Facing the Last Enemy: Death, Trauerarbeit, and *Harry Potter*

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Leah Elizabeth Quick, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in English, has presented a thesis titled, *Facing the Last Enemy: Death, Trauerarbeit, and Harry Potter*, in an oral examination held on March 13, 2015. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

J. K. Rowling’s critically acclaimed and wildly successful *Harry Potter* series details an orphan hero’s quest to reclaim a lost family, and, yet, very little of the previous scholarship has explored the perennial, overarching grief that spans the length of the series. Death litters the landscape of the text—there are 57 young deaths alone throughout the series—and the story is continually propelled forward as Harry reacts to each new episode of loss. Yet, too little attention has been paid to the depth to which grief colours Harry’s story, and the then necessary and consolatory function of what Freud calls “grief work” (*Trauerarbeit*). Written in response to her own mother’s death, Rowling attests that, “the books wouldn’t be what they are if she hadn’t died ... her death is on virtually every other page of the *Harry Potter* books,” and that, “[a]t least half of Harry’s journey is a journey to deal with death in its many forms, what it does to the living, what it means to die ... what survives death. It’s there in every single volume” (“Oprah”). The series is punctuated by numerous episodes that see Harry trying to “assuage his torturing grief” (*DH* 532), when, almost continuously, he is threatened by “a grief that ... actually weighed on his heart and lungs” (268). And while death falls under the category of natural law, so that one can never wholly reclaim the dead, within this realm, death is not marked by the same sense of permanence, and so familiar mourning practices then change when one can still have fellowship with, and be supported by those that are gone. Interestingly, however, these exceptions simultaneously complicate and ease mourning practices when the dead continue to surround Harry. How then is Harry able to navigate his own mourning, and, ultimately, willingly face his own death?
In observing the story through a Freudian lens, this work will offer a hitherto unexplored reading of these iconic texts, as it will provide insight into the nature of mourning and melancholia within the *Harry Potter* series, and how it is that Harry is able to succeed at this seemingly Sisyphean task. I will examine the varying responses to death and the progression of grief in Lord Voldemort, Severus Snape and Harry Potter. Focusing primarily on these three prominent characters, I will apply Sigmund Freud’s model for organizing and examining the varying stages and categories of grief work to provide a unique perspective by which to study and map the progression of grief, from a state of pathological melancholia, wherein the sufferer remains diseased from one’s “failed grief,” to one of healthy and largely resolved mourning. Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia” provides unique insight when reading *Harry Potter*, as the primary tenet of Freud’s mourning philosophy centers on his assertion that mourning is not solely an emotion, a passive experience that sees one patiently waiting for grief to end, but, rather, mourning becomes a performance that requires the grieving subject to actively engage with, and to work through, the reality of what has been lost. This distinction in meaning hinges on the German concept of *Trauerarbeit*, which contrary to the English term, offers a deeper, and a more labor-centered picture of what it means to mourn. Harry, to a degree unlike any other character in the text, thus sets to work on his mourning, not with the explicit and deliberate purpose for its completion, but more so as the instinctual and necessary means of coping. Thus, Freud’s theory is a useful tool when exploring how it is that Harry is able to successfully navigate his own mourning—within a world that largely inhibits mourning practices—and it ultimately explains how he is able to survive, and earn his title of, “the boy who lived!” (PS 18).
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Evan, who is as brave as Harry, for his immeasurable love, encouragement, and for not hesitating to say ‘yes’ when I asked to go to Hogwarts.
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Introduction

“In Memoriam’: Grief in the Wizarding World”

“’You weren’t supposed to survive!’ said Sirius. ‘Nobody apart from his Death Eaters was supposed to know he’d come back. But you survived to bear witness’” (OotP 87).

“In magic man depends on his own strength to meet the difficulties and dangers that beset him on every side.” –Sir James George Frazer, The Golden Bough

J. K. Rowling’s critically acclaimed and wildly successful Harry Potter series details an orphan hero’s quest to reclaim a lost family, and, yet, very little of the previous scholarship has explored the perennial, overarching grief that spans the length of the series. Death litters the landscape of the text—there are 57 young deaths alone throughout the series—and the story is continually propelled forward as Harry reacts to each new episode of loss; however, far too little attention has been paid to the depth to which grief colours Harry’s story, and the then necessary and consolatory function of what Freud calls “grief work” (Trauerarbeit). Written in response to her own mother’s death, Rowling attests that, “the books wouldn’t be what they are if she hadn’t died ... her death is on virtually every other page of the Harry Potter books,” and that, “[a]t least half of Harry’s journey is a journey to deal with death in its many forms, what it does to the living, what it means to die ... what survives death. It’s there in every single volume” (“Oprah”). She confirms that, “[i]f [her mother] hadn’t died, I don’t think that it’s too strong to say that there wouldn’t be Harry Potter ... the books are what they are because she died—I loved her and she died” (“Oprah”). Indeed, the series is punctuated by numerous episodes that see Harry trying to “assuage his torturing grief” (DH 532) when, almost continuously, he is threatened by “a grief that ... actually weighed on his heart and
lungs” (268). And while death falls under the category of natural law, so that one will
never wholly reclaim the dead, within this realm, death is not marked by the same sense
of permanence, and so familiar mourning practices then change when one can still have
fellowship with, and be supported by those that are gone. Interestingly, however, these
exceptions simultaneously complicate and ease mourning practices when the dead
continue to surround Harry. How then is Harry able to navigate his own mourning, and
ultimately, willingly face his own death?

As the “orphan hero” who, for many of his formative years, is raised unwanted
and alone in the abusive Dursley home, Harry is forced to grow and mature without the
influence and guidance of supportive parental figures, as “[h]e has known nothing but
neglect and often cruelty” from the Dursleys (H-BP 57). To lose one’s parents as an
infant is unquestioningly devastating, yet this initial tragedy is but one of the many
experiences of death and loss that punctuate the Potter books. Moreover, Harry is one
who, from the very beginning, is marked by death, as his title of “the boy who lived”
carries with it the weight of all who have been lost. As the iconic “boy who lived” (PS
18) and as one who is famous for surviving, Harry Potter, throughout the course of the
seven books, is a “character [who] matur[es] into a growing understanding of [his] own
powers and the nature of good and evil” (Nodelman and Reimer 124). Indeed, Harry’s
iconic scar serves as an ever-present symbol that is both representative of his own
survival, while simultaneously functioning as a highly visible, public reminder of the
many losses that have been suffered within the larger wizarding community, as his “scar
does not depict the attack and may only slightly resemble the original wound, but it
insists that the attack remain present in our consciousness of him” (Zimmerman 196).
However, if the primary characters of the *Potter* books are all intimately connected by death and loss, and if the vein of grief runs throughout all seven books, how then is one to understand these characters that are left behind to mourn? In order to move beyond a superficial reading of the texts and to garner insight into the motivations and reactions of those who have been left behind to grieve, it is necessary to explore fully this fundamental thematic element. Moreover, to appreciate the series, it is useful to examine the varying reactions to death and mourning, as there are few characters throughout the seven books who do not experience some manner of loss. However, while some characters may indeed be mourning the loss of the same person, they are by no means grieving in a similar manner. It thus becomes helpful first to examine that which has been lost and then to consider the subsequent patterns of mourning engendered by such a loss, for “if the [lost] object had not this great significance, strengthened by a thousand links, to the ego, the loss of it would be no meet cause for either mourning or melancholia” (Freud 175). Finally, J.K. Rowling herself has clearly stated how her own episodes of loss, grief, and depression, have coloured the books and how much of the story is written in response to her own personal experiences with death and loss (“A Year”). Thus, an exploration of this central thematic element becomes essential for fully understanding the text as, “the theme of how we react to death [and] how much we fear it … is a key part of the book … [as Rowling’s] characters are defined by their attitude to death and the possibility of death” (“A Year”).

However, mourning is further complicated when the wizarding world, which is inherently a deeply dysfunctional realm, is not conducive to healthy practices of mourning and remembrance. In truth, little space is made for the memorialisation of the
dead; there are only two proper graveyards within the series—in *Goblet of Fire*, as the setting of Voldemort’s resurrection, and in the Godric’s Hollow episode in *Deathly Hallows*, both borrowed muggle graveyards. Moreover, death is frequently regarded with a dismissive, cavalier attitude. So too, the palimpsest-like memorial in Godric’s Hollow, and Dumbledore’s funeral and “white marble tomb” (*DH* 601), are the only instances of familiar memorialisation, and that people come together and mark a space for the dead might only be because these deaths hold exceptional significance within the wizarding world and warrant traditional remembrance. More likely, as in the case with Cedric’s murder, the cause of death is denied—an indicator of the immaturity of the culture and a society in a perpetual state of mourning—as it is either too difficult to process, or acknowledging the circumstances surrounding the death would forcibly reveal inconvenient truths. Furthermore, if one’s grief is stifled—like Cho Chang’s—the melancholic wound persists, for “[a]s long as grief remains concealed and uncommunicated, she will suffer the narcissistic wound of melancholy” (Sherbert 117). Indeed, death is the constant within the text, and, yet, it is as if death in the wizarding world is so commonplace that there simply do not exist the healthy and necessary means to cope with such extensive loss.

This inability points to the dysfunction at the core of the culture, as death is often not seen as being healthy and natural, but rather it is something that is a frequent possibility and a necessary sacrifice in war, something to be obsessively feared above all else, or it is a sign of weakness. Indeed, magic complicates this relationship when death is no longer so ultimately final, as it can often remedy a seemingly-fatal injury, and there exists an arrogance that surrounds a wizard’s mortality. So too, adults are often reminded
that a younger character is of age, and that participation or membership in a group or mission, might end with their death. However, those in the wizarding world still frequently interact with the dead, through immersion in memory, ghosts, photographs, the Resurrection Stone, and other magical means, and so mourning practices become complicated when there are efforts to literally bring back the dead. Thus, when Dumbledore dies, “[a]dmittedly [Harry] had not, as he had with Sirius, looked desperately for some kind of loophole, some way that Dumbledore would come back” (H-BP 596), as there do exist exceptions to the finality of death that enable continued communication and fellowship with the dead. Indeed, the dead literally direct him in the Priori Incantatem scene, a dress rehearsal, of sorts, for when Harry is surrounded and supported by his dead family in the final moment before facing his own death, and upon defeating Voldemort, Harry is counselled and congratulated by a tearful Dumbledore, in portrait form. It thus seems that such magical intervention counteracts an appreciation for the fragility of life—magic can impede acceptance of the finality of death—and it follows that the culture then fails to ultimately recognize why mourning is so important.

While previous Harry Potter scholarship often highlights the tragic death of Harry’s parents, and Virginia Zimmerman writes of Harry’s desire to engage with and reclaim the dead, there remains a need to examine the specific mourning patterns engendered by the frequent deaths within the text. Chapter One will establish the framework of Freud’s theory by which I will examine the many responses to death and the progression of grief in Lord Voldemort, Severus Snape and Harry Potter. Focusing primarily on these three prominent characters, I will apply Sigmund Freud’s model for organizing and examining the varying stages and categories of grief work to provide a
unique perspective by which to study and map the progression of grief, from a state of pathological melancholia, wherein the sufferer remains diseased from one’s “failed grief,” to one of healthy and largely resolved mourning. While there are certainly countless characters within the text whose grief warrants careful examination, these three aforementioned characters demonstrate patterns of grief that are both intimately connected to one another and are subsequently more fully developed than any other character within the text. Thus, the application of psychoanalysis to these texts offers a unique and previously unexplored means of encapsulating the patterns of grief within one succinct theory.

As one who desires immortality above all else and whose very name translates to mean “flight from death,” Voldemort is a character positioned as a stark contrast to that of Harry, as throughout the series Voldemort is largely the antithesis to many of the noble qualities that are emblematic of Harry. Yet, such a contrast between these two characters moves well beyond the familiar binary of good versus evil. In Chapter Two I will examine how Voldemort’s very nature is one that is directed solely inwards and towards the self, as he decidedly turns away from others. Furthermore, Voldemort is distinctly unlike either that of Snape or Harry, since he is incapable of love—one of the primary symptoms of Freudian melancholia—and his obsession is solely one of self-preservation. Yet, interestingly, it is his quest for immortality that drives his mania for symbolically investing his fractured soul within objects of prized memorabilia, since “Voldemort prizes objects that offer the promise of his name—flight from death—and an evasion of time’s power” (Zimmerman 197); a very physical artifact is then encrypted wholly externally, creating a very divisive, irreparable “open wound” (Freud 172). Dumbledore
reflects on Voldemort’s inability to recognize the Resurrection Stone as being valuable as anything other than a Horcrux, and he remarks, “as for the stone, whom would [Voldemort] want to bring back from the dead? He fears the dead. He does not love” (DH 577). Thus, Chapter Two will also examine Voldemort’s intrinsic fear of death and his subsequent, obsessive desire to remain immortal. While he is surrounded by his loyal army of Death Eaters, he remains isolated and aloof, and Zimmerman notes that, “Voldemort has no interest in the past—no one from his personal past matters to him, and significant objects and places become for him only vehicles in his quest for immortality” (Zimmerman 194). Finally, in Chapter Two I will also explore Voldemort’s desire to preserve the immaterial within the material, while failing to understand that “death is the constant of human existence” (Riegel Response XVIII).

The character of Severus Snape provides an interesting example of one who paradoxically experiences a form of grief that is at the same time all-consuming yet concealed, as “one cannot see clearly what has been lost” and “what it is that absorbs him so entirely” until the completion of Deathly Hallows (Freud 164). However, such a state of irreconcilable grief can effectively be examined using Freud’s theory, providing insight and an explanation when, upon Lily’s death, Snape is found “making a terrible sound, like a wounded animal … and he looked like a man who had lived a hundred years of misery” (DH 544). Chapter Three will examine Snape as one whose grief is a classic presentation of Freudian melancholia, since “[t]he occasions giving rise to melancholia for the most part extend beyond the clear case of a loss by death, and include all those situations of being wounded, hurt, neglected, out of favour, or disappointed, which can import opposite feelings of love and hate into the relationship or reinforce an already
existing ambivalence” (Freud 170). Snape’s inability to effectively work through the loss of his beloved Lily Potter—as the healthy progression and resolution of mourning requires one to do—thus leads him to reinvest his attachment for Lily onto Harry, although “hate is expended upon this new substitute-object, railing at it, deprecating it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic gratification from its suffering” (Freud 170). As one who is unable to successfully mourn the death of Lily, Snape is inextricably tied to Harry, albeit secretly for the majority of the series, and he is “[a] man motivated above all by the Ricoeurian sense of endurance [as] he continues to watch over Harry because in him Lily endures, though with a difference that fills Snape with loathing” (Zimerman 200). Snape thus displays many of the primary symptoms of the Freudian melancholic: he is neither able to reconcile his loss, nor is he able to disassociate Harry from the loathing that was once directed towards James Potter, as Snape exemplifies how melancholia is furthered by “[t]he loss of a love-object [which] constitutes an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence in love-relationships to make itself felt and come to the fore” (Freud 169). However, it is this “conflict of ambivalence [that] casts a pathological shade on grief, forcing it to express itself in the form of self-reproaches, to the effect that the mourner himself is to blame for the loss of the loved one, i.e. desired it” (170). Snape is unable to relieve himself of the weight of his guilt, and thus he remains in a perpetual state of melancholia, as after a death, one “is meant to have [a] leave [from] mourning after a term and to return to reality … yet [Snape] is stubborn in his grief and the work of mourning persists” (Hart as cited in Riegel Response X). Finally, in Deathly Hallows, one sees how Snape remains in a state of perpetual melancholia, as the enormity and
The persistent nature of this brand of grief remains characterized by his continued ambivalence—evident still in his final few moments of life—towards Harry.

Chapter Four will examine how Harry “builds himself and his exceptional wizarding ability on a solid foundation of family, past, and traces that bring family into the present,” as he continually draws strength from family heirlooms and his encounters with the shadows of those that he has lost (Zimmerman 212). However, if the dead remain within Harry’s present, as Sirius assures Harry that, “[w]e are part of you” (DH 561), then Freud’s theory of mourning and melancholia aptly describes how Harry is able to remain within the present and to engage with and work through each new episode of grief, so that in the end he may ultimately “walk confidently to face his enemy and death” (Zimmerman 212). Finally, it follows that if death and grief remain a constant theme throughout all seven books, as these themes are intricately woven throughout the fabric of the text, then the study of such subject matter warrants careful examination and explanation. While Harry is arguably the singular hero most affected by the frequent deaths that define both the text and his character, unlike Snape, Harry is not ultimately ruled by his grief. Rather, Deathly Hallows sees Harry accepting death and actively engaging with his grief, thereby allowing him to work through the process of mourning successfully. While it may seem like a Sisyphean task to continually mourn for each new friend, family member, and mentor that has died, for Harry, “mourning is an intricate and needed activity that consoles in the face of pain” (VIII). Similarly, Harry does not grieve alone, but rather he seeks consolation and fellowship from friends, peers, and adoptive parental figures, as they all amass to create a larger “community of mourning” (XIII). And yet, while Harry does find solace and comfort amongst the living, they cannot
replace those who have passed, as “the primary impulse of the mourner … is [to] engage in attempts to recreate or bring back—even if only fleetingly—that which has been lost” (Riegel *Writing Grief* 4). However, death is not as definitively permanent in the wizarding world as one might expect, and “Harry’s deceased family members appear at … key junctures … in the Mirror of Erised in *Philosopher’s* Stone, in the form of his Patronus, in Snape’s Pensieve in the *Order of the Phoenix*, and in many non-magical records such as photographs, stories told by surviving friends, and even the Hogwarts detention records” (Zimmerman 195). So too, the wizarding world offers unique opportunities to escape temporarily from one’s grief, as “without hesitating, with a feeling of reckless abandonment” (*DH* 532) Harry is able to delve into the memories of others, thus experiencing an exemplary form of fully-engaged—both physically and emotionally—hyperremembering which is at the core of successful mourning.

