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**UNIVERSITY OF  
PLYMOUTH**

**Time Travellers and Storytellers: Representations of Dementia in  
Children's Fantasy Literature.**

By

**Tracey Guiry**

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfilment for  
the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Society and Culture

May 2021

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisors Dr Angela Smith and Dr Miriam Darlington for their support and guidance through this process as well as their enormous patience and understanding.

This thesis would also not have been possible but for the support and heroic patience of Paul Guiry who has foregone so much to allow me the time, space and resources to complete this work. I dedicate this to him and to the next generation in the hope they we always have woodland walk through.

**Signed Author's Declaration:**

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee. Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

Word count of main body of thesis: 74601

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## **Time Travellers and Storytellers: the representation of dementia in children's fantasy literature. Tracey Guiry**

### **Abstract**

This creative writing research-based thesis asks how dementia can be represented to primary-aged children through a fantasy fiction novel and offers an original fantasy fiction novel, *The Battle for Spanoak* (Guiry, 2020), written for children between the ages of 7 and 12-years-old as an original contribution to the corpus of dementia writing for children. The critical component to this thesis explores how generic fantasy devices and structures impact on the representation of dementia through 'storytelling' and 'memory' and describes the particular relevance of 'time' as a narrative device in dementia fantasy narratives. I have also contributed a corpus of dementia texts for the young from which I have identified thematic commonplaces which I propose might be criteria to recognise fantasy dementia writing for the young. I have codified and offered this evidence in Table 1: Dementia and Fantasy Writing for the Young. I offer a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary theoretical approach which brings together children's fiction writing about dementia, fictional landscape theories and the fantasy genre to propose that fantasy landscapes can open up a useful theoretical space to represent dementia to children in positive terms of transformation.

## **CONTENTS**

Copyright statement	1
Title page	2
Acknowledgements	3
Signed author's declaration including word count	4
Abstract	5
Contents	6
Theses Part 1: Creative Practice: <i>The Battle for Spanoak</i>	7
Thesis Part 2: Critical analysis: Time Travellers and Storytellers; representations of dementia in children's fantasy fiction	163
Introduction	163
Methodology	181
Literature review and construction of corpus	188
Storytelling in Fantasy	206
Memory in Fantasy	212
Time in Fantasy	219
Case Studies	226
Conclusion	253
Appendix: Table 1: Dementia and Fantasy Writing for the Young	261
Bibliography	264

**Title Page Creative Practice element:**

**The Battle for Spanoak, Tracey Guiry, presented as the creative  
practice element of Time Travellers and Storytellers:  
representations of dementia in children's fantasy fiction.**

**The Battle for Spanoak**

**By**

**Tracey Guiry**

2021

***The Battle for Spanoak*, the fiction component of this thesis by Tracey Guiry has been removed due to embargo.**

**Time Travellers and Storytellers: Representations of Dementia in  
Children's Fantasy Literature  
Critical component.**

In 2014 I was walking through a small ancient woodland with my mother when she pointed out an ash tree with withered leaves of Ash Die-back disease. 'It's poorly', she said, touching its bark. Alzheimer's disease and Vascular Dementia had only just begun to erode her language and memory. She knew there was something wrong with the tree but she couldn't express what it might be. I was struck by the correspondence between the ecological damage being caused to the woodland through the loss of individual tree species and the stage-by-stage damage being caused to my mother's brain by dementia. I began to imagine the exterior landscape of the woodland as a reflection of my mother's dementia and this became the central metaphor which inspired my creative process in writing a fantasy woodland story.

This is a creative writing practice-based research thesis which uses fantasy writing to investigate how dementia can be represented to primary-aged children through fantasy landscapes and by using narrative devices of the fantasy genre. I offer a fantasy fiction novel, *The*



*Battle for Spanoak* (Guiry, 2020), written for children between the ages of 7 and 12-years-old as an original contribution to the corpus of dementia writing for children. I have also contributed a corpus of dementia texts from which I have identified thematic commonplaces which form the basis of a set of criteria which could support the recognition of dementia writing for the young as a genre. I have codified and offered this evidence in Table 1:

Dementia and Fantasy Writing for the Young (see p261, I will refer to Table 1 throughout this thesis). This table includes some additional criteria which relate to the primary concern of this thesis: fantasy dementia narratives. Together the criteria comprise properties by which a fantasy sub-genre of dementia texts might begin to be recognised and of value to future researchers and practitioners when identifying dementia texts for the young.

I began my research by imagining a Venn diagram containing the three fields of cultural dementia research, fictional representations of dementia in children's fantasy writing and theoretical approaches to fictional landscapes. The centre of this imagined Venn diagram offered a multidisciplinary theoretical territory in which I could locate my research. The interdisciplinary nature of my approach positions my work in the wider philosophical field of ageing studies and, through my creative writing practice, in fantasy writing, genre studies and children's literature studies. My aim is not to homogenise popular fiction writing about dementia, fantasy and fictional landscapes, but to explore the impact of fantasy narrative devices on representations of dementia to discover how

they might provide a fresh perspective to consider dementia in more positive terms through children's fiction. By proposing some criteria for fantasy writing about dementia for children I aim to contribute to the growing body of work around literary fiction narratives about dementia and to support children's understanding of, and sympathy for, the dementia experience. I demonstrate that the fantasy genre is underrepresented in narratives of dementia and I argue that fantasy writing might offer some fresh perspectives on the disease.

In this critical element of my thesis I draw on the work of scholars researching representations of dementia in fiction through genre. Martina Zimmermann, in *Poetics and Politics of Alzheimer and Dementia Life Writing* (2017) shows that the mechanisms of auto/biographical texts, graphic novels and published diaries have the power to shape the language used to describe dementia in popular media. In her more recent work, *The Diseased Brain and the Failing Mind: Dementia in Science, Medicine and the Literature of the Long Twentieth Century* (2020) Zimmermann examines a range of medical and fictional texts from the UK, US, Europe and Japan to identify how language used to describe dementia in detective novels, life-writing and scientific journals travels into popular discourses and literary texts. Sarah Falcus and Katsura Sako, in *Contemporary Narratives of Dementia: Ethics, Ageing, Politics* (2019), explore auto/biography, detective novels and children's picturebooks to identify how the narratives of these genres work to improve ethical approaches to the care of people living with the disease.

Rebecca Anna Bitenc's paper, in 'Representations of Dementia in Narrative Fiction' (in *Knowledge and Pain*, 2012, p305), focuses on the ethical challenges of representing dementia through fiction in relation to supporting people who are affected by it to negotiate their condition. Bitenc analyses two fictionalised auto/biographies: *Out of Mind* (Bernlef, 1988) and *Still Alice* (Genova, 2007) to argue their impact is due to 'interactions of fictional narrative technique and narrative content' (2012, pp305-329).

In her study of detective novels with significant dementia-affected characters, Zimmermann argues it is the generic basis of plot-related expectations which dictate that the truth will be revealed at the end of the story which gives characters with dementia a credible role and agency, thereby questioning the lack of authority assumed of dementia patients (2020, p116). Christopher Vassilas, in his article 'Dementia and Literature' (2003) also takes a generic approach to fictionalised autobiography through a close reading of two texts: *Out of Mind* (Bernleff, 1988) and *Scar Tissue* (Igniateff, 1993) to find that images of dementia can promote negative as well as positive response (2003). This agrees with Anne Basting's paper, 'Looking Back from Loss: Views of the Self in Alzheimer's disease' (February 2003), which takes a more structural approach by comparing three autobiographies about dementia and their use of linear and non-linear narratives to represent the disease. Basting explores how fictional representations of dementia hold the inherent possibility of reinforcing and recirculating negative attitudes

about the disease (2003, p87). All these studies approach dementia narratives through a genre or format: life-writing, auto/biography, detective novels or children's picturebooks. Each of these genres employ very specific narrative devices to tell their stories. I adapt and build on these structural approaches by focusing on the genre of fantasy writing. My creative practice is in the fantasy genre and I aim to celebrate the cultural value of this genre by considering titles which meet Clute & Grant's definition of Fantasy in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997). When considering whether a text is a fantasy text or not, I follow Clute's definition that it is the 'self-coherent', or self-reflexive nature of fantasy through storytelling which separates it from other representations of the 'unreal', such as dreaming, surrealism and some Postmodernist treatments, which 'decline to take on the nature of story'. The worlds these texts present are not 'designed to be lived within' as they are in a true fantasy text, and they lack the 'naïve connective tissue that permits narrative consequences to follow on from narrative beginnings' (1997, 338).

Through this research and my own, personal experience, I propose the 'story' is a primary unit of communication with people living with dementia. Notions of story also have particular resonance in the fantasy genre. As Clute & Grant point out 'a fantasy text is above all things a *story* which does not try to obscure its meaning from its readers' (1997, p339). This is the function of genre; to establish expectations in the reader about the shape of the story to come. Storytelling has also long been associated with dementia care and the dementia experience. In

*Storying Later Life: Issue, Investigations, and Interventions in Narrative Gerontology* (2010) G Kenyon, Ernst Bohlmeijer and William Randall find storytelling has a positive impact on dementia symptoms when stories which support self-worth are shared (2010). Rosemary Jackson, in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981), describes fantasy as being 'where spacial, temporal and philosophical ordering systems all dissolve; unified notions of character are broken; language and syntax become incoherent' (1981, p15). Though this was not her intention, Jackson could have been describing the experience of someone living with dementia, and so I began my research by identifying correspondences between fantasy narrative devices and the symptomatic representations of the disease in biomedical research and popular fiction.

Of dementia symptoms it is the loss of memory which is most commonly associated with dementia, in both popular and scientific discourse, to the point Lindemann, Hilde, Brockmeier, Jens, Hyden, and Lars-Christer in *Beyond loss: dementia, identity, personhood* (2014) consider it synonymous with the disease (2014, Introduction). The Alzheimer's Society also reflects the disease only through its symptoms and lists the core properties of 'loss of memory and cognitive function'; 'impairment to abstract thinking', and the 'risk of temporal disturbances' (<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk>, 2020). The social psychologist and gerontologist, Tom Kitwood (1937-1998), was amongst the first in the UK to challenge the accepted notion that loss of memory and language mean a loss of identity. In 'Towards a Theory of Dementia

Care: Personhood and Well-Being' (Kitwood & Bredin. 1992, p269 ) and 'Towards a Theory of Dementia Care: The Interpersonal Process' (Kitwood, 1993 p52) Kitwood centralised the person living with the disease as an individual personality, with continuing individual emotions and responses. In *Dementia Reconsidered: The Person Comes First*, Kitwood developed a view of 'personhood' in dementia as being socially constructed (Kitwood, 1997), and in 'Toward a Theory of Dementia Care: Ethics and Interaction' he focused on the role of ethics around public discourse and quality of care for those living with the disease (Kitwood, 1998, p23). The studies above have contributed to a change in attitude towards people with dementia in medical discourse from being regarded as a set of medical symptoms towards a person-oriented approach to care and quality of life.

In this critical analysis I draw on the work of Richard Cheston and Michael Bender in *Understanding Dementia: The Man with the Worried Eyes* (1999). They track the early history of medical research and interventions around Alzheimer's Disease by mapping dementia symptoms over the social and cultural context of the individual patient, identifying the key symptoms associated with dementia in medical discourse as 'a deterioration of memory'; an 'impairment to reasoning and abstract thinking'; 'problems using expressive language', and 'changes in behaviour such as wandering and restlessness' (Chester & Bender, 1999, p54). Lindemann et al agree broadly that popular and scientific discourses tend to consider dementia in terms of loss of memory and identity, and 'the loss of mental capacity, the loss of skills

and agency, the loss of memory, identity and personhood' (Lindemann, 2014, p2). Pierre-Marie Charazac's study, 'Loss of identity in Alzheimer's disease: a psychoanalytic approach', also locates memory in personhood, supporting the notion that, when memory is lost, identity is also lost (2009 pp. 169–174). But, if the discourse of dementia is reduced only to memory loss, then the narratives available to fiction will similarly be reduced to loss. My approach will draw on these studies by adopting the notion that people with dementia retain their individual personhood. I also borrow from the approach of mapping dementia across various fantasy narrative devices in children's fiction about dementia.

I am investigating if fantasy narratives might provide a more positive representation of the disease to children, so I also draw on Lindemann et al, who also find that discourses of dementia tend to be about narratives of loss, but also speak of a more recent, postmodern vision which 'goes beyond the individual's loss' to view personhood and identity as more complex loci of transformation and change (2014, p2). The transformative potential in popular ideas about dementia is also reflected in Van Gorp & Vercruyssen's work in the paper 'Frames and Counter Frames giving meaning to Dementia: A framing analysis of popular media content' (2012). Their aim is to reframe narratives around dementia symptoms in more positive ways, first by identifying the frames of reference which dominate images of dementia in popular imagination and then suggesting counter-frames to popular conceptions and

misconceptions. For example, they suggest ‘a loss of personal history’ might be reframed as ‘a personal history of loss’ to focus attention on the individual in more a more sympathetic way, or they suggest adopting ‘a dualistic split between body and mind’ which reframes focus away from ‘what has been lost’ to ‘what remains’ (Van Gorp & Vercruyssen, 2012, p1275 – 1277). In both this critical component of my thesis and the companion work of fiction I address the question of how fantasy narratives of dementia might ‘reframe’ children’s attitudes towards the disease.

Falck & Sako suggest it is the interplay between dementia and its association with memory loss which has made auto/biographies, memoirs and life-writing the most popular expressions of the dementia experience. This is because dementia provides a territory to question personal identity by offering ‘greater access to the perspective and/or voice of the person with dementia’ (2019, p81). Fiction offers less direct access to the dementia experience and this calls into question notions of authority and veracity of fictional dementia representations.

I also draw on the study by George, Qualls, Cameron and Whitehouse in ‘Renovating Alzheimer’s: Constructive reflections on the new clinical and research diagnostic guidelines’ (2013) which finds the presentation of dementia symptoms is not wholly organic in nature but can be subtly different for each individual in ways that relate to the social, political and cultural environments of their lived experience (June 2013, p378–387).

This understanding provides a key correspondence with my aim to reflect



the dementia experience through a fantasy landscape which I discuss later. I propose that all dementia narratives have a complex, overlapping relationship with the overarching elements of 'storytelling', 'memory' and 'time'. Consequently my discussion is organised under those headings throughout this thesis. I demonstrate that the fantasy genre is under-represented in narratives of dementia, both in popular fiction and cultural research. Fantasy is already a richly explored genre in terms of its definition and defences of the form as a culturally significant mode of writing. Nevertheless, by aligning the dementia experience with the fantasy landscape new understandings of its potential as well as of how to convey the effects of the disease can be gained through the way fantasy can offer a space to represent dementia not primarily based on human loss. Through fantasy it is possible for readers to focus instead on more positive and hopeful themes of transformation and ecological preservation.

## **Storytelling**

In this section I explore how the dementia experience corresponds with some generic models of fantasy writing and I describe the theoretical perspectives through which I have arrived at the criteria I propose in Table 1. I draw on definitions in the *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy* to describe the relationship of fantasy to story (1997) and extend the generic models proposed in *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008) by Farah

Mendlesohn. Mendlesohn claims fantasy writers use four overarching forms to construct fantasy texts: the portal-quest fantasy; the immersive fantasy; the intrusion fantasy and the liminal fantasy (2008 Introduction, xviii). I draw on this work to propose that dementia, in fantasy texts, might be considered a portal. Rustin & Rusting argue that, for children, the 'boundary between internal and external reality is more fragile and permeable' than it is for most adults' (2001, p18) and so adult writers are pushed into writing through metaphor. Metaphors are important in dementia texts (Zimmermann, 2020, Introduction). Martina Zimmermann in her 2017 article 'Alzheimer's disease: Metaphors as Mirror and Lens to the stigma of dementia', and Hannah Zeilig in 'Dementia as a Cultural Metaphor' (2014) both demonstrate that metaphors have been central to popular understanding of the disease.

Margaret and Michael Rustin, in *Narratives of Love and Loss: Studies in Modern Children's Fiction* (2001) explore the experiences of imaginative and emotional growth in children's fantasy stories within the broader cultural context through close, psychoanalytic readings (2001, Introduction). Psychoanalytic response in fictional characters is contested. Carroll suggests that psychoanalysis of fictional characters is 'all but defunct' (2011, p14), and certainly I would agree that psychoanalysis of dementia characters would be fruitless. But Rustin & Rustin argue their view that 'authors have imagined situations and persons as if they were real' (the 'realist fallacy') - so their intention is to demonstrate parallels with more

generalized understanding obtained from child psychoanalysis (2001, p14) and I draw on their work to test my proposed criteria.

## **Memory**

My creative practice is fantasy writing for children about environmental concerns, and by writing a story about a fantasy woodland I will demonstrate that I am drawing on a long tradition of memory being encoded in the landscape. My core research question asks how dementia can be represented to primary-aged children through fantasy landscapes and narrative devices of the fantasy genre. In this section I propose that an alignment of the dementia experience with the fantasy landscape might offer the space for a fresh, critical relationship for readers' experience of fictional dementia.

