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**ÅBO AKADEMI – FAKULTETEN FÖR HUMANIORA, PSYKOLOGI OCH
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Abstrakt för avhandling pro gradu

Ämne: Engelska språket och litteraturen	
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Abstrakt:	
<p>The objective of the thesis is to investigate whether a psychological model intended for use on real people can be used to understand the grief of literary characters as well. Secondly, the text also discusses whether or not such an understanding can be used to allow one to understand the grief of real people as well, if an understanding of literature leads to an understanding of reality.</p> <p>The theory used for this examination is the stage-based 1969 Kübler-Ross model which outlines the phases one goes through after experiencing a major emotional trauma, i.e. denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. The stages do not necessarily occur in that order, but denial typically comes first and acceptance last. The novels used are William Faulkner's <i>As I Lay Dying</i> (1930), Kazuo Ishiguro's <i>Never Let Me Go</i> (2005) and Jim Harrison's <i>Returning to Earth</i> (2007). These novels were selected due to the different forms of grief and grievers they illustrate, as well as representing a difference in both time and place of origin.</p> <p>The grief in <i>As I Lay Dying</i> is very complex and not all of the characters are able to go through the entire Kübler-Ross grieving process, or even grieve in a normal manner at all. Their mentalities are frequently so different from that of real people as to be almost alien, and the applicability of the Kübler-Ross model is thus sometimes hindered. Regardless, it still functions to an adequate degree.</p> <p><i>Never Let Me Go</i> is narrated in retrospect and the grief therein is thus often fragmentary, particularly when the topic is the narrator's childhood, but it grows in detail as the narration approaches the present. The many causes of grief in <i>Never Let Me Go</i> are most often not caused by a death, but rather by relatively minor events, indicating that it is not the nature of the loss that is critical to the existence of grief but rather its emotional impact.</p> <p><i>Returning to Earth</i> depicts grief both before and after the death of a family father, but unlike the other two novels it also displays the process of dying from the father's own perspective. However, it runs into problems with the Kübler-Ross model as it skips the first few months following his death, thus leaving out a critical part of the grieving process.</p> <p>The Kübler-Ross model is useful to some degree for understanding the grief of literary characters, but it inevitably encounters difficulties. The grief depicted in the novels analysed often does not function in the same way as real-life grief, be it due to the use of literary techniques such as time skips or retrospective narration from memory, or the unusual mindset of the characters. The fundamental problem is thus that since the model is intended for use on real people, it cannot be applied to literary characters without issue. Still, it is possible that it is more accurate if the characters and style of the novel mirror reality more than the ones used here. The same applies to a potential understanding of real people as a result of an understanding of literary characters.</p>	
Nyckelord: Death, grief, bereavement, Kübler-Ross, Faulkner, Ishiguro, Harrison.	
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1. Introduction

While the notions of applying psychology on literary characters, as well as using various psychological approaches in order to understand grief in real individuals are not new ideas, there appears to be little research done on the potential applicability of psychological grief theory on literary characters in an attempt to understand their grief and their resulting actions. The primary objective of this thesis, apart from the literary analysis itself, is thus to investigate whether or not the theory used can be a viable approach to understanding the grief of literary characters, who were never the intended subjects of the theory here employed, as they are obviously not real people, which could generally lead to potential issues if e.g. they do not react to bereavement in a way that a real person might. Secondly, the study discusses whether this hypothetical understanding could be applied to real people as well, in an effort to understand grief in reality through grief in fiction. The primary theory used is the stage-based Kübler-Ross model which, in brief, asserts that any griever will undergo a number of emotional stages as part of their grieving process and that understanding and successfully identifying these stages will allow one to understand the behaviour and emotions of the bereaved. The initial hypothesis was that the model would be able to accurately and efficiently identify individual aspects of grief and thus be able to provide insight and at least partial understanding of the bereaved characters analysed, but when or if the model failed to provide a satisfying understanding, it would be backed up by analyses unrelated to the Kübler-Ross model.

The novels used for this analysis are William Faulkner's 1930 novel *As I Lay Dying*, Kazuo Ishiguro's 2005 novel *Never Let Me Go* and Jim Harrison's 2007 novel *Returning to Earth*. The novels were selected primarily by the criterion of displaying the grieving process of one or more characters but also provide temporal and geographical variety in the form of two recent novels and one written decades prior to the publishing of the Kübler-Ross model, as well as two American novels and one British. The novels differ further in the form of the grief that they portray. *As I Lay Dying* and *Returning to Earth* both portray grief from the perspectives of multiple characters, whereas *Never Let Me Go* is narrated by a single character. Furthermore, the latter also differs in that it is told in retrospect while the former are set in the present. *Returning to Earth* also differs from the other two due to its use of

language and style being less experimental and more straightforward. The objective of selecting novels so different is to provide a varied material on which the applicability of the theory can be tested in order to increase the relevance of the results. To briefly summarize the plots, settings and the causes of bereavement of the novels, the Southern Gothic novel *As I Lay Dying* concerns a family of farmers in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County of the American Deep South in the early twentieth century; the mother's death becomes the trigger for the grief of the surviving family members and her will forces them to undertake a grotesque kind of odyssey to bury the mother in town rather than locally. While *Never Let Me Go* may appear idyllic at first glance, it gradually unveils its nature as a dystopian novel with hints of science fiction set in an alternate version of 1990s England and is told in retrospect by the main character Kathy, who recalls a multitude of minor traumas throughout her life as well as one major and recent one that is the underlying cause of her grieving and the reason for her telling her story. Perhaps the closest to popular fiction of the three novels, the structurally straightforward *Returning to Earth* is set in 1995, primarily in the American Midwest and is centred around an upper-class family's grief as the father is slowly dying of Lou Gehrig's disease. This, along with his eventual assisted suicide that the entire family participates in becomes the trigger for bereavement to everyone involved.

One area where the novels arguably prove restrictive and immediately different from the real world is the absence of a pre-bereavement state for any of the characters. The understanding of the grief of a real person can be aided if one is aware of that person's characteristics when not bereaved and thus able to see how their emotional state may differ. However, in *As I Lay Dying* all are aware of the mother's impending death from before the beginning of the novel, *Never Let Me Go* is narrated in retrospect in a state of bereavement (and post-bereavement, depending on which trauma is considered) and in *Returning to Earth*, Donald has been given his diagnosis a year prior to the beginning of the novel, so everyone is already aware of his inevitable death. The absence of a pre-bereavement state, aside from a few flashbacks in *As I Lay Dying*, necessitates inferring based on the characters' general thoughts and behaviour, as opposed to reality where the family and friends of the griever are typically familiar with the griever's normal behaviour and state of mind.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theory used in this study is primarily the non-literary theory of the stages of dying and the later adaptation of these into the stages of grief by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. The theory was first published in 1969 in Kübler-Ross' book *On Death and Dying* and focused on the various phases a dying person goes through, from the initial reaction to hearing of their impending death to the final acceptance of their situation. Prior to the release of *On Death and Dying*, the literature on the subject was close to nonexistent and the stages of dying came to be highly influential in not only the hospital and hospice care of dying patients but also in shaping the way the subject of death was approached in the United States (Fulton & Metress 1995:XV, Davies 2005: 31). The extent of the success of the theory was indeed both unexpected and significant; Fulton & Metress note that it became openly embraced and applied by many, from medical students to doctors to the patients themselves, to the point that it occasionally became a self-fulfilling prophecy, with carers actively encouraging patients to go through the stages (1995: 314). This is an issue that Kübler-Ross & Kessler remark upon in what can accurately be described as the sequel, *On Grief and Grieving*, saying that the friends and family of the bereaved would at times encourage grievers to go through the five stages rapidly, perhaps fearing that failure to do so would result in the grief becoming pathological (2005: 26).

An example of the understanding of grief prior to the Kübler-Ross model's rise in popularity can be seen in Strauss & Glaser (1970: 141), where the issue of "getting suitable behaviour from the family members" is described in a dismissing way that seems to encourage hospice staff to hand-wave bereavement as hysteria or disturbing behaviour. In brief, the concept of the stages of dying consists of the idea that a person will generally go through the same psychological process when confronted with the news of their own death. Kübler-Ross divides this process into five stages: denial, bargaining, anger, depression and acceptance; note that any usage of these words in the analysis always refers to the Kübler-Ross stages and not to the regular use, unless otherwise stated. In *On Grief and Grieving* (2005), Kübler-Ross & Kessler adapted the theory to also fit the bereaved, arguing that the reactions exhibited by the grieving closely match those of the dying, as the two experiences are

fundamentally the same, with both being a reaction and adaptation to the loss of something critical.

The model set by Kübler-Ross is not without its issues and criticism. *On Death and Dying* implies through its structuring of the stages as a numbered list that the stages in the process of dying invariably follow the presented order, and as a result it has often been misunderstood to be a rigid process when it is in fact more fluid in nature, with patients going from one stage to the other any number of times and in any order; the process is thus highly individual and not everyone will necessarily go through all the stages (Davies 2005: 31, Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2005: 7). Fulton & Metress note that while the model runs the risk of neglecting the individual in favour of a standardized method (with aspects such as age, gender, religion and ethnicity having not been systematically studied in their interaction with Kübler-Ross' theory), most of the issues stem from people uncritically accepting and misinterpreting it (1995: 314). However, while they state that many scholars have moved away from stage-based models for the purpose of preserving individuality, it also appears that many still consider such models relevant not only to understanding the dying but the grieving as well, with multiple other stage-based models being presented in Fulton & Metress (1995) and Davies (2005). The latter mentions a four-stage grieving model by Yorick Spiegel (2005: 32) while the former present a three-stage model by Stephenson and a seven-stage model by Kavanaugh (1995: 352), indicating that while very valid criticism towards stage-based models exists, there seem to simultaneously exist few alternatives, at least as far as grieving is concerned. Additionally, while these models are structured differently, they describe the same fundamental grieving process as the Kübler-Ross model. It is possible that this is due to the difference in treatment of the dying and the grieving, with the former being actively cared for while the latter is generally left to their own devices unless the grief persists to the point that it may be considered pathological (Breen & O'Connor 2007). As the grieving are typically left to grieve alone, there is no risk of improper treatment by hospice personnel, as is the risk with the dying. Nonetheless, as the process of grieving is fundamentally similar to the process of coming to terms with one's death, some of the critique directed towards the Kübler-Ross model on the dying can reasonably be applied to her model on the grieving. This primarily concerns the rejection of the implication that the stages occur in a specific order, and

perhaps the idea that the model may favour the structure over the individual, although this likely applies more to real-world therapeutical care than to an analysis of literary characters.

The stages of dying are adapted into the stages of grieving in Kübler-Ross & Kessler (2005) without any further elaboration on the validity of this decision, but as the news of one's own impending death can rightfully be considered a traumatic experience, similar in that sense to the sudden or expected loss of a loved one, it appears that this choice is a valid one; death and grief are thus the same in the sense that they both induce a similar trauma in the recipient. Fulton & Metress (1995) also indicate that the processes resemble each other closely enough for a model on dying to also apply on grieving, and note that the emotional reactions of the dying can also appear in the grieving and not necessarily in the same order or at the same time (313). While this argument is absent in Kübler-Ross & Kessler (2005), they do put the grieving stages in comparison to the dying stages in order to clarify the distinctions between the stages of dying on one hand and grieving on the other.

The first stage described by Kübler-Ross is the stage of denial. In the dying patient this manifests prior to all the other stages as a form of "No, it cannot be true!" reaction, regardless of whether the patient is informed at the very beginning of their illness or if they gradually come to the realization on their own (1969:38). The denial and anxiety is stronger in individuals who are informed of their illness abruptly or prematurely, or by unfamiliar hospital staff. The stage of denial is entirely or partially utilized by almost all patients, not only during the initial period of illness but also intermittently during the other stages. Furthermore, Kübler-Ross stresses that denial is a normal and healthy way of dealing with the news of as painful a process as dying; it thus functions as a buffer that works to shield the patient's psyche after unexpected shocking news, allowing them to collect themselves and eventually mobilize less radical defences (1969: 39). Still, while denial is generally a temporary measure soon replaced by at least partial acceptance, Kübler-Ross notes that maintained denial can also occur, if rarely (1969: 40).

While denial is described as the initial stage, Kübler-Ross also notes that at first there will be a brief stage of shock, after which the patient will move into denial (1969: 42). It is possible that they opted not to include the initial shock as an

independent stage due to the book being written with the practical aspects of hospice care in mind, with the implication that shock is not possible to effectively treat beyond allowing the patient some time to recover naturally. As for the denial of the living, grieving kin of the deceased, Kübler-Ross & Kessler note that while the dying may manifest denial as a literal disbelief, the denial of the grieving tends to be more symbolic in nature; rather than actually believing that the deceased is still alive it “means you come home and you can’t believe that your wife isn’t going to walk in the door at any minute or that your husband isn’t just away on some business trip. You simply can’t fathom that he will never walk through that door again” (2005: 8). In spite of statements such as “I can’t believe he is dead”, it thus operates in a fashion similar to that of the dying, namely as a buffer to shield the griever’s psyche and help them cope with the loss.

The second stage is anger. After the thoughts of denial in the dying fade, they are replaced by feelings of anger, envy and resentment, leading to thoughts akin to “Why me? Why not someone else?” (Kübler-Ross 1969: 50). Generally presenting an issue for people around the patient, the manifested anger is unfocused, with anything or anyone in the nearby environment becoming a possible target. Kübler-Ross argues that the source of the anger in the dying is a form of frustrated grieving over the loss of the functions of a healthy body, and that the patient will be constantly reminded of their loss in everything they see, from young and healthy personnel to the very procedures used to keep them alive; the anger is thus often rational in nature, despite appearing unfounded (1969: 51-52).

In Kübler-Ross & Kessler, the anger of the grieving is stated to not necessarily be rational in nature, often being directed at the dead or back at one self, at the doctors responsible for their care or at God or the world in general (2005: 11). It may manifest e.g. as anger at the dead for not staying healthy, at one self or the doctors for not being able to stop the death or at the world or God for allowing it to happen. Similar to the anger of the dying, the griever’s anger originates in a sense of frustration at being unable to affect the situation, and at the perceived unfairness of the death of a loved one, particularly in a religious context; a believer may feel anger at their god for allowing someone who has lived according to the rules of their religion to die regardless. As with denial, Kübler-Ross & Kessler stress that the anger is not only natural and part of the healing process, but in fact a necessary one. It

should thus be embraced and accepted rather than avoided, as healing is accelerated by it (2005: 12).

The third stage is that of bargaining. Kübler-Ross (1969: 82) argues that while the stage of denial is a result of an inability to face the facts and the stage of anger is chiefly anger at the world or anything in the immediate vicinity, the stage of bargaining is born from a hope that while the previous options failed, perhaps there is the possibility of entering some form of agreement in order to delay the inevitable. Drawing a parallel with the behaviour of children, who when denied something they want may at first be angry, but may also attempt to offer their guardian a bargain e.g. in the form of “If I clean my room, can I have the thing?”, Kübler-Ross observes the same behaviour in the dying; for a child, there is always the possibility that their bargain will succeed, and the dying hope for the same, usually appealing to personnel or God for e.g. better treatment or more time before they die (1969: 82-83). Moreover, the bargaining is essentially an attempt to postpone death and follows a particular structure; it requires a reward offered for the patient’s “good behaviour”, it sets a self-imposed deadline (Kübler-Ross mentions an opera singer who wanted one last performance and a woman who wanted to attend her son’s wedding) and also includes an implicit promise that the patient will not ask for more if the postponement is granted (a promise that all of the interviewed patients failed to keep) (1969: 83-84). A significant number of the dying interviewed in Kübler-Ross (1969) promised to dedicate their life to religious pursuits if they were allowed to survive, and the author argues that such promises may be a result of guilt associated with e.g. not attending church (84).

As for the grieving, Kübler-Ross & Kessler state that the bargaining takes different forms depending on the state of the dying or dead individual. Prior to death, it can take the same form as the structure described above, with prizes, promises and deadlines, or when acceptance of the inevitability of the upcoming death is realized, a wish for the death to be painless; afterwards, it initially tends to change into wishing for the deceased to return to life, often subsequently leading to a focus on the future, wishing for no more deaths in the family, or to be reunited with the deceased in the afterlife (2005: 17-20). Often also taking the form of “if only...” statements, bargaining can, as with the dying, be accompanied by guilt related to past actions and perceived opportunities where the griever may have been able to prevent

the tragedy, e.g. “If only I had seen the car” or “If only we had gone to the doctor sooner” (2005: 17).

The fourth stage is the stage of depression. Kübler-Ross (1969: 85) describes it as being the result of a partial acceptance of the patient’s own death; after the stage of denial, the patient’s state of mind may move towards depression rather than anger, or the depression may come afterwards. Like the other stages, however, depression may still come at any time and with varying intensity. Kübler-Ross divides depression in the dying into two categories: reactive and preparatory depression. The former refers to the immediate reaction to some form of loss that is generally physical in nature, e.g. a patient with breast cancer may feel reactive depression over the loss of their breast(s) following a mastectomy; such depression is generally alleviated without any great degree of difficulty (1969: 85-86). Preparatory depression, however, is the anticipation of impending losses rather than the result of a past loss. This form of depression is a “tool to prepare for the impending loss of all the love objects, in order to facilitate the stage of acceptance” and attempts to distract or encourage a patient in this stage is typically meaningless, as the patient is contemplating their own death and is processing the reality of losing everything and everyone; distractions would thus hinder the patient’s ability to cope with and understand their situation (Kübler-Ross 1969: 87).

