From Dissociation to Integration: Representation of Trauma in

Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled **From Dissociation to Integration: Representation of Trauma in *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine*** is a record of the studies carried out by **SAFNA NIZAR**, at the Department of English, T.K.M College of Arts and Science, Kollam under the guidance of **Dr. Sumithra Devi S** and submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature.

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I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **From Dissociation to Integration: Representation of Trauma in *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine*** submitted to the University of Kerala in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature is the original record of studies and research carried out by me during 2024-2026 under the guidance of Dr. Sumithra Devi S, Assistant Professor of English, T.K.M. College of Arts and Science, Kollam and it has not formed the basis for the award of any degree, title or recognition.



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Preface

Trauma literature has emerged as a significant area in contemporary literary studies, exploring the lasting psychological impact of painful experiences and the human journey towards healing and emotional integration.

Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine (2017) by Gail Honeyman explores the life of Eleanor Oliphant, a socially isolated woman shaped by childhood trauma. Through her journey from emotional fragmentation to healing, the novel examines themes of trauma, loneliness, recovery, and identity, highlighting the transformative power of human connection and self-acceptance.

The project titled "From Dissociation to Integration: Representation of Trauma in *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine*," examines the portrayal of trauma and healing in the novel. Chapter One, titled "Introduction", introduces the writer Gail Honeyman and provides an overview of the selected text, focusing on its themes, narrative style, and significance. Chapter Two, titled "Conceptualising Trauma: Theoretical Foundations and Critical Perspectives", discusses the concept of trauma and explains the major theories and ideas related to trauma studies that are relevant to the analysis. It also explores how trauma affects memory, identity, and human relationships. Chapter Three, titled "Unravelling Trauma: A Journey into the Inner World of *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine*", offers a detailed analysis of the novel and studies the traumatic experiences of the protagonist, Eleanor Oliphant. This chapter examines how emotional isolation, dissociation, and past suffering shape Eleanor's life and behaviour throughout the narrative. It further analyses the gradual process of recovery, self-acceptance, and emotional integration presented in the novel. Chapter Four, titled "Conclusion", concludes the study by summarizing the major findings and highlighting how the novel presents trauma, resilience, and healing through Eleanor's personal journey.

Chapter One

Introduction

Literature is an enduring form of expression that captures the essence of human emotions, allowing people to speak their private minds and feelings. From historical myths to modern storytelling, literature provides a window into the human soul, depicting our struggles, triumphs, joys, and sorrows. It serves as a common language that transcends cultural and historical barriers, informing and fostering empathy among diverse audiences.

Across different historical periods, human beings have experienced various forms of suffering, including war, violence, abuse, natural disasters, and personal loss. These experiences often have a profound impact on the human psyche and cause psychological distress. Such deeply disturbing experiences are commonly referred to as trauma. Initially, the term "trauma" was used to refer to a wound or physical injury, which can be traced back to seventeenth century medical pathology. Later, in the nineteenth century, it referred to an internal or psychological wound that affects a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour.

Trauma studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines the impact of traumatic experiences on literature and society by analysing psychological, rhetorical, and cultural dimensions. Trauma is generally understood as a deeply disturbing experience that significantly alters an individual's emotional organization and perception of the external world. As a complex psychological phenomenon, trauma affects a person's emotional stability, behaviour, and perception of reality, often leaving lasting and deeply ingrained effects. Initial reactions to trauma may include fatigue, confusion, sadness, anxiety, agitation, numbness, dissociation, and heightened physical arousal. Although these reactions are intense, they are often considered natural and

adaptive, as they represent the mind's attempt to process and cope with overwhelming experiences. In most cases, such reactions are temporary and serve as mechanisms that enable individuals to gradually regain psychological equilibrium.

The goal of trauma studies is to explore the impact of trauma on the literary field by analysing an individual's cultural and social background. The development of trauma theory was profoundly shaped by the contributions of Sigmund Freud and Cathy Caruth, whose work has significantly influenced its place in literary studies. Freud's early psychoanalytic writings introduced the idea that traumatic experiences are not fully understood at the moment they occur, but rather remain unabsorbed in the unconscious, returning later in indirect and recurrent forms such as dreams, flashbacks, and compulsive behaviours. Building on these insights, Cathy Caruth deepens the understanding of trauma by emphasizing its inherently delayed and ambiguous nature. She proposes that trauma is not simply an event, but rather the inability of the mind to fully comprehend it as it occurs. As a result, the experience resurfaces over time in a fragmented and intrusive manner, revealing that trauma is not fully remembered but is continually relived. In this sense, trauma remains an unresolved and haunting presence within the human psyche, shaping a person's emotions, memory, and sense of self.

In this context, literature emerges as a vital space that not only represents the complexities of traumatic experiences, but also engages with them deeply. Contemporary literary works, in particular, delve into the psychological consequences of trauma, revealing how it shapes an individual's identity, behaviour, and emotional landscape. A remarkable work that captures these dimensions in an engaging way is *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* by Gail Honeyman. The novel marks Gail Honeyman's debut and was published on 18 May 2017 within the realm of

contemporary literary fiction. Spanning 383 pages, it was honoured with the Costa Debut Novel Award in 2017, reflecting its critical acclaim and literary significance.

Gail Honeyman was born in Stirling, central Scotland, in 1972, and grew up in a family that was inspired by both administrative discipline and scientific inquiry. Her mother served in the civil service, while her father was involved in scientific work. From an early age, she had a deep affinity for reading and frequent visits to libraries, an experience that played a major role in shaping her literary sensibility. This early engagement with literature nurtured her imagination and laid the foundation for her later creative pursuits. She gained a strong foundation in literary traditions by studying for an undergraduate degree in French language and literature at the University of Glasgow, and then continued her academic journey by studying for a postgraduate degree in French poetry at the University of Oxford. Her academic training not only honed her linguistic and analytical skills, but also contributed to the depth, sensitivity, and psychological insight that characterize her writing.

However, despite her strong academic background, Gail Honeyman chose not to pursue a traditional academic career, instead moving into professional life through a series of administrative roles, first as a civil servant in the economic development sector and later as an administrator at the University of Glasgow. She continued to nurture her creative inclinations alongside her professional responsibilities, gradually moving towards a more focused engagement with literature by enrolling in a writing course at the Faber Academy, which marked a major turning point in her creative journey. It was during this formative phase that she began to shape her first novel, eventually submitting its opening chapters to a fiction competition for unpublished women writers organized by Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, where her work was first recognized. The manuscript, later developed and published as *Eleanor Oliphant is*

Completely Fine, garnered widespread critical acclaim and several prestigious awards, cementing Honeyman as a distinctive presence in contemporary fiction and making her creative quest a defining aspect of her literary identity.

In the context of contemporary literary debates, Gail Honeyman's contribution, though modest in volume, is marked by a remarkable depth of psychological insight and emotional resonance that has earned her a distinctive and enduring place. Her rise to fame with her debut work signals not only the arrival of a new writer but also the emergence of a narrative voice that is finely attuned to the nuances of human emotion and the complexities of inner life. Following this recognition, Honeyman has captured the attention of the public and critics, engaging with prominent platforms such as The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph and Waterstones, where she has provided reflective and nuanced insights into the thematic concerns that shape her writing. In these interventions, she consistently foregrounds the exploration of loneliness, emotional isolation, and the fragile dynamics of human connection, emphasizing that while her central character is not directly autobiographical, the emotional realm of her narrative is deeply rooted in experiences that transcend personal boundaries. Such reflections not only confirm the authenticity of her narrative voice, but also illuminate the psychological sensitivity and introspective depth that underpin her literary approach.

Gail Honeyman's work is shaped by a careful exploration of themes that reflect the psychological and emotional complexities of human experience in contemporary society. Central to her narrative is the enduring impact of trauma, presented not as an isolated event but as a deeply internalized state that shapes memory, behaviour, and identity over time. Trauma manifests itself in her work through delayed responses, emotional dissociation, and the inability to fully articulate past experiences, thereby aligning with modern theoretical understandings of its fixed and ambiguous nature.

Closely related to this is the pervasive presence of loneliness and social isolation, depicted not only as external circumstances but also as deeply embedded emotional states that influence an individual's perception of themselves and others. Through this lens, Honeyman captures the silent and often invisible struggles of individuals who are cut off from meaningful social connections.

Gail Honeyman's narrative style features a unique combination of simplicity and psychological depth, allowing her to present complex emotional experiences through a simple narrative method. One of the most important features of her narrative technique is the use of a first-person point of view, which allows for direct and intimate interaction with the protagonist's inner world. Through this narrative voice, the reader gains access not only to external events, but also to the character's thoughts, perceptions, and emotional responses, thereby creating a deeply subjective and immersive reading experience. This approach is particularly effective in conveying the fragmented and often unreliable nature of memory and perception, especially in relation to traumatic experiences.

Another important aspect of Honeyman's narrative style is her strong emphasis on psychological realism. Rather than relying on dramatic plot developments, she focuses on the internal processes of the mind, exploring how emotions, memories, and past experiences shape a person's present behaviour. The narrative unfolds gradually, revealing layers of the protagonist's personality and history in a subtle and controlled manner. This slow progression reflects the nature of psychological discovery, where understanding emerges over time, rather than through sudden revelations. As a result, the narrative maintains a sense of depth and complexity without becoming overly dense or inaccessible.

