Neerven 2914, emplacement 759 on 2559.

The futuristic novella significantly echoes the historical reality. Under the cover of reconciliation, past actions are repeated, such as segregation, division, and exploitation of resources. Many times, the protagonist Kaden speaks about the government and the new president Tanya Sparkle who is introduced as an opportunist who uses the Indigenous cause for her own political gain: "She gave a spiel about reconciliation, which she stylised to 'recon' and then she said to Hugh, 'I am an optimist. I believe one day Aboriginal people will get back what they lost and more'".[737] However, suffering is used as an excuse to reproduce past atrocities and promote division and inequality between citizens. The face of the country is completely modified to showcase Aboriginality: "President Sparkle has made a few significant reforms in her tenure, particularly to Indigenous affairs. Advancement of native title, health, employment, education, creative control and recognition of culture were the main objectives of the policy".[738] Regardless of these declared intentions, the characters depict an authoritarian society where human rights are constantly violated and in which "the communities were not consulted".[739]

The situation described in "Water" seems to draw the contours of an infernal circle of repetitions where past mistakes are reproduced for the exclusive benefit of the nation and where people are segregated:

> A second 'country' is being built, by using the islands off southern Moreton Bay [...] The re-forming company are going to create new land between the twenty or so islands off the Brisbane coastline, joining them to create a super island. This is where Aboriginal people can apply to live. In the application criteria they are required show how they have been removed or disconnected from their country [...].[740]

[737] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 775 on 2559.
[738] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 775 on 2559.
[739] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 783 on 2559.
[740] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 800 on 2559.

In the extract above, the division created between Australians is mentioned. Being Indigenous appears as a necessary condition to obtain privileges that are granted by the state. Despite this apparent progress in Indigenous rights, the protagonist acknowledges that this part of the population is being instrumentalised: "As much as the government thought they did, as much as Sparkle thought they did, these people didn't want to live in this new 'country'. They didn't want Australia2".[741] Paradoxically, Indigenous Australians appear to be the first victims of this new politic, having to live and adapt to an imposed country they do not want to belong to:

> Aboriginal art has almost wiped out all other Australian art. A journo said recently in *The Australian*, 'If you're not black, forget it'. The sad thing is, most Aboriginal artists crack under the pressure and celebrity, from the commodification of their work. You only have to look at my family for examples of that. [742]

The extract above sheds light on the fact that Indigeneity is not valued for what it is, but for what it should be. It is not accepted in its variety but is constrained to the single official version tolerated by the authorities. Furthermore, the lack of freedom and the coercive control exercised over the population seem to reinstall a police state similar to the ones Australia has known in the past. The focal point of the traumatic circularity that is being drawn in "Water" is the dehumanised plantpeople: "'They're not entirely human, though, are they?'"[743] While the reader initially ignores the true nature of these plantpeople, the context establishes some similarities with Australia's colonial past: "Basically, they present a problem for the Project at this stage, as all the southern Moreton Bay islands are being evacuated. These plantpeople, who divide their time between the water, Russell Island and the edges of some of the smaller unoccupied islands, must cooperate during the process, for the safety of all".[744] Thus, the spirits of the Ancestors are confronted with exclusion, displacement, dehumanisation, and murder:

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[741] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1178 on 2559.
[742] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 791 on 2559.
[743] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1045 on 2559.
[744] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 825 on 2559.

"From talking to Jack in the lab, I know the shit would eventually kill them, and they've been developing another, more vicious substance, that will kill them faster".[745] The outlines of the interminable circle of repetitions become clearer. The Indigenous spirits re-experiencing past trauma confirms this hypothesis of circularity. In order to reach political and financial profit, not only nowadays Aboriginal Australians being mistreated, but atrocities are being committed against their old spirits.

In such a context where the plantpeople's rights are being ignored, the protagonist undertakes a process of recognition: "Larapinta is less green than the others. She has wild frond-like hair across her face, bleached pale pink in parts, perhaps from the sun. She has a face that's like me and you. With space for two small eyes and a hint of a mouth. Am I blind not to notice much difference?".[746] It can be argued that a process of recognition is taking place between Kaden - who is in search of her identity – and personification of the past she is trying to discover. By getting to know the plantpeople, Kaden also starts to know herself. The knowledge she is seeking is brought by these old spirits. Thus, it appears that - like in Mora Curriao's poetry - a reconnexion with the forgotten past operates. This past fundamentally differs from the overwhelming sensations the protagonist is used to face in the present. The meeting with the Ancestors' spirits opens up a new reality whose origin is located in the past. This forgotten past appears to be anterior to trauma. Kaden's identity is not created but rather remembered – or recognised – through the meeting with Larapinta. Throughout the novella, the theme of origin is brought to the fore through the pattern of water:

> Early in the day, while I'm on the water, the time seems to go really slow, and my thoughts cramp. I'm bored and anxious. Anxious, like when I worked at the biscuit factory. But after a while, the tasks on the water become relaxing and I find myself

[745] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1229 on 2559.
[746] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 850 on 2559.