In the grieving, depression following a loss is a normal reaction and a necessary part of the recovery process; it is not the same as clinical depression and does not require medical care (although the former may occasionally develop into the latter). Nevertheless, Kübler-Ross & Kessler note a tendency of (American) society to desire for depression in an individual to be eliminated as soon as possible, which may result in a hindering of the grieving process (2005: 20-23). While Kübler-Ross & Kessler do not elaborate on whether depression in the grieving can be divided into reactive and preparatory forms, Fulton & Metress argue that the mode of death plays a role in how grief manifests, separating a sudden death from one of which the would-be grievers are informed in advance (1995: 348). A sudden death results in more intense reactions and results in more difficulty in adjusting to the loss, and the grieving period is commonly extended by several years in such cases (1995: 348-349). Being informed in advance, on the other hand, leads to anticipatory grief comparable to the preparatory depression of the dying. This allows the grieving

process to begin before the death occurs, and while it allows the grieving (as well as the dying) to prepare, resolve conflicts and say farewell, it does not eliminate the overall impact of death (1995: 348). Anticipatory grieving may also take its toll on the griever, with room for periods of remission and decline, leading to an experience that may be both emotionally and physically exhausting, and has been referred to as “a state of emotional limbo” in which “one cannot resolve a loss that has not yet occurred and cannot escape the fact that it will” (Fulton & Metress 1995: 348).

The fifth stage is acceptance. While Kübler-Ross describes the order of most of the stages of dying as individual and not set in stone, acceptance of one’s own death is determined to occur towards the end of the process of dying, provided that the patient has had the time and support to go through the other four stages, reaching a stage where they feel neither depression nor anger at their situation (1969: 112). Acceptance, Kübler-Ross stresses, should not be misinterpreted as a stage of happiness; rather, it is nearly “void of feelings” (1969:113). While it may be argued that this observation could be a misunderstanding as a result of Kübler-Ross’ methods of observing patients, it should be noted that the study underlying Kübler-Ross (1969) also includes a significant quantity of interviews with said patients, lending credibility to this observation whose validity might otherwise be challenging to demonstrate. The void of emotions is characterized by patients’ statements such as it being as “though the pain has gone” and that “the struggle is over”, suggesting a form of quiet tranquillity; indeed, the patient tends to desire rest and solitude as opposed to earlier stages’ wish for visitors and attention (Kübler-Ross 1969: 113). Strauss & Glaser (1970: 143-144) also note patients reaching acceptance at the end of their lives, but phrase it as a necessary state of mind whose advent should be actively pursued by hospice staff. Additionally, they approach the subject primarily with the practicalities of caretaking in mind, leaving little room for understanding either the patient or their family.

The stage of acceptance in the grieving is, as with the dying, occasionally confused with feeling “all right” with the loss; Kübler-Ross & Kessler stress that this is not the case, and that the stage is instead about accepting a new reality in which a loved one is physically gone and that this state of affairs is indeed permanent (2005: 24-25). As with the dying, acceptance forms the final stage of grieving, in which one learns to live with the loss and generally no longer fully experiences the effects of the

other stages; e.g. anger at a murderer or depression over a loss may never fade entirely, but they will be diminished by the acceptance of the reality of the situation (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2005: 25). Acceptance also includes restructuring one's life in the event that the deceased is a family member, as various roles and responsibilities filled and taken by the dead must be reassigned; acceptance in the grieving is thus a process of healing, as opposed to the dying who reach acceptance as a final stage before death, and Kübler-Ross & Kessler mention that this process is highly individual and can take up to several years (2005: 28). While the aforementioned models by Stephenson and Kavanaugh (Fulton & Metress 1995: 350-354) differ from the Kübler-Ross model in most of the previous stages, they both agree that a final stage of accepting the loss and a new life without the deceased is a near-inevitable outcome of the bereavement process.

In addition to the stages of grief, Kübler-Ross & Kessler (2005) elaborate on a number of aspects of grieving or life in general that may come to affect a grieving individual. These are divided into two categories labelled the inner and outer worlds of grief. Out of these, the former refers to specific things directly related to the loss, ranging from the psychological and emotional to the metaphysical; the latter concerns aspects more physical and social in nature, e.g. holidays and possessions. While these aspects are too numerous to reasonably list, they are referred to when doing so is relevant to the analysis.

3. As I Lay Dying

The grief in *As I Lay Dying* is, like much of the novel, too complex to be easily defined and using exclusively the Kübler-Ross model would present unnecessary constrictions to the analysis, more so than for any of the other works. The sections on the individual characters will thus include a separate, brief analysis not immediately related to this theory, although the focus will be on the use of the Kübler-Ross model. While this model was not conceived of until 1969 and Faulkner published *As I Lay Dying* in 1930, the analysis avoids becoming anachronistic as the model concerns a normal human grief process and reactions to bereavement and can as such be taken to be timeless. The grief in *As I Lay Dying* is centred around the death of Addie Bundren, and is seen in how her husband Anse and their children Cash, Darl, Jewel,

Dewey Dell and Vardaman, all of various ages, attempt to cope with and understand her death.

Before diving into the analysis of the individual characters, there are a couple of brief points concerning the family as a whole in *As I Lay Dying* that do not fit into the character sections, but are well worth discussing. While they are all portrayed as simple, uneducated farmers, the Bundrens occasionally make internal use of language that is far more literary and complex than what they could reasonably have mastered. This, along with their frequently unorthodox, almost alien, mindsets and reactions to Addie's death brings up the point of whether a theory meant to apply to real people can be applied to them at all. Ultimately, however, this question is part of the study's stated purpose of investigating the theory's applicability on characters that are not quite real (and perhaps thus not quite human), and as such does not appear to require special consideration.

For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that the members of the Bundren family, with the possible exception of Anse, do in fact function as the average person and mourn the loss of Addie. This, however, can be argued against as most of the family members demonstrate ulterior motives for honouring Addie's wish to be buried in her home town; Anse explicitly states that he wants to go to town in order to get a set of new teeth (30) and, as is revealed at the end, a new wife (149). Meanwhile, Cash wants to go to town in order to get a "talking machine"(110), presumably a gramophone, Dewey Dell wants to get an abortion (116) and Vardaman wants go get a toy train that he has previously seen in a store window (39). Only Jewel and Darl seem to only wish to undertake the journey in order to bury Addie without another goal in mind, and they both pay the price for it; along the journey, the thinker Darl slips further and further into madness which eventually leads him to burn down the barn in which Addie's coffin is housed and subsequently ends up in a mental institution, while Jewel sacrifices the horse that is his most treasured possession in order for the journey to continue, as well as suffering burns when rescuing Addie's coffin from the fire. While Darl's and Jewel's punishments for their love are mental and physical, respectively, their siblings who wished for something material end up not only being denied their desire but also suffering an ironic punishment for it. Cash has his leg broken once again and, while he does get his hands on his object of desire, is unable to dance to the music of the gramophone,

Dewey Dell is cheated, humiliated and sexually exploited by the dishonest doctor's assistant and Vardaman gets the bananas he dislikes instead of the train. Only Anse escapes immediate punishment, but it is likely that his history of constantly relying on his neighbours for assistance has come to an end, as most of them seem to have had enough of constantly being exploited by him.

Going back to Darl and Jewel, the novel can be interpreted as a battle between the two and their different ways of grieving; both love Addie and wish to see her treated with respect after death, but have opposing views on how to accomplish this along with their rather hostile relationship (see e.g. Darl's taunting of Jewel on page 123). While Jewel is prepared to sacrifice all he owns as well as his own body (as seen when he agrees to sell his horse (111) and when he goes into a burning building to safeguard the coffin (126-128), respectively) in order to get his mother to her chosen place of rest, Darl appears to see the grotesque nature of the whole ordeal and as his insanity grows he decides that the only dignified choice is to burn Addie and her coffin in order to bring an end to the absurdity. Jewel, however, opposes this and prevents the burning of the coffin, resulting in his victory over Darl and the coffin being safely delivered to town. Darl is then further defeated by being beaten (137) and sent to a mental institution (146). If one considers Darl's insane clairvoyance and general madness to be a representation of the reader's outside insight, expectations and reaction to the absurd nature of the Bundrens' journey, Darl's defeat becomes the triumph of the grotesque over the sane and the novel's refusal to surrender to the reader's demands for the victory of reason and the normal. In this sense, the novel itself becomes a battle between it and the reader, as the latter, like Darl, struggles to understand the former and perhaps put a stop to the whole farce but to limited success, as the novel seems to proudly announce with Darl losing and being sent away, declaring its victory over the reader.

3.1 Anse

Addie's own husband appears to be the one who is the least affected by her death, demonstrating no visible concern over her death apart from uttering a few clichés likely designed to make his neighbours pity him and feel like they need to help him out, and does in fact only see an opportunity to get new teeth and a new wife, rather than being upset over his wife's death. This does not, however, explain why he goes

through all the trouble of moving her corpse all the way to town instead of simply burying it near their home. Vickery (1959: 238-240) suggests that Anse and Addie are polar opposites in that they have entirely different views on life; Addie regards words as useless and believes only in the act of doing, while Anse lives only by words. They have completely failed to join their views together, despite having been married for thirty years or more, and as a result Addie has no influence over Anse except when she makes him promise to take her to her home town to be buried after her death. It is this promise, combined with his desire for a new wife and set of teeth, that makes him go through with the journey, rather than actually being considerate and respectful of his wife's wishes. The notion that Anse only lives by the word shines new light on the aforementioned ironic punishment; the priest Whitfield, too, lives by words rather than deeds, and while he has resolved to confess his affair with Addie before Anse, he ends up deciding that him having resolved to do so is equal to having performed the deed. Anse's way of life is thus turned against him, and he remains an unknowing cuckold. Kübler-Ross' stages of grieving do not apply to Anse, as he does not actually grieve; at most it may be assumed that he has already reached the stage of acceptance with his uttering of "God's will be done" (30) at her death.

3.2 Cash

The eldest son of the Bundren family, Cash, in his late twenties, seemingly tries to distance himself from the death of his mother through the construction of her coffin (which ironically brings him even closer to it both physically through the construction and figuratively through it later containing Addie's corpse). This is present at the very start of the novel where Cash is always busy building the coffin rather than seeing his mother while she is on her deathbed (4). Indeed, even when she calls out to him he only responds by showing her the unfinished coffin from outside without speaking to her or going inside (28). Only after she dies does he go to see her briefly, and even then carrying with him his saw, one of the tools he uses for escaping the situation, and unwilling to approach the bed where Addie lies or say anything, thus maintaining the distance he has created both physically and emotionally (29). Cash's physical escape through the building of the coffin thus matches the mental escape from having to cope with the loss of his mother, and

throughout the novel it becomes a fixation for him, as seen e.g. on page 48 which constitutes an entire chapter of him simply thinking about the method used to create the coffin, devoid of any mention of his mother as a person or a parent and instead simply thought of as a corpse, an impersonal object. This callous response is a part of his escape and is seen again later on when he nonchalantly refers to his dead mother as “it” (62), promptly followed by him showing more care for the coffin itself by wiping off a gout of mud (62) (alternatively possibly suggesting that he may have come to equate his mother with the coffin). This fixation continues throughout the novel until he breaks his leg and becomes more focused on the immediate issue of the physical trauma of his broken leg, which can perhaps be thought of as a replacement of the physical fixation on the coffin (still being physical in nature). Cash’s physically oriented reaction can be traced back to pre-grief in Darl’s flashback, where Cash demonstrates a practical nature by electing to follow Jewel at night to find out what he is up to.

The Kübler-Ross stage of denial can, like the majority of his grief, be seen in the way Cash constructs his mother’s coffin. He dedicates great care and effort to building something for his mother, as if she was in a state where she could appreciate it. He appears to consider the coffin the same way as he would e.g. a chair or any other household object that Addie might use in her daily life (48), hinting at him, rather paradoxically, considering the object he is constructing, being in denial over her upcoming death. This can also be seen when he appears to proudly present his progress on the coffin to Addie (28), as if it was some manner of gift he was making for her, and perhaps he believes that speaking to her would break this illusion, since rather than telling her about the construction he instead pantomimes.

Anger from Cash’s side is usually, but not exclusively, directly related to the coffin, and even when it is not, it is still indirectly connected to it. The one time that the anger is indirect is when Cash is nearing completion of the coffin, but is interrupted by sudden rain. Cash resolves to finish the coffin regardless, together with Tull, but rejects Anse’s presence; he appears to be very familiar with his father’s parasitical and lazy nature and bitterly tells him to just go inside, and let himself and Tull complete the work (45), hinting at the anger he feels without ever truly exposing it to anyone. Even when more directly linked to the coffin, the anger is never directed towards the coffin itself, but rather towards those who interact with

it in an incompetent fashion, such as when Cora Tull and the other women (neighbours, presumably) put Addie in the coffin the wrong way in order to preserve the shape of her dress. He expresses frustration at their actions and, as befitting his practical nature, it is grounded at least partially in a concern for functionality: ““It’s them durn women,” he says. “I made it to balance with her. I made it to her measure and weight.” (52) and later “It’s them durn women,” (53). Aside from the frustration of a professional whose work is going to waste, it is also highly likely that he is angry at his dead mother being treated improperly, perhaps for essentially being buried upside down (or, more likely, since Cash probably lacks the education to be aware of the symbolism of being buried in such a way, he is upset at her being put into the coffin in the wrong way). The incorrect orientation of Addie in the coffin continues to be a source of aggravation for Cash, as seen e.g. when the men of the family go to lift the coffin into the wagon and he is frustrated with how it will not be properly balanced as it is (56), and appears to be his chief concern when he is delirious on the riverbank after having his leg broken (95).

As with his anger and denial, Cash’s attempts at bargaining are connected to his mother’s coffin, but they are perhaps the most ambiguous part of his grieving. When Jewel catches up to the rest of the family on his horse, he passes the wagon and his horse kicks up a gout of mud that lands on the coffin (62). Rather than simply swiping it off, Cash “takes a tool from his box and removes it carefully” after which he “breaks off a branch and scours at the stain with the wet leaves” (62). This behaviour resembles, and is connected to, his denial in the sense that he appears to be in denial about his mother’s death in the construction of the coffin, and the great care he shows in maintaining its pristine condition suggests that maybe he holds on to some vague hope that if he takes good care of her, maybe Addie will be fine and somehow not dead, one of Kübler-Ross’ “if-only” scenarios. Alternatively, of course, he may simply be showing a normal human tendency to take care of his mother by keeping the coffin in good condition, hence the ambiguity. The careful construction of the coffin in general can also be considered a sign of bargaining, another “if-only” line of thought, i.e. “If I do my best and make a good job of it then she will be fine”, an illogical and childish response that is nevertheless in tune with the reactions described by Kübler-Ross & Kessler (2005: 17).

At only one point in the novel does Cash demonstrate signs of depression, as his practical and stoic nature does not afford him the opportunity to ever truly reflect on his loss. It is seen right after Addie dies and Cash enters the room:

““She taken and left us,” pa says. Cash does not look at him. “How nigh are you done?” pa says. Cash does not answer. He enters, carrying the saw. “I reckon you better get at it,” pa says. “You’ll have to do the best you can, with them boys gone off that-a-way.” Cash looks down at her face. He is not listening to pa at all. He does not approach the bed. He stops in the middle of the floor, the saw against his leg, his sweating arms powdered lightly with sawdust, his face composed. “If you get in a tight, maybe some of them’ll get here tomorrow and help you,” pa says. “Vernon could.” Cash is not listening.”
(*As I Lay Dying*: 29)

The way in which Cash is utterly unresponsive towards his father indicates great sorrow and depression at the realization that his mother has died, and even so, he is still as stoical and practical as ever, saying nothing and showing little outwards emotion, and then immediately going back outside to resume his work on the coffin.

Aside from depression, the above section also demonstrates a sense of stoical acceptance towards the situation in the way that he does not make any great displays of emotion but simply looks at his mother before resuming his work. Cash’s construction of the coffin can paradoxically be taken as both a sign of denial and of acceptance. While the great care he takes may, as mentioned above, suggest denial, the fact that he is building it in the first place hints at him having accepted the fact that his mother is going to die, and the coffin being a physical manifestation of this acceptance. Additionally, Darl’s narration does at one point provide a definite sense of finality and acceptance: as Cash is finishing the work on the coffin, Darl observes that

“Some time toward dawn the rain ceases. But it is not yet day when Cash drives the last nail and stands stiffly up and looks down at the finished coffin, the others watching him. In the lantern light his face is calm, musing; slowly he strokes his hands on his raincoated thighs in a gesture deliberate, final and composed.” (*As I Lay Dying*: 46)

The language here is filled with a sensation of completion, of both the coffin and Cash’s acceptance of Addie’s death, seen e.g. in “the rain ceases”, “the last nail”, “the finished coffin” and the gesture he makes being “deliberate, final and composed”. While this could also be interpreted as Darl’s own acceptance rather than Cash’s, he proves himself to be a reliable observer throughout the novel, even after

he goes insane, and his observation of Cash's behaviour here can thus be reasonably assumed to be reliable.

3.3 Darl

The second child, Darl, also in his twenties, reacts to Addie's death in a very different manner. While his elder brother's reaction is physical in nature, Darl's response is instead mental. There is some initial distancing where Darl appears to have not yet accepted his mother's imminent death, essentially thinking of the coffin as a piece of regular furniture that will give "confidence and comfort" to Addie (4), which is obviously not necessary after her death. Despite this, Darl appears to factually accept his mother's death and attempts to understand it by the use of reason and his amateur philosophy; additionally, unlike Cash, he does not fixate on the coffin. In a train of thought likely prompted by Addie's death he ponders the nature of his own existence, wondering whether he "is" or not and remarking that Jewel knows that he is because he does not ask himself such questions (46); this leads to his idea of differentiating between *is* and *was* in order to comprehend the difference between life and death. He later tells Vardaman that he does not have a mother, because if he did, it would be *was*, and so it could not be *is* (58), demonstrating this idea of existence as "is" versus "was". His descent into madness is hard to pinpoint, as it is not immediately evident to the other characters and his own narration is unreliable due to his insanity. Still, it appears to have been triggered by his pondering on the nature of life and death and can be seen as his ultimate failure in coping with his mother's death, leading him to attempt to destroy the coffin and Addie's corpse to perhaps rid himself of the grief that way. His failure in doing so then eventually leads to his breakdown and his subsequent incarceration in a mental institution. In his flashback, Darl remembers himself as not being concerned at all with existential matters, suggesting that it was indeed the shock and grief caused by his mother's death that sparked it.

