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Haunted Narration in the 21st Century British Novel

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Haunted Narration in the 21st Century British Novel

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Introduction

The narratives analyzed in this dissertation are informed by the most defining moment of the 21st century: the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York. It is a traumatic event which started a global war on terror, mutating later into a myriad of shapes and spreading across the globe. The attacks dealt a further blow to the human narrative of progressive rationality, or the so-called 'project of modernity', with its grand ideals of "the understanding of self and world, the progress of morality, justice … and even human happiness" (Habermas 1997, 45–46). A deep chasm opened up between the human image of itself and a terrifying reality that reared its stupefying head, redefining existence. Martin Amis wrote the following lines about the airplane that crashed into one of the towers: "I have never seen a generically familiar object so transformed by *affect* ('emotion and desire as influencing behavior'). That second plane looked eagerly alive, and galvanized with malice, and wholly alien. For those thousands in the South Tower, the second plane meant the end of everything. For us, its glint was the worldflash of a coming future" (Amis 2008, 3). Amis's words, written shortly after the attacks, aim to encapsulate the overwhelming feelings engendered by witnessing the tragedy unfold. The attacks unleash a burst of affect in the onlooker, of traumatic incredulity coupled with a consciousness of the existence of qualities one believes to be uncharacteristic of civilized humanity, notably unbounded malice.

The realization of the degree to which hatred fuels acts of terrorism triggers the traumatic affect of an insight into the profoundly dark pit of the "potentially warlike" (Swift 2016, n.pag.) human heart. It is the irruption of this unacceptable insight into what is imagined to be the ongoing narrative of human progress that strikes fear into the roots of the onlooker's very being. Post-terrorism subjectivity has to be redefined against a backdrop of this disillusionment, of this "shattering" of the imaginary world picture. Amis expatiates more on the "malice" of the perpetrators and the resultant fear:

> Their aim was to torture tens of thousands, and to terrify hundreds of millions. In this they have succeeded. The temperature of planetary fear has been lifted toward the feverish…. And yet the most durable legacy has to do with the more distant future, and the disappearance of an illusion about our loved ones, particularly our children. …. The illusion is this. Mothers and fathers need to feel that they can protect their children. They can't, of course, and never could, but they need to feel that they can. What once seemed more or less impossible, their protection, now

> seems obviously and palpably inconceivable. So from now on we will have to get by without that need to feel. (Amis 2008, 7)

The illusion that Amis wrote about is that in a world increasingly redefined by fear of terrorism – defined by Amis as "political communication by other means" (Amis 2008, 3) – belief in the linear progress of humanity toward an ideal future must be discarded and replaced by an acceptance of a new reality of life: a traumatic one defined precisely by the absence of any illusion of safety and progress, however fearful this realization might be. Simon Malpas refers to the traumatic reality of terrorism as an affront to *any* narrative of progress by stating that "the increased fragmentation of Western societies has, in recent years, gone hand in hand with the growing influence of fundamentalist religious beliefs in both the developing and developed world that resist entirely not just the postmodern but also the enlightenment rationalism of the scientifically based discourses of the modern" (Malpas 2005, 41).

This new reality is defined by the disappearance of the notions of solidity, subjectivity and the state. Put otherwise, it is characterized chiefly by the 'liquidity' – to borrow from Zygmunt Bauman – of the concepts that bestowed an illusion of firmness to the various pillars of modern existence. According to Bauman, the sentiment of diffuse existential dread is so widespread that it seems as if "our liquid modern society is a contraption attempting to make life with fear liveable" (Bauman 2006, 6). In terms similar to Amis's characterization of fear as central to contemporary life, Bauman writes:

> Fear is at its most fearsome when it is diffuse, scattered, unclear, unattached, unanchored, free floating, with no clear address or cause; when it haunts us with no visible rhyme or reason, when the menace we should be afraid of can be glimpsed everywhere but is nowhere to be seen. 'Fear' is the name we give to our *uncertainty*: to our *ignorance* of the threat and of what is to be *done* – what can and can't be – to stop it in its tracks – or to fight it back if stopping it is beyond our power. (Bauman 2006, 2)

Whereas the chief source of traumatic fear in the 1980s was the *roughly defined* threat of mutual assured destruction of the Cold War pitting two world blocks against each other, contemporary existence is defined by an acute sense of existential powerlessness in the face of the diffusion of the origins of threat. Fittingly, Bauman believes that "living in a liquid modern world known to admit only one certainty – the certainty that tomorrow can't be, shouldn't be, won't be like it is today – means a daily rehearsal of disappearance, vanishing, effacement and dying …" (Bauman 2006, 6). In a more recent work, Bauman's co-author Carlo Bordoni voices this

sentiment when he states that "Social guarantees that until a few decades ago were the backbone of individual existence are phased out, diminished or emptied of meaning" (Bauman and Bordoni 2014, 57).

A conception of fear as constitutive of contemporary subjectivity and its spectrally (im)material omnipresence also necessitates a different understanding of the ethics of encounter with alterity: one which would do justice to the liquidation of borders of fear, subjectivity and state. This ethical perspective would have to elucidate how fear and trauma are central to existence, cross boundaries and form an evolving strand of the human understanding of existence. This ethical perspective would also have to reveal *all* beings connected in their vulnerability[1], *literally* partaking of one another, and thus responsible toward one another, *and* the material context of the world out of which they emerge. This immanent understanding of existence – borderless and constantly becoming other – is best summed up by Martin Amis whose efforts to comprehend the 9/11 attacks yield a similar conception of ethics:

> Our best destiny, as planetary cohabitants, is the development of what has been called "species consciousness," something over and above nationalisms, blocs, religions, ethnicities. During this week of incredulous misery, I have been trying to apply such a consciousness, and such a sensibility. Thinking of the victims, the perpetrators, and the near future, I felt species grief, then species shame, then species fear. (Amis 2008, 9)

The sentiment of sensibility toward the people involved in the attacks engenders a simultaneous feeling of pain, shame and fear. What matters above all, is the exercise of the human faculty of sensibility extended toward members of the same species, to achieve a *deeper consciousness* of the event, beyond its initial traumatic impact. As Amis intimates, "species consciousness" is the *material biological* sensibility that binds human beings – denuded of cultural and political add-ons – together. He goes so far as to feel shame on behalf of the perpetrators of an unspeakable act. The novels of our corpus mirror a similar sensibility to existential fear and trauma in a spirit of (Deleuzian) immanence, a critical area in trauma theory which is insufficiently explored.

The narratives selected for the present study, *The Pregnant Widow* (2011) by Martin Amis, *Wish You Were Here* (2012) by Graham Swift and *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) by

[1] an idea developed by Jean-Michel Ganteau in his recent monograph *The Ethics and Aesthetics of Vulnerability in Contemporary British Fiction* (Ganteau 2015a)

Julian Barnes depict the attempt to work through the haunting memory of traumatic death, either of a close friend or a loved one. In *The Pregnant Widow*, the protagonist and narrator Keith's foremost traumatic experience involves his sister Violet's untimely death following a lifetime of self-destructive sexuality and alcoholism. His existence is overshadowed by the "enormous and unsuspected presence within" his being, an "undiscovered continent … the past" (*TPW*, 5) which he writes the novel to discover. Reminiscent of Marcellus's reference to the ghost[2] in *Hamlet* (1.1.21-2), Keith also resorts to the phrase "this … thing", to refer to the enigmatic core of trauma and its spectral return which he tries to verbalize throughout his narrative; He asks his third wife, "There's this other thing. I don't know what it is. It can't be to do with Violet, can it?" (*TPW*, 182,183). For Shakespeare and Amis – as well as for Derrida – naming 'the thing' represents an attempt at verbalizing the traumatic encounter with the haunting *revenant* that demands audience, much in the manner of traumatic return which engenders the movement of narrativization. In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida writes, "As in *Hamlet*, the Prince of a rotten State, everything begins by the apparition of a specter. More precisely by the waiting for this apparition" (Derrida 1994, 2).

Similarly, Swift's novel arises out of the will for freedom from the heavy weight of a traumatic past replete with suicide and loss of family members in war, in addition to the pain of deracination. The protagonist Jack and his wife Ellie are portrayed as struggling to extricate themselves from the "pursuing ghost of" (*WYWH*, 36) the dead. What Captain Hayes, the commanding officer of the Luxton brothers had done in the wake of their death in World War I, could well serve as the therapeutic *raison d'être* of the novel itself: to "write the matter up, … , in the hope that something good … might come of the day's unspeakabilities" (*WYWH*, 10). Finally, in Barnes's autodiegetic narrative[3], the protagonist is battling against the feeling of traumatic "remorse"[4] that emerges in the course of his detective-like – or "forensic" (Dalrymple 2016, 79) – inquiries into the events surrounding his friend Adrian's suicide, an investigation which brings home to him the traumatic truth of his unwitting involvement in his friend's suicide. Tony Webster's quest for the precise meaning of Adrian's enigmatic

[2] "What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?" (Shakespeare 1986, 870)

[3] "Autodiegetic Homodiegetic narrative in which the first-person narrator is the main protagonist. An autobiography is an autodiegetic narrative" (Fludernik 2009, 150).

[4] The etymological entry in *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary 11th edition* reveals the hidden component of intrusive return, rendering 'remorse' an apt appellation for trauma: " … from Latin remordere 'vex', from re- (expressing intensive force) + mordere 'to bite'" (Soanes and Stevenson 2008)

mathematical formulas scribbled in his diary is also accompanied by an acute sense of Adrian's spectral presence in the novel: "I felt as if Adrian was present in the room again, beside me, breathing, thinking" (*TSE*, 86).

The presence of the ghost of trauma in the narratives is accompanied by the need to tell a story. David Malcolm's introductory remarks about the fiction of Graham Swift's generation highlights their chief thematic concerns including the urge to narrate. He writes:

> Although the radical nature of any shift in British fiction in the late 1970s and early 1980s can be exaggerated, one can identify four main aspects of this decade's novels that stand out in sharp relief against those of an earlier period and that, it must be noted, endure on into the 1990s and the early twenty-first century: a fascination with historical events and processes of the distant and more recent past; a cosmopolitan opening out to settings and characters from beyond the geographical limits of the British Isles; a very substantial amount of mixing of genres within individual texts; and metafictional concerns (that is, the writing of fiction that constantly advertises, in a variety of ways, its own textuality and fictionality – in short, its "madeness" – and of fiction that prominently takes as its theme the difficulties and sometimes the necessity of giving an account, telling a story, or producing a reliable narrative of any kind). (Malcolm 2003, 8–9)

The four principal preoccupations highlighted by Malcolm are all present in the novels of the corpus with varying degrees. To his remarks, we would also add that the need to give an account of the past has acquired an unprecedented urgency in the contemporary context of acute awareness of trauma and its relevance to the quotidian human existence.

Trauma, the principal subject matter of the narratives of the corpus has been comprehensively researched by eminent psychoanalysts as well as literary critics throughout its history. The chief characteristic of trauma is an encounter with an event that cannot be verbalized immediately by the victim. Unverbalized, it keeps returning in the victim's psyche (notably in the form of flashbacks and nightmares), a phenomenon for which "haunting" has been used as a good-enough metaphor. Haunting or possession by the ghost of trauma has been directly associated with trauma. In "Remembering, Repeating and Working-through" Freud seminally argued that "the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it". He went on to call it the "compulsion to repeat" (Freud 2001, 150–51), a notion which has since come to be recognized as the chief

psychical reaction to traumatic experience. Elsewhere, Freud discusses the tendency to act out a repressed traumatic memory in terms of spectrality: "a thing which has not been understood inevitably reappears; like an unlaid ghost, it cannot rest until the mystery has been solved and the spell broken" (Freud 1975, 122). Similarly, in her introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, pioneering scholar Cathy Caruth discusses the return of trauma using the spectral metaphor of "possession". She defines PTSD as an experience "in which the overwhelming events of the past repeatedly possess, in intrusive images and thoughts, the one who has lived through them. This singular *possession by the past* …." (Caruth 1995, 151) i.e. its psychical repetition and return is what constitutes trauma for Caruth.

Following Freud, certain other trauma theorists define trauma as an experience that is not integrated into the victim's conscious narrative of the self, and thus demands verbalization. Geoffrey Hartman states that "Trauma results from an experience that lodges in a person without having been experienced, that is, without having fully passed into consciousness or stayed there. It is a 'foreign body' (*Fremdkörper*) in the psyche…. Unintegrated, it gives off strange signals" (Hartman 2003, 257). Hartman's analysis is inspired by the Lacanian conception of 'the real' as "missed encounter" in the symbolic order of language (the symbolic order roughly meaning all manifestations of the culture into which an individual is born, including its language[5]). Lacan asks, "Where do we meet this real? For what we have in the discovery of psycho-analysis is an encounter, an essential encounter – an appointment to which we are always called with a real that eludes us" (Lacan 1977, 53). Lacan's word for the missed encounter with the traumatic real – in the symbolic order of language – is the *tuché*. He explains his choice of appellation thus: "First, the *tuché*, which we have borrowed … from Aristotle, who uses it in his search for cause. We have translated it as *the encounter with the real*. The real is … the return, the coming-back, the insistence of the signs …." (Lacan 1977, 53–54).

[5] Robbins et al. succinctly define the Lacanian symbolic order as "the realm of ordered, structured paraphrasable language, the realm of Law", entry into which "begins with the mirror phase which initiates the child into the beginnings of language after he catches sight of himself – or rather of a reflection of himself – in a mirror, and recognises himself for the first time as a separate and distinct being, not one with either the world or with his mother" (Robbins, Wolfreys, and Womack 2006, 55). The symbolic order is thus indissociable from a constitutive alienation at the core of subjectivity. Similarly, Laplanche and Pontalis define the symbolic thus: "The Symbolic covers those phenomena with which psycho-analysis deals in so far as they are structured like a language. … Lacan's use of the notion of the Symbolic in psycho-analysis seems to us to have two aims:
a. To compare the structure of the unconscious with that of language, and to apply to the former a method which has borne fruit in its application to linguistics.
b. To show how the human subject is inserted into a pre-established order which is itself symbolic in nature in Lacan's sense" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 439–40).

The real thus manifests itself in the seemingly haphazard "strange signals" that Hartman conceives of as the tell-tale signs of the return of the traumatic real in the symbolic of language. Lacan proceeds:

> What is repeated, in fact, is always something that occurs – the expression tells us quite a lot about its relation to the *tuché – as if by chance* ….The function of the *tuché*, of the real as encounter – the encounter in so far as it may be missed, in so far as it is essentially the missed encounter – first presented itself in the history of psychoanalysis in a form that was in itself already enough to arouse our attention, that of the trauma.
>
> Is it not remarkable that, at the origin of the analytic experience, the real should have presented itself in the form of that which is *unassimilable* in it – in the form of the trauma, determining all that follows, and imposing on it an apparently accidental origin? (Lacan 1977, 54–55)

Thus, the return of the traumatic real occurs in an unpredictable and veiled manner, "as if by chance," in the symbolic of language as long as it remains unassimilable. The verbalization of trauma assists in the gradual assimilation of (or acceptance of) the incomprehensible and mercurially returning event of trauma into the evolving narrative of the victim's life.

Among contemporary psychoanalysts, the clearest recapitulation of the nature of trauma and the repetition compulsion – from a Freudian perspective – is presented by Laplanche and Pontalis. In their book *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, they define psychical trauma in economic terms as,

> An event in the subject's life defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organisation.
>
> In economic terms, the trauma is characterised by an influx of excitations that is excessive by the standard of the subject's tolerance and capacity to master such excitations and work them out psychically. (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 465)

They then proceed to offer an etymology of the term 'trauma' as deriving from the Greek word for a physical wound where the skin is pierced "as a consequence of external violence" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 465). Laplanche and Pontalis state that within a psychical context, the physical connotations of the word are not entirely absent: "In adopting the term, psycho-analysis carries the three ideas implicit in it over on to the psychical level: the idea of a violent shock, the idea of a wound and the idea of consequences affecting the whole

organization" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 466). They adopt the Freudian model of trauma based on "an economic perspective" of the psyche whereby trauma "presents the mind with an increase of stimulus too powerful to be dealt with or worked off in the normal way, and this must result in permanent disturbances of the manner in which the energy operates" (Sigmund Freud qtd in Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 466). According to the Freudian model, the principle of constancy dictates that the organism, which finds itself violated, take action to restore the lost homeostasis – which translates into pleasure for the organism. Laplanche and Pontalis gloss further on Freud who refers to the living organism, the human body for example, as 'a living vesicle':

> Freud suggested a figurative conceptualisation of this state of affairs …, envisaging it in terms of an elementary relationship between an organism and its surroundings: the 'living vesicle' is sheltered from external stimuli by a protective shield or layer which allows only tolerable quantities of excitation through.
>
> Should this barrier suffer any breach, we have a trauma: the task of the apparatus at this juncture is to muster all its available forces so as to establish anticathexes, to immobilise the inflowing quantities of excitation and thus to permit the restoration of the necessary conditions for the functioning of the pleasure principle. (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 466)

Thus the organism's initial reaction is to shut down its emotional ties to its surroundings (technically known as *anticathexis*) to prevent further excitation of the interior of the organism, a psychic strategy which translates outwardly as a state of speechless shock, or 'dissociation'. In addition to Laplanche and Pontalis, Cathy Caruth also distinguishes the physical wound from a psychical one in that the latter is characterized by its incomprehensibility and intrusive return. She states that "in Freud's text, the term *trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind. … an event that, …, is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (Caruth 1996, 3–4).

Trauma's repetitional compulsion leads on to yet another significant notion detected and theorized initially by Freud: the concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (translated as 'deferred action', 'belatedness' and 'après-coup') which plays a crucial role in the formation of several other concepts that have proven instrumental to the analysis of the corpus narratives. Reprinting a letter to Breuer by Freud, where Freud first divulges his discovery of "memory traces being

subjected from time to time to *a rearrangement* in accordance with fresh circumstances – to a *retranscription*" (Sigmund Freud qtd in Modell 2003, 36), Arnold Modell explains the contemporary scientific relevance of Freud's idea. He shows how similarities exist between Freud and cognitive scientist Gerald Edelman's conception of memory:

> Freud and Edelman described memory as a recontextualization. Freud referred to the retranscription of memory as *Nachträglichkeit*, which can be literally translated as a retrospective attribution. …
>
> One basic function of memory is the detection of novelty, the detection of similarity and differences within the everchanging flood of perceptions from inside the body and from the outer world. The sorting of similarity and difference is another way of describing category formation. Categorization is a function of memory, and memory, in turn, is a property of neural systems. (Modell 2003, 36)

Thus, with proof available from recent scientific discoveries, Modell highlights the fact that the human brain classifies – or rather *recontextualizes* – memory through a fresh understanding in light of emergent internal and external perceptions. This is the process that has come to be known as *Nachträglichkeit*, after Freud. Lacan restates this sentiment in his commentary on the objective knowledge of the past: "History is not the past. History is the past in so far as it is historicised in the present – historicised in the present because it was lived in the past" (Lacan 1988, 12). In similar vein, translating Freud's word as "deferred action", psychoanalysts Laplanche and Pontalis state that *Nachträglichkeit* is a

> Term frequently used by Freud in connection with his view of psychical temporality and causality: experiences, impressions and memory-traces may be revised at a later date to fit in with fresh experiences or with the attainment of a new stage of development. They may in that event be endowed not only with a new meaning but also with psychical effectiveness. (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 111)

Thus, deferred action on the memory means that memories are revised in the service of an *evolution* of meaning. Importantly, the revision of certain memories is claimed to invest them "with significance and even with efficacity or pathogenic force" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 112). This means that an event *may* become traumatic only through its revision at a later date. Crucially for the study of trauma, Laplanche and Pontalis proceed to define the salient features of *Nachträglichkeit* thus:

> a. It is not lived experience in general that undergoes a deferred revision but, specifically, whatever it has been impossible in the first instance to incorporate fully into a meaningful context. The traumatic event is the epitome of such unassimilated experience.
> b. Deferred revision is occasioned by events and situations, or by an organic maturation, which allow the subject to gain access to a new level of meaning and to rework his earlier experiences. (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 112)

The significance of the above formulation cannot be overstated. Trauma, as an event characterized by its initial unassimilability into the subject's received set of assumptions of subjectivity, requires a "deferred revision" triggered by later "events" or "maturation". *Nachträglichkeit* allows for the attainment of fresh perspectives and a reworking of the initial experience. In the current dissertation, all three novels could be said to embody the mental narrative process of *Nachträglichkeit* as they reenact the protagonists' evolving perspectives on the traumatic event – and the people and places involved in it.

As for release from trauma, the scholars state that "*technically*, effective cure is sought by means of an 'abreaction' and a psychical working out of the traumatic experiences" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 466). Abreaction, closely related to the idea of belatedness or *Nachträglichkeit* could be roughly defined as cathartic release through working-through in language. Laplanche and Pontalis define it as, "Emotional discharge whereby the subject liberates himself from the affect attached to the memory of a traumatic event in such a way that this affect is not able to become (or to remain) pathogenic. … As early as 1895, in fact, Freud noted that 'language serves as a substitute for action; by its help, an affect can be 'abreacted' almost as effectively'" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 1). Of crucial significance in the scholars' analysis, is the notion of *the possibility of release* from the *affect* of the traumatic memory, i.e. the possibility of trauma *not* becoming pathogenic, or at least not remaining so indefinitely. What frees the victim is the emotional discharge through cathartic recollection by putting the event into words, in repeated returns to the traumatic event in the course of analysis.

Not only within the context of trauma studies, but also as a means of comprehending the dynamics of immanent existence in the corpus narratives, the concept of 'affect' acquires great significance. Apart from its centrality to trauma – as overwhelming intrusion into the homeostasis of subjectivity – affect is also viewed as the primary driving force behind the movement of becoming in nature. In his translator's foreword to Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi defines affect and affection thus:

> AFFECT/AFFECTION. …L 'affect … is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act. *L'affection* … is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include "mental" or ideal bodies). (Massumi 1987, xvi)

At issue here is a conception of existence comprehensively defined by an awareness of becoming-other through *corporeally-felt and initially unverbalizable intensities* that allow for objects, ideas, images, impressions, etc. to pass into a different state of being, to *become other*. Bodies (objective *and* mental) thus affect one another and bring about action (or its diminution). A thinking of affect is informed by a logic of encounter and the unpredictability of what might arise from the encounter between beings and how this process of becoming-other might influence the course(s) of existence.

Ruth Leys who views the recent interest in affect as "a renewed 'conversation' between the humanities and neurosciences … involving a more inventive and shameless form of borrowing by the humanities from the sciences" (Leys 2011, 443) sums up the common characteristic of different views on what constitutes affect. They unite in their,

> … *shared anti-intentionalism*. … the important point to recognize is that they all share a single belief: the belief that affect is independent of signification and meaning. In short…affect is a matter of autonomic responses that are held to occur below the threshold of consciousness and cognition and to be rooted in the body. … there is a gap between the subject's affects and its cognition or appraisal of the affective situation or object, such that cognition or thinking comes "too late" for reasons, beliefs, intentions, and meanings to play the role in action and behavior usually accorded to them. The result is that action and behaviour are held to be determined by affective dispositions that are independent of consciousness and the mind's control. (Leys 2011, 443)

It is thus the absence of cognitive mastery that best defines affect. Affects run counter to rational and logical understanding whose tools are provided in the symbolic order of language. Affects are precognitive material and bodily sources of human actions and dispositions, independent of the mind's control. In her introductory notes on the 'affective turn', Ticineto Clough writes about "affectivity as a substrate of potential bodily responses, often autonomic responses, in excess of consciousness. … affect refers generally to bodily capacities to affect

and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a body's capacity to act, to engage, and to connect…" (Ticineto Clough 2007, 2). Put differently, affects are potentially *actual* human actions – into which they evolve. Through affect, distinct beings interact with one another. As such, affectivity could be said to mirror the movement of Life. As this dissertation hopes to demonstrate, an approach to the corpus narratives informed by both senses of 'affect' (*traumatic* and *life-enhancing*) assists greatly in the appreciation of trauma and the ensuing narrativity.

Throughout the corpus, trauma and its repetitional haunting not only furnish the story of the narratives but they also come to define the structure of their plots. The return and repetition of trauma engender a movement of narrativization leading to reinterpretation through a transferential dialogue, which gives shape to the text[6]. In the course of these novels, trauma is demonstrated to be (re-)presentable in the text, and the psychic "wound" to be comprehensible, leading to the exorcism of the ghost of trauma and a revision of subjectivity. The therapeutic power of narrative is such that Geoffrey Hartman holds it to be on a par with Freudian psychoanalysis chiefly due to the intersubjective dynamics of the human dialogue. He writes, "The talking cure is also a homeopathic cure and literature could be viewed as a talking cure to a higher degree" (Hartman 2003, 259). This sentiment is echoed in the words of the author Siri Husvedt who explains the process of healing through narrative thus:

> When horror can be articulated and told as a story, no matter how terrible the story is, it becomes part of an autobiographical narrative, and as such, it has already changed character. It has become a willed repetition rather than an automatic and/or hidden one. It has gained a temporal, narrative reality, one we share with others, something made possible by our reflective self-consciousness. As a story, the experience necessarily belongs to a specific time and place we can identify. (Husvedt 2015, para. 1)

[6] Peter Brooks develops the concept of the text as transference, drawing upon Freud's ideas on the *intersubjective dynamics of transference in the psychoanalytic dialogue*: "Freud's description of this intermediate region – this *Zwischenreich* – that is both artificial and a piece of real experience makes it sound very much like the literary text. He who intervenes in it is the analyst or reader, first of all in the sense that the simple presence of this other brings to the analysand's discourse what Lacan calls 'the dimension of dialogue'" (Brooks 1987, 342–43). In other words, the intersubjective nature of the reading experience gives it a quality not dissimilar to psychoanalytic analysis, with reading embodying the dynamics of transference.

This is as far as the content and ending of the narratives are concerned. Equally importantly for the purpose of this thesis, a thinking of trauma sheds further light on the experience of reading and interpretation.

The novels of the corpus share a number of important thematic concerns, highlighting the fact that they are engaged in an intense act of representing contemporary cultural concerns[7], informed by the perils germane to life in what Caruth terms a "catastrophic era" (Caruth 1996, 12). This undercurrent of dread is summed up by Hartman as "our sense that violence is coming ever nearer, like a storm – a storm that may already have moved into the core of our being" (Hartman 1995, 552).

As a stark manifestation of this tragic existence, traumatic death takes center stage in the conception of the novels, with protagonists all mourning the untimely deaths of loved ones and represented as suffering from PTSD and melancholia (symptoms include dissociation, numbness, ambivalence, depression, guilt, low self-esteem and the inability to name the source of the trauma) as described by Freud, Kristeva, Sandra Bloom, Hartman and Caruth, among others. As befits the logic of trauma, all three narratives proceed to their resolution through – what is presented as – the "ungovernable process" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 78) of repetition and return of the ghost of trauma. The ending of the narratives is a partial understanding of the traumatic event or a reconciliation with the reality of post-traumatic life. In this sense, the narratives reenact the psychoanalytic process of acting-out and working-through, with acting out as the repetition compulsion and working-through as the resolution of the narrative. In LaCapra's analysis, this results in appropriate mourning and, more significantly, a return to normality:

> In acting-out, the past is performatively regenerated or relived as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription, and it hauntingly returns as the repressed. Mourning involves a different inflection of performativity: a relation to the past that involves recognizing its difference from the present-simultaneously remembering and taking leave of or actively forgetting it, thereby allowing for critical judgment and a reinvestment in life, notably social and civic life with its demands, responsibilities, and norms requiring respectful recognition and consideration for others.(LaCapra 1999, 716)

[7] *Wish You Were Here*, for example, is theorized as a "crisis" or "state of England" novel (Horton 2014).

What the narratives of our corpus demonstrate is that they favor a process of mourning, with the textual return of the real of trauma as its natural counterpart. Although the present is depicted as haunted by the past, in the end, the ghost of the past is laid to rest in the interests of life and a growing sensibility to ethical responsibility. The *future-oriented* nature of the trauma narrative (in particular our corpus) does not escape West-Pavlov's analysis who writes, "Narrative as a therapeutic response to the unnarratable traumatic event releases the traumatized subject from an eternal present, consigns her or his experiences to the past and opens up the future once again" (West-Pavlov 2013, 107). The eternal past of trauma thus loses its haunting grip on the present, opening the path to a better future.

As trauma stalls the narrative of life, it also engenders the need for a fresh narrative, or in Schafer's[8] words, "a narrative redescription of reality" (Schafer 1980, 50). Accordingly, the three novels also highlight the importance of some sensible plot to life; the role of imagination, the fictionalization faculty and the imagined thoughts of the other invading the protagonist's helpless mind are dramatized in the novels as instrumental to the construction of subjectivity. This renders the notion of spectrality doubly important for our work as it is utilized as a trope of a poststructuralist (at times, Lacan-inspired) conception of subjectivity or the "I". Here, the other as conceived by Lacan plays an important role. Lacan identifies the Other as "the locus in which is situated the chain of the signifier that governs whatever may be made present of the subject – it is the field of that living being in which the subject has to appear" (Lacan 1977, 203). Further on, Lacan attests to the centrality of the desire of the Other to the construction of the subject's desire when he states, "analytic experience shows us that it is in seeing a whole chain come into play at the level of the *desire of the Other* that the subject's desire is constituted" (Lacan 1977, 235) i.e. that the subject's ever-changing and insatiable desire is dictated from a point exterior to it: the society. The critic who explicitly mentions spectrality in the context of subjectivity is Maud Ellmann who equates the ego with the specter, writing "the I is always someone else, an alibi, since it is founded on identification with a spectral form external to itself, whether its own reflection or the equally quixotic image of an other. Thus the

[8] Roy Schafer on the significance of a mutually constructed narrative of trauma in the transferential space of analysis: "From the acceptance of this new account, there follows a systematic project of constructing a psychoanalytic reality in which one retells the past and the present .... One retells all this in terms that are increasingly focused and coordinated in psychoanalytic terms of action. One achieves a narrative redescription of reality. This retelling is adapted to the clinical context and relationship, the purpose of which is to understand anew the life and the problems in question. The analysand joins in the retelling (redescribing, reinterpreting) as the analysis progresses. The second reality becomes a joint enterprise and a joint experience" (Schafer 1980, 50).

ego is a ghost, or rather a consortium of ghosts, consisting of the replicas of lost or absent objects of desire" (Ellmann 1994, 17–18). The ego is thus understood as a constantly evolving mental fiction populated with a myriad ghosts.

To highlight the progressive erosion of the boundaries of subjectivity, the novels also contain postmodernist metanarrative elements: direct address to the narratee, attempts at including analysis in the text, and breaking the mimetic/diegetic frames to highlight the narrative nature of consciousness. In short, they partially partake of the overall spirit of postmodernism defined by Linda Hutcheon in the following words:

> In general terms it takes the form of self-conscious, selfcontradictory, self-undermining statement. It is rather like saying something whilst at the same time putting inverted commas around what is being said. The effect is to highlight, or 'highlight,' and to subvert, or 'subvert,' and the mode is therefore a 'knowing' and an ironic – or even 'ironic' – one. Postmodernism's distinctive character lies in this kind of wholesale 'nudging' commitment to doubleness, or duplicity. (Hutcheon 2002, 1)

Yet, although the novels resort to strategies of self-undermining – of narrative authority and history – this is done with an ethical intent. Though metafiction is present, it is not deployed in the interests of an endless irony revealing *all* as a discursive construct[9]. Instead, there is a tangible demand for 'sincerity' and the necessity to *adopt* an ethical stance.

The tendency to engage postmodernist techniques, while at the same time moving "beyond the postmodernist" ethos has been noted by Irmtraud Huber who refers to this contemporary sensibility under the umbrella term "reconstruction". Reconstructive movements share the following characteristics:

> All of them shift their focus from ontological and epistemological questions to pragmatic ones in an attempt to reclaim fiction as a form of communication that actually manages to convey meaning, however unstable and compromised it may be. In face of the postmodernist tenets of the inaccessibility of the real, the indeterminacy of meaning and the impossibility of truth, they explore the ways in which we nonetheless understand reality, construct meanings and

[9] Linda Hutcheon's characterization of the dominant mode of postmodern narrative, which she termed the "historiographic metafiction", has as its central tenet the notion that the "theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historio*graphic meta*fiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past" (Hutcheon 1988, 5).

> communicate with each other. In face of the omnipresence of fiction, they ask for our agency in its production and to assume responsibility for the fictions we tell. (Huber 2014, 15)

Of great significance to our work is Huber's emphasis on the element of the dialogical construction of meaning and a commitment to communication. Moreover, in her analysis, Huber highlights the element of responsibility in the human attempts at fictive constructions, an element also pointed out by Hanna Meretoja (Meretoja 2014, 226). Huber's observations sum up the ethical import of the novels of the corpus which contain postmodernist elements *and* simultaneously underline the significance of sincerity and agency as key elements of a pragmatic stance against trauma. This represents a movement away from pure postmodernism.

A further trauma-induced enquiry in the novels is the preoccupation with contemporary cultural realities, a problematic inscribed in the novels' very titles. All novels have (apocalyptic) titles borrowed from other texts, highlighting the urgent nature of their enquiry and instilling them within a broader cultural investigation into the contemporary realities of bereavement, cultural impasse and lateness. 'The pregnant widow' is an expression borrowed from the following quote from Alexander Herzen reprinted before the title page of Amis's novel: "The death of the contemporary forms of social order ought to gladden rather than trouble the soul. Yet what is frightening is that the departing world leaves behind it, not an heir, but a pregnant widow. Between the death of the one and the birth of the other, much water will flow by, a long night of chaos and desolation will pass". *Wish You Were Here* borrows the most prosaic of postcard messages to denote a richly suggestive absence that reverberates across the novel. Similarly, Barnes's novel shares its title – and its fascination with the "tick-tock" (*TSE*, 3) of time – with a work of the same name by Frank Kermode (originally published in 1966), one of whose themes is the exploration of the human need for narrative within the apocalyptic framework of an end that bestows meaning on the middle space of life[10]. This is the human faculty of fictionalization Barnes is inclined to call 'fabulation' which means, we humans "make up a story to cover the facts we don't know or can't accept; we keep a few true facts and spin a new story round them" (Barnes 1989, 240).

[10] Here is the excerpt from Frank Kermode in which he intimates the idea of narrative as an existential act of humanizing an otherwise alien life: "The clock's tick-tock I take to be a model of what we call a plot, an organization that humanizes time by giving it form; and the interval between tock and tick represents purely successive, disorganized time of the sort that we need to humanize. …
Tick is a humble genesis, tock a feeble apocalypse; and tick-tock is in any case not much of a plot" (Kermode 2000, 45).

Additionally, the social context of the novels is informed by the post-9/11 anxiety attendant on the fight against terrorism, the lingering postmodern "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984, xxiv) and a feeling of superficiality and deracination. Accentuating this sentiment, all three novels contain incompetent or absent father figures in keeping with the novels' obsession with the critical absence of the grand narratives. In line with this spirit of inquiry into social reality, language, as the Lacanian symbolic order, is also defamiliarised. Likewise, the idea of illegitimacy – as the trope of cultural confusion and the loss of historical direction – is highlighted in all three novels. Correspondingly, all novels orchestrate the late and exhausted nature of a culture by rendering a healthy birth impossible: Adriano, the rich beau in *The Pregnant Widow* is stunted at birth. Barnes's Adrian (the son of Adrian) is a mental handicap and Tom's mother in *Wish You Were Here* is said to have been too weak to give birth and her health suffered as a result of Tom's birth. In the same vein, Tom's brother Jack and Ellie refuse to have a child together[11].

Concurrent to this "incredulity" toward grand narratives and sense of cultural fatigue, there is the sense of a yearning for a grand narrative capable of bestowing meaning and coherence upon existence. This yearning is also accompanied by a longing for a knowledge of nature that lies beyond human understanding, one that would encompass life's transformation and diversity in all its manifestations. Parallel to this aspiration, in all novels, there is an awareness of an as-yet ungraspable dimension of life arising from what Bradley and Tate call, apropos Amis, "cosmological piety" (Bradley and Tate 2010, 36), a phrase that calls to mind Wordsworth's "natural piety" (Wordsworth 1994, 79), signifying a profound, yet ineffable relationship with the grandeur of nature. In this context, the narratives of the corpus could be said to embody yet another contemporary tendency (subsumable under Huber's collective term "reconstruction") that has come to be known as metamodernism. The chief proponents of metamodernism state: "The metamodern generation oscillates between a postmodern doubt and a modern desire for sense: for meaning, for direction. Grand narratives are as necessary as they are problematic …" (Potter and Vermeulen 2016, n.pag.).

[11] In this regard, Peter Boxall, categorizing *The Pregnant Widow* (among others) as a novel of "lateness", writes: "In all of these writers, posthumousness is the mark of a historical disorientation, in which the late time of the twentieth century 'lingers on,' persisting as a specter in the midst of a young time …." (Boxall 2012, 702).

A further thematic analogy between metamodernism and our corpus is their foregrounding of an emergent neoromanticism[12]. One could speculate that in their awestruck attitudes to nature, the corpus authors are highlighting the necessity of attending to nature as a grand narrative in its own right. Damaged and ignored in the name of progress, the ineffable materiality of the universe calls for an ethically non-appropriative attention to its multiple, immanent becomings, with humanity as a relatively recent, essentially temporary, manifestation of its material becomings. Emphasizing the magnificent grandeur of nature and its ugraspable becomings deals a further blow to the human ego and reveals it as vulnerable within an equally vulnerable network of connectivity.

As an aspect of the trauma-induced questioning of subjectivity and a neoromantic attempt at a dialogue with what lies beyond the symbolizable, the novels also stage an attempt to comprehend and represent the nature of temporality, as it constitutes an integral problematic of traumatic existence. The repetition compulsion at the heart of trauma collapses temporality, infusing the present with a persistent image of the past. This attempt is at times accompanied by an avowal of its futility.

Overture to becoming-other and the interconnected web of life in a non-judgmental and ethically nonreductive fashion forms another strong thematic strand of the novels of the corpus which narrate the traumatic stories of spectral, 'monstrous' and deformed characters in ways that call for compassion and understanding on the part of the reader. The principal ghosts of the novels are Violet, Keith's "spectral sister" (*TPW*, 102) and Tom, Jack's dead brother who puts in a magical-realistic appearance toward the end of the novel (*WYWH*, 346). The writer's nonjudgmental voice intimates that he had joined the army as a sniper simply because he needed a job after the loss of cattle. The monster is Violet who represents "Nature without nurture. Like Caliban. Like a Yahoo" (*TPW*, 305) and is represented compassionately as a

[12] As a recent conceptual tool used to account for contemporary cultural and artistic trends that have supplanted or coexist alongside postmodernism, metamodernism has been theorized by Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker. Metamodernism is characterized by an oscillation. Vermeulen defines the 'meta' component of metamodernism as "a swinging or swaying … with and between ideals, mindsets, and positions. … the prefix meta indicates that a person can believe in one thing one day and believe in its opposite the next. Or maybe even at the same time" (Potter and Vermeulen 2016, n.pag.). A strong component of metamodernism is also its formulation of an emergent neoromanticism. "Romanticism is about the attempt to turn the finite into the infinite [the infinite to the finite], while recognizing that it can never be realized. …, but for our purposes, this general idea of the Romantic as oscillating between attempt and failure … is sufficient. It is from this hesitation also that the Romantic inclination toward the tragic, the sublime, and the uncanny stem, aesthetic categories lingering between … form and the unformable, coherence and chaos, corruption and innocence" (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2010, n.pag.).

"talentless" (*TPW*, 318) victim of the sexual revolution unfolding at the time she was growing up in the 70s. Those either physically or mentally deformed are Adriano whose mother was subjected to hunger in Mussolini's prison during pregnancy, rendering him "The tiny ghost" with a permanent "face of pain" (*TPW*, 124) and Adrian, born almost incestuously to Mrs. Ford "at a dangerously late age. A child damaged as a result" (*TSE*, 149). In this regard, critics concur that the study of trauma and spectrality represent a shift in focus to the ethical concerns of reading, dating back to the last decades of the previous century: "trauma theory developed in the 1990s in connection with the ethical turn that emerged in the previous decade and which affected literary theory and philosophy"(Nadal and Calvo 2014, 1). The ethical turn in question refers to the counter-deconstructionist sentiments that arose following the discovery of Paul de Man's pro-Nazi writings and Baudrillard's comments on "the Gulf War" (Ganteau and Onega 2011, 7). Geoffrey Hartman also believes that thanks to a thinking of trauma, "both in literary studies and in the field of public health a new awareness arises which is ethical as well as clinical. There is more *listening*, more *hearing* of words within words, and a greater openness to *testimony*" (Hartman 1995, 541). Deeply influenced by Derrida's formulation of the unsettling figure of the specter in *Specters of Marx*[13], an awareness of the ghost is also held to be central to an ethical reading according to critics such as Colin Davis: "Attending to the ghost is an ethical injunction insofar as it occupies the place of the Levinasian Other: a wholly irrecuperable intrusion in our world, which is not comprehensible within our available intellectual frameworks, but whose otherness we are responsible for preserving" (Davis 2005, 373–74).

What the corpus narratives demonstrate is that trauma, subjectivity, the immanence of Being and ethics all partake of the logic of spectrality. As Derrida sums it up, "the figure of the ghost is not just one figure among others. It is perhaps the hidden figure of all figures" (Derrida 1994, 150). In light of the corpus novels' diverse evocations of spectrality against a traumatic backdrop and the resultant questioning of received notions of subjectivity, a number of issues arise that bear analysis. An elaboration of these issues forms the backbone of the current study.

With regard to the overall narrative economy, the primary point of investigation is the three texts' manners of (re)presenting spectrality and trauma. We are also interested in the

[13] Derrida uses the figure of the specter to describe the destabilizing element of *undecidability* attendant on meaning: "To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept" (Derrida 1994, 202).

significance of the ghost for the reading experience other than, and in addition to the insights discussed above. In the same spirit, we also aim to find out why narrativity has been foregrounded alongside with the ghost. We are intrigued by the fact that interpretation and the mental process of fiction-making are foregrounded in the novels alongside with the ghost and thus purport to discover its implications for subjectivity and narrativity. This leads on to the study of the function of self-reflexivity/metafiction within the context of spectrality.

Apropos the fictional representation of subjectivity, our query concerns the reason(s) why subjectivity is foregrounded alongside with the ghost. This prompts a questioning into the significance of the ghost for the construction of subjectivity.

A further question relates to the connection between the ghost and the contemporary worldview. The question is whether spectrality represents the concerns of the age. If so, how? Is spectrality an aspect of the *Zeitgeist*? Does spectrality represent any facet of the emergent cultural conceptualization termed reconstruction in Huber's theorization? Concerning alterity, how does spectrality contribute to the elaboration of ethics in the texts? What is the overarching ethical outlook informing the narratives?

In the three chapters that follow, we aim to demonstrate how spectrality and "possession" by trauma represent not only an internal psychical struggle to 'work through' trauma, but how this struggle also affects and universally transforms the protagonists' entrenched notions of their subjectivity. The thesis will comprise three chapters, each devoted to a discussion of a different aspect of spectrality as mirrored in the textual fabric of the narratives; the chapters will discuss how haunting foregrounds and changes the protagonists' views of *selfhood and its dynamic relation to alterity, place and its appearance in subjectivity,* and finally, the novels' elaboration of *the meaning of life and temporality.* Chapter one deals with how traumatic encounter with death triggers a questioning and redefinition of the idea of selfhood in the novels, aiming to demonstrate how the three protagonists end up with a revised understanding of the ego by the end of the narrative. Chapter two aims to relate how the revision of subjectivity at the behest of traumatic repetition results in a re-evaluation of attitude toward the 'place' of traumatic occurrence. This includes a revision of the idea of nationality and belonging to a place, against a background of rootlessness and postmodern loss of cultural and historical direction. In the third and final chapter, we hope to demonstrate how personal and cultural enquiries develop to encompass issues of greater significance than nationhood: registered in all novels, there is a struggle to comprehend the meaning of time, life and the role of love in existence, in a world where life is heavily tinged with the traumatic fear of survival in the face of extremism and universal loss of direction, or 'sense'.

Chapter 1 - Traumatized Self: From Haunted Self to Its Reformulation

A. Narrative Haunted by Trauma

The narratives under analysis resort to the motif of spectrality to indicate the presence of trauma. What is even more fascinating is that they approach trauma as both a phenomenon whose logic they incorporate and whose psychical symptoms they represent (Whitehead 2004, 3) mimetically. The dual movement of reenacting trauma through textuality and representing traumatic symptoms informs the entirety of the corpus narratives. This section commences with a discussion of the preponderant motif of textual haunting and moves on to analyze trauma as performed (Ganteau and Onega 2014, 10) and represented by the narratives.

a. Spectrality

The trauma novel arises out of the need to make sense of a number of momentous historical events, and present and future concerns of grave significance for life on the planet. The tragic events that give shape to these novels have left their indelible traces in the collective psyche of the various peoples involved, and regardless of how long has passed since their occurrence, certain traumatic incidents continue to make their spectral presence felt to date. These specters from the past call for narrativization to be laid to rest, to be worked through. One such historic event is the First World War and a few examples of novels treating the theme include Pat Barker's anti-war *Regeneration Trilogy – Regeneration* (1991), *The Eye in the Door* (1993) and *The Ghost Road* (1995) – which narrate the recovery of WWI soldiers from shell shock, or "that most characteristic symptom of war neurosis: the battle nightmare" (Barker 2008, 26) and include characters based on real people such as the anti-war poet Siegfried Sassoon, who was traumatized and would "find the ghost of a dead comrade standing by his bed" (Barker 2013, 212) at Craiglockhart Hospital. Similarly, Barker's *Another World* (1998) demonstrates how the ghosts of WWI survive to this day in the mind and body of an aged survivor "doomed to an endless and interminable replay of events" (Whitehead 2004, 17). The novel also demonstrates the centrality of trauma to everyday life. Among the narratives of the corpus, *Wish You Were Here* also demonstrates how the ghost of WWI survives to this day in narratives and national ceremonies. Akin to the Great War, the Second World War also

figures as the subject-matter of some trauma novels, notably *Atonement* (2001) by Ian McEwan, which is situated at the crossroads of personal and national traumatic experiences.

Yet, by far the darkest event of the 20th century which forms the core of several significant works of fiction is the Holocaust. Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man* (1947) about the author's experiences in Auschwitz, W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001) which documents the factual-fictional search of the protagonist for traces of a mother incarcerated in Auschwitz, Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* (1996) about the poetic sublimation of the trauma of witnessing the murder of parents by a Jewish boy, Caryl Phillips' *The Nature of Blood* (1997) which charts the dangers of tribalism across time and space with a focus on the Holocaust, Martin Amis's temporally backward *Time's Arrow* (1991) exploring the memories of a fugitive Nazi, and more recently, *The Zone of Interest* (2014) exploring evil in the minds of Nazi officers in Auschwitz are among the novels that chronicle the traumatic atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis and the spectral legacy of the Shoah to this day.

More recent 20th century history has its own set of traumatic challenges to human reason and progress. Throughout the Cold War, the fear arising from the threat of nuclear extermination was registered in a number of seminal works including Swift's *Waterland* (1983) in which Tom Crick discusses the end of history as a result of "the perilous and apparently unhaltable build-up of nuclear arms" (Swift 1999, 7) and Barnes's *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989) which concerns among other things, "the Big Thing … the extinction of the planet" (Barnes 1989, 88). Among the novels of the corpus, The *Pregnant Widow* also alludes to the formative impact of the mortal fear of nuclear extermination, notably the Cuban missile crisis, "the contest of nightmares" (*TPW*, 133), on the sexual conduct of the youths of the post-WWII generation (to be discussed in detail in chapter 2).

Of more immediate relevance, our contemporary existence has not proved any less destabilizing, as the 21st century was inaugurated by the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers on September 11th 2001. Reacting to the event in an interview with Giovanna Borradori, Jacques Derrida spoke of the day, explicitly utilizing the idiom of trauma and spectrality:

> For the index pointing toward this date, …, also marks something else. Namely, the fact that we perhaps have no concept and no meaning available to us to name in any other way this "thing" that has just happened, this supposed "event." An act of "international terrorism," for example, and we will return to this, is anything but a rigorous concept that would help us grasp the singularity of what we will be trying to discuss. "Something" took place, we have the feeling of not having seen it coming, and certain consequences undeniably follow upon the "thing."

> But this very thing, the place and meaning of this "event," remains ineffable, like an intuition without concept, …, out of range for a language that admits its powerlessness and so is reduced to pronouncing mechanically a date, repeating it endlessly, as a kind of ritual incantation, a conjuring poem, a journalistic litany or rhetorical refrain that admits to not knowing what it's talking about. We do not in fact know what we are saying or naming in this way: September 11, *le 11 septembre*, September 11. (Derrida 2016, n.pag.)

Derrida is clearly at pains to argue that as a traumatic challenge to understanding, the "thing", the event, incomprehensible for the time being, will keep returning endlessly in human imagination and writing, until the ghost of the tragedy is exorcised, until we "know"; an act of "international terrorism" would be a starting step towards this verbalization. September 11th is an event alluded to in all three novels of our corpus, as a pivotal apocalyptic moment in recent human history, setting off a war against terrorism that has ignited ancient animosities and mutated into dark new combinations. Yet, not only the threat of rife terrorism, but also fear of environmental crises on a vulnerable planet whose delicate balance has been disturbed in the name of uninhibited human progress have given rise to grim predictions and post-apocalyptic works of fiction such as Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007), replete with wandering survivors and uninhabitable planets destroyed as a result of the "eternal recurrence" of human errors. Among the corpus writers, Martin Amis has also recently voiced a similar environmental concern saying, "don't you sense the incredible potential for violence in the weather, already—the storms, the snow? You can see the nature of what the future will be, and it's all terror and boredom all over again. You will be massively inconvenienced and appalled by the power of the weather" (Amis 2016, n.pag.).

From a technical point of view, trauma fiction is believed by notable critics to be closely linked to postmodernism and postcolonialism and the legacy of the two world wars: "… trauma fiction arises out of and is inextricable from three interrelated backgrounds or contexts: postmodernism, postcolonialism and a postwar legacy or consciousness" (Whitehead 2004, 81). Whitehead explains further that this connection is principally due to postmodernism's "innovative" use of "forms and techniques", embodied in what Linda Hutcheon called the 'historiographic metafiction', which aims to forge a critical relationship with grand narratives and the past. Whitehead writes:

> In the face of mounting amnesia, there is an urgent need to consciously establish meaningful connections with the past. Postmodernist fiction is part of this memory project. Its innovative forms and techniques critique the notion of history as grand narrative, and it calls attention to the complexity of memory. Trauma fiction emerges out of postmodernist fiction and shares its tendency to bring conventional narrative techniques to their limit. In testing formal boundaries, trauma fiction seeks to foreground the nature and limitations of narrative and to convey the damaging and distorting impact of the traumatic event. (Whitehead 2004, 81–82)

In effect, as the disquieting imprint of trauma is primarily registered in the individual and collective memory, the boundaries between the study of memory and of trauma appear to be porous at times, prompting critics like Roger Luckhurst to claim, apropos trauma studies, that "Academic monographs have proliferated, often appearing to subsume the whole area of Memory Studies under the sign of trauma" (Luckhurst 2008, 2). As this chapter will demonstrate, Luckhurst's claims are borne out by the simultaneous problematization of trauma and memory, most explicitly in *The Sense of an Ending*.

Scholars in the field have also identified techniques germane to postmodern and postcolonial fiction that are also utilized widely in the trauma fiction. Noting the remarkable change brought about as a result of the fiction-trauma "encounter", Whitehead writes:

> Novelists have frequently found that the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterised by repetition and indirection. Trauma fiction overlaps with and borrows from both postmodern and postcolonial fiction in its self-conscious deployment of stylistic devices as modes of reflection or critique. (Whitehead 2004, 3)

Further on in her book, she adds features such as "intertextuality, repetition and a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice. … that mirror at a formal level the effects of trauma" (Whitehead 2004, 84). Echoing Whitehead and building upon her list of the representations of trauma in the literary text, Marc Amfreville also attributes the paradoxical literary manifestations of trauma to the paradox at the heart of trauma:

> Le trauma psychique opère lui aussi selon deux directions : une absence totale de traces mnésiques de l'événement traumatisant, ou au contraire, la hantise douloureuse par le surgissement d'images obsédantes, de cauchemars.
>
> On voit d'emblée comment la littérature, et les arts visuels, ont pu de tous temps se pencher sur

> cette question, et avec les moyens qui leur sont propres : ellipse, suspens de l'information, jeu sur les signifiants, rimes, d'une part et de l'autre, obsessions, répétitions, explosions métaphoriques, spectralité, dédoublements et même fragmentation…. Sur les deux versants donc, du vide ou du trop-plein, l'art avait bien avant les premières théorisations représenté le trauma … . (Amfreville 2015, paras. 3–4)

According to Amfreville then, the total absence of memory traces in trauma, or conversely a relentless haunting by intrusive images and nightmares translate either into elliptical narrative strategies or a repetitional obsession characterized by repetition, metaphoric excess, spectrality, split personality or even psychic fragmentation.

Similarly, Ganteau and Onega highlight the utility of the term "traumatic realism" to the analysis of trauma fiction. They define it as characterized by a, "heavy resort to intertextuality; emphasis on repetition (in various guises, including anachronism, hence haunting and uncanny effects): fragmentation … or also the representation of psychological de-doubling - confirmed, for instance, by the permanence of the Jekyll-and-Hyde motif in novels like Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow* … " (Ganteau and Onega 2011, 17). Further narrative "innovations" embodying "traumatic realism" which aim to deliver a range of "extreme emotional states" include "landscape imagery, temporal fissures, silence, or narrative omission – the withholding of graphic, visceral traumatic detail. … a nonlinear plot or disruptive temporal sequences to emphasize mental confusion, chaos, or contemplation as a response to the experience" (Balaev 2008, n.pag.).

Yet despite the fact that trauma novels (re)present trauma through form and content, a controversy still remains concerning "whether trauma can be narrated or represented" (Whitehead 2009, 116), and its consequent healing, a debate involving Cathy Caruth at its center. Caruth proposed what is now a highly controversial model of trauma based on the *absolute incomprehensibility* of the traumatic experience. Her contention is that as its own repetition in the future, trauma is pathologic and amnesiac; a "wound of the mind" (Caruth 1996, 4) that is incomprehensible:

> Yet what is particularly striking in this singular experience is that its insistent re-enactments of the past do not simply serve as testimony to an event, but may also, paradoxically enough, bear witness to a past that was never fully experienced as it occurred. Trauma, that is, does not simply serve as record of, the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned. (Caruth 1995, 151)

Caruth's "extremely influential" (Luckhurst 2008, 5) ideas on trauma are said to derive from three sources according to Roger Luckhurst: the works of Theodor Adorno, deconstruction and psychoanalysis. For Adorno who regarded Auschwitz as representing the paralysis of thought, "art and cultural criticism" had "the severe, and paradoxical, imperative of finding ways of representing the unrepresentable" (Luckhurst 2008, 5). This aporetic task found its best formulation in the writings of the Yale critics, among whom Paul de Man's influence on Caruth is tangible. De Man, for whom "literature in particular seemed to foreground the slippages inherent in the act of representation, and often came to be *about* this erring" (Luckhurst 2008, 6), along with Geoffrey Hartman who was interested in "the proliferation of meanings" (Luckhurst 2008, 7) and Shoshana Felman who championed a failure of meaning, constituted a further set of influences on Caruth. Lastly, Freud's work is claimed by Luckhurst to exert a seminal influence on Caruth and trauma theory in general (Luckhurst 2008, 8). Caruth's writings also exemplify Lanzmann's idea of the "obscenity" of understanding. In the book *Au Sujet de Shoah: Le film de Claude Lanzmann*, Lanzmann is quoted as saying,

> It is enough to formulate the question in simplistic terms - Why have the Jews been killed? for the question to reveal right away its obscenity. There is an absolute obscenity in the very project of understanding. Not to understand was my iron law during all the eleven years of the production of *Shoah*. I had clung to this refusal of understanding as the only possible ethical and at the same time the only possible operative attitude" (Lanzmann qtd. in Caruth 1996, 123–24).

It transpires that as far as Freudian influence is concerned, Caruth agrees with the principle of "remembering" and "repeating", yet according to Barry Stampfl, "Caruth's (mis)reading of Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit* transforms what Freud had conceived of as a delayed recoding of a repressed memory" and risks "Minimizing or eliding the possibility of 'working through' the traumatic event" (Stampfl 2012, 135).

In addition to *Nachträglichkeit*, two other Freudian concepts have also proved to be of great assistance in the analysis of traumatic recall and its "recontextualization". Historian Dominick LaCapra, who distinguishes between traumatic *absence* and *loss* – respectively, unverifiable traumatic myths of origin and specific historical trauma such as the Holocaust – also resorts to the Freudian concepts of traumatic *acting-out* and *working-through*. LaCapra argues for the possibility of historical recontextualization of loss in Freudian terms:

> Through memory-work, especially the socially engaged memory-work involved in working-through, one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recognize something as having happened to one (or one's people) back then that is related to, but not identical with, here and now. Moreover, through mourning and the at least symbolic provision of a proper burial, one attempts to assist in restoring to victims the dignity denied them by their victimizers. (LaCapra 1999, 713)

Thus, dialogic and socially collaborative recontextualization of trauma allows for the possibility of alleviating the repetitional compulsion of trauma, or its acting-out. This is tantamount to mourning and a restoration of dignity to the lost victim(s). LaCapra posits that "socially-engaged" attempts at working-through prevent specific historical loss (such as the Holocaust or the 9/11 attacks) from turning into absence, which he deems as tantamount to cultural melancholia. He writes, "One would … help prevent the indiscriminate generalization of historical trauma into the idea of a wound culture or the notion that everyone is somehow a victim (or, for that matter, a survivor)" (LaCapra 1999, 722). LaCapra's is clearly a meliorist position, characterized with a belief in the possibility of intersubjective, therapeutic dialogue and the *performative efficacy of narrative* against the "death drive" of the "compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes of violence" (LaCapra 1999, 713). Summing up LaCapra's position regarding the possibility of working through trauma, Stef Craps usefully writes, "Dominick LaCapra … a trauma scholar more directly interested in transformative political practice, has expressed some misgivings about what he perceives as Caruth and Felman's excessive fixation on the symptomatic acting-out of trauma, which threatens to inhibit action in the present oriented to a more desirable future" (Craps 2005, 11). As chapter two of the dissertation will demonstrate, *Wish You Were Here* shows the means by which the 'cultural melancholia' of the type LaCapra cautions against comes about in the cultural space.

Two other critics who disagree with Caruth and Felman's notion of the incomprehensibility of trauma are Ellie Ragland-Sullivan (Ragland-Sullivan 2001) and Linda Belau who stress that trauma is the failure of language to symbolize the real. They take issue with Shoshana Felman and Cathy Caruth, holding that trauma is not a sacred knowledge beyond the signifier, but rather the failure of the signifier *within* the symbolic order to register the real, a failure that is nonetheless registered in the inadequate "material signifier" of the symbolic order. As a gloss on the Lacanian real registered in the symbolic order, Linda Belau states,

> Because traumatic experience is grounded in the repetition of an impossibility, it is indelibly tied to the real beyond the signifier. In this sense, trauma opens up an ethical space beyond the symbolic which is, nevertheless, intimately tied to the materiality of the signifier and, therefore, to our social and linguistic destiny. This ethic of the impossible, however, drives the subject beyond the social to an encounter with the inadequacy of the signifier as she moves beyond the particular event of her suffering to a failed encounter with the very possibility of knowing that suffering completely. The psychoanalytic intervention assures us, then, that we are responsible in the face of something that exceeds symbolic guarantee. This is the ethical dimension of trauma that gets left behind when we attempt to place traumatic experience beyond language and representation, beyond the traumatic materiality that is the signifier. (Belau 2001, para. 2)

What is apparent in Belau's analysis is an ethical commitment to "the repetition of an impossibility" registered in the failing social and linguistic signifier. What plays itself out in Belau's approach to the cognition of trauma is precisely the impossibility of this cognition in the signifier. She pursues the ethical dictum of non-understanding in the analytic process practiced by Lacan who states, "To interpret and to imagine one understands are not at all the same things. It is precisely the opposite. I would go as far as to say that it is on the basis of a kind of refusal of understanding that we push open the door to analytic understanding" (Lacan 1988, 73). Belau's position is strikingly similar to Cathy Caruth's – whom she criticizes for elevating trauma to "a sort of exceptional experience" with "victims or survivors of trauma, consequently… seen as ambassadors of an exceptional realm, bearers of a higher (albeit more terrible) knowledge" (Belau 2001, para. 1). Yet what her analysis contributes to our study (more on this in chapter 2) is the notion of a disruption of the social subjectivity, a psychic awakening "beyond the social to an encounter with the inadequacy of the signifier" (Belau 2001, para. 2). To Belau, the ethical dimension of analysis consists in sustaining a deepening of the realization of this inadequacy rather than reaching any solace or understanding. Carps comments: "She equates a responsible ethical stance with a radical refusal to understand trauma coupled with an unremitting commitment to acting it out" (Craps 2005, 12). This is where Linda Belau resembles Caruth most.

There is obviously a contradiction, confusion and controversy at the heart of the discussions surrounding trauma studies resulting from divergent interpretations of an almost identical body of knowledge. Craps sums up the situation thus:

> Felman, who was criticized by LaCapra for overemphasizing acting-out in her analysis of Lanzmann's film, now stands accused of ignoring this very same phenomenon. Belau imputes

> to Felmas and Langer a naïve desire to recuperate some meaning out of the experience of trauma, to which they allegedly ascribe a 'miraculous potential to broaden our horizons'. .. according to Belau, these assumptions reveal their work to be implicated in a 'reductive idealism' which 'offers no serious alternative to a recuperative liberalism.' (Craps 2005, 12–13)

Thus, as is apparent from Craps' remarks, the confusion arises out of the stage in analysis that would follow acting out: scholars vehemently disagree as to whether analysis should sustain acting-out of trauma along the dictates of Lacan or whether one should commit to a deconstructivist sustaining of blindness alongside any insight, both of which approaches would amount to the same conclusion. Non-understanding remains the ideal of both approaches, albeit deriving from separate sources of inspiration: Lacanian psychoanalysis and deconstruction.

Yet despite the feeling of obfuscation engendered by the variety of competing approaches to trauma, there are also areas where they greatly overlap. Craps recapitulates these similarities in the following words:

> What unites all the aforementioned trauma theorists, despite their disagreements, is a shared concern with the unsettling impact of trauma and with the obligations this imposes. All of them accept the need to confront the challenges that trauma poses to ordinary forms of understanding, and to do so in such a way that the force of its affront to understanding is registered rather than erased. In other words, there is a place, in all these accounts, for disorientation, fragmentation, disruption, confusion and undecidability. The differences between them are largely a matter of emphasis: whereas some theorists (for example, Belau, Caruth and – I would argue – Felman) are primarily concerned with doing justice to the shattering experience of trauma by performatively enacting it, others (for example, LaCapra) seek to drive home the point that one cannot stay within trauma for ever but eventually has to 'reengage life in the interest of bringing about a qualitatively better state of affairs'. This situation can be recast as the tension between a predominant emphasis on ethical purity (the realm of the undecidable) and a focus on desirable moral or political action (the realm of the decision) … . (Craps 2005, 14)

To Stef Craps's way of thinking then, approaches to trauma unite in their emphasis on the inauguratory impact of the event of trauma on the whole of subjectivity. Subjection to the event of trauma means that posttraumatic life will be radically different from what went before it. The difference lies in some scholars' interest in traumatic enactment, which they see as the right ethical stance to trauma, and other scholars' interest in working-through trauma in the

interests of a life in the here and now. To Craps' account, we would add that approaches to trauma also converge in stressing the importance of a *dialogue* with the enigmatic core of trauma (or the secret of the trauma narrative on a diegetic level). The Lacanian analyst's urge to foster acting-out in the analysis of trauma as well as the deconstructivist commitment to undecidability both bear the stamp of a desire to keep an ongoing conversation alive at the heart of their practice. Similarly, Ganteau's evocation of affect as precognitive emotion[14] central to an ethics of mutual vulnerability (discussed further on in this section) attests to a conversation between bodies, leading to a becoming that is always-already in progress unbeknownst to human cognition.

With regard to our analysis of trauma in the selected novels, it should be noted that they embody the category of novels which play out "the difficulty to represent trauma through the idiom of traditional realism" (Ganteau and Onega 2014, 7) as they avail themselves of majorly postmodernist techniques, yet they do not *indefinitely* perform the Caruthian[15] "inaccessibility of the causes of trauma and of its absent memory" (Ganteau and Onega 2014, 7). The narratives of our corpus demonstrate that traumatic experience is both 'presented' and *progressively* 'represented' through form and content, or in Freudian terms the narratives embody acting-out and eventual working-through. By dint of their "figurative evocation of the symptomatic

[14] Colebrook describes the operations of affect in the following words: "Affect is crucial to this 'violence' of thinking (violence in the sense of something that happens to us beyond all morality). We can think of affect in terms of a form of pre-personal perception. I watch a scene in a film and my heart races, my eye flinches and I begin to perspire. Before I even think or conceptualise there is an element of response that is prior to any decision. Affect is *intensive* rather than *extensive*. Extension organises a world spatially, into distributed blocks. Ordered and synthesised perceptions give us an exterior world of varying extended objects, all mapped on to a common space, differing only in degree. Everyday vision takes this extensive form. I do not see a world of colours, tones and textures fluctuating from moment to moment. I see objects set apart from each other, stable through time and within a single and uniform extended space. Extension maps or synthesizes the world in terms of presupposed purposes and intentions. (I go into my office and see the books that are there for me to read, the chair I will sit on, so on. I 'see' the world *as* a world of distinct functions, continuous through time.) Affect is intensive because it happens to us, across us; it is not objectifiable and quantifiable as a thing that we then perceive or of which we are conscious. Affect operates on us in divergent ways, differing in kind – the light that causes our eye to flinch, the sound that makes us start, the image of violence which raises our body temperature. Deleuze therefore refers to *intensities*" (Colebrook 2002, 38–39).

[15] Ganteau and Onega state in their introduction: "Of course, trauma narratives, fictional or not, are often seen to be characterised by the inability to voice a trauma, and they tend to limit themselves to indirect evocation, beating about the hole that they must be content to circumscribe, short of describing it. More often than not, trauma narratives must renounce the possibility of describing the unassimilated traumatic memory and build their impossibility into the textual fabric, performing the void instead of anatomising it" (Ganteau and Onega 2014, 10).

response to trauma through formal and stylistic innovation" (Whitehead qtd. in Nadal and Calvo 2014, 8), not only do the novels of the corpus impart a growing recognition of the sources of trauma and its concomitant haunting, but they also register the psychic struggle to work through trauma on the protagonists' journeys of revision of the traumatic event, subjectively changing with every revision. Michelle Balaev highlights the protagonist's struggle to work through trauma, ultimately attaining what she terms a "reformulation of identity":

> … The multiplicity of determinate meaning produced within the narrative, and the various new meanings that arise out of the traumatic experience that causes a reformulation of perception of self and world, indicate that each author portrays an alternative perspective on the meaning of traumatic experience that emphasizes the reformulation of identity, not simply the destruction of the self. (Balaev 2008, n.pag.)

Put differently, trauma novels offer a multiplicity of perspectives on the significance of trauma for the protagonist. The internal interpretive struggle that ensues in the narrative leads to fresh perspectives on the protagonist's conception of private and social self. This "reformulation of identity" as a result of the protagonist's determination to re-interpret and comprehend trauma proves that subjectivity is not, as Caruth would have it, caught in a vicious cycle of (non)-understanding, with the protagonist at the mercy of the shape-shifting intrusive images of the traumatic event, or the returning ghost of trauma; the Caruthian view "narrowly conceptualizes the psychological dimensions of trauma and the range of traumatic experience and responses. … amnesia, dissociation, or repression *may* be responses to trauma but they are not exclusive responses" (Balaev 2014, 6).

The notion of the re-positioning of subjectivity as a result of a shocking jolt to established conceptions of selfhood and sociality also ties in with a thinking of immanence. Apropos, Tamsin Lorraine offers a conceptualization of trauma and traumatic reformulation from the perspective of Deleuzian ethics:

> Trauma can relate to … disequilibrium in subjectivity experienced as painful—a deterritorialization of the subject that makes social living difficult. This demands attention to affects, intensities, and subtle nuances of meaning in defiance of commonsense and representable forms of experience. This, in turn, entails a process of self-transformation that resists majoritarian forms of subjectivity and invites new ways of understanding what it means to be human. The subject is not a thing with an ego that can be damaged, but rather a process that is sustained through social, psychic, and physiological processes. On this view, trauma sets

> off a shift in the sustaining patterns of those processes that block the ability to develop and extend one's capacities to affect and be affected. What is needed to resolve trauma is to find the points of intensification and the connections that might unblock the flows causing the problem. (Lorraine 2011, 130)

Conceived of as "deterritorialization", trauma ceases to be the inhibited knowledge of the kind Lanzmann or Caruth believe to be beyond the victim's *material* processual existence. It is a "disequilibrium" of subjectivity that demands a transformed vision of the subject's stance vis-à-vis his/her surroundings. Immanent ethics views the subject as a process contiguous to adjoining, ever-interacting processes. To restore therapeutic equilibrium, a reinterpretation of received and socially-sanctioned (majoritarian) notions of subjectivity is necessary. To this end, an internal quest must commence for new *emotive* lines of flight, "to affect and be affected" in Lorraine's words. This would allow the flow of life to resume. In Freudian terms, the resumption of the ability to affect and be affected amounts to a successful process of working-through (through transference). It is noteworthy that Ganteau also mentions the relevance of the notion of affects to the ethics of care and vulnerability. He writes:

> The contours of vulnerability … owe much not only to such categories as openness, exposure, failure, but also to such resolutely positive aspects like *praxis*, the recognition of interdependence, and the possibility of using apparent limitations as levers for action. It is striking that most of those elements may be considered basic ingredients of affect theory …
> Most of the findings of affect theory are consonant with the proposals of the ethics of care and of vulnerability: the dislocating or creative power of the limited or of the frail is made prominent in such studies, with special attention to the singular value of art and literature not only in presenting affects and emotions but also in allowing for a consideration of cultural practices. (Ganteau 2015a, 15–16)

Thus, Ganteau stresses the socially constructive values of the recognition of interdependence and *action* arising out of an awareness of vulnerability. Affect engenders a sense of dislocation and leads to creativity, a fact mirrored prominently in art and literature. Claire Colebrook also writes about the affective nature of art: "Art is not about representation, concepts or judgement; art is the power to think in terms that are not so much cognitive and intellectual as *affective* (to do with feeling and sensible experience). We are not reading a work as artistic or literary if we read it for its representation of the world or its presentation of theories" (Colebrook 2002, 12).

Within a discussion of trauma and narrativity, a further concept that emerges as indispensable is that of interpretation as action. The significance of (re)-interpretation as an *action* integral to life is stressed by Brockmeier and Meretoja who argue that "… interpretations are not just views or cognitive representations but have real, material, world-constituting implications" (Brockmeier and Meretoja 2014, 5). They go on to elaborate that an act of interpretation is not merely a mental stance on the human social reality, but that it is "integral to the historical fabric of our lives and our existence" (Brockmeier and Meretoja 2014, 5). Yet, significantly for a thinking of immanence (although this is not a word they use) interpretations are inextricably linked to human action and interaction with adjacent beings: "Interpretations not only have a bearing on how we act and interact, constituting frameworks of intelligibility and action—with new interpretations creating new possibilities of action; they also are actions themselves, interventions that change the very world in which we live" (Brockmeier and Meretoja 2014, 5). Emphasis on interpretation as *action* accords it the crucial status of the performative[16], with *interpretation becoming an action in the world*. To borrow J. L. Austin's words then, interpretation is "not to *describe* my doing … or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it" (Austin 1975, 6). The emphasis on the possibility of action ensuing an interpretation is what situates interpretation at the center of an ethics of immanence that seeks to account for release from trauma. Within the ethics of immanence, (re-)interpretation *becomes* an action. What is additionally paramount in our research is that the authors utilize the motif of spectrality and the ghost as the engine that drives the interpretive search for a fresh, post-traumatic subjectivity.

[16] In the following extract, Austin sets out his notion of the performative: "In these examples it seems clear that to utter the sentence (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing of what I should be said in so uttering to be doing or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it. None of the utterances cited is either true or false: I assert this as obvious and do not argue it. It needs argument no more than that 'damn' is not true or false: it may be that the utterance 'serves to inform you' – but that is quite different. To name the ship *is* to say (in the appropriate circumstances) the words 'I name, &c.' .When I say, before the registrar or altar, &c., 'I do', I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it.
What are we to call a sentence or an utterance of this type? I propose to call it a performative sentence or a performative utterance, or, for short, 'a performative'. The term 'performative' will be used in a variety of cognate ways and constructions, much as the term 'imperative' is. The name is derived, of course, from 'perform', the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (Austin 1975, 6–7).

In *The Pregnant Widow*, a novel declared by Amis to be "blindingly autobiographical" (Amis and Bilmes 2006, n.pag.), Keith the protagonist is depicted as constantly haunted, primarily by the resurgent memories associated with his sister, both when she was alive and most devastatingly, after her death. In his youth, sitting round a table and conversing with his friends, Keith sensed this haunting unmistakably, in the guise of a thick presence. Keith's sister Violet, modelled on Amis's sister Sally, was then alive. We learn that Keith, despite leading an outwardly contented life of cigars, alcohol and sex in the middle of young friends, "… was also experiencing a difficulty he did not understand. It was something like a liver attack—a thick presence had rigged itself up in the air above them. Keith could look at it, this presence. … What was it? He felt he had a bolt or a plug of hard air in his chest. He gulped, and gulped again" (*TPW*, 303). The "thick presence" of Violet's traumatizing conduct and death haunts and infects every aspect of Keith's life, even his sexual life with his girlfriend Lily. We read, "He was in the process of making love to Lily. The arms and legs of his spectral sister still went where they went, where they used to go, the hands smoothed, his two tongues explored her two mouths …" (*TPW*, 102). In effect, Keith's entire being, as well as that of anyone close to him is portrayed as possessed by Violet's ghost. To Keith's literary mind, even natural elements mirror his haunted condition. Here, the mountains seem to be siblings (mirroring Keith and Violet), with one overshadowed by the other, and awaiting a critical moment akin to Keith's nervous breakdown: "They sat under the shadow of their sister mountain. Above and beyond, the clouds sought the gothic colours and buffoonish configurations they would be needing, in readiness for the thunderstorm—now long-awaited" (*TPW*, 46). Now middle-aged and depressed, Keith is continuously pondering his dejected mental state, suspecting that it might be to do with his traumatic past: "Then fifty comes and goes, and fifty-one, and fifty-two. And life thickens out again. Because there is now an enormous and unsuspected presence within your being, like an undiscovered continent. This is the past" (*TPW*, 5). The verbal outcome of his musings, the record of his coming to terms with the traumas of his youth engender the narrative.

Keith is also portrayed as fighting the dread of approaching death, as mourning Violet makes him aware of his own mortality, a thematic Keulks refers to as Amis's "one unsettled feud … that is Amis's quarrel with death" (Keulks 2006, 2). The novel is interspersed with his comments on this deep-running feeling of fear. Keith, who has taken to making up rules to make sense of his tragic existence says, "Rule number one: the most important thing about you is your date of birth. Which puts you inside history. Rule number two: sooner or later, each human life is a tragedy, sometimes sooner, always later. There will be other rules" (*TPW*, 4).

He makes no secret of his fear of old age and death, which he likens to a horror film: “When you become old … When you become old, you find yourself auditioning for the role of a lifetime; then, after interminable rehearsals, you’re finally starring in a horror film—a talentless, irresponsible, and above all low-budget horror film, in which (as is the way with horror films) they’re saving the worst for last” (*TPW*, 5).

Furthermore, throughout the novel, Keith manifests a profound aversion to flies, which to him, symbolize death. Consequently, killing the fly comes to be synonymous with “the creative act” of life, as life itself is a process terminating in death as “Keith still thought that killing a fly was a creative act – because a fly was a fleck of death” (*TPW*, 246). Earlier, in an interview with Will Self, Amis had voiced this sentiment of dread at the thought of approaching death: “Who knows when it happens – it happens in your late thirties – but it happens. Suddenly you realize, both as a person and as a writer, that you are switching from saying 'Hi,' to saying 'Bye.' And, as I said in *London Fields*, it is a full-time job: death” (Self and Amis 1993, 143). Awareness and fear of death is demonstrated as coloring the entirety of Keith’s life, even as an adolescent. As usual, the fly is there to signal the presence of this fear, in contrast to the butterflies which signify enviably unjustified hope:

> He closed his eyes. The bruiser bees twanged and fizzed. He sat up. A crouched fly on the stone tabletop was staring at him. He waved it away but it returned, and crouched there, and stared. Little skull and crossbones … In this matter of Scheherazade, the butterflies, as Keith saw it, took his side. The butterflies: party toys, doll-scale fans and hankies—hopeless optimists, twittering dreamers.
>
> Unusually for a twenty-year-old (the privilege followed from his peculiar situation), Keith was aware that he was going to die. More than that, he knew that when the process began, the only thing that would matter was how it had gone with women. As he lies dying, the man will search his past for love and life. (*TPW*, 42)

Death, in the guise of the fly stares Keith persistently in the face, piratically stealing joy out of his life and returning – as befits the repetitional logic of trauma – to haunt him throughout the narrative. Correspondingly, he also summarizes his past life in terms of the women he had married: “So first Keith married Gloria, then he married Lily, then he married Conchita. He didn’t marry Scheherazade or Oona or Dodo. But he married all the others. With Gloria it was just sex, with Lily it was just love. Then he married Conchita, and he was all right” (*TPW*, 355). Conchita is the woman whose cheerful and optimistic character aligns her with the butterflies (as opposed to flies) and who seems unconcerned about old age and death. In this extract, she

is in conversation with cynical Keith who has conducted a thorough study into the physical decrepitude characterizing old age. Keith informs his wife that as one approaches old age,

> Your hams get skinnier—but that's all right, because your gut gets fatter. Your eyes get hotter—but that's all right, because your hands get colder (and you can soothe them with your frozen fingertips). Shrill or sudden noises are getting painfully sharper—but that's all right, because you're getting deafer. The hair on your head gets thinner—but that's all right, because the hair in your nose and in your ears gets thicker. It all works out in the end. (*TPW*, 364)

Moreover, in Keith's long musings and conversations on how to approach death, he hits upon the paradoxical insight that to live courageously through the "terrifying" days of old age, you have to be young:

> Keith's stepdaughter Silvia once said (having listened to him complain about his exercise class) that old age wasn't for sissies. But the suspicion was building in him that it was all much simpler than that. Old age wasn't for old people. To cope with old age, you really needed to be young—young, strong, and in peak condition, exceptionally supple and with very good reflexes. Your character, too, should be of no common stamp, but should blend the fearlessness of youth with age-old tenacity and grit.(*TPW*, 136)

Yet, no matter how prepared you might be for the tribulations of old age, Amis believes that the end is bound to be less than dignified. In conversation with Alex Bilmes, he declares that "It all ends in dissolution and chaos and indignity and tears. I'm very conscious of that. I thought it wasn't a big deal, but … there's something about 60 that can't be laughed off" (Bilmes 2014, n.pag.). Likewise, in the novel, the dread of death is still palpable towards the end as Keith draws an analogy between human death and a "snuff movie", the only difference being that throughout the narrative, he has come to conceive of the agony of death as *the* reality of life, as it embodies the universal principle of becoming-other and transformation:

> This, even this, very this … The video nasty, to put it in plain words, the horror film, was set to become a snuff movie, but long before that he would be its trailer. He would be an ad for death.
>
> Death—the dark backing a mirror needs before it can show us ourselves.
>
> It isn't vanity, it was never vanity. It was always death. This was the true and universal metamorphosis: the agonising transfiguration from one state to another—from the state of life to the state of death. (*TPW*, 363–64)

Significantly for our research, in the course of his narrative, Keith unveils his growing understanding of death as a "metamorphosis" *immanent* to life, which is one aspect of the rapprochement with death and the ghost of his dead sister. Apropos the centrality of transformation and becoming-other to life in the world, Jane Bennett writes,

> The sense of nature as creativity also seems a part of what the ancient Greeks meant by *phusis*, of which the Latin *natura* is an equivalent. *Phusis* comes from the verb phuo, which probably meant to puff, blow, or swell up, conveying the sense of germination or sprouting up, bringing forth, opening out, or hatching. *Phusis* thus speaks of a process of morphing, of formation and deformation, that is to say, of the becoming otherwise of things in motion as they enter into strange conjunctions with one another. (J. Bennett 2010, 118)

In Bennett's immanent analysis, all existents and their constituting components are constantly morphing into different shapes (at different speeds), a process that defines the very creativity of nature. This is a radically different thinking to a view of life as bound by the borders of birth and death, a profound realization that affords solace to Keith in the above quote.

Wish You Were Here, similarly, foregrounds death and the uncanny revenant as its primary concerns. We learn that the protagonist's encounter with his brother Tom's body is a "business for which Jack had never entered an air terminal before: the business of Arrivals" (*WYWH*, 158). In her review, Evelyn Beck points out haunting and the corpse as the cornerstones of the novel. Significantly, she also highlights the role of the revenant in instigating an internal process of questioning the self and country: "Like Swift's *Waterland*, this book explores the ways the past haunts us, and, like his Booker Prize-winning *Last Orders*, it uses a death as a provocation for the examination of self and country" (Beck 2012, n.pag.). Our research is also in agreement with Beck's statements regarding revision of the ideas of self and country.

Haunting in the novel is depicted as occurring through two channels: the natural mental dispositions of the characters, qualities generalizable to all human beings, and the literal return of the dead brother Tom as a ghost. As a rule, the dead are portrayed as undead as far as the inquisitive imaginative powers of the living characters are concerned or as Amy in *Last Orders* puts it eloquently, "Like a person never dies in the mind's eye" (Swift 1999, 267). Swift's observation regarding haunting and the tenuousness of the dead/living binary divide in *Wish You Were Here* is the following realization dawning on Ellie: "Until recently this would only

have expressed Ellie's position generally. The past is the past, and the dead are the dead" (*WYWH*, 33).

Ellie is said to be struggling with "the pursuing ghost of her unvisited mother" (*WYWH*, 36). Similarly, Jack, constantly pondering the reaction of the dead towards the current goings-on in the country, is unsure whether the dead are gone for good: "Jack can't decide the matter. Do they feel it, know it all, or are they spared?" (*WYWH*, 25). Yet the novel also literalizes the return of the dead through the repatriation of Tom's body and the appearance of his ghost. When alive, Tom's physical absence was seen by Jack as aiding and simplifying his seemingly placid family life with Ellie but,

> Tom *had* come back. He understood it truly now. He'd come back as surely as if that letter announcing his death had really been Tom himself knocking on the door. Can I come in? It was as if Tom, whom he'd lived without for thirteen years, could no longer, now he was dead, be lived without. He'd been trying to drive away from this nonsensical, pursuing fact, and yet it was true. (*WYWH*, 215)

Ellie, too had taken Tom's departure as a relief, but now "she'd understood a bigger truth that would only grow bigger, clearer in the hours, days, that would follow. That though Tom wasn't coming back, yet he *was* coming back. So far as Jack was concerned, he was coming back big-time. He was coming back to bloody haunt them" (*WYWH*, 116–17). If the reader is in any doubt as to the nature of the spectral paradox of presence in absence, Swift's narrative voice spells it out: "… strangely, now Tom was dead, she could no longer rely on his absence. … The simple word was ghost" (*WYWH*, 216). The ghost is a manifestation of the uncanny and one of its chief functions is to unsettle boundaries. This is stated most clearly by Bennet and Royle who write: "Ghosts. In some ways, perhaps, this is the uncanny par excellence. The notion of the ghost unsettles all distinctions between being alive and being dead, the real and the unreal, the familiar and the unfamiliar. A ghost is the very embodiment of strange repetition or recurrence: it is a revenant, it *comes back*" (A. Bennett and Royle 2014, 39). Apropos haunting and the spectral grip of the past upon the present in the Swiftian universe, Stef Craps writes:

> The crisis point in the narrative present points to one of Swift's key thematic preoccupations: the insidious hold exerted over the present by a traumatic past. It marks the moment when the ghosts of the past return to haunt a narrator-protagonist who labours under the illusion that he has successfully put the past to rest. As the past catches up with the present, he feels the

> foundations slipping away upon which he, and the society to which he belongs have built their existence, and by means of which they have sought to keep the trauma at bay. (Craps 2005, 2–3)

Taking Craps' analysis on board, Tom's spectral return thus initiates a crisis that throws the placid picture of the past into turmoil. Put differently, spectrality deterritorializes the seemingly wholesome "picture" of the present as its "foundations" give way. In the novel, not only Jack, but also the village undertaker's assistants sense Tom's spectral presence between them on their way to the village:

> Though they would never talk about it and though they eventually broke this meditative hush, both Derek and Dave would feel that in this journey they formed a definite bond with their cargo. It didn't happen on the usual short trips, quite the opposite. But this was like having a third person along for the ride, there were definitely three of them. The conversation, or concatenation of unspoken thoughts, was somehow three-way.
> It was—well, memorable. But more than that. The word was really (though neither of them said it) haunting. When they finally reached their destination, Marleston church, back in Devon, where the coffin would rest overnight, they felt relieved, but also vaguely sorry, even deprived. (*WYWH*, 195)

The undertakers' unwillingness to verbalize their sentiment of haunting, i.e. avoidance of referring to the distinctly-felt presence of a third 'person' among them, is indicative of a general characteristic of the Swiftian narrative, pointed out by David Malcolm:

> Most of Swift's major narrators use language very skillfully (and often in a self-advertising fashion) … The Swiftian narrators' speech is distinguished by incomplete utterances (frequently as aposiopesis—the intentional failure to complete a sentence). Many narrators allow their utterances to trail off into dashes and ellipsis points. Usually the reader is well able to complete the unfinished sentences, while still getting a strong sense that some characters are unwilling to say certain words, or to look at certain issues directly. (Malcolm 2003, 15)

Malcolm's remarks shed further light on the transferential nature of reading within a posttraumatic context of avoidance of painful issues from the past: issues that continue to possess the protagonist.

Apropos spectrality in the novel, what is even more disconcerting, even maddening for Jack is that he feels haunted not by one ghost but by a whole host of them. On his way to the

airport, he feels overwhelmed by the fear of having to deal with all these ghosts that imbue even the city of Bristol with spectrality: “Now all the other ghosts, it suddenly seemed to him, were waiting for him too—sensing his approach, beyond the end of this blue, snaking motorway. … Bristol, like some phantom presence—a thickening of traffic and junctions—passed somewhere on his left” (*WYWH*, 217). Later, traumatized Jack feels as if his entire existence is possessed, as Tom’s ghost seems to let loose all the specters of the past, threatening Jack’s sanity and his ‘firm’ grip on reality:

> Everything is mad now, everything is off its hinges. He’d gone to bury Tom, but now all the things that had once been dead and buried had come back again, and there was only one way forward, he was sure of that. Even Tom himself hadn’t been really buried. He was with him now, in this cottage, he was sure of that too, even if he hadn’t seen him. It was Tom’s trick, Tom’s choice, to appear or not, he knew that by now. Tom might be standing even now at his shoulder. A sniper. (*WYWH*, 300)

In the Swiftian oeuvre, inundation by ghosts seems to be a recurring pattern, a fact highlighted by Stef Craps who writes of the Swiftian fiction, “in which the starting point of the story is often a crisis situation in the narrative present that brings back the ghosts of the past, which the characters thought had been laid to rest” (Craps and Swift 2009, 654).

The ghost, referred to as “this thing” in a manner reminiscent of Marcellus’s words in *Hamlet*, disrupts normality and threatens to upset the balance of Jack and Ellie’s conjugal life as “this thing that had arrived out of the blue would drive a wedge—he could hear the blows of the hammer striking it—between them” (*WYWH*, 52). The “wedge” in question refers to the ghost’s deterritorializing impact, with the outcome being a total revision of what constitutes ‘normality’, ‘reality’ and ‘subjectivity’. The ghost infects literally everything, even turning the living into ghosts, as toward the end of the novel, Jack and Ellie stare into each other’s eyes, “in looking at each other” it seems “as if they’ve seen a ghost” (*WYWH*, 350–51).

In the novel, even language is not spared the universal spectralization, and Swift’s double-edged choice of words reflects the haunting at the very fabric of language. For instance, when Major Richards, in the course of his ‘visitation’, formally informs Jack and Ellie of Tom’s death and repatriation, “ … it’s as she briefly shares her being with Major Richards that Ellie gets the distinct sensation that she has been preceded, even now, by a military visitation” (*WYWH*, 348). Infection of the living/dead divide by the specter is reminiscent of Derrida’s definition of the figure of the virus in spectral terms which is, “… ni vivant ni mort. C'est

spectral" (Jacques Derrida qtd in Wolfreys 2002, ix). The ghost is indeed a deterritorializing virus that destabilizes all facets of subjectivity, as mirrored in the textual fabric of the novel. As the figure of the undecidability of received dichotomies (life/death, past/present, I/other), the ghost acts as a virus that destabilizes the received borders of the binary pairs. It reveals every term to be infected by its 'opposite'.

In the Swiftian universe, the dead – be it human or animal – do not depart, but remain as a palpable hollowness overshadowing existence and inducing an internal inquiry. Here, Tom and Michael have just shot dead and buried their ailing dog Luke,

> … with the air—Jack could see this as they pulled into the yard—thick between them. He didn't understand the thickness of it till Tom, and it took a little time, had given his full account.
> But the air (still busy with flying ants that had escaped that kettle) was thick and heavy anyway, heavy with the sultry August weather, but heavy with the strange, hollow weight of there being three of them now where once there'd been four. Just as once there'd been four of them where once there'd been five. (*WYWH*, 144)

It is this hollowness of a spectral present absence or an absent presence (with the "flying ants" reminiscent of Amis's morbid flies), this void, which had driven Tom away from the farm in the first place. Swift employs the word "trigger" abundantly in the novel to refer to the manner in which traumatic recall is triggered through association, but also to foreshadow Tom's future career and by extension, a world infested with weaponry: "It wasn't the cow disease that had swung it for Tom. For Tom the trigger had been Luke. In more senses than one" (*WYWH*, 137). In the Swiftian world of endless spectral echoes, where one loss reminds one of another, Luke's death had "left a more than dog-sized gap and there was that echo – though none of them dared say it – of the death of Vera" (*WYWH*, 152–53) and it was Vera's death that had deprived the farm of its firm pillars: "The cow disease, which came later, was one thing and it was a killer in every sense, but the rot really set in, Jack would say, when Vera died" (*WYWH*, 20). "When she died," we read, "it was as if the whole pattern was lost" (*WYWH*, 23).

In a manner almost identical to the arrival of the letter – announcing Tom's death in Iraq – in *Wish You Were Here*, in *The Sense of an Ending* haunting occurs through the posthumous return of a text, and the attempt to make sense of this return which sets off a deterritorializing questioning around the protagonist's – and homodiegetic narrator's – unwitting involvement in his friend's suicide. Mrs. Ford, the mother of Tony Webster's ex-

girlfriend bequeaths him a sum of money in addition to Adrian's diary. However, Veronica refuses to give him the diary as a bound whole, leaving Tony ever confused and eager to obtain the diary in its entirety. In an email to Veronica, frustrated Tony finally gives up his search and writes, "I don't expect you to hand over Adrian's diary. If you've burnt it, there's an end to it. If you haven't, then obviously, as it was written by the father of your son, it belongs to you. I'm puzzled why your mother left it to me in the first place, but that's no matter" (*TSE*, 143). Yet, the whole novel documents Tony's hermeneutic attempts at piecing together and interpreting the precious fragments that reach him through Veronica, rendering the novel an allegory of interpretation.

This act of textual interpretation – of Tony's "ghostly" (Turrentine 2011, n.pag.) diary fragments – is also accompanied by a sensation of haunting. We read, "… I tried to concentrate on Adrian and what he was doing. I don't know how best to put this, but as I looked at that photocopied page I didn't feel as if I was examining some historical document – one, moreover, requiring considerable exegesis. No, I felt as if Adrian was present in the room again, beside me, breathing, thinking" (*TSE*, 86). Tony's reference to exegesis, as if at the behest of the specter, evokes parallels with literary hermeneutics which stresses the necessity of a willingness to enter into a dialogic relationship with the text. In his article "Text and Interpretation", Hans-Georg Gadamer refers to this relationship as a "constant co-speaking" between the reader and the text: "For in contrast to all other texts, the literary text is not interrupted by the dialogical and intermediary speaking of the interpreter; rather it is simply accompanied by the interpreter's constant co-speaking. … Even the simple act of reading in which one reads something to oneself is dialogical …" (Gadamer 1989, 46–47). Elsewhere, Gadamer reiterates the same ideas by defining the dialogical nature of reading as "nothing but the mutual stimulation of thought" (Gadamer 2004, 187). He then proceeds to highlight the imprint of mortality, the "experience of human finitude" (Gadamer 2004, 351) and the "experience of one's own historicity" (Gadamer 2004, 351) to deduce the limitations of the human perspective in interpretation. Historicity for Gadamer also means that human beings are within a "tradition", albeit one that for him comes alive in a veritable dialogue with a 'thou':

> … tradition is not simply a process that experience teaches us to know and govern; it is language – i.e., it expresses itself like a Thou. A Thou is not an object; it relates itself to us. It would be wrong to think that this means that what is experienced in tradition is to be taken as the opinion of another person, a Thou. Rather, I maintain that the understanding of tradition does not take the traditionary text as an expression of another person's life, but as meaning that is detached

> from the person who means it, from an I or a Thou. … tradition is a genuine partner in dialogue, and we belong to it, as does the I with a Thou. … the Thou is not an object but is in relationship with us. For this reason … experience will undergo a change. Since here the object of experience is a person, this kind of experience is a moral phenomenon – as is the knowledge acquired through experience, the understanding of the other person. … There is a kind of experience of the Thou that tries to discover typical behavior in one's fellowmen and can make predictions about others on the basis of experience. We call this a knowledge of human nature. We understand the other person in the same way that we understand any other typical event in our experiential field – i.e., he is predictable. His behavior is as much a means to our end as any other means. From the moral point of view this orientation toward the Thou is purely selfregarding and contradicts the moral definition of man. As we know, in interpreting the categorical imperative Kant said, inter alia, that the other should never be used as a means but always as an end in himself. (Gadamer 2004, 352)

Gadamer thus conceives of the event of textual interpretation within a tradition, as "a dialogue" (West-Pavlov 2013, 73) with an entity possessed of a soul and deserving ethical treatment, his word for ethics being 'morality'. Interpretation is thus portrayed as a relationship wherein the other of the text - arising out of a given historical context - solicits a relationship with the interpreter, her/himself arising out of a historical context. In a manner recalling the Barthesian declaration of the death of the author, Gadamer conceives of this encounter as one between the interpreter and the text, detached from the life of the author. The hermeneutical encounter with the text is further said to be characterized by an ethical treatment of the other, not as a means, but as an end. Entry into the exegetical relationship is marked by the fact that "it is characteristic of every phase of the process of experience that the experienced person acquires a new openness to new experiences" (Gadamer 2004, 351). The experience of the *process* of a dialogue with the object of interpretation – or the Thou of the text – remains an open-ended adventure.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the return to the text under analysis is akin to the future return of trauma in its repetitional urge, and willing entry into a dialogue is analogous to the transference that characterizes psychoanalytic analysis. In this context, Hartman refers to the way in which the outcome of textual interpretation sheds light on "human functioning" in the wake of trauma, and explains its operations in the following words:

> The result is not moral criticism exactly, because this newest perspective does not attempt a definitive judgment or evaluation of the individual work. The change introduced operates at the

> level of theory, and of exegesis in the service of insights about human functioning. The focus is on disclosing an unconscious or not-knowing knowledge – a potentially literary way of knowing, if you wish – combining insight and blindness, play and earnest …, and linking inspiration to sound as well as sense.
>
> Emphasis falls on the imaginative use of language rather than on an ideal transparency of meaning. The real – the empirical or historical origin – cannot be known as such because it presents itself always within the resonances or "field" of the traumatic (Hartman 1995, 544).

While Hartman partially subscribes to the unknowability of the real, he also attests to the possibility of attaining a roundabout knowledge of trauma, through literary interpretation[17]. This is exemplified fully in *The Sense of an Ending*, in Tony's interpretive investigations, aided by Veronica's textual morsels and the bizarre guided trip to the neighborhood where Tony meets Adrian Jr., the mental handicap born out of Adrian's quasi-incestuous union with Mrs. Ford. This helps him to unlock Adrian's mathematical enigma in the diary. This realization, however, does not dispel the sensation of haunting that would forever arise out of the remembrance of those words:

> It was obvious now. The first *a* was Adrian; and the other was me, Anthony – as he used to address me when he wanted to call me to seriousness. And *b* signified 'baby'. One born to a mother – 'The Mother' – at a dangerously late age. A child damaged as a result. Who was now a man of forty, lost in grief. And who called his sister Mary. I looked at the chain of responsibility. I saw my initial in there. I remembered that in my ugly letter I had urged Adrian to consult Veronica's mother. I replayed the words that would forever haunt me. As would Adrian's unfinished sentence. 'So, for instance, if Tony …' I knew I couldn't change, or mend, anything now. (*TSE*, 149)

According to Mark Currie, Tony's surprise realization constitutes "anagnorisis rather than peripeteia in so far as it turns on the protagonist's recognition of a fact, the ignorance of which

[17] Along with Hartman, Cathy Caruth is among the first critics to have formulated the link between trauma, reading and literary interpretation: "If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing. And it is, indeed at the specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersect that the language of literature and the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience precisely meet" (Caruth 1996, 3). She goes on to elaborate that representing traumatic experience, or rather, " a crisis that is marked, not by a simple knowledge, but by the ways it simultaneously defies and demands our witness" can only be investigated "in a language that is always somehow literary: a language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding" (Caruth 1996, 5).

has been a foundation for his misunderstanding of everything" (Currie 2013, 173). Further, juxtaposing "responsibility" and haunting is of paramount importance, since a salient function of spectrality in the novel is to trigger an ethical awareness of immanent, interconnected "chain" of life and responsibility[18]. The web of connectivity and the reach of our actions extend far beyond our immediate surroundings according to Spike in Winterson's *The Stone Gods*: "…The universe is an imprint. You are part of the imprint — it imprints you, you imprint it. You cannot separate yourself from the imprint, and you can never forget it. It isn't a "something", it is you'" (Winterson 2013, 87). The ethical implications of a worldview in which all 'elements' are connected and "imprinted" on by one another, in which every being equals its action are self-evident. Adrian's words in the diary, which seem to have willed themselves to return and haunt Tony through an uncanny turn of events, will forever constitute a spectral, "living, dead rebuke" to Tony and his seemingly carefree "existence" (*TSE*, 140) reminding him of his unwitting involvement in a tragedy.

On a diegetic level spectrality sheds light on the endless and intersubjective nature of reading. With regard to the haunting arising from the experience of reading and its significance as on-going "exegetical conversation", Geoffrey Hartman argues,

> The more we try to animate books, the more they reveal their resemblance to the dead – who are made to address us in epitaphs or whom we address in thought or dream. Every time we read we are in danger of waking the dead, whose return can be ghoulish as well as comforting. It is, in any case, always the reader who is alive and the book that is dead, and must be resurrected by the reader. The reader's forceful exegesis, however, does not remain at the conversational level but becomes a text which must itself be revived at a later point. (Hartman 1995, 548)

[18] The notion of responsibility toward the vulnerability of the other also forms the crux of Ganteau's most recent monograph on the subject. In the introduction to his work, he avers vulnerability to be "defining the human", a concept that has gained "ubiquity … over the last two decades" (Ganteau 2015a, 2). Ganteau goes on to define vulnerability within the context of trauma studies and ethical sensibility to the "otherness of the other" as, "a phrase that lays the stress on the suffering people even while eschewing individualisation and the taking into consideration of singularity—are associated with a constellation of notions like 'care' and 'caring,' 'responsibility,' 'ethics,' 'the Other,' but also 'trauma,' and 'the traumatised,' which makes one reflect on the status of the victim in contemporary societies and bears witness to an essential paradigm shift: that which saw the move from an era of suspicion to one of attention to and solicitude for victims of trauma …" (Ganteau 2015a, 3). The "era of suspicion" refers to the heyday of deconstruction prior to the ethical turn.

So, Hartman, in agreement with Gadamer's view of interpretation as a "constant co-speaking", states that any textual interpretation is liable to further revision. Yet, the connection between reading and encountering the ghosts of the text is nowhere more eloquently stated than in Julian Wolfreys's work who, contrary to Hartman, accords the text, not an inanimate, but a *spectral* status:

> … what we call texts, what we constitute as the identity of texts is, in the words of Jean-Michel Rabaté, systematically "haunted" by voices from the past ... this shows in an exemplary way the ineluctability of spectral returns. Such voices are the others of the very texts we read in any given moment. Texts are neither dead nor alive, yet they hover at the very limits between living and dying. The text thus partakes in its own haunting, it is traced by its own phantoms, and it is this condition which reading must confront. (Wolfreys 2002, xii)

Thus, in a move that captures the boundless reality of interpretation, Wolfreys transforms reading, the read and the reader to spectral conversants in an ongoing conversation, relying chiefly, "on a blurring, which is also a suspension, of categories such as the real or the imaginary" (Wolfreys 2002, xiii). Wolfreys draws on the Derridean notion of the 'trace' (synonymous with 'the ghost' or 'the virus') to highlight the fact that meaning is never fully present in a text. The ghost, or the trace, extends the act of interpretation. In a manner similar to Rabaté and Wolfreys's spectralization of textuality and the literary experience, Pascale Tollance highlights the "possession" of the "voice" of the text by other voices, in her commentary on Graham Swift:

> La multiplication ou la démultiplication de la voix peut s'appréhender à travers un autre prisme qui modifie quelque peu l'accent du discours critique. À divers égards, l'écriture de Swift peut être dite "polyphonique" : cela par la façon dont elle reprend la tradition du "roman à voix", par la place qu'elle donne à l'intertextualité, ou plus généralement par la façon dont la voix individuelle se trouve "habitée" par d'autres voix. La notion de polyphonie ne s'envisage pas chez Bakhtine indépendamment de celle d'hétéroglossie qui suggère que tout texte est traversé par une altérité fondamentale : dans cette perspective, l'intertextualité (et plus largement le texte lui-même, comme le soulignent Barthes ou Kristeva) apparaît non comme un simple phénomène d'inclusion ou d'imbrication d'un texte dans un autre, mais comme un phénomène d'ouverture à une langue qui est elle-même déjà marquée par l'hétérogénéité. A l'étrangeté de la langue s'ajoute l'altérité de la parole, le travail d'une énonciation qui divise chaque énoncé individuel. (Tollance 2011, 22)

Drawing on Kristeva's reworking of the Bakhtinian idea of polyphony or *heteroglossia* germane to the novel, Tollance points to the centrality of intertextuality to the Swiftian oeuvre. In importing the idiom of Derridean hauntology to a discussion of the Kristevan intertextuality, she thus engages in a spectralization of intertextuality in the same way as Maud Ellmann has already declared the ghostliness of the "I" (to be discussed further on in this chapter).

To conclude, spectrality in the corpus narratives functions as the trope of the return of trauma in posttraumatic subjectivity. This is a return that demands potentially endless narrativization and interpretation. In this sense, the belated verbalization of trauma mirrors the process of literary interpretation as a dialogic process through time.

b. Trauma Presented

With regard to the textual representation of trauma, a general pattern across the novels is that it is either discussed explicitly in the individual works or registered as an oblique imprint of the Lacanian real on the symbolic order of language. In *The Pregnant Widow*, the real of trauma is referred to, primarily as unmentionable "truth". Keith's reflections on the nature of the traumas entailed in existence have convinced him that "We are trapped by the truth," and as far as his personal traumatic reactions to Violet's death and his own approaching mortality are concerned "the truth was that it all built *very slowly* …" (*TPW*, 28), in other words, it took some time for the symptoms to surface belatedly (in line with the Freudian notion of *Nachträglichkeit*). Elsewhere, Keith also mentions beauty as an element that renders traumatic existence bearable, avowing straight away that beauty was missing from his life: "*Beauty is truth, truth beauty*. This was beautiful, perhaps. But how could it be beautiful? It wasn't true. As he saw it. Beauty, that rare thing, had gone. What remained was truth. And truth was in endless supply" (*TPW*, 137). The "endless supply" of truth can be taken as a reference to the repetitional compulsion and the resultant hyperarousal of trauma, in what Caruth calls "our own catastrophic era" (Caruth 1996, 12). As we learn in the course of the narrative, healing from trauma in Keith's life comes about partly through the return of beauty in the guise of his third wife, whom Keith calls Pulc, short for pulchritude "present beauty" (*TPW*, 181), suggesting, in the mainstream tradition of psychoanalysis, that healing and release from trauma occur through engagement with the symbolic order of language.

A second way in which Amis refers to the *initially* incomprehensible presence of traumatic real, is through the use of the Lacanian-Freudian terminology. In his attempts to understand the nature of his psychological malaise, in a manner reminiscent of Marcellus's

attempt at verbalizing the troubling affect of encounter with the ghost in *Hamlet*, Keith also uses the phrase "this … thing", to refer to the enigmatic core of trauma and its spectral return; he asks his third wife, "There's this other thing. I don't know what it is. It can't be to do with Violet, can it?" (*TPW*, 182,183).

On a diegetic plane, the return and repetition of the real is conducive to the maintenance of transference and development of the plot. In the novel, Gloria's repeated (loveless and depthless) sex with Keith, to the accompaniment of a sentiment of "primitive fear" on Keith's part represents traumatic return. Keith says, "Wanting Gloria wasn't like wanting Scheherazade, in the old days: it came and went, but it didn't accumulate. Love (he knew) made the world expand; this (whatever it was) reduced the world to a single point. The physical act with Gloria had produced nothing more than a primitive desire to repeat it. A desire more or less exactly balanced by a primitive fear" (*TPW*, 266). Sex, devoid of love and human emotions represents yet another source of "trauma" (*TPW*, 3) for Keith as he explicitly states at the outset[19], prompting him to search for a proper definition for "this", a search that indicates the psychological obstruction of imagination. Arnold Modell, for whom metaphor is the "currency" of the mind, explains this inability to verbalize in the following words:

> When metaphor is the interpreter of traumatic memories, it interprets with the aid of metonymy (a part substituting for the whole), and metaphoric memorial categories are evoked by metonymic associations.
>
> But trauma can be self-sustaining, as trauma will degrade the metaphoric process: here the metaphoric process transfers meaning from the past to the present *without transformation*, and as a consequence imagination is constricted. The past becomes a template for the present, creating a loss of ambiguity in the experience of the here and now; there is an absence of the customary play of similarity and difference. In experiential terms, this means that the present is conflated with the past. (Modell 2003, 38–39)

Keith's recourse to "this", as an attempt at verbalizing traumatic loveless sexuality as well as his other traumas, could be said to arise from the traumatic degradation of the metaphoric process. The "customary play of similarity and difference" that characterizes metaphoric

[19] "This is the story of a sexual trauma. He wasn't at a tender age when it happened to him. He was by any definition an adult; and he consented—he comprehensively consented. Is trauma, then, really the word we want (from Gk 'wound')? Because his wound, when it came—it didn't hurt a bit. It was the sensory opposite of torture. She loomed up on him unclothed and unarmed, with her pincers of bliss—her lips, her fingertips. Torture: from L. *torquere* 'to twist.' It was the opposite of torture, yet it twisted. It ruined him for twenty-five years" (*TPW*, 3).

transformation of meaning so central to literary expression, is obliterated as the past collapses unto the present. Traumatic sexuality in the context of postmodernism and the sexual revolution of the 70s is the principal topic of discussion in chapter two.

In a manner identical to Amis, Graham Swift, in his various characterizations of trauma and its imprint on the symbolic order of language, refers to trauma as "the truth" that pierces the placid order of the life Jack and Ellie had built together. In the novel, this "mocking truth" intrudes in the form of the letter from the defense ministry announcing Tom's death in Iraq. Traumatized Jack manifests physical symptoms, "his heart … banging, as if it had jumped loose in his chest" and he has an uncanny premonition regarding the letter's contents even before it is opened:

> Perhaps it occurred to him as he stared at that letter that he might already have read, without knowing it, as an item in a newspaper—though he was not a great scourer of newspapers—the anonymous announcement of his own brother's death. Public disclosure. But no, he couldn't remember any moment when his insides had turned mysteriously cold. And though, by now, such items of news weren't so rare, he'd always told himself that Tom might be anywhere.
> …. Now that it was in his hand it had the eerie, mocking truth of something not entirely unanticipated. His hand shook. As if the anticipation might have forestalled it. As if the anticipation might have caused it. (*WYWH*, 79)

It was not the first time Jack had had to deal with the unsettling "truth" of the traumatic real piercing the placid fantasy of the Lacanian imaginary order of life. When his father Michael committed suicide, his slumber, signifying the fantasy of the imaginary order of consciousness, was torn apart by the shot that killed Michael:

> He couldn't have said (it was like other passages of time that night) how long he'd stood there, as if hypnotised, as if in his mind—but wasn't he dreaming anyway?—he might still have been back in bed and asleep, not knowing that any of this was really happening. Till the sound of the shot—but had he even seen, from the window, the quick poke of light?—had woken him, out of all dreams, into truth. (*WYWH*, 304)

Michael's suicide – in the manner of his predecessor Ernest Atkinson in *Waterland*, "with his back against a tree" (Swift 1999, 235) – awakens Jack to the traumatic reality, "the truth", of existence. Elsewhere in the novel, trauma is depicted as too shocking to be put into words. In

psychoanalytic terms, it is presented as the limit point of the Lacanian symbolic order of language (Lacan 1977, 203) or the failure of the signifier to voice it, a failure which is nonetheless registered in the narrative text (Belau 2001; Ragland-Sullivan 2001). Swift's characters demonstrate how a significant part of humanity's struggle in life is to constantly attempt to carry out the difficult task of verbalizing the real of existence through recourse to the symbolic (of language). For instance, when Jack's uncles die in battle in WWI, "Their commanding officer, Captain Hayes, who had witnessed the act of valour himself, had been eager, that night, to write the matter up, with his recommendation, in the hope that something good—if that was a fair way of putting it—might come of the day's unspeakabilities" (*WYWH*, 10). Trauma is thus represented as hard to verbalize, yet even an army officer is aware of the beneficial effects of trying to narrate it. Also, indicating the rifeness of trauma across the land, when Major Richards pays a visit to Michael and Ellie to officially deliver the message of Tom's death, he is relieved to find out that "there'd been no distressing outbursts. None of the howls or moans or terrifying speechlessness he'd sometimes known" (*WYWH*, 96). Evidently, speechlessness is among the first reactions to trauma across the nation.