> thinking of Dad, and other things. Maybe I can find some sort of peace with myself out here.[747]

Again, the fragment above highlights the feeling of anxiety, which is presented as a recurring feeling. Also, there seems to be a continuity between what used to be experienced on the mainland and on the island. This highlights the idea of history repeating itself. The project of 'Australia 2' awakens similar feelings of anxiety and loss. This can be interpreted as a traumatic loop in which the protagonist is stuck. In these circumstances, the water seems to bring thoughts about her father and a feeling of peace. The water was previously mentioned in association with the mother. The relationship created between water and origin is also strengthened by the sense of peace the character finds with herself on the land of the Ancestors. This might echo the statement that *home* is a feeling that is located and cultivated within through the (re)connection with an origin that is not traumatic:

> For so long I'd been alone with all these questions about who I was and I hadn't even realised how much I was hurting. I was empty. Not able to connect with anyone. And then, under the strange, intense circumstances, I was drawn to Larapinta; somehow she had understood me, she made me want more for myself [...].[748]

The passage above underlines the void that is being filled from within thanks to the meeting with the old people's spirit. The reconnexion with the origin becomes fundamental for this inner transformation to take place. Therefore, another circle seems to be drawn which starting point is the forgotten origin prior to trauma: "How can I go back? How can I unknow what I know now? I've been in the dark for far too long. I know who I am now. I know what we have to do".[749] The knowledge about the past brings the understanding of the present, which is also acknowledged by one character: "Their knowledge goes back, big time, bub. They've helped

[747] Van Neerven 2914, emplacement 986 on 2559.
[748] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1298 on 2559.
[749] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1332 on 2559.

us piece back our language. And they're going to help us stop this [...]".[750] Kaden's identity does not have to fit in the preconceived categories in which she was contained but is found – or remembered – within. The process of recognition leads the protagonist backwards to a past that has been left out. It can thus be argued that this past comes back in a circular manner within the present and the future. Besides, like in Mora Curriao's poems, the origin is not traumatic, but rather peaceful, empowering, and authentic. In this respect, the notion of origin is amplified by the pattern of the sea from where the spirits emerge: "They are our old people. Spirits. Something happened when the dugai brought the sea up. They rose with it".[751] The circularity implied by this resurgence of the past within the present appears to be entangled with the linear conception of time. Indeed, the apparition of the spirits is what allows the traumatic loop to end so that the reconnexion with the origin occurs: "She doesn't know how they, as *jangigir*, came to be in the form they are in, but they know their purpose".[752]

The notion of *purpose* is crucial as it refers to the actions that need to be taken to literally break the cycle of repetitions and create a distinct reality: "We're taking back the islands. Ki first. Larapinta will call them at nightfall'".[753] The Ancestors' spirits – embodied in the plantpeople – decided to sacrifice themselves in order to take back the islands and destroy the project of segregation that was being put into place: "They want to segregate us. Cast us out for good. Everything that this President has done drifted us – blackfellas and whitefellas – further apart".[754] Not only the dreadful project of 'Australia2' is being blasted, but the interminable traumatic circle seems to be breaking down. In relation to this, the idea of linearity is massively represented, mostly by the means of journeys. It has previously been said that these journeys could be analysed as a metaphor for the progression that consists of leaving the traumatic past behind while moving towards a different future. The final part of "Water" is

[750] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1279 on 2559.
[751] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1279 on 2559.
[752] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1332 on 2559.
[753] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1288 on 2559.
[754] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1279 on 2559.

filled with passages that bring an impression of movement to the fore. Two of them are being taken into consideration. The first one states: "I get out of the vehicle casually. If anyone's here, if anyone questions me, I'm a little early for work this morning because I missed yesterday. It's quiet. I shine my way to the door [...]".[755] The accent is placed on the different actions taken by the protagonist in order to complete the purpose of the *jangigir*. The impression of linearity can be felt through these different actions orientated towards their goal. The way Kaden must travel to fulfil this purpose is also mentioned. The second extract corroborates this impression of linearity: "I drive the few extra hundred metres to the building next to the Science centre, the orange one, which was the hospital and security base".[756] The insistence on the distinct actions and steps that the character has to go through brings dynamism to the narration. The use of the first person of the singular highlights Kaden's willingness and determination to fulfil the jangigir's mission of changing the course of events.

