

**DEATH REPRESENTATIONS OF ANIMAL CHARACTERS
IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

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<p>Tiivistelmä - Abstract</p> <p>Kuolema ja läheisen menetykset ovat väistämättömiä tapahtumia elämässämme, jotka herättävät usein voimakkaita tunteita. Käsitteenä kuoleman ymmärtäminen ja siitä puhuminen voi olla vaikeaa. Lapset ovat usein kiinnostuneita filosofista ja moraalista kysymyksistä, joihin kuolemakin lukeutuu, mutta ihmiselle niinkin hämmentävästä ja voimakkaita tunteita aiheuttavasta kysymyksestä kuten kuolemasta kertominen lapsille voi tuntua hankalalta. Lastenkirjallisuudessa kuolema on kuitenkin melko yleinen teema. Useissa saduissa kuolema esitetään moraalisenä opetuksena siitä, kuinka paha saa lopulta palkkansa. Nykypäivän lastenkirjoissa teemaa käsitellään kuitenkin myös realistisemmasta näkökulmasta, jossa kuoleman hetki ja menetykseen liittyvät tunteet ovat keskiössä. Vaikeita teemoja käsitellään usein eläinhahmojen kautta kahdesta syystä: toisaalta pienet lapset samaistuvat helpommin eläinhahmoihin, ja toisaalta vaikeita asioita on helpompaa käsitellä hahmojen muodostaman etäisyyden takia. Pro gradu -tutkielmani tavoitteena oli selvittää, miten kuolemaa ja menetykseen liittyviä tunteita esitetään englanninkielisessä lastenkirjallisuudessa eläinhahmojen kautta. Tutkielman keskiössä olivat eri metaforat ja muut kielelliset ilmaukset, jotka käsitelivät kuolemaa, kuoleman jälkeistä elämää ja menetykseen liittyviä tunteita. Tutkimukseen valittiin kuusi englanninkielistä lastenkirjaa, joista neljä oli kuvakirjoja ja kaksi romaania. Laadullinen analyysi toteutettiin hyödyntäen KWIC (key-word-in-context) -tutkimusmenetelmää, jossa aineistosta etsittiin esiin nousevia ja toistuvia sanoja ja fraaseja, ja niistä muodostuvia teemoja.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat, että kuvainnollisen kielen käyttäminen on yleistä lastenkirjoissa, jotka käsittelevät kuolemaa. Kuvakirjoissa metaforia esiintyi keskimääräisesti enemmän romaaneihin verrattuna. Kuoleman jälkeistä elämää kirjallisuudessa ei juurikaan esitetty, ja kysymys siitä mitä kuoleman jälkeen tapahtuu, jäi avoimeksi kaikissa kirjoissa. Tämä antaa toisaalta lapsille mahdollisuuden pohtia tätä filosofista kysymystä itse ilman että tarinoiden liittyä yksipuolista tai ideologista opetusta. Menetykseen liittyvissä tunteissa aineistosta nousi esiin erityisesti kaksi surun vaihetta: masennus ja hyväksyminen. Kirjat kuvasivat suruun liittyviä eri tunteita, kuten epätoivoa, vihaa ja alakuloisuutta. Yhtenäisenä teemana kirjoista kuitenkin nousi esiin, että suruajan kestänyt jonkin aikaa vaikeat tunteet alkoivat helpottaa, ja päivistä alkoi jälleen löytyä jotain hyvää. Tutkimuksen tuloksia ei voida yleistää kaikkeen teemaa käsittelevään englanninkieliseen lastenkirjallisuuteen, sillä aineiston määrä on hyvin rajallinen. Jatkotutkimuksissa olisi myös hyvä huomioida eri ikäryhmille suunnatun kirjallisuuden mahdolliset erot teeman käsitelyssä.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Death and loss are natural and inevitable parts of life, and they often evoke strong emotions. For many people, death is a difficult topic to discuss or even understand. Conceptions of death and what happens after it vary greatly between different cultures and religions, and even on an individual level. Although the experience of loss is always individual, the sense of grief after losing a loved one is a conjunctive concept for all humans (Wright 2007). Whereas death and loss are complicated concepts to understand for even adults, especially for children, death and the sense of grief can be extremely confusing.

Children's stories often include lessons of morality, and death is quite a common theme in children's literature. In many classic children's stories, for example in *Hansel & Gretel*, *Red Riding Hood* and *Sleeping Beauty*, the villain dies in the end of the story, the moral lesson of it being "the evil gets its share". The number of classic children's stories in which the villain, or some other characters die is quite considerable. However, in contemporary children's literature, there are also a great variety of stories that actually delve into losing a loved family member or a friend and processing the emotions of bereavement. These stories are often directly written to help children and families cope with grief. Moreover, animal characters in children's literature are very common. Even the most difficult themes, such as death and afterlife, are often represented through these characters.

Children's literature is always influenced by the historical and cultural aspects in society that form the concept of childhood (Hunt 2005). Hence, it could be concluded that the literature read to and by children nowadays depict a cotemporary conception that of childhood. Although death representations in literature have been in the interest of previous research, the representation of death and afterlife specifically in children's literature has lacked the attention of critics and educators (Guroian 1998). However, research has shown that there has been a shift in how moral issues are discussed in children's literature, moving from didacticism to a more realistic and sentimental approach in death representations (Carr 1973, Schroth 2017). Examining death representations in children's literature sheds light on a larger issue ; societal conceptions of both death and childhood (James 2008).

As noted above, examining death representations in children's literature helps in gaining understanding on how and what children are told and taught about such difficult and baffling matters that death and loss are. The purpose of this study is to examine how death and afterlife are represented in children's literature through animal characters, and how emotions related to bereavement are represented in these literary works. The aims of this thesis as well as the research questions will be presented in Chapter 3. The theoretical framework of this thesis will be presented in Chapter 2, consisting of separate sections. Section 2.1 consist of an introduction to the history of children's literature and a few most relevant genres considering this study, as well as discussion of moral education, anthropomorphism, and death representations in children's literature based on previous research. The linguistic aspects of the theoretical framework will be discussed in section 2.2, moving from a more general level of conceptual metaphors and linguistic metaphorical expressions based on the general mapping of Lakoff and Johnson (1989) to more specific conceptual metaphors commonly used of death, as well as metaphors of emotion.

Six children's books, including both novels and picture books, were selected for the study. The data selection and collection process will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2. The main focus of the study will be on metaphors and the use of other linguistic elements describing death, afterlife, and the most common emotions associated with loss. In order to examine these elements, qualitative research methods were applied using KWIC (key-word-in-context) technique, which is used to find reoccurring words, phrases, and themes in text. The use as well as the limitations of this methodology one has to consider will be explained in section 3.4 in more detail. Furthermore, an inductive, thematic analysis was conducted with a semantic approach. The analysis will be presented in Chapter 4. Finally, discussion of the main findings and a review of the research process will be presented in Chapter 5.

2 BACKGROUND

This Chapter will present the theoretical framework of the thesis. First, as an introduction on the matter, the history of children's literature and a few relevant genres considering this thesis will be discussed in section 2.1. Moral education in children's literature will be discussed in section 2.1.1, and the subsections 2.1.1.1 and 2.1.1.2 discuss the use of animal characters, and previous research on death representations in children's literature. Conceptual metaphors and linguistic metaphorical expressions will be briefly discussed in section 2.2. Last, common conceptual metaphors in death representations will be discussed in more detail in section 2.2.1, and conceptual metaphors for different emotions in 2.2.2.

2.1 Children's Literature

In this section, the history and a few different genres of children's literature will be discussed briefly to create a basis for the theoretical background of the study. To keep this section concise and serving the purpose of the study, only fables, fantasy and picture books will be discussed in more detail.

First, to understand the concept of children's literature at the present time, it is necessary to consider the long and complex history of it. Grenby (2014: 1) explains that the history of children's literature dates back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when it was established as a separate part of print culture. Obviously, children had read literature before, but it was only after the establishment of print culture that authors began to produce literary works especially aimed for children. It is crucial to note that children's literature has gone through many changes in means on purpose and practice, largely due to the fact that the notions of childhood have altered over time. However, generic continuity exists in the sense of publishing

literature that is likely to be profitable in the minds of authors and publishers. (Grenby, 2014: 3).

Secondly, defining children's literature is not uncomplicated. The number of different genres in children's literature is debatable due to the fact that deciding on what counts as literature specifically aimed for children is not straightforward in the eyes of researchers (Grenby, 2014). There are also other reasons that make defining children's literature rather complex. Hunt (2005: 5) explains that children's literature is always dependent on the historical and cultural aspects in society that form the concept of childhood. Many books read to or by children 200 years ago do not fit in the conception of children's literature today. In addition, an interesting aspect of children's literature is that it is adults who write the books and adults who choose the books to be read to children. Therefore, it could be argued that the books currently being read to children reflect the societal conception of childhood that of today. Analysing children's literature with this in mind, it is possible to gain understanding on how the conceptions of childhood have altered over time, and how the adults writing, selecting, and reading children's literature determine childhood at the present time.