Finally, Chapter Five will further explore Harry’s perception of death, in reaction to the final remaining chapters of *Deathly Hallows*. I will examine the means by which Harry and those around him have come to embrace death and the necessity of sacrifice, as the grieving subjects’ “own lives—and their inescapable endings—are tied inextricably to the lives and deaths of others” (Davis and Womack 163). Similarly, I will closely examine Chapter 35 of *Deathly Hallows*, as this chapter best articulates the core of the anxiety of losing those that one loves, as “[d]ying is simple. What’s worst is … the separation” (Kenyon as cited in Davis and Womack 169). This chapter will explore Harry’s unique response to the deaths of those closest to him, and how it is that he alone, through active, labour-centred engagement, is able to succeed at his mourning. Finally, I will briefly reflect upon how the dead have been memorialized at selected key points.
throughout the seven books and how grief can be satiated through such gestures of memorialisation. Thus, Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia” functions as an apt lens, offering a previously unused means in which to study mourning—both expressed and repressed—within the *Harry Potter* series.
Chapter One

“The Death is on Virtually Every Other Page”: Harry Potter as Narrative Therapy”

The Harry Potter series is “an epic saga of childhood confusion, danger and adventure. But it’s more than just a children’s story. Behind the witchcraft and the wizardry lies an intensely moral fable about good and evil, love and hatred, life and death” (“A Year”). At age eleven, the series’ nascent hero enters this enchanted space only to discover that beneath the superficial charm, iniquity flourishes; indeed, Harry soon becomes disenchanted, realizing that the evil his world insists that he fights, is, in fact, not located solely within one prominent individual, but, rather, is endemic within and the product of this repressive and dysfunctional realm. If, as the author insists, the series is primarily an examination of death and mourning, then by far the most intriguing and distinguishing feature of this world is that many of its structures and characters repeatedly, systematically deny its relevance—making mourning all the more necessary (and an examination of the disturbing lack of it so interesting) (“A Year”). Indeed, if healthy mourning practices were to exist, then, as he is the characterization of the far greater problem of collectively repressed and denied mourning, Voldemort would not exist. Finally, if various presentations of death and mourning frame the text, how then is Harry able to navigate his own mourning and ultimately, willingly face his own death?

In observing the series through a Freudian lens, I will offer a hitherto unexplored reading of these iconic texts, as the application of “Mourning and Melancholia” will provide unique insight into the nature of mourning within the Harry Potter series, and, as the epilogue reveals, how it is that Harry is able to succeed at this seemingly interminable task. While these three characters were chosen primarily because they exemplify Freud’s
theory—a clear presentation of mourning expressed (Harry), repressed (Snape), and denied (Voldemort) is most clearly portrayed by these prominent three—there are countless others that are equally worthy of thoughtful examination. Moreover, because of mass cultural repression, this theory becomes all the more relevant, as “Freud’s ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ succeeds in countering the denial of death and demonization of bereavement” (Clewell 44). Indeed, Freud’s criticism of bereavement in the late nineteenth century allies with a similar presentation of repressed bereavement in the wizarding world that also features “death [as] an increasingly taboo subject ... [and the] demonizing of all social displays of bereavement. Freud resisted this cultural repression of loss [prominent in the late nineteenth century] by defining mourning as a necessary labor, theorizing the psyche as an internal space for grief work, and bringing a discussion of bereavement into the public domain” (44-5).

Harry, as hero, certainly fulfills the expectations of this role in the traditional sense of the word—he battles and defeats the villain in order to try and save those that he loves—but more significantly, Harry’s true heroism is present in his mourning; he does what his grief-stricken, repressive world cannot and will not allow. Throughout the course of the series, “the would-be victim who had survived” (DH 568) fights against an ever-present tide of repression, secrecy and disbelief; and yet, it is only when he finally surrenders to the waves of grief that threaten to engulf him, in allowing himself to bear, to finally feel it, that he is able to find the necessary footing and strength to defeat Voldemort. In their final confrontation, Harry debases Voldemort, stripping away his affectations by reducing him simply, yet significantly, to “Riddle” and finally to just “Tom” (the latter occurring in the film version). Here, in voicing what is for Voldemort
the unutterable name of the father—the seat of Voldemort’s melancholic ambivalence—
Harry is no longer addressing a character; rather, he is addressing the condition. In this
climactic, public exchange, witnessed by a public that has collectively refused to bear,
Harry asserts that, “Yes, I dare” (591). Harry alone dares to actively, purposely engage
with his grief and that is what “ma[kes] all the difference” (567).

Freud asserts that both “normal” mourning and “pathological” melancholia can
occur as a “reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction,” and
the notion of “normal” mourning can be deemed healthy and necessary “grief work” so
that one may then effectively move past one’s profound loss (Freud 162). In response to
a “symbolic loss,” the governing criteria of healthy mourning calls for one to experience
one’s grief as “a process of working through during which [the mourner must] relinquish
emotional ties to the lost object” (Clewell 44). For the aforementioned process of
mourning to be successful, Freud’s theory calls for one to experience a “detachment of
libido [which] takes place through a ‘testing of reality’” and one must “sever attachments
primarily though a labor of memory” (44). The melancholic must then sever his or her
attachment to the lost other through a process of purposeful, laborious recollection, and
one must actively work through memories of the lost other: “Each single one of the
memories and hopes which bound the libido to the object is brought up and hyper-
cathected, and the detachment of the libido from it accomplished” (Freud 163). Thus,
restoration and the return to an uninhibited state of mental clarity requires one to first
experience a period of “hyperremembering,” that being “a process of obsessive
recollection” wherein the mourner is able to contrast memories of the lost other with their
current reality” (Clewell 44). One’s mourning will thus only come to an end when one
can “detach ... his or her emotional tie to the lost object and reattach the free libido to a new object, thus accepting consolation in the form of a substitution for what has been lost” (44). If the mourning subject can successfully hyper-cathect the memories of the lost other and find an appropriate, healthy substitution, then “the work of mourning is completed [and] the ego becomes free and uninhibited again” (Freud 163).

The primary tenet of Freud’s mourning philosophy centers on his assertion that mourning is not solely an emotion, a passive experience that sees one patiently waiting for grief to end; rather, mourning is inherently an active process, a performance that requires the grieving subject to consciously engage with, and to work through, the reality of what has been lost. This distinction in meaning hinges on the German translation of Trauerarbeit, which contrary to the English translation, offers a deeper, more labour-centered picture of what it means to mourn. While the distinction is subtle, the German translation insists that one work at mourning, by which mourning becomes a task and its subsequent success depends on the subject’s own measure of effort. Thus, while it is often a common oversight, “[a] point that is sometimes overlooked in translation, but that is integral to understanding Freud’s conception of the work of mourning, is that the German word for mourning Trauerarbeit, is more fully encompassing than the English translation. In German the word is literally ‘mourning-work’ and can mean ‘work or mourning,’ as in a text of mourning or ‘the work that is required to mourn’” (Riegel Response XX). Mourning can thus be understood as a necessary chore, a task that must painstakingly be worked at, and through, “bit by bit” (Freud 163) as “Freud elaborated the second meaning most fully by using metaphors of work (as in labour) to define mourning” (Riegel Response XX-XXI).
For the reader, in using “Reading the Ethics of Mourning in the Poetry of Donald Hall” by Todd F. Davis and Kenneth Womack, one gains privileged insight into the therapeutic process of address and redress through this mode of literary response, enabling one to then write through one’s grief. Written throughout and after the loss of his wife to leukemia, the essay reflects upon how Hall’s writing establishes an “ethics of mourning” (Davis and Womack 163) by which one may contextualize one’s loss and begin the slow process of healing, through the active process of narrative therapy. This essay can thus aptly inform J.K. Rowling’s own grief—stemming from the loss of her mother, and her “regret that [her] mother never saw any [of her success]” (“Oprah”)—and its continuation throughout the writing of the Harry Potter series, as “the obviously cathartic aspects of this process provide [Rowling] with an avenue for narrating [her] grief and contextualizing the breach in [her] life engendered by [her mother’s] glaring and painful absence” (Davis and Womack 161). One comes to see that through the very act of writing, one “employs ... an explicit forum for both embracing and transcending the barriers of time and death” (161)—a central theme in the Potter books that simultaneously eases and complicates mourning practices. In utilizing this aesthetic form for coping, one witnesses how Rowling situates herself within past experiences, and how she must now create a record of that experience, while creating meaning from the loss that she has endured; and so there exists this “struggle to transform [her] grief into a narrative of mourning that might hold together the reality of [her] loss within the context of art [and] the power of narrative therapy … [which then] emerges as the principal means of coping for [Rowling]” (161). She thus writes her way through the seemingly inexpressible loss, contextualizing it. The very act of writing, fulfilling the need to
engage in creative and reparative acts, is an ethical, positive response to grief. Moreover, as one whose life is largely defined by the enormity of that loss, through writing, she finds some manner of equilibrium, whereby her grief is not forgotten, but, rather, it is transformed and understood so that she is then permitted to exist within a present that is largely uninhibited by past trauma, as “humans use narrative structure as a way to organize the events of their lives and to provide a scheme for their own self-identity” (Polkinghorne as cited in Davis and Womack 169). Writing is thus “a vehicle for [Rowling] to express not only [her] grief but [also her continued] love for [her mother]” (Davis and Womack 169):

Because Hall devotes particular energy in his verse to not only narrating but also recontextualizing his grief and anger ... we will construct an ethics of mourning in this essay in order to confront the important, and often unexamined, work of narrative therapy in literary works of art and its significant role in the grieving process for both the writer and his audience ... As a form of narrative therapy, an ethics of mourning reflects the struggle each human faces with the death of another: the reality of our own mortality, the finality that we discover in our loved one’s deaths. As a poet, Hall addresses this inevitability by looking backwards, by elegizing not only the person that he mourns but also the events and places that shape his experience of that person” (161-163).

Rowling’s own melancholia intimately informs her writing in such a way that Snape, Harry, and Voldemort’s melancholic ambivalence—directed largely at the father—are simply an extension and the textual manifestation of her own father-centered ambivalence. The now public nature of her largely private grief provides insight into the governing influence of her writing and with the understanding that, “[t]he absence of any meaningful relationship with her father and the long, slow loss of her mother, are two of the most important influences on [Rowling’s] writing” (“A Year”). One sees that *Harry Potter* is the product of her grief work and her chosen mode of response. With her primary fear being one of “losing someone I love,” it is appropriate that this fear would
then feature so prominently, providing the depth and shape of Harry’s story: “The death of J.K. Rowling’s mother was to have a profound effect on her writing. In many ways, the whole of Harry Potter is one giant attempt to reclaim a childhood” (“A Year”). Indeed, her mother’s death intimately informs Harry’s story, as “[t]he weird thing is that the essential plot didn’t change after my mother had died, but everything deepened and darkened” (“A Year”); and yet, both the text and her grief respond to one another in kind, creating a uniquely reflective, insightful form of reciprocity, whereby the death is addressed textually, so that she can then “know what [she] believe[s] because of what [she has] written (“Oprah”).

As the reader, the secondary participant in and witness to her experience, one is granted privileged access into Rowling’s own experience with trauma and loss, as she uses Harry Potter to “chronicle the nature and profundity of [her] grief” (Davis and Womack 161). Thus, as a reader, one engages in a unique relationship with the text:

As an act of literary interpretation, an ethics of mourning cultivates empathy in the reader. Without the ability to assume the role of the characters who grieve within the confines of the story or poem, the reader will not be transformed. As an ethical paradigm, the act of mourning encourages the reader to take part in the grieving that the writer records, to experience the death of a person whom we have never known, except through the artifice of language. Similar to the suspension of disbelief, an ethics of mourning draws us into the circle of grief so we may shed tears that are at once our own and not our own (163). The reader is implored to become an active participant, not solely to believe, but to listen and to respond to stories of trauma. The act of reading itself is an important gesture and if one is implicated in reading, one is then implicated in witnessing, too. The reader, as a witness, is drawn in by the gaps between language and one becomes a witness of the linguistic strategies, their subsequent effects, and that which draws one in emotionally.
Literature, like mourning, requires work, as it is work for one to read and to put oneself into the consciousness of another, calling for the reader to work at this variant form of grief:

An ethics of mourning ... demands that our stories of grief be told and retold. Hall’s poems demonstrate that the survivors of the deceased can only reshape their own lives by telling stories of their shared past, as well as stories of a future they must face without the one they have lost. By naming their experiences, we begin not only to understand them but to transform them into stories of coping and of healing (164).

Throughout the writing process, but most prominently upon the series’ conclusion, Rowling enters a realm in which she is able to recount and reflect rationally upon her grief; within this narrative of fear, suffering and loss, a space is made for gratitude. David and Womack’s essay features one of Hall’s poems from *The Museum of Clear Ideas* (1993) that instructs:

“teach us / to grieve with gratitude” as we explore “grief’s borders, boundaries of mourning / and lamentation, wild cries and unending tears, / when the unexpected and unacceptable / death happens” (165).

One sees that it is only through the therapeutic process of writing, in articulating her grief that:

[Rowling] becomes an omniscient observer, a witness once removed from the crisis that in the past threatened to engulf [her]. Now, through the therapeutic practice of creating a narrative—a process that demands precision, the culling of exact detail from the morass of potential events left in the wake of grief—[she] enters into a kind covenant with [her] sorrow (167).

It then follows that, “Hall’s ethics of mourning demands that he candidly recount his trial of grieving. He must not—and, indeed, cannot—polish the memory ... with the glossy oil of sentimentality, nor can he manipulate the rhetoric of superficial courage or unfeeling stoicism in order to present himself as untouched by the hand of extinction” (168).
Finally, one must eventually contend with the unimaginable loss, as “the fear of death confounds both the dying and the living ... Dying is simple ... what’s worst is ... the separation” (Kenyon as cited in Riegel Response 169). Thus, it is not the dead, but rather those who remain alive that must now confront this new separation, the conspicuous, consuming absence engendered by loss; and so it is here, within Harry Potter, that Rowling creates a textual space in which to memorialize and inscribe the lost other.

Rowling thus transforms her loss through the consolatory function and substitution of language, responding to parental loss through its textual recreation, as “[w]riting is an act of survivorship; it is what the survivor does in order to keep on going, to understand what has happened in his or her life, and to give form, shape, and sound to the pain of losing” (Stamelman as cited in Riegel Writing Grief 11). Through active, labour-centered engagement—recognized as Harry’s chosen mode of response bringing his mourning to a timely and largely “decisive end” (Clewell 44)—Rowling documents her loss, creating a body of work that is intimately informed by her mourning, while remaining separate and wholly other, as “art isn’t just a record of coping, it is an act of coping, a gesture of healing” (Clayton 11). It is interesting that only her protagonist, a character who comes to be both largely defined and separated by mourning expressed, should be the sole character within the series to exemplify a measure of engagement that mirrors her own. Harry Potter thus becomes the ideal substitution, replacing—while still featuring—the lost other with language, as the mourning subject “struggle[s] to transform the reality of [her] loss into an aesthetic realm. Narrative effectively becomes therapy whereby grief and anger are worked through. Davis and Womack’s approach stresses the notion of an ethics of mourning; this ethics recognizes that the desolation of loss can be countered by
the balm of language” (Riegel *Response* XXVI-II). Finally, with her mother’s death seeped into every page of the text, *Harry Potter* succeeds to the highest standard within this Freudian model, highlighting that, “[f]or psychoanalysis, words and images are the luminaries that bring unconscious memories to light. When we carry out the work of mourning successfully, we replace the lost object with another. The ‘ideal’ replacement or substitution is language” (Sherbert 120).
Chapter Two
“Sometimes a Horcrux is Just a Horcrux: Orphaned Boys and Encrypted Artifacts”

Voldemort displays the aggressive and isolating behaviour of one who has been both rejected and damaged from the moment he enters the world, and, as such, “there is a deep rage within Voldemort against the world” (“Fiennes Talks Voldemort”). Mrs. Cole, the matron at the prison-like, “rather grim, square building surrounded by high railings” (H-BP 247) that is Voldemort’s first home, is initially evasive about detailing the young Voldemort’s suspect character, as though being too honest about this suspicious child might then deter Dumbledore from taking the boy away. However, she comes to admit that, “[h]e’s a funny boy ... He was a funny baby, too. He hardly ever cried, you know. And then, when he got a little older, he was ... odd” (250). The absence of tears, even as a baby, implies that his character lacks the fundamental human ability to process and express grief, suggesting that Voldemort does not have the physical capacity for mourning. From this exchange, Dumbledore learns that Voldemort developed from a sullen and introverted infant, into a child that, “scares the other children” (250). While both Harry and Voldemort unconsciously use magic prior to entering Hogwarts, Harry protests that it must all be a terrible mistake when he is first told by Hagrid that, “Harry—yer a wizard” (PS 42). However, as quite the opposite of Harry, Voldemort greedily believes when he is told that he is a wizard: “‘I knew I was different,’ he whispered to his own quivering fingers. ‘I knew I was special. Always, I knew there was something special’” (H-BP 254). It is as though Voldemort had spent his early childhood waiting for the confirmation that he was a “Chosen One” in his own right. So too, prior to having his magical ability confirmed, Dumbledore learns that, “[Riddle] was already using magic against other people, to frighten, to punish, to control” (259). This ability to
control and dominate others using fear is an innate aspect of Voldmeort’s character that was refined during his early childhood, and Voldemort confides that, “I can make bad things happen to people who annoy me. I can make them hurt if I want to” (254).