Honeyman also employs a unique tonal balance in his writing, combining elements of humour with underlying emotional seriousness. The narrative voice often presents situations in a matter-of-fact or mildly ironic manner, contrasting with the deeper psychological struggles the character experiences. This interplay between humour and pain helps to highlight the complexity of the human experience, where moments of levity coexist with profound emotional distress. At the same time, it makes the narrative more engaging and accessible, allowing readers to connect with the character on multiple levels.

In addition to these aspects, Honeyman's use of language demonstrates a subtle clarity and deliberate restraint, avoiding excessive embellishment while at the same time expressing deep emotional depth. This measured linguistic restraint enhances the authenticity of the narrative voice and makes the character's perspective natural and convincingly intimate. The apparent simplicity of expression does not diminish the work's complexity; on the contrary, it facilitates the subtle expression of complex themes such as trauma, isolation, and recovery with precision and nuance. Furthermore, the narrative structure is characterized by a gradual and layered development of truth, in which past experiences emerge in fragmented forms, thereby reinforcing the delayed understanding that is at the core of the traumatic experience.

Characterization in Gail Honeyman's work emphasizes internal development over external action, presenting characters as evolving subjectivities shaped by past experiences and present realities. Her depictions often focus on individuals situated on the fringes of social interaction, marked by isolation, emotional detachment, and difficulty in forming meaningful relationships, while resisting reductive or stereotypical representation. In this way, she reveals the complex interplay between external behaviour and internal psychological struggle. At the same time, her characters embody

a balance between vulnerability and resilience, undergoing gradual processes of self-awareness and transformation that highlight the enduring impact of trauma and the possibility of recovery.

The setting of Gail Honeyman's work is embedded in contemporary urban society, where routine, work, and limited social interaction shape everyday life. This environment serves not only as a backdrop but also as a key element that reinforces the emotional distance and isolation that reflects the protagonist's inner state of mind. At the same time, this setting deals with issues of mental health and social integration, highlighting the tension between external conformity and internal turmoil. In this way, the contemporary setting contributes to the thematic development and psychological depth of the narrative.

Gail Honeyman's novel *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* presents a powerful narrative centered on the life of thirty-year-old office worker Eleanor Oliphant. Her existence is defined by rigid routines, emotional withdrawal, and the lingering effects of a deeply disturbing past. Working in an administrative position, Eleanor leads a meticulously structured life in which her weekdays are dominated by work and minimal social interaction, while her weekends are marked by deliberate isolation that consists of simple meals, frequent drinking, and frequent telephone conversations with her mother. Initially presented as disciplined, reserved, and socially inept, Eleanor seems profoundly ill-equipped to negotiate the subtle complexities of interpersonal relationships, often failing to conform to conventional social expectations, thereby exposing the depth of her emotional detachment. Beneath this carefully controlled and outwardly composed existence lies a deeply layered psychological reality shaped and shadowed by unresolved trauma, which informs, distorts, and unsettles her understanding of herself and others. This fragile, carefully

personal experience and identity formation. It also emphasizes the importance of literary works in bringing attention to issues such as mental health, isolation, and recovery, and thereby contributing to a broader awareness of these concerns. At the same time, the study is limited to a textual analysis of the novel, which ensures a clear and focused approach within the chosen framework.

The present study is structured into four chapters, each addressing a distinguishable aspect of the analysis in a systematic and coherent manner. The first chapter serves as the introduction, offering a general overview of trauma theory while also presenting a detailed account of the author, her literary background, and clear picture of the selected text. The second chapter establishes the theoretical framework of the study, providing a comprehensive discussion of trauma theory and its key concepts, with particular reference to Freudian perspectives and Cathy Caruth's interpretation of trauma. The third chapter constitutes the core analytical section, in which the selected text is examined in detail through the application of trauma theory as the primary critical lens. The final chapter presents the findings and conclusion of the study, bringing together the insights derived from the analysis and reflecting on their broader literary significance.

Chapter Two

Conceptualising Trauma: Theoretical Foundations and Critical Perspectives

Trauma is the Greek word for "wound." It can also mean shock or injury. Although the Greeks used the term only for physical injuries, today trauma is used to refer to emotional wounds. A traumatic event can leave psychological scars long after the physical injuries have healed.

Trauma is the emotional distress resulting from an event that overwhelms the person's ability to cope emotionally. A sudden event can be a single event or a series of events that are perceived as being seriously harmful or life-threatening to the self or loved ones. People process experiences differently, and not everyone responds to an event in the same way; what one person experiences as traumatic may not necessarily cause distress to another. Traumatic experiences undermine a person's sense of security in the world and create a sense that a disaster could happen at any time. Childhood loss of a parent, motor vehicle accidents, physical violence, sexual assault, military combat experiences, earthquakes, the unexpected loss of a loved one, as well as any sudden and violent disruption, are all experiences that can lead to trauma. People typically replay the experience in their minds over and over again and think about what happened constantly. Changes in brain activity that mark hypersensitivity to threats occur. Both children and adults are vulnerable to trauma. Shock, fear, anger, sadness, difficulty concentrating, and helplessness are common features of the immediate trauma response. Children may suddenly develop behavioural problems and exhibit clinginess. However, these effects diminish over time, and the vast majority of people recover from trauma. Active coping skills and strong social support are important in alleviating symptoms and preventing the long-term effects of trauma on mental health.

Trauma theory has emerged as an important framework for understanding the complex consequences of psychological trauma. It explores the nature of trauma and the diverse responses individuals have to traumatic events. Trauma can result from a variety of experiences, including but not limited to abuse, disasters, loss, and violence. The effects of trauma manifest uniquely in each individual, with responses including emotional, physical, cognitive, and psychological symptoms, which can be mild or debilitating.

The central concerns that define the field of trauma studies are trauma, its representation in language, and the role of memory in shaping personal and cultural identities. Psychological theories of trauma, coupled with additional theoretical frameworks such as post-structural, sociocultural, and postcolonial theory, form the basis for a critique that interprets representations of an intense experience and its impact on identity and memory. The concept of trauma, the source of the critique, is generally understood as a severe, devastating experience that profoundly affects one's own emotional organization and perception of the external world. Trauma studies explore the impact of trauma on literature and society by analysing its psychological, rhetorical, and cultural significance. The formal innovations in print and media texts that display insights into the ways in which identity, the unconscious, and memory are influenced by extreme events thus remain a major focus of the field.

Trauma is often classified according to the nature and duration of the experience, and is broadly understood to manifest in three primary forms, namely acute, chronic, and complex trauma, each characterised by distinct features and varied psychological effects.

Acute trauma results from a single traumatic event, such as a car accident, natural disaster, or assault. This type of trauma is characterized by its suddenness and

intensity, often leaving the person feeling shocked and vulnerable. Although the event is usually short-lived, its psychological effects can last, especially if the person does not receive support immediately after the event. If left untreated, acute trauma can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but with timely intervention, many individuals can fully recover.

Chronic trauma occurs when there is prolonged exposure to distressing situations or repeated exposure to traumatic events. Examples include ongoing domestic violence, childhood neglect, bullying, and chronic illness. The persistent nature of chronic trauma leads to the development of long-lasting psychological effects, often leading to depression, anxiety, and self-esteem issues. Individuals who experience chronic trauma may develop patterns of emotional withdrawal or avoidance behaviours, which further affect their mental health.

Complex trauma is exposure to multiple, repeated traumatic events, often in an interpersonal context, such as childhood abuse or ongoing domestic violence. This type of trauma typically occurs in close relationships, especially during the formative years, and has a variety of effects on a person's sense of self, emotional regulation, and trust in others. Complex trauma often leads to serious psychological consequences, including dissociation, emotional numbness, difficulty in forming interpersonal relationships, and chronic PTSD. In the event of complex trauma, individuals may develop negative self-esteem and a diminished sense of worth.

Understanding these different types of trauma provides a basis for examining how each can uniquely affect mental health. Regardless of the type of trauma, it disrupts the brain's ability to process emotions and maintain emotional stability. However, the specific impact on mental health can vary depending on the type of trauma experienced, personal resilience, and access to support systems. Post-traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD) is one of the best-known effects of trauma, often resulting from both acute and chronic trauma. Symptoms include intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, nightmares, and avoidance of traumatic reminders. When memories of the traumatic event recur, individuals with PTSD may struggle to return to normal, causing distress and fear. Individuals may experience generalized anxiety, social anxiety, and panic attacks due to the stress and fear associated with past trauma. Depression often results from feelings of emotional numbness, such as helplessness and loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities. Such effects highlight the profound and lasting impact of trauma on an individual's emotional life, shaping not only immediate responses but also long-term patterns of perception and experience.

Societies have been confronted with traumatic and destructive events since the dawn of time. Cave paintings, oral histories, art, literature, religious texts, and more recently, academic writings document the ubiquity of traumatic events, their nature, and their consequences. René Descartes, in his 1649 philosophical treatise *The Passions of the Soul*, explained the relationship between destructive emotions, the resulting fear, and the lasting influence they have on human interactions and behaviour. Unlike what we believe today, Descartes believed that emotions, or what we now call feelings, originated from an external stimulus acting on the individual. Such a view was an early attempt to situate emotional experience within the interaction between the external world and the individual, thereby anticipating later developments in psychological thought. It was within this evolving intellectual context that subsequent theorists began to explore more deeply how distressing experiences persist within the mind and shape human behaviour over time.