Swift also recognizes that trauma is repressed memory that requires verbalization. We read that as Major Richards is leaving, "he'd noticed … something going on inside Jack Luxton, something deep and contained, that might need its outburst at some time. On the other hand he didn't look like a man given to outbursts, or to much extravagant self-expression at all" (*WYWH*, 98). Likewise, Jack found himself unable to talk about the scene of his father's suicide: "Though Jack was technically prepared for what he would find, this had not made the discovery any less shocking, and how to describe what he'd felt at this moment was beyond him" (*WYWH*, 246). In a similar fashion, the people in attendance at the repatriation ceremony, specifically those who had lost a relative, appeared to Jack to have an "air of dazed incomprehension" (*WYWH*, 160–61) about them. Correspondingly, on several occasions, the Freudian-Lacanian "thing" is utilized to refer to manifestations of trauma that demand urgent verbalization and are as yet too painful for integration into conscious "narrative" (van der Hart, Brown, and van der Kolk 1989) memory, in Pierre Janet's words. Here, Ellie who is constantly worried about her family life, hopes that the shock of dealing with Tom's spectral return and burial, symbolized here by the charged cloud casting a shadow over their marriage, would soon be over: "Ellie …was already calculating that this thing (was there some proper word to give it?) would have blown over by then. In a month or so it would be behind them. The air would be clear and blue again, even bluer. That cloud, having arrived and shed its burden, would no longer be there" (*WYWH*, 54). Brookes, the church rector also refers to the return of Tom's

corpse from Iraq as if new lexis is required to signify it. Referring to Michael's suicide, "Brookes had said, 'I don't know what to say, Jack. The last time we spoke was when … And now this.'" (*WYWH*, 262–63). The repatriation ceremony also deals a traumatic shock to Jack's system who refers to it again as Marcellus had referred to the ghost in *Hamlet*: "When all three coffins had been transferred to their hearses a tense silence remained. This was, Jack understood, a pre-arranged part of the proceedings (it was like those Remembrance Days), but it was also like a natural, inevitable response. How could this thing simply end?" (*WYWH*, 170).

Yet despite the initially paralyzing "essence" of trauma, Swift also believes in the parallel existence of an internal psychic struggle against the inarticulacy imposed by it. Trauma deterritorializes firm notions of subjectivity, forcing the subject to find a way out through affirmation of existence in a creative, new form, as if human existence in the Swiftian oeuvre were synonymous with this creative struggle. In Freudian terms, in particular in his conception of "the *conservative* nature of" (Freud 1989, 612) the human instincts, the *expansive* life force of Eros[20] is depicted as countering the death instinct[21], here bent on choking Jack up. Swift's impeccable choice of the word "outdrive" also invites a Freudian reading:

> Jack swung the Cherokee back onto the road and sped off as if from some delay not of his own making. He'd wasted valuable time getting choked up. Part of him recognised that it was the

[20] "I will add a few words to clarify our terminology… the sexual instinct was transformed for us into Eros, which seeks to force together and hold together the portions of living substance. What are commonly called the sexual instincts are looked upon by us as the part of Eros which is directed towards objects. Our speculations have suggested that Eros operates from the beginning of life and appears as a 'life instinct' in opposition to the 'death instinct' which was brought into being by the coming to life of inorganic Substances. These speculations seek to solve the riddle of life by supposing that these two instincts were struggling with each other from the very first" (Freud 1989, 624).

[21] "*It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things* which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life … they are merely seeking to reach an ancient goal by paths alike old and new. Moreover it is possible to specify this final goal of all organic striving. It would be in contradiction to the conservative nature of the instincts if the goal of life were a state of things which had never yet been attained. On the contrary, it must be an old state of things, an initial state from which the living entity has at one time or other departed and to which it is striving to return by the circuitous paths along which its development leads. If we are to take it as a truth that knows no exception that everything living dies for internal reasons - becomes inorganic once again – then we shall be compelled to say that '*the aim of all life is death*' and, looking backwards, that '*inanimate things existed before living ones*" (Freud 1989, 612–13).

> whole point of this journey, to get choked up. It was its essence. But some other part of him was now trying to outdrive this immobilising stuff inside him. He looked in the mirror, half expecting to see the black hearse on his tail. (*WYWH*, 214)

Clearly, this internal volition to "outdrive" the morbid immobility of trauma, a fight characterized in Freudian terms with an erotic lust for life against the collapse of life and temporality that defines the operations of the death drive, runs counter to classic trauma theorists' claims that traumatic knowledge equals its incessant return in the future, depicting the subject as perennially trapped and powerless in the grip of demonic trauma. Life, against a backdrop of trauma, amounts to a struggle to prolong the "circuitous paths" of life before the inertia of death.

Swift's most trenchant engagement of the subject's approach to trauma manifests itself in the events centering on the oak tree against which Michael had shot himself. The great oak comes to represent a wide range of concepts, including also the Lacanian symbolic order, or the Other – or put simply, life as it is lived in its social reality. The hole made by the bullet in its body stands for the palpable real of trauma and its insistent return in the symbolic order, or rather in this case, its refusal to disappear:

> But the hole, some three feet or more up the trunk, remained, its aperture reduced but defined as the bark grew a ring-like scar around it. It was there when Jack, with five others, lowered his brother's coffin into its grave. It's there now. The surrounding stain on the bark remained too, despite that sluicing down on the day itself by PC Ireton. Unlike the stains on the ground, which soon disappeared, it weathered gradually and came to look like some indeterminate daub of the kind sometimes seen near the base of trees, or like some fungal blemish associated with that odd puncture in the trunk. What was it there for? Had someone once tried to hammer something, for some strange agricultural purpose, into the wood? (*WYWH*, 274–75)

Ostensibly, no amount of "sluicing down" can eliminate the "indeterminate daub", or do full justice to the totality of the traumatic event, and further performative acts of narrative will be needed to integrate the tragedy into conscious memory. Not only does traumatic affect not fully disappear, but it also demands audience and further narrativization – in the manner of the ghost of Hamlet's father. The Swiftian stress on the therapeutic function of the narrative has already been noted by researchers. Andrew James, for instance, writes:

> Swift has often spoken of the ability of stories to lift us out of our own worlds and transport us to other magical ones. He is intrigued by the fundamental human need to tell stories in order to overcome traumatic experiences. …. Most of the time … religion is absent and storytelling is its substitute, the teller acting as confessor who simultaneously gains solace from the tale. (James 2014, 5)

Correspondingly, trauma theory holds that trauma is characterized by the paradoxical logic of simultaneous incomprehensibility and the demand for comprehension, registered in language. Swift represents this characteristic of trauma by the hole's uncanny demand on the onlooker to insert a finger in it, to probe the real of trauma as it were:

> One person who certainly knew how the hole was made was Ellie. She and Jack stood one warm July day under the tree—it was the summer after Michael's death—and Jack watched Ellie put her finger into the hole. He didn't stop her. He'd done it himself, though not at first. It had taken a long time, in fact, before he'd felt able to and even then he'd felt that he shouldn't. But it was a hole that, all other considerations apart, begged to have a finger put in it, even two. An ignorant outsider, who might not have been especially bothered by the mystery of the hole, would have found it hard to resist putting a finger in it. (*WYWH*, 275)

Swift is once again, asserting the active role of the subject in his/her release from trauma through fashioning a fresh subjectivity out of the debris of the old. What is more, there are unmistakable undertones of desecration accompanying the act of insertion, implying that there is nothing sacrosanct about the old subjectivity or view of the world. Ellie's encouragement to undertake an action that seems sacrilegious to Jack re-enacts the biblical scene of the temptation of Adam by Eve, suggesting the presence of the devil, in this case the Serpentine, diabolical repetition and return that sustains trauma and the plot simultaneously. Swift encourages this interpretation by referring to the absence of "parental constraint". On Ellie's encouragement, Jack and Ellie proceed to have sex, fantasizing that they do not know each other. Probing the hole of trauma while engaged in mutual erotic stimulation amounts to a willed act of transference and fantasy-building, leading to mutual hermeneutic resubjectification of trauma and potential liberation from the haunting past. We read:

> But Ellie's putting her finger in it—without, as it were, even asking Jack's permission—marked a decisive moment in the history of Jebb Farm. Her own father had died even more recently. It was an act of impudent penetration that had to do with the absence of more than one parental

> constraint. It was as though Ellie were saying, 'Look, I can do this now. We can do this now. Look, I haven't been struck down. The tree hasn't fallen on us. *We* can do anything we like now.'
>
> …
>
> And the fact was that this simple yet outrageous act of Ellie's—she allowed her finger to probe and twist a bit—rather excited Jack. It aroused him. (*WYWH*, 275–76)

"Aroused" and "excited" by Ellie's "teasing game", Swift's rendition of psychoanalytic transference, Jack agrees to engage in her phantasy of seduction by a stranger, itself an indication of a yearning for a fresh start. Ellie tells Jack: "'Show me around, give me a tour. It's a beautiful day. Take me for a walk down Barton Field.' She even said (and it was an oddly appealing idea), 'Pretend you don't know me. Pretend I've never been here before'" (*WYWH*, 277). The outcome of willing participation in an emotionally-charged phantasy is movement toward recovery from trauma in the intersubjective space of transference. Jack, whose psyche is indelibly marked by the image of his father's suicide on a frigid night, feels as if his entire body is thawing out, following this symbolically-laden scene:

> It had once seemed to Jack that he would never get the coldness of that night out of his bones, but now he felt warm to his marrow. Ellie drew her finger from the hole and beckoned. Blooming in herself—and with something, so it seemed, she still had up her (sleeveless) sleeve. A blotch of sunshine reached her through the canopy of the oak and rippled over her bare shoulder.
>
> 'Come on'—she might almost have licked her lips—'put your finger in it too.'
>
> …. So he put his finger in the hole. Then Ellie squeezed a finger—it was a tightish fit—alongside it.
>
> 'There.' (*WYWH*, 277)

This is Swift's clearest avowal of the possibility of regeneration and healing through willing emotional investment in intersubjective transference. In a Foyles interview, Swift reiterates (in answer to a question suggesting Jack's entrapment in existence) the possibility of release from traumatic life through Ellie's redemptive role in his novel: "And in my story Jack is given the particular opportunity for a new life that comes via Ellie. I don't, incidentally, see my characters as trapped. They're dealing as best they can with what life has brought them and with their own innate traits of character. If that's to be trapped, then we're all trapped" (Swift 2016, n.pag.).

Swift had already visited the theme of intersubjective probing into the hole of the real, in yet another gesture of literalization of the 'hole' metaphor. In *Waterland*, on Mary's bidding (in parallel with Ellie's move), Mary and the then young Tom Crick engage in genital exploration:

> Hesitantly, but at Mary's free invitation, I put the tip of my index finger into the mouth of Mary's hole, and was surprised to discover what an inadequate word was 'hole' for what I encountered. For Mary's hole had folds and protuberances, and, so it seemed to me, its false and its genuine entrances, and – as I found the true entrance – it revealed the power of changing its configuration and texture at my touch, of suggesting a moist labyrinth of inwardly twisting, secret passages. … Mary's hole began to reveal a further power to suck, to ingest; a voracity which made me momentarily hold back. And yet the chief and most wondrous power of Mary's hole was its capacity to send waves of sensation not only all over Mary's body, but all over mine; and this not by some process of mental association but by a direct electric current which flowed up my arm, flushed my face, and gathered in the part of me to which Mary was simultaneously applying her hand. (Swift 1999, 50–51)

The unknown real of the hole reveals that the signifier "hole" is "inadequate", as is any signifier that purports to verbalize the shock of a first-time encounter with sexuality – considered by Lacan as "traumatizing" (Lacan 1977, 64) – and calls for a deeper probing characterized by trial and error, discovery and disillusionment, as is the transferential process of analysis, or any act of interpretation for that matter. Yet the "wondrous" outcome is one that binds and excites both beings as if an "electric current" joins them, in a manner rephrasing Jack's warming bones after his erotic exploit with Ellie.

In Swift's immanent vision of the universe, things happen – Life happens – when beings engage in acts of transformative interaction. These beings could belong to any order of human classification, yet what matters is that Life flows through them and movement takes place. This immanent conception of universal inter-subjectivity and becoming-other crops up also in *Last Orders*, embodied in Vince's two amusing neologisms: "And I always say it aint the motor by itself, it's the combination of man and motor, it's the intercombustion. A motor aint nothing without a man to tweak its buttons. And sometimes a man aint nothing without a motor, I see that. Motorvation, I call it" (Swift 1999, 71–72). Vince not only elucidates the symbiotic connection of man and machine in their 'intercombustive' relationship, but he probes the process further and calls it "motorvation", referring to the creative, combined outcome of the man/machine interaction, rather than the distinct acts of individual agents. The Swiftian

penchant for blurring the man/machine boundary is also in line with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of deterritorialization and subjectivity as a *machine* as opposed to a mechanism. Colebrook explains the ideas in a nutshell thus:

> The idea of deterritorialization … is directly related to the thought of the machine. Because a machine has no subjectivity or organising centre it *is* nothing more than the connections and productions it makes; it is what it does. It therefore has no home or ground; it is a constant process of deterritorialisation, or becoming other than itself. … Deleuze and Guattari use a terminology of machines, assemblages, connections and productions…. they insist that the machine is not a metaphor and that life is *literally* a machine. This is crucial to Deleuze's ethics. An *organism* is a bounded whole with an identity and end. A *mechanism* is a closed machine with a specific function. A *machine*, however, is nothing more than its connections; it is not made by anything, is not for anything and has no closed identity. (Colebrook 2002, 55–56)

Conceived of as a machine which is nothing more than the sum of its connections, an *assemblage* of parts, each with its specific *function*, subjectivity amounts to constant deterritorialization, with movement and change occurring at the point where machines interact. Within a discussion of trauma conceived of as *deterritorialization* of subjectivity, the significance of a machinic view of subjectivity becomes even more conspicuous as machines not only disrupt, but they also energize one another through intersubjective affectivity or in Vic's idiom, intercombustively. Intersubjective emotional investment offers the possibility to fashion a fresh narrative of identity through re-interpretation and resubjectification of trauma. Daniel Lea discusses the significance of such a narrative for release from the "hiatal space" of the Real and goes on to state that,

> … what the majority of Swift's narrators do is try desperately to fill the emptiness with the presence of things and, in particular, with the substantiality of narrative. …. Denying that to *be* is to be inauthentic, they search for a 'true' inner authenticity that will rationalise their life experiences into a continuous and developmental whole. Faced with a collection of disconnected memories and incoherent life-events, their only recourse is to a radical narrative refashioning that can apply the order of logic to the disparate jumble of their being. They set about revisioning their lives through the focus of a redemptive diegesis, an application of retroactive conformity that endows them with a hindsight that can therapeutically resurrect their 'lost' subjectivity. (Lea 2005, 10)

It is noteworthy that Lea highlights "redemptive" narrative as a "substantial" component in the inner quest for a refashioned story of the self within the "continuous and developmental whole" of existence. The "resurrected" post-traumatic self comes about as an outcome of an act of narrative hermeneutics which proves to be "a palliative act, a poultice on the wound on the Real" (Lea 2005, 12). Thus, traumatized Swiftian characters prove more than capable of transcending their traumas through seizing opportunities immanent to life. Alexandra Mărginean also sees an element of regeneration through narration of trauma in *Wish You Were Here*. She writes, "... we are interested in highlighting trauma as an invaluable instrument in the construction of identity and discourse. To Swift's characters, trauma is both a scourge and a tool. It both handicaps and empowers, because it favours a special outlook that generates discourse, with the effect of creating identity" (Mărginean 2014, 1133). Similarly, Stef Craps rightly states that there is more of an emphasis on regeneration through trauma in Swift's later works. Addressing Swift in interview, he says, "I'm inclined to see … a kind of linear evolution, from an emphasis on denial and evasion in your early work, through an intense preoccupation with the demands of trauma in your 'middle-period' novels, to an embrace of renewal and regeneration in your latest novels" (Craps and Swift 2009, 647–48).

In a manner strangely similar to *Wish You Were Here*, Barnes's novel also contrives for the real of trauma to irrupt into the seemingly uneventful imaginary order of Tony Webster's life, through a letter announcing Mrs. Ford's bequeathal of a sum of five hundred pounds and Adrian's diary. Yet as befits the logic of trauma, knowledge of the real is mysterious, resists symbolization and is never available in its totality. The entire novel amounts to a self-interrogatory, detective-style attempt at piecing together elements of a traumatic past, a quest, it seems, in answer to a spectral call by Adrian from beyond the grave. According to Tony, he receives only *fragments* of the diary:

> I received a letter from Mrs Marriott enclosing what she described as 'a fragment of the disputed document'. She expressed the hope that the next months might bring a full restitution of my legacy. I thought this showed a lot of optimism.
>
> The 'fragment' turned out to be a photocopy of a fragment. But – even after forty years – I knew it was authentic. Adrian wrote in a distinctive italic hand with an eccentric 'g'. Needless to say, Veronica hadn't sent me the first page, or the last, or indicated where this one came in the diary. If 'diary' was still the right word for a text set out in numbered paragraphs. (*TSE*, 85)

The reader – probably already used to Barnes taking "liberties with the novel form" (Moseley 2009, 7) – is given early indications that this is no ordinary diary; like any inquiry into the past, the outcome would be fragmentary, with numbered paragraphs "structured along the lines of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*" (Turrentine 2011, n.pag.). Wittgenstein stressed the ineffable character of life and the essentially limited nature of human cognition.

To literalize the fragmentary nature of human understanding, Barnes devises for Tony to receive only fragments of the diary, not in the original but in photocopies. Tony's inability to decipher the enigmas surrounding the bequest prompts James Dalrymple to classify the novel as a "metaphysical" detective story,

> … one characteristic of which is "the detective's apparent inability to decipher the mystery." One of the canonical works of detective fiction said to inspire these reworkings is Edgar Allan Poe's 1844 story *The Purloined Letter*. A curious aspect of Poe's story is that the reader never learns the contents of the original stolen letter, whose task it is the amateur detective Auguste Dupin's to retrieve. (Dalrymple 2016, 85)

Furthermore, in the course of Tony's investigations, it is the unruly mechanism of revisionist memory that is demonstrated as sovereign, not the subject 'possessing' that memory. This is demonstrated by the fact that the fragment given to him stops short of being revelatory in a satisfactory manner. Tony narrates, "And there the photocopy – this version of a version – stopped. 'So, for instance, if Tony': end of the line, bottom of the page. If I hadn't immediately recognised Adrian's handwriting, I might have thought this cliffhanger a part of some elaborate fakery concocted by Veronica" (*TSE*, 86). Recourse to the metanarrative "cliffhanger" is one in a series of references to the essentially postmodern insight of the narrativity of life, highlighting the centrality of narrative hermeneutics to the human condition.

Another way in which the unsettling operations of the Lacanian real on language are demonstrated is through the symbolically cracked villa wall as a result of heaving caused by deep-running roots, akin to repressed traumatic memories piercing the tranquil surface of the imaginary order. We read, "Towards the end of my marriage, the solid suburban villa Margaret and I lived in suffered a little subsidence. Cracks appeared here and there, bits of the porch and front wall began to crumble. (And no, I didn't think of it as symbolic.)" (*TSE*, 83). Note that here again, Tony points to the centrality of interpretation to human existence. Natural events are coopted to make sense of the raw material of existence by according them symbolic significance. In a fashion mirroring the transferential psychoanalytic dialogue aimed at

redefining a deterritorialized subjectivity, Tony goes on to engage in a *correspondence* characterized by role-playing and pretense, albeit one tinged with duplicity and antagonism. Tony recounts:

> I queried the arborist's conclusions and requested the digging of extra inspection pits to confirm or disprove the presence of rootlets close to the house's foundations; …. I was rigidly polite; I aped my opponents' bureaucratic language; I annoyingly attached copies of previous correspondence to each new letter; I invited further site inspections and suggested extra use for their manpower. With each letter, I managed to come up with another query they would have to spend their time considering; if they failed to answer it, my next letter, instead of repeating the query, would refer them to the third or fourth paragraph of my communication of the 17th inst, so that they would have to look up their ever-fattening file. I was careful not to come across as a loony, but rather as a pedantic, unignorable bore. I liked to imagine the moaning and groaning as yet another of my letters arrived; and I knew that at a certain point it would make bean-counting sense for them to just close the case. Eventually, exasperatedly, they proposed a thirty per cent reduction in the lime tree's canopy, a solution I accepted with deep expressions of regret and much inner exhilaration. (*TSE*, 84)

Tony's willing and sadistic use of official language in his correspondence (a register to which he professes an aversion earlier on in the novel), indicates the essentially fluid, unreliable and ungrounded nature of (his) subjectivity, as if subjectivity were nothing but a *bricolage*, a matter of picking and mixing available subject positions on a pragmatic basis as the arising situation demanded. This is precisely the quality which lays subjectivity potentially open to therapeutic reterritorialization.

Yet, most significantly, Barnes's ideas on the repetitional compulsion of (traumatic) memory are summed up in the word 'remorse'. As Tony's investigations into his past deepen and he realizes that he might inadvertently and uncannily have caused Adrian's suicide, the vengefulness of his younger self shocks him, delivering a significant blow to his idea of self: "My younger self had come back to shock my older self with what that self had been, or was, or was sometimes capable of being" (*TSE*, 97). Apropos, P. Suneetha writes, "… the protagonist is involved in spending a lot of time … revisiting later part of his life and challenging his core beliefs about causation, responsibility and the very chain of events that make up the sense of self" (Suneetha 2013, 58).Tony's internal inquiry dislodges his sense of self even further and he is overwhelmed with a feeling of "remorse". In this regard, Ivan Callus writes, "The story of *The Sense of an Ending* is the story of that self-image collapsing, as the

peaceable Tony Webster discovers that he has unwittingly and not so unwittingly had a hand in precipitating various tragic events in the lives of those surrounding him" (Callus 2012, 68). Tony explores 'remorse' further: "And no, it wasn't shame I now felt, or guilt, but something rarer in my life and stronger than both: remorse. A feeling which is more complicated, curdled, and primeval. Whose chief characteristic is that nothing can be done about it: too much time has passed, too much damage has been done, for amends to be made" (*TSE*, 99). Further on, Barnes's etymological gloss on the word reveals its links with the repetitional compulsion of trauma, at the same time as significantly widening the scope of traumatic memory to encompass any recollection that might trigger a feeling of loss and poignancy. Tony narrates, "Remorse, etymologically, is the action of biting again: that's what the feeling does to you. Imagine the strength of the bite when I reread my words. They seemed like some ancient curse I had forgotten even uttering" (*TSE*, 138). Once again, there is an uncanny, supernatural hint of evil and the demonic around the word, tying it to the death drive, repetitional trauma, and also the figure of the plot which aims to narrativize trauma.

Tony's reference to his injurious words as a curse that refuses to dissipate and instead remains as a material presence which continues to hurt and infect existence ties in with the idea of the materiality of language developed by Jean-Jacques Lecercle and Denise Riley. In the first section of the book, Riley writes apropos "bad words",

> The worst words revivify themselves within us, vampirically. Injurious speech echoes relentlessly, years after the occasion of its utterance, in the mind of the one at whom it was aimed: the bad word, splinter-like, pierces to lodge. In its violently emotional materiality, the word is indeed made flesh and dwells amongst us – often long outstaying its welcome. Old word-scars embody a 'knowing it by heart', as if phrases had been hurled like darts into that thickly pulsating organ. But their resonances are not amorous. Where amnesia would help us, we cannot forget. (Lecercle and Riley 2004, 46)

Hurtful words thus assume a fleshly identity and live on in the interlocuter's – or in the case of Tony, his reader's – psyche as a material presence akin to the Freudian foreign body of trauma. Bad words induce affect and take on a performative function boring into the victim's subjectivity and refuse to subside in their injuriousness, even years later.

Interestingly, remorse toward past words and deeds is a feeling Barnes had professed to be suffering from in his earlier reminiscences about his mother and grandfather, in *Nothing to Be Frightened Of*:

> My mother told me that Grandpa had once told her that the worst emotion in life was remorse. What, I asked, might he have been referring to? She said she had no idea, as her father had been a man of the utmost probity (no leaky pouffe there). And so the remark – an untypical one for my grandfather – hangs there un-answerably in time. I suffer from little remorse, though it may be on its way, and in the meantime am making do with its close chums: regret, guilt, memory of failure. But I do have a growing curiosity about the unled, the now unleadable lives, and perhaps remorse is currently hiding in their shadow. (Barnes 2009b, 63)

Thus, in the Barnesian lexicon, 'remorse' widens the scope of trauma to any unresolved past issue that returns demanding a belated resolution.

Yet, unlike Amis and Swift who demonstrate that the "truth" of traumatic real is "shiftable", and that relief is attainable, Barnes seems to believe it to be otherwise. Tony thinks that no amount of theorization can attenuate the ugliness of his past deed: "And now these idle clichés ran up against the unshiftable truth of what had happened" (*TSE*, 139). Clearly, traumatic inquiry has awakened Tony to the unpredictable intricacy of the web of life and the sense of responsibility that this realization entails. Geoffrey Hartman would partially agree that the real of trauma might be "unshiftable" and potentially incapable of integration into the narrative of life, while simultaneously attesting to the possibility of healing through verbalization of trauma:

> A central question, in fact, is whether a model of *non-integration* can be developed that would have, at one and the same time, therapeutic value in psychoanalysis and emancipatory/expressive value in art. There is no guarantee that these go together, that every gain in expressiveness is also a step toward psychic strength. Yet surely expressiveness in art is more than a repetition without relief. Should it further a mental flexibility that tolerates dialogue, irony, indeterminacy, ambivalence – all such complexities of communication – if it also augments, in short, a pausal and self-reflective capability, a linkage appears between literary expression and psychic health (Hartman 2003, 260).

Thus, despite the absence of a sure guarantee, literary expression appears to go some way toward fostering psychic strength through the very exercise of its techniques. Michelle Balaev also points to the fact that the resubjectification of traumatic event does not in any way guarantee the attainment of relief: "The novel indicates that traumatic experience disrupts the previous framework of reality and the protagonist must reorganize the self in relation to this new view of reality. This reordering is sometimes successful for characters or communities,

but other times, the protagonist cannot find relief or remedy" (Balaev 2008, n.pag.). In agreement with Balaev, our focus is rather on the *reordering* of deterritorialized subjectivity – a concept whose synonyms include *resubjectification*, *reformulation* (of subjectivity) and *recontextualization* (of the traumatic event, and by extension the subjectivity built around it).

To sum up, trauma is presented in the textual fabric of the narrative as the irruption of a reality too harsh to integrate into the symbolic order. This piercing of the imaginary by the real of trauma is seen as the force that drives a recalcitrant narrative aimed at restoring affectivity, or the flow of the life force.

c. Traumatic Symptoms

In addition to registering the real of trauma in their textual fabric, trauma novels (re)present a tell-tale manifestation of trauma: dissociation, identified as the primary outcome of a traumatic shock to the victim. Sandra Bloom draws an analogy between optimally integrated computer components and the human brain to define the evolutionary function of dissociation and the devastating impact of this state of "physiological overload" on the traumatized victim who can no longer "function normally":

> We alter our reality through our capacity to enter different states of consciousness that allow us to maintain separate – and often contradictory – bodies of knowledge. We call this capacity *dissociation*. In its acute state, after some tragic occurrence, it is common to recognize that people are 'in shock' – that is, they are acutely dissociated. As a result the[y] may not remember the terrible events that just occurred, or they may remember them but have no feeling about the events. (Bloom 2010, 200-01)

Dissociation is a symptom that finds diverse incarnations in the corpus texts. In *The Pregnant Widow*, dissociation manifests itself in the guise of *de-realization* of the physical body, with Keith feeling as if the physical boundaries of his body were deliquescent. We read, "He seemed to be floating, drifting in and out of himself …" (*TPW*, 177). In this regard, Joshua Pederson, applying Richard McNally's findings on trauma to literature, would recognize the ontologically unsettling sensation of floating out of the body as a tell-tale sign of "peritraumatic dissociation" (Pederson 2014, 340).

Further application of psychiatric insights to literature comes from the work of Jane Robinett who draws on the work of Judith Herman to highlight three significant sets of

traumatic symptoms (all represented with varying degrees in our corpus), including what she terms *constriction*, her name for dissociation characterized by numbing. In the following excerpt, she usefully sums up traumatic symptoms:

> Although determined, in part, by the individual's response to traumatic experience, the symptoms of psychological trauma can be grouped into a small number of clusters. Herman suggests three groups: *hyperarrousal*, in which there is a persistent expectation of danger, including startle reactions and hyperalertness; *intrusion*, during which the traumatic events are relived … in intense flashbacks, hallucinations and dreams; and *constriction*, manifested in numbing, withdrawal, indifference, emotional detachment, a sense of acute passivity or surrender.
>
> Herman points out that … these symptoms disrupt the fundamental interior narrative which normal adults continually construct for, and about, themselves and their world. Traumatic experience produces narrative structures that are fractured and erratic, structures which will not sustain integrated notions of self, society, culture, or world. (Robinett 2007, 296–97)

Robinett's mention of a disrupted, "fractured" "interior narrative" is of crucial importance in the context of our focus on the significance of narrative hermeneutics as an essential facet of what Hartman would term "human functioning", in a world where according to Amis, "We live half our lives in shock…" (*TPW*, 365). Amis further devises for a "shed" to symbolize the inward withdrawal that best characterizes Keith's dissociation or "constriction". Keith withdraws to the shed to contemplate the root of his oppressive misery, with Venus representing Violet, probably as she was his first love-object. We read, "He slipped away to his shed and spent an hour staring down into the thatchy crater of the Heath. Venus rose. What was it, this other thing?" (*TPW*, 183). Later on, we read that Keith had actively withdrawn his emotions and fantasies of rescue from Violet whose disgraceful conduct as an adult woman was causing Keith an inordinate amount of pain:

> … When he was a child—nine, ten, eleven, twelve—every night, every single night, he put himself to sleep with fantasies of rescue. In these vivid, eager thoughts, it wasn't little girls he rescued but grown women: huge dancers and movie stars. …
>
> Violet herself never appeared in these imaginings, but he always knew that she was the source of them—that she was the innocent captive, the wronged prisoner. The thoughts and feelings that had given him his aspirations of rescue he now cancelled. They were bitter to him. (*TPW*, 285)

In Freudian terms, Keith withdraws his cathexes from Violet to preserve the equilibrium of the economy of his own being (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 466). From the perspective of trauma theory, the above extract is yet another indication of withdrawal and indifference to surroundings as a result of dissociation, as pointed out by Robinett.

In *Wish You Were Here*, the clearest indication of dissociative detachment and withdrawal is the fact that Jack seeks solace in loneliness. In the room he had rented near his village of birth on the eve of the funeral, "There was no television—it was something he'd consciously checked—in this bar. He wanted to be disconnected" (*WYWH*, 224). But more importantly, throughout the novel, Swift loses no opportunity to point out that in addition to their unwillingness to converse, all emotions were missing from Michael and later Jack's face: "His face was like a wall, a thicker wall than usual, and, after doing the other thing they always did, going to stand by Vera's grave, they'd just driven silently back to Jebb. 'That's that then,' his dad had said and had hardly needed to say even that" (*WYWH*, 17). Elsewhere, we are told that Jack "had a wall of a face, he was born with it" (*WYWH*, 64). When carrying Tom's coffin, Jack was thinking that "It would be all right if he didn't show anything in his face, which came quite naturally to him anyway" (*WYWH*, 272). Also, upon hearing about Tom's death, Jack bursts into tears, yet simultaneously we read about the absence of expression on his face, "Even as the hot tears came gushing out of him—they had to—out of Jack Luxton's eyes, that were stony-grey and, most of the time, cool and expressionless like his father's. Well, people weren't fucking cattle" (*WYWH*, 81). The analogy between the death of people and cattle reminds Benjamin Markovits of another similar lamentation. He writes: "Graham Swift has chosen a line from William Blake to serve as the motto for his new novel, *Wish You Were Here*, but he might just as well have picked the famous opening of Wilfred Owen's 'Anthem for Doomed Youth': 'What passing-bells for those who die as cattle?'" (Markovits 2016, n.pag.).

Further, akin to *The Pregnant Widow*, dissociation is presented in terms of numbing and desensitization. We learn that "Since Jack was a man already hit hard, he was, in one sense, numbed and immunised against these further blows Ellie was now delivering" (*WYWH*, 125–26). There is also an emphasis on the sense of de-realization accompanying trauma. On the way to the repatriation ceremony, Jack looks at himself in the mirror and does not recognize himself: "His heavy face, gazing straight back at him, seemed not to know him" (*WYWH*, 150). Jack also seems equally alienated from his body as "In the bathroom his nakedness, in a strange mirror, among strange angles and surfaces, suddenly perplexed and alarmed him" (*WYWH*, 222).

The same lack of expression, the uncanny sentiment of being an automaton is visible on the faces of some other characters, notably those in attendance at the ceremony alongside with Jack. We read, "Among the uniforms were a number of women in what seemed to Jack extravagant forms of dress and hat, as if this might be a wedding, and wearing also, in some cases, a kind of smile that wasn't a smile at all and reminded him of zip fasteners" (*WYWH*, 160–61). Reference to "zip fasteners" ties in with Swift's immanent notion of life as an uncanny composite of machinic becomings. In the ceremony, Jack feels divorced from the rest of the crowd:

> This was all suddenly quite terrible: these people, these floundering women (he vaguely grasped that the ones with the hats and smiles must be there to provide some token balance), these children, among all these uniforms. The two clusters seemed both to cling to themselves and to cling, separate as they were, to each other, and Jack realised that he was a third cluster. He was *the* third cluster, a cluster of one. He felt both a solidarity and a dreadful, shaming isolation, that his cluster was just him. (*WYWH*, 160–61)

Dissociative Jack is portrayed as "a cluster of one", as he feels withdrawn from his surroundings, yet the scene also alerts him to the universality of suffering. Finally, Jack's feeling of dissociation is brought to the fore when he curses his native village and the world, which he sees as threatening. He anticipates with anger and dread that "The whole damn village would be there—remembered or half-forgotten faces leaping out at him like flash bulbs—but, given that the thing was on the front pages, Jack thought, so might the whole bloody world" (*WYWH*, 264). Apropos the numbing exerted by dissociation, Siri Husvedt's account of a car accident contains parallels with certain aspects of Jack's situation. She writes, "Under the circumstances, this now strikes me as bizarre, but my distance from potential catastrophe must have served a protective, adaptive purpose: alienation as armor against the real. The little voice in my head continued on its narrative journey, talking away in a reasonable manner, but my emotions had shut down" (Husvedt 2015, para. 8). Dissociation, described as emotions being withdrawn, acts as a protective shield against the overwhelming affect of trauma.

On a lexical level, dissociation and numbing in *Wish You Were Here* are rendered in the guise of language that strikes the reader as devoid of emotion, laddish and in the words of Jonathan Derbyshire, "characteristically tortured and decidedly unliterary" (Derbyshire 2016, n.pag.). It is as if language is aimed at quelling conversation and social bonding rather than encouraging it. Apropos the representation of dissociation in trauma novels, Jane Robinett

states, "… unadorned and understated language and uncomplicated syntax … mirror the psychological disassociation of the narrator" (Robinett 2007, 299). The same ideas are conveyed by Siri Husvedt who writes: "… that traumatic experience resists words, resists telling, and when the events are related, they often result in dissociated language, a cold, unfeeling account of horrible experience" (Husvedt 2015, para. 12). A notable example of this is the manner in which Ellie's body is referred to in less than romantic terms, which in turn reenacts the posttraumatic failure of the subject to affect the other and be affected in return: here Ellie shows Jack a letter from her uncle: "They'd both been stark naked at the time and he'd wondered where the hell she'd been hiding it. He saw again Ellie's tits sway as she handed him a letter. The July sky at the window. They were in the Big Bedroom" (*WYWH*, 53). In a similarly unromantic fashion, we read that "She'd sat up with her back against the bedhead, not minding that her tits were on display" (*WYWH*, 70–71). Once more, using language that is blokish and devoid of emotion and romance[22], Jack muses that "… she'd gone down, in her bare arse, to the kitchen, Ellie Merrick, in her bare arse in the Jebb kitchen, in Jebb Farmhouse. And he'd thought, it wasn't a bad arse (nor all the rest), if it wasn't the baby arse he'd first clapped hands on fifteen years or more ago" (*WYWH*, 71). Reference to the naked body also makes thematic sense in the novel's general universe of becoming-other, a subject to be discussed in detail in chapter three.

Likewise, Jack's physical appearance is described in less than flattering terms. When Ellie and Jack get married, this is how Ellie thinks others might react to her choice of a man: "All the things she will do. All her life long. When he wasn't even, perhaps, when you stood back and looked, that much to speak of really, that much to bloody write home about. Other women might say, 'Him?'" (*WYWH*, 117). Other characters are not spared in Jack's dissociative mind. For example, the caravanners are said to be "lazy buggers" (*WYWH*, 132)

[22] Writing about *The Light of Day*, Tollance relates the brevity of style in the Swiftian oeuvre to the simultaneous containment *and* expression of the violence characters are subjected to: "As usual with Swift, silence finds its way in the narrative in the gaps produced by the fragmentation and temporal dislocation of the story, as well as in the rhythm of a narration which makes us hear its breaks and pauses as much as the flow of its sentences. But unlike most of the previous novels, *The Light of Day* is characterised by an intensely economical use of words, by a reticence which imbues the entire narrative: the reader is immediately struck by the extreme brevity and concision of the sentences, by the very simple and matter-of-fact style and by a general sense of restraint and control. … *The Light of Day*, like all Swift's novels, exposes its characters to one form of violence or another, makes them go over a limit and encounter something which shatters their world. Holding that violence in check is perhaps one of the purposes of George Webb's sober use of words. But reticence also becomes, paradoxically, a way to make both words and silence 'louder, to bring out rather than to hush the disturbing power that each may possess – to unveil rather than to shield" (Tollance 2009, 63–64).

and he even imagines others thinking likewise about him "'Big bugger, wasn't he?'" (*WYWH*, 189).

In *The Sense of an Ending*, dissociative withdrawal is justified in the name of protecting oneself as well as others from the effects of "damage", another of Barnes's words for trauma, suggesting yet again the rifeness of trauma in daily life. Tony narrates:

> I certainly believe we all suffer damage, one way or another. How could we not, except in a world of perfect parents, siblings, neighbours, companions? And then there is the question, on which so much depends, of how we react to the damage: whether we admit it or repress it, and how this affects our dealings with others. Some admit the damage, and try to mitigate it; some spend their lives trying to help others who are damaged; and then there are those whose main concern is to avoid further damage to themselves, at whatever cost. And those are the ones who are ruthless, and the ones to be careful of. (*TSE*, 44)

As we read further into the novel, Tony turns out to belong to the latter category, one "to be careful of", as his past vengefulness is revealed by the end of the narrative. Tony Webster, whose life strikes himself, as well as the reader, as an uneventful, placid and at times a boring succession of events, could be said to have spent his entire adult life suffering from a mild form of dissociation, in which he had gradually withdrawn all his emotional cathexes:

> What did I know of life, I who had lived so carefully? Who had neither won nor lost, but just let life happen to him? Who had the usual ambitions and settled all too quickly for them not being realised? Who avoided being hurt and called it a capacity for survival? Who paid his bills, stayed on good terms with everyone as far as possible, for whom ecstasy and despair soon became just words once read in novels? (*TSE*, 142)

Further proof of Tony's dissociative withdrawal is his refusal to enter a serious romantic relationship after his divorce, with the aim of protecting himself as well as others. The waning of affects and emotions, a corollary of traumatic dissociation, is also indicated in the fact that Tony views his life as "emptied". He intimates: "Also, in my more emptied life, I came up with various ideas which I termed 'projects', perhaps to make them sound feasible" (*TSE*, 44–45).

The sentiment of detached emptiness, akin to Keith's draining of beauty and Jack's face being expressionless, comes to define Tony's new mental state. His interactions with people become increasingly tinged with the numbing of trauma. Here, he sends Veronica an apologetic email: "I can't say whether I felt better or worse after sending it. I felt not very much.

Exhausted, emptied-out" (*TSE*, 143). Dissociative absence of affect comes to define Tony's general state of mind towards the end of the novel. When Veronica takes Tony to the street where he had met Adrian Jr for the first time, Tony grows indifferent: "I sat there remembering all this, registering the differences, without coming to any conclusions. I neither applauded nor disapproved. I was indifferent; I had suspended my right to thoughts and judgements" (*TSE*, 133). Among the three protagonists in the novels under analysis, Tony is the only one who is not accorded the possibility to affect others and rise above the deterritorialized state of trauma.

Trauma in the novels manifests itself not only through the dissociative waning of feelings but it also "possesses" the victim in the phenomenon known as 'intrusive memories' or 'intrusive recall'. This is when the victim finds her/himself at the mercy of images and thoughts that invade their minds. Onega and Ganteau define this crippling phenomenon thus:

> Unable to narrativise the traumatic experience in logical terms, the subject gives expression to his or her trauma by means of sensorial images instead of words. Unlike words, sensorial images are emotionally charged and symbolic, so that when they emerge from the unconscious during the process of acting out, they are experienced by the subject as overwhelming and incomprehensible. (Ganteau and Onega 2014, 3)

In a sense, intrusive recall is akin to the "possession" by the ghost of trauma that Caruth formulates after Freud. Husvedt expatiates further, stating that intrusive recall, or what she prefers to refer to as *traumatic flashback*,

> … is not subject to the dimming, mutating, or cooling effects that characterize autobiographical or episodic memory. To use the neurologist Hughlings-Jackson's word: the flashback is *an automatism*, an experience without a narrator, and it is precisely the kind of memory Augustine argued no one would *want* to have because the emotion is not altered, but has the same power as when it happened. (Husvedt 2015, para. 11)

Pat Barker also dramatizes the spectral quality of intrusive recall explicitly in her *Regeneration* in repeated references to nightmares that appear to haunt the soldiers in graphic detail. Rivers the psychiatrist says, "'…one of the distinguishing characteristics of nightmares is that they are always remembered'" (Barker 2008, 67) and further on, in a move that recalls Freud and Caruth, Barker portrays Rivers himself as literally possessed:

> As he read through what he'd written, he became aware that he was being haunted by images. The man in the corridor at Queen Square, Yealland's hands, Callan's open mouth, the two figures, doctor and patient, walking up and down, in and out of the circle of light round the battery. It was unusual for Rivers to visualize as intensely as this, indeed to visualize at all, but then the whole experience, from beginning to end, had had something… hallucinatory about it. (Barker 2008, 234)

Similarly, *Wish You Were Here* demonstrates how the characters are unable to get on with their normal lives, or think in a calm and collected manner because they are haunted by overpoweringly invasive images of the traumatic event. Within the war-saturated context of the novel, Swift aptly refers to the throng of invading traumatic images as an "ambush", as when Jack is entering his village of birth (*WYWH*, 266). A further unmistakable reference to intrusive recall – being common lore among professionals involved – is when the police officers, having arrived at the scene of Michael's suicide, recognize Jack's dazed helplessness in the face of the invasive return of traumatic images:

> So the policemen perhaps wondered why Jack had needed to speak about the tracks he'd seen by torchlight that were no longer there—unless, of course, it was simply because he couldn't help reliving, and reliving again, every detail. Both officers were not unused to this. It was strange how the silent ones could suddenly become the gushers, while the regular gabblers could lose their voices. (*WYWH*, 244–45)

Jack's helplessness in the face of intrusive recall is explained by the fact that highly charged, or *affective*, memories are stored differently in the brain as Husvedt explains:

> Emotional memories appear to be processed differently in the brain from more pedestrian memories, which may explain the phenomenon of traumatic flashbacks. A neurobiological study conducted in 1996 on people who experienced flashbacks concluded that these memories are "organized on a perceptual and affective level with limited semantic representation and tend to intrude as emotional or sensory fragments related to the original event with stability over time." This is an elaborate way of saying that what returns in a flashback is remembered not through language but through emotion and sensation. (Husvedt 2015, para. 6)

Traumatic memories are thus not so much memories as highly affective images that return ceaselessly in the victim's mind. Through their return, or their compulsion to repeat themselves, the sensory images seek further "semantic representation", or in the case of fiction,

narrativization. In the same context, on a different occasion, Jack, constantly portrayed as pondering and empathizing with his dead mother, engages in self-analysis:

> And then he'd think, because it was the thought he was really always having to bat away, like batting away one of those big bastard tropical hornet things that could come at you suddenly out of nowhere: what would his mum think?
> Well, Jack, my big old boy, it's a far cry from Brigwell Bay. That's what she'd think. Or from hosing down the milking parlour.
> And then he'd think of Tom. (*WYWH*, 28)

The "hornet" thus comes to represent intrusive recall, with Jack having to constantly bat distressing thoughts and images away.

Although it is true that for Swift, empathy through imaginative identification with the Other has "a moral dimension" (Craps and Swift 2009, 651) in a collective human and animal setting, what his novels portray is that his protagonists suffer inordinately from the malaise of psychic dispersal in time through obsession with the imagined feelings of the dead and departed. Swift depicts his protagonists as seldom capable of living in the here and now, recalling to mind Tom Crick's axiomatic announcement in *Waterland*, "We are one-tenth living tissue, nine-tenths water; life is one-tenth Here and Now, nine-tenths a history lesson. For most of the time the Here and Now is neither now nor here" (Swift 1999, 61). In like manner, in *Wish You Were Here*, empathy with the dead and departed proves the bane of Jack and Ellie's married life. Other instances of morbid empathy include Jack demonstrated as gauging his dead mother's reaction at the same time as fighting the intrusive thought down: "What would his mother think (he tries not to think about it) if she could see him now? But what would she have thought, anyway, to see him no longer at Jebb Farm but here by the sea, tending a herd of caravans? What would she think to see him hitched up—properly and officially married—to Ellie Merrick?" (*WYWH*, 26). More poignantly, at the repatriation ceremony, Jack, who has internalized Tom in his psyche, is said to have involuntarily relived all his moments with Tom when the reveille sounded:

> The bugle sounded again, for Tom's coffin. It was a recognisable bugle call, though Jack couldn't think of its name: Reveille. When it sounded, some second person inside him, it seemed, gave a little inner cry. He hoped that none of the group in front would now turn and give him, however well intended, sympathetic looks. None did. They were looking at Tom. They were thinking of Tom for him.

> The drum was pounded again. In the minutes that followed, almost every remembered moment he'd spent with Tom seemed to flow through him in a way he couldn't have predicted, willed or even wished. Yet he was also aware of all the time they'd not spent together. (*WYWH*, 169)

It seems as if the reveille wakes up Tom's ghost inside Jack's mind whose mental state is majorly attributable to his empathy and identification with the throng of the dead.

Furthermore, when discussing the haunting thoughts of the dead, Swift makes a point of mentioning that it is the intrusive image or idea that is in control, and not the supposedly sovereign subject, or the haunted victim. We read, "Even Tom himself hadn't been really buried. He was with him now, in this cottage, he was sure of that too, even if he hadn't seen him. It was Tom's trick, Tom's choice, to appear or not, he knew that by now. Tom might be standing even now at his shoulder. A sniper" (*WYWH*, 300). Elsewhere, Tom's ghost being in control is highlighted. Jack wonders, "Perhaps, in some quite feasible and arguable way, Tom was no longer in the hearse. He stared at the empty chair beside him, which stayed empty. It was clearly something Tom had control over, not him" (*WYWH*, 218). Not only Jack, but Ellie is also depicted as struggling to get rid of her mother's ghost, and the intrusive memories associated with her. On one occasion, she is shown as driving madly in the rain, when she is unexpectedly assaulted by the thought of her mother: "She'd driven blindly hither and thither at first, sometimes literally blindly, given the assaults of the rain, and because much of the time her eyes were swimming with tears. … Then the thought of her mother had loomed, even more powerfully, once more" (*WYWH*, 34).

A further reason why Jack is assailed by intrusive images is the notion of "failed enactment" or "survivor guilt". Jack believes that if he had acted differently in the past, he might have been able to avert the tragic event. In his constant musings on his father's death, he repeatedly wonders if a different sequence of events could have dissuaded his father from taking his own life: specifically, if Jack had bought his father a drink earlier that day. We learn that Jack has,

> … thought it ever since, gone over it repeatedly in his head. It was somewhere, even, in the terrible dream out of which he surfaced, years later, in a hotel room in Okehampton. The simple opening and closing of a gate. He'd swung it back, perhaps, with extra force. And if he'd grasped that decision as he'd grasped and swung that gate—for God's sake, if he'd just bought his father a bloody pint—how different the consequences might have been. (*WYWH*, 232)

Survivor guilt compels Jack to turn an episode over in his mind "repeatedly", even many years after the event. Sandra Bloom elucidates the relevance of the sentiment of 'failed enactment' with reference to the other manifestations of traumatic recall:

> The traumatized person becomes possessed, haunted by the theater in his mind. He cannot control the intrusive images, feelings, sensations. They come into consciousness unbidden, terrifyingly vivid, producing a vicious cycle of helpless self-revictimization. The intrusive images trigger a level of hyperarousal similar to that of the original trauma and dissociation escalates instead of diminishing. Any efforts he took to protect himself or others at the time of the trauma were by definition, a failure since they failed to prevent the trauma, and yet images of what he could have done or fantasizes he could have done – 'failed enactment' – continue to obsess him. (Bloom 2011, 76)

Bloom's characterization of 'failed enactment' fits Jack's mental state in his struggle against thoughts of his failure to avert his father's suicide, or even Tom's running away from home.

The *Sense of an Ending* also recognizes intrusive recall as an integral part of working through trauma. In the novel, there are several references to the unruly workings of memory and the lack of control over the timing of what Cristina Chifane refers to as the onslaught of "involuntary memory … haunting" Tony (Chifane 2013, 107). Here, Tony is hoping, in vain, that age would bring along the comfort of forgetting disturbing memories. However, we learn that,

> … the brain doesn't like being typecast. Just when you think everything is a matter of decrease, of subtraction and division, your brain, your memory, may surprise you. As if it's saying: Don't imagine you can rely on some comforting process of gradual decline – life's much more complicated than that. And so the brain will throw you scraps from time to time, even disengage those familiar memory-loops. That's what, to my consternation, I found happening to me now. I began to remember, with no particular order or sense of significance, long-buried details of that distant weekend with the Ford family. (*TSE*, 111–12)

As an aspect of the novel's overall theme of the inapplicability of logical formulae to life (the subject of chapter three), intrusive recall – or randomly invading memory "scraps" in Barnes's words – deals a blow to entrenched ideas of a firm subjectivity.

Concurrent to, and inextricably linked to dissociation and intrusive recall, hyperarousal also appears abundantly in the novels as a corollary of trauma. Sandra Bloom explains the connection between hyperarousal and dissociation:

> Overwhelming hyperarousal produces dissociation, a disconnection. …. Under conditions of stress, the victim experiences 'speechless terror'. This loss of language function is frequently profound and extremely important. The traumatic experience and all associations to it cannot be incorporated into a cognitive framework, cannot be ordered, partly because the brain system that accomplishes this task is shut down under the impact of extreme stress. (Bloom 2011, 75–76)

As mentioned earlier, in *The Pregnant Widow*, Keith is portrayed as struggling to work through the traumatic "truth" of his sister's death and his midlife crisis at the recognition of the proximity of death. This struggle is said to have completely incapacitated him for some time, so much so that he had had to withdraw to the studio to "escape from sanity", from the grip of the real. Debilitating sanity is Amis's characterization of the traumatic symptom known as hyperarousal that compels the victim to mentally revisit the traumatic situation ceaselessly. We read about Keith: "Rearrangements were being made in the sources of his being. Opening his eyes, waking, taking leave of the mocking kingdom made by sleep, getting out of bed and standing upright: this seemed to consume the lion's share of what remained of the day. As for getting shaved, shat, showered: this was a Russian novel" (*TPW*, 93). Like other manifestations of trauma, the deterritorialization wrought by hyperarousal aims for "rearrangements", a resubjectification of Keith's being. It is noteworthy that reference to the sluggish "Russian novel" of his daily routines further blurs the life/fiction boundary, indicating that Keith is going through the painful process of reinterpreting the narrative of his life, or re-subjectifying his traumas.

Yet, it also bears mentioning that trauma fiction does not always represent this deterritorialization as leading to recovery. Some authors portray their characters as forever burning in the "hell" of the returning memories even until death, a case in point being Geordie in Pat Barker's *Another World*, whose grandson hears him say just before death:

> … 'I am in hell.' Present tense, the tense in which his memories of the war went on happening. A recognized symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder, a term Geordie probably never knew. Though he knew the symptoms well enough, he knew what it did to the perception of time. The present – remote, unreal; the past, in memory, nightmare, hallucination, re-enactment,

> becoming the present. I *am* in hell.
>
> … Recovery, rehabilitation, regeneration, redemption, resurrection, remembrance itself, all meaningless, because they all depend on that constantly flowing stream. But then Geordie's truth had been terrible. Ultimately, for him, all those big words had meant nothing. Neither speech nor silence had saved him. *I am in hell.* (Barker 2000, 246)

For Geordie who had witnessed the horrors of the trenches and who believes he may have killed his brother, traumatic memories refuse to be filed away in memory as belonging to the past. Several decades later on his death-bed, as described in overtly clinical terms by Barker, the symptoms of PTSD are still present in all their intensity and she refuses to accord her character the possibility of what Nick contemptuously enumerates as "Recovery, rehabilitation, regeneration, redemption, resurrection".

However, the story proceeds differently for Swift's protagonist Jack, who in a manner similar to Keith, suffers from the illusion that what he is going through as a result of trauma is nothing but sanity in a mad world: "It's all gone mad, Jack thinks, but part of him has never felt saner" (*WYWH*, 6). Further, the sanity/madness divide is also presented as fragile. In the following angry exchange, where Jack accuses his wife of murdering her father, madness and delusional clarity are juxtaposed:

> 'I'm not saying he didn't die of what he did. I'm just saying you speeded the process up.'
>
> 'You're off your rocker, Jack.'
>
> But he knew that. He had to be. Ellie was looking at him as she'd never looked at him before, but he supposed it must be the same the other way round.
>
> 'It's not true, then?'
>
> 'How dare you?'
>
> 'It's not true?'
>
> 'Jack. Jack—come back to me. Of course it's not true. Of course it's *not fucking true*. It's about as true as me saying you killed *your* dad.'
>
> … And how could he be mad, if he was so clear-headed? (*WYWH*, 301–2)

On two other occasions, the clarity of Jack's overworking, hyperaroused mind is also noted (*WYWH*, 5, 300–301). In the grip of hyperarousal, Jack's deranged, suicidal mind is demonstrated as ever-engaged in the act of revisiting and reinterpreting the traumatic scene of his father's suicide. We learn that "There's a version of it all that Jack tells only himself, an

over-and-over revisited version that allows more room for detail and for speculation, but it's essentially the same version that he gave others and that for many years he's, thankfully, had no reason to repeat" (*WYWH*, 232–33).

Most importantly, hyperarousal is brilliantly demonstrated as an instance of the uncanny: the mind is depicted as a mechanism that becomes electrified as a result of traumatic recall, with the whole process reducing the victim of trauma to a vulnerable automaton, "perceived as merely mechanical", hence a manifestation of the uncanny according to Bennet and Royle (A. Bennett and Royle 2014, 37). Inwardly, this heightened state strikes the victim as analytical 'sanity' at its most intense, but outwardly, it is tantamount to crippling and potentially destructive madness. One such instance is the following excerpt, in which Jack opens the letter and his suspicions regarding Tom's death are confirmed:

> Once he *had* opened it and truly did know, there was no way he could prove that he'd known beforehand, and it didn't matter. Yet he'd known, even as he held the unopened envelope. His mind was no longer the usual slow mechanism. It was quick as a switch, it had turned electric. His big, heavy body, on the other hand, seemed to be draining through the floor and leaving him powerless. The roof of his mouth went dry. In the same bright flash of knowing, he thought, absurdly, of his long-dead mother, raised in a post office. (*WYWH*, 53)

Here, hyperarousal is accompanied by a feeling of powerlessness as the mind goes into overdrive. Andrew James notes Swift's interest in moments of the fragility of the sanity/madness divide. He writes: "When Swift allows his characters to tell their own traumatic tales he is, perhaps, like the photographer Paul Strand, letting them strike poses. But it is characteristic of Swift's complexity that he is also interested in what happens to his characters when their poses slip, they reach their breaking points, and are at their most vulnerable" (James 2014, 6). Haunted by a tragic past and faced with a crumbling present, some characters resort to (self-) destruction, such as Jack's father Michael who shoots himself in the head against the great oak.

On top of dissociation, intrusive images and hyperarousal, trauma and haunting also tamper with the victim's sense of time in a phenomenon known in trauma studies as 'temporal disjunction'. This symptom is represented most clearly in *Wish You Were Here*, in the scene where Jack is walking back to the farmhouse from the scene of his father's suicide, to call the

police. Having just witnessed the incalculably horrific scene, imprecating Jack's "sense of the passage of time" is said to be malfunctioning:

> He continued to say it during the period between regaining the farmhouse and making the call he knew he would have to make, when he had no clear sense of the passage of time and when he continually wavered between the thought of making the call, which would make things final and definite, and the thought that he should go back down to the oak tree, because what had happened perhaps might not really have happened at all. Or because he should just be there with his father. Up here, in the farmhouse, he'd already deserted him. 'You bastard.' (*WYWH*, 248–49)

Losing track of time and doubting the veracity of what he has just witnessed point in the direction of the ontological uncertainty characterized by "temporal disjunction". In this regard, Siri Husvedt highlights the fact that trauma wreaks havoc to the victim's sense of chronologically ordered temporality by quoting Françoise Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudillière: "'Once upon a time,' they write, becomes 'Once upon no time.' Trauma has no narration" (Husvedt 2015, para. 7).

Swift's earlier work also contains instances of a confused, spectral temporality. In *Waterland*, Sarah Atkinson's ghost revisits Gildsey, prompting Swift to wonder, "Do not ghosts prove – even rumours, whispers, stories of ghosts – that the past clings, that we are always going back …?" (Swift 1999, 103). Apropos temporal disarray in the trauma novel, Joshua Pederson, inspired by Richard McNally's research, believes readers should be on the lookout for signs of "temporal distortion" in their study of trauma:

> … *trauma theorists should focus on depictions of experiences that are temporally, physically, or ontologically distorted*. McNally observes that while victims may have heightened memory of trauma, these memories may be altered. These alterations do not seem to change the substance of the memory but instead its affect. Time may feel as if it's slowing down. Spaces may loom. The world may feel unreal, or the victim may slip outside his or her own body. (Pederson 2014, 340)

It is noteworthy that in the scene immediately following the discovery of his father's headless body, Swift also contrives for Jack to be afflicted with all the classic symptoms of trauma, most notably dissociation, hyperarousal and denial, in addition to a loss of the sense of time. These images would haunt Jack forever. Writing about *Wish You Were Here*, Pascale Tollance also

highlights the destabilizing effect of traumatic spectrality on the passage of time in the novel, writing, "… la hantise suspend une bonne fois pour toutes le cours du temps" (Tollance 2015, para. 10). One such memorable instance of time coming to a halt is in Marin Amis's Holocaust novel *Time's Arrow*. At a station near Treblinka extermination camp, Amis recounts how time was stalled:

> Every station, every journey, needs a clock. When we passed it, on our way to inspect the gravel pits, the big hand was on twelve and the little hand was on four. Which was incorrect! An error, a mistake: it was exactly 13:27. But we passed again, later, and the hands hadn't moved to an earlier time. How could they move? They were painted, and would never move to an earlier time. Beneath the clock was an enormous arrow, on which was printed: Change Here For Eastern Trains. But time had no arrow, not here. Indeed, at the railway station in Treblinka, the four dimensions were intriguingly disposed. A place without depth. And a place without time. (Amis 2003, 151)

To Amis, the Holocaust represents a haunting void in understanding, a traumatic point in time which renders all chronology before and after it, meaningless. Similarly, Pat Barker's Nick wonders if temporality does truly unfold at a different pace for trauma victims. Here, having heard his grandfather pronounce that he is in "hell", Nick vents his anger at analysts:

> … Nick begins to feel angry on Geordie's behalf. …. But suppose, Nick wants to shout at rows of faceless white-coats, suppose you're wrong and he was right. Suppose time can slow down. Suppose it's not an ever rolling stream, but something altogether more viscous and unpredictable, like blood. Suppose it coagulates around terrible events, clots over them, stops the flow. Suppose Geordie experienced time differently, because, for him, time was different? (Barker 2000, 246)

For Barker's Geordie, time had slowed down and like blood oozing endlessly out of the never-healing scab of trauma acted as a constant reminder of the terrible event that refuses to be cleansed and integrated into the "rolling stream" of normal temporality.

Working through the deterritorializing trauma of loss, fear of impending death and global uncertainty is also analyzable through the Freudian concepts of mourning and melancholia, Freud's word for depression which seems pervasive across the three novels. In *The Pregnant Widow*, we read the following account of Keith's incapacitating lethargy:

> … he stays horizontal until keeping his eyes shut is harder work than keeping them open. His body deeply needs this. And every night, for about an hour, he weeps and swears. He lies on the bed and swears with stinging eyes. When fully awake, he retains a stunned feeling. And he doesn't know why. What has happened to him that he should have to carry all this weight?
> He doesn't understand. Because Violet is already dead. She died in 1999. (*TPW*, 356)

Keith's prolonged mourning of his sister is of an unusual stamp which bears the hallmarks of 'melancholia', as theorized by Freud in his essay, "Mourning and Melancholia", in which Freud puzzles over the enigmatic nature of melancholia:

> … the melancholic seems puzzling to us because we cannot see what it is that is absorbing him so entirely.
> The melancholic displays something else besides which is lacking in Mourning - an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable; he reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and punished. He abases himself before everyone and commiserates with his own relatives for being connected with anyone so unworthy. He is not of the opinion that a change has taken place in him, but extends his self-criticism back over the past; he declares that he was never any better. This picture of a delusion of (mainly moral) inferiority is completed by sleeplessness and refusal to take nourishment, and – what is psychologically very remarkable – by an overcoming of the instinct which compels every living thing to cling to life. (Freud 1989, 548)

The symptoms listed above, namely the self-debasing sentiment of worthlessness and a surrender to the death drive are all manifested in Keith's mental state. Self-analytic Keith also shares with the reader, the contemporary appellations of melancholia: "Body Dysmorphic Syndrome or Perceived Ugly Disorder. … BDS, or PUD". Keith goes on to claim that "At his time of life (he was fifty-six), you resigned yourself to a simple truth: each successive visit to the mirror will, by definition, confront you with something unprecedentedly awful" (*TPW*, 4–5).

Worse, in a manner meant to recall Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis into a "gigantic insect" (Kafka 2002, 1), Keith's self-debasing ego descends to the level of a vermin (Maleki 2016, 66). This does not come as a surprise, as a melancholic is known to appropriate qualities of the dead in order that they may get to live vicariously through them. Apropos the spectral internalization of the lost love object characterizing melancholia, David L. Eng writes,

> The melancholic is so militant in his or her denials that the lost object is finally incorporated into the self, turned into the shelter of the ego, and preserved as a form of ghostly identification. In this refusal to sever any attachments to the lost object, the melancholic becomes instead haunted by it. Loss denied is incorporated into the ego, and the ego thus becomes a remainder of unresolved grief. (Eng 2000, 1276)

This characteristic of melancholia is manifested in Keith's self-image. Keith is mourning Violet whom he subconsciously likens to a rat – displaying what Amis repeatedly calls a "*nostalgie de la boue*" – and a rat is what he melancholically feels he has turned into: "Keith Nearing awoke from troubled dreams and found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin. His room, a regular human room, lay quiet between the four familiar walls; and he had his human eyes. But that was what he was—an enormous insect with human eyes" (*TPW*, 228). Elsewhere, years ago, he saw himself as a worthless dog with "a curlike sneeze that left his palm secretly coated in snot" (*TPW*, 231). Even his girlfriend Lily had remarked a downward shift in his mien and appearance, to that of a morbid insect. She had said, "'You know, I still loved you. At first. Till you started looking like an undertaker around bedtime. Then you changed. Staring like a stick insect" (*TPW*, 298).

Yet according to Freud in "Mourning and Melancholia", melancholia is almost always accompanied by ambivalence:

> In melancholia, the occasions which give rise to the illness extend for the most part beyond the clear case of a loss by death, and include all those situations of being slighted, neglected or disappointed, which can import opposed feelings of love and hate into the relationship or reinforce an already existing ambivalence. … We have long known, it is true, that no neurotic harbours thoughts of suicide which he has not turned back upon himself from murderous impulses against others…. (Freud 1989, 288)

The self-hatred that characterizes the melancholic had in fact originally been a criticism directed at the loved person who is now lost irredeemably. Keith's view of his sister is mentioned in a conversation with Nicholas who says, on the subject of Violet: "'She acts like a boy. Nature without nurture. Like Caliban. Like a Yahoo'" (*TPW*, 305). Keith's observations arise from Violet's excessive indulgence in sexuality and alcohol. For instance, in this extract, Keith is learning about yet another scandalous incident involving newly-wed Violet, having sex with several members of the building crew:

> Violet's marriage was already over. An improbable sister and an impossible daughter, Violet turned out to be an inconceivable wife.
> "She fucked the builder?"
> "No," said Nicholas on the phone. "She fucked the builders. With an ess."
> "She fucked two builders."
> "No. She fucked all the builders."
> "But there were lots of builders."
> "I know." (*TPW*, 326)

Toward the end of the novel, Keith's views of her sister come into the open by means of verbalization through narrative (Maleki 2016, 65,68). This is believed to lead to a release from melancholia and a return to normal mourning. The ending of the novel clearly represents that Keith, who had melancholically nurtured the memories of his lost loved ones, is finally able to verbalize what he construes as their deplorable qualities, in a move that represents a release from their haunting ghost. Comparing the world to a potential paradise inhabited by the self-destroying youth, his sister and close friends being prime examples, Keith vents his anger at his generation. This represents release through the verbalization of traumatic and melancholic affect. Keith almost vociferates:

> Who were these extremists and self-destroyers, these despiters, the people who couldn't stand it another second in heaven? Yes go on, Kenrik, get caught after a long chase for driving five times over the limit at nine o'clock in the morning for the fourth time in three weeks (and serve a year in Wormwood Scrubs). Yes go on, Gloria, place yourself outside history, and live your twenties twice, and do it as a game, while in that way somehow making yourself invaluably dear to the memory. Yes go on, Violet, let the honeymoon last at least half a minute, and then run out over the fields, with no more thought in your head than a puppy, panting, heaving, running, flying, looking for someone you love. (*TPW*, 366)

In *Wish You Were Here*, all classic symptoms of depression and melancholia (in overlap with traumatic symptoms) are present, starting with a pervasive absence of communication of feelings which prompt Derbyshire to call the novel, along with Swift's other works, "symphonies of inarticulacy" (Derbyshire 2016, n.pag.). Instances of the absence of communication include Ellie who, as a child, had felt elated on receiving a postcard from Jack but had not bothered to convey, "how her heart had soared (though she'd never said so) when she'd got that postcard from Dorset" (*WYWH*, 112). Later traumas also add to this general

unwillingness to communicate feelings. For example, Tom's traumatic death is said to have erected a wall between Ellie and Jack, so much so that Jack cannot cry in her presence:

> But he knew he shouldn't cry again, not in front of Ellie. Once was enough and even then he'd been brief. It hadn't helped the first time. It didn't help anyway.
> So he hadn't, though it had cost him a struggle. He'd looked at Ellie, who'd remained standing oddly by the front door, her back to it, as if there was something bad beyond it, though she'd looked, too, as if she were struggling with something inside her. It was the real shock and truth of it all, perhaps, only now getting through. But he didn't get up to go to her. He knew that something had come between them since that letter. All it took was a letter. But there was an invisible wall. If he walked across to her now, he'd hit it. (*WYWH*, 119)

Subtle intimations of magical realism in Swift's literalization of metaphors such as the 'wall' in the above extract hint at a realism gone mad, a "traumatic realism" in Rothberg's words which "confronts the detritus of the real" (Rothberg 2000, 2).

A further symbol of the nonexistent conversation in the novel is the mobile phone Jack carries throughout the burial journey, albeit always turned off. On other occasions, Jack simply remains incommunicado and we are told that it is "the right thing at the time—which in most cases, in Jack's experience, was to shut up or say very little" (*WYWH*, 155). Similarly, Ellie also thinks that there is no point letting Jack know how anxious she was for his return from Tom's burial, and for the establishment of an emotional rapprochement after the recent devastating events:

> And what difference did it make, now, if he were never to know how anxiously she'd watched and waited? How she'd seen at last his lights—at such an hour they could only be his—take the turn for Beacon Hill, then travel, like the passage of some luminous, scurrying animal, up the first, hidden stretch of road before appearing, with a full blaze, at the bend by the old chapel. How she'd said aloud, 'Jack. Jack,' and how she'd sprung up, to run downstairs, to be at the door, to put right, to reverse all the events of two mornings before. (*WYWH*, 296)

Melancholic regret about conversations that could have been held with the now lost loved ones marks the last stage of Jack's journey of burial. As he lifts the coffin on his shoulder, and memories of holding are triggered, Jack regrets not having told baby Tom something: "But he'd never said, later, to Tom, even if Tom perhaps might have imagined it: 'Tom, I rocked you once. In that cradle.' He'd never said, 'I dangled you.' How could he ever say it? And now

he never would. And he'd never know if his mother had ever said it for him. Never in Jack's hearing anyway" (*WYWH*, 104). In a world replete with the trauma of loss and deracination, the Swiftian withholding of emotions and words can be seen as a strategy utilized to reflect the characters' internal struggle against trauma, as Daniel Lea states: "Swift's devotion to the disinterring of past traumas through a forensic excavation of the silences and secrets of private history reveals a conviction that the experience of the present as ideologically and ethically fragmented and discontinuous lies in the hidden reaches of the past" (Lea 2005, 6).

Apropos the enigmatic silence of his characters in particular in *Wish You Were Here*, the fact that they "are relatively inarticulate, or at least not given to volubility" as the Foyles interviewer puts it. Swift says,

> I think this links with what I say about the territory of 'the human frame'. I strongly believe that there's more to people than what they say or show or, sometimes, even know. I'm drawn to inarticulacy because I think a large part of life – the life inside us – goes largely unarticulated. How many people walk around thinking: No one knows my story, no one knows what's inside me? So it's one of the functions of fiction to break the silence, say the unsaid, tell the stories that don't get told. (Swift 2016, n.pag.)

In the novel, verbalization of the real "unsaid" of trauma comes to represent the main "function" of the novel. Vanessa Guignery also ties the narrative strategy of silence to trauma in her analysis:

> … narratives of trauma confront the aporia of speaking the unspeakable, voicing the unvoicable. They reflect the difficulties involved in the process of anamnesis, in the exhumation of the past, be it private or public, and in any attempt to reveal, expose or explore the realm of the intimate and the traumatic…. Silence may thus be part of a deliberate strategy aimed at distancing oneself from painful subjects. (Guignery 2009, 3)

Not only personal tragedies but also large-scale events of historical and existential import engender a benumbed silence. Jack's silence could also be said to arise from the loss of faith in the historical narrative of human progress, a shattering of global assumptions which compels Michael and Jack to be economical with their words, or in the words of Pascale Tollance, "de rester bouche bée devant l'ironie d'une histoire où violence et folie font régulièrement retour" (Tollance 2011, 19). In Tollance's analysis of the Swiftian oeuvre, the silence of the father indicates a far greater chasm. She states, "les narrateurs swiftiens

rencontrent toujours à travers l'absence ou le mutisme du père une béance plus fondamentale" (Tollance 2011, 20) and proceeds to relate it to a fundamental crisis in modernity and a universal melancholia (Tollance 2011, 21).

Furthermore, in addition to typically melancholic unwillingness to engage in the symbolic order of language, or "narrative" according to Anita Sokolsky[23], Swift's characters suffer from an impoverished ego, in a manner similar to Keith's affliction in Amis's novel. For example, in the following extract, slighted by Ellie's reference to Tom as Jack's "little brother", Jack is turning the conversation over in his traumatized mind, contemplating the various connotations of the word "little", including Tom's fragmented or possibly burnt body:

> It wasn't true of course, if it had been once. Tom was no longer little. You could say, maybe, that he was less than little now, since now he was nothing—he might not even be just one piece of nothing. And for some time now he'd been out of Jack's life and Jack had tried, mostly, not to think of him. So in that sense, too, he'd been little, or nothing. But in the normal sense he wasn't little at all, and hadn't been little for years. He hadn't been little on that night he'd left Jebb Farmhouse, though Jack had thought of him then, and sometimes since, as little. The point was that 'little' was his own word, his own special word, it wasn't Ellie's. (*WYWH*, 125–26)

Further, as is typical of melancholics, Jack is portrayed as having internalized Tom, taking upon himself all of his qualities. A few lines on, we read that he was thinking of himself as little, insignificant: "Among the many strange feelings Jack had felt since that letter had arrived was the feeling that *he* was the little brother now. Big as he was, he'd turned little. And it went now with that little, concentrated ball of fear in his stomach. He felt simply small. So when

[23] "Melancholy seems to harbor a revulsion against narrative: there is nothing more to say, or no point in trying to say it. The great loss or grief the melancholic has suffered cannot be eased by rehearsing it. All efforts to persuade one that anything but an irredeemably lost past matters are regarded with wonder or disdain. The only audience who counts - the one whose loss has precipitated the melancholy – cannot or will not hear the protest that without it is not worth mounting. That audience may be a loved one, a class, an historical moment, or a fantasied and amorphous identity. But the renunciation its disappearance entails will take a similar form: a dispirited and intransigent clamping of the lips in the conviction that to recount one's loss would be to vitiate or disperse it.
The melancholic thus claims the prestige of an affliction which cannot be meliorated, which prides itself on the superiority of its causes to its treatment. But it is not just that the affliction cannot be meliorated, but that on some level the melancholic cannot be persuaded that he or she *is* afflicted. The disconsolate and preoccupied mood that amounts at times to a kind of indolent stupor conceals an exultant sense that the seemingly vanished object persists. One is mute because preoccupied: occupied in advance, as it were, by the very figure whose loss one seems to mourn" (Sokolsky 1994, 129–30).

Ellie had used that word, he'd felt she might as well be using it of him" (*WYWH*, 127). His sense of self-hatred grows as the narrative progresses, for instance, at the repatriation ceremony, while contemplating leaving before others, as "he felt like scum for even imagining he might now simply peel away" (*WYWH*, 172). Elsewhere, we read that his sense of self-worth has diminished considerably, "as if he felt that he deserved something only just above the lowest" (*WYWH*, 221). Similarly, when entering the small hotel he had booked the night before the burial, we read, "He'd entered that hardly intimidating hotel like a mouse" (*WYWH*, 225). In this regard, Eng's remarks would be helpful. Commenting on Freud's observations on the melancholic impoverishment of the ego, David L. Eng describes how melancholic internalization of loss is synonymous with subjectivity itself in Freudian psychoanalysis:

> In *The Ego and the Id* … he [Freud] revises his theory of melancholia, contending that the ego, in fact, is composed of abandoned object-cathexes preserved as identifications. …. The ego is created through an originary loss predicated on a melancholic incorporation and identification. As such, there can be no ego with out, or prior to, melancholia. Melancholia is the privileged psychic mechanism by which "abandoned" and "forsaken" objects are simultaneously preserved by and as the ego. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud comes, then, to recognize this psychic entity as one of melancholy's effects. The melancholic turning inward establishes the ego, which only then can claim the "proper" work of mourning. In this respect, melancholia cannot be regarded as pathological. To the contrary, it must be thought of as entirely normative – as a constitutive psychic mechanism engendering subjectivity itself. (Eng 2000, 1277)

Thus, according to Eng, "possession" by the lost love object forms the core of melancholic subjectivity and acts as an essential component of the struggle to revise subjectivity along the process of healing. Eng's characterization of the ego as composed of un-relinquished attachments to lost love objects greatly enlarges the scope of melancholia. Among its implications are the rootedness of subjectivity and identity in unresolved losses. An analysis of this aspect of melancholia as evidenced in the corpus narratives will be offered in chapter two.

On top of silence and belittlement in *Wish You Were Here*, Swift portrays his surviving characters as suffering from an acute sense of guilt. Guilt, according to Freud is also a corollary of melancholia, especially the feeling that the death of the loved one is the survivor's fault. This is most obvious in the novel when Ellie thinks she might have brought about Tom's death by wishing it: "Though now that it had happened, she could see that it might seem to have happened because she'd wished it" (*WYWH*, 114). In a similar manner, Jack wonders, thinking

about her dead mother, if "Between the two of them, Jack sometimes wondered, might they have given her the cancer?" (*WYWH*, 21). Even worse, Jack believes all the tragic events befalling the farm and their family is his doing, starting from his birth that had weakened his mother Vera:

> She'd had such a bad time with him, Jack supposed, that it had generally been accepted that she couldn't be a mother again. So everything was pooled in him. Or, looking at it another way, it was his fault. Eight long years had proved it. Then Tom had come along and taken away the blame. Which was another reason why suddenly having a little brother around was never a problem for Jack. Quite the opposite. (*WYWH*, 24)

Jack's melancholic guilt is a defining feature of his character throughout the novel. For instance, when finally settled with Ellie after the death of his father, Jack felt like a usurper, that he and Ellie "…were like two ransacking burglars who'd burst into a place that wasn't theirs at all" (*WYWH*, 70). By the same token, when naked in bed with Ellie, he felt a sense of guilt and shame: "She'd sat up with her back against the bedhead, not minding that her tits were on display. He'd pulled himself up against the bedhead too. Like a shameless king and queen, yes, surveying their realm" (*WYWH*, 70–71). Further on, having received the invitation by the MOD, when he calls the defense ministry for more information "he'd felt, as he spoke, like a man calling a police station to turn himself in" (*WYWH*, 87) and on the way to the ceremony, he is overwhelmed by this inexplicable feeling of culpability. We read,

> Jack drove off the ferry into the hurrying morning streets of Portsmouth. No one had detained him or regarded him with special interest, but he whipped his sunglasses from the dashboard not just against the glare of the low sun. His instinct was to hide his face. It was absurd to think of being recognised, but in his white shirt and black tie, even inside the car, he felt painfully conspicuous. He had safely got ashore, but at any point now, he felt, as he strove to navigate the currents of purposing traffic around him, he might be stopped and asked to explain his own particular purpose. And how would he do that?
> I am going to meet my brother.
> As the ferry docked, the ball of fear had tightened in his stomach. He told himself, for no clear reason, that the innocent have nothing to fear. (*WYWH*, 154)

As the narrative progresses, his sense of guilt deepens further, as we are told, "He felt like a man on the run" (*WYWH*, 223), that "he knew he might be being watched" (*WYWH*, 88),

or that "he had the feeling he'd had before of being liable to arrest" (*WYWH*, 265). At the repatriation ceremony, he had felt like a failing soldier and left: "He simply turned and walked away. He didn't care if everyone was watching him. Didn't mind the feeling of needles in his back, the feeling of being a deserter. Didn't mind if there were all sorts of other things he still should have done or was expected to do. He simply walked away" (*WYWH*, 176).

In the same spirit of universal melancholia, Jack's brother Tom had felt guilty and his decision to remain out of communication might have been motivated by the desire to inflict punishment on himself:

> Apart from the card, only three other written messages had ever come his way from Jack. Which wasn't a complaint, since he, Tom, had never written back—or only the once, and briefly. He'd very quickly found out that he just wanted to be out of communication in this world he'd chosen, this world of strangely unresented punishment, his whereabouts unknown. (*WYWH*, 201)

As we read further into the narrative, we also learn about the characters' ambivalent feelings toward each other and the fact that through melancholic internalization of one another's undesirable traits, they had come to loathe themselves, feeling blameworthy. One such character is Ellie, whose relationship with her mother had been one characterized with resentment: "She hadn't quite condemned, but she hadn't quite forgiven either, and she wasn't going to go standing by any graves" (*WYWH*, 33). Further on in the novel, we learn about Ellie's anger at her mother's desertion of their family:

> … at least she might say: Thank you, Mum, thank you anyway. I'm here at least to say that. Thank you for deserting me and Dad all those years ago. Thank you for leaving me to him, and to the cows. And the cow disease. Thank you for being a cow yourself, but for coming right in the end, even if you never knew it. Thank you for giving me and Jack—remember him, Jack Luxton?—these last ten years. Which now look like they're coming to an end. (*WYWH*, 34)

Likewise, Jack's ambivalence toward Tom comes into the open when we learn about his true feelings regarding Tom's escape from home to join the army. This is what he would have revealed to the people in attendance at the ceremony, had he been called upon to deliver a short speech about his brother: that "Tom was the traitor, my lords and ladies, Tom was the deserter, the runaway. Running away from the war against cow disease and agricultural ruin. And against his own embattled father. Good luck, Tom" (*WYWH*, 178–79). This buried resentment

is the reason why in his melancholic internalization of his brother Tom, Jack had been feeling like a deserter himself deserving punishment all along.

In *The Sense of an Ending*, melancholia also manifests itself through symptoms described in the two previous works. What is striking in the case of Barnes's novel is that he builds guilt, culpability and traumatic mental investigation, into the metaphoric fabric of the narrative. The whole novel is interspersed with judicial language: to begin with, Tony admits to having a "barrister" in his head (*TSE*, 120) and when discussing the incident of the spiteful letter he had written to Adrian, Tony ends his account thus, as if he was on trial: "Then I wished him good luck, burnt his letter in an empty grate (melodramatic, I agree, but I plead youth as a mitigating circumstance), and decided that the two of them were now out of my life for ever" (*TSE*, 43).

Similarly, when discussing the quintessence of nostalgia, he admits to being nostalgic, albeit utilizing judicial jargon: "But if nostalgia means the powerful recollection of strong emotions – and a regret that such feelings are no longer present in our lives – then I plead guilty. I'm nostalgic for my early time with Margaret, for Susie's birth and first years, for that road trip with Annie" (*TSE*, 81). In the following extract, Tony's feeling of guilt (having learned about the shocking belligerence of his younger self) is conveyed through judicial language that makes sense on both literal and metaphorical planes, as there is a real likelihood of the diary case being resolved in court:

> Next I thought about her. Not about how she might have felt on first reading the letter – I would come back to this – but why she had handed it over. Of course, she wanted to point out what a shit I was. But it was more than this, I decided: given our current stand-off, it was also a tactical move, a warning. If I tried to make any legal fuss about the diary, this would be part of her defence. I would be my very own character witness. (*TSE*, 98)

Other occasions on which court lingo is utilized are when Tony refers to the workings of his mind. Here, for example, the word "testify" is used synonymously with "remember", in keeping with Tony's guilty conscience. In this extract, Tony is recounting the impressions of his visit to Veronica's parents' house:

> Veronica's mother ignored all the by-play around her, asked me about my studies, and disappeared into the kitchen a lot. I suppose she must have been in her early forties, though of course she appeared to me deep into middle age, as did her husband. She didn't look much like

> Veronica: a broader face, hair tied off her high forehead with a ribbon, a bit more than average height. She had a somewhat artistic air, though precisely how this expressed itself – colourful scarves, a distrait manner, the humming of opera arias, or all three – I couldn't at this distance testify. (*TSE*, 27–28)

Tony appears to be equating his narrative memory of the past with testimony, in a gesture that might hint at Barnes's elision of memory with posttraumatic testimony. This ties in with the novel's tacit implication that quotidian events could border on the traumatic and that the links in the chain of guilt and responsibility in an intricately connected world can extend far beyond the limited range of our individual – and at times erroneous – perspective. Moreover, in keeping with Ganteau's equation of human subjectivity with vulnerability (Ganteau 2015a, 6), Barnes's choice of metaphor demonstrates the degree to which human subjectivity is brittle and thus, deserving of care.

Writing about *The Sense of an Ending*, Michael Greaney seems to be intimating a similar observation on the wide scope of the sentiment of guilt and judgment in the novel:

> … *The Sense of an Ending* is concerned with a different kind of courtroom, a different kind of inquiry – not the formal machinery of justice but the permanent, unofficial inquiry that we conduct into the everyday behaviour of those around us. Webster's courtroom fantasies are a more extreme version of his mildly paranoid awareness of being looked at, appraised, judged in an unofficial inquiry where verdicts will be delivered via a brief glance or a casual remark. (Greaney 2014, 234–35)

Correspondingly, on a different occasion, Tony is in search of people who could help him confirm the veracity of a memory: "No, they wouldn't be any help. And Mrs Ford was dead. And Brother Jack was off the scene. The only possible witness, the only corroborator, was Veronica" (*TSE*, 108–9). After all, Barnes is avowedly interested in placing characters "in situations where there isn't necessarily an easy answer, and things aren't necessarily resolved" (Julian Barnes qtd in Moseley 2009, 15).

Aside from a pervasive feeling of traumatic guilt at having been an involuntary party to Adrian's suicide and the surrounding string of unfortunate events, Tony, in common with Swift's Jack and Amis's Keith, also suffers from an impoverished ego and a dramatic loss of self-esteem, in his own words, "a more general remorse – a feeling somewhere between self-pity and self-hatred". When comparing Adrian's courageous and analytical attitude to life –

culminating in his suicide – with his own passive acceptance of life, Tony cannot help but feel, self-loathingly, that his has been a mediocre existence:

> Average, that's what I'd been, ever since I left school. Average at university and work; average in friendship, loyalty, love; average, no doubt, at sex. There was a survey of British motorists a few years ago which showed that ninety-five per cent of those polled thought they were 'better than average' drivers. But by the law of averages, we're most of us bound to be average. Not that this brought any comfort. The word resounded. Average at life; average at truth; morally average. Veronica's first reaction to seeing me again had been to point out that I'd lost my hair. That was the least of it. (*TSE*, 99–100)

In another place, we read that "average" Tony is surprised that his ex-wife would want to dine with him, despicable as he appears in his own self-image: "She knew me better than anyone else in the world. And still wanted to have lunch with me. And let me go on and on about myself" (*TSE*, 101). Similarly, when Adrian's son Adrian turns away from Tony in fear, Tony says, "Well, his instinct had been a true one: I was a man against whom backs should be turned. If life did reward merit, then I deserved shunning" (*TSE*, 139) and when this happens again, Tony thinks of his own presence as ill fortune: "When Adrian's son saw me, he turned his shoulder as if to keep me – and bad luck – away" (*TSE*, 146). Finally, when reviewing the incidents of the novel starting from the reception of the letter by Mrs. Ford, Tony sums it up as "a short history of humiliation" (*TSE*, 145).

As is true of the other two novels, feelings of ambivalence are also present in Barnes's novel. In the course of his dealings with Veronica, mingled with feelings of self-loathing, traces of antagonism are also visible in Tony's accounts of Veronica. Tony admits, "No, I was an odder old fool, grafting pathetic hopes of affection on to the least likely recipient in the world" (*TSE*, 131) and elsewhere, even more vehemently. He writes, "The bitch, I thought. If there was one woman in the entire world a man could fall in love with and still think life worth refusing, it was Veronica" (*TSE*, 51).

To conclude, trauma and the resultant haunting bring about a profound deterritorialization in the subject's sense of self, leading to a redefinition of subjectivity. This journey happens to the accompaniment of traumatic symptoms that reflect the painful internal struggle at comprehension and reintegration of the traumatic event into the fresh narrative of life. At times, the texts of the novels mirror these symptoms, in different combinations and with varying degrees.

B. Self Haunted by the Other

The painful traumatic journey of introspection and redefinition of subjectivity also leads to a questioning of the significant role of the other in the formation of subjectivity. In this context, the novels of the corpus primarily highlight the momentous position of the other within the traumatized imagination, in its struggle against traumatic recall and haunting. This concern is highlighted amply in *The Pregnant Widow*. In one of his multiple allusions to Shakespeare, Amis mentions the Shakespearean phrase "airy nothings"(*TPW*, 260), a reference to the creative – and performative – power of imagination that is at work in the mind of the madman, the lover and the poet. The phrase appears in the following extract from *Midsummer Night's Dream* (5.1.7-17):

> The lunatic, the lover and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact:
> One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
> That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic,
> Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
> The poet's eye, in fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name. (Shakespeare 1986, 187)

The defining thematic parallels with Amis's novel are obvious. In the novel, madness is instantiated in the insistent bedevilment by the ghost of trauma, which Amis calls unbearable "sanity" devoid of the cushioning palliative of beauty. Similarly, Keith is also the failed poet figure – as his 'superego'[24] attests, "… yes, he could have been a poet" (*TPW*, 19) – and of course, a distant lover of unattainable Scheherazade, forever fated to "communing with an image" (*TPW*, 56). All three types, according to Shakespeare, share one attribute: a potent imagination with, specifically in the poet's case, the power to "body forth": to *create* and verbalize through giving a "name" and "shape" to the unsymbolizable. Part of Keith's journey

[24] The revelation of the narrative voice as Keith's "superego" could be considered as a case of textual presentation of traumatic fragmentation known as "dédoublement" (Amfreville 2015, para. 4), in Marc Amfreville's words.

of resubjectification at the repetitional instigation of trauma is the discovery of the radical divide between reality and its mental representation; in other words, that our mental reality is all but an imaginary construct, the realm of fantasy and make-believe, or the Lacanian imaginary order. In the novel, Keith further attests to the universality of this alienating insight by avowing that Scheherazade is very much a painted image in Keith's quixotic fancy. We read, "… Don Quixote, talking of his imaginary girlfriend, Dulcinea del Toboso, told Sancho Panza, *I paint her in my fancy, according to my wish*. Keith had done too much of this with Scheherazade, and made her into someone above his reach to know" (*TPW*, 148). Elsewhere, Keith mentions poetry again, pointing out the highly subjective and selective nature of poetic imagination:

> Scheherazade was miserable, and you could tell. The superstitious castle, the fierce mountain, the raw blue sky—everything was numbed by it. …. But suffering just made her more painterly. In painterly Italy. You felt the weight, the downward tug on her heart. Compared to Scheherazade, even Gloria, with her cropped head, her dun smocks, her workshirts and tartan trews, her bricklike leather sandals with the inch-thick toe holes, seemed merely professionalised in her penitence and grief. (*TPW*, 144)

Thus, in the realms of painting and poetry, 'reality', including even the physical world, is revealed to be highly subjective and colored by the human faculty of imaginative interpretation and metaphor-making.

Further on, in a move that blurs the boundaries between writing and film-making, Keith portrays Scheherazade in the form of an actress in an imaginary film being shot in Keith's imagination. An omnipotent director only in his fancy, Keith decides to change the genre of the film to suit his salacious intent: "*Well*, said the shrill Scheherazade on the terrace—and Keith wanted to shout, *Cut*! But no: keep rolling. It occurred to him, now, that he was the director of the film in which she starred; and it was time for a change of genre. No more platonic pastoral. Time for the slatternly shepherdess, the venal wood-nymph, the doped contessa" (*TPW*, 156). Thus to Amis, reality is always-already mediated through generic imaginative, and at times imaginary representations.

Within the historical context of the 1970s, this dismantling of the literal/literary divide, or the literal/metaphoric dichotomy in the realm of the imagination flows over to Keith's conception of the "I", or his sense of self. Here, the chief symbol is the mirror, before which Gloria persuades him to have sex with her. Keith thought that "it was good in the mirror, realer

in the mirror. You could see what was happening very clearly. Uncluttered, unsullied by the other dimensions, which were those of depth and time" (*TPW*, 297–98). Here, Amis is literalizing an insight from Lacan, in that the mirror gives Keith a comforting sense of an "I" as an independent entity. In reality, this is a self-hood defined in the Lacanian Other for which the mirror is a representative in the novel[25].

The choice of a mirror makes even more sense, given Amis's interest in the theme of narcissistic postmodern obsession with surfaces and sensations. In the extract below, Amis brings all these concerns together in another mirror-reflected scene where Keith also admits to having acquired certain qualities from the significantly transfixing gaze, the "looming" figure of the other in the mirror, Gloria:

> Was he, was Keith, guilty of the disgusting vice of self-love? Well, he loved the rose of youth in himself, such as it was. That was forgivable. On the other hand, a surface, something of two dimensions, had transfixed him—not his own shape in the mirror but the shape that loomed at his side. *Oh, I love me*. Through her, for a day, he had loved himself, which he had never done before. Because there he was in the mirror too, standing behind her. The reflection—and also the echo: Oh *I love me so* . . . . (*TPW*, 307)

Thus, "echo", simultaneously emanating from the other *and* spectral, comes to define subjectivity for Keith, as elsewhere, prompted by Gloria, he resorts to the word "echolalia" to define the contemporary nature of sexuality: "Echolalia. The meaningless repetition of what others say and do. Sexual echolalia" (*TPW*, 291). Yet, there seem to be a number of problems with the mirror that preoccupy Keith. For one thing, he does not believe that one can always trust the mirror, the Lacanian Other, or the society to present a reliable image of reality. Here, he is contemplating the operations of the pool surface on the reflected *images*,

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[25] The significance of the mirror as a means of supplying the infant with a reflected (and thus false) sense of a 'whole' self-image (or the "I") is discussed in the following excerpt from his article "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function". This is the stage prior to the acquisition of subjectivity in the symbolic order of language and society: "It suffices to understand the mirror stage in this context *as an identification,* in the full sense analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes *[assume]* an image—an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase, as witnessed by the use in analytic theory of antiquity's term, "imago."
The jubilant assumption *[assomption]* of his specular image by the kind of being—still trapped in his motor impotence and nursling dependence—the little man is at the *infans* stage thus seems to me to manifest in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject" (Lacan 2006, 76).

> … Keith was wondering about the unreliable optics of the swimming pool. Its walls and floor were a metallic grey. When the water was still, its surface shone solidly and impenetrably, like a mirror; when the water rippled, or when the light changed (from shadow to dazzle, but also from dazzle to shadow), it became translucent, and you could see the fat plug at the bottom of the deep end, and even the odd coin or hairclip. He wondered at it, this grey new world of glass and opacity, and not the wobbly, slippery, ribbony blue of the pools of his youth. (*TPW*, 55–56)

In the paradoxical new world of the exposed translucence of Keith's scantily clad sexual others and their simultaneous opacity, Keith is portrayed as confused about his epoch, and thus ambivalent toward the role of the Other in the construction of the self. Similarly, elsewhere he thinks that the image presented by the mirror, which he deems, after Lacan, as absolutely indispensable for a socially functioning subjectivity, will necessarily fail to present a full picture of reality. He says resignedly:

> Find a mirror you like and trust, and stick to it. Correction. Find a mirror you like. Never mind about trust. It's too late for that—it's too late for trust. Stand by this mirror, and be true to it. Never so much as glance at another.
>
> …
>
> Beyond a certain age you no longer know what you look like. Something goes wrong with mirrors. They lose the power to tell you what you look like. All right, they do tell you, probably. But you can't see it.
>
> Beyond a certain age, then, you have neither the means nor the opportunity to find out what you look like. All the mirror will give you (in at least two senses) is a rough idea. (*TPW*, 89)

In the postmodern age of disqualified grand narratives, Keith is assailed by the desire for a mirror that would help him make sense of life, but simultaneously attests to his irreversibly deep suspicion and inability to "trust" an all-encompassing mirror, or what Lyotard calls the grand narrative of emancipation. All you end up with are at best provisional "rough ideas" that accord no comprehensive sense of certainty. This is very much in line with the emergent spirit of metamodernism as embodied in the metaxy[26] of simultaneous yearning for, and suspicion of grand narratives.

[26] In a joint article published in 2010 Vermeulen and van den Akker explain that the 'meta' component of metamodernism originates from the Platonic idea of *metaxis* and had already been developed by the German philosopher Eric Voegelin who deemed it as emblematic of the experience of existence: "Existence has the structure of the In-between, of the Platonic *metaxy*, and if anything is constant in the

Significantly, Keith's deeper ruminations about selfhood further blur the self/other divide, to such an extent that selfhood comes to be synonymous with immanent "osmosis": we read apropos Keith, "He was twenty, remember, and still young enough—still osmoting with his fluids and nostalgias" (*TPW*, 71–72). A further example is when Keith believes that proximity to Scheherazade might confer beauty on him as well. Keith recounts, "He … believed that beauty was mildly infectious, given close and prolonged contact. It was a universal presumption, and he shared it: he wanted to experience beauty—to be legitimised by beauty" (*TPW*, 34). In this regard, an illuminating insight comes from the work of Arnold Modell who highlights the discovery of "mirror neurons" in 2001 as biological proof that subjectivity is inherently *intersubjective*. Modell states, "Viewing the action of the other excites the same neurons in the observer as if the observer was performing the specific action of the other. The discovery of mirror neurons provides an objective explanation for the fact that we, and other primates, share an inherent intersubjectivity" (Modell 2009, 8). This is scientific proof of the viability of the ethics of becoming and vulnerability. One literally, *biologically*, feels for the other and this encompasses not only pain, but also other sensations in existence such as pleasure.

A similar concern with the workings of imagination is also apparent in Swift's novel who portrays the human faculty of imagination as responsible for what he terms (evoking the Derridean lexicon) the "contamination" of boundaries, leading to a sense of uncertainty with regard to the idea of a sovereign self in the hyperaroused, probing mind of the traumatized character. As demonstrated in *Wish You Were Here*, within the realm of the imagination, borders separating the living and the dead, self and the other and ultimately, reality and its metaphoric image grow tenuous as a result of haunting and trauma. Swift believes that in the mind of his traumatized characters, a kind of "contamination" occurs, whereby the living become spectralized. On one occasion, Jack is portrayed as driving with the clear sensation of Tom's phantom presence beside him:

> It wasn't an easy question or even a fair one. For a moment he failed to answer it. But then, for a clear second or two, and by way of an answer, Tom was there. He had a corporal, in battle

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history of mankind it is the language of tension between life and death, immortality and mortality, perfection and imperfection, time and timelessness, between order and disorder, truth and untruth, sense and senselessness of existence; between *amor Dei and amor sui, l'âme ouverte and l'âme close* …" (Voegelin qtd in (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2010, n.pag.).

> gear, sitting beside him while he drove, under a brightening sky, down the M4. This was the first time this had happened on his journey, and it wouldn't be the last. Jack wasn't frightened or even surprised. He was even relieved. He didn't need now to worry about the hearse, about outstripping it, because Tom was with him anyway.
> It's because he's really come back, he thought. It's because I touched the coffin and held it. Like a kind of contamination, but a good one. (*WYWH*, 216)

This excerpt demonstrates how spectral "contamination" – by the embodied, or 'corporal', Corporal Tom – represents a collapse of temporality and spatiality. This is in keeping with Anne Whitehead's remarks that in the trauma novel, "temporality and chronology collapse" (Whitehead 2004, 3). Elsewhere in *Wish You Were Here*, the notion of contamination is evoked within the context of the cow disease and proximity to the traumatized farmers losing their cattle. To Clare Robinson, it seems as if the trauma of the disaster-stricken farmers is being carried over the wind by the smoke, like some kind of contagion or contamination:

> But, even at a distance, Clare hadn't liked this thing happening so plainly and upsettingly close to their new property. She felt it as if she *were* down there. She didn't like the idea of the smoke from that huge pyre being carried on the wind towards Jebb Farmhouse. Her husband's remark about its blowing over had been unfortunate. She felt it like a contamination. And, though it wasn't logical and Toby would have scoffed, she felt it as something they should feel responsible, even vaguely guilty for, in a way they couldn't have felt about the BSE which had struck, as it were, before their time. (*WYWH*, 319)

Swift's emphasis on "were" highlights the spatial dislocation of subjectivity in the face of collective trauma, an encounter – and a case of becoming-other – that takes place in the realm of imagination: in short, a deterritorialization of subjectivity. The excerpt demonstrates how the vulnerability of the other corporeally affects the subject, leading to an ethical awareness of the plight of the other. This is also a clearly ethical moment of responsibility towards the interconnected nature of immanent Being in the world, a sentiment highlighted through the spectrality of smoke and its deterritorializing effect. In a similar vein, Pascale Tollance points to the uncanny affect of this scene (frissons) and considers the smoke as emblematic of the universal and unrelenting spectrality at the heart of the novel:

> Clare Robinson ressent quant à elle d'étranges frissons dans sa grande maison, alors qu'elle est bien loin de Londres et des frasques de son époux, comme si les fantômes chassés de l'ancienne

> ferme revenaient par le trou du grand chêne où s'est logée la balle que Michael Luxton s'est tiré dans la tête. Ce dont la fumée est l'indice ne cesse de se transformer au fil du roman, mais c'est surtout comme image que cette fumée s'impose dans sa fixité et son insistance – image de tout ce qui est à la fois voué à disparaître et se refuse à disparaître. (Tollance 2015, para. 7)

What refuses to disappear – and remain a buried secret – engenders a sentiment of the uncanny according to Bennet and Royle who quote Freud's citation of Schelling: the uncanny arises, *inter alia*, when something "'ought to have remained . . . secret and hidden but has come to light'" (Schelling and Freud qtd in A. Bennett and Royle 2014, 40). The uncanny (here represented by the sudden inexplicable shivers) could thus be equated with the unexpected return of the real, "*tuché* – as if by chance" (Lacan 1977, 54–55), in Lacan's words. Traumatic return is thus another manifestation of the uncanny. Furthermore, although not directly discussing trauma, Tollance's reading attests to the urgency of attending to the specter marking being in the manner of a miasma that refuses to lift.

From the perspective of trauma theory, Clare Robinson's uncanny sentiments could also be said to exemplify the Caruthian notion of "entanglement", which conceives of trauma, "as the story of the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound" (Caruth 1996, 8). Within an immanent thinking of life as becoming-other, trauma occasions a profound sensibility to "another's wound" and paves the ground for an "encounter with another", as exemplified in Clare's sensibility toward nondescript farmers of a different social *class*.

The contamination of the living by the dead, their becoming-ghost, is further reflected in the strange thoughts uttered by the traumatized characters. For instance, Jack feels as if he has turned into a ghost. We read, "Boots, Martin's newsagents, NatWest Bank. He walked with no sense of being shadowed or accompanied, but he felt that he himself, now, had become like some gliding ghost. He found his way to the Globe again and stepped in with a strong need not to be noticed" (*WYWH*, 227). Elsewhere, Jack is said to find the idea of turning into a ghost, a more bearable alternative to the complicated life he had to live:

> While he couldn't have feared more the clutching actualities of the occasion before him, Jack was hoping that he might pass through them like some shadow—both there and not there. Who could come near his situation? His compounded situation. First that, now this. He would be untouchable. He would be, in effect—and what could be more appropriate and more purely expressive of his situation?—like the corpse he would nonetheless have to bear on his shoulder.

> This was how he felt.
>
> And perhaps because he wished it enough or perhaps because, in the event, he was so simply and helplessly dazed and stunned by the whole process, this was how it was. (*WYWH*, 265–66)

Traumatized, "dazed and stunned", by the compounded nature of life, Jack yearns for the pleasurable homeostasis of Thanatos as if death and ghosthood were synonymous with freedom from the oppression of trauma. In the grip of the death wish of melancholia, Jack also identifies with Tom, even thinking of his passport photo as belonging to Tom, in his uniform, "not unlike that face with the beret and camouflage shirt in the newspaper photo" (*WYWH*, 136).

Not only living people but also inanimate objects are depicted as contaminated by this spectral blurring of the living/dead boundary, a case in point being, "Luke's basket and blanket, still sitting there, … like a buffer, blurring and softening the difference between Luke's presence and his absence. A judgement and a comfort, like Vera's apron" (*WYWH*, 153). Haunted objects, thus seem to offer a sense of (melancholic) comfort, as though the dead continue to live on through them, as though these objects (and by extension any remnant of the familial or historical past) provide a measure of comfort against the nullity imposed by death. For instance, we learn that Jack could not bring himself to dispose of the gun that had ended Luke and Michael's lives. Ellie wonders, "The gun. That bloody gun, which he could never bring himself to get rid of. Which she could never persuade him to part with. Why had he kept it? Were they plagued with rabbits down at the site? The gun which he'd kept in that cabinet all this time, as if it might be his dad in there" (*WYWH*, 334–35). Ellie's remarks shed light on how becoming-other occurs across 'disparate' beings and how human imagination creatively transcends boundaries of time and space, being affected by emotions that it bestows upon mere objects. From the view-point of object-relations psychology, this makes sense as Melanie Klein states:

> The analysis of very young children has taught me that there is no instinctual urge, no anxiety situation, no mental process which does not involve objects, external or internal; in other words, object relations are at the *center* of emotional life. Furthermore, love and hatred, phantasies, anxieties, and defences are also operative from the beginning and are *ab initio* indivisibly linked with object-relations. (Klein 2011, 53)

Klein's observations shed light on the way in which the Swiftian character's imagination endows objects with memories of lost loved ones. Thus suffused with memories of the dead,

these objects become a means of allowing the dead to live vicariously through the living subject, as is characteristic of melancholic existence.

Wish You Were Here portrays (in parallel with *The Pregnant Widow*) the human faculty of imagination as chiefly accountable for haunting and contamination of subjective borders. More often than not, within the traumatized imagination, there is shown to be no difference between the living and the dead. For instance, Jack *imagines* a conversation occurring between his dead mother and father. We read, "when they'd lowered Dad down beside Mum in Marleston churchyard. He'd thought: what was she saying to him, what kind of greeting was he getting? This is a fine way to be coming back to me, Michael" (*WYWH*, 76). More importantly, the porosity of the living/dead divide is shown to arise from the innate human tendency to interpret and draw metaphoric parallels in an attempt to make narrative sense of the traumatic experience. In introduction to her interview with Swift, Catherine Bernard writes of "the human fiction-making impulse" widely present in Swift's oeuvre and proceeds thus:

> For Swift, man is "the story-making animal," an "amphibious" animal (a metaphor inspired, perhaps, by Swift's passion for fishing) which for all its capacity for survival in a hostile reality yearns to return to its natural element: myth, fiction. Stories are more than placating stratagems to face reality; they inform it, are given a hermeneutic function. Hence in his novels, the constant confrontation of our fabulating capacities with the harshest of realities: death, loss, madness, suffering, oblivion. Hence also the jubilation that lies for all the narrators in endlessly retrieving the past by rewriting it, by telling it anew. Hence finally the proliferating logic of the narrative texture. (Bernard and Swift 1997, 218)

Bernard's observations regarding the essentially hermeneutic role of narrative in life in the Swiftian oeuvre, are borne out by passages such as the following from *Waterland* in which Tom Crick, the middle-aged history teacher addresses his students in the following terms:

> Children, only animals live entirely in the Here and Now. Only nature knows neither memory nor history. But man - let me offer you a definition - is the storytelling animal. Wherever he goes he wants to leave behind not a chaotic wake, not an empty space, but the comforting marker-buoys and trail-signs of stories. He has to go on telling stories. He has to keep on making them up. As long as there's a story, it's all right. Even in his last moments, it's said, in the split second of a fatal fall - or when he's about to drown - he sees, passing rapidly before him, the story of his whole life. (Swift 1999, 62–63).

In what smacks of e. e. cummings's aporetic[27] characterization of "that incredible / unanimal mankind" (cummings 2014, 89), Swift points to the human narrative compulsion, an instinct that kicks in "as an existential necessity, a vital urge that manifests itself most poignantly in crisis situations" (Craps 2005, 2). The human narrative compulsion is out of keeping with its animal nature which has no time for memory and history, but unfolds in the immanent "Here and Now". The "storytelling animal" on the other hand, "has to" amass stories to avoid the sense of loss. Otherwise, it would feel as if it is drifting in "an empty space". One such character who is in desperate need of a soothing story in *Waterland* is Helen Atkinson. We read:

> Does Helen Atkinson, too, then, believe in miracles? No, but she believes in stories. She believes that they're a way of bearing what won't go away, a way of making sense of madness. Inside the nurse there lurks the mother, and in three years at the Kessling Home for Neurasthenics Helen has come to regard these poor, deranged inmates as children. Like frightened children, what they most want is to be told stories. And out of this discovery she evolves a precept: No, don't forget. Don't erase it. You can't erase it. But make it into a story. Just a story. Yes, everything's crazy. What's real? All a story. Only a story … . (Swift 1999, 225)

Faced with the perplexing "madness" of existence and the repetitional return of trauma that refuses to "go away", Helen Atkinson devises a theory that would sit well with a trauma theory that recognizes the value of narrativizing traumatic affect: stories abstract a provisional

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[27] e. e. cummings' meditations on humanity bear the hallmarks of a traumatized subjectivity struggling to make sense of irrational human behavior, characterized most conspicuously by gratuitous cruelty. Note also his destabilization of the norms of language starting from the spelling of his own name to his deliberate disregard for punctuation and capitalization:

when serpents bargain for the right to squirm
and the sun strikes to gain a living wage—
when thorns regard their roses with alarm
and rainbows are insured against old age
when every thrush may sing no new moon in
if all screech-owls have not okayed his voice
—and any wave signs on the dotted line
or else an ocean is compelled to close
when the oak begs permission of the birch
to make an acorn—valleys accuse their
mountains of having altitude—and march
denounces april as a saboteur
then we'll believe in that incredible
unanimal mankind(and not until) (cummings 2014, 89)

imaginary reality out of the maddening chaos and dispersal of the real. The raw material of existence is terrifying and human beings need to humanize it through narrative, as Kermode states.

A similar stress on the centrality of the palliative function of narrative to the otherwise chaotic human condition is to be found in the works of Julian Barnes. In *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, Barnes uses the term 'fabulation' to refer to this human sense-making faculty:

> We lie here in our hospital bed of the present (what nice clean sheets we get nowadays) with a bubble of daily news drip-fed into our arm. We think we know who we are, though we don't quite know why we're here, or how long we shall be forced to stay. And while we fret and write in bandaged uncertainty - are we a voluntary patient? - we fabulate. We make up a story to cover the facts we don't know or can't accept; we keep a few true facts and spin a new story round them. Our panic and our pain are only eased by soothing fabulation; we call it history" (Barnes 1989, 240).

In his discussion of Barnes's fiction and his preference for "fabulation" as the basis of our understanding of reality, Peter Childs draws on the writings of Robert Scholes who brought the term fabulation "to prominence" (Childs 2011, 7) in his book of 1967. Of particular interest to our study in Scholes's theorization is the reciprocal relationship between fiction and reality:

> Fabulation, then, means not a turning away from reality, but an attempt to find more subtle correspondences between the reality which is fiction and the fiction which is reality. Modern fabulation accepts, even emphasizes, its fallibilism, its inability to reach all the way to the real, but it continues to look toward reality. It aims at telling such truths as fiction may legitimately tell in ways which are appropriately fictional. (Scholes qtd in Childs 2011, 8)

Thus, in Scholes's analysis, reality and fiction are presented as being mutually enriching. Provisional human 'truths' must needs be produced as an essential component of human existence, as Swift writes in the above quote from *Waterland*, as "a way of bearing" trauma, or "making sense" of it. Ultimately, fabulation affirms the status of reality as "appropriately fictional"[28].

[28] Linda Hutcheon – defending postmodernism against charges of ahistoricity – voices a similar sentiment when she highlights the postmodern view that the past is mediated through texts: "History is not made obsolete: it is, however, being rethought – as a human construct. And in arguing that *history* does not exist except as text, it does not stupidly and 'gleefully' deny that the *past* existed, but only that

Echoing Swift, Barnes and Bernard's remarks, albeit within a discussion of trauma, Arnold Modell states that the mind of the trauma victim detects metaphoric similarities more readily than differences: "When traumatic memories are activated, metaphor recognizes only similarities. However, in conditions of safety, the mode of cognition shifts and affective memory evokes a metaphoric play of similarity and difference and meaning is expanded" (Modell 2009, 8). In *Wish You Were Here*, the inherent narrativizing faculty is foregrounded in the ample use of the metaphor marker "as if". For instance , "The dead black eye of the pigeon in Jack's hand would look at him as if to say, 'And I won't say a word either.'" (*WYWH*, 101). Having given birth to Tom, we learn that Vera had grown weak, "looking for a while as if she'd been pulled through a baler" (*WYWH*, 103). Swift also demonstrates the "as if" operating in his characters' attempts at sense-making, on a mundane basis. For instance, "when, the next day, Major Richards had called again, Ellie had picked up the phone and more or less handed it straight to Jack as if it were some matter that was none of her business. 'Major Richards,' she'd said as if Jack now had friends in high places" (*WYWH*, 119–20). Elsewhere, in the fictional realm of the "as if", Luke's blanket, Luke the dead dog himself and the Union Jack merge: "Whenever Jack remembered Tom ironing that blanket and folding it up so carefully and holding it, as if it might have been Luke himself, across his arms, there was something about it he could never place. But now he can. It was as if he was handling a flag" (*WYWH*, 156).