> In the clear water behind the ferry I can see them. They are everywhere Stretching out as far as my vision reaches. And then I know there are as many behind them. The brown reeds of their hair are all that is showing. They move in in formations, in shapes similar to the last letter of the alphabet. Larapinta is one of them. There must be thousands. I step onto the ferry and stand next to my uncle. The water is rising around us and I can feel the force in the leaping waves and what we're about to do.[757]

The last sentences of "Water" seem to bring together the notions of circularity and linearity. Both conceptions of time do not appear as irreconcilable worldviews but as complementary parts. The pattern of water opens the novella by introducing Kaden's initial journey to

[755] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1364 on 2559.
[756] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1373 on 2559.

[757] Van Neerven 2014, emplacement 1389 on 2559.

RussellIsland. The final part of the story also places this natural element at the heart of the plot. The return of the spirits of the old people embodies the permanence of the past within the present. The writing is thus governed by a circular pattern as the meaningful presence of the water opens and closes the narration. The theme of origin reaches its climax through the protagonist's reconciliation with the past. Kaden's journey also illustrates the process of recognition of contact with the spirit of the Ancestors. Such a process of remembrance can only be considered backwards, which necessarily implies the idea of linearity. Furthermore, both ends of the novella can be considered as the starting point and the destination of the character's inner journey of self-discovery. This point demonstrates how the linear conception of time is essential to leave the traumatic past behind and progress towards a new reality that paradoxically finds its grounds in the original time. It can also be added that while the infernal circle of repetitions can be analysed as the subconscious trauma's address to be known, the goal-orientated conscious actions of the character allow this cycle to be broken so a new one can begin. The protagonist's evolution can thus be measured on a linear timeline. Her journey to the land of the Ancestors metaphorizes her inner metamorphosis – from the initial confusion to the final regained confidence and strength.

In conclusion, the linear time of Modernity and the circular Indigenous conception of time seem to reunite in the writing of both women writers. The circular vision of time appears as a key concept for the understanding of the cycle of traumatic repetitions. On the other hand, the linear Modern temporality is needed to distinguish the traumatic cycle from the timeline that rules daily life. The separation of both temporalities allows us to understand how trauma is projected onto the outside world while both realities are actually separated. This also permits the adoption of a decolonial gaze on the landscape by acknowledging that it is inherently neutral and independent of the human's attempt to control it. Moreover, both temporalities seem to reconcile around the notion of origin. Indeed, the circular conception of time leads the characters to a non-traumatic origin that can be regained. Simultaneously, the linear timeline

appears as a precious indicator of the characters' progress that can be seen as a healing journey that needs to be got across. The journey comprised of their different conscious and purposeful actions triggers the ending of the traumatic cycle.

7.3. Linearity and Circularity: The thread across the corpus

A similar pattern can be observed throughout the corpus. The combination between the recurring nature of trauma and the journeys undertaken by the different protagonists has already been mentioned. Additionally, the meaningful presence of natural components to symbolise the origin has also been evoked. The last part of this chapter will further analyse the ending of some other novels in light of this notion of origin that combines linearity and circularity.

Within the corpus, many characters seem to find resilience at the end of their journey towards the truth. The repetitive circle of traumatic events breaks under the weight of their actions which opens a new regenerative cycle. This has been developed in the case of Purcell's *The Drover's Wife.* Despite the tragic ending of the main protagonist, this event paves the way to a peaceful future. The idea of circularity is represented through the recurring, overwhelming, and worrisome thoughts that invade Molly's mind. Besides, the cycle of violence seems to repeat itself across the generations of women. The linearity is depicted through Molly's willingness to protect her progeny. This is also symbolised by her final journey during which her children are given freedom. This journey where the past life is left behind while the mountains become visible on the horizon implies the idea of progression and linearity. A close reading of the final part of Purcell's literary work shows how the reconnexion with an origin prior to trauma has been reached. The text is dotted with mentions of natural elements that convey the idea of regeneration.