Tim Cresswell wrote, in *Place: A Short Introduction* (2004), that 'to be human is to be 'in place' (2004, Introduction). By using the external landscape in my children's novel as a metaphor for dementia I explore the binary relationship of the 'internal landscape' of the dementia experience and its relationship to the external, physical landscape of the text.

Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space* (1958), introduces his concept of 'topanalysis' as 'the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives' (1958, p8). Bachelard argues that 'memories are motionless', and must be fixed in place because 'localization in the spaces of our intimacy is more urgent than determination of dates (1958,

p9), whilst Yi-fu Tuan, in *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* links both old and young people with fantasy when he says 'youngsters people the future with fantasies, whereas with the old it is the lengthening past that provides the material for fantasy and distortion' (1974, p57). I explore the extent of fantasy to present the past in dementia narratives when I look at 'time'.

I draw on Jane Suzanne Carroll's model in *Landscapes in Children's Literature* (2011), in which she identifies four 'topoi' which she sees as central to the landscapes of British children's fantasy literature, each distinguished by their physical and symbolic attributes: the sanctuary, the green space, the roadway and the lapsed space (2011 p13). Carroll's 'Green Topos' explores farmed spaces, pleasancess and wilderness (as the unbounded spaces), arguing that green places have always been about both beauty and violence, 'decay and death as well as renewal of life (2011, p49).

I build on this in the construction of the resolution to *The Battle for Spanoak*. I also draw on Edward S Casey's approach to 'place' in relation to 'time' and 'space' in *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (2009) to explore the potential to embody dementia in the landscape. Perry Nodelman, in *Pleasures of Children's Literature* (2000) lists common binaries found in children's literature and relates them all to either 'home' or 'away'. He suggests 'home' tends to represent safety and boredom, whilst 'away'

tends to represent danger and excitement (2000, p9). Carroll extends this to 'home – going away – returning home' and notes how landscapes, often active, have some agency in creating this pattern of movement (2011, p91).

Forests have a long tradition in fantasy writing. Clute and Grant describe *forests* as 'representing a barrier, especially one that is dark, mysterious, impenetrable, whilst *woods* carry a connotation of transformation and encounter (1997, p362), and the Spanoak in *The Battle for Spanoak* is a wood. Simon Schama, in *Landscape and Memory*, points out the connection between human memories, time, and real and imagined landscapes when he says landscapes may be 'a text on which generations write their recurring obsessions' (1995, p12). Schama claims forests fulfil humanity's 'craving to find in nature a consolation for our mortality' (1995, p15) and this speaks to concerns in dementia narratives which must somehow negotiate the inevitable death of the character with dementia. I draw on his description of forests when he says the 'truly heroic historians of the drama are trees, their great antiquity gives them an authority that spans generations' (2015, p56). In *Forests: the Shadow of Civilization*, Robert Pogue Harrison finds traces of forests in our collective and cultural psyche through their representation in the earliest origins stories, myth and folklore. He argues that the first act of clearing trees to create bounded spaces for settlement, and the placing of dead ancestors in a fixed area of ground to retain their ongoing presence

amongst the living, are key to the first appropriation of forests as the 'cultural metaphor for long, ancestral memory keeping' (1992, p7).

Landscapes have strong associations with memories and personal experience and I am inspired by work of 'creative non-fiction' in describing human/landscape relationships, for example Philip Marsden in *Rising Ground: A Search for the Spirit of Place* (2014) explores the impact place has had on his life, embedding his memories in the places and landmarks of his childhood, where 'you can feel yourself dissolving, slipping back into the slopes and hollows of the land (2014, p303).

Another work I find inspiring is *Common Ground* (2015) by Rob Cowen, a year-long, systematic topographical and environmental review of the land at the very edge of his town: the 'no-man's land between town and country; the edge of things' (2015 p3) where 'time was indifferent' (2015 p 4).

Cowen defines 'edge-lands' as those between fields and the tree-lines of woods are 'a union of opposites, a meshing of lives human and non-human, a paradigm for where past realities meet our now mediated experiences, (2015, p139). Sarah Maitland's *Gossip From the Forest: The Tangled Roots of our Forests and Fairytales* (2012) explores the Northern European relationship with forests, arguing that 'at our deep Teutonic roots we are forest people, and our stories and social networks are forest born' (2012, p9). Roger Deakin's *Wildwood: A Journey through Trees* (2007), Oliver Rackham's *Woodlands* (2012) and Colin Tudge's *The Secret Life of Trees: How they Live and Why they Matter* (2005) are

all seminal texts which argue for the urgent need to preserve ancient woodland environments because of the irreplaceability of biological and ecological systems which have taken hundreds of years to develop, and each has inspired my creative practice and approach to representing dementia in the landscape.

## **Time**

In this section I propose that by conflating notions of the life-span of natural landscapes with notions of human life-span, time can present a particularly fruitful narrative device through which to explore and represent the dementia experience in the fantasy genre. From the perspective of symptoms, the phenomenon of remembering and recalling the past for those living with dementia is anecdotally referred to by doctors, carers and staff in care homes as 'time travelling'. This notion of timetravelling is described by Wheeler, Stuss and Tulving in their paper 'Toward a theory of episodic memory: the frontal lobes and auto-noetic consciousness' (1997) which explores how people living with dementia remember the past through an episodic and fragmented sense of the present (Wheeler, Stuss, Tulving: p331 – 354). Writing in 2016, El Haj and Kapogiannis explored this phenomenon further in their article 'Time distortions in Alzheimer's disease: a systematic review and theoretical integration'. They found very little research had been done on the relationship between time distortions and the 'episodic autobiographical memory' (the ability to project oneself back in time), but remarked that with dementia patients, though time is physically irreversible, 'this law can however be violated thanks to mental time travel' (Article No 16016,

2016).

I explore alternative models for the representation of time in fictional dementia narratives. For example Falcus & Sako consider genealogy in familial narratives as being the 'dominant frame of reference by which we imagine the self in time' (2019, p144). In *Children's Fantasy Literature* (2016), Levy & Mendlesohn claim time travelling narratives explore themes of history and belonging and 'ways of presenting the past as witness' (2016, p126). I also draw on the work of David Wittenberg in *Time Travel: The Popular Philosophy of Time Travel* (2013) to explore the capacity of time-travel as a narrative to provide a fresh perspective on temporal continuity and disruption in fantasy dementia narratives. Though he primarily considers science-fiction texts, Wittenberg argues time-travel 'might be considered a fundamental condition of storytelling itself, even its very essence' (2013, p1 Introduction), and considers narratives, both fictional and nonfictional, recoup or recover past time through a kind of 'cerebral or conceptual time travel' (2013, p27). Though the scope of my study does not include a detailed focus on narratology, I draw on Wittenberg's 'theorisation of temporality' (2013, p2) to explore the ways in which time travel provides another criterion which might be useful in identifying fantasy dementia texts (see Table 1).

### **Case Studies**

I offer Case Studies of fantasy dementia texts, including *The Battle for Spanoak*, to examine the extent to which the generic properties for



fantasy dementia texts I have identified in Table 1, and underpinned throughout this theses, are effective. I begin each case study with a brief summary of the text. I then approach each close reading through the headings of 'storytelling' (how fantasy narrative structures are established by the introduction of dementia and in the self-reflexivity of storytelling); 'memory' (how memory is encoded in the text and in the landscape), and 'time' (how time is manipulated through narrative device).

### **A note on ethics and care**

Falcus & Sako identify 'ethics' as the underpinning theme of their analysis of the social and cultural contexts of dementia in British, North American and Japanese texts (2019, Introduction, p6). Lucy Burke's essay 'The Poetry of Dementia: Art, Ethics and Alzheimer's Disease in Tony Harrison's *Black Daisies for the Bride*' also argues the ethical representation is a central concern in dementia narratives when she asks, 'who are we really protecting when we argue for or against the representation of those with dementia, the sensibilities of those who look, or the 'objects' of this gaze?' (2007, p610).

I note here that, though my practice is concerned with care in its widest sense (Charlie's care for Hetty as well as the characters' and readers' care for the woodland environment), my thesis does not have the scope to explore in detail the broader and more complex perspective of ethical issues of caring for and about people living with dementia, which is

thoroughly explored by Falcus & Sako (2019). I took the decision to relieve my protagonist, Charlie, who is 9 years old, of any concerns of personal care for my character with dementia, Hetty. Instead I focus on reframing the care narrative towards care of the *environment*. Charlie feels, initially, that Hetty is a stranger to her. She has not visited her before and resents having to stay with her for a week. *The Battle for Spanoak* follows the transformation of their relationship from strangers to one of empathy. In this I draw on Zimmermann's 'care-free' perspective in *The Poetics and Politics of Alzheimer's Disease Life Writing* which suggests that a physical, or social, distance between the carer and the patient enables a more open and less stressful caring experience (2017, p49).

I understand fantasy fiction as having the potential to raise a fresh set of ethical concerns about the representation of dementia, since it deals with imagined worlds, imagined realities and generic expectations which could all have 'real' implications for people living with dementia. I do not claim my creative practice will advance the development of care for people living with dementia, but I aim to provide an accessible, engaging approach to the disease for young readers to explore dementia and the natural environment. I borrow from the conclusion of Falcus & Sako that, in the widest sense, the act of reading and writing about dementia may constitute care in its broad sense of 'response to and responsibility for an other' (2019, p7), and that 'care is fundamental not just to the themes of [dementia narratives] but to the writing and reading of these texts' (2019, p20).

## Methodology

My primary methodology in approaching my research questions was the iterative process of creative writing in my original novel, *The Battle for Spanoak* (2020), alongside theoretical research. In *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children's Fantasies of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones and Susan Cooper* (2006), Charles Butler makes a comparative study of those authors to draw out many of the generic common thematic qualities of British children's fantasy written in the 1960's and 1970's. In doing so he warns that comparisons between the writing styles of very different authors might 'degenerate into an exercise in critical ingenuity' (2006 p17).

Dementia texts for children come from a wide range of often overlapping genres, styles, themes, formats and modes of writing, and I acknowledge that describing a wide group of texts as a single genre called 'dementia texts' will always remain problematic. By reading children's fiction stories about dementia I have identified commonplaces in theme and narrative approach which I propose are some criteria by which juvenile writing about dementia might be recognised as a genre and further, how fantasy writing about dementia introduces additional criteria which might describe a *fantasy* dementia text. I present this evidence in 'Table 1: Corpus of Dementia Writing for the Young on page 261 and offer it as an

original contribution to knowledge which might be of value to future researchers and practitioners.

By focusing my study on representations of dementia in children's' fictional titles aimed at 7-12-year-olds which use fantasy narrative devices, I am appraising a form which has received less detailed attention in other research on fictional dementia narratives. I draw on Carroll's argument that literatures from around the world will have their own distinct canonical models and unique meanings supported by shared cultural understanding (2011, p5). In searching for children's' fiction about dementia I have included all texts which are available in English and have been professionally published between 1980 and 2020. I have not included self-published titles as far as they are identifiable. In practice, my searches have revealed titles which originated from UK, USA, Australia, Canada, Netherlands and Japan and I have included all titles in Table 1. In the sections on 'Storytelling' and 'Time' I necessarily focus primarily on those titles which I have identified as being fantasy treatments of dementia narratives and I also concentrate on these titles in my Case Studies in order to explore the impact of fantasy narrative devices in those texts. My creative practice is in children's' fiction and environmentalism and *The Battle for Spanoak* is centred on the preservation of ancient British woodland (from my originating metaphor). I therefore adopt Carroll's summary of the history of the word 'landscape', which can be traced from Anglo Saxon roots of 'landscipe', a compound of the noun 'land' and the verb 'scippan'

meaning 'to make' or 'give shape to', and therefore British and Northern European landscapes provide a more obvious cultural source for the landscapes of modern British children's fantasy ( 2011, p5).

I searched for children's fiction about dementia in the databases of University of Plymouth library and associated databases, the British Library, the British Education Index, the magazine '*Books For Keeps*' (which reviews and highlights children's books for libraries), Children's Story Museum, The BookTrust, The National Literary Trust, the Children's Literacy in Primary Education, The Reading Agency and a wide range of Journals offered through the University databases. I have collated bibliographies from other relevant studies and have searched the websites of specialist support agencies, such as Dementia UK, Young Dementia UK, The Alzheimer's Society and Young Dementia UK and Age UK. I also searched the WorldCat database, Amazon, Waterstones, Barnes Noble and Goodreads alongside individual publisher databases, as these represent the largest aggregators of book distribution and reviews. This thesis has been completed during the global COVID 19 Pandemic where access to libraries and archives has largely been restricted between March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020 and May 17<sup>th</sup> 2021. Many organisations have made literature freely available online during this period so, where travel was impossible and digital copies not available, I have accessed materials online through, for example, BloomsburyEdu.Com, BloomsburyCollections.com, Sage Journals, ResearchGate and Academian.edu, and I have purchased Kindle editions of major titles which I could not otherwise access.

My search criteria included key word searches for (in various combinations), 'dementia', 'vascular dementia', 'Alzheimer's', 'children', 'children's literature', 'fiction', 'children's fiction', 'fantasy' and 'fantasy children's literature'. These searches illustrated a challenge in searching for titles about dementia. For example, a search of the Goodreads website on 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020, using keywords 'All' alongside 'Dementia', returned 4032 results. I explored each of these texts and discovered the majority were non-fiction guide books, medical or scientific texts, puzzle books, large print books for seniors with memory problems, or in other ways did not meet my criteria for *fictional* titles. When I amended the search criteria from 'all' to 'genre' alongside the keyword 'dementia', the search returned zero results. In repeating a 'genre' search on other library databases the results were the same, which leads me to assume that, in general, dementia is not recognised or tagged in literary collections or libraries as a genre. I also note, for ease of comparison, I have used the term 'dementia' in this thesis to mean all forms of the disease which cause similar social and cultural impacts around impairment to memory and transformation of identity. Full descriptions of the biomedical differences between the various dementias, such as Alzheimer's Disease, Vascular Dementia and Lewy Body disease, are fully described in Chester and Bender's (1999, pp52-59), Falcus & Sako (2019, pp8-9), and are available on the websites of Dementia UK, The Alzheimer's Society and Young Dementia UK. I note here that, when I discuss *The Battle for Spanoak* in this thesis, I refer to the magical world as 'Spanoak', and the real, framework world as 'Spanoak Wood'.

I also note that contemporary novels which are explicitly about dementia may not be identified by searches including my search words. A recent example of this is *Toffee*, by Sarah Crossan (2019), which is a Young Adult novel written in verse. *Toffee* is the story of Allison, known as Toffee, who flees an abusive home. Toffee meets Marla, an elderly lady described on the cover as 'lonely and often confused' (2019), and by learning to care of Marla, Toffee relocates herself within a family. This title does not appear in searches using dementia, Alzheimer's or any of the key word searches I have identified, nor does reference to dementias appear on the cover or in the marketing. I was referred to this title during an interview with Clare H Welsh, author of *The Tide* (2019). That *Toffee* does not explicitly identify as a story about dementia may link to reluctance to include the word 'dementia' in the launch marketing. I acknowledge, therefore, that there may be titles which I have not included in Table 1 because they are not revealed through any systematic or detailed search for children's titles about dementia. My corpus includes those titles which explicitly describe themselves as being about dementia in their titles, their abstracts, marketing content or in reviews.

There is also a class of children's fictional stories which potentially include, or reflect, the experiences of dementia, but which do not reference the disease in reviews, marketing descriptions, book covers or their titles. These include classic titles such as Mary Norton's *The*

*Borrowers* (1952), where old Mrs May tries to remember the stories her younger brother told her in her childhood (1952, p7), or Phillippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958), where Mrs Bartholomew, who owns the old house and the magical Grandfather clock, lies up in the top room 'dreaming of the scenes of her childhood' as the clock strikes and opens up the world of the past (1958, p35). I am concerned with the representation of dementia, including the preconceptions readers may hold about the disease which might affect their reading, so I do not include these titles. One of my aims in this study is that future researchers might find my generic criteria and description of dementia texts in future research to make identification of these texts more clear.

Titles revealed through searches but which are outside the scope of this study include non-fiction texts about dementia, including training texts, guidebooks and medical texts. An excellent exploration of non-fiction dementia guides is provided in Zimmermann (2020). I also exclude nonfiction auto/biographies, life writing and memoirs by people living with the disease, their children, family or carers, for example *What Dementia Teaches Us About Love* by Nicci Gerard (2019) and *Somebody Stole My Iron: A Family Memoir of Dementia* by Vicki Tapia (2014). I also exclude fiction stories aimed at adult readers, including fictionalised auto/biographies and fiction, for example *The Wilderness* by Harvey (2009), *Elizabeth Is Missing* by (2014), *Magic O'Clock: A fictional tale of dementia and hope* by L S Fellows (2007), *Still Alice* by Lisa Genova (2010), *White Lies* by Jo Gatford (2014), *Forgotten* by Susan Lewis (2010), the graphic novel *Dementia 21* by Shintaro Kago, translated by



Rachel Matt Thorne (2018) and *The Dementia Chronicles: Walking the Journey of Alzheimer's Disease with Mom* by Susan Wingate (2018) .