The history of trauma theory spans from ancient civilizations' understanding of mental injury to the complex frameworks of modern psychology. Ancient cultures

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recognized psychological trauma, often attributing its effects to spiritual or supernatural causes. For example, the Greeks came to understand the concept of trauma through the stories of warriors in epic poems such as Homer's *Iliad*, which depicted the psychological trauma of war. The concepts of "melancholia" (depression) and "hysteria" (a term used at the time) originated with Hippocrates and other early medical writers, referring to the awareness of psychological distress.

Trauma studies, which began to emerge as a distinct field in the 1990s, drew heavily on Freudian theory to develop a conceptual model that understood trauma as an intense and overwhelming experience capable of challenging the limits of language and sometimes breaking down meaning itself. Within this framework, trauma cannot be easily represented or articulated, but is instead marked by a fundamental resistance to expression, making it difficult to capture suffering in an innate narrative form. The roots of this understanding can be traced back to the pioneering work of Sigmund Freud, whose early investigations into the human psyche laid the foundation for trauma theory. In the late 19th century, Freud's studies revealed that psychological trauma was central to what was then described as hysteria in women, thereby establishing a crucial link between the experience of suffering and its lasting impact on the psyche.

Freud's theories on traumatic experience and memory have played a fundamental role in shaping the psychological concepts that underpin the field. Psychoanalytic approaches to the origins and effects of trauma emerged in the nineteenth century through studies of shock and hysteria conducted by researchers such as Sigmund Freud, Joseph Breuer, Pierre Janet, Jean Martin Charcot, Hermann Oppenheim, Abram Kardiner, and Morton Prince. Among these, Freud's contributions remain particularly influential, especially his early work *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), written in collaboration with Joseph Breuer, and his later theoretical developments in

Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920). These works have come to dominate the conceptual framework through which trauma is understood, and continue to exert a significant influence on contemporary literary trauma criticism.

Freud's contribution to the understanding of trauma lies largely in his exploration of the unconscious and the mechanisms by which disturbing experiences are processed within the mind. He proposed that traumatic experiences, especially when they are overwhelming, are often not fully understood at the time they occur and are therefore repressed into the unconscious, where they persist in a latent form. These repressed memories do not disappear; rather, they persist and indirectly influence the individual, shaping feelings, thoughts, and behaviour. A key aspect of Freud's theory is the delayed nature of trauma, in which the meaning and impact of an experience only emerge at a later stage, highlighting the complex relationship between memory and experience. This is closely related to his concept of the repetition compulsion, whereby the individual unconsciously relives aspects of the traumatic event in dreams, actions, or repetitive behaviours. In this way, trauma is understood not as a single event confined to the past, but as a continuous mental state that permeates the present. Freud's insights, while not forming the central framework of contemporary trauma theory, provide a fundamental understanding of how traumatic experiences are retained, repressed, and repeatedly manifested in the psyche.

An interdisciplinary approach to the study of trauma was developed significantly by Cathy Caruth with her edited collection *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995). It drew critical attention to the complex relationship between trauma, memory, and narrative. As her engagement with trauma studies deepened, she further developed her theoretical framework in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996). Through these contributions, Caruth is recognized as a pioneer in

the development of trauma theory in literary studies. Central to her view is the idea that literature and trauma are deeply intertwined, and that literary texts offer a unique space for engaging with experiences that resist direct understanding. They emphasize that the relationship between literature and trauma extends beyond traditional interpretation, opening up possibilities for exploring dimensions of experience that otherwise remain inaccessible.

In her formulation of trauma theory, Cathy Caruth draws heavily on Freud's conceptualization of trauma, particularly as articulated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism*, which she considers essential to understanding the conditions of human survival as a consequence of traumatic experiences. Developing these psychoanalytic insights, Caruth conceptualizes trauma as an event that, due to its sudden and overwhelming intensity, escapes full comprehension at the moment of its occurrence. Rather than being immediately assimilated into conscious awareness, the impact of the trauma is postponed, emerging belatedly through recurring manifestations such as nightmares and flashbacks, thereby revealing its intrinsically delayed and recurrent structure. In this way, trauma resists direct knowledge and remains partially inaccessible to conscious understanding. Caruth further develops this perspective within the realm of representation, emphasizing that trauma cannot be fully articulated through language, but is instead conveyed obliquely through fragmented, interrupted, and often incomplete forms of narrative expression. This limitation of articulation is closely tied to the nature of trauma itself, which she defines in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* as:

> In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the

> often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. (11)

This definition highlights the destructive nature of trauma, especially its delayed and spontaneous mode of return. The emphasis on "uncontrolled" and "repeated" responses suggests that trauma resists immediate understanding, and resurfaces in intrusive and fragmented forms rather than in stable memory. As a result, the experience cannot be fully encapsulated in language, reinforcing its tendency to emerge implicitly and congruent with Caruth's view of trauma as fundamentally resistant to full articulation.

Caruth further develops her theory through the concept of belatedness, which occupies a central place in her understanding of trauma. She proposes that the impact of a traumatic event does not emerge at the moment of its occurrence, but only when the experience initially fails to be fully registered within consciousness. In this sense, trauma occurs not at the point of the experience, but in its delayed return, often through the recurrent disturbances associated with post-traumatic stress disorder, where the past constantly intrudes into the present. Caruth describes this delayed encounter as a "missed experience", one that fails to secure a stable place in conscious memory and is therefore understood through its absence. This absence makes direct articulation difficult, because the individual cannot fully grasp the experience or represent it in coherent terms. It is in this context that Caruth emphasizes the importance of literature, suggesting it as a space where the unspoken and unassimilated can be indirectly conveyed. By relying on figurative language, dissection, and narrative indirection, literature enables the expression of what cannot be said directly, thereby facilitating the transmission of traumatic experiences in ways that extend beyond traditional modes of representation. Yet this indirect expression is not merely a literary strategy, but reflects

the way traumatic experience itself is encountered, as Cathy Caruth observes in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*:

> The repetitions of the traumatic event—which remain unavailable to consciousness but intrude repeatedly on sight—thus suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known, and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing. (92)

This statement emphasizes that the traumatic experience is outside of conscious comprehension, and that it returns in uncontrolled and repeated intrusions. The fact that it is "unavailable to consciousness" highlights the failure of immediate comprehension, while its repeated reappearance suggests that the trauma remains not as a finished event but as an unresolved presence. The emphasis on belatedness and incomprehensibility reinforces the idea that trauma cannot be directly known or articulated, but is instead encountered in fragmented and indirect forms.

Trauma theory is further articulated through a set of key concepts, including belatedness, repetition, fragmentation, memory, and silence, each of which explains a distinct dimension of traumatic experience and its complex modes of representation within literature.

Belatedness refers to the delayed nature of traumatic experience, in which the full impact of an event is not recognized at the moment it occurs and only emerges later. As Cathy Caruth explains, trauma is not immediately assimilated into consciousness due to its overwhelming intensity; instead, it returns later through repeated experiences such as flashbacks and intrusive memories. This delay creates a temporal gap between the event and its perception, suggesting that trauma exists not as a complete experience, but as an ongoing process that shapes the individual's understanding of reality.

Repetition is a defining feature of trauma, referring to the tendency to repeat traumatic experiences in spontaneous and often distressing ways. Rather than being confined to the past, the trauma repeatedly enters the present through dreams, flashbacks, and behavioural patterns. This repetition reflects the mind's attempt to process an experience that has not been fully understood, thereby revealing the trauma as a persistent and reasserting state in the individual's psychological life.

Fragmentation describes the disjointed and incomplete nature of traumatic memory and experience. Unlike normal memory, which follows a consistent sequence, traumatic memory appears in broken and disjointed forms, lacking clear continuity or structure. This fragmented quality is often reflected in literary narratives through disrupted chronology, gaps, and nonlinear storytelling, highlighting the difficulty in representing trauma in a coherent way.

Memory plays a key role in trauma theory, as traumatic experiences are stored and recalled in ways that are significantly different from normal memory processes. Traumatic memories are often unstable, incomplete, and involuntary, returning unexpectedly and blurring the boundary between past and present. This distortion reinforces the enduring presence of trauma, demonstrating how past experiences shape an individual's identity and perception.

Silence reflects the inability of language to fully capture the depth and intensity of traumatic experiences. Trauma often resists direct expression, and survivors are unable to express what they have experienced in a clear or consistent way. In literary representation, silence functions not as a mere absence, but as a meaningful space that conveys the unspeakable aspects of trauma, allowing for a powerful, albeit indirect, mode of expression.

Taken together, these concepts provide a comprehensive understanding of trauma as a complex and multifaceted experience that resists simple representation. They explore how trauma disrupts memory, fragments experiences, and challenges the limits of language, while continuing to shape an individual's understanding of themselves and reality. In this way, trauma emerges not as an isolated event, but as a continuous process that unfolds through a variety of psychological and narrative forms.

The concept of identity is inherently fluid and multifaceted, shaped by the interplay of personal experiences, relational dynamics, and the narratives through which individuals understand themselves. Rather than remaining static, identity evolves over time, continually redefined by memory, perception, and social participation. Central to this process is the individual's internal sense of self, which is deeply influenced by past experiences and emotional interactions. Within this framework, trauma emerges as a major force that shapes and disrupts identity, contributing not only to the development of resilience and awareness, but also to profound disruptions in the coherence of identity.