"Children's literature is frequently about coming to terms with a world one does not understand - the world as defined and governed by grownups and not totally familiar or comprehensible to children" (Nodelman, quoted in Grenby, 2014: 165)

According to researchers, fables are believed to be the first form of children's literature (Grenby, 2014). Levy and Mendlesohn (2016: 12) define fables as short, fictional tales that include two central qualities associated with children's stories: moral lessons and the anthropomorphization of animal characters (Levy, Mendlesohn 2016: 12). The characters in fables are anthropomorphic, meaning the animal characters, legendary creatures or inanimate objects are humanlike, for example in means of being able to talk. Some of the most famous fables, for example Aesop's "the Tortoise and the Hare" and "the Lion and the Mouse" date back to ancient Greece. The origins of classic fables are believed to base in folk tale traditions similarly to fairy tales. Furthermore, like fairy tales, fables were originally not intended only for children but over the course of time they have become primarily associated with the younger. According to Grenby (2014: 10-11) fables of today differ considerably from the ones written hundreds of years ago. The genre has undergone changes from the short allegorical animal tales to novel-length stories with complicated plots, ambiguous meanings, and more intricate themes. Despite of the development into a more sophisticated form, fables have remained didactic, drawing in the reader through compelling plots, appealing characters, and teaching important moral lessons. (Grenby 2014: 10-11).

Another genre that needs to be addressed is fantasy. It has been argued that fantasy is the core of children's literature, and hence, it deserves to be discussed as it

is rather central in understanding the whole concept of children's literature. As Grenby (2014: 144) notes, fantasy as a literary genre is very extensive and ambiguous in multiple ways. Fantasy books for children include stories taking place in the alternative worlds, in the real world and sometimes somewhere in between of these two. In addition, themes in fantasy can alternate from serious to comic, scary to whimsical, and moral to anarchic. Fantasy stories often include magic, supernatural beings, talking animals, and dreams. What makes defining fantasy complex is that despite including supernatural features, fantasy can simultaneously include features from the reality. Based on these aspects, it can be concluded that fantasy in children's literature is indeed very extensive and overlaps with multiple other genres.

According to Levy and Mendlesohn (2016: 14), the fantasy in many early literary works children read and were read to from the 16th to 18th centuries were intended to be read as allegory and be taken morally seriously. However, it is believed children found these stories including dragons and magical powers appealing purely for the fantastical elements in them. It has also been argued that children's literary did not properly exist before the literary works were allowed to entertain children and not only serve the purpose of moral education (Grenby, 2014: 144). Grenby (2014) argues that Lewis Carol's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) can be considered one of the first fantasy books written to purely entertain children, although moral questions are represented in the book as well.

Most people in the modern world have probably had their first experiences of literature through picture books, being read to by their parents or other close family members. Picture books contain a small number of pages and minimal text, the number of words being fewer than 1,000 and often under that. Northrup (2012: 9) explains that books containing a higher number of words in relation to the illustrations are considered illustrated books instead of picture books. In conclusion, illustrations in picture books take more space than text. According to Grenby (2014: 202), illustrations in children's books started becoming more popular in the late 18th century but printing illustrations alongside letterpress was often expensive and challenging. Wood engraving enabled publishers to feature more illustrations in the books during the 19th century, and slowly picture books with illustrations dominating letterpress became more popular in children's literature.

Throughout the history of picture books, they have generally included straightforward exemplification for the youngest readers of what is featured in the letterpress (Grenby 2014: 201). The illustrations can depict characters, different kinds of settings and sceneries or exemplify an action taking place:

“One method is to capture a precise moment of the action of a text in an illustration. When done well, this does not immobilise the book, or even stabilise it, but opens it up, inviting the reader to explore the moment and enquire into where the book is leading.” (Grenby 2014: 206)

Moreover, the whole essence of picture books is the successful relationship between image and text. Some illustrations depict the situation described in the text, some enrich the text by adding more details, and in some cases the illustrations and text contradict each other in order to increase a humorous effect (Northrup 2012: 10). Figuratively, it could be said that in picture books the text and illustrations are in a symbiosis with each other.

Since the books are usually aimed for younger children up from age 4 and the text is very minimal, it can be argued that text-wise and as a literary genre picture books are the easiest children's books to read. However, despite the simple and minimalistic nature, picture books are a rather complex form of art and can be compared to many other minimalistic literary forms, such as poetry, where every word has to count (Northrup 2012: 9). Similarly to poems, in picture books only a few words must contain meaningful information and keep the reader engaged. This, of course, also implies that picture books are not entirely uncomplicated to analyse. In order to be able to analyse a picture book, one cannot ignore analysing the illustrations as a part of the literary work. Furthermore, picture books of today have become more sophisticated, discussing philosophical questions priorly considered unconventional or unnecessary to concern children (Grenby 2014: 213). The popular settings and characters have not all necessarily changed but the books manage to discuss different topics, even the most difficult ones, in a comprehensible way for children. Despite the technical development in printing as well as the evolving themes in picture books over the course of the past three centuries, the basic aspects of what makes a successful picture book have remained the same.

Based on this brief overview on children's literature it can be concluded that children's literature has gone through numerous changes over time, largely due to changes in the conceptions of childhood and technical development in printing. How philosophical and moral questions are represented in children's literature is a multimodal and interesting phenomenon that certainly deserves the interest of researchers. By analysing literature currently being read to or by children we do not only analyse the literary works but also the societal conceptions of childhood and children. Therefore, by gaining understanding of the conception of childhood it is possible to understand the phenomena of the surrounding societies.

2.1.1 Moral Education in Children's Literature

In this section, moral and philosophical questions used in children's literature will be discussed from the viewpoint of moral education. The use of animal characters from the viewpoint of teaching morality in children's literature is discussed in more detail in subsection 2.1.1.1 Death and afterlife in children's literature are discussed in more detail in subsection 2.1.1.2.

As probably every parent, or anyone who has ever spent a lot of time with children knows, children are sufficient coming up with scientific and philosophical questions about the surrounding world we live in. Children are especially keen to find answers to the question why; why the world works how it works, and why we as humans behave the way we do. As Goering (2014: 233) demonstrates, most adults first consider philosophy for children as too difficult or abstract, based on their own experience on philosophical readings. It is often forgotten that many philosophical questions arise from the children themselves and their pure need to understand the surrounding world. However, it has taken a long time for philosophy to be included in children's literature, due to the conception of childhood that did not consider children capable of philosophical thinking (Costello 2012: 14).

According to Guorian (1998: 18), great fantasy and fairy tales depict moral meanings through the portrayal of good and evil, and the difficult choices between right and wrong that characters have to make in the imaginary worlds. Moreover, instead of being straightforward in didacticism, contemporary children's stories feed the imagination with important symbolic information of the surrounding world we live in. There are hundreds of examples of these classic stories, for example Beauty and the Beast, where Beauty is able to see the virtues hidden beneath the Beast's monstrous appearance. The paradoxical moral lesson of the story is that without virtue being present in a person, they will not be able to find nor appreciate virtue in another (Guroian 1998: 22). As noted above, the list of these symbolic stories including moral lessons is extensive. The stories including powerful images of good and evil will shape children's moral imagination and enable them to translate the experiences and metaphors to be interpreted in their own life (Guroian 1998: 27). Hence, it can be concluded that these kinds of stories are crucial in developing children's moral conceptions and imagination.

However, moral education has its pitfalls in the contemporary world. According to Guroian (1998: 34-35), modern educators often consider traditional fairy tales too violent and not suitable for children. Instead, more practical and realistic stories are favoured among the educators. The issue here is that teaching reasoning skills instead of virtues is considered moral education (Guroian 1998). As demonstrated by Wartenberg (2014: 5), excluding philosophy from moral education and thus, preventing children from creating their own understanding on how the surrounding world functions, can lead to unfortunate consequences. Especially the early years of schooling shape the children's attitudes towards knowledge and education, and hence, it is crucial to offer the young pupils with the joy of thinking. This, of course, also applies to parental discussions as well as schools. Too often, picture books are treated superficially as "tools" by parents to get their children to sleep, when many of the

books offer great puzzling philosophical questions to be discussed with the children (Wartenberg 2014: 5).

There has indeed been a shift in how moral and philosophical matters are portrayed in children's literature. From the ancient times, where children were considered incapable of philosophical thinking to fairy tales depicting morality through great metaphors, and the latest form of moral education that focuses on practicality and realism.

2.1.1.1 Animal Characters

Animal characters are very common in children's stories, and there is a great amount of anthropomorphic literature that is directed especially for younger children. However, as noted in the previous section, children's literature only started to develop with the changing conception of childhood alongside the innovation of print culture. Animal characters in children's books only started becoming more popular when the conception of childhood started to change towards a notion that children need more time to develop before taking on the responsibilities of adulthood (Bruke and Copenhaver 2004). As Bruke and Copenhaver (2004) demonstrate, the inclusion of anthropomorphic characters in children's literature provided children with what adult readers had already been provided with before: engaging stories with messages of cultural significance.

The use of animal characters in children's literature has been researched more recently, and according to many scholars, there is a psychological reason for using animals instead of human characters. According to Sharama (2017), authors feel that children can associate more closely to animals than adults, and hence, moral values are easier to teach using animal characters. Additionally, using animal characters can add emotional distance for the child reader when the message in the story is powerful or painful (Bruke and Copenhaver 2004). Therefore, discussing difficult themes and portraying ambiguous moral questions can be easier using animal characters. In addition, Mills (2014: 3) argues that if fiction is too narrowly focused on didacticism, it is most likely to be aesthetically flawed for that exact reason, and hence it would be appropriate to combine the aspect of teaching moral values with anthropomorphism.