Excellent studies of these are provided variously by Zimmermann (2017 and 2020), Falcus & Saco (2019, Bitenc (2012), Burke (2007) and Basting (2012).

### **Table 1: terms of reference**

Due to considerations of space, I identify each author in Table 1 by the author's surname only, alongside the date of publication. A full description of author, title and publication details of my corpus are in the bibliography. For each of the criteria I propose as a property of dementia fiction for children I have provided a 'key word' which is then related to a column in Table 1. I have also placed each title into broad categories which I have encoded into Table 1 as either PB/SB (Picturebooks and Storybooks), CL (Children's Literature) or YA (Young Adult Literature). I have drawn these distinctions because each of these forms has a different readership in mind and uses different rhetorical approaches to dementia in terms of use of narrative, use of language and use of illustrations. There is capacity in this study to only consider children's literature aimed at primary-aged children, but I offer a summary of Picturebooks, Storybooks and Young Adult Literature below.

## **Literature Review and Construction of Corpus**

When Jill Manthorpe wrote her paper 'A Child's Eye View: Dementia in Children's Literature' in 2005, she found that children's views of dementia at that time were under-explored and there was very little evidence of fiction titles where dementia was a central motif to plot or character (2005, p305). Dementia has become a more popular theme for children's fiction during the 14 years since that study was completed, but there remains a relatively small corpus of texts which use fantasy devices to tell their stories about dementia. My searches identified 122 titles about dementia written as Picturebooks, Storybooks, Children's Literature or Young Adult Literature which explicitly describe themselves as being about dementia. The baseline properties which all texts must include to be eligible for my corpus are that dementia must be included as a significant component of plot, narrative, protagonist or character and the story must be aimed at young people under 19 years old. I also identified that *all* texts referred to in this thesis involve memory loss as the primary symptomatic behaviour of the character living with the disease and so assume this as a property of all dementia texts for the young. This agrees with Erin Y. Sakai, Brian D. Carpenter and Rebecca E. Rieger in their paper 'What's Wrong with Grandma?: Depictions of Alzheimer's Disease in Children's Storybooks' (2012), which examined the prevalence of Alzheimer's and dementia symptoms in 33 Storybook titles in order to establish the accuracy of the information, guidance and resources these publications present.

## **Picturebooks and Storybooks**

Picturebooks tend to be aimed at very young and pre-school readers.

The narrative is told with text and illustrations, ideally to be read alongside an adult to support discussion, questioning and sharing.

Picturebooks are usually less than 30 pages long. Storybooks are longer-form narratives for young readers which mix storytelling and illustrations alongside advice, guidance and signposting to resources which can further support families experiencing dementia. Storybooks tend to be less than 65 pages long and use more sophisticated language. I have grouped these two formats together in Table 1 because they use very similar, specific narrative devices to tell their stories.

Future researchers who might be interested in looking at the use of imagery and illustration in the representation of dementia may want to separate these forms.

Picturebooks and Storybooks continue to dominate the field of fiction writing about dementia for the young. Of the titles which my searches identified for Table 1, 75% are Picturebooks or Storybooks. Manthorpe concluded that the dominance of Picturebooks in dementia fiction is due to young children being considered unlikely to be recognised as primary carers to those with particular age-related needs. These texts tend to be aimed at parents who want to introduce information to their children which might prepare them for everyday encounters with elderly relatives (Manthorpe, 2005, p306). Zimmermann proposes that these books are

intended as 'pedagogical tools for caregivers, whose child may become stressed and anxious, especially as family dynamics change' (2020, p143). Children share 'marginal positions within the family and society' with the elderly (Manthorpe, 2020, p140), though Zimmermann sounds a note of caution, proposing these books also pose a challenge to the dementia patient because the story and imagery often used 'perpetuates the concept of the patient as child' illustrated by visual resemblances between grandparent and grandchild and a focus on 'shared behaviours and abilities' (2020, p143).

Falcus & Sako undertook a study of Picturebooks about dementia from North America, Europe, Australia and Japan from the perspective of relationality, aging studies and care (2019, p180). They find these texts prioritise family settings, relationality, care, temporal disruption, negotiation of change and a focus on the loss of memory as the primary symptom (2019, p181). All the texts in my corpus involve a very young child negotiating the changes in behaviour of a grandparent or older relative. They have a strongly didactic approach to presenting dementia and texts tend to include factual advice, guidance and resources for families to find further support.

Humour is a recurring element in Picturebooks and Storybooks to present the changes in the behaviour of older relatives as being safe for the grandchild to consider. A grandparent might put things in inappropriate places, as in *Why Did Grandma Put Her Underwear in the Refrigerator?* (2013) by Max Wallack (author) and Carolyn Green

(illustrator) and *When My Grammy Forgets, I Remember: A Child's Perspective on Dementia* (2015) by Toby Haberkorn. They may need reminding of a child's name, as in *Grandma*, by Jessica Shepherd (2014) and *Grandad's Hat* by Matt Elliot and illustrated by James Threadgold (2015). Keeping photographs, pressed flowers and diaries are suggested as ways to stimulate shared memories, as in *Clarice Bean, That's Me* (2015) by Lauren Child; *Harry Helps Grandpa Remember* (2015) by K Tyrrell; *Nanny Never Forgets* (2005) by Christianne Connolly; *The Memory Box* (1992) by M Bahr (author) and David Cunningham (illustrator) and in *Grandma's Box of Memories: helping Grandma to remember* (2014) by Jean Demetris. Singing and musical activities are also popular, as in *Grandpa's Music: A Story about Alzheimer's* (2009) by A Acheson; *Singing with Momma Lou* (2002) by Linda Jacobs Altman and *When Nana Sings* (2019) by Alice Wiethoff Blegen (author) and Anna Davis (illustrator).

The majority of the titles identified here are located in the real, mimetic, world and do not employ fantasy narrative devices. *Pearl: Why doesn't Granny Remember my Name* (2010) by Sally Murphy is offered as a book about dementia, but I consider it more as a book about loss. Pearl's life is difficult because her mother is so distracted by looking after grandmother, who has dementia. But the grandmother dies early on in the narrative and Pearl learns to come to terms with loss by writing poetry, learning that good things can sometimes come from bad situations. *Me and Mrs Moon* is a 48 page graphic novel aimed at primary-aged readers. It follows Maisie and Dylan as they experience the

decline of their elderly neighbour who they call Granny Moon. The cartoon-like images deal with Granny Moon's erratic behaviour and ends on a happy note when Granny Moon's daughter comes to look after her. A few of these titles use talking animals and cartoon-like characters to replace humans, even though the setting is otherwise a simulacrum of contemporary reality. For example, *Lovely Old Lion* (2015) by Julia Jarman uses a lion family; *My Grandpa* (2012) by Marta Altes is about a family of bears; *The Elephant Who Forgot* (2015) by Mike Church, which was created with children and their families as part of an educational initiative funded by the Welsh Assembly, follows an elephant called Billy whose father has dementia and *Grandma Noonie has Alzheimer's* (2015) by Cindy Chambers (author) and Jum Huber (illustrator) is about a talking pineapple called Pippy, who lives in Tell Me Town and is taught about Alzheimer's by Dr. Neuro through illustrations and clear prose. I include these as fantasy texts in Table 1.

### **Young Adult literature**

Young Adult (YA) literature is another popular strand of fiction writing about dementia aimed at teenagers and young adults. Falcus & Sako find the majority of these titles follow the form of 'familial tales' in the same way as fictionalised auto/biographies by adopting an inheritance plot to 'reinststate generational continuity' (2019, p146). I will return to discuss 'inheritance plots' in more detail in the section on 'Time'. The

protagonists in these tend to be teenaged, and narratives include more sophisticated themes, including sexual relationships, sexuality, dramas of domestic abuse, teenaged pregnancy, drug addiction and trauma which tend not to appear in writing for younger children. These texts are generally in novel form but also include comics and graphic novels which tell stories focused on teenaged characters who are experiencing and confronting dementia, either in their families or through work or caring responsibilities.

Jane Gilliard et al's study of young adult carers' responses to dementia in 'Young carers: individual circumstances and practice consideration in dementia caregiving' in *Younger People with Dementia* (1999) found a more complex reaction, with embarrassment and shame on behalf of their relative, and fear that the disease might be infectious, playing a part in their reactions to the disease (Gilliard, in Cox & Kealey (eds), 1999 qtd. in Manthorpe p196-202). Young Adult fiction about dementia is concerned with the transitions through the milestones of growing up. They are coming-of-age stories which deal with domestic, family and social pressures young people experience as they grow toward adulthood. The teenagers and young adult characters in dementia texts are more likely to be faced with responsibilities of having to care for an older relative, either at home or in work contexts. For example, Jenny Downham's *Unbecoming* (2016), follows the experience of 17-year-old Katie whose grandmother suffers from dementia. The novel demonstrates the fear and confusion which Mary, the grandmother, is

experiencing, as Katie takes on a key role as Mary's emotional support whilst also dealing with the emotional impact on her own mother.

*Daughter* (1999) by Ishbel Moore follows 14-year-old Sylvie in the more difficult situation of dealing with her mother's early-onset dementia. After discovering her mother trying to commit suicide, Sylvie must learn how to take care of her mother and her household, whilst also negotiating school, the Prom and that the health care professionals she encounters will not take her seriously.

*A Kiss in every Wave* (2001) by Rosanna Hawke sees 14-year-old Jessie learn to love the odd and funny behaviour of her Nanny, who has come to live with her family, and become more mature through the experience of looking after her. Sylvie finds some old love letters in Nanny's drawer and learns who the old lady was in her youth. She becomes more tolerant and less self-centred through the process of learning what other people's true qualities are. I have included *Forgetting Foster* (2017) by Dianne Touchell, as a young adult novel, even though it is told through the voice of 7-year-old Foster, because the novel has a narrative sophistication and dependence on deep and mature emotional resonances which would resonate with young adult and adult readers, and which child readers simply might not enjoy. We see the family cope with Foster's father's rapid decline and altered behaviours, and the impact this has on his mother as she becomes exhausted, depressed and worries about their financial situation.



The transformative power of love, patience and understanding is a shared theme in all these novels. In *The Dream Palace* by Jackie Wilson (1991), Lolly works in a care home. Her first love-affair has ended, but by talking with one of her charges, Annie, who has dementia, Lolly learns that it is the ability to love at all which is most important. In *Just Lucky* (2019) by Melanie Florence, 15-year-old Lucky is taken into a foster home when she is no longer able to look after the grandmother she lived with because of her worsening dementia. This is a story about families and that love retains bonds even when you don't live together. In *How Not to Disappear* (2016) by Clare Furniss, Hattie is pregnant by her best friend, Reuben. When Gloria, an old aunt who has early stage dementia comes to stay, the two set out on a road trip to find 'the end' of Gloria's story before she loses her memory of her life's stories. The narration splits between the point of view of teenaged Hattie and the much older Gloria and we see familial patterns repeating themselves. *Sundae Girl* (2008) by Cathy Cassidy is aimed at older children and follows a few years in the life of the protagonist. It follows Jude as she navigates her chaotic life. Her mother is an alcoholic, her father an Elvis impersonator, and her Grandmother has dementia. The dementia is portrayed as one more problem Jude must live with and the narrative focuses on Jude's life as she reaches her later teens. Jude's grandmother dies of a vascular dementia stroke in the end of the story and Jude's mother decides to give up alcohol and provide more support to Jude.

*Elizabeth is Missing* (2014) by Emma Healey is a cross-over novel which would appeal to young adults and adult readers. It follows the elderly Maud as she tries to uncover what happen to her friend Elizabeth. The narrative moves between Maud's past and present, with flashback used as a narrative time-travelling device to visit Maud's past and to demonstrate her inner thoughts and fragmented thought processes. The sub-plot of finding the elusive Elizabeth and discovering what happened to Maud's sister Sukey becomes secondary to the process of Maud's decline. *The Girl on the Shore* (2002) by F M Hughes has a more didactic tone as it follows 17-year-old Gemma in her first job in a care home for 'confused' older people. The book touches on Gemma's relationship with the residents as she learns to be patient with them, and also wider economic pressures of the community as the care home comes under threat of closure. The book includes vivid descriptions of the environment and the calming impact the sea has on the resident and advises the reader that outdoor activities are good for older people.

*Memory* (1987) by Margaret Mahy is another novel with complex theme which would appeal to young adults and adults. It follows 19-year-old Jonny as he tries to cope with his sister's death by tracking down the only other witness to it to check if his memories of the event are true. He encounters vulnerable Sophie, who has dementia and is being swindled by a conman. As Jonny takes more and more care of Sophie, he realises that memories need not be a trap you are fixed in and that other people can help you cope with whatever life bring. In Young Adult fiction dementia becomes the catalyst to highlight transitions into adulthood by

comparing the working memory and identity with the broken memory and identity, the healthy versus the unhealthy body and mind. Their contemporary realism encourages the reader to navigate their own possibly difficult family and social dynamics and domestic politics, and focus on the protagonist and reader learning from the experiences of past generations to navigate their own transition through life.

### **Fictional Children's literature about dementia aimed at primaryaged children**

These are the primary focus of my study and the subject of my creative practice. They are long-form narratives which use more sophisticated prose and a more complex range of narrative devices to tell their stories. The protagonist is usually aged between 7 and 12-years-old and so might share the readers' understanding of the implications of dementia. These are stories about children experiencing disruption to family life due to an older relative, most often a grandparent, developing dementia. As Manthorpe points out, debates around primary caregiving by children under 14 years old are rare, largely because the needs of someone with late-stage dementia are generally considered too complex and onerous for younger children, who are considered not to have the maturity to confront the disease until they are older (1999, p308). I have chosen not to include Charlie confronting Hetty's potential needs for personal or intimate care, instead focusing on the broad/empathetic sense of caring

because I want the reader to identify with this and transfer it to a care for the woodland they may encounter.

Rustin & Rustin explore distinctive themes and concerns in post-war children's literature and argue that primary-aged readers are at an age when family relationships are central to children's preoccupations whilst they simultaneously develop their independence and so these tend to focus on 'recurrent experience of separation and reunion' (2001, p2).

The majority of these texts for children also negotiate the child's independence from, or return to, home. Rustin & Rustin's study claims many modern children's fictional stories involve adventures on holiday, 'where absence of parent and the containing structures of ordinary life is only temporary or symbolic, and is an exciting space' (Rustin & Rustin, 2001, p10). Perry Nodelman's notion that 'home' tends to represent safety and boredom, whilst 'away' tends to represent danger and excitement (2000, p9) is broadly true for many of the dementia texts in this study, but the concept of 'home' is problematized in dementia narratives due to the fear and anxiety which surrounds notions of home when that relates to Care Homes. The relationship to the Care Home is usually one of threat. The level of this threat is dictated by the stage of dementia that the character with the disease is at (early, mid, severe) because the later the stage, the less able the person will be to look after themselves or others and the more likely they will be to need external support. Many children's fiction dementia narratives involve a grandchild wanting to 'save' their grandparent from going into a home, or deal with a grandparent's fear of going into a home. Some children have to go into a

children's care home when a grandparent they live with must go into a home. In *Back to Blackbrick* (2013) by Sarah Fitzgerald, Cosmo learns all he can about dementia so he can help his grandfather memorise answers to the 'memory test' so he won't have to go into a home; *The Memory Cage* (2015) by Ruth follows 12-year-old Alex struggling to keep his adopted grandfather at home as his traumatic memories of World War 2 return to haunt him, just as Alex's own traumatic past threatens his sense of belonging in his adopted family. *Grandpa's Great Escape* (2015) by David Walliams follows grandson Jack's attempts to keep his grandfather out of a sinister care home by encouraging him to remain in his imagined world of his past life as a World War 2 pilot and *The Shadows at Sundown* (2013) by Michael Rock, follow Sam and Sandy Lundin as they try to keep their Uncle Gus at home because he tells them exciting stories of his travels around the world. When this becomes impossible they must learn how to remain in contact after Uncle Gus moves to a care home. In *Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth* (2016) by Frank Cottrell Boyce, Prez must go into a children's home when his grandparent is taken into a home. Both Prez and Jack in *Grandpa's Great Escape* go to visit the home and 'free' their grandparent.

In other stories, the arrival of a grandparent into the family home is resented by the child protagonist at first, but over the narrative they learn how to love and accept them by developing empathy born of getting to know the person better. *The Lottery's Plus One* (2017) by Emma

Donoghue is set in an eccentric, but otherwise contemporary family, and follows 9-year-old Sumac as she comes to terms with a bad-tempered grandfather with dementia who has come to live with them. *Heartbeat* (2012) by Sharon Creech is written in verse and follows 12-year-old Annie as she loves to run barefoot around her community, her running echoing the poetic metre of the text. Annie runs to escape the pressures of home life as her grandfather starts to be affected by dementia. The theme is of the natural cycle to life, illustrated through the drawing of an apple over 100 days. The slow decay of the apple is contrasted with the new baby growing in her mother's stomach and Annie, with her grandfather's help, learns that life, death and birth will all naturally continue. *Toffee* (2019) by Sarah Moore Crossan is aimed at slightly older children as it follows Allison who has had to leave her home because of her father's abuse. She meets Marla, a very confused old woman who is not getting any family support, and together they form new kind of family which helps them both learn how to resolve their problems.