This impact of trauma on identity is complex and often paradoxical, as it can simultaneously create strength and fragmentation. Particularly during the formative years, in cases of prolonged or relational trauma, the individual may struggle to reconcile conflicting emotional experiences, especially when sources of care and security are intertwined with fear and pain. Such situations cause internal divisions within the self, as the mind attempts to deal with overwhelming experiences through processes of fragmentation and dissociation. As a result, identity becomes unstable and discontinuous, marked by a fragmented sense of self that resists integration and cohesion.

Trauma finds a profound and complex expression within literature, where it is not merely represented as an event, but as an experience that shapes narrative form, character development, and thematic structure. Unlike conventional storytelling, trauma narratives often resist linear progression and coherent representation, reflecting the fragmented and disjointed nature of traumatic memory. In this sense, literature becomes a space where the internal disruptions caused by trauma are mirrored through narrative techniques, allowing readers to engage with experiences that are otherwise difficult to articulate.

Literature serves as a powerful medium for articulating trauma, enabling a deeper understanding of individual and collective experiences while also fostering a sense of shared awareness across cultures. It plays a significant role in human life by offering a language through which the inner world of the individual can be expressed and explored. Within literary space, there exists a capacity to represent memory, introspection, retrospection, foreshadowing, and flashback, as well as painful recollections shaped by suffering, loss, and trauma. Through these narrative possibilities, literature provides a means of engaging with experiences that are often difficult to articulate directly. Consequently, trauma has emerged as a central and compelling concept within literary studies, attracting sustained critical attention.

One of the defining features of trauma in literature is the use of nonlinear narrative structures. Traumatic experiences are rarely presented in a chronological order; instead, they emerge through fragmented sequences, flashbacks, and interrupted timelines. This narrative fragmentation reflects the way trauma is remembered, not as a continuous story, but as isolated and intrusive moments that interrupt the present. Through such techniques, literature captures the instability of memory and the persistence of past experiences within the present moment.

In addition to narrative structure, trauma is also conveyed through the psychological depth of the characters. Traumatized characters often exhibit emotional withdrawal, silence, and detachment from their surroundings. Their inability to fully express their experiences is often represented through minimal dialogue, internal monologues, or symbolic expressions. This silence does not indicate absence, but rather signifies the presence of an experience that exceeds the limits of language. In this way, literature provides a medium through which the unspeakable aspects of trauma can be indirectly expressed.

Thus, literature not only depicts trauma, but also actively participates in its representation, providing a unique space where fragmented experiences, interrupted memories, and silenced voices can find expression. By employing innovative narrative techniques and focusing on the psychological realities of characters, literary texts enable a deeper understanding of trauma as a complex and enduring condition that resists simple explanation. At its core, this resistance to coherent explanation exposes the limits of understanding that govern traumatic experience, as Cathy Caruth states in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*:

> The phenomenon of trauma has seemed to become all-inclusive, but it has done so precisely because it brings us to the limits of our understanding: if psychoanalysis, psychiatry, sociology and even literature are beginning to hear each other anew in the study of trauma, it is because they are listening through the radical disruption and gaps of traumatic experience. (4)

This perspective highlights that trauma fundamentally challenges the limits of understanding itself, as it presents radical obstacles and gaps that resist consistent interpretation. The emphasis on these gaps suggests that the experience of trauma cannot be fully grasped within the frameworks of traditional knowledge, thereby

complicating efforts at understanding and meaning-making. At the same time, the recognition that multiple disciplines, including literature, engage with trauma underscores the need for alternative modes of representation. In this context, the limits of understanding are closely linked to the limits of expression, Thereby, the crucial role of language in negotiating and conveying the fragmented realities of traumatic experiences was foregrounded.

Following the exploration of trauma and its representation in the literature, it is essential to consider the possibility of healing and recovery. While trauma disrupts identity, memory, and expression, trauma theory recognizes the individual's ability to gradually deal with these disruptions and move toward a renewed sense of self. In this context, healing is understood not as a complete resolution, but as a complex and ongoing process that develops after trauma.

Within trauma theory, the importance of therapy lies not only in its clinical function, but also in its ability to create a space where traumatic experiences that initially remain unassimilated can be approached and clarified. Because trauma resists immediate understanding and exists in fragmented and delayed forms, the individual is often unable to fully access or integrate the experience within conscious awareness. In this context, therapeutic intervention can be understood as a process that enables the gradual encounter of something previously inaccessible, allowing the individual to confront the traumatic event not as an overwhelming intrusion, but as something that can be partially recognized and engaged with over time.

A central dimension of this process is the movement from silence to expression. As Cathy Caruth theorizes, trauma often resists direct representation, manifesting itself not through a coherent narrative but through gaps, repetitions, and interruptions. In this sense, therapy serves as a place where such fragmented experiences begin to take on

narrative form, even if that form remains incomplete or indirect. The act of talking about, remembering, or attempting to describe the experience does not completely resolve the trauma, but rather initiates a process of working through action, in which the individual gradually negotiates the distance between the event and its perception.

In this light, the importance of therapy in trauma theory lies in its ability to reframe the individual's relationship to their traumatic past and identity. By creating space for reflection, expression, and identification, therapeutic intervention enables the individual to gradually move beyond a state of fragmentation and silence to a more coherent understanding of their experiences. This process does not erase the trauma, but rather transforms its hold on the individual, allowing it to integrate rather than continue to fragment. As a result, therapy plays a crucial role in the reconstruction of the individual's identity, as the individual begins to reassemble a sense of self that is not entirely defined by the trauma, but rather informed by it. In this way, recovery emerges not as a final solution, but as a sustained process in which the individual negotiates meaning, regains agency, and re-establishes a sense of continuity within their lived experience.

The foregoing discussion has established trauma theory as a critical framework for understanding the intricate relationship between experience, memory, identity, and representation. Through an engagement with key theoretical perspectives, particularly the contributions of Cathy Caruth, the chapter has highlighted the ways in which trauma operates as a delayed and fragmented experience that resists immediate comprehension and coherent articulation. The exploration of core concepts such as belatedness, repetition, fragmentation, memory, and silence has further illuminated the complex processes through which trauma is internalised and expressed.

By developing these theoretical insights, this chapter has examined the disruptive impact of trauma on identity, revealing how it creates a fragmented sense of self and challenges the continuity of experience. It has considered the role of literature as a key space in which trauma finds representation, not through direct narrative, but through forms that reflect its instability and resistance to language. The discussion of recovery and therapeutic intervention, the movement from silence to articulation, underscores the possibility of reframing the traumatic experience, enabling the gradual reconstruction of meaning and selfhood.

Building upon this theoretical foundation, the following chapter moves towards a close analysis of the selected text, examining how these concepts are embodied within the narrative. By applying the insights of trauma theory to the text, the analysis seeks to explore the ways in which trauma is represented, negotiated, and ultimately integrated within the character's experience, thereby demonstrating the relevance and applicability of the theoretical framework in understanding the complexities of literary representation.

Chapter Three

Unravelling Trauma: A Journey into the Inner World of *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine*

Trauma in *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* does not appear as a sudden rupture, but rather unfolds silently through the structures of everyday life. It is embedded in routine, isolation, and subtle distance that shapes the protagonist's interaction with the world around her. On the surface, an appearance of order and self-sufficiency gradually gives way to a deeper psychological reality shaped by fragmentation and emotional restraint, as reflected particularly in Eleanor's carefully controlled yet emotionally distant mode of living. The narrative allows trauma to emerge implicitly through moments of disconnection, traces of memory, and an underlying sense of unease that gradually permeates her experience. This gradual unfolding is further reflected in the novel's structural division into phases such as "Good Days," "Bad Days," and "Better Days," which mirror the protagonist's shifting psychological states and her movement through trauma. In this way, trauma is not presented as a single event, but as a persistent state that shapes the character's identity and experience.

Eleanor Oliphant is a nearly thirty-year-old woman who works as a finance clerk and has been employed in the same office for almost nine years, having started the job at the age of twenty-one. Despite holding a degree in Classics, she occupies a modest back-office position, showing little inclination toward ambition or professional growth. Her workplace itself is marked by a clear hierarchy, where she remains among the unnoticed supporting staff, further reinforcing her marginal position within a social environment. She leads a solitary life in Glasgow, where her existence is defined by a strict and repetitive routine that governs both her professional and personal spheres.

Her days follow a fixed pattern, beginning with her work at the office and ending in complete isolation, with no meaningful interaction or emotional engagement with others. Even within the workplace, her presence remains distant and detached, as she does not form connections with her colleagues and limits her communication to functional necessity. This sense of detachment extends into her personal life, where she spends her evenings alone, often adhering to the same habits that reinforce her isolation. Although her life appears organised and self-sufficient, it is marked by rigidity and emotional restraint, suggesting that her structured existence is not a sign of stability but a controlled response to an underlying psychological disturbance. Eleanor's detachment from social interactions is evident from her own description of how she spends her time in isolation: I don't talk to anyone — by the time I've bought my Meal Deal, read the paper and finished both crosswords, the hour is almost up (Honeyman 4).