2.1.1.2 Death and Afterlife

The mysterious nature of death lies in the fact that there is no reliable data of death as an experience. Hence, people have always had to encounter death in other ways, for example imagining the experience through fiction (Hakola, Kivistö 2014 : 7). Although a great amount of research has been conducted on death representations in literature,

among literary critics and educators there is a serious lack of attention in the portrayal of death and afterlife in contemporary children's literature (Guroian 1998: 64). Goering (2014: 236) argues there is a disconnection between what adults think children can handle and what children are eager to discuss considering ethical questions. Death as an ethical and philosophical question is considered a taboo, and especially parents often consider death to be too a frightening topic to discuss with children and that it can be even harmful for the children's cognitive development. Adversely, it has been proven that children can benefit from being given the opportunity to philosophically examine the subject themselves (Goering 2014: 236). As death, dying, and bereavement have been rather marginalized in the development of children's literature, it is crucial to consider why. The question of "what happens to us when we die" is still as puzzling for the human mind as it has always been, and every child eventually has to face this mystery.

A variety of different techniques are used in children's literature to depict situations related to death. As Carr (1973: 701) demonstrates, representation of death has altered over time, moving from ancient Greek myths where characters were often metamorphosized into flowers, animals, and natural earth formations, to stories where the death of the character is deserved in the eyes of the child reader, for example the wicked queen in *Snow White* dancing her life out in hot iron shoes. Naturally, death has served religious purposes in children's literature, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries (Carr 1973: 701-702). Devotion to God was encouraged to note as in means of teaching the children how to die. Although the traditional religious answers to immortality may not be as persuasive for the readers that of today as in the preceding times, it cannot be denied that people tend to yearn for immortality (Guroian 1998). However, the decreasing importance of religion in people's lives can be witnessed in how death has been represented in children's literature in the late 20th century and in the present times.

As noted in the section on moral education, there has been a shift in how moral questions are approached, and death representations have also varied throughout the history of children's literature. As religion has not played such a significant role in people's lives anymore, a more realistic and sentimental approach has become more popular in death representations (Carr 1973, Schroth 2017). By nature, this approach has not been able to forbear criticism. For example, *The Brothers Lionheart* by the Swedish author Astrid Lindgren (1973) received vast criticism for the inclusion of suicide and being "depressive" in general (Richards 2007: 67). However, after the 1970s, the authors' and critic's awareness of using fantasy elements in depicting realistic life events, such as death, in children's literature increased. According to James (2008: 2), this has greatly increased the frequency of death's appearance in children's literature in the post-1970s.

Death is a delicate matter, and hence it is understandable how controversial the representation of death in children's literature has been. James (2008: 2), however, argues that by examining death representations in children's literature, it is possible to gain understanding on how meaning is created and shared within society. In simple terms, the portrayal of death in children's literature gives insights on a larger issue, specifically on the societal conception of death, and more importantly on how the society determines childhood.

2.2 Conceptual metaphors and linguistic metaphorical expressions

Metaphors are often associated with extraordinary language use and poetic rhetorical flourish. However, as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explicitly point out, metaphors are very pervasive in our everyday lives, both in our thoughts and actions. Metaphors affect our experiences and understanding of the surrounding world. In simple terms, a metaphor can be defined as a "figurative form of language in which one thing or idea is expressed in terms of another" (Ritchie 2013: 1). It is crucial, however, to define conceptual metaphor from linguistic metaphorical expressions. As defined in the conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), conceptual metaphor can be depicted as follows: conceptual domain A is conceptual domain B, for example, LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Conceptual metaphors do not occur in everyday language use, but they conceptually include all the metaphorical expressions underneath them (Kövecses and Benczes 2010). In the case of the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, linguistic metaphorical expressions underneath it could be for example, "He's without a direction in life" or "I'm at a crossroads in my life". As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrate, metaphorical concepts are systematic, and hence it is natural to use systematic linguistic expressions when talking about the concepts. For example, it is not a coincidence that vocabulary such as *attack*, *win*, *strategy* and *indefensible*, all expressions associated with war and battle, are used to depict argument.

The metaphor of argument being war is a structural one since we generally conceive arguments in this specific manner, involving conceptual similarities with an actual battle. However, there are also other types of metaphors, such as orientational and ontological ones. Orientational metaphors have to do with spatial orientation (up-down, in-out, deep-shallow etc.), and they often arise from our own physicality in relation to the environment. Examples of orientational conceptual metaphors could be for example, HAPPY IS UP - SAD IS DOWN. Moreover, our experiences with physical objects provide a wide variety of ontological metaphors meaning that we view events, activities and emotions as different kinds of entities and substances (Lakoff and

Johnson 1980). One example of an ontological metaphor could be for example, MIND IS AN ENTITY (“*my mind just isn't operating today*”). In addition, personification allows us to understand various experiences of non-human entities with human-like characteristics (e.g., “*life has cheated me*”).

One further distinction that must be noted is that of metaphor and metonymy. Metaphorical expressions as well as metonymies are used in everyday language without even noticing using them, and thus being aware of the difference between them is not self-evident. Whereas metaphors are ways of embodying and understanding one thing in terms of another, metonymies are used for a referential function that allows the understanding of an entity to stand for another (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). A couple of examples of metonymies could be “*the White House will be making an announcement soon*” or “*the automobile is clogging our highways*”, which both refer to a certain entity. We realize that it is not the actual building that is giving an announcement but the president or the staff in the White House will. Similarly, the automobile refers to the collection of automobiles, not just one.

2.2.1 Conceptual metaphors for death and dying

Since the linguistic expressions in death representations are in the center of this thesis, some of the most common conceptual metaphors for death will be discussed in more detail in this section. Death is an inevitable part of life, yet for the human mind it is a complex concept to fully understand. Goethe (quoted in Sexton 1997: 336) depicted the need for metaphors as it follows: “where understanding fails, a word comes to take its place”. Sexton (1997: 336) continues to argue that mortality is one of those areas is human life where understanding fails completely, and hence, it is common to use metaphors for death. Some of the common conceptual metaphors depicting death include for example: DEATH IS NIGHT (from LIFE IS DAY), DEATH IS SLEEP, DEATH IS REST, DEATH IS COLD (from LIFE IS HEAT), and DEATH IS DARKNESS (From LIFE IS LIGHT) (Herrero Ruiz 2007: 62-63). As explained by Lakoff and Johnson, (1980), metaphorical orientations are strongly based in our physical and cultural experiences. Taking this into consideration, these conceptual metaphors for death seem rational. As Herrero Ruiz (2007: 63) demonstrates, all these conceptual metaphors are connected by common shared knowledge of the concepts related to death and dying. Night is usually cold and dark, and people usually sleep at night, and hence sleep is rest. Furthermore, dead beings are usually cold (as the night) and immobile (as if at rest).

In addition to the already mentioned conceptual metaphors that largely have to do with our knowledge of common characteristics of death, there are other widely used metaphors for the matter as well. As Herrero Ruiz (2007: 65), explains many old civilizations considered death as a type of a journey to another world, which explains

the cross-cultural use of the metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE. The idea of death as a journey might have its roots in the simple fact that bodies decompose in nature, which in the ancient times may have led people think that we are set on a journey when we die (Herrero Ruiz 2007: 65). Lakoff and Turner (1989) discussed two counter metaphors LIFE IS BONDAGE and DEATH IS DELIVERANCE, which remark that the soul of a person is bodily imprisoned until death that symbolizes being released. These two metaphors bring forth the conceptual metaphor DYING IS LEAVING ONE'S BODY. Historically, ancient philosophers considered that the soul of a person was eternal, pre-existent and spiritual, and was able to survive the bodily death (Herrero Ruiz 2007: 69). Based on these descriptions it could be concluded that by depicting death as a journey or leaving one's body behind, people have embedded their beliefs of spirituality and possible afterlife into these metaphorical expressions.

Moreover, based on Lakoff and Turner's (1989) general mapping, STAYING ALIVE IS A CONTEST, it can be concluded that its counter metaphor is DEATH IS AN ADVERSARY. The metaphor of life being a contest is used when the possibility of death is being contemplated, for example, in a combat, race, or game (Herrero Ruiz 2007: 70). As it is the case for any battle or race, one has adversaries that are tried to be defeated. The adversary can be personified as death, who is trying to catch or defeat the living being, or life in general. Other personifications of death are also common. Since old age is naturally associated as the nearest stage before death, rather often death has been personified as an old character, hence the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS OLD AGE (Herrero Ruiz 2007: 75). These metaphors arguably entail our universal experience of the unavoidable nature of death: no matter how hard we try to fight it throughout our lives, it is always death that finally defeats us.