The majority of these novels are set in contemporary, realistic narratives which young adults would recognise in their own lives, and this recognition will play a role in offering a relevant space where young people can confront often traumatic themes. The younger generation works to emphasize the patient's continued abilities, rather than their losses, as part of their attempt to return things to 'normal'. Zimmermann argues that narratives about dementia for children have also 'begun rewriting the cultural dementia narrative'; they offer the chance to 'take a

non-judgemental, unencumbered perspective onto a person, who is different' (2020, p143). Falcus & Sako claim the majority of titles about dementia follow the form of 'familial tales', particularly stories of dementia aimed at older children, adopting the 'inheritance plot' which moves the narrative forward by trying to 'contain that disruption and reinstate generational continuity' (2019, p146).

Difficulties with communication and the threat of the loss of language and ability to communicate are expressed through a self-referential use of storytelling in the majority of these texts. Storytelling by the protagonist, or the character with dementia, is embedded in the narrative as a way to express and share the memories and experiences of dementia.

*Grandpa's Great Escape* begins 'this is a tale of a boy called Jack and his grandfather' (2015, p10) and their relationship centres around grandfather's stories about being a Spitfire pilot. *Forgetting Foster* (2017) by Dianne Touchell involves early onset dementia and starts with Foster saying 'best of all my dad tells stories' as the narrative then describes how the stories begin to disappear. In *Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth*, Sputnik arrives in Prez's life asking for his help to identify ten things which make the Earth worth saving and the narrative is driven by the Post-It notes Prez leaves for his grandfather.

Memory, and its loss, is a shared concern of all these stories, and each text faces the challenge of portraying the memories of the dementia character in the absence of that own person's ability to recall them. Other methods of memory retrieval must be employed and I found these

methods primarily focused on storytelling and documentation (diaries, letters, maps, notebooks, newspaper articles). This agrees with Mendlesohn's claims for portal fantasy narratives where time-travel is involved, that they must employ features such as found and recovered artefacts, maps, legends, spells and books to establish an 'authoritative past' which serves to 'make history inarguable' as they present 'a fixed and narrated past' (2008, p14). Attempts are made to recover or retain the memory of the person with dementia through these mechanisms, or the child learns more about the life of their grandparent by revisiting their more active past through physical artefacts which carry their memories. Mendlesohn also discusses the way J R Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) codifies how fantasy deals with landscape, characters and reader positioning by offering characters who were 'embedded in the natural world as authorities in the text' (2008, p30): this notion became key in presenting Hetty's memories as authoritative when she was no longer able to do that herself through language.

Through these artefacts readers' are able to engage with the 'predementia' personalities and lives of the characters affected by the disease and authenticate their experience. In *Stonebird* (2015) by Mike Revell, the family are clearing through the grandmother's belongings, including old newspapers, black and white photographs, old papers and letters when Liam finds his grandmother's diary. The stories his grandmother wrote in the diary at 13 years-old control the magical



Stonebird's actions until Liam takes over the storytelling (Revell, 2015, p7). In *The Memory Cage*, Alex attempts to 'cure' his grandfather's forgetfulness by collecting photographs from his grandfather's life in a scrapbook. By searching out photographs, diary entries and letters through which to reconstruct his grandfather's life, Alex hopes to make trigger memories of better times. Other examples of found 'evidence' in these artefacts are found letters (*Clarice Bean, That's Me; Harry Helps Grandpa Remember; Nanny Never Forgets; A Kiss in Every Wave; The Memory Cage; The Dream Palace*); diaries (*Unbecoming, Stonebird, Daughter*), and by finding and sharing photographs (*The Memory Box, Unbecoming; The Dream Palace; Talking to the Moon*).

*Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth* is a science-fiction story which uses illustrations in the same way as *Grandpa's Great Escape*. Images break up the linearity of the narrative and provide interludes which carry great emotional weight. For example, Prez's grandfather insists on finding his 'sea-chest' which has 'all the most important things in it' (2016, p171). As they search the flat, Prez sees all the Post-It notes which he used to remind his grandfather to do various things. For example, over an illustration of a photograph of Prez a Post-It note reminds his grandfather that 'this is Prez. He is your grandson. He is not your brother or your mate Sergei' (2016, p169). This illustrates the importance in many dementia texts of writing things down which becomes a vital way through which the child can keep contact with the grandparent. *The Rocking Horse Diary* 2005 by Alan Combes is written as 9-year-old Kirk's diary entries as he counts down from October to Christmas. As Kirk and his

grandfather make a rocking horse together, they swap stories and jokes which Kirk writes down so that, as his grandfather becomes unable to tell the stories, Kirk can take over that role in their relationship. In *Back to Blackbrick*, Cosmo uses Ted's notebook to write down his experiences of his grandfather's past so that he can remind his grandfather of his own past in the hope it will help him to pass his medical memory tests (Fitzgerald, 2013, p60). In *The Battle for Spanoak* I have made the telling of stories self-reflexive in the narrative at many levels. Charlie writes down everything that happens to her as an attempt to capture Hetty's memories by which she can solve the mystery of the cup; the Woodwits consider language in terms of 'stories'; Berry is a 'story-keeper' for the SPDR academy and the history of the cup is told in the mythical story of a Warrior Queen (Guiry, 2020). I will discuss this further in Case Study 5.

Dementia is an incurable, fatal disease and all texts about dementia inherently include the spectre of the eventual death of the person suffering from the disease. In all these texts, therefore, successful resolutions cannot come through the redemption of the character in terms of a cure, but must be resolved through other devices or strategies to provide a satisfying 'closure' for readers. For example, in *The Memory Cage*, Alex discovers an article in the Library research room microfiche (Eastham, 2011, p45) which provides archived, first-hand journalistic accounts of his grandfather's life story. It is only when Alex is able to present this evidence of documented 'facts', through copies of letters and diaries, to his adoptive parents, thus corroborating his grandfather's

stories, that he is believed and welcomed back into the family. The trauma of grandfather's past also helps Alex feel able to face his own past (Eastham, 2011, p167). When Alex opens up his own box of memories which had been passed on with him from the orphanage in Bosnia, he finds similar documentary evidence of his former life; photographs, an official list of war dead which includes his parent's and brother's names, family letters, newspaper cuttings and all the other ways in which stories and memories are kept stable (Eastham, 2011, p262). All of these documents help to legitimise and provide authority for the story that Alex is telling, and by being able to show evidence that these stories might have happened, and by offering more personal details of 'personhood', both Alex and Grandad are located back within their family in a resolution which does not depend on the grandfather's death. I have included the following criteria for dementia texts in Table 1 as relating to the majority of narratives for the young:

Code in Table 1	Criteria in dementia texts
Storytelling	Storytelling and stories are embedded in the text selfreflexively to express the memories and experiences of dementia and as a way to engage and communicate with people living with dementia.
Memory/Docs	Memory will be encoded in physical artefacts such as letters, diaries, photographs and notebooks which are used to support the authority of the memories and experiences of the character with dementia.

Time	The dementia experience will be represented through narrative devices which manipulate the flow of time (for example, temporal disturbances, chronology, timetravelling, histories, archaeology, ageing, genealogy and generational concerns)
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In the following sections I will summarise the theoretical standpoints which underpin my construction of some additional criteria for *fantasy* in dementia stories which I propose might be recognised as criteria for fantasy dementia narratives. I use 'storytelling', 'memory' and 'time' as overarching themes to organise this discussion but note that these elements are so tightly enmeshed and overlapping in dementia texts that At times I necessarily include all three subjects across this section. At the end of this section I summarise some criteria for fantasy dementia narratives for children and add these to Table 1 as an original contribution to knowledge which may be useful to other scholars working with genre in dementia texts.

### **Storytelling in Fantasy**

I begin with Clute and Grant's definition of fantasy:

A fantasy text is a self-coherent narrative. When set in this world, it tells a story which is impossible in the world as we perceive it; when set in an otherworld, that otherworld will be impossible, though stories set there may be possible in its terms (1997, p338).

Clute et al argue the broad definition of fantasy is that 'fantasy is a way to tell stories about the fantastic' where story is always self-referential (Clute & Grant, p340). A successful fantasy 'invites and wants the reader to fully inhabit, understand and participate in its impossible worlds' (Clute & Grant, p339) and the impossibility of those worlds sets fantasy apart from realism, though some fantasy stories can contain elements of realism. This definition of fantasy separates 'fantasy genre' from 'genre fantasies' which tend to be more formulaic (for example 'heroic fantasies and 'sword and sorcery' tales) and which do not 'engage deeply with the transformative potentials of fantasy' (1997, p339). Nodelman agrees when he suggests one of the central enjoyments in children's books is that they 'deny impossibility', claiming that the main subject of children's fantasy fiction is 'impossible things happening' (2000, p7). The impossibility of the world of the dementia text has been my primary measure for defining whether the text is a true fantasy story, or a realistic story with fantasy elements.

Clute et al propose a structure for fantasy stories as a passage from 'bondage', via a central 'recognition' based on revelation, which may also involve a 'metamorphosis', leading finally to the 'eucatastrophe' and 'healing' (1997, p339). In its broadest sense, this definition reflects the arc of the disease itself. From the onset of symptoms and unusual behaviours which restrict ability (bondage), to the point when these behaviours are recognised as dementia (recognition/diagnosis), through to the transformation of the affected character as symptoms develop

(metamorphosis). The final resolution / consolation / healing in the case of dementia inevitably means death, and I discuss this in more detail below. The moment of recognition in Clute's model resonates with Nobleman when he claims stories which begin from a naïve and child-like point of view 'come to a triumphant climax at the moment when the child sees past the innocence, acknowledges it as ignorance, and becomes more mature (2000, p4), which equates death with maturity.

Clute claims a fantasy is above all else 'a story' (1997, p339). Fantasy texts are most easily understood as stories, whereas other categories of the fantastic may rely on '*what* is being told rather than *how* it is being told' (1997, p900). A focus on stories as the building blocks of narrative will resonate deeply with anyone who has experiences of dementia and I will return to my own, first-hand experience of living with someone with the disease (and that of families I have interviewed as part of this research), when I propose that the *telling of stories* becomes the central currency of communication for someone living with dementia. The stories the dementia patient tells, which under usual circumstances might be unquestioned as the sharing of memories, tend to be repeated over time, often increasingly out of context and with gradually less detail or chronological cohesion as the disease progresses until, I suggest, these narratives begin to blur the distinction between 'story' and 'memory'.

In fantasy narratives, Clute et al argue that fantasy narratives are constructed to reveal an underlying 'story' in which the protagonists know

they are acting out a tale (1997, p901). For example, storytelling is selfreflexively embedded in *Grandpa's Great Escape* as Walliams provides a sixteen page pre-prologue introduction to the characters. Visual devices, including celluloid film designs around the page and caricature illustrations of each character are completed with pictures of Jack and his grandfather (2015, pp8-24). The story begins on page 25 with 'this is the tale of a boy called Jack and his grandfather. Once upon a time Grandpa was a Royal Air Force pilot' and 'our story is set in 1983' (Walliams, 2015, p9). *Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth* begins with Prez's grandfather telling him that if something 'is worth doing then it is worth making a list' (2016, p1). We quickly learn that Prez has been covering for his grandfather's increasing confusion and forgetfulness by maintaining these 'to-do' lists and going through them with him each day. By writing Post-It notes and leaving them around the house, Prez has been ensuring that his grandfather meets basic hygiene standards, reminding him to shave, put on his shoes and do up his trousers (2016, p10). These notes also remind his grandfather of the activities they both enjoy in order to jog his grandfather's memory to continue telling Prez stories about his adventures as a young sailor travelling the world. Prez already imagines his grandfather's life as a series of stories. On many occasions the narrative makes the fantasy world ambiguous: only Prez and his grandfather can ever see Sputnik. Cottrell-Boyce always offers a realist (scientific) explanation for the 'magic' which Prez performs and no other characters in the story believes they are in a fantasy world. It is implied that the story is in Prez's imagination. Uncertainty about the present is reinforced when a social worker tells Prez, 'I'm afraid your

grandad can no longer look after you at the present time'. When Prez asks if his grandfather will get better soon: the man replies, 'we can but hope' (2016, p66). Dementia does not improve and readers' might share Prez's sense of uncertainty about what is really happening to his grandfather.

Rustin & Rustin argue that children's fantasy fiction 'is a genre of distinctively metaphoric writing' where stories 'also function as metaphors or poetic containers for the typical life experiences of its readers' at a time they are 'fresh to both language and feelings' (2001, p4). There are many examples of dementia stories using metaphors from the natural world to describe the disease. Hannah Zeilig, in her essay 'Dementia as a Cultural Metaphor' uses the perspectives of critical gerontology to examine how societies have constructed, reflected and defined dementia through the stories they tell each other about it through popular media (2014, p258). She found that metaphors from the natural world play a large part in our everyday language, finding newspaper headlines focused on emotionally charged metaphors about dementia in terms of war and battle as well as describing the disease through natural metaphors of a 'rising tide', or a 'tsunami of suffering'. She also points out how trees are also linked to the organic nature of the brain with words like 'dendrite' (the Greek word for 'tree like'), 'roots' and 'stems' being used to describe the brain's architecture (Zeilig, 2013, p262).

Martina Zimmermann explores the language used by people who have developed the disease and finds metaphors of 'a journey' (2017, p77),



and a 'black hole' (2017, p78). Diana McGowin's work, 'Living in the Labyrinth: A Personal Journey through the Maze of Alzheimer's' (1993), employs the metaphor of Alzheimer's as being 'lost in the labyrinth' of spatial and temporal disorientation. Claude Couturier, in *Puzzle: Journal d'une Alzheimer* (2004), likens herself to a 'tree in autumn', losing her leaves knowing they will not return again in Spring (2017, p80), a metaphor I borrow directly *The Battle for Spanoak* when Charlie wonders if Hetty's memory will return in the same way as the leaves do in spring (Guiry, 2020, p27). Andrea Gillies in 'Keeper: Living with Nancy – A Journey into Alzheimer's' describes her mother's dementia as like a 'forest fire' destroying all before it (quoted in Zimmermann, 2017, p75).

Attebery tells us fantasy, in similar ways to metaphor, 'depicts the associational processes of the unconscious' against the conscious understanding of the world (1992, p8) and I begin to link the unconscious 'landscape' of dementia with the conscious landscape of the text. For Carroll, fictional landscapes are 'a physical and imaginative construct' where 'landscapes are at once geographic and historical, natural and cultural, experienced and represented, and present a spatial interface between human culture and physical terrain' (2011, p2). The resonances between exterior and interior experiences of dementia led me to experiment with the notion that dementia might be a portal and I tested this against some fantasy theories. Clute and Grant describe a portal as being either physical (gates, doors, mirrors or wardrobes etc), or they can be metaphorical, existing wherever a threshold between worlds is 'sufficiently focused to be detected' (1997, p776). Fantasy

portals signal any kind of physical transit from one world to an otherworld, including from one time to another (through 'Timeslip' narratives, which I will discuss later), and even from life into death. Portals in fantasy texts also tend to be guarded by conditions, or tests, which must be met before one can pass through, and are therefore 'part of the grammar of significant story' (1997, p776). In this way it is the knowledge kept by the Woodwits which maintain Hetty's memory of her role as protector of the forest. Her loss of these memories force the Woodwits to come through the portal to bring Charlie back to educate her, now that Hetty is unable to fulfil this role.

Mendlesohn claims a portal fantasy will always include a point of transition from an original 'frame' world through to a secondary fantasy world, which the protagonist can move through but the fantasy world cannot (2008, p2). In the case of portal fantasies where the secondary world is under threat Mendlesohn also claims 'the heart of the portal fantasy is always *the land* and not the adventure' (2008, p28). The Rustins' propose imaginary lands are 'containers' of moral and emotional adventures where a child reader can 'bear the terrors of moral choices in which the death of goodness is at stake, in the knowledge that the children facing these also have a secure place back at home (2001, p40). Readers know nothing of the world on the other side of the portal and so their position is naïve, guided only by the protagonist for explanation of what the world contains and what it might mean

(Mendlesohn, 2008, p1), which is therefore full of 'intense description of landscape' (2008, p136). The world on the other side of the portal also relates to Carroll's model of the 'lapsed topos' where the hidden world allows characters to become embedded within the landscape, 'opening up passages to the forgotten past "deep past" (2011, p134). By offering a model outside the linearity of time Carroll tells us that hidden spaces allow for a 'disorderly meshing of past and present and of memory and potentiality' (2011, p135). If dementia is conceived as a portal then memory gains a new potentiality in the world beyond the frame world which can be expressed by, or on behalf of, the character with dementia.