The nature aligns with the feeling of peace and joy experienced by the protagonists: "The baby sits on her father's lap and snuggles into his chest, sucking her thumb. He begins: 'Monaro. Ngarigo. Walgalu. Country. Water. Life force. Runs through our veins. Boundaries.

Songlines, we sit down this side. Family. Mother. Deep ancient connection...'".[758] Like in Mora Curriao's and Van Neerven's literary works, the water is mentioned in relation to motherhood. A deep ancient connection has been remembered and regained. Molly Johnson's descendants acknowledge the importance of this origin as the pillar of the identity on which they build a new destiny. Moreover, other extracts from *The Drover's Wife* use the pattern of light, which symbolises spiritual strength: "Their laughter and squeals of delight can be heard from outside. Molly's old shanty is now a large family home with a veranda wrapping all the way around it. It sits in the light of the fire pit that still burns and, now, electric lights that highlight every room through the glass windows".[759] The theme of resilience seems to be brought to the fore. The light metaphorically represents the spiritual strength that has been gained through the hardships, so from henceforth a new narrative is being told and will be passed on to the later generations. The drover's wife's story of loss and abuse has been transformed into a tale of resilience, strength, and justice. She is not introduced as a weak and helpless victim, by as a referent of resilience for her lineage.

In this respect, femininity and motherhood are omnipresent within the last lines of Purcell's book. For instance, the following quote can be found: "Outside, a blanket of brilliant stars fills the sky and a new moon smiles down on the landscape below".[760] It has previously been said that the moon is considered to be a feminine and motherly element associated with the principles of germination, fertilisation, fecundation, and regeneration. Its symbolic meanings overlap the ones traditionally attributed to the night. The dreadful process that led to the writing of this new narrative could be considered a necessary stage of germination. This implies the idea that some resilience and spiritual strength can be found in a traumatic situation. Also, it appears that beauty and creation can emerge from the pain.

[758] Purcell 2019, p.222.
[759] Purcell 2019, p.221.
[760] Purcell 2019, p.222.

Finally, the impression of circularity reaches its apogee through the last paragraph of the novel:

> By the old snow gum a woman stands. They have a visitor. Oh, no – wait... It's the feminine shape of the tree trunk, exaggerated by the dark night and the firelight. Or is it?
>
> Oh, to see these trees after an autumn shower . . . it's this rare beauty that reminds me why I stay . . . Molly Johnson's legend and family live on. On Country.[761]

The same quote is used at the opening and the ending of the book. The circle that is drawn is not an infernal repetition, but the promise of hope and beauty. The regenerative, purifying, and fertilizing power of the rain is mentioned. Additionally, this circularity is increased by the mention of the seasons eternally alternating in a circular way. The explicit mention of womanhood also deserves to be mentioned. All the other natural elements seem to combine around the central theme of origin. A state of quietness, relief, and peace seems to have been regained. It comes from the reconnexion from a previous state of being and the remembrance of the origin. This reconnexion with the past is necessarily linked with the linear progress towards a new future that does not look back to the traumatic past.

In Guelfenbein's *The Rest is Silence*, the principle of circularity is needed to understand – not only the protagonists' recurring thoughts – but also the repetition of transgenerational patterns. Again, the situation depicted in the last pages of the novel brings a circular and linear conception of time together. Indeed, after Tommy's death, Alma removes herself from her imaginary house of water and begins the journey that reunites her with her husband: "I know that she is rubbing the back of her hand across her nose, back and forth, that she has a determined look on her face, and that her foot is pressing down hard on the gas pedal".[762] The idea of movement, purpose, and linearity is patent through the reading of this fragment. This

[761] Purcell 2019, p.222.
[762] Guelfenbein 2011, p.259.

movement allows the traumatic cycle to break by taking a different and inspired action. This idea is metaphorically represented through the image of the labyrinth drawn by Tommy:

> I need air. I go down the stairs and into the hallway where Tommy's drawings are hanging. I stop in front of his labyrinth. An ethereal Theseus holds his lance over the Minotaur's body. It's a pain-free battle, as if both, after acting out their portrayal of conquest and death, will shake hands and leave the labyrinth together. A line runs through the drawing. It's Ariadne's thread, which Tommy called "the thread that leads love out.[763]

The image of the labyrinth in which the captives turn in a circle and the linear shape of the thread seem to metaphorize the entanglement of linearity and circularity. The labyrinth might refer to the cycle of traumatic repetitions in which the characters are stuck while the thread symbolises their conscious actions towards the truth. It also symbolises their linear progress towards healing, resilience, and self-discovery. Thus, it does not appear as a coincidence if *The Rest is Silence* ends with this metaphor: "You are all that. You are the thread Tommy left for me to get out of the labyrinth, because I can't do it alone. Do you remember?".[764] The main protagonist's death allows the breaking of the traumatic cycle to create a different narrative based on love and growth. This reminds us of the origin based on love instead of suffering.