The natural cycle of the seasons has also brought forth some common metaphors for death. As Herrero Ruiz (2007: 71) explains, many pagan traditions share the conceptualization of death (winter) being necessary for new life to develop and restart the cycle of the natural seasons. This conceptualization is related to the metaphor LIFETIME IS A YEAR according to which SPRING IS BIRTH, WINTER IS DEATH. Even the Christian tradition of celebrating Easter is partly based on these pagan traditions, therefore Easter does not only celebrate the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ but the return of the sun to the northern hemisphere as well. According to the metaphors related to the natural cycle of the seasons, the metaphor DEATH IS RENEWAL can be concluded. The close relation to nature in the conceptualizations of death can also be witnessed in the metaphor DEATH IS UNDERGROUND. It is possible that this metaphor has its roots in the tradition of burying people, as well as ancient Egyptian culture including for example Anubis the God of Underworld (Herrero Ruiz 2007: 72-73). The experimental basis for this metaphor seems rather clear, when we consider the extremely long recorded history of the humankind

burying the dead. Another metaphor worth of examining in the light of the previous two is DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION. It is possible that the basis of this metaphor lies in the experience of when a body is buried, it decomposes and disappears, and often rich vegetation grows in the place of the tomb (Herrero Ruiz 2007: 74). Religions, such as Buddhism view that a soul departs from a being's body at death and seeks to enter a body at birth (that of a person or an animal). From these religious views it could be concluded that transformation is a change of one way of being to another.

From this brief overview on conceptual metaphors for death and dying, it can be quickly summarized that there are various kinds of metaphorical expressions for the purpose of talking about the delicate yet such baffling matter. There are conceptual metaphors that rationally link with our knowledge of death's characteristics that are shared with our everyday realities and physical experiences (DEATH IS SLEEP, DEATH IS COLD etc.), and there are metaphors illustrating our beliefs of the actual process of dying that nobody has experience of (DEATH IS DEPARTURE, DEATH IS LEAVING ONE'S BODY). In addition, due to the universal experience of dying being inevitable, death is often personified as an adversary or an old character (DEATH IS ADVERSARY, DEATH IS OLD AGE). Moreover, many natural elements and the cycle of natural seasons have developed some of the conceptualizations of death and afterlife cross-culturally (DEATH IS RENEWAL, DEATH IS UNDERGROUND, DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION). The conjunctive concept in these various kinds of metaphors we use for talking about death, is that all of them stem from ancient traditions, beliefs and common experience and knowledge.

The vast amount of these linguistic metaphorical expressions for death indicates how the humankind has throughout its history tried to reason and explain such an incomprehensible event that dying is. Another common metaphorical expression for death that is worth for a brief discussion is "being gone", as demonstrated by Sexton (1997: 341). The expression falls underneath the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS THE END. However, Sexton (1997) argues that using such ambiguous expression for death raises a question of why we as humans are not comfortable with using the actual word *death*, but rather imply that the deceased are gone somewhere, without a destination nor an expected return. Based on these various conceptual metaphors and linguistic expressions for death it can be concluded that death is indeed something so unfathomable and unpleasant that people must have indirect and more subtle ways of talking about it.

2.2.2 Metaphors and emotion

The death of a loved family member or a friend is arguably one of the most agonizing universal experiences people must go through in their lives at some point. Many kinds of emotions are associated with the process of grieving; however, it must be noted that

every experience is individual. The framework of the five stages of grief (Kübler-Ross and Kessler 2006) has, however, offered insights on this process. Although the experience of grief is extremely individual, and not all the stages (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) are always experienced, and not always in a prescribed order, the framework offers tools for identifying the emotions connected to loss. Now, since it is in the interest of this thesis to also examine linguistic metaphorical expressions used in the representation of emotions related to bereavement, it is necessary to introduce some commonly used conceptual metaphors for emotions. This discussion will be largely based on the folk model of the mind by D'Andrade (1987). Emotions that have been in the interest of linguistic researchers include anger, fear, happiness, sadness, love, lust, pride, shame, and surprise (Kövecses 2000: 20). According to Kövecses (2000: 20) many of these emotions are prototypical emotions, such as anger, fear, happiness, and sadness that frequently appear on lists of basic emotions. To keep this section concise and serving the purpose the objective of this thesis, these four basic emotions will be discussed in more detail, and others are excluded.

According to the folk model of the mind (D'Andrade 1987), mind is treated as a container or processor which inside and outside forces influence. These outside and inside forces are seen both as the effects of emotions and at the level of cause of emotions. The idea of mind as a container is also well suited in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of conceptual metaphors, in which it is explained that people experience themselves as entities (containers) separate from the rest of the world, and experience things external to them as such. Based on Kübler-Ross and Kessler's framework (2006), anger is the second stage of the grieving process after denial. According to Kövecses (2000: 21) one of the most central and widely used conceptual metaphor for anger is ANGER IS HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER (e.g., *"she's boiling with anger"*). Another example of a common anger metaphor is ANGER IS FIRE, which also strongly relates to our physical experience feeling sensations of heat connected to the emotion. As Kövecses (2000) points out, it is important to make clear distinctions between metaphors and metonymies. Whereas many anger metaphors stem from the physical sensations of heat, there are also linguistic expressions, such as *"my cheeks were burning"*, which is a conventionalized metonymy for body heat for shame). Moreover, the intensity of the emotion of anger is also expressed in the metaphor ANGER IS A BURDEN (e.g., *"he carries his anger around with him"*). Equally with anger, fear has similar metaphors (FEAR IS FLUID IN A CONTAINER, FEAR IS A BURDEN), but it is also characterized by more specific ones, such as FEAR IS A HIDDEN ENEMY (Kövecses 2000: 23).

It may seem tactless or even irrational to include metaphorical expressions of happiness to a discussion of emotions related to bereavement. However, as Kübler-

Ross and Kessler (2006) elaborated on the final stage of grief that is acceptance, an essential part of the stage is starting to recognize having more good days than bad ones, and finally starting to enjoy life in the “new normal”. Happiness also shares many of the general metaphors as in the case of anger and fear but in addition includes limited source domains (HAPPINESS IS UP, HAPPINESS IS BEING OFF THE GROUND, HAPPY IS LIGHT, HAPPY IS WARM) (Kövecses 2000: 25). Metaphors for sadness are rather obviously opposite for metaphors for happiness, therefore they include many opposing aspects that are used in depiction of happiness, for example, HAPPY IS UP - SAD IS DOWN, HAPPINESS IS HEALTH - SADNESS IS ILLNESS. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) explain that there is a systematic conceptualization based in our physicality behind the kinds of spatial metaphors that HAPPY IS UP and SAD IS DOWN are: an upright position is commonly associated with happiness, whereas sad and depressed people tend to have a drooping posture.

It appears that all the basic emotions share at least some of the general emotion metaphors, for example being a fluid in a container, or being a burden. In addition, as Kövecses (2000) demonstrates, physiological aspects greatly elaborate in language, but it is important to understand the differences between metaphors and metonymies in this relation (see 2.3.1), for example, in the case of “my cheeks were *burning*” which is a metonymy referring to shame and derives from the physical reaction related to this emotion. It can be concluded that our talk about emotions that are present in our everyday lives is strongly based on our physicality and experiences, and hence metaphors and metonymies are very common when describing different emotions.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

The aims, research questions and methodology of this thesis will be presented in this Chapter. Aims and research questions will be discussed in section 3.1. An overview of the data selection and collection process will be presented in 3.2. The data, including the titles, authors' names, and time of publication of the selected books will be presented in 3.3. In addition, brief plot summaries will be presented of each book. Finally, the methods of analysis will be discussed in section 3.4.

3.1 Aims and research questions

Socio-cultural aspects always affect literature, and children's fiction is also greatly affected by them. It is important to study how philosophical and moral questions are discussed in children's literature to gain understanding on what is being taught to children about these questions, and whether there is room for development. As James (2008: 3) argues, critical engagement on death representations in children's literature has been largely descriptive rather than analytical and has mainly focused on bibliotherapy. This means the research has been dedicated to explaining how death featured in narratives can help children to cope with grief. Examining death's function in discursive, ideological, and rhetorical forms has not gained vast volume in the field (James 2008: 3).

The aim of this study is to understand how death, afterlife, and the emotions connected to bereavement are represented in post-modern children's literature via animal characters. The focus is on the language use in the literary works. To understand how death and afterlife are portrayed in children's fiction, especially the use of figurative language as well as the use of other linguistic elements, for example adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and nouns, will be examined. The study will be conducted

by analyzing 6 children's books that are thematically similar, death being a collective theme in all the literary works being analysed.

The research questions are the following:

1. How are death and afterlife represented in children's fiction via animal characters?
2. How are emotions related to bereavement represented in the books?

3.2 Data Selection and Collection

In total, six children's books were selected for the data. When searching for the possible data, some criteria had to be used to find data that best corresponds to the research questions. The criteria were that the books need to be aimed for children, they are fiction, include animal characters and thematically discuss death and possibly afterlife as well. Additionally, the books' time of publication was limited from 1950's to present day. This way, gaining an understanding of post-modern children's literature according to the research questions was possible but additionally, comparison between older and more recent literary works could be conducted.

Data collection was conducted by various Google searches using key words "children's literature, death", and "death in children's fiction". I am aware that Google utilizes the previous browsing history of the user and took this into consideration. Private mode of the browser was used to avoid personified bias in the search results. The searches resulted in multiple different websites listing children's fiction thematically dealing with death. Scanning these various lists, the ones with animal characters were chosen for the next step of choosing the possible data. After choosing a sample of possible data, each book was then searched individually, and their plot summaries were read to gain understanding whether they were suitable for the research. A common excluding factor was the absence of actual death of characters. Many books seemed to thematically cover bereavement before the death of a close family member or a pet, and hence, the portrayal of death could not be analysed considering these books. Additionally, the search resulted in many guidebooks and activity books for grieving families and children. These books were also excluded since they do not serve the purpose of this study that is to unravel death's ideological and rhetorical forms in children's fiction.