Further clarification on Swift's penchant for the imaginative "as if" as indicative of human fiction-making faculty and "the provisionality of their [Swiftian characters'] fabrications" (Lea 2005, 10) can be found in the work of Hans Vaihinger, with whom fictionalism is associated (Waugh 1984, 89). Vaihinger called his book on consciously false human fictions, *The Philosophy of As If*. In the introduction, he justifies the choice of title in the following words:

> 'As if', i.e. appearance, the consciously false, plays an enormous part in science, in world-philosophies and in life. I wanted to give a complete enumeration of all the methods in which we operate intentionally with consciously false ideas, or rather judgments. … . For the method

its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality. We cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are *texts*. Even the institutions of the past, its social structures and practices, could be seen, in one sense, as social texts" (Hutcheon 1988, 16).

> of fiction which is found in a greater or lesser degree in all the sciences can best be expressed by this complex conjunction 'As if'" (Vaihinger 2014, xli).

Vaihinger's emphasis on the "consciously false" and *judgmental* human fictions as the basis of human cognition, bears the postmodern and Nietzschean stamp of *perspectivism* – enshrined in the following ideas: "Indeed, humans gave themselves all of their good and evil. … Humans first placed values into things, … a human meaning!"(Nietzsche 2006, 43), and "… facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations" (Nietzsche 1968, 267).

Lea voices a similar sentiment apropos Swift when he claims that his novels "persistently foreground the arbitrariness of semiotic definition and the elusive qualities of any hermeneutic superstructure to life" (Lea 2005, 5). However, these provisional fictive constructs are all that a trauma victim has at his/her disposal, with which to revise the traumatic experience. It is perhaps for this reason that to Swift, the imaginative "as if" is the *modus operandi* of posttraumatic cognition, stressing – as does Amis – the inability of language to verbalize trauma *directly*. This confirms Anne Whitehead's remarks that trauma "narratives are characterised by repetition and indirection" (Whitehead 2004, 3). Ganteau and Onega would approve of Whitehead's remarks as they, too, state that "the mode of testimony – whether it is fictional, or not, or both – favours the practice of dialogue and indirection as staples of a discursive ethics lending itself to the evocation of trauma" (Ganteau and Onega 2014, 14).

In *Wish You Were Here*, the imagination is also said to *create* its own essentially fictive reality. This often happens to the accompaniment of the hypothetical "might have". The following is the belligerent exchange Jack imagines 'might have' taken place between his father and Tom, on their way back from the Remembrance Day ceremony:

> And his father, Jack thinks now, might just have said, 'We haven't not done anything. We went and looked at her grave, didn't we? Take your hand off my arm.'
>
> They might simply have had a set-to right there, a blazing set-to, pulled up on the Marleston–Polstowe road, the engine of the Land Rover still running. A set-to in their suits. They might even have got out and taken a swing at each other, the swings at each other they'd been saving up for years. And his dad with a medal for bravery in his pocket. (*WYWH*, 18)

Swift embellishes every sentence with 'might have' to emphasize the human imaginative impulse for narrative and metaphor-making in probing the past, in an attempt to recreate a

wholesome image from "the disarticulated shards of former selves which, even when reassembled, fail to proffer a full picture … as continuous, logical and coherent" (Lea 2005, 6–7). A similar instance of fantastic creativity occurs when Jack hypothesizes about his mother's marriage in the absence of "the actual story":

> One day Michael Luxton had plucked her from the post office in Polstowe and carried her to Jebb Farm and, so it seemed, nothing could have better answered her hopes and her wishes.
> Something like that must have happened. Jack had never known, even from his mother's lips, the actual story. His dealings with Ellie Merrick didn't seem a useful guide. But he found it hard, or just vaguely trespassing of him, to imagine that his father, his father of all people, might once have carried his mother, her legs kicking, over the threshold of Jebb Farm and possibly even have carried her, without a pause, straight up to the Big Bed—where two years later he, Jack, would be born and where, twenty-one years after that, Vera Luxton would die. (*WYWH*, 23)

However, this innate human tendency to think up apocryphal, imaginary episodes is also depicted as detrimental to mental and social functioning. To illustrate, Jack is said to be conscious of his over-fertile imagination, a quality depicted as increasingly crippling. He knows that on some occasions, his imagination had filled in the gaps of his memory. Here is the scene of Jack and Tom discussing their father's behavior toward Tom when they were both out in the field to put down the sick dog Luke:

> There'd been a look in his father's face, a tone in his voice. He'd said, 'Here. You do it.' It wasn't an offer, it was another order. Then Tom said, 'Like an even bigger bastard.'
> Tom couldn't do it, anyway. He'd just stood in front of his father and shaken his head. He couldn't put a finger on that gun. And maybe—though Tom didn't say this, it was one of those things Jack's imagination had to supply—Tom was never meant to. It was just a bluff, a game, to make Tom feel like a worm, to make him wish he could disappear into the ground. (*WYWH*, 142)

Still on the subject of shooting Luke, we are told, "the scene itself, from which Jack was excluded, has only ever, like some other scenes from which he was absent yet which were crucial to his life, played itself out in his imagination, seeming each time to be both real and unreal" (*WYWH*, 139–40). Later on, the reader is given a clearer idea of the graphic ability of Jack's traumatized imagination. As Tom was leaving the house for good. We read,

> Jack thought he heard a few faint scuffs of footsteps as Tom crossed the yard and again as he slipped in and out of the barn. But it wasn't a case of hearing, so much as of imagining and seeing in his head. It wasn't difficult to do. For Jack in his head, as for Tom on his feet, the walk up the track would be like going to get the school bus when it was still dark in winter. (*WYWH*, 186)

In Jack's world of multiple losses of people and certainties, imagination becomes dangerously – even maddeningly – fertile, in parallel with the deepening traumatic symptom of hyperarousal or hypervigilance.

Crucially, within the context of immanent intersubjectivity, a significant aspect of the imaginary "as if" is that at times it is also revealed as other-oriented in nature, or conceived from the vantage point of the other. For instance, waiting for Ellie's return, Jack "sees himself now, as if he might be Ellie watching his own departure, beginning that journey all over again. He sees himself covering every mile, every strange, bewildering stage of it again, …" (*WYWH*, 130). Manifestations of other-oriented subjectivity are ubiquitous in the novel as elsewhere, we read the same about Ellie as a young girl fantasizing about a rebellious escape from farm life, together with Jack:

> She sped back towards Marleston. Could she really do it? She certainly saw herself doing it. She sees herself doing it now, as if there's still somehow a need. She sees herself stopping by the Jebb gate and opening it. Sees herself driving through and not bothering to do any closing. My God, this is a first. She sees herself roaring into the Jebb yard and lurching to a halt, hand slammed on the horn. No guessing where Jack might be on the farm at this time of day, but in the scene in her head Jack is somewhere conveniently near the yard. And he's heard this meteor coming down the track. (*WYWH*, 39)

Ellie's subjectivity is portrayed as a mere *image* in her head, already an other to herself. This constant need for the mooring of the Other is what Lacan refers to as the alienation at the heart of subjectivity, with the sense of "I" always directed from the viewpoint of the Other. Detached from the (spectral) other, a sense of the "I" is inconceivable in human terms.

Further, in another overlap with Lacanian psychoanalysis, Swift depicts subjectivity in terms of "slavery" to the desire of the other. We read: "it was all about men being slaves to the female of the species, so Michael Luxton had liked to say" (*WYWH*, 41). We also learn, apropos Ellie, that "Her father owned her, but he didn't scare her. She'd choose him of the two. But

then she'd chosen Jack, who could sometimes look the image of his father" (*WYWH*, 109). Similarly, we read that, "Jimmy, … , was master of Westcott Farm and she was in his thrall?" (*WYWH*, 282). In a manner not unlike Ellie, "Jack, too, was a slave to his father…" (*WYWH*, 113). The slavery metaphor is carried further as love is also presented in terms of ownership, as embodied in Ellie's feelings for Jack bordering on absolutist ownership: "If only she could have all of him. And she'd thought once that at last she even had that, and had made a whole future for both of them" (*WYWH*, 118). As usual, Ellie is portrayed as doing her utmost for a fresh, 'uncontaminated' start with the entirety of Jack's being. Not only romantic love, but membership in family are also depicted in terms of bondage to, and ownership by the Other. We read,

> Michael pulled Tom out of school when he turned sixteen, to be a prisoner with his brother on Jebb Farm. No more making hay with schoolgirls. He might have made his escape—by the same route he eventually took—even then. But he waited till his father wouldn't have the power to haul him back, till he was his own free man. … . As Tom got bigger, the way it was between Tom and Luke became like the way it once had been between Jack and Tom. When Tom left school to take up full-time attendance at Jebb Farm, Luke somehow became Tom's dog. (*WYWH*, 137)

From the perspective of immanent ethics involving the entirety of existence, it is apposite that Swift should also implicate animals in the process of ownership by the Other. In a manner analogous to *The Pregnant Widow*, this stress on the salient – and always-already appropriative – role of the Other literalizes the Lacanian emphasis on the centrality of the desire of the Other in the construction of subjectivity. Lacan states that "analytic experience shows … that it is in seeing a whole chain come into play at the level of the desire of the Other that the subject's desire is constituted" (Lacan 1977, 235). More aptly for the analysis of spectrality and trauma, the critic who draws on Lacanian psychoanalysis and evokes spectrality to refer to subjectivity as impregnated by the Other, is Maud Ellmann who equates the very ego with the specter: "'Je est un autre', wrote Rimbaud. Lacan would agree that the I is always someone else, an alibi, since it is founded on identification with a spectral form external to itself, whether its own reflection or the equally quixotic image of an other. Thus the ego is a ghost, or rather a consortium of ghosts, consisting of the replicas of lost or absent objects of desire" (Ellmann 1994, 17–18). Ellmann's conceptualization of the melancholia-prone ego thus attests to 'its' essential dispersal in the potential possibilities for transformed subjectivities.

Aptly, Swift also demonstrates how "bondage" to the other brings about change, transformation and becoming-other through attraction to appearance, an 'image' that arouses an affect of desire. In the novel, this insight is instantiated mostly in Ellie's movements in Jack's paternal farmhouse and her suggestions regarding their future, which are often proffered when she is described as undressed. Here, Ellie is taking her first steps in the house after both Jack and her father have died. The letter in question is the one announcing the bequest by Uncle Tony, Ellie's mother's lover, which would enable them to acquire a new life:

> How many kettles had Ellie filled? That had been the first ever kettle she'd filled at Jebb. And she'd done it stark naked. But she'd filled enough kettles for him before that, over the years, at Westcott. And she'd have filled enough, anyway, for old man Merrick. He felt, with a letter lying in front of him that weighed, of itself, next to nothing, the weight and strain in her arms of all those kettles Ellie would have filled for Jimmy Merrick. … And it was a big old farmhouse-kitchen kettle too, it wasn't like the natty plug-in thing they had here at the Lookout. (*WYWH*, 85)

It is noteworthy that within the ethically intersubjective world of the novel, Jack should feel the weight of the kettle on Ellie's shoulders. Affective susceptibility to the pain of the other in the Swiftian oeuvre instantiates what Ganteau refers to as a "loop of vulnerability", a commingling of the ethics of care and vulnerability,

> … so as to build an ethical relational model in which good and the good life depend on attention to the other, responsiveness to the other, solicitude for the other, and practical help of the other. The ethics of care develops a model that puts forward what may be called a loop of vulnerability, in that it is premised on vulnerability to the vulnerable other, vulnerability being both the condition and expression of interdependence. (Ganteau 2015a, 11)

Thus, vulnerability, affect and becoming go hand in hand. In a similar manner, when Ellie proposes the transformative merger of the farmhouses for potentially more profit, she is described as naked. Jack reminisces, "And later she'd said, a mug of tea cradled against her bare, bright breasts, that they should throw in Barton Field with the house, that's what they should do. With the house and the yard, all for private development" (*WYWH*, 278). The occurrence of change, "private development" as Ellie would term it, through attraction and interaction of images recalls to mind the Deleuzian insight in which even the 'perceiving' brain

is conceived of as a mere image among others: "There are images, things are themselves images, because images aren't in our brain. The brain's just one image among others. Images are constantly acting and reacting on each other, producing and consuming. There's no difference at all between *images*, *things*, and motion" (Deleuze 1995, 42). A few pages on in *Wish You Were Here*, we learn again about Ellie's proposal, made naked, that they go ahead with their plans of selling the farmhouse and moving elsewhere, in search of a new life: "Ellie had said, that mug of tea nudging her tits, that he could do it now – they could do it now. When she spoke, the 'he' kept slipping into 'they', as if the words were almost the same thing, or as if what he alone might have hung back from ever doing was a different matter once the 'he' changed to 'they'" (*WYWH*, 280). Clearly, the Swiftian merger is not only of farms but also of subjectivities as reflected in the changing pronouns.

Swift reiterates his immanent vision of a world where "the Heraclitean ideas (concerning flux and change)" (Malcolm 2003, 11) reign supreme, sweeping through individual boundaries[29]. This insight runs partially counter to Daniel Lea's analysis of subjectivity in the Swiftian oeuvre, at least as far as *Wish You Were Here* goes:

> One of the abiding characteristics of Swift's novels is that the characters are isolated in matrices of subjectivity that are precariously inscribed and prone to dissolution. Not only that, but they are alienated from others by their inability to empathise with the inner workings of another's consciousness. The typical Swiftian male protagonist is a loner (even if married), disenchanted by his lot and profoundly dismayed by his inability to understand the world around him. The methodologies of knowledge that he applies to his life are painfully insufficient to the task of furnishing a coherent sense to existence and he is left facing the precariousness of his subjectivity with a vertiginous instability. The collision of the subjective with the experience of the objective world (which includes other subjects) always disables the solidity of the self, for Swift believes there to be an inherent disjunction which keeps the objective forever outside the totalising purview of the subject. That is not to say that the objective world is intrinsically contradictory, malign or aggressive but just that it is at a remove from the individual's experience of herself or himself and cannot be accessed with the available interpretational

[29] Heraclitus saw fire as the true, unchanging soul of beings, with the constantly transforming objects as its visible manifestations: "By cosmic rule, as day yields night, so winter summer, war peace, plenty famine. All things change. Fire penetrates the lump of myrrh, until the joining bodies die and rise again in smoke called incense" (Heraclitus 2003, 37). Heraclitus's most famous pronouncement of the constancy of change is the following, where the river (not unlike Borges) epitomizes ceaseless transformation and the impermanence of form: "The river where you set your foot just now is gone – those waters giving way to this, now this" (Heraclitus 2003, 41).

> apparatuses. This base-level distinction between subjective and objective versions of reality is insurmountable and can only be sutured by the cohering implementation of arbitrary fictions of continuity. (Lea 2005, 7)

Although true to the extent that they highlight the perpetual risk of madness and the radical divide between reality and its necessarily fictional human understanding, Lea's comments do not sit well with the immanent vision of social life propounded in *Wish You Were Here*, where affective, corporeal empathy with the other goes so far as to qualify as haunting by the other, dead or alive.

Julian Barnes also explores how the intrusion of traumatic memories, or an event that is subsequently perceived as traumatic, into a placid self-image can throw well-delineated, watertight definitions of subjectivity into disarray: Tony, forced into a state of internal inquiry into the traumatic event of Adrian's suicide, ends up with a 'reconfigured' conception of subjectivity. In *The Sense of an Ending*, the journey starts from an orderly sense of self, with Tony remarking a few times on his general preference for – and successful achievement of – order and tidiness in his mental and physical life:

> … I spend a lot of time clearing things up – and I'm not even a messy person. But it's one of the modest satisfactions of age. I aim for tidiness; I recycle; I clean and decorate my flat to keep up its value. I've made my will; and my dealings with my daughter, son-in-law, grandchildren and ex-wife are, if less than perfect, at least settled. Or so I've persuaded myself. I've achieved a state of peaceableness, even peacefulness. Because I get on with things. I don't like mess, and I don't like leaving a mess. I've opted for cremation, if you want to know. (*TSE*, 68)

Barnes's choice of the antonyms "tidy" and "messy" in the extract could be said to sum up the general developmental direction of Tony's subjectivity: from a "settled" state of "peaceableness" and "tidiness" to an avowal of the centrality of messiness to human social interaction. "Mess" comes to signify the real that destabilizes Tony's 'tidy' imaginary order of consciousness.

As regards his unhappy relationship with his enigmatic ex-girlfriend Veronica, Tony also believes that he has successfully been able to excise the episode out of his mind and life forever. He recounts, "And anyway, that pain hasn't lasted. As I mentioned, I have a certain instinct for self-preservation. I successfully put Veronica out of my mind, out of my history" (*TSE*, 64) and although in his youth he aimed for a life of adventure, the kind one reads about

in novels, soon he had found himself settled into a rather boring life. We read, “There was a moment in my late twenties when I admitted that my adventurousness had long since petered out. I would never do those things adolescence had dreamt about. Instead, I mowed my lawn, I took holidays, I had my life” (*TSE*, 93). As Tony’s narrative develops and he becomes increasingly mindful of life as more of an unpredictably intricate network, a realization of the dispersal of the ego and the possessive adjective “my” dawns on Tony.

One aspect of Tony’s yearning for a tidy life is the wish for a tidy death, one only possible through suicide, the like of which Adrian had achieved years previously. In comparison, Tony’s life had been inauthentic as he laments: “Compared to him, I had always been a muddler, unable to learn much from the few lessons life provided me with. In my terms, I settled for the realities of life, and submitted to its necessities: if this, then that, and so the years passed. In Adrian’s terms, I gave up on life, gave up on examining it, took it as it came (*TSE*, 99).Yet as Tony proceeds with his journey of resubjectification at the irruption of the Lacanian real of the letter bequeathed to him, and as he learns about the less-than-glorious reasons behind Adrian’s suicide, he ends up questioning his assumptions of the ease or tedium of his life. He writes,

> We live with such easy assumptions, don’t we? For instance, that memory equals events plus time. But it’s all much odder than this. Who was it said that memory is what we thought we’d forgotten? And it ought to be obvious to us that time doesn’t act as a fixative, rather as a solvent. But it’s not convenient – it’s not useful – to believe this; it doesn’t help us get on with our lives; so we ignore it. (*TSE*, 63)

For Tony, the vagaries of memory and the deliquescence of subjective certainties through time, deal jolting blows to his “easy assumptions” about life.

Not only the sequence of shocking events but also his emerging inexplicable emotions catch him by surprise. He narrates: “It took me some time to get this straight. Eventually I said to myself: Right, so you’re feeling guilt towards your ex-wife, who divorced you twenty years ago, and excitement towards an old girlfriend you haven’t seen in forty years. Who said there were no surprises left in life?” (*TSE*, 118). The emergent illogical emotions over which Tony does not seem to exercise any control add a further level of confusion to his “assumptions” of selfhood and further threaten its boundaries. Tony could be said to reside in the visceral space

of affect and emotions[30] as Brian Massumi explains: "An *emotion* or *feeling* is a recognized affect, an identified intensity as reinjected into stimulus-response paths, into action-reaction circuits … in short, into subject-object relations. Emotion is a contamination of empirical space by affect, which belongs to the body without an image" (Massumi 2002, 61). Tony's blooming passion toward Veronica is an affective prerequisite for a movement of becoming. Here, becoming-other manifests itself in the manner of an inexplicable sexual affection toward a past love-object. In Massumi's analysis, Passion is the reinjection of intensity into the paths of stimulus-response that form subject-object relations. Put otherwise, emotions are a sign of the energization of the "ability to affect and a susceptibility to be affected" (Massumi 2002, 61) that sustain immanent existence.

Furthermore, Tony's obfuscation with regard to 'his own' feelings can be understood in light of insights from narrative hermeneutics as represented in the work of Jens Brockmeier. Quoting Gadamer's famous statement regarding the mutability of interpretation[31] and understanding, Brockmeier highlights the "intrinsically interpretive" nature of complex experiences and the fact that interpretation is essentially tantamount to "*re-creating*". He proceeds thus:

> The re-creative constitution of meaning is not necessarily a single act. This does not remain without consequences, because the conditions for repeated interpretation are never exactly the same. The flux of time does not stop; understanding is always different. … In this way, the ongoing interpretability of narrative experiences and memories keeps the entire process open-ended, at least in principle. Understanding narrative, be it in contexts of everyday life, literature, or academic investigation, rarely ends with closure, and this is not only because our stories

[30] Massumi (unlike Ruth Leys) distinguishes between affect and emotion: "Affect is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion. But … emotion and affect – if affect is intensity – follow different logics and pertain to different orders.
An emotion is a subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal. Emotion is qualified intensity, the conventional, consensual point of insertion of intensity into semantically and semiotically formed progressions, into narrativizable action-reaction circuits, into function and meaning. It is intensity owned and recognized. It is crucial to theorize the difference between affect and emotion. If some have the impression that affect has waned, it is because affect is unqualified. As such, it is not ownable or recognizable and is thus resistant to critique" (Massumi 2002, 27–28).

[31] "Understanding is not, in fact, understanding better, either in the sense of superior knowledge of the subject because of clearer ideas or in the sense of fundamental superiority of conscious over unconscious production. It is enough to say that we understand in a *different way, if we understand at all*" (Gadamer 2004, 296).

> about past experiences do not automatically turn events into memories. … it [time] turns every story into a story of interpretation. (Brockmeier 2015, 116–17)

In Brockmeier's significant analysis, the repeated mutability of the context of interpretation renders the *process* of interpretation potentially *open-ended*. Closure of interpretation of past experience is rare as time precludes it.

Akin to Brockmeier's ideas, Arnold Modell underlines the creative power of memory in that it works not as a camera capturing experience but more as an autonomous machine with a mind of its own. In his research, Modell draws on Gerald Edelman's Freudian notion of "recategorization[32]" – yet another synonym for *Nachträglichkeit* – which holds that "Memory retrieval is selective, depending on the context of the immediate experience. Memory does not capture a coded representation but is itself a construction. Unconscious memory exists only as a latent *potential* awaiting reconstruction" (Modell 2003, 37–38). Modell and Edelman's remarks regarding the "creative" rather than "replicative" nature of memory shed further light on the Barnesian claim that time is a "solvent" rather than a "fixative". Rather than simply order the episodes of a past reality, memory is known to dissolve them and *create*[33] its own combinations.

In *The Sense of an Ending*, not unlike Keith and Jack, Tony's unassailable ideas of his 'settled' self-hood undergo a massive reformulation as he also realizes that aspects of the self are borrowed from – or rather, belong to – the other and he elaborates on this insight on several occasions. For instance, in conversation with Veronica's lawyer, Tony immediately appropriates his legal tone and terminology, not forgetting to ask the narratees afterward if they have remarked how "when you talk to someone like a solicitor, after a while you stop sounding like yourself and end up sounding like them?" (*TSE*, 68). This implies that our lexicon only partially belongs to us and like every other aspect of subjectivity, it morphs into fresh combinations in accordance with the dictates of the situation at hand.

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[32] Edelman's description of the "dynamic nonrepresentational" (Edelman 1999, 80) memory runs as follows: "Such a memory has properties that allow perception to alter recall, and recall to alter perception. It has no fixed capacity limit, since it actually generates 'information' by construction. It is possible to envision how it could generate semantic capabilities prior to syntactical ones. It is robust, dynamic, associative, and adaptive. If such a view is correct, every active perception is to some degree an act of creation, and every act of memory is to some degree an act of imagination. Biological memory is creative and not strictly replicative" (Edelman 1999, 80).

[33] In her analysis of Barnes, López-Deflory also refers to creativity as coloring one's conception of the past; "that introspection in one's own life may also be a creative process involving a certain degree of manipulation" (López-Deflory 2016, 8).

Elsewhere, Tony uses an idiomatic expression that best conveys the sense of subjectivity as heavily tinged with the presence of the other. He intimates: "Nowadays I might try to get under Veronica's skin, but I would never try to flay it from her bit by bloody bit" (*TSE*, 99). Increasingly, Tony comes to the realization that subjectivity is tantamount to having others under one's skin, in a universal spirit of becoming-other. Some pages on, he highlights the strangely apposite nature of the expression: "I said I wanted to get under her skin, didn't I? It's an odd expression" (*TSE*, 109). A further instance is when Tony is depicted as having the other's whisper in his head, threatening to take over his speech. While he is recounting his life story to Veronica, Tony is inwardly troubled as he is having a hard time "batting away Margaret's whisper in my [his] head of 'How's the Fruitcake?'" (*TSE*, 116), 'fruitcake' being his ex-wife Margaret's nickname for Veronica. Interestingly, 'batting away' intrusive thoughts is what Swift's Jack has to do as well in *Wish You Were Here*.

Tony's inquiries into the unsettling role of the other in the intersubjective construction of the self proceed further to include the idea that one cannot count on the solidity of the other either. The other is represented, primarily, as an interpretation or rather a (changing) narrative abstracted from the ensemble of ineffable sense-perceptions in an encounter. Here's Tony's account of his first visit to Veronica's family and his impressions of her mother, all avowed to be an interpretation based on mental images:

> So in the end I was almost as much at sea with her as with the rest of them, though at least she appeared to like me. She eased another egg on to my plate, despite my not asking for it or wanting it. The remnants of the broken one were still in the pan; she flipped them casually into the swing-bin, then half-threw the hot frying pan into the wet sink. Water fizzed and steam rose at the impact, and she laughed, as if she had enjoyed causing this small havoc. (*TSE*, 29)

Thus, being "at sea" with life events and impressions comes to symbolize the confusion and deliquescence of human perception and subjectivity in the novel.

Barnes had already voiced his deep suspicions regarding the recoverability of the past using the imagery of disorientation in the post-apocalyptic, alien land of memory. In *Flaubert's Parrot*, we read, "It isn't so different, the way we wander through the past. Lost, disordered, fearful, we follow what signs there remain; we read the street names, but cannot be confident where we are. All around is wreckage" (Barnes 2009a, 60). Apropos Tony's confusion in *The Sense of an Ending*, albeit with a focus on the order of narrated events, Wenquan Wu states

that the "feigned randomness of these memories intentionally indicates the fluidity and stagnation of life and desire, for water/ fluidity is the basic element/nature of life, and memory, be it individual or collective, is also fluid in essence, always flowing and changing shapes" (Wu 2015, 89).

In the above extract from *The Sense of an Ending*, the presence of fictionalism and a narrative imposed on ineffable reality is denoted by the inclusion of the "as if", in a manner reminiscent of Swift's novel. Further, when Tony was dating Veronica, we learn that her demeanor "seemed", rather than *was* instinctive. We read, "When I was going out with her, it always seemed that her actions were instinctive. But then I was resistant to the whole idea that women were or could be manipulative" (*TSE*, 32). Similarly, in the following extract about Tony and Veronica's books, they are both said to "assume" certain facts about each other, all of which amount to appearance-based, imaginary interpretations of the other:

> My bookshelves were more successful with Veronica than my record collection. …. Veronica paid me the compliment of assuming I'd read them all, and didn't suspect that the most worn titles had been bought second-hand.
>
> Her own shelves held a lot of poetry, in volume and pamphlet form: Eliot, Auden, MacNeice, Stevie Smith, Thom Gunn, Ted Hughes. …. I didn't for a moment doubt that she had read them all, or that they were the right books to own. Further, they seemed to be an organic continuation of her mind and personality, whereas mine struck me as functionally separate, straining to describe a character I hoped to grow into. (*TSE*, 23–24)

Clearly, Tony's questioning mind is reconfiguring all previous assumptions and this chiefly engulfs Veronica. Another assumption Tony had made had to do with Veronica's virginity. Tony narrates: "But I was wrong about most things, then as now. For instance, why did I assume she was a virgin? I never asked her, and she never told me. I assumed she was because she wouldn't sleep with me: and where is the logic in that?" (*TSE*, 26). The novel is the chronicle of the inapplicability of logic to the 'fluid' mess of life and subjectivity. Even years later, his self-denigrating mind is not very clear about it. All he can do is to venture a hypothetical guess. We read, "I wondered if, all those years ago, her words 'It doesn't feel right' were simply a politeness. Perhaps she hadn't wanted to sleep with me because the sexual contact we'd had during the time she was deciding just wasn't enjoyable enough. I wondered if I'd been awkward, pushy, selfish. Not if, how" (*TSE*, 101). The mutability of the narrative of the other is a central ethical insight of the novel. Although the other is always-already a

narrative in the subject's mind, this is not a narrative set in stone. Rather, through time, the narrative of the "I" and the other both undergo a process of revision and resubjectification.

Apart from being a spectrally "assumed" fictive construct in the subject's mind, the other is further displayed (in parallel with *The Pregnant Widow* and *Wish You Were Here*) as an essential component of the subject's fantasy life, or the Lacanian imaginary order of consciousness. Tony reminisces about his youth:

> I settled into a contented routine of working, spending my free time with Veronica and, back in my student room, wanking explosively to fantasies of her splayed beneath me or arched above me. Daily intimacy made me proud of knowing about make-up, clothes policy, the feminine razor, and the mystery and consequences of a woman's periods. I found myself envying this regular reminder of something so wholly female and defining, so connected to the great cycle of nature. I may have put it as badly as this when I tried to explain the feeling.
> 'You're just romanticising what you haven't got. The only point of it is to tell you you're not pregnant.' (*TSE*, 25)

In the extract, the desirable other is once again presented as a fantastic entity (akin to Amis's Scheherazade as painted in imagination) within the subject's imaginary order of consciousness, union with whom is also possible, only in that realm. This represents another parallel with *The Pregnant Widow*, whose main intertext is the story of Echo and Narcissus. The universal impossibility of oneness with the sexual love object is also another source of trauma, to compensate which, Tony resorts to romanticization and the "troping" (Hartman 1995, 537) of his loss.

By the same token, in the following excerpt, Tony highlights the possibility of a relationship with the other, *only* in the fantasy-land of imagination. Tony is reminiscing about his "sex life forty years previously" involving another revelatory meeting with Veronica. He reminisces,

> … how exciting it always was; how, even though we weren't having 'full sex', all the elements of it – the lust, the tenderness, the candour, the trust – were there anyway. And how part of me hadn't minded not 'going the whole way', didn't mind the bouts of apocalyptic wanking after I'd seen her home, didn't mind sleeping in my single bed, alone except for my memories and a swiftly returning erection. This acceptance of less than others had was also due to fear, of course: fear of pregnancy, fear of saying or doing the wrong thing, fear of an overwhelming closeness I couldn't handle. (*TSE*, 117)

This is the realm of role-playing within stories, hence "apocalyptic", in the Kermodian[34] sense of any story terminating in a diminutive apocalypse, an ending corresponding here to sexual release. Tony is also reiterating the impossibility of an untrammeled sexual union on a real plane, as if sex is only capable of being experienced in the realm of the imaginary where Tony could handle the "overwhelming closeness", through devising what Peter Brooks calls "binding" (Brooks 1984, 101) narratives that he is in control of, that is, his "bouts of apocalyptic wanking".

Tony's tumultuous relationship with Veronica constitutes yet another chapter in Barnes's fascination with the theme of love and the unhappiness it involves. Apropos, Moseley states: "Barnes's persistent concern more than previous works of literature, more than experimentation with form, more than 'the modern condition' is love. Each of his novels is about love in some central if not exclusive way" (Moseley 2009, 12). He goes on to write that "the ways in which love makes men and women unhappy are expertly traced in several of his novels. But in his most ambitious treatment of the importance of love, he declares that even though it may not make people happy, it is what will save them from the forces of history" (Moseley 2009, 13).

In sum, understanding of and union with the other whose presence is crucial to subjectivity is only possible through images in the imaginary order of consciousness. These narrative images are subject to countless reconfigurations through time depending on emergent contexts and exigencies.

[34] In his article about the reasons behind the popularity of what he terms "the novel of recollection", in which category he places Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending,* (Chalupský 2016, 90), Chalupský states that "the novel deals with the theme of the relationship between reality and fiction. This is viewed, among others, through an interesting, and owing to the main protagonist's character or the surname of his tragically deceased friend also considerably ironic, polemic with Frank Kermode's literary critical study *The Sense of an Ending* (1967), whose title Barnes borrowed for his book, and which explores the age-long ability of creative literature to offer the reader … a solace in the form of an illusion of an intelligible end" (Chalupský 2016, 94).

C. Self: A Fiction

In addition to the significant realization that the self is always-already marked and haunted by the fluid images of the Other, the novels demonstrate that the subject's inquiry into trauma also reveals the very self to be a narrative, a fictive construct.

The Pregnant Widow corroborates this insight as Keith's literary mind highlights the narrative nature of the human conception of selfhood and life, blurring the self/narrative divide and contributing to a redefined sense of self. In the novel, the porosity of the self/narrative boundary is conveyed most clearly in Keith's conception of life as 'naturally' composed of genres. Keith further perceives any violation of a received idea of life as a "slippage of genre", for instance in the following extract where he is watching Scheherazade emerging from the pool. He narrates, "Now she surfaced and climbed out with tensed tendons, covered in bright beads of water. And it was all laid before you. Topless as nature intended. And yet to Keith the spectacle seemed anti-natural – seemed unsound, like a slippage of genre" (*TPW*, 57). It is the immanent dynamic arising out of this "slippage of genre" that drives social change (to be discussed in detail in chapter 2) and reveals natural and "anti-natural" to be mere human interpretations.

Further, deploying postmodernist *mise-en-abyme*[35], the novel proffers a demonstration of how a revised understanding of the traumatized self comes about in the narcissistic "space" of the novel. This demonstration is achieved as the narrative traverses the mimetic and diegetic planes and in so doing, it "disturbs the orderly hierarchy of ontological levels (worlds within worlds), in effect short-circuiting the ontological structure, and thus foregrounding it" (McHale

[35] "*Mise-en-abyme* is one of the most potent devices in the postmodernist repertoire for foregrounding the ontological dimension of recursive structures. … A true *mise-en-abyme* is determined by three criteria: first, it is a nested or embedded representation, occupying a narrative level inferior to that of the primary, diegetic narrative world; secondly, this nested representation *resembles* … something at the level of the primary, diegetic world; and thirdly, this "something" that it resembles must constitute some salient and continuous aspect of the primary world, salient and continuous enough that we are willing to say the nested representation *reproduces* or *duplicates* the primary representation as a whole. Such a salient and continuous aspect might be, for instance, the story at the primary level; or its narrative situation (narrator, narratee, act of narration, and so on); or the style or poetics of the primary narrative text. … *Mise-en-abyme* is not, it need hardly be said, exclusive to postmodernist writing but, on the contrary, may be found in all periods, in all genres and literary modes. Nevertheless, it should be clear why postmodernist writing has exploited and developed it so extensively: *mise-en-abyme* is another form of short-circuit, another disruption of the logic of narrative hierarchy, every bit as disquieting as a character stepping across the ontological threshold to a different narrative level. The effect of *mise-en-abyme*, Gabriel Josipovici writes, 'is to rob events of their solidity,' and the effect of *this* is to foreground ontological structure" (McHale 1987, 124–25).

1987, 14). In the persons and *bodies* of the novel's three principal women, Amis lays bare the means by which Keith's obsessional narrative of death and Violet-induced trauma expands and proceeds to its final "quiescence"(Freud 1989, 625), or its "proper end" to use Freudian terms, this end being where "narrative desire" is always headed and where, according to Peter Brooks "the ultimate determinants of meaning lie"(Brooks 1984, 52).

In *The Pregnant Widow*, the women who metafictionally embody the narrative dynamics are Keith's rational girlfriend Lily, the ethereally desirable and buxom Scheherazade and Gloria Beautyman, referred to as 'the Future' as she "represents the future of sex, the violence of porn, the idea of sex as a financial transaction" (Bilmes 2014, n.pag.). Lily and Keith agreed to meet in the castle after a period of separation. In their bed, they ceaselessly discuss Sheherazade, mostly as a lead-up to sex, and grow so close and similar that their relationship takes on sibling-like qualities. This is bad news for an erotic bond that reminds fictionally-minded Keith of Hansel and Gretel or Jove and Juno: "Not only one-time students of psychology might notice the coincidence: Keith was worried about his sister, and his sister was what Lily had seemed to become" (*TPW*, 84). From a narrative point of view, Lily cannot accompany Keith to the end of the novel as they become un-narratable together. Peter Brooks calls this "the possibility of short-circuit" and defines it as,

> … all manner of threats to the protagonist or to any of the functional logics that demand completion; it most commonly takes the form of temptation to the mistaken erotic object choice, who may be of the "Belle Dame sans merci" variety, or may be the too perfect and hence annihilatory bride. Throughout the Romantic tradition, it is perhaps most notably the image of incest (of the fraternal-sororal variety) that hovers as the sign of a passion interdicted because its fulfilment would be too perfect, a discharge indistinguishable from death, the very cessation of narrative movement. Narrative is in a state of temptation to oversameness, and where we have no literal threat of incest … lovers choose to turn the beloved into a soul sister so that possession will be either impossible or mortal. (Brooks 1984, 109)

Interestingly, John Keats' "La belle Dame sans merci" figures as an intertext in *The Pregnant Widow* and "the erotic object choice" that is "too perfect and hence annihilatory" for the narrative is Scheherazade, whom Keith's imagination has "painted" as a semi-divine, hence unattainable being. On three occasions in the novel, Keith's union with Scheherazade is thwarted and the temptation to "short-circuit" the narrative averted.

Scheherazade whose expansive breasts, massive cereal bowl, delightfully messy bathroom and noisy showers stand in contrast to Gloria's Spartan manners, embodies the

metaphoric axis of the narrative. She represents the unbounded power of the signifier to attach itself to disparate objects and ideas and then to transform, surface or hide at will, very much like the "ascended" butterfly or the "bee" with the "positive charge" bumping into things" (*TPW*, 200), a similarity that does not escape Keith's traumatized and critical notice. Scheherazade is Keith's artless swan with "wings" for arms and "wing-cases" (*TPW*, 149) for shoulder-blades and as a swan – or more aptly the enlightened supreme swan *parahamsa* ("Paramahamsa | Hinduism" 2016, n.pag.) – she traverses earthly and heavenly planes – corresponding to reality and the realm of imagination – making it possible for poets to devise what Shakespeare calls "airy nothings" in the imagination.

It is thus in her symbolic/metaphoric dominion that Keith is able to brood Violet's traumatic enigma as reproduced in the transference of the narrative, revising in the process, his own ideas on selfhood. Keith's melancholic metamorphosis into a vermin, his musings on the nature of the rat with a dirty, lusty grip on life, the "bassackwards" cultural march which he terms "nostalgie de la boue", his thoughts crossing his forehead in a "vermicular movement" (*TPW*, 166) and his *aporia* before the man/animal divide (to be discussed in chapter 2), all can be traced back to the single incident of Violet's group sex in a ditch and her muddy jeans, an event shocking and traumatic only for Keith and his brother. Even the chapter entitled "Coda. Life." bears traces of the rat metaphor as Coda means "tail" in Latin (Maleki 2016, 69–71).

With regard to the significance of metaphor within the transference of narrative, Peter Brooks writes, "the transference is itself a kind of metaphor, a substitutive medium for the analysand's infantile experiences, and thus approximates the status of a text" (Brooks 1984, 99). More importantly, Brooks also thinks of the entire narrative as a metaphor, although for him, it is metonymy, the ordering element of plot which constitutes the main figure of a narrative:

> Narrative operates as metaphor in its affirmation of resemblance, in that it brings into relation different actions, combines them through perceived similarities …, appropriates them to a common plot, which implies the rejection of merely contingent (or unassimilable) incident or action. Plot is the structure of action in closed and legible wholes; it thus must *use* metaphor as the trope of its achieved interrelations; and it must *be* metaphoric insofar as it is totalizing. Yet it is equally apparent that the key figure of narrative must in some sense be not metaphor but metonymy: the figure of contiguity and combination, of the syntagmatic relation (Brooks 1984, 91).

Thus, as a key element of the transferential experience of reading, metaphor generates interpretation and sustains it in the reader's many returns to the text. Significantly for trauma studies, Peter Brooks also believes in the capacity of metaphor for triggering comprehension, in that "the substitution – the characteristic operation of metaphor – of a present signifier for an absent one can spark an understanding of the meaning of that which is absent" (Brooks 1984, 59).

Further proof of the significance of metaphor for interpretation comes from the work of Arnold Modell who believes that "metaphor is not merely a figure [of] speech but is a fundamental form of cognition. Metaphor is truly the currency of mind" (Modell 2005, 562). In a more recent article, Modell explains the therapeutic function of metaphor for trauma victims in the following terms:

> In considering the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis, we believe that metaphor contributes to what can be viewed as a self-reinforcing loop. … metaphor is central to the communication and interpretation of unconscious meaning. One therapeutic effect of making the unconscious conscious is the creation of new meanings that expand the sense of the agency of the self. There is, then, a synergistic effect: with an expanded sense of agency, there is also an expanded awareness of the complexity of metaphor, which, in turn, can recontextualize traumatic memories. When new meanings replace automatic invariant responses, the sense of the agency of the self is also expanded. There is, then, a self-reinforcing loop that will produce therapeutic change (Modell 2009, 10).

Thus, in Modell's analysis, metaphoric creativity engenders a complex, multi-faceted understanding of the repressed or traumatic "unconscious" memory, leading to a therapeutic sense of mastery and agency. In a similar vein, Julia Kristeva believes in the therapeutic and sublimating power of metaphor in literature. In Kristevan thought, the healing comes about through the artist's Orphic descent into "the Thing" of trauma through metaphor – and thus, verbalizing the traumatic real buried underneath. Here is an excerpt from her article "Gerard de Nerval, The Disinherited Poet":

> By means of a leap into the orphic world of artifice (of sublimation), the saturnine poet, out of the traumatic experience and object of mourning, remembers only a gloomy or passional tone. He thus comes close, through the very components of language, to the lost Thing. His discourse identifies with it, absorbs it, modifies it, transforms it: he takes Eurydice out of the melancholy hell and gives her back a new existence in his text/song. (Kristeva 1994, 211)

Kristeva's emphasis on the therapeutic properties of "discourse" – or the symbolic order of language – and metaphoric transformation is similar to Ganteau and Onega's position which holds that "trauma narratives … resort to strategies of excess to react to the openness of the wound, but also to perform an openness to the wound … to the internal foreign body of traumatic states, to the Other's wound" (Ganteau and Onega 2014, 11). One way in which excess manifests itself is through the proliferation of metaphor referred to by Marc Amfreville as "explosions métaphoriques" (Amfreville 2015, para. 4).

In addition to psychoanalysis, a further insight into the contribution of metaphor to comprehension comes from the work of Paul Ricoeur. Here, understanding as a result of interpretation is crucially bound up with the trope of the "living" metaphor, as opposed to dead clichés, Paul Ricoeur writes: "Metaphor is living not only to the extent that it vivifies a constituted language. Metaphor is living by virtue of the fact that it introduces the spark of imagination into a 'thinking more' at the conceptual level. This struggle to 'think more,' guided by the 'vivifying principle,' is the 'soul' of interpretation" (Ricœur 1977, 358). Angelika Rauch makes a similar point when she writes, "Metaphor … serves as an open horizon of experiential meaning for the unspeakable object. In that sense, metaphor provides the hermeneutical link between language and experience" (Rauch 1998, 118). Thus, for Rauch, the "horizon" of meaning – the real teased out through metaphor – is "open" and subject to further, possibly endless, revisions. Apropos, West-Pavlov also states: "The time of language itself is a time of constant innovation in which the shared resources of linguistic flexibility and human experimentation drive forward into the future. Indeed they make the future concretely as they together overcome dead metaphors and ossified structures" (West-Pavlov 2013, 96). Thus, metaphor comes to play a central role in the creative act of interpretation, which is a forward-looking performative gesture aimed at the verbalization of existential affect. The creation of living metaphors thus mirrors the immanent creativity of life and contributes to an expansive understanding of it. As such, metaphorization is not only an essentially therapeutic act, but also a creative one.

However, as *The Pregnant Widow* attests, metaphor alone does not guarantee the forward movement of the narrative toward a desired end for the novel. The third woman in Amis's triad is Gloria Beautyman whose important presence nevertheless inspires no passages of rapt admiration. As a character, Gloria has a penchant for order and is driven by opportunism and narcissistic obsession with her body. On the day of Keith's inaugural and life-changing sex with Gloria, we read, "The first thing she did… was attend to her breasts in a way he had never seen before. She said ardently, 'Oh, I love me. Oh I love me so.'" and some lines on, "'Look,'

she said to the figures in the glass. 'I'm a boy. I've got a cock too.'" After which she does something undisclosed to her body of which he had never heard before and "It was then that he had his moment of vertigo. I'm too young, he thought, to go to the future." and when the key moment arrives, she says, "'Some might say that it's a bit droll—to *start* with this. But we're having a black mass, you and I. You know—backward. Everything the wrong way round. Stay still, and I'll do it all. Understand? … .'" (*TPW*, 240). Gloria epitomizes the empowered woman wielding the phallus of authority, representing what Brian Finney defines as "those women who have liberated themselves from 'social realism' to become the equals of men", which in turn explains "Gloria's otherwise unusual last name – Beautyman" (Finney 2016, n.pag).

More importantly though, with her futuristic sexuality involving fantasy and role-play, her contraceptive "coil" (*TPW*, 348) and the "patchwork quilt" (*TPW*, 196) that she is making, she stands for the metonymic process of plotting; of designing contiguous actions in relations of "precedence and consequence" (Brooks 1984, 91); of heading forward to an end that would shed a backward light on the narrative middle embodying what Brooks terms "the *anticipation of retrospection*" (Brooks 1984, 23).

Gloria also stands for the figure of trauma and its insistent repetition (Maleki 2016, 72–73), embodied in her repeated and depthless sexual encounters with Keith, akin to the hyperarousal of trauma. The death drive and the 'diabolical' (Bloom 2010, 198) quality of traumatic repetition are hinted at several times in the novel, in references to the Garden of Eden, the perpetual presence of erotic temptation, and the snake. For example, the showerhead in Scheherazade's bathroom is said to turn into a mad snake when turned on full. Lily discussing Scheherazade's account of her occasional sex toy, the bathroom showerhead, says: "the showerhead in the tub that's like a mad snake when you turn it on full. … . Guess what she calls the showerhead? She calls it the Rain God" (*TPW*, 197). The Rain God could serve as an allusion to Zeus, particularly in his lover's role as the Swan, which Scheherazade is also said to resemble. It could also allude to the ancient Canaanite deity Baal, considered an enemy of the Jewish God of the Old Testament ("Baal | Ancient Deity" 2016, n.pag.). Extending the connections with the diabolic return of trauma and the plot, biblical metaphors are sustained as elsewhere, Keith calls the Italian castle Eden: "'It's Eden here.' The roses pouted and simpered, the scents swayed and swooned. They were talking about the birds and the bees. It was Eden. And Keith, who was feeling very fallen" (*TPW*, 192). One last reference to the figure of the serpent is the necklace Rita is wearing, which she refers to as "*My serpent of old Nile* …"

(*TPW*, 193) in yet another evocation of Shakespeare. Hints of eroticism are present as this was Anthony's pet name for Cleopatra (1.5.25 Shakespeare 1986, 982). Moreover, repeated references to the snake and Gloria's fondness for plotting evoke Peter Brooks' Freud and Balzac-inspired characterization of the snake-like figure of the arabesque as representing plot in the narrative. He writes,

> Deviance, detour, an intention that is irritation: these are characteristics of the narratable, of "life" as it is the material of narrative, of *fabula* become *sjužet.* Plot is a kind of arabesque or squiggle toward the end. It is like that arabesque from *Tristram Shandy,* retraced by Balzac, that suggests the arbitrary, transgressive, gratuitous line of narrative, its deviance from the straight line, the shortest distance between beginning and end-which would be the collapse of one into the other, of life into immediate death. (Brooks 1984, 104)

Brooks' analysis sheds valuable light on Gloria's diegetic function for the narrative.

Toward the end of the novel, Keith ponders the "tasteless", random nature of life[36] saying, "Life is made up as it goes along. It can never be rewritten. It can never be revised" and some lines on, asserting the need for a narrative to life, Keith states, "Gloria Beautyman, at least, will be giving us something that Life badly needs. Plot" (*TPW*, 310). Keith's emphasis on the significance of a plot to life can be better understood in light of Ricoeur's analysis of plot. Conceiving of the episodes of life within an evolving plot confers holistic meaning to what would otherwise be a string of haphazard events. Ricoeur defines 'plot' thus:

> By plot I mean the intelligible whole that governs a succession of events in any story. This provisory definition immediately shows the plot's connecting function between an event or events and the story. A story is *made out of* events to the extent that plot *makes* events *into* a story. The plot, therefore, places us at the crossing point of temporality and narrativity: to be historical, an event must be more than a singular occurrence, a unique happening. It receives its definition from its contribution to the development of a plot. (Ricœur 1980, 171)

Thus, the story of a life developing across the time-span of a lifetime would not yield a sense of overall wholeness, were it not for the fact that plot bestows significance to the mere

[36] Brian Finney seems to be making a similar point when he refers to the incompatibility of "raw life" and fiction when he states that "*The Pregnant Widow* constitutes a deliberate exposé of the impossibility of incorporating raw life in fiction. The novel shows the two to be mutually incompatible. Within the world of the novel life is repeatedly displaced by the demands of narrative …." (Finney 2016, n.pag.).

succession of events. The sense of a plot to life turns mere occurrences to events of "historical" significance in the 'story' of a lifetime bound to end with death. The random goings-on in a person's lifetime thus receive their defining importance as chapters in the "development" and fruition of the "plot" of life. Ricoeur continues his analysis by designating plot as "the objective correlate of the act of following a story" (Ricœur 1980, 177). Every narrative, in Ricoeur's view, combines two axes or "dimensions": chronological (or episodic) and nonchronological (configurational). The episodic dimension governs the succession of events through time and the configurational dimension, importantly for Ricoeur, is the plot:

> The second [d i m e n s i o n] is the configurational dimension, according to which the plot construes significant wholes out of scattered events. …I understand this … to be the act of the plot, as eliciting a pattern from a succession. …To tell and to follow a story is already to reflect upon events in order to encompass them in successive wholes. (Ricœur 1980, 177–78)

Ricoeur's views on plot and its significance for extracting "a pattern" from the haphazard series of events that constitute a story reveal why in *The Pregnant Widow*, Keith 'badly needs' a plot: as he reappraises his life, Keith yearns for his life story to have constituted a 'significant whole' before it reaches the final 'resolution' of death. In Keith's metafictional[37] commentary on the necessity of a plot to life, the life/fiction boundary is once again revealed as leaky.

Patricia Waugh would agree as she holds that a central function of metafiction is to "explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text" (Waugh 1984, 2). This does not in any way devalue reality or lead to a relativism. Waugh explains that "Metafiction … does not abandon 'the real world' for the narcissistic pleasures of the

[37] In her study on the 'narrative turn' of the 1980s, Hanna Meretoja calls narratives such as Amis's 'metanarrative' in that they include metafictional elements and more importantly, emphasize the significance of *narrative as an existential act*. The narratives embodying the narrative turn "involve … *both* metanarrative reflection on the constructed nature of literary narratives as well as on the process and significance of storytelling *and* giving expression to a certain experience of being in the world. 'Metanarrativity' is usually taken to refer to narration in which the narrator reflects on the process of narration, but what I would like to suggest here is that it can be understood in a wider sense to characterize narratives that make narrative their theme and deal with the significance of narratives for human existence in general (for how we understand ourselves, others, the world, history) and that such metanarrativity is an important aspect of fiction that can be associated with the narrative turn" (Meretoja 2014, 3). Further on in her book, she lists Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* as "a long metanarrative reflection on how we make sense of our lives … " (Meretoja 2014, 227).

imagination. What it does is to re-examine the conventions of realism … In showing us how literary fiction creates its imaginary worlds, metafiction helps us to understand how the reality we live day by day is similarly constructed, similarly 'written'" (Waugh 1984, 18). Carried to its extreme, this engagement with an always-already mediated – or "written" – reality results in denial of entry to a center of meaning. Further on in her book Waugh elaborates:

> Metafictional novels … have abandoned 'roleplaying' … and have embraced a Wittgensteinian concept of 'language games'. They function through forms of radical decontextualization. They deny the reader access to a centre of orientation such as a narrator or point of view, or a stable tension between 'fiction', 'dream', 'reality', 'vision', 'hallucination', 'truth', 'lies', etc. Naturalized or totalizing interpretation becomes impossible. The logic of the everyday world is replaced by forms of contradiction and discontinuity, radical shifts of context which suggest that 'reality' as well as 'fiction' is merely one more game with words. (Waugh 1984, 137)

Several elements of Waugh's theorization are directly related to the overall atmosphere of our novels. The center of meaning is presented as out of human reach, belonging to a non-human language game, yet the novels discourage a rupture of a relationship with the elusive meaning. No interpretation is presented as natural or definitive; instead, communion with meaning is ongoing with full knowledge of their contradictions and provisionality in the face of "shifts of context". The fictionality of existence also encompasses subjectivity.

Importantly for our study, vis-à-vis the essentially fictional nature of the self and conception of the other, Roy Schafer's remarks are also illuminating:

> We are forever telling stories about ourselves. In telling these self stories *to others* we may, for most purposes, be said to be performing straightforward narrative actions. In saying that we also tell them *to ourselves,* however, we are enclosing one story within another. This is the story that there is a self to tell something to, a someone else serving as audience who is oneself or one's self. When the stories we tell others about ourselves concern these other selves of ours, when we say, for example, "I am not master of myself," we are again enclosing one story within another. On this view, the self is a telling. From time to time and from person to person, this telling varies in the degree to which it is unified, stable, and acceptable to informed observers as reliable and valid.
>
> Additionally, we are forever telling stories about others. These others, too, may be viewed as figures or other selves constituted by narrative actions. Other people are constructed in the telling about them; more exactly, we narrate others just as we narrate selves. The other person,

> like the self, is not something one has or encounters as such but an existence one tells. Consequently, telling "others" about "ourselves" is doubly narrative. (Schafer 1980, 35)

Schafer's emphasis on the narrativity of self and of the other and its being unrooted in any reality tallies with the immanent Deleuzian concept of reality as an ineffable ensemble of becomings, with every being appearing to the next one as a mere *image in words*. This is borne out most vividly in *Wish You Were Here*, where the question of selfhood is intimately bound to that of the image which, aside from being the means of attraction and a trigger for social mobility, acquires significance as the *only* way in which reality is perceived in the characters' imagination. Here, Ellie's formulation of her reality is presented as an unsullied, imaginary picture which she wants to *possess* fully, but which for now, and possibly forever, has a *hole* in it:

> There was just one gap in the picture, and that was the gap that corresponded to the part of Jack that still belonged to Tom, even though Tom had been absent now for over eighteen months and hadn't even answered any letters. She'd known not to push it too quickly or firmly. When so much else was going their way, and when, after all, she was still not quite twenty-eight. … Time was still on her side, she'd thought, so far as that gap in the picture went. …, she knew that the obstacle was still Tom, who was still in the picture though out of it. (*WYWH*, 115)

Ellie's journey of resubjectification in the novel is one of acceptance of "the picture" without aspiring to "possess" it fully or desiring it to be untainted with haunting holes, or *traces* of the traumatic past. Elsewhere, we learn about Jack's take on the farm, again a picture in the imaginary order of his consciousness: "He knew that keeping the farm, for all its summer glory, was only a picture. Ellie had stuck her finger through it. Now she was pointing to their future" (*WYWH*, 283). Jack resents Ellie secretly for having brought about change, for having thrown him out of his comfort zone, as it were. The other, thus acts as the agent of the traumatic intrusion of the real (here, Ellie's deterritorializing presence), setting in motion the internal movement of verbalization of the real. In Ragland-Sullivan's analysis (inspired in turn by Yves Vanderverken), Ellie's instigation of change amounts to "an encounter with the real that pierces the fantasy, confronting head-on an emptiness or hole in meaning" (Ragland-Sullivan 2001, para. 15).

The novel further demonstrates how metaphor helps with the verbalization of affect, an essential aid in the resubjectification of traumatic memory. Utilizing the narrative technique of free indirect discourse, Swift 'enters' – *Orphically* as Kristeva would term it – into his

character's minds and co-constructs their metaphorical 'pictures' of the real, very much in the manner of a mutually sustained transferential dialogue. Here, for example, Jack is attempting to verbalize the gap that he sees as having opened up since Major Richard's departure: "In the twenty-four hours following Major Richards's visit Jack had felt that invisible wall settle only more rigidly between them—the wall, so he might have thought of it, of Ellie's failure to reach out and comfort him. Except it sometimes seemed—it was like an unjust reversal of the situation—that this might stem from some baffling failure on his part to comfort her" (*WYWH*, 123). With regard to his experimentation with the authorial voice in *Wish You Were Here*, Swift says in the Foyles interview: "Unusually for me, the novel is written in the third person. Its 'voice' isn't Jack's, even though it might sometimes seem that it is. I think I wanted it to be the kind of third person that's so intimately close to the character that it almost melts into the first person" (Swift 2016, n.pag.). This demonstrates an ethical moment of authorial empathy toward the protagonist. In his interviews, Swift has reiterated the significance of empathy and sympathy in the construction of his novels, for instance, in an interview with Stef Craps, he says,

> When I write, I'm very much not an interpreter. I don't wish to be one stage ahead of my characters, interpreting what they're doing with hindsight, and certainly not with some kind of overall plan. Another way of putting this is to say that I actually have as much rapport, empathy, sympathy, connection with Willy Chapman as I have with George. Both of those characters are still as present and as real for me as they were at the particular times I created them and wrote about them. (Craps and Swift 2009, 648)

Further on in the interview, Swift highlights the ethical core of the imaginative enterprise of the depiction of trauma in the following words:

> The business of imagining what it's like to be somebody else is also the business of saying to yourself, "Suppose this were happening to me." If you actually go along with that, empathetically, if you really think about what it would be like to be either a parent or a child who is on the giving or the receiving end of this bit of news, you very quickly realize that it's something that raises fundamental questions and can have enormous implications. (Craps and Swift 2009, 656)

Thus, for Swift, empathetic writing is all about an imaginative merger of the author and character in an immanent spirit. Moreover, it is about authorial affectivity to the imagined pain

of the other of the character. In Ganteau's words, the Swiftian deployment of free indirect style is an instance of vulnerability to the vulnerability of the other, or "a loop of vulnerability" (Ganteau 2015a, 11). Scholars working on Swift have also commented on how the Swiftian narrative voice instantiates ethical responsibility toward the other of the character. Tatarian characterizes this as the spectral presence of the author in the narrative:

> But if the authorial presence may be felt as a kind of ghost, Graham Swift's last two novels … suggest that the narrators can decide to translate it at the level of diegesis as they accept their responsibility as actors in the story they tell. Instead of attempting to escape an all-too-powerful god-like figure – or to submit to it – they work hard on weaving a relationship with others who belong to their own sphere of action – or narration. (Tatarian 2009, 51)

This is certainly true of *Wish You Were Here* where, within the global atmosphere of spectrality, a general movement towards ethical acceptance of, and overture to the other comes about, a movement which is initially conceived agonistically in terms of slavery to the other.

The withdrawal of the authorial voice in the Swiftian oeuvre is perceived differently by other researchers. Tollance, for instance, ties it to the postmodern crumbling of grand narratives, and by extension, narrative authority. She views it more as a *void* cutting across Swift's works:

> Sans doute peut-on commencer mesurer les effets du vide qui fissure tous les récits de Swift en parcourant les décombres d'une l'autorité ébranlée dans ses fondements ébranlement qui affecte nécessairement la figure de l'auteur. Globalement, c'est bien comme vecteur d'un questionnement de l'autorité narrative que la voix est appréhendée avec le plus de constance par la critique swiftienne. Instable, insaisissable ou parfois peu fiable, la voix narrative se démultiplie dans certains romans, contribuant à une mise à mal de l'unité d'un récit déjà soumis à une fragmentation temporelle systématique. Même lorsque le récit est confié à un narrateur unique, la voix se dédouble et se divise, permettant l'émergence d'un discours qui parasite le récit, le dissèque et l'interroge. (Tollance 2011, 21)

Aside from being affected by a postmodern loss of credulity towards the grand narratives, the voice of the author suffers from a traumatic split personality (*dédoublement*) referred to as a textual symptom of trauma by Marc Amfreville (Amfreville 2015, para. 4). The shattered unity of the narrative, including its temporal fragmentation, could be said to represent a move away from realism towards what Rothberg has referred to as *traumatic realism* (Rothberg 2000, 2).

Overall, the ethical gesture of dialogical construction of the narrative, *as if* the characters conceived by the author are subjects of flesh and blood, befits the logic of trauma and an ethics of vulnerability in vulnerable times. Ganteau and Onega state this feeling thus: "Tentativeness of presentation seems to be the condition of faithfulness to the symptoms of trauma. The fact that such evocation is generally provided from inside implies a great deal of attentiveness to the vulnerable subject. This subject is not envisaged from a domineering, totalising position, thus favouring an ethical treatment" (Ganteau and Onega 2014, 7).

A similar – ethically-informed position regarding the narrative voice – is adopted by Andrew Gibson who highlights the ethical significance of the choice of point of view in the narrative. He states that "ethical distinctions would be involved, for example, in differentiations between more or less 'omniscient' narrators; between an 'omniscient' third person narrator and one who professes only a limited or partial knowledge of the world narrated" (Gibson 2002, 26). This distinction is embodied and foregrounded in the corpus with varying degrees. Apart from Swift's penchant for laying his authorial vulnerability bare, Barnes's Tony Webster demonstrates this absence of omniscience in his solicitation of the narratee's help as well as self-critically avowing his unreliability (*TSE*, 32). Similarly, Amis's Keith deconstructs the notion of "authorial omnipotence" (*TPW*, 92) through the very mention of the concept. All three novels thus exemplify modes of ethical point of view with regard to the narrative and its constituent elements. Gibson continues his analysis of the ethical significance of point of view by highlighting the increased eradication of the subject-object distinction in contemporary thought:

> There is a radical distinctness, then, to the mode of narration that Genette called extradiegetic-homodiegetic, narration as delivered by a narrator-character, though I would want to extend Genette's category to include focalized narration, narration which adopts a particular character's point of view, Jamesian reflector-narration. The distinctness of the mode in question has to do with what it makes of the subject–object relation; how far it formulates that relation in a manner that corresponds to its problematization in contemporary thought. … The subject can no longer be conceived of as closed up in itself, set in a structural opposition to a world onto which it peers out and of which it constructs a knowledge or representations. Such a conception of the subject is now outmoded, an abstraction or illusion. The subject must rather be understood as always in relation in the first instance, from the start. …The narrator is also an experiencer. He or she is engaged, involved in the world narrated. … The ethics of narrator-character or focalized narration thus entails a play of levels and dimensions as – say – the ethics of omniscient narration does not. (Gibson 2002, 27)

In Gibson's analysis, Genette's first-person, homodiegetic narration (Genette 1988, 84), and Henry James's foregrounding of focalization of a particular character also raise the possibility of discussing ethics in preferences for particular points of view. According to Gibson, a contemporary mode of narration should do justice to the contemporary ethos of the eradication of the subject-object distinction and preclude the possibility of according an omniscient, or ethically appropriative, point of view to a narrator, either extradiegetic or heterodiegetic. In line with Swift's remarks regarding the vulnerability of the author, Gibson believes the contemporary narrator should reflect the fact that s/he is a participant in the unfolding narrative and embody the Levinassian spirit of sensibility to the vulnerability of the other in the narrative. Omniscient narration, according to Gibson, fails to achieve this level of ethical overture.

Significantly for the study of trauma fiction, Swift's dialogic narrative presence, instantiated in the ample use of free indirect style and his empathic stance toward the vulnerability of his protagonist, also dramatizes the essential nature of what Laub and Podell call 'the art of trauma'. In their article entitled "Art and Trauma" they demonstrate how art represents or narrativizes trauma, leading to healing or at least the development of a certain resistance against it. This happens through fostering "the art of trauma" defined as:

> … 'imaginative acts' that occur spontaneously within the process of survival itself. These imaginative acts arise in one's attempt to 'know' the traumatic events that confront him. They produce emotional resonances parallel to those produced by conventional art forms, and, we would suggest, are themselves a form of art. When a person is subjected to a trauma, the only way he can maintain a connection between self and internal other is by exercising an inner capability to shape and order the coercive 'facts' that confront him. Art aids survival (as well as recovery) by widening one's vision and offering alternative perspectives and ways of seeing things. (Laub and Podell 1995, 998)

In a manner recalling Rauch's ideas on hermeneutic resubjectification, Modell's stress on metaphor as recontextualization and Balaev's notion of reformulation of subjectivity through narrative among others, Laub and Podell lay an emphasis on art's capacity to enable survival through "widening … alternate perspectives" on the traumatic event, through hermeneutic resubjectification aimed at 'knowing' the real.

Inspiring Anne Whitehead later, Laub and Podell go on to define "indirectness" as the chief characteristic of "the art of trauma". They write, "This indirect pointing to past meanings

is an essential element in the art of trauma, in which the aim is not to come to an 'objectively real' depiction of an event, but to create a protected space wherein the remembrance of the traumatic experience can begin, if only haltingly, to occur" (Laub and Podell 1995, 995). For Laub and Podell, a further crucial characteristic of such art is its dialogism, which potentially leads to a 'knowing' of trauma:

> The restorative power of such art, which we have described as resulting from its indirectness, presupposes another prerequisite: that it be 'dialogic', both in its genesis and in its effects …. In the dialogic art of trauma, however, a space outside of this limited conventional perspective is found or created, which allows for the negotiation of another, more individualized and authentic perspective from which to become aware of, represent, or 'know' the trauma. (Laub and Podell 1995, 996)

Thus, healing from trauma through art comes about as a result of gradual awareness of trauma through indirect and dialogic "representation" of the event. Hence, in the posttraumatic Swiftian art, subjectivity becomes heavily tinged with a constantly narrativized scene in the face of trauma, or rather ceaseless direct and indirect revisions and reinterpretations of memories – or internal dialogues – associated with a traumatic event. Here is an example of Jack in *Wish You Were Here*, trying empathically, to work out why his father had been carrying the DCM at the moment of his suicide:

> Why, later, the medal was in the pocket of his shirt was anyone's guess, but it would have meant—though Jack didn't go into this in his statement—that he must have been conscious of it during the intervening hours, and perhaps never returned it to its silk-lined box. He might have put it, for example, on his bedside table when he went to bed and before he slept, if he did sleep, that night. Perhaps—though this was a thought that would not crystallise in Jack's mind till many years later—he might even have clutched it in his hand. (*WYWH*, 238–39)

The past modal "might have", belonging as much to Swift as to Jack, is ubiquitous, suggesting an ongoing dialogue with an enigmatic past that calls for hypothetical acts of reconstructive narration. As Swift states, this is a scene Jack would be revisiting and reinterpreting for many years to come.

Emphasis on revisionism and active interpretation germane to the human condition had already appeared in Swift's work, notably in *Waterland*, albeit within the grand context of History:

> And when you asked, as all history classes ask, as all history classes should ask, What is the point of history? Why history? Why the past? I used to say… But your 'Why?' gives the answer. Your demand for explanation provides an explanation. Isn't this seeking of reasons itself inevitably an historical process, since it must always work backwards from what came after to what came before? And so long as we have this itch for explanations, must we not always carry round with us this cumbersome but precious bag of clues called History? Another definition: Man, the animal which demands an explanation, the animal which asks Why. (Swift 1999, 106)

In what constitutes an allusion to Nietzsche and Gadamer with their emphasis on the centrality of interpretation, and Frank Kermode, in his avowal of the significance of the 'sense' of an 'ending', Crick's comment on humanity's thirst for "explanations" *explains* why humanity has ended up with the "cumbersome but precious bag of … History". With regard to the active revisionism at the heart of traumatic recall as represented in the trauma novel, Balaev writes:

> The complex view of memory as an active and revisionary process expressed in the trauma novel challenges the predominant model that suggests traumatic experience remains frozen and separated from "normal" memories. Traumatic memory is rarely represented as an exact recalling of events. Rather, the construction of the past includes new details with each telling, or it is constructed from different perspectives, which demonstrates that memories of the traumatic experience are revised and actively rearranged according to the needs of the individual at a particular moment. (Balaev 2008, n.pag.)

Balaev thus places emphasis on the inclusion of "new details with each telling" and construction "from different perspectives" leading to active rearrangement of past trauma, in parallel with narrative hermeneuticists such as Rauch, Brockmeier and Meretoja and trauma specialists such as Laub and Podell, Modell and Kristeva.

The art of trauma with its chief characteristics of dialogic revisionism of the past and indirectness of narrative, is also instantiated in *The Sense of an Ending*, where Tony's questioning of his past memories at the persistent instigation of the emergent feeling of "remorse" also reveals the firm certainties of his life, memory and thus, his sense of self to be a tenuous narrative. In his youth, Tony used to hold his certainties very dear. He says, "We used terms like 'Weltanschauung' and 'Sturm und Drang', enjoyed saying 'That's philosophically self-evident', and assured one another that the imagination's first duty was to be transgressive" (*TSE*, 9–10). In addition to their certainties and preference for German

cultural terminology[38], Tony and his friends are also said to have sought a revolutionary and individualistic way of life: "we wanted to believe in our own things, rather than what had been decided for us. Hence what we thought of as our cleansing scepticism" (*TSE*, 7). Akin to Swift's Ellie who wanted a clean, unadulterated sweep with the past, Tony and his friends also desired a well-demarcated present free from the traces of a haunting past.

We also learn that for the schoolboy Tony, boundaries between opposite concepts seemed clear, or at least appealing: "Back then, we were most of us absolutists. We liked Yes v No, Praise v Blame, Guilt v Innocence – or, in Marshall's case, Unrest v Great Unrest. We liked a game that ended in a win and loss, not a draw" (*TSE*, 10). Old Tony however, sounds considerably subdued and resigned to the grey nebulosity pervading the various conventional demarcations of life. He says, "Sometimes I think the purpose of life is to reconcile us to its eventual loss by wearing us down" (*TSE*, 105). In contrast to the opinionated Tony of his youth, he is now indifferent, even when it comes to the important generational changes that have come about in public conduct, be it eating or smoking or fraternizing with the opposite sex, Tony states that he is no longer troubled as he watches schoolchildren's unorthodox behavior in public: "I sat there remembering all this, registering the differences, without coming to any conclusions. I neither applauded nor disapproved. I was indifferent; I had suspended my right to thoughts and judgements" (*TSE*, 133). Mature Tony, struggling with unsettling emotions and memories, now admits that one consequence of ageing is the gradual loss of life's certitudes, quoting Patrick Lagrange (Julian Barnes, as Patrick is his middle name and *la grange* is the French rendition of 'barn') in the end to corroborate his claim:

[38] Tony's use of the German term 'Strum und Drang' points to the Romantic subversiveness of his youth as "Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress) was an intellectual movement in German literature that lasted from 1760 to 1780. Its name originated from the title of a play by Friedrich Maximilian Klinger. The movement was characterized by an exuberant outburst of youthful energy. A group of young men including Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Johann Gottfried Herder, and Friedrich Schiller led the literary movement that exalted freedom and individuality. They challenged the conventions of what seemed to them the narrow minded society of the Enlightenment, rejecting strongly the Enlightenment's rigid class barriers, stiff norms, and denial in the earthly life. The young men rebelled against the radical and unbalanced use of rationality as well as the definition of human identity as bare intellect rather than the totality of body, mind, and spirit. The movement emphasized both the value of individual experience and the spontaneous and sensual expression of that experience. The role of these two elements was considered critical in liberating the individual from the control of the mind. In nature, Sturm und Drang recognized a new and promising reservoir of experiences; nature was seen as the primary source of all life and creativity within as well as outside the human being" ("Sturm Und Drang: The International Encyclopedia of Revolution and Protest: Blackwell Reference Online" 2017, n.pag.). *Weltanschauung* however, simply means "A worldview , a philosophy of life" ("Weltanschauung: Concise Dictionary of Social and Cultural Anthropology: Blackwell Reference Online" 2017).

> Also, when you are young, you think you can predict the likely pains and bleaknesses that age might bring. You imagine yourself being lonely, divorced, widowed; children growing away from you, friends dying. You imagine the loss of status, the loss of desire – and desirability. You may go further and consider your own approaching death, which, despite what company you may muster, can only be faced alone. But all this is looking ahead. What you fail to do is look ahead, and then imagine yourself looking back from that future point. Learning the new emotions that time brings. Discovering, for example, that as the witnesses to your life diminish, there is less corroboration, and therefore less certainty, as to what you are or have been. Even if you have assiduously kept records – in words, sound, pictures – you may find that you have attended to the wrong kind of record-keeping. What was the line Adrian used to quote? 'History is that certainty produced at the point where the imperfections of memory meet the inadequacies of documentation.' (*TSE*, 59)

Parallels with Peter Brooks's ideas of (the death-bound plot of) life as "anticipation of retrospection[39]" are conspicuous, in that Barnes also emphasizes the 'sense' that the ending of death bestows on a life always conceived in its lived 'entirety', in the lead-up to death. Earlier, Barnes had used the story of the animosity of Apostolov to the Russian composer Shostakovich to demonstrate that death is immanent[40] to life. The ending of death lives in every moment of Barnes's life:

> The Moscow story shows death as it normally is: what we bear within us all the time, in some piece of potentially berserk genetic material, in some flawed organ, in the time-stamped machinery of which we are made up. When we lie on that deathbed, we may well go back to personifying death, and think we are fighting illness as if it were an invader; but we shall really just be fighting ourselves, the bits of us that want to kill the rest of us. Towards the end—if we live long enough—there is often a competition among our declining and decaying parts as to

[39] "If the past is to be read as present, it is a curious present that we know to be past in relation to a future we know to be already in place, already in wait for us to reach it. Perhaps we would do best to speak of the *anticipation of retrospection* as our chief tool in making sense of narrative, the master trope of its strange logic. We have no doubt forgone eternal narrative ends, and even traditional nineteenth-century ends are subject to self-conscious endgames, yet still we read in a spirit of confidence, and also a state of dependence, that what remains to be read will restructure the provisional meanings of the already read" (Brooks 1984, 23).

[40] López-Deflory paraphrases this sentiment thus: "Contrarily to imminence, entailing immediacy, immanence denotes an abiding presence of the ending, which can occur at any moment and is inherent to humankind" (López-Deflory 2016, 4).

> which will get top billing on our death certificate. As Flaubert put it, "No sooner do we come into this world than bits of us start dropping off." (Barnes 2009b, 207)

Yet, in *The Sense of an Ending*, Barnes – one of whose chief concerns is claimed to be "living with mortality" (Childs 2011, 4) – is also chiefly pointing to the dispersal of the narrative of selfhood and identity that emergent emotions bring about as one approaches death. Barnes comments further in an interview with Jeffrey Brown: "You have your own memories of life, you've got the story that you tell mainly to yourself about what your life has been. And every so often these certainties are not. Something happens, someone reports something from 20 or 30 years ago, and you realize that what you'd believed is not the case" (Barnes 2016, n.pag.).

In the final analysis, Barnes concludes that what amounts to a sense of history to life is all but a *narrative* riddled with "the imperfections of memory" or as he puts it pithily in *Flaubert's Parrot*: "We can study files for decades, but every so often we are tempted to throw up our hands and declare that history is merely another literary genre: the past is autobiographical fiction pretending to be a parliamentary report" (Barnes 2009a, 90). This sentiment of history's "discursive and narrative dimension … disputing … [its] claim to exhaustiveness, objectivity and scientific truthfulness" (Guignery 2006, 44) is identical to that expressed by Hayden White who writes:

> Readers of histories and novels can hardly fail to be struck by their similarities. There are many histories that could pass for novels, and many novels that could pass for histories, considered in purely formal (or, I should say, formalist) terms. Viewed simply as verbal artifacts histories and novels are indistinguishable from one another. We cannot easily distinguish between them on formal grounds unless we approach them with specific preconceptions about the kinds of truths that each is supposed to deal in. But the aim of the writer of a novel must be the same as that of the writer of a history. Both wish to provide a verbal image of 'reality'. (White 1985, 121–22)

Thus establishing narrative as a common tool of the novelist and historian, White goes on to attack the Western "empiricist" prejudice that conceived of reality as "perceivable" and "coherent in its structure" (White 1985, 122).

In *The Sense of an Ending*, Barnes again discusses the narrative nature of subjectivity and compares the resilience and seeming solidity of youth with the loss of certainty that age brings along. This, he puts down to the vagaries of memory, especially, the enigmatic

phenomenon of false memories that discredit and disrupt what he calls the 'black box' of human memory. Tony says,

> When you are in your twenties… you have a strong sense of what life itself is, and of what you in life are, and might become. Later … later there is more uncertainty, more overlapping, more backtracking, more false memories. Back then, you can remember your short life in its entirety. Later, the memory becomes a thing of shreds and patches. It's a bit like the black box aeroplanes carry to record what happens in a crash. If nothing goes wrong, the tape erases itself. So if you do crash, it's obvious why you did; if you don't, then the log of your journey is much less clear. (*TSE*, 104–5)

Thus, in addition to emergent emotions, as the narrative of life expands to encompass a longer period of lived time, it also disintegrates into "shreds and patches", with illegitimate, "false" pieces putting in an occasional deterritorializing appearance. The outcome is that as we age, Tony believes, more and more of our defining certainties will be tainted with suspicion and uncertainty, since memory seems to create its own truth or to misrepresent lived reality in unpredictable ways. Apropos, Tony – whose "display of epigram and aphorism" (Childs 2011, 11) renders him a typically Barnesian character – remarks succinctly on the idiosyncrasies of memory: "It strikes me that this may be one of the differences between youth and age: when we are young, we invent different futures for ourselves; when we are old, we invent different pasts for others" (*TSE*, 80), meaning that our unreliable memory also engulfs our impressions of others. The self as well as the other partake of a narrativity that time throws into disarray.

Additionally, Tony's use of the technical term "false memory" is a reference to an episode whose objective existence he is brought to doubt in the course of his trauma-induced inquiries into the past. This memory is none other than the seminal event of the visit to Veronica's paternal home, one of whose memorable features had been the supposedly 'solid', physical landmarks in the area her father had pointed out to young Tony, who narrates:

> On a whim, I Googled Chislehurst. And discovered that there'd never been a St Michael's church in the town. So Mr Ford's guided tour as he drove us along must have been fanciful – some private joke, or way of stringing me along. I doubt very much there'd been a Café Royal either. Then I went on Google Earth, swooping and zooming around the town. But the house I was looking for didn't seem to exist any more. (*TSE*, 113)

Is it the case that the visit to Veronica's parental house has all been a figment of Tony's troubled imagination? Are certain details tampered with or have the abovementioned landmarks been demolished? Neither Tony, nor we ever know. All we know is that Tony's memory has been engaged in "an act of creation" (Edelman 1999, 80). Apropos the untenable divide between memory and imagination, David Hume also writes, "And as an idea of the memory, by losing its force and vivacity, may degenerate to such a degree, as to be taken for an idea of the imagination; so on the other hand an idea of the imagination may acquire such a force and vivacity, as to pass for an idea of the memory, and counterfeit its effects on the belief and judgment" (Hume 1960, 387). Hume's observations affirm that an idea in the human imagination can pass for a memory and vice versa.

Similarly, with regard to inaccurate memories, in his discussion of the significance of narrative for the "psychoanalytic occasion", Roy Schafer also touches upon the unreliability of accounts of the past. He conceives of transferential dialogue as

> … a story that begins in the middle, which is the present: the beginning is the beginning of the analysis. The present is not the autobiographical present, which at the outset comprises what are called the analysand's presenting problems or initial complaints together with some present account of the past; the reliability and usefulness of both of these constituents of the autobiographical present remain to be determined during the analysis. (Schafer 1980, 52)

Schafer goes on to state that the present account of the past is in fact, "a repetitive, crisis-perpetuating misremembering of the past and a way of living defensively with respect to a future which is, in the most disruptive way, imagined fearfully and irrationally on the model of the past" (Schafer 1980, 52). In a sense, Schafer's comments paraphrase the trauma specialists' ideas on the repetitional nature of trauma and the hypervigilance that characterizes the present of posttraumatic existence. Finally, in Schafer's view, and as corroborated by Tony's revisionist account of the past, in interpreting, "One works backward from what is told about the autobiographical present in order to define, refine, correct, organize, and complete an analytically coherent and useful account of the past, and one works forward from various tellings of the past to constitute that present and that anticipated future which are most important to explain" (Schafer 1980, 52–53). Put differently, the way forward in analysis lies through revision, refinement and narrative organization of accounts of the past.

In *The Sense of an Ending*, the shock of the discovery of a false memory adds another deprecatory hearing to the ongoing imaginary trial in Tony's head, in which he stands

melancholically accused. Here, he fantasizes about being told by Veronica's lawyer, in what seems like a "cross-examination", that the entire incident is an imagined scenario: "'Then let me put it to you, Mr Webster, that this supposed incident is an entire figment of your imagination, constructed to justify some romantic attachment which you appear to have been nurturing towards my client, a presumption which, the court should know, my client finds utterly repugnant'" (*TSE*, 119–20). Apropos the centrality of false memory to Barnes's fiction and the mutability of the past as a necessarily imaginative enterprise, Peter Childs states:

> Ironic comedy and false memory are two of the poles around which Julian Barnes's work revolves … If the past is alive for us in the present because we remember it, Barnes's fiction would suggest that it is not necessarily the past that we remember. The versions and details that inhabit memories are mutable and changeable. Recollections fashion a current sense of identity and arguably vice versa, but for Barnes the most important aspect to memory is that it is imaginative. … Barnes turns to memory more and more in his later fiction. (Childs 2011, 6)

Of great significance in Childs's analysis is his stress on the uncertainty of past "recollections" and more aptly for our study, his characterization of identity as merely a "state" built upon a mutable, imaginative basis.

Tony further mentions that an essential operation of time on memory is to 'deform' rather than fix and duly contextualize events. At best, only impressions of past events remain in the mind. His school days, for example, are characterized by "incidents that have grown into anecdotes, to some approximate memories which time has deformed into certainty" (*TSE*, 4). Conscious of the uncertainty at the heart of memories of the past, Tony goes on to say, "If I can't be sure of the actual events any more, I can at least be true to the impressions those facts left. That's the best I can manage" (*TSE*, 4). Later, when he is "re-examining" his younger selfhood in search of memories of Veronica he might have forgotten or repressed, Tony mentions again the fact that he had been carrying only a certain set of reductive impressions, a "version" of his relationship with her. What is more, he also admits that this particular *perspective* on a complex event amounts, not to truth, but to false, delusional memories:

> I tried to be objective. The version of my relationship with Veronica, the one that I'd carried down the years, was the one I'd needed at the time. The young heart betrayed, the young body toyed with, the young social being condescended to. What had Old Joe Hunt answered when I knowingly claimed that history was the lies of the victors? 'As long as you remember that it is

> also the self-delusions of the defeated.' Do we remember that enough when it comes to our private lives? (*TSE*, 121–22)

Tony is thus shedding light on the seminal insight that not only is the self an untenable ensemble of shiftable narratives, but that relation with the other is also necessarily a version out of the many available narratives of the other. Apropos the amorphous nature of human subjectivity, David Hume writes:

> I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement. Our eyes cannot turn in their sockets without varying our perceptions. Our thought is still more variable than our sight; and all our other senses and faculties contribute to this change; nor is there any single power of the soul, which remains unalterably the same, perhaps for one moment. The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. … They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is compos'd. (Hume 1960, 534–35)

Thus, what characterizes human subjectivity better than anything else, is ceaseless flux of the idea of self. Not only the sense of self, but also the senses and the mutable body are in flux. To Hume, even the human soul is characterized by mutability in the face of the multitude of rising and fading perceptions in the theater of the mind, or the imaginary order of consciousness. Even the possession of this mental theater does not afford Hume any comfort as he does not know what *materials* the mind itself is composed of.

Elsewhere in *The Sense of an Ending*, Tony, the unreliable postmodern narrator, clarifies that his 'version' of his self-told 'story', or 'history' of Veronica is characterized by deliberate distortions, mostly at the dictate of his emotions: "… it was easy to give this version of my history because that's what I'd been telling myself anyway. I viewed my time with Veronica as a failure – her contempt, my humiliation – and expunged it from the record. I had kept no letters, and only a single photograph, which I hadn't looked at in ages" (*TSE*, 69). Tony's realization of the inherent bias at the heart of the unreliable narrative of the self is in line with the following remarks by Mark Oakes and Ira Hyman Jr. in their article "The Changing Face of Memory and Self":

> … memory is an unreliable foundation on which to build an identity. People forget events. The retrieval of memories is dependent on current circumstances. Memories may be distorted by additional information. In addition, people may create entirely false memories. Remembering is a constructive process, and although the self is constructed through memories, the construction of memories is also influenced by the self. An individual's self-concept may drive the selection of memories that are recalled and may contribute to the distortion of the past. Thus, the relationship between memories and self is circular: Memories define and shape the self while the self shapes the memories that are retrieved. (Hyman and Oakes 2000, 45–46)

These remarks are similar in many ways to Edelman's view of memory as being *creative* in nature rather than representational. Oakes and Hyman's statements sum up Tony's conclusions regarding his tenuous, emotion-ruled selfhood and his insights into the ungraspable nature of the past through the shifting prism of memory. In this context, one cannot help but be reminded of Laplanche and Pontalis's remarks vis-à-vis deferred action, or the Freudian *Nachträglichkeit*. They state that deferred action could lead to a fresh understanding of temporality whereby "consciousness constitutes its own past, constantly subjecting its meaning to revision in conformity with its 'project'" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1988, 112).

In *The Sense of an Ending*, Tony discovers further that, given time, even carefully crafted mental stories or 'versions' will seem tenuous. He says, "Time … give us enough time and our best-supported decisions will seem wobbly, our certainties whimsical" (*TSE*, 93). In the novel, Barnes devises for Tony and Veronica to meet on Wobbly Bridge, a setting whose symbolic significance Tony does not fail to comment on. Wobbly Bridge is where Tony and Veronica meet and wobbly[41] is Tony's mental state:

> The Wobbly Bridge is the new footbridge across the Thames, linking St Paul's to Tate Modern. When it first opened, it used to shake a bit …. I thought it beautiful. I also liked the way it wobbled. It seemed to me that we ought occasionally to be reminded of instability beneath our feet. Then they fixed it and it stopped wobbling, but the name stuck – at least for the time being. I wondered about Veronica's choice of location. (*TSE*, 89–90)

[41] López-Deflory also comments on the Wobbly Bridge setting: "This constitutes an effective metaphor of the faltering grounds on which lies the link between the past and the present, and of the subsequent 'instability beneath our feet'" (López-Deflory 2016, 10).

Thus, in a manner analogous to Swift's Jack and Amis's Keith, Tony's traumatized mind detects similarities between his mental state and his surroundings, in a bid to work through the deterritorialization of trauma through metaphor. Tony's ruminations on the wobbliness of memory have also been the focus of critical attention. Cristina Chifane, for instance, defines the chief characteristics of memory as "activism, selectivism, situationality, relativism, mediation and rationality or logic". She then proceeds to explain how these facets of memory are exemplified in Barnes's novel:

> The activism of memory refers to its capacity to transform both a person and the information he or she has memorized at a certain point in time … Tony's reminiscence of his relationship to Veronica Ford represents an argument in favor of the idea that our memory is situational in the sense that it depends upon the spatial and temporal coordinates assigned to an event in our life as well as upon our state of mind. In addition, the relativism of memory takes into account the fact that we are not talking about a photographic copy of reality consequently a multitude of other factors intervene and individuals do not memorize and later reproduce the information with absolute accuracy. (Chifane 2013, 104–5)

Chifane concludes by writing that in Tony's "focusing upon other aspects of" the traumatic memory, "Spatial and temporal distance allows for a change of perspective and for a different interpretation of the truth" (Chifane 2013, 107). Importantly, Chifane's emphasis on the variability of truth points to the initiation of a narrative hermeneutics spurred by traumatic deterritorialization, a performative act that holds vital existential significance for the protagonist (Brockmeier and Meretoja 2014, 5).

In like manner, Palani Kumar's article on the "constructed" nature of memory in Barnes's novel focuses on the unpredictability of memory in its present dealings with a traumatic past. The article cites initially Daniel L Schacter's work on "the seven sins of memory", defined as "transience, absent-mindedness, blocking, misattribution, suggestibility, bias and persistence. Among them, it is the sin of transience (forgetting past events) which is frequently found in literature" (2014, 64). The author then goes on to cite Oakes and Hyman's work on false memories, stating that "People create false memories....Because the self is constructed from memories, the self will be a false self, based on beliefs and memories that do not accurately represent the past" (Oakes and Hyman qtd. in Kumar 2014, 67). Falsehood of self "constructed" on a mutable past is certainly the conclusion Tony reaches in his narrative.

Most significantly, Tony's meditations on the nature of the other and unreliability of memory further lead to the discovery that the self equals a narrative and that sanity amounts to a rigid adherence to a self-fashioned 'plot'. Even Tony's ex-wife Margaret is depicted as cognizant of the necessity of a plot to life, in her address to Tony: "'It's quite touching that you're so stubborn. I suppose it's one way of not losing the plot when we get to our age.'" (*TSE*, 77). Echoing Schafer, Rauch, Brockmeier and Meretoja, Tony himself explicitly refers to the narrative nature of our sense of self. He says, "How often do we tell our own life story? How often do we adjust, embellish, make sly cuts? And the longer life goes on, the fewer are those around to challenge our account, to remind us that our life is not our life, merely the story we have told about our life. Told to others, but – mainly – to ourselves" (*TSE*, 95). The realization that the only thread connecting Tony to 'his life' is essentially an ephemeral narrative is a far cry from Tony's youthful mannerisms characterized by individualism and a middle age defined by its aloof 'tidiness'.

Yet, ephemeral or otherwise, narrative is all Tony has at his disposal as a way of making 'sense' of his life as he edges closer to old age. In their recent article on the crucial role of narrative hermeneutics in life, Brockmeier and Meretoja draw upon Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* to highlight the essentially narrative soul of the experience of life. They cite the novel as,

> A recent example that deals with the intertwining of living and telling and with how narratives always already pervade our very experience … It unfolds not only the retrospective process of narrative self-interpretation but also how story models affect how we orient ourselves to the future – as when the young experience and plan their lives in relation to the books they have read. Narrative fiction shapes both their hopes and their fears, their desires and anxieties …. (Brockmeier and Meretoja 2014, 15)

Similarly, in her analysis of the novel, literary gerontologist Maricel Oró Piqueras uses Tony's remarks on the narrativity of life to highlight the significance of a narrative for a healthy outlook on life in old age, as "life narratives have the function of providing a sense of continuity and logical meaning to a long life trajectory" (Oró Piqueras 2014, 89).

Two points merit consideration in Tony's characterization of life as a story: first, that the story of life is one that undergoes potentially countless re-adjustments and re-interpretations, and second, that the other remains a significant party to this transferential

reconfiguration of the narrative of self, in striking parallel with the other two novels of the corpus. To demonstrate the collaborative nature of the life narrative, Barnes metafictionally involves the extradiegetic narratee[42] in Tony's attempts to make sense of the shifting impressions of the past. For example when Tony is about to readjust his views of Veronica, he feels helpless, demanding the reader's assistance. We read, "This may tell you more about me than it does about her. And even if I were to decide, at this late stage, that she was and always had been calculating, I'm not sure it would help matters. By which I mean: help me" (*TSE*, 32). This is Barnes's way of dramatizing the evolving dialogical nature of interpretation involved in the act of reading or analysis.

Apropos, in her article "Trauma Talk", Siri Husvedt – drawing on Freud and later Lacan – alludes to the evolutionary quintessence of meaning in each return to the memory of the traumatic event. Reaffirming the Lacanian statement that "every truth has the structure of fiction" (Lacan 2013, 12) she writes, "What Freud called *Nachträglichkeit* (the shifting of recollection from the perspective of the present), what I think of as fictionalizing the past, is referred to as *reconsolidation* by neuroscientists. We do not retrieve an original memory, but rather the memory we retrieved last time and, with each retrieval, a new version becomes possible" (Husvedt 2015, para. 10). The recontextualization, fictionalization or reconsolidation of the event after the traumatic event (*nachträglich*, or *après-coup*) crops up also in Jean-Michel Ganteau's analysis of Winterson's *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*, where he draws on Laplanche to liken the logic of the narrative of trauma to a spiral characterized by many returns to the event of trauma; the temporality of the novel thus evolves in a spiraling motion: "Ce temps en spirale est celui de l'après-coup, composé d'intermittences et de disparitions, d'un événement et de ses recapitulations… Ce faisant, l'œuvre nous rappelle combien, pour faire trauma, il convient qu'il y ait deux moments, combien le souvenir traumatique agit après-coup, mais combien aussi la rétroaction façonne la perception de l'irruption originelle" (Ganteau 2015b, para. 13). Similarly, in this context, Angelika Rauch cites Lacan, to highlight the vital significance of emerging perspectives on trauma, or "all the resubjectifications of the event which he [Freud] considers necessary to explain its effects at every turning point where the subject restructures himself – that is, as many restructurings of

[42] "Narratee (Fr. narrataire, Ger. Leserfigur) In contrast to the reader (real or implied), a persona traceable in the narrative text through the use of address pronouns, imperatives and other markers of addresseehood. A diegetic or intradiegetic narratee is a character in the fictional world to whom another character tells a story; an extradiegetic narratee is a reader persona exhorted, harangued or hailed by the narrator as, for example, the 'madam' asked to shut the door in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*" (Fludernik 2009, 157).

the event as take place, as he [Freud] puts it, *nachträglich*, after the event" (Lacan qtd. in Rauch 1998, 113). Most significantly, she reiterates the importance of "resubjectification" through what Lacan calls "interlocution": "Trauma is less significant as an event that can be fixed at a prior date … then [than] in its posterior resubjectifications and the restructuring of the subject that is the consequence …. This resubjectification, as past history and ongoing process, can be accessed only by means of an interactive relation between analyst and analysand" (Rauch 1998, 113). Rauch thus stresses the dialogical and processual nature of posttraumatic subjectivity as susceptible to revision through relation to the other. This accords with the Deleuzian immanent ethics of becoming-other following the deterritorialization wrought by trauma. In the process of revision of the significance of trauma (resubjectification), the other also plays an essential role through enabling interaction, or rather, "interlocution".

Fittingly, in *The Sense of an Ending*, instances of seeking dialogue with the extradiegetic narratee are not rare. At one point, Tony is trying to win the reader's sympathy by painting Veronica in a negative light. Here, Tony is revising his views of Veronica's sexual experience prior to meeting Tony. He addresses the reader thus: "Yes, you can say it again: You poor sap. And did you still think her a virgin when she was rolling a condom on to your cock? In a strange way, you know, I did. I thought it might be one of those intuitive female skills I inevitably lacked. Well, perhaps it was" (*TSE*, 36–37). Tony is still confused as to whether Veronica's skills with the condom were attributable to her enigmatic "female skills" or previous experience. In another address to the narratee, Tony is raising the question of his own unreliability as a narrator, offering no defense and leaving the reader free to decide for her/himself:

> You might think this is rubbish – preachy, self-justificatory rubbish. You might think that I behaved towards Veronica like a typically callow male, and that all my 'conclusions' are reversible. You might even ask me to apply my 'theory' to myself and explain what damage I had suffered a long way back and what its consequences might be: for instance, how it might affect my reliability and truthfulness. I'm not sure I could answer this, to be honest. (*TSE*, 45)

Tony's admission of the reversibility of his 'conclusions' in his analysis of the past points to the ongoing essence of the act of interpretation and the existence of multiple perspectives, a process for which he seeks the assistance of the narratee or in Rauch's words, his *interlocutor*. For the moment, no help is offered and dialogue with the narrative of the past must continue.

Tony's solicitation of the narratee's contribution to his mutable narrative of the past also metafictionally dramatizes the essence of narrative as dialogic transference. According to Russel West-Pavlov's paraphrase of Freud, transference is the process whereby the repressed past is instantiated in the present of analysis:

> By the same token, however, the past is constantly being pulled back into the present by those self-same re-inscriptions which overlay the past. … Transference was that very past which psychoanalysis wished to retrieve from the oblivion of repression, manifesting itself in the most immediate present of the therapy. The utility of transference as an exemplification of the problematic past that therapy sought to excavate was all the more evident given the fact that some forms of repression could never be undone. Such repressed elements might never be susceptible of revelation by the normal processes of therapeutic analysis, but might, on the other hand offer themselves of their own will in the form of a real-time re-instantiation of past relational configurations. Into such immanent manifestations the therapist could intervene, re-working the past by means of its present repetition. (West-Pavlov 2013, 108)

Through the intersubjective dynamics of transference, the repressed past thus manifests itself, willing to be re-inscribed in the present. What is of significance to our analysis is that West-Pavlov views this surfacing of a buried past as an instance of immanence. The narrative of the past, thus traverses the past-present dichotomy, waiting to be *actualized* in the present of the analysis, rather like a spectre waiting to be embodied, albeit *differently* in each embodiment. Yet transferential narrativization of the past is not a process with a terminus. Rather, it is "an ongoing process which converts the repressed past and its intrusions into the patient's everyday life, via the ongoing 'presents' of the regular sessions on the couch, into a future in which the patient can live (ideally) freed of symptoms, anxiety or illness" (West-Pavlov 2013, 108). Parallels with LaCapra's emphasis on Freudian working-through as conducive to a workable present, a "life in the here and now" (LaCapra 1999, 707) extricated from a stalled narrative of the past are obvious.

Furthermore, in *The Sense of an Ending*, with regard to interpretation of the narrative of the past, Tony also offers insightful comparisons between *life* and narrative fiction, blurring the boundary in the process, in a move reminiscent of Amis and Swift. We learn that in their youth, Tony and his friends feared "that Life wouldn't turn out to be like Literature", and in the process, we are offered a definition of literature, as seen through the boys' youthful eyes: "Real literature was about psychological, emotional and social truth as demonstrated by the actions and reflections of its protagonists; the novel was about character developed over time"

(*TSE*, 15). Later, in one of his conversations with his ex-wife, Tony and Margaret discuss a song consisting of a single line repeated endlessly, until 'the song' entitled "Every day is Sunday" chooses to end. The repetitive, non-developmental nature of the song strikes mature Tony as a good-enough definition, at least of *his* life, one worthy of being his epitaph. In the following extract, Tony is recounting the conversation with Margaret:

> 'Every day is Sunday' – the words took me back to my own years of stagnancy, and that terrible waiting for life to begin. I asked our friend what the group's other songs were. No, she replied, that's their song, their only song. How does it go then? I asked. What do you mean? Well, what's the next line? You don't get it, do you? She said. That *is* the song. They just repeat the line, again and again, until the song chooses to end. I remember smiling. 'Every day is Sunday' – that wouldn't make a bad epitaph, would it? (*TSE*, 62)

For Tony, who is constantly seen as aspiring to bestow a conveniently tidy sense to the plot of a life whose ending is in sight even as he was younger, the realization that in life, the development of character is not necessarily linear and neatly plottable over a straight temporal course is the principal "psychological, emotional and social truth". Forced to give up any aspiration to grasp and 'possess' his 'life' wholly – an ambition symbolized in the youthful mannerism of wearing the watch with the dial facing inward – Tony opts for the repetitional and at the same time uncannily nightmarish line "Everyday is Sunday" as his epitaph. The repetitional – and meaningless – line that ends of its own accord is thus the Kermodian ending that bestows 'significance' on the "middest"[43] of life.

The significance of an "ending" to the manner in which the plot (of life) would develop is a theme Barnes had already touched upon. In *Flaubert's Parrot*, in an aside on love, Barnes equates life with the anticipation of death, stating, "Mourning is full of time; nothing but time" (Barnes 2009a, 160). The theme of end-oriented narration also crops up later in *Arthur and*

[43] The idea of 'the end' as a vantage point for meaning is elaborated eloquently in *The Sense of an Ending* by Frank Kermode who draws an analogy between narrative fiction and our conception of life, and writes of "our deep need for intelligible Ends. We project ourselves—a small, humble elect, perhaps—past the End, so as to see the structure whole, a thing we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle" (Kermode 2000, 8). Elsewhere in the book, he highlights the importance of a coherent man-made plot in light of an ending thus: "Men in the middest make considerable imaginative investments in coherent patterns which, by the provision of an end, make possible a satisfying consonance with the origins and with the middle" (Kermode 2000, 17). He sums up his comparison of the need for an ending with the discredited Apocalypse in the following formulation: "No longer imminent, the End is immanent" (Kermode 2000, 25). In other words, thoughts of the end constantly color the middle space of the *narrative* (of life).

George where Touie, Arthur Conan Doyle's ailing wife, is quoting a certain Mr. How's observations on Arthur's narrative technique:

> "Mr. How says, that 'Dr. Doyle invariably conceives the end of his story first, and writes up to it.' You never told me that, Arthur."
> "Did I not? Perhaps because it is as plain as a packstaff. How can you make sense of the beginning unless you know the ending? It's entirely logical when you reflect upon it" (Barnes 2006, 75)

Furthermore, in a manner strikingly similar to Amis's novel the Serpentine deviousness of the plot is foregrounded in *The Sense of an Ending*, as yet another parallel between the mental life narrative and literary fiction: the principle holds that the narrative beginning and ending should be sufficiently distanced for the metonymic figure of the plot to develop to become the transferential metaphor of the story, as Peter Brooks explains it. Barnes's figure of the plot is the character of Veronica whose seductive refusal to hand Adrian's diary over to Tony allows for narrative elaboration and consequent resolution of the traumatic story over time, a technique reminiscent of Amis's Gloria Beautyman and Swift's Ellie conceived as scheming plot figures. Tony's epithet for Veronica, "cockteaser", sums her diegetic function up. This is the relevant segment of Tony's spiteful letter addressed to Adrian:

> Adrian: you already know she's a cockteaser, of course – though I expect you told yourself she was engaged in a Struggle With Her Principles, which you as a philosopher would employ your grey cells to help her overcome. If she hasn't let you Go All The Way yet, I suggest you break up with her, and she'll be round your place with sodden knickers and a three-pack, eager to give it away. But cockteasing is also a metaphor: she is someone who will manipulate your inner self while holding hers back from you. (*TSE*, 96)

Thus, similar to narrative plot, a satisfactory development would be one which allows for sufficient development and profundity of manipulation of the "inner self", and this is precisely how Tony's subjectivity grows throughout his narrative, at the hands of Veronica, the figure of the plot. In this context, Peter Brooks' remarks are enlightening as he also holds that the seduction of the reader is key to the development of plot, as exemplified in the figure of Scheherazade, the narrator of *Arabian Nights*:

> Narration, in this allegory, is seen to be life-giving in that it arouses and sustains desire, ensuring that the terminus it both delays and beckons toward will offer what we might call a lucid repose, desire both come to rest and set in perspective. Narratives portray the motors of desire that drive and consume their plots, and they also lay bare the nature of narration as a form of human desire: the need to tell as a primary human drive that seeks to seduce and to subjugate the listener, to implicate him in the thrust of a desire that never can quite speak its name – never can quite come to the point – but that insists on speaking over and over again its movement toward that name. (Brooks 1984, 61)

Correspondingly, in Barnes's novel, it is the "narrative desire" to recover the diary that drives the plot forward, a desire that "never can quite come to the point", as the diary is never restituted to Tony whose tale is one of "seduction" by Veronica and his final "subjugation" in her hands. Tony's resignation in the face of a sequence of events, or a plot beyond his powers of cognition is the ironic "lucid repose" of the narrative.

The same principle of resignation in the face of mutability – or even "irretrievability of the past" (Guignery 2006, 1) – also holds sway in the case of a mental inquiry into past memory. Tony holds that surprise is an integral element of any soul-searching introspection, especially in old age as "the brain doesn't like being typecast. Just when you think everything is a matter of decrease, of subtraction and division, your brain, your memory, may surprise you. As if it's saying: Don't imagine you can rely on some comforting process of gradual decline – life's much more complicated than that" (*TSE*, 111–12). Objective recovery of the past has always been a Barnesian concern as his earlier fiction also dramatizes the human inability to "seize the past" objectively, in its entirety. His inquiry starts as early as *Flaubert's Parrot*, showcasing the protagonist, retired physician Geoffrey Braithwaite's fascination with Flaubert's parrot. In the novel, Braithwaite wonders:

> How do we seize the past? Can we ever do so? When I was a medical student some pranksters at an end-of-term dance released into the hall a piglet which had been smeared with grease. It squirmed between legs, evaded capture, squealed a lot. People fell over trying to grasp it, and were made to look ridiculous in the process. The past often seems to behave like that piglet. (Barnes 2009a, 14)

Braithwaite's meditations on the evasive nature of a reliable narrative of the past, spawn a series of metaphors in addition to the greasy piglet of the above quote. Vanessa Guignery associates this sentiment of uncertainty with the overall postmodern 'incredulity' toward grand

narratives. She writes apropos the novel, “Master narratives that would grant meaning and rationality to events no longer exist and are replaced by a variety of stories” (Guignery 2006, 71–72). Her remarks are an avowal of the almost universal postmodern perspectivism pervading the Barnesian oeuvre. Elsewhere in the novel, the fading narrative of the past conjures up the image of a receding coastline:

> The past is a distant, receding coastline, and we are all in the same boat. Along the stern rail there is a line of telescopes; each brings the shore into focus at a given distance. If the boat is becalmed, one of the telescopes will be in continual use; it will seem to tell the whole, the unchanging truth. But this is an illusion; and as the boat sets off again, we return to our normal activity: scurrying from one telescope to another, seeing the sharpness fade in one, waiting for the blur to clear in another. And when the blur does clear, we imagine that we have made it do so all by ourselves. (Barnes 2009a, 101)

Thus, the past is always viewed from the perspective of a present afloat ‘waters’ that could, at any given moment, turn turbulent, throwing the tenuously sharp image of the past into confusion. In this context, with regard to Braithwaite’s attempts at a wholesome image of Flaubert, Peter Childs holds that the “past is unrecoverable, the truth is ungraspable, and attempts to capture the writer are full of holes” (Childs 2011, 49). Furthermore, in the above extract from *Flaubert’s Parrot*, the illusion of a singular image of the past is shattered when the boat moves – or when the traumatic real pierces the imaginary order of subjectivity – and it is then that the fantasy of the single image is deterritorialized and the subject resorts to different perspectives to resubjectify the previous image of the past. With regard to the Barnesian penchant for presenting multiple perspectives on the past, particularly as manifested in *Flaubert’s Parrot*, Peter Childs also states, “Oscillation and parallax describe history better than development and supposition and there are many truths rather than one” (Childs 2011, 58). This has the added effect of rendering truth “as ghostly as invention” (McEwan 2003, 40), in Ian McEwan’s words in *Atonement*, where the narrative is struggling to present multiple “overlapping” perspectives on the narrator’s “sister’s shocking near-nakedness” near the fountain.

In *The Sense of an Ending*, a further significant correspondence between subjectivity and narrative fiction is that any meaning or perspective amounts to a mental fiction abstracted from the ineffable flux or the innumerable processes of transformation in existence (a theme to

be developed in chapter three). Colin, young Tony's classmate is said to have put this sentiment thus: "Colin, argued that everything was down to chance, that the world existed in a state of perpetual chaos, and only some primitive storytelling instinct, itself doubtless a hangover from religion, retrospectively imposed meaning on what might or might not have happened" (*TSE*, 11). In his *Nothing to Be Frightened Of*, Barnes had already voiced his confusion over the chaos at the heart of the experience of existence, noting the human proclivity for narrative order:

> Lessing described history as putting accidents in order, and a human life strikes me as a reduced version of this: a span of consciousness during which certain things happen, some predictable, others not; where certain patterns repeat themselves, where the operations of chance and what we may as well for the moment call free will interact; where children on the whole grow up to bury their parents, and become parents in their turn; where, if we are lucky, we find someone to love, and with them a way to live, or, if not, a different way to live; where we do our work, take our pleasure, worship our god (or not), and watch history advance by a tiny cog or two. But this does not in my book constitute a narrative. Or, to adjust: it may be a narrative, but it doesn't feel like one to me. (Barnes 2009b, 189)

Notwithstanding Barnes's avowal of the inadequacy of human "narrative" in *The Sense of an Ending*, Tony does not believe that one can transcend the narrativity of existential perspectives and grasp a deeper truth. Instead, life is presented as an ineffable ensemble of ever-revisited narratives "requiring considerable exegesis" (*TSE*, 86).

Tony also blurs the boundary between memory and interpretation, highlighting that an interpretation or memory can be several removes from reality. Here, Tony is commenting on one of his several 'readings' of his dates with Veronica. He says, "Again, I must stress that this is my reading now of what happened then. Or rather, my memory now of my reading then of what was happening at the time" (*TSE*, 41). Tony's bewilderment faced with the multiple layers of reading is apparent. Apropos Barnes's conflation of narration and interpretation in *The Sense of an Ending*, Brockmeier and Meretoja write: "The novel foregrounds how the autobiographical process makes past experiences present and how telling is always a matter of interpreting…. The novel investigates how we are always interpreting our previous interpretations: our lives unfold as such processes of constant reinterpretation of past interpretations" (Brockmeier and Meretoja 2014, 16).

Moreover, the constant resubjectification of an event is also a lingering trait of postmodernism according to Linda Hutcheon who writes,

> Another consequence of this far-reaching postmodern inquiry into the very nature of subjectivity is the frequent challenge to traditional notions of perspective, especially in narrative and painting. The perceiving subject is no longer assumed to [be] a coherent, meaning-generating entity. Narrators in fiction become either disconcertingly multiple and hard to locate … or resolutely provisional and limited – often undermining their own seeming omniscience …. (Hutcheon 1988, 11)

Hutcheon's stress on the postmodern blow to the notion of a coherent subjectivity and perspective as the source of meaning reiterates the nature of 'reality' as an always-already mediated, human *construct*, provisional and *perspectival*.

As Tony's trauma-induced inquiries deepen, his other entrenched assumptions are shattered and subsequently reconfigured, or in the words of Susan Quilliam, "totally reinterpreted – and for the worse" (Quilliam 2012, 93). For instance, the emergence of the information regarding Adrian's affair with Mrs. Ford and the birth of a damaged child radically redefine Tony's view of his friend as an existentialist *hero*:

> 'First-class degree, first-class suicide,' Alex and I had agreed. What sort of Adrian did I have instead? One who had got his girlfriend pregnant, been unable to face the consequences, and had 'taken the easy way out', as they used to put it. Not that there can be anything easy about it, this final assertion of individuality against the great generality that oppresses it. But now I had to recalibrate Adrian, change him from a Camus-quoting repudiator for whom suicide was the only true philosophical question, into … what? No more than a version of Robson, who 'wasn't exactly Eros-and-Thanatos material', as Alex had put it, when that hitherto unremarkable member of the Science Sixth had left this world with a parting 'Sorry, Mum' (*TSE*, 140–41)

The new *reading* of Adrian's suicide reveals his heroic refusal of the unsought gift of life to be no more than an "unremarkable" "version" of Robson's suicide, as he is said to have killed himself following an unwanted pregnancy. Tony's 'recalibration' of Adrian constitutes an act of hermeneutic reconfiguration, through which Tony 'changes' him into a commonplace representative of the class of people afraid of unwanted pregnancy. In the course of his inquiries, not only does Tony "recalibrate" his mental image of the Adrian of his youth, but he also updates his reading of Veronica. Again, revisiting his spiteful letter, in which he had called Veronica "a bore", Tony admits:

> I hadn't even meant it at the time – I was just flailing around, trying to find a way to hurt. In fact, all the time I was going out with Veronica, I found her many things – alluring, mysterious, disapproving – but never boring. And even in my recent dealings with her, though the adjectives might be updated – exasperating, stubborn, haughty, yet still, in a way, alluring – I never found her boring. So it was as false as it was hurtful. (*TSE*, 138)

'Recalibrating' interpretive perspectives is also what the reader of the novel does alongside with shifts in Tony's views of his past, as Michael Greaney states:

> An unreliable narrator, … Barnes's Webster … is the text's first and worst reader; he has the first stab at making sense of things and gets things horribly but instructively wrong. As such, he stands as a negative example for the novel's reader. Learning to distrust the narrator – cottoning on to his unreliability, and recalibrating our version of events accordingly – is our first task as readers of novels like … *The Sense of an Ending*. (Greaney 2014, 232–33)

Greaney is thus obliquely pointing to the novel being an allegory of interpretation (of the ever-renewed mental texts of life and literature) in the dialogical space of reading. To our list of concepts conveying the revision of the past (*Nachträglichkeit*, reformulation, resubjectification and recontextualization) we might add the Barnesian 'recalibration' and 'updating'.