### **Memory in Fantasy**

Attebery claims that story is closely linked to memory, and both inhabit a privileged place in fantasy texts:

By placing questions of memory and fate, cause and effect, invention and experience at the level of story, rather than leaving them at the discretion of a narrator as realistic fiction tends to do, fantasy suggests that they are central to the process of storytelling, and not mere stylistic choices (Attebery, 1992, p68).

It is through the correspondences between notions of memory and landscape that I connect Hetty's dementia to the landscape of Spanoak to explore how fantasy worlds can offer a space for a fresh, critical relationship between child readers and people with dementia. Schama points out the connection between memories, time, and real and imagined landscapes when he says landscapes may be 'a text on which generations write their recurring obsessions' (1995, p12). He claims the

natural myths of the landscape tradition are still with us as ‘a tradition built from a rich deposit of myths, memories and obsessions’ (2004, p14), and that, in the landscapes of our imaginations ‘scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock’ (1995, p7). It was fundamental to *The Battle of Spanoak* that I connect Hetty’s memory (and by association her dementia) with the world of Spanoak in order to achieve a successful resolution to the novel.

As already noted, dementia and the lived environment are linked in George, Qualls, Cameron and Whitehouse’s study, which concludes that an individual’s *environment* (in terms of place but also culture, education, social networks) will determine their experience of dementia (2013, p378–387, italics mine). This is what Zimmermann finds in her study of life-writing when she claims that ‘a patient’s lived past structures their illness experience in the present’ (2020, p126). My aim in *The Battle for Spanoak* is to align Hetty’s dementia with the magical, hidden world of Spanoak behind the portal in order to bring a focus on threat to, and need for urgent care of, woodland spaces. Attebery calls J R R Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* ‘the mental template’ of fantasy in its treatment of the landscape as an active part of the narrative, (Attebery, 1992, p14) because it provides a ‘road map to the marvellous, complete with the testing of the hero, crossing of a threshold, supernatural assistance, confrontation, flight and the establishment of a new order at home.’ (Attebery, 1992, p15). Levy & Mendlesohn extend this to suggest it was Tolkien who established that fantasy should heal the world, and

that the challenge was not a personal problem but a universal one as shared across several characters and races (2016, p135). This idea resonates with the challenges of dementia. Clute, too, notes that forests have the unique ability through which, because of its vastness, a forest takes on an innate sentience (1997, p362). This sense of a sentient forest is also linked to our memories by Pogue Harrison, who argues that the presence of a forest folklore has the collective psychological effect of evoking memories of the past which over time have become a figure for memory itself by being 'recycled through all the forests of our imagination, stories and poetry to provide a correlate, or primal scene, for poetic memory' (1992, p156). Forests in anthropomorphised forms, such as in ancient myths, have come to serve as metaphors for a sacred past and a repository for the collection and transformation of memory through deities such as Diana (the Huntress), Pan, Proteus and later 'Herne the Hunter', reflecting a time 'nature was more humanised because humanity itself was more naturalised' (1992, p160).

Tuan describes the natural life-cycle as the temporality of the landscape in *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* dividing the land into the 'vertical' and the 'horizontal', where the horizontal represents the landscape as the space to be travelled across, and the vertical is charged with metaphorical meaning, signifying transcendence which has affinity with the notion of cyclical, and eternal, time (1974, p129). Casey argues that 'place' should not be subordinated to 'time' and 'space' and he offers a new model where place, as the primary state, allows time and space to be located through 'furnishing

*dimensions*' of a place (such as events, histories, culture) which operate beyond any exact location in either geographic space or chronometric time (2009, Introduction, xxv, italics in the original). These furnishing dimensions, Casey claims, are 'non-physical' and 'non-geographic' and they work together to produce place as 'facilitative' and 'locatory' but also as 'eventmental: as a scene of personal and historical happening' (2009, Introduction, xxv). 'There is no grasping of time without place' Casey, 2009, p21) and in his notion of 'implacement' he says 'implacement' itself is [...] occasion bound: or more exactly, it binds actual occasions into unique collocations of space and time' (Casey, 2009, p21).

I used Casey's notion of 'eventmental' dimension in my depiction of Spanoak and Spanoak Wood, creating in them a place where Hetty's lived experience can continue to be valued as a series of events. Using Casey's terms, it becomes possible to embody the experience of dementia in the territory of Spanoak through Hetty's remaining memories as a 'scene of personal and historical happening' (2009, Introduction, xxv) where the duration of Hetty's life (past), the narrative (present) and Charlie's future family life and memories of Hetty (future) can all be located.

I propose that the narrative challenge of resolving stories about dementia, which must confront the inevitable death of the dementia character, are what makes fantasy narrative devices transformational in representing the disease. Clute and Grant propose a structure for fantasy as being a story of a passage from 'bondage', via a central

'recognition' based on revelation, which may also involve a 'metamorphosis', which leads to the 'eucatastrophe' and 'healing' (1997, p339). The 'eucatastrophe' is a term coined by J R R Tolkien in his essay 'On Fairy-Stories' which speaks of the 'uplifting turn of plot' which leads to 'a piercing glimpse of joy, of hearts desire' which extends beyond the story itself (qtd. in Clute et al, 1997, p323). A key challenge, of course, lies in this moment of eucatastrophe in the resolution of dementia narratives. Dementia, as already noted, is incurable and fatal, so a healing resolution or eucatastrophe may seem unattainable, particularly for the character living with the disease.

Dementia narratives must find some way to resolve issues around suffering, death and dementia. Falcus & Sako consider the narrative of 'inheritance' is able to resolve familial tales of dementia through the restoration of the generational line, not simply by passing on property, but by locating one's place in family history where 'inheritance narrative' can offer the concept of a more certain future (2019, p144). They argue that, 'if it is mystery-solving that works to restore order in detective stories, in the familial tale it is the inheritance plot that functions as a narrative of restitution to restore genealogical stability (Falcus & Sako, 2019, p146). This resolution works in *Grandpa's Great Escape* when, at the last moment, grandfather recognises Jack in the Spitfire cockpit and insists he bail out, telling him 'as long as you love me, I can never die' (2015, p414). The successful resolution comes through the acknowledgment of his grandfather's funeral, at which there is no proof of his death: the coffin is empty. Neither the Spitfire, nor grandfather,

were ever seen again as, in a scene reminiscent of the 1991 film *Thelma & Louise*, the grandfather flies upwards until he disappears into thin air (2015, p415).

In the Epilogue, Jack lies 'between awake and asleep' and hears a Spitfire engine. In it his grandfather looks just as he did as a young pilot and Jack watches him zoom around the night sky until, eventually, he flies off. The next night Jack 'closed his eyes and concentrated as hard as he could' and once again he sees the Spitfire. Jack's grandfather has moved from sharing the narrative of the story world to appearing in Jack's imagination or dreams (2015, p449). The story ends by revealing that Jack is now an adult with a son of his own, who, after hearing about his great-grandfather's stories now sees Grandpa fly past his window each night. Levy & Mendlesohn claim that 'destiny' acts to provide a sense of order when the future feels insecure, but note that destiny can also strip the protagonist of their full agency (2016, p115). Hetty's dementia has proved to be a stronger force than her destined role to protect the woodland and her responsibility to pass that knowledge on. Charlie, by accepting her destiny as the inheritor of the role of protector of the woodland, shows that dementia is devastating but there are always ways to ameliorate the damage done to the sufferer.

Jan Baars connects the human perspective on aging with nature when he claims 'narratives make it possible to give personal meaning to the otherwise abstract chronological dimension that reminds us of our



connection to nature with its inevitable processes of aging and decay (1997, p289). I build on this to propose that by aligning the passing of time in the dementia experience with the passing of time over the longer eras of the natural world through the woodland story, I can embody the dementia experience as being secondary to the more positive potential in the story of the natural long life and regeneration of the forest. In Carroll's 'Green Topos' it is the natural cycles of death and renewal embodied in the woodland figures, the Green Man and Herne the Hunter (2011, p83) that I draw on to locate a resolution to Hetty's inevitable death, and also her dementia. Yi-fu Tuan, in *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*, links both old and young people with fantasy when he says 'youngsters people the future with fantasies, whereas with the old it is the lengthening past that provides the material for fantasy and distortion' (1974, p57). For me, it is the *fantasy* in this notion which is celebrated in the relationship between young protagonists in dementia narratives and the character living with the disease. In *Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth*, time passing is also expressed through the seasons as the geese arrive back at the farm after having been in Iceland all summer: 'they never get lost', says Jessie, and Prez decides, 'I suppose home is home, even if people are shooting at you' (2016, p244).

Rustin & Rustin agree that the experience of loss and death can be more safely explored by children through the life cycle of creatures (2001, p21) and I use both life-cycles of individual trees and the metaphor of the long-life of the forest, and implied eternal life of the Great Oak, to present

the loss in terms of its potential to be mediated and ameliorated through the long-term survival and renewal of the woodland.

### **Time in Fantasy**

'Once upon a time' also signals the importance of time itself in fantasy. Narrative is language's way of exploring time; it enables us to give shape and meaning to time in somewhat the same way architecture orders space. The literary convention we call story is our way of establishing imaginative control over time, and so is the fundamental vehicle for artistry within narrative discourse (Attebery, 1992, p53).

Time, as a philosophical, temporal and chronological concept, sits in the centre of the overlapping fields of dementia, fantasy writing and ecocritical writing I explore in this thesis and are reflected in my structure of storytelling, memory and time. Of these, I propose 'time' offers a particularly useful narrative device to represent the dementia experience and I explore here some of the ways in which time is treated in dementia narratives. Time also has specific meanings in the fantasy genre. Clute and Grant find that 'timeslip' and time-travel narratives are found in children's fantasy particularly often, usually in association with magical intrusions or through the use of portals (1997, p948). 'Timeslips' are defined as often linking an ancestor to a descendent, not necessarily through physical travel, whereas *Time-travel* on the other hand, does involve a *physical* movement (1997, p949). In *Children's Literature Comes of Age*, Maria Nikolajeva discusses Bakhtin's notion of chronotopes through which every genre can be defined by the way it organises time and space, claiming we see the fantasy chronotype

'because it is so obvious' (1996, p122). She finds that most fantasy novels organise the plot so that time in the primary world stands still whilst the protagonist is in the secondary world, and this reflects the 'division between the sacred and profane space' (1996, p124). I partially adopted this difference in the way in which time operates in the fantasy and real worlds in *The Battle for Spanoak* (where time passes more slowly, but does not stand still) to allow Charlie to spend extended periods away from home undetected.

The work of Wheeler, Stuss and Tulving in researching the 'mental timetravel' of dementia's disruption to chronological memory and the person's ability to mentally project themselves back in subjective time, leads to chronological fractures in autobiographical memory (1997, p331 – 354). This effect reflects the dementia experience in Zimmermann's work when she talks of narrative devices being necessary in dementia fiction to portray a life without 'narrative drive' and where 'the narrative propulsion' through a linear sense of 'my life' is fractured (2020, p137). In his study of autobiographical and life-writing, Brockmeier is concerned with the mix of autobiographical memory and time, claiming 'narrative discourse is our most advanced way to shape complex temporal experiences, including remembering' (2009, p118). He quotes Proust writing about a human being as:

[T]hat ageless creature who has the faculty of becoming many years younger in a few seconds, and who, surrounded by the

walls of the time through which he has lived, floats within them as in a pool the surface-level of which is constantly changing so as to bring him within range now of one epoch, now of another (1983: 3:627 quoted in Brockmeier 2009, p115).

Here, Proust could equally have been talking about the experience of someone living with dementia-related disturbances in their episodic autobiographical memory. Brockmeier suggests that memory and time are both 'narrative phenomena' in a philosophical and psychological sense because both are 'only thinkable and imaginable as autobiographical discourse and narrative time' (2009, p117). Jan Baars links this connection of time to the human perspective on aging when he claims our 'experience of time is shared with others in the form of narratives' (1997, p289). Drawing on these links between narrative and time, I adopt Clute et al's definition of 'time', in fantasy narratives, as a 'qualitative endeavour' used to explain the moments of lived experience, often through 'cycles' (seasons, lives), where time 'enfolds the shape of events' in the same way that 'story expresses the shape of events': for fantasy writer 'Once Upon a Time' means 'seize the day' (Clute et al, 1997, p946).

This sense of the immediate present resonates with the dementia experience through the loss of chronological order (Wheeler, Stuss and Tulving, 1997). The act of growing older itself offers the most common theme in the life-writing dementia narratives explored by Falcus & Sako (2019) and Zimmermann (2020). Jan Baars argues that aging takes place only within 'human time' which presupposes a present, past and

future, yet this chronological view of time can offer only a limited view of the aging process because past, present and future carry 'no sense of a longitudinal present' (1997, p283). Time, in Baars' sense of aging, cannot be an 'independent variable' (1997, p284) because it is impossible to experience 'time' directly without any culturally mediated constitution of time (1997, p291). This view of time as culturally and even chronologically mediated corresponds with William Stern's definition of 'the personal present' as being 'spatiotemporally neutral; it is the unseparated here-now' which also talks of a notion of time as being fluid, continuously constructed and available to the dementia sufferer 'unmediated by their condition' (Stern, 1938, p93 qtd in Zimmermann, 2020, p29).

Though 'time travel' stories are generally seen as a sub-genre of Fantasy and Science-Fiction writing (Clute & Grant 1997, Wittenberg 2013), Wittenberg argues that since all narratives "travel" through time, constructing fictional worlds, one could arguably call narrative itself a 'time machine', or a 'mechanism for revising the arrangements of stories and histories.' (2013, p1 Introduction). Wittenberg's study of the history of time travel is primarily concerned with film, but he looks at a small range of fiction literature to trace the development of time-travel narratives against scientific discovery. He traces the time-travel story's development from the publication of H G Well's *The Time Machine* (1895) , through the prominence of Darwinism which established that the future is derived from an evolutionary link to the past (2013, p30) to the

new scientific discoveries in theoretical physics, which brought new focus on plots possibilities of the material bodies moving through time and space (2013, p31) to the extent that time travel becomes a 'narratological laboratory – a literature about the forms and mechanisms of storytelling itself (2013 p31 and p143). By the 1930s, Wittenberg claims, time travel narratives are a recognisable genre about the basic conventions of story construction (2013, p63).

To return to Falcus & Sako, they argue generational time can be used to 'naturalise ideas about temporality' (2019, p16) where the link between time and dementia is focused around the 'course of a person's life [being] interrupted' (2019, p9). They suggest this is because dementia threatens the transmission of family stories' (2019, p16). Though I would question any broad cultural impact of dementia on *genealogy* (people with dementia in narratives tend to have had children/grandchildren despite the disease, so genealogy itself is not the focus of threat), Falcus & Sako also include the inheritance of knowledge and wisdom, the loss of which threatens the transmission of family knowledge, memories and stories (2019, p145). I note that a dementia diagnosis might also work to promote and accelerate a younger generation's interest in family history, as it did in my own family, which becomes more urgent in the knowledge that memories will soon be lost.

Carroll also notes that genealogy structures many fantasy stories through the passing on of magical powers or objects (2011, p136).

Carroll's topos of 'the ruin' also suggests time has passed as the building falls into decay during human life times (2011, p160). In *The Battle for Spanoak*, Callum's death is contained in the concrete foundation in the field as the symbol of both his death, and Hetty's inability to recall his death. Carroll argues that ruins are often the site of revelation of repressed or hidden aspects of the past, which, through the revelation, can prescribe action for the future (2011, p161). The ruined Blackbrick Abbey reveals the grandfather's life before dementia and prompts Cosmo to manipulate his ancestors until his own future existence assured. In *Grandpa's Great Escape*, the ruin is located in the Spitfire, hanging in the Imperial War Museum, which the grandfather brings back to life, forever remaining a young pilot free from dementia, for his grandson and great-grandson. In *Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth*, the ruin is found in Hadrian's Wall, which Prez, in an act of wish-fulfilment around having his grandfather back with him, rebuilds, changing it temporarily from a ruin to a pristine wall.

DeFalco in *Uncanny Subjects* (2010) argues that dementia provides 'a glimpse of the future, drawing attention to a fundamental mortal instability at odds with impressions of permanence'. She finds auto/biographical texts reflect 'a persistent and irresolvable tension between the fluidity of time and characters' staccato-like apprehension of it which segments time into discrete moments, periods, and ages' (2010, p127). This is echoed by Zimmermann when she argues that many

dementia narratives approach representations of temporal disruption through their plot and narrative structures, offering Terry Pratchett's television documentary *Living with Alzheimer's* (2009) directed by Charlie Russell, Christine Bryden's *Dancing with Dementia: My Story of Living Positively with Dementia* (2005), and Richard Taylor's collection of essays *Alzheimer's from the Inside Out* (2007) as examples where the narrative approach includes such devices as episodic reflections and fragmented narratives, short paragraphs and lack of strict chronological ordering to demonstrate the fragmentation of time in the dementia experience (2020, p137). Falcus & Sako find this in *The One With the News* (2000) by Sandra Sabatini, which is a collection of short stories and therefore exploits the short-story form's ability to present 'embedded presents' and changing points of view to construct a 'kaleidoscopic presentation of the life of Ambrose', the main character across the stories (2019, p106).