It can be added that Tommy himself previously reconnected with this loving origin before his death. During this episode, a similar impression of linearity and progress can be felt: "I keep climbing downhill, my eyes always glued to the path. When I reach the breakers, I'm exhausted."[765] The image of the path is indeed conveyed. The remembrance of the forgotten unconditional love of his mother is introduced in relation to the pattern of the sea: "The sea is very rough; the waves are getting higher, stronger. I take off my backpack and go forward a few feet along a black, smooth boulder that rises above the water, like a great big hanging

[763] Guelfenbein 2011, p.112.
[764] Guelfenbein 2011, p.259.
[765] Guelfenbein 2011, p.212.

terrace. I keep looking at the sky, until the sun starts to go down between the swirls of the dark clouds".[766] It seems that a link is established between motherhood and water as her mother's grave faces the sea. At the moment of his passing, Tommy's desire to meet his mother again seems to be fulfilled:

> I lift up my arms like Kájef taught me and close my eyes. I see the woman's smile; I see the light side of Mama's face; I see myself, big and smiling in her sparkling eyes; I see a ship in the middle of the sea; I see what will never return; I see hundreds of birds taking off in flight; I see the impact, the twisted iron over my head, Mama's bleeding face; I hear a shout; I see my heart beating faintly under my ribs; I see Kájef at the bottom of the sea, his body floating, like a fish. All of that is inside me; all of that is me.[767]

Despite his tragic ending, Tommy's final words transmit a feeling of self-acceptance. He is presented as a being who embodies the whole world and does not appear as inherently traumatic anymore. He embraces the motherly love he remembered, and his death can be considered as a sacrifice that "leads love out" so that his father and Alma can heal together and change the narrative of trauma into a narrative of resilience.

The ending of *The Touch System* also symbolises Ania's inner metamorphosis through the image of a journey: "A velvety light brings things into focus, the little valleys, the hills, the peaks, the snow stretching across the summit. If she adjusts her gaze, she can touch the hills with her eyes. The plane judders. She knows the mountain is willing to receive her, with its yawning canyons".[768] The image of the light as a symbol of spiritual strength is also present in Costamagna's writing. The feeling experienced by the protagonist is a feeling of acceptance and calm. The intergenerational inheritance of trauma seems to take an end by means of Ania's conscious steps towards the truth. At the end of the novel, she has reconciled with her origin

[766] Guelfenbein 2011, p.213.
[767] Guelfenbein 2011, p.213.
[768] Costamagna 2021, p.150.

and rebuilt an identity whose pillar is found within herself. The last paragraph of Costamagna's novel also uses the symbolism of the water in conjunction with the one of the garden. An impression of regeneration and purification emanates from the text: "[...] she'll have a garden and she'll water it with care [...] And she'll get up in the night and arrange the hose and turn on the faucet and let the water flow into the tufts of grass and form a puddle that, drop by drop, will create the contours of her very own pond".[769] It has been previously mentioned that the garden symbolizes consciousness. It is also a feminine symbol of order. This shows how the protagonist breaks the traumatic cycle in which her family is trapped unable to master their invasive and overwhelming thoughts. Her final journey back to Chile marks the end of the infernal and traumatic loop and opens a new era where her conscious steps allow her to bring sense to her past.

Finally, Margaret's death could be interpreted in another light. While it clearly appears that Bird's character is truly unable to tolerate the truth, she seems to find some comfort and reassurance on the brink of her death. Firstly, the impression of linear movement is also conveyed through the protagonist's final journey: "Margaret gripped the steering wheel with her bare hands, and there was something unfamiliar and somehow comforting about the immediate contact with its curved surface".[770] The character drives her car on the highway, which brings this visualisation of linearity. It emphasises the actions she takes that are accurately described by the narrator. Finally, it appears that death is the only possible way for Magaret to regain the peace and safety she once experienced:

> The lights of the far distant village sprang into Margaret's vision quite unexpectedly, like the twinkling lights in a Christmas scene, like a Swiss fairyland in a department store window. The lights in the window of the O'Day lodge, the lights of home. The lights of the old house in Eltham glimpsed through the blossom

[769] Costamagna 2021, p.151.
[770] Bird 2016, p.219.