Finally, in his search for an end-oriented narrative that would bestow "consonance"[44] and meaning on his life, Tony decides to use a sentence enigmatically reiterated by his ex-girlfriend and ex-wife. Tony is always left to work out for himself why he does not "get it" and he is never offered any assistance. The following is the account of an email exchange:

> Her reply went: 'You still don't get it. You never did, and you never will. So stop even trying.' I left the exchange in my inbox and occasionally reread it. If I hadn't decided on cremation and a scattering, I could have used the phrase as an epitaph on a chunk of stone or marble: 'Tony Webster – He Never Got It'. But that would be too melodramatic, even self-pitying. How about 'He's On His Own Now'? That would be better, truer. Or maybe I'll stick with: 'Every Day is Sunday.' (*TSE*, 144)

[44] "Men in the middest make considerable imaginative investments in coherent patterns which, by the provision of an end, make possible a satisfying consonance with the origins and with the middle" (Kermode 2000, 17).

Thus, Tony's human search for a life-summarizing epitaph yields two options, forever replaying his saga of repeated attempts at "getting it". With regard to the mutability of the narrative of self in the face of repeated analysis, Roy Schafer points to the fact that interpretations of past actions or memories are liable to change, in the constant process of resubjectification that makes up the varying self-images of the subject:

> Often the stories we tell about ourselves are life historical or autobiographical; we locate them in the past. For example, we might say, "Until I was fifteen, I was proud of my father" or "I had a totally miserable childhood." These histories are present tellings. The same may be said of the histories we attribute to others. We change many aspects of these histories of self and others as we change, for better or worse, the implied or stated questions to which they are the answers. Personal development may be characterized as change in the questions it is urgent or essential to answer. (Schafer 1980, 35)

Schafer's observations are doubly important as he characterizes the human life story as "life historical"; that is, possessed of and implicated in a *material* life context that unfolds over time. He then uses 'story' and 'history' interchangeably as Barnes does in his novel. What is even more important within an ethics of immanence is that Schafer demonstrates these identity-building histories as shifting in response to deterritorializing (traumatic) questions of an "urgent" nature. In other words, the mercurial human 'identity' is but a narrative transformed by the exigencies of the context(s) of inquiry. Schafer concludes his article by writing that in the "hermeneutically filled-in narrative" of analysis and interpretation, "The time is always present. The event is always an ongoing dialogue" (Schafer 1980, 53). In a similar manner, albeit with regard to literary interpretation, Gadamer writes about the essence of a literary "text" as an entity inextricably bound with its interpretation:

> … here "text" must be understood as a hermeneutical concept. This implies that the text is not regarded from the perspective of grammar and linguistics, and as divorced from any content that it might have; that is, that it is not to be viewed as an end product the production of which is the object of an analysis whose intent is to explain the mechanism that allows language as such to function at all. From the hermeneutical standpoint – which is the standpoint of every reader – the text is a mere intermediate product [*Zwischenprodukt*], a phase in the event of understanding that, as such, certainly includes a definite abstraction, namely, the isolation and reification involved in this very phase. (Gadamer 1989, 31)

Thus, the hermeneutical dialogue – or "exegesis" as Barnes puts it – with the text is an ever-shifting mental construct, with every unique "event of understanding" being an "intermediate product", which is always-already a provisional abstraction of meaning.

The refusal to treat interpretation as finite and bound is also similar to the "radical" deconstructionist postulate of the impossibility of a final postulate regarding meaning in a text. Paul de Man voices this sentiment in the following words:

> … the fallacy of a finite and single interpretation derives from the postulate of a privileged observer…. As an escape from this predicament, one can propose a radical relativism that operates from the most empirically specific to the most loftily general level of human behavior. There are no longer any standpoints that can a priori be considered privileged, no structure that functions validly as a model for other structures, no postulate of ontological hierarchy that can serve as an organizing principle from where particular structures derive in the manner in which a deity can be said to engender man and the world. All structures are, in a sense, equally fallacious and are therefore called myths. (De Man 1983, 10)

The finality of literary and existential interpretation after which Tony strives in vain, is deemed a "fallacy" as by definition, the observer has lost her/his privileged position as a stable subjectivity.

In a worldview informed by poststructuralism, all beings lose their stable borders and privileged vantage points in the general porosity of structures. Beings exist through their processuality. All beings are *in process*, to borrow Kristeva's characterization of the subject as being *in process*, the outcome of the interaction between the drives of the pre-linguistic, quasi-maternal *chora*, and the symbolic order of language. Kristeva defines the *chora*, a term borrowed from Plato, thus: "a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated … We may therefore posit that social organization, always already symbolic, imprints its constraint in a mediated form which organizes the *chora* not according to a *law* (a term we reserve for the symbolic) but through an *ordering"* (Kristeva 1986, 94).

Writing about *The Sense of an Ending*, Oró Piqueras also states that Tony's story is "a never-ending narrative until death" that will have to be revisited endlessly at the return and repetition of "remorse", with the outcome being "a deep revision of his remembered young self" and acceptance of instability at the heart of memory and subjectivity, concluding that "memory is strongly influenced by the feelings that invaded someone regarding a specific

event" (Oró Piqueras 2014, 92–93). On the theme of the inexhaustibility of interpretation and critique embodied in Barnes's novel, Greaney states that,

> Every act of reading and interpretation is potentially a misreading, a distortion of what is being read. Such a perception is built into the structure of Barnes's fiction. History and reality, in *The Sense of an Ending*, are experienced as an archive of texts – diaries, wills, letters, suicide notes, emails – that demand to be read but that are always somehow tantalizingly incomplete in what they can tell us about the past. (Greaney 2014, 238)

To conclude, trauma – or "remorse" or maddening "truth" as the corpus authors differently call it – as its own spectral and incessant return, a return demanding audience and witness, could be said to amount to a model of literary reading – as typified by *The Sense of an Ending* which could also be construed as an allegory of interpretation. A work of literature that lodges itself in the reader's mind also amounts to a potentially self-begetting dialogue, or put differently, a ceaseless expansion of a self-recontextualizinig interpretation. An intertextual ghost composed of other ghosts, the literary text keeps returning in the reader's mind, demanding a fresh reading, a new interpretation, or put in psychoanalytic terms, a transferential dialogue that lasts forever, even until death. As such, any return of the literary text – or any event of reading – is (mildly) traumatic, demands narrativization and recontextualization, and is akin to the hyperarousal undergone by a victim of trauma.

Moreover, in their efforts to approach the essence of trauma and its unsettling impact on subjectivity, scholars also resort to strikingly similar *metaphors*. Starting from the pioneering concept of *Nachträglichkeit* by Freud, other metaphors include: resubjectification, 'recontextualization' of traumatic memory by Gerald Edelman, 'revision' of subjectivity by Michelle Balaev, and finally, the Deleuzian concepts of 'deterritorialization' and reterritorialization, corresponding roughly to the Freudian posttraumatic anticathexis in the wake of trauma and libidinal reinvestment following successful mourning.

The next chapter aims to demonstrate how the subjective 'recontextualization' discussed in this chapter also affects the protagonists' conceptions of the 'place' of trauma and more specifically, the idea of national identity. The corpus narratives chart a progressive and evolving questioning into the notion of 'country' along with every other aspect of social existence.

Chapter 2 – Traumatized Citizen: From Social Assumptions to Their Shattering

A. Time Disjointed

Time being disjointed, the feeling that something is fundamentally wrong with the way the world is going is a sentiment that is voiced in various ways by the corpus authors. In all three works there is a prevalent sentiment that a major cultural period and paradigm has reached its end or that it is going through a transitional phase of loss of direction, or 'sense'. This emergent sentiment is even reflected in the very titles of the works: *The Sense of an Ending* problematizes subjective revisions undertaken towards the end of life with oblique references to an epochal end, *Wish You Were Here* signals an epochal absence and a yearning for a return. Similarly, *The Pregnant Widow* mourns the departure of a cultural era as it tries to decipher the consequences of ongoing transformation. At issue in all novels is an unmistakable feeling of cultural malaise and dissonance that characterizes contemporary British society. This sentiment of crisis is captured by Vanessa Guignery and Marc Porée in their description of the 'Condition-of-England' and the 'neuro-novels', categories within which they include Amis and Swift's latest novels:

> No wonder then that bleak and besieged Condition-of-England novels have never had it… so good! At least *they* thrive, outdoing one another as far as dourness of outlooks and ferocity of prospects are concerned (Martin Amis's *Lionel Asbo: State of England* [2012]; Jon McGregor's *Even the Dogs* [2010]). They frequently work hand in hand with "neuro-novels" (Roth), the latter being more explicitly concerned with diagnosing the mental and psychic symptoms of what transpires to be a profoundly unsettling sense of *malaise* affecting the individual and the collective psyche. … . The international theater of military operations (in Iraq, principally) also interferes with domestic wounds to further aggravate traumas, as evidenced in Self's forthcoming *Phone* or Graham Swift's *Wish You Were Here* [2011]. (Guignery and Porée 2015, 132–33)

Guignery and Porée's analysis aptly encapsulates the mood of melancholia, "dourness of outlooks" and "malaise" pervading these novels, which aspire in various ways to witness the various domestic and international traumatic "wounds".

In keeping with this sentiment of a time afflicted with multiple personal and social traumas on a national and international scale, the Shakespearean notion of a time "out of joint"

has come to be a recurrent motif in our corpus, with every novel alluding to it in its own way. Amis evokes *Hamlet* (3.1.124-148) in Keith's reference to "the nunnery"[45], within the context of the sexual revolution as nunnery meant "a house of ill fame" (Simpson and Weiner 2009) in Elizabethan times. Keith addresses Gloria Beautyman as Hamlet did Ophelia, "Get thee to a nunnery, and quickly too" (*TPW*, 353). Swift and Barnes, however, use a synonym of "joint", the "hinge", to refer to this sentiment of cultural and historical trauma; shaken by the death of loved ones and uprooted by inevitable national and international disasters and conflicts, Swift's protagonist Jack voices this sentiment saying, "Everything is mad now, everything is off its hinges" (*WYWH*, 6,300). Rather similarly, in *The Sense of an Ending*, Tony's mother warns him against the traumatizing consequences of attempting to make sense of a chaotic existence. She says: "'But if you're very clever, I think there's something that can unhinge you if you're not careful'" (*TSE*, 47).

In more detail, *The Pregnant Widow* borrows its title from Alexander Herzen, who used it originally to conceptualize the "long night of chaos and desolation" attendant on any significant social change. Amis's concern in the novel is to map the cultural and emotional changes that he believes are characteristic of the transitional period of the sexual revolution of the 70s, whose unforeseen repercussions are still being felt in the British society. Alex Bilmes delineates the temporal scope of the novel as "the period between the mid-Sixties and now, as we continue to come to terms with the 'sea change' of the sexual revolution. The water is still flowing and will be, Amis thinks, for perhaps another century". Bilmes goes on to quote Amis as saying that the 70s represented "a tremendous break with the past" (Bilmes 2014, n.pag.). Peter Boxall's analysis of the novel offers a more insightful perspective on the "large sociopolitical transition" mapped by Amis. We read,

> It reads Keith's out-of-time sexual awakening in the post–Philip Larkin 1970s against his anguished confrontation with gathering age in the early 2000s, offering as it does so an account of the passage from the sexual revolution to the war on terror …, *The Pregnant Widow* sees the 9/11 attacks as the pivot, the exploded bridge between one century and the next, one mode of temporality and the next. … For both Ballard and Amis, as for O'Neill, the turn of the century

[45] "Get thee to a nunnery, go; farewell. Or if thou wilts needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go; and quickly too. Farewell" (Shakespeare 1986, 887)

> conspires with the 9/11 attacks to induce a difficult birth, the birth of a new time from the widowed body of the old. (Boxall 2012, 700–701)

Boxall succinctly touches on the three core traumas that preoccupy Amis's novel: untimely sexual liberation, dread of mortality and the war on terror ensuing the 9/11 attacks, an event which constitutes a disruption to the narrative of global progress and reason.

The profound impact of 9/11 attacks on the American – and global – consciousness has been aptly described in terms of the belated logic of trauma by Richard Gray:

> And then there are the cataclysmic events of 11th September and their aftermath. These are as much part of the soil, the deep structure lying beneath and shaping the literature of the American nation, not least because they have reshaped our consciousness; they are a defining element in our contemporary structure of feeling and they cannot help but impact profoundly on American writing. One possible way of interpreting these events is in terms of trauma: a recalibration of feeling so violent and radical that it resists and compels memory, generating stories that cannot yet must be told. (R. Gray 2011, 24)

Nonetheless, Amis does not present pre-September 11th life as free of international traumas. In the following extract where Amis uses the "crippled clock" as a symbol of the dis-jointed "temporality" of his youth characterized most notably by existential dread, he also refers to one of his recurrent traumatic nightmares from the time of the Cold War, the apocalyptic threat of nuclear extermination: "Apart from the pitifully crippled clock on the wall above the open window, the castle kitchen, that morning, presented a scene of crystallised normality. … Until recently, Keith himself was starting the day with a cooked breakfast; but he feared the microbes in the gamey bacon, just as he feared H-bombs, *ejaculatio praecox*, revolution, dysentery, …" (*TPW*, 217). Thus, for Amis's protagonist, fear in its multiple incarnations, comes to define existence as overshadowed by fear of extermination of life in "the world, which … is coming to an end…" (Barnes 1989, 97), as Barnes's character puts it in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*.

An earlier mention of the deranged nature of contemporary time in Amis's works occurs in *Time's Arrow* where the instability of contemporary existence is juxtaposed with the demands of the capitalist society: we learn that John's trip to the Metropolitan Museum with Nurse del Puablo was demanded of him by "the stone and metal hydra called society. Like writing, paintings seem to hint at a topsy-turvy world in which, so to speak, time's arrow moves the other way. The invisible speedlines suggest a different nexus of sequence and process"

(Amis 2003, 95). Apropos Amis's obsession with – and representation of – the nonlinearity of time, James Diedrick comments:

> Amis's increasingly complex manipulations of narrative temporality also reflect his awareness of the postmodern condition. Haunted by the potential for planetary destruction, placed in an eternal present by the nonlinear representations of reality by video, experiencing a diminishing sense of agency … In this connection it is not surprising that Amis consistently disrupts, subverts, and in one case (*Time' s Arrow*) inverts chronological order, so that time itself becomes a subject of his fiction. (Diedrick 1995, 13)

Thus in Amis's world, daily living is inextricable from the disjointed temporality of trauma, as even the seemingly innocuous TV of the postmodern age induces an affect of fear and loss of a "sense of agency" in the subject.

In like manner, in his portrayal of contemporary loss of cultural and political direction, Graham Swift uses a pun that ties *Wish You Were Here* with the Shakespearean theatre: on his way to his brother's funeral, Jack has to stay in a small hotel called "The Globe" which "was little more than a pub" (*WYWH*, 221). Swift's equation of the globe with a pub is reminiscent of *Waterland*, with its scenes of drunkenness and arson also pointing to the latent human potential for madness (Swift 1999, 175,319). In the same novel, Swift also touches upon apocalyptic concerns in the words of Price who declares, "'The only important thing about history, I think, sir, is that it's got to the point where it's probably about to end'" (Swift 1999, 7).

Literary reflections of Apocalyptic concerns live on in contemporary trauma novels, with the added fear of environmental threats, in novels such as Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* where allegorically-named planets are sought after desperately by planetary wanderers, in an atmosphere replete with spectrality and death. We read,

> There's a planet called Echo. It doesn't exist. It's like those ghost-ships at sea, the sails worn through and the deck empty. It comes on the radar, you fly towards it, there's nothing there. Our crew were outside, repairing the craft, and we saw it moving at speed right at us. It passed straight through the ship and through our bodies, and the strange thing that happened was the bleach. It bleached our clothes and hair, and men that had black beards had white. Then it was gone, echoing in another part of the starry sky, always, 'here' and 'here' and 'here', but nowhere. Some call it Hope.
>
> . . .

> We found a planet, and it was white like a shroud. The planet was wrapped in its own death. We lowered ourselves through mists like mountains, cragged, formed, shaped, but not solid. Put out your hand and you put it through a ghost. Every solid thing had turned to thick vapour. We dropped through winds that could not shift the clouds until we reached a land where the air — if it was air — was like paste. We would soon have made porridge out of our lungs if we had breathed it, and burning porridge too, for the place, as white and cold as death, is as hot as rage. The planet is a raging death.
>
> Or it is a thing that has been killed and rages to be dead. (Winterson 2013, 51)

Hope for the future of humanity is thus represented by Winterson as a spectrally unattainable prospect. The second planet, with its highly toxic and ghostly atmosphere, is reminiscent of what could befall a potentially "killed" planet Earth. This reflects the contemporary traumatic preoccupation that Amis refers to as "the Greening of … imagination" (Chatfield 2015, n.pag.) in an interview with Tom Chatfield.

In *Wish You Were Here*, the major domestic events in the novel that trigger a series of tragic events are the cow disease and BSE. The loss of livestock to the disease and with it, a major source of income and an old way of life are depicted as apocalyptic calamities. We read, "BSE, then foot-and-mouth. What would have been the odds? Those TV pictures had looked like scenes from hell. Flames leaping up into the night" (*WYWH*, 3). Elsewhere, the disease is said to be the major traumatic preoccupation of the local inhabitants: "what came more readily to mind were the cullings and slaughterings of recent times and the grief and hardship they were still causing" (*WYWH*, 14). Furthermore, in the Luxtons' house, the cow disease joins in with the death of loved ones, here Vera, to engender a feeling of universal deterioration, of "rot" (*WYWH*, 20) and decay across the farm.

Swift's setting is one of general malaise arising from national and international causes, in a personified, "disease-hit land" (*WYWH*, 46) whose visage various tragedies were "pockmarking" (*WYWH*, 96). The novel makes several references to scenes of cattle burning, making the rising smoke a constant miasmic presence. Many years after he had left the farm, Jack turns on the TV to witness,

> Thousands of stacked-up cattle, thousands more lying rotting in fields. The thing was burning day and night. The smoke would surely have been visible, over the far hills, from Jebb. Not to mention the smell being carried on the wind. And someone on the TV—another of those experts—was saying that burning these cattle might still release into the air significant amounts

> of the undetected agent of BSE. Though it was ten years on, and this time the burnings were for foot-and-mouth. Which people weren't known to get. Yet. (*WYWH*, 3)

Even living far away does not accord Jack any respite from "the thing" of the "burning cattle". Note also the presence of the spectral smoke always "being carried on the wind" with the risk of infection. In this scene though, the TV supplants the wind to propagate the "contamination" of trauma and loss. The threat of madness and unreason is always a constant undercurrent, a possibility that had not materialized, "yet".

Even Tom, who had left the farm much earlier, had not been spared the traumatic events, through watching them on TV. Tom is thus subjected to 'secondary trauma' or what Geoffrey Hartman refers to (after Luc Boltanski) as "'distance suffering' (*souffrance à distance*)" (Hartman 2003, 258), precipitated by "Audiovisual media [which] pressure a mind that is no longer allowed to 'sleep' but must continually react" (Hartman 1995, 552). Swift narrates,

> But he kept the TV picture of those burning cattle in his head as if it was a real and actual memory, and it was a useful memory to have, somehow, whenever he saw a belch of black smoke, after the explosion, rise up above the flat rooftops, over the palm trees—which was getting to be most days now, sometimes you'd see two, three or more palls of dark smoke. It was a good guide and reference point to have, whenever you had to think of or sometimes look at what those clouds of smoke meant. Burning cattle, slaughtered cattle. Like the ones he'd seen carried off from Jebb Farm because they might be mad. Not were, but might be. They might have been going to catch or spread the madness. (*WYWH*, 197–98)

In a world replete with tragedy and loss, Tom's melancholic psyche internalizes the smoke rising from the burning of dead bodies, be it human or animal. Tom's identity is thus built on a loss and desensitization to "slaughter", which befits his calling as a sniper. This is the "madness" and unreason that Swift fears has already gripped the "potentially warlike" (Swift 2016, n.pag.) human "species" and the 'civilization' it has built.

The sense of desperation and tragedy is so profound and the instances of traumatic events so rife that Bob, the police superintendent thinks his unofficial title might be something else. We read, "Had he been told when he became a policeman that he'd one day be officiating over all the wretched consequences of a so-called mad-cow disease, he'd have said that such an idea was itself mad. He hadn't supposed—though he hadn't sought a quiet life and there was such a thing as rural crime—that he'd become one day a sort of superintendent of misery"

(*WYWH*, 241). Swift's fondness for blurring the man/animal boundary encompasses the idea of the madness of both and their immanent interdependence in a delicate ecosystem, a leakage of instantiated in the transferability of madness and death from one to the other.

The ensuing feeling of loss of bearings also affects the continuity of (the narrative of) life in the country; in the novel, Jack and Ellie are not going to have any children, a decision exacerbating the feeling of an imminent end to an otherwise ongoing narrative of continued kinship: "now there wasn't any next of kin, not for him, not in the true meaning, even though he'd married Ellie. There wasn't any next" (*WYWH*, 77). This sentiment of the absence of any 'next' is aggravated by the propagation of secondary trauma through images broadcast on television: images mainly of international conflicts, dominated fittingly by the ubiquitous smoke:

> More smoke. Not over familiar, remembered hills, and even on the far side of the world. Though Jack's first thought—or perhaps his second—had been the somehow entirely necessary and appropriate one: Well, we should be all right here. Here at the bottom of the Isle of Wight. And while the TV had seemed to struggle with its own confusion and repeated again and again, as if they might not be true, the same astonishing sequences, he'd stepped outside to look down at the site, as if half expecting everything to have vanished. (*WYWH*, 3–4)

Thus, the madness of the world, the derailment of the global narrative of human progress, symbolized here in the "confusion" of the otherwise all-knowing television – almost in the manner of a stunned collective spirit unable to digest its own "astonishing sequences" – induces an equally traumatic affect of a civilization vanishing.

Within the context of a derailed global narrative, the 9/11 attacks are also represented as an historic watershed in the nation's, as well as the world's history. Tom sees the images of the attacks on TV and compares them, in magnitude, to the disasters wrought by the cow disease. We read, "it wasn't so long afterwards that a couple of planes had flown into a couple of big towers—another TV picture to remember—giving a whole new meaning to the act of suicide and having a range of consequences, including ones for British soldiers, which would make a spot of cow disease seem piddling"(*WYWH*, 203). Similarly, we read, "When those planes hit the towers that September," Mrs Robinson thinks, "everyone said that the world had changed, it would never be the same again" (*WYWH*, 319). The ensuing war on terror is portrayed as preoccupying everyone in the novel. Nevertheless, to Jack, terror signifies

traumatic repetition and haunting, into the bargain: "A war on terror, that was the general story. Jack knew that terror was a thing you felt inside, so what could a war on terror be, in the end, but a war against yourself?" (*WYWH*, 60). It seems as if to Swift, a war on terror is probably a struggle every individual is engaged in on a daily basis, as he elides traumatic recall of personal tragedies with global terror. This has the added effect of rendering existence itself traumatic in the long run.

Additionally, terror, the traumatic fear of annihilation in the face of extremist attacks, is represented as a "little ball of fear" lodged deep inside everyone, despite there being a semblance of peace "in the middle of England". Here, Jack is having breakfast on the way to the airport, when he notes that,

> … around him, in fact, was a majority of solitary, preoccupied men (though none in a black tie) doing just as he was doing: pushing something sticky into their mouths and chewing on it needily, but with no particular sign of pleasure. Were they all—though none of them, surely, could be on a journey, a mission like his today—nursing, feeding their own little balls of fear? This was peacetime in the middle of England. But there was a war on terror. (*WYWH*, 149)

Traumatic existence, characterized as it is by the numbing of dissociation and withdrawal of cathexes (or a disruption in affectivity), reduces eating to "pushing something sticky into" the mouth with no sense of sensuous enjoyment. The extract also portrays the "solitary" men as uncanny automata, in Jack's traumatized vision.

To further reflect the universal feeling of insecurity in the face of a global war, Swift devises for the Caravan Park to be renamed "The Lookout Caravan Park", an 'improvement' on its previous name, The Sands:

> The Lookout Caravan Park, named after this cottage (or two knocked into one), in turn named after its former use. He feels, himself now, like some desperate coastguard. Ellie had said they should change the name from The Sands. He'd said they should keep it, for the good will and the continuity. And so they had, for a year. But Ellie was all for them making their own mark and wiping out what was past. There must be no end of caravan sites called The Sands, she'd said, but The Lookout would stand out. (*WYWH*, 7)

In what appears to be an affirmation of Swift's belief in the circularity of history, the caravan park has claimed a name in line with its previous use of "guarding" in a state of bellicose hypervigilance, in a bygone era of insecurity now making a comeback. Swift's conviction in

the nonlinearity of history, and by extension, the human journey of Enlightenment and progress, is a concern that dates from *Waterland* where Tom Crick teaches us:

> It goes in two directions at once. It goes backwards as it goes forwards. It loops. It takes detours. Do not fall into the illusion that history is a well-disciplined and unflagging column marching unswervingly into the future. Do you remember, I asked you – a riddle – how does a man move? One step forward, one step back (and sometimes one step to the side). Is this absurd? No. Because if he never took that step forward—
>
> Or – another of my classroom maxims: There are no compasses for journeying in time. As far as our sense of direction in this unchartable dimension is concerned, we are like lost travellers in a desert. We believe we are going forward, towards the oasis of Utopia. But how do we know – only some imaginary figure looking down from the sky (let's call him God) can know – that we are not moving in a great circle? (Swift 1999, 135)

A strikingly similar loss of faith in humanity's 'forward' march toward the attainment of a Utopian future is voiced through Winterson's protagonist in *The Stone Gods*, where she addressed the Robo *Sapiens* Spike, saying, "'Spike, the future of the planet is uncertain. Human beings aren't just in a mess, we are a mess. We have made every mistake, justified ourselves, and made the same mistakes again and again. It's as though we're doomed to repetition'" (Winterson 2013, 29).

Wish You Were Here goes further and depicts security as the overarching concern of the characters. The Robinsons, buying Jack's ancestral land in the middle of the supposedly peaceful rural England were concerned about it, "and solid evidence of their concern was that heavy white gate with its built-in electronic features. 'Control of Entry', Jack had momentarily thought" (*WYWH*, 311–12). "Control of Entry"[46] was a formality Jack had to go through in the

[46] Kucała discerns a yearning for a return to a lost paradisiac past in Swift's novels: "All the three novels centre around the main characters' futile wish to go back to the idealised place of their early years. The protagonist of *Last Orders* dies too soon to re-possess his private paradise but at least has been spared the frustration of having his dreams contrasted with reality. In *Wish You Were* the protagonist makes the journey, but is aware that not only entrance to the family farm is now forbidden to him, but that the place itself has completely changed its identity. The story is situated in a fallen world, with memories of disastrous events flashing through the character's mind on the single day on which the action is set. Even though Jack Luxton has renounced the family farm and chosen a different mode of life, he still feels that the farm was his true home, one that is now irrevocably lost. … Re-possession of this personal paradise is impossible because it has become ruined from the inside by death, disease and family disagreement and simultaneously damaged by pressures from the violent world outside, which is seemingly bent on self-destruction" (Kucała 2016, 366).

military airport on his way to his brother's coffin. It also points to the increasing militarization of 'civilian' life. Swift's narrative voice further expounds upon this general traumatic awareness of insecurity – or diffuse 'liquid' fear (Bauman 2006) – as the defining sentiment of the contemporary epoch:

> Security, in the broad sense—security of incomes, of livelihoods and even of lives—had become a real enough concern in a region afflicted first by BSE, then, years later, by foot-and-mouth. But security as the Robinsons meant it and as it might affect a local policeman was something different. … it was something that, like those cow diseases, was now just spreading through the air. The feeling that nowhere was really immune, even quiet green places in the depths of the country. … it was only recently that Bob had begun to feel that his safe little job as a country policeman …was actually bound up, as if he might be involved in some latent war, with a larger, unlocal malaise of insecurity. And he'd felt this particularly, like a palpable burden and responsibility, when he'd offered his shoulder to help carry Jack Luxton's poor dead brother. (*WYWH*, 312–13)

Thus, Swift reiterates his conviction that once it takes hold, "the malaise of insecurity" spreads spectrally "through the air", with no place being "really immune". In Swift's cosmopolitan and immanent conception of existence, local and "unlocal" dilemmas merge through universal "contamination", a realization that prompts the discerning policeman to offer "his shoulder" in an ethical gesture of compassion and solidarity.

Swift delves deeper into the theme of universal insecurity as his narrative voice concedes that "it was lookout time now all right" (*WYWH*, 8) as the holidaymakers, there to be "away from it all", were often engaged in discussing terrorism. Jack observes,

> It was surprising how often, in fact, people who were here to have fun, to get away from it all, to have a holiday, could drift, of an August evening, with their sun-reddened faces, into conversations about the dire state of the world and how, one way or another, there was no hope for it. Jack would try, which wasn't so difficult, not to get too involved. It was simply part of his obliging, humouring proprietor's role, to go with the flow. So he'd nod and smile and now and then throw in some meaningless remark. (*WYWH*, 61)

Thus, it seems as if in a world where the simple act of having "fun" and a "holiday" strike Jack as anachronisms, any attempt at relieving the gloominess of conversations obsessed with the "dire" insecurity of contemporary existence would amount to meaningless platitude.

In a 'peacetime' England where Jack wonders to himself "Could bombs go off in motorway service stations?" (*WYWH*, 218), and the police superintendent agrees that "the world—the world at large—certainly wasn't getting any safer" (*WYWH*, 315), it comes as no surprise if Jack overhears his caravanners conversing about the ever-worsening state of the world. We read, "Jack might have said that it was a funny thing, but the caravanners, on their holidays, often wanted to talk about the general state of the world, how it wasn't getting any safer. Just like him and Bob now. And Jack might have put forward the idea that there was no such place really as 'away from it all', was there?" (*WYWH*, 316).

In *The Sense of an Ending*, Barnes's vision of contemporary reality, informed as it is by recent traumatic events, notably the 9/11 attacks, is also heavily tinged with fear, mistrust and incomprehensibility. Tony says,

> I still read a lot of history, and of course I've followed all the official history that's happened in my own lifetime – the fall of Communism, Mrs Thatcher, 9/11, global warming – with the normal mixture of fear, anxiety and cautious optimism. But I've never felt the same about it – I've never quite trusted it – as I do events in Greece and Rome, or the British Empire, or the Russian Revolution. Perhaps I just feel safer with the history that's been more or less agreed upon. Or perhaps it's that same paradox again: the history that happens underneath our noses ought to be the clearest, and yet it's the most deliquescent. (*TSE*, 60)

Barnes is attesting to the fact that history, as the Caruthian[47] history of trauma, requires the retrospectivity of narrative to approach an acceptable degree of reliability. Official narratives of contemporary traumatic occurrences such as the 9/11 attacks and global warming do not strike Tony as reliable. Barnes, who equates history and time with personal memory, uses the uncanny 'natural' phenomenon of the Severn Bore[48] to convey, among other things, the affect

[47] "For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (Caruth 1996, 18).

[48] "Tidal bore, also called bore, body of water that, during exceptionally high sea tides, rushes up some rivers and estuaries near a coast where there is a large tidal range and the incoming tide is confined to a narrow channel. Traveling upstream about two or three times as fast as the normal tidal current, a bore usually is characterized by a well-defined front of one or several waves, often breaking, followed by the bore's main body, which rises higher than the water level at its front. The height of the bore is greater near the banks of a river than at midstream. … The classic example of a bore occurs on the Qiantang River (the lower course of the Fuchun River), in Zhejiang province, China, which has bore heights that reach nearly 9 metres (about 29 feet). In France the mascaret is a large bore on the Seine River, which forms on spring tides and reaches as far upriver as Rouen. Other rivers containing well-

of uncertainty that defines the times. Tony describes the feeling as, "unsettling because it looked and felt quietly wrong, as if some small lever of the universe had been pressed, and here, just for these minutes, nature was reversed, and time with it. And to see this phenomenon after dark made it the more mysterious, the more other-worldly" (*TSE*, 35–36). The Severn Bore, with the "mysterious" and "other-worldly" effect of time being "as if …placed in reverse" (*TSE*, 122) is an instance of the uncanny defined by Bennet and Royle in the following words:

> To try to define the uncanny is immediately to encounter one of its decisive paradoxes, namely that it has to do with a *troubling* of definitions, with a fundamental disturbance of what we think and feel. The uncanny has to do with a sense of strangeness, mystery or eeriness. More particularly it concerns a sense of unfamiliarity which appears at the very heart of the familiar, or else a sense of familiarity which appears at the very heart of the unfamiliar. The uncanny is not just a matter of the weird or spooky, but has to do more specifically with a disturbance of the familiar. (A. Bennett and Royle 2014, 35)

The uncanny "eeriness" of the Severn Bore comes to define Tony Webster's vision of history as well as memory[49] and existence, as will be demonstrated in depth in chapter three. Tony's sentiment of incertitude is doubly disconcerting as the phenomenon defies human 'scientific' timetables and the narrator is conscious of his own inability to grasp the nature of the phenomenon. His understanding is further undermined by its fictional nature, as an "as if" explanation.

Furthermore, in Brian McHale's words, Tony's confusion in the face of the uncanny Severn Bore can be attributed to two sets of questions troubling modernist and postmodernist fiction. McHale begins by stating his theory regarding modernist fiction: "the dominant of modernist fiction is *epistemological*" (McHale 1987, 9). In other words modernist works

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known bores include the Severn, in England, and the Petitcodiac River, which empties into the Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick, Canada" ("Tidal Bore | Tidal Current | Britannica.com" 2016, n.pag.).

[49] "López-Deflory also comments on the water imagery in the novel: "… memories are also unstable *per se,* as conveyed through the symbolic images of running water present in the novel. The first river that appears is the Severn, known for its characteristic tidal bores. This phenomenon occurs when the force of the current goes against that of the sea tide at the mouth of the river. As a result, a wave that moves inland, rushing upstream, is produced. … the image of the wavy water flowing against the direction of the river symbolically represents the uncertainty resulting from trying to go back in time to recover past events" (López-Deflory 2016, 10).

problematize the nature of knowledge. The questions that a modernist work may ask include "What is there to be known?; Who knows it?; How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty?; How is knowledge transmitted from one knower to another, and with what degree of reliability?; How does the object of knowledge change as it passes from knower to knower?; What are the limits of the knowable? And so on" (McHale 1987, 9). McHale then cites the detective story as "the epistemological genre *par excellence*" (McHale 1987, 9). The postmodernist fiction on the other hand raises a different set of questions: ontological. He draws on Dick Higgins to prove his point:

> … the dominant of postmodernist fiction is *ontological*. That is, postmodernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions like the ones Dick Higgins calls "post-cognitive": "Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?" Other typical postmodernist questions bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects, for instance: What is a world?; What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured? And so on. (McHale 1987, 10)

Thus, according to McHale's analysis, the phenomenon of the Severn Bore highlights the event's affront to human understanding and throws normal conceptions of temporality and ontology[50] in the world into disarray. Further, as an embodiment of trauma, the uncanny

[50] Other instances of ontological questioning in the corpus include Tony's denial of his and Veronica's fictional existence: "Afterwards we watched the TV news and awkwardly discussed world affairs until bedtime. Had we been in a novel, there might have been some sneaking between floors for a hot cuddle after the paterfamilias had locked up for the night. But we weren't; Veronica didn't even kiss me goodnight that first evening, or make some excuse about towels, and seeing I had everything I needed" (*TSE*, 28). In Amis's novel we read about a similar troubling of the referential frame of the novel, whereby Gloria is presented as a real person: "And suddenly she stops, turns, and opens her coat … In novels, weather and landscape answer to mood. Life isn't like that" (*TPW*, 322). Elsewhere, we learn about Keith living within a novelistic temporality as opposed to a real one: "As for Keith … Well, it is 2009, now, not 2003, when, reasonably novelistically, 1970 caught up with him, all at once" (*TPW*, 309). Keith, acknowledging the characters' novelistic existence declares: "Timmy'll be along in a chapter or two" (*TPW*, 40). Elsewhere, Keith likens himself to a director writing the lives of the other characters: "*Well*, said the shrill Scheherazade on the terrace—and Keith wanted to shout, *Cut*! But no: keep rolling. It occurred to him, now, that he was the director of the film in which she starred; and it was time for a change of genre. No more platonic pastoral. Time for the slatternly shepherdess, the venal wood-nymph, the doped contessa" (*TPW*, 156). Yet the most shocking moment of postmodernist ontological

movement to and fro of the river also reflects the unpredictable temporality of trauma which refuses to allow the victim easy progress towards a future along the path of "the arrow of time": (if unnarrated) the traumatic past can reside as unintegrated "foreign body" revivifying the past as a literality in the present, creating a feeling of backward movement in time. The affront to comprehension and the disjointed nature of traumatic time raise simultaneously epistemological and ontological questions. This is in keeping with Linda Hutcheon's statement that McHale's binary distinction does not always apply in postmodernist fiction, or what she prefers to refer to as historiographic metafiction: "I would argue that the contradictions of postmodernism cannot be described in "either/or" terms (especially if they are going to be reversible!). Historiographic metafiction asks both epistemological and ontological questions. How do we know the past (or the present)? What is the ontological status of that past? Of its documents? Of our narratives?" (Hutcheon 1988, 50).

The epistemological and ontological questions posed with regard to an insecure existence (How do I know trauma? What am I, if not a haunted being?), could also be analyzed in light of the work of Ronnie Janoff-Bulman. The sense of profound uncertainty which characterizes contemporary existence amounts to a realization which Ronnie Janoff-Bulman refers to as the "assault" on our "most fundamental assumptions about the world and ourselves". She writes:

> The essence of trauma is the abrupt disintegration of one's inner world. Overwhelming life experiences split open the interior world of victims and shatter their most fundamental assumptions. Survivors experience "cornered horror," for internal and external worlds are suddenly unfamiliar and threatening. Their basic trust in their world is ruptured. Rather than feel safe, they feel intensely vulnerable. … traumatic life events provide powerful evidence that the world is a frightening place in which they are not protected. Suddenly the victim's inner world is pervaded by thoughts and images representing malevolence, meaninglessness, and self-abasement. They are face to face with a dangerous universe, made all the more frightening by their total lack of psychological preparation. (Janoff-Bulman 2010, 63)

Janoff-Bulman's analysis of trauma is particularly significant as it overlaps with an immanent characterization of trauma as a dislodging or deterritorialization. Trauma is not an

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troubling comes about in *Wish You Were Here*, where Tom prevents Jack from going ahead with his deranged plan of killing himself and his wife, saying "Over My Dead Fucking Body" (*WYWH*, 346).

incomprehensibility in Janoff-Bulman's research. Rather, it is the grim realization of the futility of belief in received values of the benevolence of the symbolic order into which the subject is born. The shattering of the victim's "assumptive world"[51] built on "an illusion of invulnerability" (Janoff-Bulman 1989, 116) also opens the victim's eyes to the uncanny *unfamiliarity* and danger at the heart of existence, rendering it "meaningless" and "frightening".

Among the three authors, Graham Swift is the one who most graphically portrays this sense of the shattering of assumptions, nostalgically "yearning for lost certainties" (Lea 2005, 4) of life and in particular, rural England[52]. Apropos, Stacey D'Erasmo explains: "After the farms died, some of their owners opened small businesses; some went to the cities; others joined the army. … Swift traces what happens to communities of people who once lived on and by the land, but no longer can. Exiled in modern life, they're perpetually haunted by alternate selves, tied and obligated to structures that no longer exist" (D'Erasmo 2012, n.pag.). In a similar manner, in his general introduction to the universe of the Swiftian fiction, Stef Craps states: "The reality with which he confronts his characters – typical ingredients of which are murder, war, torture, terrorism, impending nuclear annihilation, suicide, death, madness, incest and rape – is an intensely traumatic one, tripping them up, throwing them off balance, unsettling their comfortable world-views and cutting the ground from under their habitual assumptions" (Craps 2005, 2). Various traumatic events thus deal a seismic blow to the Swiftian characters' received, "habitual assumptions" of subjectivity, compelling them to forge it afresh from the ashes of the shattered vectors of the old.

To Swift, the "madness" of the times, its "unhinged" incomprehensibility renders the future bleak and he chooses the universal image of greyness to convey this "murk". Here, Ellie is inside the car: "Today there is no view. Even Holn Head is just a vague, jutting mass of darker greyness amid the general greyness, and Ellie can only squintingly imagine that at a

[51] "I would maintain that there are three primary categories of such assumptions: (1) perceived benevolence of the world, (2) meaningfulness of the world, and (3) worthiness of the self. Based on past research on the experience of victimization … there is little question that assumptions about the benevolence of the world, about meaningfulness, and about oneself are central concerns of individuals following stressful negative events; as such, they are likely to be primary postulates of our assumptive world" (Janoff-Bulman 1989, 116).

[52] Kucała writes in this regard: "His opening reflection, 'There is no end to madness …once it takes hold' functions also as a summary of the story which is to be told, and which is primarily a story of the family's decline and of the larger world going the same way" (Kucała 2016, 362–63).

certain point, through the murk beyond her windscreen, she can see the pin-prick gleam of the lit-up windows of the cottage" (*WYWH*, 31). Similarly, we read, "Jack, … , looks now from an upstairs window at a grey sea, at a sky full of wind-driven rain, but sees for a moment only smoke and fire" (*WYWH*, 2). The greyness amounts to a pall of death covering everything. Even the vegetation takes on a morbid complexion as in the "Ivy-shrouded tree stump" (*WYWH*, 266). All this gloom, characterized as it is with "motifs of disconnection, discontinuity and discordance" (Lea 2005, 10) arises from the fact that the series of events recounted in the novel seem inexplicable within the normal conceptual framework of life, or a set of "unquestioned and unchallenged" (Janoff-Bulman 1989, 114) assumptions in Janoff-Bulman's words, in a small rural community. Daniel Lea's analysis of the Swiftian "fictional *Weltanschauung*" sheds further light on the roots of the shattered assumptions of the characters:

> His abiding diagnosis of British society in the second half of the century is of a chronic melancholia that mourns the lost stabilities of the past with a lachrymose nostalgia. The sense of dislocation and alienation that bedevils the subject springs from a systemic abandonment of institutional authority and its replacement by an ideological and ethical free-for-all that champions its democratic relativism even as it disavows collective responsibility. For Swift the loss of the centralising doctrines of religion and patriarchy as efficient symbolic cornerstones for social and psychological mooring has resulted in a drift away from cohering communalities and into a form of atomised solipsism that ultimately destroys empathetic identification between subjects. … Swift's novels return time and again to the dismantling of local communities by the imperatives of demographic change and shifts in generational value systems and suggest that without the exterior markers of social belonging the centre cannot hold and things, and people, fall apart. (Lea 2005, 10–11)

In Lea's analysis of the global Swiftian melancholia, the inevitable social changes of the past century – summed up by Lyotard in his notion of the loss of faith in grand narratives – have resulted in the weakening of the social moorings of religion and patriarchy (both points to be elaborated later on in this chapter). With these cornerstones removed, communities appear to have lost their coherence, social values have undergone a sweeping redefinition and the entire notion of belonging seems to have faded, leading to the overall impression of an acentric, crumbling entity, otherwise known as a country. Yet, as far as *Wish You Were Here* goes, "lachrymose nostalgia" is probably not a feeling the novel aims to evoke. Rather, an immanent reading reveals an affirmative Swift who is a nonjudgmental observer of the multitudinous processes of "being" that he allows to unfold in the verbal construct of his novel. As is the case

with *The Pregnant Widow*, the loss of a past stability, painful though it may be, accords the subject the chance to fashion its own fresh identity (however provisional it may be). From an ethical perspective one also discerns a move toward acknowledgment of responsibility toward immanent existence in all its manifestations. As far as *Wish You Were Here* is concerned, this realization is conducive to "empathic identification".

Intensifying greyness and morbidity, there is also a "frosty" atmosphere of dread to the world of the novel. We read, "Bob, looking at Jack also contemplating that frosty view and seeing his Adam's apple rise and fall, might have begun to wish this topic of security hadn't emerged, prompted as it was not just by the burglar alarms at Jebb, but by his local policeman's need to give some context to the death of a once local man in a far-away country" (*WYWH*, 316). Frostiness, thus, arises from the realization of insecurity, and the difficulty of verbalizing trauma in straightforward terms, faced with the inner "need" to contextualize Tom's *deterritorialized* death (not at 'home' in the UK, but in Iraq). We also learn that Bob, a regular and "a practical policeman, had become a not unreflective man and, while keeping these thoughts to himself, might have looked soberly across the frost-whitened valley before them" (*WYWH*, 315). Importantly, despite rendering existence frigid, trauma is also demonstrated as spurring characters to adopt a questioning, "not unreflective" attitude to life. The evocation of the chilly vista in the novel could be said to reflect the internal chill of the characters in their struggle to overcome the symptoms of trauma. Apropos the relevance of place to the characters' inner world Michelle Balaev explains:

> Place, therefore, becomes central to representations of trauma in the novel because the physical place of suffering and remembrance of loss becomes an identifiable source for the author to explicate the multiple meanings of the event. The physical landscape is a referent for the individual's sense of self or identity, and writers often centralize the natural world when the protagonist confronts a traumatic memory in order to demonstrate the internal struggle of the self and the various workings of the mind as the individual attempts to understand, incorporate, and explain the traumatic event. (Balaev 2008, n.pag.)

The centrality of a questioning into trauma in the face of events of grave grandeur is a theme Swift had visited before. In this context, death and in particular the corpse emerge as significant motifs in the Swiftian oeuvre: earlier in his fiction, Swift had equated the inexplicability of historical human failure with a corpse. Tom Crick in *Waterland*:

> And to illustrate both our pressing need to ask the question why and the proposition that history begins with our sense of wrong, I used to ask you to liken the study of history to an inquest. Suppose we have on our hands a corpse – viz., the past. …We ask: Why did this corpse come to be a corpse? Answer: By accident – or because on a certain day in Paris when a certain guillotine was descending, Louis XVI happened to have his neck in the way. At which you would laugh, and prove your inquisitive minds, your detective spirit – your historical consciousness. (Swift 1999, 106–7)

Faced with the historical trauma of shattered assumptions of our sociality and following our inward conviction that something is "wrong", or "out of joint", the human "detective spirit" launches an internal inquiry into the causes of this universal malaise: to find out why the human narrative of human progress lies dead.

The traumatic events in *Wish You Were Here*, evoking what Stacey D'Erasmo terms "a collective psychic wound" (D'Erasmo 2012, n.pag.), as well as the crucial inevitability of social change and universal impermanence as a *sine qua non* of life, are depicted as throwing the centuries-old order and stability of people's lives into disarray. We read:

> All the generations going back and forwards. It had been so for centuries. The first farmhouse on Jebb Hill had been built by a Luxton in 1614. The oak in Barton Field was perhaps old even then. And who would have thought—let alone his own mother—that he, Jack Luxton, would be the first of all the Luxtons (as he was now the last) to cut that long, thick rope on which his own hands had been hardened and sell Jebb Farmhouse and all the land and become, with Ellie, the soft-living proprietor of a caravan site? (*WYWH*, 29)

The multifaceted oak thus comes to symbolize the illusion of stability and continuity in the social narrative. Jack, whose vision of life is now colored with death, turmoil and insecurity strikes a postmodern note when he concludes that grand rules no longer apply in any area of life and that exceptionality is the order of the day. In reply to Major Richards putting a professional-sounding, nice twist on Tom's death in Iraq and the repatriation of his fragmented body, we learn that "Jack … didn't feel it was exceptional. Or, rather, he felt that everything was now exceptional, so exceptionality had become the norm" (*WYWH*, 120–21). It is as if with the sale of the farm and the *grand* oak in the middle, all reliance on grand narratives smoothing over exceptionalities has faded, or rather, every exceptional "event" – which has "unpredictable and long-lasting consequences" (Ganteau and Onega 2014, 8) – is a micro-

narrative in its own right, coexisting immanently with infinite equally feeble and impermanent contiguous narratives. Hutcheon expresses this postmodern sentiment in the following words:

> Rorty, Baudrillard, Foucault, Lyotard, and others seem to imply that any knowledge cannot escape complicity with some meta-narrative, with the fictions that render possible any claim to "truth," however provisional. What they add, however, is that *no* narrative can be a natural "master" narrative: there are no natural hierarchies; there are only those we construct. It is this kind of self-implicating questioning that should allow postmodernist theorizing to challenge narratives that do presume to "master" status, without necessarily assuming that status for itself. (Hutcheon 1988, 13)

Jack's insight into the disappearance of overarching norms, or rather, his distrust of the master norms fits into this (self-)questioning.

In sum, the narratives portray the contemporary era as afflicted with a deep-rooted, traumatic sense of instability and fear of survival. The global awareness of a terror that takes on diverse visages and strikes unexpectedly adds to the traumatic nature of an existence already suffering from natural disasters and traumas of a personal nature. This combination of multiple traumas undermines the subject's faith in the unquestioned assumptions surrounding the human social existence. The contemporary loss of belief in social certainties at the hands of trauma, aggravates an already shaky faith in grand narratives.

B. Grand Assumptions Shattered

Contextualizing the novels within major postmodern theories of the absence of grand or meta- narratives is crucial to our analysis. To Lyotard, the postmodern meant a crumbling of conviction in the explanatory and emancipatory powers of the grand narratives possessed of a middle and an end, narratives which previously sustained and enthused subjectivity. He states: "Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. … The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal" (Lyotard 1984, xxiv). Instead of metanarratives of legitimation, in the wake of the metaphysical crises of the 19th and 20th century, there are now "clouds" of "language games" with "pragmatic valencies". One lives at the intersection of these language games, unable to "establish stable language combinations" (Lyotard 1984, xxiv).

Further on in his book, Lyotard touches on the two types of grand narrative – speculative and emancipatory – and ties their decline to the rise of post-WWII technologies:

> In contemporary society and culture – postindustrial society, postmodern culture – the question of the legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation.
>
> The decline of narrative can be seen as an effect of the blossoming of techniques and technologies since the Second World War, which has shifted emphasis from the ends of action to its means; it can also be seen as an effect of the redeployment of advanced liberal capitalism … a renewal that has eliminated the communist alternative and valorized the individual enjoyment of goods and services. (Lyotard 1984, 37–38)

Thus, the postmodern condition, in Lyotard's analysis, is characterized by the decline of the overarching narratives that explained existence (speculative) and offered a means of eschatological salvation (emancipation). Its main hallmark is the unprecedented speed of the human technological progress, the rise of capitalism and its attendant consumerism.

To the detractors of postmodernism however, postmodernism is primarily associated with a fascination with surfaces and characterized by depthlessness and ahistoricity. A notable example of an antagonistic account of postmodernism is Jameson's comparison of Van Gogh's "high modernist" painting *A Pair of Shoes* and Andy Warhol's "postmodernist" shoe paintings. Jameson writes: "The first and most evident [difference] is the emergence of a new kind of

flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense, perhaps the supreme formal feature of all the postmodernisms to which we will have occasion to return in a number of other contexts" (Jameson 1992, 9). Thus, the primary characteristic of postmodernist art in Jameson's view is that it emanates an absence of depth. On top of depthlessness, Jameson identifies a further quality of postmodernist art which has to do with affect, or rather, its absence: "a third feature … what I will call the waning of affect in postmodern culture. Of course, it would be inaccurate to suggest that all affect, all feeling or emotion, all subjectivity, has vanished from the newer image" (Jameson 1992, 10). Thus Jameson recognizes a failure on the Warholian images' part, to affect, or to relate emotionally to the viewer. In his Marxist analysis, Jameson ties his proclaimed "waning of affect" to the commodification of the images of life. here, Jameson uses Warhol's Marilyn Diptych as an example: "The waning of affect is, however, perhaps best initially approached by way of the human figure, and it is obvious that what we have said about the commodification of objects holds as strongly for Warhol's human subjects: stars – like Marilyn Monroe – who are themselves commodified and transformed into their own images" (Jameson 1992, 11). Thus, to Jameson's way of thinking, postmodern art is best defined by its commodification of flattened images, whose affective potential is depleted. These sentiments also crop up in Terry Eagleton's Marxist theorization of postmodernism as "a depthless, decentred, ungrounded, self-reflexive, playful, derivative, eclectic, pluralistic art which blurs the boundaries between 'high' and 'popular' culture, as well as between art and everyday experience" (Eagleton 1997, vii).

Among the corpus authors, Martin Amis has a great deal to say about the deeply traumatic consequences of the postmodern decline of the grand narratives in the West. One of Amis's latest creations *Lionel Asbo,* set in Diston which is a dystopian rendition of a British town, contains several disturbing references to what a depthless life might entail, a sentiment best summed up in the protagonist's lamentations about his old life: "'And *my* old world, Diston as was, it's . . it's light! Nothing weighs an ounce! People die! It, things—fly away!'" (Amis 2012, 151). Amis is literalizing postmodern 'depthlessness' as the lightness of objects and the briefness of life, in a move reminiscent of McHale's observations on the centrality of metaphoric destabilization of ontology to postmodernist fiction. He states:

> Postmodernist writing seeks to foreground the ontological *duality* of metaphor, its participation in two frames of reference with different ontological statuses. This it accomplishes by aggravating metaphor's inherent ontological tensions, thereby slowing still further the already

> slow flicker between presence and absence. All metaphor *hesitates* between a literal function (in a secondary frame of reference) and a metaphorical function (in a "real" frame of reference); postmodernist texts often prolong this hesitation as a means of foregrounding ontological structure. (McHale 1987, 134)

The ontological destabilization of the referential frames of narrative – principally through literalization of the metaphor – is a narrative effect frequently evoked by Amis (as well as Swift, and to a lesser extent by Barnes). Foregrounding ontological indeterminacy also befits a logic of spectrality so prevalent in the novels. Apropos Amis's depiction of postmodernity, James Diedrick writes, "Amis's larger subject, a source of anxiety, outrage, and wonderment as well as laughter, is the postmodern condition itself" (Diedrick 1995, 9).

Amis takes a grim view of postmodernity and associates its rise with the disorientating loss of cultural certainties, an attitude summed up in his title *The Pregnant Widow*. More specifically, postmodernism is depicted as setting in as a cultural paradigm, concurrently with the sexual revolution of the 70s. He believes – in agreement with Eagleton – the period to be most closely associated with a decline in moral standards, obsession with surfaces and sensations, narcissism and most regrettably to him, the dissociation of love from sex. In an interview with Alex Bilmes, Amis states that,

> The Seventies was the Me Decade. Every decade is sort of that, but it was a new order of self-absorption and narcissism. Looks mattered more. And they matter even more now. Here [in Britain] at least, there's a complete obsession with surfaces and facets and textures and superficialities, and you wonder how far it can go. Have looks ever been more important? There's a great unspoken tyranny of looks now. (Bilmes 2014, n.pag.)

In his analysis of the roots of the changes that redefined people's social and sexual mores, Amis specifically ties these readjustments – bordering on metamorphoses, hence his liberal quotation of Ovid (Bilmes 2014, n.pag.) – to the question of a nationwide traumatic existence under threat of nuclear extermination, and believes that the Cold War is to blame for the unsavory consequences of this transformation:

> Like everyone else alive during the period under review, Keith was a vet of the Nuclear Cold War (1949–91): the contest of nightmares. In 1970, a twenty-year tour lay behind him. A twenty-year tour lay ahead of him…. Growing up, he didn't feel resentful about military service exactly, because everyone else alive was in the army too. Apart from crouching under his desk

> at school, when they practised for central thermonuclear exchange, he didn't seem to have any duties. Or no conscious ones. But after the Battle of Cuba, in 1962 (for its duration, its thirteen days, his thirteen-year-old existence became a swamp of nausea), he entered into the spirit of the contest of nightmares. …. There, the violence was all in the mind.
> Keith lay in his bed, trying to understand. What was the outcome of the dream war and all that silent combat? Everything could vanish, at any moment. This disseminated an unconscious but pervasive mortal fear. And mortal fear might make you want to have sexual intercourse; but it wouldn't make you want to love. Why love anyone, when everyone could vanish? So maybe it was love that took the wound, in the Passchendaele of mad dreams. (*TPW*, 133–34)

In short, the trauma of the Nuclear Cold War (also a preoccupation of Swift and Barnes in the 80s) induced a "mortal fear", triggering an internal struggle to comprehend, with everyone being constantly on edge – hyperaroused – as participants in the battle of existence. The traumatic symptoms of nightmares and nausea and the dissociative withdrawal of cathexes are visible in Amis's account of his youth.

To Amis however, what this deterritorialization engendered above all, was a redefinition of love, or rather, its metamorphosis into licentious sex. Consequent to the "mortal fear" of imminent destruction, people, according to Amis, resorted to sexual intercourse devoid of love and affection. Lionel in *Lionel Asbo* is the contemporary culmination of such an approach to sexuality. He intimates his 'feelings' to his nephew thus: "'Remember what I said? *Not happy. Not sad. Numb*. Des, I tell you the truth. The only time I know I'm breathing is when I'm doing some skirt. Not uh, problem-free there either. With the minge'" (Amis 2012, 198). Lionel's language satirically sums up his vulgar or "one-dimensional" – in Herbert Marcuse's[53] analysis of capitalistic – existence, characterized by benumbed obsession with sex,

[53] "The productive apparatus and the goods and services which it [advanced industrial culture] produces 'sell' or impose the social system as a whole. The means of mass transportation and communication, the commodities of lodging, food, and clothing, the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industry carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits, certain intellectual and emotional reactions which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers and, through the latter, to the whole. The products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood. And as these beneficial products become available to more individuals in more social classes, the indoctrination they carry ceases to be publicity; it becomes a way of life. It is a good way of life—much better than before—and as a good way of life, it militates against qualitative change. Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe. They are redefined by the rationality of the given system and of its quantitative extension" (Marcuse 2002, 14).

with a synecdochic[54] "skirt" or "the minge", as opposed to an unabridged human partner. Lionel could also be said to instantiate the Jamesonian concept of the "waning of affect" characteristic of postmodernism:

> The end of the bourgeois ego, or monad, no doubt brings with it the end of the psychopathologies of that ego – what I have been calling the waning of affect. … As for expression and feelings or emotions, the liberation, in contemporary society, from the older *anomie* of the centered subject may also mean not merely a liberation from anxiety but a liberation from every other kind of feeling as well, since there is no longer a self present to do the feeling. (Jameson 1992, 15)

In Jameson's rather sweeping view of postmodern subjectivity, the disintegration of a coherent subjectivity, the end of the Cartesian *ego cogito*, brings about the inability to feel.

The social changes that came about in the 70s are listed by Amis as clauses in the revolutionary manifesto of sexual liberation. We read, "The first clause in the revolutionary manifesto went as follows: *There will be sex before marriage*. Sex before marriage, for almost everyone. And not only with the person you were going to get married to" (*TPW*, 89). In the transformative period Amis depicts, sexual norms were changing beyond recognition. According to the author, the universal depthlessness of the age had infected sexuality and age-old sexual mores. Keith, theorizing this trend opines: "'But normal's changing, Lily. Soon all that *will* be normal. In the future,' he said (he was actually plagiarising Gloria), 'sex will be play, Lily. A play of surfaces and sensations" (*TPW*, 268). Keith is also alluding to sentiments aired by Eagleton and Jameson.

The second most significant modification to the social psyche, the third clause of Amis's "revolutionary manifesto" ties it directly to postmodernist traits of the type that Eagleton and Jameson berated. We learn from the novel that, "point three in the revolutionary manifesto was a kind of sleeper clause, implicit but unintended and still imperfectly understood. It was this: *Surface will start tending to supersede essence*. As the self becomes postmodern, how things look will become at least as important as how things are. Essences are hearts, surfaces are sensations …" (*TPW*, 182). Thus, according to Amis, traumatic aversion to bonding and depth in a sexual relationship was mirrored in the *social* disappearance of depth

[54] Previous instances of Amis's use of synecdoche to denote the dominant feature of a character's being include Spunk in *Money* (1984): Spunk feels "devastated" when he learns what his name means on a literal level, in addition to "grit, pluck, courage … fight. Guts. Balls" (Amis 2005, 187).

and essence and their replacement by a fascination with looks and "surfaces". As surfaces gained in importance in the 70s, so did narcissism become a mainstay of culture.

One immediate advantage of narcissism, according to Amis, was that in an uncertain period of fear, there was less weight on you in terms of responsibility towards the other. All you needed to care about was your "I":

> … they were all of them in the cusp of Narcissus. They were not like their elders and they would not be like their youngers. Because they could remember how it was before: the lighter weight on the individual, when you lived your life more automatically … They were the first that ever burst into that silent sea, where the surface is a shield that burns like a mirror. Down by the grotto, down by the bower, they lay there near-naked, in their instruments of yearning. They were the Eyes, they were the Is, they were reflections, they were fireflies with their luminescent organs. (*TPW*, 67)

The traumatized generation Amis describes opted for a life of surfaces for "its lighter weight on the individual", but in the process, lost fundamental ethical qualities and lived their lives, "automatically", in the manner of an automaton, a characterization reminiscent of Swift's robot-like men stuffing their benumbed faces with food. In such a world, the ego (the I) and the eye take precedence as the body's defining function becomes the gratification of the sex drive, or what Amis terms constant "yearning" devoid of meaningful pleasure. In a narcissistic world, women, so it seemed to Keith writing to her brother, kissed their own reflections: "Dear Nicholas, oh, brother, the girl here she … When she dives, she dives into her own reflection. When she swims, she kisses her own reflection. She works her way up and down the pool, with dipping face, kissing her own reflection" (*TPW*, 80).

Amis also believes that sex in the 70s, devoid of the dimension of "depth and time" – or of love characterized by historicity – was a great deal less cumbersome, incurring less responsibility for the individual. Hence, he devises for Keith and Gloria to watch themselves in the mirror while having sex: "Yes, it was good in the mirror, realer in the mirror. You could see what was happening very clearly. Uncluttered, unsullied by the other dimensions, which were those of depth and time" (*TPW*, 298). This seems to offer Keith some respite from the Lacanian real of traumatic thoughts (of nuclear extermination and her sister's self-destructive conduct) which having non-binding sex keeps at bay.

Within the context of obsession with surfaces and sensations, Amis also believed the "sea change" of the sexual revolution, a time when people's very "thinking and feeling were

rearranged" (*TPW*, 260), gave birth to an egocentric – and thus unethical – sentiment of cultural "Invidia", characterized by even more depthlessness and resentment. We read,

> *What all this is.* … What all this is? A contest? Yes, he would have said if he'd known. … *this is a contest that is coming, intersexual and intrasexual: a beauty contest, a popularity contest, and a talent contest. There is more display, comparison, staring, noting, assessing—and therefore more* invidia. Invidia: that which is unfair, and likely to arouse resentment and anger in others. *It is a contest, and therefore some will fail, some will lose. And we will find many new ways of failing and losing.* He said, "It's a sea change." (*TPW*, 160)

The distressing metamorphosis which Amis depicts is redolent of the contents of the media covering the lives of celebrities, with their chief characteristic being 'invidia' or vacuous interpersonal resentment arising from a fascination with surface 'beauty'. Amis's most mordant caricature of this period is of a fat, wealthy cheese merchant who, in a gathering of friends, tells his fiancée Gloria: "'Now come along. I want you turning all heads,' said Jorq, 'with your pretty titties. Those pretty titties of yours. I want everyone to see them and weep.'" (*TPW*, 260).

Amis's previous fiction hints also at a similar apprehension concerning the collective outcome of the disappearance of love and feeling from the sexual bond. In *London Fields* (1989) we read, "And if love was dead or gone then the self was just self, and had nothing to do all day but work on sex. Oh, and hate. And death" (Amis 2010, 298). Such egotistical resentment culminates catastrophically in the contemporary nation-wide malice of Diston in *Lionel Asbo* where Amis writes, "In Diston—in Diston, everything hated everything else, and everything else, in return, hated everything back. Everything soft hated everything hard, and vice versa, cold fought heat, heat fought cold, everything honked and yelled and swore at everything, and all was weightless, and all hated weight" (Amis 2012, 165). With regard to the skillful deployment of satire by Martin Amis, in the context of postmodern "weightless" fascination with looks and surfaces, James Diedrick states that the author's works,

> … view the world through the magnifying glass of satire, which sees selfishness, duplicity, venality, and greed everywhere. The individual and collective ills exposed in these narratives would make for grim reading if not for the transformative energy of Amis's comic voice, which employs exaggeration, parody, and irony to supply the civilized, civilizing perspective his characters typically lack. (Diedrick 1995, 1)

Diedrick's remarks ring certainly true apropos the above extract from *Lionel Asbo*, in that the style, which parodies the opening paragraph of *A Tale of Two Cities*[55], masks the grim subject of antisocial hatred.

Obsession with appearances also meant that even the human body became redefined, and alongside with that, the language used to describe it. One such shift in meaning had to do with "vital statistics" which "originally referred, in studies of society, to births and marriages and deaths; now it meant bust, waist, hips" (*TPW*, 10). Keith, not immune to the deplorable tendencies of his age, is said to have fantasized about women "rendered numerically", for example:

> And every possible combination, or at least anything remotely humanoid—35-45-55, for instance, or 60-60-60—seemed well worth thinking about. 46-47-31, 31-47-46: well worth thinking about. But you were always tugged back, somehow, to the archetype of the hourglass, and once you'd run up against (for instance) 97-3-97, there was nowhere new to go … . Mere digits, mere integers. Still, when he was a boy, and he saw vital statistics under the photograph of a singer or a starlet, they seemed garrulously indiscreet, telling him everything he needed to know about what was soon to be. (*TPW*, 10)

In Keith's caricature of his age "mere integers" were all you required to know about the sexual other in a 'relationship'.

Still more depressingly, Keith thought of the mannequins in shop-windows as emblematic of the contemporary view of women, which to Amis, represented a massive change from the "wooden Madonnas" of the past. We read, "In the window there, mannequins of caramelised brown plastic, one of them armless, one of them headless, arranged in attitudes of polite introduction, as if bidding you welcome to the female form. So the historical challenge was bluntly stated. The wooden Madonnas on the alleyway corners would eventually be usurped by the plastic ladies of modernity" (*TPW*, 11). The descent from the wooden to the plastic, and from the whole to the mutilated, fetishized and commercialized female statue

[55] "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only" (Dickens 2005, 9).

appears to Keith, to indicate the general societal shift in attitude toward the women of postmodernity. Apropos, Amis states that the changes which swept across the West in the 70s resulted in "The shape-change from woman to living ornament [which] seemed to have taken place very recently" (*TPW*, 201). The replacement of the wooden Madonnas with the 'reproducible' plastic mannequins also smacks of Walter Benjamin's nostalgia for an "aura" [56] around art works that seems to have disappeared. Amis appears also to be intimating that the sexual revolution and the unbounded availability of sexual intercourse has also done away with the aura of romance, unattainability and singularity around the sexual other.

Even more tragically, fascination with appearances, and more specifically, with the female form is presented as a sort of cultural demise; for instance, when discussing Gloria's latest swimsuit, Lily sums up what might be going on in everyone else's mind, saying "'It's as if we're all absolutely *dying*,' said Lily, 'to see the exact shape of her arse'" (*TPW*, 145). This is a cultural downfall that Amis perceives as occurring on a nationwide basis. Amis's equation of the destructive tendencies of his age with cultural death is also evidenced in his antipathy to flies, representing his view of the self-destructive members of his generation. Keith has a knack for killing them, and on one occasion, the fly goes down the sink drain, as "it seemed to disappear into the maelstrom of its own death" (*TPW*, 287).

In Amis's view, a further consequence of the sexual revolution has been "the coarsening of the culture" (Bilmes 2014, n.pag.) or what Amis bemoans as the "brutal Philistinism … in Britain" (Bilmes 2014, n.pag.). Some of the people close to Martin Amis were 'victims' of the 'pregnant widow', Rob Henderson, his friend and Sally, his sister fictionalized as Violet. Apropos, Keith tells Gloria: "'My oldest friend,' he says carefully, 'is sharing a cell, and a toilet, with a man who probably knifed a family of five. Just a couple of days ago, my sister was screwed in a ditch. Gloria, nothing could possibly shock me'" (*TPW*, 345). That said, Keith

[56] Benjamin believed mechanical reproducibility of a work of art has led to the disappearance of an element which he termed its "aura". He explains: "One might subsume the eliminated element in the term 'aura' and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind. Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass movements. Their most powerful agent is the film. Its social significance, particularly in its most positive *form,* is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage" (Benjamin 1968, 221).

does not think of himself as possessed of a conduct beyond reproach. His had been a whole-hearted participation in the licentious spirit of his age, with his lifestyle leading to the 'sickness' of the pure heart of his youth, in allusion to Blake's poem "The Sick Rose"[57]: "…his rose of youth. O rose, thou art sick …" (*TPW*, 320).

On a verbal plane, moral and cultural degeneration also manifested themselves in the form of behavioral coarseness and impudence, as we read, "Everyone could swear now, if they wanted to. The word *fuck* was available to both sexes. It was like a sticky toy, and it was there if you wanted it" (*TPW*, 17). The literary-historical counterpart of this decline in morals is the shift from Chaucer to T.S. Eliot, from *The Canterbury Tales* to *The Waste Land*, which to Keith, sums up his sentiments about the cultural transformation he is participating in. In the following excerpt, he is quoting the opening lines of both works to Gloria:

> "When that April, Gloria, with its showers sweet, the drought of March hath pierced to the root, then people long to go on pilgrimages."
> "Do they now."
> "No they don't. Not any more. That's the trouble. They just sigh and think, April is the cruellest month. Breeding lilacs out of the dead land, Gloria. Mixing memory and desire." (*TPW*, 321)

To Keith, contemporary life is all about instant and depthless gratification of desire. In line with the metamodernist spirit of the novels, which register a yearning for belief at the same time as positing the impossibility of certainty, we also witness Keith hesitantly equating the positive aspects of life in the past with the stabilizing presence of religious belief. Previously, in relation to the wooden Madonnas and here, in his evocation of past pilgrimages, one catches glimpses of Amis – who elsewhere declares blind belief to be "otiose" (Amis 2008, 15) – displaying a nostalgia for a bygone and more religious age. Similarly, traumatized by his

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[57] The Sick Rose

O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy. (Blake 2006, 91)

sister's disgraceful sexuality and alcoholism, Keith cannot but be reminded of Joan of Ark, who at Violet's age, was, "a warrior and a standard-bearer—leading armies, capturing cities, lifting sieges—at the age of seventeen" (*TPW*, 117). Yet, no sooner is Keith reminded of the woeful parallel between Violet and Saint Joan, than he remembers the hypocritical use of "the biblical stricture about clothing" for which she was "incinerated" (*TPW*, 117). This is the simultaneous nostalgia for – and distrust of – metanarratives characterizing emergent metamodernism. In an interview with Tank Magazine's Cher Potter, Timotheus Vermeulen defines this apparent contradiction or oscillation at the heart of metamodernism through his definition of the prefix *meta*:

> For Robin and myself, meta signifies an oscillation, a swinging or swaying with and between future, present and past, here and there and somewhere; with and between ideals, mindsets, and positions. For us, the prefix meta indicates that a person can believe in one thing one day and believe in its opposite the next. Or maybe even at the same time. Indeed, if anything, meta intimates a constant repositioning: not a compromise, not a balance, but an at times vehemently moving back and forth, left and right. (Potter and Vermeulen 2016, n.pag.)

Belief, even though irresolute and provisional, represents a move beyond the constant subversion of pure postmodernism. As such, metamodernism could additionally be said to embody the spirit of 'reconstruction' – as theorized recently by Huber[58] – which acknowledges the contemporary relevance of postmodernism, at the same time as mapping a faltering cultural move beyond it. Moreover, one could say that the oscillation between opposite poles so characteristic of metamodernism arises out of the epochal confusion that forms the title of Amis's novel: the transitional era of 'the pregnant widow'.

According the *The Pregnant Widow*, apart from cultural demise, the prevalent lasciviousness of the 70s also represented a regressive cultural march. Amis literalizes this social retrogression in his following description of a scene portraying Keith, Lily and Scheherazade taking a walk in the Italian village:

[58] "The term 'reconstruction' not only indicates the continuing importance of postmodernist thought but also already points to the specific aspect of postmodernism reconstruction mainly reacts to: the former's supposed nihilism, solipsism and deconstruction of values, subjects and agency. The term thus tacitly acknowledges its own limited perspective. Thirdly, 'reconstruction' answers both to the pervasive attempt to establish meaningful connections by renewing the (impossible) possibility of communication and to the revaluation of the fictive that attends this process. Therefore, 'reconstruction' seems to me at this point to be the most adequate term to describe the current literary attempts to write through postmodernism towards something else" (Huber 2014, 48).

> Now something happened—something he had never seen before. After fifteen or twenty seconds, Lily and Scheherazade (with Keith somehow bracketed in the middle of it) were swiftly and surreally engulfed by a swarm of young men, not boys or youths, but young men in sharp shirts and pressed slacks, whooping, pleading, cackling—and all aflicker, like a telekinetic card trick of kings and knaves, shuffling and riffling and fanning out under the streetlamps … The energy coming off them was on the level (he imagined) of an East Asian or sub-Saharan prison riot—but they didn't actually touch, they didn't actually impede; and after a hundred yards they fell like noisy soldiery into loose formation, a dozen or so contenting themselves with the view from the rear, another dozen veering in from either side, and the vast majority up ahead and walking backward. And when do you ever see that? A crowd of men, walking backward? (*TPW*, 11)

The scene is "aflicker" with sexual violence and the men described seem ruled by their animalistic drives, as if going "backward" on the human evolutionary path. Apropos, Violet, ever exemplary of her age, provides an extreme example which shocks Keith: in her case, a further deteriorating aspect of culture is her language and pronunciation. Here is Keith advising her not to call her boyfriend 'Impy', short for impotent. Keith recounts:

> "Jesus. What's his real name?" Violet: "Feo." Me: "Well call Impy Feo. I mean Theo." Violet: "If you say so, Key." Me: "I say so, Vi."
> Why does she still have trouble with the th sound? Remember her transpositions? Ackitt for attic. Kobbers for because. Navilla ice cream. (*TPW*, 79)

As the most notable feature of culture, language, thus falls prey to the general "coarsening of culture" (Bilmes 2014, n.pag.) in Amis's characterization of his time. Keith finds it initially hard to adapt to this new way of living and 'feeling'. This is how he reacts to his girlfriend's announcement that she is going to act differently, like a boy:

> Lily's announcement had left him bereaved, orphaned. That was what it meant: from Gk *orphanos* "bereaved." Keith was actually born bereaved. And the suspicion that this would remain his natural state was clearly far too readily available to him. Desolate: from L. *desolare* "abandon," from *de-* "thoroughly" + *solus* "alone." He listened to Lily—and of course he knew it already. Something was churning in the world of men and women, a revolution or a sea change, a realignment having to do with carnal knowledge and emotion. Keith did not want to be an anachronism. And I think I can say that this was his first attempt at character management: he decided to get better at not falling in love. (*TPW*, 23)

It is noteworthy that Keith's recourse to etymology is his way of highlighting the thematic significance of certain words as well as seeking to restore a measure of depth and historicity to language in an increasingly superficial existence. It seems as if throughout the rapid cultural realignments of his youth, the historicity of the English Language has rescued him from the "desolation" of total cultural orphanhood.

As a child of 'the pregnant widow' of cultural uncertainty, Keith is unable to decide how he should react to Lily's news. After all, social change is part of humanity's evolutionary trajectory, to which it should adapt, a fact of which Lily reminds Keith, to lift him out of his "desolation": "She told him to be evolved about it. *Why should boys have all the fun*? said Lily, and blew her nose into the paper napkin. *We're anachronisms, you and me. We're like childhood sweethearts. We should've met ten years from now. We're too young for monogamy. Or even for love*" (*TPW*, 22–23). Individual inability to resist the *evolutionary* path of humankind is a theme Amis picks up elsewhere as well.

As for the contemporary consequences of the sexual revolution of the 70s, Keith cannot but think that his generation's conduct had been immature and short-sighted. In reaction to the slogans of his youth, "Never Work. Never trust anyone over twenty-five. Never trust anyone who hasn't been to prison. The Personal is Political. When I think of revolution, I want to make love. It is forbidden to forbid. *Tutto e subito*: All and Now", he says, "'That's how babies feel,' said Keith. 'Apparently. They think: I am nothing and I should be everything.'" (*TPW*, 16). In the novel, we learn that as far as wholehearted participation in the overarching ethos of the sexual revolution in the 70s is concerned, Scheherazade was one of the few in the novel who did not want to act like a boy. Now in old age, Keith seems to regret some of the inevitable choices of his youth. Here is old Keith the literary critic, talking about his younger self:

> You know, I used to have a lot of time for Keith Nearing. We were once very close. And then we fell out over a woman. Not in the usual sense. We had a disagreement over a woman. I sometimes think he could have been a poet. Bookish, wordish, letterish, with a very peculiar provenance, a committed romantic who, nonetheless, found it fairly difficult to get any kind of girlfriend – yes, he could have been a poet. But then came his summer in Italy. (*TPW*, 19)

The woman in question is Gloria, 'the Future', who initiated Keith into the spirit of the licentious 70s, with all the changes in social mores it entailed, *away* from poetic romanticism. Keith's disillusionment with the slogans of his youth is reminiscent of Tony's realization (in

Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending*) that the "self-evident" and individualistic certainties of his youth are tenuous against the accruing uncertainty and murkiness of old age. In this regard, Michael Wood's remarks quoted by Wenquan Wu, concerning the various narratives of the profound unhappiness of the post-war generation in Britain are illuminating:

> They have made an appalling mistake, in glee, in anguish, in innocence or heartlessness; convinced that there was no mistake, but only liberation or a form of fidelity. Years later, when the disasters have spoken, when murder or madness or suicide or incest or the withering of love has declared itself, the survivors face their half-focused regrets, reaching no conclusion. This story, in various versions, recurs so often in recent British fiction that it begins to look like a major contemporary myth: forgive us, for we know not what we have done. (Wood qtd in Wu 2015, 93)

Parallels with Amis's concerns – especially the focus on the redefinition of love as sex in the 70s – are visible in Wood's commentary.

Keith continues to meditate in depth on the subject of sexual liberation. On one occasion, Gloria supplies him with the *mot juste* for what had come to define Keith's vision of his generation's approach to sexuality. She goes on to theorize further about the strong connection between social conformity and liberated sexuality:

> And Gloria, ever surprising, said, "Echolalia. The meaningless repetition of what others say and do. Sexual echolalia. Pansy slept with you for one reason. Because if she didn't, Rita would sneer at her for not acting like a man."
> Keith sat back.
> "I was just thinking," she said as she closed her pad and sheathed her pencil. "Remember Whittaker? When he talked that night about the politicisation of bras? Well this was the politicisation of pants. The politicised pants were the ones that came off." (*TPW*, 291)

Amis's aversion to any form of social conformity is clear. He continues, "don't do *anything* for the crowd. And not *that*, not that, especially not that: the intimate, the innermost. It worked both ways. With sex, don't do it, and don't *don't* do it, for the crowd" (*TPW*, 292). Clearly, to Amis, the private sphere must remain untouched by the social, but it is seldom the case in times of sweeping social transformation.

In Amis's analysis, not only has the sexual revolution led to rife unhappiness but it has also ruined commitment in a relationship: in other words, the sexual revolution has dealt a blow

to the most basic of human bonds. Here is Keith, in conversation with his step-daughter Silvia who is discussing contemporary sexual estrangement and loneliness:

> "So, against your better judgement," she said torpidly, "you find yourself spending the night with a young man. And they're all the same. Doesn't matter who. Some replicant in a City suit. Some stinkbomb in an Arsenal shirt. And the next morning, out of habit, you say, you know, give me a call sometime. And he stares back. As if you're a leper who's just proposed marriage. Because *give me a call* is emotional blackmail, see. And commitment's not allowed." (*TPW*, 90–91)

In Amis's tenebrous vision of contemporary Britain, men are but a social "replicant" of each other, similar to their semi-human, genetically modified precedents in the film *Blade Runner*. The trait they share is the inability to commit to a relationship with the sexual other.

As far as women's adjustments are concerned, Amis observes that in the sexual revolution, women had to learn to scheme their way through life, the way men have always done throughout the ages: "It was already obvious that every hard and demanding adaptation would be falling to the girls. Not to the boys—who were all like that anyway. The boys could just go on being boys. It was the girls who had to choose. And ingenuousness was probably over. Maybe, in this new age, girls needed designs" (*TPW*, 292). Hence, his choice of Gloria, nicknamed "the Future", as the scheming metafictional figure of the plot.

To Amis, however, what represents the culmination of the sexual liberation of the 70s and its impact on contemporary sexuality more than any other phenomenon is the spread of pornography. Amis believes pornography – accessed mostly on the Internet, or "the web" – to be the unmistakable sign of the rift between sex and love, traceable to the 70s. Here is Keith's eloquent daughter summing up her generation's sexuality:

> "And you know how I got *my* sex education? How Nat and Gus got theirs? How Isabel and Chloe'll get theirs? We're *porny*."
> He said, "Can't we improve on *porny*, Silvia? … How about *pornoid*?"
> "All right. Pornoid. Yeah, that's good. It's more like *paranoid*. And when you're with a new guy, that's what you are. You're paranoid about how pornoid he's going to be. You know, Pop, we're the spiders of the Web. We got everything we know from the infinity of filth. He's better, Mum, don't you think? Pop's a bit better." (*TPW*, 245–46)

Amis expounds on the impact of pornography on contemporary sexuality further in interview with Bilmes who draws parallels between Martin Amis and "Natasha Walter, the leading British feminist, who attacks the commodification of female sexuality in her new book, *Living Dolls: The Return Of Sexism* - published, coincidentally, on the same day as *The Pregnant Widow*". Bilmes goes on to quote Walter on "female sexuality" which "has become more than ever defined by the forms of the sex industry". He concludes his remarks by quoting Amis who states that, "Pornography is the industrialisation of the split between sex and emotion – a vast industry and absolutely the signature sex of the internet age. … it's a completely unignorable fact of modernity, and so many things must be eroded by it. But you can't quite lament reality, and there it is. I find myself wondering what's being lost. And it is emotion" (Bilmes 2014, n.pag.). Similarly, James Diedrick draws on Amis's remarks on the inauthenticity of contemporary experience – as mediated through movies and pornography – to highlight "The increasingly fluid, unstable nature of selfhood … primarily [due] to the ever-present threat of nuclear annihilation, but … also … the relentless mediation of experience by popular culture" (Diedrick 1995, 12).

Aside from Amis's singular preoccupation with the "pornoid" and retrogressive tendencies of contemporary culture, other motifs are strikingly common among the narratives of the corpus. Within the context of postmodern decline of grand narratives and cultural decadence, a salient motif that highlights the loss of faith in the grand narratives of emancipation and speculation in the novels is the inclusion of a weak or absent father figure. The yearning for a father figure also turns the protagonists of all the novels of our corpus into Oedipal figures in search of the key to the enigma of their traumatic existence.

In *The Pregnant Widow*, Keith, is an adopted child with "… no sense of entitlement: he is an illegitimate orphan, a sort of *tabula rasa*" (Chatfield 2015, n.pag.) in Amis's words. As such, he identifies with Edmund in *King Lear* and is said to have "felt his bastardy too. '*Why bastard? wherefore base?'* he kept whispering. '*Why brand they us With base? bastardy? base, base?'*" (*TPW*, 229–30). To Amis, whose novel is, in a sense, a demonstration of the timeless human struggle to fashion a father figure, a fact that renders *all* ages (Shakespeare's as well as ours) transitional and transformational, all mere *stages* on the evolutionary path, Ariel's song in *The Tempest* rings magically true of his own age as well. He writes,

> And this still strikes me, almost daily, as a magical fact: the most plangent evocation of the time I lived through (I, and hundreds of millions of others) was written in 1610. Ariel's song

> appears in that masque-like romance *The Tempest*, Shakespeare's last play, and I quote the second verse yet again:
> Full fathom five thy father lies;
> Of his bones are coral made:
> Those are pearls that were his eyes:
> Nothing of him that doth fade, But doth suffer a sea change
> Into something rich and strange.
> Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell …. (*TPW*, 370)

Thus, a verse written four hundred years previously chimes true, as even back then, a dead father figure is demonstrated as evolving into a strange new entity. Amis's appellation for this dislodging of the moorings of culture and subjectivity and its attendant transformation is 'the pregnant widow' as borrowed from Alexander Herzen. Amis demonstrates his time as characterized by suffering a "death" but he also represents it as embodying a regeneration (to be discussed further in chapter 3), a transition to a new and richly strange stage.

Wish You Were Here contains a father figure too, who is not up to the task. The presence of weak paternal figures is explicitly linked with the universal loss of cultural direction and a general feeling of malaise. In the novel, Ellie invites Jack to insert his finger, alongside hers into the hole made in the oak tree by the bullet that had blown out Michael, Jack's father's brains. Jack construes this action as an act of disobedience against an unspecified "parental" ban. To Jack, it "was an act of impudent penetration that had to do with the absence of more than one parental constraint" (*WYWH*, 275–76). The insertion of fingers, seen by Jack as a sacrilege committed in the absence of the enigmatically phrased "parental constraint" is reminiscent of the removal of moral and social strictures discussed in *The Pregnant Widow*. This absence so central to a postmodern logic of a "time out of joint" translates itself into ample use of the word "bastard" in Swift's novel. Here is the narrator recounting the day Michael and Tom took Luke the dog away in their pickup to put him to sleep as he had been suffering from an incurable disease, which constitutes yet another instance of ill health in the novel: "There'd been a look in his father's face, a tone in his voice. He'd said, 'Here. You do it.' It wasn't an offer, it was another order. Then Tom said, 'Like an even bigger bastard'" (*WYWH*, 142). Both Tom and Jack call their father a bastard in their moments of desperation and fury, in what amounts to a sentiment of disgruntlement and rebellion against an *illegitimate* figure of authority.

In the novel, another action that qualifies as a dishonorable act of bastardry is shunning the responsibilities of life, however entangled and other-haunted it might appear, and deserting the collective, familial struggle. Put otherwise, in an interconnected world, relinquishing the ethical responsibility of caring for the immediate other is viewed as an unethical stance toward the subject's interconnected universe. On receiving the news of his father's suicide, Tom reviews his own past, particularly the night he had stolen out of the farm to join the army. Jack thinks, "maybe, it had been a bastard thing he'd done in the first place, that night in December" (*WYWH*, 202).

Yet by far the worst case of shunning responsibilities to one's context of existence – which again opens the doors to the haunting of trauma and qualifies as an act of bastardry – is suicide, leaving others to "pick up the pieces" in both senses of the expression:

> But people also didn't help by dying. Because someone had to pick up the pieces. It was a bastard thing to inflict on anyone that they should pick up the pieces, a bastard thing. Jack knew this. He and Ireton had picked up the pieces, so to speak, yesterday, though neither of them had resented Tom for it. Tom hadn't meant it or been a bastard about it. It wasn't Tom's fault. They'd put the pieces on their shoulders and Jack had wondered if Ireton had thought (but surely he would have done) about other pieces they'd once had to pick up (*WYWH*, 342).

In Swift's – as well as the other two authors' – immanent vision of an intricately interconnected universe, the rupture caused by suicide constitutes an instance of trauma, leaving other members of family and community to come to terms with the emotional wreckage. Apropos the individual choices of Swiftian characters and the significance accorded to them in the interconnected universe of the author, Daniel Lea remarks:

> From his earliest novels Swift's interest lies in the small choices that individuals make over the course of their lives and how they are governed by the ideological apparatuses of class, community, nation, profession and tradition within which they are made. If these determinants represent a macrostructure for the formation of a social identity, then the microstructural imperatives of love, duty, dependence and dedication are of equal importance and point to one of the distinguishing features of Swift's writing: his conviction in the centrality of ethical commitment to human actions. All his fiction involves characters forced into positions where they have to make ethical choices about the way in which they lead their lives, choices which are rendered more difficult by the network of debts and dependencies that tie them to their place in the world. (Lea 2005, 5)

Taking Lea's analysis into consideration, Jack's anger at his father's suicide stems from the realization of his betrayal of the "microstructural imperatives" of "dedication" and "ethical commitment" to the intricate life context in which he finds himself, no matter how unbearably cumbersome and haunted it is. Lea's characterization of the Swiftian characters' entangled life context hints at an immanent conception of a life of multiple "dependencies". In the novel, mention of bastardry crops up again in Jack's traumatic reaction to seeing his father's dead body minutes after his suicide: "He couldn't have described his feelings at this time, but anger must have been part of them… what he began to say, aloud and more than once in the middle of a dark field to his dead father, was: 'You bastard. You bastard.' Even as he shone a torch on his father's shattered features: 'You bastard.'" (*WYWH*, 247). As Jack's world shatters alongside with his father's head, anger at being deserted comes to the fore in Jack's reactions. This goes on for hours to the accompaniment of a "still-insistent chorus of 'You bastard'"(*WYWH*, 253) until the little rural – and as if war-torn – community rallies around Jack, doing all they can to help. His neighbors include Mrs. Warburton whose very name entombs a war.

It is noteworthy that the absent father figure is a recurrent motif in Swift's oeuvre, with such predecessors as June's father Jack in *Last Orders*. June's mother tells her, "… your own daddy, who never came to see you, who you never knew because he never wanted to know you, that your own daddy" (Swift 1999, 278). In addition to the motif of an absent father in the Swiftian fictional universe, there is also a stress on the presence of surrogate father figures in his works. In *Wish You Were Here*, the duty to fill in for his father's role falls on Jack, except that he does not believe he has fulfilled it. As is the case with many other aspects of the novel, for example conversations, it is all hypothetical, a missed opportunity and an imagined potentiality. Jack entertains this wish even as a teenager. We read, "Even then. In the evenings, it was true, back at the caravan, it could all turn round. Something quite new could happen to Jack. It could seem that he might be twice thirteen. It could seem that he and Mum were a couple and this was their little home and, for this one week at least, he might be Tom's dad. That was how it could seem" (*WYWH*, 67). The incestuous, Oedipal overtones are obvious, again in parallel with (the fathering of Dick by his grandfather, and Tom's paternal feelings toward Dick in) *Waterland* and (Ray's view of his daughter Susie in) *Last Orders*. Finally, as Jack is shouldering Tom's coffin, his desire to have fathered his brother assails him vigorously:

> As he'd shouldered Tom's coffin, Jack had felt the overwhelming urge to be not just Tom's brother but the second, secret, cradling father he'd sometimes felt himself to be. And as he'd

> stood and dropped his handful of earth onto the drumming coffin lid—before he was unable to stand there any longer—he'd even wanted to be Tom's real father, their father, who could never, except through the living breath of his older son, have the chance to say, to let the words pour repentingly from his lips: 'My son Tom. O my poor son Tom.' (*WYWH*, 328)

Apropos the prevalence of the motif of surrogate fathers and the universal significance of kinship in his oeuvre, Swift's answers to a question posed by Stef Carps – about the "considerable number of substitute father figures and children who are adopted or whose paternity is uncertain or in dispute" (Craps and Swift 2009, 657) – are illuminating:

> Well, I would say that kinship, family relationships, family bonds … raise for us the big questions: where do we come from, and where are we going? How is it that I am here and I am the person I am, and will there be anything left of me when I'm gone? Factors of kinship also raise the big question of whether we are governed by biological forces, by nature, or by the human bonds we form. … But in any case I think when you write about families, you inevitably touch on those core human areas of origins and destiny. I found, curiously, when I went back to *Waterland*, some remarkable similarities between that novel and *Tomorrow*. They're both concerned with birth, and misbirth, in one form or another." (Craps and Swift 2009, 657–58)

Thus, for Swift – as for Amis – the issue of collective human destiny is of paramount importance. This issue takes on particular significance in the late capitalist, postmodern and traumatized contemporary world where future human 'sense' appears all but elusive. In a manner recalling the naturalist writers at the turn of the 20th century, notably Thomas Hardy[59],

[59] For instance in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Tess's misfortunes and her final death come about as a result of the dubious discovery of her biological kinship by her perennially-drunk father, in what represents early instances of the motif of the feckless father figure so rife in contemporary fiction. Her rape by her 'cousin' and her subsequent pregnancy are both the immediate outcomes of this supposed 'biological' link and the promise it held for social improvement. In a manner that strikes one as contemporary, Hardy is at pains to subvert the human predilection for superimposing human interpretations – which invariably arise from power relations – upon Nature. Human misery, or in Hardy's worldview, life in general, often ensues from the humanization of Nature. Hardy thus sees it as the sad dynamic that drives civilization forward, with no way out in sight. In his novel, Hardy tries to demonstrate the always-already cultural viewpoint from which Nature is viewed. Tess's body, linked biologically to the aristocratic d'Urbervilles and yet below them in social classification, is ripe for entanglement in Alec d'Urberville's amorous scheme: "It seemed natural enough to him now that Tess was again in sight to choose a mate from unconstrained Nature, and not from the abodes of Art" (Hardy 2008, 191). Yet, Alec is also demonstrated as already caught in the human enigmatic position between his naturally *and* socially-instigated lust and his inability to wed her *socially*. Hardy's questioning into the role of society – and humanity's social nature – as the prime cause of its sorrow culminates in Tess's daughter born

Swift questions the role of biology and social forces in the emergence of the current cultural, political and humanitarian impasse. In this sense, misbirths and abortions – embodied in *Wish You Were Here* in Jack and Tom's onerous births – are indicative of Swift's greater concern with the future of "human bonds" and "destiny".

In a similar fashion, *The Sense of an Ending* also stages the yearning for a parental figure through the inclusion of Veronica's father who is a secondary, feckless figure in the background, a drunkard who eventually gets cuckolded by his wife. The Oedipal parallels stand out in the quasi-incestuous affair between the would-be son-in-law Adrian and Mrs Ford, the outcome being the birth of a handicapped child, also called Adrian: the disabled son is also the suicidal father suggesting the perennial nature of a crisis, in a manner evocative of Amis's allusions to Shakespeare. This, of course, is yet another traumatic fact that Tony discovers towards the end of his detective-style attempts at recovering Adrian's diary bequeathed to him by the late Mrs Ford. As he avows, his Oedipal search for truth had led to a great deal more than the mere discovery of the ugly truth in which he may have played a part, and which amounted to yet another shock to his firm sense of subjectivity. His search – internal and external – had led to the reconfiguration of his views on the different aspects of his subjectivity. Tony says, "What had begun as a determination to obtain property bequeathed to me had morphed into something much larger, something which bore on the whole of my life, on time and memory. And desire" (*TSE*, 130). Writing about the novel and drawing on the work of Brockmeier and Carbaugh, Oró Piqueras also points to the way in which "we construct our lives as well as create them through narration and" how, "as we do so, we mould our identity as individuals but also as cultural beings" (Brockmeier and Carbaugh qtd in Oró Piqueras 2014, 91).

Significantly within a discussion of postmodernism, to further convey a feeling of lateness, cultural impasse and "ontological crisis" characterized by "disruption of the 'myths' … that are historically employed to give meaning to existence" (Paynel 2014, 11), as Paynel

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outside social law and thus unable to live in society: "So passed away Sorrow the Undesired—that intrusive creature, that bastard gift of shameless Nature who respects not the social law … " (Hardy 2008, 108). Lastly, Hardy reserves his condemnation for the ironically named Angel Clare who sums up the human ensnarement in – and miserable inability to transcend – contradictory social laws. Here, Angel is watching Tess in one of their first encounters: "'What a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature that milkmaid is!' he said to himself" (Hardy 2008, 136).

states, all novels render a healthy birth impossible: Adriano, the rich beau in *The Pregnant Widow* is stunted at birth. Barnes's Adrian is a mental handicap and Tom's mother in *Wish You Were Here* was too weak to give birth and her health suffered as a result of Tom's birth (previous examples of problematic births in the Swiftian oeuvre include Dick in *Waterland* and June in *Last Orders*). In the same vein, Tom's brother Jack and Ellie refuse to have a child together. With regard to the issue of the problematic nature of birth in literature as representative of a cultural rupture, Edward Said's comments would be invaluable. He couches the problem within two terms: "filiation" meaning procreation and birth, and "affiliation" signifying identification with a community or idea as solace against the disappearance of filiation. These terms sum up his identification of a problem of cultural continuity in 19th- and 20th-century literature. He sets out by giving a few examples:

> Relationships of filiation and affiliation are plentiful in modern cultural history. One very strong three-part pattern, for example, originates in a large group of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers, in which the failure of the generative impulse – the failure of the capacity to produce or generate children – is portrayed in such a way as to stand for a general condition afflicting society and culture together, to say nothing of individual men and women. *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* are two especially well-known instances, but there is similar evidence to be found in *Death in Venice* or *The Way of All Flesh*, *Jude the Obscure* … (Said 1983, 16–17)

Said thus isolates a problem in the literature of a hundred years ago that seems pertinent even today: the absence of the will to procreate as an embodiment of cultural malaise. He continues: "Childless couples, orphaned children, aborted childbirths, and unregenerately celibate men and women populate the world of high modernism with remarkable insistence, all of them suggesting the difficulties of filiation" (Said 1983, 17).

Yet, Said also believes that the same works embody a search for fresh regenerative modes of existence, "different ways of conceiving human relationships … some other way by which men and women can create social bonds between each other that would substitute for those ties that connect members of the same family across generations" (Said 1983, 17). The new social bond of existence, which he terms "affiliation" would thus replace and compensate for the withering family ties. Said cites T.S. Eliot's shift from "the world-view of *Prufrock*, *Gerontion*, and *The Waste Land* to the conversion poetry of *Ash Wednesday* and the *Ariel Poems*" (Said 1983, 17) as an example representing a shift from a sentiment of severance,

death, decay and impotence to one of acceptance and spirituality within a new bond of faith. Said imagines Eliot as conveying the following sentiment: "… the aridity, wastefulness, and sterility of modern life make filiation an unreasonable alternative at least, an unattainable one at most. One cannot think about continuity in biological terms …The only other alternatives seemed to be provided by institutions, associations, and communities whose social existence was not in fact guaranteed by biology, but by affiliation" (Said 1983, 17). Thus, although characterized by a sense of discontinuity, rupture and unwillingness to procreate in an era seen as beset by cultural malaise, there is also hope in the formation of fresh social bonds, through which the absence of filiation will be compensated for by the affiliation of social identification.

A similar view to Said's is expressed by Boxall with regard to *The Pregnant Widow*. Having categorized Amis's work (among other novels) as a novel of "lateness", Boxall goes on to write: "In all of these writers, posthumousness is the mark of a historical disorientation, in which the late time of the twentieth century 'lingers on,' persisting as a specter in the midst of a young time …." (Boxall 2012, 702). In a similar manner, in his characterization of postmodernism, Steven Connor touches on a sentiment of cultural exhaustion, *post*-ness and decay. Connor states:

> If we live in a 'post-culture', a culture wedded to all kinds of supersession post-Holocaust, post-industrial, post-humanist, post-cultural, indeed then there remain, residually, two sides or aspects to the 'post'-prefix and debates about the postmodern in the humanities and social sciences have tended to reproduce this duality. On the one hand, to designate oneself as 'post' anything, is to admit to a certain exhaustion, diminution or decay. Someone who inhabits a post-culture is a late-comer to the party, arriving only in time to see the bottles and cigarette-ends being swept up. Belatedness may also imply a certain dependence, for the post-culture cannot even define itself in any free-standing way, but is condemned to the parasitic prolongation of some vanished cultural achievement. …
>
> More recently the claims of postmodernism have been advanced in a much more affirmative way. In the work of Leslie Fiedler, Ihab Hassan and Jean-François Lyotard, postmodernism is seen as a positive birth from the fallen giant of modernism. In the work of these writers, the 'post' of postmodernism signifies not the fatigue of the late-comer, but the freedom and self-assertion of those who have awoken from the past. (Connor 1997, 74)

Amis's depiction of the effects of postmodernism on the British society partake of both views mentioned by Connor. Postmodernism, alongside with the sexual revolution, is depicted as having led to cultural decay, the demise of morals and antisocial conduct. At the same time,

the inevitable social changes that swept across the West are seen as signs of transition to an as-yet indeterminate future. Conceived thus as a *process* of transition rather than a finished *product*, today's culture takes on a multiple, multi-layered quality, with the subject also partaking of this spirit of multiplicity. Linda Hutcheon's comments in this regard are illuminating:

> As Foucault and others have suggested, linked to this contesting of the unified and coherent subject is a more general questioning of *any* totalizing or homogenizing system. Provisionality and heterogeneity contaminate any neat attempts at unifying coherence (formal or thematic). Historical and narrative continuity and closure are contested, but again, from within. … The centre no longer completely holds. And, from the decentered perspective, the "marginal" and what I will be calling … the "ex-centric" (be it in class, race, gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity) take on new significance in the light of the implied recognition that our culture is not really the homogeneous monolith (that is middleclass, male, heterosexual, white, western) we might have assumed. The concept of alienated otherness (based on binary oppositions that conceal hierarchies) gives way … to that of differences, that is to the assertion, not of centralized sameness, but of decentralized community …. The local and the regional are stressed in the face of mass culture and a kind of vast global informational village …. Culture (with a capital C and in the singular) has become cultures (uncapitalized and plural)…. (Hutcheon 1988, 11–12)

The notion of the decay of homogeneity in the interests of heterogeneity, and of the crumbling of a center of meaning in the face of differences, in short, the birth of a new notion of subjectivity defined by its multiplicity and processuality is embodied in the writer's focus on the body. Amis's problematization of the human body, notably his evocation of the figure of the monster, also takes on particular significance as a dual emblem of simultaneous decay and regeneration.

With regard to the unwholesome shape of the body in contemporary trauma fiction (Amis's Adriano, Barnes's Adrian and Swift's Vera in the corpus), a valuable insight comes from the work of Jean-Jacques Lecercle on the relevance of language to existential transformation, or becoming-other. Drawing on Deleuzian immanent conception of existence as characterized by becoming-other, Jean-Jacques Lecercle explains how violence in the world becomes a *material* attribute of the body. He begins by stressing,

> … the *materiality* of language, its capacity to act on bodies, to be inscribed on the human body as a trace, from the erotic and symptomatic tracing of the mother's words on the baby's body … to the effects on bodies of performative utterances, provided they are endowed with social felicity (the best example of this is the death sentence) – in other words, such materiality is not merely physical, but also social-institutional. The body is captured by language and, as a lived body, at least in part constituted by language, as symptoms are not only affections of the body, but inscriptions of words or sentences on it; it also bears the mark of the subjectivation of the subject by institutional discourses: the words of authority and power, and the words of the ideological struggle, contribute not merely to my general behaviour but to the very shape of my body. My stunted growth or athletic make-up are not merely natural or organic developments: they speak the language that is inscribed in them. (Lecercle and Riley 2004, 66–67)

Thus, within a general milieu of universal violence, Adriano's body is deformed prenatally as the violence of his pregnant mother's time in Mussolini's prison is inscribed *materially* on his body. Adriano's body thus bears the indelible marks of his subjectivation by institutional discourses, even before his birth. Awareness of the materiality of language also presents the social subject with immense responsibility regarding the use of language as a tool that could make or break the vulnerable addressee.

Adriano and Adrian's bodies could also be conceived of as instances of the monstrous as theorized by Ganteau, in turn inspired by Shildrick[60]. Ganteau views the "figure of the monstrous … as a way to underline the universality of vulnerability" (Ganteau 2015a, 15).

[60] Ganteau draws on Margrit Shildrick's research on the figure of the monster to emphasize the centrality of becoming to subjectivity – in a gesture more in line with Deleuzian ethics of becoming-other. Ganteau states that "For her [Shildrick], exposure to the other or the vulnerable opening to alterity is the very condition of subjectivity as *becoming* … , which postulates an image of the self as ceaselessly interrupted by the event of the other, indefinitely open and refusing the totalising effects of closure" (Ganteau 2015a, 6). Thus *becoming*, or a recognition of the fluidity of subjectivity, arises out of an encounter with the vulnerability of the other. The presence of the other is conceived of as a transformative force of change and becoming, demonstrated for instance, most vividly in *Wish You Were Here*, in the narrator's mention of a sudden emotional overture and compassion as Clare Robinson sees the vulnerable patch of pink flesh and signs of ageing as her husband (whom she knows to be cheating on her) falls down a mound of earth: "He hadn't hurt himself, though for a micro-second Clare had thought: Has he broken a leg, an arm, an ankle? Was this whole, marvellously materialising Sunday not to be, after all? But, in fact, he'd merely provided entertainment and laughter for all, something he acknowledged, when he regained his feet, by taking a theatrical bow. It was one of those moments of potential disaster rapidly transformed into comedy which are like some extra blessing. Clare had noticed, as her husband fell and slid and his short-sleeved shirt flew up, the plump wobbliness of his paunch above the waist of his shorts and, as his straw hat flew off, the shiny, receding patch in his hair, catching the sunlight. For some reason these things—the flashes of pink, vulnerable skin—reassured her" (*WYWH*, 322–23).

Ganteau, who posits vulnerability as a hallmark of humanity, then proceeds to add the concept of the vulnerable monster to his general theorization of vulnerable subjectivity. He writes: "Vulnerability, as exposed by the monstrous body, becomes an index of humanity, revealing the always already hybrid, or at least multiple and open nature of the self, its refusal of totality and, in Shildrick's terms, replacing being with becoming" (Ganteau 2015a, 15). Ganteau and Shildrick thus conceive of the monster as a figure of vulnerable becoming. Shildrick puts these ideas in the following words:

> … it is in the very negativity that the monstrous provokes that we may begin to discern different ways forward. It is not that the fears are offset by fascination – for that too may be intercut with a certain shame – but rather that we cannot finally locate the monster as wholly other. Though it remains excessive of any category, it always claims us, always touches us and implicates us in its own becoming. And it is here that the theme of vulnerability begins to take shape as the somewhat unanticipated yet irreducible companion of the monstrous. Alongside the capacity to evoke anxiety and loathing, the vulnerability that may seem to belong to it is also our own. And, moreover, as we reflect on the meaning of the monstrous, and on its confusion of boundaries, the notion of vulnerability emerges precisely as *the* problematic. The responses of disavowal of and identification with the monstrous arise equally because we are already without boundaries, already vulnerable. It is not my claim that every form of the monstrous effects the same counter-logic, but that in demanding a deconstruction of the strategies by which the self is secured, all may be effective in mobilising new ways of thinking not simply the binary encounter between self and other, but the very impossibility of such a determined location. (Shildrick 2002, 6)

Thus the monster exposes the porosity of the human/inhuman or self/other boundary and in so doing reveals the vulnerability of the monster as also that of the 'non-monstrous' subject. In fact the subjectivity of the 'non-monster' is already primed for this leaking of subjectivities as subjective borders are always-already porous. The shared self/other vulnerability also gives rise to ambivalent feelings of simultaneous identification and abhorrence.

The unpredictability of the future direction of monstrousness renders it open-ended as the mutation of subjectivity could *fly* in any direction. Another thinker who explores the possibility of the figure of monster as an emblem of the transformational model of culture of the type discussed in *The Pregnant Widow* is Jacques Derrida who ties the monster explicitly to the future. He writes: "I think … the future is necessarily monstrous: the figure of the future, that is, that which can only be surprising, that for which we are not prepared, you see, is

heralded by species of monsters. A future that would not be monstrous would not be a future; it would already be a predictable, calculable, and programmable tomorrow" (Derrida 1995, 386–87). The unpredictability of the future is thus announced by the appearance of monster figures that refuse to fit existing conceptualizations of subjectivity. The "surprising" monster necessitates a reprogramming of future plans, a recalibration of the definition(s) of sociality. Attending to the monster could thus be the ethical import of including transitional 'monster' figures in *The Pregnant Widow*.

Concurrent to the characterization of the present age of uncertainty through the motifs of the monster, a futile paternal figure and the impossibility of a healthy birth, religious belief is depicted as partaking in the universal transformation of the contemporary age, along with every other defining feature of the characters' social subjectivity. In *The Pregnant Widow*, Keith, modelled on Amis, is declared to be an agnostic, rather than an atheist. Young Keith believed religion to be the "the antichrist of eros" (*TPW*, 236) and his mature self declares blind belief in the "heaven and hell" of religion to amount to a slight to humanity. The following is an account of Keith's 'beliefs':

> Yes, Keith, unlike Lily, was an agnostic: he knew that he would die all right, and that heaven and hell were vulgar insults to human dignity, but he also knew that the universe was very imperfectly understood. In his opinion, it would be an outcome mainly notable for its banality—but God might turn out to be true. Claiming otherwise, as he told Lily when they argued about it, was crabbed, presumptuous, *and not rational*, Lily. *I'm teetering on the edge of it*—of godlessness, Lily. But that's what you have to do. Teeter. (*TPW*, 234)

Thus, rather than dismiss God outright, Keith stresses the incompleteness of human knowledge of creation. True to the metamodern commingling of belief and doubt, Keith opts for constant teetering "on the edge" and even quotes the Bible to air this sentiment (Maleki 2016, 74). In conversation with Scheherazade's boyfriend, he says, "'I know the Bible quite well,' he said, 'and I've always been very moved by that verse in John …You know—*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit*. That resonates, I find.'" (*TPW*, 235). What resonates with Keith seems to be the neo-romantic sentiment of the sublime ineffability of the grandeur of the universe. Keith's "cosmological piety" (Bradley and Tate 2010, 36) and

romanticism, which Wordsworth called his "natural piety"[61], is informed by an acute awareness of the limitations of the human conceptual systems. In this extract, Keith is watching the sky at night, overawed:

> He sat on under a sky now crazed with stars—stars in such wild profusion that the night had no idea what to do with them all. Actually, it did. Actually of course it did. We don't understand the stars, we don't understand the galaxy (how it formed). The night is more intelligent than we are—many Einsteins more intelligent. And so he sat on, under the intelligence of the night. (*TPW*, 292)

It is intriguing that Amis demonstrates the fundamentally illusory essence of human attempts at understanding the grandeur of Nature, as projections of inadequate human intelligence (Maleki 2016, 74); we are the ones that do not understand, and not the *intelligent* night. The darkness of the night thus stands for the abysmal chasm between nature and the human understanding of its alien intelligence. This has the added uncanny effect of animating the otherwise 'inanimate' nature.

Yet, in accordance with the neo-romanticism at the heart of contemporary metamodernism, this awareness of human limitations does not dissuade Keith from yearning to reach for a profounder meaning beyond the mundane reality, at least to sense it. Like the romantic poet Rilke whom he evokes in the novel, Keith also mentions feeling the wind on his face, which induces a feeling of a dialogue *as if* with an 'entity' beyond the physical and visible. Here is Rilke's poem "The Walk" as translated by Robert Bly:

> My eyes already touch the sunny hill.
> Going far beyond the road I have begun,
> So we are grasped by what we cannot grasp;
> It has an inner light, even from a distance-

[61] My Heart Leaps up
My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety" ("My Heart Leaps up", Wordsworth 1994, 79).

> And changes us, even if we do not reach it,
> Into something else, which, hardly sensing it,
> We already are; a gesture waves us on
> Answering our own wave…
> But what we feel is the wind in our faces. (Rilke 1981)

Recalling Keith's Bible quote and the wind metaphor in the Gospel of John, encounter with the physical wind is said to be an experience that "changes us", in an ineffable bonding with nature that "we cannot grasp".