Finally, while not offering specific details, Mrs. Cole’s telling of the episode at the seaside cliffs alludes to the young Voldemort’s capacity for terror and torture, and to Dumbledore, Voldemort’s “obvious instincts for cruelty, secrecy and domination” are already apparent (259).

Dumbledore wisely and quite accurately appreciates the necessity for studying Voldemort’s psychology and the underpinnings of his rage, and upon taking “a trip down Bob Ogden’s memory lane” (188), in *Half-Blood Prince*, Harry and Dumbledore become privileged witnesses of the origin and nature of Voldemort’s melancholia. Voldemort’s diseased grief stems from his severe animosity towards his mother, Merope Riddle, as “[h]is mother dies giving him life ... but rather than revering her sacrifice, Voldemort disdains her for being so weak as to die” (Zimmerman 199). So too, this point is affirmed during their first exchange in the orphanage between a young Voldemort and Dumbledore: “[m]y mother can’t have been magic, or she wouldn’t have died,’ said Riddle, more to himself than Dumbledore” (*H-BP* 257). This highlights an early belief in the artificial, magical deference of death. While still within the memory of the Gaunts, Harry observes “a girl whose ragged grey dress was the exact colour of the dirty stone wall behind her,” and he “thought he has never seen a more defeated-looking person” (194). And yet, Merope is afforded no sympathy from Voldemort, who disdains his mother for not valuing her magical ability enough to save her own life, thus, leaving him alone in the world. Again one sees how such a complicated pathology is primarily
characterized by ambivalence: Voldemort hates his mother for her weakness, but she is his connection to the magical world and the source of his own magical ability, which he prizes above all else. Yet, it is interesting to note that it is his membership within the larger wizarding world that he values, and not his own specific Gaunt family connection to that world, as again his family is the seat of his melancholic ambivalence. Finally, as the memory of the orphanage is completed, Dumbledore instructs Harry to be lenient in his opinion towards Voldemort’s mother, as “Merope Riddle chose death in spite of a son who needed her, but do not judge her too harshly, Harry. She was greatly weakened by long suffering and she never had your mother’s courage” (246).

Voldemort’s melancholia is fueled by the perennial rejection that punctuates his early childhood, and he displays “a boy’s loneliness because the world has rejected him, which is the beginning of a sort of rage against the world” (“Fiennes Talks Voldemort”). While his ambivalence towards his mother is more measured and he understandably expresses feelings of confusion and abandonment, his ambivalence towards his father, Tom Riddle, is far more violent and vengeful. Zimmerman notes “[t]hat Voldemort creates this first Horcrux by committing patricide leaves no doubt that these objects exist as representations of his violence against his origins” (Zimmerman 198). When no longer bewitched, Tom Riddle abandons his wife and unborn son, and Voldemort cites this rejection as ultimately the cause of his mother’s death. Thus, Zimmerman observes that “Voldemort completely disassociates himself from his parents” (199) and “murderously rejects the traces that connect him to family and to the past [and h]e turns them into Horcruxes, receptacles for fragments of his own soul, rather than meaningful connectors to the past” (210). Voldemort is rejected by his own parents, so he then
rejects them in kind; the rejection of his dead parents then precludes the need for mourning. Interestingly, while he is abandoned by both parents, Voldemort’s ambivalence is not equally directed at both mother and father, as “[h]is real animosity, however, is directed at his father, a Muggle. Voldemort takes nothing from his father; he discards his name—rather, he fragments it and reforms it into his alias—and as callously discards his father’s life” (199). However, as with his mother, Voldemort rejects his connection to the individual, while still benefitting from that connection; he commits patricide, but his inherited good looks, charm, and charisma from his muggle father enables his advancement within the wizarding world.

The memory of the orphanage is also instrumental in highlighting Voldemort’s “magpie-like tendency”—a tendency also found in Harry, as he, too, collects and saves meaningful objects—for collecting and secreting away sentimental objects, which foreshadows future abhorrent behaviours, while serving as the blueprint for the formation of his seven Horcruxes (H-BP 260). Dumbledore observes “a mess of small, everyday objects; a yo-yo, a silver thimble and a tarnished mouth-organ among them” (256) that, “were taken from victims of his bullying behaviour, souvenirs, if you will, of particularly unpleasant bits of magic” (260). However, when caught, “Riddle did not look remotely abashed” (256), which highlights Freud’s point that, “[s]hame before others, which would characterize this condition above everything, is lacking in him, or at least there is little sign of it” (Freud 165). Indeed, Voldemort’s lack of shame, and his progression through varying positions of power—first as Head Boy, and later as the self-titled “Most Powerful Wizard of All Time”—further illustrates Freud’s suggestion that, “[o]ne could almost say that the opposite trait of insistent talking about himself and pleasure in the consequent
exposure of himself predominates in the melancholiac” (165). Thus, one can trace Voldemort’s decent into melancholia from the “little lonely isolated boy who has decided he will not be defeated” (Fiennes interview), to the man who lacks any feelings of shame and remorse for his crimes.

Furthermore, Voldemort’s attitude towards his Horcruxes is central to understanding his melancholia, as he rejects his own past, and “[t]his rejection of the past is further underscored by Voldemort’s lack of interest in the objects once they have become Horcruxes: rather than keeping them nearby to admire or to serve as reminders, he hides them away and, until he realizes they are threatened, he gives them little thought” (Zimmerman 198). Thus, there exists a significant disconnect between Voldemort and his Horcruxes—his soul as melancholic artifact, having been violently splintered from the parent body, is then encrypted wholly externally—which then enables Harry to hunt and destroy the first five initially undetected. Zimmerman notes that, “[t]his ignorance shows that the present-day Voldemort maintains no connection to the fragment of his past self” (198). Indeed, this disconnect—from others, his own soul, and that which makes one human i.e. love, empathy, and compassion—features largely in his melancholia, as “Voldemort’s Horcruxes, inasmuch as they are like traces, follow the Derridean model; they reveal a violent disconnection from origins” (198); this disconnect is significant because as he literally severs his soul, he also dissolves his connection to his past, and as each is destroyed, “Voldemort [is] not aware in the present of his Horcrux’s actions or fate” (201). Moreover, the objects that he selects are symbolic of the prestige and status that he desires, but once they are corrupted, their significance is lost, as “Horcruxes are an abuse of time and of traces”(199). While Voldemort does not value
the objects themselves, *Deathly Hallows* opens with Harry sifting through his school trunk and contemplating items that he has rightly saved, like the “two-inch-long fragment of the enchanted mirror that his dead godfather, Sirius, had given him” (*DH* 20).

Zimmerman notes that, “Rowling … has demonstrated an interest in artifacts that connect people to the past” and she “emphasiz[es] access to the past through its remains” (Zimmerman 195). Finally, Dumbledore emphasizes how this divide between the characters’ ability and inability to value the seemingly insignificant is central to how Voldemort will be defeated: “That which Voldemort does not value, he takes no trouble to comprehend. Of house-elves and children’s tales, of love, loyalty and innocence, Voldemort knows and understands nothing. *Nothing*” (*DH* 568). While Voldemort fails to comprehend the value of the aforementioned list, this inability is not solely because of his narcissism and failed grief, as the wizarding world is in itself a deeply dysfunctional realm that is not conducive to healthy practices of mourning and remembrance. Even Ron, like Voldemort, is unable to recognize the underlying significance of the children’s story *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* that is bequeathed to Hermoine in Dumbledore’s will, and its instruction to follow the natural order of death, when “the youngest brother finally took off the Cloak of Invisibility and gave it to his son. And then greeted Death as an old friend, and went gladly, and, equals, they departed this life” (*DH* 332).

Comprehending both the nature and the importance of traces is central to understanding Harry’s resilience, and how he is able to successfully negotiate his quest, while Voldemort’s failure to gather traces or hold them in any esteem ultimately leads to his defeat: “In *Time and Narrative*, Paul Ricoeur describes how traces work: ‘the trace indicates “here” (in space) and “now” (in the present), the passage of living beings ... [i]t
orients the hunt, the quest, the search, the inquiry’’ (Zimmerman 194). With an emphasis on endurance, the Ricoerian trace highlights the endurance of past remnants within the present. However, Voldemort remains imprisoned within his narcissism and he blindly fails to recognize the significance of his Horcruxes, beyond the superficial value he assigns to them, as “[a]gain and again, Harry proves himself able to make use of the past; ‘his’ complex relationship to his past evolves, while Voldemort’s remains static” (194). Furthermore, “J.K. Rowling uses traces as at once fundamental to the formation of identity and central to the ongoing struggle for power between Harry and Voldemort” (194). A prime example of Voldemort’s inability to identify the full implication of such traces is Marvolo Gaunt’s ring, which is first introduced in *Half-Blood Prince*, as this family heirloom, prized for once belonging to Salazar Slytherin, “traces an old family, the crimes of a Dark wizard, an old wizarding legend, and the dead whom it is empowered to resurrect” (197). Predictably, Voldemort remains ignorant of the stone’s ability to ensure his immortality, and it remains, for him, merely a symbolic casing in which to create another Horcrux. Finally, both the power and significance of the trace lies in its ability to ensure that that which has been lost or has happened in the past retains continued influence in the present, as it recalls the lost object by “‘[b]ringing back’ [which] is an action associated with traces, and it is not one that Voldemort values ... for him, the stone is only a Horcrux, an object meant to defeat time” (196).

Initially, Marvolo Gaunt’s ring, which for “[c]enturies [has] been in [the Gaunt] family ... and pure-blood all the way!” serves to trace the family’s pure-blood status back to the Peverell line (*H-BP* 196). However, the significance of the ring changes and becomes misappropriated when Voldemort murders his uncle and transforms the ring into
a Horcrux, as the now corrupted ring “becomes at once a trace of Voldemort’s evil deeds and ambitions” (Zimmerman 196). Interestingly, as a Horcrux, the ring no longer serves as a trace that extends into the past, “since Voldemort has no interest in the past, [and] for him the ring [only] signifies his own effort to cheat death and thus to halt time’s passage” (196). Voldemort repeatedly fails to appreciate the importance of an object’s history, beyond valuing it as a superficial token or prize—unlike Dumbledore and Harry—as “[f]rom the Sorcerer’s Stone to Horcruxes, Voldemort prizes objects that offer the promise of his name—flight from death—and an evasion of time’s power” (197).

Finally, this now deformed trace further highlights Voldemort’s inability to recognize his Horcrux as signifying an alternate history, as he is “particularly ill-suited to recognize that the stone is the Resurrection Stone of legend” because “as for the stone, whom would he want to bring back from the dead? He fears the dead. He does not love” (DH 577).

Voldemort deliberately fails to make an ally of time (unlike Harry), as a Horcrux’s “purpose is not to forge a connection to the past” (Zimmerman 197). As his very name suggests, his sole motivation is to “guard ... against mortal death” (GoF 648), and the abominations that are his seven Horcruxes serve to “protect him from the passage of time” (Zimmerman 197). It is then significant to note that a Horcrux is positioned as the antithesis of a trace, as a trace “works with time to endure,” while a Horcrux works “[i]n the effort to defeat time” (197). Moreover, Voldemort’s Horcruxes also serve as the physical representation of his incomplete, fractured character. Zimmerman notes that, “[a]s early as his days as a student at Hogwarts, Voldemort sought out Horcruxes as the best strategy to elude death” (197)—he deliberately and repeatedly severs his own soul in pursuit of this elusion—the series is also punctuated with Voldemort’s various attempts at
reformation so that he may regain his former strength and power. However, like his maimed soul, these attempts at reformation repeatedly leave him incomplete, as “Voldemort severs himself as completely as he can from his origins and makes traces, not of people from his past or simple memories, but of himself, dividing and diminishing his soul” (199).

The soul then becomes one of the most significant articles in the series—the discovery and defeat of each individual Horcrux drives the plot forward in the final two books, obsessed over by both Harry and Voldemort for what they now contain and not what the object originally represented—the condition of which ensures Harry and Voldemort’s respective success and failure. Moreover, consideration for the state of one’s immortal soul would logically guarantee some manner of immortality; and yet, once again, “Voldemort knows and understands nothing. Nothing” (DH 568). Indeed, if one is truly concerned with self-preservation, one would be mindful of the wellbeing and purity of one’s immortal soul. Furthermore, while boastful that he has penetrated “magic further, perhaps, than they have ever been pushed” (H-BP 415), the irony remains that in being obsessed with maintaining a physical presence, the Horcrux ultimately becomes a failed mode of preservation.

Furthermore, it is his quest for immortality that drives his mania for symbolically investing his deliberately fractured soul within objects of prized memorabilia, and “[a]s he dehumanizes himself, Voldemort demonstrates how fragmenting one’s self destroys that self” (Zimmerman 199). The series is punctuated with repeated images of Voldemort as a parasitic, sickly child who has either regressed back to, or more likely has not matured and moved beyond, a state of tortured infancy. Voldemort’s first appearance
in the series in *Philosopher’s Stone* sees him figured out of “[m]ere shadow and vapour ... [having] form only when [he] can share another’s body” (*PS* 213). So too, prior to his resurrection in *Goblet of Fire*, Voldemort is likened to a “child”—albeit an imperceptive, grotesque one devoid of all innocence—numerous times in a single paragraph:

> It was as though Wormtail had flipped over a stone, and revealed something ugly, slimy and blind—but worse, a hundred times worse. The thing Wormtail had been carrying had the shape of a blind child, except that Harry had never seen anything less like a child. It was hairless and scaly-looking, a dark, raw, reddish black. Its arms and legs were thin and feeble, and its face—no child alive ever had a face like that—was flat and snake-like, with gleaming red eyes” (219-20).

Interestingly, in the “King’s Cross” chapter in *Deathly Hallows* one finally sees Voldemort’s “small and fragile and wounded” disembodied soul—now no longer housed within Harry—as a very graphic and physical representation of his vulnerable and maimed character (*DH* 567). The soul of this unwanted orphan is now shown to be “the small, maimed creature [that] trembled under the chair” (567); Voldemort’s life is purposefully bookended by this image of a discarded child, as his soul takes “the form of a small, naked child, curled on the ground, its skin raw and rough, flayed-looking, and it lay shuddering under a seat where it has been left, unwanted, stuffed out of sight, struggling for breath” (566). Dumbledore pointedly remarks that this “stunted creature under the chair” (568) is “[s]omething that is beyond either [Dumbledore or Harry’s] help” (567). Indeed, this indistinct and wounded form, which stands out in stark contrast with its pristine surroundings, is marked largely by its vulnerability and suffering, and it is conspicuous as the sole impurity within the “wide open space, bright and clean,” that is Harry’s imagined King’s Cross station (566). The image of this “flayed-looking” child is representative of Voldemort’s irredeemably flayed soul, and this “agonized creature” (568) is left making “the small, soft thumpings of something that flapped, flailed and
struggled. It was a pitiful noise, yet also slightly indecent” (565). Sadly, Voldemort’s story poignantly begins and ends with this image of a discarded child. For all his abhorrent efforts to remain immortal, Voldemort dies “with a mundane finality,” unknowing of love, unable, as Harry says, to “try for some remorse” (DH 594), with melancholia reflected in his “white hands empty” and “vacant and unknowing” face (596).
Chapter Three

“'Snape’s Grudge’ Explained: Examining the Melancholic Feature of Ambivalence”

Severus Snape is arguably both the most captivating and misunderstood character in the *Harry Potter* series, and careful examination of his “psychic architecture” (Kaplan 316) clearly points to the diagnosis of Freudian melancholiac, as the root cause of his “bereaved aggression” (Clewell 56) and “anticonsolatory and anti-idealist mourning practices” (57) remain largely unclear for the majority of the series. For Snape, the loss of his beloved Lily Potter, whom he has both loved and obsessed over for much of his life, is one that is so deeply profound that he remains incapable of mourning and moving through the healthy and necessary “process of detachment and consoling substitution” (57); he thus remains trapped in a state of irreparable, pathological melancholia, and even his final few moments of life are coloured by his longing for her. So too, the catalyst for his overt disdain for Harry, which becomes all the more complex and interesting when paired with the motivation to protect Harry, remains largely unclear, as Snape details “a modern practice of mourning that is not only enraged but also loving, not just reactive but affirmative” (55). With a “face ... like a death mask ... marble white and so still that when he spoke it was a shock to see that anyone lived behind the blank eyes” (*DH* 526), Snape dies—with his grief etched on his face—having been unable to reconcile the loss of Lily, and his subsequent ambivalence towards Harry. Thus, Severus Snape provides an excellent opportunity to explore this form of “mourning [that] names a work of grieving [that is] less idealistic and more ambivalent, enraged, and aggressive” (Clewell 54).
Indeed, this model of melancholic mourning—detailed by a “less idealistic and more ambivalent, enraged, and aggressive” (54) symptomatology—is exemplified in Snape, as this unlikely double agent provides an interesting example of one who paradoxically experiences a form of grief that is at the same time all consuming, while remaining largely concealed, as “one cannot see clearly what has been lost” and “what it is that absorbs him so entirely” until the final chapters of *Deathly Hallows* (Freud 164). Furthermore, diagnosis becomes all the more clear, as his grief is clearly characterized by the symptoms of melancholia: “The occasions giving rise to melancholia for the most part extend beyond the clear case of a loss by death, and include all those situations of being wounded, hurt, neglected, out of favour, or disappointed, which import opposite feeling of love and hate into the relationship or reinforce an already existing ambivalence” (170). Interestingly, even before their first encounter and extending well beyond, an eleven-year-old Snape privately obsesses over Lily: “[a]ll the time [he] was watching [her] ...” (*DH* 535). He continues to “watch ... her as greedily as he watched her in the playground” when they were children (*DH* 535). Sadly, as one whose own father “doesn’t like anything, much” (535) and whose mother is unflatteringly described as being a “thin, sallow-faced, sour-looking woman” (536), Snape tragically lacks any warm familial relationships. It then follows that in Lily, Snape finds the love and validation that he is so dearly lacking. However, their arrival at Hogwarts imports challenges into the friendship, and by being sorted into rival and essentially opposite houses creates added insecurities for Snape—he asserts that he “thought [he and Lily] were supposed to be friends ... Best friends?” (*DH* 540). Moreover, James Potter further complicates the relationship as he, too, is “slight, black-haired like Snape, but with that
indefinable air of having been well cared for, even adored, that Snape so conspicuously lacked” (538). Snape’s deep-rooted hatred for James Potter is established early, as James both bullies Snape, while simultaneously threatening to replace him (which indeed becomes the case), and Snape haltingly asserts to Lily that, “‘he fancies you, James Potter fancies you!’ The words seemed wrenched from him against his will. ‘And he’s not ... Everyone thinks ... Big Quidditch hero—’ Snape’s bitterness and dislike were rendering him incoherent” (541). Snape is overtly critical of Lily’s choice in James Potter, and so Harry—as James’ son, the living testament of their love and of Snape’s exclusion—presents the ideal substitution on which to redirect similar criticisms, as “[m]ourners may feel this aggression toward the lost other for a variety of reasons, including common feelings of abandonment and more specific complaints about another’s conduct” (Clewell 54).