Darl's clairvoyance and growing insanity, as well as his status as primary narrator, make the prospect of deciding his reactions and grieving process somewhat different from that of the other characters. While the others' grief is expressed primarily through their speech and actions, Darl expresses part of his grief through the way he uses language in his narration.

As for the first of the Kübler-Ross stages, Darl expresses denial at multiple points in the novel, but it is rarely as obvious as a statement of “I can’t believe she’s gone!”. At the very start of the novel, Darl considers the coffin that Cash is building, noting its high quality, thinking that “Addie Bundren could not want a better one, a better box to lie in. It will give her confidence and comfort.” (4). The way he considers the coffin to be more like a bed than a vessel for a corpse suggests a level of denial much like that of a child incapable of understanding death, in line with his other actions that eventually cause him to go mad. On page 8, while sitting outside the house where his dying mother lies, he considers, among other things, a water bucket and its contents in great detail, thinking of how to make it taste the best. It is not an explicit expression of grief, but the way in which he focuses on seemingly random objects in great detail indicates an effort, perhaps unintentional, to avoid thinking about the most pressing matter, Addie’s death, and thus a form of denial of the reality at hand. Before Addie dies, Darl once again demonstrates a tendency to want to deny the situation by running away from it, this time more literally, by going with Jewel to do some work for their neighbour Tull (11). He is thus physically absent when his mother dies, but even so, his madman’s clairvoyance and tendency to mentally approach things too closely prevent him from truly escaping his mother’s death, and perhaps this is what sets off his descent into madness. Indeed, the very next chapter he narrates begins with language of a decidedly depressing tone, e.g. “The lantern sits on a stump. Rusted, grease-fouled, its cracked chimney smeared on one side with a soaring smudge of soot, it sheds a feeble and sultry glare upon the trestles and the boards and the adjacent earth” (44), with words such as stump, rusted, grease-fouled and cracked hinting at a grief-affected mental state.

To perhaps a greater degree than denial, Darl expresses anger in an indirect way. While he does not exclaim his frustrations, he still behaves in a way that suggests anger, namely by his taunting of Jewel. On their way to town, he says that “Your mother was a horse, but who is your father, Jewel?” (123), insulting not only Jewel’s relationship with Addie but also the value he places on his horse as well as implying that Jewel is an illegitimate child. The taunt, however, carries a suggestion of his own anger, and perhaps jealousy at Jewel’s close relationship with his mother, and can thus be seen as a way for Darl to vent his frustration over the whole situation at what is likely the easiest target. Additionally, while on the way to their job for Tull,

he interrupts his introspection and clairvoyance twice in order to tell Jewel that Addie is going to die (24). Considering the poor relationship between Darl and Jewel, it appears likely that this, at least partially, is also him attempting to taunt and hurt the latter in order to vent his own anger. Another hint of anger and frustration is seen on page 62, where Jewel is about to catch up to the rest of the family on his horse and Cash remarks that the corpse will start smelling within a couple of days, to which Darl replies “You might tell Jewel that,”, showing some frustration at Jewel for holding them up while getting his horse. The attempted burning of the coffin and the corpse within can also be considered an expression of outrage at the absurdity of the whole situation and the farcical treatment of his dead mother; an attempt to end what he perhaps considers an offense to both her memory and his own grief.

Bargaining is not something that Darl really engages in; all the “if only” and “what if”-statements described by Kübler-Ross & Kessler (2005: 17-19), as well as any analogues, are almost entirely absent. One possible exception is found in the chapter where the barn is burning and Jewel is struggling to rescue the animals and the coffin (126-128); Darl sees the coffin and remarks that “I would not have believed that Addie Bundren would have needed that much room to lie comfortable in” (128), suggesting that he still thinks of Addie as alive, as she needs to be comfortable. The attempted incineration of her and the coffin can thus be interpreted as him thinking something along the lines of “If only I could destroy it, then maybe she could rest in peace and move on”. Bedient (1968) suggests that as Addie continues to exert influence on the family even after her death, the whole journey takes place as she lies dying, and thus in a sense still alive, supporting the idea that the reason Darl attempts to destroy her is in order to end her suffering.

Depression in Darl’s narration is rare and where it is found it is subtle; it is expressed not only in his behaviour but also in the language he uses. On page 120, just before the family visits the barn that Darl burns down, he ponders that

How do our lives ravel out into the no-wind, no-sound, the weary gestures wearily recapitulant: echoes of old compulsions with no-hand on no-strings: in sunset we fall into furious attitudes, dead gestures of dolls. Cash broke his leg and now the sawdust is running out. He is bleeding to death is Cash. (*As I Lay Dying*: 120)

Like the aforementioned depressing thoughts (44), Darl here expresses a sense of depression by the way in which he uses the language. Nothing appears to be real anymore, everything is like a pale imitation of what it is supposed to be, with terms like “no-wind”, “no-sound” etc., things are tired and stagnant, being “wearily recapitulant” and “echoes of old compulsions”. There is a sense of despair and impending doom in his description of Cash with how “the sawdust is running out” and more directly in “He is bleeding to death”. This near-apocalyptic description of the state of things shows him at what is perhaps the height of his despair and indicates a strong depression as a result of his loss; indeed, Kübler-Ross & Kessler note a sense of despair and unending grief as typical for the stage of depression (2005: 20). One more possible expression of depression can be found when Darl considers the river they are about to cross; he appears to think of it as a living thing with descriptions such as “it talks up to us”, “it clucks and murmurs” and that it is “as though just beneath the surface something huge and alive waked for a moment” (82). Him seeing life in a dead thing can be interpreted as a reminder of his mother; he sees something that could be alive, perhaps something he wishes was alive, but is not, and his pondering thus becomes a way for his grief to manifest. Alternatively, it also carries a hint of bargaining in the sense that he might be thinking that if one dead thing (i.e. the river) could be alive, then maybe another (i.e. his mother) could too, becoming another of the “if only”-statements.

Acceptance of Addie’s death is something that Darl arguably never achieves, as after his attempt to burn the coffin, he merely goes mad and is sent to the insane asylum, and does thus not get the opportunity to get that far on the Kübler-Ross model. In that sense, his insanity is perhaps actually a result of his failure to accept his mother’s death. Nevertheless, there are points at which he demonstrates a sense of acceptance towards the situation. When he visits Addie and Dewey Dell before he leaves with Cash, he simply states that Addie is going to die before they get back (17), indicating that he is at least intellectually, if not emotionally, capable of accepting the fact. Similar matter-of-fact statements are made to Jewel (24, 31) about Addie’s death, but the acceptance expressed within them is confined to his speech only, whereas the other Kübler-Ross stages are also expressed through the narration itself, possibly suggesting that it is merely something he says but is not capable of truly accepting yet (and perhaps never, seeing how he goes mad).

3.4 Jewel

Jewel, the third child, likely around twenty years old, does not get many opportunities to express his own ways of dealing with grief, as he only narrates a single chapter. He is nevertheless consistent in his reaction to death: throughout the novel he primarily responds with anger to various situations or the other characters, and this is evident in his own narration as well. Jewel's anger is unfocused and likely stems not only from his mother's death but also from his own frustration at being unable to do anything about the situation, as seen in the generally frustrated tone in his narration (10) (frustration not focused at any one thing, but instead directed at anything in his path, from Cash's carpentry to his other family members to God). His anger is thus impotent, which is ostensibly the opposite of his personality, as seen in the flashback where, apart from showing that Jewel was not constantly angry prior to the events of the novel, he is portrayed as a capable and independent person; he decides that he wants a horse, so he sneaks out to work in secret to earn the money to buy one (74-78).

Aside from his insistence that his mother is not actually about to die, as seen on page 11 where he insists that "Ma ain't that sick", which he also expresses in a more indirect manner when Darl implies that Addie is inevitably about to die, telling him to "Ah, shut your goddamn mouth," (12), Jewel also expresses his denial in another way, not only before his mother's death but afterwards as well. The horse that he decides to buy with money he has earned secretly by working at night (74-78) does not start off as anything more than his most prized possession, but after Addie's death, it seems to become something more; like how the coffin becomes the fixation of Cash's grief, the horse serves a similar role for Jewel, albeit to a lesser extent. It appears to take on a role of a replacement for his mother, and he focuses much of his grief on this horse. His denial is seen in the very fact that the horse becomes this surrogate, as he seems to subconsciously equate the horse being young and healthy with his mother not being sick enough to die from her condition. Darl appears to sense this through his clairvoyance when he taunts Jewel about the horse, saying that "It's not your horse that's dead, Jewel," as if to say that despite Addie being dead, at least it is not the horse, suggesting it being equally or more important to him than Addie and hinting at its unusually significant emotional consequence. Additionally,

he afterwards explicitly states to himself that “Jewel’s mother is a horse.” (55), a statement given weight by the fact that he is aware of both Dewey Dell’s pregnancy and Jewel not being Anse’s son.

Jewel’s anger is plentiful and aside from the reasonable reaction of anger he displays upon being taunted by Darl (55), it is also, as mentioned, unfocused and directed at not only the people in his vicinity, but also on his horse. In addition to this, he expresses general frustration at the situation on multiple occasions, anger that often manifests as directed towards the coffin and, by extension, Cash in his capacity as its constructor. Jewel frequently lashes out at whoever is nearest, seen e.g. when the men of the family move the coffin into the wagon, with him swearing at both Cash (56) and Darl (57). When Tull goes to talk to the Bundrens as they observe the river and Jewel tells him to “Get the hell on back to your damn plowing” (72) the unreasonable nature of his anger is brought to attention as Cash tells him off. Aside from again raging at those around him, he displays an effort to control his own anger (132-133), where he is confronted by a man with a knife who believes Jewel has insulted him, reigning in his previous habit of wildly cursing those around him, and afterwards, he displays far less anger than prior, with only one expression of what appears to be frustration at Darl’s madness rather than anger related to his grief: “Goddamnit, do you want to wait until he sets fire to the goddamn team and wagon?” (134). The horse he bought also becomes the target of his rage at one point, as it misbehaves as he calls for it, causing him to swear at it and physically assault it, using it as an outlet for his frustrations, ironically while (or perhaps as a result of) also being a symbol for his mother (9). Vickery (1959: 245) suggests that the horse “perpetuates Addie’s emotional relationship with Jewel” and that it as such offers a release for Jewel’s affection as well as his anger in its capacity as his surrogate mother. The general frustration and anger he expresses is visible e.g. in his own narration (10) where he (internally) expresses frustration at Cash for building the coffin outside Addie’s window (“Good God do you want to see her in it”) and Dewey Dell for fanning her, as well as when they are about to cross the river and he wants to begin “Just so we do something. Setting here, not lifting a goddamn hand...” (84).

Jewel’s grief is expressed primarily as anger, and he does not spend much time on bargaining. This stage is reflected only in his aforementioned treatment of, or

perhaps relationship with, his horse. Despite him venting his rage upon it, he also takes care of it and shows it affection, as seen when he feeds it after just having both punched and kicked it and even while doing so both insults it and displays his affection for it (““Eat [...], you pussel-gutted bastard. You sweet son of a bitch,” he says”) (9). This mix of affection and caretaking can, in the light of the horse being a symbol or replacement for Addie, be interpreted as bargaining, in the sense that by taking care of the horse he is in his mind also taking care of Addie, perhaps in the hope that doing so will make things right and either undo her death or grant her more time in life, as is typical of the stage of bargaining.

Depression is the one stage that Jewel does not at any point demonstrate; he instead resorts to anger, and if any depression does exist, it is likely hidden beneath that anger, and Jewel’s very limited narration makes the possibility of determining this a tricky proposition indeed. Fulton & Metress (1995: 355) note that some of the stages of the Kavanaugh model can be skipped altogether, and given its general similarity to the Kübler-Ross model, it appears reasonable to assume that the apparent absence of one of the latter’s stages does not necessitate an unhealthy form of grief. This is supported, as seen below, by the fact that he does manage to reach the stage of acceptance.

While he spends most of the novel in denial and anger, there comes a point where he appears to accept the situation, namely when they need to buy a new team of mules in order to progress. At first hearing of Anse’s attempts at trading, he responds with outrage: “You mean, you tried to swap my horse?” (111) but after hearing Anse’s explanation (or perhaps simply another one of his seemingly inexhaustible moral platitudes),

“Jewel stands with his hands at his hips, looking at Anse. Then he looks away. He looked out across the field, his face still as a rock, like it was somebody else talking about somebody else’s horse and him not even listening. Then he spit, slow and said “Hell” and he turned and went on to the gate and unhitched the horse and got on it. [...] They went out of sight that way, the two of them [...]” (*As I Lay Dying*: 111)

This demonstrates Jewel’s acceptance of his mother’s death, as he is capable of ridding himself of the horse and by extension his holding on to his mother. He clearly does not enjoy it (as indicated by his bitter statement “Hell”) but he does it anyway, as he is essentially forced to if the burial is to ever take place. Furthermore,

him selling the horse also signifies acceptance, as mentioned, as well as Jewel perhaps becoming closer to the rest of the family through their shared misfortune. In addition to the above, Jewel's apparent desire to see Addie buried as soon as possible carries a hint of him quickly having accepted the situation, despite the signs of denial and anger he also demonstrates.

3.5 Dewey Dell

Dewey Dell, seventeen years old and the only female child, reacts to the death of her mother by focusing on the physical, but whereas Cash fixates on the coffin, Dewey Dell's object of interest is her own body and her sexuality. Initially seen in her obsessive fanning of Addie on her deathbed (10) and possibly also in her violent reaction when her mother dies, where she "flings herself across Addie Bundren's knees, clutching her, shaking her with the furious strength of the young before sprawling suddenly across the handful of rotten bones that Addie Bundren left" (28), her focus moves from her mother's now dead body to her own. Now the only woman of the household, she turns to her own body and its life-giving potential (illustrated by her pregnancy with Lafe) in order to cope with death (indeed, even her name implies fertility, the bounty of the land). She is at first concerned with life, thinking of her pregnancy and their child in physical terms with herself as a "tub of guts" (35) and addressing a cow she is milking as another woman (37). This soon gives way to the sexual nature of pregnancy, and she abandons concern for life for her own body and sexuality, thinking of neutral things in sexual or bodily terms: e.g. the wind touching her naked (38) and imagining a "womb of time" and the "entrails of events" (69). Her apparent (69), possibly imagined, incestuous relations with her brother(s) may or may not have occurred after Addie's death, and as such it may possibly be a manifestation of her interest in her sexuality but directed at her brother(s) before she focuses on Lafe and herself. She decides to reject the child within her, seeking an abortion, possibly signifying that she has managed to cope with Addie's death, as she rejects the life inside her that she had been focused on earlier and also ceases her pregnancy-induced thoughts about her sexuality. However, as she appears to have decided on the abortion in advance, it appears more likely that this is not the case, and that her rejection of her pregnancy instead indicates a closer connection with Addie, who also disliked having children and was unable to avoid it, as is the

eventual outcome for Dewey Dell. In the flashback she is too young to concern herself with sex and mostly just does various chores around the house, so it is hard to say with certainty whether she obtained her interest in her body only after her mother died.

Dewey Dell's stage of denial takes place exclusively before her mother's death and is closely connected to her stage of bargaining, as the two stages show a significant degree of overlap. She can be observed in a state of denial in the moments leading up to Addie's death, where Cora Tull sees her "always standing over Addie with a fan so that every time a body tried to talk to her and cheer her up, would answer for her right quick, like she was trying to keep anybody from coming near her at all" (15). Here Dewey Dell has seemingly taken on a role of protector which, while unnecessary and without any effect on Addie's health, suggests both denial and bargaining. The former can be seen in how she appears to believe that she can keep her mother from dying through her protection, and the latter in how she also appears to think that if she keeps fanning and making others leave her alone, her mother will be fine. While the above example displays a close connection between her denial and bargaining, this connection is not expressed anywhere else in the novel, with no more instances of denial and only one of independent bargaining. The bargaining can be seen just before Addie's death, when she attempts to rise from her bed after ten days of not moving, and Dewey Dell stops her and presses her back down (28), indicating an instance of bargaining in the shape of her apparent belief that, similar to the fanning, if she can keep her mother resting and comfortable, she will make a recovery and the tragedy will have a happy ending.

Dewey Dell demonstrates anger first in what resembles irritation more than true anger and later in an explosive outburst. The irritated anger can be seen in the tone of her narration where she hears Cash sawing and thinks of it "like a dog outside the house, going back and forth around the house to whatever door you come to, waiting to come in." (35). Soon afterwards, her grief manifests as an outburst of anger rather than irritation, when she goes into the barn, is surprised by Vardaman and proceeds to curse and shake him violently and unprovoked: "'You durn little sneak!' My hands shake him, hard. Maybe I couldn't stop them. I didn't know they could shake so hard. They shake both of us, shaking." (37), demonstrating the random nature of the anger in this stage of grieving. In addition to the above, Dewey

Dell also demonstrates what appears to be grief-related anger, but is in fact not. At one point she imagines taking a knife and using it to kill Darl (69), and later when they leave the cemetery after having buried Addie, followed by the personnel from the insane asylum coming to arrest Darl and he resists it, both Dewey Dell and Jewel jump on him to beat him up and prevent him from escaping (137). While the reactions are definitely caused by anger, they are not triggered by the grief she feels over her mother's death, but rather by the fact that Darl knows about her pregnancy and she hates him for it, as she desperately wishes to keep it secret in order to get an abortion without anyone finding out.