Furthermore, for the failed romantic Keith, a total understanding of the workings of nature, the object of contemplation or of love inspires fear and entails a potential traumatic experience (Maleki 2016, 75). As Hartman observes, "the sublime in nature, [is] (a beauty that has terror in it)" (Hartman 2003, 264–65). Aside from a sentiment of terror, the Lyotardian idea of 'the sublime' also sheds light on Keith's experience of the ineffable in existence:

> The sublime sentiment, which is also the sentiment of the sublime, is, according to Kant, a strong and equivocal emotion: it carries with it both pleasure and pain. Better still, in it pleasure derives from pain. … The sublime is a different sentiment. It takes place, on the contrary, when the imagination fails to present an object which might, if only in principle, come to match a concept. We have the Idea of the world (the totality of what is), but we do not have the capacity to show an example of it. We have the Idea of the simple (that which cannot be broken down, decomposed), but we cannot illustrate it with a sensible object which would be a "case" of it. We can conceive the infinitely great, the infinitely powerful, but every presentation of an object destined to "make visible" this absolute greatness or power appears to us painfully inadequate. Those are Ideas of which no presentation is possible. Therefore, they impart no knowledge about reality (experience); they also prevent the free union of the faculties which gives rise to the sentiment of the beautiful; and they prevent the formation and the stabilization of taste. They can be said to be unpresentable. (Lyotard 1984, 77–78)

Of immediate relevance to our analysis is Lyotard's focus on the element of pain (which Keith feels as a pressure on his chest when watching his love object and Muse Scheherazade), and the inadequacy of human 'concepts' to verbalize the grandeur and potency of sublime "reality". The resultant confusion of senses – or their "wild profusion" (*TPW*, 292) in Amis's words – is what engenders a feeling of ineffability "unpresentable" through the tools provided by language. Lyotard's definition of the sublime, particularly his avowal of the inadequacy of

language in representing its affect evokes a similar acknowledgment by Wittgenstein who wrote famously: "*The limits of my language* mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein 2001, 68).

Furthermore, Keith's feelings faced with the ineffable beauty (either of nature or Scheherazade) also recall to mind the Lacanian encounter with the Real. The myth of Narcissus, a recurrent intertext in the novel, is a tragic demonstration of such an encounter with the desirable love object. Yet rather than give up the quest for meaning, a constructive approach toward the comprehension of the meaning of existence would be to settle for a "communion" with it, for example, the way Keith watches Scheherazade (whose name refers to the life-sustaining narrator of the *Arabian Nights*), always at a distance, *silently*. Scheherazade could thus be said to form the heart of Keith's narrative, sustaining the narrative and the transference of reading, very much in the manner of her namesake in *Arabian Nights* who, every night, told "a story to keep desire alive, to prolong and renew the intersubjective and interlocutionary relation" (Brooks 1984, 216), an exchange characterized by its being "active, dynamic, shifting, and transformatory" (Brooks 1984, 216).

Dynamic though it is, the communion of reading is also a relation defined by a silent and potentially indefinite listening. For Pascale Tollance , who cites Maurice Blanchot as defining the literary experience as "un riche séjour de silence", reading amounts to a silent listening to the "voice" of the text, a giving of oneself over to a listening to the voice: "ce pourrait être, avant toute chose, faire place au silence" (Tollance 2011, 18). Tollance's evocation of the necessity of attending to a stillness at the heart of the literary work is reminiscent of Paul de Man's similar naming of a "void" as the essential characteristic of literature, a void that gives rise to a peculiar sort of consciousness. He writes:

> But one hesitates to use terms such as nostalgia or desire to designate this kind of consciousness, for all nostalgia or desire is desire of something or for someone; here, the consciousness does not result from the absence of something, but consists of the presence of a nothingness. Poetic language names this void with ever-renewed understanding and like Rousseau's longing never tires of naming it again. This persistent naming is what we call literature. (De Man 1983, 18)

Entry into dialogue with the literary work is thus not characterized by knowledge of something, but by a "nothingness". The void that is essential to the literary experience returns in "ever-renewed" forms, assuming a multiplicity of guises. This expansionary return of a dialogic relation to the work makes up the literary experience.

Keith's silent communion with Scheherazade's image is also evocative of the way Kafka's man from the country waited indefinitely before 'the Law' (Kafka 2009b, 153). Derrida interprets Kafka's story as an instance of *différance*, the indefinite deferral and difference of meaning or the *undecidability* at the heart of expanding meaning. He writes,

> On observing the doorkeeper more carefully, he decides to await a permission simultaneously given and deferred, although the first doorkeeper's hint suggests that the delay will be indefinite. After the first guardian there are an undefined number of others, perhaps they are innumerable, and progressively more powerful and therefore more prohibitive, endowed with greater power of delay. Their potency is *différance*, an interminable *différance*, since it lasts for days and "years," indeed, up to the end of (the) man. *Différance* till death, and for death, without end because ended. (Derrida 1992, 204)

Derridean *différance* would thus come to be synonymous with what Amis calls "communion"[62], as opposed to straightforward "communication" (Amis 2000, 268), in his memoirs *Experience*: a lifelong dialogic relationship with the resilient yet seductively welcoming core of meaning, *as if* this communion defined life itself.

Communion with meaning – as characterized by the Derridean *différance* – is by no means to be understood as a lack, rather it implies the opposite, as West-Pavlov explains:

> Full meaning is never present, but always posited as something that will have happened in the future. Logically, however, this future total meaning is impossible, because the process of deferral of full meaning is potentially infinite. Derrida's picture of an ever-deferred fullness of meaning must by no means be registered as a loss. His hollowing out of full-meaning in 'differance', paradoxically, may transpire to be an unsuspected plenitude, indeed an excess, albeit one that eludes possession. (West-Pavlov 2013, 96)

Amis's communion and the Derridean *différance* thus refer to the power of narrative to generate an *excess* of meaning in repeated returns to the text under analysis, *through time*, hence the association of the metaphoric axis of the novel with the metafictionally-named

[62] Reminiscing about Saul Bellow in his memoirs, *Experience*, Amis writes, "I see Bellow perhaps twice a year, and we call, and we write. But that accounts for only a fraction of the time I spend in his company. He is on the desk, on the shelves, he is all over the house, and always in the mood to talk. That's what writing is, not communication but a means of communion. And here are the other writers who swirl around you like friends, patient, intimate, sleeplessly accessible over centuries. This is the definition of literature" (Amis 2000, 268).

Scheherazade. It is the dialogic relationship to Scheherazade that generates an abundance of meaning. This is why her attributes (physical appearance and belongings) bespeak a sense of expansiveness throughout the novel.

As interpretation and expansion of meaning, a thinking of *différance* is also aptly linked to therapeutic transference and working through trauma. LaCapra refers to this connection in the following words: "Seen in a certain light, deconstruction is itself a way of working through and playing (at times acting) out absence in its complex, mutually implicated relations to nonfull presence" (LaCapra 1999, 714). Dialogue with the initially incomprehensible (absent) trauma through commitment to a teasing-out of evolving meaning is seen as a common trait of deconstruction and Freudian approach to trauma as laid out in "Remembering, Repeating, Working-through".

A further insight on the Amisian communion with the literary text comes from the work of Pascale Tollance in her monograph on Graham Swift. In her work, the 'voice' of the text calls upon the reader's eyes to follow it on the page. The seductive yet hidden core of meaning in the literary text is described thus:

> l'allure d'une attirance fatale : la voix appelle la voix, mais la voix appelle aussi le regard, elle le sollicite instamment et de mille et une façons. II est impossible de ne pas prêter attention à la place qui est donnée à l'œil des personnages dans les romans, mais aussi à l'œil d'un lecteur mobilisé en permanence par une histoire qui lui est mise sous les yeux et par une voix qui se met elle-même en scène. Là encore peut-être s'agit-il d'un autre regard, un regard voué à un certain aveuglement devant la page écrite, un regard qui exige de ne pas se trouver devant une scène réelle. Qu'est-ce alors que cette scène posée nulle part qui se dessine au fil de la voix ? Et qu'est-ce que cette voix qui se donne à voir ? (Tollance 2011, 19)

Tollance's description of the spectrally exhibitionistic, seductive and fatal "voice" of the literary text inviting the reader to carry on reading parallels the spectral voice of Echo calling out to Narcissus. This parallel is exploited in *The Pregnant Widow* in ample allusions to the myth as rendered by Ted Hughes. A voice that calls out to a reader who is supposed to read – and see – with a certain degree of 'blindness' also evokes the deconstructionist technique of reading as stipulated by Paul de Man in his book *Blindness and Insight*. Here, de Man argues that critical relationship to a work is defined by constructive misreadings, or moments of blindness. He writes,

> Critics' moments of greatest blindness with regard to their own critical assumptions are also the moments at which they achieve their greatest insight. … from the moment there is writing, the newly engendered text does not leave the original text untouched. Both texts can even enter into conflict with each other. And one could say that the further the critical text penetrates in its understanding, the more violent the conflict becomes, to the point of mutual destruction… . (De Man 1983, 109)

Thus, in the mutually transformative relation of the reader to the work, one that is marked by infinite trial and error, or revision of understanding, "destruction" comes to signify a relinquishment of previously held ideas vis-à-vis the work. Furthermore, reading in Tollance's conception is thus characterized by following a spectral voice in a realm perennially associated with mutual fantasy-building never to be mistaken with reality. The 'encounter' with the voice is also "fatal" as an old subjectivity is to be 'destroyed' upon delivery of the self to the dialogue with the text, whose meaning also undergoes a transformation, a death. Parallels with the psychoanalytic dialogue of transference, with the intersubjective mutual game of seduction epitomized in Scheherazade's narration of *Arabian Nights* are obvious.

Tollance's – and generally speaking, the deconstructionist – stress on the ethically non-appropriative, dialogic essence of the act of interpretation overlaps with the hermeneutic Gadamerian concept of the act of interpretation as an ongoing dialogue. In Gadamer's conception of the interpretive encounter, the text comes alive – in parallel with Tollance's textual voice – and the dialogue is elevated to the level of an art: "As the art of asking questions, dialectic proves its value because only the person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in his questioning, which involves being able to preserve his orientation toward openness. The art of questioning is the art of questioning ever further—i.e., the art of thinking. It is called dialectic because it is the art of conducting a real dialogue" (Gadamer 2004, 360). The Gadamerian dialogic interpretation is thus an ethical gesture of understanding characterized by overture to the alterity of the *as-if* living text.

Commentary on the transformation of mainstream religious belief crops up differently in *Wish You Were Here*. The sentiment of the inadequacy of the Church, its inability to answer significant questions touching upon the incomprehensibly traumatic events of contemporary existence, is voiced in *Wish You Were Here*. In the following extract, Brookes the rector refers to Tom's fragmented 'body' as 'this', recalling the traumatic real, 'the thing':

> Brookes had said, 'I don't know what to say, Jack. The last time we spoke was when … And now this.' It was reassuring somehow to know that a man of the Church didn't know what to say. But Jack didn't like that linkage across twelve years – first that, now this – as if the two things were actually connected and the later one would unearth the other. Perhaps Brookes, who'd been so solid that first time, might be stretched past his limits now. A suicide – now *this*? (*WYWH*, 262–63)

Faced with repeated instances of existential trauma, even a man of the Church appears clueless, "stretched past his limits". Earlier, Brookes' decisions regarding the burial of Jack's father had demonstrated that he can rise above the orthodox requirements of his office. Brookes had said that despite Michael being a suicide, he will be buried: "In Church ground. Brookes had expressed his opinion of Jack's quaint idea in language surprisingly graphic for a clergyman ('This isn't the damn Middle Ages,' Brookes had said), but had then added with a sort of patient smile, 'Do you think, for any reason, I'm going to keep those two apart?'" (*WYWH*, 256). In Daniel Lea's analysis, Brookes acts along the lines of "the pragmatic relativism of the contemporary episteme" (Lea 2005, 13). The weakening of grand narratives thus compels the rector to devise a pragmatically viable and *ethical* – rather than moral – solution to the situation at hand (an instance of the postmodern ethics summed up in the Lyotardian *différend*[63]). Lea continues his analysis in light of the postmodern "loss of centralising authority", within which

[63] According to Beverly R Voloshin, a postmodern "ethics compatible with postmodern … suspicion about positive or universal claims drawn from the standards of reason, nature and law" (Voloshin 1998, 69) was introduced with the publication of Lyotard's *The Differend* in 1983. Lyotard defines the differend as "a case of conflict between (at least) two parties that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy. However, applying a single rule of judgment to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule)" (Lyotard 1989, xi). Further on, he develops the differend as "the unstable state and instant of language wherein something which must be able to be put into phrases cannot yet be. …. A lot of searching must be done to find new rules for forming and linking phrases that are able to express the differend disclosed …. What is at stake in a literature… is to bear witness to differends by finding idioms for them. …In the differend, something 'asks' to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away. This is when the human beings … are summoned by language, not to augment to their profit the quantity of information communicable through existing idioms, but to recognize that what remains to be phrased exceeds what they can presently phrase, and that they must be allowed to institute idioms which do not yet exist" (Lyotard 1989, 13). Lyotard states his differend-oriented ethical injunction thus: "One's responsibility before thought consists, on the contrary, in detecting differends and in finding the (impossible) idiom for phrasing them" (Lyotard 1989, 142).

period, it becomes necessary for the likes of Brookes, as well as several other Swiftian characters, to establish an ethical relationship,

> … not as authoritarian dogma, but as lived practice if they wish to arrogate meaning to their lives. Faith is thus seen to be less about the object of devotion and more about the qualitative nature of that faith. Believing in believing and the establishment of a working ethics offer forms of redemptive transcendence to these characters … a positive indication of an uncynical optimism at the core of his writing. (Lea 2005, 13)

Thus, within traumatic existence, it is individual ethical gestures that offer the possibility of transcending crippling trauma and it is the *communal* quality of faith – in sympathetic ethical overture to the other – as a "working" poultice on the traumatic wound that matters, rather than an "object of devotion".

Swift's vision of a pragmatically functioning human community is one in which disparate members demonstrate ethical compassion toward one another. In his writing, he states, he aspires to reflect the same belief in compassion, as he states:

> One of my articles of faith as a novelist is that you are suspending judgment, you are not saying that this is better than that. You're putting sympathy and compassion before moral judgment – which is not the same as saying there is no moral dimension to writing, far from it. I think there is a moral dimension, but it's a moral dimension which is governed by empathy, compassion, and a preparedness to suspend easy judgment on anyone who features in the story. If I have developed as a writer, I hope that I've developed in accordance with that article of faith. (Craps and Swift 2009, 649)

Thus, what constitutes morality to Swift is the suspension of judgment and the extension of sympathy towards other beings. The therapeutic consequences of an attitude of communal compassion are clear. Through the presence of the other, the traumatized subject engages in a process of working through trauma, leading to release from its pursuing ghost. Craps puts this general Swiftian tendency thus: "Swift's work also raises the possibility that the process of working through trauma might create the conditions for a viable modus vivendi based on openness to and respect for alterity" (Craps 2005, 3).

Significantly, as far as the *modus operandi* of the postmodern society is concerned, there is general consensus among the authors that capitalism is regrettably *the* credo of the contemporary consumerist societies out of which the novels arise. As Jameson puts it,

postmodernism represents "the cultural dominant of the logic of late capitalism" (1992, 46). In this context, Amis, who portrays the 70s in terms of a cultural fall not too dissimilar to its biblical counterpart observes through Keith: "*Correct*, Lily. *Who was it who said*, And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked? *That was in Eden, after the Fall; you didn't need a fig leaf until after the Fall. And consider another observation (made two thousand years later)*: I never yet touched a fig leaf that didn't turn into a price tag. *Correct, Lily. That's all correct*" (*TPW*, 262). Keith quotes the Book of Genesis 3:7 and Saul Bellow in *Humboldt's Gift* (Bellow 2008, 159) to draw an analogy between the loss of an old way of life, the resultant materialism attendant on rising economic prosperity in the developed world, and the market that panders to consumerism. In a similar fashion, Barnes also refers to the increasing dominance of consumerism and capitalism during Tony's youth. In an interview with Xesus Fraga, he states:

> I think governments increasingly are less powerful and more willing to do what transnational companies want them to do. They are setting the agenda, and the ideal agenda for them is a vast community of consumers, all of whom want the same thing. So that is clearly, it seems to me, the enemy of individuality amongst nations. We can't get too serious about it, but, even so, I remember being in Italy a few years ago and walking with some friend we had met in a little town in the middle of Italy, and I said, "Oh God, there's a McDonalds there! "And she said, "Why shouldn't we have McDonalds? Why should we eat all these old-fashioned foods that you want us to eat all the time?" … OK, that's their right, and we shouldn't have too many illusions about it. (Fraga and Barnes 2009, 143)

In *The Sense of an Ending*, a similar feeling of the decline of humanistic values against the unstoppable rise of capitalism armed with its strategies of enticement to purchase is tangible. In the following extract, Tony is discussing Veronica's father's car:

> Her father drove a Humber Super Snipe. Cars don't have names like that any more, do they? I drive a Volkswagen Polo. But Humber Super Snipe – those were words that eased off the tongue as smoothly as 'the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost'. Humber Super Snipe. Armstrong Siddeley Sapphire. Jowett Javelin. Jensen Interceptor. Even Wolseley Farina and Hillman Minx. (*TSE*, 80)

Here, one senses traces of an implicit longing for a viable grand narrative or "a supreme fiction" (Julian Barnes qtd in Tate 2011, 67), a sentiment also present in the works of Amis and Swift.

In this context, Mira Stout states that Barnes's fiction "essentially addresses the spiritual void of the middle-class man" (Stout 2016, n.pag.). After all, this is the Barnes who opens his *Nothing to Be Frightened Of* with the declaration that "I don't believe in God, but I miss Him" (Barnes 2009b, 1). Elesewhere, in interview with Nadine O'Regan, Barnes reiterates this position. O'Regan recounts: "Is he religious? 'I'm not. My position is: I don't believe in God, but I miss Him. Some times, when you see great religious art, or you listen to a great choral work, which is a religious work, you think how wonderful it would have been to have been alive when these things were being painted or composed, and to believe it all.'" (O'Regan and Barnes 2009, 116).

This coexistence of the opposites of yearning and doubt is characteristic of the 'oscillation' at the heart of contemporary metamodernism. Although not explicitly mentioning metamodernism, Sebastian Groes and Peter Childs highlight this coexistence of opposites in the Barnesian portrayal of human subjectivity:

> Barnes's work also suggests that we are tolerant but also know that the liberal tradition makes us passive; that we have a desire to believe in God but fear the mysteries of life and death; that we are selfish and cannot accept the fact that we are limited beings; that we have faith in progress and the power of rationality, but are haunted by the darker, regressive aspects of human nature; we are fascinated by sex, but terrified of the sexual imagination and continue to embrace taboos as a form of self-protection; we believe in social equality but are afraid of an underworld of social outcasts and immigrants; we are afraid of our bodies and, above all, we fear the ultimate taboo, death. We are an accident of evolution, but like to think that man is at the heart of the universe. (Childs and Groes 2011, 7)

Thus, the – essentially conflictual – human subjectivity is presented in terms of warring polarities between which we swing interminably. Conceived thus, human action – or adoption of a social stance, for that matter – amounts to a positioning of selfhood closer to one end of the oppositional spectrum, rather than the other. However, this performance is perennially tainted with the knowledge of the provisionality of the given stance, as unquestioned belief in grand narratives is eroded in the contemporary collective psyche.

Loss of faith in grand narratives also gives rise to a traumatic feeling of deracination in the novels, a sentiment pointed out by Oliver Paynel in his discussion of *The Sense of an Ending*. Paynel attributes the preponderant feeling of rootlessness to,

> … a sense of crisis surrounding the future following the proclamation of 'the end of history' by Francis Fukuyama, and a crisis in understanding the past, given the impossibility of postmodern historical understanding in Jameson's terms. As such, Tony Webster's experience embodies both modern concerns with loss of the consonant 'ending' that apocalyptic narratives of regeneration provided, and the loss of assured historical narratives that postmodernity relegated to the status of 'myth'. (Paynel 2014, 12)

Among the novels of our corpus, the theme of contemporary deracination within a traumatic, postmodern context finds its most detailed and poignant elaboration in *Wish You Were Here.* The rural community of Swift's novel suffers as a result of events unfolding at home and in foreign lands far beyond their control and reach. In addition, Jack, who on the suggestion of his wife traded the farm for a camping site on an island, feels like an uprooted alien swindled out of his rightful inheritance and physical bearings. Apropos the sentiment of rootlessness in the novel, Swift says,

> At some point I made the leap to the missing brother having joined the army many years ago, thus to Iraq and thus to what became the spine of the narrative – the almost literal "coming home" of that war, the story of the return of a dead soldier.
> But I can't stress too much how all this, with its political, even global implications, arose out of a local, intimate context. This is a novel about farming as much as anything, about all the meanings the word "land" can have, including that of close, heartbreaking physical view. I seem to write novels that are simultaneously domestic and undomestic, rooted and uprooted. (McLeese and Swift 2012, n.pag.)

Swift thus stresses the centrality of the uncanny to his novel. In this case, the uncanny arises, not only from spectrality, but also from the feeling of an ineffable closeness to the "heart-breaking physical view", bordering on the sublime (Hartman 2003, 264–65). Most importantly, the uncanny comes about as a result of the simultaneity of a feeling of rootedness and uprootedness, a formulation recalling Freud's characterization of the uncanny in almost identical terms, as a feeling of unfamiliarity (*das Unheimlichkeit*, "unhomeliness" in German) at the heart of the familiar and homely: "the uncanny [*unheimlich*] is something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimisch*]" (Freud 1964, 245).

In parallel to *Wish You Were Here*, Swift's latest collection of short stories *England and Other Stories* ends with a short story entitled "England" whose protagonist, a coastguard,

has an inkling of the same sentiment of uncanny unfamiliarity toward the island he is guarding. We read,

> The familiar tower of the lighthouse appeared before him, its topmost, no longer functioning section nonetheless touched with pink glinting light. He sat on the edge of England, supposedly guarding it, looking outwards. He knew a bit about the Bristol Channel, its present-day shipping and its history. He knew a bit about Exmoor. …. Brand-new shiny SUVs nosed around it like exploring spacecraft. He knew what he knew about this land to which his back was largely turned, this strange expanse beyond Exmoor, but it was precious little really. He really knew, he thought, as he brought his car to a halt again, nothing about it at all. (Swift 2015, 238)

The protagonist's uneasy relationship to England, "to which his back was largely turned" is obvious in his simultaneous feelings of affection and "guarding", and total unfamiliarity to a land that strikes him as increasingly alien and infested with the "exploring spacecraft" of the unwelcome SUVs.

Apropos the uncanny in *Wish You Were Here*, Pascale Tollance quotes Didi-Huberman to highlight the importance of the narrative dynamic arising out of a paradox similar to the rooted/uprooted divide: that of place/no-place, also closely connected with spectrality. She writes, "George Didi-Huberman, dans *Génie du non-lieu*, nous parle … d'une hantise qui est 'non pas le refus mais la mise en mouvement du lieu, façon de le mettre en travail et en fable'. Il insiste toutefois, ce phénomène de dis-location … 'ne veut pas dire absence du lieu mais son déplacement producteur de paradoxe'" (Tollance 2015, para. 8). The spectral paradox is the sentiment of the uncanny which arises out of the simultaneous feeling of being "rooted" and "unrooted", or simultaneous belonging and alienation.

The most poignant emblem of deracination, loss of ancestral land and an age-old way of life to Jack is the sale of the old "wooden cradle" in which several generations of Luxtons, some of whom were wartime heroes of the community, had been rocked as an infant. We learn that the cradle was, "hardly more than two thick chunks of wood joined in a 'V' and fixed to a pair of rockers. Everyone knew it was very old. Like so much else in that room, like the big bed itself and the old wooden chest, it was an heirloom, and there was no saying how many Luxtons had been rocked in it. Those two Luxton lads on the war memorial, surely" (*WYWH*, 103–4). Yet in her urge to make a "clean sweep" (*WYWH*, 155) with the ghost of the past, Ellie encourages Jack to sell the cradle along with many other old items. Here is Jack reviewing his memories and questioning his acquiescence to Ellie's suggestion:

> ‘You sell it too, Jack. We sell it too.’ She’d even looked a little impatient with him. ‘You might be surprised what you get for some of those things. I’d say you’ve got enough there to fill a whole antiques shop.’
> And so, because Ellie had given him the go-ahead and because anyway it was like giving her a sort of sign, he’d sold the cradle. What would they want with a cradle? Though it had cost him a wrench, a hell of a wrench. (*WYWH*, 107)

The sale of the cradle is yet another traumatic memory for Jack, as it represents a “wrench”, an affective, corporeal rupture with his solid roots in the past. Yet, what Swift seems to be implying is that past roots will all inevitably have to be relinquished in the face of sweeping deterritorialization, here embodied in Ellie’s unsentimental, capitalistic attitude to objects of sentimental value.

Jack’s rootlessness is further highlighted in the fact that on his return to the village of his birth to bury his brother’s remains, Jack has no home to stay in, “he was to stay in a hotel less than twenty miles from where he was born” (*WYWH*, 220). His traumatic experiences in life also dissuade him from wanting to produce any heirs, as he knows that a child would be an equally uprooted heir to his sufferings as well. We read, “Ellie wanted a child, children, he knew that. And he didn’t. For his own reasons, but for reasons that Ellie knew perfectly well in her way. He simply hadn’t wanted any more of himself, of his own uprooted stock, after Tom had left and then he and Ellie had left too. And Dad had gone anyway. He hadn’t wanted any passing on” (*WYWH*, 105). This feeling of deracination and rupture constitutes a serious blow to the fabric of society as Swift sees it. Worse still, Jack’s redefined sense of social self, characterized as it is by dissociation and severance of social bonds, spurs him deeper and deeper into isolation. Swift narrates, “These anonymous places, in which to piss, eat and kill time, seemed to draw him like a second habitat—a habitat that was no habitat at all. But he wanted nothing more” (*WYWH*, 331). It is as though the numbing of trauma has robbed him of his human desire for comfort and bonding, as though the trauma of deracination and the concomitant severance of social bonds induce a sentiment of spectrality in the protagonist, turning him into a ghost as well.

The traumatic chasm of dissociation defined by “fragmentation of vital mental functions … diminished integration and therefore impaired performance” (Bloom 2011, 200), means that Jack’s entire social existence becomes a prison-like “wall” of inarticulacy and silence. Jack’s silence and refusal to engage in verbal bonding could also be characterized as a symptom of “collective trauma” defined by Kai Erikson as “a blow to the basic tissues of social

life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality" (Erikson qtd in Luckhurst 2008, 10). Refusal to participate in the symbolic order of language is also avowed to be a tell-tale sign of melancholia, as Kristeva and Sokolsky state (Kristeva 1994, 211; Sokolsky 1994, 129-30).

Swift additionally literalizes the uncanny sense of 'no-place' of dissociative trauma and social deracination by devising settings and activities defined by their non-solidity, instability or a-topicality. The sea and the air are prominent examples of the Swiftian 'no-place':

> Though Jack had lived now for some ten years in a former coastguard's cottage and had looked every day at the sea, to be on it didn't come naturally to him. He … had never developed the yen to have a boat himself …. The six-mile ferry ride across the Solent had been his first experience of being on a vessel and remained his only one. Similarly, until he'd flown with Ellie to the Caribbean he'd never known what it was like to be in a plane. (*WYWH*, 134)

Generally speaking, having his feet on any surface other than solid ground is said to have "unnerved him [Jack] with its elemental audacity" (*WYWH*, 134–35). One of his most frightening experiences was that of being pulled up into the air on a parachute tied to a boat. The irony is that once alienated from a place, there is no going back and Jack feels equally alienated from his current abode and the mainland that contained his 'roots'. The following is an account of his feelings on his way to the repatriation ceremony:

> The truth was that he was that common enough creature, a landsman, by experience and disposition … He liked his feet anchored to solid ground. How on earth had he ever let himself be plucked into the air on a parachute pulled by a boat? But the truth also was that Jack had become an islander. The ferry crossing was fearful in itself, but it also went, when travelling in this direction, with a queasy distrust of the looming mainland—that yet contained his roots and his past. He felt both fears now, knowing that when he soon drove off again onto dry land, this would in no way cure his qualms. He touched the medal against his chest, as if for his protection. (*WYWH*, 134–35)

Given Swift's belief in the comforting function of stories, it comes as no surprise that Jack should resort, "as if for his protection", to the as-yet unrelinquished narrative of distant heroic past solidified into the medal in his pocket, in what amounts to the therapeutic "substantiality of narrative" (Lea 2005, 10). The narrative compacted into the medal offers a momentary "anchor" against existential alienation on water and land.

Apropos, writing on "the models of symbolic coherence" in the chaotic Swiftian universe, Daniel Lea identifies certain elements of social existence that provide a comforting impression of stability: "History, as a monolithic testament to narrative continuity, is a recurrent structure of restitution, but others include the family, Englishness, community, love and, perhaps most commonly, knowledge" (Lea 2005, 7). Despite being equipped with these narratives of social stability, we learn that Jack is continually assailed by bouts of inexplicable anxiety; on holiday in St Lucia, Ellie keeps telling him to "lighten up" and get rid of the "anxious restlessness",

> It had been during their last time in St Lucia, in one of those periods of sweaty, anxious restlessness that could sometimes come over him. He'd wanted to shake off the mood. He'd wanted to say to himself, 'Hey, lighten up, you're on holiday.' 'Lighten up' was a phrase of Ellie's, often used by her in the days when they'd been about to move to the Isle of Wight, like a motto for their future—'Lighten up, Jacko'—and now he'd use it, from time to time, like a reminder, on himself. (*WYWH*, 57)

In the Swiftian universe, being near the seaside is a motif that indicates the presence of a deep-running questioning – or of a threatening presence – at the heart of the traumatized character. In interview with the Foyles Bookstore, Swift expands on his attraction to the seaside, "out of a rather primal urge: to be at the very edge of our natural habitat, contemplating this other element that isn't ours and which we know can be hostile. … I've always been drawn to regions of ambiguity and precariousness …, to regions where lines of inner as well as outer geography can suddenly, perhaps catastrophically, be crossed" (Swift 2016, n.pag.). Thus, the hostility of the sea comes to signify the general feeling of insecurity defining contemporary existence. Furthermore, the feeling of inexplicable anxiety 'possessing' Jack out of the blue is reminiscent of the Lacanian formulation of anxiety as the unmistakable sign of the presence of the real, as elucidated by Ellie Ragland-Sullivan:

> Insofar as the Lacanian concept of the real – defined here as the knowledge one cannot bear to know and which, for that reason, is radically repressed from conscious memory – concerns a knowledge that returns into conscious language via symptoms, passion, suffering or affect, one can study its traumatic effects upon language at points where the image (imaginary ego identifications) ends and anxiety arises, or where consistencies and appearances are cut into by affect, and so on. (Ragland-Sullivan 2001, para. 29)

In the novel, the affect of deracination "cuts into" the seemingly normal – or imaginary – enjoyment of a holiday. Lightness, rather than denoting freedom from care, triggers an affect of rootlessness for traumatized Jack. It ends up defining Jack's rootless no-place in existence. In interview with Stef Craps, Swift further comments on his conception of place as simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar, or uncanny. Swift states that the places described in his narratives "start by being familiar, but they become less familiar. … the extraordinary in the ordinary. … I think the familiar simply can be strange. The London suburbs, once you look beneath their surface, can be very strange. That paradox attracts me" (Craps and Swift 2009, 652). In other words, it is the thrill of the uncanny, the *Unheimlichkeit* at the heart of narration that engenders his novel and sustains it.

In *Wish You Were Here*, uncanny deracination resulting from Jack's unresolved traumas and "shattered assumptions" about the unquestioned givens of existence have made him withdraw further within himself. The narrative voice wonders whether he is feeling anything, while up in the air or after having descended from the parachute:

> He hadn't felt frightened and, strangely, he hadn't even felt very excited—or triumphant, given that he'd won the bet now, he'd actually done it. When he walked up later from the beach, Ellie had said, 'My hero.' Had he felt like a hero? No. He'd just hung there, Jack Luxton, like some big baby being dandled, or rather—with that thing above—like some big baby being delivered by a stork. (*WYWH*, 58)

Jack's indifference and near-numbness arise from his dissociative withdrawal as a result of losing his bearings within traumatic existence. As Janoff-Bulman explains,

> … within the mind of a single individual, there are times when one's guiding "paradigms" – one's fundamental assumptions – are seriously challenged and an intense psychological crisis is induced. These are times of trauma. The new data of experience do not resemble the grist for the mill of "normal change," which typically involves gradual and incremental accommodation at the level of our narrowest schemas. …. The injury is to the victim's inner world. Core assumptions are shattered by the traumatic experience." (Janoff-Bulman 2010, 51–52)

On a social level, Jack's benumbed indifference and non-feeling can be attributed to the traumatic dislocation of his "guiding paradigms" symbolized in the jettisoned medal and the absent cradle. The "wrench" felt by Jack at the sale of the cradle could be said to inaugurate the "shattering" of his "inner world".

Furthermore, Jack's feeling of loss of place, at the same time as being *in* a place, also makes sense within the emergent spirit of metamodernism, characterized, among other things, by "atopic metaxis". 'Atopic metaxis' conjures a post-apocalyptic cultural wasteland characterized by the irredeemable loss of cultural moorings, and a dying flicker of hope in their restitution. It is a cultural landscape where the subject feels lost, everywhere and nowhere, 'all over the place'. Vermeulen and van den Akker define atopic metaxis thus:

> … the metamodern, it appears, exposes itself through a-topic metaxis. The Greek-English lexicon translates atopos (ατοπος), respectively, as strange, extraordinary, and paradoxical. However, most theorists and critics have insisted on its literal meaning: a place (topos) that is no (a) place. We could say thus that atopos is, impossibly, at once a place and not a place, a territory without boundaries, a position without parameters. We have already described metaxis as being simultaneously here, there, and nowhere. In addition, taxis (ταξάς) means ordering. Thus, if the modern suggests a temporal ordering, and the postmodern implies a spatial disordering, then the metamodern should be understood as a spacetime that is both – neither ordered and disordered. Metamodernism displaces the parameters of the present with those of a future presence that is futureless; and it displaces the boundaries of our place with those of a surreal place that is placeless. For indeed, that is the ''destiny'' of the metamodern wo/man: to pursue a horizon that is forever receding. (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2010, n.pag.)

The parallels between trauma theory's characterization of the victims' shattered inner world followed by loss of faith in a benign world, and the metamodernist (non-)existent place are striking. "A-topic metaxis" gives the impression of living in an eerie world that is only outwardly ordered and 'functioning', a world surreally alien, uncanny.

The current climate of deracination – as enshrined in the concept of a-topic metaxis – is also embodied in the motif of loss of inheritance. The loss of legacy in *Wish You Were Here* in the form of the sale of Jebb Farm and the irrecoverability of Adrian's diary in *The Sense of an Ending* are further demonstrations of an uncertainty, inadequacy and rupture at the heart of the cultural narrative. This ties in with the theme of a time "unhinged", with grand narratives losing their currency. With regard to Swift's previous novels, Catherine Bernard explains this sentiment in the following words:

> History is but a "thin garment," or so Tom Crick suggests in *Waterland,* a garment pieced together from the tatters of private experience and worn threadbare by time and disillusion. Relentlessly, from the private tragedy exhumed in *The Sweet-Shop Owner,* or in *Last Orders,*

> to the philosophical doubts of *Ever After* (1992), which focuses on the epistemological revolution caused by Darwinism, Swift means to come to terms with the increasing inorganicity of historical destiny. (Bernard and Swift 1997, 217–18)

The breach in the historical narrative amounts to a traumatic shattering of the 'organicity' of the characters' social context. Elements of subjectivity no longer 'hang together' as a coherent, organic whole, as they are subjected to internal questioning – and subsequent erosion – in the mind of the traumatized victim. The rupture also arises from the fact that a search for historical coherence in the study of history proves even more disconcerting as the overarching narrative of human progress turns out to be a mere fiction. In *Waterland*, Tom Crick voices this sentiment in the following words:

> So I began to look into history … indeed with particular zeal, the history of my Fenland forebears. So I began to demand of history an Explanation. Only to uncover in this dedicated search more mysteries, more fantasticalities, more wonders and grounds for astonishment than I started with; only to conclude forty years later – notwithstanding a devotion to the usefulness, to the educative power of my chosen discipline – that history is a yarn. And can I deny that what I wanted all along was not some golden nugget that history would at last yield up, but History itself: the Grand Narrative, the filler of vacuums, the dispeller of fears of the dark? (Swift 1999, 62)

Thus, the lifelong search for the Grand Narrative of History has revealed it, to Crick's dismay, to be riddled with the unmistakable signs of a fanciful story, characterized by "mysteries" and "fantasticalities", falling short of assuaging the historian's existential fears[64].

Further, the deep-rooted sentiment of deracination and loss of cultural direction prompts the authors to question the success of the forward march of the human evolutionary path, or the Enlightenment. Pondering the nature of the times at the instigation of traumatic events opens the authors' eyes to the violence at the heart of human interaction, leading specifically in Amis's case to an aporia regarding humanity's professed position along the evolutionary road to the ultimate flowering of its civilization. At a loss to understand the

[64] Alexandra Mărginean's analysis of trauma in the Swiftian oeuvre raises a similar issue as she claims that in the Swiftian oeuvre, trauma arises from "passage from a society that supports the individual, on the model of the welfare state, towards a Thatcherite, individualistic one, and the loss of guiding lines, narratives (*grands récits*) and values against this background … Also, war is depicted as a particularly traumatising macro-scale experience" (Mărginean 2014, 1133).

traumatic physical and psychological violence of the time, often patently gratuitous and rife, Amis calls it the "harlequinade" of the broader social context of his life. We read, "Keith uneasily turned his head away. And felt a shadow cross the harlequinade—the harlequinade of his time. Near the centre of this shadow was Ulrike Meinhof, strolling nude in front of the Palestinian recruits (*Fucking and shooting*, she said—*they're the same*), and even further in there was Cielo Drive, and Pinkie and Charles" (*TPW*, 14). Not surprisingly, the ominous shadow is cast by violent criminals, murderers and terrorists who had made the headlines at the time of Keith's youth.

Keith also feels that in the contemporary world, women are (have always been) in more danger of violence than men. The example he supplies is that of Franca Viola, who was told by her family to marry her rapist who was a "rejected suitor", on the basis of a penal code called "*matrimonio riparatore*". Keith says, "'It's tribal. Shame and honour. It's like Afghanistan. Or Somalia. Marry the rapist, or your menfolk'll kill you. She didn't do that. She didn't marry him—she put him *in jail*. And she changed everything'"(*TPW*, 15–16). Amis deems violent conduct toward women as "prehistoric" practice, examples of which were to be found everywhere. Even several decades after the incident of Franca Viola, the prevalence of violence against women is alarming. Keith's daughter, Silvia – modelled on Amis's daughter Delilah, a gender studies specialist – asks her father:

> "Violence. Against the gentler sex. Why?"
> "I don't know."
> "Even here, in England. We're always going on about the other stuff. Honour killing and genital mutilation and all that. …."
> …
> "… I saw it the other day. I quote. 'The most common form of death for women between sixteen and forty-five,' here, now, 'is murder by the male partner.' Now that's really weird. That they only need to kill us when we're of childbearing age."
> "I don't understand. I never have. I suppose those are the men who've just run out of words. Long ago. But I don't understand."
> "Well it's the caveman asset, isn't it. It underlies everything. Bigger and stronger. What are we going to do about *that*?" (*TPW*, 361)

Keith's answer reflects his view regarding the dubious existential position of human beings, that as living beings we are caught between an animal nature and our aspiring, transcendentalist self. The ensuing tension means that although we have made some progress, much remains to

be accomplished and that some among us still bear a behavioral resemblance to our "caveman" ancestors, with probably Lionel's semi-evolved "Neolithic trudge" (Amis 2012, 187).

On a literal plane, Keith blames sexual violence on the licentious atmosphere of the 70s, a quality not far beyond himself either. Keith recounts a day in the castle when watching Gloria's body, "filled him not with feelings so much as a set of impulses. The impulses of the raptor. From L., lit. "plunderer," from *rapere* "seize" (*TPW*, 293). As usual, etymology is present to defamiliarize the word by signifying the brute force lying underneath as Keith associates Gloria with violent, loveless sexuality of the type he deems exemplary of the era of sexual revolution and beyond: the present of *Lionel Asbo*. Apropos, Amis has the trauma of Violet's violent conduct to help him delve deeper into his life situation, in this case, the issue of violence. Violet justified her behavior by calling herself "a healthy young girl", obviously a catchword of the time, probably "out of a magazine at the hairdresser's" (*TPW*, 305) . Here are the last lines of one of the many conversations between Keith and his brother about Violet's comportment, with Nicholas concluding by likening her to monster figures conceived by Jonathan Swift and Shakespeare: "'The fact remains that Vi rapes fruits and dates football teams.' 'She acts like a boy. Nature without nurture. Like Caliban. Like a Yahoo'" (*TPW*, 305). Thus, Violet's violent sexuality – raping gay people and sleeping with multiple partners – compels Amis to evoke Shakespeare whose characterization of Caliban as embodying "nature without nurture" rings true in contemporary times.

Amis's novel is, in a sense, an attempt to make sense of the destructive, antisocial streak at the heart of humanity. Apropos the narrative effect on the reader, of the portrayal of society in terms of the characters' unjustifiably antisocial tendencies, James Diedrick writes:

> The nakedness of these characters' desires, resentments, and fears throws into satiric relief the "normalizing" tendencies of respectable society. Their speech is also an implied dialogue with an implied reader, one of the ways Amis directly engages the reader in their stories, implicates the reader in them, and calls for a combination of identification, revulsion, and finally judgment. In these ways, Amis speaks obliquely "through" his first-person narrators, without offering a definitive judgment of them or the social forces that have shaped them. He leaves both these tasks to the reader. (Diedrick 1995, 17)

Diedrick's emphasis on Amis's refusal to judge his 'monstrous' characters conclusively and his depiction of characters as caught in a social context that heavily informs their social selves, ties in with the general ethos of *The Pregnant Widow*, where Amis seems to think that human

beings would behave angelically, if they belonged in Elysium, but that their conduct arises from the fact that they are earthly creatures possessed of physical bodies and an inbuilt lust for violence. In Elysium, Violet, whom he loved as a child, would have been a Venus: "Venus: when he looked at her with his glasses on, she seemed to be wearing eyelashes. The daughter of Jupiter and Dione, the goddess of love, in false eyelashes. Its gossamer wings—what a fly would look like if born and raised in Elysium" (*TPW*, 366). Thus, to Amis who associates human beings with flies and rats – his misanthropy and evocation of the Yahoo prompting James Dedrick to dub him "in many ways a postmodern Jonathan Swift" (Diedrick 1995, 14–15) – human beings are always-already enslaved by their bodily drives and violent passions.

Amis's nonjudgmental attempts at unravelling the mystery behind the conduct of the younger generation which strikes him as monstrous and unintegrable into existing definitions of acceptable social conduct evoke the ethical Derridean welcome – extended to the other in culture - stated in following words:

> All experience open to the future is prepared or prepares itself to welcome the monstrous *arrivant*, to welcome it, that is, to accord hospitality to that which is absolutely foreign or strange, but also, one must add, to try to domesticate it, that is, to make it part of the household and have it assume the habits, to make us assume new habits. This is the movement of culture. Texts and discourses that provoke at the outset reactions of rejection, that are denounced precisely as anomalies or monstrosities are often texts that, before being in turn appropriated, assimilated, acculturated, transform the nature of the field of reception, transform the nature of social and cultural experience, historical experience. All of history has shown that each time an event has been produced, for example in philosophy or in poetry, it took the form of the unacceptable, or even of the intolerable, of the incomprehensible, that is, of a certain monstrosity. (Derrida 1995, 387)

Thus, in a movement of mutual becoming, the assimilated cultural monster also contributes to the transformation of the "social experience". The dynamism of the cultural space thus arises out of its ability to welcome and domesticate as well as be affected by the *arrivant*.

Furthermore, on occasions when Keith is seized by bouts of melancholic self-disgust, the man/animal divide seems even more tenuous and reminds him even more of his animality. Here, he is looking at his feet: "Keith knew of course that the psychological meaning of *feet* was itself twofold. These brutal trotters were a permanent reminder of your animality, your unforgiven, non-angelic status as a human being. They also performed the menial task of connecting you to solid ground" (*TPW*, 31). This is yet another instance of Amis concluding

that human beings are non-angelic, earthly *animals*. On another occasion, seated on the Italian toilet, Keith is reminded of the materiality and therefore eventual decay – and transformation – of his body. In short, the toilet is telling him, in highly graphic visual and olfactory imagery, that he is an animal. We read:

> The Italian toilet, and its negative sensual adventure: what was it trying to say? Southern Europe in its entirety had it like this, even France, the grime-scored crouchpads and flowing knee-high stopcocks and the fistfuls of yesterday's newspaper wedged between pipe and brickwork. The stench that threaded acid into the tendons of the jaw, and made the gums sting. Don't flatter yourself, the toilet was saying. You are an animal, made of matter. And something in him responded to this, as if he sensed the proximity of a beloved beast, moist and leathery in the spiced darkness. (*TPW*, 18)

In a manner reminiscent of Swift and Barnes's Jack and Tony, Keith's trauma also manifests itself in spotting metaphoric similarities and infusing the physical world (here, the toilet) with symbolic significance. Here, the animal smells of the toilet awaken an animal inside him. In addition, the sight of the human refuse triggers a sense of abjection[65] in Keith, representing a further blow to his received notions of human subjectivity.

Classic literature too, corroborates Keith's views on the essential animality at the heart of humanity. Keith mentions Michel de Montaigne with a commentary that follows. In this scene, Keith the failed romantic is plotting to drug his girlfriend so that he can sleep with the unattainable Scheherazade, his ethereal sexual object of desire. We read, "*The man who occupies the highest throne on earth*, said Michel Eyquem de Montaigne in—what?—1575, *is still sitting on his arse*. Human beings, atom-splitters and moon-striders, serenaders, sonneteers, they want to be gods, but they are animals, with bodies that once belonged to a fish.

[65] One more way in which the refuse, death and decay have been associated with the undoing of borders of subjectivity (akin to the operations of spectrality) is in connection with the Kristevan concept of the non-object or the 'abject". Toril Moi, glosses on Kristeva, writing that the abject "can be represented by any kind of transgressive, ambiguous or intermediary state" (Kristeva 1986, 238–39). One prominent experience of abjection is triggered by the corpse, a waste. Kristeva believes that the corpse induces a feeling of the break-down of borders, including in this case, that of life and death: "… the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything. … . In that compelling, raw, insolent thing in the morgue's full sunlight, in that thing that no longer matches and therefore no longer signifies anything, I behold the breaking down of a world that has erased its borders: fainting away. The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. … . Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (Kristeva 1982, 3–4).

In short, Keith Nearing sat on the cold bowl" (*TPW*, 71–72). In addition to Shakespeare and Jonathan Swift, Michel de Montaigne seems to be approving of Keith's evolutionary outlook on life, reminding him that it might take eons for this processual evolution to eventually produce a 'non-animal' human, whatever that might mean. Elaborating on his comparison of Amis to Jonathan Swift, James Diedrick points out an important distinction:

> At his best, Amis wields the weapon of irony with the same controlled, merciless precision as Swift himself. He also emulates his predecessor's preference for physical excess and grotesquery as vehicles of social criticism. Consistent with his skepticism toward totalizing explanations and moral positions, however, Amis's satirical irony is far less "stable" than Swift's. A voice of moral and religious certainty can be heard behind the masks of Swift's personae; the critical tones that filter through Amis's characters register contingent rather than definitive moral judgments. (Diedrick 1995, 15)

To the part-time "postmodern" misanthrope Keith, whose moral critique is levelled against "contingent" criteria, the ultimate symbol of humanity is the rat (and occasionally the morbid fly). Here, Keith, Lily and Scheherazade are out for a walk in the Italian town, when "The trio came to a polite halt as a stately brown rat—lavishly assimilated—went ambling across their path: given the power of speech, this rat would have grunted out a perfunctory buona sera" (*TPW*, 10). Needless to say, the humanoid, "assimilated", rat falls just short of humanity, as it lacks the gift of speech.

Moreover, in Keith's traumatized and thus metaphor-making imagination, the rat contrasts with the dog which appears to be a higher-order being. The rat stands for human indulgence in what Amis deems as self-destructive, anti-social conduct. In the novel, there is a pet shop with an animal on sale that appears to be a borderline creature resembling both a rat and a dog simultaneously, mirroring Keith's social aporia. Lily and Keith argue as to which way the balance may incline, whether it is a dog or a rat. Keith, obsessed with its human counterparts, contends that it is a rat, saying, "'You should give up on this dog angle, Lily. And praise it as a rat. With all the usual rat virtues.' Among these strengths would be a lustier embrace of life—a lustier embrace of life at the level of *nostalgie*. *Nostalgie de la boue*: the return-home pain for the mud, the trash, the shit. 'Rats get around more'" (*TPW*, 113).

A more virulent characterization of the people with a *nostalgie de la boue* occurs in *Lionel Asbo*. Here, the narrative voice and Lionel are passing their respective comments on the raucous scene of drunk Distonites vomiting on the street:

> It came to the ears as a scene of celebration, the willed guffaws of the men, the abandoned cackles of the women. But if you could turn the sound down (if you could turn the volume off), then the Distonites would resemble the survivors of a titanic calamity, random wanderers in the aftermath of an earthquake, say, and the ground still lurching beneath their feet. Lionel put his face up close and thickly and hotly whispered,
> "Look at them—Christ. Decks awash. Full as a fairy's phonebook. Can't hold they drink, Des. Simple as that." (Amis 2012, 201)

Thus, to Amis, the social and moral apocalypse that he sees as having germinated in the 70s has already set in, replete with its calamitous consequences on the people of his generation and beyond. In Amis's fictional universe, Diston is the grim locale where such vulnerable (Ganteau 2015a, 135) people would be living: "Diston, with its gravid primary-schoolers and toothless hoodies, its wheezing twenty-year-olds, arthritic thirty-year-olds, crippled forty-year-olds, demented fifty-year-olds, and non-existent sixty-year-olds" (Amis 2012, 255). Paraphrasing Amis, Alex Bilmes calls the human tendency to indulge in gradual self-annihilation, the "in-built self-destruct mechanism" (Bilmes 2014, n.pag.). Melancholic Keith also equates violent humanity with flies which thrive on death and ruin:

> Like rats, flies love war, love battlefields. At Verdun (1916), there were donkeys, mules, oxen, dogs, pigeons, canaries, and two hundred thousand horses. But only the rats and the flies (the flies in their scores of millions) were there because they liked it. The flies were huge, black, silent. Huge. The rats, too, were bloated, like war profiteers …
> In his studio Keith stared at the colourless sky and enjoyed "the view": the vista of his own corneal crud, asperities, excrescences, which swilled and slopped when he moved his head. His eyes were Petri dishes, with their cultures of dirt and death.
> What to do, he thought, now that the flies live inside my eyes? (*TPW*, 136)

Thus for Keith, present and past history are riddled with traumas arising from the sheer human desire for (self-) destruction. Not only is this death drive manifested outwardly in endless wars and conflicts, but also inside Keith's body, in his eyes cultivating "dirt and death". Thus, to melancholic Keith, death, destruction and decay come to define existence on a macro and microcosmic scale.

Lily, however, believes otherwise. She thinks humans, scheming creatures as they are, are lost in the grey zone between the dog and the fox. She says, "'I don't know quite what you had in mind, but I've been thinking. Is there an animal between a dog and a fox? Because that's

what we are. We're not tree rats and we're not red squirrels. We're the grey'" (*TPW*, 194). Keith has ample examples in his mind of the vulpine qualities of the human heart, even on a global scale. Discussing the Iraq war, Keith points to the deceitfulness of supposedly transparent governments and their disregard for human lives. In the following extract, Keith is arguing with Nicholas, modelled after Christopher Hitchens who supported the invasion of Iraq:

> Actually, war was more terrifying—and just as unavoidable, it seemed, for human beings … Why was no one identifying the true *casus belli*? It was obvious. American presidents, in wartime, are always re-elected. There would be regime change in Baghdad, in 2003, so that there would be no regime change in Washington, in 2004.
>
> Nicholas, who supported it, tried to instil in him some courage about the Mesopotamian experiment, but Keith, just now, couldn't begin to bear the thought of flying iron and mortal flesh, and what happened when the hard machine met the soft. (*TPW*, 136)

The less politically-savvy Keith views the US-UK invasion of Iraq as a mere imprudent "experiment" by politicians who have little or no regard for the outcome of their decisions on the "mortal flesh", either of soldiers or civilians. Moreover, characterizing the human body as a soft machine, almost an automaton, renders it uncanny and induces an affect of alienation toward the otherwise unquestioned human body.

Instances of the human body being described in ways that are disturbingly uncanny are not sparse. In one instance, playing cards with Scheherazade, Keith comments on her flesh which was "full and plump. And it had a self-magnifying quality, her flesh—the plump peel of youth …" (*TPW*, 47) covering the 'machine' of the body underneath. In another instance, Keith uses a medley of botanical and geographical metaphors to describe her body:

> As for the girls, well, take Scheherazade, for instance: the modest Cleopatra sandals (with kitten heels), and then a vast expanse of bare brown calf and thigh, the two firm stems going up and up and on and on, and up, and on, until, at the last possible instant (the suspense was killing everybody), the corolla, in the form of a light summer skirt hardly broader than a watchstrap; next, starting persuasively low on the hips, another expanse (the moist concavity of the navel), ending in the gathered loop of the transparent top, and finally the unsupported gulch of the cleavage (*TPW*, 51).

Keith's portrayal creates an affect of mutinous sensuality unattributable to a single area of human experience. Keith, for whom the overwhelming affect of love and union with the sexual other represents yet another encounter with a Lacanian impossibility[66], resorts to roundabout metaphorical ways of verbalizing the real of Scheherazade's unattainable body, even going so far as converting his own vision into an almost slow-moving camera, a machine. In the process, the combined affect generated is one of defamiliarization and alienation of the body of the sexual other. The demolition of hackneyed conceptual frameworks with the intention of *creative* representation of the *affect* of the presence of Scheherazade's body also exemplifies the famous Amisian commitment to "the war against cliché". This sentiment is summed up in Amis's declaration that "all writing is a campaign against cliché. Not just clichés of the pen but clichés of the mind and clichés of the heart" (Amis 2014, xv).

Furthermore, viewed from an immanent perspective, Keith's recourse to disparate botanical and topographical metaphors evokes Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the body as an "assemblage". They describe the potential for becoming-other in an assemblage thus: "An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 8). Art and literature, according to Deleuze and Guattari, partake in the creative becomings of the life force, through engendering "lines" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 8) and deterritorializing feelings independent of the subject, which they term *affects* and *percepts*. Here is their clearest comment on the quintessence of art:

> What is preserved – the thing or the work of art – is *a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects*…. Percepts are no longer perceptions; they are independent of a state of those who experience them. Affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts, and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself." (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 164)

They go on to write that an artist is "a seer, a becomer" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 171). Claire Colebrook explains that affects and percepts are free, "from the particular observers or bodies who experience them. … Affects are sensible experiences in their *singularity*, liberated

[66] "… there's no such thing as a sexual relationship … " (Lacan 1999, 12).

from organizing systems of representation. A poem might create the affect of fear without an object feared, a reason, or a person who is afraid" (Colebrook 2002, 22). Likewise, Keith's multiple metaphorization of Scheherazade's forbidden body coveys an affect of alienation of the human body, through the fictional means of the metaphor, or the *as if*. Here, Graham Swift would also supply a word for the ineffable sensations arising out of the cumulative combination of words: "vibration". He elaborates:

> Words are there to transmit things, not an end in themselves. What really matters is what lies beneath and beyond the words. It's one of our measures of great literature that it somehow gets words to vibrate to things for which most of us don't have words, and even the most articulate of us, before certain things, can be lost for words. But it's not the words that matter – they might be very ordinary words – it's the vibration. (Swift 2016, n.pag.)

Swift seems to be hinting at the *uncanny* ability of words to "vibrate" to the ineffable core of "things" in a manner that is independent of the signifying system or human rationality. In Hartman's analysis, "word-wound"[67] would be the concept that explains how words verbalize 'things'.

In *Wish You Were Here*, the discussion of the shattering realization of the universality of violence follows a similar path to Amis. In a series of surgically precise selection of lexis and metaphors, Swift weaves war and violence into the very fabric of the novel. The overall feeling is one of constant preoccupation of the writer with the destruction inflicted by war. Also, as far as trauma and haunting are concerned, peppering the text with war words comes to mirror the traumatic symptom of hyperarousal and intrusive recall; it is as if preoccupation with war is a repetitional concern that would simply refuse to subside throughout the narrative, or rather, that war is the ghost possessing the narrative. An early instance of Swift's recourse to war words occurs when, on learning about Tom's overnight escape to join the army, Michael

[67] Word-wounds chip away at the unsymbolizable kernel of things as dumb material beings, enticing them into the symbolic order of language. Hartman is drawing on Hegel's conception of language as a means of *negation* of nature: "The generic character of the word-wound in a post-Hegelian type of philosophical analysis stresses a dialectic progression in which language 'negates' the enticement of phenomena, creating a space for reflection in which their sensuous aspect is more clearly perceived and sublimed into thought. There is a transcendental pressure that haunts human wordings and escapes naming even while being named, and it includes the *éclat* of phenomena, the luminosity and self-presentation of things, their sort of *material* dignity" (Hartman 2003, 263).

rips the birthday card he had bought him, or in Jack's words, "Dad had gone ballistic, after ripping up that card" (*WYWH*, 187). Elsewhere, Jack looks out of the window at the landscape, detecting military parallels:

> He looks now at that same view from the bedroom window of Lookout Cottage, though the weather's neither sunny nor calm. Clouds are charging over Holn Head. A November gale is careering up the Channel. The sea, white flecks in its greyness, seems to be travelling in a body from right to left, west to east, as if some retreat is going on. Rain stings the glass in front of him. (*WYWH*, 4)

In a manner recalling Amis's Keith whose traumatized mental state prompts him to see metaphoric parallels between his preoccupations and the external natural world, Jack conceives of the movement of natural elements – or the 'place' of trauma in Balaev's theorization – as if they were engaged in a battle, with clouds "charging" and the sea "retreating" in defeat. "A November gale" has also lost control and "is careering up the Channel". The otherwise soothing raindrops also land like a "sting" on the glass pane. Similarly, Major Richards, we are told, also knows when to leave, "beat a retreat" (*WYWH*, 95), having delivered the sombre news of Tom's death and the specifics of the repatriation ceremony. Elsewhere, tending to his caravans, Jack occasionally is said to feel like an army officer himself. We read, "The joke was that he had a telescope constantly trained, he wasn't just Farmer Jack, he was also sometimes the Commandant" (*WYWH*, 30). Similarly, Jack also conceives of the caravanners as "only ever an encampment … like the halt of some expeditionary, ragtag army" (*WYWH*, 30).

In the same spirit of a life in which the civilian/military boundary is blurred by the threat of terrorism and war, Ellie is also said to have led the car in the manner of a commander. We read, "she has the car now—she has unilaterally commandeered it – and, only within the last desperate hour, Ellie has attempted that aborted journey once again. And failed … She'd driven blindly hither and thither at first, sometimes literally blindly, given the assaults of the rain, and because much of the time her eyes were swimming with tears" (*WYWH*, 34). Thus, in a world obsessed with the threat of destruction – a reality reminiscent of the corpus authors' preoccupation with nuclear extermination in the 1980s – driving a car amounts to "commandeering" and the rain "assaults" Ellie's vehicle. Likewise, when the cow disease hits the farm, Jack conceives of the cows as a "penned-up company strangely bereaving" (*WYWH*, 41–42), "company" denoting conventionally, a body of soldiers. Drawing on Balaev's analysis of the place of trauma, one could claim that the place of Jack and Ellie's trauma is heavily

tinged with their posttraumatic subjectivity. As they are both struggling against traumas brought about by war and destruction, the elements in nature also assume a bellicose appearance, as if at war.

We also learn that mournful Jack believes he has not mourned his father or brother sufficiently, that he has "a whole tankful" (*WYWH*, 83) of crying to do. By the same token, in a war-infested world, getting drunk is more aptly designated in terms of military hardware: "tanking up before a night of it" (*WYWH*, 197). Likewise, the security devices installed by Robinsons on their newly bought property strike Jack as explosives: "the wired-up booby trap of the gate" and "a possible minefield of burglar alarms further down the track" (*WYWH*, 291). In addition to war being built into the metaphoric fabric of the novel, the air of life under a state of emergency is suggested as when Jack goes for a walk outside the hotel on the eve of Tom's burial. We read, "The streets were empty and quiet, as if under curfew" (*WYWH*, 226). In the novel, Ellie is constantly depicted as wanting to break with her past, part of which involved getting rid of Tom, and when news of Tom's death arrives, deep down, she knew that "at least now she was shot of Tom" (*WYWH*, 113). Similarly, Tom's unfailing attractiveness to girls is said to be down to the fact that he had lost his mom. We read, "And maybe girls go for a boy who's just lost his mum, they can't help it. It's a sure-fire recipe, … " (*WYWH*, 101).

When Tom confides in his brother, the secret that he was leaving that night, he knew he could trust him, "… that what he did actually say would be safe with Jack, safe as blank ammunition" (*WYWH*, 200). Similarly, the whizzing seagulls are also metaphorically likened to weaponry, or a "whizzing missile of a wind-hurled seagull" (*WYWH*, 210). Jack's traumatic helplessness at the mercy of intrusive recall is likened to an explosive, which the appearance of a waitress momentarily keeps in check. We read, "A girl appeared from nowhere, bearing his steak and some cutlery wrapped in a paper napkin. Black skirt and white blouse. Her brief attentiveness (though she would never know it) entirely defused him" (*WYWH*, 225). The next day, in his village of birth, as he is driving to the church, the familiar sights throng on him, triggering traumatic recall: "It seemed impossible that the familiar sights now thickening round him could still be here, or else impossible that he'd been away. He surrendered to their ambush"(*WYWH*, 266). When Ellie is trying to persuade Jack to sell both farms and move, she is telling her about the possibility of making a fortune. She advises him thus: "Throw it in with the house and you could make a bomb" (*WYWH*, 258). Ellie's secret trip to weigh up their options for their future property is presented in terms of military reconnaissance, "to spy out their future on the Isle of Wight" (*WYWH*, 329).

Anger in the household is also depicted in military terms, as an explosion. Here, Ellie is reacting to Jack's deranged suggestion that Ellie might have killed her father:

> Strangely, her first thought before she exploded was to continue to picture her father sitting in the kitchen at Westcott, in the chair he always sat in—to think of all those breakfasts she'd cooked for him. …
> Then she'd exploded. …
> 'Are you mad, Jack? Are you *mad*?' (*WYWH*, 298)

Elsewhere traumatic reaction to news of relatives' death is also presented using the explosion metaphor. Here, Major Richards is feeling relieved that in Tom's case there are only two people in the house to receive the news and that there would be "… no further family network (it was a sort of comfort) to trouble, no further connections running like underground wires for further domestic detonations to occur … None of the howls or moans or terrifying speechlessness he'd sometimes known" (*WYWH*, 96). On the final page of the novel, Jack struggles to maintain his sanity and his relationship with Ellie is also presented using a word redolent of war: "Jack walks towards Ellie, holding a seaside umbrella. Ellie walks towards Jack. Then the umbrella covers them both, the wind trying to wrest it from Jack's battling grip, the rain beating a tattoo against it" (*WYWH*, 353).

In what is yet another affirmation of Swift's immanent ethics, human beings, the elements and man-made objects unite in a transformative struggle with forces engaged in dynamic interaction. In this world, the umbrella *becomes* a new, protective skin for Jack and Ellie, almost a 'living' family member, in return for Jack's life-affirming "battle" against the madness of traumatic dissolution and the perpetuation of traumatic violence. The life-affirming gesture of becoming that seems, even to enliven an inanimate object has been pointed out as a transformative act of belief germane to the Swiftian oeuvre, notably *Waterland*:

> If as has been suggested, subjective interconnection is fissured by dissonant empathetic cadences, then one answer the novel suggests is to 'become' other people by temporarily suspending an instinctual distrust of the Other and reaching out to the possibility of change. Believing, if only for a short period, in the realisability of rapprochement is a recuperative act that elicits a substantive ethical outcome, for it anchors one individual to another not in a bond of dependence but in a liberating gesture of self-determination. The willingness to believe in something, whatever that something may be, becomes a key feature of the fiction after

> *Waterland* and is increasingly connected to the desire for salvation that Swift's characters evince. (Lea 2005, 13)

Lea's analysis holds equally true for *Wish You Were Here* in that Jack's final decision to break the suicidal cycle constitutes an act of faith in the other, in a novel where relationship to the other is frequently defined resentfully in terms of slavery. This one-time leap of – or rather oscillation towards – faith in the likelihood of "redemption" (D'Erasmo 2012, n.pag.) through overture to and "becoming" the other is what offers the "possibility of change" and ethical "rapprochement". Jack's gesture of offering the umbrella also instantiates the ethics of "care", a view of ethics that "relies on a relational model, that … describes an ordinary model of vulnerability, and that … is based not only on a disposition but also, and more specifically, on *practice*" (Ganteau 2015a, 11). In other words to qualify for an ethical act of care, not only a caring "disposition" toward the "vulnerability" of the other is necessary, but this attitude must be coupled with "*practice*".

Moreover, Jack's gesture of ending the cycle of violence could be considered a non-postmodern stance in that it moves beyond surrender to indeterminacy. One could posit that it represents an attempt at what Huber calls reconstruction: "on the one hand, the conscious engagement with, but transformation of, postmodernist attitudes, as an act of impossible rebellion against revolution; on the other, a fiction that is no longer centrally concerned with unmasking, dissolving, subverting and unsettling, but sets out to gradually displace postmodernism's fantastic paranoia by attempts to reconstruct, (re-)connect, communicate and engage" (Huber 2014, 24).

Trauma is thus demonstrated as engendering a loss of belief in the assumed certainties that make up subjectivity. As global war and death wreak havoc in the lives of the protagonists, the narratives demonstrate how an abysmal feeling of loss of the anchoring certainties bolstering the victim's very humanity are put under question. The next section discusses how this inquiry encompasses the protagonist's view of the symbolic order, or the social self.

C. Symbolic Order Haunted

On a social level, trauma is depicted as engendering a subversive questioning leading to a reconfiguration of relationship to the character's bond with the society, or the "place" of occurrence of trauma. As described by Michelle Balaev, the notion of "place" acquires a specific meaning in a discussion of trauma:

> The term place refers to a physical environment inhabited, viewed, or imagined by a person who attaches and derives meaning from it. … place is not only a physical location of experience, but also an entity that organizes memories, feelings, and meaning because it is the site where individual and cultural realities intersect …We can understand place as the locus where nature and culture converge to construct meaning and inform both individual and collective identity. … Place is not only a location of experience, but, significantly, a facet of perception that organizes memories, feelings, and meaning at the level of the physical environment. To conceive of place as an actor or character in the novel takes into consideration a conception of identity as relational or as a non-binary organizing principle of the self and consciousness. (Balaev 2008, n.pag.)

Thus, in the trauma novel, the understanding of place transcends its mere physicality and incorporates emotional elements. Place participates in the formation of subjectivity and as attitudes to place change, so does subjectivity undergo a redefinition. An extreme version of this revision of attitude to place of trauma is the severance of emotional bonds with it.

The Sense of an Ending only fleetingly refers to this sense of traumatic a-sociality; Tony only briefly refers to "a friend who trained as a lawyer, then became disenchanted and never practised. … The more you learn, the less you fear. 'Learn' not in the sense of academic study, but in the practical understanding of life" (*TSE*, 82). He also voices his disillusionment with "political and historical change", and by extension, life. He says, "Because just as all political and historical change sooner or later disappoints, so does adulthood. So does life. Sometimes I think the purpose of life is to reconcile us to its eventual loss by wearing us down, by proving, however long it takes, that life isn't all it's cracked up to be" (*TSE*, 105). Thus, Tony's traumatic experience of his unwitting involvement in Adrian's suicide and the subsequent revision of outlook on a postmodern, late capitalist era leaves him disappointed with life and the social structure. The novel demonstrates in Michelle Balaev's words that,

> …the reorganized self is relational and emerges relative to a specific place that produces a specific articulation of a transformed identity. This expression of the self is socially contingent and connected to a place of inhabitation and meaning, not binarily dependent on a linear re-enactment of a traumatic experience. The protagonist's subjectivity is, thus, depicted as a fluid process located in relation to new realities or new knowledge. (Balaev 2008, n.pag.)

In Balaev's analysis, subjectivity is a processual, amorphous entity that is capable of transformation, should the material social context of its formation necessitate it. Trauma is one such instance when social subjectivity is reorganized. The subject is thus not a perennial victim of repetitional haunting by trauma, but a fluid being that revises it in relation to the context or 'place' of trauma, thus reterritorializing itself. New realities thus bring about a fresh outlook on the victim's social context. The "fluid" self's revision of relationship to the place of trauma often manifests itself, at least initially, in the manner of a dissociative severance of emotional ties to the place. Later, following verbalization of the affect of trauma in the form of the narrative, a reestablishment of the social bond could come about. Janoff-Bulman makes a similar point when she states, with regard to the trauma victim's cognitive attempts at comprehending trauma, that "when a victim integrates the data of the traumatic event, the most fundamental assumptions are changed" (Janoff-Bulman 1989, 123).

Among the corpus authors, the writer who is acutely aware of the deterritorializing operations of PTSD on the social bond is Graham Swift. *Wish You Were Here* displays how, in the wake of trauma, a subversive universal questioning surges in the victim's mind engulfing the notion of society, citizenship, and eventually nationhood. Swift demonstrates how trauma convinces the victim that prevailing ideas of nationhood are but fictive narratives: a reconfiguration of outlook that leads to the adoption of an alternative, revised vision of sociality, quite unlike that in pre-traumatic times. In the novel, this shift in perspective occurs on the way to the repatriation and burial ceremonies and back home, in Jack's hyperaroused and questioning mind. The mental questioning of the symbolic order involves problematizing the family surname which Jack's mother believed to be somehow a glorious name. The narrative voice – a free indirect commingling of the narrator and Jack – recounts, "My Ellie. She'd changed her name (at long last) to Luxton, just as, once, his mother had done. And 'Luxton', so his mother had always said, was a name to be proud of. It was even a name that had its glory" (*WYWH*, 9). Jack's very mention of – and bewilderment at – the two women's eagerness to adopt their husbands' surnames defamiliarizes and subverts the tradition. Like Lacan, Jack knows that the father only symbolically bears the name that keeps the family

together: the *nom-du-père* comes *non du père*, not *really* from the father, only *symbolically* so, as the deepening questioning into the workings of society would have it.

Yet one of the narrative's clearest depictions of the symbolic order as a mere fictive construct, an irrelevant *performance* divorced from Jack's social *reality*, is the Remembrance ceremony he attends annually with his father. His father carries the DCM (Distinguished Conduct in the Field Medal) awarded posthumously to his uncles killed in WWI, in his pocket. We read: "And only after more time had passed and while he still looked at the air in front of him would he open his hand, just for an instant, above the surface of the bar, and then return the medal to where it had come from. It was a performance his dad was good at and one worth its annual repetition" (*WYWH*, 19). The DCM, with the whorl of hyperbolized heroic narratives Vera had spun around it is one way in which the novel represents the haunting of the present by a distant conflict, in a manner reminiscent of Pat Barker. Yet, the characterization of the ceremony as a performance, a collective narrative, constitutes a step toward liberation from the weight of – the narratives – of the past.

Throughout the novel, Jack questions and begins to disbelieve the diet of heroic stories of his uncles that their mother had fed them since their childhood. We learn,

> Both Jack and Tom had grown up with the story, though, because of the eight years between them, not at the same time. But after Tom was born it acquired the double force of being a story about two brothers. It was Vera who mainly had the job of telling it, shaping it as she thought fit—though there wasn't so much to go on—for the ears of growing boys. Their father may have known more, but the truth was that, though the story had become, quite literally, engraved, no one had ever completely possessed the facts. (*WYWH*, 9)

In what constitutes a miniature nation-building narrative of heroic combat and sacrifice, with the DCM as its almost sacred relic, the trauma narrative undergoes shifts in its contours as the boys grow older, with Vera aiming to forge a stronger bond between the two living brothers. Yet Jack's interrogative mind begins to question the veracity of Vera's stories, which turn the hearts and minds of the living into sepulchers for the dead: subjectivity is presented as always-already a ghost-story, with stories of the past turning the minds of the living into graves as Swift's choice of the verb 'engraved' does not fail to highlight. The blatant subversion implied by Jack's disbelief has been pointed out by Alexandra Mărginean who states that victims of trauma can 'use' as well as 'abuse' their suffering. She writes: "The other aspect concerns the

(ab)use of trauma as an excuse to express (scandalous) difference of opinion with respect to the dominant discourse" (Mărginean 2014, 1134).

It is the discovery, or the suspicion of the possibly hyperbolic nature of the heroic story of the soldier uncles and their medal that further undermines Jack's faith in the familial narrative. Jack further remembers that "His mother, …, always put more spirit into the thing, not only buffing up the medal, but making sure to procure the poppies in advance and inspecting them in their suits as if they might have been soldiers themselves" (*WYWH*, 15). Thus, the events around the Remembrance Day ceremony reveal the degree to which the haunting of the present is down to the human melancholic tendency to breathe a "spirit" into inanimate objects – as well as living human beings – thereby imagining the dead to be alive through them(selves). Repeatedly, Swiftian characters are shown as *humanly* incapable of accepting death and mentally letting go of their dead, with the ultimate social effect being the emergence of an always-already spectralized communal 'life'. In her analysis of the novel, Stacey D'Erasmo touches upon the haunting presence of the past in the contemporary lives of the characters. She writes: "Swift has used extraordinarily subtle means to talk about the way we live now and how it's infused not only with the way we lived then but with the way other people lived, and live. … the unearthing of buried emotion, and the consequences of that unearthing, is his métier" (D'Erasmo 2012, n.pag.).

The melancholia and spectrality arising from Vera's manner of mythologizing – or 'buffing up' – a specific traumatic death can also be said to instantiate what Dominick LaCapra warns against in culture: allowing historical *loss* "situated on a historical level and … the consequence of particular events" (LaCapra 1999, 712) to be conflated with an *absence* (traumatic myths of origin). He explains:

> When absence and loss are conflated, melancholic paralysis or manic agitation may set in, and the significance or force of particular historical losses (for example, those of apartheid or the Shoah) may be obfuscated or rashly generalized. As a consequence one encounters the dubious ideas that everyone (including perpetrators or collaborators) is a victim, that all history is trauma, or that we all share a pathological public sphere or a "wound culture." … Furthermore, the conflation of absence and loss would facilitate the appropriation of particular traumas by those who did not experience them, typically in a movement of identity- formation that makes invidious and ideological use of traumatic series of events in foundational ways or as symbolic capital. (LaCapra 1999, 712)

According to LaCapra then, the cultural melancholia ensuing such a conflation of the two types of trauma leads to the erroneous belief that existence is, and has been traumatic. With an aside to Shoshana Felman and Cathy Caruth – whose commitment to non-understanding and the repetition of trauma risks perpetuating it across generations – LaCapra warns against its appropriation by non-victims and political opportunists. More importantly he warns against the degeneration of loss to absence or "structural trauma"[68], i.e. the danger of trauma's loss of historical particularity and its consequent mythologization and appropriation as the foundational basis of national identity. This appropriation of trauma is characterized by "the event's absolute uniqueness or even epiphanous, sublime, or sacral quality" (LaCapra 1999, 724) .

To safeguard against this type of misuse, LaCapra believes, after Freud, that one should deploy the power of working-through. He writes:

> Historical losses can conceivably be avoided or, when they occur, at least in part be compensated for, worked through, and even to some extent overcome. Absence, along with the anxiety it brings, could be worked through only in the sense that one may learn better to live with it and not convert it into a loss or lack that one believes could be made good, notably through the elimination or victimization of those to whom blame is imputed. Conversely, it is important not to hypostatize particular historical losses or lacks and present them as mere instantiations of some inevitable absence or constitutive feature of existence. Indeed, specific phantoms that possess the self or the community can

[68] "Structural trauma is often figured as deeply ambivalent – as both shattering or painful and the occasion for *jouissance,* ecstatic elation, or the sublime. Although one may contend that structural trauma is in some problematic sense its precondition, I would reiterate the basic point that historical trauma is related to particular events that do indeed involve losses, such as the Shoah or the dropping of the atom bomb on Japanese cities. The strong temptation with respect to such limit-events is to collapse the distinction and to arrive at a conception of the event's absolute uniqueness or even epiphanous, sublime, or sacral quality. Perhaps this is the tangled region of thought and affect where one should situate the founding trauma – the trauma that paradoxically becomes the basis for collective and/or personal identity. The Holocaust, slavery, or apartheid – even suffering the effects of the atom bomb in Hiroshima or Nagasaki – can become a founding trauma. Such a trauma is typical of myths of origin and may perhaps be located in the more or less mythologized history of every people. But one may both recognize the need for, and question the function of, the founding trauma that typically plays a tendentious ideological role, for example, in terms of the concept of a chosen people or a belief in one's privileged status as victim. *As* historical events that are indeed crucial in the history of peoples, traumas might instead be seen as posing the problematic question of identity and as calling for more critical ways of coming to terms with both their legacy and problems such as absence and loss" (LaCapra 1999, 724).

> be laid to rest through mourning only when they are specified and named as historically lost others. (LaCapra 1999, 712–13)

Thus, through mourning and working through, historical loss can be "overcome", at least partially. Absence, equated in LaCapra's analysis with crippling spectrality and "possession" by the "inevitable" ghost of the past, can be laid to rest through working-through. Otherwise, it risks inducing the communal desire to eliminate those who carry the blame, much in the manner a cancer grows to engulf the entire existence. This type of *collective* melancholia – or traumatic "possession" – is sustained from one generation to the next through narratives and institutionalized cultural practices of the type mentioned in *Wish You Were Here*. Another researcher who discusses the cultural tendency to mythologize a traumatic past is Hartman who holds that "Troping" the traumatic past, sometimes to the level of "mythic fantasmagoria" (Hartman 1995, 537) is a psychic strategy to deal with trauma. It is also a miniature version of a nation-building narrative that might turn out to be hyperbolized beyond human proportions, indicated in Swift's novel by Jack's suspicion of Vera's heroic narratives.

In a slightly different context, Jan Assman's definition of "cultural memory" indicates a similar innate tendency for hyperbole and transcendence beyond the "practical function" of otherwise ordinary objects. He states:

> 'Cultural memory.' This is the handing down of meaning. … . When mimetic routines take on the status of rituals, for example, when they assume a meaning and significance that go beyond their practical function, the borders of mimetic action memory are transcended. Rituals are part of cultural memory because they are the form through which cultural meaning is both handed down and brought to present life. The same applies to things once they point to a meaning that goes beyond their practical purpose: symbols; icons; representations such as monuments, tombs, temples, idols; and so forth, all transcend the borders of object-memory because they make the implicit index of time and identity explicit. (Assmann 2011, 6–7)

In the wake of trauma in Swift's novel, it is precisely *cultural memory* – or the mythologized past – handed down through *rituals* and *objects* of transcendental value which gets critiqued. Starting with the DCM and the Remembrance Ceremony, *Wish You Were Here* includes passing glimpses of transcendental historical objects instrumental to the construction of national identity through time. In a move that could qualify the novel also as a slight

representative of the "historiographic metafiction" as theorized by Hutcheon[69], History is critically presented as built on violence, bloodshed, war and death in the passing references to Carisbrooke Castle, where Charles I had been imprisoned prior to trial and beheading. The ships Warrior and Victory from the Trafalgar battle, which Jack passes on his way back home from the funeral are also testimonies to the glorification of bloodshed at the heart of the nation's attempts at nation-building. As Jameson puts it in Marxist terminology, "throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror" (Jameson 1992, 5).

Critical attitude to a nation's past (whose necessity is also reiterated by Barnes in interview with Guignery[70]) is a subversive and ultimately liberating questioning that trauma is likely to trigger in the victim's psyche. In this context, Emily Horton writes of Swift's wariness to the dangers of romanticizing past trauma. In the following extract, she discusses contemporary historical conflicts and traumas, including the Iraq war:

> In some ways, these changes are shown as truly shocking, rightly eliciting anxiety and protest. Even so, Swift also reveals the larger predictability of these events, as repetitions of past mistakes founded on similar delusions, as well as the ways history and historical trauma has been appropriated socially and politically towards questionable ends. The connections he draws between recent history and the two World Wars make this point lucidly, foregrounding the persistent danger that accompanies romantic idealism. In effect, many of these events are shown

[69] "In most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative – be it in literature, history, or theory – that has usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historio*graphic meta*fiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past" (Hutcheon 1988, 5).

[70] In answer to Vanessa Guignery's question about the significance of preserving history in the Barnesian oeuvre, he touches on the tendency to mythologize at the heart of nation-building:
"Getting its history wrong is also part of creating a nation. You have to build up those myths of liberation, myths of fighting the oppressor, myths of bravery. Often they have a certain percentage of truth in them, so they're easy myths to build up. But then being a nation as well as becoming a nation also depends on the continuation of those myths, which you see in all countries…
Guignery: And do you think that historians and maybe novelists are there to preserve those myths, that history, that identity?
Barnes: I think we are more apt to point out that they are myths rather than to build them up. …We need to be able to hold more than one idea in our head at a time. We need to understand that Henry V was a great English king and a brilliant strategist at Agincourt, and also a complete bastard who helped end the rules of chivalry by massacring his French prisoners.
… It seems to me that, increasingly, countries are caricaturing themselves and are using a very air-brushed version of certain aspects of their own history. It's not new, but it's certainly being done more extremely and with more commercial efficiency now than before …" (Guignery and Barnes 2009, 59–60).

> to be linked to romantic hubris, the belief in the innate rightness of one's own historical vision. (Horton 2014, 21)

Horton's analysis ties in with Jack's growing sense of critical unease at having to participate in the Remembrance Day ceremonies. His feelings of disbelief at his mother's hyperbolical tales of heroism involving his uncles' death in WWI are also evidence of the Swiftian narrative of "protest" at the perpetuation of past mistakes through "questionable" appropriation and consequent repetition of trauma. The intergenerational trauma and haunting by the two World Wars are partly to be blamed on the "romantic idealism" and "hubris" at the heart of culture.

In *Wish You Were Here*, the subversive questioning of the seamless narratives of national identity occurs simultaneously with a feeling of the presence of the Lacanian real, an incomprehensible sentiment of anxiety or dread. Jack stops on the way to go to the toilet, where,

> … the mere reflex of looking at his watch, the noting of passing minutes, made him sweat. The tightness in his stomach reasserted itself and, as if to smother and quell it, he forced himself, in the cafeteria, to consume a large, sticky Danish pastry and drink a cup of coffee.
> Around him was the random sample of the nation (another word, like 'citizen', that had come in recent days to nag him) to be found in any service-station cafeteria on a weekday morning. The bland, communal atmosphere both soothed and troubled him. (*WYWH*, 148)

Jack's stalled relationship with the people around him is undergoing a reconfiguration as his assumptions of what it means to be a 'citizen' – as a member of a nation he can identify with – have been thrown into confusion. The narrative will generally aid to redefine his attitude toward the "communal atmosphere". As is clear, in the hyper-aroused mind, the questioning goes hand in hand with the intrusive trauma, manifesting in sudden sweating and panic attacks.

Earlier, he had voiced his doubts about the significance of being a citizen, which rather than alleviate his feeling of fear, added to it as he thought of it as an "imposition". We read, "He didn't feel like a citizen today. Though today he knew, inescapably, he was one. It felt like some imposition or even incrimination when he knew it should be the opposite: a privilege, a protection, a guarantee. The fact that he was a citizen should be dissolving that primitive ball of fear in his stomach" (*WYWH*, 146). Jack's assumptions of the human civilization had been built on the idea of linear progress away from the "primitive" past, that being a citizen would safeguard him against inexplicable barbarity. It is the shattering of these assumptions that render notions of citizenship – and attachment to country – meaningless to him. Emily Horton's remarks regarding the internal questioning of the social bond ensuing trauma in "such novels

as McEwan's *The Child in Time*, Swift's *Last Orders* or *Wish You Were Here*" are enlightening. Permeating these works, she observes, is "a motif of social and ethical crisis which brings into question everyday assumptions regarding truth and value, and which obliges these narrators to seek out alternative epistemological and ethical frameworks. … this often involves an incident of breakdown or traumatic violence, which leaves the narrator uncertain of his or her place in the world, and grappling over a means to [of] re-imagining identity and belonging" (Horton 2014, 42).

In a manner recalling Janoff-Bulman's analysis of trauma, Horton's critique highlights the deterritorializing effect of the shattering of received social principles of "truth and value", leading to the emergence, in the traumatized psyche, of fresh "epistemological and ethical frameworks". Her stress on "re-imagining identity and belonging" is in line with Michelle Balaev's analysis of trauma in terms of its effect on the victim's relation to the symbolic order of society. In the extract below, Balaev comments on the significance of the relation to place in trauma novels:

> In significant ways, the contemporary trauma novel explores the effects of suffering on the individual and community in terms of the character's relation to place. A traumatic experience disrupts attachments between self and others by challenging fundamental assumptions about moral laws and social relationships that are themselves connected to specific environments. Novels represent this disruption between self and others by carefully describing the place of trauma because the physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the personal and cultural histories embedded in landscapes that define the character's identity, and thus influences the meaning of the traumatic experience. The primacy of place in the representations of trauma anchors the individual experience within a larger cultural context because place attains its meaningful import based on individual perception and symbolic significance accorded by culture. (Balaev 2008, n.pag.)

Balaev's remarks shed further light on the Swiftian attention to the presence of history and cultural practices as instruments of national identity construction, elements which mirror the characters' *evolving* relationship to the social bond. Here is another proof of Jack's gradual de-socialization and reconfiguration of relationship to "the place of trauma" which goes hand in hand with a questioning of his country's involvement in overseas wars. We read, "But he had, in recent months, been an intimate witness to some immediate consequences of what was happening in Iraq and Afghanistan … Enough to give him a curious sense of the country in which he dwelt and to which he owed a soldier's allegiance" (*WYWH*, 96). Jack's questioning

of his country's involvement in distant wars – of which he is a traumatized victim – undermine the "allegiance" he feels to his country. In Emily Horton's immanent analysis of the novel, the characters' internal inquiry into the causes – national and international – of trauma in the UK and elsewhere, ends up reconfiguring their historical awareness:

> The attempts Swift's characters make to confront these personal and historical events, and to put them into contextual perspective – not only temporally but also locationally – establishes a reflexive philosophy, which, as I understand it, is expressly cosmopolitan. In effect, the local is seen here as both a *product of* and a *participant within* larger global happenings, which are always visible on the edge of the narrator's vision. As Swift's characters begin to recognise this relationship, and to change their views accordingly, they re-establish the connection between local, national and transnational. The result, when this process is successful (however rarely), is historical roundedness: events are made comprehensible, even despite their emotional difficulty, and not in a way which devalues or closes down alternative, differently articulated contextual explanations. … In the … puzzling spaces of Swift's narratives, history offers a similar social and ethical grounding, inciting awareness as a guard against romantic prejudice. (Horton 2014, 22)

The troubling events the characters are subjected to in the Swiftian universe prompt them to ponder their being within a social context, and as they do so, they grow increasingly aware of the web of connectivity that ties them to global goings-on. Concurrent to this realization, a reorganization of subjectivity takes place. Thus, traumatic enquiry and the subsequent perspectival recontextualization of trauma accord the characters a cosmopolitan outlook on the context of trauma. The resultant awareness of immanent interconnectivity leads to the likelihood of comprehension of "the experience of deterritorialization" (Horton 2014, 95) within a historical context, a process which Horton finds to be conducive to ethical awareness and a safeguard against romanticization of past bloodshed.

In this context, Jack's traumatized vision, which can only detect metaphorical similarities according to Arnold Modell perceives the united farms of the Loxtons and Merricks as a miniature version of a larger geopolitical union which is in ruins as a result of recent traumas sweeping across the country. We read apropos Jack and Ellie, "They were king and queen now of their (ruined) castles, of their finally united kingdoms, …" (*WYWH*, 69). To Jack, the disaster-hit farms of Britain represent a microcosmic image of a greater malaise afflicting the country. Another instance of traumatic memories intruding at the point of metaphoric similarities and highlighting the national plight is when Jack's mind is simultaneously

inundated with the associations between Luke the dead dog, his blanket and a flag, not to mention Tom himself. We read:

> Maybe the army likes a man who not only knows how to shoot, but who knows the value of a blanket, who takes good care of a blanket. Blankets go with the army. Whenever Jack remembered Tom ironing that blanket and folding it up so carefully and holding it, as if it might have been Luke himself, across his arms, there was something about it he could never place. But now he can. It was as if he was handling a flag. (*WYWH*, 156)

The past is ever-present in vivid images which persist into the present. What is even more overwhelming is that one image triggers another, with poignant images thronging in on the victim. This constitutes an instance of the traumatic symptoms of 'hyperarousal' and 'intrusive recall', coupled with the victim's metaphoric attempt at the verbalization of the real of trauma: here, the loss of a brother to a far-off battle to which Jack does not subscribe.

Jack's feelings of deracination and alienation are all the more acute as he is born and bred as a farmer. Not only overseas wars and threats, but also the very idea of a 'city' is disquieting to him as we learn that "The word 'city' itself was foreign to him, as was the word 'citizen'…" (*WYWH*, 145–46). Yet the scene in which Jack's ideas of belonging and nationhood are questioned in the most unsettling manner is the repatriation ceremony where he sets eyes on alien-looking British dignitaries he cannot relate to in any way. The feeling of numbing and withdrawal from the idea of citizenship and country is so profound that Jack feels "like a puppet, a lost man, somehow steering himself or letting himself be steered through what lay before him. He might have used … the word 'autopilot'. He might have had the same sense of not being himself if he had been called to Buckingham Palace to be knighted by the Queen" (*WYWH*, 160). From the outset, the uncanny sentiment of being an automaton is established as Jack feels emotionally cut off from the crowd. What amounts almost to trauma for Jack is his contiguity with fantastically dressed people of a radically different social class:

> … a throng – he was somehow sucked into it – that included a great many uniforms, some of them of an astonishingly resplendent and seemingly high-ranking nature. His plain suit felt instantly shabby. There were swords, sashes, gold braid – medals – epaulettes. It was fancy dress. Some of the uniforms were so besmothered and encrusted that Jack wondered if they didn't mark the point where they mysteriously merged with the regalia of dukes and earls. And he'd previously noted, from the List of Those in Attendance, that he would indeed be in the presence of one viscount (whatever a viscount was) and more than one lord. It hadn't given him

> any sense of privilege. It had scared him.
>
> Among the uniforms were a number of women in what seemed to Jack extravagant forms of dress and hat, as if this might be a wedding, and wearing also, in some cases, a kind of smile that wasn't a smile at all and reminded him of zip fasteners. There were also at least two men wearing uniform but with long white lacy surplices on top. (*WYWH*, 160–61)

Jack's encounter with a class of people whose incongruously flamboyant outfits is meant to glorify the death of soldiers for 'Queen and Country', as it were, strikes Jack as outlandish and frightening.

Far from relating to dignitaries who have their wars fought at a distance by the likes of Tom[71], Jack conceives of them not as people but as "uniforms". Women, too, strike him as automata with zip fasteners for mouths. The presence of the viscount in attendance, wearing what appeared to Jack as fancy-dress induced a feeling akin to trauma, a sense of "dazed incomprehension" pushing him further into his dissociative shell, to the point that Swift describes him as a "cluster of one", no longer belonging to the "throng" of "people in extraordinary get-ups with extraordinary voices" (*WYWH*, 163–64). Commenting on the deterritorializing effect of this 'mourning' ceremony – characterized by what she terms "arcane procedures of military bureaucracy" – on Jack, Emily Horton states that Jack feels "repelled by uniformed grandeur and artifice…. In this performance of metropolitan fashion and pretence, Jack becomes estranged from his immediate surroundings, the deterritorialisation of the local within the global engendering personal uncertainty" (Horton 2014, 230–31). In the ceremony, Jack relates to the few people dressed and looking like himself, to "two clusters of civilians … who seemed to Jack not so unlike himself, either in their clothing or in their air of

[71] Swift's description of the dignitaries in uniform is reminiscent of this poem by Siegfried Sassoon about army officers for whom the loss of young lives was immaterial, or 'base details':

Base Details

IF I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath,
I'd live with scarlet Majors at the Base,
And speed glum heroes up the line to death.
You'd see me with my puffy petulant face,
Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel,
Reading the Roll of Honour. 'Poor young chap,'
I'd say—'I used to know his father well;
Yes, we've lost heavily in this last scrap.'
And when the war is done and youth stone dead,
I'd toddle safely home and die—in bed. ("Base Details", Sassoon 2004, 58)

dazed incomprehension. He instantly knew who they were and instinctively felt it would be good, though also difficult, to be close to them" (*WYWH*, 160–61). These civilians were also traumatized like him, with their "air of dazed incomprehension".

Later on, still pondering his traumatic life and the unsettling memory of the alienating ceremony, and as usual, imagining far worse possibilities than real (in this case having to deliver a funeral speech), he thinks of the DCM, the likes of which were plentiful in the ceremony, in plainly subversive and derogatory terms:

> He thought of how if he was required, following this ceremony, to make a speech, he would say how Tom, his little brother Tom, had always wanted to be a soldier, ever since he'd learnt about his two great-uncles who'd died in the First World War and how one of them had won the DCM. Or some such crap. He'd say it. Though thank God that he didn't have to make a speech. How could he, Jack, ever make a speech? How could *anyone* ever make a speech? (*WYWH*, 170)

In his own simple way, thus, Jack ties the perpetuation of war and violence to the heroic narratives glorifying bloodshed and the objects commemorating these haunting events, in this case the DCM, "or some such crap" in Jack's view. Clearly, Jack's critical questioning into his trauma is dislodging his vision of age-old narratives and family heirlooms. Apropos Jack's critical questioning into the increasingly waning idea of "attachment to land", Swift states in the Foyles interview that "it's also abundantly clear that my novel takes a very complex and questioning view of things when 'land' and 'country' merge into the idea of nationhood and into the idea of things being done, supposedly, in the name of or 'for' one's country" (Swift 2016, n.pag.).

Correspondingly, Jack finally comes to adopt a different opinion on the heroic ceremony. For a start, he does not believe that Tom had died for his country. We read, "But to say, as is said of soldiers, that he'd died for his country—no, that wouldn't be exactly true, would it?" (*WYWH*, 196). Further, shaken by his thoughts and the hypothetical speech he might have been asked to make, Jack extends his doubts across generations, even disbelieving the possibility of *any war* ever having been understood by the *soldiers* fighting it, in particular his uncles killed in WWI. As far as Tom goes, Jack believes, "At least those two Luxton lads had known the score. Maybe. Tom was the traitor, my lords and ladies, Tom was the deserter, the runaway. Running away from the war against cow disease and agricultural ruin. And against his own embattled father" (*WYWH*, 178–79). At least, Jack 'knows' that Tom was a deserter

of the more comprehensible fight closer to home, that of the mad cow disease and his duties on the farm toward, primarily his ageing, "embattled" father. Curiously, neither were the undertakers sure if Tom had died for his country. We read, "They weren't sure either, from what they'd occasionally seen on the ten-o'clock news, if even words like 'in action' were quite the right words to be thinking of" (*WYWH*, 191).

With his beliefs in the core ideas of nation, country and his brother's motives for fighting in the war shattered, Jack subversively refuses to have Tom's coffin draped in the "bloody great" (*WYWH*, 191) Union Jack:

> But Jack had said – it had just come out, it was one of his occasional, forceful blurtings - that he didn't want the flag. If it was his say-so, then he was saying so. He didn't want it left on the coffin, and he didn't want it himself. He said – and this had just come out too – that he wanted it given to the 'battalion'. He'd used Major Richards's word. He wanted the battalion to have it. (*WYWH*, 173)

Jack and the undertakers' uncertainty regarding Britain's foreign war reflects Swift's own perspective who, in interview with Stef Craps, compares Britain's involvement in Iraq with the Falklands war, to express his "sense of shame". He goes on to say: "It's shameful. My nation is besmirched by it in a way that I don't think was the case with the Falklands …The moral climate in this country now involves a feeling of shame. What is there to be proud about? I don't think that was true in the 1970s or 1980s … Even Northern Ireland didn't produce the underlying sense of shame that exists now" (Craps and Swift 2009, 642). Apropos the conflict arising from the Swiftian characters' recognition of the inadequacy of the official narrative of nationhood and the resultant sense of void in the social self, Daniel Lea writes,

> That sense of lack, of being incomplete, or of glimpsing the potential forever outside the grasp of the self, or of the means of expression, is a recurrent theme of Swift's fiction …. In most of the novels it is expressed through an engagement with the historical process that juxtaposes the individual's dislocating experience of the historical moment with the form of grand narrative that constitutes History and against which the unsatisfying experience of the subject is always judged. In effect, though, history is merely an abstract site around which a more fundamental dislocation is enacted: that between subjective and objective realities. (Lea 2005, 7)

In effect, the subjective reality, characterized as it is with traumatic deterritorialization, is portrayed as engaged in a constant process of subversive questioning of received notions of the

constituent elements of nationhood. History and historical events of sizeable magnitude are seen only as unwelcome irruptions, “dislocations”, into the placid lives of ordinary people, later smoothed over with “unsatisfying” tales in the “grand narrative that constitutes History”.

In the novel, Jack’s most significant act of relinquishing the social myth of heroism spun around personal tragedies has to do with the symbolically-laden DCM. This is the medal he carried in his pocket, as his father no doubt would have done, to sustain some semblance of a dialogue, however tenuous, with a past whose veracity nonetheless he had been questioning. Throughout his trip, Jack would occasionally touch the DCM, presumably for encouragement and support. Swift describes it as the “small, round solidity against his chest” (*WYWH*, 272) that Jack would touch “as if for his protection” (*WYWH*, 134–35). The Swiftian “as if” is present in the sentence to indicate the presence of yet another fiction, an imaginary consolatory construct. Nonetheless, traumatic questioning of core assumptions prompts Jack to relinquish this seeming solidity. On the way back home, on the ferry, we learn that some passengers “would have noticed one of their number, a large, strongly built, even rather intimidating man, feel for something in the region of his breast pocket, then, clutching it tightly for a moment in his fist, hurl it into the sea” (*WYWH*, 333). Jettisoning the DCM constitutes a willing act of relinquishment of a social and familial myth in the space of deterritorialization opened up – or triggered – by trauma. Michelle Balaev explains how the “transformative journey” triggered by trauma leads to a revision of outlook towards place, culminating in the “reorientation” of the social self:

> Trauma, in the novel, lurches the protagonist into a profound inquisitive state, in which the meaning of the experience and the process of conceptualizing the self and world are meticulously evaluated. The trauma novel demonstrates this process of questioning as the crux of the plot in terms of the reconstruction of personal and social knowledge. The traumatized protagonist's inquiry into previous "truths" of the self or formulations of identity produces a change in consciousness, however painful this might be, that takes the protagonist on a transformative journey, one that does not necessarily provide relief from suffering or redemption. Responses to traumatic events in fiction often cause the protagonist to turn inward and struggle with the past. This inward glance is paired with a growing awareness to the external world outside the individual mind. In this way, trauma is both a personal and cultural experience linked to place because the reorientation of the self is paired with a re-evaluation of one's relation to society, thus expanding the identification between self and world. (Balaev 2008, n.pag.)

Balaev's formulation could well serve as a summary of the operations of trauma on Jack's – and Tony and Keith's – conceptions of the social self. The questioning triggered by trauma thus induces a transformative journey within which the "expanding" processual self becomes reconstructed within the immanent universe of the novels. Relations to place are also redefined, as within an ethics of immanence subjectivity arises out of interactions with the place and society. Balaev rightly observes however, that "relief" is not always attained at the end of the trauma narrative. Apropos the redefinition of subjectivity and relation to the past at the instigation of trauma in the Swiftian oeuvre, Lea observes that the characters' "only recourse is to a radical narrative refashioning that can apply the order of logic to the disparate jumble of their being. They set about revisioning their lives through the focus of a redemptive diegesis, an application of retroactive conformity that endows them with a hindsight that can therapeutically resurrect their 'lost' subjectivity" (Lea 2005, 10). Lea's remarks corroborate Balaev's comments on traumatic "reorientation of the self".

In the end, what comes to Jack's rescue is not manifestations of official citizenry but the "resilience of the community spirit" (Bernard and Swift 1997, 219) in Bernard's words, or "a horrified but quickly rallying community spirit" (*WYWH*, 251). Apropos, care and assistance by the community are claimed to be key to healing from trauma, as noted by psychiatrist Sandra Bloom: "Trauma and terror, pain and grief could be transmuted into the joy of … story and poetry. Not forgotten, but changed and changed together. No longer a recurrent terrifying fantasy of the solitary victim, but the newly transformed addition to the culturally shared reality, another chapter in the culture [cultural] mythical system" (Bloom 2011, 77). The mutual construction of a "story" through collaborative effort – with its transformative effects – is thus reiterated as being crucial to the transmutation of trauma into 'joy'. In this context, further proof of the significance of social support in healing from trauma comes also from the work of Dominick LaCapra who draws on the Freudian concepts of acting-out and working-through in his analysis of historical trauma, which he terms "loss":

> I would also distinguish in nonbinary terms between two additional interacting processes: acting-out and working-through, which are interrelated modes of responding to loss or historical trauma. … I have argued elsewhere that mourning might be seen as a form of working-through, and melancholia as a form of acting-out. Freud compared and contrasted melancholia with mourning. He saw melancholia as characteristic of an arrested process in which the depressed, self-berating, and traumatized self, locked in compulsive repetition, is

> possessed by the past, faces a future of impasses, and remains narcissistically identified with the lost object. Mourning brings the possibility of engaging trauma and achieving a reinvestment in, or recathexis of, life that allows one to begin again. (LaCapra 1999, 713)

In LaCapra's analysis, both the repetitional compulsion of acting-out and the recontextualization of trauma achieved in working-through are essential as proper responses to historical trauma. A stalled trauma, one that is not subjected to narrativization, leads to cultural melancholia, whereas appropriate mourning results in working-through. More importantly, mourning and working-through hold the promise of regeneration and renewal, termed "recathexis" after Freud. This is tantamount to a restoration of the desire for libidinal investment and a prioritization of the erotic principle of Eros. However, what ties LaCapra's analysis to *Wish You Were Here* most is his emphasis on the role of the community and the mutual narrativization of trauma. He continues:

> In line with Freud's concepts, one might further suggest that mourning be seen not simply as individual or quasi-transcendental grieving but as a homeopathic socialization or ritualization of the repetition compulsion that attempts to turn it against the death drive and to counteract compulsiveness – especially the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes of violence – by re-petitioning in ways that allow for a measure of critical distance, change, resumption of social life, ethical responsibility, and renewal. (LaCapra 1999, 713)

Like Bloom, LaCapra also stresses the role of the rituals of mourning which would allow for therapeutic acting-out and eventual working-through on a cultural level. In his analysis, after a Freudian fashion, LaCapra also equates the repetitional compulsion of trauma to the death drive, or Thanatos, bent on the annihilation of desire and elimination of cathexes to restore a morbid state of homeostasis to the 'living' organism. Moreover, participation in the collective act of socialization of trauma is presented as an ethical responsibility.

In *Wish You Were Here*, Jack's decision to put an end to the cycle of violence is indicative of a healing, in addition to a greater existential healing, which is the recognition of the reality of existence as constant transformation (to be discussed in detail in chapter three). He even manages a partial rapprochement with his past as his altered feeling towards the permanently lost DCM indicates. We read, "He'd sell the gun. Or – better, quicker – there was plenty of sea all around, which had already, regrettably but permanently, swallowed a medal"

(*WYWH*, 352). The volition to renounce violence by disposing of the gun is the transformative step Jack takes toward freedom from the ghost of the past.

Within the overall ontological and epistemological reconfigurations that sweep across the symbolic order of a traumatized subjectivity, a further manifestation of resubjectification is the troubling of gender boundaries. Bennet and Royle define the porosity of gender boundaries as one incarnation among many, of the uncanny characterized by "A sense of radical uncertainty about sexual identity – about whether a person is male or female, or apparently one but actually the other" (A. Bennett and Royle 2014, 38). As is also evidenced in the narratives of our corpus, an important feature of subjectivity that becomes redefined in the wake of trauma is the social aspect of sexuality, or gender.

In *The Pregnant Widow*, Keith openly admits to the fact that his gender amounts to a performance, an acting. In an era where girls had taken to *acting* like boys, he confesses to having acted like one himself. We read, "He was better placed than her, in a way: he had some experience of acting like a boy. Now he took it up again. Pre-Lily, before Lily, he often encountered a difficulty more associated with acting like a girl: his emotions" (*TPW*, 23–24), attesting to the purely social character of gender. Further on in the novel, outwardly straight Keith also admits to liking Amen:

> Keith thought of Amen, eighteen years old, and piratically handsome with his missing upper incisor; and the fuzzy eyelashes that scrolled all the way up and over, like harem slippers. He didn't want to say so—but Keith quite fancied Amen. Whenever he saw him he felt a fleeting pressure on his chest. It was nothing like the alpweight continuously applied by the presence of Scheherazade; still, it was there. (*TPW*, 45)

Keith's gender boundaries are presented as all but "fuzzy". Although in both cases, the sexual other exerts a traumatic "pressure" on the core of his being, as if he were about to come face to face with the Lacanian real, or as if for Keith, the Eros/Thanatos boundary is not well-defined, in a manner analogous to the novel's most-quoted intertext, the myth of Narcissus and Echo. The association of love with trauma also occurs in Hartman's essay where he calls love a "positive" trauma and states "For even in such a 'positive' trauma as falling in love there is schism: an intense grasping at the real on the one hand, and a devaluing or fading away of everything else, on the other" (Hartman 1995, 560). Thus, closeness to the sexual other and the

possibility of love "actually contributes to close encounters of the traumatic kind" (Hartman 1995, 560) with the Lacanian real.

Concurrent to the waning of gender boundaries, masculinity itself is portrayed as being redefined in the narrative. Keith, after Amis, is concerned about the effect of the rise of feminism on what he calls "the definingly fallible potency of the male creature" (*TPW*, 92). Keith, again after Amis, also has a chip on his shoulder about his height and in the novel, an unimpressive stature comes to signify men's dwindling influence following the social rise of women. In this extract, he is commenting on Adriano, the rich but short beau's passion for bodybuilding:

> "I guess they all tend to do that. Little people. They can't make themselves taller. So they make themselves wider … I keep thinking I'm watching *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. At about the point where he starts getting scared of the cat."
> "Early on, remember, when he goes to kiss his wife and now she's taller than he is?"
> "Mm. Some say *The Incredible Shrinking Man*'s an anxiety dream about the American hard-on. Potency. The rise of women." (*TPW*, 97)

Similarly, in *Wish You Were Here*, received notions of gender are revealed to be unrooted in the day-to-day reality of the characters' lives. As noted by Miriam Wallraven, "Trauma is intimately intertwined with the destruction of masculine identity" (Wallraven 2014, 4). For instance, Tom, now a sniper, taps into different human skills that could be placed anywhere on the socially-determined gender spectrum. We read, "Even that gun lying there, Tom was better at that. At twelve or thirteen he could swing it round and *make* the rabbit hit the shot. Good with a gun—so a soldier's life for him. But Tom was even better, after Vera died, at taking her place, at being, for them all, a bit of a mum himself. Was that something the army required of a man too?" (*WYWH*, 43). This is yet another embodiment of the posttraumatic undecidability of gender borders and the spirit of becoming-other that permeates the textual fabric of the novel (to be discussed in depth in chapter three). Life for Tom is made up of a series of roles, some of which fall conventionally within received notions of femininity. A similar instance of men (in situations conducive to trauma) behaving in 'feminine' ways occurs in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* where we read,

> One of the paradoxes of the war – one of the many – was that this most brutal of conflicts should set up a relationship between officers and men that was… domestic. Caring. As Layard would undoubtedly have said, maternal. And that wasn't the only trick the war had played.

> Mobilization. The Great Adventure. They'd been mobilized into holes in the ground so constricted they could hardly move. And the Great Adventure – the real life equivalent of all the adventure stories they'd devoured as boys – consisted of crouching in a dugout, waiting to be killed. The war that had promised so much in the way of 'manly' activity had actually delivered 'feminine' passivity, and on a scale that their mothers and sisters had scarcely known. No wonder they broke down. (Barker 2008, 107)

That traumatized 'men' might break down demonstrating symptoms of PTSD in the face of imminent death in pathetically unheroic, *passive* ways deals a blow to the symbolic order's seemingly well-defined borders of masculinity and femininity. Apropos, Lena Steveker states, "They thus showed a complaint that had until then been primarily known in women" (Steveker 2011, 23). In a manner similar to Swift's novel, Barker's work also deconstructs the social construct of gender.

In this context, we learn that in Jack's "daring" view, the presence of the father is of little consequence in the continuity of a family line; in other words, for a family 'name' to live on, the father is only fleetingly necessary. We read,

> He'd sometimes daringly think that the business of birthright might work in reverse. That his mother's birthing him, more than her taking his father's name, had made a Luxton out of her. … As if she were putting down her final roots.
>
> He'd always remember—though he's tried to forget them—her last days. How she clung, sometimes literally, to that bed as if she wanted, perhaps, to become it. Or the bed, perhaps, wanted to become her. His father, as if not to intrude on this intimate process, had slept, or rather kept terrified watch, close by in a sort of separate bivouac made out of the old wooden chest pushed up against the room's solitary, battered armchair. The room was like some compartment of disaster. (*WYWH*, 24)

The traumatic loss of the anchoring presence of Vera is interestingly depicted as a moment of transformation, indicated in the repeated use of the verb "become". This is analogous to Amis's characterization of Violet's death and the decline in social values as instances of becoming, or a "sea change" after Shakespeare. In Swift's immanent worldview, it is hard to see the direction in which becoming-other proceeds, whether it is Vera who wants to become the bed or vice versa.

Swift's men are also depicted as aware and respectful of the weighty centrality of women to existential transformation; aware and oddly excluded from it. The emphasis placed

on the centrality of the mother and the significance, only of the *name* of the father, recalls to mind the Lacanian notion of the Name-of-the-father. Hedwig Schwall describes the function of the Lacanian "*nom-du-père*" in the socialization of the subject thus: "The 'Name-of-the-Father' is the arch-metaphor, the instrument of mediation, of socialization. If the Name-of-the-Father is rejected, the child will not be able to situate itself in the chain of generations, nor in its own sexual identity. It will … lack all possibilities to symbolize, to represent, to mediate (psychic or material) realities. In other words, the child will be a potentially psychotic subject, …" (Schwall 2002, 348). The Name-of-the-father initiates the child into the symbolic order of society and language. However, the role of the father is *symbolic*, i.e. important *only* as a symbol in the realm of symbols. Maud Ellmann explains:

> Lacan insists that these are both symbolic roles transcending the individuals performing them. The real father cannot be conflated with the symbolic father, the paternal function or the *'Nom-du-Pere':* here the pun on *non-du-père* implies that the Name-of-the-Father is not-of-the-father, not intrinsic to the man as such but donned upon him like a giant's robe upon a dwarfish thief. (I quote *Macbeth* because this play, like *Hamlet*, exposes the absurdity of the attempt to *be* the father, and insinuates that those who take his role are always dwarfish thieves or player kings.) (Ellmann 1994, 18).

Identifying masculinity as only symbolically significant in the received set of social values is a facet of contemporary thinking against phallocentrism. Immanent thinking fosters a view of being as defined by becoming, including becoming-woman of man and woman. Lacan's demolition of the monolith of the Father is an acknowledgement, both of the *material* equality of human beings and of the supra-human power of the symbolic order into which human beings are born. *Nature* does not name or appoint one creature as guardian of 'order'.