For Snape, the eventual loss of Lily is twofold: the lost object is, in truth, lost objects, as he is, years before, mourning the death of an ideal, that being the loss of Lily to James as his potential yet “deserted bride” (Freud 164), later coupled with the mourning that her actual death incites. Interestingly, Hogwarts is where he first aligns himself with the newly formed Death Eaters; however, in seeking fellowship and validation from this villainous group, it is Snape who arguably distances himself from Lily. And yet, while still at school, it is ultimately Lily, based on Snape’s decision to keep such company, who finally rejects Snape in her declaration that, “[i]t’s too late. I’ve made excuses for you for years. None of my friends can understand why I even talk to you ... I can’t pretend any more. You’ve chosen your way, I’ve chosen mine” (DH 542). However, upon her death, Snape was found “making a terrible sound, like a wounded
animal ... and he looked like a man who had lived a thousand years of misery” (*DH* 544).

Snape’s loyalty to Lily remains unwavering, while still scarred by the melancholic feature of ambivalence:

> Freud attributed the onslaught of melancholia to an object relation marred by ambivalence. In contrast to the predominant feelings that he believed made the completion of mourning possible, the melancholic has ambivalent feelings of love and hate for the other. This ambivalence stems from ‘a real slight or disappointment coming from this loved person’ and renders it impossible for the melancholic to give up the attachment, at least until the grievance has been brought into consciousness and settled (Clewell 59).

As instructed, Snape dutifully relays the details of the prophesy to Voldemort. However, Voldemort’s subsequent critical treatment of Snape, and his inability to recognize Snape’s request to spare Lily Potter’s life as being anything deeper than a superficial “desire ... [for] her, that was all” (*DH* 593) is what ultimately causes Voldemort’s downfall, since this moment is the catalyst for the melancholic’s “internal ‘revolt’ against the ‘censoring agency’ as arising ‘out of the subject’s desire ... to liberate [himself] from all these influences’” (Clewell 54). Snape’s true allegiance is in question for much of the series and it is not until the chapter “The Prince’s Tale” at the end of the *Deathly Hallows* that one sees that, “[a]lways” (*DH* 552) his true motivation stems solely from his singular devotion to his beloved Lily. Snape pledges to do “anything” to “[k]eep her—them safe—safe” and when this fails, he “commit[s] to saving Lily’s son, the son he himself condemned to death by revealing Sybil Trelawney’s prophesy to the Dark Lord” (Johnston 76). Yet, while his devotion is absolute, it is also deeply private and must remain concealed so that his role as Voldemort’s “good and faithful servant” (*DH* 527) remains unquestioned by the Dark Lord. Thus, “a mourning practice that prohibits the expression of bereaved anger tends to drive hostility inwards, where
berating the self takes place” (Clewell 54). Upon Lily’s death, Snape asserts that “I wish ... I wish I were dead” (DH 544) and “[i]t is this sadism ... that solves the riddle of the tendency to suicide which makes melancholia so interesting—and so dangerous” (Freud 171). Kristeva details this experience well, arguing that, “I live a living death, my flesh is wounded, bleeding, cadaverized, my rhythm slowed down or interrupted, time has been erased or bloated, absorbed into sorrow ...” (Kristeva 4). Snape is insistent that his sorrow and sacrifice remain a secret; his “pain is the hidden side of [his] philosophy, its mute sister” (4), and he pleads with Dumbledore: “‘never—never tell, Dumbledore! This must be between us! Swear it! I cannot bear ... especially Potter’s son ... I want your word!’ ‘My word, Severus, that I shall never reveal the best of you?’ Dumbledore sighed, looking down into Snape’s ferocious, anguished face. ‘If you insist ... ’” (DH 545). Thus, “[p]art of what intensifies and perpetuates bereavement [is] the social prohibition against expressing anger and aggression” (Clewell 54) and with the exception of Dumbledore as his sole confidant, Snape must grieve alone.

It is important to note that the “melancholiac’s behaviour is not in every way the same as that of one who is normally devoured by remorse and self-reproach. Shame before others, which would characterize this condition above everything, is lacking in [Snape], or at least there is little sign of it” (Freud 165). Interestingly, Freud argues that, “if one listens patiently to the many and various self-accusations of the melancholiac, one cannot in the end avoid the impression that often the most violent of them are hardly at all applicable to the patient himself, but that with insignificant modifications they do fit someone else, some person whom the patient loves, has loved or ought to love” (167). This behaviour can be seen in Snape’s often unwarranted criticism and bullying of Harry,
in addition to those—both students and colleagues—who are not in his own house, as often the melancholiac “give[s] a great deal of trouble, perpetually taking offence and behaving as if [he] had been treated with great injustice” (167). From the onset of the series, in a private exchange later revealed in his final memory, Snape protests that an eleven-year-old Harry is “mediocre, arrogant as his father, a determined rule-breaker, delighted to find himself famous, attention-seeking and impertinent” (DH 545).

Furthermore, he repeatedly and publically debases Harry, as he contemptuously describes Harry as “[o]ur new—celebrity” (PS 101), believing that, “famous Harry Potter is a law unto himself” (PA 209). His ambivalence—presented as everything from rage-filled aggression to tearful remorse, but always manifested through “a haze of pain” (DH 544)—is central to the plot, as “[Snape] seems vindictive when it comes to Harry, seemingly using him to retaliate for the humiliation that Harry’s father had forced him to suffer when they themselves were students” (Heilman 91). Indeed, the complexity of Snape’s pathology is further explained by Freud’s position that, “[a]ll this is possible only because the reactions expressed in their behaviour still proceed from an attitude of revolt” (Freud 167).

Snape’s inability to work effectively through the loss of his beloved Lily Potter, (as the healthy progression and resolution of mourning requires one to do), leads him to reinvest his attachment for Lily onto Harry, although “hate is expended upon this new substitute-object, railing at it, deprecating it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic gratification from its suffering” (170). While often Harry’s own perception of Snape is misleading—it is either exaggerated or incorrect—Snape is guilty of similar misperceptions, thinking Harry to be James, and Harry suffers as a result of this
misdirected association from the very beginning of the series: “At the start-of-term banquet, Harry had got the idea that Professor Snape disliked him. By the end of the first Potions lesson, he knew he’d been wrong. Snape didn’t dislike Harry—he *hated* him” (*PS* 101). Such uncensored dislike towards Harry supports this all-important symptom of ambivalence, further affirming his melancholia, as he “looks suspiciously to Harry ... Yet he is watching over him and protecting him as early as a Quidditch match in the first year” (Heilman 95). While outwardly, Snape is a bully of a man, it remains that his primary motivation is “to make Lily’s sacrifice for Harry a meaningful one” (Johnston 74). Thus, for seventeen years he remains committed to the memory of Lily, as “Snape spied ... and lied ... put [himself] in mortal danger ... Everything was supposed to be to keep Lily Potter’s son safe” (*DH* 551).

As one who is unable to successfully mourn the death of Lily, Snape is inextricably tied to Harry, albeit secretly for the majority of the series, and he is “[a] man motivated above all by the Ricoeurian sense of endurance, he continues to watch over Harry because in him Lily endures, though with a difference that fills Snape with loathing” (Zimmerman 200). Snape is neither able to reconcile his loss, nor is he able to disassociate Harry from the loathing that was once directed towards James Potter, as Snape exemplifies how melancholia is furthered by “[t]he loss of a love-object [which] constitutes an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence in love-relationships to make itself felt and come to the fore” (Freud 169). In their final confrontation, Harry approaches “the dying man” to collect the tear-like memories, “[s]ilver blue, neither liquid nor gas, [they] gushed from his mouth and his ears and his eyes” (*DH* 528); And as Harry plays through Snape’s memories, he bears witness to the ambivalence:
Snape was kneeling in Sirius’s old bedroom. Tears were dripping from the end of his hooked nose as he read the old letter from Lily. The second page carried a few words ... Snape took the page bearing Lily’s signature, and her love, and tucked it inside his robes. Then he ripped in two the photograph he was holding, so that he kept the part from which Lily laughed, throwing the portion showing James and Harry back on to the floor, under the chest of drawers ... (553).

By ripping the photograph and callously tossing James and Harry aside, one sees how this figurative separation of a family easily translates into Snape’s initial desire to only spare Lily, when he “ask[s] for mercy for the mother, in exchange for the son” (543). Dumbledore expresses his contempt (“You disgust me”) at such a request, to which “Snape seemed to shrink a little” under the weight of his own guilt (543). It is this “conflict of ambivalence [that] casts a pathological shade on the grief, forcing it to express itself in the form of self-reproaches, to the effect that the mourner himself is to blame for the loss of the loved one, i.e. desired it” (Freud 170). Snape is unable to relieve himself of the weight of his guilt, and he remains in a perpetual state of melancholia, as after a death one “is meant to have [a] leave [from] mourning after a term and to return to reality ... yet [the mourning subject] is stubborn in his grief and the work of mourning persists” (Hart as cited in Riegel Response X).

Finally, upon learning that Harry has always been marked to die, Snape’s ambivalence is further reinforced when Dumbledore questions whether Snape had “grown to care for the boy, after all?” (DH 551):

‘For him?’ shouted Snape. ‘Expecto patronum!’ From the tip of his wand burst the silver doe: she landed on the office floor, bounded once across the office and soared out of the window. Dumbledore watched her fly, and as her silvery glow faded he turned back to Snape, and his eyes were full of tears. ‘After all this time?’ ‘Always,’ said Snape (551-52).

Snape’s incredulous response further highlights what Abraham and Torok detail as the melancholic feature of “‘incorporation,’ [that being] a literalized fantasy governing
melancholia in which the loss is denied and the other encrypted in the body” (Clewell 50). It follows that, “[i]ncorporation ... leads to illness because the object has been secretly encrypted in the inner sanctum of the mourner’s psychic space: the object lies in a crypt so secret that the separation between mourner and object evaporates” (Kaplan 317). Snape, unable to reconcile his loss and find an appropriate “consoling substitution” (Clewell 57), preserves the lost other within a crypt, as is seen through his mimicry of Lily’s Patronus. Moreover, it is essential to understand the distinction between “introjections” and “incorporation” and how these concepts supplement Freud’s theory:

The divide between introjection and incorporation can be loosely mapped onto the division Freud maintains between mourning and melancholia, in which mourning can be hastily characterized as successful forgetting—or moving on in time, thereby maintaining normal time—whereas melancholia remains endlessly mired in its desire for the lost object, unable to forget, frozen in an old temporal space, and unable to mourn ... The incorporated object then secretly remains in the ‘crypt’—a concept developed by Abraham and Torok to describe an internal tomb wherein lies the image, if not the actual body, of the lost object that never dies” (Kaplan 316).

Finally, with his dying breath, Snape, who remains unrelieved of his melancholia, whispers for Harry to “[l]ook ... at ... [him]” (DH 528), so that he may one last time gaze into the eyes of his beloved Lily, as “[Harry] has her eyes, precisely her eyes” (DH 544). While deeply flawed, Snape remains committed to his love for Lily and when asked whether she considered Snape to be a hero, Rowling replied that, “[he] remains rather cruel, a bully, riddled with bitterness and insecurity—and yet he loved, and showed loyalty to that love and ultimately laid down his life because of it” (Heilman 84).

Both mourning and melancholia detail similar symptoms of “profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, and inhibition of all activity,” all of which become evident to varying degrees as the series
unfolds (Clewell 43). Freud highlights that frequently there exists for the melancholic some profound loss within their personal history that triggers the erosion of rational thought, until one slips completely into a state of “pathological melancholia” (43); and yet, Freud cautions that this state of mourning will only come to a “decisive end when [one] severs [one’s] emotional attachment to the lost one and reinvests the free libido in a new object” (43). Ideally, one must discover a healthy new fixation in which to become invested, in order for one’s grief to end. However, further examination of such grief reveals the painful loss that is at the core of the melancholic affliction; it is then imperative that, when attempting to discern a deeper, more meaningful understanding of this particular brand of grief, “wherever it is possible[,] to discern the external influences in life which have brought [melancholy] about” (Freud 161-62). As Snape exhibits, often the melancholic struggles so greatly with his personal loss that, “subsequently this struggle can be so intense that a turning away from reality ensues” (163). While some instances of melancholy may reflect “an attitude of revolt [or] a mental consternation which by a certain process has become transformed into melancholic contrition” (167), the lost other continues to plague the melancholic, dictating his disposition and actions. Thus, Freud’s theory presents introspection into the unhealthy and pathological nature of melancholy, which subsequently features so greatly in many of the key characters within the Harry Potter series, while simultaneously highlighting a profound loss that frequently acts as the catalyst for such a dangerous and debilitating affliction.
Chapter Four

“Sifting through the Bottom of the School Trunk: Time, Traces, and Hyperremembering”

Central to Harry’s ability to negotiate effectively each new episode of loss, is his capacity to construct a foundation of traces from his past that offer him the guidance and support that are essential for his success. Indeed, Harry’s early childhood is essentially a historical chasm which he must later fill by questioning and piecing together his own past, as “Harry cherishes his past, and one of the greatest gifts he gains when he enters the wizarding world is access to memories and traces of his parents” (Zimmerman 198). Moreover, unlike Voldemort, who fails to assign the past any means of a continued presence in the present, Harry aligns himself with the past and makes it his ally; Zimmerman notes that, “Harry gains strength as he gathers traces” (199). Voldemort, however, purposefully rejects his own past, firstly as a young child—doing, as he believes, in an effort to evade mourning and prevent himself from being vulnerable—and then, as a more capable and resourceful adolescent, he murderously rejects all familial traces. Voldemort selfishly chooses to disengage, so as to prevent any active and conscious mourning practices, and while he openly displays many symptoms of the Freudian melancholiac (similar to Snape and Harry), such symptoms are never consciously addressed. In contrast, both to his credit, and as the means by which he is ultimately able to succeed, Harry positions himself as an interesting and effective counterpoint to Voldemort; repeatedly, Harry demonstrates the exact opposite sensibility to time and traces, and while Voldemort obsessively fears the passage of time and covets objects only for their superficial value, Harry manipulates time, always mindful to gather and wisely save traces (even if their benefit is unclear) that will aid him in success.
Countless scenes see Harry contemplating objects from both worlds. In his final moments at Privet Drive, Harry, alone, mulls over the now forgotten small toy soldiers that were carefully displayed in his cupboard, and he follows this trace back to when they were his only possessions, in what was once the only home that he had ever known: “Harry, in unfailing contrast, values objects that recall the past, even when they appear to have no continued value, like the false locket and the broken mirror he carries in his moleskin pouch” (197). Looking back, Chapter Two explores how Harry considers objects from his six previous years at Hogwarts, as he sifts through the bottom dregs of his school trunk. Indeed, *Deathly Hallows* opens with Harry nostalgically mulling over these seemingly unimportant objects that trace key moments in his development, and he recalls the memories that they incite. What might appear to be worthless bits and pieces, objects forgotten by an untidy teenager, are, in truth, rightly saved; and yet, the confusion that surrounds such objects—the broken shard of mirror and the snitch, in particular—“foregrounds the difficult task of reading a trace whose meaning is not always clear” (200). However, Harry is indeed mindful and rightly saves such objects, squirreling them away for later use, and “[w]hen these objects prove to have value after all, Harry’s reverence for the past is affirmed” (197).