Dewey Dell's depression can be seen on two, possibly three, occasions. As Addie dies, Dewey Dell's first reaction is not denial but depression, as she cries violently and "flings herself across Addie Bundren's knees, clutching her, shaking her with the furious strength of the young" (28). While Kübler-Ross does make it clear that the order of the stages is not set in stone, the apparent divergence from the presented order is in fact notional, as she has already begun the grieving process in the regular order as seen by her expressing denial prior to Addie's death, in the form of anticipatory grief. After this initial explosion of depression, she does not experience it as strongly afterwards, but it is difficult to determine the extent of her depression between her sections of narration, as the other depression she shows is strictly internal, and other narrators are thus unreliable in this case. Still, the second section she narrates after her mother's death almost immediately displays powerful depression ("I heard that my mother is dead. I wish I had time to let her die. I wish I had time to wish I had. It is because in the wild and outraged earth too soon too soon too soon"(69)), suggesting that this may have been her state of mind ever since Addie died. The aforementioned potential instance of depression can be found in the first chapter she narrates following Addie's death, where she laments being alone (35), but it is unclear whether this actually refers to the death of her mother, or if it relates to Lefe, who impregnated her and then disappeared. The latter seems more likely, as the section is located between her thinking of Lefe and her pregnancy, respectively.

Dewey Dell does not demonstrate many, if any, signs of final acceptance of Addie's death, with the one possible instance being found where Darl is about to leave with Jewel to work for Tull and he tells his sister that their mother is going to

die, to which Dewey Dell simply replies “When is she going to die?” (17). This, however, may not be particularly reliable, as her reaction here may be chiefly internal, as is the case for parts of her depression, introducing the possibility that she fails to reach the stage of acceptance, at least within the scope of the novel. There is nothing to suggest that she will not eventually accept her mother’s death, however.

3.6 Vardaman

The family’s youngest child, Vardaman, resembles Darl in his grieving in that he too attempts to intellectually understand the concept of death. However, Vardaman’s approach to this differs from Darl’s in that he focuses not on existential philosophy but on a fish he caught, attempting to use it as a metaphor in order to comprehend death; this is likely due to Vardaman being very young, around nine, and too immature to articulate questions like Darl’s. This immaturity is also seen in his decision to drill holes in the coffin so that his mother will be able to breathe. While he initially thinks of “is” and “was” like Darl (33) (alongside the fish metaphor), he soon abandons this idea in favour of the fish. The fish, to Vardaman, is, after it has been killed and cut up into pieces, a “not-fish” (32) that bleeds “not-blood”; the fish, no longer fish but just food, cannot bleed because food does not bleed, and so he sees the blood as “not-blood”. This attempt to understand death is then linked to Addie in his ranting on page 39 and his declaration that his mother is a fish (49). Vardaman’s logic here is based on the idea that if the fish stops being a fish when it is transformed into something else (food), then his mother, who also has transformed into something else (a corpse) has perhaps stopped being his mother. He thus sees his mother as the same as the fish due to this shared fate. In Darl’s flashback, Vardaman is not portrayed as a child concerned with difficult questions, but rather as a normal child who just wants to ride Jewel’s new horse (78); it is possible that he would never have become concerned with understanding death if his mother had not died when he was young.

Vardaman’s situation differs somewhat from that of the rest of the family in that he is the youngest, about eight or nine years old, and due to his resulting immaturity and limited experience with death, his grief takes on a slightly different form. Still, the way in which he grieves does not entirely align with children’s understanding of death as outlined in Fulton & Metress (1995), nor is it as different

from that of the others as it perhaps should be, possibly due to the research on the topic having almost exclusively been conducted during the period after the Second World War (379-384), and thus even at its earliest more than a decade after Faulkner wrote *As I Lay Dying*. That said, considering the unorthodox mentality of the Bundrens, it is also entirely possible that said research would have been of little to no importance to *As I Lay Dying*. As mentioned above, Vardaman's grief is, to a considerable extent, focused on the image of his mother as a fish in an attempt to understand the situation, and Fulton and Metress note that such behaviour is relatively normal in children, who have an immature reasoning ability and often very limited experience with death (1995: 390). Another difference between Vardaman and the others is that while the others suffer through a single grief-inducing event, Vardaman experiences two. After Addie's death, he grows closer to Darl, who is the only other person in the family who really pays any attention to him and ends up becoming a kind of replacement parental figure, so when Darl is sent to the insane asylum, Vardaman suffers a second loss of a key supporting adult and the reaction can be clearly observed in his frantic and confused narration afterwards (144-145).

While Vardaman's philosophizing about the fish is a part of his attempt at understanding death, the fish can also be connected to his denial. When he first catches it, he tells Tull he wants to show it to Addie (19), displaying a relatively carefree attitude, suggesting that he is in denial, or considering his lack of prior experience with death, ignorance, of the fact that his mother is on her deathbed and likely not too interested in seeing the fish. When Addie does die, he displays a reaction of initial shock, "his mouth full open and all color draining from his face" (29) followed by denial strong enough to physically manifest in the form of him leaving the room (i.e. a form of denial of the whole situation), almost as if being pushed away by his own grief: "He begins to move slowly backwards from the bed [...] fading into the dusk like a piece of paper pasted on a failing wall, and so out the door" (29). Denial of his mother's death continues in him treating her as though she was still alive with the living person's need for breathing, seen when he is panicking over her being put into the coffin, something that he relates to a traumatic experience in his own life (39) and subsequently drills holes into the lid of the coffin (and, grotesquely, into her face) in order for Addie to be able to breathe (42). After having

crossed the river and the coffin having been rescued from the water, Vardaman once again seems to deny the fact that his mother is dead, thinking that

“My mother is a fish. Darl says that when we come to the water again I might see her and Dewey Dell said, She’s in the box; how could she have got out? She got out through the holes I bored, into the water I said, and when we come to the water again I am going to see her. My mother is not in the box. My mother does not smell like that. My mother is a fish”
(*As I Lay Dying*: 114)

Here he appears to be taking his fish metaphor literally, perhaps in desperation caused by his revulsion and outrage at the stench of the rotting body, believing that his mother is an actual fish able to swim out of the holes he made into freedom. If the fish metaphor is to be understood as him attempting to comprehend death, then this failure to let go of denial and instead interpret it literally also becomes a failure to accomplish that goal of understanding.

Vardaman does not spend much time being angry or frustrated, but that is not to say that he does not go through the stage of anger. Rather, he experiences it very quickly and explosively, allowing him to focus on attempting to understand life and death; perhaps him being focused on, or distracted by, this is the reason for why his anger is as brief as it is. Prior to Addie’s death, he demonstrates one instance of anger, directed at the fish, when he has a minor outburst after dropping it, swearing aggressively, “like a grown man” (19) according to Tull, hinting at some surprise at this, suggesting that such behaviour is out of character for Vardaman and thus triggered by the stress and grief he feels due to his mother being on her deathbed. After her death and him leaving the house, he has his main episode of anger, irrationally blaming the doctor, Peabody, for her death (seen in him saying e.g. “The fat son of a bitch”, “He kilt her. He kilt her.” and “You kilt my maw!” (32)), running into the stables and frantically attacking his horses with a stick until it breaks. The unreasonable reaction he displays fits his nature as a child, as his immaturity leaves him incapable of controlling or understanding his anger, and so he lashes out at random. Peabody, along with his horses, being the target is arbitrary; despite Vardaman likely making the connection between the responsibility of a medical practitioner and his mother’s death, anyone in the vicinity could have been the target, with Peabody simply being the most obvious choice. Had he not been there, Vardaman might have blamed e.g. Cash, for making the coffin, instead. As Kübler-

Ross & Kessler state, the anger is often directed randomly (2005: 10-11), but in Vardaman's case this is amplified by the child's immaturity.

The stage of bargaining can be observed in how Vardaman, failing to properly understand that his mother is dead, drills holes into her coffin in order for her to be able to breathe (42), indicating a thought process along the lines of "If I can drill some holes so that she can breathe, then she will be fine" in tandem with his denial of her death. Moreover, the above quoted section where he imagines Addie to be an actual fish capable of exiting the coffin through the holes he made earlier suggests bargaining in addition to denial. The underlying mentality is similar to when he first made the holes, i.e. him essentially attempting to save her from death, but here he also becomes her literal saviour by creating a way for her to escape the coffin and death itself, creating a fantasy world preferable to the real one, where his mother is not dead, he is able to see her again and does not need to feel grief over her death, thus experiencing both denial and bargaining at the same time.

Like his anger, Vardaman's stage of depression is brief and explosive, in addition to being expressed in tandem with his anger. In the same section as mentioned above when he attacks Peabody's horses, he also goes through his depression. After running outside, he cries violently, as seen in the incoherent nature of his narration in e.g. "I enter the stall, trying to touch him, and then I can cry then I vomit the crying. As soon as he gets through kicking I can and then I can cry, the crying can" (32); he is interrupted by his anger and goes to beat the horses until he is exhausted and then he resumes crying, now in a more quiet and subdued manner. After this, his attention quickly becomes focused on his attempts at understanding death and he does not have a similar episode for the remainder of the novel.

While Vardaman initially appears to accept his mother's death by equating her with the dead fish he caught ("My mother is a fish."(49)), the fact that he comes to think of the metaphor as literal truth rather than as a figurative mental tool indicates that aside from him failing at understanding death, he also fails to accept his mother's death by creating the aforementioned fantasy world where she is alive as an actual fish. Vardaman's ability to complete his grieving process from the perspective of the Kübler-Ross stages is thus hindered by his own immaturity and the lack of support from the other family members. The only one who pays him any

attention is Darl, whose madness and often unclear or confusing speech makes him alone insufficient support for Vardaman.

3.7 Conclusion

The grief of the Bundren children is chaotic, regularly jumping back and forth between the Kübler-Ross stages and the stages are frequently challenging to accurately identify, with some stages being very brief while others lasting longer, and not always in the way described by Kübler-Ross or Kübler-Ross & Kessler, with e.g. the stage of depression often being uncharacteristically brief. While this is well within the parameters established by the aforementioned, normal grief is occasionally hindered, e.g. by Darl's insanity and Vardaman's immaturity and the latter in particular fails to progress normally along the progress of grieving with very little, if any, indication that he will be able to do so within the foreseeable future and without developing pathological grief. Of course, the Bundrens can hardly be described as normal, but these failures at following the normal Kübler-Ross structure of grieving at the very least suggests that they would require more time than the novel gives them to process their grief.

While the Kübler-Ross stages can still be applied to *As I Lay Dying*, despite it being written four decades before the theory was published, some contradictions can be found, such as the grievers' denial on occasion actually being literal as opposed to figurative. In general, the novel follows the Kübler-Ross order of shock and denial coming first, but acceptance is not always last. Some of the characters also tend to favour certain stages over others, with e.g. Jewel displaying a great degree of anger while Vardaman displays more denial and bargaining than the others. While the Bundrens often react very strongly and differently to their grief, focusing on one stage over others is not extraordinary (Fulton & Metress 1995: 354-355). However, the strange, near-alien mentality that the Bundren children demonstrate makes it difficult at best to attempt to use an analysis of them to understand the grief of real people and at worst, as seen e.g. with Darl's insanity, perhaps completely impossible to apply an understanding of the Bundrens on the real world. The complex style of the novel further serves to complicate matters, as the stream of consciousness and the deliberate obscuring of certain events get in the way of both gaining an understanding of the Bundrens and subsequently attempting to apply it to reality.

4. *Never Let Me Go*

Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* follows a different structure than the other two novels used for this study, being centred around a single narrator, the thirty-one-year-old Kathy, rather than having multiple narrators giving their own unique perspectives on the same event. Because of this difference, this section primarily follows a structure that focuses on the various grief-inducing events of Kathy's narration instead of the perspectives of different characters. A small number of exceptions exist, where the griever is another character, and for these it is assumed that Kathy functions as a reasonably reliable narrator who provides an accurate recount of what she has seen and heard (and indeed Dræg (2014: 164) notes Kathy's sincerity as distinct from the narration of some of Ishiguro's other work). Still, she may at times have misremembered or misunderstood something, but it is assumed that she does not intentionally lie to the reader.

While *Never Let Me Go* does include the deaths of the narrator's two closest friends, these do not leave any major trace in the narration, perhaps because Kathy does not want to think about it, or because they, being clones created for organ harvesting, have been raised with the knowledge that they will die young and thus their deaths do not take the shape of a major trauma for Kathy. Another possibility is that since the narration is given in retrospect, Kathy has already finished going through the grieving process after their deaths and is narrating the novel from the stage of acceptance. This would explain the lack of attention given to these deaths as well as the general mood of resignation present throughout the novel, acceptance often being characterized by the griever coming to terms with an unwelcome reality. Instead of one or more deaths, the grief-inducing events of *Never Let Me Go* are often minor (but still significant enough for Kathy to remember them more than ten years later, indicating that they left a mark on her in her younger days) and the primary event that the narration and the minor grief events lead up to is not a death at all, but instead gained and subsequently lost hope. While the Kübler-Ross model was originally intended to be applied on the dying, its adaptation to being usable for understanding grief as well in Kübler-Ross & Kessler indicates that it is not the death itself that is vital, but instead the loss of something critical to an individual's emotional wellbeing, whether it is one's own impending death, the death of a loved

one, or as is the case here, the loss of one's hope for a future where there is no immediate threat of death by organ harvesting and where one can live together with a loved one, albeit briefly.

4.1 Minor Grief Events

Prior to the revelation of the aforementioned primary event, Kathy reveals several minor events in her past that often trigger a reaction that can be measured with the Kübler-Ross model. One of these is the loss of Hailsham when she finds out that the school has closed down. For her and the others who grew up there, Hailsham serves as a cornerstone of their identity not only during their period there, but throughout their entire lives. Its closing down thus comes as a blow to their entire identities, as seen on page 208 where Kathy reflects on what it might mean for her identity: "I'd meant *us*, all the students who'd grown up with me and were now spread across the country, carers and donors, all separated now but still somehow linked by the place we'd come from". Moreover, Kathy is at the time of Hailsham's closing already well aware of the fact that she will be required to give up her vital organs and that she as a result has no real future, and the loss of Hailsham comes as the loss of her past as well, severing her from her nostalgia for the past in addition to her dreams of the future. Perhaps this is the reason for why she decides to find her friends, Ruth and Tommy, after not having seen them for years.

The stage of denial is, apart from acceptance, the only stage that can be clearly observed regarding the closing of Hailsham; this is likely due to the narration being given from the stage of acceptance, meaning that the other stages are not always mentioned. Denial can be seen in Kathy's narration on multiple occasions, and not only in her telling of the past, but in the present time of the novel as well; she mentions that upon seeing e.g. houses or tree formations that remind her of Hailsham, she still thinks "'Maybe that's it! I've found it! This actually *is* Hailsham!' Then I see it's impossible and I go on driving" (6). This indicates that despite being in the stage of acceptance of the primary grief event, she still frequently relapses into denial when the grief relates to the loss of Hailsham. When recalling her discussing the school's closing with another former student, Laura, she reacts with a for denial typical statement of "'I can't really believe it's not there anymore'" (207) but, as

Kübler-Ross & Kessler (2005: 8) state, this type of reaction is not a literal statement but rather a mental defence mechanism.

While the stage of anger is not expressed explicitly in relation to the closing of Hailsham, Kathy reacts with irritation and anger when Ruth pretends to have forgotten certain details about the place and the people there, e.g. “Okay, these were mostly trivial things, but I got more and more irritated with her” (187) and when she shortly thereafter recalls getting angry at her for the same reason. While Kathy was at that point in time unaware of the then-future closing of Hailsham, she remarks that the absence of the arrival of more Hailsham students to the cottages where they were staying added to a sense of loss, of Hailsham being a thing of the past (186), indicating that the anger she displays towards Ruth is connected to the grief she feels at the loss of Hailsham, since to Kathy, Ruth is essentially denying the school by pretending not to remember things that would be too notable to forget.

The stage of bargaining is entirely absent from Kathy’s narration, but whether this is due to her not having experienced that stage or if she simply either does not remember or chooses not to tell the reader is likely an impossible question to answer. Depression can, however, be briefly identified in a dream that Kathy recalls having after hearing that Hailsham was about to close. Kübler-Ross & Kessler note that dreams related to the object of one’s grief are natural and can demonstrate both emotions and a sense of a lack of control that is common in grievers (2005: 52). This can be seen clearly in Kathy’s dream, where she sees a clown carrying a handful of balloons and fears that they will come loose and fly away, leading to there being “no real sense in which those balloons belonged with each other any more” (209). This not only signifies Kathy’s fear of losing her past and her connection with the other Hailsham students, but also demonstrates the aforementioned sense of a lack of control, since she knows that she can do nothing to prevent it. It identifies the stage of depression due to this being the time at which her grief at this loss is the most profound, enough for her to have symbolic dreams, suggesting it having affected her on a deeper level, common to this stage (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2005: 20).