Nodelman claims past childhood can be revisited when 'it's metamorphosed into a place, because, whereas times pass, places can exist simultaneously' (2000, p10), and argues this stems from the dichotomy of adult writers being the primal scene of a text's creation (2000, p11). In *The Battle for Spanoak* I have chosen to represent 'time' in multiple ways to reflect the disturbances to Hetty's sense of time. One of these is archaeology. Butler argues that archaeology is concerned with historical time, mythical time and personal time 'made manifest through the land, particularly where consciousness of the deep past is in



constant interplay with change and contemporaneity' (2006, p42). In this sense, the landscape reflects the dementia experience of episodic, nonchronological memory, and it also reflects Butler's claim that people create a 'trans-historical community through remembrance of which one may be reconciled even to one's own personal impermanence (2006, p67). It is this reconciliation which I propose offers another positive and transformational resolution to dementia narratives which I discuss further in the 'resolution' section of *The Battle for Spanoak Case Study*.

Drawing from all these theoretical perspectives I offer additional criteria which I propose as being commonplaces in fantasy treatments of dementia stories, which I have included in Table 1:

Code in Table 1	Criteria in dementia texts
Fantasy	The text will be a self-coherent narrative set in an impossible world
Portal	Where the fantasy includes a portal, the two worlds will reflect and contrast the memories, of the character with dementia.
Landscape	Where the fantasy land is under <i>threat</i> , the exterior landscape will be associated with the dementia or the well-being of the person living with the disease.

Time-travel	Fantasy narrative devices will include <i>impossible</i> constructions of time as a mechanism for presenting and revising stories and histories. Time-travelling will represent dementia unmediated by the physical body of the person living with the disease.
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### **Close Reading Case Studies**

I now offer case studies of some of the children’s literature (CL) texts I have identified in Table 1 as being full fantasy narratives in order to explore some additional examples to those already discussed of the ways in which fantasy narratives create their representations of dementia. Each narrative is set within an unambiguously impossible world and each uses fantasy rhetorical and narrative approaches to the disease. I finish with a case study of my own novel, *The Battle for Spanoak* (2020), drawing on my proposed criteria to demonstrate a fantasy woodland representation of dementia. I begin each case study with a summary of the text. I then explore the extent to which the properties I propose as criteria of fantasy dementia narratives (see Table 1) operate in these texts to tell stories about dementia.

**Case Study 1: *Back to Blackbrick* by Sarah Moore Fitzgerald (2013) as a time-portal narrative.**

*Back to Blackbrick* is a story about time travel. The protagonist, Cosmo, is trying to keep his granddad at home when his behaviour is putting himself and those around him at risk. When granddad gives him a key to Blackbrick Abbey, a nearby ruined manor house, Cosmo discovers the gate is a portal through which he has travelled back in time. He meets and befriends his granddad as a young man and plays a crucial role in bringing him together with his grandmother, thereby ensuring his own later existence and resolving a new acceptance of his grandfather's present-time condition. I have included this title as being for readers of 7 – 12-years-old because reviews in Amazon, Goodreads, and the tagging in the British Library catalogued it as such, but it shares approaches with Young Adult fiction in that the protagonist, as a 15 year old, enjoys more independence than other protagonists. For example, a taxi-driver collects him and takes him out to the dark countryside without question, he decides to remain at Blackbrick Abbey as an employee of the house for almost a year, and the narrative includes a rape. The novel demonstrates use of time-travel to revisit the memories of characters with dementia, resolve generational continuity and demonstrate that love can survive any hardship.

*Back to Blackbrick* begins with a dedication: 'In memory of Paul Stanley Moore: Dad extraordinaire' (2013, p1). As with *Stonebird* this suggests autobiographical knowledge which conveys a sense of authority through

personal experience. The dedication page is followed by a separate quotation identified as from 'Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*' which begins 'at least of this I feel assured, that there is no such thing as forgetting possible to the mind' (2013, Prologue). This quote establishes the relationship which the protagonist will have with memories by the end of the narrative (Fitzgerald, 2013: Prologue). Time disturbances are demonstrated in the first line as Cosmo begins by recalling this story: 'granddad was pretty much the cleverest person I ever met so it was strange in the end to see the way people treated him – as if he were a complete moron' (2012, p1).

'Dementia' is not explicitly used to describe Cosmo's grandfather's challenging behaviour but readers are told by Cosmo that his grandfather mixes up names, talks to lampposts, pees in the dishwasher and wanders around the house at night. But perhaps most upsetting is the fact that his grandfather has also forgotten the death of his grandson (2013, p2). Grandfather's dementia has left him 'shivering, thin and empty. Like a shadow' (2013, p3) which sets his dementia at a late stage.

The grandfather is still living at home, but the threat has arrived that he must go into a home. It is only when he breaks his leg, however, that Cosmo's grandfather is taken to hospital, which occurs almost a third of the way through the story. Social Services and Granddad's adult son, Ted, explain to Cosmo that 'no-one ever recovers from Alzheimer's' (2013, p31). At this point readers will still assume they are reading a purely realistic story of a family living coping with dementia. The time

comes for his grandfather to go into hospital, but when Cosmo goes to say goodbye the night before he finds him unexpectedly lucid, 'alert and bright and focused' (2013, p37). His grandfather tells him he is aware his 'mind is failing' and there is 'only one thing that can help me now', offering Cosmo a key which he tells him will help 'find the answer to everything' (2013, p38). Granddad tells Cosmo the gate is a portal to the past and, if Cosmo goes through it, 'I'll be there. On the other side. Waiting for you. Bring a pen and paper' (2013, p39). Time itself is also aligned with natural world as Cosmo's grandfather tells him that the past is 'frozen, like ice, and the future is liquid, like water. And how the present is the freezing point of time' (2013, p15).

The mention of a pen and paper reflects the work Cosmo has been doing to write his grandfather's memories down. He has discovered a website called 'The Memory Cure', which offers didactic advice on dealing with memory loss by sharing photographs and memories as well as on exercise and diet (2013, p7) and he believes that if he writes his grandfather's memories down it will help him 'pass' his memory test (2013, p40). Cosmo discovers that the gate to Blackbrick Abbey is a portal, the point of transition between Cosmo's original 'frame' world and a secondary, impossible world. Cosmo celebrates his grandfather's genius: 'you've made a bloody portal', not with 'flux capacitors, or a Tardis, or cosmic strings, or gravitational laser solutions' but because his grandfather was 'able to do time travel' (2013, p52). Clute & Grand define 'timeslips' as often linking an ancestor to a descendent, but they also say that portals involving *physical* movement are 'time-travel' stories

(1997, p949). Time travel back to ancestor's lives also places memory and fate at the level of story, rather a stylistic choice (Attebery, 1992, p68). The time portal also negotiates 'place' on an equal level with 'time'. As Casey argues, 'place' is not subordinate to 'time' and 'space' but is a new model which 'allows time and space to be located through 'furnishing *dimensions*' located 'beyond any exact location in either geographic space or chronometric time (2009, Introduction, xxv, italics in the original).

His grandfather had told him to lock the gates after him carefully, 'it would never do to let anyone else in' (2013, p39), recalling Mendlesohn's properties of portal fantasies as allowing the fantasy to pass only in one direction (2008, p9) and the language of 'constant amazement', (2008, xxii). As soon as he is on the inside of the portal gate, a figure emerges from the bushes (Fitzgerald, 2013:49). Clute's sense of 'recognition' of the fantasy world in full fantasy narratives comes when Cosmo recognises the figure is his granddad as a young man and realises he has travelled through the gate of Blackbrick Abbey into his granddad's past and is now part of a new world (Fitzgerald, 2013, p51). For Cosmo, the ability to travel back in time confirms that his grandfather is not losing his memory but has created the portal world as a place to store his memories intact. At first, Cosmo assumes he has done this to warn him about the trauma to come with his brother's death so it can be averted. Cosmo calls himself a 'time traveller' and quickly decides to stay in this new world (2013, p64), threatening the continued generational lineage of his family. In the otherworld behind the portal, the narrative of *Back to*

*Blackbrick* becomes Cosmo's quest to ensure generational continuity is maintained. He must engineer that the young version of his grandfather must meet the young version of his grandmother. The narrative then follows the model of Clute's definition of a 'timeslip narrative' in which fantasy links ancestors to their descendants (1997, p948).

Carroll claims the 'lapsed topos' of the ruin provides the clearest connection between past and present. *Back to Blackbrick* does not make a character of the landscape, but the space to which Cosmo travels back to locate granddad's memories is Blackbrick Abbey, described in relation to the landscape from which it rises: a large country house which Cosmo describes as looking 'like it was more or less growing out of the ground' (Fitzgerald, 2013, p58). The ruined Blackbrick Abbey becomes the metaphorical space for his grandfather's memories as Cosmo simultaneously lives his life alongside him. When Cosmo approaches the gate to Blackbrick Abbey he finds it is located in deserted countryside and surrounded by woodland where 'the sounds of the massive big trees that were creaking like hundreds of old doors opening very slowly', and the gate opens 'like an enormous toothy mouth doing a slow yawn' (Fitzgerald, 2013, p45), making a brief, metaphorical connection between his grandfather's physical body and the natural world. The portal is surrounded by greenery and time is measured in the secondary world by the turning of the seasons. When Cosmo finds he can't go home immediately he begins to forget about the present and the reader's clue

to time passing is portrayed through the trees on the driveway as the ones around the portal remain 'as green and black and thick as ever' but the trees everywhere else are losing all their leaves as winter arrives (Fitzgerald, 2013, p138). Time itself is also aligned with natural world as Cosmo's grandfather tells him that the past is 'frozen, like ice, and the future is liquid, like water. And how the present is the freezing point of time' (2013, p15). Carroll argues ruins are sites of both 'fascination and revulsion' and within those two poles dementia sits very well. *Back to Blackbrick* is written in 'episodes', sometimes of half a page, sometime three or four pages, each separated by a small symbol. This echoes the episodic disturbances to memory and recalls time as culturally and even chronologically mediated: the 'the personal present' as being 'spatio-temporally neutral' (Stern, 1938, p93 qtd. in Zimmermann, 2020, p29).

When Cosmo returns to his own time he is convinced he has enough knowledge to cure his grandfather's illness by preventing the accidental death of his little brother (for which his grandfather blames himself and which is implicated in his dementia). Realising that his 'young' grandfather isn't able to recognise him, Cosmo recognises that 'it didn't make a difference which stupid time zone I was in. Granddad didn't recognise me in either of them' (2013, p52). When he finds that the girl his grandfather initially wants to marry is not his grandmother, Cosmo assumes he has caused a disruption which is against a natural order: 'I'm tampering with history here. I'm interfering with the natural order of things (2013, p86).



Time travel offers an opportunity for Cosmo and readers to become more sympathetic to his grandfather's dementia, but since granddad did not have dementia in his past, the opportunity to interrogate the impact of the disease or to present it with a new perspective in relation to the present is lost. The narrative distance between Cosmo and his emotions continues when he leaves Blackbrick Abbey through the portal:

'I watched myself cross over the threshold through those gates as if I wasn't even in my own body' (Fitzgerald, 2013, p186). This lack of corporeal substantiality speaks of returning to his grandfather with his dementia intact and again hints at a link between granddad's dementia and the world beyond the portal.

Through a time-portal Cosmo is able to get to know his grandfather in a 'spatio-temporally neutral' place 'unmediated by [his] condition' (Stern, 1938, p93 qtd in Zimmermann, 2020, p29). The grandfather's dementia is resolved at the end when Cosmo tells us 'I sat with my granddad every single day before he died' (2013, p221), demonstrating that Cosmo has already successfully negotiated his grandfather's death and sparing readers' the experience. The final chapter gives time to Cosmo and his grandfather to share more stories and for Cosmo to reassure his grandfather that he is OK.

## **Case Study 2: *Stonebird* by Mike Revell (2015) as an intrusion fantasy and storytelling narrative.**

*Stonebird* meets Clute's definition of being in the fantasy genre. It follows 11-year-old Liam who has moved to his grandmother's old house with his mother and sister to be nearer to his grandmother's care home. Under the pressure of being bullied at school, a mother whose drinking is becoming out of control, and a disaffected teenage sister, Liam resents the move. At the beginning of the story a shadow passes over the house and Liam discovers a huge, flying stone gargoyle has landed inside the abandoned church behind his house. When Liam finds his grandmother's childhood diary carries a picture of the gargoyle titled 'Stonebird', Liam realises it is his reading of his grandmother's stories from the diary which has called the magical, if dangerously unpredictable, gargoyle to him. A new teacher arrives at his school and encourages the class to share stories with each other as they pass a stone egg around the class. Liam finds the stories he tells whilst holding the stone egg come true in his own life so he begins to tell stories which will benefit his life. The Stonebird cures his grandmother's dementia for a day, but when he calls on the Stonebird to exact revenge on a bully, almost killing him in the process, Liam learns that the Stonebird is beyond his control. When Liam learns to take responsibility and control over his own actions, in effect controlling his own story, the Stonebird leaves.

*Stonebird* is about the power of stories to share, and heal, generational relationships. The novel opens with a dedication: 'For Molly Ward, who I will always remember', suggesting an autobiographical connection between the author and the experience, which also draws attention to the telling of a story. Storytelling is embedded in the text self-reflexively to drive narrative progression and to reflect the experience of dementia. The Stonebird's activity is directed by the stories Liam tells to his class. The Stonebird is made alive by stories and the stories Liam tells controls how the narrative is told (in Clute, 1997, p900). In this sense the Stonebird is revealed as a mindless avatar able to act only in relation to the stories Liam tells. This is then problematically associated with the grandmother as her loss of control over her own narrative.

Instead, the grandmother's story, in the form of her memories, is brought into the story when Liam discovers her diary, written when she was a 13-year-old. On it she has drawn what Liam describes as 'a monster or a demon, tall and black with burning amber eyes' (2015, p7), and he recognises it is the same gargoyle creature he saw fly over his house. This is also Liam's moment of what Clute calls 'recognition' (in 1997, p339) as he realises he has entered an impossible world and his 'fingers tingle and my head goes all foggy' (2015, p9). By appropriating his grandmother's memories from her diary, Liam is forced to also confront her dementia. Liam's fear of the Stonebird is contrary to his grandmother's childhood memories in the diary, in which she describes the gargoyle as a much loved friend which helped her and other children to flee Nazi-occupied Paris. This reminds readers of the empathetic

distance between Liam and his grandmother at the start of the story, itself at odds with the fondness with which Mrs Culpepper, his new teacher, remembers her as a former teacher. Readers get their first clue that Liam's grandmother has an issue with her memory when Liam complains to his mother 'she wouldn't realise she's moved anyway' (2015, p5) establishing both his lack of empathy towards her and that she has a problem with her memory, which, because she is already in a Care home, must be severe. Liam's mother suggests they try to find something which they could keep to remember Grandma 'before she went into the care home' (2015, p7), implying memories *after* she went to the home are not worth keeping, that in some way, she is no longer the 'Grandma' they want to remember. There has been no mention of 'dementia', but the dark shape (the gargoyle) which Liam sees is quickly associated with his grandmother through the time she spent at the church as a girl. By characterising the Stonebird as something monstrous and which frightens Liam, his grandmother's dementia is also associated with horror.

In terms of fantasy narrative devices, the Stonebird's arrival into the story meets the criteria for Mendlesohn's model for intrusion fantasies (2008). Mendlesohn claims intrusion fantasies are the preferred structure for modern horror narratives, where 'as a rhetoric, the form depends on the naïveté of the protagonist' and where there is a 'distrust in what is known in favour of what is sensed' (2008, p115). As readers learn that his grandmother's illness has 'intruded' in Liam's life to the extent his family

has been forced to move house (Clute's 'bondage', 1997, p339), Liam feels 'a shiver runs up and down [his] arm' as he senses something is frightening about the shadow that has moved over this house in the dark (2015, p2). The intrusion reflects the grandmother's late-stage dementia, when symptoms are most severe. Liam's sister tells him their grandmother has 'a demon in her' (2015, p13), and readers learn that Liam has actually misheard her telling him she has *dementia* (2015, p23). When Liam recognises that the gargoyle is the same creature his grandmother calls Stonebird in her diary, Revell describes the creature in monstrous terms, with glowing eyes, a long curved beak, sharp claws, huge wings and powerful, lion-like legs (2015, p18).

The intrusion fantasy requires us to believe in a sub-surface world (Mendlesohn, 2008, p116) where the intrusion provokes either horror or amazement (Mendlesohn, 2008, Introduction, xxi). In *Stonebird* metaphor is used to present dementia as horror. We meet Liam's grandmother the next day as Liam accompanies his mother on a visit to the care home. Liam describes the home as being full of 'groans and mumbles', where the first resident he meets is a 'zombie woman', grinning with gums that are 'shiny-wet, like slugs clinging to her mouth' (2015, p22). The demon motif is continued as Liam describes his grandmother's condition as a 'demon eating her from the inside out', so that she 'shouts and screams and cries when we're talking' (2015, p23). The first visual description of Grandma is filtered through Liam's horrified reactions: 'the thing on the bed can't be Grandma. It's not a person. It's

just sticks and sheets and ghosts,' and Grandma is 'like a bag of twigs' (2015, p24). When his sister hands Grandma a birthday card on this visit, the old lady 'shoves the drawing in her mouth and chews, biting, biting, biting' (2015, p25). This representation is obviously problematic which *Stonebird* must work to resolve.