In stark contrast to the trauma that intensifies as the series progresses and a key element that the action-packed film versions fail to capture, are the equally extensive periods of normalcy and the mundane that stretch for great periods of the plot. It is then here, through the seemingly insignificant periods of inactivity, where friendships become truly solidified. While it is certainly true that Harry, Ron, and Hermione first become close because of trauma—the two boys save Hermione from the rogue troll in their first
year at school—their bond is solidified, not solely because they have survived together, but, rather, because they have lived and aged together, and it is that sense of normalcy that they are fighting for and ultimately trying to save. Ron questions whether, “Anyone else we know died?” (H-BP 591) when the Evening Prophet arrives, as there exist binaries between trauma and the mundane, when news of the dead is normal, expected and arrives everyday with the post. Thus, while grief informs much of Harry’s story, it is then balanced by long periods that are filled with everyday problems and pleasures—students spend hours doing their homework together in their common room, attend classes and write exams, practice for and participate in Quidditch matches, and for Harry, long summers are spent at the Burrow, or seemingly even longer ones are spent at the Dursley’s. In many ways, however, these long periods of inactivity have been his salvation. While Harry is constantly recognized as being his world’s “Chosen One,” and his scar marks him as being extraordinary, the trauma and the burden of expectation are partially suspended during these periods of normalcy and inactivity, and, for a time, he is allowed simply to be ordinary. Thus, these periods are critical for Harry’s development and the development of his friendships, because as the series progresses, the everyday increases in importance when trauma becomes the everyday.

In contrast, the opening chapters of the series find Harry literally tucked out of sight in his cupboard under the stairs friendless and alone—he is an invisible child.  

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1 Prisoner of Azkaban director, Alfonso Cuarón, imports a scene on friendship that is absent from the text.

2 The Leavesden film set masters the artful display of comfort right down to the last tiny, homely detail, providing Harry a ready-made, lived-in and loved home that was once his parents’ home, too; it is a wholly authentic homecoming: “They reached their familiar, circular dormitory with its five four-poster beds and Harry, looking around, felt he was home at last” (PoA 74). Indeed, it is the antithesis of, but also the remedy to, the damage done in his cupboard. The space is deliberately broken in, threadbare, and ready to receive him; there here is no need for any adjustment.
Here with the Dursleys, he is an anti-celebrity, and an active effort is made to insist that he is undesirable (a familiar label that will be reused later in the series) and unloved. The living-room “held no sign at all that another boy lived in the house too” (PS 19). So too, for this first decade, Dudley is the “Chosen One,” in contrast with Harry, who is little else than, “Dudley’s favourite punch-bag” (20). Harry is barked at: “Don’t ask questions—that was the first rule for a quiet life with the Dursleys” (20). The means by which his parents were killed, and his own history, are a fiction, a series of carefully-constructed lies that keep him ignorant of the wizarding world. Moreover, within the first chapter of the series, Dumbledore concedes that, “[w]e’ve had precious little to celebrate for eleven years” (13). And yet, for Harry, after the fateful attack, the tedium continues: “[h]e’d lived with the Dursleys almost ten years, ten miserable years, as long as he could remember, ever since he’d been a baby and his parents had died” (27), and this state of hopelessness and boredom are all that he has ever known, and they are his normal. Thus, this is the world from which Harry is coming, and while oddly enough they are “the safest years of his life” (45), they are also intentionally devoid of familial traces, as “[h]e couldn’t remember his parents at all. His aunt and uncle never spoke about them, and of course he was forbidden to ask questions. There were no photographs of them in the house” (27).

Much of Harry’s existence is shaped by a story that comes before his time; however, what is so abnormal about Harry, is that he is normal, and while he carries the weight of this story, it his ability to feel happiness and accept love, despite such suffering,
that is abnormal.\(^3\) Moreover, Harry’s identity is shaped by his experience as a survivor and by the story that he has inherited, and as the definitive survivor and witness, he bears the responsibility of telling the truth about the dead. As the sole remaining member of his family, and as a witness, Harry thus bears the obligation to remain alive to tell the story. One sees that, “[i]n such texts, the one who returns to the world after enduring the torment of death’s presence—whether that be in the midst of war or natural disaster or some other life-threatening occurrence—not only confronts the void left by the deceased’s glaring absence but also the memories of the death experience itself” (Davis and Womack 170-1). As a survivor, one must decide whether to seal off the trauma, or to continue to enter that fearsome space and engage the traumatic. Within the series, Harry establishes what it means to be traumatized and to carry the burden of such grief, as “[n]othing could prepare him for the loss of so significant a part of [his] being” (172).

Testimony is but another integral component that is necessary for the completion of mourning work, and while others may not want to bear it, to hear unsettling truth finally voiced (because once voiced, they cannot be unheard, and they become a permanent part of one’s own consciousness of the trauma), Harry must testify. Again, emphasis is placed on the physical, performative nature of testimony, and images of “labour” and “work” are incited, when witnesses are called to, “labour to bring their emotions of loss to the surface so that they can be voiced, thus allowing the work of mourning to be performed” (Riegel Writing Grief 7). Immediately following the death of Cedric Diggory, the series’ seminal introduction to trauma, Harry, once again as the sole

\(^3\) Rowling reinforces that Harry is “normal” and an “every-child.” In a realm with names like: “Millicent Bulstrode” and “Reginald Cattermole,” Harry’s name and appearance are, in contrast, largely nondescript.
survivor, is called upon to publicly bear witness and to transform his trauma into testimony; Harry feared that, “Dumbledore was going to question him. He was going to make Harry relive everything” (GoF 603):

‘If I thought I could help you,’ Dumbledore said gently, ‘by putting you into an enchanted sleep, and allowing you to postpone the moment when you would have to think about what has happened tonight, I would do it. But I know better. Numbing the pain for a while will only make it worse when you finally feel it. You have shown bravery beyond anything I could have expected of you. I ask you to demonstrate your courage one more time. I ask you to tell us what happened’ (603).

And yet, while Harry might initially “suffer under the weight of grief,” (Riegel Writing Grief 7) this weight is soon transformed, indicating that he is to be comforted throughout the process, and that he is not alone; Harry is then able to testify only when “Fawkes the phoenix had left his perch, flown across the office, and landed on Harry’s knee ... Fawkes blinked peacefully up at him. There was something comforting about his warm weight” (GoF 602-3). Harry’s testimony is thus exacted in its entirety (although there are many instances when testimony is forcibly extracted) without pause or interruption, allowing for the cathartic property of language—producing a similar effect to when his body is finally rid of the seventh Horcrux—to once again make him whole:

Once or twice, Sirius made a noise as though about to say something, his hand still tight on Harry’s shoulder, but Dumbledore raised his hand to stop him, and Harry was glad of this, because it was easier to keep going now he had started. It was even a relief; he felt almost as though something poisonous was being extracted from him; it was costing him every bit of determination he had to keep talking, yet he sensed that once he had finished, he would feel better (603-4).

Often the survivor faces the seemingly insurmountable task of not just the survival itself, but one must then testify, and “[w]itnesses face the difficulty of transforming their trauma into testimony, but, in some cases, they must also deal with the repression imposed by listeners who do not want to accept their truths” (Debling 74).
Harry witnesses Voldemort’s resurrection, and his callous killing of Cedric Diggory, who is discarded as “the spare” (*GoF* 553), but beyond that trauma, Harry must contend with dismissal by the official discourse, who are content to think that he is a “deluded, attention-seeking person who thinks he’s a great tragic hero” (*OotP* 71), and they then deny his testimony, as the survivor often discovers that others are unable or unwilling to bear. One then asks this perennial question: How does one survive the witnessing? Moreover, it then follows that the survivor seeks a space in which their testimony will be heard, and “the notion of the testimony ... turns out to be tied up, precisely, with the notion of the underground” (Felman 12). For Harry, his underground is comprised of Dumbledore’s Army, The Order of the Phoenix, and most importantly the Harry, Ron and Hermione trio, who do not question his experience, and “Rowling uses this connection between testimony and the underground ... as Harry and those who believe his testimony work outside of what is socially and even lawfully allowed” (Debling 74). Thus, during times of trauma, and as people are dying, often another social order asserts itself.

Interestingly, because of this suppression of the truth, there are restricted options for those wanting to mount resistance, as it remains difficult to know what *it* is that they are resisting, when *it* is surrounded by a lack of information, denial, and the uncertainty of how exactly to proceed. So too, there appear to be few contingency plans in the wizarding world for when Voldemort regains power, and the procedure that is in place—confirming identity with pet names and jam preferences feature greatly in the security protocol—is indeed superficial and counterproductive (like many of the laws and policies within this world). Harry is then faced with mass denial, when the truth is conveniently
dismissed as “Dumbledore’s rumour-mongering” (*OotP* 89), and only his immediate circle believes that Voldemort has returned:

‘Because accepting that Voldemort’s back would mean trouble like the Ministry hasn’t had to cope with for nearly fourteen years,’ said Sirius bitterly. ‘Fudge just can’t bring himself to face it. It’s so much more comfortable to convince himself Dumbledore’s lying to destabilize him’ (89).

In the film version, Dumbledore implores Fudge “to see reason ... [as t]he evidence that the Dark Lord is back is incontrovertible,” and yet, Fudge remains defiant, as he conveniently insists that, “He is not back!” (Yates, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*). Appropriately, this familiar phrase is again used at the end of *Order of the Phoenix*—altered only slightly by the removal of the negation—as Fudge’s stunned, long-overdue admission that Voldemort is indeed back, highlighting the wholly ineffective, superficial opposition that Fudge presents in the face of such a threat. Indeed, much of the Ministry’s agenda centers on the need to be *seen* doing something, rather than *actually* combating Voldemort. Thus, Harry is repeatedly confronted by this, “choiceless choice,” whereby one must find a means to mount resistance, when one is constantly met with denial and suppression.

It is Dumbledore who appreciates that Harry must remain open and engaged in the face of such suppression, and he encourages Harry to fully rely on the support and talents of his immediate community, as he insists that the remaining members of the threesome—on multiple occasions—be fully informed: “You do them a disservice by not confiding something this important to them” (*H-BP* 78). Furthermore, Voldemort—and to a lesser degree Snape, whose own happiness, maturity, and even his sanity, is tethered to his irreplaceable friend, Lily—deliberately chooses (even as a young schoolboy) to
construct a superficial community, always mindful to remain isolated, friendless, and largely independent while still at its centre; and yet, Harry, is repeatedly reminded of the dangers of isolation and the stabilizing effect of his friends: “You need your friends, Harry. As you so rightly said, Sirius would not have wanted you to shut yourself away” (79). But most importantly, it is Harry himself who consciously chooses to remain engaged after Sirius’ death: “I realised I can’t shut myself away or—or crack up. Sirius wouldn’t have wanted that, would he? And anyway, life’s too short” (77). Here, Harry purposefully rejects melancholia, choosing instead to actively participate in the present time, his own life, and with those in it, so as not to descend irreparably into melancholia, or “crack up,” as it were (77).

So too, beyond the familiar, good-versus-evil binary, Harry and Voldemort also display a wholly opposite understanding of the function of time. Looking back to Chapter Three, Voldemort (as his very name would suggest) fears the passage of time above all else, as, to him, time is static and irretrievable, and it callously speeds one closer to death. Harry however, comes to demonstrates an intimate understanding of time, and its various uses—he first manipulates time in *Prisoner of Azkaban*, using the Time-Turner to relive the three critical hours that will “save more than one innocent life” (*PoA* 288)—and “[h]e repeatedly uses time—manifested both as traces and as time travel—to facilitate his development and to take him well beyond the magical and emotional abilities of a typical adolescent” (Zimmerman 195). Here, time is understood to be, if used properly, a life-saving tool. However, it is made clear that time (like the natural law that surrounds death) has its own strict parameters; Dumbledore cautions that, “you—*must*—not—be—*seen,*” (*PoA* 288) and it is imperative that, above all else, they
strictly adhere to this rule. Indeed, while Voldemort would slate time as his primary enemy, and he goes so far as to fracture his own soul in an attempt to ensure his immortality (this being just one of many abortions in his war against time), Harry repeatedly draws on his past so as to brave the present.

Indeed, Harry rightly counts time among his many allies, and while time does bring these two characters closer to their deaths, the difference here being that, for Harry, his death is essential for his survival; his death has been strategically planned—years in advance—and is the keystone in the intricate, largely-secret plot to finally defeat Voldemort. So too, key junctures throughout the seven books see Harry revisiting the past (a theme that intensifies in the later books)—both his own and the pasts of others—all the while remaining mindful that he is not reclaiming time through an idealized, wish-fulfilling version of time travel; Harry is conscious and accepts that he is manipulating a fractured, finite portion of time, but he appreciates that he is not reclaiming lost time.

Indeed, while Voldemort remains fixated on his future and the artificial deferral of death, “[c]entral to Harry’s heroism is his ability to live in time and even to manipulate and take advantage of its passage, surrounding himself with his personal history and forging his identity from the traces of his family” (Zimmerman 194). Interestingly, his own death even suspends time, when both Voldemort and Harry lie unconscious on the forest floor; yet, while unconscious, in death he becomes conscious of why he has “got to go back” and cannot simply “board a train” and move “on” (DH 578). In this interlude, time is both suspended and extended for Harry alone, and he is gifted with the necessary time that affords him privileged clarity and insight. Finally, Harry also has a healthy understanding of the progression of time, and while studying the past may alter and
inform his present reality, “The ‘boy who lived’ demonstrates an ability to accept traces as connections to the past, yet also as indications that the past has past” (Zimmerman 194).

Often the recreation and recitation of memory is done in an effort to situate oneself in a realm that creates some sense of meaning and understanding of time and past trauma. However, memory is by no means infallible and it can prove highly problematic when ascertaining the accuracy and authenticity of an account. And yet, it is nonetheless important, as remembering “is also a desire to understand the ways in which that effort at retrieval—sometimes exceedingly selective, sometimes careless or mightily subjective—creates something new, something perhaps tenuously related to what took place” (125). Memory thus becomes but a fragment or a partial reflection of what actually happened, as “the relation between history and memory has been seen as a relation between what [one] know[s] happened, and what can be recalled of that same event by individuals who were there, with the understanding that memory is incomplete and selective, recycled through what the witness knows already, and in its raw and undigested form is an incomplete record of what happened” (125). So too, memory, with its many failures, is not so much an exact replication of what actually happened, but rather an indication that something important and meaningful did indeed happen.

The Pensieve serves the unique function of systematically cataloging memory so as to preserve testimony, but the slippery nature of memory can then complicate this record. In the wizarding world, the Pensieve is one of the primary means of archiving trauma, but because memory is often fragmented, as each memory is coloured equally by what is both included and excluded from the story, one is then at risk of learning the
wrong story. So too, memory is formed not as much by retrieval, as it is by construction, and as a memory is constructed, the frame in which the memory is figured must also be considered, as the frame further changes and manipulates the context. Harry and Dumbledore repeatedly plunge “into the silvery substance” (*H-BP* 189) that is each carefully collected memory, and they become literally immersed within that selected episode of memory. This immersion allows Harry to observe each memory precisely as it was remembered, and memory is then included in Harry’s arsenal against Voldemort. Thus, memory and history are not at risk of fading with the passage of time, and there is not the same threat of forgetting when the memory is carefully bottled and secreted away.

Interestingly, the immaterial memory mirrors its physical form, as both are precious and fragile, and both the “memories [that] swirled, silver-white and strange” and one’s interpretation of them, are indeed malleable (*DH* 532). As the Pensieve literally saturates one with memory, while within that memory, one becomes a silent spectator with the privileged occasion for true embodied witnessing. Thus, the Pensieve presents testimony in its most authentic form with little opportunity for direct censorship, as Slughorn’s attempt to cloud his own shameful memory with “the dense fog ... so that Harry could not see Slughorn or Riddle at all,” and the assertion that, “I don’t know anything about Horcruxes and I wouldn’t tell you if I did! Now get out of here at once and don’t let me catch you mentioning them again!” is both crude and obvious (*H-BP* 347). However, as this form of embodied witnessing presents memory in a far more authentic form than just recitation, one then observes raw and disturbing moments that, if given the choice, one might choose to soften or omit, as “[Harry’s] previous experiences with the odd device that stored and revealed thoughts and memories, though highly
instructive, had also been uncomfortable. The last time he had disturbed its contents, he had seen much more than he would have wished” (188). Thus, while this type of engagement with memory is heavily experienced through the senses and it arguably presents it in its most authentic form, it may also provide new moments of trauma.

The magical Pensieve thus enables Harry a form of embodied witnessing and empirical participation with memory that goes infinitely beyond mere remembrance and limited, non-magical engagement; each sojourn into memory wholly fulfills the Freudian expectation that the mourning subject must “sever ... attachments primarily through a labor of memory” (Clewell 44). Harry thus quite literally labours through memory, done so “bit by bit” (Freud 163), while experiencing the dichotomy of nostalgia, the painful homecoming that is revealed through each episode of immersion. The very function of the Pensieve then allows for the ideal fulfilment of what Freud cites as the “magical restoration of the lost object,” when memory, as a historical and emotional ruin, is repeatedly reclaimed and relived:

The work of mourning, as Freud describes it here, entails a kind of hyperremembering, a process of obsessive recollection during which the survivor resuscitates the existence of the lost other in the space if the psyche, replacing an actual absence with an imaginary presence. This magical restoration of the lost object enables the mourner to assess the value of the relationship and comprehend what he or she has lost in losing the other. But prolonging the existence of the lost object at the center of grief work (Trauerarbeit) does not persist indefinitely, for Freud claimed that the mourner, by comparing the memories of the other with actual reality, comes to an objective determination that the lost object no longer exists (Clewell 44).

A repeated engagement with memory—initially experienced during the earliest stages of his mourning work as the involuntary assault of memories during the Dementor attacks that render him incapacitated—ultimately frees and transforms Harry: “[e]ach single one
of the memories and hopes which bound the libido to the object is brought up and hyper-
cathected, and the detachment of libido from it accomplished” (Freud 163). Finally,
Harry even goes so far as to counter such attacks with similar weaponry, by consciously
reclaiming his memories while privileging the happy memories that, “act ... as a shield
between [Harry] and the Dementor” (PoA 176).