The stage of acceptance is, apart from being the tone in which this loss is narrated, visible on a number of occasions. One of these is when no new Hailsham students arrive at the cottages after Kathy having been there for one year and she

recalls feeling a sense of relief, likely indicating that she has at that point accepted the fact that she is unlikely to ever see Hailsham again and that the lack of new Hailsham students aids her in coming to terms with this. Another instance of acceptance is seen when she is speaking to Laura about Hailsham closing and they hug each other “not so much to comfort each other, but as a way of affirming Hailsham, the fact that it was still there in both our memories” (207). This demonstrates acceptance of the fact that the school is gone and that while they both find the fact uncomfortable, they accept it, a stage they reach most likely by affirming that while Hailsham is gone, they still have personal connections that survive despite the school’s closing. Her deciding to become Ruth’s carer shortly afterwards (209) suggests that this is indeed the case. While Kathy has a dream of depression, Ruth recounts one that appears to indicate acceptance instead; she recalls dreaming about being at Hailsham and looking out of a window and it all being flooded, but experiencing feelings of tranquillity rather than e.g. panic or sorrow: “I knew I wasn’t in any danger, that it was only like that because it had closed down” (221). This suggests that while she has likely experienced the other stages earlier, she has at that point arrived at the stage of acceptance. Finally, at the very end of the novel, where her narration of the past is over and she narrates the present, she unsurprisingly -considering the omnipresent tone of acceptance- relates that while she still sometimes thinks she’s found Hailsham, she has accepted the fact that it is gone (280).

While the loss of Hailsham spans a longer period of time, other grief events are experienced exclusively during her childhood. One of them involves a game related to a secret club of sorts that Ruth had invented at a point in time where they were still around the age of (presumably) six or seven. This game becomes very important for Ruth, Kathy and a number of other, unnamed girls who are also participating, and when Ruth decides to expel Kathy from the club following a minor conflict, it triggers a grief reaction in Kathy. Interestingly, the stage of denial does not (as far as Kathy can remember) occur as normal, i.e. initially and following a brief period of shock. The brief initial shock is clearly present: “[It] suddenly hit me what was about to happen. It was like the split second before you step into a puddle, you realize it’s there, but there’s nothing you can do about it” (53), but while denial usually follows, here it is delayed until two days later when she talks to another ex-

member who dismisses the idea behind the club as nonsense. Kathy reacts with anger and goes so far as to make up a lie on the spot in order to maintain the club's legitimacy, an act that suggests that she still feels like she is a part of it and thus needs to defend it, displaying her denial over having been excluded from the group.

The stage of anger is arguably already present in the aforementioned display of denial, where Kathy remarks that she is “[Puzzled] by the sheer force of the emotion that overtook me [...] I turned to her, completely furious” (55). It is, however, possible that this reaction is simply part of the strong denial that she experiences regarding being excluded, but also that she is perhaps rapidly switching between denial and anger since the Kübler-Ross stages are, as mentioned, not required to appear in a specific order. A less ambiguous instance of anger can be observed right after Ruth expels Kathy from the club, where the latter turns around and leaves the room, “angry more at myself for having walked into it than at Ruth and the others.” (54) as well as her feeling anger upon seeing the club meetings during the subsequent days.

The stage of bargaining is, as far as Kathy recalls or chooses to recount, seemingly absent, with the arguable exception of her aforementioned outburst of denial at the other girl, which may indicate a thought process along the lines of “If I defend Ruth and the club, and act as if I was still a member, maybe I will be let back in”; this could also explain why she reacts with such strong emotions in that situation. Depression is briefly visible right after Kathy leaves the room after her expulsion, when she recalls that “I was upset, no doubt about it, though I don't know if I actually cried” (54). While she does not elaborate on it any further, the fact that she strongly remembers being upset demonstrates that the emotion was powerful enough for her to remember it, even more than two decades later. Kathy's arrival at the stage of acceptance is not obvious in her narration, since it cuts off before she decides to tell the reader about it. Instead, she merely hints at the secret club game having long faded away three years later. Presumably this means that she at some point came to accept having been excluded, and her adult narration gives no hints of any of the earlier stages, but when she reached acceptance or what this looked like is information of which she does not inform the reader.

Another incident, also concerning Ruth but occurring a few years later, after Hailsham, during their stay at the cottages, is their search for the person from whom Ruth was cloned. The idea of finding this person, referred to as a model or “possible” in the novel, takes on great importance for Ruth and, to a lesser extent, Kathy; this is derived from the notion that by finding one’s possible, one can gain insight into who one truly is, one’s origin as well as one’s possible future (137-138). In summary, the endeavour ends in failure after they find the person they are looking for, someone who resembles what they believe Ruth might look like a decade or two later, but who they ultimately decide is in fact not Ruth’s possible.

Interestingly, the stage of denial begins even before they set out on their trip, as evidenced by the fact that Ruth believes this person could ever be her possible in the first place. As she bitterly remarks later on, the people who serve as clone models are all “Junkies, prostitutes, winos, tramps. Convicts, maybe, just so long as they aren’t psychos” (164). This fact opens up the possibility that the stage-based reaction she undergoes ostensibly due to not finding her possible is actually a result of her not wanting to recognize that she is a clone who has no future, as the entire idea of finding that a successful office worker has acted as her clone model, as opposed to the usual lowlife, could in itself be the stage of denial related to her feelings for her own future, or lack thereof. An alternate interpretation is that she simply enters the stage of denial as soon as she hears that someone has seen a person who might be her possible, since she knows deep down that this cannot be the case, but wants to believe it nonetheless. Regardless of which alternative is more accurate, further denial can be identified when they find and observe the possible; Kathy notes that “It wasn’t obvious, but the more we kept looking, the more [she] seemed [like Ruth]” (157). While Kathy and the others seem fairly convinced that it might be Ruth’s possible, Ruth herself appears unsure, possibly because she is at some level aware of the fact that it cannot be her model, but she still chooses to not only wait and observe some more, but also to follow the woman afterwards in order to get a closer look, suggesting that she is at this point still denying the fact.

The stage of anger can be observed primarily in Ruth’s lengthy outburst about their clone models being junkies etc., where she, among other similar things, angrily remarks that “If you want to look for possibles [...] look in rubbish bins. Look down the toilet, that’s where you’ll find where we all come from” (164). Prior

to this, however, anger is seen when her then-boyfriend Tommy attempts to dismiss the failure in an attempt to lighten the mood, but Ruth coldly responds with “You wouldn’t think so if it was *your* possible we’d been looking for” (163), hinting at her upcoming outburst.

Another option regarding her aforementioned desire to wait and keep observing is it being part of the stage of bargaining instead of, or perhaps in addition to, denial. When she wishes to keep watching, it suggests bargaining along the lines of “If I keep watching her, I might see something and it will turn out that she is actually my possible”. While Kathy appears to be having difficulties interpreting Ruth’s reaction (as seen in e.g. “It was hard to read her face at that moment: she certainly wasn’t disappointed, but then she wasn’t elated either“ (157)), her repeated wishes to see more of this woman suggests that her feelings towards this are quite strong, and that she thus harbours a powerful desire not to be mistaken, hence the repeated bargaining.

Depression is not openly expressed here, the only hint being Kathy noting that Ruth was being very quiet and recalling that “I could tell she was upset, but someone who didn’t know her well might have supposed she was being thoughtful” (162). Kathy, however, appears to be having difficulties interpreting Ruth’s emotions during this endeavour, as evidenced by her aforementioned problems with deducing Ruth’s reaction from her face, meaning that her seeing that Ruth was upset could be either depression or anger. Ruth being quiet, however, appears to indicate the presence of the stage of depression as opposed to anger. Acceptance, like depression, is at best hinted at, when Ruth decides to go along with the group to visit another person unrelated to her possible without any further comments, potentially suggesting her having accepted the situation. Whether this is actually the case, or if she reached the stage of acceptance at some later point that Kathy did not witness due to not going along is unknown.

The final of the minor grief events is the failure of the Hailsham project, and it concerns the people who worked there rather than Kathy herself, but despite Kathy being the sole narrator, her conversation with them reveals hints of grief than can be successfully traced using the Kübler-Ross stages. While it concerns two different characters, Miss Emily and Madame, the grief event is the same and they both seem

to know each other well enough to know each other's feelings on the matter (and Kathy in turn does not know them well enough to provide much insight into their separate emotions), and are thus here analysed as one unit. While this is the same event as the above-mentioned closing of Hailsham, it concerns different people who view it from a different perspective and is thus different enough to be a separate grief event.

Denial is, as is perhaps to be expected considering the amount of time that has passed and the brief nature of the conversation, missing almost entirely from both Madame's and Miss Emily's dialogue. The only case of possible denial is seen when Miss Emily remarks that they kept Hailsham running for as long as they could and managed to last two years longer than a similar institution (260), which suggests that they did not want to accept that their project was doomed to fail. The stage of anger on the other hand, can be easily observed and appears to be the stage that Madame is stuck in (which is unusual but not impossible (Kübler-Ross 1969: 114)). Miss Emily remarks that the failure of Hailsham has left Madame "feeling somewhat disillusioned" (251) and shortly thereafter Madame questions "what good" it will do either party to hold their conversation (251) and why they even created the Hailsham project in the first place (a question she apparently likes to ask a lot(254)), suggesting, along with some similar comments, that the lingering state of her emotions is anger. Miss Emily, too, while generally speaking with a resignation indicating the stage of acceptance, demonstrates the stage of anger on one occasion when discussing genetically enhanced children in relations to the clone programme when she bitterly remarks that while the general public had little difficulties accepting the clones, "Children demonstrably *superior* to the rest of us? Oh no. That frightened people. They recoiled from that" (259).

The stage of bargaining is largely absent, visible only on a single occasion when Miss Emily expresses the notion that "Had we been more alert, less absorbed with ourselves, if we'd worked very hard at that stage when the news about Morningdale first broke, we might have been able to avert it" (259). This is a regular "if only"-reaction typical for the bargaining stage, but it appears to not be a very strong reaction, given Miss Emily's tone of resignation and the fact that she shortly thereafter admits that the closing of Hailsham may have been inevitable. The stage of depression, however, is not ever explicitly stated to have occurred, and one may at

best speculate that it did due to the Hailsham project being very important to Madame, Miss Emily and their co-workers and it failing presumably being an unpleasant experience. Lastly, the stage of acceptance is hard to pinpoint, but Miss Emily speaks, as mentioned, with a general tone of resignation which suggests that while she does not in any way like the outcome of the Hailsham project, she has accepted that it has failed. Madame, on the other hand, does indeed appear to still be in the stage of anger; whether she will ever reach acceptance is unknown.

4.2 Primary Grief Events

The primary, as well as the most recent, source of grief for Kathy is the realization that there is no way for her and her lover Tommy to postpone or avoid having their organs harvested; this is accompanied by a number of other causes of grief that are related to becoming a donor.

One of these related sources of grief is Kathy's processing of the fact that she and her friends are created to become organ donors and die. As mentioned above, Ruth's attempt at finding her clone model potentially indicates denial towards becoming a donor, but while Kathy makes an attempt to find her own possible, she is looking for her in pornographic magazines, which suggests that she is merely curious rather than in denial, at least concerning her clone model. There is no trace of denial in her narration, but at one point she recalls a scene from her childhood where she is dancing to a song with the same title as the novel and imagining that she is holding a child in her arms (71). However, she and all the other clones have been sterilized and are unable to have children, meaning that this may be a display or denial, or possibly, in the event that she is at that point in time unaware of her infertility, simply a child's fantasy.

Denial is, in relation to their future as donors, generally not expressed; instead, they have likely been raised with the knowledge of their future present from a very young age in order to neutralize the gravity of the matter and make them all accept it right from childhood. When Miss Lucy tells them (while also informing the reader for the first time), she uses the phrase "told and not told", and Tommy believes that

[The] guardians had, throughout all our years at Hailsham, timed very carefully and deliberately everything they told us, so that we were always just too young to understand properly the latest piece of information. But of course we'd take it in at some level, so that before long all this stuff was there in our heads without us ever having examined it properly. (71)

This approach would explain the lack of any of the stages of grief, apart from the stage of acceptance, one instance of anger and arguably one of bargaining, the cultivation of the former having been the exact goal of the Hailsham staff, since while they were idealists fighting to show the world the clones' humanity, they also needed to prepare them for their inevitable future, but in a way that would perhaps be the most merciful by avoiding the entire grief process. What is also possible, given the evidently advanced knowledge of genetic manipulation present in the setting, is that the clones were genetically modified to be obedient before they were even born, or perhaps a combination of the two. This, then, opens the way for the, admittedly somewhat far-fetched, argument that if their minds or mentalities have been altered to be obedient, maybe their grief is not representative of that of real people as a result. The fact that the applying of the Kübler-Ross theory appears to function without any major issues speaks against this, however.

The one instance of anger can be seen when Kathy, Ruth and Tommy have gone on an expedition to find the wreckage of a boat in a swamp, and they begin talking about donating their organs. Kathy makes a comment about one of their former friends having accepted his girlfriend dying during an organ transplant, which prompts Ruth to angrily ask "How could he possibly know what [she] would have felt? [...] It wasn't him on that table, trying to cling onto life. How would he know?" (222). Ruth has at this point undergone donations of her own and experienced resulting health issues, so it is reasonable that she reacts more strongly than the other two, as her situation is more urgent than theirs; her death is closer and the resulting stress is greater, so even though she too appears to have accepted her fate, she experiences the stage of anger as a result. The potential case of bargaining is also demonstrated by Ruth, as she is the one who brings up the whole idea of having donations postponed and goes to the lengths of tracking down the whereabouts of Madame and Miss Emily. Still, she does it for Kathy and Tommy rather than for herself which, while not invalidating the act being a part of the stage of bargaining,

suggests that she has already reached acceptance at that point, at least where her own fate as an organ donor is concerned, making the act difficult to categorize.

The most prominent stage is, as mentioned, the stage of acceptance. Whether it is due to their upbringing, careful timing of information or genetic engineering, they are all very accepting towards their own future as donors. Aside from the omnipresent tone of acceptance, some concrete examples can be observed. One of these is when Kathy recalls the Hailsham students making a joke out of their future as donors (86), which functions not only as a way of normalizing something so extreme but also as them reaching or expressing acceptance of the reality that they will have very short lives. Another example that excellently illustrates their acceptance of the situation is when Ruth mentions that “I was pretty much ready when I became a donor. It felt right. After all, it’s what we’re *supposed* to be doing, isn’t it?” (223). While Kübler-Ross & Kessler note that the stage of acceptance does not include the griever ever liking the new reality (2005: 24-25), here Ruth indicates that she (and given that the other two do not comment on it, them and perhaps all the Hailsham students as well) feels an unusually strong level of acceptance, to the point where she sees the donations as a positive thing. Perhaps this is a deliberate choice by the author in order to show the power of normalizing something unacceptable into the mundane.

The primary grief-inducing event of the novel is the time when Kathy and Tommy begin to believe in the rumours about deferrals, i.e. the Hailsham-exclusive postponement of the organ donations of a couple in love, go to see the person they believe will act as a contact for couples who wish to make such a request, only to find out that the entire notion was nothing but a rumour. Perhaps because this is the most recent grief that Kathy feels (excluding Tommy’s death, of which she evidently does not wish to tell the reader), the Kübler-Ross stages are more easily visible, including the stages that are usually difficult to identify in Kathy’s narration, most notably the stage of denial. It is also possible that this grief is stronger than any other she has felt, including the deaths of her two closest friends, since the revelation that the deferral is nonexistent means that she grieves for not only Tommy’s death, but also for her own (in the form of anticipatory grief) as well as for the future that she hoped or believed they would have together. Perhaps Kathy does not herself realize the profound nature of her grief, considering that she chooses not to tell the reader of

her grief after Tommy and Ruth's deaths as she probably felt it was too personal, but still tells the story of the deferral, despite it likely being the stronger source of grief for her. Regardless, the grief is powerful enough to affect her whole narration throughout the novel in the form of the aforementioned tone of resignation. However, despite being referred to throughout the novel, mentions of the deferrals interestingly do not demonstrate any signs of the Kübler-Ross stages (except arguably acceptance) prior to the point where Kathy and Tommy hold their conversation with Madame and Miss Emily; perhaps this is a conscious choice by the author in order to increase suspense.

The stage of denial can be first observed almost immediately after Kathy and Tommy's conversation with Madame begins. When told of their plans, Madame answers in a way that suggests she knows nothing about it: "You believe this? [...] And therefore you've come to me for this...this deferral? Why?" (247), to which Kathy instantly reacts with denial. Perhaps she has already at this point realized on some level that the deferral is merely a rumour and thus moves into the stage of denial, or perhaps it is something she applies to her narration in hindsight, something she has thought of later, after going through the conversation in her head:

If she'd asked this in a certain way, like the whole idea was completely crazy, then I'm sure I'd have felt pretty devastated. But she hadn't quite said it like that. She'd asked it almost like it was a test question she knew the answer to; as if, even, she'd taken other couples through an identical routine many times before. That was what kept me hopeful. (247-248)

Shortly afterwards, Miss Emily refers to the deferrals as a rumour, to which Kathy replies that they wish to know whether the rumour is true or not (252), demonstrating denial towards the fact that it is not, despite her likely having realized it at this point, as this is the second time she has heard the deferrals being indirectly dismissed. When Miss Emily clearly states that the rumours are in fact mere rumours, Kathy's first reaction is, again, denial:

[Even] though Miss Emily's words should have crushed me, there was an aspect to them that implied something further, something being held back, that suggested we hadn't yet got to the bottom of things. There was even the possibility she wasn't telling the truth. (253)

Following this, Kathy once again demonstrates denial by asking one more time whether there is any truth to the rumours (253); this is followed by Tommy asking

whether they had been true at some earlier point in time, suggesting both a degree of acceptance towards the fact that the rumours are false and what is perhaps a more desperate level of denial, with him still holding on to the idea that the deferrals could have existed, and could thus perhaps be reinstated for them (253). While Kathy appears to have moved past the stage of denial at this point, Tommy still asks, with what could be interpreted as either denial or anger, if the deferrals never existed, why did Madame take some of their art pieces for her “gallery”, perhaps hoping that if the gallery exists then maybe the deferrals exist as well (254). Later, after a lengthy explanation of the nature of Hailsham and the cloning programme, he demonstrates denial one last time by asking “So there’s definitely nothing. No deferral, nothing like that” (261); Kathy’s response to this, however, indicates that at least she is indeed past the stage of denial at this point.