3.3 Data

This section includes an overview of the selected data. Basic information, such as the title of the book, name of the author(s) and the year of publication, is provided. In addition, a short plot summary is represented of each literary work.

Picture books:	
<i>Always and Forever, by Alan Durant, 2003</i>	When Fox dies the rest of his family are absolutely distraught. Mole, Otter and Hare find it difficult to go on with their lives without their beloved friend. As weeks and months pass, Squirrel reminds them all of how funny Fox used to be, and they realise that Fox is still there in their hearts and memories.
<i>Badger's Parting Gifts, by Susan Varley, 1984</i>	All the woodland creatures - Mole, Frog, Fox, and Rabbit - love old Badger, who is their confidante, advisor, and friend. When he dies, they are overwhelmed by their loss. Then they begin to remember and treasure the memories he left them.
<i>Duck, Death and the Tulip, by Wolf Erlbruch, 2008 (translated from German by Catherine Chidgey in 2008)</i>	Duck, Death and the Tulip is a children's story written by German author and illustrator Wolf Erlbruch. The book has been translated into multiple languages including English. The story involves Duck, who acquaints a character called Death. As it turns out, Death has been following Duck for her whole life. The two become friends, discussing life, death, and what afterlife might be like. In the end of the story, Duck dies, and Death carries her to a river, places Duck gently in the water and lays a tulip on her.
<i>The Rough Patch, by Brian Lies, 2018</i>	The Rough Patch is a picture book written and illustrated by American author Brian Lies in 2018. The story tells

	<p>of an anthropomorphic fox named Evan who has a dog. They do everything together, including working on the garden they both love. One day the dog dies. Evan experiences various emotions while grieving and destroys the garden in his anger. When a pumpkin starts to grow, instead of destroying it, Evan decides to grow it big enough to be taken to a fair. At the fair Evan finds himself enjoying the day and reconnecting with friends, and his pumpkin wins the third prize. At the end of the book Evan brings a puppy home from the fair, and there is a new beginning.</p>
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<p>Novels:</p>	
<p><i>Charlotte's Web, by E.B. White, 1952</i></p>	<p>Charlotte's Web is a classic children's novel written by American author E.B. White in 1952, with illustrations by Garth Williams. The story takes place on a farm and involves a pig named Wilbur and his friend; a barn spider named Charlotte. When Wilbur learns he will soon be slaughtered for Christmas dinner, Charlotte decides to act and starts writing in her web about Wilbur with the assistance of some other farm animals. Wilbur's life is saved as people from miles away come to see the astonishing manifestations and are moved by them. Charlotte, however, becomes old and weak after laying hundreds of eggs, and Wilbur has to leave his dying friend behind at county fair. He brings the egg sac back to the farm with him. Most leave after hatching but three stay behind in the barn, and</p>

	they and subsequent generations of Charlotte's offspring comfort Wilbur for many years.
<i>Old Yeller, by Fred Gipson, 1956</i>	The story takes place in a fictional town, Salt Licks, Texas, in the late 1860s. A young boy named Travis Coates works to take care of his family at the ranch, and one day a yellow dog comes for an unasked visit with the family. Travis decides to take in the dog and names him Old Yeller. At first Travis is not fond of the dog, but Old Yeller proves his worth time after time by saving the family on several occasions. Travis and Old Yeller become inseparable friends. One day Old Yeller is bit by a rabid wolf when trying to save his family, and Travis has to make the difficult decision to put him down. After the tragic event, Travis tries to get a fresh start by taking in one of Old Yeller's puppies from his friend.

3.4 Methods of analysis

The aim of the study was to understand how death and emotions connected to it are represented in children's literature through animal characters by searching for differences, similarities, and repetition in the language use of the chosen data. Especially metaphors and the use of other linguistic elements were examined. Hence, qualitative research methods were used in the conduction of this study. Inductive thematic analysis worked as the foundation, and semantic approach was applied in the analysis. Since the aim was to examine meaning within text and illustrations, and the sample was rather small, qualitative methods were considered the most suitable for the study. Essentially, in comparison to quantitative research methods, qualitative methods offer more flexibility in data selection as well as room for an interpretative approach (Guest 2011: 6). The specific criteria for the data set certain limits for data

selection and the number of books to be selected, and hence this flexibility was rather necessary.

Thematic analysis as a research method allows the analyst to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke 2006: 6). The themes are then coded for the analysis. According to Guest (2011: 11-12), the reliability of thematic analysis is of greater concern than many other qualitative methods, largely due to its interpretative nature. However, thematic analysis is widely used and considered useful in capturing the complex meanings and nuances within a textual data set. Interpretative thematic analysis is often suitable for smaller data sets, as in this case, and it enables the analyst to explore data more deeply and extrapolate beyond the text. Reliability is of course something that must be considered when using this research method. The limitations of inductive thematic analysis are that the analysis is not necessarily systematic, and that the analyst may interpret too far from what is in the data (Guest 2011: 16-17). These aspects had to be considered in the process of analysis. For further discussion of the limitations of these methods, see section 5.2.

Since the data was mainly in text form, word-search and KWIC-techniques were used to investigate the data. According to Guest (2011: 108), word searches and keyword-in-context (KWIC) techniques are rather simple yet highly effective methods for inductive thematic analyses. Word searches simply involve searching and counting certain words in the body of text, whereas KWIC technique also considers the surrounding elements (words, phrases) of the text in means of contextuality. I considered these methods suitable for this study, since the aim is to locate and examine different linguistic expressions related to death and the emotions connected to it. These two methods formed the basis for codebook development prior the analysis. The fundamental idea behind the codebook is that frequently appearing words and phrases potentially mark different themes (Guest 2011: 108).

Although the focus of the analysis was on the linguistic elements, the multimodal nature of the data, especially in the case of illustrated children's books, could not be ignored. O'Halloran (2004: 220) states that meaning is rarely made with language alone, especially in the current age of multimedia. Hence, it is important to also take the illustrations into consideration in the analysis. As Northrup (2012: 10) demonstrates, illustrations can either depict the situations in the text, enrich the text by adding more details, or even function as contradiction to add a humorous effect. These functional aspects of the illustrations were taken into consideration when conducting the analysis. However, the actual images of illustrations in the analysis were excluded for two reasons: first, the almost inevitable copyright issues and second, the purpose of the study. Since it was my aim to mainly focus on linguistic elements such as metaphors, including images of illustrations in the analysis would not have

been necessary unless there were something in the illustration that was not possible to explain in text form.

To be able to begin with codebook development, it was necessary to investigate some of the most common death metaphors and figures of speech around the topic prior the analysis (see section 2.3.1). Similarly, as it was in the interest of this thesis to examine the language use related to the emotions of bereavement, common emotion metaphors were also investigated (see section 2.3.2). This was of course necessary for building the theoretical framework of the thesis, but it was simultaneously helpful in gaining understanding of what types of key words and phrases need to be taken into consideration when analyzing the data.

In the process of analysis, different themes were coded from the data. To best correspond the research questions, the following supporting questions according to these three central themes were used when completing the word search:

1. **Representation of death and dying** - How is death represented in the books? Are words such as “death” and “dying” used, or is figurative language used instead?
2. **Representation of afterlife** - What happens after death, and more precisely, what metaphors or other linguistic elements are used in the representation of afterlife (if afterlife is addressed by any means).
3. **Representation of emotions related to death** - How is mourning addressed in the books? What kind of metaphors or other linguistic elements are used in depicting the characters emotions after losing a loved family member or friend, or when characters address their own mortality?

The three themes above were also used in presenting the findings in a structured manner.