Much of the series details Harry’s quest to reconstruct a family, but it is not until
Deathly Hallows that he finally journeys back to Godric’s Hollow, which is where his
story began, as “it started there, all of it” (H-BP 606) and “[f]or him, the lure of the
village lay in his parents’ graves, [and] the house where he had narrowly escaped death”
(DH 261). Moreover, the lure of Godric’s Hollow lies in the opportunity for Harry to
finally see what his life could potentially have been:

He was about to go home, about to return to the place where he had had a family.
It was Godric’s Hollow that, but for Voldemort, he would have grown up and
spent every school holiday. He could have invited friends to his house ... he
might even have had brothers and sisters ... it would have been his mother who
had made his seventeenth birthday cake. The life he had lost had hardly ever
seemed so real to him as at this moment when he knew he was about to see the
place where it had been taken from him (263).

Harry and Hermoine arrive “hand in hand” and together they venture down “a snowy lane
under a dark blue sky,” until they come upon the enchanted memorial (264).
Appropriately, one war memorial conceals another. Hermoine “was pointing at the war
memorial. As they had passed it, it had transformed. Instead of an obelisk covered in
names, there was a statue of three people: a man with untidy black hair and glasses, a
woman with long hair and a kind, pretty face, and a baby boy sitting in his mother’s arms.
Snow lay upon their heads, like fluffy, white caps” (265). The memorial and the
graveyard are thus works of art, constructions of remembrance, the essential pieces that
fit together to help construct Harry’s story, and they help to answer the question of what it means to be part of the war dead, and tragically what it then means to be left behind. How odd it is to have a war memorial where both the living and the dead are figured next to one another, but, in doing so, this serves to further express the enormity of this tragedy and to highlight just what has been lost. Harry is pictured encircled by his loving family, and as “Harry drew closer, gazing up into his parents’ faces. He ... never imagined that there would be a statue ... how strange it was to see himself represented in stone, a happy reminded that Harry stands alone as the image’s sole survivor” (265).

The ghostly, snowy memorial of the Potters lies hidden and undisturbed, picturing Harry’s lost family together and happy, a frozen image in the snow of how they should have been had it not been for Voldemort. The memorial thus functions as an artful act of imagination and recuperation where the dead are transformed and remembered. Harry’s parents are pictured not as they died—pleading: “Not Harry! Not Harry! Please—I’ll do anything—” (PoA 177)—but, rather, in this space, they are remembered, humanized, and afforded some dignity. So too, the memorial addresses the question of audience, and it speaks not just to the larger wizarding world, but to Harry directly, by asserting that James and Lily’s deaths and the family’s sacrifice, will not be forgotten. Finally, the memorial’s telling inscription that, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (268) responds to the trauma if their deaths, and it serves to counteract the finality of death by spreading a message of remembrance.

The Potters are figured in a moment of perfect unity—they are forever frozen in time as being both unscarred and happy—but, while artful and sentimental, the memorial presents a fiction, an idealized and homely fantasy of what one hopes Harry has lost.
Harry fantasizes about his mother making a cake for his seventeenth birthday, and the life that he could have had, and still longs for, had it not been for Voldemort. Yet, however much one wants this possibility to be true for Harry, sadly is remains a fantasy, as Harry’s parents are forever dead, and even if they had not died, they would not have been immune to future trauma, so one cannot predict what life might have been like for him. Like the memorial itself, Harry’s now impossible future with his parents is presented as a fiction, as it is impossible to predict the course of his life, even if Voldemort had not murdered his parents. One is given evidence that gestures towards a happily-ever-after—photographs, letters, and stories of others confirm that the Potters were, once, a very happy family—and, while one would hope that this happiness would continue, it is impossible to predict. Thus, the memorial is constructed not from memory, but it is a fantasy, where the dead and their lives are made whole, polished, and then idealized.

While most often composed and stoic—most notably in the final moments before his own death—Harry does, during pivotal moments of high-drama, exhibit the symptomatology of melancholia, and more specifically the melancholiac’s tendency towards mania. These rare, manic moments are of particular interest, as Harry, even at his most vulnerable, is consistently steadied and sane while his world whirls uncontrollably around him. And yet, it is almost a relief to see one who has lost so much finally concede and rage, as an immense, physical reaction, still does not appear to be an overreaction when one considers all that Harry has lost; however, Harry clearly exhibits “the tendency [melancholia] displays to turn into mania accompanied by a completely opposite symptomatology” (Freud 172). Indeed, in the episode following Sirius’ death, “Harry roared, and he seized the delicate silver instrument from the spindle-legged table
beside him and flung it across the room; it shattered into a hundred tiny pieces against the wall ... He seized the table on which the silver instrument had stood and threw that, too” (*OotP 726*). Here, chaos becomes a welcome distraction, and by raging and maintaining this state of chaos, one is able to delay the far more terrifying silence and stillness that will surely follow. Indeed, silence prevents the comfort of distraction, where one is then truly confronted with the gravity the loss; in the silence, a painful absence cannot be hidden, and the void that it engenders becomes that much more apparent and immediate.

Finally, while Harry actively labours at his mourning work— in testifying, hyperremembering, continued engagement with his supporters, and, most notably, during the tireless, ceremonial digging of Dobby’s grave (a scene that is explored in detail in Chapter Five)—it is important to mention that such efforts are made so as to combat his melancholia; like Snape and Voldemort, Harry, too, demonstrates countless symptoms that define the Freudian melancholic. There are numerous references to the emptiness that Harry feels within himself, detailing his grief as though it has left him feeling hollow, fractured, or incomplete; this “terrible hollow inside him [is described as,] a dark hole where Sirius had been, where Sirius vanished” (723), and it affirms that, “the loss is one in himself” (Freud 166). Harry asserts that, “[i]t was his fault Sirius had died; it was all his fault” (*OotP 723*), which confirms this diagnosis, as, “[i]n the clinical picture of melancholia, dissatisfaction with the self on moral grounds is by far the most outstanding feature” (Freud 166). Moreover, Harry, self-debasingly asserts that he is at fault, and he declares himself the true murderer. Dumbledore corrects him, stating that, “It is my fault that Sirius died ... Or should I say, almost entirely my fault—I will not be so arrogant as to claim responsibility for the whole” (*OotP 727*). Here, the melancholic ambivalence is
most evident—Harry rages at Dumbledore for being fallible and withholding
information, and Sirius, too, for being reckless and impulsive—and yet these criticisms
are redirected onto the self. Dumbledore confirms that, “Sirius was a brave, clever and
energetic man, and such men are not usually content to sit at home in hiding while they
believe others to be in danger” (727); Harry blames himself for a familiar, reckless
impulsivity, and his reproaches for Sirius are redirected back onto Harry himself. Thus,
one sees that Harry does not remain exclusively within the realm of healthy and
necessary mourning, making the final stages of his mourning work (which are explored in
Chapter Five) all the more important, for if they remain incomplete, then Harry, like
Snape and Voldemort, risks descending irreparably into melancholia.
Chapter Five

“Gazing ‘Beyond the Veil’: Harry’s Mourning Work Explained”

Harry is often left to mourn independently from his larger world; and yet, interestingly, his often private grief is intimately linked to his very public scar, and so it is only fitting that we “start with [Harry’s] scar” (OotP 729). Harry’s iconic, lightning-bolt scar is the definitive trace in the series; displayed prominently on his forehead for all to see, he is branded as other. Like the series itself which begins with a description of, “a baby boy, fast asleep. Under a tuft of jet-black hair over his forehead they could see a curiously-shaped cut, like a bolt of lightning” (PS 16-7), Harry’s storied scar, and its curious behaviour, features at the beginning of each new explanation, in every episode of understanding that he shares with Dumbledore, as the headmaster asserts that, “it is necessary to start with your scar” (OotP 729). So too, while scars do indeed change over time—much like the memory of the event in which one is scarred—Dumbledore asserts the permanence of the trace: "Yes. [Harry will] have that scar for ever" (PS 17). And yet, Harry’s scar also, quite remarkably, mirrors his emotional state and becomes the litmus test for the various stages of his grief, which further highlights Dumbledore’s appreciation that, “[s]cars can come in useful” (17). Finally, when Minerva McGonogall questions, “Couldn’t you do something about it, Dumbledore?” he then replies that, “Even if I could, I wouldn’t” (17), which proves to be a very wise choice; Harry’s success is intimately tied to understanding the nature of his scar.

Indeed, as his most identifiable feature, Harry’s scar is celebrated and mythologized in its own right, as those who meet him for the first time, can be seen “pointing at Harry’s lightning scar” (71), so as to confirm that, “It’s really there—like lightning” (73). Interestingly, Harry, too, is fixated on his scar, as “[t]he only thing Harry liked about his
own appearance was a very thin scar on his forehead which was shaped like a bolt of lightning” (20). Numerous references confirm his uncanny resemblance to his father and mother—specifically, Harry has his father’s untidy, jet-black hair, and his mother’s piercing green eyes—and yet, his scar is his own. Furthermore, his scar is what signifies that he is unique, a survivor, and a victor; it is simultaneously his battle scar and his war medal. Zimmerman notes that, “Harry’s scar does not depict the attack and may only slightly resemble the original wound, but it insists that the attack remain present in our consciousness of him” (Zimmerman 196). And yet, interestingly, this is not the only scar of significance, as Harry receives four additional, memorable scars—Nagini’s fang mark, the knife wound from Voldemort’s resurrection, the remnants of the rote script he carved into his own hand, and the mark left on his chest from the immovable Horcrux—all of which are indicative of his heroic character, as they, too, mark him as a survivor.

Moreover, while physically scarred, Harry does not experience the trauma of being left behind by his mother—unlike Voldemort, who disdains his mother for her weakness and for choosing to die—as he knows that his mother died to save him. Thus, while a sacrificial death is marked by symbolism and can be seen as a gift that may affirm the importance of one’s own life, it may also carry with it the weight of guilt and the obligation to always remain mindful of that sacrifice. Thus, is one’s life still one’s own when another dies to save it? Harry, in an agonizing, human moment, is left scolded and ashamed, after being reprimanded by Remus Lupin for sneaking about the castle after hours: “Your parents gave their lives to keep you alive, Harry. A poor way to repay them—gambling their sacrifice for a bag of magic tricks” (PoA 213). Here, Harry is reminded that his life is not his own, and that he is indeed indebted to those who have
died for him. The perennial significance of this sacrifice overshadows his life, but because it remains always present, he is then able to follow their example when facing his own sacrificial death.

Interestingly, the dead are never properly frightening, or even foreign, in *Harry Potter*—with the exception of the zombie-like *Inferi*, which, while terrifying, pose only one episode of immediate threat—and they are as ubiquitous as magic in this realm.

Prior to even meeting Hogwarts teachers and new friends, and before entering the Great Hall for the first time, Harry “gasped ... [when a]bout twenty ghosts had just streamed through the back wall. Pearly-white and slightly transparent, they glided across the room talking to each other and hardly glancing at the first years” *(PS* 86). While physically immaterial, the dead have a substantive presence within the story, as Harry is repeatedly counselled and consoled by them. Killinger explores this theme:

> Our natural eagerness for a relationship to people beyond this life may account for a noticeable fluidity between the living and the dead in all the Harry Potter books. As I point out in *God, the Devil, and Harry Potter*, Rowling invariably ‘treats the dead as if they are never all that far from the living, as if a very thin line divides the realms of the mortal and immortal. Her novels are peopled by innumerable ghosts as well as living creatures, and for wizards, who are more sensitive to these matters than Muggles are, there is often some form of communion with them’ *(Killinger 90)*.

Even Nearly Headless Nick, albeit to a lesser degree, joins this already crowded cast of segregate-father figures, as he frequently counsels Harry, congratulates him on his Quidditch victories, and Harry is his preferred guest at his five-hundredth deathday party.

From the age of eleven on, Harry moves naturally between these two realms, interacting

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4 Killinger writes of the interaction between the living and the dead, emphasising the "fluidity" that exists between the two. With little exception, Rowling imparts a similar set of images, detailing the malleable elements that exist in all especially sacred or rare magical concepts—memories, tears, unicorn blood, the veil, the soul, et al.—highlighting the same naturalistic and textural qualities that unite them.
comfortably with the dead in a manner that is so seamless, and so familiar, it’s easy to
forget that they are dead. As Harry matures, always moving closer to the point of his
own death, his familiarity with the dead enable, and even ease, this forward progression,
as their continued presence among the living confirms that there is something after.

Ironically, even the dead must remind Harry of the rules of this realm, as Harry
desperately seeks Nick’s assurance, hoping that there is some exception to this rule, and
that, just possibly, Sirius might now be a ghost. Sadly, Nick, resigned, states that, “I
can’t pretend that I haven’t been expecting it,” (OotP 757) and that this desperate hope,
and frantic need for any alternative, “happens, sometimes ... when somebody has suffered
a ... loss.” (758). Harry presses Nick: “People can come back, right? As ghosts. They
don’t have to disappear completely” (758). In the end, it is the painful truth of having
one, “disappear completely,” of having “a terrible hollow inside him [that] he did not
want to feel or examine, a dark hole where Sirius had been, where Sirius had vanished”
(723), that is the root cause of Harry’s suffering. The melancholiac’s torment stems from
the void that the loss engenders, as the death itself is not the primary cause of suffering,
but, rather, it is the separation. Thus, Harry’s mourning practices are further
complicated, as magic addresses the question of separation, and it provides countless
opportunities for continued interaction; and yet, as Nick “looked mournfully at Harry,” he
confirms that “[Sirius] won’t come back” (758). Moreover, ghosts deliberately disobey
this natural law, and while Harry counters that, “You came back—you’re dead and you
didn’t disappear—” Nick clarifies that, “Wizards can leave an imprint of themselves
upon the earth, to walk palely where their living selves once trod ... But very few wizards
choose that path” (758). Again, Nick asserts that, “He will not come back ... He will
have ... gone on,” as “[Nick] was afraid of death ... [and] chose to remain behind ... I am neither here nor there ... I know nothing of the secrets of death, Harry, for I chose my feeble imitation of life instead” (759).

Many of the deaths within the series are experienced by Harry firsthand—Dobby dies in his arms, and Cedric, Sirius, Snape, and Dumbledore are murdered in front of him—so Harry is tasked with the work of immediately responding to these violent and graphic deaths, as there is not any distance between Harry and nearly all of the deaths in the text. However, as other members of his small group organise the pragmatics of the elf’s burial, Harry, who stands to be the character most deeply affected by Dobby’s death, remains apart, as “Harry listened to [the sea] while the others talked, discussing matters in which he could take no interest, making decisions ... Harry agreed without really knowing what he was saying” (DH 386). When a loss is so unexpected or horrific or both, it is as if one then becomes enrobed in a veritable cloak of grief and shock that numbs one’s immediate experience with the outside world, so that there is then a barrier that, for a small amount of time, protects one from the full reality of the loss. So too, even rage becomes subsumed within this cloak of grief, as “Voldemort’s rage was dreadful and yet Harry’s grief for Dobby seemed to diminish it, so that it became a distant storm that reached Harry from across a vast, silent ocean” (386). Perhaps this temporal distance cushions one, and it both influences and functions in a similar way to the subsequent memories of the event, whereby the mourning subject is prevented from absorbing and remembering the full scope of the horror. Surely there must be trauma that is too horrific to endure, and so one wonders whether there is a point of maximum saturation, a limit to how much horror one character can survive; when that point is
reached, do the intolerable and incomprehensible details slip through the cracks of memory, as a necessary means of self-preservation, so that ultimately one can survive? Thus, it then follows that just as there are intentional gaps in the story that the witness chooses to share, perhaps another layer of involuntary omissions exists within the same story.

Harry, to a degree unlike any other character in the text, thus sets to work on his mourning, not with the explicit and deliberate purpose for its completion, but more so as the instinctual and necessary means of coping. After Dobby’s death, he insists that, “‘I want to do it properly,’ [which] were the first words which Harry was fully conscious of speaking. ‘Not by magic. Have you got a spade?’” (386-7). Harry thus recognizes that it is here that magic fails, as it would be disingenuous and dismissive to wave a wand to create a resting place for the dead, as “[g]rief work is difficult and time-consuming” and it requires some measure of suffering from the mourning subject (Riegel *Writing Grief*).

One’s response must then be an active one, a sacrifice in kind, wherein one suffers through one’s grief, in order to make it through one’s grief:

And shortly afterwards he had set to work, alone, digging the grave in the place that Bill had shown him at the end of the garden, between bushes. He dug with a kind of fury, relishing the manual work, glorying in the non-magic of it, for every drop of his sweat and every blister felt like a gift to the elf who had saved their lives (DH 387).

With each motion of his spade, bead of sweat, and tear, Harry is pointedly chipping away at his own grief, as “this process involves a great deal of psychic labour and of active labouring, or working, at mourning” (Riegel *Response XX*).