As mentioned, Tommy asks about the gallery with what possibly demonstrates the stage of anger, as, in addition to denial, his question could also imply anger and frustration, wondering why Madame ever bothered with collecting the students’ art if they are all inevitably going to die young regardless. After Madame’s reply, Kathy also demonstrates anger, by asking

Why did we go through all of that work in the first place? Why train us, encourage us, make us produce all of that? If we’re just going to give donations anyway, then die, why all those lessons? Why all those books and discussions? (254)

Later, Kathy again indicates the stage of anger by bitterly commenting that “It might just be some trend that came and went [...] but for us, it’s our life” (261) in response to being told of Hailsham’s history. When Kathy and Tommy are driving back to the care centre afterwards, Tommy shows a final display of anger when he gets out of the car and throws a tantrum like the ones from his childhood, kicking and screaming uncontrollably in a field until Kathy manages to calm him down (268-269).

Some of the instances of denial demonstrated by Kathy and Tommy can also be interpreted as being part of the stage of bargaining. When Tommy asks about the possibility of deferrals having existed in the past (253), it indicates bargaining since he appears to hope that, as mentioned, if deferrals existed in the past, they could exist in the present as well, and whatever conditions he imagines might exist for this to be the case are ones that he would instantly accept. Him later asking if there is

absolutely no kind of deferral also suggests bargaining, in a thought process that hopes for some forgotten option that will appear and save them if he just asks them one more time (261). As mentioned above with Ruth believing in deferrals possibly being bargaining, Kathy and Tommy coming to hope for it and even visiting Madame and Miss Emily could arguably be considered bargaining regarding their fate as organ donors, as it is, at its core, one great attempt at finding another option; if they can find and convince Madame, and prove that they are in love, then they will be granted a few years of time before their donations will be due. The criteria Kübler-Ross mentions for this stage can all be identified in this case, as it includes one or more conditions, a time limit and an implication that they will not ask for more time once the granted extra time is up. Kübler-Ross likens the bargaining of the dying to that of children bargaining with their parents, and in the novel, Kathy and Tommy are essentially literally bargaining with their parents, i.e. the Hailsham staff, as they, being clones, have no real parents. Indeed, Kathy and Tommy both find that “Madame now appeared [...] like an intimate, someone much closer to us than anyone new we’d met over the recent years” (247) and talking to her being akin to talking to one of their foster parents, the Hailsham guardians. They are in that sense thus bargaining as both children and adults simultaneously, to an authority that is both parent and state institution.

The stage of depression is not very visible, but does arguably appear at one or two points, one being a few weeks after Kathy and Tommy’s visit to Madame and Miss Lucy when Kathy asks Tommy if he is happy that Ruth died before finding out that deferrals do not exist, perhaps suggesting that she feels some envy towards Ruth as the latter died without losing hope for the future, and/or perhaps that she feels no desire to go on now that their hope of a deferral has been proven false. Another possible instance of depression can be observed when they are driving away from their meeting with the former Hailsham staff. Kübler-Ross & Kessler note that isolation is a common part of grieving, often depression (2005: 82-83) and in addition to them not speaking to each other, Kathy appears to be seeking out some form of isolation by driving along rarely-used roads at night (“[It] seemed to me these dark byways of the country existed just for the likes of us” (267)). Their silence and the brief isolation they experience can thus be taken as a sign of depression, despite the latter being more metaphorical and artificial than normal emotion.

The stage of acceptance is not explicitly seen at any point, but is the ultimate cause of the tone of resignation and acceptance present throughout the entire novel. Some weeks pass after the visit that are only briefly paraphrased, so it is likely that she reached the final Kübler-Ross stage during this time, as she has reached it by the time she says her final farewell to Tommy. Yeung (2017: 10) notes that Kathy uses her memories as a means of finding solace from the grief of the present and that it is because of this that she is ultimately able to accept her fate as a donor. Drąg (2014: 135), however, argues that the loss of Hailsham is of critical importance, as it is a trauma that Kathy is unable to fully accept and as a result gives rise to a desire to return to her paradise-like childhood, illustrated by her retelling of her past. The Kübler-Ross model would interpret this as the stage of denial, and in this sense she is thus caught in a state of simultaneous denial and acceptance. This is, however, paradoxical to said model and Kathy's final acceptance of her fate clearly illustrates that the stage of acceptance is reached. It is perhaps possible to interpret Kathy's desire to tell her story as denial in the form of escapism, but from the very beginning of her narration she seems to have already reached acceptance (seen e.g. in "[It] feels just about right to be finishing at last come the end of the year." (4)). This speaks against the idea that she is unable to accept her fate and the present but seems to support Yeung argument regarding using the past as a means of reaching acceptance (although it should be noted that Yeung does not refer to the Kübler-Ross stage of acceptance). While Drąg does note Kathy and Tommy's reactions to realizing that the deferral is a myth (2014: 169), this is merely glanced at and as seen in the analysis above, the Kübler-Ross model serves to provide a deeper understanding of their emotional state at the time.

4.3 Possibility of Metagrief

In addition to the grief discussed above, there is an argument to be explored about the possible existence of the Kübler-Ross stages within the structure of the novel. The proposition is them existing on a meta level meant to connect to, or perhaps even induce a grief response in, the reader. The narrator speaking to the reader as a fellow clone indicates that there does indeed exist some level of intent to make the reader assume the role of Kathy, but while Kathy experiences her own grief, the reader may require something directed towards them specifically. Much of this "metagrief" is

connected to Kathy becoming a donor and the chance of a deferral, as these are two are central parts of the novel and the primary sources of drama. Additionally, Kathy seems to invite the reader to not only sympathize with her situation but to place themselves in it. This is expressed in how her use of language seems to be directed towards a peer, as seen e.g. in “I don’t know how it was where you were, but at Hailsham [...]” (13), which implies that the reader is also a clone who has grown up at some form of institution and is either a carer or a donor at the time of reading. With the exception of the stage of denial, all the Kübler-Ross stages can be identified in a context that may indicate that they are directed towards the reader rather than the characters of the novel. The stage of denial being difficult to pinpoint is possibly due to most of, or even the entirety, of the novel acting as a form of denial for the reader. The possibility of a deferral and the fact that Kathy is obviously alive to narrate the novel provides enough ground for denial to exist and for the reader to keep hoping that perhaps there is some form of misunderstanding, or that something will be introduced that will save Kathy and Tommy from their fate.

The stage of anger can be observed on two occasions; first, in Tommy’s recount of his conversation with Miss Lucy, where he recalls that she was “Shaking. With rage. I could see her. She was furious. But furious deep inside” (28) and notes that the anger was directed towards something unknown. This being directed to the reader is arguable, as it occurs prior to the novel informing the reader of the organ donations, but as the novel seems to invite the reader to go back and reread the first few chapters with the entire knowledge of the cloning project in mind to spot the signs they did not notice the first time, it is not implausible to assume that Miss Lucy is here intended to reflect anger on behalf of the reader as they will, on a second reading, understand what Tommy was both told and not told. The other instance of anger can be seen after their meeting with the former Hailsham staff and Tommy’s outburst of anger, where Kathy suggests that Tommy’s childhood tantrums were caused by him somehow being aware of their fate and unknowingly protesting against it, to which Tommy reluctantly agrees that “Maybe I did know, somewhere deep down. Something the rest of you didn’t” (270). This may be a reference to what is likely intentionally created frustration in the reader; frustration that comes from perhaps asking why none of them protest against being bred for organ harvesting, why they do not try to hide or flee the country and why they simply accept things as

they are. Thus, the reader would know something the rest, i.e. the student characters, do not, specifically the possibility that they could escape from their fate if they made the attempt.

The stage of bargaining, while definitely present on a meta level, is somewhat redundant to detail here as it consists of the same bargaining that Kathy and Tommy experience: the deferral, and thus the possibility that the novel might have a happy ending or that the cloning program could be ended if they can convince people who run it (i.e. Madame and Miss Lucy). At this point, the reader has almost merged with Kathy in the hope of a way out, and is perhaps encouraged to imagine what other possible options might exist by Kathy imagining that Miss Emily might be lying when she reveals that the deferrals do not exist (253).

Depression is demonstrated by Madame, when she discovers Kathy dancing to the title song, and reacts by openly crying for a to the reader then-unknown reason, and while the reason is later revealed, it seems to invite the reader to imagine the cause or impose their own idea of what may be the reason. Indeed, the grief expressed here is done so literally in response to the title of the novel, and by someone who shares the reader's nature of being an outside observer of someone else, suggesting that Madame's reaction here is symbolic of any sadness the reader may experience when reading the novel. The stage of depression is also arguably the stage in which the reader is left by the end of the novel; along with Kathy, the reader says farewell to Tommy, and is then reminded of the fact that Kathy will soon die as well, and finally the novel ends with a fantasy where Tommy is still alive, but which is swiftly cut off by Kathy, denying the continuation of the grieving process.

Lastly acceptance, while perhaps being denied the reader, is the prevailing tone of the entire novel, which may be interpreted as the reader being told to accept Kathy's fate and that finishing the novel returns the reader to the real world, thus creating acceptance in the form of the knowledge that it is, after all, merely a novel and so has an ending, regardless of what that may be. The notion of the existence of the stages of grief within the novel's structure is thus not unfounded, but as seen above, the connections are frequently arguable in their applicability.

4.4 Conclusion

The grief present in *Never Let Me Go* proves challenging to accurately identify at times as a result of the narration being given by the primarily affected character in hindsight and in most cases long after they have reached the stage of acceptance. The novel thus does not provide an image of grief that can be directly related to real grief, but the Kübler-Ross model nonetheless functions where the grief is visible. The suggested fixation on the past (Drag 2014: 135) may also serve to complicate the applicability of an understanding of Kathy on the real-world bereaved. Unlike the Bundrens of *As I Lay Dying*, however, she is sane, educated and sincere, which makes an understanding of Kathy useful at least to some extent as far as real grief is concerned. Some of the stages are omitted from the narration in places, and the reason behind it is not always clear. While anticipatory grief would normally apply to the Hailsham students, it is largely eliminated by the guardians' strategy of gradually informing the clones during childhood, presumably along with any possible objections. Fulton & Metress (1995: 346) make a note on the social acceptability of a given death being tied to the extent to which it can be considered natural, e.g. the death of an infant being less acceptable than the death of a senior, and the Hailsham guardians have succeeded in raising the level of acceptance towards the clones' fate among themselves to the point where it is considered the natural order of things.

The primary difference in the grief of *Never Let Me Go* in comparison to the other two novels is that the grief concerns not a death, but other, sometimes seemingly minor events that still induce the same grief response in the recipient as an actual death. This suggests that the nature of the event that causes the grief is of secondary importance to the emotional impact it has on the griever, which in turn implies that not only a death but any event can result in grief, provided it generates sufficient emotional distress in the would-be griever. While the order of the Kübler-Ross stages of grief is typically difficult to determine due to the retrospective narration, the grief response during and after the rejection of the deferrals observes the model's general rule of denial occurring first and acceptance last. Ultimately, Kathy does manage to undergo a normal grieving process, despite the unusual circumstances, perhaps as a result of her very deliberate Hailsham upbringing. The idea that Kathy uses her memories of the past as a means of coming to terms with her fate (Yeung 2017:10) suggests that perhaps this is a viable method of mourning that could be applied to real grief as well. While it may seem obvious to focus on positive memories of the deceased, perhaps reaching the stage of acceptance could be aided by the bereaved recalling all their memories of them in the form of a story and by realizing that while they have died, the memories remain, as may be the case for Kathy.

5. Returning to Earth

The grief in *Returning to Earth* is centred around the death of the Chippewa-Finnish American man Donald who, in his early forties, slowly dies from Lou Gehrig's disease. Donald's Native American heritage becomes a crucial point for his ability to cope with his own death, and in Chapter 1 he tells the stories of the closest three generations of his ancestors. While *As I Lay Dying* also features a dying family member, the situation here differs due to Donald being more active than Addie Bundren and able to narrate his own chapter, providing insight into the mind of the dying as well as those of the grieving. The rest are narrated by his family members and friends: his wife Cynthia, his brother-in-law David and his friend Kenneth. His adult children, Clare and Herald are also shown to grieve but do not narrate their own chapters. Clare does not narrate a chapter of her own but is nevertheless analysed below due to the unorthodox and unexpected reaction she displays after her father's death. While the narration in Chapters 1 and 2 are given prior to and during Donald's death, the latter half of the novel skips the first four months following his death, thus offering a different perspective on grief than the other two novels, namely grief which is not immediate but more advanced and which in most cases has progressed further on the Kübler-Ross model. The form also differs from the other two novels by being far less experimental and instead more plain and straightforward, being primarily narrated from a first-person perspective. The one exception can be found in Donald's narration which, on account of being presented as a document, also contains some notes made by Cynthia.

While Donald suffers from an incurable disease, his death is ultimately an active decision, inflicted via medical euthanasia in a location of religious significance. Donald's euthanasia is what Fulton & Metress refer to as voluntary active direct euthanasia, meaning that the act is performed at the behest of the dying individual and that this is done so deliberately, in a way directly intended to end life; this is occasionally referred to as the "mercy killing" of e.g. the terminally ill, or as assisted suicide (1995: 170-171). Given that Donald is the one who insists on euthanasia and that Lou Gehrig's disease does not affect one's mental capacity or ability to make decisions, it appears most accurate to describe the event as an assisted suicide; an undertaking in which his family and his closest friend all assist him, if

reluctantly. Research on suicide actively assisted by the would-be bereaved as opposed to a physician, in combination with their experience of anticipatory grief leading up to the event, and its effect on the grieving appears to be an unexplored territory. Thus, the euthanasia of Donald will here be treated as a form of expected suicide regarding the grief experienced by his friends and family.

Suicide normally results in the relatives finding themselves in a situation that differs from that of the aftermath of a non-suicide. A suicide in the family carries a social stigma that may interfere with the griever's ability to properly process their grief, e.g. through a lack of communication, and can result in powerful feelings of shame and guilt in the bereaved (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2005: 183). Indeed, Fulton & Metress note that suicide survivors tend to experience more grief reactions than normal; however, while suicide-related grief may extend the grieving process, the recovery of suicide survivors is similar to regular grievers two to four years after the loss (1995: 419). In *Returning to Earth*, however, the bereaved do not exhibit the above behaviour, and any social stigma is largely or entirely eliminated by them supporting each other and keeping the nature of Donald's death a secret. This is likely due to the nature of Donald's assisted suicide being an event that his loved ones not only knew about ahead of time but actively participated in, as well as them all understanding and respecting Donald's wish to not die from the disease. Indeed, any objections to the euthanasia are briefly given by an outsider. Perhaps this is intended to demonstrate that Donald's wish to die could only be understood by those who truly knew him and that it is necessary to keep it a secret from society, and the law, as the state they live in (and Canada, where the suicide takes place) evidently bans assisted suicide.

5.1 Donald

Donald's primary reaction to his impending death is one that requires an understanding of his personality to accurately identify. Throughout his entire life, Donald has been a person who expresses himself through physical action rather than words, and contracting Lou Gehrig's disease, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, strikes a powerful blow to the heart of his entire identity. His wife Cynthia remarks that his typical reaction to being upset by something was to "walk it off", usually for dozens of miles (51). His disease preventing him from doing this thus not only causes great

frustration but also undermines a cornerstone of his identity. As a result of this, Donald seeks for something to replace the part of himself that he has lost, and the choice falls on his heritage as a Native American. His life prior to his illness is not widely explored, but his family members recall that he has always lived as an average white American with little attention paid to his heritage outside of some social gatherings and his personal religion.

As this heritage becomes a more important part of his identity, it also becomes important for him to consider it more actively, but as he is almost incapable of moving around without assistance, or even speak properly, the only way he can truly express this new part of his identity is to continue the oral tradition of his ancestors and tell his children of their heritage. However, while tradition dictates that the telling be exclusively oral, not quite to the point of taboo, but close (20-21), Donald's illness forces him to break with this tradition and have the stories written down by his wife. While such a telling can be considered an attempt at gaining immortality through stories, it is unlikely that this is the case for Donald, as both his personality and religion consider death to not only be a natural part of life but also merely a transition between life and a form of animist spiritual post-life existence and thus nothing to be dreaded. In a way similar to *Never Let Me Go* (see Section 4.3), Harrison seems to invite the reader to share the grief of the bereaved by making Donald's story in Chapter 1 a text that both the reader and the characters of the novel read. Unlike in *Never Let Me Go*, however, this appears to be more of a literary tool for creating a sense of empathy in the reader, rather than an attempt at inducing an actual grief response, since there are no further attempts at it.

Donald's initial reaction to his future death is hidden from the reader in the same way that his family's initial reactions are hidden by a four-month skip, as he has already suffered from the illness for nearly a year by the beginning of the novel (5). As a result, the Kübler-Ross stages cannot all be identified and Donald is generally in a very advanced stage of his dying. The stage of denial, being the initial one, is likely entirely absent as while Donald presumably underwent this stage, it is not visible in the novel. The one possible exception is his desire to pass on his knowledge and the stories of his ancestors to his children, which can, as mentioned, be interpreted as an attempt to attain immortality and thus deny his own death. This, however, is unlikely to be the case for the same reasons as mentioned above and the

most accurate assessment is that Donald has simply moved past this stage by the beginning of the novel.