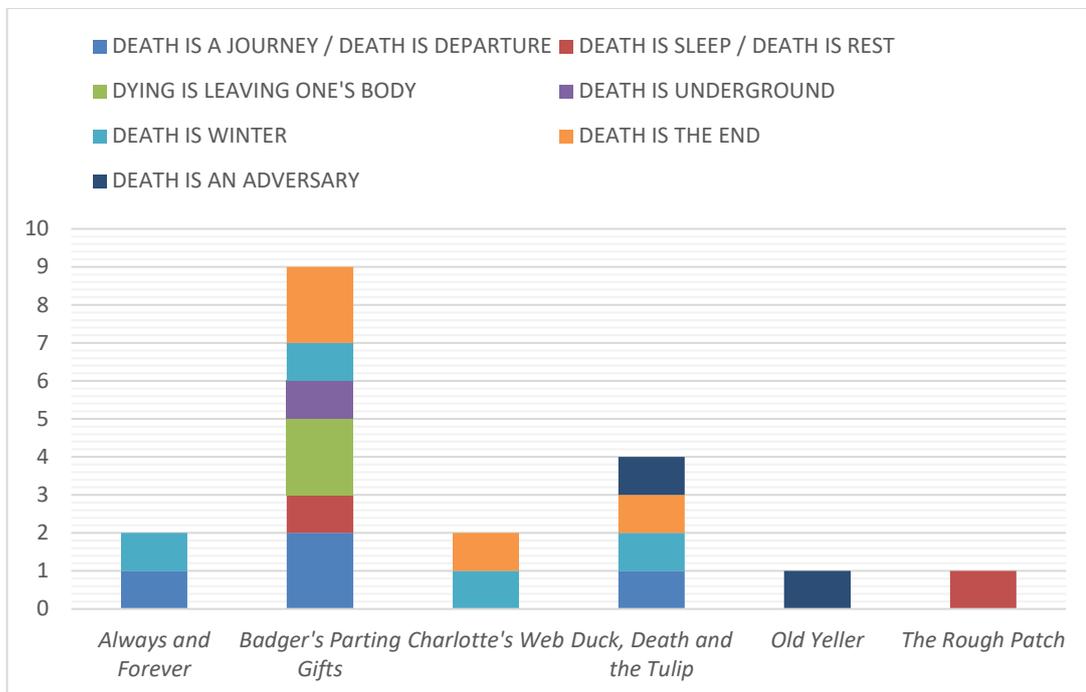
4 RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

In this Chapter, the analysis of this thesis will be presented. To present the analysis in a structured manner, the Chapter is divided into three sections. Section 4.1 will discuss the representation of death and dying, and representation of afterlife will be discussed in section 4.2. Last, the representation of emotions related to bereavement will be discussed in 4.3.

4.1 Representation of death and dying

In this section, the results regarding the representation of death and dying will be presented. The appearance of different death metaphors will be discussed in order of the most to the least frequent expressions. The relationship of the linguistic expressions and illustrations will be analysed according to each metaphorical expression that occurred. In addition, other death related expressions will be discussed in the end of this section. A great variety of death metaphors were found in the data by using the KWIC technique (Table 1). The most frequent ones, appearing in more than two of the six books analysed, were: DEATH IS A JOURNEY, DEATH IS DEPARTURE, DEATH IS WINTER, and DEATH IS THE END. Other common death metaphors appearing included DEATH IS SLEEP, DEATH IS REST, DYING IS LEAVING ONE'S BODY and DEATH IS AN ADVERSARY. In addition, DEATH IS UNDERGROUND appeared in one of the books.

Table 1: Appearance of death metaphors



DEATH IS A JOURNEY, DEATH IS DEPARTURE

The conception of death as a journey to another world and as a form of departure from the world we know, appeared in three of the books analysed. In *Badger's Parting Gifts*, old Badger knows about his soon coming death, and tells his friends that "soon he would be going down the Long Tunnel". Badger falls asleep in his rocking chair and sees a vivid dream where he runs in a long passageway (tunnel) until he no longer is in pain and feels free. The illustrations depict the situation in the text: Badger running in an underground tunnel towards a direction shown by an arrow. The following day his friends find his goodbye letter indicating he is dead.

Quotation 1

"Badger moved swiftly, running faster and faster through the long passageway, until his paws no longer touched the earth. He felt himself turning end over end, tumbling and falling, but nothing hurt. He felt free." (*Badger's Parting Gifts*)

Quotation 2

"Fox broke the sad news that Badger was dead and read Badger's note to them. It said simply, "Gone down the Long Tunnel, Bye Bye, Badger.". (*Badger's Parting Gifts*)

In *Duck, Death and the Tulip*, Death who is represented as a character discussing death and possible afterlife with Duck, carries the dead Duck to the great river and gently

lays her on the water for the stream to carry her away. The illustrations depict this situation, adding a detail of a red tulip being placed on Duck's body.

Quotation 3

"He laid her gently on the water and nudged her on her way." (*Duck, Death and the Tulip*)

In *Always and Forever*, Fox becomes ill in the autumn, and leaves into the woods all alone. Later his family finds him dead beneath an oak tree. The conceptual metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE appears both in text and the illustrations, which depict both the moment of departure (into the woods) and the dead body lying on the ground. The placement of the illustrations on pages that are visible at the same time also indicate the close relationship of the events.

Quotation 4

"One morning he went alone into the woods and didn't come back." (*Always and Forever*)

The four quotations above include examples of the conceptual metaphors DEATH IS A JOURNEY and DEATH IS DEPARTURE. In *Badger's Parting Gifts*, the moment of death is depicted from the viewpoint of Badger himself, being on a journey from this world to another, whereas in *Duck, Death and the Tulip*, Death sets Duck on her final journey after the moment on death. All three picture books depict movement away from this world, Badger dreaming of running, falling, and tumbling, Duck being carried away with the stream of the river, and Fox walking into the woods and dying.

DEATH IS WINTER

Four of the books included the conceptual metaphor LIFETIME IS A YEAR, depicting death as winter and spring as renewal (birth). Three of the picture books depicted the coming of winter shortly after death both in text and illustrations, indicating the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS WINTER. Interestingly, one of the four picture books (*The Rough Patch*) did not follow this conceptualization, but instead a reverse one: death took place in the summertime, and autumn was the time for renewal in means of a fresh start.

Quotation 5

"And so it continued, sun and moon, moon and sun. There was only deep sadness in the house in the woods. Snow came and went. The trees started to turn green once more." (*Always and Forever*)

Quotation 6

"Outside, it began to snow. Winter had begun, and soon a thick layer of snow hid the animals' homes, where they would stay snug and warm during the cold months." (*Badger's Parting Gifts*)

Quotation 7

“Snowflakes drifted down. Something had happened. Death looked at the duck. She’d stopped breathing. She lay quite still.” (*Duck, Death and the Tulip*)

The conceptual metaphor DEATH IS THE END appeared in three of the books analysed: *Badger’s Parting Gifts*, *Duck, Death and the Tulip* and *Charlotte’s Web*. All the examples depict the finality of death.

Quotation 8

“His only worry was how his friends would feel when he was gone.” (*Badger’s Parting Gifts*)

Quotation 9

“When you’re dead, the pond will be gone too – at least for you.” (*Duck, Death and the Tulip*)

Quotation 10

“She never moved again. Next day, when the Ferris wheel was being taken apart and the racehorses were being loaded into vans and the entertainers were packing up their belongings and driving away in their trailers, Charlotte died.” (*Charlotte’s Web*)

Other death metaphors that appeared in the books were DEATH IS SLEEP, DEATH IS REST, DYING IS LEAVING ONE’S BODY, DEATH IS AN ADVERSARY, and DEATH IS UNDERGROUND. DEATH IS SLEEP/DEATH IS REST appeared especially in the illustrations of two books. In *Badger’s Parting Gifts*, Badger is depicted his eyes closed, falling asleep in his rocking chair, and seeing a vivid dream. In *The Rough Patch*, Evan’s dog is depicted laying still in his dog bed as if he was asleep. In addition, the conceptual metaphor of DYING IS LEAVING ONE’S BODY appears in *Badger’s Parting Gifts* where Badger reflects on dying “only meaning that he would leave his body behind.” Moreover, the metaphor DEATH IS AN ADVERSARY can be identified in two of the books. In *Duck, Death and the Tulip*, Death is depicted in a skeleton form, following Duck all the way until her death. Although the book represents their relationship as a friendly one, it is indicated that in the end death is inevitable. Similarly, in *Old Yeller* (Gibson, 1956) Old Yeller’s upcoming death is described as something inescapable due to his sickness.

Quotation 11

“For a while now, Duck had had a feeling. ‘Who are you? What are you up to, creeping along behind me?’ – ‘Good,’ said Death, ‘you finally noticed me. I am death.’” (*Duck, Death and the Tulip*)

Quotation 12

“I knew that there was very little chance of Old Yeller’s escaping the sickness. It was going to kill something inside me to do it, but I knew I had to shoot my big yeller dog.” (*Old Yeller*)

The conceptual metaphor DEATH IS UNDERGROUND can be identified in *Badger’s Parting Gifts*, where Badger slowly makes his way home down to the warm fire deep underground. Later when he falls asleep and dies, he sees a vivid dream of running in a passageway. Although there is logic in the fact that a badger would live underground, the transition of slowly moving deep underground, and not coming back up again figuratively indicates the moment of death.

Furthermore, there were other death related expressions worth the attention. The incomprehensible nature of death and dying was also expressed in the books. In *The Rough Patch*, Evan is depicted bent down petting his dog who lays dead in the dog bed. The text simply says: “but one day, the unthinkable happened”. In *Always and Forever*, the animals bury their friend, Fox, underneath a willow tree. A personification of the tree was used in the phrase “the tree wept tears over him”. Moreover, two of the books, *Old Yeller* and *Charlotte’s Web*, represented death in more realistic, even gritty manner. Both books are obviously directed for older children to read and therefore, the stylistic change seems logical. In *Charlotte’s Web*, Charlotte is represented dying all alone after the Fair ended and everybody had left. “no one was with her when she died”. Moreover, in *Old Yeller*, Travis must shoot his loved family dog due to Old Yeller’s sickness. The moment of death in these two books seems miserable, unfair even.

4.2 Representation of afterlife

In this section, the representation of afterlife in the books will be discussed in more detail. The theme was not as apparent in the books as one could first assume, considering that all the books discuss death, a baffling matter for the humankind.