Harry, often and without explicit instruction, honours the dead and works to mark a space for them, as a gesture of remembrance, and as a means of satisfying his own need
to create a space for them and to inscribe that space with meaning. Regardless of how simple or small the sign, Harry feels it necessary to always, in some manner, honour the dead, as he even “buried Mad-Eye Moody’s eye and marked the spot by gouging a small cross in the bark with his wand” (DH 234). So too, Harry puts himself in grave danger, so as to honour Cedric’s request to: “take my body back, will you? Take my body back to my parents” (GoF 579), so that his parents could bury him, and Harry asserts that, “I couldn't leave him ... Not there!” (Newell, Goblet of Fire). Furthermore, Harry finds himself, “staring at a tiny body curled upon the grass, pierced by Bellatrix’s silver knife” and “[h]e stretched out a hand and pulled the sharp blade from the elf’s body, then dragged off his own jacket and covered Dobby in it like a blanket” (DH 386). Harry’s jacket appropriately becomes Dobby’s burial shroud, as his earlier gift of clothing frees the elf from servitude, and this last gift honours him in death. The elf is then, “wrapped ... more snugly in [Harry’s] jacket’ and shoes, socks, and a woollen hat are ceremoniously removed and given to the elf, as these offerings, while seemingly ordinary, are what would have meant most to Dobby (388).

While his world largely prevents such an open gesture towards healing, Harry’s need to bury the elf is an instinctual one, as “characters must ultimately allow themselves to mourn, whether by breaking free of socially defined strictures, or of more personally, and thus privately, defined restrictions on active grief” (Riegel Writing Grief 10). It is thus symbolic and highly appropriate that this episode of grief work should take the form of the literal digging of a grave, as “the struggle is to address the loss and thus attempt redress, and to actively and forcefully engage the depths of grief in the work, the labour of mourning,”(7) and so “[o]n Harry dug, deeper and deeper into the hard, cold earth,
subsuming his grief in sweat, denying the pain in his scar” (*DH* 387). While devastating and fracturing, for Harry, grief, most significantly, becomes a source of authority where magic has previously failed. Grief is what finally authorizes Harry to suppress the hidden Horcrux and to forcibly shut Voldemort out:

His scar burned, but he was master of the pain; he felt it, yet was apart from it. He had learned control at last, learned to shut his mind to Voldemort, the very thing Dumbledore had wanted him to learn from Snape. Just as Voldemort had not been able to possess Harry while Harry was consumed with grief for Sirius, so his thoughts could not penetrate Harry now, while he mourned Dobby. Grief, it seemed, drove Voldemort out ... though Dumbledore, of course, would have said that it was love ...” (387).

In this poignant moment, one sees how embracing grief becomes the empowering tool that ultimately allows Harry to close his mind off to Voldemort. So too, while moving through his world largely uncertain of how to mourn, it is here, when he becomes more self-assured and comes to know his own mind, that he is able to reclaim his own mind. While he does not *know* whether this is right, this expression of labour-centered mourning certainly *feels* right to Harry, and ultimately it is through feeling and instinct that he is able to successfully navigate his world—why might it be any different when navigating his grief? Thus, it is in grieving in a different way, albeit the healthiest way, which enables Harry to survive and succeed at mourning, and even Griphook asserts that, “You are an unusual wizard, Harry Potter” (393).

While ascribed monikers from a public that must (based on a continued, collective sense of helplessness and uncertainty) situate hope within one individual, reinforcing his unique, often inexplicable penchant for survival and success, Harry Potter is not, as Pond attests, “the single hero capable of defeating this threat” (184). Rather, the “Chosen One” is the public face of the collaborative effort and sacrifice that are made to defeat the Dark
Lord. Harry often believes himself responsible for the deaths of those who have membership in this protective community, while failing to understand that while they fight in his name, it is for a cause that is far greater than one individual:

He felt beleaguered and blackmailed: did they think he did not know what they had done for him, didn’t they understand that it was for precisely that reason that he wanted to go now, before they had to suffer any more on his behalf? (DH 73).

On multiple occasions, Harry tries to leave—both publicly and in secret—in objection to the danger that his presence (and survival) impose onto others; yet, not once is he permitted to go. Moreover, from as early as Chamber of Secrets, when he is explicitly instructed to, “Get the Snitch or die trying” (128), and throughout the entirety of the series—the climactic moment being his final admission to Aberforth Dumbledore that, “I’m going to keep going until I succeed—or die. Don’t think I don’t know how this might end. I’ve known it for years” (DH 569)—always, Harry has possessed the intuitive knowledge that his death is intimately, inextricably linked to success. And yet, the gravity of such a sacrifice is countered with the assurance—from both the living and the dead—that, “[they]’ll stay with [him] ... [u]ntil the very end,” (561) which resonates throughout the series, when, in every death-related episode, the adolescent hero, while vulnerable, is never once left alone.5

5 Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1 captures this concept well:

Ron: “Going somewhere?”

Harry: “Nobody else is going to die. Not for me.”

Ron: “For you? You think that Mad-Eye died for you? You think that George took that curse for you? You may be the Chosen One, mate, but this is a whole lot bigger than that—it’s always been bigger than that.”

Harry: “Come with me.”

Ron: “Leave Hermione? Are you mad? We wouldn’t last two days without her”
Throughout his story—from the immovable, unblinking cat on the wall and the slipper-clad Mrs. Figg in Privet Drive, to the magically restored family that lovingly guides him to his end—those charged with Harry’s protection have varied greatly and have been many in number. And so it is only fitting that they, too, surround him while he performs his mourning work. Indeed, without any instruction or explanation, they participate alongside Harry so that he can complete the work:

Harry had his retort ready for when they asked him why he had not simply created a perfect grave with his wand, but he did not need it. They jumped down into the hole he had made with spades of their own, and together they worked in silence until the hole seemed deep enough (DH 388).

Harry is often protected by an overtly magical, physical presence, but here, it is in simply being present, in the most human sense, that he is afforded protection, and while the wider wizarding community largely inhibits mourning, this immediate group enables it. Moreover, if each death is cause for a measure of insight and the ability to perceive what others may not—after Sirius’ death, Harry, like Luna, is able to see thestrals—one cannot discount that grief work is illuminating, too, when, after the digging of Dobby’s grave is complete, “he no longer burned with that weird, obsessive longing. Loss and fear had snuffed it out: he felt as though he had been slapped awake again” (387).

In the climactic final chapters of Deathly Hallows, the last battle, appropriately enough, is waged at Hogwarts—such an epic battle could only be fought here, in this common, equalizing space, where both orphans found their first home and learned “the secrets of success” (H-BP 404)—and, as is common in war, it is here that Molly Weasley’s Boggart-fueled fear becomes fully realized when family and friends, now dead, litter the battle ground. At last, there is no space for denial and estrangement—
Percy Weasley, proclaiming himself “a fool ... [and] an idiot” (487), arrives in the final moment before Fred’s death, to reunite with and fight alongside his family—when “[t]he dead lay in a row in the middle of the hall” (530). This is arguably the scene in the series that is most saturated with grief, when loved ones are killed en mass, leaving not one singular body or grave (as has previously been the case), but a hall full. With the exception of the famed murders for which Sirius was wrongly imprisoned, there is no other scene that can equal the sheer concentration of death and grief; and for Harry, with so many of the lives given in service and support of his cause, the horror is overwhelming, and so finally, as is repeated in the following quotation, he simply “could not bear” (531):

The Great Hall seemed to fly away, become smaller, shrink, as Harry reeled backwards from the doorway. He could not draw breath. He could not bear to look at any of the other bodies, to see who else had died for him. He could not bear to join the Weasleys, could not look into their eyes, when if he had given himself up in the first place, Fred might never have died (531).

Harry, once again, sets himself apart, feeling unworthy of comfort and consolation, and he is unable to join “[t]he survivors [who] stood in groups, their arms around each other’s necks” (530). Moreover, he confirms his status as *other* by leaving, and he discovers the rest of the castle “eerily still, as if all its remaining lifeblood were concentrated in the Great Hall, where the dead and the mourners were crammed” (556). He distances himself from the most lively, communal space in the castle, perhaps unconsciously readying himself for the more final separation soon to come. Harry thus finds “[t]he castle ... completely empty; even the ghosts seemed to have joined the mass mourning in the Great Hall” (531). Thus, Harry distances himself and remains alone, unable to face
those who, ironically, are now no longer so greatly separated by “trauma and experience” (Zimmerman).

When he posed the decade-long question: “Do I die?” Daniel Radcliff, who portrayed Harry on film, was cryptically told by Rowling that, “You get a death scene” (“A Conversation”). Thus, after years of speculation, Harry does experience a very literal death; and yet, it is one that very few—if any—might have expected. Rowling has joked that early on in the writing process, she “helpfully made the note for herself that, ‘[Harry’s death] will need very serious planning’ ... and I was quite right in that’ (“A Year”). Serious planning indeed, when, from the very beginning, the entire seventeen-year-long writing process was working towards the moment of his death, and the image of a tearful Hagrid, with “enormous hands that ... were exceedingly gentle ... crad[l[ing]] Harry in his arms,” carrying him out of the Forbidden Forrest (DH 582):

The truth is I always knew, and this is from really early on, that I was working towards the point where Hagrid carried Harry—alive but supposedly dead—out of the forest. Always. We were always working towards a final battle at Hogwarts. I knew that Harry would walk to his death. I planned the ghosts, for want of a better word, coming back; that they would walk with him into the forest, and we would all believe he was walking to his death, and he’d emerge in Hagrid’s arms; that’s what always kept Hagrid safe ... because Hagrid actually would have been a natural to kill, in some ways. But because I always cleaved to this image of Hagrid being the one carrying Harry out, and that was so perfect for me because it was Harry who came and took him into the world, and then Hagrid would bring him back (“A Conversation”).

Thus, while there was much speculation as to who might survive—Harry, of course, topping that crowded list—Hargrid was always safe, because “[that final image] was where we were always going” (“A Conversation”).

While many of the series’ themes are initially introduced and then explored in greater depth in the later books, this mirrored structure is especially evident when
examining the function and recurrent details surrounding death (Chevalier. Private
Interview. 31 July 2013.). Indeed, in the aftermath of both wars, Harry is found cradled
in the same protective, paternal arms. Furthermore, the necessity of sacrifice—especially
one that precedes death—is echoed throughout the text; first demonstrated by Ron in the
life-sized game of chess in Philosopher’s Stone, Harry’s ultimate sacrifice is shaped by
the innumerable ones that have come before his own. And most significantly, because
Harry’s “deepest nature is much more like his mother’s” (DH 549), his own death must
then mirror her sacrifice. Moreover, the series becomes bookended by maternal sacrifice,
when Narcissa Malfoy, who protects Harry so as to have access to Draco, falsely
confirms that, “[Harry] is dead!” (581). Thus, this mirrored structure can be found
throughout, and sadly, can even be found in the epilogue, as within each successive
generation after a war, there are inevitably children who are left parentless (a detail that
will be explored in the Conclusion).

Harry thus escapes into Snape’s final memory, the seminal memory of the text,
and as “[t]he memories swirled, silver-white and strange, and without hesitating, with a
feeling of reckless abandonment, as though this would assuage his torturing grief, Harry
dived” (532). How odd it must be to discover that one’s death has been planned, to learn
that one must die for it all to end, and that he has been “kept ... alive so that he can die at
the right moment” (551). All three successive chapters detailing Harry’s progression
from pre- to post-clarity open with the same prostrate image, as “[h]e lay face down,
listening to the silence” (565), as though simply waking from a dream:

Finally, the truth. Lying with his face pressed into the dusty carpet of the office
where he had once thought he was learning the secrets of victory. Harry
understood at last that he was not supposed to survive. His job was to walk
calmly into Death’s welcoming arms. Along the way, he was to dispose of Voldemort’s remaining links to life, so that when at last he flung himself across Voldemort’s path, and did not raise a wand to defend himself, the end would be clean, and the job that ought to have been done in Godric’s Hollow would be finished: neither would live, neither could survive” (554).6

Harry’s mourning work is thus expanded to include the elimination of the Horcruxes, the destruction of which being referred to as a necessary “job.” This is the task that he has been charged with, and it is one that he alone must see to its completion:

Of course there had been a bigger plan; Harry had simply been too foolish to see it, he realized that now. He had never questioned his own assumption that Dumbledore wanted him alive. Now he saw that his lifespan had always been determined by how long it took to eliminate all the Horcruxes. Dumbledore had passed the job of destroying them to him, and obediently he had continued to chip away at the bonds tying not only Voldemort, but himself, to life! How neat, how elegant, not to waste any more lives, but to give the dangerous task to the boy who had already been marked for slaughter, and whose death would not be a calamity, but another blow against Voldemort” (555).

Like the digging of Dobby’s grave, Harry—in choosing Horcruxes over Hallows—remains devoted to his grief work, “chip[ping] away at the bonds tying not only Voldemort, but himself, to life!”(555) the difference being that here, Harry is dutifully digging his own grave.

Harry, while always conscious that he is fortunate to be alive, now lies facedown, as though already dead. Indeed, while his life has largely been defined by death, and his celebrity relates to his inexplicable avoidance of it, one never sees him fully entertaining

6 All three successive chapters—“The Forest Again”, “King’s Cross”, and “The Flaw in the Plan”—open with a remarkably similar image. The moments of pre- to post-clarity find Harry in the same prostrate, debased position: “Finally, the truth. Lying with his face pressed into the dusty carpet of the office ...” (554); “He lay face down, listening to the silence ...” (565); “He was lying face down on the ground again. The smell of the Forest filled his nostrils” (580). All three images figure him as though he is simply waking from a dream or in prayer.
the possibility of his own death, always believing that he must remain *alive* to defeat Voldemort:

Terror washed over him as he lay on the floor, with the funeral drum pounding inside him. Would it hurt to die? All those times he had thought that it was about to happen and escaped, he had never really thought of the thing itself: his will to live had always been so much stronger than his fear of death. Yet it did not occur to him now to try to escape, to outrun Voldemort. It was over, he knew it, and all that was left was the thing itself: dying” (554).

Indeed, living entices the mourning subject to remain engaged with one’s mourning, fulfilling the promise that its successful completion will enable one to continue living, as one “is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfaction it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that that has been abolished” (Freud 255). Historically, Harry has diligently responded to each successive death, always “offering the ego the inducement of continuing to live” (257). And yet, in contrast, it is here that his failed mourning succeeds; his diseased grief mirrors the parasitic Horcrux within, and, at last, he succumbs to his melancholia. Harry consciously chooses death, and, as is often symptomatic of illness, Harry finds that, “his mouth and throat were completely dry, but so were his eyes” (*DH* 555)—tears thus being the reparative product of the mourning work that he now consciously chooses not to perform. Instead, Harry chooses to “fail” and embrace death, delaying the task no longer, as “Death was impatient ...” (555).

At last, Harry arrives at what is commonly recognized by many as the final stage of grief: acceptance; resolute and stoic, he affirms that, “I must die. It must end” (556). Modelling his own resolution after Dumbldore’s example during the final moments at the top of the Tower, Harry asserts that, “he must be like Dumbldore, keep a cool head, make sure there were back-ups, others to carry on” (557). Thus, with the Snitch in hand—a
trace that signifies his first celebrated victory—Harry walks willingly towards his death. And it is here that the Snitch’s inscription, “I open at the close” (555), gestures beyond the immediate closing of a life, highlighting Harry’s acceptance, and his open, willing embrace of death, when the incredible clarity that is typically afforded in death is extended to the final few moments before death:

And again, Harry understood, without having to think. It did not matter about bring them back, for he was about to join them. He was not really fetching them: they were fetching him” (559-60).

With such privileged insight presenting an image of his own death as a much-desired homecoming, Harry then “closed his eyes, and turned the stone over in his hand, three times” (560).

Harry opens his eyes, and “on each face ... the same loving smile” is revealed (560). While lovingly surrounded by family and friends, Harry’s quest to reclaim a lost family is fulfilled in the most thorough, significant manner, up to that point. Indeed, the text is punctuated by episodes of partial reunion, making this final gathering, the magical reclamation of a lost family, all the more satisfying when—as is typical in the final moment before a death—they do not need to say Goodbye. Instead, Harry uses these final moments for catharsis, consciously addressing and expressing the specific details of his grief and the regret that have characterized his melancholia: “‘I didn’t want you to die,’ Harry said. These words came without his volition. ‘Any of you. I’m sorry—’” (561). While Harry remains unsure of what to expect after, the equally-great mystery of when is no longer; Harry uses his remaining time as his ally, to ask lingering questions, to ensure that his guilt and regrets are fully expressed and then released, and finally, most importantly, to hear that, “[y]ou’ve been so brave” and “[w]e are ... so proud of you”
Indeed, Harry is reassured, and “while he may not be able to control the forces that inevitably and ultimately end [his life, there is] a kind of peace that might be discovered by coming to a deeper understanding and acceptance of the act of dying” (Hall 164). And finally, Harry questions them about death itself, as “the fear of death confounds both the dying and the living” (169):

‘Does it hurt?’ The childish question had fallen from Harry’s lips before he could stop it. ‘Dying? Not at all,’ said Sirius. ‘Quicker and easier than falling asleep’ (DH 560-1).

Why then is Voldemort consumed by a crippling fear of death, when, like sleep, it so simple and natural? Perhaps such a “childish question” (560) highlights a governing fixation with the body, or more accurately, an obsession with the before and not the after; it points to an emotional immaturity—Voldemort is repeatedly presented as a corrupted, grotesque child—stemming from one’s need to maintain a substantive presence, and an inability to see beyond the physical.