> of the apple trees. Margaret felt suddenly warm and safe and unafraid, the horror in the cellar far behind her in a pocket of unreality. Nothing was going to happen [...] Some table napkins the colour of cabbage leaves, somewhere something carved from malachite, a glass bowl of fragrant roses, Blue Moon.[771]

The moon is mentioned in an extract that is replete with childhood memories. The feelings evoked by the protagonist are feelings of safety, calm, and home. The linear movement that leads Margaret to death allows the traumatic cycle to break. The character's disappearance ends the loyalty towards the past and creates the necessary space to build a new reality. At her death, she seems to remember a peaceful and happy reality that trauma had completely erased and that she is willing to rejoin.

[771] Bird 2016, p.220.

CHAPTER 8:DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The research has shown that the joint analysis of the literary practices of women writers in Australia and Chile can inform our understanding of truth-telling in postcolonial societies. The following question has been addressed: "How can truth be told in postcolonial societies where violence is ignored and where truth is silenced?

Firstly, it has been argued that the representation of trauma by means of fiction within the corpus allows the validation of the characters' experiences and struggles. In this respect, not only does literature give voice to silenced narratives, but it is also able to inform us on the functioning of trauma. Indeed, literature seems to mimic the ways in which subconscious trauma addresses the characters.

In relation to this, Chapter 3 has underlined the authors' common desire to voice silenced discourses and to shine a light on hidden truths. The first chapter strongly highlighted the recurring and overwhelming thoughts and emotions faced by the protagonists. In so doing, the crucial impact of trauma on their existence has been brought to the fore. It has also been argued that the past has not been left behind, but remains present – or keeps coming back into the present. Chapter 3 has simultaneously depicted different types of violence that enable the protagonists to know the truth and talk about their traumatic experiences. This impossibility constitutes a major difficulty in the acknowledgement of trauma and understanding of their struggles. Drawing on the early Freudian definition according to which trauma is a wound that remains latent in the victim's subconscious, the protagonists' recurring thoughts and emotions have been interpreted as the voice of the trauma seeking to be known. The impossibility of safely communicating one's struggles challenges Freud's statement that trauma is acknowledged through interaction with another. It seems that one can only acknowledge one's trauma through the trauma's address to

someone else. However, the corpus introduces characters that no one listens to. Furthermore, violence is systematically faced while trying to express these overwhelming experiences.

Thus, it has been argued that trauma – seen as a subconscious wound – constantly addresses the characters themselves through their thoughts, emotions, and repetitive patterns. It is shown that the protagonists are entrapped in a repetitive cycle of trauma. In relation to truth-telling in the postcolonial context, this means that trauma has its own voice and mechanisms to be known, which challenges the censorship installed to keep it hidden. Finally, Chapter 3 explains how the different characters address the voice of trauma throughout the corpus. They mainly try to make sense of their fragmented and worrisome thoughts by means of fiction – either through a process of storytelling or writing. Also, the importance of their imaginary worlds, and dreams and the ways in which they engage with fictional works has been further studied.

Secondly, Chapter 4 has highlighted the significant impact of trauma on the protagonists' brains through the analysis of the landscape. The representation of the landscape in Ferrada's *How to Order the Universe* and Grenville's *The Secret River* revealed that the external world is not accurately and objectively depicted, but rather represents an extension of the characters' thoughts and emotions. This implies that trauma can be projected onto the landscape that thus appears inherently and wholly traumatic. Chapter 4 has also shown how trauma annuls the previous reality that is completely replaced by a world that is perceived as fundamentally traumatic. Thus, trauma modifies the victims' perception of the world. Within the corpus, this is perceptible in the descriptions of the landscape that evolved according to the characters' inner evolution. It has been argued that the characters do not differentiate between the inner and outside world. Consequently, confusion is created between trauma and the landscape, which also implies that past and present are entangled. The characters apprehend trauma as an external phenomenon over which they have no control.

Chapter 5 focused on Purcell's rewriting of *The Drover's Wife* and Guelfenbein's *The Rest is Silence* to demonstrate how the protagonists' overwhelming emotions lead to the truth. They actually constitute the remaining link to the truth hidden in the subconscious. It has been shown that the body remembers what consciousness has repressed or ignores. Their overwhelming feelings and thoughts do not merely appear as invalidating elements but as the voice of trauma seeking to be acknowledged by the characters. These novels permit to take a completely different approach than the one introduced in the previous chapter. Trauma does not appear as something over which the victim has no control as it is contained outside of himself but as an inner process of remembrance.