Concurrent to the questioning of gender boundaries, names, as yet another manifestation of identity in the symbolic order, are revealed to be haunted, mostly by their history and what befell their previous holders. In Amis's novel, girls are mostly named after flowers: Iris, Pansy, Lily and finally, Keith's sister Violet. Also, certain characters have animal nicknames, most probably to demonstrate the violence concealed in the quotidian social repartee. This is a source of wit and confusion in the novel. For instance, we read, ""What's the Dog's real name? Is it Rita?" (*TPW*, 25–26) yet it also serves Amis's overarching thematic purposes in the elaboration of his evolutionary human-animal or nurture-nature dichotomy. In

the novel, Adriano is both the rat-dog creature and the rich Italian count, nicknamed Tom Thumb for his small stature. Note the following exchange between Keith and Lily:

> "What shall we do with Adriano?"
> "Tom Thumb?"
> "No. Not the count. The rat." She held up the sheet of thick white paper. "Junglebum's Adriano."(*TPW*, 268–69)

Junglebum, parenthetically, is one of Gloria's few secret appellations, of which she is unaware. Amis's use of derogatory and animal epithets further testifies to the profundity of the cultural descent into animality that Amis is at pains to narrativize. The characters' subjectivity is shown to be *shaped* by the epithets they are given. Put differently, the pejorative animal *and* violent titles arise out of the social milieu and in turn intensify the overall feeling of violent lasciviousness that Amis decries. Apropos, Jean-Jacques Lecercle's remarks are illuminating: "Naming is an essential part of the process of (violent) subjectivation, in the shape of interpellation of the individual into a subject via the ascription of a name" (Lecercle and Riley 2004, 71). Lecercle's analysis draws on Althusser's work which emphasizes the role of "interpellation" by a particular ideology (in the case of Amis's novel, the sexual revolution), in the formation of a subject out of an individual. Althusser states:

> *all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects, through the functioning of the category of the subject.* …
> … ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way as to 'recruit' subjects among individuals (it recruits them all) or 'transforms' individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) through the very precise operation that we call *interpellation* or *hailing*. It can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace, everyday hailing, by (or not by) the police: 'Hey, you there! ' (Althusser 2014, 190)

Thus, as far as Amis's characters are concerned, they cannot but be "recruits" of the transitional ideology of the sexual revolution involving, *inter alia*, the confused human/animal boundary. This confusion could be interpreted simultaneously as a sign of cultural decay, but also of transformational becoming, a hallmark of the "emergent" social forces defined by Raymond Williams as "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationship … continually being created" (Williams 1977, 123).

The process of subjectivation through naming is demonstrated to be of immense complexity, involving, not least, the logic of spectrality. In the following conversation between Keith and Lily, Amis demonstrates how the supposedly transparent 'name' is fraught with cultural complexities and how some names are haunted by the cultural past. Lily says:

> "It's all in the names, isn't it. Scheherazade—and *Keith*. Keith's probably the most plebeian name there is, don't you think?"
> "Probably … No. No," he said. "The earl mareschals of Scotland were Keiths. There was a line of them, each called Lord Keith. …
> You know, Lily, there was a poet called Keith Douglas. *He* was posh. His middle name was Castellaine and he went to the same prep school as Kenrik. Christ's Hospital. Oh yeah. And the K in G. K. Chesterton stands for Keith."
> "What's the G stand for?"
> "Gilbert."
> "Well there you are then."
> Keith thought of Keith Douglas. A war poet—a warrior poet. The fatally wounded soldier: *Oh mother, my mouth is full of stars* … He thought of Keith Douglas, dead in Normandy (a shrapnel wound to the head) at twenty-four. Twenty-four. (*TPW*, 20–21)

This is yet another proof of the opaque relationship between the symbolic order and what it is supposed to represent. In the same way as Violet's behavior represents a cultural descent, notably from the likes of Joan of Arc, Keith Nearing is a come-down from the hero Keith Douglas killed in action, in WWII. Elsewhere, Keith thinks of himself as "a K in a castle" (*TPW*, 120), recalling Joseph K. in Kafka's *The Castle*.

The outcome of this endless complication of the proper name – instigated by the contamination of the cultural past – is that names cease to function in a transparent manner as pointers to the bearer. Rather, they take on a haunted – or contaminated – existence of their own in the cultural memory of a nation, accumulating the ghosts and traumatic memories of those who have held them. Seldom transparent and almost always carriers of cultural meaning (social class in the above extract), they open the floodgates of haunting, referring to a throng of people simultaneously, as if the symbolic order is always-already a grand space of spectrality, as if it is always *hyperaroused* with a traumatic past possessing the present. Apropos, Derrida writes about the death that lurks behind names: "… but you will never be your name, you never have been, even when, and especially when you have answered to it. The name is made to do without the life of the bearer, and is therefore always somewhat the name

of someone dead. One could not live, be there, except by protesting against one's name, by protesting one's non-identity with one's proper name" (Derrida 1987, 39). Living, being "there", is thus tantamount to a radical act of revision of outlook toward a haunting past, one that prioritizes being there rather than surrender to the cultural weight of a past, always presented as haunted in the Swiftian oeuvre, and always pushing the protagonist to the brink of psychological crisis. Swift provides further proof of Derrida's claim about the haunting at the heart of the name: in *Wish You Were Here*, the caravans are named after Hollywood actresses, among them, a suicide. We read, "It was Tom who asked him [Jack], years later, if he'd ever noticed that each of those caravans had been named after a Hollywood film actress. There was a Betty, a Lauren, a Rita. Jack had spent a week each year, two years running, inside Marilyn Monroe, and never even known it" (*WYWH*, 67). Thus, not only historical tragedies and wars but also dead individuals, with their narratives entombed in the collective culture, refuse to disappear and are forever inscribed in a nation's collective memory, as if spectrality was a *sine qua non* of the symbolic order of society, with the specter "as a figure of otherness which traverses and blurs any neat analytical distinction" (Wolfreys 2002, xi) of identity. To lead a life unsullied by the ghost of the past, one needs a name never used before, in a place never inhabited before, in a time never lived before: in short, an impossibility.

The deterritorialization of the symbolic order of subjectivity expands to affect the protagonists' relation to language. In the traumatized psyche, language is no longer conceived of as an unproblematic medium of signification. As trauma triggers a questioning of subjectivity, language, as an essential component of the social self, is gradually revealed to be "treacherous" (*WYWH*, 262) as Swift puts it. No longer the transparent and reliable medium of communication and conveyance of meaning, it is now revealed as being muddled, fragmented and at times incapable of communicating any coherent meaning at all. The effect of trauma on the victim's previously unquestioned relation to language can be likened to Paul de Man's deconstructionist declaration of a rupture of signification germane to "literary" language:

> For the statement about language, that sign and meaning can never coincide is what is precisely taken for granted in the kind of language we call literary. Literature, unlike everyday language, begins on the far side of this knowledge; it is the only form of language free from the fallacy of unmediated expression. All of us know this, although we know it in the misleading way of a wishful assertion of the opposite. Yet the truth emerges in the foreknowledge we possess of the true nature of literature when we refer to it as *fiction* ... The self-reflecting mirror-effect by

> means of which a work of fiction asserts, by its very existence, its separation from empirical reality, its divergence, as a sign, from a meaning that depends for its existence on the constitutive activity of this sign, characterizes the work of literature in its essence. It is always against the explicit assertion of the writer that readers degrade the fiction by confusing it with a reality from which it has forever taken leave. (De Man 1983, 17)

In de Man's trenchant analysis, signification, understood as untrammeled relation between the signifier and signified, is presented as always-already untenable, as if what constitutes the literary for Paul de Man was precisely this freedom from "the fallacy of unmediated expression" of the kind one encounters in, say, journalistic reports. To de Man, it is the resilience of literary language to realistic verisimilitude and its refusal to yield "knowledge" that constitute its defining features. Trauma deals a similar, *literary* blow to the victim's previously unquestioned relation to language, revealing the inherent inadequacy of the symbolic order.

Correspondingly, Martin Amis uses language self-consciously in the narrative to create, *inter alia*, a feeling of insecurity and to highlight the inadequacy of the signifier to convey the totality of meaning. Consider this extract, in which even the lexicographical authority on language fails Keith, who has suspected that he is neurotic and is looking the symptoms up:

> What a very compassionate book it is, the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. Take, for example, the entry on *neurosis*. He rang his wife and read it out to her.
> "Now listen. *A relatively mild mental illness*, my love, *not caused by organic disease*. Here's an even better bit. *Involving depression, anxiety, obsessive behaviour, etc*.—that et cetera's great—*but not a radical loss of touch with reality*. There. That's *so* understanding, don't you think?" (*TPW*, 134)

Here, even the dictionary points to its incompleteness and lack of total authority and presence. Moreover, as signaled by the 'etc.', it avows to its infection with the spectral *trace* or *supplement*. This signifies the incomplete and ongoing nature of the enquiry into Keith's mental state, a questioning conducted in the inadequate symbolic order.

Keith's inquiry into trauma continues within the symbolic order. He offers a number of etymological glosses on words in the novel, especially those that are key to a thematics of trauma. One such entry is for the word 'grotesque'. Keith is quoting Scheherazade:

> She said, "History terrifies me … Our parents were the ones who had to go through all that. We're lucky. The only thing we've got to worry about is the end of the world. Everything might just—stop." …
>
> Everything stopping. Now, for instance, he looked out at the grotto, daubed with its flesh and youth, and for a moment the grotto was grotesque. Grotesque, from Ital. *grottesca* "a painting resembling something found in a grotto;" grotto, from Gk *krupte-* (see CRYPT). "And how are we supposed to feel about that?" he said. "I mean everything stopping." (*TPW*, 145–46)

The grotto, another metaphoric manifestation of the "cryptic" hole of the real, bears probing diachronically. Amis's investigations in the dictionary reveal its links with death and burial, which makes perfect sense to a generation living under threat of nuclear extermination. Lexicographic etymology, or "finding out … what its origins are" (Finney 2016, n.pag.) not only offers a deeper understanding of a word according to Finney, but in our analysis, it also attests to the timeless centrality of immanent transformation to existence, as reflected in the variegated history of a word. Lecercle promotes a similar view of language when he states in Shakespearean/ Derridean terms that "The time of language is always out of joint, and language is the site for indefinite layers of sedimentation …" (Lecercle 2002, 72).

In a similar fashion, Russel West-Pavlov draws on the Derridean notion of the "trace" to highlight the nature of language as a being evolving through its historical use. He starts off by presenting the relevance of the "trace" to the history of an individual lexical item:

> A trace is a present absence, or an absent presence, a sign of something that was present in the past, and is now only present as a shadowy mark of non-presence. A word is always inhabited by 'traces' of other words. Derrida suggests that words constantly lose old meanings and accrue new ones as they reoccur in new contexts. A word used on several successive occasions will have slightly different contextual meanings each time it is used. These different meanings are not clearly distinguishable from each other however. The previous meanings will inhere in the word in a ghostly form as 'traces', jostling with the additional meanings imposed by the new context. In each new context the process will be repeated, with various meanings, often conflicting with each other, occupying the space of the word 'now' as semi-absent or semi-present valencies. (West-Pavlov 2013, 93–94)

An awareness of trace reveals how language is heavily tinged with the spectral presence of its past and defined by its transformation throughout the ages. In the case of Amis's novel, Keith's

repeated recourse to etymology highlights these facets of the English language. Further, in Keith's case, etymological probing reenacts psychical investigation into trauma.

Etymological exploration also serves as the textual reflection of the analytical work accomplished through narrative understood as transference. Through the dialogic transference of the text, the traumatic past is explored and brought to light much in the manner of the spectral etymological past buried within the signifier. The signifier is thus conceived of as a seeming presence haunted by its past traces which are not, strictly speaking, absent but which haunt and destabilize the full presence of the word. The notion of the trace is also elaborated in the work of Pascale Tollance where the trace is the driving force behind the text or its non-present presence. Tollance refers to it as, "une voix qui déstabilise le récit non seulement parce qu'elle multiplie les discours et les postures discursives, mais parce qu'elle défait le discours lui-même et l'empêche d'être jamais clos sur lui-même" (Tollance 2011, 23).

However, consciousness of the spectral trace does not stall the process of signification and meaning. Rather, it enriches signification in a spirit of play and abundance of meaning. West-Pavlov concludes his remarks regarding the trace thus: "Derrida's slippery sliding of temporalized signifiers can be embraced as a celebration of the infinite productivity of language. Language itself as a system inhabited and sustained by its human users generates meanings with a profusion which cannot be stemmed, so that apparently identical words will gather new and surprising meanings in new contexts" (West-Pavlov 2013, 96). Excess of meaning within the textual narrative space is conducive to the narrativization of trauma as it fosters metaphoric creativity, in turn leading to acting-out and working through trauma.

Furthermore, in *The Pregnant Widow*, Amis's characteristic technique of obfuscating the transparent use of language is his recourse to the pun or the double-entendre, to probe his theme. One such occasion is the use of the word "limbo" (*TPW*, 176) to refer not only to the dance, but also to his view of how he feels with regard to the undecidable man-animal aporia, the traumatic inquiry induced by Violet's animalistic conduct. Amis also makes use of words that register his grave cultural concerns in their texture, such as the word "bassackward" (*TPW*, 155) to refer to what he believes is the human moral regression and (self-)destructiveness he terms *nostalgie de la boue*. An illustration of such conduct occurs in *Lionel Asbo* where Lionel, reading a copy of the *Morning Lark* fished out of his back pocket, points to adverts in which people in their late seventies advertise for sexual partners in what strikes Lionel as highly denigrating terms. Lionel comments on how such adverts signify a national descent in values: "'And that's England, Des. A once-proud nation. Look. *Beefy Bedmate Sought by Bonking Biddy*. That's England'" (Amis 2012, 29). At other times, Amis simply uses language playfully,

basking in the ability of language to generate unpredictably multiple layers of meaning, much in the manner of Deleuze and Guattati's "rhizome"[72] with its "lines of flight". Here, Keith and his girlfriend are discussing a bee bite on Gloria's backside. Lily uses slang: "You could've at least offered to kiss it better. Mm. Interesting. Maybe you need to be gay. It's a peach, Gloria's arse, but maybe you need to be a fruit to see it" (*TPW*, 193), fruit being slang for a homosexual person.

On a metafictional level, Keith's scheming plans to seduce Scheherazade, their failure to bear any fruit and the resulting complications in his personal life also mirror the capacity of literary language to branch off in unpredictable directions, independently of the author, in a phenomenon which Barthes referred to in 1968 as 'the death of the author', with the text conceived of as a "a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Barthes 2001, 293). Keith is aware of this possibility. We read, "He was no longer all aglitter with cunning; he had begun to suspect that there were certain people who were better at cunning than he was. Keith felt like a tyro physicist who, on his first day, initiates an irreversible chain reaction, and then just stands there and stares" (*TPW*, 190), with the "chain reaction" signifying the inherent playfulness – and humour – of literary language. Commenting on the two strands of Amis's militantly ubiquitous wit, James Diedrick explains: "The first speaks to his satirical impulse, the engine of an incisive wit aimed at contemporary social realities. The second points in another direction: toward a love of verbal play and formal experimentation inspired by Vladimir Nabokov" (Diedrick 1995, 1).

The multiple metaphoric webs that arise intentionally or unintentionally, fragment meaning in the trauma novel and create a burgeoning affect of deterritorialization, not unlike a rhizome. Conceived thus, trauma studies and poststructuralism overlap greatly as poststructuralism represents a troubling of signification in keeping with the Barthesian

[72] "... the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. ... The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots. ... the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracings that must be put on the map, not the opposite. ... the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states. What is at question in the rhizome is a relation to sexuality—but also to the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial—that is totally different from the arborescent relation: all manner of 'becomings'" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 21)

declaration that "the sign itself … must be perturbed" (Barthes 1986, 66). The Barthesian affirmation of his fondness for a perturbed signification ties in with the analysis of trauma – in terms of deterritorialization – within an ethics of immanence, characterized by what Deleuze and Guattari would term "lines of flight". Enmeshed, the rhizomatic webs of metaphor bring about a gradual rapprochement with the incomprehensible and repetitional real of trauma. The overall outcome of complicating the signifier-signified relationship in the context of trauma is to highlight the discursive struggle of language to symbolize the unsymbolizable real. Linda Belau explains this struggle in the following words: "… the real of trauma can be said to be inherently symbolic. … It is … the very limit of the symbolic, the impossible kernel of the symbolic around which it circles, what the symbolic attempts to cover over as its very industry" (Belau 2001, para. 32). In Belau's Lacanian analysis, the real is not beyond the immanence of the symbolic order, but its perturbation or deterritorialization, triggering new "lines of flight". Repeated attempts at symbolizing the real result in a revision of social, "symbolic", subjectivity. Hartman is among the scholars who believe in the capacity of literary language to verbalize the real of trauma. He states, "Literary knowledge, I will suggest, finds this 'real,' identifies with it, and can even bring it back, ….Yet, as in the Orpheus myth, there is a limit to recovery, or a limit to the effort at visualization" (Hartman 1995, 540).

In *The Pregnant Widow*, Amis's self-conscious use of language is evidence of the dual attempt to demonstrate shattered social assumptions and the simultaneous discursive struggle to verbalize the real. In this regard, Dominick LaCapra states that the general ethos of postmodernist writing and deconstruction are conducive to a process of acting-out and eventual working-through:

> Poststructuralism in general, and deconstruction in particular, often involve forms of traumatic writing or post-traumatic writing in closest proximity to trauma, and they variably engage processes of acting-out and working-through. In one sense, however, deconstruction is misunderstood when it is applied to historical losses. Historical losses call for mourning – and possibly for critique and transformative sociopolitical practice. When absence, approximated to loss, becomes the object of mourning, the mourning may (perhaps must) become impossible and turn continually back into endless melancholy. The approximation or even conflation of absence and loss induces a melancholic or impossibly mournful response …, a generalized "hauntology," and even a dubious assimilation (or at least an insufficiently differentiated treatment) of other problems (notably a limit-event such as the Holocaust and its effects on victims) …. In another sense, deconstruction in certain of its registers may also be understood as a form

> of immanent critique that is applicable to historical phenomena and practices, including losses. (LaCapra 1999, 715)

Through its particularly playful relation to language, poststructuralism fosters a multifaceted and repetitional attempt at signification – or symbolization in Lacanian terminology – which in turn allows for trauma to become narrativized. Repeated returns to trauma through language approximate the acting out of traumatic affect in transference, and the gradual rapprochement with trauma is akin to the therapeutic outcome of working-through. In this sense, poststructuralism aids in the historical contextualization of traumatic loss and its mourning. Mourning loss through language also prevents it from turning into a transcendental absence that could be co-opted as originary myths in nation-building attempts. If historically specific loss is not narrativized, it risks turning into absence[73] (or structural trauma) and melancholically haunts an entire nation or epoch. Here, LaCapra might be referring to the melancholic undertones of a Caruthian notion of contemporary history as a "catastrophic era" (Caruth 1996, 12). Her insistence on the incomprehensibility of trauma – is what LaCapra refers to above as "deconstruction ... misunderstood", i.e. a deconstruction stripped of its capacity for acknowledging an *excess* of verbalization rather than the avowal of a returning ghostly void.

A poststructuralist troubling of signification is also evidenced in *Wish You Were Here* which registers an acute awareness of how language loses its conventional transparency in the wake of trauma and how it is used to verbalize traumatic affect, working towards healing. At issue is primarily the representation of the shattering of "ancient convictions" (Seaman 2012, 19) – including received dichotomies conveyed through language – and the consequent revision of relationship toward the place of trauma. Here is Jack questioning the word "private", the official rank of one of three dead soldiers in the repatriation ceremony: "But Jack could equally see that private was a thin, even treacherous word. A war memorial, for example, was not a private thing. It was a public monument, the names on it were for all to read. And how did a common soldier, serving his country in its public causes, ever get to be called a private? Fuller, Pickering" (*WYWH*, 262).

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[73] "Even in terms of absence, deconstruction may open other possibilities of response, including more affirmative, carnivalesque, and generally complex ones (for example, in terms of a displaced wake in which the carnivalesque has a role in mourning itself). In any case, losses would have to be specified or named for mourning as a social process to be possible. (This point may provide some insight into the desire of intimates to locate the bodies and determine the names of victims so that they may be given a proper burial.) When mourning turns to absence and absence is conflated with loss, then mourning becomes impossible, endless, quasi- transcendental grieving, scarcely distinguishable (if at all) from interminable melancholy" (LaCapra 1999, 715–16).

Further, in a gesture that deliberately blurs the boundary between psychoanalysis and his narrative, Swift 'milks' the potential of the word 'trigger', which is used copiously as a term that is key to a thinking of repetitional trauma, in times of war and violence, as propagated through the use of weaponry. Aside from Michael who had committed suicide by pulling the trigger, Tom also "had been killed when the armoured vehicle he was in had triggered an exceptionally lethal roadside bomb" (*WYWH*, 91). Likewise, Tom had left home and joined the army because he could no longer bear the weight of tragedies at home, "It wasn't the cow disease that had swung it for Tom. For Tom the trigger had been Luke. In more senses than one" (*WYWH*, 137). Concerning Michael's suicide, we read, "Jack has always asserted that he heard the shot. It either woke him or, by some mysterious triggering inside him, he was awake to hear it" (*WYWH*, 235). Finally, when investigating into the circumstances of Michael's suicide, Swift, in his character's head through free indirect style, knows that it would be ethically insensitive of him to use this word. He narrates, "Bob frankly didn't attach much weight to the odd circumstantial details that sometimes went with a suicide, the strange things that might precede it, the strange things that might (it was not a good word) trigger it" (*WYWH*, 241).

Other words and expressions are also used in a manner that 'trigger' the chief traumatic memories of the novel i.e. (human and animal) bodily fragmentation. In the funeral service held for Tom, the rector Brookes decided to hold a brief ceremony. In the following excerpt, Swift utilizes the idiomatic expression 'the bare bones' in both its literal and metaphoric senses:

> Brookes, indeed, was well aware by now (he'd been rector for over twenty-five years) that it was what most people really craved at such events, even when there were no extraordinary circumstances to acknowledge, as little and as simple as possible being really the essence of the thing, the bare bones, so to speak. So: a simple service, just the one address, and he would have to find some way—but he'd somehow done it before—of referring to the exceptional (and violent) manner of the death. (*WYWH*, 263)

Thus, the "bare bones" comes to signify – and "trigger" for the reader – simultaneously, the brevity of the ceremony and Tom's charred remains. As Ganteau states in his discussion of Winterson, narrative is capable of inducing a feeling of reciprocal vulnerability, "rendant le lecteur vulnérable au trauma de l'autre dans une ouverture éthique partagée" (Ganteau 2015b, para. 18).

Violence flares elsewhere in Swift's meticulous choice of metaphors. When Jack arrives at the village church for the burial ceremony, "Such was his panic that he wouldn't clearly recall later precisely how he arrived—how he parked or how he got himself from his car to the church. But he would remember having to say more than once, to clear a path, 'I'm Jack Luxton, …' Though wasn't it blazingly obvious? Who else did people think he was?" (*WYWH*, 267). This indicates the narrative struggle to verbalize trauma through 'embodying' traumatic recall – or 'presenting', or 'performing' it. The readers know that a blaze is what Tom had died in, following the explosion of the personnel carrier. Here is another expression that triggers a feeling of traumatic return in the text, for the reader. Here, Ellie suddenly remembers that Jack might be up to something tragic with the gun at home, as "A great blast of terror hits her …" (*WYWH*, 335). The narrative is blatantly possessed by the trauma of Tom's death, in a blast.

In the same context, a salient technique Swift uses abundantly in the novel to muddle and subvert signification is the literalization of metaphors, or the simultaneous use of a word in its literal and metaphorical senses. This use of language is of great significance to the (re)presentation of trauma as it is meant to mirror in the text, the symptoms known as intrusive recall and hyperarousal afflicting the victim. Intrusive recall occurs when a word, event or smell "triggers" the return of a repressed memory. Similarly, a metaphor collapsed to its literal meaning, a technique native to magical realism – characterized by "a rendering real of what is usually conceived of as a mere figure of speech or thought" (Hegerfeldt 2005, 235) – dispenses with historicity and conveys the feeling of a past that is never fully narrativized as the past, i.e. trauma. In the novel, however, the most striking instance of magical realism[74] occurs when the ghost of Tom speaks out to bar Jack from shooting Ellie: "'Shoot me first, Jack, shoot me first.

[74] Krystyna Stamirowska believes the appearance of Tom's ghost to be undermining the "happy ending". In her analysis, the novel is all about a profound loss: "*Wish You Were Here* connotes absence and loss; the phrase recurs like a refrain throughout the text and the *you* refers to two people: Jack's brother and his wife, and the narrative – in contrast to its predecessors – finds an unexpected, if only hypothetical, resolution at the end of the long day during which the protagonist, Jack, re-examines the dramatic events of the preceding 48 hours, and their antecedents belonging to the past, both recent and also, not so recent. It is not, however, that indeterminacy and a sense of inconclusiveness is entirely removed: the complex fusing of temporal dimensions (expressed by Future in the Past, Future Perfect in the Past, Present Simple, Past Simple) combined with and also, resulting from the uncertain status of the reported events leaves an area for doubt. The solidity of the happy ending is undermined by the intrusion of the supernatural, namely, the inexplicable double intervention of Jack's dead brother. Is this to be taken at face value? Was this yet another illusion experienced by both Jack and Ellie who wished for reconciliation? Or a pretext for reconciliation?" (Stamirowska 2015, 75).

Don't be a fucking fool. Over my dead fucking body'" (*WYWH*, 346), in a move typical of the Swiftian oeuvre wherein "in certain novels the dead speak" (Malcolm 2003, 14).

In addition to being an instance of magical realism, the inclusion of a dead character speaking induces an affect of the uncanny in the novel, a quality germane to literature. In his book-length discussion of the uncanny, Nicholas Royle draws on the pioneering work of Sigmund Freud – who had stipulated the blurring of "the distinction between imagination and reality" (Freud qtd in Royle 2003, 15) as one among several instances of the uncanny – to conclude that "Literature is uncanny … the Literary does not permit a settling on one side or the other ('imagination' versus 'reality')…. Unsettling the ground of both poles (imagination/reality), literature entails the experience of a *suspended* relation" (Royle 2003, 15).

Furthermore, the Shakespearean inclusion of a speaking revenant, representing a "radical departure from … verisimilitude" (Craps 2003, 411) ties in with the contemporary "trauma paradigm that has come to pervade the understanding of subjectivity and experience in the advanced industrial world" (Luckhurst 2008, 1). This sensibility finds its literary reflection in what Rothberg refers to as "traumatic realism", a term originally referring to the representations of the Holocaust and signifying "a realism in which the scars that mark the relationship of discourse to the real are not fetishistically denied, but exposed; a realism in which the claims of reference live on, but so does the traumatic extremity that disables realist representation as usual" (Rothberg 2000, 106). Instances of traumatic realism abound in Swift's novel. The cumulative effect on the reader is one of living inside the victim's head, always on edge, permanently hyperaroused and vulnerable. This is the reason why Ganteau views vulnerability as a defining feature of contemporary existence: "Said differently, it seems as though vulnerability, in the wake of – or alongside – trauma, has become a paradigm of the contemporary condition and of contemporary culture, and a template for the wounded contemporary subject …" (Ganteau 2015a, 4). Ganteau then proceeds to expatiate on why he believes vulnerability to be the mark of contemporary subjectivity:

> A brief look at the etymology, i.e. the Latin *vulnus*, *-eris*, for wound, provides the main denotation. Vulnerability appears as a capacity for damage, a liability to harm, an exposure to risk, aggression, or attack. This is how the *OED* chooses to define the notion, underlining the passivity inherent in vulnerability even while insisting on the capacity ("able to") to be wounded and on what may be considered a *disposition* to damage, as if vulnerability were a quality or an essential characteristic. At the root of the definition then lies the idea that

> vulnerability is shared, that it is common property, and that it allows for a vision of the human as essentially interdependent and in no way autonomous…(Ganteau 2015a, 5)

Thus, from Ganteau's perspective, a shared vulnerability, feeling the vulnerability of the other as one's own is a defining feature of what he goes on to call, an essentially "relational" humanity.

In a manner similar to Amis and Swift's troubling of signification, Barnes, whose protagonist – possibly modelled on the author himself who "though … qualified as a barrister, he has never practiced" (Moseley 2009, 3) – declares his disillusionment with history and comes to lose his trust in the transparency of language, most notably as instantiated in the legal system. This is a theme Barnes had already visited in *Arthur and George* where a young lawyer George Edalji is imprisoned and the novel is mostly about the cunning uses of words and their "adjustments" (Barnes 2006, 170) by Edalji's detractors. This recalls the Nietzschean insight of truth being nothing but a set of *tropes*[75] manipulated by those wielding authority, or in Nietzsche's own words, "A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms" (Nietzsche 1977, 46) in the service of power. Similarly, in the following extract from *The Sense of an Ending*, Tony is discussing with his lawyer Mr Gunnell, the legal action he intends to bring against his ex-girlfriend Veronica for withholding the diary left to him by Veronica's deceased mother. Tony:

> 'In other words, don't let her start thinking I'm some kind of loony.'
> 'Oh, she'd never think that, Mr Webster. And "loony" is hardly legal terminology.'
> 'What might you say instead?'
> 'We might settle for "vexatious". That's quite strong enough.'
> …
> 'Have you any other advice?'
> 'I'd be careful with the word "stealing". It might polarise matters unnecessarily.'
> 'But isn't that what she's done? Remind me of the legal tag when something is blindingly obvious.'
> '*Res ipsa loquitur*?'

[75] "What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins" (Nietzsche 1977, 46–47).

> ‘That’s the one.’
> Mr Gunnell paused. ‘Well, criminal work doesn’t often cross my desk, but the key phrase when it comes to theft is, as I remember, “an intention permanently to deprive” the owner of the thing stolen. Do you have any clue as to Miss Ford’s intention, or her wider state of mind?’ (*TSE*, 70–71)

The exchange is reminiscent of a comment Barnes makes in *Arthur and George* regarding the judiciary, which strike him as composed of an alienating hierarchy of people with “their kingdom, where they spoke to one another in a *lingua franca* others could often barely comprehend” (Barnes 2006, 149). There is also a subtle comic ring to the conversation, arising from Barnes’s peculiar brand of wit which is said to reside “in the language and the texture, not the events of the plots. Barnes has a wit that accompanies his relish for words” (Moseley 2009, 12).

On another occasion in *The Sense of and Ending*, Tony is inquiring about the ‘hand-cut’ potatoes he has ordered in a pub on one of his detective-style attempts at working out the mystery of the handicapped man who shuns him. He is asking the barman:

> ‘You don’t cut them on the premises?’
> ‘That’s what I said.’
> ‘So what you call “hand-cut chips” are actually cut elsewhere, and quite probably by a machine?’
> ‘Are you from the council or something?’
> ‘Not in the least. I’m just puzzled. I never realised that “hand-cut” meant “fat” rather than “necessarily cut by hand”.’
> ‘Well, you do now.’
> ‘I’m sorry. I just didn’t get it.’
> I retired to my table and waited for my supper. (*TSE*, 145–46)

This scene is a clear demonstration of the possible chasm between the signifier and signified, instantiating what Peter Childs identifies as the Barnesian “tragicomic irony” (Childs 2011, 5). Tony’s feeling of bewilderment is the last in a series of scenes in which he gets told that he does not get it (*TSE*, 62,100,144).

Apropos the tenuous relation between the symbolic order of language and the reality it is supposed to signify, Flaubert-inspired Barnes had already informed us in *Flaubert’s Parrot* that “Words came easily to Flaubert; but he also saw the underlying inadequacy of the Word.

Remember his sad definition from *Madame Bovary*: 'Language is like a cracked kettle on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, while all the time we long to move the stars to pity'" (Barnes 2009a, 19). The inadequacy of language appears again in his work, in the words of the filmmaker Charlie in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, addressed to his non-responsive partner:

> I said to Old Fishy do you have kids and he said yes they're the apple of my eye and we just hugged each other right there in front of everyone and ever since I've been wondering what it means. The apple of my eye. What does it mean? You say words like that and everyone knows what they mean but when you look at them you can't understand them …. You go along thinking you know exactly what everything is, and then you stop and look at it and it doesn't make any sense and you think maybe it only made any sense in the first place because everyone was pretending it did. Does this make any sense? (Barnes 1989, 212–13)

Charlie's chilling realization of the radical gulf between 'the signifier' and 'the signified' is an instance of the Freudian *Unheimichkeit*, of the homely of language becoming unhomely, of the subject's realization that the symbolic order makes sense only as a grand act of collective pretense which appears spookily alien – and alienating – on closer inspection. Bennet and Royle highlight the uncanny at the heart of the experience of language: "An uncanny feeling or experience is intimately bound up with language, and more particularly perhaps with a kind of *crisis in relation to language*. We call it 'uncanny' but we are also rather at a loss, we experience uncertainty, we encounter (however fleetingly) the sense of something *beyond language*, unnameable" (A. Bennett and Royle 2014, 40). Traumatic questioning of the symbolic order of language divests it of its ability to seamlessly signify reality, of its previously unquestioned ability to accord comforting "sense" to the world.

However, the Barnesian troubling of the signifier is in no way tantamount to his belief in the total irretrievability of a truth behind the indeterminacy of the sign. In answer to a question by Vanessa Guignery about Barnes's position regarding the availability of objective (historical) truth and its relativity, particularly with regard to his *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, Barnes summarizes the book's position:

> It's saying, "It's no good just lying back and saying, 'Well, we'll never work it out', and it's no good saying, 'Of course, we understand history, all we have to do is apply the following theories or the following scientific principles or Marxist ideology, whatever'. What we should do eventually is believe that truth is obtainable. History may not be 56 per cent true or 100 per cent

> true, but the only way to proceed from 55 to 56 is to believe that you can get to a hundred." (Guignery and Barnes 2009, 55–56)

Barnes's position is one similar to the Derridean position of the availability of truth and justice as a prospect '*à venir*', always to be aspired after with a mixture of belief in the future availability, and knowledge of the contingency of current human truths, or in the words of Derrida, a prospect "linked to the to-come [*à-venir*, cf. *avenir*, future], to the experience of a promise engaged, that is always an endless promise" (Derrida 1992, 38).

To conclude, the affect of deterritorialization induced by the multiple traumatic events of the characters' personal and social existence results in a comprehensive revision of the social self. The reconfiguration of subjectivity as instantiated in certain contemporary novels – including most incisively in the corpus – is summed up by Emily Horton. In her view, the contemporary "crisis fiction" explores,

> … the ways in which crisis, in the context of everyday life scenarios, unexpected catastrophes, or social and cultural shifts, makes necessary a revision of epistemological and ethical priorities in order to take into account a larger world overview, one which encompasses not only the interiorized self and the limitations of language but also the unknown other. In effect, by assessing history, science and culture in the framework of contemporary global change, including shifts in the way in which representation, language and subjectivity are presently considered, but also in the hope that new, more critical modes of thinking may be put into place, these fictions give voice to the problem of mediating contemporary world estrangement with an attention to new possibilities for becoming. (Horton 2014, 53)

Horton's emphasis on the traumatic revision of "priorities" and a resultant acquisition of a "larger world overview" as well as an overture to the "other" bear the hallmarks of an immanent conception of existence. The "new, more critical modes of thinking" of immanence cherish the hope of a movement away from the "contemporary world estrangement" toward "new possibilities for becoming". Additionally, the trauma novel performs – or presents – the affect of traumatic repetition and recall in its dramatization of trauma. The textual repetition of trauma reveals the symbolic order to be inadequate, yet the only means of achieving a redefined sense of subjectivity.

The next chapter aims to show how the trauma novel moves beyond the mere (re)presentation of trauma and traumatic symptoms to pose profound questions of existential

import. This holds the promise of a broadening of perspective and a sort of growth in the wake of trauma.

Chapter 3 - Traumatized Existent: Toward Affirmation of Existence as Transformation

Throughout the deterritorializing journey of revision of subjectivity triggered by traumatic experiences, various aspects of subjectivity get reshuffled in the protagonist's mind. Alongside with orchestrating a recognition of the other, the social and the private self as shiftable mental fictions, the narratives also problematize the nature of a finite existence on earth. This questioning encompasses the human notions of time, life, the death drive and the transformative force of love, with different novels reaching convergent conclusions in their own distinct ways.

A. Time Questioned

To begin with, the protagonists pose fundamental questions about the nature of time in their various dealings with the symptoms of trauma. Trauma in this case could be the outcome of an encounter with a tragic event that threatens to break down the set of beliefs holding subjectivity together, including an unquestioned understanding of time as represented spatially – by the hands of a clock – comprising a past, present and a future. In *Wish You Were Here*, the narrative voice attests to the troubling of Ellie's received understanding of time as we read "And until recently this would only have expressed Ellie's position generally. The past is the past, and the dead are the dead" (*WYWH*, 33). This is a conception of time that spectrality throws into disarray. Similarly, in *The Pregnant Widow*, Keith inquires into time as a key thematic of the narrative in his significant evocation and development of Borges and his metaphor of time as a river (*TPW*, 366). This questioning is brought on by Keith's investigation into mortality. In a similar vein, Barnes's narrator makes an explicit reference to time as integral to our being, with its "mysteries of pace and progress" (*TSE*, 60) intriguing us. Tony's interest in the workings of time arises from his meditations on the vicissitudes of his memories, most of which are painful reminders of his unwitting involvement in a tragic course of events.

Questioning time could come about as a consequence of the victim's attempt to comprehend traumatic symptoms that touch directly upon the victim's received notions of temporality and chronology. Symptoms such as *temporal disjunction* induce a feeling of living in a present that does not feel like the present, but rather like a past which imposes itself as an urgency in the present, taking over the present and dislodging the victim's sense of linear

temporality. Additionally, traumatic flashbacks are indicative of trauma's peculiar temporality in its insistent "possession" of the victim, in what was theorized as the belatedness of trauma or *Nachträglichkeit* by Freud. Ganteau points to the distressing nonlinearity of time within traumatic existence when he writes about "un temps qui refuse le traitement linéaire et devient temps désajointé et traumatique" (Ganteau 2015b). Thus, traumatic past is not so much a fully-understood past, as a narrative urgency in the present in the belated triggering of trauma and the necessity to repeat, and eventually "work through" trauma.

Belatedness and the nonlinearity of time are both ideas that crop up in Ricoeur's analysis of the close link between temporality and narrativity. Highlighting the "configurational dimension" of the plot, or its ability to turn "the succession of events into significant wholes" (Ricœur 1980, 178–79), Ricoeur concludes that narrative interpretation unfolding in time, is conducive to the expansion of understanding, or in his words, "the whole plot may be translated into one 'thought'" (Ricœur 1980, 178–79). Expanding comprehension, in this sense, is inseparable from myriad acts of revision of episodic events in a temporal sequence (or a lack thereof) which is highly similar to the disjointed time of trauma. Apropos, Ricoeur states,

> The plot's configuration also superimposes "the sense of an ending" – to use Kermode's expression – on the open-endedness of mere succession. As soon as a story is well known … retelling takes the place of telling. Then following the story is less important than apprehending the well-known end as implied in the beginning and the well-known episodes as leading to this end. Here again, time is not abolished by the teleological structure of the judgment which grasps together the events under the heading of "the end." (Ricœur 1980, 179)

Thus a narrative (also of life with the ending of death), revisited in light of its "ending" is less about "time as moving from the past forward into the future" (Ricœur 1980, 180) than about the interpretation of the middle and the significance it gains with every retelling, hence Keith's yearning for a 'plot' to life (*TPW*, 310). This conception of the role of plot parallels the Freudian notion of the recontextualization of trauma in its belated returns in the victim's psyche. As such, temporality and narrativity become inconceivable independently of each other.

Traumatic questioning into time could alternatively be triggered by an acute awareness of one's own mortality, or time-boundness. At a time when the subject's received notions of subjectivity are thrown into confusion, the shattering of social assumptions and the revision of

attitudes to the place of trauma – and by extension, the current state of human civilization – result in a questioning of the forward movement of the human narrative of progress. The postmodern weakening of faith in the stable Cartesian subjectivity of the Enlightenment means that subjects no longer associate the future with a more progressive version of a bygone time. Time is perceived by the protagonist as no longer a linear progression toward better times ahead, but madly "out of joint". In this respect, the questioning of time also coincides with a return of modernist themes in an era increasingly defined by attention to categories of space as opposed to time. Jameson describes the postmodernist valorization of space in the context of his overriding concern with "the waning of affect":

> The waning of affect, however, might also have been characterized, in the narrower context of literary criticism, as the waning of the great high modernist thematics of time and temporality, the elegiac mysteries of *durée* and memory (something to be understood fully as much as a category of the literary criticism associated with high modernism as with the works themselves). … I think it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism. (Jameson 1992, 15–16)

In Jameson's analysis of postmodernism, the depthlessness of the late capitalist era is reflected in the loss of interest in the mysteries of time and memory. Jameson is not alone in associating modernism with a surge of interest in temporality. In his article on narrative temporality, Richardson also writes about the modernist "appreciation of the value of a particularly intense or significant moment in time (Joyce's 'ephiphanies';Woolf 's 'moments of being'), a preference for experienced or 'subjective' time as opposed to 'mechanical' or chronometric time, and a general suspicion of linearity and teleology" (Richardson 2006, 603). In the contemporary world, it appears as if the universal concern with the operations of trauma on the human mind has brought about a resurgence of interest in the thematics of time, not unlike the period of high modernism.

From an ethical perspective, the realization of a time "out of joint" is claimed to be conducive to an ethical encounter with the other, in Derrida's famous formulation of the phrase. Derrida uses Hamlet's declaration in reaction to the promise extracted of him by the ghost of his dead father, "Time is out of joint", to conclude that "things going badly" is the pre-condition for a just relationship to the other, in this case, the *revenant*:

> What happens when time itself gets "out of joint, dis-jointed, disadjusted, disharmonic, discorded, or unjust? *Ana-chronique*? What does *not* happen in this anachrony! Perhaps "the time, time itself, precisely, always "our time," the epoch and the world shared among us, ours every day, nowadays, the present as our present. Especially when "things are not going well" among us, precisely [*justement*]: when "things are going badly, when it's not working, when things are bad. But with the other, is not this disjuncture, this dis-adjustment of the "it's going badly" necessary for the good, or at least the just, to be announced? Is not disjuncture the very possibility of the other? How to distinguish between two disadjustments, between the disjuncture of the unjust and the one that opens up the infinite asymmetry of the relation to the other, that is to say, the place for justice? (Derrida 1994, 25–26)

A disadjusted time – an era of intense inquiry at the behest of the specter of trauma – thus opens up the possibility of ethical openness to the other, the ghost of the past, or the 'monstrous' other – in Ganteau and Shildrick's formulations of the term. A juncture characterized by things going badly could thus be utilized as an opportunity to strive for a *just* relation to the other. Derrida goes on to define justice as the "incalculability of the gift and singularity of the an-economic ex-position to others" (Derrida 1994, 26). i.e. a relationship devoid of any commercial interest and one characterized by a Levinassian offering of the self in the incalculably singular event of the ethical encounter. Fittingly, the narratives of the corpus dramatize this emergent ethical awareness of the other in their evocations of the dominant conceptions of existence, particularly in their treatment of the theme of human mortality. Put differently, the narratives map a movement away from a conception of existence as terminating in unsullied *individual* death toward a radically less clear-cut understanding of death which involves not only the individual death of the subject but also the others' stakes in it.

Life and the 'terminal' moment of death are portrayed as imbricated in an *immanently* messy network, with all the attendant ethical implications of this particular view of existence. Life, initially conceived of as an individual narrative with its (what Barnes's Tony Webster would call a) "tidy" "ending" positioned in the moment of death, is revealed to be a multidirectional ensemble of divergent and convergent 'fabulations' crisscrossing the ever-questioning – and confused – mind of the subject, with the ending involving *and impacting* the other, even after the 'subject' is dead. The end of one life does not guarantee a neat recapitulation and filing away of the actions undertaken therein. Rather, in an immanent existence, one being's actions ripple through the rhizomatic existence, giving rise to lines of flight, some of which may involve the perpetuation of tragedy and its incessant return in the community. This insight is referred to in all three novels: in Swift's narrative, it is referred to

as subjecting others to the pain of having to “pick up the pieces” (*WYWH*, 342) after Tom and Michael’s deaths. In Barnes’s novel, the ethical insight is expressed clearly on the last page of the narrative: that there is potentially great unrest ensuing egocentric, individual action. This realization is followed by the assertion of immense responsibility incurred for one’s actions on the plane of immanence of life. In a similar manner, Amis refers to this ethical realization by stating that “it’s the deaths of others that kill you in the end” (*TPW*, 365), i.e. that the traumas of the others live on to infect life long after they are gone, with their spectral absent presence contaminating the lives of the living.

On the plane of diegesis and interpretation, the protagonists’ investigation into time parallels the process of narrative recontextualization of trauma which Freud called “working-through”. This, according to Freud and as later theorized by Peter Brooks takes place within the temporality of transference. Brooks elaborates on his notion of the transferential model of reading in the following extract:

> The text is conceived as a … medium constituted as the place of affective investments that represent a situation and a story as both symbolic (given the absence of situation and story except "in effigy") and "real" (given the making-present of situation and story through their repetition). The text conceived as transference should allow us to illuminate and work through that which is at issue in the situation of the speaker, or the story of the narrator, that is, what must be rethought, reordered, interpreted from his discourse. Transference and interpretation are in fact interdependent, and we cannot assign priority to one over the other….
>
> When, as analysand or as text, you call for interpretation from the analyst/reader, you put yourself into the transference. Through the rethinkings, reorderings, reinterpretations of the reading process, the analyst/reader "intervenes" in the text, and these interventions must also be subject to his suspicious attention. A transferential model thus allows us to take as the object of analysis not author or reader, but reading, including, of course, the transferential-interpretive operations that belong to reading. Meaning in this view is not simply "in the text" nor wholly the fabrication of a reader (or a community of readers) but comes into being in the dialogic struggle and collaboration of the two, in the activation of textual possibilities in the process of reading. Such a view ultimately destabilizes the authority of reader/critic in relation to the text, since, caught up in the transference, he becomes analysand as well as analyst. (Brooks 1987, 345)

The literary text is thus conceived of as the immanent space of becoming-other and evolution of meaning. In Brook's Freudian analysis, the literary text is seen as a real/unreal realm where

the issues of the text (akin to the real of trauma) are gradually unearthed and given their full interpretative elaboration. What is significant in Brooks' remarks is his emphasis on the significance of *affect* as the force that renders textual issues (or the traumatic past) real in the present moment of reading (psychoanalytic transference) through the mutual emotional investment of desire between the reader (analyst) and the text (analysand). Affective engagement with the text engenders a force of becoming-real of textual issues (hence their appearance "in effigy") and as such, their reordering and reinterpretation partakes of the logic of the simultaneous reality/unreality of the text. The outcome of the repeated evocations of textual issues (the traumatic past) in repeated – and affectively-charged – returns to the text is a deepening appreciation of the work in the present of reading-transference. The temporality of reading is thus analogous to the multi-layered temporality of trauma, as previously avowed by Schafer and Gadamer who highlight the dialogic and evolutionary nature of meaning in the present of reading. The temporality of narrative is thus tantamount to an expansion of meaning in the present moment of revision of traumatic event or the literary object of analysis.

Within the context of existential analysis, temporality is viewed as key to understanding existence. Yet the idea of time is hardly thinkable in human terms. As Frank Kermode puts it, "Time cannot be faced as coarse and actual, as a repository of the contingent; one humanizes it by fictions of orderly succession and end" (Kermode 2000, 160). Time is thus tantamount to the Lacanian real, engendering the will to understand it, at the same time as resisting full recuperation of its essence and meaning. Drawing on Clément Rosset, West-Pavlov also states that "time in things is the Real, the sum of all things which necessarily exceeds our representational capacities. It is a plenitude admitting of no lack, except in our own (lacunary) capacity to comprehend it" (West-Pavlov 2013, 50). As stated by the protagonists and 'performed' within the textual fabric of the novels of the corpus, temporality remains an as-yet ineffable mystery, tangible but not verbalizable. This is reminiscent of Wittgenstein's remarks for whom certain areas of existence – including an understanding of temporality – lie beyond the limits of the human language (Wittgenstein 2001, 68).

In *The Pregnant Widow*, Amis presents questioning into time as an integral element of the experience of transformation within existence. Traumatic haunting and the subsequent reconfiguration of subjectivity engender questions about the validity of human chronology and the understanding of time. For instance, Keith suspects that human chronology and the division of time into equal segments are merely *symbolic* human constructs, sometimes also varying greatly from one culture to the next. We read, "Keith sat smoking. In it came, and out it went:

the familiar blend of benzene, formaldehyde, and hydrogen cyanide. Amen once said that in Libya the cigarette is a unit of time. How far's the village? Three cigarettes. How long will you be? One cigarette" (*TPW*, 185). Dissatisfaction with the received understanding of time also manifests itself in a nightmare in which Keith dreams of damaging a grandfather's clock. Waking up, he uses the Libyan time measurement unit, subversively:

> Lily's quiet flurry; in the dawn – he was intermittently aware of it; and there was a small packet of time (he sensed) when she stood over him and looked down, and not with liking either. There had just been a disastrous spillage (he had accidentally poured a two-pound bag of sugar into the intimate workings of a grandfather clock) – but someone else could clear it up, the dream could clear it up, he left it there for the dream …. (*TPW*, 238)

Keith's questioning into time prompts him to think of it in less culturally-specific ways. More specifically, his observations reveal time as uncontainable transformation and change (rather than a segmented line), of the type one observes everywhere, notably in the process of physical growth, or as Keith puts it "decompression", involving also pain. He narrates, "Twenty-year-olds are fighting the weight of gravity, and they suffer decompression, with classic symptoms. Pain in the muscles and joints, cramps, numbness, nausea, paralysis" (*TPW*, 61). Pain, decompression (implying entropy) and transformation are thus presented as the *sine qua non* of growth, both physical and mental. These qualities also appear in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's sonnet "Inclusiveness", given to Keith's brother Nicholas (Christopher Hitchens in real life) by Borges during a brief visit. The nature of time as equivalent to constant transformation, with no beginning or end, is stressed in the following account of the encounter:

> For two days running, in 1980, Nicholas read to the great Borges. When they parted, the blind seer, the living Tiresias, offered him "a present," and recited this quatrain, from Dante Gabriel Rossetti:
> What man has bent o'er his son's sleep, to brood
> How that face shall watch his when cold it lies?
> Or thought, as his own mother kissed his eyes,
> Of what her kiss was when his father wooed?
> … . But he believed that Borges universally understood about Time: "Time is the substance I am made of. Time is a river that carries me away, but I am the river …." (*TPW*, 366)

The quote from "A New Refutation of Time" by Borges continues: "… it is a tiger which destroys me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire which consumes me, but I am the fire" (Borges 1964, 234). The Borges extract testifies to Keith's recognition of the timeless struggle by human beings to comprehend the mystery of time and death. Human existence is thus closely allied to the notion of time. Time is further conceived of as the condition of possibility of human existence, an insight which Amis had already recorded in *Time's Arrow*: "Time, the human dimension, which makes us everything we are" (Amis 2003, 76).

Borges's remarks also intimate a questioning of the received notions of life and death since my life and that of the other merge in the river, a river of which my life is but a small drop and simultaneously, its totality. It is as though within time, the individual existent and the entirety of existence merge, rendering life and death illusory limits placed on this flux. Borges's words, hard as they are to comprehend on an empirical level, indicate that any theorization about time is bound to be tainted with the limits of human knowledge as a *perspective* that cannot transcend its limits. Put differently, as timebound beings, we cannot comprehend time in a satisfactory manner.

The extract from Dante Gabriel Rosetti's sonnet "Inclusiveness" quoted in *The Pregnant Widow* also points to the immanent conception of the duration of human life as uncurtailed by death and marked by an other-oriented subjectivity. This subjectivity is also demonstrated as engaged in a dialogue with the mortality and desire of the self and the other. Moreover, mental time is portrayed as reaching beyond physical limits and merging with that of the other. This is a soothing insight for Keith struggling with the question of death, his sister's as well as his own. Toward the end of the novel, Keith comes to conceive of mortality not as a dreadful end, but as a metamorphosis from one state to another. He narrates, "It isn't vanity, it was never vanity. It was always death. This was the true and universal metamorphosis: the agonising transfiguration from one state to another—from the state of life to the state of death" (*TPW*, 363).

Elsewhere in the novel, the universality of transformation is hinted at in affectively visceral and scatological imagery, for example in the following description of the village: "In the afternoons the gustatory and intestinal odours of the village rose up in layers of salt and gravy" (*TPW*, 150). It is noteworthy that Bakhtin, in his *Rabelais and His World* (1965), had also referred to the transformational and regenerative connotations of the mention of excrement in literature in his theorization of the satiric narrative genre he classifies as "grotesque realism". Bakhtin explains that "The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the

sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity" (Bakhtin 1994, 205). Bakhtin's further commentary on bodily degradation germane to grotesque realism ties it to an ethics of immanence and becoming-other. At the heart of death and physical decay, there lies the hope of germination and rebirth, albeit following an unpredictable line of flight. He elucidates:

> … to degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth" (Bakhtin 1994, 206).

Amis's stress on bodily decay and death throughout Keith's narrative – of, *inter alia*, a conversation with mortality – could thus additionally be analyzed in light of the Bakhtinian insights on regeneration and transformation. In this context, the clearest expression of a logic of transformation and becoming-other attendant on death is Ariel's song from *The Tempest* where the dying do not "fade" but "suffer a sea change / Into something rich and strange" (*TPW*, 370). Here, of course, death is also presented as a process of ineffable enrichment in addition to being a metamorphosis. With regard to the literal centrality of ceaseless transformation to existence and the *illusory nature of stability* on a micro- and macro scale, West-Pavlov states:

> We are used to the idea that the world is made of more or less solid substances. However, the closer we look at things, that is, at the scale of subatomic particles, the more we discover that they are in constant flux. All materials are made up of particles linked to each other in complex structures, which are not static, rigid or motionless but vibrating according to temperature. …
> Indeed, even the constituent units of these subatomic structures are constantly undergoing change, oscillating between various states…
> No less invisible to individual human perception, but at the other extreme on a scale of size, is the earth itself. Far from being a solid entity, the globe we inhabit is largely constituted of fluids in constant circulation (West-Pavlov 2013, 48–49)

Recent scientific discoveries bear out the idea that however deep we descend into the composition of matter, everything is in a state of flux and *literal* transformation into one another. Being – including Keith's object of inquiry, death – could thus be conceived of as oscillation between states. This insight also applies to the very 'solid' ground we tread on as it

floats on a non-solid core of circulating fluidity. Thus, in a universe where "matter does not 'exist', but rather, is caught in a constant process of change and transformation" (West-Pavlov 2013, 50) , one could deduce an understanding of time, not as an Absolute outside the lived existence, not as an internal, subjective reality in the subject's mind (distinctions which Barnes's Tony also highlights), but one characterized by crisscrossing processes of becoming:

> … there is no 'separate' time outside the dynamic, processual becomings of things. That dynamic process is temporality itself. Temporality is not the environment of these processes, or the measuring stick to calibrate them, but rather, the processes themselves. All these processes make up the multiply variegated density of being, a tapestry of interwoven immanent 'temporalities'. Time is not a container (in which things exist and events happen), nor is it even a fluid medium (like air or water). Rather, time is immanent to things. (West-Pavlov 2013, 50)

In an ethics of immanence, time is thus the ensemble of the processes that make it up, however multitudinous and ineffably incomprehensible they are. In a thinking of becoming and immanence, being is no longer opposed to the beings that make it up (as is the case in Levinassian ethics[76]). This explains Borges's equation of the "I" and the river of time in *The Pregnant Widow*, as well as its destructiveness. Within the process of ceaseless becoming that is time, the generation/destruction boundary is blurred. Moreover, no hierarchy is established

[76] In the following extract from *Entre Nous*, Levinas's idea of the opposition of Being to beings – or existents, or the ethical encounter – is expressed clearly. He begins by attacking Being as self-absorbed and the origin of violence and bloodshed. He then 'introduces' the "holy" encounter with the other as a force that counters Being: "The event of being is in a concern with being; it would appear to be its only way of being, in its *élan* which is 'essentially' finite and completely absorbed in this concern with being. In a sense, the only thing at issue for the event of being is the being of that very being. To be as such is, from the first, to be preoccupied with being, as if some relaxation were already necessary, some 'tranquilizer,' in order to remain – while being – unconcerned about being. To be: already an insistence on being as if a "survival instinct" that coincided with its development, preserving it, and maintaining it in its adventure of being, were its meaning. The tensing of being back onto itself, a plot in which the reflexive pronoun, -self, is bound up. An insistence before all light and decision, the secret of a savagery excluding deliberation and calculation, violence in the guise of beings who affirm themselves 'without regard' for one another in their concern to be.
Origin of all violence, varying with the various modes of being: the life of the living, the existence of human beings, the reality of things. The life of the living in the struggle for life; the natural history of human beings in the blood and tears of wars between individuals, nations, and classes; the matter of things, hard matter; solidity; the closed-in-upon-self, all the way down to the level of the subatomic particles of which physicists speak.
But behold! The emergence, in the life lived by the human being (and it is here that the human, as such, begins – pure eventuality, but from the start an eventuality that is pure and holy), of the devoting-of-oneself-to-the-other" (Levinas 2006, xii).

among beings, as they continuously become other in a process that appears mind-bogglingly overwhelming. Time – or Being – is the ensemble of the becomings of innumerable beings.

Furthermore, this particular outlook on temporality also challenges the received notions of beginning and ending with birth and death as their arch-manifestations. West-Pavlov continues: "… every moment of final entropic collapse is also a moment of autopoesis, of self-creative activity, within another neighbouring system. Reconceptualizing things as processes, we must also reconceptualize the notion of temporality as made up of constant processes of transition from one state to another" (West-Pavlov 2013, 50). Put differently, once we cease to conceive of subjectivity and the body as bound products, birth and death cease to make sense and are henceforth understood as transformation into a "neighboring system". As every being collapses in the ineluctable dispersal of molecular entropy or death, its constitutive elements help rise a neighboring being in a process referred to as autopoesis[77], indicating the self-creativity germane to the immanent plane of life. Once things become synonymous with their processual becoming, temporality also takes on the quality of constant transformation. West-Pavlov explains how this becoming-other manifests itself in the human body:

> At a more accessible level of comprehension, the body, for instance, is constantly transforming itself – cells are being created and dying constantly, our skin completely renews itself at regular intervals. Things are thus caught in a constantly shifting equilibrium between autopoesis and entropy. We tend to think of death as the endpoint, but in terms of autopoesis, no process ever ends, but merely shades over into new processes of a different sort. Beginnings and ends are both strategies for containing change by establishing narratives that are either determined from the point of departure, or pre-programmed by the point of arrival. They do not, however, accurately reflect the ongoing processes of transformation …. Entropy and death are merely instances of becoming-other rather than marking a definitive end-stop terminus. (West-Pavlov 2013, 51)

[77] "The autopoietic definition of life … emphasizes life's maintenance of its own identity, its informational closure, its cybernetic self-relatedness, and its ability to make more of itself. Autopoiesis refers to self-producing, self-maintaining, self-repairing, and self-relational aspects of living systems. Living beings maintain their form by the continuous interchange and flow of chemical components. Cellular autopoietic systems are bounded by a dynamic material made by the system itself….On Earth all life's autopoietic systems require a supply of water in its liquid state for self-maintenance of their parts. Taken together, all transformations that underlie autopoiesis require six elements: carbon, nitrogen, hydrogen, oxygen, phosphorus, and sulfur. The chemical components of all living entities are fashioned primarily from these elements" ("Life | Biology | Britannica.com" 2017, n.pag.)

West-Pavlov's Deleuze-inspired remarks may go some way toward explaining Amis's fascination with Shakespeare's characterization of death in *The Tempest* as a "rich and strange" transformation, rather than a "terminus". What is customarily seen as the end-point of death is viewed as an ever-present component of life, at work in every given moment. Life and death – or unstoppable transformation – exist immanently within each other. In other words, they are human concepts aimed at abstracting a comprehensible segment of the process of universal transformation, or put otherwise, components of a *human* narrative which amounts to a mere perspective on an otherwise uncontainable, *ineffable* process. Barnes would refer to the contingent truth of this human narrative as "fabulation".

Transformational time also constitutes one of the central issues in *Wish You Were Here*, as the two principal characters in the novel are depicted to be battling against haunting by the ghosts of their dead relatives. The realization that time, in the haunted mind of the traumatized, does not move in a chronologically ordered fashion is highlighted early on in Ellie's insight that the past is not so much of a past after all: "Ellie hasn't seen her mother for over twenty years – and can never see her again – so that to think of her at all is like seeing distant glimmers through a blur. Yet right now, as if time has performed some astounding, marooning loop, thoughts of her mother – and of her father – have never been so real to her" (*WYWH*, 32). Akin to the Barnesian idea of time as represented by the unruly movement of the Severn Bore (discussed further on in this section), haunted time is seen as anachronic. The past puts in an unexpected appearance in the present, prompting the narrator to question time's linearity. Haunted, traumatic time returns like a loop (reminiscent of Ganteau's characterization of it as a spiral) in which the victim of trauma finds him/herself to be marooned as on an island. To Swift, this mental return of the dead is "astounding", almost as if the unknown operations of the human mind and its understanding of temporality were a source of trauma (in corroboration of Kermode and West-Pavlov's remarks, conceiving of time itself as the real). Ellie's possession by the ghost of the past dislodges the conventional assumption that "The past is the past" (*WYWH*, 33) in what amounts to a succinct presentation of the problematic of (traumatic) time.

Yet, apart from traumatic existence being characterized by deranged chronology, time is also portrayed as a process of transformation and becoming-other presented most perceptibly in the metaphoric fabric of the narrative. One of the most devastating tragedies in the novel being the cow disease, Swift builds his metaphoric network of existential transformation around the *milk* from the cows. He defines the milk-centered existence on the farm in the following simple terms:

> It was deep, steep, difficult but good-looking land, with small patchy fields that funnelled or bulged down to the woods in the valley. They had one field up on the ridge where they grew occasional wheat and autumn feed, otherwise it was down to grass and like almost every farm for miles around: sheep or dairy, and they'd always been dairy—beef calves for sale, and dairy. It was hard work for the softest, mildest thing in the world. It was all about turning the land into good white gallons, as many as possible. And it was all about men being slaves to the female of the species, so Michael Luxton had liked to say, with a sideways crack of his face, when Vera had still been around, especially in her hearing. They were all bloody milksops really. (*WYWH*, 41)

Life on the farm is thus defined in terms of immanent transformation from one life form to the other, crucially to the accompaniment of the erotic principle of desire. The centrality of the soft and mild liquid milk to existence is also highlighted to underline the delicacy of the equilibrium characterizing farm life. What is even more interesting is that human mental bondage to sexuality and desire is tied to the immanent becoming-other that constitutes farm life. Animals and humans are also demonstrated as existing in a collaborative, symbiotic relationship, where milking is also viewed as "udders … being relieved of their burdens" (*WYWH*, 180). Swift also compassionately highlights the essential dependence and vulnerability of the human race in his frequent use of the word "milksop", a vulnerability[78] highlighted in the dependence of human beings of all ages, on 'milk'. We read, "And it was a wonder how the grown-up world still needed, by the churn-load, by the tanker-load, this white, soft, pappy baby-juice" (*WYWH*, 204). Even the farm is said to take on this human quality as it is referred to as the "forlorn, milksop dairy farm in the deep, green hills" (*WYWH*, 151). This textual deterritorialization of received attributes levels external differences among diverse life forms as the metaphoric rhizome expands in its representation of the enmeshed life that the narrative is at pains to mirror. One could also claim that Swift uses the universality of the milk – that sustains and cuts across subjective boundaries of disparate beings – as an approximation of the material and mercurial Life force that flows freely through the diverse manifestations of life. The utility of metaphor to convey the affect of ineffable transformation is a point that Arnold Modell also makes in his discussion of the significance of metaphor to human cognition and imagination:

[78] According to McLeese, Swift is the master of arousing the reader's sense of empathy toward his characters: "Few novelists show more subtle mastery than Swift, whose characters invite the reader's empathy rather than judgment" (McLeese and Swift 2012, n.pag.).

> A current definition of metaphor is simply "a mapping or transfer of meaning between different domains." Metaphor not only *transfers* meaning between different domains, but by means of novel recombinations metaphor can *transform* meaning. As the domains in question are open-ended in their variety, the possibilities of transformation are nearly infinite. It can be seen that metaphor is central to the imagination, and for this reason I have described metaphor as the currency of the mind. (Modell 2009, 6)

In *Wish You Were Here*, not only does the "milksop" metaphor allow for the elaboration of a thematics of transformation, but it also transforms language and the text itself. Through devising novel metaphorical combinations – "milksop farm", for example – the affect of existential transformation is verbalized. One witnesses, as it were, the symbolic of language verbalizing the real of existence as becoming-other. The farm comes alive as an *actual* form through which the Life force (here, the milk) flows.

Metaphoric transformation mirroring existential becoming-other is also instantiated elsewhere in the Swiftian oeuvre. Previous instances of the transformative destabilization of the human/animal/machine boundary include Vince in *Last Orders* who draws an analogy between the human and the machine in their common trait of fragility and vulnerability. He says, "It's the only way I could think of it. Like doing a repair job. A rebore or something, a decoke. I don't know how we work inside but I know a good motor when I see one, I know how to strip an engine. If you ask me, flesh and blood aint such a neat piece of work, not always, but a good motor is a good motor" (Swift 1999, 25). Thus as machines that occasionally need repair, the "motor" represents an easier challenge for the repairman than the task awaiting a surgeon repairing the machine of the human body. The universality of the milk which stands for the sustaining life force in *Wish You Were Here*, finds its parallel in the ubiquitous water in *Waterland*, and the meat in *Last Orders*. It is noteworthy that the meat, alongside with the function of blurring the human/animal dichotomy on a literal level, also highlights the vulnerability of both, as butcher Jack states: "'You got to keep a constant eye on wastage, constant. What you've got to understand is the nature of the goods. Which is perishable'" (Swift 1999, 285). Thus, on the level of flesh, which to Jack represents the only reality, the human and animal unite in their perishability and need for "constant" care. Apart from being a deeply ethical insight, the Swiftian emphasis on the shared elements of humanity, animality and machinery – be it their vulnerability or the transience of their life-span – points to a conception of time as running through things, in much the same way as water, milk or flesh does. Russel West-Pavlov elucidates this point: "all time is lived time, in the sense that time is nothing but

the vibrant, pulsing dynamic of life itself: a time immanent to the constantly changing being of things. This time-in-things, however, is not merely that of humans, but of all life, whether animate or inanimate, organic or inorganic" (West-Pavlov 2013, 48). Thus, the Swiftian emphasis on the shared qualities and substances of beings in existence reveals how the passage of time as essential to becoming unites beings in their diversity.

The extended farming metaphor develops in *Wish You Were Here* to further equate human beings and animals. As would be expected, human beings and cows seem to have grown alike, even identical, infusing even the commonplace expressions of the language. Here is Ellie, venting her anger at her mother who had left their household many years previously: "Thank you, Mum, …. Thank you for being a cow …" (*WYWH*, 34). Later, when "bovine" (*WYWH*, 96) Jack arrives at the airport, we read, "… he hadn't felt like a citizen, shuffling through and showing his clean new passport. He'd felt more like a cow at milking time" (2012, 146). Similarly, Jack is also said to have felt like a cow on the farm, on several occasions. We read, "A cow was only one notch up, perhaps, in thinking power, from a caravan. At Jebb, Jack had occasionally thought that he wasn't that many notches up from a cow. All the same, he knew things. Did they know things? Luke had known things, Jack had never doubted that. Luke had surely known, when Dad had bundled him out to the pick-up. He'd known" (*WYWH*, 343). This is yet another instance of the representation of life as made up of the human/animal/machine interaction. Even when it comes to sentience, Jack is in doubt as to where a dog and a cow's feelings and intelligence end and his begin. In the same way, Michael's warm clothes, and especially his 'donkey suit', are said to have been an almost organic part of his body. This is a description of what he was wearing at the moment of suicide: "… he'd put on his cap and scarf and his donkey jacket with the torn quilt lining, and the olive-green wool mittens that stopped short at the knuckles. So you might have said that he'd certainly felt the cold, given that he'd dressed so thoroughly for it. But all this was the force of habit. These clothes were like his winter hide, which he merely slipped off overnight" (*WYWH*, 236). Michael's donkey suit is presented as if it is an extension of his skin, almost an inseparable outgrowth, or a "hide", in yet another metaphoric troubling of the received human/animal divide. With regard to the illusory nature of the divisions of beings in an immanent conception of Nature Jane Bennett writes:

> In lieu of an environment that surrounds human culture, or even a cosmos that cleaves into three ecologies, picture an ontological field without any unequivocal demarcations between human, animal, vegetable, or mineral. *All* forces and flows (materialities) are or can become lively,

> affective, and signaling. And so an affective, speaking human body is not *radically* different from the affective, signaling nonhumans with which it coexists, hosts, enjoys, serves, consumes, produces, and competes.
>
> This field lacks primordial divisions, but it is not a uniform or flat topography. It is just that its differentiations are too protean and diverse to coincide exclusively with the philosophical categories of life, matter, mental, environmental. The consistency of the field is more uneven than that: portions congeal into bodies, but not in a way that makes any one type the privileged site of agency. The source of effects is, rather, always an ontologically diverse assemblage of energies and bodies, of simple and complex bodies, of the physical and the physiological.
>
> In this onto-tale, everything is, in a sense, alive. This liveliness is not capped by an ultimate purpose …. (J. Bennett 2010, 116–17)

On the plane of immanence – or in Bennett's words "vital materiality or vibrant matter" (J. Bennett 2010, 117) – the demarcations between human, animal, vegetable and mineral fade as every conceivable being is viewed simply as a flow of materiality (symbolized in the Swiftian oeuvre as milk, water and meat). On this plane, beings transform (into) one another through affect and signaling, and their functions in nature are thus not fundamentally dissimilar. Moreover, the plane of immanence is characterized by diversity and unevenness. Conceptual categories – such as the distinction between mind and matter – do not apply in immanent reality of the flow of materialities. Here, everything is alive and vibrant and no transcendental (timeless) categories, such as a *telos*, apply. Bennett concludes by stating, "The point is this: an active becoming, a *creative not-quite-human force capable of producing the new*, buzzes within … nature. This vital materiality congeals into bodies, bodies that seek to persevere or prolong their run" (J. Bennett 2010, 118). In other words, through becoming, diverse 'beings' aim to embody and prolong the vitality that they manifest in their current impermanent form, a 'form' that unavoidably becomes other. Bennett characterizes this Life force as "not-quite-human", or beyond the *current* human understanding.

Bennett's remarks are echoed by Brian Massumi who states, apropos the perspectival shift involved in immanent thinking: "Rethink body, subjectivity, and social change in terms of movement, affect, force, and violence – before code, text, and signification. These latter reiterate arrest (the Law: where bodies cease, only to mean, and where meaning carries a sentence)" (Massumi 2002, 66). To Massumi, a thinking of existence uninformed by the operations of affect and the violent unstoppable movement of becoming it involves is one synonymous with the stasis of death. Immanent thinking – much in the manner of poststructuralism – replaces code with difference, text with intertextuality and signification

with processual *signifiance*[79]. The stability of meaning conceived synchronically carries a death sentence. While preserving the individuality of individual beings, immanent thinking acknowledges the movement of becoming-other at the heart of the plane of immanence of being. The monolith of received identity is shown to be untenable in the face of the "shattering blow" (Massumi 1987, xiii) of the force of becoming. The *Force* of affective becoming-other thus represents the shattering of the walls of received boundaries of identity.

This force is reenacted in Swift's choice of idiomatic expressions in *Wish You Were Here* which denote a universal sense of becoming-animal *and* becoming-human. Here are a few instances: when Tom had planned to escape from the farm to join the army, Swift writes, "It would soon be the army's job to clothe, feed and house him. He'd hoof it through the night, then get the first bus to Exeter" (*WYWH*, 182). Similarly, Major Richards had told Jack that it would not be too impolite of him to "slip away" from the repatriation ceremony, "But that hadn't meant the man should simply turn tail and make a beeline. 'Slip away' implied some tact" (*WYWH*, 188). When Tom divulges his secret intention of leaving the farm to Jack, Jack considers the option of "simply ratting on him to his father" (*WYWH*, 180). Likewise, when it comes to the question of who will be the authority in Jebb Farm, Jack wonders if shooting the sick dog Luke would have settled the matter, "And would that have settled the question of how things stood at Jebb Farm for ever, of who now would rule the roost?" (*WYWH*, 151–52). On several occasions, Jack is likened to a wolf or a dog in agony. In one instance, he is eating the breakfast Mrs. Warburton had brought over the day after Michael's suicide: "to see Jack wolf down several rashers" (*WYWH*, 257). Traumatized Jack is also depicted as letting out lupine howls of pain on the way to his brother's funeral: "Now, with a great, unearthly howl that no one heard, he drove madly on" (*WYWH*, 294), and again on the road, "He didn't even slow down, but he let out another great, unheard howl" (*WYWH*, 331).

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[79] *Signifiance* is Kristeva's coinage to denote the *process* of signification as a constant interaction between what she terms as the symbolic of society and the semiotic *chora* arising from the *biological* body. In her introduction to a collection of essays by Kristeva, Toril Moi glosses on *signifiance* in the following words: "Setting out to understand the signifying process *(signifiance),* Kristeva transforms Lacan's distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic order into a distinction between the *semiotic* and the *symbolic.* The interaction between these two terms (which, it must be stressed, are processes, not static entities) then constitutes the signifying process. The semiotic is linked to the pre-Oedipal primary processes, the basic pulsions of which Kristeva sees as predominantly anal and oral, and as simultaneously dichotomous (life/death, expulsion/introjection) and heterogeneous. The endless flow of pulsions is gathered up in the *chora* (from the Greek word for enclosed space, womb)" (Kristeva 1986, 12–13).

An interesting previous case of the Swiftian penchant for the commingling of the animal and the human is Dick – rendered textually in vegetal terms, "potato-head" – in *Waterland* who, at some point in the novel, is portrayed as spitting into the lock-pen: "He watches it float, bubble, sink. His cow-lashes flutter over his fish-eyes" (Swift 1999, 33). This is a case of multiple deterritorialization of subjectivity *par excellence* where the human simultaneously becomes two animals and a plant on the metaphoric plane of textual transformation. Dick's subjectivity is thus rendered veritably 'multiple'. Apropos the timeless relevance of constant deterritorialization for the negotiation of a "multiple" self such as Dick's or Jack's in *Wish You Were Here*, Deleuze and Guattari state:

> In fact, the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities. Each multiplicity is defined by a borderline functioning as Anomalous, but there is a string of borderlines, a continuous line of borderlines *(fiber)* following which the multiplicity changes. And at each threshold or door, a new pact? A fiber stretches from a human to an animal, from a human or an animal to molecules, from molecules to particles, and so on to the imperceptible. Every fiber is a Universe fiber. A fiber strung across borderlines constitutes a line of flight or of deterritorialization. It is evident that the Anomalous, the Outsider, has several functions: not only does it border each multiplicity, of which it determines the temporary or local stability (with the highest number of dimensions possible under the circumstances), not only is it the precondition for the alliance necessary to becoming, but it also carries the transformations of becoming or crossings of multiplicities always farther down the line of flight. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 249)

The 'human' 'self' is thus characterized as a "temporary", "local" *illusion* of stability, which in reality is but a "threshold" constantly forging fresh "pact"s and "alliance"s of "becoming" through recourse to "Universe" fibers which render subjectivity constantly anomalous, an outsider to itself. The dimensions of being thus available cut across – and imbibe – received boundaries of the animal and the molecule, encompassing the infinitely available possibilities in the Universe.

The permeability of the borders of the self as conveyed in *Wish You Were Here* is also an instance of the Kristevan notion of *le sujet en procès*, which means that the subject – constructed at the intersection of biology and culture – participates in the becomings of life through its cultural *and* biological attributes. Kristeva states in an interview,

> The subject-in-process, then, gives us a vision of the human venture as a venture of innovation, of creation, of opening, of renewal. I'm reminded of what the biologists call "open systems." They think that a living being is not merely a structure but a structure open to its surroundings and other structures; and that interactions occur in this opening that are of the order of procreation and rejection, and that permit a living being to live, to grow, to renew itself: eventually destroying something outside itself: but at the same time giving something to the outside.
>
> The metaphor that I have just used corresponds exactly to the Freudian idea of psychic life as founded on the death drive and on Eros. I think it is absolutely important to recognize these parameters. (Guberman and Kristeva 1996, 26).

Kristeva's analysis is a simultaneous avowal of immanence and the centrality of Eros to the becomings at the heart of this plane (a point developed in detail in the last section of this chapter). What is paramount in Kristeva's commentary is the emphasis placed on the processuality and ultimate openness of the interacting beings on the plane of becoming of nature.

In a similar fashion, in Barnes's work, a notable mention of the blurring of the animal/human divide – or the becoming-other unfolding in-between – occurs in *Flaubert's Parrot* where the narrator begins by writing that

> Gustave is other animals as well. In his youth he is clusters of beasts: hungry to see Ernest Chevalier, he is 'a lion, a tiger – a tiger from India, a boa constrictor' (1841); feeling a rare plenitude of strength, he is 'an ox, sphinx, bittern, elephant, whale' (1841). Subsequently, he takes them one at a time. He is an oyster in its shell (1845); a snail in its shell (1851); a hedgehog rolling up to protect itself (1853, 1857). He is a literary lizard basking in the sun of Beauty (1846), and a warbler with a shrill cry which hides in the depths of the woods and is heard only by itself (also 1846). He becomes as soft and nervous as a cow (1867); he feels as worn out as a donkey (1867); yet still he splashes in the Seine like a porpoise (1870). He works like a mule (1852); he lives a life which would kill three rhinos (1872); he works 'like XV oxen' (1878); though he advises Louise Colet to burrow away at her work like a mole (1853). To Louise he resembles 'a wild buffalo of the American prairie' (1846). To George Sand, however, he seems 'gentle as a lamb' (1866) – which he denies (1869) – and the pair of them chatter away like magpies (1866); ten years later, at her funeral, he weeps like a calf (1876). Alone in his study, he finishes the story he wrote especially for her, the story about the parrot; he bellows it out 'like a gorilla' (1876). (Barnes 2009a, 50–51)

Thus, the narrator Tony Braithwaite demonstrates that to Flaubert, his mistress and contemporary author George Sand, the various tropes – similes and metaphors – involving different animals had been a means of making sense of his subjectivity. In other words, the animal 'other' provides humans with a means of verbalizing, as it were, *the affect of Flaubert's subjectivity*. Thus, on the plane of metaphor, which as "the currency of the mind" is the only plane of cognition according to Modell, the animal and human merge in order that Flaubert and others may verbalize their evolving and circumstantial feelings vis-à-vis Gustave's subjectivity. Tony Braithwaite continues his narrative by registering "a further shift away from humanity, a progression to the extremes of ursinity" (Barnes 2009a, 52) in Flaubert, and ends his observations on the reversibility of the received opposites of the human/animal binary divide by stating that animals, too, share human qualities: "Parrots are human to begin with; etymologically, that is. *Perroquet* is a diminutive of *Pierrot*; *parrot* comes from *Pierre*; Spanish *perico* derives from *Pedro*. For the Greeks, their ability to speak was an item in the philosophical debate over the differences between man and the animals" (Barnes 2009a, 56–57). Geoffrey's troubling of the human/animal dichotomy serve to reveal subjectivity as partaking of the essence of time, in that both are characterized by ceaseless becoming-other.

The lines of flight of selfhood, characterized as they are by perennial "transformations of becoming" extend ceaselessly. In this sense, the received notion of a stable self is viewed afresh as an *abstraction* according to Claire Colebrook:

> From the complex flow of time we produce ordered wholes – such as the notion of the human self. We then imagine that this self *preceded or grounded the flow of time rather than being an effect of time.* The importance of overcoming this illusion cannot be overestimated.
>
> We tend to think of time as the connection of homogeneous or equivalent units within some already given whole; we think of a world in which there is time, or a world that then goes through time. We put being before becoming. We imagine time as a series of 'nows'. But time is not composed of 'nows' or units; we abstract the 'now' as some sort of being or thing from the becoming or flow of time. (Colebrook 2002, 41)

Time, in Colebrook's immanent analysis is conceived not as a unified or even compartmentalized receptacle in which Being in all its manifestations unfolds, but as the ineffable ensemble, or the "flow" of becomings. Immanent temporality thus valorizes becoming over a view of being as stable, acknowledging the impossibility of positing a frozen and stable notion of time, and selfhood alongside with it.

In *Wish You Were Here*, not only is existence presented as synonymous with transformation, but it is also demonstrated as constituting one whole entity, echoing the immanent "unity to the plane of nature, which applies equally to the inanimate and the animate, the artificial and the natural" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 254). This sentiment is conveyed in the image of the sea portrayed as moving in a single body: "The sea, white flecks in its greyness, seems to be travelling in an interconnected body from right to left, west to east …" (*WYWH*, 4). Within the context of this seemingly-drifting whole, reminiscent of Amis and Barnes's respective references to the river of time and the Severn Bore, the parts appear to blend inseparably into one another and lose their individual significance, as the journey – or the collective *fate* – takes precedence over and above that of individual anonymous components. Here is the description of a part of Jack's journey: "He was relieved when he joined the M4 and was sucked into its tunnelled anonymity. He saw himself as a mere moving speck on a map—the blue line of the M4 draped like a cable across the land. The road was everything and, despite the names that loomed at junctions, might have been anywhere. Chippenham? Malmesbury? Where the hell were they?" (*WYWH*, 214–15). Reference to individuals and their vehicles as specks highlights the insignificance of individual will in the face of a collective current. It also underlines Swift's conviction in immanent, collective responsibility, an exigency that appears all the more urgent in a time of global loss of direction and rife violence. As Emily Horton states in her study of affect and ethics in, *inter alia*, Swift's *Wish You Were Here*, "what is at stake … is … an attention to the individual and society's dynamic affective relations and to the ethical importance of the 'other', as they explore new possibilities for personal, national and global becoming …" (Horton 2014, 16).

Elsewhere in *Wish You Were Here*, the idea of the unity of components and their becoming-other within the totality of immanent existence is presented in the form of the mental merger of Tom's dead body and its container, the coffin. Here, Jack is kissing Tom's coffin: "So he finally lowered his lips again to the coffin—he had never kissed any piece of wood like this, he had never kissed Tom like this when he was alive, except when he was very small and wouldn't ever have known about it" (*WYWH*, 270). The notion of existential components forming one whole body – and family – is demonstrated also in the scene where Major Richards (yet another surrogate father in the Swiftian universe of paternal absence) is seen by Jack as a temporary father figure, where he also sees Tom and himself as interchangeable. We read, "He said it as if he, Major Richards, might have suddenly become a relative of the kind just denied, some sort of a temporary father, and might have wished even to reach out and grasp Jack's

arm, so conveying that he understood that Jack was of the same stuff as the dead man being referred to, that he, Jack, and Tom were interchangeable. The Luxton brothers" (*WYWH*, 92–93). As elsewhere in the novel, this oneness and interchangeability is also mirrored in the metaphoric fabric of the text. Here, for instance, Tom's coffin is about to be carried to the cemetery: "Then Ireton said, deferentially but quickly, like a man not wanting to waste valuable time, 'I'll be your other shoulder, Jack, if that's okay with you.' Your other shoulder? Then Jack understood. And, though he'd not given any previous thought to who might occupy this position, felt now he could have put his arms round both of Ireton's dark-blue shoulders …" (*WYWH*, 268). Jack's surprised reaction to Ireton's suggestion of offering a shoulder is Swift's way of highlighting the thematic significance of the ethical notion of becoming-other, of conceiving of existence as one body[80] with all parts substituting for one another in times of crisis and need. In Ganteau's analysis, the Swiftian becoming is integral to an ethics based on awareness of vulnerability and the importance of care as action[81] that proceeds from this realization. The emphasis on individuals offering limbs to one another also builds on the previous Swiftian image of the sea of life as a single body in motion.

The above extract also serves as yet another instance of Swift confirming his faith in ethical overture to the other and the restorative power of a community whose role is stressed as an agent of healing in cases of traumatic shattering of belief in collective human functioning, or collective trauma. Here, according to Sandra Bloom (drawing on Yablonsky 1972), art and the artist play a mediating role:

> The function of the artist is to stay in touch with the other truth, the truth of the less distorted, nonverbal, nonrationalized part of our consciousness. The part of us that still sees some vital

[80] To quote Ray from *Last Orders* as he is contemplating his daughter Susie and comparing her with his wife Carol: "I can't deny it, she's better-looking than Carol ever was, even Carol at her age. It's a kind of disrespect and unfairness to Carol to think it but that don't matter because she's a part of Carol, there's a part of Carol in her, we're all part of each other. It's not as if, given a second chance, I could choose Sue not Carol, because without Carol there couldn't have been no Sue. …. I'd fancy my own daughter" (Swift 1999, 51).

[81] Ganteau outlines a further vital characteristic of an ethics of vulnerability, namely ameliorative *action*, attendant on an awareness of universal vulnerability. Action arising from attunement to the vulnerability of the Other thus bears social fruit, "… in a concrete way, by privileging performance and action instead of uniquely relying on general, abstract, rational principles imposed from above. The ethic of care is more attuned with a social and political practice that relies on ongoing, concrete, tentative moves and advances, on dialogue and possibly compromise …" (Ganteau 2015a, 12). Thus, in Ganteau's analysis, what interests him is the element of a volition towards "action" within the unpredictable framework provided by the ethical "event", characterized by continuity, trial and error and above all its *dialogic* nature.

> importance in trees, and animals, and water and fish. The part of us, that despite deception, verbal gymnastics, elaborate rationalizations, and malignant propaganda realizes that we are organic parts of an organic whole and that the whole cannot remain intact without all of its parts. The part of us that resists epidemic robopathology, the attempt to turn us all into machines. The part of us that always remains in touch with primary, natural reality, no matter how much we choose to distort our personal and cultural reality. Through their paintings, sculptures, photographs, poetry, plays, songs, music, and stories, artists attempt to show us, remind us, of what we are missing, what we fail to see, or have forgotten, or fear too much to know. (Bloom 2011, 79–80)

Thus, through art, of which Swift's novel is a prime representative, the forgotten essence of social life as an "organic whole", of which all parts are connected in immanent interconnection and thus always-already situated in ethical bonds of responsibility toward the individual and the community, is revitalized. In this context, a renewed connection with nature and its animal and vegetal components appears as integral to this organic revival and reintegration.

In *Wish You Were Here*, the one-body concept is developed further to encompass human and animal forms, as when Luke the dog was put down. We read, "And up in the yard, in that still air, Jack had heard the shot clearly enough, like something hitting his own skull" (*WYWH*, 142). Swift is highlighting the fact that in the mind of a subject mourning a loss, the death of one is felt as the death of the other, as all beings are conceived of as connected, as one body. The idea of the merger of bodies into one had already appeared in Swift's work, notably in *Last Orders* where Vic reports having spotted Ray and Amy together on a park bench: "From the front of the van I could see them clearly, fifty yards, ten o'clock, Ray on the side of the bench nearest me. It seemed to me that though they made the shapes of two separate people sitting on the same bench, so you might have thought it was just a chance encounter, they also made a single shape that was the two of them together" (Swift 1999, 217). Vic's explicit reference to Amy and Ray blending into one shape in an erotic bond is developed further to incorporate a further Swiftian thematic. Vic continues: "Ray didn't feed the birds. He smoked and rubbed his lip and scratched his neck. Then he sat back and at that exact moment Amy leant forward as if they were a *machine* that worked like that" (Swift 1999, 217 emphasis added). Thus not only do beings and bodies merge into one whole, but they also constitute a "working" machine. Swift seems to be highlighting the fact that a subjective merger and becoming-other through the bond of desire is the *modus operandi* of existence.

The notion of becoming-other within operational existence – conceived of as a Deleuzian machine[82] characterized by constant movement and transformation – also overlaps with the discussion of temporality. The term that sums up the idea of adjoining machines merging to actualize a becoming-other is "systemic overlap" – reminiscent of Kristeva's commentary above on "open systems" (Guberman and Kristeva 1996, 26) – defined in the following words:

> Systemic overlap, that is, embedded systems and sub-systems which overlap with each other and evolve temporally into other systems, is the key to a positive, dynamic and immanent notion of temporalities. Temporalities and their multiple strands cannot be conceptualized without an accompanying sense of the ecologies of dynamic systems. … we can only understand temporalities as an infinite fabric of processes in which we are ourselves involved… (West-Pavlov 2013, 51–52)

Beings, "systems" or "ecologies", overlap and evolve into new working systems, as Amy and Ray seem to be doing in Swift's description, or in Bob's offer of a shoulder to Jack in *Wish You Were Here*. In their merger and evolution, the overlapping systems exemplify the multifariousness of time. Time is thus nothing but the aggregate of all overlapping systems and can only be 'understood' as such from within the process of immanent overlap. West-Pavlov

[82] The Deleuzian idea of existence as machine is most clearly laid out in the following extract from *A Thousand Plateaus*: "Arrive at elements that no longer have either form or function, that are abstract in this sense even though they are perfectly real. They are distinguished solely by movement and rest, slowness and speed. … depending on their degree of speed or the relation of movement and rest into which they enter, they belong to a given Individual, which may itself be part of another Individual governed by another, more complex, relation, and so on to infinity. There are thus smaller and larger infinities, not by virtue of their number, but by virtue of the composition of the relation into which their parts enter. Thus each individual is an infinite multiplicity, and the whole of Nature is a multiplicity of perfectly individuated multiplicities.
The plane of consistency of Nature is like an immense Abstract Machine, abstract yet real and individual; its pieces are the various assemblages and individuals, each of which groups together an infinity of particles entering into an infinity of more or less interconnected relations. … This plane has nothing to do with a form or a figure, nor with a design or a function. … Instead, it is a plane upon which everything is laid out, and which is like the intersection of all forms, the machine of all functions ….What we are talking about is … the infinity of the modifications that are part of one another on this unique plane of life" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 253–54). The Deleuzian machinic understanding of existence conceives of beings as real and abstract at the same time; real, in the sense that to the naked eye, they have visible boundaries that demarcate their existence, but abstract in that they are all characterized by constant movement and transformation. To Deleuze and Guattari, it is the speed of the transformation of beings from (one) state(s) into (an)other(s) that defines their true existence. Beings are thus Individuals in their transient uniqueness but simultaneously, this individuality is cut across by infinite forces of becoming determining their line(s) of flight.

states, “Correspondingly, we must think of what might have been named ‘time’ as a gigantic, immensely complex, interrelating and overlapping network of dynamic processes, each with its own tempo, life-span, and diachronic-synchronic transitions with previous, simultaneous or neighbouring, and successor processes” (West-Pavlov 2013, 52). Time is thus made up of the interconnection of “dynamic processes”. These processes have differing speeds, durations and modes of transition. Yet, their common characteristic is the fact that they interact with, and “evolve” into one another. This immanent sentiment of interaction and merger of beings is probably what Swift is referring to in the above extracts from *Wish You Were Here* and *Waterland*. The ethical significance of this immanent understanding is immense in that the actions of a being are demonstrated as having ripple effects on the entire ecology of existence and its future path.

Within a discussion of an ethics of immanence, in *Wish You Were Here*, people – and generally speaking beings – are also empathically presented as powerless in the face of a situation that seems to unfold as if of its own accord. For instance, when Tom would shoot an animal on the farm, it was as if the bullet was *destined to* hit the target, or put otherwise unable not to hit it. We read, “He would swing that gun, when it was still too big for him, swing it far too much, Jack would think, and fire as if the shot were like a rope that couldn’t help tighten on its target. Rabbit, crow, pigeon. Pigeons were the trickiest” (*WYWH*, 99). This is Swift’s way of extending his nonjudgmental empathy, even to a bullet, caught in a situation that robs it of any possibility of acting otherwise than ripping through the flesh of the prey. In this case, Tom could be said to be instigating an interaction, albeit a violent one, in the immanent network of an interconnected existence. Elsewhere, Tom is also said to be able to “*make* the rabbit hit the shot” (*WYWH*, 43), divesting even the rabbit of any agency. In a similar fashion, on the way to the airport, Jack is depicted as if *led on* by “the road”, almost in the manner of an object being helplessly transported on a conveyor belt: “The funnel of the M275 seemed to find him rather than he it, feeding him onto the westbound M27” (*WYWH*, 147). The road is also said to be conscious of the destination lying at the end, to which it was leading Jack: “this open country, with its unimpeded views of the road ahead, was only drawing him inexorably and all too rapidly closer to his destination” (*WYWH*, 148). This extract also points to the uncanny animism of existence, and its inhuman intelligence.

Swift’s descriptions of situations in which subjects are caught in a myriad of junctures where they cannot but act in a certain manner, is a demonstration of a gesture of compassionate empathy on the part of the narrative voice. In an interview with Catherine Bernard, Swift first

states that his writing is “deeply moral, if only for the simple reason that all morality, all real morality, rests on doing what a novelist makes a speciality of – that is, attempting to get inside the experience of others. … Imagination is the basis of morality” (Bernard and Swift 1997, 224–25) and goes on to say that in his imaginative work, he sets great store by empathy,

> …because empathy is the beginning of sympathy, sympathy is the beginning of compassion, and compassion is where morality really accrues. Empathy really goes without saying. If as a novelist you are not in the business of empathy, then what are you doing? The word "empathy" in English is fairly neutral. You can have empathy without sympathy. They are different things. In the end, empathy is the more basic of the two. That's just an ability to get a flavor, a little sort of vibration of what someone else experiences. To get out of yourself is empathy. It might lead on to better and greater things. (Bernard and Swift 1997, 224–25)

Empathy for Swift, as amply instantiated in *Wish You Were Here*, is thus the imaginative ability to view a situation from the other’s vantage point, which in turn involves a degree of becoming-other. Swift also uses the concept of vibration (the capacity to affect and be affected) to the other’s experience, infusing empathy with an air of uncanny mystery. Ultimately, his focus is on the “better and greater things” that arise out of the imaginative empathy and vibration to the pain of the vulnerable other. This amounts to an affirmation of Life and temporality as creativity and expansion.

The significance of empathic compassion – as the “affective dimension of inquiry” (LaCapra 1999, 722) into trauma – is also highlighted by Dominick LaCapra, who starts off by warning against the illegitimacy of over-identification with the victim:

> Historical trauma is specific and not everyone is subject to it or entitled to the subject-position associated with it. It is dubious to identify with the victim to the point of making oneself a surrogate victim who has a right to the victim's voice or subject-position. The role of empathy and empathic unsettlement in the attentive secondary witness does not entail this identity; it involves a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other's position while recognizing the difference of that position and hence not taking the other's place. (LaCapra 1999, 722)

In LaCapra’s analysis, the danger attendant on over-identification would be the propagation of specific trauma to encompass those unaffected by it, thereby creating a traumatic culture, or in his formulation, ‘absence’, as opposed to a specific ‘loss’. Cherishing “empathic unsettlement”

toward the victim thus involves affectivity with full knowledge of non-identity with the victim. LaCapra continues to elaborate on his notion of "empathic unsettlement":

> Empathic unsettlement … raises in pointed form the problem of how to address traumatic events involving victimization, including the problem of composing narratives that neither confuse one's own voice or position with the victim's nor seek facile uplift, harmonization, or closure but allow the unsettlement that they address to affect the narrative's own movement both in terms of acting-out and working-through. … empathy that resists full identification with, and appropriation of, the experience of the other would depend both on one's own potential for traumatization (related to absence and structural trauma) and on one's recognition that another's loss is not identical to one's own loss. (LaCapra 1999, 723)

Ethically non-appropriative, "empathic unsettlement" allows for affectivity in the transferential relationship with the victim or object of analysis, at the same time as precluding the possibility of over-identification with the trauma of the other. The specificity of the other's trauma is thus preserved, and facile recuperation of a traumatic event forestalled. Empathic unsettlement allows for the narrative's "movement" of "acting-out" and "working-through" to occur through fostering a vigilant potential for affectivity by the trauma of the other (potential for traumatization) and recognition of the alterity of the other's trauma. In narratological terms, as Peter Brooks elucidates, this amounts to the possibility of a full elaboration of the issues of the narrative through repetition, 'deviance' and 'detour', before the narrative reaches its resolution (Brooks 1984, 104). The concurrence of affectivity and critical distance makes for a proper operation of the movements of acting-out (through narrative elaboration) and working-through necessary for the therapeutic recontextualization of trauma.

In our discussion of temporality in the corpus narratives, it is in *The Sense of an Ending* where temporality emerges as a central existential problematic within the inquiring mind of traumatized Tony. Barnes's protagonist makes it his chief concern to try and fathom the mysterious nature and rhythm of time. Tony asks, "We live in time, it bounds us and defines us, and time is supposed to measure history, isn't it? But if we can't understand time, can't grasp its mysteries of pace and progress, what chance do we have with history – even our own small, personal, largely undocumented piece of it?" (*TSE*, 60). Tony and his band of friends used to think that time is an entity to be owned and appropriated, and thus wore their watches with the dial turned inward. Tony recounts, "Another detail I remember: the three of us, as a

symbol of our bond, used to wear our watches with the face on the inside of the wrist. It was an affectation, of course, but perhaps something more. It made time feel like a personal, even a secret, thing" (*TSE*, 6). However, growing up, and in particular one event he witnesses, teach him about the ungraspable nature of time: time turns out to be both inappropriable and incomprehensible. The event in question is the phenomenon of Severn Bore with the unsettling impression of the reversibility of linear time:

> The local paper used to print a timetable, indicating where best to catch it and when. But the first occasion I tried, the water didn't seem to be obeying its instructions. Then, one evening at Minsterworth, a group of us waited on the river bank until after midnight and were eventually rewarded. For an hour or two we observed the river flowing gently down to the sea as all good rivers do. The moon's intermittent lighting was assisted by the occasional explorations of a few powerful torches. Then there was a whisper, and a craning of necks, and all thoughts of damp and cold vanished as the river simply seemed to change its mind, and a wave, two or three feet high, was heading towards us, the water breaking across its whole width, from bank to bank. This heaving swell came level with us, surged past, and curved off into the distance; some of my mates gave chase, shouting and cursing and falling over as it outpaced them; I stayed on the bank by myself. I don't think I can properly convey the effect that moment had on me. It wasn't like a tornado or an earthquake (not that I'd witnessed either) – nature being violent and destructive, putting us in our place. It was more unsettling because it looked and felt quietly wrong, as if some small lever of the universe had been pressed, and here, just for these minutes, nature was reversed, and time with it. And to see this phenomenon after dark made it the more mysterious, the more other-worldly. (*TSE*, 35–36)

Barnes's engagement of the theme of time is at its clearest in this extract. To a people obsessed with catching the natural phenomenon on the basis of a human timetable, a move reminiscent of the boys aiming to personalize (interiorize and humanize) time by wearing their watches with the dial facing inward, the Severn Bore proves unwieldy and radically outside their grasp[83]. However, as Tony's explorations into the unwieldy operations of human memory

[83] Non-understanding of time does not amount to a total indeterminacy vis-à-vis human history for Barnes as he avows in the following excerpt from an interview with Rudolf Freiburg:
"Freiburg: ...and in the end you say: "If a wine tastes to you like a young Australian Chardonnay, then that in a sense is what it is. The label may subsequently declare it to be an expensive burgundy, but if it hasn't been that in your mouth, then that is what it can never really become: 'Would you say that history is also a matter of taste?
Barnes: Well, the way history is remembered and therefore to a certain extent the way history is written about is a matter of taste, but I certainly don't believe that all tastes are equal, or that taste is any

demonstrate, the nature of mental time is disappointingly unpredictable. Tony's increasing awakening to the role of nature and the presence of the other reveal a less orderly mind and an equally unsettling 'direction' of time. The reversal and dispersal of "time" and the direction of the river, with "violent and destructive" nature humbling the human beings present at the event reveal the incalculability of time and its multidirectional nature. The whole episode has an air of the uncanny and the ineffable[84], or the "other-worldly" about it. This also confirms Andrew Tate's commentary on the Barnesian oeuvre where he states that "Julian Barnes's work is frequently energized by a sensation of wonder, mystery that he perceives at work …" (Tate 2011, 68). Intimations of sublime mystery also tie Barnes's work to Amis's in its suggestion of an intelligent universe beyond the *current* human ability to comprehend it.

In *The Sense of an Ending*, brooding the memory of the night of the Severn Bore, Tony comments further on the unsettling effect of witnessing the event. Veronica and Tony, discuss the effects of watching the Severn Bore phenomenon unfold: "Alone, she and I talked about how impossible things sometimes happened, things you wouldn't believe unless you'd witnessed them for yourself. Our mood was thoughtful, sombre even, rather than ecstatic" (*TSE*, 119). In the novel, one such impossible thing to Tony is the emergence of new memories in his search for details of past events. The Severn Bore comes to embody how the seemingly unpredictable emergence of false memories throws the linearity of time into doubt, revealing it as yet another human fiction – a metaphorical, "as-if" construct – imposed on an uncontainable natural 'phenomenon' that is as yet imperfectly understood. Tony explains:

> I know this much: that there is objective time, but also subjective time, the kind you wear on the inside of your wrist, next to where the pulse lies. And this personal time, which is the true time, is measured in your relationship to memory. So when this strange thing happened – when

substitute for truth. I'm Orwellian in this respect, in that I think that 100 percent truth is unreclaimable and unknowable, but that we must maintain the superiority of a 67 percent over a 64 percent of truth" (Freiburg and Barnes 2009, 43–44).

[84] Commenting on *The Sense of an Ending*, Mark Currie highlights the human inability to verbalize time as it is felt in the present. In the novel, having finally learned about the mystery of the mentally handicapped man Adrian, Tony suddenly divagates and talks about chips. He is only later able to refer to the shocking realization (one would say *belatedly*, in Freudian terminology). To Currie, the shocking realization engenders a moment of 'nothingness', almost as if it were an encounter with the nature of temporality as the Lacanian real, as Kermode and West-Pavlov would agree: "This is what I take the novel to be saying about memory and presence, not that unexpected moments are difficult to grasp, but that, in being difficult to grasp, they reveal the structure of time more generally, as a flight from presence, and so the ungraspability, the nothingness, of presence in general" (Currie 2013, 174).

> these new memories suddenly came upon me – it was as if, for that moment, time had been placed in reverse. As if, for that moment, the river ran upstream. (*TSE*, 122)

The presence of the fiction marker "as if" indicates the mental attempt at the construction of a metaphor to trope and understand an alien phenomenon. Conceived of as an encounter with the Lacanian real (West-Pavlov 2013, 50; Currie 2013, 174; Kermode 2000, 160), the enigma of time and unruly memories engenders a questioning in the narrative. Tony is at pains to unravel the mystery of the true nature of time by theorizing that subjective time, internal to the subject's mind, is distinct from the objective time out there. Conceiving of time as partitioned thus gives Tony the comfortable illusion of mastery, at least over a small segment of time, which he appropriates through spatializing it on the dial of his wrist-watch. Spatializing time also sustains the illusion of possessing, personalization and humanization of an otherwise ineffable temporality. In a sense, it is the physical equivalent of the literary trope of metaphor in that measuring time through its spatialization amounts to a (futile) human struggle to comprehend the essence of time.

Against appropriation of time, an immanent conception of temporality posits a view of time which acknowledges the multiplicity of becomings in existence. Here, the illusion of mastery of time is given up. Claire Colebrook elucidates this sentiment in the following words:

> … there are flows of time as movement and change from which we abstract distinct beings and bodies. The body is an effect or outcome of its movement and does not precede the flow of time through which it becomes. Time is always differing from itself. No two 'nows' are the same, and no two points of any movement or action are equivalent. Indeed, time is not a series of nows or points. In order to perceive time we spatialise it, cut it up into points or the various moments of a movement. But the true time of becoming is 'imperceptible'. (Colebrook 2002, 43)

Thus, rather than a singular, objectifiable entity, time is immanently conceived of as multiple "flows of time and change" at differing speeds which give the illusion of the separation of beings and bodies as independent. Time, to the disappointment of the likes of Tony who are sticklers for tidiness and well-defined borders, is "imperceptible". Colebrook continues by writing, "We would then get a sense of time as a whole of differing series of becomings beyond our organising point of view" (Colebrook 2002, 45). At best, time can be sensed but not appropriated through human definition.

The ethical implications of an immanent conception of time are of great significance to our study. Acknowledging one's intellectual powerlessness to grasp the other of time and existence is humbling and conducive to a non-appropriative overture to the other in all its manifestations. No longer characterized by a subjective/objective dichotomy, the relation to the other is seen as one of ineffable engagement in collective becoming-other, with no end, no *telos* of total mastery in view. Immanent view of temporality and existence, thus conceived in human terms as an amorphous fluidity (in the Swiftian symbol of the sea, and the river in Barnes and Amis), divests the individual of his/her illusion of supremacy over the object of analysis. Further, it situates the human being in an infinite number of bonds of responsibility to the multiplicity of the others in existence: human, natural, animal and machine. Wenquan Wu's analysis of *The Sense of an Ending* also points in a similar direction with regard to the novel's ubiquitous image of fluidity, although no mention of an ethics of immanence is made. Wu writes, "When closely scrutinized, the underlying structure of the pieces will reveal itself; there is one common element: fluidity. The watch worn on the inside of the wrist is an image of fluid in that time is running its own course despite the juvenile desire of personal control over it" (Wu 2015, 89). On the level of reading and interpretation of the narrative, the fluidity of time and human impressions translate into the expanding lines of flight of meaning in every return to the text.

This rhizomatic spreading out of meaning and interpretation germane to narrative compels Tollance to propose a conception of narrative based on the expansion and interaction of the "voices" of the literary text, specifically in the Swiftian oeuvre. She writes: "L'effet de désancrage énonciatif produit par ces voix qui nous parlent de nulle part augmente potentiellement à l'infini la force d'expansion du récit, mais il apparaît aussi à certains égards comme une force de compression: toute l'histoire se trouve ramenée à un indéterminé, suspendue à une localisation et une temporalité incertaines" (Tollance 2011, 23). In Tollance's deconstructionist analysis, the voices of the text, akin to the Deleuzian lines of flight, expand ceaselessly in every recurring conversation with the text. At the same time, the expansionary meaning engenders a feeling of indeterminacy of meaning. The effect is similar to the Derridean *différance* or the characteristically literary void of meaning that Paul de Man writes about (De Man 1983, 18), a void that demands a repeated reading and a fresh interpretation. The total effect is one of spectralization of meaning – and the reader – in the space of indeterminacy. Adopting the idiom of spectrality, Tollance proceeds to theorize how the spectrality at the heart of the literary text also affects the characters. Significantly for our

analysis, she ties her analysis of the narrative expansion of meaning to the question of temporality:

> L'espace que dessine la voix n'est pas entièrement absorbé par un drame qui se joue autour d'un objet. Au fil du texte, la voix a aussi le pouvoir de se détacher de ce drame pour résonner aux côtés d'autres voix. La scène « de » la voix devient alors à proprement parler une scène qui appartient tout entière à la voix, voix qui « épuise » ou travaille le personnage – qui a pour effet de défaire le sujet ou faire de lui une ombre. À une approche spatiale du texte, on pourrait opposer une approche temporelle, retrouvant là une distinction qui associe la voix au temps et le regard à l'espace. Par sa résonance, la voix continue toutefois de dessiner un vaste champ aveugle où, à travers les voix multiples qui nous parlent de nulle part, se constitue peu à peu un lieu commun. L'espace textuel se fait alors espace indivis où un autre partage s'instaure, où le récit se perçoit cette fois peut-être moins comme scène de l'énonciation que comme lieu de la voix. (Tollance 2011, 35)

The voice, perceived rather in the manner of the real or the Blanchotian "work"[85], returns incessantly in its urge for optimal elaboration. The effect is one of expansion of meaning in such a way as to render the character spectral and shadowy. This is reminiscent of Ellmann's characterization of the "I" as a ghost (Ellmann 1994, 17–18). Significantly, Tollance also ties the voice of the text to temporality and the diachronic historicity of interpretation that it entails. As such, the trans-historical "resonances" of the text multiply, engendering a sentiment of de Manian "blindness" at the heart of any attempt at total comprehension. She also intimates that the soul of the narrative manifesting itself in the text is rather like time itself in which and through which a narrative develops. The temporality of the voice, or the voice as narrative temporality contains diverse voices, with the outcome being that the narrative space belongs to the plural voice, rather than the text. As the spectral voices mark the text through their unpredictable and intrusive presence, the 'present' materiality of the text is flooded with the historical ghosts that we "animate" (Hartman 1995, 548) in the act of reading. The voice of the text, is thus equated to "the thing" of trauma, a spectral force which initiates narrativization and cuts across language, much in the manner of Echo which is the ghostly presence throughout *The Pregnant Widow*: an essential absent presence.

[85] For Blanchot, the composition of a literary "work" is accompanied by a feeling of powerlessness against a seductive yet elusive core of meaning. He writes, "Every work, and each moment of the work, puts everything into question all over again; and thus he who must live only for the work has no way to live. Whatever he does, the work withdraws him from what he does and from what he can do" (Blanchot 1982, 87).

Tollance's analysis of the multiplicity of textual echoes is also inspired by the Bakhtinian concept of *heteroglossia*, translated by Kristeva as *polyphony*. Tollance quotes Kristeva in her text: "C'est la *division* du sujet, scindé d'abord parce que constitué par son autre, pour devenir à la langue son propre autre, et par là multiple et Insaisissable, polyphonique" (Julia Kristeva qtd in Tollance 2011, 22). As the Kristevan *subject in process* always demonstrates its processual nature at the intersection of the symbolic and the semiotic *chora*, so is Tollance's text the arena wherein the voice (in the manner of the semiotic *chora*) manifests itself, allowing the text to be plural, or *polyphonic*.

A similar, albeit immanent approach to the question of temporality and narrative is elaborated by Russel West-Pavlov. In his elaboration, narrativity is essential to an understanding of temporality:

> … narrative is never 'outside' time, and thus can never genuinely map it. Rather, I posit, it is the very generativity of narrative that makes it a fundamental strand of temporal dynamism itself. The tendency of stories to 'take' time, and to generate more stories which 'make' time (as in *The One Thousand and One Nights*, whose narrator tells stories so as to stave off her death) is what renders them one with time. Fiction is driven by the creativity of language itself. That creativity drives the dynamism of time of which language is one salient strand. (West-Pavlov 2013, 83)

Akin to Tollance's assertion of the expansionary force of narrative, West-Pavlov posits a theory of temporality based on narrative "generativity". Stories not only take time but they also "make" it. Yet this is an immanent expansion that depends on the "creativity of language". The creativity of language and the expansion of meaning that it gives rise to, are not separable from the expansion of time: they form a strand of the innumerable becomings that make up temporality. West-Pavlov develops his chief claim:

> More radically, I will make a claim for narrative which is analogous to my claim about time itself. Time is not an environment in which things happen, but it is the indefatigable happening of things which is time. Like the productivity of time, its constant generativity, narrative is a productive process, a generativity of stories. Narrative is a process of change manifested in the drive to tell stories again and again, always in a slightly different manner. It is the dynamism of narratives, their content and structure, as well as their tendency to be told, which makes up one of the many intertwined strands of the multiple temporalities we call time. (West-Pavlov 2013, 84)

Thus, time and narrative are not dissociable. Time is not a container within which events and narratives unfold. The human existential drive to reinterpret and retell with the attendant expansion of time and narrative is what makes narrative partake of the logic of temporality. The narratives of our corpus exemplify this insight thoroughly in their elaboration of trauma. In Keith, Tony, Jack and Ellie's repeated possession by their traumas, their narratives expand in diverse ways. The expanding narratives, coupled with the shifting perspectives on the traumatic events – or what Balaev terms the 'reformulation' of subjectivity (Balaev 2008, n.pag.) – take time. Moreover, repeated mental returns of the reader to the expanding metaphoric network devised to verbalize the affect of trauma engenders a sense of temporal expansion – of time as well as of the narrative – in the reader's mind. This is what West-Pavlov means when he states that narratives make time, or one of its many entangled and evolving strands.