Finally, at its core, a fear of death is truly a fear of separation; while Sirius specifically confirms that, “[d]ying is simple,” indeed, “[w]hat’s worst is ... the separation” (Kenyon as cited in Riegel Response 169). And yet here, even the lasting fear of separation is calmed: “‘You will stay with me?’ ... ‘Until the very end,’ said James” (DH 561). The dead remain invisible to all but Harry, and he is steadied knowing that, “[they] are a part of [him] ... [i]nvisible to anyone else’” (561). Like the Invisibility Cloak that he is wearing, they shield him, guiding him to the end:

The dead who walked beside him through the Forest were much more real to him now than the living back at the castle: Ron, Hermoine, Ginny and all the others were the ones who felt like ghosts” (560).
Like the veil, the partition separating these two worlds seems fragile, and insubstantial, when Harry is steadied and protected by those who occupy both realms: “The Dementors’ chill did not overcome him; he passed through it with his companions, and they acted like Patronuses” (561). Finally, Harry understands that, like the Patronus in the Forest of Dean that came to his aid offering him guidance and direction, he is now being guided through his final moments, and he gratefully follows them. Thus, here, Harry does not need to grieve for them, because he is surrounded by those that he is about to join, since “the other’s departure propels the mourner into a battle between life and death, between a desire to live that entails abandoning the other, and a desire to die that entails clinging to and following the other into death” (Clewell 46).

While Harry’s all-important scar, the perennial trace of the series, marks him as survivor, remarkably its function and significance extend well beyond that of an ordinary wound; indeed, his scar takes the form of a literal fracture, a prominent mark that advertises the cracked soul that resides within. The implications of the lightning-bolt scar go well beyond the simple, powerful, magical aesthetic of it, as its curious behaviour is indicative of the various stages of his grief (a detail that will be explored in the Conclusion), as well as mirroring the disfigurement of his soul:

At the end of the book you have a clash of two utterly, utterly different—again for want of a better word—souls. One that has been maimed, and has become less than human, because to me human includes the capacity to love, and Voldemort deliberately dehumanizes himself, and this very, this flawed, vulnerable, damaged, and yet still fighting, still loving, still daring to love, and daring to hope soul, which is Harry (“A Year”).

However, Harry is perhaps fortunate to have only the one connective scar of this type; Voldemort’s own exterior—which features only self-inflicted scars—becomes
increasingly disfigured as he, “seemed to grow less human with the passing years, and the transformation he has undergone seemed to me to be only explicable if his soul was mutilated beyond the realms of what we might call 'usual evil' … ” (H-BP 469).

Moreover, when Harry finally succeeds at destroying his resident Horcrux, the difference is remarkable; once gone, “Harry raised his hand instinctively towards the lightning scar. It did not seem to be there” (DH 567). Harry offers himself as a willing sacrifice in hopes of repairing the damage done to his world, but the reparative function of such a sacrifice even extends to his own soul. Here, the sacrifice erases both internal and external wounds, as “[h]is body appeared unscathed,” (565) and Dumbledore patiently, gratefully explains that, “[y]our soul is whole, and completely your own, Harry” (567). Thus, for the first time since he was a baby, with the weight of grief now lifted, Harry’s soul is once again whole.
Conclusion

“A Phoenix, a Scar, and a Bit of Derrida: How It Is That ‘All Is Well’”

At long last, the epilogue reveals a hero and a world transformed. The series is bookended by the same, familiar King’s Cross station, and yet the similarities—twenty-six years on—to that initial introduction, only serve to highlight the contrast that now exists. Harry—no longer the “[p]oor dear” whose insecurity and telling scar confirm why “he was alone” (PS 73)—now arrives, as he should have all those years ago, as part of “the little family [that] bobbed across the rumbling road towards the great, sooty station” (DH 603). Indeed, the homely station, easily recognizable and largely unchanged from that first journey, becomes the ideal space to feature, in miniature, the restoration that has now been made to their larger world. Echoes from the pristine, idealized version of the station, in which Harry’s interlude after his death is set, now sound throughout the scene; Harry, with his own grief work complete, now stands with “clean, unblemished hands” and he is presented as one who, like his world, has been repaired and made whole (570). So too, not exclusively physical, but even emotional wounds and divisive grudges appear also to have been erased when “Draco caught sight of Harry, Ron, Hermoine and Ginny staring at him, nodded curtly and turned away again” (605). Here, within this wholly normal exchange, one sees that the sacrificial efforts of the dead to protect such a space, and those within it, are realized.

Freud’s theory testifies to the necessary, restorative power of active grieving, allowing for “[m]ourning [to come] to a decisive and ‘spontaneous end,’ according to Freud, when the survivor has detached his or her emotional tie to the lost object and reattached the free libido to a new object, thus accepting consoling substitution for what
has been lost” (Clewell 44). The series thus ends with the assurance that “[a]ll was well,” a promissory statement confirming the “decisive end” of Harry’s mourning work, and with his series-long quest for a lost family finally fulfilled, he has now been provided with the most consoling of substitutions. Indeed, the epilogue reveals that Harry’s grief work “does not persist indefinitely” (44). Furthermore, “Mourning and Melancholia” is thus useful when examining the treatment of grief in the *Harry Potter* series, as both texts are similar in their exploration of the efforts made for the “magical restoration of the lost object” (44). And while there exists a fluidity between the living and the dead, and magic elevates this “prolong[ed] ... existence of the lost object [which is] at the center of grief work (*Trauerarbeit*),” magic also allows the mourning subject a more intimate, intensive immersion—and submersion—into memory, aiding “the mourner, [who] by comparing the memories of the other with actual reality, comes to an objective determination that the lost object no longer exists” (44).

Characters such as Dumbledore’s pet phoenix, Fawkes, testify to the reparative function of active grief work. In the Chamber of Secrets, Harry is taunted by the phantom, textual projection that is Riddle, and Harry is said to be “‘[d]ead. Even Dumbledore’s bird knows it. Do you see what he’s doing, Potter? He’s crying’” (*CoS* 236); and yet, Harry does not die, once the phoenix’s “[t]hick, pearly tears ... trickl[e] down the glossy feathers” healing the no-longer-fatal wound (236). Again, Harry’s initial fear of death is quickly remedied by the phoenix’s mourning tears, and he concedes that, “[i]f this is dying, thought Harry, it’s not so bad. Even the pain was leaving him ...” (236). Fawkes bears witness to the reformatory power of expressed grief, as the phoenix’s mourning tears can, and do, heal wounds: “A pearly patch of tears was shining
all around the wound—except that there was no wound” (237). Finally, the episode concludes with Fawkes, who is the embodiment of active mourning, literally liberating Harry and his friends from the tomb as he flies them to safety.

So too, Freud’s mourning work hinges on an engagement with memory, as “Freud maintained that the mourner severs attachments primarily through a labor of memory” (Clewell 44). Indeed, the “testing of reality” (Freud 163) and the learning and relearning of the world that is largely preformed through the conscious study of memory thus becomes Dumbledore’s mandate for Harry’s education, as Harry does indeed literally labour through memories:

The work of mourning, as Freud describes it here, entails a kind of hyperremembering, a process of obsessive recollection during which the survivor resuscitates the existence of the lost other in the space of the psyche, replacing an actual absence with an imaginary presence. This magical restoration of the lost object enables the mourner to assess the value of the relationship and comprehend what he or she has lost in losing the other (Clewell 44).

The necessary process of hyperremembering is further elevated when there is a tangible object, one that can be manipulated for the expressed purpose of “obsessive recollection” (44). And yet, while initially “[d]uring the memory work of mourning, as Freud assumed at this early stage in his theorization of grief, the survivor seeks a magical recovery of the lost object for self-serving reasons” (47), by snapping the Elder Wand (in the film version) and leaving the Resurrection Stone on the forest floor, Harry rejects the agents for “magical recovery,” keeping the only familial trace and the most benign of the three hallows.

Harry, in a manner largely unrecognized by his larger world, thus exemplifies an active, labour-centred engagement with grief, liberating himself from the lost other, while
simultaneously creating something that is new and in itself wholly other. One does not simply see a newer version of the Godric’s-Hollow-type memorial displayed in the epilogue, but rather there now exists a living monument. Harry thus suffers through his grief “bit by bit,” labouring as though engaged in physical construction—which indeed he is—with sweat and tears, purposefully chipping and digging and rebuilding something distinct and new:

Work: that which makes for a work, for oeuvre, indeed that which works—and works to open: opus and opening, oeuvre, and ouverture: the work or labor of the oeuvre insofar as it engenders, produces, and brings to light, but also labor or travail as suffering, as the engendering of force, as the pain of one who gives. Of the one who gives birth, who brings to the light of day and gives something to be seen, who enables or empowers, who gives the force to know and to be able to see—and all these are powers of the image, the pain of what is given and of the one who takes pains to help see, read, and think” (Derrida The Work of Mourning 142).

Harry fathers this new life-giving, affirmative space, and he is now the father at its centre:

For me, absolute heroism is rebuilding after that kind of trauma, and I could think of nothing more noble than that. He’s ... acting what Dumbledore preached but didn’t live. You see Dumbledore preached these are the values that see us through, that survive, love and those sort of human bonds, and Harry is actually living it (“A Conversation”).

Through his immediate, continued interactions with death and the dead, Harry comes to entertain a wholly opposite understanding to that of Voldemort; Harry alone is granted privileged insight as to what lies beyond this world, only to then return specifically to ensure that the vision is preserved in a new reality. With a metaphorical sword hanging over his head for much of the series—Harry’s fixation with death is first apparent in Prisoner of Azkaban, as the text is stamped with death omens, and Harry then comes to expect his own death—such fears are then suspended, first seen at the end of
Prisoner and then again in Deathly Hallows, when, in both instances, it is revealed that Death is a friend. Such bravery and sacrificial action could only occur once one no longer sees Death as a fearsome figure enrobed in a cloak of finality, but, rather, with the Cloak removed, Harry, like the Third Brother, “greeted Death as an old friend, and went with him gladly, and, equals, they departed this life” (DH 332). Harry thus becomes “the true master of death, because the true master does not seek to run away from Death. He accepts that he must die, and understands that there are far, far worse things in the living world than dying” (577). Indeed, the inscription on his parent’s graves: “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (268), signifies the persistent, substantive presence that remains once one “depart[s] this life” (332), as “[i]t doesn’t mean defeating death in the way the Death Eaters mean it, Harry,’ said Hermoine, her voice gentle. ‘It means ... you know ... living beyond death. Living after death’” (269). Indeed, with both realms being separated by nothing more than a ghostly “ragged veil” (OoP 710), there is, as the chapter title suggests, something that exists beyond. Within a realm that features animated portraiture and a proliferation of ghosts, the texts highlight the virtual presence of those that are at once there and not there:

The image’s force of mourning is its potential to be, despite death or not being. Its force is its ability to dwell in that ghostly state of ‘being’ between life and death, ‘a spectral power of the virtual work’ (“By Force” 175) of the possible. The image possesses the power to be life-like, like life in death, a spectral power which carries ‘the force, to resist, to consist, and to exist in death’ (176) (Sherbert 125).

Freud’s earlier writing theorized a polarized grief structure, whereby mourning may either succeed, once it has “come to a decisive end,” or, if not, one has then decidedly failed at grieving; and yet he conspicuously ignores the ethical grey area that exists in the gap between the two: “In ‘Mourning and Melancholia’ Freud thought that
mourning came to a decisive end; however, in *The Ego and the Id* he suggests that the grief may well be an interminable labor” (Clewell 61). Freud thus “revised his mourning theory in writings concerned with the Great War and in *The Ego and the Id* (1923)” (43) making an ethical space that permits the “elegiac ego” (45) to maintain “a performance of grief ‘that is lived in such a way that one is still in mourning but is no longer exclusively devoted to mourning’” (Woodward as cited in Clewell 47). What was initially thought of as the interim, now registers as the space where “there is something in between mourning and melancholia” (47). Clewell thus acknowledges that it is indeed ethical for some measure of grief to persist, as Freud’s “account of the elegiac ego is shown here to ultimately undermine the wish for an identity unencumbered by the claims of the lost other and the past, and to suggest the affirmative and ethical aspects of mourning” (Clewell 43).

While Rowling succeeds in her desire “to give a snapshot” (“A Year”) of an idyllic family scene, the epilogue is not devoid of traces that testify to the grief work that has succeeded and the mourning that still remains. Indeed, while Harry’s celebrated scar now appears to be simply cosmetic, having “not pained [him] for nineteen years,” a scar, by its very nature, is a residue, a remainder and permanent reminder of trauma and loss, since “a residue of unresolved grief signals that emotional bonds have not been broken” (Clewell 55). Indeed, his celebrity continues, as his scar signifies that past trauma must retain a continued presence; even now, one cannot look at Harry without immediately seeing the scar, as “[a] great number of faces, both on the train and off, seemed to be turned towards Harry” (*DH* 607). So too, Harry verifies the continued happiness of his children, while “he lowered his hand absent-mindedly and touched the lightning bolt scar
on his forehead,” suggesting that a larger sense of well-being registers with his scar. Harry succeeds at destroying the parasitic Horcrux leaving his soul uninhibited, but “[t]hat Freud advocated killing off the trace of the other in the self as a means to re-establish psychic health clearly demonstrates that his early account of melancholia assumes a subject who might exist without its losses, a subject capable of repudiating attachments to lost others” (Clewell 60); the Horcrux is gone, but the scar remains. Thus, while the scar’s behaviour has changed—pointing to the now unencumbered soul within—the physicality of it has not, insisting that grief continues in one’s consciousness of Harry.

So too, the telling names of Harry’s three children: Lily Luna, Albus Severus, and James Sirius, signify that those who are prominently absent maintain a continued presence in the subsequent generation; this new family structure is in itself a form of memorialisation and duplication, presenting a restored family that is both new and unchanged. Indeed, mourning work does not exclusively create that which is new, but it repairs the familiar, and in this instance the primary reparations are familial. The carefully assigned children’s names are traces, inscriptions that honour and signify the sacrifice of those now gone: “You were named for two headmasters of Hogwarts. One of them was a Slytherin and he was probably the bravest man I ever knew” (DH 607). Indeed, the presence of traces intensifies when one learns that the child named for that second headmaster, has also inherited the singular feature that had meant everything to him: “Alone of Harry’s three children, Albus had inherited Lily’s eyes” (607); And yet, this connection is in itself reparative by uniting both traces in one child.
Indeed, affirmations that, “my lot are all happy” (“A Year”), and Harry and Ginny’s assurance that their youngest son will “be all right” because they “know he will” is later countered by Rowling’s revelation that some will simply not be all right. George Weasley, while not pictured in the epilogue, “of course ... wouldn’t be all right, would he? That is the reality ... I think that really he would have felt like part of himself died’ (“A Year”). So too, Teddy Lupin functions as his generation’s new Harry, and Rowling concedes that, “I hated killing [Teddy’s parents], but they had to go” (“A Year”). It thus becomes necessary to figure a space that while largely contended, simultaneously “registers the endlessness of normal grieving” (Clewell 45):

It was born in upon me that Lupin had to die, which is awful ... the reason he had to go was ... ultimately, in the final book you are looking at a war, aren’t you? And what’s horrific about war ... is leaving children fatherless, motherless, and so on ... I came to a point where I thought that I’m going to have to show that again, and the most powerful way of showing that, is to kill parents we know, and to leave another; another baby boy is orphaned. It happens in the first war, and Harry was that boy, and now it happened again. But ... I gave [Teddy] Harry as a godfather, and you ... hear about him in the epilogue, and you know that he’s “alright,” in as much as he can be (“A Year”).

The epilogue thus succeeds in figuring a familiar space into a memorial, wherein the well-placed traces signify those who once occupied the station and are now remembered. The familiar station, used throughout the series to juxtapose progression and a return to the familiar, now gestures equally to the profundity of all that has been lost and that which gratefully remains the same.

J. K. Rowling details the unique experience of being personally and intellectually engaged with the same text; Harry’s story is vividly coloured by her mother’s death, and she writes that, “[her mother’s death] is seeped into every part of the books, and now in retrospect, now that I’ve finished the books, I see just how much it has informed...
everything” (“A Year”). Kristeva argues that, “Literary creation is that adventure of the body and signs that bears witness to the affect—to sadness as imprint of separation and beginning of the symbol’s sway; to joy as imprint of the triumph that settles me in the universe of artifice and symbol, which I try to harmonize in the best possible way with my experience of reality” (Kristeva 22). The text is Rowling’s grief work; and yet, in writing it, she then had to mourn the second, equally-significant death of her “phantom son,” whom she had only ever known textually:

When [the series] ended, I was in a slight state of shock. Initially, I was elated, but then there came a point when I cried as if I’ve only ever cried once before in my life, and that was when my mother died. It was uncontrollable ... I had always had [Harry Potter], and if it was an escape for all of these children, you can imagine what it would have been for me ... I had to mourn Harry (“A Year”)

Harry Potter is Rowling’s grief work, and, appropriately, this thesis has, in many ways, doubled as my own mourning work. It is thus in observing the story through this Freudian lens that one is offered a previously unexplored reading of these iconic texts, as it provides insight into the nature of mourning within the Harry Potter series, and how it is that Harry is able to succeed at this seemingly Sisyphean task. Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia” provides unique insight when reading Harry Potter, as the primary tenet of Freud’s mourning philosophy centers on his assertion that mourning is not solely an emotion, but, rather, it is a performance that requires the grieving subject to actively engage with, and to work through, the reality of what has been lost. Harry thus sets to work on his mourning, not with the explicit and deliberate purpose for its completion, but more so as the instinctual and necessary means of coping. In doing so, his quest for a lost family is finally realized in the epilogue, as mourning is inherently restorative and stabilizing; and while this new world is not left unscarred—Teddy Lupin appropriately
becomes his generation’s new Harry—for Harry, his scar is proof that his mourning has largely come to a “decisive end” as, “[t]he scar had not pained Harry for nineteen years. All was well” (DH 607). Thus, Freud’s theory is a useful tool when exploring how it is that Harry is able to successfully navigate his own mourning and it ultimately explains how he is able to survive, and earn his title of, “the boy who lived!” (PS 18).
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