This statement reveals a carefully constructed pattern of isolation, in which routine replaces the possibility of human interaction. Eleanor actively organizes her time to eliminate the need for communication, filling it with repetitive activities that act as a barrier against social contact. The consistency of this routine indicates a conscious effort to maintain distance, which suggests that her withdrawal is not accidental, but rather controlled. Such behaviour reflects a state of mind in which interaction is seen as disruptive or threatening. In this sense, her isolation functions as a defence mechanism, allowing her to avoid emotional exposure and maintain a fragile stability.

At the core of her self-presentation is a constant statement that she is "fine," a word that is repeated with conscious certainty, but stands in stark contrast to her lived reality. The repetition of this term throughout the narrative exposes a striking division between what is externally stated and what is internally experienced, where a word both encapsulates and conceals a more complex emotional state. In this way, "fine" functions

not as a description of her condition, but as a mechanism by which it is denied. This tension between expression and reality is clearly articulated in the following statement: If someone asks you how you are, you are meant to say FINE. You are not meant to say that you cried yourself to sleep last night because you hadn't spoken to another person for two consecutive days. FINE is what you say (Honeyman 270).

The severity of a certain response of "fine" reveals the extent to which her emotional life is governed by external expectation rather than internal truth. The contrast between the socially acceptable answer and the deeply personal reality of isolation exposes an identity that is conditioned to repress rather than express experience. The capitalization of "fine" further intensifies its artificiality, transforming it into a fixed, performative script rather than a genuine statement of well-being. In this way, the repetition of the word underscores a fundamental disconnect between language and lived experience, where speaking is primarily about hiding what is felt.

Eleanor's condition is further revealed through her perception of herself and others, which is a striking separation between her internal perception and external social reality. She considers her behaviour to be entirely rational and appropriate, often interpreting her actions as rational and seeing others as inconsistent or flawed. This inversion of perspective highlights her inability to recognise her own disconnection, as she remains largely unaware of how her behaviour appears within a social context. Her interpretations of conversations, relationships, and social expectations frequently lack emotional nuance, suggesting a limited capacity to engage with the complexities of human interaction. Rather than responding with empathy or intuitive understanding, she approaches situations with a rigid and literal mindset, which further distances her from those around her. In this way, Eleanor's perception is not simply different, but fundamentally misaligned, reflecting a deeper psychological disturbance in which

trauma disrupts not only her relationships, but also her ability to interpret and experience reality in a coherent manner.

This emotional disconnection is further reflected in her tendency to construct imagined forms of connection, particularly evident in her attachment to the musician Johnnie Lomond. Rather than developing through real interaction, this attachment exists largely within her imagination, where she projects a sense of intimacy and possibility onto someone she does not truly know. The idea of a relationship is formed through fantasy rather than reality, allowing her to engage in the notion of intimacy without confronting its complexities. This imaginary relationship offers a controlled space where desire can exist without the risks associated with actual emotional involvement. The difference between this idealized perception and her actual social behaviour highlights a gap between desire and ability, where the need for relationship exists but cannot be fulfilled in a real sense. Such reliance on fantasy suggests an indirect mode of coping, whereby emotional needs are transferred to the imagination rather than expressed through lived experience.

The imaginary intimacy with Johnnie Lomond is not only confined to fantasy, but also begins to influence her behaviour in tangible ways, leading to a conscious effort at self-transformation. She becomes more aware of her appearance and social presence, taking conscious steps to change aspects of herself according to what she deems acceptable or desirable. This includes changes in grooming, clothing, and her approach to social interaction, which reflect an attempt to conform herself to an idealized version of normality. Such actions reveal not only a desire for connection, but also an underlying belief that her existing self is insufficient or inadequate. The transformation is therefore not merely external, but is rooted in a deeper struggle with identity, where acceptance is sought through modification rather than self-identification. This moment

is significant because it marks a shift from passive imagination to active effort, although the change is driven by illusion rather than actual perception.

A significant transformation in her experience of relationships begins with the introduction of Raymond Gibbons, the IT technician in her office, whose presence gradually alters her understanding of human connection. Their acquaintance develops unexpectedly during an incident involving an elderly man named Sammy Thom, where the two come together not through formal interaction, but in response to an immediate situation. This moment creates a space where communication emerges naturally, free from the structured and often uncomfortable social expectations that have defined her previous experiences. Raymond's manner is characterised by patience, warmth, and an absence of judgement, allowing her to engage without the anxiety that typically accompanies interaction. Unlike her colleagues, who maintain a distance or respond with subtle ridicule, Raymond approaches her with genuine attentiveness, creating a sense of ease within the interaction. As their relationship develops, he becomes a constant presence in her life, gradually beginning to take on a more meaningful position beyond the role of workplace acquaintance, presenting the possibility of companionship and inclusion. Through this evolving relationship, the narrative begins to shift from isolation toward the experience of connection grounded in reality. This shift is particularly visible in the shared encounter with Sammy Thom, where an unfamiliar emotional response begins to emerge: Surprisingly, I felt an emotion that I recognized as anxiety or concern in relation to this elderly stranger (Honeyman 46).

This moment marks a major shift from her previous emotional state, which was one of detachment and lack of affect. The recognition of anxiety or worry indicates not only the presence of the emotion but also the ability to recognize and acknowledge it, which indicates the beginnings of emotional awareness. The fact that this response is

directed towards a stranger further emphasizes its significance, as it reflects a movement beyond self-contained existence towards relational engagement. This emotional shift occurs in the context of the presence of Raymond Gibbons, whose calm and supportive manner facilitates a space in which such responses can emerge without threat. Therefore, this experience represents more than an isolated feeling; it indicates a gradual reactivation of emotional capacity, where connection begins to be formed not through imagination but through active engagement.

The gradual emergence of a relationship through Raymond Gibbons does not immediately change the basic structure of her life; rather, it develops along with a routine that continues with remarkable consistency. Even as she begins to accompany him in visits to Sammy Thom and engage in moments of shared interaction, her weekly patterns remain firmly intact. On Friday evenings, in particular, she follows a carefully maintained routine: after work, she makes a customary visit to the supermarket, where she buys the same items every week, including a margherita pizza, a bottle of wine, and vodka, and then returns home to spend the evening in deliberate solitude. She then eats alone and drinks regularly, eventually passing out and waking up in the early hours of the morning, continuing to drink alcohol throughout the weekend, which keeps her in a suspended state between sobriety and intoxication. This repetition is not just routine, but also serves as a structural way of regulating experience, where isolation and intoxication act as mechanisms of emotional control. Along with this, the regular Wednesday phone calls with her mother persist as an unbroken and intrusive element of her routine, marked by obligation and unease rather than comfort. The coexistence of emerging connection and rigid repetition reveals a tension between change and control, suggesting that while new forms of engagement begin to surface, they do not yet penetrate the deeper framework that continues to govern her behaviour. It is within

this tension that the influence of her mother becomes increasingly significant, as the past continues to shape her present experience.

Persistence of these routines draws attention to the more profound and crucial influence embodied in the form of the mother, whose presence extends beyond memories into the fabric of present life. This relationship is defined not by care or emotional support, but by control, fear, and psychological dominance, which shape her behaviour and responses. The regular Wednesday phone calls serve as a point of forced contact, where communication unfolds within a framework of tension rather than intimacy. Instead of offering reassurance, these conversations perpetuate a dynamic in which power is maintained and emotional vulnerability is exposed. Her mother's voice acts as an inescapable, persistent presence, intruding on her sense of freedom and reinforcing a state of unease. Through this ongoing relationship, the past remains active within the present, shaping her self-perception and limiting the possibility of emotional freedom. This controlling dynamic becomes particularly evident in the language used by the mother during their interaction:

> The two of us are linked for ever, you see – same blood in my veins that's running through yours. You grew inside me, your *teeth* and your *tongue* and your *cervix* are all made from my cells, my genes. Who knows what little surprises I left growing inside there for you, which codes I set running. (Honeyman 36)

The intensity of this statement reveals a relationship shaped not by care but by possession and control, where biological kinship becomes a means of establishing dominance. The repeated emphasis on shared blood and physical formation transforms motherhood into a kind of ownership, suggesting that individuality and separation are not possible or permissible. The reference to specific body parts reinforces the

unsettling nature of this control, as identity itself is presented as something that is shaped and controlled at a fundamental level. Moreover, the suggestion of "little surprises" introduces an element of threat, suggesting that the mother's influence continues to operate within the body in hidden and unpredictable ways. As a result, the language evokes a condition of entrapment, where the past is not confined to memory but is actively embedded in the physical and psychological dimensions of her being.

Impact of this intervention is not confined to the moment of communication, but begins to disrupt the fragile structures that maintain her stability. The emotional intensity of her mother's words causes a disturbance that disrupts her previously controlled patterns of thought, creating a heightened awareness of insecurity and self-doubt. This disturbance is not expressed externally, but acts internally, creating a state of tension that influences her perception of herself and her surroundings. The carefully maintained sense of order begins to show signs of strain, as her thoughts become increasingly shaped by uncertainty and restlessness. Rather than providing clarity, the intervention intensifies her internal conflict, revealing the instability that underlies her constructed sense of control.

Gradually, this growing inner unrest began to manifest itself in more visible forms, and the strain of continued emotional repression took its toll on her mental and physical state. It becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the sense of control that once defined her behaviour, giving way to moments of restlessness, anxiety, and instability. This change does not emerge suddenly, but rather through subtle disruptions to her routines, where the effort required to maintain composure becomes more apparent. Her responses reveal a heightened sensitivity to experience, which suggests that the mechanisms that once enabled her to control emotion are beginning to fade. In this context, while the inner tension is expressed through physical discomfort and

behavioural disorder, the body reflects what the mind is trying to contain. What was previously managed through routine and separation now begins to emerge, indicating a gradual movement toward a state where repression can no longer be fully maintained.