While denial is elusive at best, the stage of anger can at times be both observed and inferred. Near the beginning of his narration, Donald relates a story of his great grandfather who was locked into a cellar for a week while travelling across the country (4) and connects this to his own illness and inability to move independently and notes that while travelling alone was likely a challenging undertaking, it must also have been “a good feeling [...] compared to [...] being trapped in a root cellar” (7), hinting at the frustration he feels at his own situation and his ever-increasing impotence. Later, he recalls the final time he was able to go on a long walk in nature with his friend Kenneth, where he decides to go off on his own to find a specific spot and is reduced to stubbornly crawling to his destination due to not having the strength to stand (15-17), indicating a reaction that Kübler-Ross describes as a form of angry defiance towards death in the shape of a desire to tell the world, and perhaps himself, that he is not yet dead (1969: 52). A more direct indication of his anger can be seen in his wife Cynthia’s narration where she discusses his illness and recalls that she “could see his rage at life” (31).

The stage of bargaining is not obviously present, but it should nevertheless be mentioned that his desire to relate the stories of his ancestors can be taken as a display of bargaining in two possible ways; the first option is it being an attempt to bargain for something before his death, namely the stories themselves, as his illness has triggered a desire to relate them quickly, before he dies. While it is never obvious, the bargaining appears to follow the pattern of a self-imposed deadline and not asking for more once the request has been granted, as outlined in section 2, as all Donald wants is to tell the stories. The second option is that he is bargaining for immortality through his stories but, as previously mentioned, this seems unlikely to be the case.

The stage of depression, however, is hinted at throughout Donald’s narration and can at times be clearly identified. When reflecting on his illness and current situation, Donald remarks that

“I looked down and took the sheet off and my muscles are nearly gone. Cynthia says not but I know otherwise. Even a pencil or a glass of water weighs something now. [...] I could hold a ninety-pound corner block out straight and now I can scarcely hold my arm out. These things happen to people but some days it can be hard to handle. So this morning my reality broke down and I wasn't sure of anything” (14)

This illustrates not only the strong feelings of depression he experiences, but also clearly indicates the source, aside from his disease, i.e. the decay of his body and identity. Later, he displays these emotions again when talking about one of his ancestors, saying “Clarence quit his good job, bought a barrel of whiskey, and drank for a month or so. [...] I was thinking now that I understand his feelings because I have lost my body, which has been mine for forty-five years” (26). In his final clear indication of depression he is less occupied with his body (although this feeling is still present) and instead laments the things he did not have time to learn about the world (43).

Finally, the stage of acceptance is the stage from which Donald appears to be telling his story, as an air of acceptance or resignation is present throughout, although this does not prevent him from occasionally experiencing the other stages, as seen above. While acceptance is generally difficult to pin down, it is clearly stated at a few points at the beginning of the novel, and indeed, the very opening line of the novel seems to display this: “I'm laying here talking to Cynthia because that's about all I can do with my infirmity” (3). This is soon followed by “I'm forty-five and it seems I'm to leave the Earth early but these things happen to people” (3). These two lines, along with when he later simply states that he has Lou Gehrig's disease (5), immediately demonstrate his attitude of acceptance towards a fate that he, unsurprisingly, does not enjoy but nevertheless accepts as part of life. The stories he tells his children can also be taken as signs of acceptance; as his life is ending he has accepted this fact and resolved to do what he can to continue the oral tradition of his ancestors before he dies, an action that he would have been unlikely to take otherwise. His personal religion also seems to foster acceptance towards death, as it holds that he will continue to lead some form of spiritual existence after death, potentially lessening the emotional impact of his impending death.

5.2 Kenneth 'K'

Kenneth, who goes by the nickname K throughout the entire novel, is the only narrator who is not a part of the family; rather, he is a friend of Donald who assists him with various tasks in his illness. The section that K narrates is the one where they prepare for Donald's euthanasia and where Donald actually dies, but despite this, K's narration skips the first three Kübler-Ross stages entirely. Whether this is due to enough time having passed for him to have simply gone through these stages already, or if it is due to his stoic nature is impossible to say. However, while the stages of denial, anger and bargaining are invisible, the stage of depression can be observed at three points. When talking to Donald's son Herald, first the latter mentions that "'There aren't very many people like my father anymore,' and then we both fell apart. That's what I was thinking this morning when I read about the three Clarences. These kind of people are gone forever." (81), demonstrating that while he is a stoic individual, he still grieves for his friend. Later, when thinking about Donald and hearing Cynthia sing, he states that "I couldn't sing a song or tell a story because I had begun crying and couldn't quite stop enough to use my voice." (138), showing increasingly powerful signs of the stage of depression as Donald's death approaches. This is further escalated when they cross the border to Canada on the way to Donald's chosen location of death and K is greeted by a customs agent, to which he reacts with "[My] mind altered his line and began to view the world in black and white despite the bluish-green water of eastern Lake Superior to the left and the high, green forested hills on the right" (139); while possibly intended as a metaphor for the grief he feels at that moment, this additionally displays the stage of depression in a very obvious manner as his friend's death is now very close.

The stage of acceptance is generally expressed in a way similar to depression, i.e. present at most times and especially visible on a few occasions. The first, and perhaps the most unambiguous is when he realizes that

"To care for Donald in his present state is to finally understand that there are no miracles except that we exist. Like his ancestor the first Clarence, we ride a big horse to the east and then it's over" (78)

Facing Donald's impending death evidently forces him to also consider his own mortality, which he at least at this stage appears to accept in addition to the death of

his friend. An instance of acceptance more directly focused on Donald can be seen when he mentions that he had been going to the gym to exercise several days per week in preparation for helping Donald in his near-infirm state (85), illustrating that he is keenly aware of Donald's inevitable death and has accepted the fact that all he can do is aid him until he dies. Finally, he later decides that "I simply had to accept the fact that bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people" (99), referring not only to Donald but also to his to-be-bereaved family. Interestingly, K's displays of acceptance seem to fade as Donald's death approaches and the mixed tone of depression and acceptance is replaced with one exclusively of depression, hinting at the increasing intensity of his grief as its ultimate cause draws closer.

5.3 David

David is Donald's brother-in-law, and his ability to grieve naturally over Donald's death is hindered by the great mental confusion he feels at nearly all times. This confusion, which includes periodic relapses into depression, stems from the guilt he feels over the actions of his father. His father, also named David, became mentally unstable after serving in the Korean War and ended up raping one of his son's friends when the latter was twelve years old, triggering the aforementioned guilt in David. While this guilt is entirely irrational, it is powerful enough that David has not forgiven his father even thirty years after the event (and several years after his death at the hands of the raped girl's son) and the guilt he feels is further complicated by his fears that he will become like his father (illustrated by them sharing a name). Indeed, most of his actions are a result of his inability, and if fact unwillingness, to forgive or even understand his father, who always looms like a dark shadow in the background. The guilt he feels and the resulting confusion make his narration equally confused, and seem to at times fuse together with his grief over Donald's death. Thus, his ability to grieve is hindered and the Kübler-Ross stages are not all visible, but whether this is due to him having gone through some of them prior to his narration or if he has been unable to grieve normally due to his unbalanced mental state is difficult to say. While guilt can often be a natural part of grief, David's guilt is caused by horror at his father's actions rather than any grief he might have felt and will as a result not be considered a grief response here.

The stage of denial is visible only at one point in David's narration, when he is out in the woods and encounters a bear (for context, the bear is what essentially amounts to Donald's spirit guide in his religion). After having distanced himself from the bear and returned to his car, he thinks "Maybe it's Donald." (155). While this could be considered acceptance in the form of Donald having died and reached his religion's afterlife, David is highly intelligent and educated and does not follow any animist religion, making it unlikely that he believes Donald to have truly become a bear. Rather, he most likely experiences denial in refusing to accept that Donald is dead, and subconsciously mixes Donald's religion with his own grief in a manner that would in no way be extraordinary to his near-perpetually confused mind.

The stage of anger cannot be observed at any point in his narration, befitting his gentle personality, but whether the absence of anger is caused by this personality or by the temporal gap between Donald's death and the narration is once again indeterminable. The stage of bargaining, however, can arguably be identified at one point, when David ponders Donald's story (i.e. the novel's first chapter) and thinks "Because of the nature of when I read it Donald's story has become more real to me than all but a few incidents in my own life" (153). This indicates what could be bargaining in the form of attempting to make Donald come back to life by equating his story with reality in what would be the ultimate success of the aforementioned potential desire to become immortal through telling the story of one's life. An alternative interpretation of this is that it belongs to the stage of denial in the shape of denying Donald's death by, again, equating his story with life and thus attempting to essentially revive him or undo his death.

The stage of depression is not only less ambiguous but also the one most frequently seen. One instance is when David is idling on a porch and considers

"[...] I am obsessed with how fragile art, literature, love, and music, even the natural world are in the presence of severe illness and inevitable death. Four months after Donald's passing we're still staring off into the middle distance even when we're facing a wall three feet away." (160)

This illustrates both his grief and his typical confusion, although here caused by grief rather than guilt, directed towards some of the things he considers the most important ones in his life and how they all seem to lose meaning as a result of his grief in a less extreme parallel to what K experiences when the world becomes black and white for

him. It additionally hints at the grief of the rest of the family. Later, he again considers the effect of death on the bereaved, himself included, in

“I stop under the streetlight and think about Donald and how the death of a man who was so loved seems to exhaust everyone as if they’re struggling in a vacuum and not quite enough air is being pumped in for survival. There are none of my helpful little packets for this border passing” (180)

This vivid description of the pain of bereavement provides a perfect description of the stage of depression and illustrates just how powerful David’s grief is. The final sentence refers to him distributing survival packs to Mexican immigrants using the money he inherited from his father to help them cross the US-Mexican border safely, an act that is again fuelled partially by his feelings of guilt. His guilt can, as mentioned, be observed fusing with the grief over Donald’s death, expressed most notably in his recount of a dream:

“[The] moon was my mother’s face and though it was dark I could see the baby bear crying because it couldn’t locate it’s mother. [...] Somehow in the dream the baby bear was [the girl David Sr. raped] and the invisible mother bear was Donald.” (198)

Aside from demonstrating the fusion of two entirely different traumas, this also illustrates David’s grief in him dreaming of an entity that desperately cries for what is essentially a representation of Donald.

Lastly, despite the significant feelings of depression, the stage of acceptance can likely be seen in how David is also able to accept the fact that Donald is dead in “[How] can death be bad when it’s happened to every single living creature and plant since the beginning of the earth?” (158). However, this is said in an attempt to encourage Donald’s daughter, suggesting there may be reasons for not considering it to be genuine, namely the highly present stage of depression which may indicate that he does not truly believe what he says and is merely trying to help another. Philanthropy being a way for David to progress his feelings of guilt, and the fact that his guilt fuses with his grief, may indicate that he is in fact putting on a façade for the sake of Donald’s daughter. The case of him having reached the stage of acceptance at all is thus left ambiguous, particularly when considering his inability to accept his father’s actions.

5.4 Cynthia

Donald's wife Cynthia is, perhaps as to be expected, the one who is the most strongly affected by Donald's death even months afterwards. Like her brother David, she remembers their father with disdain, but while David is unable to let go of the past, Cynthia has made successful attempts to understand her father and find the reason behind his actions. To her he is human, unlike the evil presence he has become to David, and as such Cynthia's ability to grieve naturally for Donald is not hindered by David Sr. She is, however, prevented from being able to grieve without worry due to the unusual method of grieving expressed by her daughter Clare (discussed in detail in section 5.5 below) and she is at times distracted from her own grief by the worry she feels over her daughter's actions. Nonetheless, this does not affect her grief over her husband's death to an extent where it could be considered a hindrance to its natural process.

The stage of denial is visible more in Cynthia's narration than in that of any of the novel's other characters. She has ostensibly created an illusion or projection of him that she uses in order to attempt to escape the fact that he is dead:

“Five months after Donald's death I still sense strongly the continuing vacuum that once was his body. Sometimes the vacuum struggles to resume his bodily shape but what is most real is the presence of the voice, and the occasional scent of raw lumber and cement, and occasionally the scent of sun on his skin. Now I can hear him say [...]” 216

She evidently imagines feeling, hearing and smelling him but appears to have difficulties seeing him; perhaps this is an indication that her illusion of Donald is in the process of being replaced with acceptance of the fact that he is dead, and a sign that she is beginning to leave the stage of denial behind. Speaking against this possibility is the fact that she still experiences denial in other forms, as seen during a conversation with a friend involving the existence of a soul, to which she reacts strongly: “I was instantly transfixed by what he said. I remembered a walk along a river over near Au Train with Flower, who told me that our departing spirits enter the bodies of our favourite animals. That meant that Donald was a bear” (227). This is connected to a later thought where she considers a common Native American belief about the bear being a symbol of rebirth (277), suggesting that she is experiencing

denial in the form of a hope that Donald will somehow return to life due to his affinity for bears, or that he is not truly dead and will arise from his supposed hibernation after winter (with the perhaps banal equation of winter with her grief).

The stage of anger is rare, with only one arguable instance. This can be found when Cynthia acts in what is an unusual way for her normally bourgeois behaviour: “I lay down on the sofa and wept for less than a minute, and then said ‘Fuck it,’ got up, and spent several hours cleaning the house, including scrubbing the kitchen floor on my hands and knees” (233). Her admitting that a cleaner is due to appear the following day highlights the seemingly pointless nature of the act and lends credence to it being an act of random, aimless frustration typical of the stage of anger.

The stage of bargaining appears to be absent, but there is one interesting section where Cynthia considers Donald having hidden the initial symptoms of his illness without displaying any signs of bargaining whatsoever (31). A common manifestation of this stage is, as mentioned, the “If only” lines of thought, and it would thus have been normal for Cynthia to wish that she had noticed the symptoms or that Donald had not hidden them, so that he could have been afforded medical care earlier and perhaps have survived as a result; for some reason, however, she does not do this. One possibility is that she did not experience bargaining due to being aware of the incurable nature of the disease and that early medication would not have affected the outcome. It should however be noted that this section is found in a note that Cynthia has made in Donald’s written-down story and not a part of her normal narration, and that she may still have experienced bargaining without actually committing it to writing.

Unlike anger and bargaining, the stage of depression can be observed to exist at multiple points and generally without ambiguity, both in Cynthia’s regular narration and in her notes to Donald’s story. Near the beginning of her narration occurs one instance: “I’m a fairly clear-headed human and understand that despite all the diversions our culture offers there’s no escaping the pain of his death” (217). In addition to depression, this appears to indicate the stage of acceptance as well in the acknowledgement that Donald is in fact dead and in her resignation towards this and her own grief. An indication of the magnitude of her depression can be observed shortly thereafter, when the nature of her husband’s death is mentioned and she

leaves the conversation “To avoid the lump rising in my throat” (220), showing that the mere mention of his death causes strong feelings of loss. This is seen again on page 228 where she is forced to confront the reality of his death in

“”He said, ‘You can remember me but let me go.’ He also said, ‘Find yourself a boyfriend.’ And then I collapsed as if the bones inside me had dissolved. I simply crumpled and began to sob for the first time since we buried Donald. I felt my chest might burst from sobbing.” (228)

It is unclear at exactly what point in time Cynthia makes the notes in Donald’s story with the only hint being her mentioning Donald’s death as a future event, placing it somewhere prior to chapter 3 and thus also prior to her own narration. Two instances of depression can be seen in these notes, the first being a note about Donald being interrupted by her crying (26) and the second being a reflection about Donald’s upcoming death: “[It] became unimaginable that my lover of thirty years will die. I sat there [...] studying my coffee and cereal as if they would reveal some sort of answer for my brain, which had just begun to swirl in the face of the inevitable” (36). This suggests a level of acceptance in addition to depression in her realization that her husband’s death is unavoidable. In addition to concrete instances, the stage of depression is nearly omnipresent throughout her narration, demonstrated by the general tone and how her thoughts always return to Donald in some form or another. While this may be considered normal for the bereaved, it is far more common for her than for the other characters, indicating that while her depression is likely not pathological, it is more powerful than that of the other bereaved – enough to be present at nearly all times. The exception to this is the very end of the novel and her narration where she finally accepts that Donald is dead and decides to move on with her life.

As mentioned, at the very end of the novel Cynthia finally accepts her husband’s death upon seeing a bear and after her considering whether or not the bear could be Donald come to say farewell, “The bear stared at us and Clare clenched at my hand. And then he trotted over a hill as we all must” (280). Prior to this, the stage of acceptance can be seen on a number of occasions, one being Cynthia resuming her job as a teacher after a period of inactivity due to her grief (261); she had attempted to do so earlier but was too distracted by her bereavement (246, 249). Another moment of significance is a point during her recovering from an illness

where she realizes that her life is not over and that she has a future to plan for, and that she has no children or ill husband to care for:

“It had occurred to me as my illness began to subside [...] that at age forty-four I wasn’t dead yet. It was hard to stop being a schoolteacher after twenty years so I would have to continue being a schoolteacher until my mind led me elsewhere. [...] [I realized] I was free to come and go as I wished” (273-274)

5.5 Clare

As mentioned previously, Donald’s twenty-three-year-old daughter Clare exhibits a seemingly bizarre reaction to her father’s death. This takes the form of attempting to imitate a bear, to the extent of building a shelter in which to emulate a bear’s hibernation during winter. She studies a number of native animist religions to understand their views on bears, some of which including women both figuratively and literally transforming into bears (257). At first glance it appears as though the grief over the death of her father has become pathological and/or caused her to lose her mind, but it is in fact a coping mechanism to help her confront the reality of her father’s death, as well as a manifestation of a desire to understand her father, whose totem animal was the bear. Nevertheless, Clare takes this to the extreme and causes great stress for her mother, whose own grief is mixed with worry for her daughter’s actions. Fulton & Metress note that the death of a parent of an adult child can function as a developmental push that forces the bereaved to not only confront their own mortality but also to stop thinking of themselves as children and take a more mature stance towards life (1995: 366-367) This is possibly what Clare experiences when she grieves for and seeks to understand her father; much of the language used by the various narrators to describe Clare prior to Donald’s death suggests that they think of her as rather childish, and Cynthia keeps this up even afterwards until she is corrected by a friend (246). This mirrors Clare’s desire to become a bear in the sense that her intended metamorphosis acts as a metaphor for her maturing into an adult; additionally, both are not only triggered by grief, but also seem to function as methods of overcoming said grief by Clare coming to understand her father and accept his death.