The outside landscape is present from the beginning: it is dark outside as the shadow 'sweeps across the garden and blends with the trees' (Revel, 2013, p2). The shadow heads for the church, which readers have already connected to the grandmother through the story of her singing in the choir. Revel reflects the grandmother's dementia in the external landscape of the church when he describes the church as a ruin where 'scaffolding covers one side of the building, and even that looks forgotten' (Revel, 2013, p2). Carroll argues the ruin 'embodies the events which led to its present state' and she argues this involves an emotional quality (2011, p156)

The grandmother's memories are encoded in her diary which Liam finds and keeps to himself. The 'Diary of Margaret Williams, age 13. TOP SECRET' explains the Stonebird is magical and shows Liam who she was before her dementia: 'I've never thought about Grandma being a little girl before' (Revell, 2015, p8); 'before I found the diary I didn't know Grandma at all' and 'the more I read the more normal she seems'(Revell, 2015, p94). A scan of an old newspaper found by a search on his phone tells Liam the story of Claire's death in a roof-fall at the church (Revell,

2015, p224) and so we find the truth of his grandmother's mystery 'murder' was in fact a tragic accident.

*Stonebird* does not play with time, beyond the Stonebird itself being associated with the grandmother's childhood. The creature first appeared to Liam's grandmother to help her escape Nazi-occupied Paris during World War 2. The text suggests the Stonebird is an immortal beast, reflected in its granite composition, which comes when certain children summon it to help them. The selection criteria for those children is unclear as the Stonebird is immediately present in the story, but the implication is that the Liam 'inherited' his connection with the Stonebird through his grandmother, so represents generational time and continuity. Liam does not physically travel through time and his grandmother is described, almost entirely, through disturbing bodily functions, anchoring her to her present moment.

*Stonebird's* resolution is made problematic by the demonising of the grandmother's condition. Mendlesohn claims the trajectory of the intrusion fantasy has the frame world 'ruptured by the intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with or defeated, send back whence it came, or controlled' (2008, p115). As I argue that the fantasy device will be aligned with the dementia condition, the only resolution available of these is negotiation or control for the character with the disease. Throughout *Stonebird*, as if to counter the wild intrusion, Liam's grandmother is always controlled, given no narrative role to play except

to demonstrate the horrors of dementia. On his penultimate visit, Liam describes his grandmother: 'I saw it in her eyes, the demon, burning inside her, turning her into that thing on the bed that's nothing like Grandma' (2015, p29). The Stonebird does grant one day of remission however, and Liam is able to talk to his grandmother, who is temporarily fully cured. This allows the grandmother to regain some of her dignity and share her life story with Liam. This sharing, in turn, enables Liam to develop some empathy with her. When the storytelling marble egg is smashed at school, the Stonebird and its fantasy powers are gone. We know that Grandma has returned to her disturbing condition when Liam says 'She's a husk. The demon hasn't just come back. It's been and eaten everything and gone already' (2015, p288). Two days after his final visit Liam's grandmother dies, and Liam gives the funeral speech, reading about her from her diary. *Stonebird* is uncompromising in its attitude that dementia is an horrific, incurable disease. The return of the Stonebird to attend the Grandmother's funeral does not provide a dignified resolution to her stories, but the ability of other people around Liam to now see it supports the notion that this disease affects the whole family.



### **Case Study 3: *The Battle for Spanoak* (2020) as a time-portal narrative.**

*The Battle for Spanoak* is a time-portal fantasy narrative about the environment. It follows Charlie, a shy 10-year-old girl who is reluctantly brought from her London home by her mother to stay in the country with her Great Aunt Hetty. Hetty has early stage dementia, represented through difficulties with her memory and communication. Whilst Charlie's mother, an archaeologist, works on a dig to interpret the landscape, Charlie meets a talking spider, Berry. Alongside the fading of Hetty's memory, the trees in Spanoak are threatened by the loss of a magical cup which nourishes the woodland. Charlie must help the inhabitants of the magical wood to locate the cup, and in the process uncover the truth about the death of Hetty's son.

The Battle for Spanoak Wood is set in an impossible world (Clute, 1997, 339). The world of Spanoak behind the portal is always there as part of the natural order of the world and Charlie is able to travel through time when she is in the world through the portal. I aimed to establish the fantasy world as soon as possible and embed stories and storytelling as conscious drivers of the narrative. When Charlie arrives at Spanoak Wood and her phone signal disappears she feels 'her last connection to the real world was gone' (Guiry, 2020, p8).

I introduce Hetty's dementia through her behaviour and the state of her home. The kitchen is in chaos which suggests that Hetty is unable to

properly care for herself. She immediately begins to tell Charlie stories about the trees around the cottage. Readers' will know that Hetty is vulnerable and will need Charlie's help. When Charlie recalls her friend Sam talking about his grandfather's condition, readers will most likely know Hetty has dementia. I have chosen for Hetty to have early-stage dementia as I wanted her to retain agency in the narrative through her storytelling and readers can focus on her retained 'personhood' (Kitwood, 1997). *The Battle for Spanoak* is set over 10 days and so the narrative will not see great changes in Hetty's behaviour and I do not track any degeneration in her condition. As soon as the reader gets the suggestion that dementia is involved, I quickly introduce Berry, a talking spider, to establish in reader's minds that this is a fantasy story. The wrongness and unease Charlie has felt since her arrival are confirmed when she sees Berry walking towards her across the ceiling. This is Clute's moment of 'recognition' (1997, p339) as the 'the hair on the back of Charlie's neck prickled and rose in the silence between them.' (Guiry, 2020, p11). This recognition is reinforced when she first hears Berry speak about the hidden SPDR Academy within Spanoak Cottage and 'everything she had ever known about the world was suddenly wrong' (2020, p34). Berry lets readers know that a fantasy world is embedded in the fabric of Hetty's home and this is a fully coherent fantasy world.

In the world of the SPDR Academy, Berry is a 'story-weaver' who constructs cobwebs for other spiders where each link celebrates a story of their life (2020, p35) but I establish that his role is subordinate to the

Warrior caste, which he hopes to join, but currently he lacks the required skills. Through the narrative I aim to demonstrate that power does not always win and that skills in celebrating stories are perhaps more powerful. I aimed to embed as many levels of 'storytelling' as the narrative would allow so one of the metanarrative effects is that *The Battle for Spanoak* is about the importance of storytelling in all its forms. Rustin & Rustin note that many children and adults are scared of and repulsed by spiders and notes *Charlotte's Web* as an original text to show spiders in a positive light. Charlotte, though a 'ruthless killer of flies' also demonstrates 'the integration of a loving character with unlovely aspects acknowledged and accepted is remarkable' (2001, p152). Many adults and children are also frightened and repulsed by dementia so Berry is also a 'fantastic' form of representation of the disease. Alongside many children's books and compilations, I draw on the Anansi myth of West Africa: the spider figure as storyteller (also explored in *Anansi Boys* (2005) by Neil Gaiman).

The woodwits in Spanoak base their language and world view around stories. Berry tells Charlie they want to hear her story, and for her to hear theirs. At first Charlie tells them, 'I'm not sure I have a story' (Guiry, 2020, p68), which the narrative then disproves. When she meets Robir and the woodwits, and tells them about the threat to their home, they are shocked at how quickly she expresses such big emotions without relishing the storytelling. Robir tells her, 'our stories take time to finish,

Charlie. Like water in a slow river', and 'this story shocks. Like a snapped branch' (2020, p70). My aim is to embed the telling of stories within the natural language of the woodland to begin to establish that Hetty's memories can also be contained as stories in the woodland world.

Hetty's early stage dementia enables her to retain some control over the narrative, however, and she is the character who moves the narrative into the fantasy world by pointing out the Lightning Tree and announcing the cup is 'in there' (2020, p11). At first Charlie views this announcement as being part of Hetty's confusion. The authority of Hetty's stories had just been questioned through the meeting with the farmer, Mr Wroughton, in the kitchen. Mr Wroughton denies Hetty's ability to speak the truth when he says '*she* can't remember what she had for breakfast. You can't believe anything she says' (2020, p48), whilst Hetty counters this when she tells Charlie he is 'full of bad stories' (2020, p18).

As Hetty's stories about what happened to cup begin to change, Charlie tries to fix her unreliable memory by writing it down in her diary. By deciding that she will care for and keep Hetty's memories Charlie is attempting to exert some control over Hetty's memory loss even though Charlie knows from her friend Sam's experience that Hetty will not be getting better. When Hetty and Charlie sit under the Lightning Tree, Charlie watches a dead leaf fall from the tree to the ground. She makes the connection that 'all the leaves will fall off all the trees before the end of winter, but at least they will come back in the spring. Hetty's stories wouldn't come back' (Guiry, 2020, p27).

She reframes Hetty's memories as stories by calling these entries 'The Spanoak Stories' (Guiry, 2020, p38), but these diary entries also provide a device through which Hetty's memories are always accessible to Charlie as she travels between the worlds. In this sense Hetty retains a role as a guide to Charlie, who regularly looks back across her entries to double check the information they carry. Mendlesohn claims many portal-quest fantasies use a guide character to lead the protagonist through the unfamiliar fantasy world by filling in all the information she would never know for herself, usurping the protagonist as narrator (2008, p14). Rustin & Rustin argue 'the pleasures of learning and problemsolving are more effective for readers by setting 'imaginary agents' to solve problems on behalf of the child (2001, p18) so Berry and the woodwits become avatars for Charlie's own feelings and experiences.

I embed other levels of stories in my narrative: archaeology and myth. I created a mythical story around the cup which nourishes Spanoak to establish a long human connection with the protection of the wood. Hetty has forgotten that she is supposed to hand over the role of protector of the woodland to Charlie, as the closest remaining blood relative (and since Charlie's Mum has already rejected the role through her lack of belief in, and acceptance of, the magical world). The woodland is therefore at risk. Hetty had already transferred this knowledge to her son, Callum, but after his death the generational line of knowledge was broken. Archaeology also provided me with a territory to

explore past lives which are embedded in the land and I view it as another form of time travel. Schama argues archaeology is the 'enemy of mythology for it presupposed a stale continuity of human habitation' (2004, p575), but I counter this through the vibrancy of the world which exists behind the portal. An archaeological dig is a space where several 'times' are occurring in the same place and time. Archaeology suggests a multitude of generations who have previously lived and died around Spanoak Wood and this recalls the expanse of generational relationality in which the person with dementia is located in a continuous generational lineage which Falcus & Sake found in auto/biographical and familial fiction about dementia (2019, Chapter 4, p144). Butler (2006), Carroll (2011), Casey (2009), Pogue-Harrison (1992) and Schama (2004) have all argued that archaeological time is embedded in personal, mythical and communal memories and experiences of place.

As a branch of science, Butler claims archaeology provides 'a supplementary frame of reference for the understanding of magical events' in fantasy narratives (2006, p58). Archaeology is also a device through which I could suggest that the past is not fixed but is subject to new interpretations being reconstructed through scientific enquiry, implying the dementia experience is not fixed and attitudes towards it can change. The word 'dementia' is not used until the adults arrive to undertake the archaeological dig in Hetty's field and we see the discomfort and embarrassment some people have towards the disease. As they discuss the potential past histories they might find in the field

during the dig, Mum explains to the Professor that 'Hetty is having some problems with her memory' (2020, p49) and he gives a 'knowing nod' in response to spare her having to continue. Mum also tries to say the word without Charlie hearing it, reinforcing Charlie's impression that dementia is a problem but also locating Charlie and Hetty together as being outside the 'adult' discussion.

Throughout the narrative I aim to establish a link between Hetty's dementia and the woodland, both through her connection to the land she grew up in and through her hereditary role of protector of the magical wood which I make known also controls the vitality of nature in the frame world. This agrees with Falcus & Sako who consider the narrative of 'inheritance' resolves dementia through the restoration of the generational line to offer a more certain future (2019, p144). The link to the future health of the wood is made explicit by Robir when he says 'healthy trees in our world are healthy trees in your world. But something is wrong Charlie' because 'Hettica has forgotten the old promises' (2020, p42). The metaphor of Hetty's illness reflected in the woodland agrees with Attebery's claim of fantasy: it 'depicts the associational processes of the unconscious' against the conscious understanding of the world (1992, p8). The central 'story' which remains to Hetty is the urgency of saving the trees, another of my metanarrative concerns in *The Battle for Spanoak*. Hetty insists Charlie her Mum must be 'here to meet the trees' and personifying them by explaining 'the trees all have their own names' and particularly drawing attention to the saving of the Lightning Tree

(Guiry, 2020, p14). I aimed to make the landscape as detailed and animate as possible, starting with Charlie's frame world where, 'the grass was wild and long and it snagged around her feet' and she was covered with 'wet seeds and soggy leaves' as 'tall nettles and even taller thistles grabbed at her clothes and hair' (Guiry, 2020, p21).

When Charlie and Hetty sit under the Lightning Tree its 'twin branches above her gave off comfortable creaks as they nudged back and forth in the wind. I aim to make the trees exhibit human traits and the Lightning Tree has a few leaves which 'clung on, looking like fingers curled on a hand' (Guiry, 2020 p21). Schama talks of trees embodying legitimacy, for example, the 'Great Baublis' in Lithuania, an ancient hollow oak is venerated as a sacred tree and an embodiment of national memory' (2004, p57). Once inside Spanoak Charlie must describe the environment to the reader and I relied on metaphor to describe the size of the trees in the wood, which were as 'tall and wide as electricity pylons stamping across the land' (Guiry, 2020, p61). Rustin and Rustin claim miniature characters also offer the child comfort through their 'relative size and power when confronted with large, strange and potentially threatening worlds' (2001, p19). Through the portal Charlie finds she is the same size as the woodwits which confirms their sameness. She asks the woodwits if the world is real: 'Of course it's real, Robir said, 'this is as real as it needs to be' (Guiry, 2020, p67). I wanted Spanoak to feel safe for Charlie (and readers) to explore. Spanoak meets Carroll's criteria for a sanctuary world, with three main attributes: 'the sacred space has a strong vertical dimension', 'strongly demarcated boundaries' and a



“central chamber” as a focal point for the community around it’ (2011, p18).

After Hetty has pointed out the Lightning Tree Charlie soon discovers it is a portal to another woodland world. Charlie’s trip through the Lightning Tree is very physical (2020, p59), agreeing with Clute’s definition of timetravel stories (1997, p949). Mendlesohn argues that where the secondary world is under threat ‘the heart of the portal fantasy is always *the land* and not the adventure’ (2008, p28). This makes time-portal fantasies fruitful subjects for dementia representation in landscape and secondary worlds. By embedding the dementia at a metanarrative level in the secondary world, the fantasy narrative need not engage with the more disturbing effects of the bodily experience of the disease, but can focus on more positive elements of the quest and adventure story. The portal to the woodland also recalls Carroll’s model of the ‘lapsed topos’ which opens us ‘passages to the forgotten past’ (2011, p134), allowing Hetty’s memories to exist outside her corporeality.

Within the portal world of Spanoak Charlie and the gang are able to journey back through time to become physical witnesses to the real events of Hetty’s past life, even though Hetty herself cannot recall them. Levy & Mendlesohn tell us that time-travelling narratives will explore themes of history and belonging and ‘ways of presenting the past as witness’ (2016, p126). The concept of time-travelling allowed me to echo the disturbances to chronological time experienced in dementia. The trip

to the past also allows readers, and Charlie, to see Hetty without her dementia. This allowed me to share more background about Hetty with readers, which might encourage both readers and Charlie to feel a closer sense of sympathy with her. I recall here Van Gorp & Vercruyssen's counter frame study which identifies an understanding of dementia as 'a personal history of loss' (Van Gorp & Vercruyssen, 2012, p1275 – 1277) in people with dementia, and *The Battle for Spanoak*, *Stonebird* and *Back to Blackbrick* all use that convention.

After her trip back through time Charlie wonders, 'was that really fifty years ago? Perhaps time didn't matter. This was all Hetty's story whether it had happened yesterday or decades ago' (2020, p135). Charlie's sympathy is developed further when she imagines 'poor Hetty that night, calling Callum's name. How do you begin to ask someone about something so awful? Charlie knew she couldn't do anything to upset her' (2020, p133).