West-Pavlov's analysis leads him to implicitly valorize the expansionary character of stories (the metaphoric axis theorized by Brooks and embodied in Amis's Scheherazade) over the plot (the metonymic axis of Gloria Beautyman) as he states that "it is not so much the mapping of sequence which characterizes the temporality of narrative as the productive performance of productive transformation" (West-Pavlov 2013, 85). West-Pavlov's theory of "narrative as temporality" rather than narrative within temporality is exemplified in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* which is "a single hyperbolic performance of the multitude of ways a story *makes* and *takes* time. It is only by elaborating, reworking, distorting or refracting a basic sequence of events that a tale emerges" (West-Pavlov 2013, 90). These remarks could well be true of Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* where Tony's investigation into time, among other things, gives rise to a narrative expansion within time that is the novel itself. Put differently, Barnes's narrative exemplifies time itself or in West-Pavlov's words, the novel "begins to come into view as a process whose only product is the productivity of time itself" (West-Pavlov 2013, 91).

In *The Sense of an Ending*, immanent time – or *temporalities* in plural – 'manifesting' itself partly in the form of the becoming of the events that make it up, be it History or Tony's constantly revised memories, is also understood to be repetitional and circular, much in the manner of the song "Every Day is Sunday" (*TSE*, 62) that repeats itself, as if independently of the singers' volition, until an ending terminates it. In their history lesson, young Tony witnessed the following exchange:

> ‘We could start, perhaps, with the seemingly simple question, What is History? Any thoughts, Webster?’
> ‘History is the lies of the victors,’ I replied, a little too quickly.
> ‘Yes, I was rather afraid you’d say that. Well, as long as you remember that it is also the self-delusions of the defeated. Simpson?’
> Colin was more prepared than me. ‘History is a raw onion sandwich, sir.’
> ‘For what reason?’
> ‘It just repeats, sir. It burps. We’ve seen it again and again this year. Same old story, same old oscillation between tyranny and rebellion, war and peace, prosperity and impoverishment.’ (*TSE*, 16)

Colin’s pronouncement regarding the inability of human beings to learn from the past and the repetition and return of “tyranny and rebellion” is an insight that highlights the contemporary loss of faith in the forward march of the human narrative of progress. Characterizing history as a pack of lies and delusional tales also underlines its essentially narrative nature, albeit one that does not fit any cathartic or satisfactorily palliative structure: it is layered, rather than linear and simply gives off a malodorous smell of stagnation.

Barnes had voiced this sentiment of disenchantment earlier, in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* where he voices his disappointment with humanity’s incapacity to learn from past horrors:

> And then what? Everyone became wiser? People stopped building new ghettoes in which to practise the old persecutions? Stopped making the old mistakes, or new mistakes, or new versions of old mistakes? (And does history repeat itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce? No, that’s too grand, too considered a process. History just burps, and we taste again that raw-onion sandwich it swallowed centuries ago.) (Barnes 1989, 239)

Here, as well as in his above characterization of History as a raw onion sandwich, Barnes is voicing the Nietzschean concept of “eternal recurrence”, attesting to the nonlinearity of time and History, which in turn “counteracts the progressiveness of Hegelian world history” (Ganteau and Onega 2014, 6). In his article on the representations of temporality in fiction, Richardson explains the concept of eternal recurrence thus: “The doctrine, which Nietzsche insisted was a scientific proposition, goes as follows: after our world is destroyed, it will eventually be reconstituted as the power quanta that make up the universe once again reach a previous configuration and then repeat all the following patterns. What is, has already occurred

and will happen again innumerable times at immense intervals" (Richardson 2006, 606). Moreover, History in Barnes is also conceived of in a postmodern fashion in that as narrative, it contains essentially a perspective. Apropos the postmodern conception of history, particularly as exemplified in 'historiographic metafiction', Hutcheon writes:

> Historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity. (Hutcheon 1988, 93)

History, understood from a postmodernist perspective has as much claim to truth and facticity as does narrative fiction. The trait they share is that they are both human constructs embodying a perspective. As such, the narrative of history is capable of being rewritten from an infinite array of perspectives, each embodying the historian's distinct deployment of the raw material of "what happened" in the service of his/her values. Barnes continues in a grim voice:

> History isn't what happened. History is just what historians tell us. There was a pattern, apian, a movement, expansion, the march of democracy; it is a tapestry, a flow of events, a complex narrative, connected, explicable. One good story leads to another. First it was kings and archbishops with some offstage divine tinkering, then it was the march of ideas and the movements of masses, then little local events which mean something bigger, but all the time it's connections, progress, meaning, this led to this, this happened because of this. And we, the readers of history, the sufferers from history, we scan the pattern for hopeful conclusions, for the way ahead. And we cling to history as a series of salon pictures, conversation pieces whose participants we can easily reimagine back into life, when all the time it's more like a multi-media collage, with paint applied by decorator's roller rather than camel-hair brush.
>
> The history of the world? Just voices echoing in the dark; images that burn for a few centuries and then fade; stories, old stories that sometimes seem to overlap; strange links, impertinent connections. (Barnes 1989, 240)

Barnes is thus dissociating human narratives of history from the reality they profess to represent, i.e. the "what happened" of life. The existence of a linear narrative of history embodying "a pattern, a movement, expansion", and a complex narrative that is ultimately capable of being explained through Enlightened human reason, is a fiction human beings have been led to believe in. Barnes believes that these underlying patterns are all but apocryphal to

human beings whom he characterizes primarily as "sufferers from history". To him, the "collage" of history is made up of transient amalgamations of "stories", all of which are equally suspect. As "patients" rather than subjects, we “fabulate” (Barnes 1989, 240) to keep our fear of the dark unknown of history at bay.

The question of the verifiability of historical truth and its essentially narrative nature comes up also in Barnes’s interviews. In answer to a question by the *Observer* regarding the purpose of fiction, Barnes replies, “It's to tell the truth. It's to tell beautiful, exact, and well-constructed lies which enclose hard and shimmering truths” (Observer and Barnes 2009, 30). Similarly, in reply to Susha Guppy’s question “What is literature for you?” and its relation with truth, Barnes replies,

> There are many answers to that question. The shortest is that it's the best way of telling the truth; it's a process of producing grand, beautiful, well-ordered lies that tell more truth than any assemblage of facts. … I think a great book – leaving aside other qualities such as narrative power, characterization, style, and so on – is a book that describes the world in a way that has not been done before; and that is recognized by those who read it as telling new truths … For example, even people who condemned *Madame Bovary*, who thought that it ought to be banned; recognized the *truth* of the portrait of that sort of woman, in that sort of society, which they had never encountered before in literature. That is why the novel was so dangerous. I do think that there is this central, groundbreaking veracity in literature, which is part of its grandeur. … I think I tell less truth when I write journalism than when I write fiction. … when you are writing journalism your task is to simplify the world and render it comprehensible in one reading; whereas when you are writing fiction your task is to reflect the fullest complications of the world, to say things that are not as straightforward as might be understood from reading my journalism and to produce something that you hope will reveal further layers of truth on a second reading. (Guppy and Barnes 2009, 64–65)

Thus, to Barnes, form and a sensuous “delight” in language are paramount in the construction of works of literature. Further, in a manner reflecting the central tenets of trauma theory and hermeneutics, literary truth is presented chiefly as a cherishing of a “complication” of truth, rather than its simplification, as (traumatic) truth in the narrative calls for the fullest possible elaboration. As such, literary truth (well-ordered “lies”, in that they are discursive constructs) encourage not a straightforward understanding, but a constructive relation with the text, characterized by many returns to the act of interpretation. Rather reminiscent of the central

tenets of Russian formalism[86], literature defamiliarizes hackneyed truths of the world in what amounts to a creative act *per se*, in the sense that a great literary work is possessed of performative potential; it is "groundbreaking" and "dangerous" as it enacts performative change in the "world" to which it is born. Barnes's conception of literature as dangerous and engaged in the affairs of the world fits in with an immanent understanding of existence as it is an acknowledgement of the role of literature as an enactor of change (a topic discussed in depth in the next section).

The notion of the incomprehensibility of the narrative of history, and in particular, that of eternal recurrence also appears in the works of Graham Swift. In *Waterland*, describing the Crick family watching the River Leem, he writes, "And though they draw pride from their part in the making of this newly navigable, brightly gleaming river, they know that what water makes, it also unmakes. Nothing moves far in this world. And whatever moves forwards will also move back. A law of the natural world; and a law, too, of the human heart" (Swift 1999, 73). Water, "which, however much you coax it, this way and that, will return" (Swift 1999, 72), thus stands for the universal principle of eternal recurrence debunking any illusion of linear historical progress. The idea of the eternal recurrence of history including tragic human mistakes, is also an idea reiterated in the work of Jeanette Winterson, notably in her *The Stone Gods* where she characterizes life in a manner similar to Barnes and Swift. The narrative voice recounts:

> I went to the opening of the cave. Some religions call life a dream, or a dreaming, but what if it is a memory? What if this new world isn't new at all but a memory of a new world?
> What if we really do keep making the same mistakes again and again, never remembering the lessons to learn but never forgetting either that it had been different, that there was a pristine

[86] "Formalism views *literature* primarily as a specialized use of language, and proposes a fundamental opposition between the literary (or poetical) use of language and the ordinary, 'practical' use of language. It proposes that the central function of ordinary language is to communicate to auditors a message, or information, by references to the world existing outside of language. In contrast, it conceives literary language to be self-focused, in that its function is not to convey information by making extrinsic references, but to offer the reader a special mode of experience by drawing attention to its own 'formal' features—that is, to the qualities and internal relations of the linguistic signs themselves. The linguistics of literature differs from the linguistics of practical discourse, because its laws are oriented toward producing the distinctive features that formalists call literariness" (Abrams and Harpham 2011, 139).

> place?
> Perhaps the universe is a memory of our mistakes. (Winterson 2013, 103)

In Winterson's immanent conception of the universe, the human mind, through its constant and active dreaming, is leaving an imprint on the universe, actively engaged in giving "shape" to this collective dream. Yet what characterizes this colossal dream-work is a forgetting of past mistakes, leading to their incessant repetition. This is why in *The Sense of an Ending*, the narrative of history repeats and burps, giving off a noxious smell of stagnancy.

Within the discussion of temporality, not only the nonlinearity but also the speed of time is a problematic that arises in the traumatic inquiry of the protagonist along the journey of resubjectification. This internal inquiry corresponds to the traumatic symptom known as temporal disjunction (Pederson 2014), in which time seems to slow down in the victim's mind. In *The Sense of an Ending*, Barnes's protagonist, for whom the Severn Bore embodies the reversibility and unpredictability of time, is also aware of the effect of emotions on the speed of time. He states the problematic thus in unequivocal terms:

> We live in time – it holds us and moulds us – but I've never felt I understood it very well. And I'm not referring to theories about how it bends and doubles back, or may exist elsewhere in parallel versions. No, I mean ordinary, everyday time, which clocks and watches assure us passes regularly: tick-tock, click-clock. Is there anything more plausible than a second hand? And yet it takes only the smallest pleasure or pain to teach us time's malleability. Some emotions speed it up, others slow it down; occasionally, it seems to go missing – until the eventual point when it really does go missing, never to return. (*TSE*, 3)

Thus, what Tony seems to find intellectually disquieting in his meditations on time is the unsettling influence of emotions and feelings on the speed of time. For example, Tony feels as if time speeds up for him when he is in a romantic relationship. He narrates, "And then life took over, and time speeded up. In other words, I found a girlfriend" (*TSE*, 19). The consciousness of human time unfolding at different speeds ties in with the Deleuzian insight of existence as immanent transformation in the manner of an infinite number of becomings developing *at different speeds*.

The significance of the mention of emotions as an element that influences the human experience of time is also pointed out by Colebrook who states the centrality of emotions or affect for art thus: "Through affect art restores time's disruptive power. We no longer see life

as some unified whole that goes through time; we see divergent becomings, movements or temporalities *from which* the whole would be derived" (Colebrook 2002, 40). Thus, an awareness of the disruptive power of emotions destabilizes the notion of an evenly-spaced bodily temporality as represented by the hands of a clock. Rather, affects and emotions reveal temporality to be infinitely multi-layered with each layer unfolding at a different speed according to its affective tincture. In the novel, Barnes illustrates how daily conversations can also exemplify an understanding of this significant insight. Susie is Tony's daughter:

> Susie grew up, and people started calling her Susan. When she was twenty-four, I walked her up the aisle of a register office. Ken is a doctor; they have two kids now, a boy and a girl. The photos of them I carry in my wallet always show them younger than they are. That's normal, I suppose, not to say 'philosophically self-evident'. But you find yourself repeating, 'They grow up so quickly, don't they?' when all you really mean is: time goes faster for me nowadays. (*TSE*, 55)

Tony, now having grown out of the irony-laden habit of positing his ideas as "philosophically self-evident", simply acknowledges the significance of emotions for the human temporal perception.

Tony is also led to believe that an awareness of existence as transformation and becoming-other incurs an ethical responsibility on the existents. Having tried very hard to logically work out the enigma of the chain of responsibilities for the traumatic death of his friend Adrian, Tony realizes that this can only be done, not through logic, but through narrative recuperation of the traumatic event. In other words, a satisfactory rapprochement with the event of Adrian's suicide can only come about through constant hermeneutic revisions of Tony's self-consciously perspectival *narrative*, i.e. in a dialogic relationship which could continue indefinitely. Here is Adrian's numbered reflection speaking for himself and Tony:

> 6.0 Or we might try to draw the responsibility more narrowly and apportion it more exactly. And not use equations and integers but instead express matters in traditional narrative terminology. So, for instance, if Tony
>
> And there the photocopy – this version of a version – stopped. 'So, for instance, if Tony': end of the line, bottom of the page. (*TSE*, 85)

The abrupt termination of Adrian's reflection amounts to a spectral invitation – to Tony and the narratee – to participate in an act of textual interpretation. The numbered remark also

reveals the novel's most ethical insight, that there is responsibility toward maintaining the ceaseless dialogue of interpretation involving the unpredictable other who, in this case, stages an immanently spectral return throwing the "tidy" boundary of death into question. Ethical realization of the unpredictability of encounter with the other is also mirrored in the unpredictability of immanent temporality as a multidirectional expansion of becoming. Claire Colebrook writes: "Time is a virtual whole; it is never given or perceived (actualised) by any single observer or collection of observers. We need to think time machinically: not as the eternal whole of an already given universe that is one present organism, but as an *open* whole of what may happen through unthought-out and unintended connections and proliferations" (Colebrook 2002, 57–58). Thus, from an ethical perspective, the interaction with the other – in full knowledge of its unpredictability – forms yet another strand of the multiple temporalities of existence. To extend West-Pavlov's above formulation of narrative as time (West-Pavlov 2013, 84), one could claim that relation with the other – in the form of an evolving narrative of this relationship – takes and *makes* time.

Apropos the ethical necessity of maintaining a narrative dialogue with contemporary existence in the face of increasing loss of subjective moorings, Daniel Lea's remarks about "the demythologisation of such cultural monoliths as religion, patriarchy, the community and the stable Cartesian ego" (Lea 2005, 12) in the Swiftian oeuvre could also hold true in the case of Barnes's novel:

> … recent decades have witnessed an unprecedented crisis of authority across social discourse. The stripping away of the sustaining fictions of human practice lays bare the gaps in subjects' formation of themselves and the groups they foster. Brought face to face with the Real of the subjective void, individuals have little choice but to reconstruct stories (in the full knowledge of their constructedness) to defer the abjecting imperative of solipsistic dissolution. The stories that … characters tell themselves therefore replace the narratives in which they no longer have faith, but this arbitrary displacement is not a morally devoided act because… to sustain a palpable credibility the new stories demand an ethical commitment. (Lea 2005, 12)

Thus, ethical commitment to narrativization of an existence robbed of its grand narratives emerges as an existential necessity (as argued by Brockmeier and Meretoja, 2014). The void at the center of contemporary subjectivity requires the symbolic of language to verbalize the "crisis of authority" afflicting existence. Yet no definitive story is to be taken as a *finished* model, a monolith of authority replacing the grand narratives of the past. New stories are

marked by their "constructedness" and contingence. Despite the moral and ethical force of these stories, no firm grounding is to be aspired for.

In *The Sense of an Ending*, Barnes's way of indicating this constant commitment to contingence – barring the way for any narrative to lay claim to grandeur – is his refusal to allow for the original diary to appear. He presents Adrian's diary only as a photocopy, a "version of a version" of the original. This points to its nature as a palimpsest (possessed of a history and context), further dimming any hope of recovering the original document. Furthermore, the numbered entry in the diary recalls to mind the manner in which Wittgenstein laid out his reflections in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, as noted by Jeff Turrentine (Turrentine 2011, n.pag.) in his review of the novel. A postulate from this book also highlights the inability of human beings to grasp the totality of the truth of existence. He writes: "1 The world is all that is the case. / 1.1 The world is the totality of facts, not of things" (Wittgenstein 2001, 5). Thus, in what could be seen as an intimation of an immanent vision (West-Pavlov 2013, 50), Wittgenstein believes the world to be made up of material processes, or "all that is the case". Similarly, he also believes isolated "things" to be inconceivable in themselves. Instead, they exist in material *contexts* of possibility, or what he terms infinite networks of "facts". It is the totality of these facts that makes up existence and it is this totality that cannot be verbalized without abstraction. He goes on to paraphrase "the case" and the "fact" as "states of affairs" and writes: "2.01 A state of affairs (a state of things) is a combination of objects (things)" (Wittgenstein 2001, 5). In other words, things cannot be conceived of as divorced from their contexts of existence[87], a context that is not recoverable in its entirety. Derrida's own version of this Wittgensteinian sentiment is "*There is nothing outside of the text* [there is no outside-text; il n'y a pas de hors-texte]" (Derrida 2016, 158). The case of Adrian's affair with his would-be mother-in-law, with the tragic outcome of a handicapped child is a "state of affairs" that bears analysis. However, Adrian's analysis is cut short as the chain of responsibilities prove multiple and inexhaustible, keeping Tony – and Adrian's cogitating ghost in the diary – busy revisiting the entangled chain of responsibility, for many years to come. What Tony is doing – trying to exhaust the contextual links around Tony's suicide – is akin to the immanent

[87] Wittgenstein proceeds to paraphrase his thoughts with an emphasis on the *immanent interconnectivity* of beings: "Just as we are quite unable to imagine spatial objects outside space or temporal objects outside time, so too there is *no* object that we can imagine excluded from the possibility of combining with others. If I can imagine objects combined in states of affairs, I cannot imagine them excluded from the *possibility* of such combinations" (Wittgenstein 2001, 6). Thus, in a conception of existence in which time is the prerequisite of existing in the space, it is unthinkable for objects not to combine with each other, in countless processes of becoming-other, or "states of affairs".

operations of deconstruction. In the following extract, Derrida highlights the significance of a diachronic context to objectivity, in the process clarifying his formulaic insight above, *il n'y a pas de hors-texte*:

> What is called "objectivity," scientific for instance (in which I firmly believe, in a given situation), imposes itself only within a context which is extremely vast, old, powerfully established, stabilized or rooted in a network of conventions (for instance, those of language) and yet which still remains a context. And the emergence of the value of objectivity (and hence of so many others) also belongs to a context. We can call "context" the entire "real-history-of-the-world," if you like, in which this value of objectivity and, even more broadly, that of truth (etc.) have taken on meaning and imposed themselves. … One of the definitions of what is called deconstruction would be the effort to take this limitless context into account, to pay the sharpest and broadest attention possible to context, and thus to an incessant movement of recontextualization. The phrase which for some has become a sort of slogan, in general so badly understood, of deconstruction ("there is nothing outside the text" [*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*]), means nothing else: there is nothing outside context. In this form, which says exactly the same thing, the formula would doubtless have been less shocking. (Derrida 1988, 136)

For Derrida then, the 'text' is no more than the interpretable context of existence. This context is informed by human history and conventions, yet what matters most to our analysis is that the Derridean understanding of the context is informed by the logic of immanence as it is real, historical and worldly. As such, interpretation is a worldly undertaking within the transformative becomings of existence. Reading and interpretation mean doing (im)possible justice to this inexhaustible context – which is probably what *The Sense of an Ending* is intimating; that no interpretation is ever to be construed as definitive. Interpretation – however thorough – is always-already tainted with its own provisionality and openness to future re-reading, or in the Freudian idiom of trauma, "recontextualization" of a previous reading in light of an evolved understanding of the context.

In this context, narrative, conceived primarily as a phenomenon constituted through reading and interpretation, also serves a key strand of the experience of temporality as characterized by expansion. Every act of interpretation is defined by the expanding connections of meaning in the text. This mental expansion of meaning becomes one among the multiple strands of creativity unfolding through time and constituting "one of its many complex pluritemporal strands" (West-Pavlov 2013, 92). West-Pavlov goes even further than asserting the significance of narrative to time. Building upon Ricoeur's assertion of narrative as "*the*

guardian of time" (Paul Ricoeur qtd in West-Pavlov 2013, 9), West-Pavlov states: "one might propose more simply: narratives are time" (West-Pavlov 2013, 98). In their capacity for "non-stop self-regeneration", narratives mirror – and contribute to – temporal expansion. They "drive forward relentlessly, always generating new stories, albeit never in straight lines. Narrative produces time itself…. Narrative should be seen as a strand of … multiple, immanent temporality … generating one aspect of the immeasurable and ineluctable productivity which is time in its many specific and inimitable manifestations" (West-Pavlov 2013, 99). Narrative participates in the becomings unfolding in Nature. By giving rise to multiple interpretations in repeated acts of recontextualization, narrative contributes to a sense of temporal expansion. As such, the self-regenerating narrative becomes a portion of expanding time.

In *The Sense of an Ending* however, as Tony avows, the achievement of mental peace through the acknowledgement of immanence is not a certain outcome. Mental peace or an arrival at a definitive understanding in the end is not a guaranteed outcome of the interpretation of a traumatic past: Barnes concludes the novel thus: "There is accumulation. There is responsibility. And beyond these, there is unrest. There is great unrest" (*TSE*, 150). Responsibility in an interconnected immanent existence[88] is thus key to Barnes who had earlier cited, in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, the uncontainable spread of the fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster as conclusive proof of the inherent interconnectivity in nature:

> At first the plan had been to bury the reindeer six feet down. It wasn't much of a news story, just an inch or two on the foreign page. The cloud had gone over where the reindeer grazed, poison had come down in the rain, the lichen became radioactive, the reindeer had eaten the lichen and got radioactive themselves. What did I tell you, she thought, everything is connected. (Barnes 1989, 85)

[88] In her analysis of the novel, López-Deflory believes that the narrative is an assertion of lack of "Sense" in an ending: "The title of the novel, *The Sense of an Ending*, comes into play at this point as the only plausible interpretation seems to be that there is no sense to be found in the ending. The final lines of the narration are aporetic, as the readers reach an impasse and many questions are left unanswered, for example, as regards why Veronica expects Tony to understand the intricacies of the conflict on his own or the reason why her mother left money to the protagonist. These conflicts of the middle are not resolved in the ending, thus not fulfilling the expected closure. This aporia adopts a broader dimension from the perspective of Tony. Though persuaded of the truth of his discoveries, he realizes that the damage is irreparable" (López-Deflory 2016, 16).

Responsibility in a world where "everything is connected" and actions, much in the manner of radioactivity, have ripple effects in unpredictable ways applies principally to the realm of verbal sensitivity toward the vulnerable other, or the other rendered vulnerable through verbal *injury*, as evidenced by Tony's wounding words in his letter to Adrian. Apropos verbal sensitivity to the vulnerable other, insights from Lecercle and Riley's book on the *material force* of language are of great significance. Riley's discussion of the materiality of language has, as its principle point of departure, the "bad word", including the curse, of the type Tony had uttered. Riley writes:

> … some sustained hostility of unremitting verbal violence, like the linguistic voodoo … can induce the fading away of its target, a phenomenon which cannot be dismissed as an archaism. The curse does work. Verbal attacks, in the moment they happen, resemble stoning. Then is it not too laboured to ask how they do damage: isn't the answer plain, that they hurt just as stones hurt? At the instant of their impact, so they do. Yet the peculiarity of violent words, as distinct from lumps of rock, is their power to resonate within their target for decades after the occasion on which they were weapons. …Why, though, should even the most irrational of verbal onslaughts lodge in us as if it were the voice of justice; and why should it stubbornly resist ejection, and defy its own fading? (Lecercle and Riley 2004, 47)

Riley's appellation for the material force of language, "linguistic voodoo", partakes of the Deleuzian logic of becoming-other where verbal utterances take on a physical life of their own residing within the psyche of the listener and inflicting affective pain long after the utterance has been hurled in the manner of a stone. Utterances such as curses are also performatives that enact worldly changes in the real world, prompting Riley to argue that curses do work performatively. In *The Sense of an Ending*, the spectral longevity of insult and its continued performative injuriousness – not to mention that it did work and a pregnancy did occur – is instantiated in Veronica's unrelenting anger at Tony's curse uttered decades earlier. Riley answers the question she poses above:

> There has, undoubtedly, to be something very strong at work to explain why we cannot readily shake off some outworn verbal injury. The nature of this strong thing, though, might better be envisaged as a seepage or bleeding between the usual categorisations; it need not be allocated wholesale to an unconscious considered as lying beyond the verbal, or else to a sphere of language considered as narrowly functional. For the deepest intimacy joins the supposedly

> ‘linguistic’ to the supposedly ‘psychic’; these realms, distinct by discursive convention, are scarcely separable. (Lecercle and Riley 2004, 48)

Riley refers to injurious utterances as a “strong thing” which arises out of the immanent leakage between existential categories of intention and objective corporeality of the word as a dagger. In other words, hurtful *words* are potentially indistinguishable from *real* daggers. The so-called linguistic reality is thus transmuted into a traumatic psychic reality. The received boundaries in Being (mental/physical) are thus revealed to be porous in a logic of immanence.

Interestingly, West-Pavlov states similar ideas in his writings on *narrative as temporality*. He simultaneously evokes the Deleuzian ethics of immanence and the Foucauldian[89] characterization of words as material *things*. In the following extract, West-Pavlov ties his earlier analysis of narrative as temporality to *narrative as material change* in the material world.

> Narrative is not merely a way of talking about material processes. It does not consist of idealist signifiers which refer to real signifieds, but is, rather, a material process in itself. Narrative consists of complex chains of aural or visual signifiers which interact with and modify other material signifiers. Words do not merely refer to things, they are things themselves which circulate among and interact dynamically with other things, generating novelty and changing in the process. … As a material process of a very particular sort interacting with other material processes, narration participates in their multiple and interlocking temporalities. Story-telling is a more complex elaboration of this urge to create…weaving threads of narrative which make up one of the many intertwined strands of time which we have identified … as the multiple immanent temporalities of existence. (West-Pavlov 2013, 97)

Narrative, composed as it is of material elements, is itself a material enactor of change in a material world, interacting with similar material texts and non-textual objects and phenomena. The temporality of narrative is consequently interwoven with those of adjoining processes and together, these multiple temporalities make up existence.

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[89] “… language is not an arbitrary system; it has been set down in the world and forms a part of it, both because things themselves hide and manifest their own enigma like a language and because words offer themselves to men as things to be deciphered. The great metaphor of the book that one opens, that one pores over and reads in order to know nature, is merely the reverse and visible side of another transference, and a much deeper one, which forces language to reside in the world, among the plants, the herbs, the stones, and the animals” (Foucault 2005, 38–39).

To conclude, the questioning of time, triggered mainly by trauma, awakens a profound investigation into the nature of human cognition of existence. Time, understood as the condition of possibility of existence, is the ensemble of countless becomings unfolding in nature. Through time – and engendering time – beings become one another. In this context, narrative is not only conceived of as a strand of these multiple becomings of – and in – time, but it is also seen as being the expansive force of time itself. Narrative makes time, also as a material force – constructed out of materially active language – engaging with the realities of the world.

B. Life Questioned

Alongside questioning the nature of time and its attributes of direction and speed, the narratives of our corpus also question the nature of life. The question of the nature of life is closely linked to the problematic of time and builds upon it. At issue here is the posttraumatic narrative attempt at formulating a conception of what it means to be alive and what life in general consists of. In *The Pregnant Widow*, Keith conceptualizes his life within generic limits. Furthermore, on several occasions, Keith also refers to the world and life itself as a thriller. We read, "Keith settled in the usual café with his Americano, his unlit French cigarette (a mere prop, now), his British broadsheet. And here it was, the news, the latest instalment of the thriller and tingler, the great page-turner called the planet Earth. The world is a book we can't put down" (*TPW*, 4). The idea of life as a text read in diverse genres – or the raw material of existence being narrativized through various textual conventions – is developed further on in the novel. When Whittaker comes to visit the castle where Tony and his friends are staying, he has a burlap sack full of magazines covering diverse aspects of contemporary life:

> Keith lay between the sheets, up in the south tower. He was thinking, not very constructively, about the frayed burlap sack Whittaker had slung over his shoulder as they left the bar. *What's that?* Keith asked. *Mail?* Italian mailbags, he assumed, like English mailbags, were manufactured in the nation's prisons; and Whittaker's burlap sack did indeed look felon-woven (it seemed most disaffectedly thrashed together), with a sociopathic, faintly purplish tint somewhere in its weft. … *Not mail*, said Whittaker. *Mail gets delivered direct. In here is—the world. See?* And there it was, the world: *Time*s, *Life*s, *Nation*s, and *Commentary*s, *New Statesman*s, *Listener*s, *Spectator*s, *Encounter*s. So it was still out there—the world. And the world already seemed very quiet and very distant. (*TPW*, 20)

Keith's initial impressions of the exterior of the burlap sack point to his misanthropic mistrust in the "felon-woven … weft" of humanity, particularly in its predilection towards chaos and sociopathic conduct. Yet, more importantly, Keith is intimating – in typically postmodern fashion – that human efforts to learn about life in the world will inevitably be limited to what can be understood through the medium of language and interpretation. Language, in its conventionally agreed genres is thus the only tool there is to verbalize and comprehend the other of existence. Finney sums this idea up when he writes, "Life, Amis wittily demonstrates, can only be described in narrative terms" (Finney 2016, n.pag.).

The sentiment of human attempt at comprehending the core meaning of existence is also highlighted by Keith being likened to Kafka's Joseph K.: "He was, ominously, a K in a castle" (*TPW*, 20). In the *fable*-like, or "fabulous" (*TPW*, 25), castle where Keith stayed, any inquiry into the nature of existence, despite Keith's belief in the necessity of sustaining a 'communion' with meaning, was likely to be endlessly tortuous:

> So here was the castle, its battlements kept aloft on the shoulders of the four fat-girthed giants, the four towers, the four terraces, the circular ballroom (with its orbital staircase), the domed pentagonal library, the salon with its six sets of windows, the baronial banqueting hall at the far end of the implausibly and impractically long corridor from the barnyard-sized kitchen, all the antechambers which receded, like facing mirrors, into a repetitive infinity. (*TPW*, 31)

Attempts at understanding the nature of life are thus likened to being caught in a labyrinthine maze in another reference to Kafka's *The Castle* and its enigmatic corridors (Kafka 2009a). Yet Keith is fully aware of the fact that incomprehension of life does not amount to its futility. Life could be indifferent to the human aspiration to comprehend it, yet he loses no chance to underline the fact that it is ineffably generous and perfect: "And life, for its part, went on behaving impeccably right up to and including the last day of the summer. There were to be revelations, recognitions, about-turns, come-uppances, and so on. And life, generally indifferent to these things, went ahead and obliged" (*TPW*, 293). Keith's awakening to the generosity of life is reminiscent of what Andrew Gibson, after George Bataille calls "archaic sensibility". Gibson quotes Bataille:

> The sun gives without ever receiving. Men were conscious of this long before astrophysics measured that ceaseless prodigality; they saw it ripen the harvests and they associated its splendour with the act of someone who gives without receiving … In former times value was given to unproductive glory, whereas in our day it is measured in terms of production. Precedence is given to energy acquisition over energy expenditure … But, dominated though it is by practical judgment and Christian morality, the archaic sensibility is still alive. (Bataille qtd in Gibson 2002, 166)

Bataille's "Archaic sensibility", the "glory" of the self-expending sun, applicable in Keith's understanding only to nature and life is thus the abundance with which existence regales all beings. In line with Keith's previous observations of the "awesome" (Amis 2008, 15) incomprehensibility of the grandeur of the universe, in the above extract Keith also adds that

the “generosity of life” is beyond total human cognition, yet ineffably impeccable. The ethical implications for humanity might be that nature’s nonjudgmental generosity is probably a model to aspire after. This generosity of outlook is what Derrida also refers to, in *Specters of Marx*, as the asymmetry of the “an-economic ex-position” (Derrida 1994, 26) to the other.

What is more, Keith is also demonstrated as being grateful for the minutiae of the life he is leading, for the conditions of his possibility. We read, “He still owed Lily a great debt of gratitude. Gratitude was what he was good at. It was his one emotional talent, he believed. Sitting, now, he was grateful for the chair beneath him, the book before him. Grateful, and pleasantly surprised. He was grateful for the ballpoint in his hand, pleasantly surprised by the cap on the ballpoint” (*TPW*, 43). Keith’s gratitude is for the present moment of life, made up of objects, the people and the inexhaustible context in which these objects and people are related to him. His appreciation of his position within the complex web of his context of existence bestows an aliveness to the otherwise inanimate objects. This is as close as he can get to an understanding of life: his consciousness of being part of a material context where beings are situated in a variety of relations to one another. This awareness makes him feel “pleasantly surprised”, or conscious of aliveness through gratitude to his Life-context.

Notwithstanding his contextual gratitude, Keith states that although some episodes in life may fit our standards of narrative coherence in terms of possessing a plot, chronology and generic property, the essence of life lies radically beyond the conceptual reach of fictive human constructs. Being is ineffable, and any human attempt to plot it is a fundamentally untenable human interpretation prone to revision or refutation. The following extract collates Amis’s epigrammatic theses on life. Keith starts by reminiscing about his stay in the Italian castle which,

> … was the only passage in his whole existence that ever felt like a novel. It had chronology and truth (it did happen). But it also boasted the unities of time, place, and action; it aspired to at least partial coherence; it had some shape, some pattern, … . Once that was over, all he had was truth and chronology—and, oh yes, the inherently tragic shape (rise, crest, fall), like the mouth on a tragic mask: and this is a face that is common to everybody who doesn’t die young. (*TPW*, 310)

Thus, retrospectively, Keith's stay in the castle was in accordance with the classic Aristotelian unities[90] of action, time and place that defined a well-constructed drama. Subsequently, Keith's life is said to have been characterized by truth, which in the novel amounts to the traumas of existence – whose vagaries lie unexplained – and a lifetime of dealing with its repercussions. As Keith states elsewhere, ultimately, life takes the form of a tragedy, replete with its conflicts, climaxes and a denouement. He then launches on a series of epigrammatic pronouncements on life:

> But it turns out that there's another way of doing things, another mode, another *genre*. And I hereby christen it Life.
> Life is the world of Well Anyway, and Which Reminds Me, and He Said, She Said.
> Life has no time for the exalted proprieties, the ornate contrivances, and the intense stylisations of kitchen-sink.
> Life is not a court shoe, with its narrowing heel and arched sole; Life is the tasteless trotter down there at the other end of your leg.
> Life is made up as it goes along. It can never be rewritten. It can never be revised.
> Life comes in the form of sixteen-hour units, between waking up and going to sleep, between escaping from the unreal and re-embracing the unreal. There are over three hundred and sixty such units in every year. (*TPW*, 310)

Thus, contrary to the norms of realistic fiction, there is no rhyme or reason behind the order of events in life as Keith does not see the haphazard events which populate life as befitting the norms of a well-made narrative with a climax and a dignified resolution of the plot. Instead, human life is tainted with the animal limitations of the principal characters whose physical bodies are a constant reminder of their mortality and processual nature, as caught in the human/animal divide. Life is further presented as essentially situational with human actions determined by the exigencies of the arising contexts of existence (Here, Amis is manifesting Swiftian compassion). Most importantly of all, human life and our conceptions of it are posited as principally partaking of the unverifiable material of dreams, in parallel with Winterson's evocation of Hinduism which conceives of life as an illusory dream. Human reality is thus

[90] "As to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form and employs a single metre, the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it" (Aristotle 2017, n.pag.).

couched in the realm of the imaginary that hurts as well as comforts, enervates as well as empowers the subject to encounter the unbearably traumatic reality of waking life.

Keith's epigrams on Life, which he christens using Austin's famous sentence frame for the performative "I hereby …" (Austin 1975, 6–7), also highlight the performative function of the narrative. Bennet and Royle define this function thus:

> The notion of the performative is extremely helpful for thinking about literature, then, because it allows us to appreciate that literary texts not only describe but perform. Literary texts not only say but do things: they do things with words and do things to us. More precisely they do things *by* saying. They create the world they describe …, but this creation is not a single event, occurring at the time of writing: it happens with every new reading of the literary work. (A. Bennett and Royle 2014, 266)

Thus, by making performative pronouncements on Life, Keith is inadvertently referring to the real function of the narrative outside its textual, wordy nature; the narrative also has a *worldly* existence, to borrow Edward Said's term for the performative function of literature (explained further on in this section).

Moreover, at every performance of the act of reading, the literary text also performs the reader, inducing material, worldly change in the reader's mind. Every return to the literary text thus becomes a unique encounter with the alterity of the text, or as Derek Attridge prefers to call it, an ethical "event". Attridge explains the encounter with the "singular" text thus:

> My example can be no more than suggestive; as a singular work, whose singularity is renewed in each performance of it, its inventiveness differs from the inventiveness of every other singular work, and no simple extrapolation or generalization is possible. As I have been emphasizing, part of what an inventive work discovers, and makes possible for other writers, is new ways of being inventive. … critics have often commented on literature (especially poetry) in terms that suggest the centrality of what I am calling inventiveness and singularity, and the way in which these properties are realized in performances of language's powers. A large body of criticism has, however, failed to distinguish between the performativity of the literary work and other, non-literary aspects of it, such as its referential accuracy, its moral stance, its political usefulness, its formal complexity, its narrative structure, and so on. (Attridge 2004, 100)

In Attridge's formulation, the "singularity" of literature consists in the singularity of every performance of the work by the listener/reader. The work is also inventive as its performativity

engenders a fresh subjectivity in the reader (a point reminiscent of the fatal encounter with the literary text as theorized by Blanchot, de Man and Tollance). Reading thus becomes a mutual event of becoming, an event that is ever-renewed in every performance thereof. The inventiveness of the work also manifests itself on the plane of formal experimentation (in parallel with Lyotard's preference for avant-garde postmodernism). Literature's inventiveness and singularity, according to Attridge, arise from the performative power of language itself.

Attridge's remarks parallel those of Edward Said for whom the material historical – or "circumstantial" – context of writing and reading, as well as the performative power of texts are crucial factors. He refers to the performativity of texts as their "worldliness". He states,

> … a critic may often be, but is not merely, the alchemical translator of texts into circumstantial reality or worldliness; for he too is subject to and a producer of circumstances, and these are felt regardless of whatever objectivity his method possesses. Texts have ways of existing, both theoretical and practical, that even in their most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place and society – in short, they are in the world, and hence are worldly. The same is doubtless true of the critic, as reader and as writer. (Said 1983, 35)

Put differently, both the writer, the reader and the text are worldly beings enacted by, and enacting material circumstances, an idea similar to Attridge's statements regarding the "singular" eventness of reading and interpretation. Said proceeds to elaborate on his theory of the text's "worldliness" as a key determiner of its performative interpretation, as the text's "worldliness, circumstantiality, the text's status as an event having sensuous particularity as well as historical contingency, are incorporated in the text, are an infrangible part of its capacity for producing and conveying meaning" (Said 1983, 39). The text is thus inseparable from the circumstantial context which gives rise to it and in which the text enacts material change.

In *The Pregnant Widow*, Keith further elucidates how the essence of life also lies outside the generic norms and artifice of provisional human fictions, including his very own narrative. We read, "In novels, weather and landscape answer to mood. Life isn't like that" (*TPW*, 322). The alienating failure to comprehend the essence of life through the human symbolic order of language is highlighted in Keith's consciously failed and comic attempts at anthropomorphizing nature through his metaphors. For instance, young Keith's struggling conscience reads meanings into natural phenomena that comically mirror his strained morals and salacious intents:

> What did Keith see when he looked in the fire? Fire, he thought, was the amorous element, neurotic, corrosive, devouring. Fire was the amorous element; and a fire of logs was an *orgy*—throw on another one and watch all the snakes, all the copperheads, as they arch and veer; then they came in over it, under it, round the back of it, with lips and fingertips, and spitting and licking with their serpent tongues. (*TPW*, 264)

Keith's metafictional acts of interpreting the real of life reveal the degree to which human interpretation is suffused with the subject's internal psychic state and elements of culture, or the symbolic order. In the above extract, burning logs in the fire appear to bespeak lustful passion as well as the neurosis which Keith suspects he is suffering from. In keeping with Keith's obsession with the lascivious 70s, the fire also embodies an orgy, replete with the guilt-ridden religious imagery of the serpent. Reality – as it appears in the imaginary order of consciousness – is thus presented as an interpretation heavily tinged with received cultural values. The real, the raw material of life, is constantly teased out through metaphor in the service of an interpretation that serves to make sense of an aspect of existence.

Similar examples of uncanny animism and anthropomorphism abound in the novel. Here, Keith is describing the sky: "Keith took more notice of the sky that evening, conscious, perhaps, of having recently neglected it. Its pouting pinks, its brothelly oranges. The sun put in a guest appearance, with a beaming smile, then exited stage left. Just before curtain-fall, a ripe, hot, fully limbed Venus climbed up into the darkening blue" (*TPW*, 289). As is clear, Keith's traumatized psyche, struggling with his sister's disgraceful sexuality and trying to contextualize it within the overarching spirit of the 70s, views the sky in a brothelly light. In what could be construed as a Shakespearean ethos of the world being a stage[91], the sun is also portrayed as an actor in Keith's imagination, entering and exiting the stage which represents the imaginary order of consciousness. To top it off, Venus is also there to remind Keith of Violet and also his longing for love, which he sees as having departed the social scene in the 70s.

Elsewhere, again anthropomorphizing the sky which could sometimes be "dishevelled" (*TPW*, 134) in line with Keith's mental struggle, Amis writes: "Then the light began to change,

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[91] In *As You Like It* (2.7.139-143), Shakespeare writes,
All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. (Shakespeare 1986, 227)

as a cloud hurried sideways to shield the modesty of the sun …" (*TPW*, 194) and again, "The usual sunset colours, with a shading or grading of turbulence, as Jupiter's stomach rumbles, in some other valley, under some other mountain" (*TPW*, 152). Mentioning Jupiter is Amis's way of highlighting ancient ways of anthropomorphizing an alien – and sometimes frightening – natural entity through bestowing humanoid qualities upon it. It is also in keeping with Amis's ongoing narrative of the consequences of the sexual revolution as Jupiter's amorous escapades would have made him a fitting actor on the lascivious scene. At other times, the sky mocks him as "Every other minute, he could hear heaven snickering at his forebearance" (*TPW*, 164) for his inability to seduce Scheherazade. Even the sun seemed to be gloating over his incompetence: "I will never tire, the sun was saying. I am like the sea. You will tire. But I will never tire" (*TPW*, 197). Thus humanizing the sun and conferring the attribute of indefatigability on it allows Keith to narrativize his own contrasting feebleness. All in all, foregrounding the human attribute of metaphorization of nature in the service of comprehending the human condition – as an existence within a social and natural context – lays bare the human mental operation of metaphorization that normally goes unquestioned. Amis's insistent use of defamiliarization – or the Brechtian *estrangement effect*[92] – through foregrounding has the effect of rendering existence uncanny. They reveal, as it were, the clockwork behind the operations of language.

Amis's use of anthropomorphism and animism also amounts to performative acts of interpretation of life aimed at assuaging the uncanny feeling of the meaninglessness and irrelevance of humanity in nature. This is an idea put forward by Edward Said in his analysis of descriptions of nature by Gerard Manly Hopkins (in his journal and the sonnet "As Kingfishers Catch Fire[93]") which Said finds "dynamic", his word for animistic. He states,

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[92] The Brechtian "estrangement effect" is akin to the Russian formalist penchant for defamiliarization. Robbins et al explain: "Like defamiliarisation, estrangement is a process of making one's experience of text or artwork strange or, more particularly, distant. Its aim is usually to subvert the reading experience (or viewing experience in the visual arts, theatre and film) away from conventions and habits. Sometimes given as a translation for the Brechtian term *Verfremdung*, which is more commonly translated as *alienation*. In the context of Brechtian theatre, estrangement names the theatrical practices by which the audience are encouraged to engage intellectually and ideological[ly] with the political and philosophical issues of a play by the deliberate foregrounding of theatrical artifice, thereby seeking to prohibit the audience's engaging empathetically with the subject material or the characters" (Robbins, Wolfreys, and Womack 2006, 38–39).

[93] As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;

> So in the note-book entry Hopkins' observation of nature is dynamic. … The writer is as much a respondent as he is a describer: similarly the reader is a full participant in the production of meaning, being obliged as a mortal thing to do – that is, to act – himself, to produce the sense that even though ugly is better than meaninglessness. This dialectic of production is everywhere present in Hopkins' work. Writing is telling; nature is telling; reading is telling. (Said 1983, 40–41)

Telling – or in our study, narrativizing – thus comes to signify an existentially defining act that extracts sense out of what would otherwise be a meaningless life in nature[94]. In Said's analysis the mortality of human beings is directly associated with its compulsion to "tell", and the constant production of meaning – by all the participants in the literary exchange – is deemed inextricable from existence. Said's ideas are similar in this respect to those of Brockmeier and Meretoja who consider narrative interpretation as tantamount to living (Brockmeier and Meretoja 2014, 5). The emphasis on the vitality – or dynamism – of interpretation is also highlighted in Said's choice of idiom as he states, "So close is the identification in Hopkin's mind between world, word and the utterance, the three coming alive together as a moment of performance, that there is no need of critical intervention" (Said 1983, 41). The performative act of production of meaning from the raw material of life – including nature – is thus seen as a naturally human trait.

Further analogous instances of animism and anthropomorphism in *The Pregnant Widow* include geographical features such as "Cornwall, where the island dips its toe into the English Channel; Wales, with its arms reaching out to embrace the Irish Sea" (*TPW*, 86–87) and uncanny descriptions of objects such as the 'frightened bottle', the 'tormented waistcoat' and the 'conscience-stricken table-cloth'. Assigning one's human attributes to surrounding

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Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells; within
Selves – goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came*.
I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is –
Christ. For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces. (Hopkins 2006, 1517)

[94] Said is alluding to this excerpt from Hopkins: "I have no other word yet for that which takes the eye or mind in a bold hand or effective sketching or in marked features or again in graphic writing, which not being beauty nor true inscape yet gives interest and makes ugliness even better than meaninglessness" (Gerard Manly Hopkins qtd in Said 1983, 40).

inanimate objects also demonstrates the metaphorical movement of becoming-other at the heart of immanent existence. In the realm of imagination, objects and human beings freely exchange qualities and feelings, further blurring the animate/inanimate – or the real/imaginary – boundary.

On occasion, Keith's consciously feeble desire to humanize the universe is accompanied by an avowal of the human inability to comprehend a system that lies beyond current human intelligence. Here is an example of Keith's existential questioning: "There were the stars, with their points looking cold and sharp: the visible tips of the pins God used to tack down the dark backing of the universe. And what of his own system, his personal galaxy, his Virgo, and the seven suns that remained to him? Before the summer is done, how many more will I extinguish?" (*TPW*, 179). In this extract, human creativity through language, or more precisely, the human attribute of verbalizing the incomprehensible real through metaphor is likened to the creation of the stars out of the dark abyss of nothingness, leading to the manifestation of both the stars and the nothingness surrounding them. Keith's weakness in the face of Gloria's sexual temptation and his loss of Lily's love, here represented by Virgo, are tantamount to sinking into the dark abyss of an existence without love, the deathly equivalent of the "dark backing of the universe".

When it comes to creation, Keith admits that a superior, effortless talent must be at work. Here, Timmy, Scheherazade's boyfriend enters: "But it was a good entrance—Timmy's. Long, slender, loose, vague, and somehow limply stylish—like a doodle from a talented hand …" (*TPW*, 263). Likewise, Keith, comparing the figure of human plotting Gloria, with artless Scheherazade, says: "ingenuous Scheherazade was like a work of art. And the same could not be said of Gloria Beautyman" (*TPW*, 292). This is yet another instance of the oscillation (or *metaxy*) at the heart of the metamodernism characterizing the contemporary *Zeitgeist*. As Timotheus Vermeulen states, "The metamodern generation oscillates between a postmodern doubt and a modern desire for sense: for meaning, for direction. Grand narratives are as necessary as they are problematic" (Potter and Vermeulen 2016, n.pag.). In keeping with this worldview, Amis, avowedly an agnostic (not unlike Barnes), admits to the possibility of the existence of a superior intelligence and system beyond current human cognition. Also, at the same time as admitting his human shortcomings within the symbolic order of language, his text registers a neoromantic[95] (doomed) attempt at a dialogue with what lies beyond. Amis's

[95] Keith's attempts at meaning could also be said to instantiate romantic irony believed, by its theorists, to be at the heart of contemporary metamodernism. Vermeulen states, "In some works of art, like the installations by Olafur Eliasson, for example, Romanticism is most clearly present in the attempt to turn

awareness of the shortcomings of human cognition of the universe at the same time as being willing to humanly comprehend it amounts to a narrative rendition of the following remarks by Borges:

> … obviously there is no classification of the universe that is not arbitrary and speculative. The reason is quite simple: we do not know what the universe is. … We must go even further, and suspect that there is no universe in the organic, unifying sense of that ambitious word. If there is, then we must speculate on its purpose; we must speculate on the words, definitions, etymologies, and synonymies of God's secret dictionary.
> The impossibility of penetrating the divine scheme of the universe cannot, however, dissuade us from planning human schemes, even though it is clear that they are provisional. (Borges 2000, 231)

The parallels between Borges's observations and Amis's words are obvious: human beings cannot comprehend the secret, divine knowledge behind creation. Any system that has thus far attempted to do so has amounted to nothing more than speculation, or in postmodern terms, a "discursive construct" (Hutcheon 1988, 83). However, the shattering knowledge of this limitation should not stop humanity from trying hard to unravel the mysteries of the universe, if, according to Borges, such a thing even exists at all.

In a manner similar to Amis, Swift also enquires into the nature of life in the guise of his characters' traumatic questioning into their subjectivity. In a manner echoing *The Pregnant Widow*, the most important characteristic of life in *Wish You Were Here* is its indifference to petty human endeavor and pain; that life is portrayed as going on unperturbed no matter how crippling the human pain of existence. For example, in the following excerpt, Tom is dying in agony, probably burning up as a result of the explosion that blew up the British personnel carrier in Iraq, or he is already a ghost hovering between life and death:

> But he wasn't here either. He was there. He was back there in Barton Field. There was the big oak, its leaves brushing a big blue sky. But there was no Dad, no Luke, no gun. And no Jack.

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the ordinary into something extraordinary, something we cannot but be aware of and contemplate simply because it is in its ordinariness unlike anything else. There are works concerned with the idea of the Romantic sublime; with fate; with craftsmanship. But by and large, I would say that what characterises the Romanticism that has been increasingly visible in contemporary culture since the early 2000s is romantic irony: to strive for infinity in spite of one's finiteness; to hope in spite of one's better judgment" (Potter and Vermeulen 2016, n.pag.).

> But he was lying in Barton Field more or less where Luke had been shot and had known all along it was coming. It was summer, it was warm and the grass was full of buzzing insects. And then he could hear something else, getting closer. He hadn't heard that sound for a long time now, but he knew straight away what it was, and if he could lift his head he might just be able to see them. It was the unmistakable, steady 'tchch … tchch … tchch' of browsing cattle, the slow, soft rip-rip of cows' mouths tearing up grass. It was the most soothing sound in the world and it was utterly indifferent. (*WYWH*, 209)

The extract leaves the reader in doubt as to whether the cow's nonchalant grazing is occurring next to Tom's burning body or 'elsewhere': Tom is suspended in the *a-topos* of spectrality. The big oak in the above extract crops up several times in the novel, serving as an image of life in the failed human endeavor to comprehend the nature of life and existence.

There are several indications in the novel alerting the reader to the more-than-arboreal significance of the oak tree. For one thing, it is said to be the mainstay of the farm since time immemorial, "reckoned to be over five hundred years old. It had been there before the farmhouse" (*WYWH*, 236). We read:

> From the house you looked, over the fall of the land, to the woods in the valley and to the hills beyond, but principally took in—perfectly placed between foreground and background—the broad top third or so of the big single oak that stood near the middle of the field where its slope levelled off. The oak's massive trunk could not be seen, nor the immense, spreading roots which had risen above the surrounding soil. But between these roots, where the grass had given up, were small hollows of that reddish earth that Jack would notice on the last stages of a strange, westbound journey. The roots themselves were thick and ridged enough to form little ledges or seats, for a sheep or a man.
>
> The oak was, of course, a great stealer of the surrounding pasture—its only value to provide shade for the livestock—but it was a magnificent tree. It had been there at least as long as Luxtons had owned the land. To have removed it would have been unthinkable (as well as a forbidding practical task). It simply went with the farm. …
>
> None of these thoughts had particularly occurred to Michael or to Jack (or, when he was there, to Tom). They were so used to the tree straddling their view that they could, for most of the time, not really notice it. Nonetheless, it was straight to this tree that Michael walked on an icy November night, carrying a gun. Or as straight as the steep slope allowed. (*WYWH*, 242–43)

The tree is described as possessed of deep-running roots, parts of which are visible above ground and although its practical function does not extend beyond providing shade and shelter

for people as well as the livestock, it is irrationally seen as a pivotal guarantor of stability and the continuity of life and the ongoing existence of the farmhouse, almost synonymous with farm life itself. Yet in the spirit of rife fictionalism of the novel, the scene describing the oak tree is presented as *a picture* in the imaginary order of the characters' consciousness. On close inspection, the tree is not at all seminal to life on the farm. Rather, it is ambivalently described as a sinister "stealer" of sunshine from the surrounding pasture. The narrative voice sounds unconvincing when it declares the tree to be "magnificent", or rather, the magnificence of the tree is debunked as a myth, once trauma shatters the received assumptions surrounding it. Embedded in the description is also an avowal of the irrationality of regarding the tree as being the *sine qua non* of farm life. In saying that "It simply went with the farm", Swift is questioning the *simple acceptance* of a received picture of the past, thereby defamiliarizing the unquestioned positioning of the elements of the past. Upon description of the scene, what emerges is the uncanny *unhomeliness* that the tree bestows on the view, as if the affirmation of the grandeur of the tree also houses within it, an equally resonant echo of its avowal as a mere picture, hence ungrounded in reality.

Reading metaphoric sense into nature – here, seeing the tree as an unshakable pillar of existence – is further demonstrated as destructive, since not only living, but also suicide occurs against the roots of the tree. On the night of Jack's father's suicide, Jack surmises that there might have appeared as a spectral presence reigning over the whole field, as "The dark mass of the oak tree, against the ghostly silver of the field and the woods beyond, would have been visible of itself, Jack knew, to his father, who'd carried no torch" (*WYWH*, 245). The age-old comforting tree of life also becomes the morbid tree of death as Michael opts to shoot himself against it. Here is Jack fabulating again: "his father would have removed his jacket so as to be better able to feel, through his remaining layers, the wrinkled bark and supporting, towering, centuries-old solidity of the tree against his back" (*WYWH*, 245–46). Somehow, Jack believes that his father needed the prop of the tree to accomplish his action, in an uncanny moment of the union of two life forms within the general non-judgmental flux of life: "His father had simply wanted to press his head, his skull and his back hard against that oak tree and feel it pushing back. Spine against spine" (*WYWH*, 246). The oak grows to represent what Swift would term the "dilemma" of life – containing also death within it– manifesting itself in various forms, including, also as a coffin. Here, Jack is touching Tom's coffin, alone in the church: "The coffin was plain oak. Was it English oak? He felt its smoothness, examined the grain in the wood, breathed the scent of the flowers. It was suddenly like some inextricable riddle Brookes had set him, to be alone like this with the coffin, a dilemma beyond solving" (*WYWH*,

269). The wood from the omnipresent oak tree, present here in the shape of a coffin, could be said to provide an image, however crude, of life/temporality in its incessantly mercurial manifestations. The tree is thus portrayed as having 'died' and become a coffin containing Tom's once-alive body inside which is in the process of decomposition, another becoming-other. The dilemma is beyond solving as the process of transformation and becoming-other immanent to nature is one that is unfolding ceaselessly in all directions, involving all beings.

Existence is thus portrayed as the ineffable commingling of the countless processes of becoming unfolding everywhere, at all times. Human valuation of these processes renders some desirable and others objectionable but what concerns the novelist is that happy or sad, acceptable or abhorrent, these becomings form part of the immanence of life. Moreover, writing about becoming-other with the aim of allowing transformation to occur in the realm of the narrative is in itself an affirmative and ethical act of creation – or an instance of performativity – out of what is essentially the chaos of life. Characterizing writing thus, places it on a par with the divine creation of the stars out of the chaotic mass of the universe which Amis refers to above. In an interview with Stef Craps, Swift elucidates these points in answer to a question regarding his being branded by certain critics as a pessimist:

> I think my work is far from being all darkness…. Perhaps what I'm saying is that the light and dark go together; you have to do both. I believe, in any case, that whatever the subject matter, fiction is an inherently positive thing. I like to use the word "creative," a word which has become – I don't quite know why – rather unfashionable, but I think what I do is a creative thing, and I think being creative is positive. The mere business – or the not-so-mere business – of starting from nothing and creating the whole world that a novel can be is inherently positive, the business of bringing things to life. I think that fiction is always at some level celebratory. Even when it's exploring some of the most dismal aspects of experience, it's doing that, it's not being inert. And doesn't any novel simply want to offer, whatever else it may be doing, the stuff, the flavor, the taste of life? Isn't it constantly reminding you of the feeling of being in this world, and urging you not to be complacent or indifferent about it? "No, look again at that tree, have a look at that tree that you haven't noticed, just think for a moment, isn't that a wonderful tree?" I think that fiction should be constantly having such little – or not-so-little – effects. They may be almost subliminal, or they may be the point of a whole paragraph, but they're saying, "This is life, this is what we have, look at it!" Isn't that inherently celebratory? (Craps and Swift 2009, 660–61)

Swift is thus reaffirming the centrality of non-nostalgic affirmation of Being[96] to the creative project of fiction. Fiction joins the myriad becomings of life as not only another strand of becoming, but also *the* image of becoming. As a representation of Life, fiction is undeniably celebratory and thus positive, even when discussing "dismal … experience" such as trauma. What is more, fiction is anything but an "inert" participant in the becomings of life. Rather, it enacts a difference, sending off "lines of flight" of becoming by shaking the reader out of complacency – through affect – and thus encouraging contemplation.

Narrative description is thus not a mere representation but a partaker in Life and an enactor of "worldly" (Said 1983, 35) change. Derek Attridge touches upon this question highlighting the performative power of the act of reading and the mutual movement of becoming-other that unfolds in the literary experience. His domain of interest in the following extract is poetry:

> Responding to a poem being recited involves performing the particular performance of it that I am hearing. It may even be the case that when I read a poem aloud myself I respond creatively to my own performance as a realization of the performative potential of the work. A recent anthology of "close readings" announces on its back cover that the book presents "a wide range of responses to the question at the heart of literary criticism: how best to read a text to understand its meaning." My argument is that a very different question should be at the heart of literary criticism and exemplified by the best close reading: how best to perform a text's engagements with linguistic power. For anything that language can do in the world may be performed in literature. In performing the work, I am taken through its performance of language's potency; indeed, I, or the "I" that is engaged with the work, could be said to be performed by it. This performed I is an I in process, undergoing the changes wrought by, and in, the encounter with alterity. (Attridge 2004, 98)

Several issues are at stake in Attridge's packed statements. Listening to a poem being recited – or reading fiction, for that matter – involves a dislodging of subjectivity, a deterritorialization, in Deleuzian terminology. The work, harnessing the performative potential of language, performs the listener/reader. Put differently, the text possesses the potential to affect the reader, thereby engendering change(s) in their subjectivity. Literature is the most potent manifestation of language's power to enact a becoming-other in the addressee (in line with Blanchot, de Man and Tollance's views regarding the death of subjectivity involved in reading). In the literary

[96] As Amy would say *affirmatively* in *Last Orders*, "Clip-clop. Things come together in this world to make things happen, that's all you can say. They come together" (Swift 1999, 237–38).

experience, a tripartite transformation occurs: the work, the linguistic medium and the reader are all altered simultaneously – or performed – through contact with the alterity of the text. The I, as the Kristevan *subject in process* – constantly resubjectified at the crossroads of the pre-linguistic *chora* and the symbolic of language – undergoes a resubjectification in the encounter with the other of the work. Apropos the relation between the human body and the creativity at the heart of literature, Lecercle, drawing upon Deleuzian insights, also states:

> Literature is the site where the workings of language are … at their most explicit: it is the site where the *forces of language* are enacted … the forces that *constitute* language. In literature those forces are given free play, not frozen into meaning. …
> … the study of language is inseparable from the materiality of the body. There is a constitutive corporeality of language as forces come from and act on bodies. Thus, language issues forth from the body and exerts pressure on it: it expresses and embodies active forces, bears witness to reactive forces. … language is a medium in which force as material impulsion is physically `communicated' in the French sense of the term. It is also the medium in which such force is expressed, that is, assessed and measured so that the result is a differential relation of forces, a *rapport de forces*.(Lecercle 2002, 167–68).

Lecercle, who provides the cliché as the embodiment of the frozenness of language highlights the corporeal materiality of language, much in the manner of the body that utters it. Language is thus the outcome of a mingling of the symbolic order and the physical human body (as Kristeva would affirm) and as such, a material performative force that takes on an active role in the formation of the body and the society out of which it arises. As such, literary language is seen as a multidirectional enactor of becoming through the affective *force* of transformation. Lecercle's evocation of Deleuze and his formulation of literary language as a *rapport de forces* is also reminiscent of Nietzsche's definition of life as "A multiplicity of forces, connected by a common mode of nutrition, we call 'life'" (Nietzsche 1968, 341). Life, as mirrored in literary language is thus the ensemble of interacting forces that give rise to fresh lines of flight of subjectivity on the immanent plane of existence.

In *Wish You Were Here*, with regard to the oak tree in the novel, we also learn that in a manner similar to the indifference of the sound emanating from the cow's grazing next to Tom's scene of death, the timeless oak of life remained indifferent when the suicide bullet penetrated its bark several inches deep. In the following extract, the timeless – almost alien – presence of the oak is contrasted with the transience of human life:

> It continued to pass, along with fragments of bark, skull and brain, some significant distance into the oak tree against which he'd been leaning. It could be said that the tree felt nothing. The tree never flinched and no more registered Michael's death than Michael did himself. For an oak tree that big and thick and old, to have a parcel of compacted shot and other matter embedded not even deep in its flesh was of no importance. Trees endure worse mutilation.
> But the hole, some three feet or more up the trunk, remained, its aperture reduced but defined as the bark grew a ring-like scar around it. It was there when Jack, with five others, lowered his brother's coffin into its grave. It's there now. The surrounding stain on the bark remained too, despite that sluicing down on the day itself by PC Ireton. Unlike the stains on the ground, which soon disappeared, it weathered gradually and came to look like some indeterminate daub of the kind sometimes seen near the base of trees, or like some fungal blemish associated with that odd puncture in the trunk. What was it there for? Had someone once tried to hammer something, for some strange agricultural purpose, into the wood? (*WYWH*, 274–75)

Although the tree, here standing for existence, does not flinch *visibly* at the moment of the impact of the bullet, and even tries to cover over the hole by growing a scar around it (in yet another instance of uncanny anthropomorphism), the attenuated blood stain lingers on, impossible to wash off. Existence is thus demonstrated as marked, or rather *haunted* by human action, as the "indeterminate daub" stands for the spectral imprint of the act of suicide on existence in the farm, long after the violent act has been committed. This is similar to Winterson's claims of the universe being an imprint of the living beings' intentions and actions. The dark ghost of the violent action returns to haunt the living, as it were, through the hole in the tree, as Tollance states (Tollance 2015, para. 7).

The 'indifferent' life tree (reminiscent of Amis's indifferent sky in *The Pregnant Widow*), is also depicted as an implicit partner contributing to the formation of the characters' feelings and existential decisions. Here is Clare Robinson, the wife of the current owner of Jebb Farm, looking up at the tree while everyone else is enjoying themselves: "But it was only minutes later that she'd looked up at the broad, sun-filled canopy of the oak as if to see in it some approval of her joy (this wonderful oak tree—they owned an oak tree!) and felt that something was very wrong" (*WYWH*, 323). There is an uncanny feeling of ghostliness about the tree that makes Clare feel cold. The tree suddenly takes on a threatening and sinister appearance, almost akin to life itself whose alien incomprehensibility in human terms is a source of sublime terror and pleasure at the same time. Here is Clare again, filled with dark terror in the presence of the great oak:

> Yet she'd looked up at the oak tree and at once began to fear it. There was something now about it that, even on a warm July day, made her feel cold. Its leaves, stirring in the breeze, seemed to shiver with her. Its shade, which should have been only delightful on a summer's day, seemed, momentarily, simply dark.
>
> She hid all this, tried to dismiss it as the picnic proceeded, and, as it turned out, never said a word about it to her husband. Though the truth was that it really took most of that summer for this 'moment' to go away. She was on guard against its repetition. She eyed the tree as if she and it were outfacing each other. She could no longer be sure that there wasn't something sinister rather than glorious about the way it dominated the view, its crown rearing up above the brow of the field, like the head of some giant with brooding designs on the house. She thought of it lurking at night. Then all this simply receded, to the point where she wondered if she hadn't really just imagined it all. (*WYWH*, 323–24)

The tree is depicted in a regal light adorned with a crown. As such, it embodies existence itself as simultaneously inclusive of paradoxical qualities: the humanly valuated pure and profane, Eros and Thanatos, the regally divine and demonic are among its various attributes. The tree is portrayed as 'possessed' of a presence that inspires an indescribable, yet palpable fear in the onlooker. The spectrality of the tree, already pointed out by Pascale Tollance, dominates the whole view, engendering an internal struggle to stand up to its morbid influence by affirming life. Spectrality also means that the tree of life, inscribed as it is with the violence and madness of a past act, occasionally takes on the threatening visage of a giant at night. Clare – already feeling infected by the trauma of the farmers who had lost their cattle to the cow disease and the BSE – is now being subjected to a second infection by the unpredictable return of the ghost of traumatic suicide.

Vicarious – one would say uncanny – subjection to the trauma of the other through mere presence in the locale of trauma reaffirms the Swiftian ethics of immanence and becoming-other with natural elements, including the very air, being a participant in what Caruth might term as "entanglement" (Caruth 1996, 8) in the trauma of the other. Husvedt refers to scientific evidence of the fact that traumatic events can infect more beings than the victim, even the subsequent generations:

> Trans-generational trauma has been widely discussed especially in relation to the children of Holocaust survivors and has usually been understood from a purely psychological perspective. But it is interesting that new research in epigenetics is examining inherited trauma as well. Epigenetics is the study of the regulation of gene pattern expression in relation to

> environmental influences. A 2010 paper … done on mice showed that mice subjected to chronic and unpredictable maternal separation had offspring who, although not subjected to the stress of separation, showed changes in DNA methylation. This refers to the chemical modification of a strand of DNA after it is replicated. Methylation can cause gene suppression, so the finding is significant and, with further research, we may begin to understand how such transmissions work in human beings. It is blazingly clear, in all events, that genetic expression takes place in interaction with the environment and the old nature/nurture divide is moot. One becomes the other. (Husvedt 2015, para. 27)

Thus, in a world where beings *literally* become one another, the trauma of one being can become that of another, ultimately haunting future generations through *material* genetic predisposition to the symptoms of trauma.

The Swiftian ambivalence to nature, as alien, threatening and incomprehensible on one hand and majestic on the other also recalls the Nietzschean characterization of nature as "prodigal beyond measure, indifferent beyond measure, without aims or intentions, without mercy or justice, at once fruitful and barren and uncertain" (Nietzsche 2003, 39). Portraying nature as indifferent and possessed of an ineffable grandeur also evokes the romantic idea of the sublime in nature. Nathalie Massoulier points out this particular facet of Swift's work. In her view, Swift's descriptions of the tree wearing, as it were, a crown in the above extract from the novel, "seem designed so as to convincingly convey the Swiftian conception of a sacred though agnostic order under which the characters live, emanating from the memory-wise author identifying with the divine elephant Ganeish as the title *Making an Elephant* suggests" (Massoulier 2014, 37). She thus views the oak tree as indicative of the Swiftian "agnostic order" in existence, almost reminiscent of Amis's "cosmological piety" (Bradley and Tate 2010, 36) and the Barnesian awestruck reaction in the presence of the "other-worldly" Severn Bore. This is corroborated by an observation made by the narrative voice in *Wish You Were Here*. In the novel, the sublimity of life, manifested in natural settings, is developed further to include ideas of the ineffable sacredness of nature in true romantic fashion. We learn that the farmers, bound together by the ethical, quasi-familial bond of the community, were acutely aware of this: "Through the trees and from all sides of the valley would come now and then the small, bouncy 'pop-pop' of other guns. Sunday-morning shooting. The farming fraternity would call it 'going to church'. The wood, on a still, grey morning, with the pillars of trees, was not unlike a church" (*WYWH*, 100).

Swift's interest in the ineffable immanence of Life[97] is apparent also in his comments on his work, for instance when he states, "my primary interest is in the messy, uncategorizable stuff of personal life and in what might be called 'the stuff we have inside us'. And I also simply want to tell a story" (Swift 2016). It is the affirmative sentiment of joy at observing the immanence of 'messy', uncategorizable life that prompts him to characterize Life as sacred. A further point that bears analysis is that Massoulier also identifies the tree with the imposing presence of the author in his work, a representative of the Indian patron god of writing Ganesha, "elephant-headed Hindu god of beginnings, who is traditionally worshipped before any major enterprise and is the patron of intellectuals, bankers, scribes, and authors" ("Ganesha | Hindu Deity | Britannica.com" 2016, n.pag.). Massoulier then goes on to highlight the "psychic elevation inherent in the sublime" and concludes that,

> The tree cannot help reminding the reader of the figure of Ganeish whom Graham Swift identifies with. On top of the Tree of Life uniting Earth and Sky, the elephant/author, like another god in his realm, seems to cast his light illuminating the world to the deepest valleys, thus permitting poetic action.
>
> More generally, in Graham Swift's fiction, sublime landscapes provoking awe symbolise human realities in a tradition inherited from romanticism. (Massoulier 2014, 38)

However, in our discussion of the narrative, the authorial voice seems present, not as a domineering presence but rather, a cooperative voice, as vulnerable as the character being devised and developed by the very same author. Even if the tree is taken to stand for the author, this is not an omnipotent figure, but one wounded by the shot that kills the character in a bond of mutual vulnerability, or "what may be called a loop of vulnerability … premised on vulnerability to the vulnerable other, vulnerability being both the condition and expression of interdependence" (Ganteau 2015a, 11).

Still within a discussion of existence, Life, in the symbol of the great oak, is presented as the uncanny site of the existential feeling of homeliness and unhomeliness, comfort and radical alienation, rootedness and deracination. Swift had already noted his (as well as other

[97] Irina-Ana Drobot states that nature in Woolf and Swift possesses lyrical qualities as it did for the Romantics: "Nature, which is also sometimes a place of imagination, is often, like for the Romantic poets, a place characters are strongly connected with their surroundings and with other people. In conclusion, places mirror the characters' usual dilemmas related to relationships and communication with others and with themselves. Place also contributes to the creation of the lyrical aspect in Woolf and Swift's novels" (Drobot 2016, 1116).

writers') penchant for tapping into the potential of the uncanny inkling of an alienation at the heart of the most familiar scene, in an interview with Stef Craps. Swift says, "I think writers perhaps have a special alertness for the strangeness we can all encounter in ordinary life. You walk into a familiar room, a familiar place, you go down a familiar street, but there's a strangeness in the air, you sense it. What's going on here? That's how a lot of stories begin" (Craps and Swift 2009, 652). As always in Swift's works, this insight finds its literalized textual reflection in the narrative. A notable example is the word "rock" which is used both in the sense of stability and shakiness (*WYWH*, 103–4). The instability of seemingly stable existence also affects Clare who is variously depicted as conscious of a clear sense of the uncanny ghostliness at Jebb Farm:

> But Clare would always remember (and always keep to herself) the day—though it was little more than a moment—when this whole vision had seemed to totter and shake, all its radiance had faded. And this had occurred, oddly, during one blissfully sunny weekend when everything in the picture was complete and just as she would have wished. It was only ever, she told herself, some weird sensation *inside* her. It was nothing, surely, to do with the *place*. But it was lingering enough in its effect for Clare to ask herself: Is there something wrong with me? Am I cracking up? And since her answer to those questions was a robust no, it must then be to do with the place. This place into which they'd put so much.
>
> For a while Clare actually contemplated having to tell her husband that she was very sorry, but she no longer felt—comfortable—at Jebb. (*WYWH*, 308)

Spectrality is once again portrayed as the irruption of the real of trauma into the placid image of existence sustained in the subject's imaginary order of consciousness. The "vision" or "picture" of life held together in the fantasy land of the imaginary order crumbles as the real makes its presence felt, out of the blue, in the midst of a pleasant weekend. The "weird sensation", referred to as "frissons" by Pascale Tollance (Tollance 2015, para. 7) emanates emphatically from the italicized "*place*" as if the unspeakable impact of Michael's suicide has been inscribed in the visible and invisible elements of existence at Jebb Farm. The outcome is a palpable feeling of the Freudian uncanny, or *Unheimlichkeit*. Apropos the origins of the existential sentiment of the uncanny, John Gray writes:

> The German term "*un-heimlich*," which literally translates as "un-home-like," has in fact the denotation of the "uncanny." When you feel in German "*unheimlich zu Mute*," you are seized with a nameless fear. You are out of your element, but more

> than that you have an intuition of abysses hidden from normal moods. These rare experiences of the uncanny … are revelatory of the innermost nature of reality. At such times we feel a sense of deep unease; we are threatened and oppressed by everything in general and nothing in particular. We are filled with dread or anguish, a psychological state which has … metaphysical origins. If someone asks us what is troubling us when we are oppressed with this feeling of the uncanny, we are likely to answer: "It is nothing." These words are truer than we know. For what has oppressed us is the primary intuition that we are not sustained by infinite power and plenitude of being …. On the contrary, we, human creatures, perceive dimly in the experience of the uncanny, that the world rests on nothing. It has no basis or ground. Human existence, as one form of Being, is suspended over the abyss of Non-being. As Heidegger puts it: "To exist as a human being means to be exposed to Nothingness." (J. G. Gray 1951, 116)

Thus, in addition to the return of the specter (whose story Clare does not know) as the real, a further source of the sentiment or the "mood" (J. G. Gray 1951, 116) of the uncanny is the occasional subconscious suspicion of the meaninglessness of existence, the fact that, if any, its significance lies outside the human symbolic order. It is the return of this meaninglessness – or the *human inability* to extract existential meaning – as the void of the real in the symbolic that engenders the sentiment of the uncanny, a feeling of inexplicable dread as constitutive of human existence.

In *Wish You Were Here*, Swift's fascination with the sublime and the uncanny does not end with the oak tree. Rather, his novel abounds in instances of the uncanny. Mirrored in the sky near Barnstaple, the textual fabric of the novel seems "haunting now, or haunted. … shadowy as the nightfall" (*WYWH*, 195–96). One rife manifestation of the uncanny is the repeated intimations of the supernatural present at the core of quotidian existence. For instance, Ellie seems to think that her wishing has brought about the disappearance of Tom and the death of Michael, paving the way for what would otherwise have been untrammeled conjugal bliss with Jack:

> From then on Ellie had begun to do some extra wishing. What could she do but wish? And when, not so very long after Tom disappeared from the scene, Michael Luxton, in his own way, dropped out of it too, she'd begun to feel that wishing wasn't such a useless thing to fall back on, since it seemed it could have real effect. On the other hand, there were limits, serious limits,

> to wishing, even secretly. And she'd begun also to be a little afraid of her wishes. 'Shot of', it was only an expression. (*WYWH*, 113)

In a moment of ethical awareness of the performative impact of her thoughts, Ellie suspects (in a manner reminiscent of Barnes's Tony who surmises that his juvenile curse might *performatively* have triggered the traumatic state of affairs) that she might unwittingly have brought about Tom's death. This realization is accompanied by an uncanny feeling of fear, as words seem to translate themselves into deeds: being "shot of" someone refuses to remain a mere metaphoric expression and transmutes itself into a 'bullet' killing Tom. This is a demonstration of the *creative performativity* of words as well as a call for a heightened attitude of "care"[98] and sensitivity toward the vulnerable other of existence, even, *and especially*, at the level of thoughts and words.

Apropos the uncanny power of words, in particular injurious "bad" words, to assume a performative and material existence actively joining in the affairs of the world, Lecercle writes:

> … the utterance is not the linguistic incarnation of an abstract proposition, not a carrier of information but of affect. And we note that the distressing force affects not only the addressee, at whom it is directed, not merely the addresser, … but the verbal occurrence itself, which is thus turned into a suffering body. I suffer from bad words, and the words themselves are suffering bodies. Hence words like 'scabs', 'cuts', etc., words that describe the situation of bodies as they encounter one another and mix. … Language is incorporated because it is itself a material body. Or rather… words are bodies that freely (or on occasion painfully) mix with other bodies, first of all the bodies of the speakers that utter or receive them. (Lecercle and Riley 2004, 70)

In Lecercle's Deleuzian analysis then, hurtful words act through the power of the affect they induce. In his immanent analysis, Lecercle recognizes language as partaking of the universal spirit of becoming-other, with words becoming bodies that suffer if uttered with the intention to inflict pain on the other. Even more comprehensively, Lecercle views the entire language as a living, "material" body engaged in universal "mixing" and transformative – or performative – interaction in the world. Injurious language thus unleashes a movement of spectral infection

[98] Apropos the historical development of the ethics of "care" and "vulnerability", Ganteau states that "vulnerability has often been associated with the ethics of care and seems to have evolved along with this form of ethics, from the original feminist orientation towards a more general, versatile application" (Ganteau 2015a, 2).

by violence, whereby the three parties to the act of communication, the utterer, the utterance and the addressee are inscribed with the affect of suffering from "bad" words. Lecercle's problematization of the affective and performative impact of language ties in with our analysis of immanent transformation, and its attendant ethical implications.

In line with Lecercle's analysis, self-castigating melancholic Jack who has self-directed the blame meant for Tom[99], also thinks his anticipation of Tom's death might have performatively led to the event proper. Suspicion of the performative power of thought and anticipation also engenders an uncanny dread at the unreliability of temporal sequence and the presence of unseen forces at work in the world: forces patently beyond human cognition and control. We read apropos Jack's thoughts:

> On the other hand, he might have made enquiries. Not so difficult, not so unreasonable. Being next of kin, for God's sake. And he'd known that some such message as he held now in his hand was not out of the question. Now that it was in his hand it had the eerie, mocking truth of something not entirely unanticipated. His hand shook. As if the anticipation might have forestalled it. As if the anticipation might have caused it. (*WYWH*, 79)

Eeriness thus comes to signify the sentiment of the uncanny surrounding the situation. It is noteworthy that in the above extract, the feeling of the uncanny performativity of thoughts and their ability to *become* an action in the real world is juxtaposed with the fictionalist marker "as-if". The supernatural is thus portrayed as an intrusion of the real into the imaginary, engendering a movement of mental questioning. Uncanny performativity of thought is thus a further driving force behind the expansion of understanding. The provisional human answers proposed, i.e. suspicion of the performativity of thought, are themselves presented as a fictional construct framed by the "as-if", intimating that the reality at work is alien and beyond the reach of human language.

Furthermore, in *Wish You Were Here*, the uncanny also appears in the form of anthropomorphism and animism, conferring on objects a spectral identity between life and death, "ni vivant, ni mort" (Jacques Derrida qtd in Wolfreys 2002, ix) as Derrida puts it. In a

[99] "The loss of a love-object is an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence in love relationships to make itself effective and come into the open. Where there is a disposition to obsessional neurosis the conflict due to ambivalence gives a pathological cast to mourning and forces it to express itself in the form of self-reproaches to the effect that the mourner himself is to blame for the loss of the loved object, i.e. that he has willed it" (Freud 1989, 587–88).

manner reminiscent of *Last Orders*, in *Wish You Were Here*, the family cars, the Land Rover of Ellie's youth and the Cherokee Jeep belonging to Jack and Ellie, are objects depicted as endowed with a soul, almost as if they were a horse or "some luminous, scurrying animal" (*WYWH*, 296). After all, on the machinic plane of immanence where you are what you do, there is little difference between a horse and a car. Similarly, we learn that when Ellie was young, she had wanted to escape from home, but what she was most excited about was the wild exhilaration of finding out what the Land Rover was capable of 'doing' on countryside terrain: "It wasn't a planned escape. She'd taken nothing with her, but it had evolved, in the very fact of motion, in the familiar quirks of the gear stick beside her and the mud-plastered pedals beneath her, into a frantic bid for freedom. In any case, there was the sudden sheer, wild glee of taking the thing out onto the road and seeing what it could do" (*WYWH*, 37). What Swift is highlighting here is that the 'decision' to escape did not emanate from Ellie's independent 'mind', in a premeditated, Cartesian fashion. Escape is what dawned on her as she was caught in the "fact of motion" inside the Land Rover. The exhilaration arising from motion *in-and-with* the car translates itself into the idea of freedom and escape. The idea of escape is thus the "line of flight" that arises out of the becoming-animal of the car, and one would also say, the becoming-car of Ellie. Action and motion thus arise out of the becoming-other of – or the intersubjectivity informing – beings, and not from a stable identity capable of initiating an independent decision. The visibly other 'entities' in existence merge and out of this intersubjective merger – "motorvation" (Swift 1999, 71–72) as Vince calls it in *Last Orders* – movement ensues.

In a similar vein, Jack also thinks of the car as possessing a spirit and capable of finding the way home, in a manner recalling a horse: Jack "Still sees himself rolling a cigarette, with just one finger crooked round the wheel of the jolting pick-up, as if it would know anyway how to steer him home" (*WYWH*, 49). As usual, the "as-if" is present to indicate the mental act of fictional fabulation about the nature of existence, or the metaphoricity of human cognition. The physical descriptions of the cars also encourage an uncanny, animistic perception: the Cherokee is said to have a "nose" on a *serpentine* road. Here, Jack, haunted and deranged, is waiting with a loaded gun to shoot Ellie and himself as soon as she gets back in the Cherokee:

> So he'll be alerted. So he'll be able to see, just a little sooner than from downstairs, the dark-blue roof, above the high bank, then the nose of the Cherokee as it takes the first, tight, ascending bend, past the old chapel. The Cherokee that's done so much hard journeying in these

> last three days.
> The road below him, running with water, seems to slither. (*WYWH*, 6)

Thus, the car is animistically endowed with a "nose", with the road underneath the car wheels seeming to "slither" like a snake. In the same spirit, the Cherokee is said to "snarl off" (*WYWH*, 306) vigorously and apropos the Land Rover, we read, "The throbbing Land Rover was like some stray beast he'd herded back in" (*WYWH*, 232). In the following scene, Ellie is described as driving off at high speed, with the car and the rain both coming alive, creating an uncanny, ominous ambience:

> But, in any case, and almost in the same hot breath, she'd grabbed her handbag, her keys were in it, and opened the door and walked out to the car from which he'd stumbled only the night before. And had got in and screamed off. The rain was only just starting to spit, from a darkening sky, but by the time she got to the main road it was coming down in great slapping squalls, like a warning. But she could hardly turn round now, just because of the weather. And, almost because of it, she drove madly on. (*WYWH*, 299)

This is a prime scene of becoming-other of the human and the animal and the emanation of an action (a line of flight) from this union, and not from Ellie's watertight 'human' identity. As Ellie drives off in anger, it is unclear whether the screaming belongs to Ellie or to the car. The narrative also portrays the natural elements as participating in this scene of wrathful flurry, with the rain spitting and hitting the road in "squalls". Action belongs as much to Ellie as to the elements. Ellie's human interpretation of nature reinforces her own determination to drive "madly on". Anger is thus a mood shared by the human and inanimate nature, or rather nature as it appears in the imaginary. The atmosphere answering to mood is an overt act of literary-human fictionalization of an alien, indifferent nature – as Amis also points out metafictionally, in his narrative.

What is more, the car and the driver are said to share a telepathic connection (reminiscent of the "motorvation" between the driver and the car according to Vince in *Last Orders*), with the car seeming to start of its own accord to keep pace with terrified Ellie's pounding heart: "The engine of the Cherokee starts as if it's not her doing but the direct consequence of the pounding in her chest" (*WYWH*, 335). Telepathy could be construed as an instance of immanent becoming-other on the level of invisible thought. As such, it constitutes yet another blow to the idea of a watertight subjectivity, and engenders a feeling of the uncanny,

"not least because it involves the thought that your thoughts are perhaps not your own, however private or concealed you might have assumed them to be" (A. Bennett and Royle 2014, 39).

Not only the family cars but other vehicles – of a less private nature – are also described animistically. When the coffins are being carried unto the tarmac at the military airport, "Jack could see the dark opening into its belly, beneath the tail, and the ramp leading down" (*WYWH*, 162). This demonstrates the operations of traumatized human cognition at the level of metaphors of similarity (Modell 2009, 8), consisting of the dead metaphor of the "tail" for the rear part of the aircraft and the not-so-dead one of the "belly" for the fuselage. More importantly, elsewhere, Jack also views the caravans under his supervision and care as a herd of livestock. For instance, haunted Jack is said to be imagining his dead mother's reactions to his deracinated state of "tending a herd of caravans" (*WYWH*, 26) and when he is contemplating suicide, in a melancholic gesture of revivifying his father's memory, he also contemplates the caravanners *and the caravans'* reactions to the news of his death:

> Jack doesn't want to disappoint any of them—the Lookouters in their scattered winter quarters all over the country. It seems for their sakes alone he might almost decide not to do what he intends. But nor, mysteriously, does he want to disappoint the caravans themselves, which he has come to see, now more than ever, as patient, dormant, hibernating creatures needing their summer influx of life. Who will look after them now? (*WYWH*, 338)

The extract reveals insights about the nature of human cognition of existential temporality as theorized by scholars such as Mark Currie[100] who conceives of it as "the structure of future anteriority" (Currie 2013, 175), or Peter Brooks who terms it the "anticipation of retrospection" (Brooks 1984, 23), with both formulations informed by the Kermodian sense of an 'ending' as determining the significance of the middle space – or the "middest" (Kermode 2000, 17) – of life. It also testifies to the Swiftian conviction of the immanence of existence, with the machine-

[100] In Currie's analysis, 'the unexpected' (by extension, *trauma*) becomes 'intelligible' in retrospect (or *Nachträglich* according to Freud). He generalizes this belated cognition to encompass the *human narrative understanding of its own becoming* throughout its life journey. He states, "I have been arguing … that the very combination of retrospect and futurity is the thing that gives narrative its special place in the encoding of temporal becoming: that the reading of a narrative, governed as it is by the structure of future anteriority, is the very model of temporal becoming as Lacan understood it, of 'what I will have been, given what I am in the process of becoming' …. the apprehension of time itself depends on structures that allow this kind of cognitive projection forwards from the emptiness of presence to some notional state of retrospect or completion. In this respect, the future anterior is the structure, in narrative as in temporal becoming more generally, that makes the unexpected intelligible" (Currie 2013, 175).

animal-human boundaries blurred within the general "influx of life" that seems to *animate* all beings. The extract also highlights the ethical responsibility incurred through an awakening to the interconnected nature of life and the beings that exemplify it. Suicide – which Jack is contemplating in the above extract – is presented as an unnatural disruption to the smooth flow of life on the plane of immanence within which Jack is situated. The cessation of Jack's life, individual and egocentric as it is, is depicted as a dereliction of his duties toward the immanent network of his life. This insight echoes Barnes's avowal of a great unrest[101] after suicide, and Amis's assertion that the deaths of loved ones induce more pain than one's own anticipated mortality (*TPW*, 365). All authors are highlighting a disruption to life ensuing what a non-immanent view would hold to be the *individual* death of suicide.

The plane upon which received boundaries reveal their porosity is that of the human imagination, with metaphor as its primary device. Not only cars and caravans but also natural elements are depicted as partaking of the uncanny spirit of anthropomorphism and animism in *Wish You Were Here*. For instance, in the following scene, the weather is seen by Jack as reflecting his inner feelings:

> Rain weeps down the window in front of him, but Jack isn't crying now. And he'd put a stop to his tears soon enough on that grey morning. He'd gasped them back into himself and wiped

[101] In his recent article, J. R. Wallen touches on "shallowness and self-realization", or more precisely, on the reasons why Tony is compelled "to distort and misremember his own past, making it shallower and more banal than it truly was" (Wallen 2017, 1). The author draws an analogy between Kermode's book *The Sense of an Ending* and Barnes's novel, concluding that in the case of Barnes's novel, "the title may seem a misnomer: far from providing a finalizing cathartic *finis* that leaves the reader cleansed and reassured, Barnes's novel ends by shedding light on a fragmentary document from the middle of the book, one of several key passages the reader is now directed back to. … the end of reading the novel is only the beginning of rereading it" (Wallen 2017, 1). Arguing that shallowness is Tony's way of avoiding the tangled chain of responsibilities revealed by his inquiries, Wallen states that "In the end, shallow Tony feels there was nothing more he could have become" (Wallen 2017, 4). Wallen goes on to compare Tony to an exemplary Aristotelian poet who edits out irrelevant details in the interests of a plot 'complete in itself', thereby simplifying the complexities of the situation around his past involvement in Adrian's suicide. He writes, "Tony arrives at … a shallow and self-serving reading of a messy and complex event. … the more [details] that Tony leaves out, the shallower his life narrative becomes. Peaceable, straight-thinking Tony must keep his understanding of events as shallow as possible in order to avoid realizing the immense suffering he has helped bring about; for this reason, he instinctively reduces his friend's suicide into 'something complete in itself… just involving Adrian'" (Wallen 2017, 5). Wallen finally presents a purely diegetic view of the narrative's final assertion of the existence of "great unrest" at the end of Tony's analysis of his past. He writes, "Indeed, this 'great unrest' arguably constitutes the present of the novel—the 'here and now' from which Tony narrates" (Wallen 2017, 12). In our analysis, the ending of the novel is an avowal of the ethical significance of the other and the unpredictability it bestows on the deeds issuing from a 'tidy' subjectivity.

> a sleeve across his face even before Ellie could grab a clump of tissues and hold it out for him. It should have been like this then, he thinks. Then the weather might have made his tears seem less conspicuous or might have done his crying for him. But, outside, the morning had been merely grey and damply still. (*WYWH*, 82)

This is one of Swift's most conspicuous affirmations of his conviction in the radical indifference of life and the innate human capacity for imaginary transposition of feelings on 'inanimate' nature. Yet the alien individual elements of this immanent interconnectivity are demonstrated as capable of sympathetic overture to one another through becoming-other. The rain becomes Jack by weeping down his tragedy and outwardly-aloof Ellie is portrayed as capable of offering Jack a clump of tissues to wipe his tears away. Similarly, the weather might have cried on his behalf, through compassionate empathy with a different being. However, the prerequisite for the actualization of this potentiality is that Jack accept this general, multidirectional extension of sympathy. Instead, he swallows his tears down and uses his own sleeve to wipe his face.

In a manner similar to *The Pregnant Widow* and *Wish You Were Here*, the nature of existence is also queried in Barnes's novel. As Amis's protagonist avows the futility of language in symbolizing the real of life, so is Tony led to question the applicability of the human conceptual system and logic to an understanding of life. To young Tony and his friends, logical thinking meant making determined and informed decisions about life rather than letting it happen to you. Adrian, the brilliant young man who committed suicide seemed to have achieved precisely that ideal. Tony is comparing his own 'passive' existence to Adrian's:

> I found myself comparing my life against Adrian's. The ability to see and examine himself; the ability to make moral decisions and act on them; the mental and physical courage of his suicide. 'He took his own life' is the phrase; but Adrian also took charge of his own life, he took command of it, he took it in his hands – and then out of them. How few of us – we that remain – can say that we have done the same? We muddle along, we let life happen to us, we gradually build up a store of memories. There is the question of accumulation, but not in the sense that Adrian meant, just the simple adding up and adding on of life. And as the poet pointed out, there is a difference between addition and increase. (*TSE*, 88)

A yearning is apparent in Tony's reminiscences for the false certainty of youth regarding the illusion it accords of mastery over one's life, a misconception reflected in the boys' habit of

wearing their watches with the dial facing inward. In their youth, life appeared to them as an entity to be owned and commanded. However, as life goes on, Tony feels that life amounts merely to the accumulation of memories and possessions. This piling up, referred to as "addition" does not represent a feeling of overall subjective growth, or "increase". According to Adrian Barlow (Barlow 2016, n.pag.), the poet alluded to in the above extract is Philip Larkin and the poem from which the concepts of addition and increase are borrowed is his "Dockery and Son". Tony expands on the notion of addition and increase by expatiating further on what Adrian meant by the word "accumulation", when applied to logical mathematics, as opposed to life in general:

> 'The question of accumulation,' Adrian had written. You put money on a horse, it wins, and your winnings go on to the next horse in the next race, and so on. Your winnings accumulate. But do your losses? Not at the racetrack – there, you just lose your original stake. But in life? Perhaps here different rules apply. You bet on a relationship, it fails; you go on to the next relationship, it fails too: and maybe what you lose is not two simple minus sums but the multiple of what you staked. That's what it feels like, anyway. Life isn't just addition and subtraction. There's also the accumulation, the multiplication, of loss, of failure. (*TSE*, 103–4)

The peculiar logic of life dictates that emotional losses and traumas suffered in life are potentially far greater than the sum of the lost objects of erotic investment. Certain losses derail and deterritorialize subjectivity, with the capacity to shatter the victims' "assumptive world" (Janoff-Bulman 1989, 113) and haunt them forever. Akin to the roots of the tree that heave and threaten to destroy Tony's house, the roots of such a traumatic loss run deep and dislodge the seemingly stable house of subjectivity.

As it also transpires, words fail to make 'logical' sense when applied to the rhizomatic web of events (lines of flight) that make up Life. Larkin, the poet alluded to above, also touches upon the applicability of logic to life. In 'Dockery and Son', Larkin is comparing his lonely life (a life of sexual frustration and loneliness in what Amis wittily dubs Larkinland) with that of his old classmate Dockery who had opted for a 'normal' life of family, a job and possessions, all of which could be construed logically as 'addition' in denotative terms. Yet Larkin sets out to question this assumption:

> … Dockery, now:
> Only nineteen, he must have taken stock
> Of what he wanted, and been capable

Of . . . No, that's not the difference: rather, how
Convinced he was he should be added to!
Why did he think adding meant increase?
To me it was dilution. Where do these
Innate assumptions come from? Not from what
We think truest, or most want to do:
Those warp tight-shut, like doors. They're more a style
Our lives bring with them: habit for a while,
Suddenly they harden into all we've got

And how we got it; looked back on, they rear
Like sand-clouds, thick and close, embodying
For Dockery a son, for me nothing,
Nothing with all a son's harsh patronage. (Larkin 2012)

In Larkin's 'reading' of life then, life is all but a tale of sorrow, loss and failure piled up over a lifetime. What Dockery would view as an addition to – or emotional increase in – *his* life of material belongings and a son, Larkin construes as a dilution. Larkin additionally questions the origin of the innate assumptions with which life is approached in the era of late capitalism: one which regards accumulation of possessions and material belongings as a sign of "increase". In the final analysis, it is human interpretations that bestow a value upon a particular way of life and two persons could legitimately read opposing meanings into, say, the acquisition of material belongings and a married existence, as demonstrated in the case of Larkin and Dockery.

Tony's Larkin and Adrian-inspired meditations continue as he reads the excerpt from Adrian's numbered diary, "5.5 So a) To what extent might human relationships be expressed in a mathematical or logical formula? And b) If so, what signs might be placed between the integers? Plus and minus, self-evidently; sometimes multiplication, and yes, division. But these signs are limited" (*TSE*, 85). Adrian's arguments about the limitations of 'signs' in explaining the ineffable vagaries of life grow more cogent and further on, he points to the category mistake of applying the plain rules of logic and mathematics to the muddled, radically alien "language game" of life, where – in true poststructuralist fashion – the links between the signifier and signified are said to be "frangible" to varying degrees. We read, "5.7 Or is that the wrong way to put the question and express the accumulation? Is the application of logic to the human condition in and of itself self-defeating? What becomes of a chain of argument when the links

are made of different metals, each with a separate frangibility?" (*TSE*, 85). Unlike the hard and fast nature of integers and the lucid links among them, life, ruled by immanence and characterized by becoming-other contains a multitude of unpredictable lines of flight or the Wittgensteinian 'states of affairs' binding mutating beings to one another. Logic fails to explain the entirety of the links of causation and consequence among the components of the fluid immanence of life. The last four lines of 'Dockery and Son', a poem bearing all the hallmarks of Larkinland, also attest to the incomprehensibility of the essence of life, as "something hidden from us", and the significance of death:

> Life is first boredom, then fear.
> Whether or not we use it, it goes,
> And leaves what something hidden from us chose,
> And age, and then the only end of age. (Larkin 2012)

The sentiment expressed in Larkin's poem is in line with the general drift of Barnes's novel in its treatment of the theme of existence as a self-repeating, alien phenomenon within which we find ourselves at the mercy of a force avowed to be "hidden from us". Yet, the crucial thematic similarity between the two works is the emphasis placed on the total dispersal of subjectivity toward "the end of age", a period described grimly by Amis[102] as "another very popular kind of torture: non-judicial, and preludial to death" (*TPW*, 361–62). This sentiment of an ending characterized by what the authors believe to be a state of non-volitional apathy is reflected in the uncanny self-repetition of the song "Everyday is Sunday" in *The Sense of an Ending*, a song consisting only of one repeated verse, and ending of its own accord. Apropos the thematic similarity between Barnes and Larkin (among other writers), Peter Childs states:

> Barnes's fiction reflects a wide array of approaches but settles on a combination of social satire, Swiftian irony, and experimentation. He is also influenced by the strain of melancholy that runs

[102] Here is the full excerpt where Keith is ruminating on the progress of age and its ending: "Fiftyfifty, he thought, must hurt a lot, because twentyeighty hurt like hell. Everyone, now, was talking about torture. Well, Keith would be easy to torture. Make him show up at a PTA meeting, make him spend fifteen minutes with his accountant, make him go with a list to Marks & Spencer—and he'd tell you everything he knew … Children feel boredom—childish boredom, once described by an aphoristic psychologist (and corroborated, years ago, by Nat and Gus) as "the absence of a wish." Nothing bores the twenty-year-old, the thirty-year-old, the forty-year-old. Keith, in 2009, felt that boredom was as strong as hate. There was of course another very popular kind of torture: non-judicial, and preludial to death. That kind of torture, he was confident, would show up later on" (*TPW*, 361–62).

> through such English poets as Hardy, Housman, and Larkin, elegising as much as eulogising over existence's inability to deliver wish-willed expectations, with life marked by a sense of loss and disappointment but also of continued hope underlined by stoicism and pragmatism. Love and life fail but there is much that is beautiful and amusing in the mismatch between human beings' reach and grasp. (Childs 2011, 5)

Clearly, as far as *The Sense of an Ending* goes, Tony's failed enquiries – as well as his dislodged sense of old-age comfort – give rise to a sentiment of failure. However, as we hope to demonstrate in the next section, the transformative force of love is presented as a source of 'hope' and a palliative against the disappointment inherent to existence.

Tony's enquiry into the nature of life as a process beyond human grasp and bounded by death is reminiscent of a similar questioning in Swift's *Last Orders*, a questioning that nonetheless yields no answers. Here, Vince is recounting the troubling experience of visiting his step-father Jack's dead body in the hospital morgue:

> You could only see his head because they'd wrapped him up in something like a pale-pink curtain or a tablecloth, right up to his chin. It was covering what he was lying on an' all. Like Jack was just his head, it wasn't a body, there wasn't no dead body.
> I went through the opening and stood beside him. It smelt cold. I thought, He don't know I'm here, he can't ever know I'm here. Unless. I thought, He aint Jack Dodds, no more than I'm Vince Dodds. Because nobody aint nobody. Because nobody aint more than just a body, than just their own body, which aint nobody.(Swift 1999, 199)

Here, Vince, like Tony, Larkin and Keith, is at pains to understand the nature of life, of what it is that keeps an individual alive because obviously, immediately after Jack's death, the body is still there but an ineffable component seems to have departed. It is precisely the attempt to define this element that leaves Vince baffled. Confrontation with the corpse also engenders a sentiment of Kristevan abjection (Kristeva 1982, 3–4) in which subjective boundaries are thrown into jeopardy and the subject is suddenly confronted with the brute reality of an existence devoid of the imaginary and symbolic guarantees that render it bearable. It is this realization of the fundamental futility of the *symbolic* order that prompts Vince to question Jack and his own 'name'. Abjection and the sudden collapse of received assumptions of subjectivity also make Vince babble on incoherently about death, a sign that the real (of death) is piercing the imaginary order and troubling the otherwise sensible symbolic 'order' of language.

In sum, a posttraumatic investigation into the nature of life – inseparable as it is from the problematic of temporality – reveals it to be radically beyond human cognition. Yet, this does not prohibit the human interpretive faculty from coming up with its consciously provisional fictions regarding what life consists of. The authors highlight how – within an ethics of immanence – life and nature are seen as involved in worldly action through human imaginative cooption of the elements. The real of existence is animistically and anthropomorphically involved in the emergence of human action, and this is as close as the narratives can get to verbalizing life. Life is thus seen as infinitely interconnected in unpredictable and incomprehensible ways. Apart from this ethical realization, life is viewed as ineffably alien, engendering at times the sentiment of the uncanny.

C. Eros: The Force of Expansion

In the psychic struggle against the return and repetition of trauma, love is presented as a redemptive force that counteracts traumatic haunting. Against the deathly collapse of temporality that trauma imposes on the psyche (through hyperarousal and temporal disjunction), love, or more precisely, the erotic principle of Eros acts as a "drive" for temporal expansion of the narrative of life, much in the manner of the life-sustaining narratives of *Arabian Nights* fending off mortality. Desire, sustained through narrative, thus nourishes the movement of becoming-other on the plane of immanence, a fact also referred to by Kristeva above (Guberman and Kristeva 1996, 26). As such, love represents not only the Freudian drive to bond with the other, but it also signifies the drive of the narrative of existence – *contra* the collapse of trauma, or Thanatos – for expansion and therapeutic recontextualization.

In *The Pregnant Widow*, within the traumatic inquiry into Violet's death, it is shown that love can be a transformative force in the generation of healing from trauma. Apropos, Keith alludes to George Herbert's poem "Love Bade Me Welcome" (reproducing it in full and inserting his commentary within it), and points out its significant message for someone suffering from trauma and ambivalence toward himself as well as the other:

> Now he returned to his list, and added a sixth item: 6) Love. And he found the poem with no trouble at all.
> Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
> Guiltie of dust and sinne.
> But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
> From my first entrance in,
> Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
> If I lack'd any thing.
> A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here:
> Love said, You shall be he.
> I the unkinde, ungratefull? Ah my deare,
> I cannot look on thee.
> The poem, which was essentially a religious poem, continued, and there was a happy ending.
> Forgiveness, and miraculous acquiescence:
> Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
> Who made the eyes but I?
> Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame

> Go where it doth deserve.
> And know you not, sayes Love, who bore the blame?
> My deare, then I will serve.
> You must sit down, sayes Love, and taste my meat:
> So I did sit and eat. (*TPW*, 109–10).

It is partially the power of (self-)forgiveness and acceptance (as highlighted by Keith) that in the end enables Keith's searching mind to establish a rapprochement with his traumas and ambivalent feelings. The transformative power of nonjudgmental love, forgiveness and compassion extended toward the other of his sister – as well as to life – acts as a "miraculous" agent of healing, containing also hints of spirituality and transcendence.

Keith's healing – his final acceptance of the ineluctability of death as integral to immanent becoming – could be construed as an instance of post-traumatic growth (PTG for short) as theorized by Tedeschi and Calhoun in 1995 and summarized by Barry Stampfl:

> The idea of 'resilience' introduces uplifting themes to the study of trauma. Along these lines, ideas of 'rebirth' or 'redemption' come into play, ideas which exceed the concept of recovery defined merely as the return of normal functioning. The transcendent potential of traumatization is articulated clearly in clinical context in the phenomenon of 'posttraumatic growth', defined as the positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances. (Stampfl 2012, 136)

In the novel, embracing compassion and love comes to represent this transcendent potential of the traumatic experience. To reinforce this overture to the possibility of transformative love, the planet Venus is associated with love and Violet, probably also because of the metonymically identical initial letter. On a few occasions, the presence of the real of trauma is juxtaposed with a mention of Venus, such as the time "Venus rose" (*TPW*, 183) when Keith is said to be withdrawing to his "shed", a movement symbolizing traumatic dissociation.

Amis's fascination with the theme of love as a powerful, yet problematic force in existence is reflected elsewhere in the novel. Keith who is madly in love with Scheherazade is said to have always been what Lily calls him a 'slag for love'. Throughout his life, we also learn, he had always "wanted to be romantic" (*TPW*, 315). Here is Keith giving Whittaker an account of his painful childhood crushes when he was a schoolboy. Whittaker begins by cautioning him against falling even more deeply in love with Scheherazade:

> "… Keith, a word of fatherly advice. When you gaze at her at dinner. Your eyes get wet. And you have a *wronged* look. Careful with that."
> Keith said, "This is nothing. I used to get myself bedridden with crushes when I was a kid. The teacher'd call, and my mother'd have to nurse me through it. This is nothing."
> "I thought—aren't adopted people supposed to be cautious about love?"
> "Yeah, they usually are. But I'd had this huge success early on, with Violet. And I must've thought, I don't know, I must've thought I could make girls love me. All I had to do was love them, and they'd love me back … Scheherazade's nothing. I just admire her from afar." (*TPW*, 98–99)

Adopted Keith, whose first (platonic) object of love was his half-sister Violet, highlights the unhappiness and complication that arise when one is in love. With regard to his own feelings, the narrative voice (later revealed as Keith's superego) states, "But it was love that was the trouble. Because that was what he had …" (*TPW*, 109–10). To the romantically-minded Keith, love represents a supreme emotion, yet it is a force that lies beyond his understanding, or rather, a force that becomes cumbersome when it gets caught in the human cultural complications. Here again, the unnatural – or humanly devised – man/animal divide leads to misery for Keith. At dinner, Keith has a hard time keeping his eyes off Scheherazade:

> During dinner Keith had made a conscious effort not to gaze at Scheherazade, and he was surprised by how straightforward he found it—and surprised by how suavely he jawed and quipped and wielded his irons. Until he did in fact take an angled glance. Her face was already fixed on his: unblinking, decidedly particular, as always, decidedly personal, and (he thought) quietly enquiring. With her mouth in the shape of a levelled longbow. And from then on, and throughout, not gazing at her became as onerous as anything he had ever attempted. How to deny yourself vital essence? When it's there in front of you. How to do it? (*TPW*, 100)

Keith's assertion of love as "vital essence" is in keeping with an ethics of immanence, in that the affect of love – or Eros in Freudian terminology – is the pre-cognitive, biological force of binding that joins beings, giving rise to new lines of flight of being. Love is thus the guarantor of the vitality of Being. However, caught in the pre-established symbolic order, Keith is unable to succumb to love or to actualize his passionate feelings: Keith is of a lower social class than Scheherazade, who was "from another world" (*TPW*, 20), Lily's best friend and already in a relationship. In the above extract, Keith is demonstrated as socially – or *humanly* – compelled to devise wily erotic strategies to steal a glimpse of his love object. The question he poses

regarding the human social obligation to say no to erotic happiness – thus suppressing the vitality of the immanence of life – is perhaps one of the central concerns of his narrative, one that has kept thinkers and writers busy for centuries.

Further on in the narrative, Keith discusses his strategies for seducing Sheherazade, or his 'policy'. This involves a stripping away of the cultural inhibitions against coveting a forbidden object of love: "And he had a new project or policy. Carnalisation. Falling out of love with the loved one" (*TPW*, 114). Keith's choice of phrase points to his confused status as a human being caught between nature and nurture. His wicked design to sleep with Scheherazade is a return to his carnal nature, unadulterated by culture, yet he calls it a falling out of love with her. Keith cannot decide whether one can 'love' within the pure carnality of nature. Put otherwise, it seems as if for Keith, love is possible in the symbolic order of culture and language, where he is already barred from Sheherazade. This demonstrates Keith's very human confusion as a wavering being, a socially constructed subject whose existence is always-already defined by lack and confusion.

Keith's confused position vis-à-vis 'love' and its social inhibition is also apparent in the carefully-selected setting of the castle where D. H. Lawrence is said to have stayed with his partner Frieda who had eloped with him. Not only Lawrence but also another author who had engaged in the socially unacceptable practice of elopement, John Donne, crops up in Keith's veiled allusion to him. At some point, Keith is watching Sheherazade scratch a mosquito bite on her arm: "she kept scratching at the little red swell on the paler side of her forearm where, the night before, a mosquito had inserted its syringe" (*TPW*, 164). This evokes Donne's sonnet in which he employs the 'metaphysical conceit' of the flea's body where the lovers' "bloods mingled be", prompting Donne to implore his beloved not to commit sacrilege by killing the sacred 'temple' of the flea[103].

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[103] The Flea
Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is;
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
Thou know'st that this cannot be said
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,
Yet this enjoys before it woo,
And pampered swells with one blood made of two,
And this, alas, is more than we would do.
Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, nay more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our mariage bed, and marriage temple is;

In the end, Keith's 'superego' declares that Keith had been unable to find happiness through love or what is presented as the hallmark of culture in his youth, sex. We learn that he marries three times – with Gloria, Lily and Conchita – and that, "With Gloria it was just sex, with Lily it was just love. Then he married Conchita, and he was all right" (*TPW*, 355).

Amis's discussion of the theme of love as an extraordinary force in existence appears in works before *The Pregnant Widow*, most notably in *London Fields* where we read about the speed at which love brings about change: "If love travels at the speed of light then it could have other powers just on the edge of the possible" (Amis 2010, 470). Thus, love is believed by Amis to possess great affective possibilities. Yet, Love is also avowed to be on the way out in human interactions. In the thoughts of Nicola Six the murderee, we read, "Perhaps love *was* dying, was already dead. One more catastrophe. The death of God was possibly survivable in the end. But if love was going the same way, if love was going out with God ..." (Amis 2010, 132). In the wake of the Nietzschean announcement of the death of God after the publication of Darwin's theories, a declaration that highlighted the loss of cultural moorings throughout the 20th century and beyond, Nicola suspects that Love, as the essence of life as Amis later admits, is on the wane in the dying years of the last century. Here is another excerpt from her notes: "Oh the very land where they grew the trees that yielded the paper for writing love-letters on - its soil was dying, neutered with chemicals, overworked, worked to dust. She had this idea about the death of love . . ." (Amis 2010, 196).