While Clare's interest in bears is a major part of her bereavement, the Kübler-Ross stages can also be identified, although as Clare is no narrator, they are always observed by one of the other characters as opposed to being directly visible and thus somewhat challenging to pinpoint. The stage of denial can be seen primarily in the earlier stages of her grief, prior to her fixation on bears (parts of which fit into the Kübler-Ross model) but also later on. In David's narration she is observed to "[wander] around all day [...] communicating as she says with the ghost of her father" (152), a clear indication that she is at this point in denial over his death and believes that he still lives on as some form of spirit. This is seen again later when she mentions having wandered in the wilderness and "[There] was this one spot near a waterfall where I sensed Dad in the river. Of course it was the last place we fished together. I was wondering if some of our spirit might stay in a place." (165). K is also shown to know that Clare believes her father to be alive in some indeterminate form (186). Clare's notion that Donald has transformed into a bear can also be considered denial as it is essentially the same as believing he persists in a spiritual form and is thus not dead.

The stages of anger and bargaining are elusive at best, with the former only having one arguable manifestation and the latter none at all. This does not necessarily mean that they do not occur, but only that Clare does not show it to the other characters. The one possible case of anger can be observed when Cynthia recalls showing Clare a text concerning the effects of grief on the bereaved, particularly denial and delusions, which causes what appears to be strong feelings of anger in her daughter (217). The anger is not directly caused by the bereavement but the stage of anger typically follows denial and it can often be irrational, as appears to be the case in this instance.

The stage of depression, unusually, appears to occur long before denial, but as this is seen prior to Donald's death the case may be that it is a part of the preliminary grief, and that the observed instances of denial are part of the grief caused by the actual bereavement rather merely the expectation of it. In K's narration, he observes not only Clare's depression in the form of her crying an entire night, but also that he "heard her whisper "Daddy," which she never called Donald. It was either "Dad" or "Father." (114). The latter can perhaps be considered a part of her metamorphosis into adulthood by her first reverting to a child and later maturing into

an adult. Post Donald's death, David notes that "Clare has been severely depressed since her father's death and it's been nearly impossible to get her to move from her room" (146); while David is perhaps too confused a person to be an entirely reliable observer, Clare's refusal to leave her room indicates the self-isolating tendencies common to the stage of depression. It is not clear whether Clare ever reaches the stage of acceptance. Near the end of the novel she has still not given up on her notions of becoming one with the bear and while the ending implies that Clare reaches the same acceptance as Cynthia (see section 5.4), this is merely an assumption made by Cynthia in the form of "I know that Clare and I were thinking the same thing." (280); thus, Clare's progress towards the stage of acceptance is seemingly ambiguous. McClintock (2000: 203), however, notes that Harrison has in previous novels made use of animals (and dreams of them) as metaphors for spiritual and emotional healing, which may suggest that Clare's interest in bears will lead to eventual emotional stability and the stage of acceptance. Perhaps this also indicates that David will be able to both recover from his grief and organize his life, as he also encounters a bear (155).

5.6 Conclusion

The grief in *Returning to Earth* can be divided into two forms: the anticipatory grief that occurs before Donald's death as well as the regular grief occurring afterwards. These forms, however, are not separated from each other, as seen in e.g. Cynthia's grief occurring both after her husband's death in her own narration and prior to it in the notes she makes while recording his story. The Kübler-Ross stages typically occur in no specific order, as is normal, but the stages of denial and acceptance do tend to occur first and last, respectively. Most of the characters also manage to have normal and healthy grieving processes, with the main exception being Clare with her fixation on bear mythology, and possibly David, whose confused mind and narration makes his grief progress difficult to discern. An interesting property of the post-death grief in *Returning to Earth* is that it completely skips the first few months of bereavement and making the stages of denial, anger and bargaining rare as a result, particularly the latter two. Conversely, the latter stages, i.e. depression and acceptance, tend to be more visible. While the Kübler-Ross model performs well as a tool for understanding what is shown of the characters' bereavement, it is also

somewhat limited by the fact that a significant portion of the grieving process has been left out, and one is at times required to infer in order to reach an understanding of a particular aspect of a character's grief. Thus, the model is only partially successful at allowing one to understand the portrayed bereavement. This problem applies to the anticipatory grief in addition to the grief after Donald's death, as the grieving process would have begun at the time of Donald being diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, which is nearly a year prior to the events of the novel. Furthermore, while the model is useful, it does not provide a full understanding of either Donald or, to a lesser extent, Clare, both of who require a separate analysis to truly understand. As a result of the above, an analysis of *Returning to Earth* using the Kübler-Ross model faces difficulties in applying the gained insight on real grief, as a real-life situation would presumably include the parts of bereavement omitted from the novel. The mentality of the characters, however, is the closest to normality of the three novels analysed, and even Clare's unorthodox reaction can be understood without any major issues. Thus, the case may be that what grieving the novel does reveal could be applied to an understanding of real people, although perhaps in a limited sense, as the novel skipping the initial reactions makes it more challenging to understand the characters. The entirety of *Returning to Earth* can be described as a novel about overcoming grief, and the very title seems to suggest this as well; apart from Donald literally returning to Earth in his burial in the Canadian wilderness, the bereaved all appear to seek solace in nature, or life itself, in order to cope with their grief and thus metaphorically returning their minds to the Earth.

6. Conclusion

The grief in *As I Lay Dying* is highly complex and not all of the Bundren children (the family father Anse appears to not grieve at all beyond whatever regret he might feel at having lost what essentially amounts to a housekeeper, and indeed seems to not care beyond the troubles he will have to go through in order to acquire a new one) are capable of having what can be described as a normal grieving process, as their own mentalities and attempts at understanding death occasionally prevent them from proceeding through the Kübler-Ross stages and process their grief in a natural and healthy manner. The applicability of the Kübler-Ross model on *As I Lay Dying* is limited; while it does allow for a level of understanding that would likely suffice if

any of the bereaved were capable of grieving in a standard manner, the Bundrens all experience unorthodox reactions to their mother's death, and additional analysis unrelated to the Kübler-Ross model is thus required in order to gain a thorough understanding of the bereavement of the Bundren children. Where the model does apply, it reveals that the structure of the Bundrens' grief largely follows the structure of the model, with initial denial and final acceptance, but at times acceptance occurs prior to other stages.

In *Never Let Me Go*, the grief is recounted and thus frequently fragmented but as the novel approaches the present day of the narrator, the grief becomes more detailed and complete. The events that lead to grief are typically not related to the death of any friend or relative, but are seemingly minor events that nonetheless lead to grief for Kathy, indicating that the nature of the event is not critical. In place of a death it may concern any form of loss or trauma as long as the emotional impact on the griever is similar to that of a death, which is perhaps best seen in children, who are ostensibly more likely to take minor events seriously. The Kübler-Ross model is somewhat difficult to apply to grief that is not only recounted but also over a decade old, but it performs as desired when applied to the primary (and most recent) source of grief. The grief in *Never Let Me Go* follows the Kübler-Ross structure, and despite the unusual circumstances of Kathy's life, she manages to have a normal grieving process after her most recent loss, and seemingly also during her childhood and adolescence.

Returning to Earth concerns both anticipatory grief and grief following bereavement but their interaction is infrequent, largely due to the structure of the novel. The bereaved all experience grief that fits the Kübler-Ross model, but on occasion additional analysis is required to gain a full understanding of a character's grief. Additionally, most of the characters are capable of having a healthy grieving process with some exceptions, most notably Clare and her adoption (or perhaps appropriation) of aspects of various Native American religions. Due to the novel omitting the initial few months following Donald's death, some of the Kübler-Ross stages, typically the early ones, are missing from the narration, but there is little to no indication that they would not have occurred naturally during that omitted time period. As far as the Kübler-Ross stages are visible, they follow the structure of the

model to the extent that denial is initial and acceptance final, but the other stages tend to occur in no specific order.

The three novels analysed above each provide different perspectives on grief. *As I Lay Dying* illustrates the immediate grief experienced by a poorly educated group of siblings of various ages, from around eight to the late twenties and contains complete grieving processes where the bereaved are capable of grieving normally. The Bundrens, however, are highly unorthodox in both behaviour and mentality, which makes an understanding of them difficult, or perhaps impossible, to apply to real people. *Never Let Me Go* shows grief in retrospect, told by one woman of normal education in her early thirties and the various sources of grief occur throughout her entire life. In addition, it often does not concern a death at all, unlike the case in the other two novels, but the losses still cause grief. The retrospective narration, however, makes it difficult to apply an understanding of Kathy and her friends on real grief, which will be experienced in the present and not told from memory. *Returning to Earth* resembles *As I Lay Dying* in the structure of using multiple narrators to portray different forms of grief, but while the latter shows the immediate reactions to the loss and uses uneducated narrators, the former employs wealthy and well-educated characters and skips a major part of the grieving process, thus testing the Kübler-Ross in a way that *As I Lay Dying* does not, but that one might argue *Never Let Me Go* does with its lack of detail due to being narrated in retrospect. Where the detail are missing, in either novel, the Kübler-Ross model performs sufficiently regardless, and allows one to gain an understanding of grief despite certain stages of grief being invisible. Again, this understanding is limited in applicability to reality, as real bereavement also includes the period of grief not present in *Returning to Earth*.

While the Kübler-Ross model functions to what in most cases can be considered a satisfying degree, it does not always provide a complete understanding of a particular character's grief. Indeed, the criticism aimed at the model often concerns, as discussed in section 2, its applicability to everyone. This did concern the model on the dying rather than the grieving but they are, as seen, similar enough for criticism of one to apply to the other. The fundamental problem is that the novels analysed do not accurately reflect real-world bereavement, with a critical period being skipped in *Returning to Earth*, the narration being given in retrospect and from

memory in *Never Let Me Go* and the characters in *As I Lay Dying* being too alien to be comparable to real people. The ability to use the Kübler-Ross model as a means of understanding real grief through literary analysis is in other words limited. The initial hypothesis of the Kübler-Ross model providing a sufficient understanding of literary grief in all cases can thus be dismissed, but this does not necessarily mean that it is unusable. Rather, the model remains helpful and functional but as the results of this study indicate, it may require additional analysis where it falls short. The possible reasons for its shortcomings may be related to the often unorthodox nature of the grief expressed in the analysed novels, and perhaps it would function more effectively if applied to grief that more closely mirrors the grief of real individuals and/or without the temporal oddities in *Never Let Me Go* and *Returning to Earth*. This does mean that the theory may be somewhat limited in its potential usefulness. Indeed, this raises the question of whether the Kübler-Ross model can truly be applied at to its full potential when used in relation to literary grief, or if it may be restricted to real-life bereavement exclusively. Another question is whether there is truly a meaningful reason to use it as a means of understanding real grief through literature when it could simply be applied directly to real grief, with the added advantage of not needing to first perform a literary analysis. A possible advantage could be that a literary character is easier to fully grasp, as their thoughts are easily available due to their nature of being literary, whereas understanding a real person in such a way may be far more difficult. Thus, analyses of literary grief may function as case studies for understanding real bereavement, provided that the literary grief and characters are similar enough to those of the real world. On a personal level, perhaps an understanding of any literary grief, regardless of applicability to reality, can aid one in understanding one's own grief, or that of a family member or friend. It appears likely that further study will be required in order to answer these questions. Perhaps the aforementioned stage-based models by Stephenson and Kavanaugh could be applied more successfully to the bereavement of literary characters, but as they do share many characteristics with the Kübler-Ross model it is probable that they would reach similar success, or lack thereof.

7. References

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Svensk sammanfattning

Död och sorg i tre engelskspråkiga romaner

Man har länge försökt förstå både verklig sorg och skönlitterära karaktärer med hjälp av psykologi, men att använda sig av psykologi ämnad för verkliga personer för att förstå sig på fiktiva individer och deras sorg är till synes ett underutforskat område. Utöver själva litteraturanalysen är syftet här således att undersöka huruvida en psykologisk-terapeutisk teori kan användas för att förstå fiktiva personer, och att diskutera ifall en sådan förståelse kan användas för att i sin tur underlätta ens förståelse för verklig sorg, oavsett om det rör sig om ens egen sorg eller någon annans. Teorin i fråga är Elisabeth Kübler-Ross modell från 1969. Den hävdar att alla som sörjer går igenom fem faser före sörjeprocessen är komplett. Dessa faser är förnekelse, vrede, förhandling, depression och godtagande. De behöver inte med nödvändighet förekomma i den ordningen, men vanligtvis kommer förnekelse först och godtagande sist. Kritik har riktats mot modellen, bland annat för att den inte nödvändigtvis är representativ för alla i och med att Kübler-Ross undersökte ett relativt litet antal personer, men samtidigt verkar det inte finnas några alternativ.

De romaner som analyserats är William Faulkners *As I Lay Dying* från 1930, Kazuo Ishiguros *Never Let Me Go* från 2005 och Jim Harrisons *Returning to Earth* från 2007. Just dessa romaner används eftersom de representerar en längre tidsperiod och såväl brittisk som amerikansk litteratur. Utöver detta skiljer de sig även i form och stil samt i deras sörjande och döende karaktärers intelligens, utbildning, bakgrund, ålder och kön. *As I Lay Dying* handlar om en bondefamilj i södra USA i början av nittonhundratalet. Modern i familjen dör och de övriga familjemedlemmarna tvingas handskas med sorgen på olika sätt. *Never Let Me Go* äger rum i en dystopisk version av nittonhundraåttioalets England och består av huvudpersonen Kathys memorarer och de förluster hon upplevt under sitt liv. *Returning to Earth* handlar om en familj i norra Michigan i USA; fadern Donald dör av en muskelsjukdom och resten av familjen måste anpassa sig till det hållrum han lämnar efter sig. Möjligtvis är dessa romaner något begränsade eftersom de inte visar de sörjande karaktärerna före förlusten inträffar, vilket betyder att det går inte att göra några jämförelser mellan dem före och efter. Detta betyder att man ibland

tvingas dra slutsatser baserat endast på beteende efter att förlusten inträffat. Detta kan medföra problem när man vill försöka förstå verklig sorg genom litteraturanalys, eftersom det inte nödvändigtvis representerar verkligheten.

I *As I Lay Dying* är de olika karaktärernas sorg mycket komplicerad och alla i familjen lyckas inte gå igenom varken en normal sörjeprocess eller alla skeden i Kübler-Rossmodellen. Ofta är deras mentaliteter så främmande från verkliga människors att de inte kan sörja på vad man kan kalla ett normalt sätt. Kübler-Rossmodellens användbarhet är således något begränsad i och med att de sörjande sörjer på mycket ovanliga sätt och för att över huvud taget förstå dem måste man använda sig av en teoretiskt oberoende analys. Trots detta är modellen delvis användbar och den visar att de sörjande i stora drag följer modellens struktur; i vissa fall förekommer godtagande dock inte sist.

Sorgen i *Never Let Me Go* berättas om i retroperspektiv och är således ofta fragmenterad, speciellt när Kathy berättar om sin barndom, men ju närmare nutid hon kommer desto mer detaljerad blir den. Sorgerna i Kathys liv orsakas oftast inte av någons död utan av diverse mindre händelser, vilket tyder på att det inte är själva händelsen som står bakom sorg utan vad förlusten betyder för den sörjande. Kübler-Rossmodellen är svår att tillämpa på sorg som inte bara ofta är över tio år gammal utan även berättas om av den sörjande, vilket betyder att man tvingas dra vissa slutsatser för att fylla luckorna. När berättelsen närmar sig nutid är modellen dock mer användbar. Kathys sorg följer Kübler-Rossmodellens struktur och de ovanliga omständigheterna till trots lyckas Kathy sörja på ett normalt sätt, både som vuxen och som barn.

I *Returning to Earth* syns sorg både före och efter Donalds död, men detta till trots går det på grund av bokens struktur inte att dra några slutsatser om hur de sörjandes beteende förändras. De sörjande följer alla Kübler-Rossmodellen men för vissa karaktärer krävs det oberoende analys för att förstå dem till fullo. De flesta sörjande sörjer på ett normalt sätt, men modellen stöter ändå på ett stort hinder i form av ett tidshopp på fyra månader mellan Donalds död och de kapitel som följer. Detta betyder att modellens tidiga skeden inte syns eftersom de sörjande sannolikt redan har passerat dem. Kübler-Rossmodellens struktur följs endast så långt att förnekelse kommer först och godtagande sist.

Kübler-Rossmodellen är förvisso inte oanvändbar och kan användas för att skapa en grundläggande förståelse för en människas sorg, men den stöter oundvikligen på problem. Sorgen i de ovannämnda romanerna fungerar inte på samma sätt som verklig sorg, till exempel på grund av tidshoppen, de litterära teknikerna som använts och karaktärer som ibland är mycket annorlunda jämfört med verkliga personer. Det grundläggande problemet är således att eftersom teorin utvecklats för att användas på verkliga personer kan den inte utan problem tillämpas på påhittade karaktärer och historier. Möjligtvis fungerar teorin bättre ifall materialet motsvarar verkligheten mer än de romaner som använts här. Dessutom bör man ställa frågan om huruvida det är värt att använda sig av en psykologisk teori på påhittade personer för att förstå sig på verkligheten istället för att helt enkelt applicera teorin på verkliga fall. Svaret kan vara att eftersom man har tillgång till en karaktärs tankar lättare än en verklig persons så kan en litteraturanalys fungera som en fallstudie för att skapa förståelse för verklig sorg, förutsatt att den sorg som undersöks är tillräckligt nära verkligheten.