As discussed in the previous section, the seasonal metaphor DEATH IS WINTER reoccurred in many of the books, and spring was presented as time of renewal. However, there were no clear indicators of the dead transforming into anything such as flowers, weeds, or other natural objects (DEATH IS TRANSFORMATION). Spring (and in of the books, autumn) was represented in means of a new beginning for the characters who greatly missed their deceased loved ones. In *Duck, Death and the Tulip*, Duck and Death discuss what happens after death but there is no clear answer given to the subject. It is, however, the only one of the books that addresses the matter in a rather direct way, as can be seen from the quotation below:

Quotation 1

“‘Some ducks say you become an angel and sit on a cloud, looking over the earth.’ – ‘Quite possibly’ Death rose to his feet. ‘You have the wings already.’ – ‘Some ducks say that deep in the earth there’s a place where you’ll be roasted if you haven’t been good.’” (*Duck, Death and the Tulip*)

The Christian concepts of Heaven and Hell are presented in Duck’s pondering of what might happen to her after she dies. However, the book presents these concepts as something uncertain, as Death replies ambiguously with ‘who knows?’. Moreover, in their later discussion Death comforts Duck by saying she does not have to mourn over the pond, since it will be gone too, at least for her when she is dead. This could indicate that according to Death, there is no afterlife, at least not in the sense of life as we know it.

None of the books clearly depicted the afterlife of the dead characters. However, two of the picture books indicated in the very end that they were somehow still present, in the hearts of the living characters, not in visible form but still being able for example to hear their beloved friends. In *Always and Forever*, Mole, Hare and Otter reminisce Fox together and have a sensation of Fox still being present somehow.

Quotation 2

“As they laughed, they felt they could hear Fox laughing too, as if he was still there with them. And in their hearts and their memories and their laughter, Fox *was* still there, part of their family, father of the house...always and forever.” (*Always and Forever*)

In *Badger’s Parting Gifts*, Mole walks in the site where he last saw Badger, and he thanks Badger for the parting gift (teaching Mole an important lesson). It is presented as Badger somehow heard Mole, although the illustrations only depict Mole standing on the hillside looking to the horizon filled with light pink clouds.

Quotation 3

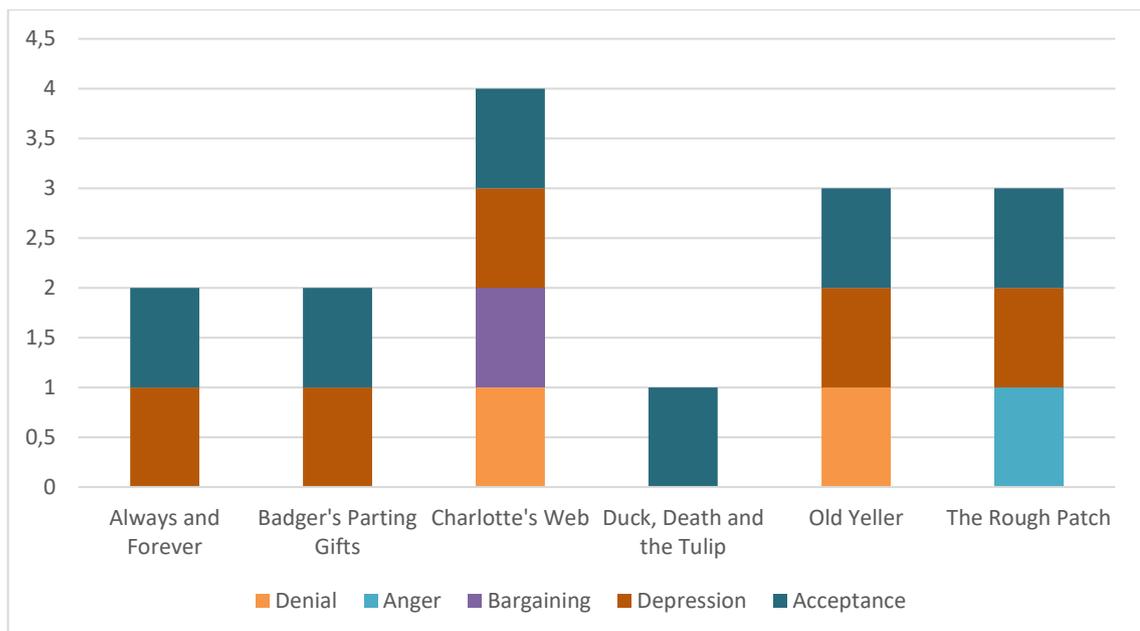
“‘Thank you, Badger,’ he said softly, believing that Badger would hear him. And...somehow...Badger did.” (*Badger’s Parting Gifts*)

The question of what happens after death was left open in all the books analysed. This suits the contemporary conception where children are considered capable understanding and discussing moral questions, even difficult ones such as death. When the question is left open, children are given the opportunity to discuss the matter and figure out their own perceptions of death.

4.3 Representation of emotions related to bereavement

In this section, the representation of emotions related to bereavement will be analysed in more detail. The framework of the five stages of grief by Kübler-Ross (2009) worked as the foundation in identifying different themes appearing in the books. In addition, the linguistic metaphorical expressions around the topic were identified and analysed. Almost all the books represented grieving characters and the process of grief with different stages. However, there was great variation in which ones of the five stages of grieving were presented (see Table 2). For example, in *Duck, Death and the Tulip*, grieving did not appear as a central theme of the book, although in the very end when Duck has already died and lost to sight, Death is represented feeling “almost a little moved”.

Table 2: Appearance of the 5 stages of grief (Kübler-Ross 2009)



The first stage of grief, according to Kübler-Ross (2009) is denial, and this stage appeared in two of the books: *Charlotte's Web* and *Old Yeller*. As Kübler-Ross (2009) explains, the first stage helps to survive the loss, and it includes feeling overwhelmed, shocked, and numb, as if the world did not make any sense. In addition, the third stage, bargaining, appears in *Charlotte's Web*, when Wilbur helplessly tries to offer Charlotte to stay with her until her death.

Quotation 1

“Hearing this, Wilbur threw himself down in an agony of pain and sorrow. Great sobs racked his body. He heaved and grunted with desolation. ‘Charlotte,’ he moaned, ‘Charlotte! My true friend!’ – ‘But I can’t stand it,’ shouted Wilbur. ‘I won’t leave you here alone to die. If you’re going to stay here I shall stay, too.’” (*Charlotte’s Web*)

Quotation 2

“Days went by, and I couldn’t seem to get over it. I couldn’t eat. I couldn’t sleep. I couldn’t cry. I was all empty inside, but hurting.” (*Old Yeller*)

The second stage, anger, appeared clearly in only one of the books, *The Rough Patch*. The book deals with the emotion in detail, representing Evan destroying his beautiful garden after the loss of his pet dog. The illustrations depict how the garden is transformed from a sunny and colorful, happy place, into a gloomy one with spiky and prickly weeds. It is not clearly stated towards who or what Evan’s anger is directed but the garden, a place where he used to enjoy his life the most with his dog.

Quotation 3

“One morning, he found himself with a hoe in his paws. Swinging angrily, he slashed the garden to the ground. – If Evan’s garden couldn’t be a happy place, then it was going to be the saddest and most desolate spot he could make it.” (*The Rough Patch*)

The fourth and fifth stages of grief, depression and acceptance were the most reoccurring themes in the books. As Kübler-Ross (2009) explains, depression and the empty feelings it holds present themselves after going through the prior stages of grief. This natural phase in the grieving process includes feelings of intense sadness, and possible wondering whether there is any point to go on with life alone after losing a loved one. Many of the books analysed depicted characters crying and feeling desperately unhappy in both text and illustrations.

Quotation 4

“A wintry sadness settled on the house in the woods. Fox’s family missed him so much. They felt lost without him.” (*Always and Forever*)

Quotation 5

“Badger had always been there when anyone needed him. The animals wondered what they would do now that he was gone. Badger had told them not to be unhappy, but it was hard not to be.” (*Badger’s Parting Gifts*)

A collective theme in most of the books, however, seemed to be that after some time had passed and there had been deep sadness, there was a way of coping with the loss, and characters once again had feelings of happiness towards the ending. Four of the

books represented the transition from depression to acceptance also through the seasonal transformation, from winter to spring, and in one case from summer to autumn. Acceptance appeared in the characters reminiscing of the deceased in a light and even humorous manner, as well as recognizing good things in the new reality. *Duck, Death and the Tulip* is here, again representing acceptance in a different way, although it is not surprising considering the thematical setting of the book that of death being in a form of a character (skeleton) and discussing life and death with Duck, who eventually dies. On the final two pages of the book, Death is illustrated standing near the river where he set Duck’s body to be carried away by the stream. In the text he is represented feeling “almost a little moved”, after which he thinks “but that’s life”, indicating there is no other choice than to accept the inevitable nature of death.

In addition to the five stages of grief that appeared in the books, the linguistic elements in the use of representing the emotions were also analysed. In Table 3, one can see the division between the most reoccurring feelings (sadness, fear, anger, and happiness) and linguistic expressions used to represent them in means of metaphorical expressions or other linguistic elements, for example adjectives, adverbs, verbs, and nouns.