The true time-lords of the story are the mayflies, who control the ability to travel through time in Spanoak. I am drawing on the ephemeral nature of mayflies who, after emerging from their nymph stage in water, only live for a single day. This draws attention to the impermanence of the human life span. The mayflies have developed the ability to time travel so they might draw out that one day into a longer-lifetime by jumping through time and experiencing many days in different times. The mayflies are also physically monstrous, but very benign, creatures who are compensated for only living one day by being able to control time (Guiry,

2020, p250). The mayfly also tells Charlie the 'rules' of time-travel, which I have drawn from the traditional trope of the 'paradox story', a notion from theoretical physics which dictates one cannot unproblematically occupy the same space at the same time (Wittenberg, 2013, p28). The mayfly tells them they must not be seen, or interact with Hetty because 'if she changes the lives she finds there then there is a risk that her own life will not exist in future days' (2020, p250). I included this warning as Charlie might otherwise be tempted to 'cure' Hetty's dementia (as Cosmo tries to in *Back to Blackbrick*) and I don't want to suggest that is possible. Charlie and the gang are able to journey back through time to become physical witnesses to the real events of Hetty's life, even though Hetty herself cannot recall them.

The uncovering of the past, the archaeology, and the discovery of the cup are all essential to the successful resolution of *The Battle for Spanoak*. I propose Casey's notion of 'implacement' works to situate Spanoak as a 'placescape' where bodies and landscapes can 'collude [...] especially those that human beings experience' (Casey, 2009, p25). The narrative of *The Battle for Spanoak* only lasts ten days, so readers are not confronted by Hetty's death, but I have argued that all dementia texts for children must find a way to positively resolve this issue. Having aligned the cup with Hetty's story the cup must then remain in Spanoak. As much as Charlie wants to keep it with her, she cannot, any more than she can keep Hetty with her. In Mendlesohn's portal model, the magic cannot leak back into the real world (2008, p9). From its hidden space

the cup will continue to recall the 'deep memories' of Carroll's lapsed topos (2011, p134), and will continue to exist afterwards in the family's memory. Archaeology also establishes a sense of place which existed before the family and will continue to exist afterwards 'the family as but one in an historical series of people who have lived on the site' (Butler, 2006, p63). I suggest that the hereditary role of Warrior, which Charlie is to inherit from Hetty, maintains the generational line which triggers the 'heritage narrative' discussed by Falco & Sakus (2019, p150). To counter the notion that dementia can also be passed through generations, which is not always the case, I problematized the sense of inheritance around the role of warrior through Charlie and Berry's story. Becoming a warrior is not just conveyed, it must be earned, as I demonstrate through Berry's story arc.

The time portal, as in *Back to Blackbrick*, allows a 'real' space (within the genre fantasy's impossible world) where 'time' and 'place' converge to encompass 'furnishing *dimensions*' of Hetty's memories, Callum's death, the archaeological record, the myth of the Cup and the cup itself in the world of Spanoak which is 'beyond geographic space or chronometric time' (2009, Introduction, xxv, italics in the original). These furnishing dimensions, Casey claims, are 'non-physical' and 'non-geographic' and they work together to produce place as 'facilitative' and 'locatory' but also as 'eventmental: as a scene of personal and historical happening' (2009, Introduction, xxv). Through this notion of the continued, long life-cycle of the natural world introduced in the fantasy and frame-world, and

reflected in the 'verticality' of the trees which have an affinity with the notion of cyclical, and eternal, time (Tuan, 1974, p129), as opposed to human ageing, which takes place only within 'human time' (Baars, 1997, p283). I provide in Spanoak a place, facilitated by fantasy narrative devices, human support and ecological preservation which promises Hetty can always be remembered.

## **CONCLUSION**

I have contributed an original fantasy fiction novel, *The Battle for Spanoak* (Guiry, 2020), written for children between the ages of 7 and 12-years-old. I have explored theoretical approaches to fantasy landscape fiction through the perspectives of a range of critics and from this research have proposed criteria relating which by which a fantasy sub-genre of dementia texts might begin to be recognised. I have codified and offered this evidence in Table 1: 'Dementia and Fantasy Writing for the Young' as an original contribution to knowledge which might be of value to future researchers and practitioners when identifying dementia texts for the young. I have presented a range of theoretical approaches related to my creative writing practice and have tested the criteria I propose for a generic approach to fantasy writing about dementia against fantasy dementia texts to demonstrate they are effective. A shortcoming of this approach has been the lack of fantasy writing about dementia for primary-aged children, but I argue that one of

the aims of this study is to begin a conversation about fantasy writing and dementia which may result in more work being created.

Towards this I have also contributed a corpus of dementia texts for the young from which I have identified thematic commonplaces which I propose as criteria which could support the recognition of dementia fantasy writing for the young and I have demonstrated that these devices are commonplaces across dementia fantasy narratives. My hope is to encourage future researches and authors to explore the reframing of dementia through fantasy fiction in ways that offer fresh, and more positive, perspectives of the disease. By trying to carve out a space where the disciplines of dementia, memory, fantasy and landscape could operate together I have attempted to balance my research across all three disciplines, from the bio-medical and social-cultural spheres of dementia as a disease, to nature writing and children's literature criticism to provide a starting point where others might be interested to explore the unique properties of dementia as a narrative form and theme.

Dementia is becoming a more common theme in children's fiction. Zimmermann argues the fact that dementia patients have become 'increasingly prominent figures in books for children and young adults since the year 2000 is evidence of the condition's popularization' (2020, p143). Through my own creative practice of environmental fantasy writing for children I am seeking ways to make characters with dementia more visible in a wider range of children's stories and in ways which

preserve the adventure and enjoyment of the story for children whilst also respecting the reality of the disease. Of the texts I identify in Table 1, I have recognised that fantasy writing is an underrepresented genre in dementia fiction. This resulted in a lack of true fantasy dementia texts to explore, so I have included a summary and exploration of a wider corpus of dementia texts for the young and suggested criteria which reflect some commonplaces between them.

The Rustins' claim it is 'only through listening to stories told by people with memories that children can enter the past through their imaginations (2001, p38), so the loss of memory would seem to present a disruption to children's imagination. But this is problematic with dementia and negates the fact that, even without access to memories, people with dementia do continue speak stories within their own capability. I propose that fantasy provides a language to explore those stories. In exploring children's fictional and fantasy stories about dementia I show how 'storytelling', 'memory' and 'time' are overarching themes in all dementia texts, where 'storytelling' relates to the ways in which fantasy narrative structures are established; 'memory' relates to the devices by which the memories of the person with dementia are delivered in the text and 'time', which relates to the role of time as a narrative device in dementia stories. By proposing 'story' is the primary unit of communication with people living with dementia I have demonstrated that this self-referential nature of storytelling in fantasy texts lends itself representing dementia in fiction by echoing the remaining capability of the character with the disease.

I began this thesis with the metaphor of my mother's dementia reflected in the woodland we were walking through. By embedding dementia in the landscape (and presumably should a future author embed it in a magical creature, object or other 'place') I have offered a representation of dementia which does not focus on symptomatic losses of the disease but is able to offer more positive and hopeful themes of transformation through fantasy devices.

I have demonstrated that time-travel narratives, by disrupting and then restoring temporal continuity, can offer a counter frame to dementia by releasing the character, however temporarily, from the focus on bodily symptoms, such as loss of memory or loss of coherence. I also propose time-travel in the fantasy narrative sense of true, physical travel through time, offers an alternative to the inheritance model suggested by Falcus & Sako to reassert generational continuity (2019, p146). The inheritance and transmission of family stories, myth and knowledge can continue to be passed on by ancestors by visiting their previous lives. Though I have chosen to obey the rule of paradox (preserving history) by not engaging with Hetty (Wittenberg, 2013, p113), future authors of fantasy narratives are free to do so.

Just as Falkus and Sako tell us 'as a cultural imaginary as well as the embodied time of reproduction, generational time is in essence an assurance that there is a future' (2019, p145), I argue that the forest and trees act as a promise of a future existence which is released from the



restrictions of an individual's lived experience and the symptomatic limits of their disease. Crucially, as part of my resolution, I make it clear that dementia is not the central threat of *The Battle for Spanoak*. Much more dangerous and damaging is the threat of losing the trees and the subsequent long-term threat to life this poses for all humankind. I propose this notion of Casey's 'eventmental' dimension can describe Spanoak and Hetty's dementia-like behaviours on more equal terms, creating in the wood a place where Hetty's lived experience can continue to be valued as a series of events. Using Casey's terms, it becomes possible to embody the experience of dementia in the territory of Spanoak through Hetty's remaining memories as a 'scene of personal and historical happening' (2009, Introduction, xxv). The duration of Hetty's life (past), the narrative (present) and Charlie's future family life and memories of Hetty (future) can all be located here.

I agree with Zimmermann's assessment that 'celebratory narratives' most often involve early stage dementias, where the person living with the disease is still able to communicate and move around (2020, p120). I found in the texts I explored that the stage of dementia of the character with the disease was related to their ability to remain at home or in the family. Early-stage dementia enables a more confident and active agency whereas late-stage dementia might simply be impossible to support at home. There was not scope in this study to include further research, but it might be useful to expand on Nodelman's proposal that

'home' represents safety and boredom, whilst 'away' tends to represent danger and excitement (2000, p9). 'Home' is a problematic and contested place in dementia texts filled with negative connotations of being 'sent away' to Care homes so this might prove an interesting theme to explore. I also found that the severity of the dementia in fictional texts necessarily dictates the levels to which the character with the disease is able to participate in the narrative. A more detailed study of the introduction and resolution of dementia across a wide range of texts would offer interesting insights to the narrative arc of dementia stories.

By representing dementia as a portal, I am also suggesting a threshold where 'memories' turn into 'stories'. I have searched for examples of critical research to express this threshold in dementia studies, but have found none. I believe the recognition of the transition point from recounted 'memory' to 'story' (which I would argue could itself be the 'dementia portal') is so subtle that it would only be detectable by someone with a close and intimate relationship with the person with dementia. The life-changing realisation that stories are no longer told, but *recited*, is also analogous to Clute's moment of world-changing 'recognition' (1997, p339) and might prove an interesting theme for fantasy dementia narratives.

More work could be done around the psychoanalytical approach taken by Rustin & Rustin. In the scope and capacity I have for this study I could not do justice to a close psychoanalytical interpretation of dialogue, landscape and character, but have chosen to take a multi-disciplinary

approach around genre and dementia studies which I feel is more suited to my creative practice. But Freudian phenomena in his essay, 'The Uncanny', such as 'doubling', the past affecting the future, and hidden trauma would seem to be an interesting space for future research into the child protagonist confronting dementia.

I acknowledge that by naming my novel *The 'Battle' for Spanoak* I am drawing on imagery and metaphors for dementia which the work of Zielig (2013), Zimmerman (2017 and 2020) Basting (2003) and Kitwood (1997) all demonstrates as potentially adding to the stigma around the disease. My intention here is to focus on the very real, modern threat to the environment and convey the sense of urgency and necessary fight needed to preserve ancient British woodland for the future. In relation to patient narratives, Falcus & Sako argue there is 'an inherent paradox in the act of storytelling of dementia, since it involves narrativizing experience that is considered to resist language and chronological order' (2019, p12). I have proposed that landscape fantasy offers a medium through which people with dementia might tell their stories in ways that can encourage exploration, engagement and enjoyment in the narrative for children.

I have demonstrated that notions of 'time' can have particular resonance in dementia narratives thematically and structurally. Through archaeology the myths of landscape can be 'transformed into history as archaeology puts us in touch with our past through the study of material

remains' (Adkins and Leitch, 1982: viii). In *The Battle for Spanoak* I have offered a dementia narrative which offers a space where an individual personality can continue to live on past their expected life-span. The fantasy landscape and fantasy devices such as the portal, the cup and talking creatures were all essential to the successful resolution of *The Battle for Spanoak*. Casey's notion of 'implacement' (2009), Carroll's green and lapsed topio (2011) both recall the past as embedded in the landscape and these notions enable me to include Hetty's lifespan within the whole of the woodland life-cycle.

In this way I propose Hetty's future death cannot be conceived as total loss because Hetty will remain embodied in the landscape. Dementia as a landscape invites people to walk through the disease, visit and return unharmed. Rather than mapping the narrative over the disease, the portal into the woodland allows me to dispense the need to describe more challenging symptoms. A portal fantasy offers dementia an escape route into another world. By introducing the more immediate threat of Mr Wroughton's attack on the wood I offer Charlie a narrative which she could successfully resolve and which offers a sense of transformation and hope at the heart of the novel. Fantasy time-portals offer a 'real' space for children to negotiate a relationship with dementia which allows for positive outcomes, even though dementia itself, ultimately, does not. Through this notion of the continued, long life-cycle of the natural world introduced in the fantasy and frame-world, and reflected in the 'verticality' of the trees which have an affinity with the notion of cyclical, and eternal,

time (Tuan, 1974, p129), fantasy writing provides a space, facilitated by fantasy narrative devices, human support and ecological preservation, which promises people with dementia can be engaged with, remembered and always celebrated.

## Appendix 1: Table 1: Dementia and Fantasy Writing for the Young

Authors identified by surname, full publication details are in the bibliography which follows.

		Children's Dementia Texts					Fantasy		
	Author		Form	Storytelling	Time	Memory/Doc	Full Fantasy	Portal	Landscape
C	Cassidy	2008	CL						
A	Combes	2015	CL						
F	Cottrell-Boyce	2016	CL						
S	Creech	2012	CL						
S	Crossan	2019	CL						
E	Donoghue	2017	CL						
S	Durrant	2020	CL						
R	Eastham	2015	CL						
A	Fine	2011	CL						
S	Fitzgerald	2013	CL						
M	Michalowski	2002	CL						
S	Murphy	2010	CL						
M	Revell	2015	CL						
M	Rock	2013	CL						
D	Walliams	2015	CL						
A	Acheson	2009	SB						
M	Altes	2012	SB						
L	Altman	2002	SB						
M	Bahr	1992	SB						
S	Ballman	1998	SB						
W	Bentrim	2015	SB						
P	Bochnig Sharkey	2020	SB						
S	Bottum-Jones	2018	SB						
L	Burdick	2015	SB						
K	Cargill	2005	SB						
C	Chambers	2015	SB						
L	Child	2005	CL						
M	Church	1980	SB						
D	Deats	2018	SB						
J	Demetris	2014	SB						
M	Edwards-Olson	2019	SB						
M	Fox	2017	SB						
A	Frantti	2002	SB						

P	Gerber	2016	SB					
L	Gerdner	2008	SB					
S	Glass	2003	SB					
K	Gosselin	2002	SB					
J	Guenette	2018	SB					
T	Haberkorn	2015	SB					
K	Harrison	2016	SB					
J	Hiles/Allmond	2017	PB					
J	Jarman	2015	PB					
F	Kakugawa	2007	SB					
N	Karkowsky	1989	SB					
M	Kibbey	1988	SB					
S	Kimjo	2015	SB					
N	Kosaka	2012	SB					
Z	Kramer	2009	SB					
A	Kusunoki	2016	SB					
D	Lamarra	2020	SB					
V	Lane	2015	SB					
L	Langston	2004	SB					
S	Lawson S, Magrel	2005	SB					
A	Leighton	1995	SB					
P	Lopez	2019	SB					
I	Mackay	2012	SB					
E	Maltman	2011	SB					
S	McCormick	2018	SB					
E	McDonald	2002	SB					
D	McIntyre	2004	SB					
D	Mills	2020	SB					
L	Moore	2018	SB					
K	Nishimoto	1995	SB					
J	Oliveros	2018	SB					
D	Perkins	2017	SB					
R	Piollon	2016	SB					
P	Pollack	2009	SB					
L	Possell	2015	SB					
R	Potaracke	1993	SB					
E	Rivard	2013	SB					
J	Rix	2019	SB					
R	Rosenbluth	2003	SB					
P	Russell	2017	SB					
E	Ruth	1988	SB					
L	Sacco	2006	SB					

K	Sakai	1990	SB						
D	Sanford	1989	SB						
L	Scacco	2005	SB						
J	Schein	1988	SB						
B	Schnurbush	2006	SB						
M	Shawver	1998	SB						
B	Shecter	1996	SB						
J	Shepherd	2014	SB						
T	Shick	2019	SB						
M	Shriver	2008	SB						
D	Simard	2007	SB						
J	Simard	2007	SB						
M	Slevin	2012	SB						
A	Stanton	2018	SB						
K	Starling Lyons	2012	SB						
B	Tauber Prior	2017	SB						
K	Tyrell	2015	SB						
V	Van den Abeele	2006	SB						
N	Van Laan	2014	PB						
M	Wallack	2014	SB						
C	Walsh	2019	PB						
E	Weinstein	2017	SB						
C	Welsh	2019	SB						
N	Whitelaw	1991	SB						
A	Wiethoff Blegen	2019	SB						
I	Winter	2019	SB						
M	Wolfe	2020	SB						
C	Wood	2014	SB						
E	Allan Poe	2009	YA						
J	Downham	2015	YA						
L	Fellows	2017	YA						
M	Florence	2019	YA						
C	Furniss	2016	YA						
R	Hawke	2001	YA						
E	Healey	2014	YA						
F	Hughes	2002	YA						
M	Mahy	1987	YA						
I	Moore	1999	YA						
D	Silver	2021	YA						
<b>M</b>	Snyman	2016	YA						
D	Touchell	2017	YA						
J	Wilson	1991	YA						



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