Eleanor's traumatic past is further exacerbated by prolonged institutional care, marked by repeated foster placements under social supervision that fail to provide the emotional stability necessary for healthy psychological development. Rather than serving as protective spaces, these foster environments reinforce her sense of displacement, as the lack of stable relationships prevents the formation of trust and belonging. Although structurally intended to ensure her safety, the involvement of social workers introduces a form of detached, controlling care lacking emotional depth, thereby intensifying her isolation. Moreover, her past experiences, particularly her involvement with a man marked by coercion rather than genuine emotional connection, reveal her vulnerability and a deeply distorted understanding of intimate relationships. These experiences are not formative in a constructive sense, but rather deepen her internal fragmentation, shaping her inability to distinguish between intimacy and control. As a result, Eleanor's adult life is marked by emotional withdrawal, social alienation, and a distorted understanding of relationships, all of which can be traced to the cumulative impact of trauma, institutional displacement, and lack of secure human connection.

Amid these increasingly uncomfortable social experiences, a subtle shift begins to occur in the level of her internal response. The distance that once enabled detached observation becomes unstable as she begins to experience moments of inexplicable emotional disturbance. These responses do not constitute clearly defined emotions, but rather appear as fleeting sensations of unease and anxiety that disrupt her controlled perception. Her inability to interpret or control them creates a growing uncertainty,

marking a crucial transition from emotional detachment to early, unrecognized movements of internal change.

In this emerging unstable state of emotional awareness, Sammy Thom's death presents a moment of disruption that deepens her inner conflict. Unlike previous experiences, communication was distant or truncated, but however subtly this loss confronts the absence of a presence that had begun to take on meaning in her life. Sammy's home offered her warmth and unstructured human connection, and his death disrupts not only this external continuity but also the fragile process by which she began to document such experiences. The response it evokes is neither fully articulated nor entirely understood, yet it marks a shift in her internal condition, where detachment no longer remains fully intact. Instead, an unfamiliar discomfort emerges as emotions come to the surface without the support of clear articulation, marking a transition to an emotional state that cannot be fully controlled or managed.

Following the disruption caused by Sammy Thom's death, there is no immediate movement towards emotional expression or external manifestation. Instead, the experience remains unprocessed, merging into the same internal framework in which she previously managed her discomfort. However, this control is no longer stable. The lack of any clear way to understand or express what she has encountered causes a growing internal tension, where the emotion remains unresolved. Her engagement with everyday life continues in sight, although it is marked by a subtle dislocation, as routine no longer provides the same order or control. What once served as a reliable structure now begins to falter, unable to contain the emotional discomfort that remains unacknowledged.

In response to this unresolved discomfort, her withdrawal intensifies not as a conscious retreat, but as a continuation of an established pattern that now operates under

changed circumstances. The isolation that once enabled her to maintain control instead begins to reinforce her instability, as the lack of external intervention eliminates the possibility of disruption or control. In this increasingly closed state, her reliance on habitual coping mechanisms becomes more pronounced, especially the use of alcohol, which becomes a more frequent and necessary way of dealing with internal disturbances from a closed routine. This gradual increase does not present itself as a dramatic change, but rather as a silent change in behaviour, where repetition replaces control, and control begins to give way to compulsion.

As this pattern continues, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the distinction between conscious action and loss of control. The structures that once allowed her to function freely, including routine, detachment, and self-containment, begin to weaken under the pressure of accumulated emotional stress. Her experience of time, bodily awareness, and daily activities become increasingly fragmented, suggesting that the self is no longer able to maintain the same coherence as before. Thus, the breakdown emerges not as an isolated event but as the inevitable outcome of an underlying condition intensifying beneath the surface.

At this stage, her capacity for control has already begun to wane, and what follows is not a sudden rupture but the culmination of a sustained internal disintegration. Her dependence on alcohol intensifies during this period, no longer confined to routine matters but acting as a necessary means of numbness and escape, gradually displacing awareness and weakening her capacity for self-control. As moments of normal experience give way to states of disorientation and physical neglect, the boundaries between consciousness and the unconscious become increasingly unstable. This blurring is reflected in her own perception of her condition: I Slept again.

When I woke, my head was empty, finally, of all thoughts except physical ones: I *am cold*, I *am shaking*. Decision time. I decided on more Vodka (Honeyman 264).

The expression "my head was empty" does not refer to relief, but to a breakdown of cognitive function in which thought itself no longer exists. The reduction of experience to basic physical sensations such as cold and shivering indicates a retreat to a physical state in which higher emotional and intellectual processes are suspended. The declaration of "decision time" initially implies freedom; however, the immediate turn to alcohol reveals that this is not a true choice but a forced response shaped by dependency. At this moment, the distinction between control and surrender becomes indistinguishable, as the act of decision-making reinforces the cycle of escape. The breakdown is therefore not merely behavioural or physical, but deeply psychological, marking a state in which the self can no longer mediate between thought, feeling, and physical experience, and unprocessed trauma begins to emerge through dissociation rather than articulation.

Along with this internal disintegration, her external environment begins to reflect the same state of neglect and disorder, as the space that once reflected her controlled existence gradually deteriorates. The routines that previously shaped her daily life no longer extend to maintenance or care, leading to an environment marked by stagnation and neglect. This physical neglect is not accidental, but rather indicates a deep psychological state in which the ability to organize, clean, or maintain even the most basic aspects of life is significantly compromised. Meanwhile, her persistent tendency toward planning remains blunted, yet it no longer functions as a means of control, instead revealing itself as an empty structure that cannot be implemented. This creates a conflict between intention and action, where the urge to organize remains, but the ability to follow through has diminished. Within this state, her experience is further

defined by an overwhelming sense of loneliness, fear, and vulnerability, as the lack of external connection and internal stability leads her to a state of self-unmediated agency. Therefore, the breakdown extends beyond the individual body and mind, encompassing her living space and daily existence, where internal and external realities converge in a profound chaos.

As this state of breakdown intensifies, her experience is no longer sustained by routine, control, or fragmented thought, but is reduced to immediate, unmediated moments of awareness in which the body and mind register distress without any form of control. The boundaries between physical sensation and emotional state begin to dissolve, giving way to an intense experience of existential isolation, where her self-awareness becomes inseparable from an overwhelming sense of loneliness. This state does not find expression through external communication, but rather emerges through clear and immediate recognition, as she confronts the absence of any kinship presence in her world. Her experience is articulated in a moment of raw clarity: I vomited. I was alive. I was alone. There was no living thing in the universe that was more alone than me. Or more terrible (Honeyman 269).

This moment is articulated through a series of short, declarative statements that reflect a fragmented state of consciousness, where experience is registered in isolated, immediate units rather than through sustained thought. The opening line, "I vomited," leads the body into a state of uncontrollable reaction, suggesting a loss of control and an inability to control inner distress, while "I lived" presents existence as a bare, directionless fact rather than a meaningful state. The progression to "I was alone" establishes isolation as an equally fundamental reality, which it then intensifies in the argument that no living being in the universe can be more isolated, transforming a personal experience into an absolute and inescapable state. The final verse, "Or more

terrible," marks the crucial internalization of this isolation, where loneliness becomes inseparable from self-perception, suggesting that she is not simply experiencing loneliness but understanding herself as it is defined. Thus this passage moves from physical collapse to existential realization, revealing a state where identity and suffering merge. The intensity of this isolation is further highlighted by her recognition of its enduring and life-threatening nature: People sometimes say they might die of boredom, that they're dying for a cup of tea, but for me, dying of loneliness is not hyperbole (Honeyman 269).

Eleanor's statement draws on a contrast between everyday figurative expressions and her lived reality, exposing the inadequacy of language to capture the severity of her condition. Reference to expressions such as "dying of boredom" and "dying for a cup of tea" highlights how language typically exaggerates minor discomforts, operating figuratively rather than literally. However, her argument that "dying of loneliness is not hyperbole" disrupts this convention, arguing that her experience transcends the figurative and should be understood literally. This shift reveals that loneliness is not an emotional state she can temporarily tolerate, but rather a condition that threatens her very sense of existence. The denial of exaggeration is particularly significant, as it reflects her need to validate her experience against a world that minimizes or normalizes such expressions. In this way, the statement underscores the intensity with which the lack of meaningful human connection is experienced not as discomfort, but as a form of psychological annihilation.

By this stage, Eleanor reaches a point where her existing patterns of isolation, neglect, and dependency can no longer sustain her. What once served as mechanisms of resilience now begin to threaten her physical and psychological survival, severely impairing even basic functioning. In this state, the limits of self-reliance become fully

exposed, creating a critical vulnerability in which external intervention becomes unavoidable.

At this critical juncture that Raymond Gibbons plays a crucial role, intervening not through dramatic action but through a steady and attentive presence that recognizes the severity of her condition. His response is characterized by persistence and care, as he ensures that she is no longer alone in a situation that she can no longer manage independently. Unlike previous interventions, where his presence has been situational, here it is actively supportive, initiating a shift from isolation to relationship-based dependency. His intervention facilitates her move toward medical attention and structured care, and is the first instance in which her condition is addressed through external support rather than internal control.