In Amis's dark world of money, violence, death and pornography, love is not the only thing that lies slain in the universe that the novel portrays. Nearly everything appears sickly and waning. The narrative shares more of Nicola's meditations on the state of the world and the petering presence of love in the daily human transactions:

Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that, self-murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.
Cruel and sudden, hast thou since
Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?
Wherein could this flea guilty be,
Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?
Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou
Find'st not thy self, nor me the weaker now;
'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be:
Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee. (Donne 2000, 1263)

> As for the death of love . . . Was it really coming? Was it already here? Naturally she had wondered, as all artists do, whether she was just arguing out from her own peculiarity. But now the news was abroad and everybody was talking about it. … The diagnosis was in on love, the diagnosis was coming in; and love was as weak as a kitten, and pitifully confused, and not nearly strong enough to be brave or even understand. Dying, the human being can formulate a strategy for death, gentle or defiant; but then death moves in completely and decides to run the show, at some point, near the end. Near the death. (She wasn't having any of that. *She* would be running things right up to the very last second.) And now the twentieth century had come along and after several try-outs and test-drives it put together an astonishing new offer: death for everybody. Death for everybody, by hemlock or hardware. If you imagined *love* as a force, not established and not immutable, patched together by all best intentions, kindness, forgiveness — what does love do about death for everybody? It throws up its hands, and gets weaker, and sickens. It is crowded out by its opposite. Love has at least two opposites. One is hate. One is death. (Amis 2010, 297)

For Amis, who takes a very grim view of postmodernism, the last years of the 20th century appear to be marked by a universal death, cultural as well as physical, an outlook that culminates in the publication of *Lionel Asbo*. The piece could be read as a plea for ethical awareness and for an almost metamodern assertion of the values of love and kindness: metamodern in that the dying plea is uttered in a spirit of hope against a background of hopelessness; As Vermeulen states, "hope is not simply something to distrust" (Potter and Vermeulen 2016, n.pag.). The narrative voice goes even further and likens the cultural death of the end of the 20th century to the literal death of a human being where proximity to death amounts to a stripping away of the dying subject's powers and possibilities. To Amis, once humanity enters this zone, there is no going back and even love – which possesses the much-needed regenerative force – will have withered away by then.

In *Wish You Were Here*, the dynamics of life from the Freudian perspective of the conflict between the erotic principle and Thanatos also leaves its imprint on the novel. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud declares, "we shall be compelled to say that *'the aim of all life is death'*" (Freud 1989, 613), where death represents inexcitability or homeostasis. Freud also notes the coexistence of what he terms Eros and Thanatos thus: "It is as though the life of the organism moved with a vacillating rhythm. One group of instincts rushes forward so as to reach the final aim of life as swiftly as possible; but when a particular stage in the advance has been reached, the other group jerks back to a certain point to make a fresh start and so prolong the journey" (Freud 1989, 615). In Swift's novel, this tension is demonstrated in the

guise of Ellie's erotic excitement at the insertion of her finger into the hole made in the tree by the bullet that had killed Michael. Eros, characterized by intersubjective erotic attraction, paves the way for the expansion of the narrative of life, a narrative that trauma collapses to an unintegrated past. Erotic love is thus a manifestation of desire – or the Life force – that cuts across the plane of immanence, prolonging the life journeys of diverse beings.

Existence is further depicted as an ineluctable *cycle* of birth and death, where one sustains the other in an age-old ecology. For instance, the sick dog Luke's remains are said to resemble a calf's birth scene at the same time as nourishing scavenging animals. We read, "Tom said there'd been a lot of blood and stuff left on the grass. The crows and buzzards and the weather would have to take care of that. Tom said it looked like where a ewe had dumped an afterbirth" (*WYWH*, 144). The centrality of death to the narrative of life – or of entropy to autopoiesis – in Swiftian fiction had already been highlighted in *Last Orders* where the entire narrative consists of conversations held around the urn containing Jack's ashes. In the same novel, acceptance of death as part of life, even as a means of making a *living* by the undertaker – whose surname, Tucker, points to his profession – is underlined as integral to a grounded view of life. In this extract, Tucker recounts how his father had introduced him to the profession early on, as a means of dissuading him from joining the navy:

> He said he wouldn't hold me to it, I should choose my own life. Just because he and Gramps, just because the name of Tucker. But at least I shouldn't decide without knowing, and seeing, at least I shouldn't decide against out of unfounded fears. So I said yes, like it was my test. So he showed me, explaining, and I saw that there was, really, nothing to fear, nothing to be afraid of. It even made you feel a little calmer, surer. I was fourteen years old, the two of us together in the parlour. Three of us. So later I said, 'Yes, all right.' Your life cut out for you, your chances altered. And then it was too late to have any other foolish notions, like running away to sea. (Swift 1999, 125–26)

Thus, a wise, calm and sure embrace of the ineluctable eventuality of death is demonstrated as grounding the subject in his existential context and forecloses the possibility of deracination, a fate that befell Tom who ran away and joined the army, only to return home as a fragmented corpse. In Alexandra Mărginean's analysis, this insight is expressed in the following words: "The awakening to life equals a turn towards a death drive, which ultimately seeks to prove life. In most of Swift's novels life and death are separated by blurred lines, and sometimes overlap and engender each other" (Mărginean 2014, 1140).

Yet the author who foregrounds the significance of the erotic principle in its struggle against the death drive is Julian Barnes whose precociously intellectual character Adrian explicitly discusses the Freudian insights as part of his commentary on poetry. Tony's youth coincided with the popularity of I. A. Richards' literary technique of practical criticism[104], whereby short lesser-known poems would be stripped of their titles and handed out in class for personal appreciation and commentary. In the following extract, Adrian Finn, whose name also evokes a feeling of an ending, comments on a poem handed out for practical criticism, in terms of the Freudian Eros/Thanatos conflict:

> That afternoon, he handed out a poem with no title, date or author's name, gave us ten minutes to study it, then asked for our responses.
> 'Shall we start with you, Finn? Put simply, what would you say this poem is about?'
> Adrian looked up from his desk. 'Eros and Thanatos, sir.'
> 'Hmm. Go on.'
> 'Sex and death,' Finn continued, as if it might not just be the thickies in the back row who didn't understand Greek. 'Or love and death, if you prefer. The erotic principle, in any case, coming into conflict with the death principle. And what ensues from that conflict. Sir.' (*TSE*, 6)

Adrian Barlow (Barlow 2016, n.pag.) believes the poem under analysis to have been a fragment from Eliot's verse drama *Sweeney Agonistes* (Birth, copulation and death, /That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks; /Birth, copulation and death). In the eternal Freudian conflict of love and death, the ultimate outcome serves the dictates of the death principle as the final aim of "the pleasure principle" is a state of pleasurable inexcitability, its function being to "free the mental apparatus entirely from excitation or to keep the amount of excitation in it constant or to keep it as low as possible. … it is clear that the function thus described would be concerned with the most universal endeavour of all living substance – namely to return to the quiescence

[104] "The critical method originating from I.A. Richards's *Practical Criticism* (1929), a work recording a teaching experiment at Cambridge in which students were asked to analyze unidentified texts. In its broad sense, practical criticism is thus synonymous with 'close reading' or the French *explication de texte*. But, historically, it came to mean something much more specific and contentious, the New Critical doctrine of 'intrinsic' analysis which encouraged students to read a text (usually a short poem) as an isolated object, exploring its internal structure and functioning without reference to, say, its author's biography or its historical context. In its pure form this would mean asking the reader to interpret Milton's 'When I consider how my light is spent' without knowing that he was blind, or Blake's 'Tyger' without knowing that the tiger was a contemporary metaphor for the French Revolution" (Wright 2010, n.pag.).

of the inorganic world" (Freud 1989, 625). Hence, Freud's pronouncement of the aim of life as death. In the following extract, Robson's suicide, allegedly on the discovery of his girlfriend's pregnancy, has just been announced in the morning assembly. A discussion ensues back in class:

> At assembly one morning, the headmaster, in the sombre voice he kept for expulsions and catastrophic sporting defeats, announced that he was the bearer of grievous news, namely that Robson of the Science Sixth had passed away during the weekend. Over a susurrus of awed mutterings, he told us that Robson had been cut down in the flower of youth, that his demise was a loss to the whole school, and that we would all be symbolically present at the funeral. Everything, in fact, except what we wanted to know: how, and why, and if it turned out to be murder, by whom.
>
> 'Eros and Thanatos,' Adrian commented before the day's first lesson. 'Thanatos wins again.' (*TSE*, 13)

Barnes is affirming the centrality of death to the human narrative of transformation and becoming in unambiguous terms.

Elsewhere in the novel, Barnes also associates death with love. In Barnes's view, subjectivity is suffused with the presence of (an evolving narrative of) the other. Yet, when it comes to involvement in an amorous relationship, the other-oriented subjectivity – already denoted in the idiom "getting under somebody's skin" – is also portrayed as afflicted with mourning. In the novel, the dish *Poulet en demi-deuil* comes to represent the constant mental presence of the fear of mortality of the loved other. In a world where one becomes the other, through the transformative power of love, the loved other's anticipated death becomes as painful as one's own mortality. In this extract, Tony realizes that the only person who could aid him to pinpoint the events of the past is Veronica:

> The only possible witness, the only corroborator, was Veronica.
>
> I said I wanted to get under her skin, didn't I? It's an odd expression, and one that always makes me think of Margaret's way of roasting a chicken. …
>
> Margaret told me of a French way of doing this which is even fancier. They put slices of black truffle under the skin—and do you know what they call it? Chicken in Half-Mourning. I suppose the recipe dates from the time people used to wear nothing but black for a few months, grey for another few months, and only slowly return to the colours of life. Full-, Half-, Quarter-Mourning. I don't know if those were the terms, but I know the gradations of dress were fully

> tabulated. …
> Sorry, that's a bit off the track. I wanted to get under her skin, that's what I said, didn't I? Did I mean what I thought I meant by it, or something else? "I've Got You Under My Skin"—that's a love song, isn't it? (*TSE*, 109–10)

This extract bears the explicitly postmodern stamp of a shifting perspective, with the narrator "either disconcertingly multiple and hard to locate … or resolutely provisional and limited" (Hutcheon 1988, 11). Hesitantly, through a self-effacing shift in perspective, Tony proffers his theory of Love as a painful process of becoming-other, characterized from the beginning by the thoughts of the vulnerability and mortality of the other for Barnes, who had lost his wife Pat Kavanagh a short while before publishing *The Sense of an Ending*. The hesitation and loss of verbal coherence could also be attributed to the discursive struggle to verbalize the real of the death of the loved one. Tony's verbal divagation is similar in its origins to Vince's befuddlement at the sight of Jack's corpse.

The theme of mourning as a *sine qua non* of love – or the essential coexistence of the two – had already appeared in the Barnesian oeuvre. In *Flaubert's Parrot*, Tony Braithwaite, the widower recounts:

> When she dies, you are not at first surprised. Part of love is preparing for death. You feel confirmed in your love when she dies. You got it right. This is part of it all.
> Afterwards comes the madness. And then the loneliness: not the spectacular solitude you had anticipated, not the interesting martyrdom of widowhood, but just loneliness. You expect something almost geological – vertigo in a shelving canyon – but it's not like that; it's just misery as regular as a job. What do we doctors say? I'm deeply sorry, Mrs Blank; there will of course be a period of mourning but rest assured you will come out of it;…
> And then it happens to you. There's no glory in it. Mourning is full of time; nothing but time. (Barnes 2009a, 160)

As such, the anticipation of the death of the other also forms a strand of the multiple temporalities of Being. Dialogue with the death of the loved one is an expanding narrative inextricable from the narrative of one's own mortality. Love is thus demonstrated as indistinguishable from a prolonged melancholia with no immediate remedy to hand.

Apart from demonstrating the intimate link between the transformative affect of love, mortality and becoming-other, Barnes's ideas on love carry great significance for an immanent

analysis of existence. Love is a subject that is close to Barnes's heart as he declares in an interview with Guignery and Roberts:

> It seems to me blindingly obvious that all novelists ought to write about love because it's what most people are most intensely interested in for at least some part of their lives. And it defines them, at the time and thereafter. So I don't think there is any problem about why I, or any writer, or any reader, should be interested in it. … I think the difficulty of talking about love, though, is that you might end up sounding like an advice center. And I don't believe a novelist is an advice center in any shape or form. … As soon as you start making any general remarks outside the context of a novel, I think you risk sounding either pompous or smug or like an advice columnist in a magazine. (Guignery and Roberts 2009, 167)

Barnes not only writes about love but he also prescribes it as a legitimate subject for all novelists. His preference for love arises from its affective intensity in the formation and evolution of subjectivity. To Barnes, this intensity is what defines the human subjectivity, particularly against a backdrop of postmodern irony and preference for indeterminacy. Yet, the difficulty involved in any discussion of love in the narrative is that it could end up 'sounding like an advice center', prescriptive, didactic or moralistic. The second reason why Barnes is interested in love is that it ties in with his interest in the vagaries of memory and its aptness for the postmodern elaboration of a perspectivist outlook on existence. Barnes states:

> I think one of the reasons that love is such a rich subject is that it is where, more than any other area of life, the participants' memories differ. There is a newspaper color magazine article every week in which they have a couple who have broken up some years ago and they get each to describe their past relationship and how it worked and how it didn't work. And the disparity between the two examples is extraordinary. (Guignery and Roberts 2009, 167–68)

Barnes's most vivid, detailed and poignant discussion of love occurs in the half-chapter "Parenthesis" in *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, avowed to be "entirely" (M. Ignatieff and J. Barnes qtd in Guignery 2006, 63) autobiographical. This essayistic excursus is essentially a treatise on love, in which Barnes, who "no longer hides behind the masks of his pseudonyms or narrators" (Guignery 2006, 64), defends love against more 'tangible' notions:

> This is difficult territory. We must be precise, and we mustn't become sentimental. If we are to oppose love to such wily, muscled concepts as power, money, history and death, then we mustn't retreat into self-celebration or snobby vagueness. Love's enemies profit from its

> unspecific claims, its grand capacity for isolationism. So where do we start? Love may or may not produce happiness; whether or not it does in the end, its primary effect is to energize. Have you ever talked so well, needed less sleep, returned to sex so eagerly, as when you were first in love? The anaemic begin to glow, while the normally healthy become intolerable. Next, it gives spine-stretching confidence. You feel you are standing up straight for the first time in your life; you can do anything while this feeling lasts, you can take on the world. (Shall we make this distinction: that love enhances the confidence, whereas sexual conquest merely develops the ego?) Then again, it gives clarity of vision: it's a windscreen wiper across the eyeball. Have you ever seen things so clearly as when you were first in love? (Barnes 1989, 231–32)

Against power and money which build 'walls' of identity according to Massumi[105], against history which is replete with trauma, and against death which epitomizes the human fear of annihilation, Barnes proposes the power of love. Love's primary function – apart from its "grand capacity for" subversive "isolationism" – is to infuse the subject with the desire and "energy" to "stand up" to flattening Thanatos, whose cultural manifestations are power, money and history. One could even claim that within an immanent conception of existence, non-teleological love would be the Life force or desire that sustains the innumerable processes of becoming-other unfolding at any given moment. It is noteworthy that akin to Amis, Barnes distinguishes between love and loveless sexuality, offering reasons strikingly similar to the ones Amis propounds. Interestingly, Amis also discusses love and loveless sexuality in terms reminiscent of the Freudian concepts of Eros and Thanatos, or in Keith's case, trauma: "Love (he knew) made the world expand; this (whatever it was) reduced the world to a single point" (*TPW*, 266).

Additionally, the Barnesian conception of love is also said to act as a viable palliative against the backdrop of the postmodern loss of grand truth claims. In an excerpt from Barnes's interview with Alexander Stuart quoted by Guignery, Barnes attests to love as the only truth left in the wake of postmodernism: "what do we put against this horrible 24-wheeler called

[105] In this extract, Massumi writes about identities and the violence of the affective force that breaks down received boundaries. In his foreword to Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, he writes of this force in the context of his discussion of immanent, or "nomad thought" which, "Rather than analyzing the world into discrete components, reducing their manyness to the One of identity, and ordering them by rank, it sums up a set of disparate circumstances in a shattering blow. It synthesizes a multiplicity of elements without effacing their heterogeneity or hindering their potential for future rearranging (to the contrary). The modus operandi of nomad thought is affirmation, even when its apparent object is negative. Force is not to be confused with power. Force arrives from outside to break constraints and open new vistas. Power builds walls" (Massumi 1987, xiii).

history that's thumping along with a tiny little trailer called politics behind it? And if we don't think that religion is true, it would be very nice, because we're novelists, to think that art was the answer. But art doesn't work for everyone, so love seems to be the one you accept" (A. Stuart and J. Barnes qtd in Guignery 2006, 64). Peter Childs' commentary on love in the Barnesian oeuvre touches upon similar points and declares the sovereignty of love in a postmodern age of a lost belief in the forward march of history:

> Barnes has said that against history bearing down on the individual can be put three things: religion, art, and love. Religion, he thinks, is not true, art does not satisfy everyone, and so love is the final 'fall-back position'. By contrast, history is seen as impersonal; it leaves out the most important human elements – faith, aesthetics, affect – and its march of progress, power, and politics leaves many casualties. (Childs 2011, 73)

This reaffirms Barnes position on love as humanity's last resort against the impersonal and destructive forces of history. Crucially, Childs touches on the notion of 'affect' – in addition to faith and aesthetics – as capable of being rejuvenated through the energizing force of love. Through affect and the restoration of the will to live together – or ethically – love acts as a poultice on the traumatic scars left on the human soul in the name of 'progress', 'power' and 'politics'. With regard to the Barnesian love as an affective force that bestows meaning upon an otherwise drab existence Childs writes, "Love may be marginalised in old and current 'news', but it is a motivating, directing, inspiring force which stops history from being absurd" (Childs 2011, 71).

In a manner similar to Childs's commentary, Rossi states that "Barnes is able to find an antidote to the overwhelming impossibility to find the truth, this antidote being love" (Rossi 2016, 171). Further on, still glossing on Barnes, he deems love as being able to "satisfy the human need for something to believe in: as we cannot believe in the truth of history, as there is no truth, we can at least believe in that strong, powerful emotion called love" (Rossi 2016, 172). Truth, or more precisely truth as humanly perceptible, is thus emotional or *affective* in nature, as epitomized in the grand emotion of love. Barnes further suggests that if there is any transcendental quality to life, it resides in the experience of love, concluding that "It gives us our humanity, and also our mysticism. There is more to us than us" (Barnes 1989, 243). It is noteworthy that according to Childs, love covers a vast gamut of affective emotions of overture to – and bonding with – the other: "Barnes focuses on romantic love, but other forms of love,

particularly familial, are amenable to similar deployment as forces that history largely overlooks, but without which there would be no humanity" (Childs 2011, 71).

Thus love and ordinary human emotions that bind human beings to one another, be it in the family or in a social or global context, are the forces that preserve our humanity. Barnes's emphasis on love lays it "vulnerable to charges of sentimentality" (Merritt Moseley qtd in Guignery 2006, 64), yet sentimentality – of the type that 'comes off' in fiction – is held by Barnes to be the hallmark of genuine humanity. That said, Barnes cautions against the kind of sentimentality which is conducive to violence. In answer to Guignery's question about his views on sentimentality in fiction, whether he is against it, Barnes replies:

> No. I don't think I'm entirely against sentimentality, and what I mean by that I'll come to in a moment. But I don't feel that is something I might fall into myself. There's a fairly small chance of my becoming sentimental in my writing or in my person. I don't think I have a sentimental side; I'm suspicious of sentimentality. In my experience, sentimentality often goes with cruelty. People who are cruel are often sentimental. By "sentimental" I mean "falsely emotional," I mean "putting it on," "avoiding things that you ought to be emotional about, or that real people are emotional about, and being emotional about trivial or false things." But there is a form of sentimentality which I applaud. Alain-Fournier, writing to his friend Jacques Rivière about a hundred years ago, said, "Sentimentality is when it doesn't come off-when it does, you get a true expression of life's sorrow." I'm in favor of that kind of sentimentality. (Guignery and Roberts 2009, 168)

True sentimentality of the type that reveals the poignancy of human existence is thus held to be a sign of affect, arising from events that extract an emotional response from the witness. Barnes's professed inclination towards genuine emotional response, or its sincerity, foreshadows an incident in *The Sense of an Ending* where Adrian vents his anger at the constant flippancy of his friends towards questions of existential import. He vehemently declares, "'I *hate* the way the English have of not being serious about being serious. I *really hate* it'" (*TSE*, 33). This avowal of the need for sincerity – or the avoidance of indeterminacy for indeterminacy's sake – represents a move beyond postmodern irony, a sentiment one could characterize as representing a metamodernist (or reconstructionist) streak in the Barnesian oeuvre. Apropos the Barnesian penchant for sincere sentimentality and love, a fitting statement by Timotheus Vermeulen – who acknowledges the awkward necessity of grand narratives to his generation – would be: "love [is] not necessarily something to be ridiculed" (Potter and Vermeulen 2016, n.pag.). Writing about *The Sense of an Ending* and its display of a tentative,

faltering move beyond postmodernism (at the same time as employing techniques germane to it), Oliver Paynel also holds that Barnes "elucidates the redemptive aesthetic possibilities inherent in the intermingling of an evaporating postmodern sensibility with the vapours of an emergent 'new sincerity'" (Paynel 2014, 16).

In conclusion, love acts as the transformative affect that brings about a bonding with the other – as opposed to the traumatic separation ensuing the loss of the power to affect the other. Another sentiment that comes close to love is compassion – which amounts to nonjudgmental forgiveness – and as such, paves the way for release from the ghost of trauma. Love, forgiveness and compassion are such potent emotions that they are held to be on a par with the transcendentally "miraculous". Additionally, the affect of love also does away with subjective boundaries and allows for the erotic object of love to live as if under the subject's skin. In this sense, the poignancy of love – at the thought of the other's eventual mortality – is not dissimilar to melancholia, albeit one preferable to the rife destruction wrought by the forces of power and history.

Conclusion

This study set out to gain a better understanding of trauma and its concomitant haunting as reflected specifically in *The Pregnant Widow* (2011), *Wish You Were Here* (2012) and *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), narratives that arise from, and allude to the contemporary sense of global existential insecurity and vulnerability. Our aim was to investigate the implications of trauma and spectrality for the narrative economy as reflecting the wider social and cultural concerns. We aimed to demonstrate how spectrality and "possession" by trauma represent not only an internal psychical struggle to 'work through' trauma, but how this struggle also impacts and alters the protagonists' deep-seated notions of subjectivity. We were interested to learn if and how the various manifestations of trauma – personal as well as social – were (re)presented in the text and how the textual manifestation of trauma proved or contradicted certain established views of trauma as theorized in the academia over the past three decades. Additionally, we aimed to learn more about the dynamics arising out of the textual interaction between narrativity and trauma, as narrativity is a visibly foregrounded metafictional element in the corpus. Our concern was to know whether the fiction-trauma interaction is one in which literature allows for a richer elaboration of trauma beyond its conception as cognitive void, and whether metafictional foregrounding of narrativity points to any tendency beyond postmodern revelation of reality as a fictive construct.

Every section of the dissertation conducted a discussion of a different aspect of spectrality as reflected in the textual fabric of the narratives; the chapters discussed how haunting foregrounds and changes the protagonists' views of selfhood and its dynamic relation to alterity, the place of trauma and its appearance in subjectivity, and finally, the novels' elaboration of the meaning of life alongside with temporality and love. Chapter one dealt with how traumatic encounter with death generates a questioning and redefinition of the idea of selfhood in the novels and depicted how the three protagonists end up with a revised understanding of selfhood by the end of the narrative. In our investigation into the textual 'symptoms' of trauma, the self/other divide is revealed to be porous and undecidable, with the ghost (of the dead or an imagined view of the living) portrayed as an integral part of the protagonists' consciousness. Moreover, the faculty of imagination, with its tendency to trope, animate objects and associate them melancholically with painful memories of the loss of love objects is portrayed as the chief means by which the ghost of trauma, or that of any absent character, 'possesses' the protagonists' consciousness. Further inquiry by the corpus authors

also reveals the traumatized ego to be a self-told narrative aimed at sustaining a coherent 'plot', with plot being a self-told story of one's life with a view to its accomplishment before the end-point of death. This self-fashioned fictive construct is carved out of the (imagined) desires of the other, leaving little room for any originary and unadulterated notion of selfhood. This realization is shown as undermining individualistic notions of subjectivity and certainty with regard to past memories. It also reveals subjectivity – and being – as always-already a narrative becoming. A deepening realization of the self as haunted by the (dead or living) other as well as their shared vulnerability in an equally vulnerable world constitutes the narratives' foremost ethical insight. A vision of subjectivity characterized by a leakage of existential borders renders all participants in Being responsible toward one another.

The blurred self/fiction divide also sheds light on the dynamics of reading as the self is understood to be yet another fiction to be constantly reinterpreted, with trauma acting as the engine of this internal hermeneutic relationship. Additionally, trauma, as its own spectral and incessant return in the future, a return demanding audience, is conceived of as mirroring literary interpretation – as epitomized by Barnes's *The Sense of an Ending* which could be construed as an allegory of interpretation. A great work of literature that lodges itself in the reader's mind amounts to a potentially self-begetting dialogue, or put differently, a ceaseless expansion of an ongoing interpretation. A ghost composed of other ghosts, the literary text keeps returning in the reader's mind, demanding a fresh reading, a new interpretation, or put in psychoanalytic terms, a transferential dialogue that lasts forever, even until death. As such, any return of the literary text – or any "event" of reading – is (mildly) traumatic, demands reinterpretation, and is akin to the hyperarousal undergone by a victim of trauma.

Chapter two related how the revision of subjectivity at the insistent bidding of traumatic repetition results in a re-evaluation of outlook toward the 'place' of traumatic occurrence. The ideas of national identity and belonging to a place were demonstrated as evolving, against a background of existential threat, rootlessness and postmodern loss of cultural and historical direction, a time 'out of joint', or the era of 'the pregnant widow'. In keeping with the ethos of uncertainty characterizing the contemporary era, specifically faced with the threat of terrorism, economic upheaval and the ongoing postmodern incredulity to grand truths, a recurrent motif in the novels is the figure of a dead, suicidal, absent or feeble father figure as the weakened shadow of a figure of authority. Furthermore, common to at least two of the novels is a questioning of nature as the spectral other that haunts and subverts contemporary culture in the guise of physical violence, moral decrepitude and 'sexual echolalia' in Amis's words. Here again, the ghost-triggered enquiry leads to a blurring of the nurture/nature or human/animal

dichotomy, as violent animalistic drives are demonstrated to be haunting the other of civilization, culminating in the recurrent circularity of war and bloodshed along humanity's as-yet incomplete evolutionary path. Worse still, as Swift demonstrates, preserving familial and national culture in the character's imaginary order is undertaken through the transmission of increasingly fictitious heroic narratives, concealing their traumatic origins, and perpetuating violence across generations.

In the third and final section, we demonstrated how personal and cultural enquiries develop to encompass issues of greater significance than nationhood: all narratives orchestrate a struggle to comprehend one's significance in the universe, or the meaning of life, in a world where daily life is heavily tinged with the traumatic, 'liquid' fear of survival in the face of religious extremism and war. Traumatic death, whether personal or on a national scale, and its attendant haunting engender a sense of temporal disjunction, unleash intrusive memories and deconstruct temporal sequence through hyperarousal. These symptoms prompt a questioning of the nature of time, as the texts explore temporality as key to an understanding of an existence haunted by a past or an anticipated trauma. The outcome is a weakening of the life/death binary divide and an affirmation of transformation, interconnectedness and becoming as the essence of time and existence. Time is thus defined as a criss-crossing of diverse becomings at differing speeds. Furthermore, the novels highlight the currently incomprehensible yet 'perfect' nature of existence which is presented as being beyond human expression and lying outside the human symbolic order, perhaps as another manifestation of the Lacanian real whose presence is registered in the symbolic order. The novels thus echo Wittgenstein who referred to the inability of human language to refer to what lies beyond it.

On a discursive level, the novels register an ethical attempt at doing justice to the entirety of existence through the deployment of metaphorical structures that enmesh various life forms, notably the human, animal and the machine. In addition, the authors remind the reader of humanity's limited capabilities and vantage point with regard to its desire to comprehend the nature of existence. All these authors can do is merely to resort to symbols such as the unruly river or the oak tree, to embody the organic fluidity of life. This avowal of limits is indicative of a yearning for a communion with the source of life, albeit one that embraces the totality of being and becoming – animal, human, machine, plant, the so-called sacred and profane – in an ethical and non-reductive fashion, eschewing recourse to transcendence and affirming the immanence of Being. Central to the plane of immanence of Being is the affective force of love, or in Freudian terms Eros, with its function being to join individual beings. In addition to the therapeutic function of narrativity, love is presented as a

binding force countering trauma – which compels the victim to withdraw its libidinal investment. Along with its erotic connotations, love is also held to be tantamount to forgiveness extended to the other, as well as to oneself. This is demonstrated as a life-affirming gesture allowing victims to transcend traumatic haunting.

Overall, the ghost of trauma is a destabilizing figure that reveals many received borders as porous. Moreover, the conceptual borders are depicted as untenable fictive impositions upon an otherwise unclassifiable nature. As variously orchestrated by the corpus narratives, some of the dichotomous borders of subjectivity that get eroded by the indeterminacy germane to spectrality are: s*elf/other/narrative, life/death, masculine/feminine, nature/nurture* and finally, *man/animal/machine*. Arising from the heart of poststructuralism (as represented in the works of Kristeva, Barthes and Derrida), the ghost is a figure that highlights the processuality of the subjective boundaries in a universal movement of becoming. This becoming unfolds on the plane of immanence of Nature. The figure of the ghost chips away at an egocentric notion of subjectivity, as all beings in Nature are demonstrated to be processual and connected. In this context, narrativity points to its own merely *human* significance as well as its discursively constructed nature. The ghost further adds the dimension of historicity (diachrony) to these infinite becomings, a move that extends the context of cultural, literary and ethical analysis – as well as responsibility – indefinitely. The research into the implications of trauma and spectrality for subjectivity was designed to cover areas of subjectivity extending from personal to universal concerns.

The research revealed significant insights, not only about the narrative representation of trauma but also about the relevance of the problematics of spectrality to the ongoing trends and the overlapping 'turns' discussed in literary theory since the 1980s. The narratives under analysis revealed the ongoing significance and elaboration of the 'ethical turn', the 'narrative turn' and the 'affective turn', not to mention the 'spectral'. The narratives also displayed sentiments in keeping with recent 'reconstructive' movements such as 'metamodernism' alongside with the continued relevance of an attenuated postmodernism.

All these 'turns' testify to the porosity of the disciplinary borders in the academia and the ongoing nature of the dialogue between literature and its contiguous areas of knowledge. The ethical turn, commencing in the 1980s (Ganteau and Onega 2011, 7) reveals the subject as responsible toward the other, as well its own material context of existence. This context is revealed to be vast and interconnected. It is the plane of immanence of Being where individual beings are synonymous with their actions on adjoining beings. It is also the Deleuzian plane where a single action can unleash unpredictable ripple effects on neighboring beings (the other)

and the entire plane of immanence. If traumatic, these effects can potentially haunt Being – and individual beings – diachronically, across time. In its post-Levinasian and Deleuzian formulations, ethical overture to alterity on the plane of immanence is conducive to becoming-other. This comes about through a reciprocal movement of affectivity involving the other. In this context, trauma is understood to be a disruption of this intersubjective (Lorraine 2011, 130) dynamics (a process similar to dissociation, or *anticathexis*, defined by Freud as the withdrawal of libidinal investment in the love object to restore equilibrium).

The narrative turn conceives of subjectivity as defined by narrativity, borrowing insights from hermeneutics and the theory of performativity. The hermeneutic significance of existential narrativity stresses the ongoing relevance of the act of interpretation for making sense of life, an act that is avowed to have performative, real-life implications. The turn to narrative also bestows on the subject's relation to existence the dimension of a transferential dialogue which simultaneously involves the self and the other. The construction of a joint transferential relation with the other – within which relation both parties to the dialogue revise their narratives over time – is conducted in a manner informed by *affective*, emotional investment. It is through emotionally-charged overture to, and application of the other to the self that narratives of the self – as well as the other – evolve. This cooperative, transferential evolution of narrative includes narrative of trauma which would lie frozen and thus pathogenic, were it not for the thawing presence of the other – including that of the libidinally significant other (notable examples being Jack/Ellie, Tony/Veronica and Keith/Conchita couples). This narrative dialogue lasts as long as the subject lives. Hanna Meretoja sums up the narrative nature of subjectivity in the following words:

> The subject … comes to be seen as constituted in a process of narrative interpretation that takes place in a dialogical relation to socio-culturally mediated models of sense-making. As literature plays a pivotal role in renewing and transforming these narrative models, this shift entails seeing literary narratives as crucial to the process by which we interpret ourselves and our situation in the world. (Meretoja 2014, 2)

The narrative turn, along postmodern lines, posits subjectivity as a discursive construct, a mediated narrative among other equally mediated and provisional narratives. Significantly for the study of spectrality and trauma, viewing subjectivity as an evolving narrative lays it open to potentially therapeutic retelling in the wake of trauma, a retelling that unfolds intersubjectively in the presence of the other in transference.

In addition to the narrative processuality of subjectivity as reflected best in literature, a further set of influences comes from an avowal of the role of the body in the evolution of human subjectivity. The 'affective turn' inspired by the work of Deleuze and Guattari acknowledges the influence of biological forces at work in the human subjectivity. An awareness of affect reveals subjectivity and the human intellect to be governed – and thus manipulable – by pre-cognitive emotions and incomprehensible biological 'drives'. Ideas and actions are thus understood as the actual 'shapes' that arise from autonomic bodily affect. Affectivity is also the chief manner in which the plane of immanence evolves. It is through affectivity that Life flows among and across individual beings , or for that matter, gets blocked in the case of trauma (understood as a disruption of affectivity). A thinking of immanence and affectivity are thus inseparable. Additionally, narrativity is demonstrated as key to a thinking of immanence as the mental expansion and re-generativity of narrative participates in the temporal expansion of the plane of immanence. In this sense, trauma understood as overwhelming affect, also becomes a potentiality for a myriad narratives of the affect of trauma and their revised versions. Affects thus contribute to the expansion of human cognition through initiating the vital necessity to verbalize and narrativize them belatedly.

The singular fascination with trauma and spectrality which is the defining feature of the narratives of the corpus places them within the general ongoing tendencies of the British fiction and its global concerns, which in Catherine Bernard's view, chiefly embraces the problematic of trauma. In the following extract, she is discussing the general subject-matter of the runners-up to the 2013 Booker Prize:

> The bitter truth in many of these novels is that of collective trauma, be it caused by ecological disaster or political tyranny. The ethics of collective care that seems to haunt many of these texts is in tune with the global turn of this year's Prize. The novel gone global, needs also to embrace global themes and to confront world-scale issues. The lonely individual is seen caught in the vice of history, and battles against historical odds. We could even argue that all the runners-up are in one way or another historical novels striving towards a sense of coherence, a sense of connectedness cruelly absent from a world in the throes of chaos. (Bernard 2014, para. 11)

The corpus narratives have been conducting a similar inquiry into personal and collective trauma with a focus on the global implications of local events, or vice versa. A seminal thematic streak of British fiction dating back to the 1980s is that the contemporary

British Fiction continues to posit the narrative – or storytelling – as a palliative against the traumatizing forces of history: "To disruption and social disintegration, these novels oppose the cohesive potential of fiction-making and narrative …" (Bernard 2014, para. 12). Narrative fascination with trauma and spectrality points to the wider cultural inquiry of a similar nature.

The spectral turn, traceable to the publication of *Specters of Marx* in 1994 (Blanco and Peeren 2013, 2), is believed to be an upshot of the ethical turn. The spectral turn highlights the relevance of historicity, the past, as well as the urgency of attending to the inappropriable presence of the other as an unsettling intrusion, for which the ghost serves as a metaphor. Among the many connotations of the figure of the ghost, the "possession" of the present by a traumatic past acquires particular significance, or as the editors of the first-ever reader on spectrality hold, "it is the haunting of the present by the past that emerges as the most insistent narrative" (Blanco and Peeren 2013, 11). The ghost of a traumatic past is thus conceived of as an insistent narrative that demands the readers' 'witnessing' or re-interpretation. This is inevitably a transferential act of listening to the painful narrative of the other involving many returns – to the act of listening and telling – and many fresh angles from which to view the ghost of the past. The trope of ghostliness and historical trauma are so alike in their scope that spectrality is said to have enabled authors of various cultural backgrounds to elaborate trauma. Blanco and Peeren elaborate:

> Critics within trauma studies have expanded on this paradigm to address catastrophic personal and collective experiences, and the acts of witnessing and testimony related to them. Ranging from colonial violence and the genocides that transpired, for example, during the Holocaust and in Rwanda during the early 1990s, to the events of 9/11, these experiences are seen as eliding and literally rupturing comprehension; they are past acts which we would like to access again in order to attempt changing them, and which the traumatized often relive compulsively, but that remain locked in their inaccessibility and relentless repetition. (Blanco and Peeren 2013, 12)

Trauma pierces the received notions of subjectivity revealing it to be a mere 'imaginary' picture. As such, the symbolic order struggles to account for this irruption which inevitably reveals subjectivity to have been built, not on solid grounds but on imaginary and symbolic make-believe. Engendering a rupture in the imaginary narrative of the present through its affective force of incomprehensibility, trauma calls for witnessing. The act of witnessing unfolds in genuine – or affectively-charged – acts of transferential "interlocution" (Rauch 1998,

113) with the intention of "changing" them, or narrativizing their incomprehensibility. This act of transferential interlocution is possessed of the potential to integrate traumatic recall into the ongoing narrative of the trauma victim's life. However, this mutual investment of affective commitment does not guarantee a narrative reintegration, as avowed by Freud. Yet, a commitment to narrative re-inscription of trauma – or "witnessing and testimony" – holds the only promise for release from spectral possession.

Alongside these overlapping theoretical tendencies, a movement beyond a postmodernism of pure irony and frame-break – in the interests of incessant subversion – is also visible in the corpus under study. Crucially, metamodernism is also linked to the narrative turn in that the metamodern sensibility "addresses the desire for stories with a new sincerity" (Meretoja 2014, 226). This neoromantic move registers a yearning for a viable grand narrative of nature, and coexists with the characteristically postmodern suspicion of grand narratives. A focus on the centrality of narrativity, be it ontological, epistemological or therapeutic, thus emerges as the common streak of the above critical turns, all of which shed a different kind of light on the globally urgent problematic of trauma and its returning ghost.

To conclude, this study revealed the corpus narratives as instilled within a socio-cultural context struggling against issues and threats of existential import. Trauma, whether personal or collective, is demonstrated as the affective force that triggers a universal subjective questioning. The outcome of this psychical investigation is a revised subjectivity and an awareness of existence as composed of interconnected – and thus responsible – beings. Within a novelistic tradition avowed to be "always already global" (Bernard 2014, para. 12) in its scope and outlook, the novels analyzed problematize a contemporary period in deep crisis and subscribe to an immanent, "cosmopolitan" (Horton 2014, 2) worldview. The universe portrayed in the novels evokes a single vulnerable body, calling for ethical sensibility and care. Postmodern in technique, yet acknowledging a metamodern need for "sincerity" (Meretoja 2014, 226) , the narratives function as prominent exemplars of "metanarrativity" (Meretoja 2014, 226): they reaffirm the nature of subjectivity as mediated through fictive social constructs, yet they also posit the revisited provisional narratives of trauma – in the intersubjective space of transference – as the only way forward toward working through trauma.

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Abstract

Mots clés: Affect, devenir-autre, traumatisme, spectralité, narration

Résumé

Cette étude vise à mieux comprendre le traumatisme et la hantise qui est concomitante, comme le montrent spécifiquement *The Pregnant Widow* (2011), *Wish You Were Here* (2012) et *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), les récits qui en découlent et qui font allusion au sentiment contemporain des crises existentielles mondiales. Nous avons analysé les implications du traumatisme et de la spectralité dans l'économie narrative comme étant le reflet des problèmes sociales et culturelles plus vastes. Nous avons cherché à démontrer comment la spectralité et la « possession » par le traumatisme représentent non seulement une lutte psychique interne pour « perlaborer » le traumatisme, mais aussi la façon dont cette lutte affecte et altère les notions profondes de subjectivité des protagonistes. Nous avons étudié comment les différentes manifestations du traumatisme sont (re)présentées dans le texte et comment les manifestations textuelles du traumatisme prouvent ou contredisent certains points de vue établis sur le traumatisme dans le milieu universitaire au cours des trois dernières décennies. En outre, nous avons étudié la dynamique découlant de l'interaction textuelle entre la narrativité et le traumatisme, car la narrativité est un élément visiblement mis en avant-plan dans les romans du corpus. Notre préoccupation était de savoir si l'interaction entre fiction et trauma permet à la littérature de richement élaborer le traumatisme au-delà de sa conception comme vide cognitif et si la mise en avant métafictionnelle de la narrativité permet d'aller au-delà de la révélation postmoderne de la réalité comme une construction fictive. Le traumatisme, personnel ou collectif, est représenté comme la force affective qui déclenche une réflexion subjective universelle. Le résultat de cette enquête psychique est un réexamen de la subjectivité et une prise de conscience de l'existence composée d'êtres interconnectés et donc responsables. Ces romans problématisent une période contemporaine en crise profonde et souscrivent à une vision du monde immanente. L'univers représenté dans ces romans évoque un seul corps vulnérable, appelant à la sensibilité et à l'éthique. De plus, ils réaffirment la nature de la subjectivité relayée par des constructions sociales fictives, mais ils avancent également que les récits provisoires et revisités du traumatisme sont la seule voie vers l'avant pour « perlaborer » le trauma.

Key words: Affect, becoming-other, trauma, spectrality, narrative

Abstract

This study sets out to gain a better understanding of trauma and its concomitant haunting as reflected specifically in *The Pregnant Widow* (2011), *Wish You Were Here* (2012) and *The Sense of an Ending* (2011), narratives that arise from, and allude to the contemporary sense of global existential crises. We investigated the implications of trauma and spectrality for the narrative economy as reflecting the wider social and cultural issues. We aimed to demonstrate how spectrality and "possession" by trauma represent not only an internal psychical struggle to 'work through' trauma, but how this struggle also impacts and alters the protagonists' deep-seated notions of subjectivity. We studied how the various manifestations of trauma were (re)presented in the text and how the textual manifestation of trauma proved or contradicted certain established views of trauma as theorized in the academia over the past three decades. Additionally, we researched the dynamics arising out of the textual interaction between narrativity and trauma, as narrativity is a visibly foregrounded element of the novels analyzed. Our concern was to know whether the fiction-trauma interaction is one in which literature allows for a richer elaboration of trauma beyond its conception as cognitive void, and whether metafictional foregrounding of narrativity points to any tendency beyond postmodern revelation of reality as a fictive construct. Trauma, whether personal or collective, is depicted as the affective force that triggers a universal subjective questioning. The outcome of this psychical investigation is a revised subjectivity and an awareness of existence as composed of interconnected – and thus responsible – beings. The novels problematize a contemporary period in deep crisis and subscribe to an immanent worldview. The universe portrayed in the novels evokes a single vulnerable body, calling for ethical sensibility and care. Further, they reaffirm the nature of subjectivity as mediated through fictive social constructs, yet they also posit the revisited provisional narratives of trauma as the only way forward toward working through trauma.

Narration hantée dans le roman britannique du 21ème siècle

Reza MALEKI SEDGHI

Sous la direction du

Professeur Catherine DELMAS

Résumé de la thèse en français

Cette thèse vise à mieux comprendre le traumatisme et la hantise qui lui est associée comme le montrent spécifiquement *The Pregnant Widow* (2011), *Wish You Were Here* (2012) et *The sense of an Ending* (2011), les récits qui en découlent et qui font allusion au sentiment contemporain des crises existentielles mondiales. Nous avons analysé les implications du traumatisme et de la spectralité dans l'économie narrative comme étant le reflet d'implications sociales et culturelles plus vastes. Nous avons cherché à démontrer comment la spectralité et la « possession » par le traumatisme représentent non seulement une lutte psychique interne pour « perlaborer » le traumatisme, mais aussi la façon dont cette lutte affecte et altère les notions profondes de subjectivité des protagonistes. Nous avons étudié comment les différentes manifestations du traumatisme sont (re)présentées dans le texte et ces dernières prouvent ou contredisent certains points de vue établis dans le milieu universitaire au cours des trois dernières décennies. En outre, nous avons étudié la dynamique découlant de l'interaction textuelle entre la narrativité et le traumatisme, car la narrativité est un élément visiblement mis en avant dans les romans du corpus. Notre préoccupation était de savoir si l'interaction entre fiction et trauma permet à la littérature de considérer le traumatisme de manière profonde au-delà d'un vide cognitif. La mise en avant métafictionnelle de la narrativité permet d'aller au-delà de la révélation postmoderne de la réalité comme une construction fictive.

Le traumatisme, personnel ou collectif, est représenté comme la force affective qui déclenche une réflexion subjective universelle. Le résultat de cette enquête psychique est un réexamen de la subjectivité et une prise de conscience de l'existence composée d'êtres interconnectés et donc responsables. Ces romans problématisent une période contemporaine en crise profonde et souscrivent à une vision du monde immanente. L'univers représenté dans ces romans évoque un seul corps vulnérable, appelant à la sensibilité et à l'éthique. De plus, ils réaffirment la nature de la subjectivité relayée par des constructions sociales fictives, mais ils avancent également que les récits provisoires et revisités du traumatisme sont la seule voie vers l'avant pour « perlaborer » le trauma.

Les romans analysés dans cette thèse sont éclairés par le moment le plus déterminant du XXIe siècle : les attentats du 11 septembre 2001 contre les tours jumelles à New York. C'est un événement traumatique qui a déclenché une guerre mondiale contre le terrorisme, qui s'est ensuite transformée en une myriade de formes et s'est répandue à travers le monde. Les attaques

ont porté un coup supplémentaire au récit de la rationalité humaine, ou au soi-disant «projet de la modernité», avec ses grands idéaux de progrès, de justice et de bonheur humain (Habermas 1997, 45‑46). Un profond abîme s'est ouvert entre l'image humaine de soi et une réalité terrifiante qui redéfinit l'existence. Martin Amis a écrit sur la malice qui a motivé les actes de terrorisme (Amis 2008, 3). Les paroles d'Amis, écrites peu après les attentats, visent à rendre compte des sentiments écrasants engendrés par le témoignage de la tragédie. Les attaques déclenchent une explosion d'affect chez le spectateur, d'incrédulité traumatique associée à la prise de conscience de la « malice illimitée » que l'on croit non caractéristique de l'humanité civilisée. C'est l'irruption de cet aperçu inacceptable dans ce qui est imaginé être le récit en cours du progrès humain qui frappe les racines de l'être même du spectateur. La subjectivité post-terroriste doit être redéfinie dans le contexte de cette désillusion, de ce « brisement » de l'image du monde imaginaire.

Cette nouvelle réalité est définie par la disparition des notions de solidité, de subjectivité et de l'état. Autrement dit, il se caractérise surtout par la « liquidité » - pour emprunter ce terme à Zygmunt Bauman - des concepts qui ont donné une illusion de fermeté aux divers piliers de l'existence moderne. Selon Bauman, le sentiment d'une crainte existentielle diffuse est inséparable du mécanisme de la société moderne (Bauman 2006, 6). Alors que la principale source de la peur traumatique dans les années 1980 était la menace de la guerre froide, qui était à peu près définie comme la destruction mutuelle des deux blocs mondiaux, l'existence contemporaine est définie par un sentiment aigu de l'impuissance existentielle face à la diffusion des origines de la menace.

Une conception de la peur comme fondement la subjectivité contemporaine et de son omniprésence spectrale (im)matérielle nécessite aussi une compréhension différente de l'éthique de la rencontre avec l'altérité : celle qui rendrait justice à la liquidation des frontières de la peur, de la subjectivité et de l'état. Cette perspective éthique devrait élucider comment la peur et le traumatisme sont au centre de l'existence, et forment un élément évolutif de la compréhension humaine de l'existence. Cette perspective éthique devrait également révéler que tous les êtres sont liés dans leur vulnérabilité, et sont donc responsables les uns envers les autres, et envers le contexte matériel du monde dont ils sont issus. Cette compréhension immanente de l'existence - sans frontières et en constante évolution - est résumée par Martin Amis dont les efforts pour

comprendre les attentats du 11 septembre donnent une conception similaire de l'éthique (Amis 2008, 9).

La sensibilité envers les personnes impliquées dans les attaques engendre une émotion simultanée de douleur, de honte et de peur. Ce qui importe avant tout, c'est que l'exertion de la sensibilité s'étende aux membres d'une même espèce afin de comprendre l'événement, au-delà de son impact traumatique initial. Comme l'indique Amis, la « conscience d'espèce » (Amis 2008, 9) est la sensibilité biologique matérielle qui lie les êtres humains - dénués de caractéristiques culturels et politiques. Il va jusqu'à éprouver de la honte au nom des auteurs d'un acte indescriptible (Amis 2008, 9). Les romans de notre corpus reflètent une sensibilité similaire à la peur et au traumatisme existentiels dans un esprit d'immanence (deleuzienne), un domaine critique de la théorie du traumatisme insuffisamment exploré.

Les romans retenus pour la présente étude, *The Pregnant Widow* (2011) de Martin Amis, *Wish You Were Here* (2012) de Graham Swift et *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) de Julian Barnes décrivent la tentative de perlaborer le souvenir d'une mort traumatique qui hante la victime, soit d'un ami proche, soit d'un proche. Dans *The Pregnant Widow*, la première expérience traumatisante du protagoniste et du narrateur, Keith, implique la mort prématurée de sa sœur Violet après une vie de sexualité et d'alcoolisme autodestructeurs. Son existence est éclipsée par la «enormous and unsuspected presence within» de son être, un «undiscovered continent … the past» (Amis 2011, 5), un passé qu'il essaie de découvrir. Rappelant la référence de Marcellus au fantôme dans *Hamlet* (1.1.21-2), Keith recourt également à l'expression « cette ... chose » pour se référer au noyau énigmatique du traumatisme et à son retour spectral qu'il essaie de verbaliser tout au long de son récit ; Il demande à sa troisième femme : « There's this other thing. I don't know what it is. It can't be to do with Violet, can it? » (Amis 2011, 182‑83). Pour Shakespeare et Amis - ainsi que pour Derrida - nommer «la chose» représente une tentative de verbaliser la rencontre traumatique avec le revenant qui demande une écoute, à la manière d'un retour traumatique qui engendre le mouvement de la narrativisation. Dans *Spectres de Marx*, Derrida écrit : « Comme dans *Hamlet*, le prince d'un État pourri, tout commence par l'apparition du spectre. Plus précisément par *l'attente* de cette apparition. L'anticipation est à la *fois impatiente*, angoissée et fascinée cela, la chose *(this thing)* va finir par arriver. Le revenant va venir. Il ne saurait tarder. » (Derrida 1993, 22).

De même, le roman de Swift résulte de la volonté de se libérer du lourd poids d'un passé traumatique marqué par le suicide et la perte de membres de la famille en guerre, en plus de la douleur du déracinement. Le protagoniste Jack et son épouse Ellie sont décrits comme luttant pour se libérer du « fantôme des morts qui les poursuit » (Swift 2012, 36). Ce que le capitaine Hayes, le commandant des frères Luxton, avait fait après leur mort durant la Première Guerre mondiale, pourrait bien servir de raison d'être thérapeutique du roman lui-même, qui est de décrire l'évènement en espérant que quelque chose de bon va naitre : «write the matter up, … , in the hope that something good … might come of the day's unspeakabilities » (Swift 2012, 10). Enfin, dans le récit autodiegétique de Barnes, le protagoniste lutte contre le sentiment de « remords » traumatique qui émerge au cours de son enquête de type forensique (Dalrymple 2016, 79), sur les événements entourant le suicide de son ami Adrian , une enquête qui lui rappelle la vérité traumatique de son implication involontaire dans le suicide de son ami. La quête de Tony Webster pour la signification précise des formules mathématiques énigmatiques d'Adrian dans son journal est également accompagnée par un sens aigu de la présence spectrale d'Adrian dans le roman : « I felt as if Adrian was present in the room again, beside me, breathing, thinking » (Barnes 2011, 86).

La présence du fantôme du trauma dans les récits est accompagnée par la nécessité de raconter une histoire. Les remarques introductives de David Malcolm sur la fiction de la génération de Graham Swift mettent en lumière leurs principales préoccupations thématiques, y compris l'envie de narrer (Malcolm 2003, 8‑9). Les préoccupations mises en lumière par Malcolm sont toutes présentes dans les romans du corpus à des degrés divers. A ses remarques, nous ajouterons également que la nécessité de rendre compte du passé a acquis une urgence sans précédent dans le contexte contemporain de la conscience aiguë du traumatisme et de sa pertinence pour l'existence humaine quotidienne.

Le traumatisme, le sujet principal des romans de corpus, a été largement étudié par des psychanalystes éminents ainsi que par des critiques littéraires tout au long de son histoire. La caractéristique principale du traumatisme est la rencontre avec un événement qui ne peut pas être verbalisé immédiatement par la victime. Non verbalisé, il continue à revenir dans la psyché de la victime (notamment sous la forme de *flash-backs* et de cauchemars), un phénomène pour lequel la "hantise" a été utilisée comme une métaphore pertinente. La hantise ou la possession par le

fantôme a été directement associée au traumatisme. Dans « Remembering, Repeating and Working-through » Freud a discuté du fait que le patient ne se souvient de rien mais qu'il reproduit l'évènement traumatisant comme une action sans qu'il le sache. Il continue à l'appeler la « compulsion de répétition» (Freud 2001, 150‑51), notion qui a depuis été reconnue comme la principale réaction psychique à l'expérience traumatique. Ailleurs, Freud parle de la tendance à représenter une mémoire traumatique refoulée en termes de spectralité, comme un fantôme non enterré, «an unlaid ghost» (Freud 1975, 122). De même, dans son introduction à *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, la chercheuse pionnière Cathy Caruth discute du retour du traumatisme en utilisant la métaphore spectrale de la «possession». Elle définit le TSPT comme une expérience caractérisée par une possession répétitive par le passé (Caruth 1995, 151), c'est-à-dire sa répétition et son retour psychiques, ce qui constitue un traumatisme pour Caruth.

À la suite de Freud, certains autres théoriciens du traumatisme définissent le traumatisme comme une expérience qui n'est pas intégrée dans le récit de soi conscient de la victime, et exige donc une verbalisation. Geoffrey Hartman déclare que le trauma nait d'une expérience non intégrée (Hartman 2003, 257). L'analyse de Hartman s'inspire de la conception lacanienne du « Réel » comme « rencontre manquée » (Lacan 1977, 53) dans l'ordre symbolique du langage (l'ordre symbolique signifiant globalement toutes les manifestations de la culture dans laquelle un individu naît, y compris sa langue). Le mot utilisé par Lacan pour la rencontre manquée avec le Réel traumatique - dans l'ordre symbolique du langage - est la *tuché* (Lacan 1977, 53‑54). Le Réel se manifeste ainsi dans les « signaux étranges » (Hartman 2003, 257) apparemment désordonnés que Hartman conçoit comme les signes révélateurs du retour du Réel traumatique dans l'ordre symbolique du langage. Ainsi, le retour du Réel traumatique se produit d'une manière imprévisible et voilée, *tuché*, « comme par hasard », dans le symbolique tant qu'il demeure inassimilable. La verbalisation du traumatisme aide à l'assimilation progressive (ou à l'acceptation) de l'événement traumatisant incompréhensible retournant dans le récit évolutif de la vie de la victime.

Parmi les psychanalystes contemporains, Laplanche et Pontalis présentent la récapitulation la plus claire de la nature du traumatisme et de la compulsion de répétition - d'un point de vue freudien. Dans leur livre *La langue de la psychanalyse*, ils définissent le traumatisme psychique en termes économiques comme un afflux d'excitations excessif à cause d'un évènement intense et l'incapacité à y répondre (Laplanche et Pontalis 1988, 465). Ils

proposent ensuite une étymologie du terme «traumatisme» comme dérivant du mot grec pour une blessure physique où la peau est percée par violence externe (Laplanche et Pontalis 1988, 465). Laplanche et Pontalis affirment que, dans un contexte psychique, les connotations physiques du mot ne sont pas totalement absentes (Laplanche et Pontalis 1988, 466). Ils adoptent le modèle freudien de traumatisme basé sur « une perspective économique» de la psyché (Laplanche et Pontalis 1988, 466). Selon le modèle freudien, le principe de constance dicte que l'organisme, qui se trouve violé, prend des mesures pour restaurer l'homéostasie perdue - ce qui se traduit en plaisir pour l'organisme. Laplanche et Pontalis élaborent sur les aperçus de Freud, qui se réfère à l'organisme vivant, le corps humain par exemple, comme «une vésicule vivante» (Laplanche et Pontalis 1988, 466). Ainsi, la réaction initiale de l'organisme est d'arrêter ses liens émotionnels avec son environnement (techniquement connu sous le nom d'*anticathexis*) pour empêcher une excitation supplémentaire de l'intérieur de l'organisme, stratégie psychique qui se traduit extérieurement par un état de choc ou de « dissociation ». En plus de Laplanche et de Pontalis, Cathy Caruth distingue aussi la blessure physique d'une blessure psychique en ce que celle-ci se caractérise par son incompréhensibilité et son retour intrusif (Caruth 1996, 3-4).

La compulsion répétitive du traumatisme conduit à une autre notion significative détectée et théorisée initialement par Freud : le concept de *Nachträglichkeit* (traduit par «après-coup») qui joue un rôle crucial dans la formation de plusieurs autres concepts qui se sont avérés instrumentaux à l'analyse des récits du corpus. Reprenant une lettre à Breuer de Freud, où Freud divulgue d'abord sa découverte des traces de mémoire soumises de temps en temps à un réarrangement, ou à une « retranscription» (Sigmund Freud dans Modell 2003, 36), Arnold Modell explique la pertinence scientifique contemporaine de l'idée de Freud. Il montre comment des similitudes existent entre Freud et la conception cognitive de la mémoire, selon Gerald Edelman, comme un processus de « recontextualization » ou une « Catégorisation » selon des similitudes et des différences (Modell 2003, 36). Ainsi, avec des preuves de découvertes scientifiques récentes, Modell souligne le fait que le cerveau humain classe - ou plutôt recontextualise - la mémoire par une nouvelle compréhension à la lumière des perceptions internes et externes émergentes. C'est le processus qui est connu sous le nom de *Nachträglichkeit*, après Freud. Lacan reprend ce sentiment dans son commentaire sur la connaissance objective du passé comme un évènement historicisé dans le présent (Lacan 1988, 12). Dans la même veine, les psychanalystes Laplanche et Pontalis affirment que

Nachträglichkeit est une révision tardive des traces de la mémoire à la lumière des nouvelles expériences qui leur accorde non seulement une nouvelle signification mais aussi une efficacité psychique (Laplanche et Pontalis 1988, 111). Ainsi, l'action différée sur la mémoire signifie que les mémoires sont révisées au service d'une évolution de sens. Cela signifie qu'un événement peut devenir traumatisant seulement par sa révision à une date ultérieure. Le traumatisme, en tant qu'événement caractérisé par son inassimilabilité initiale aux idées reçues sur la subjectivité du sujet, nécessite une « révision différée » déclenchée par des « événements » ou « maturations » ultérieurs. La *Nachträglichkeit* permet d'atteindre de nouvelles perspectives et une refonte de l'expérience initiale. Dans la thèse actuelle, on pourrait dire que les trois romans incarnent le processus narratif mental de *Nachträglichkeit* alors qu'ils remanient les perspectives évolutives des protagonistes sur l'événement traumatique - et les personnes et les lieux impliqués dans celui-ci.

Quant à la libération du traumatisme, les chercheurs affirment que « techniquement », un traitement est possible par «abréaction» (Laplanche et Pontalis 1988, 466). L'abréaction, étroitement liée à l'idée de retard ou de *Nachträglichkeit*, pourrait être définie plus ou moins comme la libération cathartique à travers une perlaboration dans le langage comme l'affirme Freud (Laplanche et Pontalis 1988, 1). D'une importance cruciale dans l'analyse des chercheurs, est la notion de la possibilité de libération de l'affect de la mémoire traumatique, c'est-à-dire la possibilité que le traumatisme ne devienne pas pathogène, ou du moins ne le reste pas indéfiniment. Ce qui libère la victime est la décharge émotionnelle par le recueillement cathartique en mettant l'événement en mots, dans des retours répétés à l'événement traumatique dans le cours de l'analyse.

Non seulement dans le contexte des études sur le traumatisme, mais aussi comme un moyen de comprendre la dynamique de l'existence immanente dans les romans du corpus, le concept d'« affect» acquiert une grande signification. Outre sa centralité au traumatisme - comme une intrusion écrasante dans l'homéostasie de la subjectivité – l'affect est également considéré comme la principale force motrice derrière le mouvement de devenir dans la nature. Dans son avant-propos de traducteur à *Mille Plateaux* de Deleuze et Guattari, Brian Massumi définit l'affect et l'affection comme,

> … une intensité prépersonnelle correspondant au passage d'un état d'expérience corporelle à l'autre et impliquant une augmentation ou une diminution de la capacité d'agir de ce corps. L'affection ... est considérée comme une rencontre entre le corps affecté et un corps affectant le corps (un corps étant compris dans son sens le plus large possible pour inclure des corps « mentaux » ou idéaux). (Massumi 1987, xvi ma traduction)

Il s'agit ici d'une conception de l'existence définie de façon globale par la prise de conscience du devenir-autre par des intensités corporellement-senties et initialement non-verbalisables qui permettent aux objets, aux idées, aux images, aux impressions, etc., de passer à un autre état d'être. Les corps (objectifs et mentaux) se touchent ainsi et provoquent l'action (ou sa diminution). Une pensée de l'affect est informée par une logique de rencontre et l'imprévisibilité de ce qui pourrait naître de la rencontre entre les êtres et comment ce processus de devenir-autre pourrait influencer le ou les cours de l'existence.

C'est l'absence de maîtrise cognitive qui définit le mieux l'affect. Les affects vont à l'encontre de la compréhension rationnelle et logique dont les outils sont fournis dans l'ordre symbolique du langage. Les affects sont les sources matérielles, précognitives et corporelles des actions et des dispositions humaines, indépendant du contrôle de l'esprit. Les affects sont potentiellement des actions humaines réelles (Ticineto Clough 2007, 2). Grâce à l'affect, des êtres distincts interagissent entre eux. En tant que tel, on pourrait dire que l'affectivité reflète le mouvement de la Vie. Comme le veut la thèse, une approche des récits du corpus éclairés par les deux sens de « l'affect » (traumatisant et stimulant la vie) aide grandement à apprécier le traumatisme et la narrativité qui en découle.

Le retour et la répétition du traumatisme engendrent un mouvement de narrativisation conduisant à une réinterprétation à travers un dialogue transférentiel qui donne forme au texte. Au cours de ces romans, le traumatisme est démontré être (re)présentable dans le texte, et la « blessure » psychique est compréhensible, conduisant à l'exorcisme du fantôme du traumatisme et à une révision de la subjectivité. Le pouvoir thérapeutique du récit est tel que Geoffrey Hartman le considère comme étant à la hauteur de la psychanalyse freudienne, principalement en raison de la dynamique intersubjective du dialogue humain. Il écrit sur la qualité homéopathique de la « cure de parole » freudienne et de la littérature (Hartman 2003, 259). Ce sentiment est repris par

l'auteur Siri Husvedt qui explique le processus de guérison par le récit ~~ainsi~~ dans lequel l'articulation de l'horreur répétée le rend autobiographique plutôt qu'automatique. D'après Husvedt, historicisée et « en tant qu'histoire » (Husvedt 2015, paragr. 1), la répétition du trauma devient moins cachée. Ceci résume notre travail sur le contenu et la fin des récits. Tout aussi important dans le cadre de cette thèse, une réflexion sur le traumatisme permet de mieux comprendre l'expérience de la lecture et de l'interprétation.

Les romans du corpus partagent un certain nombre de préoccupations thématiques importantes, soulignant le fait qu'ils sont engagés dans un intense acte de représentation des préoccupations culturelles contemporaines, informés par les périls liés à la vie dans ce que Caruth qualifie comme une époque catastrophique, ou «catastrophic era» (Caruth 1996, 12).

La mort traumatique occupe une place centrale dans la conception des romans, les protagonistes pleurant tous les décès intempestifs d'êtres chers et ils sont représentés comme atteints du SSPT et de la mélancolie (les symptômes incluent la dissociation, l'engourdissement, l'ambivalence, la dépression, la culpabilité, la faible estime de soi et l'incapacité de nommer la source du traumatisme) comme décrits par Freud, Kristeva, Sandra Bloom, Hartman et Caruth, entre autres. Comme il convient à la logique du traumatisme, les trois récits procèdent à leur résolution à travers – ce qui est présenté comme – le processus automatique, ou le « ungovernable process » (Laplanche et Pontalis 1988, 78) de répétition et de retour du fantôme du traumatisme. La fin des récits est une compréhension partielle de l'événement traumatique ou une réconciliation avec la réalité de la vie post-traumatique. En ce sens, les récits reprennent le processus psychanalytique de « acting-out » et de « perlaboration », avec « acting-out » comme la compulsion de répétition et la perlaboration comme la résolution du récit. Dans l'analyse de LaCapra, il en résulte un deuil approprié et, plus significativement, un retour à la normalité (LaCapra 1999, 716).

Ce que les récits de notre corpus démontrent, c'est qu'ils favorisent un processus de deuil, avec le retour textuel du Réel du trauma comme sa contrepartie naturelle. Bien que le présent soit représenté comme hanté par le passé, à la fin, le fantôme du passé est mis au repos dans l'intérêt de la vie et une sensibilité croissante à la responsabilité éthique. La nature prospective du récit de traumatisme (en particulier notre corpus) n'échappe pas à l'analyse de West-Pavlov qui parle de la nature thérapeutique de la narration qui ouvre une voie vers le futur (West-Pavlov 2013, 107).

Le passé éternel du traumatisme perd ainsi son emprise obsédante sur le présent, ouvrant ainsi la voie à un avenir meilleur.

Comme le traumatisme étouffe le récit de la vie, il engendre aussi la nécessité d'un nouveau récit, ou, selon Roy Schafer, une redescription narrative de la réalité (Schafer 1980, 50). En conséquence, les trois romans mettent également en évidence l'importance d'un récit cohérent pour la vie ; Le rôle de l'imagination, la faculté de « fictionnalisation » et les pensées imaginaires de l'autre envahissant l'esprit impuissant du protagoniste sont dramatisés dans les romans comme instrumentaux à la construction de la subjectivité. Ceci rend la notion de spectralité doublement importante pour notre travail puisqu'elle est utilisée comme trope d'une conception poststructuraliste (parfois inspirée de Lacan) de la subjectivité ou du « je ». Ici, l'autre tel que conçu par Lacan (Lacan 1977, 203) joue un rôle important. Plus loin, Lacan atteste la centralité du désir de l'Autre pour la construction du désir du sujet (Lacan 1977, 235). Le désir toujours changeant et insatiable du sujet est dicté d'un point de vue extérieur à celui-ci : la société. Le critique qui mentionne explicitement la spectralité dans le contexte de la subjectivité est Maud Ellmann qui assimile l'ego au spectre, écrivant que « l'ego est un fantôme, ou plutôt un consortium de fantômes, composé des répliques d'objets de désir perdus ou absents» (Ellmann 1994, 17‑18, ma traduction). L'ego est ainsi compris comme une fiction mentale en évolution constante peuplée d'une myriade de fantômes.

Pour mettre en évidence l'érosion progressive des frontières de la subjectivité, les romans contiennent aussi des éléments métanarratifs postmodernistes : adresse directe au narrateur, tentative d'inclusion d'une analyse dans le texte et rupture des cadres mimétique / diégétique pour mettre en évidence la nature narrative de la conscience. En bref, ils participent en partie à l'esprit général du postmodernisme défini par Linda Hutcheon (Hutcheon 2002, 1). Pourtant, bien que les romans recourent à des stratégies d'auto-subversion - de l'autorité narrative et de l'histoire - cela se fait avec une intention éthique. Bien que la métafiction soit présente, elle n'est pas déployée dans l'intérêt d'une ironie sans fin qui se révèle comme étant une construction discursive. Au lieu de cela, il y a une demande tangible de « sincérité » et la nécessité d'adopter une position éthique.

Irmtraud Huber, qui fait référence à cette sensibilité contemporaine sous le terme générique de « reconstruction », a noté la tendance à engager des techniques postmodernistes tout en se déplaçant au-delà de l'ethos postmoderniste. Les mouvements « reconstructifs »

présentent un sentiment pragmatique de responsabilité envers les fictions de la réalité racontées à soi-même (Huber 2014, 15). L'accent mis par Huber sur l'élément de la construction dialogique du sens et de l'engagement à la communication est d'une grande importance pour notre travail. En outre, dans son analyse, Huber souligne l'élément de responsabilité dans les tentatives humaines de constructions fictives, élément également souligné par Hanna Meretoja (Meretoja 2014, 226). Les observations de Huber résument l'importance éthique des romans du corpus qui contiennent des éléments postmodernes et soulignent simultanément la signification de la sincérité et de l'action comme des éléments clés d'une attitude pragmatique contre le traumatisme. Cela représente une écriture qui va au-delà du postmodernisme pur.

Une autre enquête induite par les traumatismes dans les romans est la préoccupation concernant les réalités culturelles contemporaines, une problématique inscrite dans les titres mêmes des romans. Tous les romans ont des titres (apocalyptiques) empruntés à d'autres textes, soulignant la nature urgente de leur enquête et les impliquant dans une enquête culturelle plus large sur les réalités contemporaines du deuil, de l'impasse culturelle et du retard. « La veuve enceinte » - signifiant le chaos au cœur d'une culture et une ère transitionnelles – est une expression empruntée à la citation d'Alexandre Herzen, réimprimée en épigraphe la page de titre du roman d'Amis. *Wish You Were Here* emprunte le message le plus prosaïque de carte postale pour désigner une absence suggestive qui résonne à travers le roman. De même, le roman de Barnes partage son titre - et sa fascination pour le « tick-tock » (Barnes 2011, 3) du temps - avec une œuvre du même nom de Frank Kermode (publiée en 1966) dont l'un des thèmes est l'exploration du besoin humain de narration dans le cadre apocalyptique d'une fin qui donne du sens à l'espace du milieu de la vie. C'est la faculté humaine de la fictionnalisation que Barnes a tendance à appeler «fabulation», ce qui signifie que nous, les humains, « make up a story to cover the facts we don't know or can't accept; we keep a few true facts and spin a new story round them » (Barnes 1989, 40).

En outre, le contexte social des romans est marqué par l'anxiété, après le 11 septembre, de la lutte contre le terrorisme, l'incroyance postmoderne persistante envers les métarécits (Lyotard 1984, xxiv) et un sentiment de superficialité et de déracinement. Accentuant ce sentiment, les trois romans contiennent des figures paternelles incompétentes ou absentes, en accord avec l'obsession des romans pour l'absence critique des grands récits. Conformément à cet esprit d'enquête sur la réalité sociale, le langage, comme l'ordre symbolique lacanien, est aussi

défamiliarisé. De même, l'idée de l'illégitimité - comme le trope de la confusion culturelle et la perte de la direction historique - est mise en évidence dans les trois romans. En conséquence, tous les romans orchestrent la nature tardive et épuisée d'une culture en rendant une naissance saine impossible : Adriano, le beau riche dans *The Pregnant Widow* est mal formé à la naissance. Adrian (le fils d'Adrian) de Barnes est un handicapé mental et la mère de Tom dans *Wish You Were Here* a été trop faible pour donner naissance et sa santé subie suite à l'accouchement. Dans le même ordre d'idées, le frère de Tom, Jack et Ellie, refusent d'avoir un enfant ensemble.

Parallèlement à cette « incrédulité » envers les grands récits et le sentiment de fatigue culturelle, il y a le sentiment d'un désir d'un grand récit capable de donner du sens et de la cohérence à l'existence. Cette aspiration s'accompagne aussi d'un désir ardent d'une connaissance de la nature qui dépasse la compréhension humaine, qui engloberait la transformation de la vie et la diversité dans toutes ses manifestations. Parallèlement à cette aspiration, dans tous les romans, il y a une prise de conscience d'une dimension de la vie encore inconcevable, découlant de ce que Bradley et Tate appellent, à propos d'Amis, une piété cosmologique, ou la « cosmological piety » (Bradley et Tate 2010, 36) à l'image de la «piété naturelle» de Wordsworth (Wordsworth 1994, 79), signifiant une relation profonde et pourtant ineffable avec la grandeur de la nature. Dans ce contexte, on pourrait dire que les romans du corpus incarnent encore une autre tendance contemporaine (sous le terme collectif de Irmtraud Huber, « reconstruction ») connue comme le métamodernisme. Les principaux partisans du métamodernisme affirment l'oscillation « entre un doute postmoderne et un désir moderne de sens: pour le sens, pour une direction. Les grands récits sont aussi nécessaires qu'ils sont problématiques ... » (Potter et Vermeulen 2016, p.pag., ma traduction).

Une autre analogie thématique entre le métamodernisme et notre corpus est leur mise en avant d'un néoromantisme émergent. On pourrait spéculer que dans leur attitude émerveillée à l'égard de la nature, les auteurs du corpus soulignent la nécessité de considérer la nature comme un grand récit à part. Endommagée et ignorée au nom du progrès, la matérialité ineffable de l'univers appelle une attention éthique à ses multiples transformations, l'humanité étant une manifestation relativement récente, essentiellement temporaire, de ses devenirs matériels. Souligner la magnificence admirable de la nature et ses devenirs insaisissables porte un coup supplémentaire à l'ego humain et le révèle vulnérable dans un réseau de connectivité également vulnérable.

En tant qu'élément du réexamen de la subjectivité induit par le traumatisme et d'une tentative néoromantique de dialogue avec ce qui est au-delà du symbolisable, les romans tentent aussi de comprendre et de représenter la nature de la temporalité, car elle constitue une problématique intégrale de l'existence traumatique. La compulsion de répétition au cœur du traumatisme efface la temporalité, insufflant au présent une image persistante du passé. Cette tentative est parfois accompagnée d'un aveu de sa futilité.

L'ouverture au devenir-autre d'une manière éthiquement non-réductrice forme un autre fil thématique fort des romans du corpus qui racontent les histoires traumatiques de personnages spectraux, monstrueux et déformés de manières qui appellent à la compassion et la compréhension de la part du lecteur. Les principaux fantômes des romans sont Violet, la « spectral sister » de Keith (Amis 2011, 102) et Tom, le frère mort de Jack, qui réalise une apparence magique-réaliste vers la fin du roman (Swift 2012, 346). La voix sans-jugement de l'écrivain intime qu'il avait rejoint l'armée comme un tireur d'élite, simplement parce qu'il avait besoin d'un emploi après la perte de son bétail. Le monstre est Violet qui représente « Nature without nurture. Like Caliban. Like a Yahoo » (Amis 2011, 305) et qui est représentée avec compassion comme une victime « talentless » (Amis 2011, 318) de la révolution sexuelle qui se déroulait au moment où elle grandissait dans les années 70. Ceux qui sont physiquement ou mentalement déformés sont Adriano dont la mère a été affamée dans la prison de Mussolini pendant sa grossesse, lui rendant « The tiny ghost » avec un « face of pain » permanent (Amis 2011, 124) et Adrian, né presque incestueusement de Mme Ford « at a dangerously late age. A child damaged as a result » (Barnes 2011, 149).

À cet égard, les critiques s'accordent à dire que l'étude du traumatisme et de la spectralité représente un changement d'orientation vers les préoccupations éthiques de la lecture, datant des dernières décennies du siècle précédent (Nadal et Calvo 2014, 1). Le geste éthique en question renvoie aux sentiments contre-déconstructivistes qui sont devenu répandus après la découverte des écrits pro-Nazis de Paul de Man et des commentaires de Baudrillard sur « the Gulf War » (Ganteau et Onega 2011, 7). Geoffrey Hartman croit également que grâce à une pensée du traumatisme, « Il y a plus d'écoute, … et une plus grande ouverture au témoignage» (Hartman 1995, 541, ma traduction) dans le domaine littéraire. Profondément influencé par la formulation de Derrida de la figure inquiétante du spectre dans *Spectres de Marx*, une prise de conscience du

fantôme est également tenue pour être au centre d'une lecture éthique selon des critiques comme Colin Davis (Davis 2005, 373‑74).

Ce que les romans du corpus démontrent, c'est que le traumatisme, la subjectivité, l'immanence de l'être et l'éthique participent tous à la logique de la spectralité. Comme Derrida le résume, « la figure du fantôme n'y est pas une figure parmi d'autres. C'est peut-être la figure cachée de toutes les figures » (Derrida 1993, 194). À la lumière des diverses évocations de la spectralité, un certain nombre de questions se posent qui portent l'analyse. L'élaboration de ces questions constitue l'épine dorsale de la présente étude.

En ce qui concerne l'économie narrative globale, le point principal de notre recherche porte sur les manières dont les trois textes (re) présentent la spectralité et le traumatisme. Nous sommes également intéressés par la signification du fantôme pour l'expérience de lecture autre que, et en plus des idées discutées ci-dessus. Dans le même esprit, nous avons essayé de découvrir pourquoi la narrativité a été mise en avant à côté du fantôme. Nous sommes intrigués par le fait que l'interprétation et le processus mental de la fabrication de la fiction sont mis en avant dans les romans avec le fantôme. Nous avons aussi étudié ses implications pour la subjectivité et la narrativité. Ceci conduit à l'étude de la fonction d'autoréflexivité / métafiction dans le contexte de la spectralité.

A propos de la représentation fictive de la subjectivité, notre interrogation concerne les raisons pour lesquelles la subjectivité est mise en avant à côté du fantôme. Cela pose un questionnement sur la signification du fantôme pour la construction de la subjectivité.

Une autre question concerne le lien entre le fantôme et la vision du monde contemporaine. La question est de savoir si la spectralité représente les préoccupations de l'époque. Si c'est le cas, comment ? La spectralité est-elle un aspect du *Zeitgeist* ? La spectralité représente-t-elle des aspects de la conceptualisation culturelle émergente dite de « reconstruction » dans la théorisation de Huber ? Concernant l'altérité, comment la spectralité contribue-t-elle à l'élaboration de l'éthique dans les textes ? Quelle est la vision éthique globale qui anime les récits ?

Tout au long des romans de corpus, le traumatisme et la hantise répétitive fournissent non seulement l'histoire des récits, mais ils définissent également leurs structures. En ce qui concerne

la représentation textuelle du traumatisme, un modèle général à travers les romans est qu'il est discuté explicitement dans les œuvres individuelles ou enregistré comme une empreinte oblique du Réel lacanien sur l'ordre symbolique du langage. Dans *The Pregnant Widow*, le Réel du trauma est mentionné, principalement comme la « vérité » non mentionnable. Les réflexions de Keith sur la nature des traumatismes impliqués dans l'existence l'ont convaincu que « We are trapped by the truth », et en ce qui concerne ses réactions traumatiques personnelles à la mort de Violet et sa propre mortalité qui approche, « the truth was that it all built *very slowly* … » (Amis 2011, 28), autrement dit, il a fallu quelque temps pour que les symptômes apparaissent tardivement (conformément à la notion freudienne de *Nachträglichkeit*). Ailleurs, Keith mentionne aussi la beauté comme un élément qui rend supportable l'existence traumatisante, avouant tout de suite que la beauté était absente de sa vie : « *Beauty is truth, truth beauty*. This was beautiful, perhaps. But how could it be beautiful ? It wasn't true. As he saw it. Beauty, that rare thing, had gone. What remained was truth. And truth was in endless supply » (Amis 2011, 137). La présence répandue de la vérité traumatisante peut être considérée comme une référence à la compulsion répétitive et à l'hypervigilance résultant du traumatisme. Comme nous l'apprenons au cours du récit, la guérison d'un traumatisme dans la vie de Keith survient en partie grâce au retour de la beauté sous la forme de sa troisième épouse, que Keith appelle Pulc, abréviation de *pulchritude*, suggérant, selon la tradition classique de la psychanalyse, que la guérison et la libération du traumatisme se produisent par l'engagement avec l'ordre symbolique du langage.

Sur un plan diégétique, le retour et la répétition du Réel maintiennent le transfert et le développement du récit. Dans le roman, les actes sexuels répétés (sans amour et sans profondeur) de Gloria avec Keith, accompagnés d'un sentiment de « peur primitive » de Keith, représentent un retour traumatique (Amis 2011, 266). Le sexe, dépourvu d'amour et d'émotions humaines représente une autre source de traumatisme pour Keith, l'incitant à chercher une définition correcte de « cette chose » traumatique, une recherche qui indique l'obstruction psychologique de l'imagination.

D'une manière identique à Amis, Graham Swift, dans ses diverses caractérisations du traumatisme et son empreinte sur l'ordre symbolique du langage, se réfère au traumatisme comme «la vérité » qui transperce l'ordre placide de la vie que Jack et Ellie avaient construite ensemble. Dans le roman, cette « vérité moqueuse » s'insère dans la lettre du ministère de la

défense annonçant la mort de Tom en Irak. Traumatisé, Jack manifeste des symptômes physiques, « his heart … banging, as if it had jumped loose in his chest » (Swift 2012, 79) et il ressent un sentiment étrange concernant le contenu de lettre même avant qu'il ne l'ouvre. Ce n'était pas la première fois que Jack avait dû faire face à la « vérité » troublante du Réel traumatique perçant le fantasme placide de l'ordre imaginaire lacanien. Quand son père Michael s'est suicidé, son sommeil, signifiant le fantasme de l'ordre imaginaire de la conscience, a été déchiré par le coup qui a tué Michael (Swift 2012, 304). Le suicide de Michael - à la manière de son devancier Ernest Atkinson dans *Waterland*, le dos contre un arbre, «with his back against a tree» (Swift 1999, 235) - réveille Jack à la réalité traumatisante, «la vérité», de l'existence. Ailleurs dans le roman, le traumatisme est représenté comme trop choquant pour être mis en mots. En termes psychanalytiques, la vérité est présentée comme le point limite de l'ordre symbolique lacanien du langage, ou l'échec du signifiant à la faire entendre, un échec qui est néanmoins enregistré dans le texte narratif (Belau 2001; Ragland-Sullivan 2001). Pourtant, en dépit de l'« essence » initialement paralysante du traumatisme, Swift croit aussi à l'existence parallèle d'une lutte psychique interne contre l'inarticulation imposée par le traumatisme. Le traumatisme déterritorialise les notions fermes de la subjectivité, obligeant le sujet à trouver une issue par l'affirmation de l'existence sous une forme nouvelle et créatrice, comme si l'existence humaine dans l'œuvre swiftienne était synonyme de cette lutte créatrice. En termes freudiens, en particulier dans sa conception de la nature conservatrice des instincts humains (Freud 1989, 612), la force expansive de vie ou l'Eros sont représentés comme s'opposant à l'instinct de mort, qui tend à étouffer Jack. Le choix impeccable de Swift du mot « outdrive » (Swift 2012, 214) invite aussi une lecture freudienne. Il est évident que cette volonté interne de « dépasser » l'immobilité morbide du traumatisme affirme que la connaissance traumatique est égale à son retour incessant à l'avenir, dépeignant le sujet comme perpétuellement pris au piège et impuissant dans l'emprise du traumatisme démoniaque. La vie, dans un contexte de traumatisme, équivaut à une lutte pour prolonger les « chemins tortueux » de la vie avant l'inertie de la mort.

D'une manière étrangement semblable à *Wish You Were Here*, le roman de Barnes parle également de l'irruption du Réel du traumatisme dans l'ordre imaginaire apparemment sans soucis de la vie de Tony Webster, par une lettre annonçant le legs par Mme Ford d'une somme de cinq cents livres et le journal d'Adrian. Pourtant, selon la logique du traumatisme, la connaissance du Réel est mystérieuse, résiste à la symbolisation et n'est jamais disponible dans

sa totalité. Tout le roman constitue une tentative auto-interrogatoire, a la manière d'une enquête policière pour reconstituer des éléments d'un passé traumatique, une quête, semble-t-il, en réponse à un appel spectral d'Adrian d'au-delà de la tombe. Selon Tony, il ne reçoit que des fragments du journal (Barnes 2011, 85). Pour littéraliser la nature fragmentaire de la compréhension humaine, Barnes conçoit le récit de manière à ce que Tony ne reçoive que des fragments du journal, non pas en original mais en photocopies.

En outre, au cours des enquêtes de Tony, c'est le mécanisme désobéissant de la mémoire révisionniste qui est démontré comme souverain, et non pas le sujet « possédant » cette mémoire. Ceci est démontré par le fait que le fragment qui lui est donné s'arrête d'être révélateur de manière satisfaisante. Tony raconte : « And there the photocopy – this version of a version – stopped. 'So, for instance, if Tony': end of the line, bottom of the page. If I hadn't immediately recognised Adrian's handwriting, I might have thought this cliffhanger a part of some elaborate fakery concocted by Veronica » (Barnes 2011, 86). Le recours au mot méta-narratif « cliffhanger » est l'une des références à l'aperçu essentiellement postmoderne de la narrativité de la vie, en soulignant la centralité de l'herméneutique narrative à la condition humaine.

Une autre façon dont les opérations inquiétantes du réel lacanien sur le langage sont démontrées est à travers le mur de la villa craquelé symboliquement en raison du soulèvement provoqué par des racines profondes, semblable à des souvenirs traumatiques réprimés perçant la surface tranquille de l'ordre imaginaire (Barnes 2011, 83). Là encore, Tony souligne la centralité de l'interprétation à l'existence humaine. Les événements naturels sont cooptés pour donner un sens à la matière première de l'existence en leur accordant une signification symbolique. Dans une manière qui reflète le dialogue psychanalytique transférentiel visant à redéfinir une subjectivité déterritorialisée, Tony continue à s'engager dans une correspondance caractérisée par le jeu de rôle, bien que caractérisé par la duplicité et l'antagonisme.

Pourtant, les idées de Barnes sur la compulsion de répétition de la mémoire (traumatique) sont résumées dans le mot « remords ». Pendant que les enquêtes de Tony sur son passé s'approfondissaient et qu'il se rendait compte qu'il aurait pu provoquer involontairement le suicide d'Adrian, le caractère vindicatif de sa jeunesse l'étouffe, lui infligeant un coup important à son idée de soi: « My younger self had come back to shock my older self with what that self had been, or was, or was sometimes capable of being » (Barnes 2011, 97). De plus, le commentaire étymologique de Barnes sur le mot « remords » révèle ses liens avec la compulsion

de répétition de traumatisme, en même temps que l'élargissement de la portée de la mémoire traumatique pour englober tout souvenir qui pourrait déclencher un sentiment de perte. Tony raconte : « Remorse, etymologically, is the action of biting again: that's what the feeling does to you. Imagine the strength of the bite when I reread my words. They seemed like some ancient curse I had forgotten even uttering » (Barnes 2011, 138). Encore une fois, il y a quelque chose d'étrange et surnaturel, même démoniaque autour du mot, le liant à la mort, un traumatisme répétitif et aussi à la figure du récit, le « plot » qui essaie de rendre compte des traumatismes.

La référence de Tony à ces mots nuisibles comme une malédiction qui refuse de se dissiper et reste plutôt une présence matérielle qui continue de blesser et d'infecter l'existence lie ces mots à l'idée de la matérialité du langage développé par Jean-Jacques Lecercle et Denise Riley. (Lecercle et Riley 2004, 46). Les mots blessants prennent ainsi une identité charnelle et vivent dans la psyché de l'interlocuteur ou, dans le cas de Tony, du lecteur, comme une présence matérielle semblable au corps étranger freudien du traumatisme. Les mauvaises paroles entrainent un affect et prennent une fonction performative troublant dans la subjectivité de la victime et refusent de diminuer leurs blessures, même des années plus tard.

Pourtant, contrairement à Amis et Swift qui démontrent que la « vérité » du Réel traumatisant est « déplaçable », et qu'un soulagement est possible, Barnes semble le croire autrement. Tony pense qu'aucune théorie ne peut atténuer la laideur de son acte–passé : « And now these idle clichés ran up against the unshiftable truth of what had happened » (Barnes 2011, 139). De toute évidence, une enquête posttraumatique a réveillé Tony à la complexité imprévisible de la toile des liens dans la vie et au sens de la responsabilité que cette réalisation implique.

En plus d'enregistrer le réel du traumatisme dans leur tissu textuel, les romans de trauma (re) présentent une manifestation typique du traumatisme : la dissociation, identifiée comme issue principale d'un traumatisme. Sandra Bloom établit une analogie entre les composants informatiques intégrés de manière optimale et le cerveau humain pour définir la fonction évolutive de la dissociation et l'impact dévastateur de cet état de « surcharge physiologique » sur la victime traumatisée qui ne peut plus « fonctionner normalement» (Bloom 2010, 200‑201, ma traduction). La dissociation est un symptôme qui trouve des incarnations diverses dans les textes de corpus. Dans *The Pregnant Widow*, la dissociation se manifeste sous la forme de la *de-réalisation* du corps physique. Keith se sent comme si les limites physiques de son corps étaient

déliquescentes : « He seemed to be floating, drifting in and out of himself … » (Amis 2011, 177). Dans *Wish You Were Here*, l'indication la plus claire du détachement et du retrait dissociatifs est le fait que Jack cherche un soulagement dans la solitude. Dans la chambre qu'il avait loué près de son village de naissance à la veille de l'enterrement de Tom : « There was no television—it was something he'd consciously checked—in this bar. He wanted to be disconnected » (Swift 2012, 224). Mais plus important encore, tout au long du roman, Swift ne perd aucune occasion de souligner que, en plus de leur réticence à converser ; toutes les émotions étaient absentes sur le visage de Michael et ensuite celui de Jack. Swift écrit : « His face was like a wall, a thicker wall than usual … » (Swift 2012, 17).

En outre, semblable à *The Pregnant Widow*, la dissociation est présentée en termes d'engourdissement et de désensibilisation. Nous lisons : « Since Jack was a man already hit hard, he was, in one sense, numbed and immunised against these further blows Ellie was now delivering » (Swift 2012, 125-26). Il y a aussi un accent sur le sens de la déréalisation qui accompagne le traumatisme. Jack semble également aliéné de son corps: « In the bathroom his nakedness, in a strange mirror, among strange angles and surfaces, suddenly perplexed and alarmed him» (Swift 2012, 222). Dans *The Sense of a Ending*, le retrait dissociatif se justifie dans le but de se protéger ainsi que d'autres, des effets des dégâts, de « damage », un des mots de Barnes pour traumatisme, suggérant encore une fois la constance du traumatisme dans la vie quotidienne.

En plus de représenter le trauma, les romans du corpus montrent le soi comme marqué par l'autre. Le soi est toujours marqué et hanté par les images fluides de l'Autre. Les romans démontrent que l'enquête du sujet sur le traumatisme révèle également le soi comme un récit, une construction fictive. *The Pregnant Widow* réaffirme cette idée, comme l'esprit littéraire de Keith souligne la nature narrative de la conception humaine de l'individualité et de la vie, brouillant la dichotomie binaire entre soi et récit et contribuant à un sens redéfini de soi. Dans le roman, la porosité de la frontière soi/récit est transmise plus clairement dans la conception de Keith de la vie comme « naturellement » composé de genres. De plus, en déployant la mise-en-abyme postmoderniste, le roman montre la façon dont une compréhension révisée du soi traumatisé se produit dans l'espace narcissique du roman. Dans *The Pregnant Widow*, les femmes qui incarnent de manière métafictionnelle la dynamique narrative sont la petite amie rationnelle de Keith Lily, Scheherazade et Gloria Beautyman, appelée «l'avenir» car elle « représente l'avenir du sexe, la

violence de la pornographie, l'idée du sexe comme transaction financière » (Bilmes 2014, p.pag., ma traduction)

L'accent sur la narrativité de soi et de l'autre correspond à la notion de la réalité immanente Deleuzienne, comme un ensemble ineffable de devenirs, chaque être apparaissant à l'autre comme une simple image en mots. Ceci est confirmé de manière très vive dans *Wish You Were Here*, où la question de l'individualité est intimement liée à celle de l'image qui, en plus d'être le moyen d'attraction et un déclencheur de la mobilité sociale, acquiert une signification comme la seule façon dont la réalité est aperçue dans l'imagination des personnages. Le voyage de resubjectification de Jack et Ellie dans le roman consiste en l'acceptation de cette image sans aspirer à la posséder complètement, ou à la vouloir sans traces du passé traumatisant.

Le temps étant désarticulé le sentiment que quelque chose est fondamentalement erroné dans la manière dans laquelle le monde se déroule est un sentiment qui est exprimé de diverses manières par les auteurs de corpus. Dans les trois œuvres, il y a un sentiment répandu d'une période et un paradigme culturel majeur atteignant sa fin, une phase de transition culturelle de perte de direction ou de « sens ». Ce sentiment émergent se reflète dans les titres même des œuvres : *The Sense of an Ending* problématise les révisions de la subjectivité vers la fin de la vie par des références obliques à la fin d'une période, *Wish You Were Here* signale une absence fondamentale et une envie de retour. De même, *The Pregnant Widow* pleure le départ d'une ère culturelle alors qu'il tente de déchiffrer les conséquences d'une transformation culturelle et historique en cours. En ce qui concerne tous les romans, il y a un sentiment indubitable de malaise culturel et de dissonance qui caractérise la société britannique contemporaine. Ce sentiment de crise est capturé par Vanessa Guignery et Marc Porée dans leur description du roman « Condition-of-England » et des « neuro-novels », catégories dans lesquelles ils incluent les derniers romans d'Amis et Swift (Guignery et Porée 2015, 132‑33). L'analyse de Guignery et Porée inclut judicieusement l'humeur de la mélancolie et le « malaise » qui imprègnent ces romans, qui aspirent de diverses manières à verbaliser des différentes « blessures » traumatiques domestiques et internationales.

Conformément à ce sentiment d'un temps affligé de traumatismes multiples à l'échelle nationale et internationale, la notion shakespearienne d'un temps inarticulé ou « out of joint » est devenue un motif récurrent dans les romans du corpus, chaque roman y faisant allusion à sa

manière. Amis évoque *Hamlet* (3.1.124-148) dans la référence de Keith au « couvent », dans le contexte de la révolution sexuelle car le couvent signifiait « une maison de passe » (Simpson et Weiner 2009) à l'époque élisabéthaine. Keith s'adresse à Gloria Beautyman de la même manière que Hamlet l'avait fait Ophélia, « Get thee to a nunnery, and quickly too » (Amis 2011, 353). Swift et Barnes, cependant, utilisent un synonyme du « joint », la « charnière », pour se référer à ce sentiment de traumatisme culturel et historique; Ébranlé par la mort des êtres chers et déracinés par des catastrophes et des conflits inévitables nationaux et internationaux, le protagoniste de Swift, Jack, exprime ce sentiment en disant: «Everything is mad now, everything is off its hinges» (Swift 2012, 6, 300). De même, dans *The Sense of an Ending*, la mère de Tony le prévient contre les conséquences traumatisantes de la tentative de donner un sens à une existence chaotique. Elle dit: « But if you're very clever, I think there's something that can unhinge you if you're not careful » (Barnes 2011, 47).

Les questions épistémologiques et ontologiques posées à l'égard d'une existence instable pourraient également être analysées à la lumière de la recherche de Ronnie Janoff-Bulman. Le sens de l'incertitude profonde qui caractérise l'existence contemporaine équivaut à une réalisation que Ronnie Janoff-Bulman qualifie d'assaut à l'encontre de nos « suppositions les plus fondamentales du monde et de nous-mêmes » (Janoff-Bulman 2010, 63, ma traduction). L'analyse de Janoff-Bulman sur le traumatisme est particulièrement importante car elle se chevauche avec une caractérisation immanente du traumatisme en tant que délogement ou « déterritorialisation ». Le traumatisme n'est pas une incompréhensibilité dans la recherche de Janoff-Bulman. Plutôt, c'est la sombre réalisation de la futilité de la croyance dans les valeurs reçues de la bienveillance de l'ordre symbolique dans lequel le sujet est né. L'éclatement du «monde supposé» de la victime, construit sur «une illusion d'invulnérabilité» (Janoff-Bulman 1989, 116, ma traduction) ouvre également les yeux de la victime à l'inconnu de la méchanceté et du danger au cœur de l'existence, rendant cela « sans signification » et « effrayant ».

Parmi les trois auteurs, Graham Swift est celui qui représente de manière la plus détaillée ce sentiment de dégradation des suppositions. Divers événements traumatiques entraînent ainsi un coup sismique sur les « suppositions habituelles » de la subjectivité des personnages de Swift, les obligeant à la reformuler. Pour Swift, la « folie » de l'époque, son incompréhensibilité « inarticulée », rend le futur sombre et il choisit l'image universelle de la grisaille pour transmettre ce sentiment de confusion.

Tout au long du parcours déterritorialisant de la révision de la subjectivité déclenchée par les expériences traumatiques, divers aspects de la subjectivité sont remaniés dans l'esprit du protagoniste. Parallèlement à la représentation d'une reconnaissance de l'autre, du soi social et privé comme des fictions mentales changeantes, les récits problématisent également la nature d'une existence finie sur la terre. Cette interrogation englobe les notions humaines du temps, de la vie, de la pulsion de mort et de la force de transformation de l'amour, dans des romans différents atteignant des conclusions convergentes de manières distinctes.

Les protagonistes posent des questions fondamentales sur la nature du temps dans leurs diverses relations avec les symptômes du traumatisme. Le traumatisme dans ce cas pourrait résulter d'une rencontre avec un événement tragique qui menace de décomposer l'ensemble des croyances qui tiennent la subjectivité, y compris une compréhension incontestée du temps représentée spatialement - par les aiguilles d'une montre - comprenant un passé, un présent et un avenir. Dans *Wish You Were Here*, la voix narrative témoigne du désaccord avec Ellie sur son idée reçue du temps : « And until recently this would only have expressed Ellie's position generally. The past is the past, and the dead are the dead » (Swift 2012, 33) . C'est une conception du temps que la spectralité perturbe. De même, dans *The Pregnant Widow*, Keith s'interroge sur le temps comme une thématique clé du récit dans son évocation et son développement importants de Borges et de sa métaphore du temps en tant que rivière (Amis 2011, 366). Cette interrogation est poussée par l'enquête de Keith sur la mortalité. Dans le même ordre d'idées, le narrateur de Barnes fait une référence explicite au temps qui fait partie intégrante de notre être, avec ses mystères de cadence, ses « mysteries of pace and progress » (Barnes 2011, 60) qui nous intriguent. L'intérêt de Tony pour le fonctionnement du temps provient de ses méditations sur les vicissitudes de ses souvenirs, dont la plupart sont des rappels douloureux de sa culpabilité involontaire dans la mort tragique d'Adrian.

Finalement, au cours de la lutte psychique contre le retour et la répétition des traumatismes, l'amour est présenté comme une force rédemptrice. Contre l'effondrement mortel de la temporalité par le traumatisme (par une disjonction temporelle et l'hypervigilance traumatique), l'amour, ou plus précisément, le principe d'Eros agit comme une pulsion de l'expansion temporelle du récit de la vie, à la manière des récits des *Milles et Une Nuits* qui maintiennent la vie et repoussent la mort. Le désir, soutenu par le récit, nourrit ainsi le

mouvement de devenir-autre sur le plan de l'immanence, un fait également mentionné par Kristeva (Guberman et Kristeva 1996, 26). En tant que tel, l'amour représente non seulement le mouvement freudien pour se lier à l'autre, mais aussi l'impulsion de narration au cœur de l'existence - contre l'effondrement du traumatisme, ou Thanatos - pour l'expansion et la recontextualization thérapeutique de la subjectivité.

Pour conclure, dans les trois chapitres de la thèse, nous avons cherché à montrer comment la spectralité et la « possession » par le traumatisme représentent non seulement une lutte psychique interne pour perlaborer le traumatisme, mais aussi comment cette lutte affecte et transforme universellement les notions reçues de la subjectivité. La rencontre traumatique avec la mort déclenche une interrogation et une redéfinition de l'idée d'identité dans les romans. Les trois protagonistes finissent par une compréhension révisée de soi à la fin du récit. La révision de la subjectivité à la demande de la répétition traumatique entraîne une réévaluation de l'attitude envers le lieu de l'événement traumatique. Cela comprend une révision de l'idée de nationalité et d'appartenance à un lieu, dans un contexte de déracinement et de perte postmoderne de la direction culturelle et historique. Finalement, les enquêtes personnelles et culturelles se développent pour englober des questions plus importantes que la nationalité : enregistrées dans tous les romans, il y a une lutte pour comprendre le sens du temps, de la vie et le rôle de l'amour dans l'existence, dans un monde où la vie est fortement marquée par la peur traumatique de la survie face à l'extrémisme et à la perte universelle de direction, ou « sens ».

En résumé, le premier chapitre traite de la façon dont la rencontre traumatique avec la mort engendre une interrogation et une redéfinition de l'idée d'identité dans les romans et dépeint comment les trois protagonistes finissent par comprendre l'individualité différemment à la fin du récit. Dans notre enquête sur les « symptômes » textuels du traumatisme, la dichotomie soi/autre se révèle poreuse et indécidable, avec le fantôme (des morts ou une vision imaginaire du vivant) dépeint comme partie intégrante de la conscience des protagonistes. De plus, la faculté d'imagination, avec sa tendance à métaphoriser, animer les objets et les associer mélancoliquement à des souvenirs douloureux de la perte des objets d'amour, est représentée comme le moyen principal par lequel le fantôme du traumatisme ou celui de tout caractère absent « possède » la conscience des protagonistes. Une étude plus approfondie par les auteurs du corpus révèle également que le moi traumatisé est un récit autodidacte visant à soutenir un « récit

» cohérent, le récit étant une histoire autodidacte de sa vie en vue de son accomplissement avant le point final du décès. Cette construction fictive auto-façonnée est fabriquée à partir des désirs (imaginés) de l'autre, laissant peu de place à toute notion originaire et non adultérée d'identité. Cette réalisation est montrée comme minant les notions individualistes de subjectivité et de certitude à l'égard des souvenirs du passé. Elle révèle aussi la subjectivité - et l'être – comme étant toujours un devenir narratif. Une compréhension approfondie de soi comme hanté par les autres (morts ou vivants) ainsi que leur vulnérabilité partagée dans un monde également vulnérable constitue la première vision éthique des récits. Une vision de la subjectivité caractérisée par une porosité de frontières existentielles rend tous les participants à l'Être responsables les uns envers les autres.

Le fossé brouillé entre soi et la fiction éclaire également la dynamique de la lecture, car le soi est considéré comme une autre fiction à réinterpréter constamment, le traumatisme étant le moteur de cette relation herméneutique interne. De plus, le traumatisme, comme son propre retour spectral et incessant à l'avenir, un retour exigeant une écoute, est conçu comme reflétant l'interprétation littéraire - comme l'illustre *The Sense of an Ending* de Barnes, qui pourrait être interprété comme une allégorie de l'interprétation. Une grande œuvre de littérature qui se loge dans l'esprit du lecteur équivaut à un dialogue potentiellement auto-engendrant, ou, autrement dit, à une expansion incessante d'une interprétation continue. Un fantôme composé d'autres fantômes, le texte littéraire revient toujours dans l'esprit du lecteur, exigeant une lecture fraîche, une nouvelle interprétation, ou en termes psychanalytiques, un dialogue transférentiel qui dure pour toujours, jusqu'à la mort. En tant que tel, tout retour du texte littéraire - ou tout « événement » de lecture - est (légèrement) traumatisant, réclame une réinterprétation, et s'apparente à l'hypervigilance subie par une victime de traumatisme.

Le chapitre deux relate comment la révision de la subjectivité à la demande insistante de la répétition traumatique conduit à une réévaluation des perspectives vers le « lieu » de l'événement traumatique. Les idées d'identité nationale et d'appartenance à un lieu ont été démontrées comme évolutives, dans un contexte de menace existentielle, de déracinement et de perte postmoderne de la direction culturelle et historique, d'un temps inarticulé ou de la « veuve enceinte ». Conformément à l'éthos de l'incertitude qui caractérise l'époque contemporaine, en particulier face à la menace du terrorisme, du bouleversement économique et de l'incrédulité postmoderne persistante devant les grandes vérités, un motif récurrent dans les romans est la

figure d'un père mort, suicidaire, absent ou faible, comme l'ombre affaiblie d'une figure d'autorité. En outre, commun à au moins deux des romans est un réexamen de la nature comme l'autre spectral qui hante et subvertit la culture contemporaine sous le couvert de la violence physique, la décrépitude morale et « l'écholalie sexuelle » selon les mots d'Amis. Là encore, l'enquête déclenchée par un fantôme mène à la porosité de la dichotomie culture/nature ou humaine/animale, alors que les pulsions animales et violentes se révèlent comme polluant l'autre de la civilisation, culminant dans la circularité récurrente de la guerre et du carnage, au long du chemin encore incomplet et évolutif de l'humanité. Pire encore, comme l'indique Swift, la préservation de la culture familiale et nationale dans l'ordre imaginaire du personnage se fait par la transmission de récits héroïques de plus en plus fictifs, dissimulant leurs origines traumatiques et perpétuant la violence à travers des générations.

Dans la troisième et dernière section, nous démontrons comment les recherches personnelles et culturelles se développent pour englober des questions plus importantes que la nationalité : tous les récits orchestrent une lutte pour comprendre la signification de l'individu dans l'univers ou le sens de la vie dans un monde où la vie quotidienne est lourdement teintée de la peur traumatique et diffuse de la survie face à l'extrémisme religieux et à la guerre. La mort traumatique, personnelle ou à l'échelle nationale, et la hantise qui en découle engendrent un sentiment de disjonction temporelle, libèrent des souvenirs intrusifs et déconstruisent la séquence temporelle par hypervigilance. Ces symptômes poussent à remettre en question la nature du temps, car les textes explorent la temporalité comme clé de la compréhension d'une existence hantée par un passé ou un traumatisme anticipé. Le résultat est un affaiblissement de la division biologique de vie/mort et une affirmation de la transformation, de l'interconnexion et du devenir comme l'essence du temps et de l'existence. Le temps est donc défini comme un croisement de divers devenirs à des vitesses différentes. De plus, les romans mettent en évidence le caractère incompréhensible mais « parfait » de l'existence qui se présente comme dépassant l'expression humaine et se situe en dehors de l'ordre symbolique humain, peut-être comme une autre manifestation du réel lacanien dont la présence est enregistrée dans l'ordre symbolique. Les romans évoquent ainsi Wittgenstein qui a fait référence à l'incapacité du langage humain à se référer à ce qui se trouve au-delà.

Sur le plan discursif, les romans enregistrent une tentative éthique de rendre justice à l'intégralité de l'existence par le déploiement des structures métaphoriques qui mêlent diverses

formes de vie, notamment l'humain, l'animal et la machine. En outre, les auteurs rappellent aux lecteurs les capacités limitées et le point de vue de l'humanité par rapport à son désir de comprendre la nature de l'existence. Tous ces auteurs ne peuvent faire que de recourir à des symboles tels que la rivière indisciplinée ou le chêne, pour incarner la fluidité organique de la vie. Cet aveu de limites est révélateur d'un désir de communion avec la source de la vie, mais une communion qui englobe la totalité de l'être et du devenir - animal, humain, machine, plante, soi-disant sacré et profane – de manière éthique, non-réductrice, et en évitant le recours à la transcendance et en affirmant l'immanence de l'être. Centrale au plan de l'immanence de l'Être est la force affective de l'amour, ou en termes freudiens Eros, sa fonction étant de rejoindre des êtres individuels. En plus de la fonction thérapeutique de la narrativité, l'amour est présenté comme une force qui agit contre le traumatisme. Avec ses connotations érotiques, l'amour est aussi considéré comme équivalant au pardon étendu à l'autre, ainsi qu'à soi-même. Ceci est démontré comme un geste d'affirmation de la vie permettant aux victimes de transcender la hantise traumatique.

Dans l'ensemble, le fantôme du traumatisme est une figure déstabilisante qui révèle que de nombreuses frontières reçues sont poreuses. En outre, les frontières conceptuelles sont représentées comme des impositions fictives intenables sur une Nature autrement inclassable. Comme diversement orchestrés par les récits du corpus, certaines des frontières dichotomiques de la subjectivité qui s'érodent par l'indétermination liée à la spectralité sont : soi / autre / narrative, vie / mort, masculine / féminine, nature / culture et finalement humain / animal / machine. Issu du cœur du poststructuralisme (représenté dans les œuvres de Kristeva, Barthes et Derrida), le fantôme est une figure qui met en évidence la nature évolutive des frontières subjectives dans un mouvement universel de devenir. Ce mouvement de devenir se déroule sur le plan de l'immanence de la Nature. La figure du fantôme s'écarte d'une notion égocentrique de la subjectivité, car tous les êtres dans la nature se montrent évolutifs et connectés. Dans ce contexte, la narrativité montre sa propre signification purement humaine et sa nature discursivement construite. Le fantôme ajoute encore la dimension d'historicité (diachronie) à ces devenirs infinis, un mouvement qui prolonge indéfiniment le contexte de l'analyse culturelle, littéraire et éthique - ainsi que la responsabilité. La recherche sur les implications du traumatisme et de la spectralité pour la subjectivité a été conçue pour couvrir des domaines de subjectivité personnelle et universelle.

La recherche a mis au jour non seulement la représentation narrative du traumatisme, mais aussi sur la pertinence de la problématique de la spectralité par rapport aux tendances critiques contemporaines et les « tournants » discutés dans la théorie littéraire depuis les années 1980. Les récits analysés révèlent l'importance et l'élaboration du « tournant éthique », du « tournant narratif » et du « tournant affectif » aussi bien que le tournant « spectral ». Les récits montrent aussi des sentiments en rapport avec des mouvements récents « reconstructifs » tels que le « métamodernisme ». Les romans du corpus montrent aussi la pertinence continue d'un postmodernisme atténué.

Tous ces « tournants » témoignent de la porosité des frontières disciplinaires dans le milieu universitaire et de la nature continue du dialogue entre la littérature et ses domaines de connaissance contigus. Le tournant éthique, à partir des années 1980 (Ganteau et Onega 2011, 7) révèle le sujet comme responsable envers l'autre, ainsi que son propre contexte matériel d'existence. Ce contexte se révèle vaste et interconnecté. C'est le plan de l'immanence de l'Etre où les êtres individuels sont synonymes de leurs actions sur des êtres voisins. C'est aussi le plan deleuzien où une seule action peut déclencher des effets d'ondulation imprévisibles sur les êtres voisins (l'autre) et sur le plan entier de l'immanence. Si traumatiques, ces effets peuvent potentiellement hanter l'Être - et les êtres individuels - diachroniquement, à travers le temps. Dans ses formulations deleuziennes et post-lévinassiennes, l'ouverture éthique à l'altérité sur le plan de l'immanence est propice au devenir-autre. Cela se fait par un mouvement réciproque d'affectivité impliquant l'autre. Dans ce contexte, le traumatisme est considéré comme une perturbation de cette dynamique intersubjective (Lorraine 2011, 130), (processus similaire à la dissociation, ou *anticathéxis*, défini par Freud comme le retrait de l'investissement libidinal dans l'objet d'amour pour rétablir l'équilibre).

En conclusion, cette étude révèle les récits de corpus instillés dans un contexte socioculturel qui lutte contre des menaces d'importance existentielle. Le traumatisme, personnel ou collectif, est démontré comme la force affective qui déclenche un réexamen subjectif universel. Le résultat de cette enquête psychique est une subjectivité révisée et une prise de conscience de l'existence comme étant composée d'êtres interconnectés et donc responsables. Au sein d'une tradition romanesque dite « always already global » (Bernard 2014, paragr. 12) dans sa portée et ses perspectives, les romans analysés examinent une période contemporaine en crise profonde et souscrivent à un vision du monde cosmopolite et immanent (Horton 2014, 2).

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