Table 3: Appearance of emotions in linguistic elements



As it can be seen from Table 3, sadness was the most reoccurring theme in means of the use of linguistic elements. Most of the books used the adjective sad, and the noun sadness multiple times. A reoccurring conceptual metaphor of sadness was SADNESS IS ILLNESS, in which the bodily sensations connected to grieving can be witnessed. These sensations can include heartache or other physical feelings of sickness. Three of

the books included metaphorical expressions underneath this conceptual metaphor as can be seen from the quotations below.

Quotation 6

“Remembering the things that they loved about Fox made his family miss him all the more. Even talking about him, their hearts ached.” (*Badger’s Parting Gifts*)

Quotation 7

“‘Templeton,’ said Wilbur in desperation. ‘If you don’t stop talking and get busy, all will be lost, and I will die of a broken heart.’” (*Charlotte’s Web*)

Quotation 8

“I was all empty inside but hurting. Hurting worse than I’d ever hurt in my life. Hurting with a sickness there didn’t seem to be any cure for.” (*Old Yeller*)

Other conceptual metaphors of sadness that could be identified from the data were SADNESS IS DARKNESS, SADNESS IS DOWN, and SADNESS IS A NATURAL FORCE. In *The Rough Patch*, sadness, or more precisely depression, is only depicted in the text by Evan shutting himself indoors and not taking care of his garden. However, the illustrations show him standing inside his house in a dark room looking out of a window. Similarly, the garden is depicted as a dark and gloomy place after Evan’s pet dog has died. The conceptual metaphor SADNESS IS DOWN appeared in two of the books. In *Charlotte’s Web*, Wilbur was said to have “sank to the ground” when he saw Charlotte’s children leave him right after hatching. In *Always and Forever*, the animals “fall into silence” after talking about their beloved friend Fox. In addition, the conceptual metaphor of SADNESS IS A NATURAL FORCE appeared in two of the books. In *Always and Forever*, “a wintry sadness settled on the house”. Moreover, in *Badger’s Parting Gifts*, sadness is depicted in comparison to the seasons, and it is said that the snow covering the countryside “did not conceal the sadness Badger’s friends felt”. In the end of the book, sadness is said to have “melted as the last snow did”

Other emotions represented in the books included fear, anger, and happiness. Fear was discussed in two of the books. In *Duck, Death and the Tulip*, Duck was “scared stiff” when first encountering Death who had been creeping behind her. Old Badger on the other hand expressed he “wasn’t afraid of death”. Anger was only depicted in *The Rough Patch* with Evan swinging angrily with the hoe in his paws the garden to the ground and making it “the most desolate place possible”. Happiness was the second most reoccurring theme in the books, which may seem even a little strange when considering the setting of each book; a loved friend, pet or family member dying. However, as Kübler-Ross (2009) explains, feelings of happiness and recognition of there being more good days than bad ones is central in the final stage of grief. Two of the picture books, *Badger’s Parting Gifts* and *Always and Forever*, depict the characters

reminiscing their dead friends in a warm and even humorous manner. Laughter among the characters occurred in the endings of three of the books.

Quotation 9

“It was a happy day for Wilbur. And many more happy, tranquil days followed”
(*Charlotte's Web*)

In conclusion, losing a loved family member, friend or pet aroused many different emotions, mostly difficult ones. However, all the books collectively represented acceptance after some time had passed from the moment of loss. This delivers an important message for the child readers: although losing a loved one is definitely one of the most agonizing experiences one must go through at some point in life, the feelings of sadness and depression are not everlasting, and with the healing power of time there will be better, happier days ahead.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this section, the main findings according to the research questions will be discussed. As presented in 3.1, the research questions were the following:

1. How are death and afterlife represented in children's fiction via animal characters?
2. How are emotions related to bereavement represented in the books?

The findings according to these research questions will be discussed in their own section 5.1, and a critical review of the research process in addition to presenting some future implications will be discussed in 5.2.

5.1 Main findings in relation to the research questions

The main findings in relation to the first research question were that death was commonly represented both in linguistic elements and illustrations, often through symbolism and metaphorical expressions, whereas discussion or representation of afterlife was not noticeably apparent. Altogether, picture books seemed to include more metaphors in comparison to the novels that were directed for older children, and were from the 1950s, as the picture books were more recent. The common conceptual metaphors for death that could be identified from the data were DEATH IS A JOURNEY, DEATH IS DEPARTURE, DEATH IS WINTER, and DEATH IS THE END, DEATH IS SLEEP, DEATH IS REST, DYING IS LEAVING ONE'S BODY, DEATH IS AN ADVERSARY, and DEATH IS UNDERGROUND. The use of metaphorical expressions in the books aligns with the conception of death being such a delicate and incomprehensible matter that there has throughout the history of humankind existed

a need for these metaphors when discussing the topic (Sexton 1997). Moreover, as Guroian (1998:18) explains, contemporary children's literature commonly includes important symbolism to feed children's imagination.

As stated before, representation of afterlife was not very apparent in any of the books. Only one of the books, *Duck, Death and the Tulip*, discussed the possibilities of afterlife (see section 4.2), and other books only depicted the deceased characters through the reminiscing of others. On the one hand, this was a little surprising in the point of view that of moral education in children's literature, but on the other hand leaving the question of afterlife open for the child readers leaves room for philosophical discussion between children and adults. As Goering (2014: 236) demonstrates, it has been proven that children can benefit from being given the possibility to examine the difficult philosophical questions themselves, even when adults feel the topic is too difficult for children to comprehend. Considering this, the books analysed for this thesis operate in exactly this manner; leaving the question open for the children to figure it out themselves, and not using biased didacticism which has been criticized in the discussion of moral education.

In relation to the second research question of the representation of emotions related to bereavement, the main finding considered the representation of different kinds of emotions in the grieving process. All five stages of grief (Kübler-Ross 2009) could be identified in the data, although not all the stages appeared in all the books. Depression and acceptance were the most reoccurring stages of grief. In the point of view of moral education, this seems logical; the immense sadness and depressive feelings after a loved family member, pet, or a friend has died were represented as something everybody went through. However, after some time had passed, which was often represented through the seasonal transitions in nature, the characters started to have more good days, and the loving memories and appreciation for the dead were more present. As Kübler-Ross (2009) states, it is not possible to start living again until grief is given the time it needs. This was most likely the morality in 5 out of six books analysed. Most of them represented the transition from depression to acceptance through a longer time period, transitioning from winter to spring, or summer to autumn. In means of linguistic elements examined in the data, sadness, happiness, fear, and anger were the most reoccurring emotions.

In conclusion, the use of metaphorical expressions and symbolism in the data was common both in text as well as in the illustrations, which often depicted the situation in the text or enriched it by adding more details. The picture books represented the moment of death in a more subtle manner, whereas the novels' representation was grimmer. This is of course logical considering the age groups at which each book was directed. However, all the books represented death as a rather natural event, something that is inevitable and indeed very sad, but natural. In

addition, the continuation of life after a passing of a friend, pet or family member was a collective theme in all the books. In the end there were better days, even including laughter, and life went on in the new normal.

5.2 Review of the research process

The aim of this thesis was to examine how death is represented in children's literature through animal characters. The representation of the actual moment of dying, discussion and representation of afterlife, and representation of emotions related to bereavement were the main aspects analysed with focus on the linguistic elements in the chosen literature. Especially metaphors and the use of different adjectives were analysed. The analysis was conducted with the KWIC (key-word-in-context) technique, searching for different key words and themes occurring in the data. The results indicated that using figurative language when discussing a difficult theme that death is, is indeed quite common in children's literature. In this section, the research process used for this thesis will be critically evaluated, and some suggestions for future implications will be made.

First, the data sample is rather restricted since it only includes six books altogether, four picture books and two novels. Therefore, generalizations regarding the results cannot be made considering all children's literature. The data was searched online with key words of the theme being analysed, and the selected data precisely covered the theme of death. Therefore, it is possible there is a great amount of other children's literature including the moment of death that of an animal character that have not been included in this analysis. The present study only offers a glimpse of a very specific type of books' representation. However, when the data was being selected, it became clear that there are not a great variety of children's books in English covering the theme of death and hence, being suitable for the analysis of this thesis. Moreover, the limited number of books allowed a more in-depth analysis of the ones chosen for the thesis. It could also be pointed out that the selected data included old classics and more recent, award-winning works, which indicates these books have been purchased and therefore, also been read by many children and families across the English-speaking world. Considering this, the data chosen for the analysis is relevant since it gives insights on the most important questions considering the objective of this thesis; what is being told and taught to children about death, afterlife, and emotions of bereavement through literature.

Secondly, the reliability of the research findings must be taken into consideration. Since the analysis was qualitative, the findings represented are naturally subjective to some extent. This subjectivity cannot entirely be abolished using qualitative methods,

and hence a quantitative study with a wider sample of children's books covering the theme of death could result in more profound insights on the matter. Moreover, it could be useful to conduct these studies with more consideration on the age groups toward which the books are directed. The sample of the present study included both picture books for younger children and novels for older children. Obviously, there are differences in how difficult topics are discussed with children of different ages, and it would be practical to take this into consideration in future research on the matter.

Although the sample of the present study is small, and generalizations cannot be made regarding all children's literature, the results shed light on important issues. The reoccurring themes in the analysed books give insights on not only how and what children are taught about such a difficult topic that death is, but also on the societal conceptions on the matter.

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