In this process, storytelling plays a crucial role in *The Drover's Wife* as it allows the traumatic emotions and repressed memories to arise. Similarly, the close analysis of *The Rest is Silence* revealed how fiction – through the characters' imaginary world – sheds light on their unsatisfied needs and trauma. Therefore, the presence of fiction within the books represents a crucial element regarding the discovery of the truth.

Furthermore, the knowledge of the truth awakens a feeling of empowerment within the characters that become able to create a better future. Also, Chapter 5 introduces a double movement that is present across the corpus. Indeed, trauma appears as a circle of repetitive events in which the protagonists get caught. This also brings the focus on intergenerational trauma that repeats itself throughout the family generations. This cycle of repetitions has also been interpreted as the voice of trauma seeking to be acknowledged. In parallel to this circular traumatic pattern, linearity is implied through both novels, mainly through the different journeys undertaken by the characters. These journeys have been analysed as a metaphor for the protagonists' progress towards the truth, which also involves an inner transformation. The characters gradually evolve and this linear progression is precisely what allows the cycle of repetitions to break. In other words, the different conscious and mindful actions taken by the protagonists to understand their overwhelming emotions help them to

find the truth. It also appears that – only once the truth has been known – the traumatic repetitions can stop in favour of a different future that would not be based on past trauma. This permits corroboration of the hypothesis that trauma is thus not something contained within the landscape. It does not appear as some sort of fatality on which the victim has no power, but as an inner phenomenon that can be processed and worked through. This brings a message of hope and a possibility of resilience.

The next chapter establishes a comparison between Bird's *Family Skeleton* and Costamagna's *The Touch System* to demonstrate how the use of fiction within the books creates a distinction between the linear timeline of daily events and the circular temporality of trauma. The multiple references to fiction within both novels show how the linear temporality is constantly interrupted by the circular movement through which the past comes back into the present. This movement is mostly represented through the protagonists' repetitive thoughts. The characters tend to project this circular pattern onto everyday life. However, fiction creates a distinction between both temporalities, which allows us to undo the "shattered assumptions" – or the subconscious associations made between trauma and the external world. Understanding that both realities are separated and obey different timelines implies that the landscape is not fundamentally traumatic. Indeed, it confirms the hypothesis that trauma is an inner event to which the external world is not intrinsically linked. Thus, trauma is definitely seen as a process that must be walked through, and not as a fatality contained in the landscape that overcomes the victim. The distinction between linearity and circularity overlaps Kristeva's distinction between Men's and Women's Time. While the first one is described as linear, future-orientated, and purposeful, the second one is repetitive, circular, and cyclical. Kristeva's distinction has also been associated with the distinction between the Time of Modernity and the Indigenous circular conception of Time. Both worldviews appear necessary to comprehend the functioning of trauma. The everyday life can be objectively measured while traumatic emotions repeatedly arise in order to be

processed. Acknowledging that both realities are separated can also be considered as a method to decolonise the landscape. Indeed, the projection of trauma onto the landscape could be seen as a colonial will to master it. Recognizing that the landscape is independent of one's trauma implies abandoning a colonial gaze.

Finally, the last chapter has further studied Mora Curriao's *Mirror Earth* and Van Neerven's "Water" to introduce the notion of origin as the meeting point where the Time of Modernity and the Indigenous circular conception of time reconcile. Both literary works place at the core the reconnexion with an origin that precedes the traumatic event on which characters have built their identity. The critique demonstrates that trauma engulfs the previous reality, which is also depicted in the corpus. Other characters have built their identity on a trauma that has been intergenerationally transmitted. Chapter 5 analyses the description of an origin that is not traumatic. By contrast, it awakens feelings of hope, quietness, and peace. This origin evokes a time that simultaneously seems foreign and familiar to the protagonists. It brings the memory that something existed before trauma. The few characters who are able to break the traumatic cycle of repetitions are the ones who can reconnect with this origin. Truth is found in a past that comes back into the present to create a better future. Their identity does not exclusively depend on external factors they cannot control but on an inner feeling of home. The theme of origin is present throughout the corpus by means of natural components that refer to motherhood, femineity, and fertilisation.