Following Raymond Gibbons' intervention, her transition to a medical and caring environment marks a significant departure from the isolated, self-controlled existence she had previously maintained. The move to the hospital introduces a space where her condition is no longer managed privately, but is acknowledged and addressed within a structured framework of observation and support. This transition does not result in immediate clarity or recovery; rather, it establishes the conditions necessary for intervention, where her physical condition stabilizes and her capacity to interact is gradually restored. The presence of medical professionals and the imposition of routines in this environment begin to reintroduce a sense of external control, replacing failed structures of self-regulation with forms of care that operate beyond her personal control.

It is against this background of stability that the therapy process begins, which marks a crucial turning point in her narrative. Unlike previous ways of being where experience was repressed or contained, therapy presents a space where expression is

possible, albeit not immediately. Interaction with a therapist does not produce instant revelation, but rather initiates a gradual process through which fragmented experiences can emerge and be examined. In this way, therapy lays the foundation for a deeper engagement with the past, through which the long-suppressed origins of her condition begin to surface within a structured and supportive framework.

In the early stages of therapy, the intervention does not lead to immediate clarity or disclosure, but is instead marked by hesitation, resistance, and fragmentation. Her responses are measured and controlled, reflecting her continued reliance on the structures of self-regulation that previously governed her experience. Rather than providing direct access to her past, her narratives emerge in partial and disjointed forms, where some details are remembered with precision, while others remain inaccessible or deliberately omitted. This selective articulation suggests not a lack of memory but a form of internal control that limits what can be consciously acknowledged. Thus, the therapeutic space becomes one of gradual negotiation, where the process is defined not by immediate disclosure but by the slow and often uneven emergence of long-repressed material.

A shift in this process emerges when Raymond Gibbons introduces a cat, later named Glen. The cat's presence reshapes her daily existence through the demands of care and responsiveness. Unlike human relationships, this connection operates without interpretation, judgment, or social expectation, allowing engagement free from psychological pressure. Caring for Glen shifts her from rigid self-control to a sustained interaction shaped by the needs of another, establishing a type of relationship based on action rather than emotional expression. This emerging sense of connection is reflected in her interaction with Glen: Glen was good company: quiet, self-contained, mostly asleep. That evening, as I sat with a cup of tea and listened to a play on the radio, she

jumped onto my lap and began kneading my thighs with her paws, claws partially unsheathed (Honeyman 322).

The description of Glen as "quiet" and "self-contained" reflects Eleanor's own preferred way of life, suggesting that this friendship is not structured through conflict but through compatibility. Unlike human relationships that require interpretation and emotional negotiation, Glen's presence is unpredictable and undemanding, allowing for a kind of connection that does not threaten her sense of control. Meanwhile, the physical act of the cat sitting on her lap introduces a tactile dimension, one that is gentle but unfamiliar, which suggests a gradual reintroduction of intimacy into her experience. Although seemingly ordinary, this moment marks a significant shift, as it reflects her growing ability to remain in a public space.

Despite the emergence of this quiet companionship, the stability it offers remains limited and incomplete. While it presents a manageable form of connection, it does not resolve the deeper tensions underlying her experience. Instead, these unresolved elements persist beneath the surface, creating a fragile state in which moments of stability coexist with latent instability. It is within this condition that her attention begins to turn toward previously repressed aspects of her past.

As her attention turns toward the past, the figure of the mother becomes the first point at which this instability takes on a recognizable form, as her presence, previously felt as continuous and unquestioned, begins to lose its certainty. The structured order of their interaction, especially the weekly conversations that had seemed constant and reliable, becomes increasingly difficult to maintain as moments of conflict and doubt begin to emerge. What had served as a stable relational anchor now reveals itself as something insecure, suggesting that this relationship is not grounded in present reality but is sustained by an internal continuity of past authority. This destabilization does not

yet produce clarity, but rather presents a rupture that begins to question the credibility of her most enduring relationship.

This deepening instability finds its first clear expression in Marianne's emergence, marking the moment in which a previously inaccessible memory takes on a recognizable and personal form, disrupting the continuity of her sense of self. This recognition does not come as a complete memory, but as a gradual integration of fragments that begin to organize into a coherent awareness. The realization that she has a sister challenges the fundamental belief in which she has understood her own life, exposing the extent to which her past has been reorganized through processes of exclusion and repression. Marianne's presence is therefore presented not as a recovery of memory, but as a correction to a distorted narrative, revealing that her identity has been formed not only on the basis of what she has experienced, but also in the name of what has been gradually removed from conscious awareness. This emerging recognition of Marianne is articulated in a moment of direct and conscious recognition: I was ready to say it out loud. 'She's my sister,' I said. We sat for a moment and I let the words crystallize. There she was: Marianne. My little sister. My missing piece, my absent friend (Honeyman 341).

The act of stating "She is my sister" signifies a crucial shift from fragmented memories to conscious recognition, where what had previously been inaccessible is brought into language, directly challenging her long-held belief that she is an only child. The phrase "Let the words crystallize" indicates a process of formation and clarification, suggesting that this memory is not suddenly retrieved, but is gradually cemented into awareness. The description of Marianne as "the missing piece" and "the absent friend" reveals the dual nature of this recognition, as it involves not only the recovery of a relationship but also the immediate awareness of loss. In this way, the

moment acts as a critical rupture point, where identity is reconfigured through the simultaneous presence and absence of what is found.

As this process of recognition continues, the emerging fragments begin to coalesce around a central event, leading to the reconstruction of the fire, which had been partially hidden in her memory. What had previously remained an ambiguous and inaccessible event now takes on a coherent and deeply disturbing form, revealing itself as the crucial moment that connects her physical injury, the loss of Marianne, and the appearance of her mother. The fire is no longer seen as an isolated event, but as an event shaped by intent and violence that fundamentally alters the meaning of her past. This unification marks a crucial shift, as the fragmented elements of memory are drawn into a single, recognizable narrative in which survival, loss, and betrayal are inextricably linked.

Through the reconstruction of the fire, coherence returns to previously fragmented memories, redefining the figure of the mother with clarity and eliminating any remaining ambiguity. The maternal presence, once experienced through inner authority and sustained through imaginary continuity, is now recognized as a source of violence and a person who no longer exists in the present. The revelation of the mother's identity as Sharon Smyth marks a shift from subjective perception to objective reality, grounding what was previously experienced as an abstract or internal presence within a concrete and verifiable framework. At the same time, the realization that she is dead puts an end to the illusion of continuous connection, exposing Wednesday's conversations as expressions of an inner voice rather than genuine engagement. This moment fully unifies the trauma, bringing the roles of mother, loss, and survival into a single, coherent understanding that redefines her past. This reality is further reinforced by an external and factual account of the event:

> Police confirmed today that the bodies recovered from the scene of last week's Maida Vale house fire belonged to Sharon Smyth (29) and her youngest daughter Marian (4). Her eldest child, Eleanor (10), was released today from hospital after making what doctors described as a 'miraculous' recovery from third-degree burns and smoke inhalation. (Honeyman 379-380)

The use of an official report, in stark contrast to the previously fragmented and internalized experience of memory, leads to a detached and factual perspective, grounding the traumatic event in an objective reality that cannot be denied or reinterpreted. The identification of Sharon Smyth and Marianne by name reinforces the concreteness of loss, while the clinical description of Eleanor's survival as a "miraculous recovery" creates an uneasy tension between external perception and internal experience. What is framed as survival within the report, in the context of her narrative, is inseparable from trauma, as it signifies not resolution but the continuation of a life shaped by violence and loss. The impersonal tone of the narrative further intensifies this contradiction, reducing a deeply personal and devastating event to a subject that is recorded, thereby highlighting the gap between lived experience and its external representation.

At the height of this reconstruction, the fragmented elements of her past coalesce into a clear and unambiguous realization, where what was once only partially understood is now fully articulated. "I looked at my hands, then back at Maria. 'Mummy set a fire. She wanted to kill us both, except, somehow, Marian died and I didn't" (Honeyman 352). The power of this statement lies in its stark directness, where what had remained fragmented finally speaks without hesitation or ambiguity. The act of looking at her hands grounds the moment in the body, connecting current awareness to the violence it has endured. By naming her mother as the agent of the fire, the

statement dispels any remaining illusion, while the contrast between Marianne's death and her own survival presents a calm but unsettling imbalance. The phrase "Somehow… I didn't" captures the incomprehensibility of survival, suggesting that this is experienced not as a relief but as a burden shaped by loss.

Following this moment of realization, the healing process does not emerge as an immediate solution, but rather as a gradual reconfiguration of her relationship to herself and the world around her. The expression of trauma creates a space in which previously overwhelming experiences begin to be approached with some degree of distance, allowing for reflection rather than fragmentation. This shift does not erase the past, but rather changes the way it is maintained, as what was once experienced as uncontrollable and isolated becomes something that can be accepted without complete destabilization. In this way, healing begins not as something that is simply recovered from the trauma, but as a transformation in how it is understood and integrated. This shift in her internal state is reflected in her own articulation: 'In the end, what matters is this: I survived.' I gave him a very small smile. 'I survived, Raymond!' I said, knowing that I was both lucky and unlucky, and grateful for it (Honeyman 382).

This statement reflects a major shift in her understanding of survival, where it is no longer experienced as a burden marked by loss, but as something that can be accepted with a certain degree of acceptance. The realization that she is "lucky and unfortunate" introduces a nuanced awareness, holding gratitude and pain together without diminishing each other. Raymond's presence within this moment further emphasizes the shift from isolation to shared experience, as articulation becomes possible in a relational context. In this way, survival is redefined, not simply as a continuum, but as a state that can be identified, spoken of, and gradually integrated into a renewed sense of self.

As she recovers, this change manifests itself not only in her internal thoughts but also in her renewed engagement with the social environment at work. Upon her return after her absence, the presence of colleagues such as Janey, Loretta, Bernadette, and Billy reflects a familiar yet newly approachable space, where interaction no longer feels completely burdensome or alien. What once felt like an environment requiring careful detachment is now encountered with greater ease, as she becomes more receptive to everyday patterns of social interaction. This change does not indicate a transformation of the external world, but rather reveals an internal shift in which she is able to participate in shared spaces with growing openness.

Within this openness, her relationship with Raymond Gibbons takes on a calm, steady significance, shaped not by expectation but by stability and care. Their interactions unfold through simple, everyday moments that gradually become meaningful, allowing her to experience connection without the need for performance or self-correction. Unlike her previous relationships, which revolved around distance and illusion, this one is based on presence, where she is not idealized or required to change. In the end, their relationship remains undefined, but it endures, marked by mutual respect and ease, supporting her movement toward a life she begins to shape on her own terms, where the relationship remains part of her world but no longer defines or limits it.

As this process progresses, what becomes more evident is not the restoration of connection, but the emergence of a more stable and self-regulated sense of identity. Her recognition of her past no longer serves as a source of excessive fragmentation, but is gradually integrated into a framework within which she can understand herself with greater clarity and acceptance. This shift allows her to move beyond previous patterns of isolation and constructed self-sufficiency, not by rejecting freedom but by redefining

it as something that can coexist with vulnerability and connection. In the end, her sense of self is no longer shaped by absence or distortion, but by an active engagement with her own experiences, marking a transition to a life that is consciously inhabited rather than merely endured.

In this way, the narrative traces a movement from isolation and fragmentation to a more integrated and self-aware existence, where trauma is neither erased nor allowed to dominate the present. Through a gradual process of identification, articulation, and relational engagement, the self is reconstituted, not as something fixed or complete, but as something continuously shaped by experience. The journey does not result in resolution in the traditional sense, but in a serene form of stability, where acceptance replaces denial and connection is possible without loss of identity. Ultimately, the text affirms that healing is not the recovery of a previous state, but the creation of a new existence in which the past is acknowledged, the present is lived, and the future is open.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

The present study has examined *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* through the interconnected frameworks of trauma, identity, and healing, with particular attention to the ways in which past experiences shape and restructure the self. By tracing Eleanor's journey from emotional isolation and self-sufficiency to gradual recognition and relational engagement, the analysis sought to understand how trauma operates not only as a past event but also as a continuous state that influences perception, behaviour, and self-expression. The study further explores how processes such as memory, therapy, and human connection contribute to the reconstruction of identity, highlighting the complex and nonlinear nature of healing within narrative.

This analysis demonstrates that the trauma in the story originates in early childhood and is fundamentally shaped by a violent arson incident initiated by her mother, which leads to serious physical injury and the loss of her sister Marianne. While the arson can be understood as an acute traumatic event, its psychological consequences extend beyond a moment and more closely align with the characteristics of developmental and complex trauma. This is evident in the way the trauma is embedded in her formative years and is closely linked to the failure of caregiving, where the maternal figure becomes a source of harm rather than protection. As indicated in the text, her childhood is marked not only by this event but also by a lack of consistent emotional support, which results in a deeply fractured sense of security and intimacy. Rather than remaining a coherent and accessible memory, the trauma is fragmented and partially repressed, continuing to shape her perception, behaviour, and identity in an indirect way. The gradual development of these experiences through therapy suggests

that trauma operates as a continuing psychological state, where past violence persists in the present and structures her emotional life and self-understanding.

The analysis further demonstrates that the psychological impact of trauma is manifested through continued isolation, emotional repression, and a fragmented sense of self, which closely aligns with the theoretical understandings of trauma discussed in Chapter two. As trauma theory suggests, particularly in relation to emotional repression and fragmentation, individuals often develop mechanisms that enable them to function externally while remaining internally disconnected from their experiences. This is evident in Eleanor's structured routines and limited social interaction, which function as coping strategies in response to unresolved trauma. Her repeated insistence that she is "fine" exemplifies what trauma theory identifies as an emotional mask, where language is used not to express but to control and conceal internal distress. The stark contrast between this enforced stability and her lived experience of profound loneliness reflects a division against internal and external identities, often associated with the fragmentation caused by trauma. As explored further in Chapter three, this prolonged repression ultimately leads to a state of psychological breakdown, where the boundaries between thought, feeling, and physical awareness begin to disintegrate. In this way, the findings confirm that trauma extends beyond memory and actively shapes emotional regulation, social interaction, and identity formation.

Traumatic memories in narrative do not emerge as a consistent or immediately accessible narrative, but rather develop gradually through fragmentation and delayed recognition, reflecting the theoretical framework proposed by Cathy Caruth. As Caruth suggests, trauma is not fully experienced at the moment of occurrence, but returns in delayed, often incomplete and disjointed forms. This is evident in Eleanor's therapeutic interaction with Maria Temple, where repressed memories begin to emerge not as a

unified narrative, but as fragments. The initial recognition of her sister Marianne, followed by the reconstruction of the fire and the final recognition of the role of the mother, demonstrate that memory operates as a process of gradual disclosure. Thus, the therapeutic space becomes a place not only of recovery but also of encounter, where previously inaccessible experiences are clarified and reorganized into an understandable form. In this way, healing is closely related to the act of describing trauma, as fragmented memories are transformed into conscious awareness, which facilitates a more integrated understanding of the self.

As represented in the narrative, healing resists the notion of resolution and aligns with theoretical understandings that frame recovery as a continuous process of negotiation rather than completion. Rather than eliminating the effects of trauma, the process involves a shift in how these experiences are contained and understood, allowing for a reconfiguration of the self in relation to the past and present. This suggests that healing is characterized not by the absence of distress, but by the ability to engage with life without being completely controlled by it. Consequently, the findings suggest that recovery operates through a reconfiguration of perception and response, where vulnerability and autonomy begin to coexist, marking a move toward a more sustainable and self-aware way of living.

The culmination of these processes is reflected in the reshaping of identity, moving beyond fragmentation to a more integrated and self-aware sense of self. Rather than reestablishing a previous or stable identity, the narrative presents identity as something reconstructed through the negotiation of past and present experiences. This is consistent with theoretical perspectives that see identity not as fixed, but as continuously shaped through memory, expression, and relational engagement. The findings suggest that Eleanor's identity is no longer structured around denial or

constructed self-sufficiency, but rather emerges through an increased capacity to acknowledge vulnerability while maintaining autonomy. Thus, identity is defined not only by trauma, but also by the ability to incorporate it into a broader understanding of identity. This shift signifies a movement from a fragmented and defensive existence to a more consciously inhabited one, where the self is no longer hidden or imposed, but is gradually formed through awareness and acceptance.

Taken together, these findings challenge traditional understandings of trauma as a condition that can be completely resolved or overcome. Instead, the narrative supports a more nuanced view that trauma remains an enduring presence that shapes but does not entirely determine the subject's sense of self. This aligns with contemporary trauma theory, particularly the work of Cathy Caruth, which emphasizes that trauma is not simply an event located in the past, but an experience that continues to resonate within the present through delayed recognition and fragmented memory. In this context, healing cannot be understood as a return to past wholeness, but rather as a process of integration, in which the individual learns to coexist with the marks of trauma rather than being completely defined by them. The narrative thus reconstructs recovery as an ongoing negotiation between the past and the present, where the self is not reestablished but rather reconstructed through awareness, articulation, and relational engagement.

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of trauma as a complex and evolving condition that extends beyond isolated events and provides insight into the ways in which identity is formed through disruption and recovery. By bringing together theoretical perspectives on trauma through a close reading of Eleanor Oliphant, the study demonstrates how literary narratives can serve as effective spaces for understanding psychological processes that are difficult to express in purely clinical terms. It highlights the importance of viewing healing not as a definitive endpoint but

as a continuous process of adjustment, integration, and relational engagement. In doing so, the study contributes to broader discussions in trauma studies and literary analysis by emphasizing the role of narrative in representing the lived experience of trauma, particularly in relation to issues of memory, identity, and emotional expression. Thus, the findings underscore the value of interdisciplinary approaches in deepening our understanding of literature and the human condition.

In conclusion, the study confirms that the trauma represented in *Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine* cannot be confined to a single moment or resolved through a linear progression, but rather should be understood as a continuous presence that shapes perception, identity, and experience. The movement from dissociation to integration does not imply the erasure of past suffering, but rather reflects a gradual shift in how the self is accepted and embodied. By emphasizing the processes of identification, articulation, and relational engagement, the narrative presents healing as a continuous and adaptive process rather than a definitive outcome. Ultimately, the study suggests that the importance of recovery lies not in overcoming trauma, but in the ability to live with it in a way that allows for growth, connection, and self-reconfiguration.

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