On this basis, a new circle can be drawn whose origin is not fundamentally traumatic. The trauma aftermaths are seen as a limited part of this new circle and not as a permanent stage. Circularity and linearity appear to be entangled as the linear progression towards the truth is what permits the traumatic cycle to break and reconnect with the origin. Also, the linear perception of time is necessary to leave the past behind and move towards a better future. It is also crucial to measure the characters' progress towards the truth and inner

peace. The process of recognition – or remembrance – of this origin shows that the body knows the way to resilience and healing.

To sum up, it can be argued that truth always finds its own ways to surface and address the victim. The voice of trauma speaks louder and rounds the censorship imposed on the victims – and sometimes by the victims themselves. Trauma has been embodied. Its voice talks through patterns of repetitions, recurring thoughts and apparently inexplicable emotions. These struggles are typically seen as invalidating. However, they can be interpreted as guidelines that directly lead to the truth. The acknowledgement of past trauma seems to be a dialogue between subconscious and consciousness. In this process, fiction plays a crucial role as it allows repressed memories to arise. Fiction – by means of storytelling, literature, imagination, or writing – brings some coherence to fragmentary and blurry memories. In the corpus, resilience can be found after trauma which is presented as a period of germination. In this respect, it can be added that postcolonial literature has emerged from trauma. This literature allows a further study of trauma and brings a message of hope. It can also show some pathways to resilience. This shows how resilience and beauty can flourish from trauma.

On a national level, it can be said that postcolonial societies – such as Australia and Chile, built their identity on trauma. While the traumatic past cannot be changed, resilience and spiritual strength can be found.

Finally, the research project had to select a limited number of books. Also, some books from Chilean women writers have not been translated into English. Therefore, they could not be taken into consideration for this study. However, the representation of trauma through fiction can be studied in other literary works, such as *Space Invaders* and *Chilean Electric* by Nona Fernández or *Theatre of War* by Andrea Jeftanovic, where the repetitive traumatic cycle can be understood through fiction.

The research has shown how trauma does not always constitute the end but a process of germination and growth that can lead to creation, beauty, resilience, and spiritual growth. It has also demonstrated that reconciling opposing worldviews is necessary to understand the functioning of trauma and introduce pathways to healing. A message of hope can be read throughout the corpus. The traumatic cycle is not a fatality that cannot be overcome, but an inner process in which humans have the power to change their destiny. Australian and Chilean women writers introduce trauma as a process that can be used as a way to get one's voice and power back. The literature review shed a light on the importance of opening trauma theory to non-conventional modes of beliefs to create alternative ways to approach postcolonial trauma. The research demonstrates how the Indigenous conception of time allows us to understand the functioning of trauma and how its combination with the Western rational thinking offers the possibility of healing.

Finally, the symptomatic disavowals that undergirded the 2023 Australian Indigenous Voice Referendum show that the past is not over. The results of the Referendum demonstrate a divided society in which Indigenous voices remain unheard or ignored. This event also shows how the unresolved past keeps returning to the present – addressing us in order to be acknowledged. The texts examined here suggest that listening to the past should be treated as an opportunity for future growth.

In the process of Reconciliation, the thesis has suggested that Indigenous knowledge systems and approaches to time, together with modern ideas of linearity and progress, can and should complement each other to address the past with a mind to improving the future. The thesis has shown that both conceptions of time are complementary: they inform each other in relation to trauma. Trauma requires both knowledges to be comprehended, and understanding that looking towards the future does not mean forgetting or leaving the past behind, but rather using the present to break a traumatic cycle and create a new story where division is replaced by unity. These works suggest that the past cannot be changed, but the

future can through the actions that are taken in the present. Both representations of time are represented together in the literary practice of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women writers, which allow a better understanding of trauma. The combination of both worldviews is precisely what permits the comprehension of each other's trauma. Trauma could not be comprehended without the reconciliation of two apparently opposite worldviews. In the context of nations whose identity has been built on trauma, Reconciliation could be reached by coming together beyond our differences, rewriting the story and making the choice of creating a different future. The Australian Indigenous Voice Referendum showed a society that is still divided. Indigenous voices seem to remain unheard. Perhaps because there is a fear that opposite worldviews would be impossible to reconcile. However, the thesis has shown how both conceptions of the world complete each other and allow a better understanding of our own beliefs. The only way to overcome division might be to recognize the intrinsic part of the other within ourselves. In this respect, the thesis has shown that work still needs to be done – as Reconciliation has not fully been reached yet and past keeps hunting the present. Nevertheless, there is hope for the future that depends on the actions we take and the conscious choices we make to create a better future together.

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